



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

# IDPs in Colombia, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras and Mexico

December 2024



*Honduras. A young woman participates in an artistic event in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. Children and youth impacted by violence use art as an expressive tool in creating safe spaces, allowing them to express what they feel while building support networks. UNHCR/Gabriela Villeda*

## OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

By mid-2024, the Americas hosted 20.3 million forcibly displaced or stateless people. Of those, over 8,135,000 people remained internally displaced in Colombia, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, and Mexico, half a million more than in 2023. This accelerating increase in forced displacement is the result of root causes that persist or have intensified, including insecurity, violence, conflict, inequality, and human rights violations; exacerbated by the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters. UNHCR plays a pivotal role in the region, actively working to strengthen protection frameworks and to provide sustainable solutions for IDPs. UNHCR continues to aid States in their efforts to establish comprehensive legal frameworks and policies aimed at preventing displacement and addressing the needs of internally displaced people. UNHCR supports national and sub-national authorities in

enhancing their capacity to collect, compile, analyse and use comprehensive data on internally displaced populations for statistical and response purposes.

UNHCR's involvement in situations of internal displacement is one of the eight corporate focus areas requiring renewed attention and accelerated action, as outlined in the [UNHCR Strategic Directions 2022-2026](#).

[The Focus Area Strategic Plan for Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People 2024-2030](#) released in September 2024 sets out UNHCR's global roadmap for predictable and prioritized action. The plan details UNHCR's specific role and contribution in providing protection and solutions in contexts of internal displacement and the strategic shifts that UNHCR operations will adopt to advance this agenda.



## COLOMBIA

By mid-2024, Colombia recorded 6.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), all recognized by the Government as eligible for assistance and reparations. According to [UNHCR's Global Trends Report](#), Colombia ranks as the fourth-highest country globally in IDP numbers. Since the signing of the 2016 Peace Agreement, over 1.4 million new displacements have been registered, with an average of 180,000 new IDPs annually. In 2023 alone, more than 200,800 people were newly displaced.

The humanitarian situation further deteriorated in the first half of 2024, with over 95,000 people affected by violence, large-scale displacements, and confinements. The frequency and impact of these incidents increased compared to the same period in 2023, affecting both historically impacted and newly affected regions. The Pacific Coast remains the most affected area with over half of the displacement occurring in the department of Nariño, while Chocó faces severe situations of confinement. Additionally, new displacements have emerged in previously less affected areas, including the Caribbean region (Bolívar, Magdalena, La Guajira, and Cesar).

While IDPs flee violence across the country, communities confined by non-State armed groups (NSAGs) are exposed to severe protection risks and difficulties in securing their livelihoods. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations are disproportionately affected, with children, LGBTIQ+ individuals, the elderly, and single caregivers with children facing the most acute protection needs.

Despite peace negotiations led by the Government, NSAGs continue to compete for territorial and social control. Armed clashes remain the primary cause of displacement and confinement. The breakdown of some bilateral ceasefires has intensified clashes in regions like Nariño and Cauca. Increased displacements and confinements have also been reported in southern Bolívar and northeastern areas, driven by NSAG expansion and disputes over strategic areas, impacting surrounding departments, including Cesar.

UNHCR is working with communities at heightened risk to strengthen their self-protection mechanisms. We are also supporting local authorities in emergency preparedness and humanitarian response, while advocating at all levels for the acceleration of durable solutions. Complementing State efforts, UNHCR helps protect communities affected by violence and facilitates voluntary returns when feasible, relocations, and the legalization of informal urban settlements, thereby contributing to solutions and advancing peace efforts.

### IN COLOMBIA, A DISPLACED LEADER PROMOTES INTEGRATION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

*Sixteen years ago, Wilmar Quintero's dream began to take shape with the Caminos Foundation, an initiative supported by UNHCR that aims to provide educational opportunities and safe spaces for the community of Bello Oriente through community work. Thanks to his work with the Caminos Foundation, children, adolescents, young people, and elderly women have found hope and resilience through community work and climate action. Read more [here](#).*



## HONDURAS

With more than 247,000 people internally displaced, Honduras is affected by a multifaceted crisis stemming from fragile rule of law, organized crime, pervasive gang violence, and high levels of poverty and inequality - all key drivers of internal displacement. Environmental hazards and **the impact of climate change further compound these challenges, putting vulnerable communities at significant risk.** This year alone 21 tropical storms and numerous landslides have left communities flooded and isolated, which could lead to the displacement of many more people.

