UNHCR ACNUR
La Agencia de la ONU para los Refugiados

May 2024

Operational Update 29

HONDURAS

Population figures

Internal displacement

+247,000

people have been internally displaced in Honduras as a result of generalized violence between 2004 and 2018. Numbers are estimated to be higher in 2024, as triggers of internal displacement persist.

Mixed Movements

219,675

refugees and migrants in mixed movements entered Honduras irregularly from 1 January to 31 May 2024 and registered with the National Migration Institute (INM), more than double than the same period in 2023 and a new all-time record.

Asylum

15,389

Honduran nationals sought asylum in Mexico from 1 January to 31 May 2024, ranking as the first nationality in the number of asylum requests to this country.

70

people sought asylum in Honduras from 1 January to 31 May 2024 and are mainly from Venezuela, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Colombia. 21% of the asylum applications were made by women, 19% by girls, 43% by men and 17% by boys.

Return

21,738

Hondurans were returned to the country in 2024 until 31 May.

Refuge

188

recognised refugees are currently living in Honduras. Refugees are mainly from Nicaragua, El Salvador, Venezuela and Colombia. 26% are women, 46% are men, 12% are girls, 16% are boys.

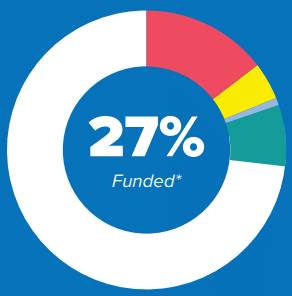
Our response

53,594 people

have been reached by May 2024 by UNHCR and its partners, mainly people in mixed movements and internally displaced persons, but also asylum-seekers, refugees, returnees, and host community members, with services such as shelter, cash and voucher assistance, case management, protection monitoring, livelihoods activities, risk mitigation and through community-based protection activities.

5,500	5,436	19,946	22,631	80
Girls	Boys	Women	Men	LGBTQI+

Funding



As of 31 May 2024

- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
- Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
- Funding gap (indicative)

**UNHCR appealed for USD 30.8 million for its 2024 programme, of which only USD 8.3 million (27%) was funded. USD 22 million is still needed to continue supporting people forcibly displaced, at risk of displacement, asylum-seekers, refugees, and persons in mixed movements.*

Context

In May 2024, Honduras faced numerous multifaceted crises, including rising violence, gender-based violence, environmental challenges, political instability, and significant mixed movements:

Violence and extortion

Honduras remains one of the most violent in the world, with at least eight people losing their lives to violent crimes daily, according to the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH).

The extension of the State of Exception remains a controversial topic.

Institutions within the country **question the efficacy of these measures in reducing violence and extortion, citing limited evidence of their success.** Despite the State of Exception, violence persists, and its impact on human rights continues to be debated. Generalized violence remains a primary driver of forced displacement in the country.

According to the Secretariat of Childhood, Adolescence and Family, there has been a disturbing **50% increase in reported cases of abuse against children and youth,** though it is suspected that the actual number is higher due to under reporting.

Psychologists in the country warn that children subjected to violence, if left untreated, are at risk of potentially perpetuating the cycle of violence when they become adults. The cycle of violence, in turn, fuels forced migration, displacing many families.

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a critical issue, affecting women, girls, and LGBTQI+ persons.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH) highlighted the **extreme violence against women and girls in Honduras, with 386 women and girls murdered in 2023.**

This represents a **significant concern regarding gender-based violence** and the urgent need for effective protective measures and justice for victims.

A new agreement between the United States and Honduras was signed in May 2024, **strengthening collaborative efforts to combat GBV.** This partnership focuses on implementing programs to protect women and children, aiming to mitigate violence and safeguard people from discrimination and harm.

Human rights situation

Violence continues to endanger journalists, with 123 journalists having been displaced due to violence between 2016 and April 2024, as highlighted by the National Commissioner for Human Rights, Blanca Izaguirre. The situation underscores the need for stronger protections for journalists to ensure a free press.

The law firm Justicia para los Pueblos reported ongoing intimidation and surveillance against indigenous defenders from the Lenca Indigenous Council of Reitoca and their legal team.

Context

Also, Honduras remains one of the most dangerous countries for environmental defenders.

The impunity rate for environmental crimes is alarmingly high at 97%, and severe threats, including targeted killings, against activists persist. Climate change impacts are exacerbating vulnerabilities, particularly among rural communities.

The CIDH presented 36 recommendations to the Honduran government, addressing the need for structural reforms to tackle human rights abuses and improve governance.

These recommendations emphasize the importance of addressing social polarization, power concentration, and the crisis of governance.

Aggravating factors

Political and Legislative Challenges

Political tensions remain high as Honduras approaches its 2024 elections.

