

Guatemala

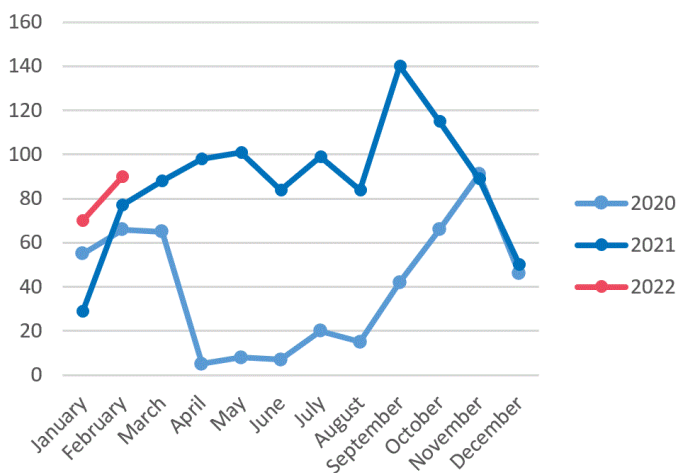
February 2022

In February, **90 new asylum applications** were registered and **17 people were granted refugee status**. In the first two months of 2022, asylum applications increased by 51% in comparison to the same period in 2021. In total, there are currently **590 refugees and 1,253 asylum-seekers** living in Guatemala.

In 2021 and 2022, the **National Protection Network**, which is made up of 12 civil society organizations (10 of them are implementing partners of UNHCR), has assisted more than 70,000 individuals of the mixed movements across the country. **16,000 of them were assisted in the first two months of 2022.**

The number of **Guatemalan returnees and deportees almost tripled** from 5,500 in January and February 2021 to 15,000 in the same period in 2022. In addition, tens of thousands of Guatemalans remain at risk in socially vulnerable communities.

Monthly Asylum Applications (2020 - 2022)



Map of protection services available in Guatemala (click on the map to see all the details)



CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW MIGRANT AND REFUGEE RESOURCE CENTRE AT THE BORDER WITH HONDURAS

To increase the protection and assistance to persons who are part of the mixed movements and identify those in need of international protection, several Migrant and Refugee Resource Centres (MRCs or CAPMyR in Spanish) are being established in the country at key origin, transit and destination locations as part of a joint effort by UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF, government institutions and local partners.

In Izabal, the installation of the infrastructure that will host the “Centro de Atención para Personas Migrantes y Refugiadas - CAPMyR” at El Cinchado / El Corinto border with Honduras was completed. The Centre will be a safe space where people on the move are provided with information, legal counselling, basic medical care, psychological first aid, hygiene kits, snacks, water, phone calls and access to Wi-Fi.



Installation of the new interinstitutional Migrant and Refugee Resource Centre at the El Cinchado / El Corinto border with Honduras. ©Departmental Government of Izabal/2022

Working with Partners

- UNHCR has **partnership agreements with 13 non-governmental organizations**. In addition, UNHCR works closely with other civil society organizations as well as with UN Women, IOM, UNICEF and governmental institutions to protect people forced to flee because of conflict and persecution.

Main Activities

Response to Basic Needs

- In February, UNHCR carried out the first cash distribution exercise in 2022, supporting 1,100 asylum-seekers, refugees and Guatemalans at risk from 360 households. Over 140,000 USD were distributed as part of the newly implemented cash distribution modality with Banrural, a leading bank in the country. At the same time, in addition to the [fact sheet that was recently published on cash-based interventions](#), **a new complementary report is now available on the findings of the Post-Distribution Monitoring** conducted in November 2021.
 - [READ UNHCR's CBI Post-Distribution Monitoring Report](#)
- In February, UNHCR also provided 300 assistances through its helpline to people who requested information on the Guatemalan asylum system or UNHCR's and its partners' services. In the first two months of 2022, **more than 450 assistances were provided to people who contacted the helpline**.
- With the objective to improve reception conditions for refugees, UNHCR together with the Municipality of San Luis and the Ministry of Health **inaugurated a Community Health Centre in the village of Modesto Mendez, Peten**. The Centre was built by UNHCR through its partner Refugio de la Niñez and provides health services for free to the host community, refugees as well as people who are part of the mixed movements. In addition, it is a safe space where protection support can be delivered to people on the move.
- The Municipality of Livingston, Izabal, joined UNHCR's City of Solidarity initiative. As part of the new agreement, **UNHCR handed over an "ambulancha", an equipped boat ambulance**, to the local community of Sarstún to provide protection and health services to refugee and Guatemalan children, GBV survivors and women in labor, residing along the Sarstún river (at the border with Belize). The river is the only way to get to these remote communities.



New boat ambulance on the way to remote communities located along the Guatemalan – Belizean border. ©Municipality of Livingston/2022

Governance, Prevention and Protection

- In the framework of the Letter of Understanding signed between the UN Refugee Agency and the Attorney General's Office (PGN) in 2021, **UNHCR provided 10 computers and 42 tablets to the PGN** to strengthen the national child protection system. In addition, UNHCR is also in the process of donating four vehicles to the same institution to enhance their protection response to unaccompanied and separated children.
- UNHCR, together with its partner La Alianza, **inaugurated a project that consists in the renovation and equipment of a bakery training centre as well as a medical and dental clinic**, located inside the shelter managed by La Alianza in Villa Nueva. The project benefits over 180 girls (mainly victims of sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking) residing in the shelter where they are provided with comprehensive protection services.
- UNHCR together with its partner Refugio de la Niñez, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs and the director of the Guatemalan Migration Institute (IGM) officially inaugurated the refurbished Centre for Returnees in Tecun

Uman, on the Mexican border. To ensure protection screenings and referrals can be conducted in a confidential environment, new **office spaces for partners and IGM were built** with UNHCR's support. To further expand the services provided in the Centre, a cell phone charging station was set up.

