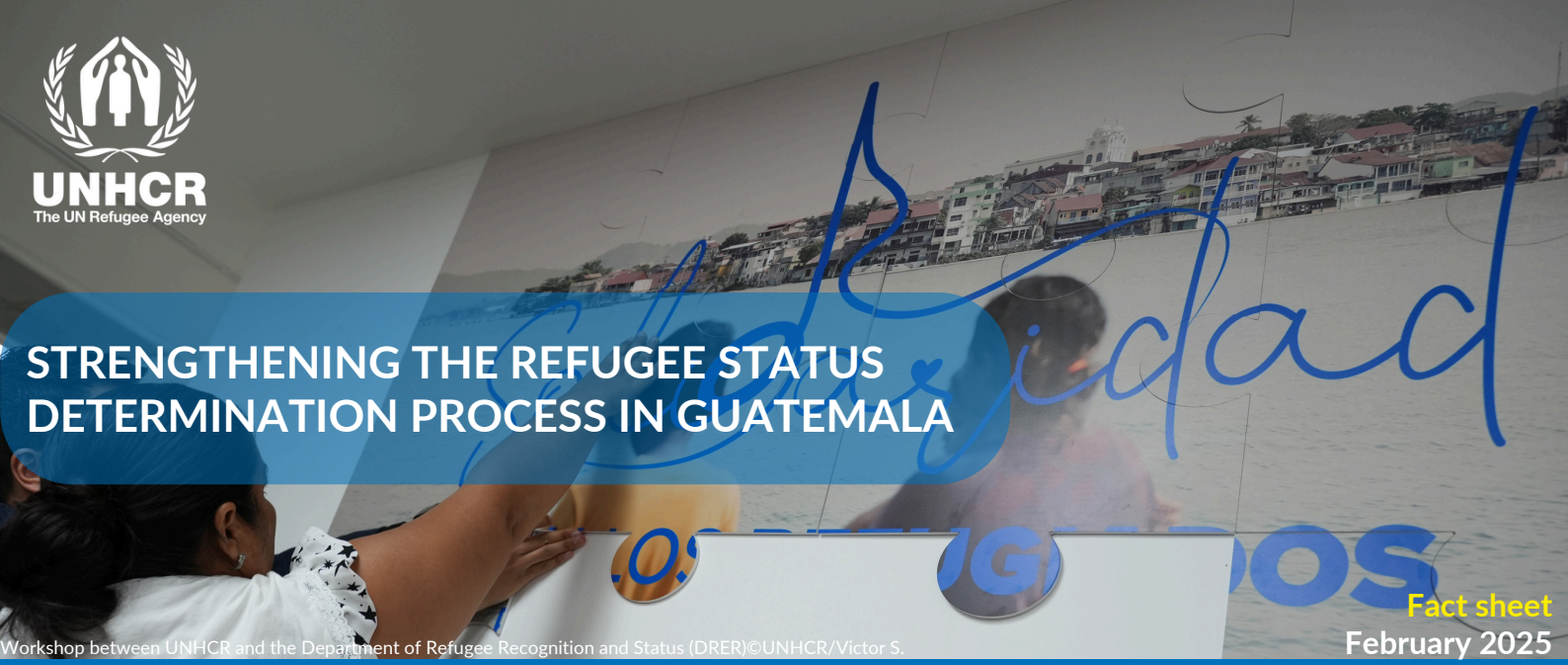


Workshop between UNHCR and the Department of Refugee Recognition and Status (DRER)©UNHCR/Victor S.

STRENGTHENING THE REFUGEE STATUS DETERMINATION PROCESS IN GUATEMALA

Fact sheet
February 2025

1,381 People recognized as refugees since 2003.

1,879 People who applied for refugee status in 2024.

61% Recognition rate of the National Migration Authority.

