El Salvador
December 2023
Monthly Update #12

UNHCR Representative along representatives of CONAPINA, PGR and El Salvador Agency for International Cooperation during the inauguration of a renovated space for the attention to children.
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Key figures

Community-based protection

400 individuals assisted through UNHCR's helpline in December, and 4,286 in 2023.

190 people assisted at the Support Spaces in December and 3,585 in 2023.

4,622 people reached through the Support Spaces' mobile units in December, and 78,394 in 2023.

Cash assistance

775 households (**2,304** individuals) at heightened risk received cash assistance in December and 2,181 households (6,069 individuals) in 2023. This support helps cover basic needs such as food, rent, documentation, and transportation, as well as to facilitate livelihoods activities and education.

Registration

186 people registered with biometrics in December and 2,679 in 2023.

Funding

65% of UNHCR's financial requirements for El Salvador received by 15 December 2023.

Highlights

- **The Vice-Ministry of Diaspora and Human Mobility, the Secretary of the National Commission for Refugees Status Determination (CODER) and UNHCR, presented the Protocol for Comprehensive Care for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees in El Salvador.** The protocol is a first effort to improve coordination among national institutions involved in responding to the needs of asylum-seekers and refugees in El Salvador. The Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed the Government's commitment to reform the refugee law to adapt the national asylum system to current challenges. During the event, CODER, the Diplomatic Institute, and UNHCR awarded diplomas to over 180 participants who successfully completed an International Protection Course.

- **Within the framework of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, UNHCR organized an event with private sector on the benefits of women's labour inclusion.** Experts from the International Labour Organization (ILO), academia, and TELUS International shared evidence-based best practices for promoting women's labour inclusion. Eighteen out of the 24 participating companies from the energy, hospitality, financial, and service sectors committed to joining the "My First Job" programme in 2024.

- **The National Council for Early Childhood, Childhood and Adolescence (CONAPINA) and the Attorney General's Office (PGR) inaugurated the Integrated Psychosocial Care Centre for Children and Adolescents, renovated with the support of UNHCR.** Girls, boys, and adolescents, along with their families, will have access to psychological care, art therapy, and support to develop their life projects in this space.

Participants of the International Protection Course provided by UNHCR in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and CODER.
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Protect

- **UNHCR held a national meeting with refugees and asylum-seekers to share information on UNHCR's mandate, the asylum system and livelihoods programmes implemented in the country.** Thirty-five refugees and asylum-seekers from Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Venezuela, attended the meeting at the new National Library (BINAES). The session followed-up the proposal refugees and asylum-seekers made during the participatory assessment conducted in 2023 to meet regularly with UNHCR on integration activities at communities and to boost engagement in support to newly arrived population.

UNHCR provided information on the asylum system and livelihoods programmes during a meeting with refugees and asylum-seeker in Salvador.
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- **UNHCR and World Vision conducted a workshop for 20 leaders from La Campanera, in Soyapango, and Nahuizalco, in Sonsonate.** The workshop focused on gender dynamics in their communities and how men can engage on the prevention of gender-based violence.
- **UNHCR held a national meeting with representatives from nine youth networks of El Salvador to share best practices, identify opportunities for collaboration, and share the outcomes of the creation of the Latin America and Caribbean Youth Network supported by UNHCR.** Delegates from the youth network from Santa Ana, Ahuachapán, Sonsonate, San Vicente, San Salvador, Soyapango, Panchimalco, San Miguel, and Morazán presented their community work, exchanged ideas and strengthened bounds.

Representatives of youth networks of El Salvador exchanging best pratices during a national meeting.
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Respond

- **UNHCR participated in an extraordinary Humanitarian Country Team meeting called by the General Directorate for Civil Protection to present the National Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction 2023-2030.** The new Plan will strengthen the country's preparation and response do disasters.

Empower

- **Over 100 people received information and medical, legal and psychosocial services in a fair "By your side" (Feria A Tu Lado) organized by UNHCR, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and the municipality of El Congo, in Santa Ana department.** The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour, the General Directorate for Civil Protection, ORMUSA, and the Red Cross among other actors, participated.

- **UNHCR and World Vision launched a community sports initiative in La Campanera, Soyapango, to promote social cohesion and mental health for boys and girls.** With UNHCR support, the local youth committee and community representatives enhanced the capacities of local soccer and softball coaching in promoting teamwork, a culture of peace, and mental health for children.

Youth in La Campanera during the inauguration of their community initiative focused on sports.
©**World Vision**

Solve

- **Twenty participants from Soyapango completed the entrepreneurship training "Creating Opportunities", improved with ILO's methodology Start and Improve Your Business (SIyb).** Participants showcased their prototype products in a fair organized by them, with UNHCR's support.

Her commitment and work for the community led Katherine to the World Refugee Forum

"Everyone can contribute to the changes we want to see in our community. If more people come together for a common purpose, we will achieve much more and inspire the new generations to continue the work," said 19-year-old Katherine, a youth leader.

Despite the challenges she has faced growing up in a community stigmatized by violence, she leads positive change in Los Ángeles neighbourhood in Soyapango, in El Salvador's central area. In December 2023, she represented El Salvador at the 2nd World Refugee Forum in Geneva, Switzerland, the largest international gathering on refugee issues that UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency organizes every four years.

"At this event, I could learn about the reality of other countries, the challenges they face, the resilience of people, and the creativity to find solutions." commented Katherine and added "This inspired me and motivated me to do more in my community." Her experience in Geneva gave her a global perspective on the work done for forcibly displaced people and strengthened her determination to make a significant impact in her municipality and improve people's lives.

"Before, we couldn't enter other neighbourhoods, children couldn't play outside, and people couldn't start their businesses. Now we have created bonds of friendship, there is constant communication and support among all communities. Seeing people participating and coexisting, regardless of where they come from, makes me very happy," Katherine said.

Katherine's dream of helping people in her community led her to establish the Youth Committee "Transforming Society" and now is the president of the Youth Network Without Borders, which includes seven committees from different areas of Soyapango. With the support of UNHCR's Youth Fund, the Youth Committee and Katherine organized activities to promote the prevention of violence, forced displacement awareness, and strengthening initiatives in her community: like sports schools for women and girls, entrepreneur fairs, mental health awareness activities, among others.

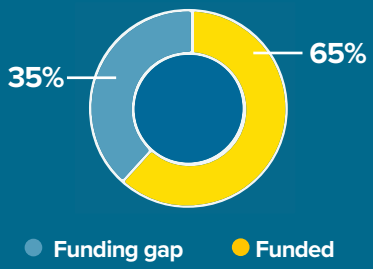
Katherine also participated in "MUN for Everyone," a Model United Nations developed by the Higher School of Economics and Business, ESEN, where she strengthened her leadership, dialogue, and negotiation skills. Additionally, she is part of the UNHCR Global Youth Advisory Committee.

For Katherine, every opportunity has been valuable. Sharing with other people in local and global events has allowed her to learn, replicate best practices, and share experiences with other youth leaders. Her vision for the future is to continue strengthening community-level participation to break the historical stigmatization and the effects of invisible borders that have affected young people. "As young people, we must seize every opportunity. My motto is: learn, replicate, and share. This way, we can transform our reality and inspire others to be part of the solutions," she concluded.

UNHCR recognizes the transformative potential of youth and accompanies the search for solutions to forced displacement and peace building. To achieve this, UNHCR works with communities to provide young people with opportunities to strengthen their skills, develop their potential, and pursue their dreams.

Funding

- **In 2023, UNHCR appealed for USD 26 million to provide protection, response, 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 global level is key in allowing a timely response to the evolving needs wherever required.



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