UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

EL SALVADOR

JULY – SEPTEMBER 2025

Quarterly update

"On the field, we are all equal. We help each other. We can even coexist with children from other communities" Nabila, participant from the JuegaXlaPaz project in Lamatepec, Santa Ana. © UNHCR El Salvador

Our 2025 response in figures

30,672 people
received support through UNHCR's helpline, Support Spaces and mobile teams

1,105 individuals
helped with psychosocial support and mental health services

2,256 people
reached through activities to prevent violence against women and girls

246 people
participated in assessments to prioritize community needs and solutions

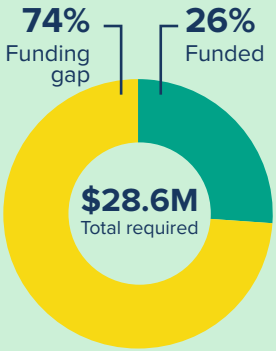
302 people
trained in skills for employment or self-employment, supported with vocational training or linked to decent job opportunities

132 civil society and national officers
with enhanced knowledge on Protection

219 people
registered with biometrics

Funding

26% of UNHCR's financial requirements for El Salvador received by 30 September 2025.



*These figures are regularly updated and reflect cumulative data for 2025.

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Highlights

- From July to September, the 2025 Street Soccer Tournament (Fútbol Callejero) organized by the Directorate for the Reconstruction of Social Cohesion with UNHCR's support engaged over 1,000 youth from nine communities across several municipalities, fostering social cohesion and mitigating the impact of historical violence through sports. The initiative culminated with the grand finale in Distrito Italia (San Salvador Este), where more than 200 youth gathered after a series of 10 municipal tournaments. The tournament, highlighted sports as a powerful tool for peaceful coexistence and community resilience.
- Under the JuegaXLaPaz (Play4Peace) project, funded by the Barça Foundation and implemented by UNHCR and World Vision, over 600 residents from several communities including youth, caregivers, parents, community leaders, and sports promoters, participated in the inauguration of intracommunity and intercommunity soccer tournaments between July and September. Activities took place in communities historically affected by violence and displacement, including Los Conacastes, Zacamil, La Campanera (San Salvador Este) and several communities in Santa Ana. The initiative builds on weekly sessions based on the SportNet methodology, which fosters values of teamwork, respect, resilience, and peaceful coexistence, promoting inclusion and stronger community engagement.

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- To support national emergency preparedness, UNHCR delivered 902 core relief items to the National Directorate of Shelters, including solar lamps, jerrycans, kitchen sets, thermal blankets, among other items. UNHCR also provided 50 family tents to the Salvadoran Red Cross, strengthening coordinated shelter efforts in case of emergencies. This contribution reinforces the country's response capacity during emergencies.
- In Ciudad Delgado, San Salvador Centro, UNHCR joined the Directorate for the Reconstruction of Social Cohesion for the groundbreaking ceremony of the new CUBO community centre. UNHCR supported the initiative with equipment for learning, cultural, and recreational activities, purchased in 2024 to promote opportunities for people in communities historically affected by violence and displacement.
- UNHCR, IOM, and UNDP held the Paz en Movimiento community fair in Santa Ana Centro under the Trinational PBF Project for Dignified, Peaceful and Inclusive Human Mobility. The event observed the presence of the UN Resident Coordinator, UNHCR's Representative, and IOM's Chief of Mission, along with the Mayor of Santa Ana. UNHCR and IRC provided information on rights and access to services, while four entrepreneurs supported by the Súper Pilas programme showcased their products and shared experiences in a panel discussion.
- UNHCR hosted the fifth steering committee meeting of the ¡De Una! Transforming my Community PBF project, presenting key implementation results and findings from the project's final evaluation. Participants included the UN Resident Coordinator, the Representatives of UNHCR, UNDP, ILO, delegates from the El Salvador Agency for International Cooperation (ESCO), and the Directorate for the Reconstruction of Social Cohesion.

