

## OCOTEPEQUE

The western border of Honduras is a transit route for people in mixed flows. With the caravans passing through the country since 2018, the need to **strengthen UNHCR's presence** to identify people in need of protection and to meet the basic needs of the population has been increasingly necessary.

In the **Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS)**, UNHCR in Ocotepeque is strengthening its presence at the border to identify and provide international protection to the people we serve and facilitate the identification of people at risk when returned.

Due to the changes in migration measures in the region, it has been observed that more people **extend their presence** in Ocotepeque, increasing the magnitude of the situation of people in mixed movements, the amount of this population and their needs

### THE PEOPLE WE SERVE

#### FIELD UNIT OCOTEPEQUE 2023

UNHCR's field unit in Ocotepeque covers **three departments bordering** El Salvador and Guatemala: Copán, Lempira and Ocotepeque.

These are located on the exit route of **people in mixed movements** to northern countries. An average of 11,000 people leave through regular and irregular border points through Agua Caliente and El Florido weekly, according to UNHCR's monitoring. A part of this population seeks international protection. To this end, UNHCR strengthens the competent authorities with the aim of facilitating access to international protection for those who require it. In addition, these departments receive **internally displaced people** fleeing violent contexts in the rest of the country.



UNHCR / Danielle Álvarez

### UNHCR PRESENCE

- Field Unit
- FUOCO



**Staff:**  
4 National staff  
2 International staff  
50% women and 50% men

### PARTNERS



## Response

*UNHCR's response integrates regional protection mechanisms and community protection mechanisms at the national level. In addition, UNHCR works with monitoring of mixed movements, identification of people with international protection needs, strengthening of the humanitarian response, amongst several other actions to prevent, care and respond to forced displacement in Honduras.*

## PROTECT

**Protect - displaced persons and persons at risk of displacement benefit from a comprehensive protection mechanism.**

**MONITORING** | UNHCR constantly monitors the flows of people in mixed movements that pass through the border points of Agua Caliente, El Florido, and El Paraíso Copán to make visible the situation and the profiles of people in need of protection. In addition, UNHCR provides information and advice on international refugee law and, in the case of the Honduran population, legal advice regarding internal displacement. In addition, UNHCR has improved its response capacity, recognizing that due to the use of the territory of Honduras, there might be a need for assistance to a massive group of population at any time.

**PROTECTION** | In order to strengthen the services provided by the State on international protection, displacement prevention and gender-based violence, UNHCR has trained more than 234 people from local institutions and authorities on these issues in 2023.

**STATE SERVICES** | Due to the risks faced by unaccompanied children, including human trafficking and smuggling, the presence of the National Directorate for Children, Adolescent and Family Affairs (DINAF) is essential. To guarantee this, UNHCR financed the construction of an office of this institution, ensuring its permanent presence in the department of Ocotepeque. This office is providing protection services to unaccompanied children in transit, both in their departure and return, and to victims of human rights violations in urban and rural areas. UNHCR has also worked to strengthen its staff.

Furthermore, given the critical transit conditions people in mixed movements face, many are in great health risks, as identified by UNHCR's monitoring. This has even led to the loss of lives, including that of women and children. To mitigate these risks, UNHCR financed the construction of the Maternal and Child Friendly Space at the border of Agua Caliente. The friendly space aims to provide a safe spot primarily for pregnant women and with small children in vulnerability who may be part of mixed movements, displaced or returnees where they can receive information on protection, access hygiene facilities and be referred to specialised medical treatment if necessary.



**RESPOND****Displaced persons and persons at risk of displacement meet their basic needs in a safe environment.**

**COORDINATION** | In response to the risks of human trafficking and smuggling on the Honduras and Guatemala borders, UNHCR relaunched the binational protection network between UNHCR offices from both countries and ten strategic state protection actors working in this area. Ocotepeque and Esquipulas Migrant Houses are also part of this protection network. This coordination mechanism expedited access to international protection for various people in need.

Furthermore, since November 2022, UNHCR leads the Local Protection Group for the Western Border, comprised of 15 organizations. This group meets weekly and maintains constant contact to ensure coordination and complementarity between humanitarian organizations present in the field, working mostly in terms of people in mixed movements, but also in relation to people in risk of internal forced displacement and survivors of gender-based violence.

