UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

# El Salvador

**December 2024** || Monthly Update #12

After being forced to flee, Marla found hope through psychological support and her entrepreneurship, with assistance from UNHCR.
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## Our 2024 response in figures

**5,134**
individuals assisted through UNHCR's helpline.

**3,778**
people assisted at the Support Spaces "By Your Side".

**81,263**
people reached via Support Spaces' mobile units.

**3,979**
individuals assisted with mental health services and psychosocial support.

**1,360**
people engaged in participatory assessments.

**8,066**
people benefited through programmes for the prevention of violence against women.

**849**
people trained in skills for employment and self-employment.

**139**
people linked with a decent job opportunity.

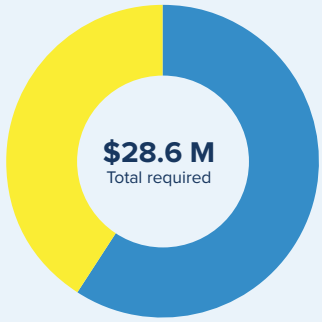
**216**
individuals completed vocational training.

**45**
adults supported to return to formal education.

**6,517** individuals at heightened risk received direct support to cover basic needs, such as food, rent, documentation, and facilitates activities for economic integration, education, and naturalization.

**2,916** people registered with biometrics.

## Funding




59% of UNHCR's financial requirements for El Salvador received by 31 December 2024.

*These figures are regularly updated and reflect cumulative data for 2024.

# Highlights

Migration officials at the closing ceremony of a three-month diploma on international protection.
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Communities affected by the seismic swarm in Conchagua, La Unión, received kits with essential supplies donated by UNHCR to Civil Protection.
© UNHCR /

Under the "Revive tu Espacio" initiative, UNHCR along with government representatives inaugurated a park in La Campanera, Soyapango.
© UNHCR / Jacqueline Henríquez

- Seventy-two Migration officials completed a UNHCR-supported three-month diploma on International Protection by the Migratory School of the General Directorate for Migration and Foreigners (DGME). Participants enhanced their knowledge on refugee law, protection needs identification, durable solutions, and how to tackle trafficking in persons, among other, contributing to timely attention to people seeking protection in El Salvador.
- In response to a seismic swarm affecting 120 households in the coastal area of Conchagua (La Unión), UNHCR in coordination with the General Directorate for Civil Protection delivered 866 core relief items including kitchen sets, blankets, solar lamps, mosquito nets, and hygiene kits. Some of these families were sleeping in tents previously donated by UNHCR to Civil Protection.
- As part of UNHCR participative initiatives to revamp spaces in communities historically affected by violence, the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Municipality of San Salvador Este joined to inaugurate a commemorative park in La Campanera, Soyapango. Ongoing projects in the community include the construction of a skate park, soccer pitches, children's playgrounds, and improvements to lightning and solid waste management, among others.)

# Protect

Delegates from NGOs and government institutions shared protection best practices in a workshop by UNHCR and UNICEF.
© UNHCR

- UNHCR and the Comprehensive Emotional Intelligence Centre (CIIE) conducted a workshop on psychological first aid for 77 staff members of the Attorney General's Office (PGR). Participants from various regions learned practical techniques and tools to provide immediate support in challenging situations.
- Representatives from the Attorney General's Office (PGR), Plan International, Ayuda en Acción, Oxfam, World Vision, and Doctors of the World strengthened their knowledge on protection through a workshop facilitated by UNHCR and UNICEF. 26 participants exchanged information and best practices to enhance the coordinated response to asylum-seekers and people with specific needs.

# Respond

UNHCR donated pedagogical and hygiene kits to the returnee reception centre GAMI in San Salvador.
© UNHCR / Juliana Paz

- UNHCR donated 150 dignity kits to the Attorney General's Office (PGR) in support to its Specialized Units for Attention to Women (UIAEM) nationwide. These units provide legal and psychosocial support to women in vulnerable situations. Also, the donation of 300 pedagogical play kits to the Centre for Attention to Migrants (GAMI) will contribute to child-friendly sessions for returned children with protection needs.
- Some 70 members of the technical sectoral commissions of the National Civil Protection System participated in a two-week workshop on protection by the UNHCR-led Protection Sector and the co-led CCCM Sector along the National Technical Shelter Commission. Attendees furthered coordination to better respond to the needs of affected populations during emergencies.

# Empower

- UNHCR, the General Directorate of Civil Protection, and local municipalities held swearing-in ceremonies for the Community Civil Protection Commissions in San Miguel and Santa Ana, following a training process to develop their community plans. These commissions, part of El Salvador's National System for Civil Protection, play a key role in community preparedness. UNHCR provided kits with tools and protective equipment to enhance their emergency response capacity.
- The annual meeting of UNHCR's Outreach Volunteers gathered 85 participants from various regions who shared outstanding initiatives on inclusion, environmental care, recovery of public spaces, and livelihood projects. The event offered a space for volunteers to share best practices and lessons learned regarding their community work spreading information on rights and access to services.
- In San Salvador, 90 representatives from nine youth networks held the second National Youth Forum with support from UNHCR and the Directorate for the Reconstruction of Social Cohesion in which they discussed community issues and priorities, exchanged best practices, and explored collaboration opportunities. A similar event in San Miguel gathered 70 representatives from 12 youth networks from the eastern region.