Protect

- Forty-four asylum seekers and refugees participated in an informative session at the "By Your Side" Support Space, supported by UNHCR, NRC, and IRC. Representatives from the Attorney General's Office (PGR) briefed participants on access to documentation and education and addressed legal inquiries. Additionally, Doctors of the World, FUNDASIL, and Ayuda en Acción shared information on available psychosocial support services.
- The UNHCR Representative and the Vice Minister of Diaspora and Human Mobility welcomed the Ambassador of Canada for a visit to the premises of the Commission for Refugee Status Determination (CODER). Led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the visit highlighted national efforts and progress in strengthening the asylum system, supported by UNHCR. It also showcased Canada's contribution through the 2025–2026 project funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

Civil servants participated in UNHCR-supported training on international protection at border points. © UNHCR El Salvador

- In coordination with the Commission for Refugee Status Determination (CODER), UNHCR, the Ombudsperson's Office (PDDH) and the General Attorney's Office (PGR), UNHCR held training on international protection for Salvadoran public officials to strengthen their ability to support asylum-seekers and refugees. Sessions involved staff from General Directorate for Migration and Foreigners (DGME), the Solidarity Fund for Health (FOSALUD), the General Customs Directorate and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The sessions took place in borders such as San Cristóbal and El Poy, contributing to timely identification and referral of individuals with specific needs.

UNHCR and World Vision held participatory assessments in communities to identify local needs and priorities. © UNHCR El Salvador | Juliana Paz

Respond

UNHCR supported the Ministry of Culture with printed copies of municipal ordinances for Izalco, San Antonio del Monte, Conchagua, San Alejo, Meanguera del Golfo, and Yucuaiquín. © UNHCR El Salvador | Juliana Paz

- UNHCR supported the Ministry of Culture with 1,000 printed copies of five municipal ordinances that uphold the rights of indigenous people and people of African descent. The initiative builds on an alliance since 2021 to promote the rights and access to services for people with specific needs.
- In Distristo Italia, San Salvador Este, some 100 residents received information on rights and access to services through a services fair organized by the municipality. The event featured participation from IRC, the Attorney General's Office (PGR), the National Council for Childhood and Adolescence (CONAPINA), the Salvadoran Red Cross, and the Municipal Disability Unit and Employment Office.

Member of one of UNHCR's prioritized communities in a participatory assessment to provides insight to respont to specific needs. © UNHCR El Salvador | Juliana Paz

- In the communities of Las Margaritas, Distrito Italia, Los Lirios, 10 de Octubre, and Tutunichapa, UNHCR and World Vision launched participatory assessments to identify community priorities, needs, and local perspectives. Between July and August, the consultations reached 246 individuals in 10 prioritized communities, providing information to guide UNHCR's programming and ensure that interventions respond to the specific needs.
- UNHCR delivered 150 learning kits with child-friendly materials to the Community Integration Centre (CIC) in Cuscatancingo. The kits contribute to raising awareness on people forced to flee and promote solidarity, while supporting educational and recreational activities for children and adolescents.
- In August, CONAPINA, with support from UNHCR, delivered 54 individual psychosocial support sessions in Psychosocial Support Spaces. The sessions supported the emotional well-being and mental health of children and adolescents from communities historically affected by violence and forced displacement.

Twelve youth completed the Community Communicators training under the JuegaXlaPaz project, funded by the Barça Foundation, acquiring multimedia skills to promote peace and social cohesion in their communities.© UNHCR | Jacqueline Henríquez

Empower

- In alliance with the University José Matías Delgado, twelve youth completed a four-week Community Communicators training under the JuegaXlaPaz project, funded by the Barça Foundation. They developed skills in multimedia production and presented audiovisual projects. With enhanced knowledge they will support messaging to highlight the project's impact in six priority communities and its contribution to preventing violence and enhancing social cohesion.
- Forty municipal delegates from several districts in San Salvador Este, strengthened their understanding of community-based protection approaches during a workshop facilitated by UNHCR. The session contributed to efforts for strengthening local capacities to identify individuals with specific need for timely assistance.
- In collaboration with partner IRC, UNHCR facilitated five training sessions on referral pathways and available services for forcibly displaced people. These sessions, held at the "By Your Side" Support Spaces in Santa Ana, San Salvador, and San Miguel brought together representatives from local government institutions and NGOs from various regions and strengthened coordination for articulated responses.
- As part of UNHCR's engagement with the academia, 50 graphic design students from University Dr. José Matías Delgado learned about the realities of people forced to flee through an informative session. With deeper understanding of UNHCR's work, they prepare artistic illustrations for the exhibition "Solidarity with People Forced to Flee", marking 75 years of UNHCR globally and 45 years in El Salvador. The exhibition is expected in November and will be displayed in cultural spaces to engage the academia, donors, and civil society.