The Law on Financing, Transparency, and Oversight of Political Parties and Candidates is under scrutiny, with calls for stricter enforcement of campaign finance reporting. Disinformation related to the election process is a significant concern, prompting efforts to ensure media accuracy and transparency.

The Government of Honduras has reiterated its commitment to the establishment of the International Commission against Impunity in Honduras (CICIH). However, there are ongoing controversies and scepticism regarding its implementation. Recent statements by government officials have caused public debates, emphasizing the need for transparency and accountability in this process.

Environmental Challenges

Honduras has been experiencing severe heat waves, exacerbated by forest fires and vehicle emissions which has positioned Honduras as the country with the third lowest air quality, and Tegucigalpa as one of the cities with the worst air quality globally.

The State Secretariat for Risk Management and National Emergencies (COPECO) issued a **red alert due to hazardous air quality caused by thick smoke and extreme heat.**

Schools across the nation suspended classes, with the UN emphasizing the importance of maintaining educational activities even in such conditions, as schools provide essential services beyond education.

Additionally, the upcoming hurricane season is expected to be one of the most severe in decades, with forecasts predicting up to 13 hurricanes. **This poses a significant risk of displacement for many communities, highlighting the need for robust disaster preparedness and response strategies.**

The agricultural sector is on high alert due to prolonged drought conditions. The National Institute of Conservation and Forest Development (ICF) warned that a lack of rain in the next ten days could result in a severe agricultural crisis, potentially devastating livestock and crop production.

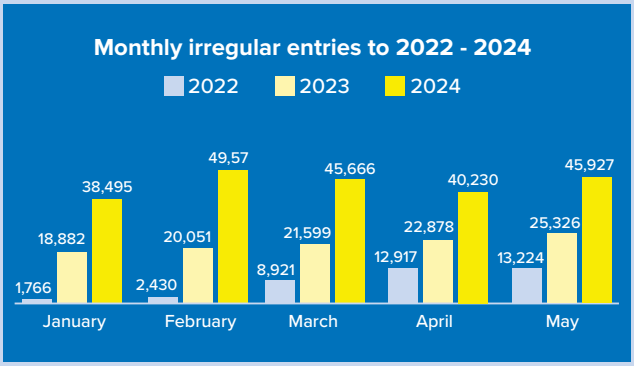
Coffee farmers in El Paraíso are struggling due to erratic weather patterns and lack of financial support. Persistent forest fires have destroyed over 204,000 hectares of forest, displacing numerous communities and threatening livelihoods.

A cyclonic season with **rainfall exceeding 60% of the average is projected,** featuring over 20 tropical storms and around 13 hurricanes, with one potentially hitting Honduras in October.

Context

Mixed Movements

In terms of mixed movements, the National Migration Institute (INM) reported that **219,675 people in mixed movements entered Honduras irregularly** from January to May, which represents a 100% increase compared to the same period in 2023.



Nationalities:
46% Venezuela | **17%** Cuba | **6%** Ecuador | **6%** Haiti | **5%** Colombia | **4%** China

Demographic breakdown: **26%** Female **49%** Male **11%** Girls **14%** Boys

97% of the people entered through El Paraíso department (mainly at Las Manos border followed by Trojes). The remaining 3% entered Honduras through Choluteca department. The main hotspots in Honduras at the moment are: Las Manos border; El Pescadero; bus terminal in Danlí; Trojes; Uyuca; and Agua Caliente border.

As reported by news outlets, **persons in mixed movements stranded in Tegucigalpa called for support to leave the capital city due to respiratory problems they suffered from,** as the city faced one of its worst air pollution crises in May.

People in mixed movements entering and transiting Honduras face significant protection risks. At Las Manos border many arrivals occur during the night, leading to unsafe conditions as people set up tents near sanitary facilities, on the main road or at the bus terminal in Danlí.

At the UNHCR-supported Humanitarian Space at El Pescadero, organizations continuously identify women and girls who suffered gender-based violence in the Darien Gap.

Frequently El Pescadero is the first safe space where survivors are able to access assistance.

In Choluteca, people on the move often struggle to find shelter and transport near the border with Nicaragua, **with some stranded due to lack of resources.**

There are also reports of unaccompanied or separated children being exploited by trafficking networks. The sentencing of 'La Patrona,' a leader of a human trafficking network, to ten years in prison underscores the serious issue of human trafficking in Honduras. This case highlights the ongoing need to combat trafficking and protect vulnerable populations.

A new caravan of around 80 Hondurans in mixed movements departed from San Pedro Sula on 15 May, heading towards the United States of America. This movement reflects ongoing economic hardships and insecurity driving mass mixed movements, with numerous protection risks, including violence, extortion, and human trafficking along their journey.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has extended the validity of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) documentation for Hondurans until 30 June 2024. This extension ensures that Hondurans currently in the U.S. can maintain their legal status and protection because of unsafe conditions in their home countries, preventing their forced return to unsafe conditions back home. In 2023, DHS had extended the TPS for Hondurans from 6 January 2024 until 5 July 2025.