To enhance emergency preparedness and response, UNHCR donated tools to Civil Protection Commissions in San Miguel and Santa Ana.
© UNHCR / Jacqueline Henríquez

# Solve

Entrepreneurs from the Súper Pilas livelihoods programme showcased their products at a fair in Santa Ana.
© UNHCR

- Under the ISDEMU-MIRPS Best Practices project funded by BPRM, 80 women survivors of violence, including internally displaced, asylum-seeker and refugee women, concluded a three-month psychosocial support and self-employment skills training. Among the participants, 56 developed life plans, and 25 received seed capital to implement business ideas or boost their ventures.
- UNHCR joined the General Directorate for Migration and Foreigners (DGME) for an event in which three refugees from Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Peru were granted Salvadoran citizenship. In support of their applications, UNHCR provided legal counselling and cash assistance for procedural fees.
- To boost networking and economic opportunities for small businesses, 124 entrepreneurs of the Súper Pilas livelihoods programme took part in fairs in San Miguel, Santa Ana, and San Salvador. Participants showcased diverse products and services, such as beauty services, food and beverages, handmade crafts, and commercial supplies.

# Highlights in 2024

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## January

- El Salvador took part in the VI Annual MIRPS Meeting in Panama, reaffirming its commitment to protection and solutions for people forced to flee.

## March

- UNHCR and World Vision held violence prevention awareness activities with 150 people in various communities for International Women's Day.

## May

- UNHCR and the Directorate for the Reconstruction of Social Cohesion inaugurated a renovated football field in the IVU community in San Salvador to promote social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

## June

- In La Campanera, Soyapango UNHCR, the Ministry of Housing, and the Municipality of San Salvador laid the first stone for the new communal house, revamping and resignifying a space previously under gang control.

- UNHCR supported the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by providing 3,200 emergency items to people in communities affected by the effects of heavy rains.

- Maria Eugenia, a refugee from Colombia shared her story of resilience and empowerment through a cooking masterclass for culinary arts students in coordination with partner Fe y Alegría.

## July

- 26 private companies joined UNHCR's "Mi Primer Trabajo" event to support job opportunities for displaced and at-risk individuals.

- UNHCR and municipalities renewed agreements further coordinated efforts through the "A Tu Lado" Support Spaces, providing services for people in vulnerable situations.

## November

- The three-month Fútbol Callejero championship, supported by UNHCR, engaged 1,000 youth across 15 municipalities to foster social cohesion, with the grand finale held in La Paz Oeste.

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs inaugurated the new premises of the Commission for Refugee Status Determination (CODER) built with UNHCR support, a space dedicated for the attention of asylum-seekers and refugees.

# Stories from the field

## Strengthening Protection and Solutions: El Salvador's Commitment to Cartagena +40

Participants at the Cartagena+40 event in Santiago de Chile during the adoption of the Declaration and Plan of Action of Chile 2024-2034.
© UNHCR / Eugenia Paz

In December, Latin American and Caribbean countries reaffirmed their commitment to solidarity, protection, and the search for comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable solutions for refugees, displaced people, and stateless individuals in the region by adopting the Chile Declaration and Action Plan. These important documents marks the conclusion of the 40th anniversary celebrations of the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, which remains one of the region's most relevant strategic frameworks for protection and solutions.

The Chile Declaration and Action Plan will guide governments over the next decade, offering coordinated responses to the challenges faced by refugees, displaced persons, and stateless populations. It acknowledges the complexity and scale of forced displacement in the region, while considering the realities of countries of origin, transit, destination, and return. The process for the Chile Declaration included three consultations about protection in contexts of human mobility and statelessness, inclusion and solutions, and disasters.

El Salvador, actively engaged in this effort, underscored the critical importance of international protection within the evolving context of human mobility. With the adoption of the Chile Plan, the country reaffirmed its commitment to the Global Compact on Refugees, aiming to enhance protection mechanisms and pursue durable solutions.

The Vice Minister of Diaspora and Human Mobility of El Salvador, Cindy Portal, stated: "It is crucial to address international protection as an essential human right and a shared responsibility at the global and regional levels. This is why El Salvador has initiated a transformation process that prioritizes life, security, the generation of opportunities, and social cohesion."

In alignment with these commitments, UNHCR supports El Salvador's ongoing efforts. In 2024, UNHCR and national institutions strengthened the knowledge of key front-line staff at borders on international protection and referral pathways. Furthermore, the newly inaugurated offices for the Commission on Refugee Status Determination (CODER) built with UNHCR support offers a protection-sensitive dedicated space for the attention of refugees and asylum-seekers.

National actors such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and UNHCR partnered to enhance the inclusion of displaced individuals into the workforce, and jointly supported efforts that foster social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in communities historically affected by violence and displacement.

"UNHCR reaffirms its commitment to supporting El Salvador in strengthening the asylum system, so that individuals seeking protection in the country have access to an efficient process and receive the assistance they need," expressed Monica Tse Candido, Acting Representative of UNHCR in El Salvador.

El Salvador progresses to strengthen its asylum system and to create a more inclusive, protective environment for those forcibly displaced seeking protection in the country. Also, the national commitment to the Cartagena +40 is key towards finding durable solutions for refugees and displaced persons.

**In 2024, UNHCR is appealing for USD 28.6 million to provide protection, responses, empowerment and solutions to refugees, asylum-seekers, and internally displaced persons in El Salvador.** The best way to support UNHCR's appeal is through unearmarked contributions. Such flexible funding at the global level is key in allowing a timely response to evolving needs wherever required.

**UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is grateful for the support in 2024 of:**

Australian Aid, Belgium partner in development, Canada, Denmark, European Union, France, Germany, German humanitarian assistance, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Cooperación Española, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, USA, Peacebuilding Fund, ONU Habitat por un mejor futuro urbano

**UNHCR is thankful for the support from private donors:** Australia for UNHCR España con ACNUR, Italy, Japan for UNHCR, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Sweden for UNHCR, UK for UNHCR, USA for UNHCR, UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe, USA for UNHCR.

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