Solve

- UNHCR engaged with the National Training Institute (INCAF) to explore areas of collaboration and share updates on operational priorities. UNHCR is preparing a Memorandum of Understanding with INCAF to formalize cooperation in areas such as referrals to employment-oriented training for forcibly displaced people and those at risk of displacement, support in labour market analysis, and joint efforts for competency certification.
- UNHCR conducted socioeconomic characterization sessions in San Salvador and San Miguel, engaging 57 refugees and asylum-seekers. Using socioeconomic profiling and the self-reliance index, the sessions generated data to analyse trends and guide the design of an employability roadmap. In coordination with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MTPS), participants with identification documents received guidance to register in the national job platform, Oportunidades.
- With coordinated support from UNHCR, the General Directorate of Migration and Foreigners (DGME), the Commission for Refuge Status Determination (CODER), and the National Civil Registry (RNPN), two refugees (from Honduras and Nicaragua) acquired Salvadoran nationality. Additionally, three refugees from Honduras, Nicaragua, and Venezuela obtained permanent residency in collaboration with Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). Since January, UNHCR and the Attorney General's Office (PGR) have provided support and legal assistance to 18 refugees to access naturalization processes, of whom 10 are now recognized as Salvadoran citizens.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

JuegaXlaPaz: Sport as a Tool for Social Cohesion in Communities in El Salvador

"In every training session, we teach the children to play with respect and work together as a team." Pamela, sports promoter in Colonia IVU, San Salvador, alongside a team participating in the community tournament.
© UNHCR El Salvador

For decades, El Salvador endured the impacts of violence. Invisible borders imposed by gangs divided families and communities, restricting access to public, recreational, and civic spaces. Fear kept many young people away from community life and decision-making processes, affecting their motivation, learning, educational continuity, and integration.

According to official figures from 2018, approximately 71,500 people were internally displaced due to violence. Emotional trauma and stigma associated with certain territories continue to affect community life. In this context, JuegaXlaPaz seeks to offer positive alternatives that strengthen social cohesion, peaceful coexistence, and conflict resolution, contributing to the prevention of new forms of violence.

In communities historically affected by violence and forced displacement, children and adolescents find in play a safe space to learn and coexist. With support from the Barça Foundation, UNHCR, in collaboration with World Vision and in partnership with national institutions and local authorities, promotes community-led sports activities to encourage participation and foster peaceful coexistence.

Using the Barça Foundation's SportNet methodology, JuegaXlaPaz promotes teamwork and peaceful conflict resolution, creating inclusive spaces for all. Through sports clinics, intra and inter-community tournaments, and the training of leaders and referees, the project encourages local ownership and sustainability of activities while strengthening community resilience.

Between November 2024 and June 2026, JuegaXlaPaz will directly benefit 2,400 individuals across six communities, including 600 children aged 10 to 16, 120 caregivers, 50 youth committee members, and 12 community referees.

In each community, sports promoters with experience in protection and community leadership work alongside caregivers to implement project activities. "With the SportNet methodology, we encourage children to work as a team. Beyond physical benefits, they develop other life skills," said Katya, a caregiver from the Los Conacastes community.

Additionally, thanks to collaboration between UNHCR, World Vision, and the National Sports Institute of El Salvador, 18 community members were certified as 11-a-side football referees.

The project also features street soccer tournaments, transforming streets into meeting spaces for communities long divided by violence. It includes collaboration with community communicators, trained in partnership with an academic institution, who help disseminate activities and strengthen community ties.

Through JuegaXlaPaz, participants including children, adolescents, caregivers, and sports promoters have taken an active role in peacebuilding.

"On the field, we are all equal. We help each other. We can even play with children from other communities," said Nabila, age 10, a participant from Lamatepec.

By organizing tournaments, supporting their peers, and promoting coexistence through sport, they have become agents of change, reinforcing social cohesion in areas once marked by violence and forced displacement.

In 2025, 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.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is grateful for the support in 2025 of:

Australian Aid · Belgium partner in development · In partnership with Canada · German humanitarian assistance · Irish Aid · KOICA Korea International Cooperation Agency · Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft Confédération suisse Confederazione Svizzera Confederaziun svizra Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC · UKaid from the British people · PEACEBUILDING FUND · UN-HABITAT FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

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