- In Izabal, UNHCR renewed the Memorandum of Understanding with the local branch of the public University of San Carlos. The joint action plan aims to: 1) sensitize the university community and a wider audience on refugee and protection issues, 2) promote research on forced displacement, 3) facilitate student access to learning, and 4) promote employment opportunities and support services offered by the university to refugees.
 - [Watch UNHCR's video message on how the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding positively impacts the lives of refugees and members of the host communities](#)
- In February, UNHCR provided information sessions to people of the mixed movements, who stayed at the migrant shelter in Esquipulas, close to the Honduran border. In this way, 450 people (56% from Venezuela, 24% from Haiti, 11% from Honduras, 4% from Cuba, among others) were informed about their rights.

Enhanced community-based protection in communities affected by or at risk of displacement

- In Peten, a project aiming to improve maternal and child health in rural indigenous communities of Sayaxche finalized with a closing ceremony. Anthropometric equipment for measuring weight and height (100 infant height measuring scales, 60 suspension scales) and 6,000 sachets of food supplement to improve the response capacity of health personnel to prevent acute and chronic malnutrition, was donated by UNHCR to the Ministry of Health. In addition, UNHCR provided 224 medical kits to 112 local community midwives to prevent maternal mortality and improve reproductive health care for rural women.



Midwives in Sayaxche, Peten, carrying medical kits donated by UNHCR. ©UNHCR/Angela Hurtado/2022

- In Jutiapa, a communal laundry facility was refurbished by UNHCR in collaboration with UN Women, CICAM (Centre for Research, Training and Support of Women) and the Municipality. The drainage system was repaired, the facilities were painted, a bathroom was installed, and the wash basins were renovated. The project improves access to water and strengthens livelihood opportunities of refugee and host community women who offer laundry services.
- UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Ak'Tenamit, an indigenous Maya Q'eqchi' community organization based in Livingston with operations in multiple areas of Izabal, Alta Verapaz, and other departments of the country. The agreement aims to promote community empowerment, livelihood opportunities and protection prevention and response activities for refugees and Guatemalans at risk.

Durable Solutions

- With the presence of the President of Guatemala and with UNHCR's and IOM's support, the Ministry of Labour launched an electronic platform through which foreigners, including asylum-seekers and refugees, can obtain their work permits online. The new system will reduce the time to issue work permits from 100 to 10 days for migrant workers and from 21 to 4 days for asylum-seekers and refugees. In addition, the new process will reduce transportation costs and travel times for Persons of Concern to UNHCR as they do not have to travel anymore to Guatemala City. As part of the MIRPS, UNHCR is closely working with the Ministry of Labour to promote the economic inclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees.

- The National Youth Council (Conjuve), the leading institution on youth issues and public policies, and UNHCR signed an agreement to promote the rights of young asylum-seekers, refugees as well as Guatemalans at risk. The UN Refugee Agency, through partnerships such as the one with Conjuve, continues supporting the Government of Guatemala in implementing the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS in Spanish).



Besem Obenson, Representative of UNHCR in Guatemala, and Jose Grijalva, General Director of the National Youth Council, after signing the agreement. ©UNHCR/Victor Sanchez/2022

- [READ UNHCR's press release on the new agreement signed with the National Youth Council](#)

- In the Municipalities of Cuilco and San Ildefonso Ixtahuacan, Huehuetenango, **two municipal training centres were equipped** by UNHCR through its partner Action Against Hunger. The centres are providing bakery, carpentry and sewing courses for Guatemalans at risk, among them indigenous Maya Mam people. More than 11,000 persons will benefit directly or indirectly from the training facilities and be able to improve their livelihood opportunities.
- In Peten, 12 asylum-seekers and refugees employed as forest rangers under the **Green Jobs initiative** (managed by UNHCR's partner FUNDAECO), participated in a training provided by Refugio de la Niñez on emotional well-being at work and the procedure to obtain or renew their work permit at the Ministry of Labour.
- In Izabal, UNHCR in coordination with partner Refugio de la Niñez **organized an artistic integration activity for refugee families** to strengthen bonds between participants.
- In Villa Nueva, a municipality located next to Guatemala City, **an integration fair co-organized by the Municipality of Villa Nueva and UNHCR took place** during which recreational activities were carried out by refugee children as well as children of the host community.
- UNHCR through its **Resettlement and Complementary Pathways programme** keeps offering durable solutions to Guatemalans at risk as well as persons of other nationalities at risk in Guatemala. In 2022, 187 people have so far departed to resettlement countries.



Follow UNHCR Guatemala's Representative Besem Obenson on Twitter to always receive the latest information on the ongoing activities:



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UNHCR's financial requirements for the Guatemala operation in 2022 (as of 22 March 2022)

Funded: 3.3 million USD (8%)

Unfunded: 39.2 million USD (92%)

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