Overall, the combination of political instability, violence, environmental hazards, and mixed movements continues to strain Honduras' resources and infrastructure, necessitating comprehensive and coordinated responses from both national authorities and international partners.

RESPONSE

PROTECT

In May 2024, UNHCR continued its comprehensive protection activities, focusing on strengthening institutional capacities and enhancing protection mechanisms for populations in vulnerable situations across Honduras. UNHCR collaborated closely with various partners to implement strategic initiatives aimed at improving the safety and well-being of people forced to flee.

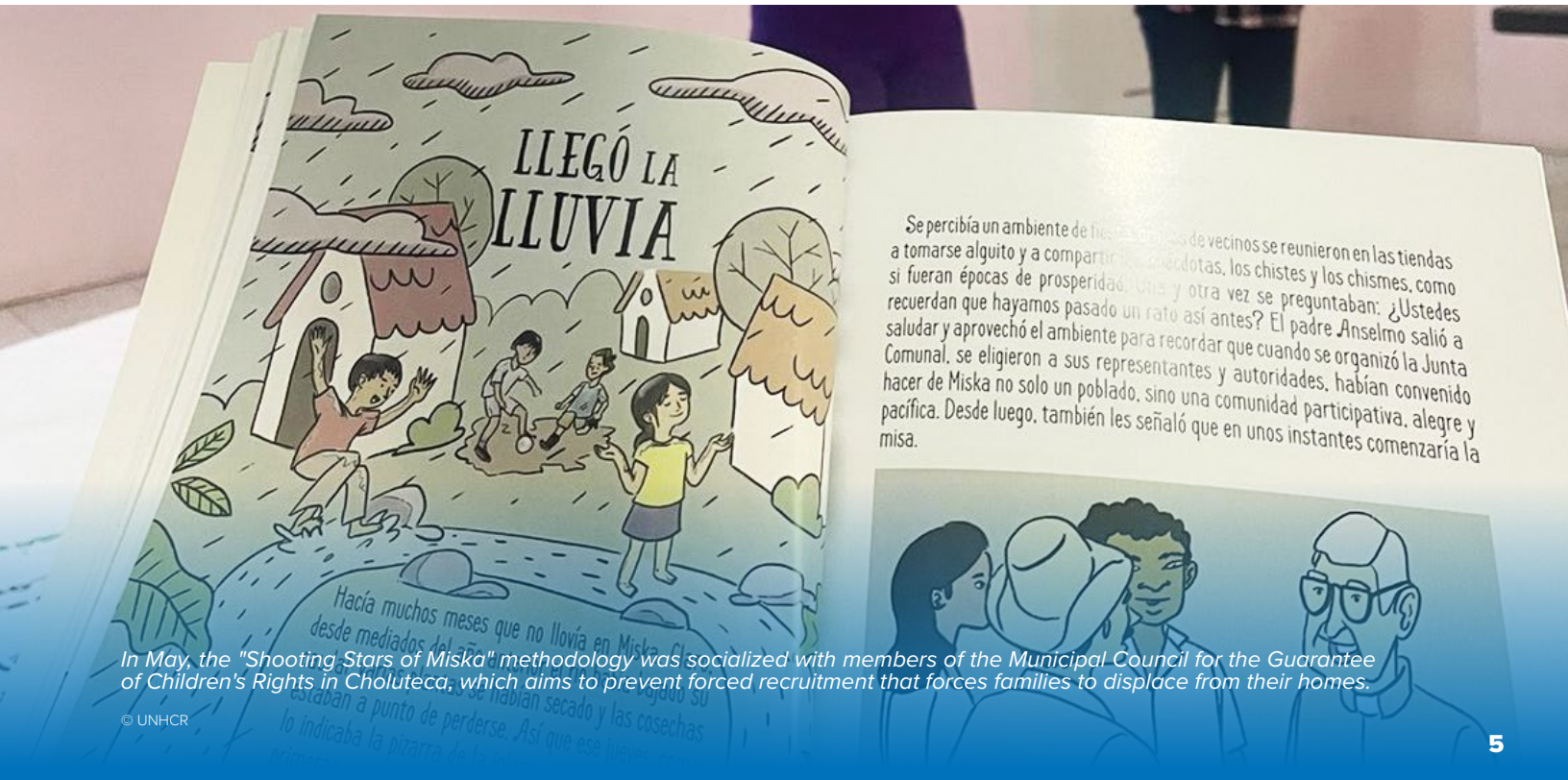
UNHCR worked with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to **publish critical information on the Refugee Status Determination procedure in Honduras, using platforms such as the RedSafe application to ensure wide accessibility.** This initiative was developed jointly with the Human Rights Unit of the National Migration Institute (INM) to provide accurate and accessible information to people on the move in need of international protection.