Since the adoption of the landmark **Law for the Prevention, Care and Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in 2022**, UNHCR has supported the Interinstitutional Commission for the Protection of Forcibly Displaced Persons in drafting regulations to guide its implementation. These regulations were presented for validation on 26 September 2024. The drafting Subcommittee held over 20 drafting sessions and five consultation sessions in Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, Choluteca, La Esperanza, and La Ceiba, with participation from government bodies, internally displaced persons, and individuals at risk of displacement.

In 2024, UNHCR continued to support the Property Institute in the information campaign "Your Registered Home, Your Secured Right", to raise awareness about the **importance of property registration and tenure regularization.** The campaign aims to prevent arbitrary dispossession and protect the housing, land, and property (HLP) rights for displaced populations by providing legal guidance on property registration processes. Four information fairs were held in Tegucigalpa, Juticalpa, San Pedro Sula, and La Esperanza.

As of September 2024, UNHCR's support for internally displaced persons includes cash assistance for livelihoods, technical trainings, formal education certifications, financial literacy programmes, internships, and support for small businesses development.



## EL SALVADOR

According to the profiling exercise published by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security by 2018, approximately **71,500 people were internally displaced in El Salvador, the majority being socio-economically vulnerable young families.**

Following the adoption in 2020 of the Special Law for the Comprehensive Care and Protection of Victims of Violence in Condition of Forced Displacement, UNHCR collaborates with authorities to address the needs of internally displaced people by **promoting the implementation of the national legal framework.** UNHCR provides guidance and technical support to institutions and key stakeholders to ensure the inclusion of internally displaced people in government programmes and initiatives.

Improved humanitarian access in communities formerly under gang control present opportunities to advance solutions for internal displacement caused by violence. With a **whole-of-society approach**, UNHCR in coordination with the Government works with communities, NGOs, the United Nations, civil society, the private sector, and development actors to address the complex challenges of prolonged displacement. In alignment with national development and peace consolidation efforts, UNHCR fosters the revamp of public spaces or “tactical urbanism” initiatives in communities historically affected by violence and forced displacement to promote local integration. A pilot project is underway in Las Margaritas, Tutunichapa, and La Campanera.



*El Salvador. Community members review the design for the new communal house in La Campanera, Soyapango, built with UNHCR's support in 2024. UNHCR's tactical urbanism efforts contribute to peaceful coexistence in communities historically affected by gang violence and displacement. UNHCR/ Jacqueline Henriquez*

## HAITI

Indiscriminate gang violence in Haiti has triggered an alarming escalation in human rights violations and large-scale internal displacement, forcing over 578,000 by June 2024, with **200,000 more estimated to have been internally displaced since then.** The crisis is staggering in scale, with nearly half of Haiti's 11.9 million population being food insecure and in **need of humanitarian assistance.** **Children are particularly vulnerable**, with over half a million children living in neighbourhoods controlled by armed groups, exposing them to violence and the risk of recruitment. The crisis in Haiti has also disrupted essential services, including education and healthcare, leaving over 300,000 children without access to schools. Gangs have targeted hospitals and schools in the capital Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas. Schools have turned into temporary shelters for the thousands displaced by violence. This surge reflects the stark vulnerability of minors in a country where approximately 2.7 million people, including 1.6 million women and children, live in areas under gang control. Alarmingly, children under 18 are estimated to make up between a third and half of the gang members.

Limited access to safe spaces for psychological support exacerbates the risk of abuse and trafficking. **Women and girls face disproportionate impacts**, with Gender-based violence (GBV) surging. Between January and May 2024, 3,949 incidents of GBV were reported, 72% of which involved sexual violence and 14% physical assault.

In response to this situation, UNHCR's strategy has centred on strengthening collaboration with UN agencies, governments, and local and international partners to build sustainable protection capacity and expertise. This approach aligns with the broader priorities of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), with a strong emphasis on sustainability, localization, and accountability.

With local partners, UNHCR supports government agencies responsible for issuing and replacing birth registration documents for individuals, particularly those who have been forcibly displaced due to violence, many of whom have moved to the southern region. This focus on documentation not only addresses the immediate needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) but also informs UNHCR's broader strategy for Haitians displaced across the Americas, where the lack of access to documentation further exacerbates their vulnerability.