As a result of the coordinated work by the Local Protection Group, UNHCR led the creation of a humanitarian space at the Machuca checkpoint in January 2023. This is a remote area where all buses coming from the southern border with population in mixed movements stop before reaching the Agua Caliente border customs with Guatemala. In this area, where there is no presence of community or general services, UNHCR coordinated the presence of different humanitarian actors to provide services to the more than 420,000 people in mixed movements that transited this space since the beginning of the year. Services include medical attention, psychosocial support, water and sanitation provisions, legal advice on the asylum system, attention to gender-based violence cases, and a safe space for children.

**INFORMATION SERVICES** | In the western region of Honduras, UNHCR has information services to mitigate protection risks for people in mixed movements at exit points from the country. These services are provided through places such as the Casa Migrante shelter and strategic points on the north-western border, an area of the country that receives people in mixed movements on their way north.

In this sense, UNHCR's started a Mobile Information Service (SIM) jointly with World Vision, a mobile space to provide information to persons in mixed movements in Machuca, Agua Caliente. Since its start in mid-July 2023, more than 1,000 individuals received information about international protection, location of shelters and closest available services. Those served were mainly from Venezuela, Ecuador, Haiti, and different African countries.

**SHELTER** | UNHCR has financed the staff of the Migrant House in Ocotepeque. In addition, UNHCR has strengthened the technical capacities of staff from Migrant Houses in Ocotepeque and El Paraíso, Copán, to identify people in need of international protection and forced displacement, with the aim of giving these institutions long-term sustainability. Ocotepeque's Migrant House serves an average of 50 people per week.

**BASIC NEEDS** | UNHCR distributes hygiene items to returned women, men, girls and boys and people in mixed movements at the Agua Caliente and El Florido border points, seeking to support those in a vulnerable situation.

**CASE MANAGEMENT** | UNHCR, together with Doctors of the World, is providing case management services for victims of gender-based violence in the entire Department of Ocotepeque. Services encompass psychosocial attention, referral to relevant authorities and follow-up until the case is closed to guarantee the rights of the victims. Furthermore, cases are registered to make them visible in light of the lack of official numbers, in addition to increase awareness to the victims' needs and ensure the due legal process of the cases.



## EMPOWER

Displaced communities and communities at risk of displacement can mitigate the differentiated impact of violence.

**RISK MITIGATION** | UNHCR in coordination with the national gender sub-cluster, led the process with members of the Municipal Committee for the Prevention of Violence (CMPV) from institutions and humanitarian organizations to validate the integral attention route for women survivors of gender-based violence in Ocotepeque, which entails the judicial denouncement, psychosocial support and access to health and protection mechanisms.

Following a participatory diagnosis, UNHCR identified many cases of broken families where children are left with other family members other than their parents and exposed to risks of human smuggling and gender-based violence triggered by the misuse of new technologies. Due to this, since June 2023, UNHCR implements the community-based protection strategy named Digital Literacy. This project aims to disseminate knowledge on prevention and mitigation of digital risks for adolescents and women's networks who are exposed to gender-based violence and the risk of trafficking and smuggling human beings.

73 Children from schools in four border communities are participating in the project "Mobile Library", as part of the Digital Literacy strategy, where UNHCR is gaining access to the territory, which favours a communication with communities' strategy in border areas with mixed movements.

Furthermore, UNHCR continues to support the Youth Network of five departments in western Honduras to promote actions to prevent internal displacement and gender-based violence among youth in the western region. During 2023, 47 young people engaged in activities promoted by UNHCR.

**PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE** | Girls and boys from the San José de San Marcos neighbourhood participate weekly since the beginning of August 2022 in a project of artistic activities that facilitate peaceful coexistence between the host community and internally displaced people. The COMUNYCARTE project, implemented in a neighbourhood suffering from stigmatization against internally displaced people and vulnerable populations, is coordinated between the local municipality and UNHCR, together with the families.

## We thank the contributions of our donors

By 31 August 2023




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







Also, we thank the contributions of our global private donors in Australia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Spain, United Kingdom, and United States of America.

## For more information:

**Caroline Scotti Vilain**  
Associate Reporting Officer, Honduras

 [scottivi@unhcr.org](mailto:scottivi@unhcr.org)  
 +504 2270-7155,  
 +504 3174 3122

 [www.unhcr.org/americas](http://www.unhcr.org/americas) · Regional Portal  
 [www.unhcr.org/honduras](http://www.unhcr.org/honduras) · UNHCR Honduras  
 @ACNURhonduras  
 /ACNUR Honduras