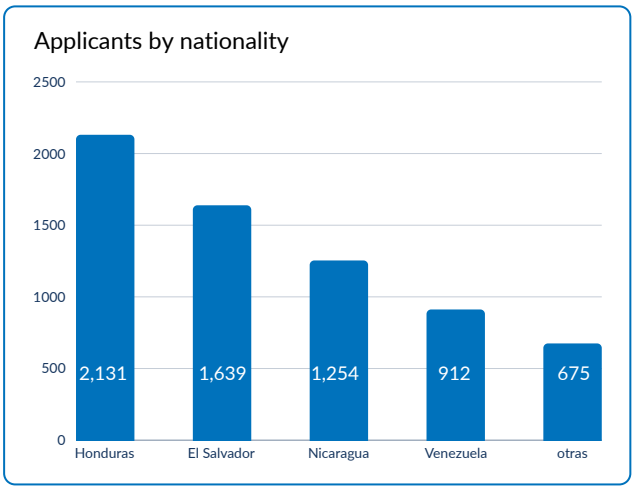
14 Decentralization missions.

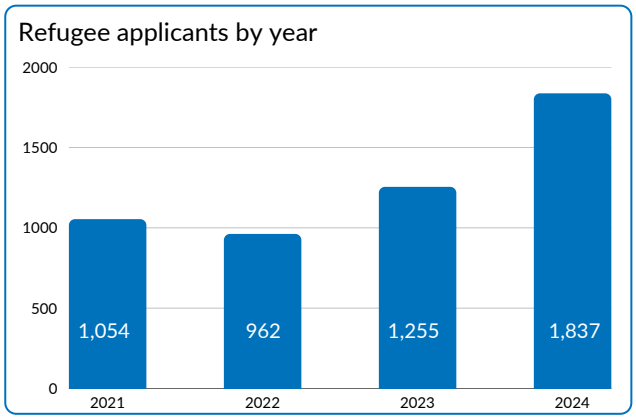
Context

Guatemala serves as a country of origin, return, and destination for individuals in need of international protection.

Over **50%** of people entering Guatemala report fleeing their home countries due to conflict, violence, or persecution, stating they cannot return.

In this context, Guatemala has experienced a notable rise in the number of individuals seeking international protection, increasing from an average of 500 applications before 2021 to a historic peak of **1,879 applications** in 2024. Most applicants for refugee status in Guatemala come from Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.





In response, government authorities have demonstrated their commitment and willingness to protect individuals and facilitate their access to the Refugee Status Determination Procedure.

UNHCR provides technical assistance to the Refugee Status Recognition Department (DRER) of the Guatemalan Migration Institute, the institutions that make up the National Refugee Commission (CONARE), and the National Migration Authority (AMN) to ensure access to the process for obtaining refugee status and associated rights.

Through field presence and support from partner organizations, UNHCR identifies individuals in need of international protection, provides them with information and assistance to apply for refugee status, and offers support to help them integrate successfully.

Fair and efficient refugee status determination.

The strategic partnership between UNHCR Guatemala and the Guatemalan Migration Institute (IGM) has enabled the development and implementation of a strategy to strengthen capacity assessment for the refugee status determination system, ensuring a fairer and more efficient procedure.

The process includes several stages: information and guidance, registration, interview, application analysis, recommendation or opinion by CONARE, and finally, a resolution by the AMN.

Each stage has been jointly reviewed to identify best practices and areas for improvement, including the implementation of differentiated and simplified procedures.

Cuilco Huehuetenango Mission ©UNHCR

Key achievements.

- The DRER staff has enhanced their technical capabilities, improving their interview skills and knowledge of country-of-origin information, thereby **increasing processing capacity from 30 to 75 technical reports per month.**

- In the recommendation and decision-making stages, both CONARE and AMN **have expedited resolutions of pending applications**, addressing over **2,550** cases—including initial requests, withdrawals, abandonments, and cessations—from 2023 to early 2025.

- These advancements have led to a **61% refugee recognition rate** in 2024 and significantly reduced overall case processing times.

- To improve access to procedures in border areas, decentralization missions were launched in 2023 at key locations, enabling registration, interviews, and documentation for refugee applicants. So far, **301 applications** have been processed through these missions, which paved the way for a decentralization pilot, including the establishment of two DRER offices in Esquipulas and Xela-Quetzaltenango at CAPMiR for 2025.

- In **coordination** with DRER, UNHCR has advocated with various state institutions to enhance the **inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers** in Guatemala, facilitating better access to both public and private services.

- Additionally, **outpatient mental care** has been made available for all asylum-seekers and refugees, offering services both online and in person.

UNHCR is grateful for the contributions of donor countries that contribute in the Americas and to global programmes with flexible funding:

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Also, we thank the contributions of our global private donors in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, and Spain.

*As of 31 May 2025

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