## MEXICO

Mexico has experienced a surge in internal displacement in recent years, driven by escalating violence perpetrated by criminal groups and land disputes across at least seven states, with the states of Chiapas, Michoacan and Oaxaca particularly affected. The national census counted more than 262,400 individuals displaced between 2015 and 2020 because of public insecurity and violence, but this number is widely recognized as an underestimate of the true magnitude of internal displacement in the country. More recently, the National Victimization Survey (ENVIPE) conducted by Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) estimated that over 320,000 households changed homes in 2023 alone as a means of protecting themselves from crime, an increase of over 40% compared to the annual average of preceding years, **underscoring the growing impact of crime and insecurity on human mobility within the country.**

Since 2017, UNHCR has engaged with all the three branches of the Mexican government and civil society to prevent and respond to internal displacement. Its efforts focus on five main areas: providing **technical assistance to strengthen legal and public policy frameworks; information management; capacity building; operational coordination with UN agencies and stakeholders and promoting protection and durable solutions at national and local levels**. UNHCR has also been providing technical assistance to national and sub-national authorities to collect, compile, analyse and use comprehensive IDP population data, including a pioneering profiling exercise conducted in Chihuahua in collaboration with over 20 actors.

To streamline these efforts, UNHCR advocates for integrating IDP perspectives into government statistical efforts. Recognizing that 20% of Mexico's municipalities are highly vulnerable to climate change and its impacts – with an additional 36% considered moderately vulnerable– UNHCR partners with civil society to monitor, diagnose and develop prevention and response strategies.

Since 2020, **UNHCR has contributed to reviewing and drafting different legislative proposals**, providing tools, methodologies, and technical assistance to support legislation and public policy instruments in states such as Chiapas, Chihuahua, Guerrero, Estado de Mexico, Michoacan, Oaxaca, Sinaloa, and Baja California. UNHCR's involvement underscores its **commitment to support enabling legal and policy framework and administrative procedures** for IDPs. This includes more than **22 consultation roundtables with indigenous communities jointly with Oaxaca's Department of Human Rights** for the development of the local law to prevent, address, and respond to internal displacement during the second half of 2024.

Collaboration with the Supreme Court of Justice, UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), resulted in the **Manual on Internal Displacement**, an important tool that the Federal Judiciary has already used in decisions protecting the rights of IDPs. Together with the Ministry of Interior, UNHCR has developed a guide to design and implement registration and referral pathways for IDPs at the local and national level.

To improve coordination between local and federal government in the absence of a national law to address internal displacement, the Migration Policy Unit (UPMRIP), Michoacán's Ministry of Migrants, and UNHCR invited all actors coordinating the response to internal displacement nationwide to the first National Coordination Meeting in August 2024. Good practices and common challenges for the comprehensive attention to internal displacement were addressed, and 28 government institutions



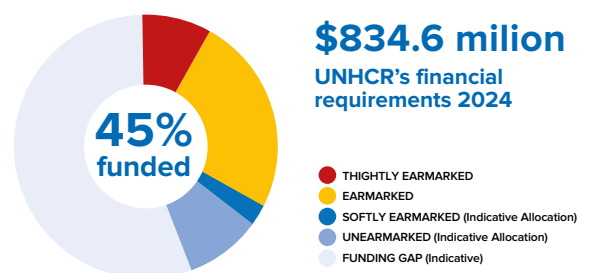
Mexico. UNHCR and the Coordination for the Attention of Human Rights in Oaxaca working together. © UNHCR/Jelena Hawellek

participated. A second forum is expected to be held in 2025 to continue promoting cooperation and coordination actions. UNHCR further helps build local capacity in collaboration with other UN agencies (OHCHR, IOM, UNICEF), ICRC, JIPS and DRC, through the development and implementation a course on internal displacement. To date, three editions of the course have trained 166 participants from various sectors of government, civil society, IDP communities, academia, and the private sector.

In September, UPMRIP and UNHCR presented the **Guide for the registration of internally displaced people in Mexico**, UNHCR's first guidance of its kind to assist in the design and implementation of the registration of internally displaced people. In the absence of a specific national law, it provides guidance to local authorities in the design and implementation of registration mechanisms for internally displaced people.

## TIMELY FUNDING

UNHCR's humanitarian response in the Americas is made possible thanks to the generous support of major donors who have contributed unrestricted funding to UNHCR's global operations and to donors who have contributed directly to UNHCR operations in the Americas. UNHCR appealed for \$834.6 million in funding in 2024 to respond to the most pressing needs in the Americas. As of 30 November, donors had pledged \$ 373 million.



### THANKS TO ALL OUR DONORS IN 2024 (As of 30 November 2024)

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