The **"Shooting Stars of Miska" methodology was introduced to prevent the forced recruitment of children, engaging them in educational and recreational activities that promote resilience and life skills.** This initiative was presented to 12 members of the Municipal Council for the Guarantee of Children's Rights (CMDGDNA) in Choluteca. Additionally, workshops on gender-based violence (GBV) and child protection were conducted, reaching various community leaders and officials to enhance their capacity to support vulnerable groups.

Monitoring visits at key transit points, including Uyuca (near Tegucigalpa) and Ocotepeque, were conducted to address misinformation by smugglers and identify protection gaps. These visits highlighted ongoing challenges, such as the entry of people through blind spots and the need for better coordination among humanitarian actors. In Ocotepeque, INM and UNHCR carried out a mixed movement protection monitoring mission from 27 to 29 May, engaging with local authorities and humanitarian actors to improve the response to mixed movements. As part of the mission, the construction site was visited where the new Comprehensive Assistance Centre (CAMI) for people in mixed movements and Honduran returnees is currently being built by INM. The construction initiated this month.

UNHCR also participated in bi-national protection network meetings, such as the one co-led in Ocotepeque and Esquipulas, Guatemala. These meetings emphasized the importance of enhancing information sharing and coordination to ensure the protection of people in mixed movements. Key challenges addressed included health coordination and ensuring peaceful coexistence, with a focus on improving cross-border collaboration.

Throughout May, **UNHCR continued to support the development of the IDP Law's Regulations through interinstitutional consultation sessions.** These sessions involved 23 governmental institutions and covered topics such as access to justice, protection of the right to identity,



In May, the "Shooting Stars of Miska" methodology was socialized with members of the Municipal Council for the Guarantee of Children's Rights in Choluteca, which aims to prevent forced recruitment that forces families to displace from their homes.

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prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, budget allocation for the National System for Response to Forced Displacement, and early warning systems. UNHCR's monitoring and advocacy efforts aim to ensure that the regulations are effectively implemented to protect the rights of internally displaced persons.

On 31 May, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNHCR **launched the art exhibition, "Protecting Lives, building hope, we displace fear".** The exhibition, at the National Museum of Identity featured 13 artists selected by a jury out of 122 applicants. The exhibit will be displayed throughout June to commemorate World Refugee Day. With the objective to strengthen the Honduran asylum system, INM's Human Rights Unit participated in the regional MIRPS meeting on Child Friendly Procedures with support of UNHCR. In addition, INM in coordination with UNHCR carried out a self-assessment exercise. Among the main gaps INM identified is the need to count with child-friendly spaces at its delegations that register most asylum claims.

UNHCR published its newest Mixed Movements Protection Monitoring report in Spanish and in English. Of the 145 interviewed refugees and migrants on the move, 25% stated to have left their country of origin due to violence and persecution. 32% of the interviewed people reported having suffered some form of mistreatment or abuse during the journey since they left their country of origin or last residence. The main needs reported are food; clothing and footwear; water; medicines and healthcare; as well as information on the available protection services.

RESPOND

In response to the immediate humanitarian needs of people in mixed movements and displaced populations, UNHCR implemented different actions in May 2024.

UNHCR's Mobile Information Service provided critical information to over 15,000 people, primarily Venezuelans, Colombians, Ecuadorians, Haitians, and Cubans, in key locations such as Choluteca, Danlí, Las Manos border, Trojes, and Machuca (Agua Caliente border). The service offered information on international protection, shelter locations, and access to communication tools to facilitate contact with relatives.

UNHCR's supported shelters assisted 2,300 people in mixed movements at entry and exit border points as well as the main transit hubs of the country. Most of the people were hosted in shelters located in Danlí. UNHCR also referred cases of Hondurans at risk of displacement and people in need of international protection to partners such as Médecins du Monde and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) for support. These referrals are part of ongoing efforts to ensure that vulnerable individuals receive the necessary assistance and protection.

Cash assistance played a crucial role in UNHCR's response strategy, **providing over USD 140,000 to 1,061 people, including those at risk in the resettlement program, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and asylum seeke**rs. This financial support helped beneficiaries cover essential needs such as shelter, food, and documentation. Additionally, UNHCR provided emergency shelter to Venezuelans in Tegucigalpa and supported them with legal counselling to navigate the asylum process.

UNHCR's continuous monitoring and referral processes ensured that people with protection needs were identified and assisted. In May 2024, 2,783 Hondurans were returned to the three Centres for Returned Migrants in Honduras. UNHCR identified 50 protection cases involving 165 people, including IDPs and asylum seekers, who were referred to NRC for assistance and case management. Moreover, a 27% reduction in the number or returnees was identified in May 2024 compared to the same month in 2023, which demonstrates the continuing reduction of returnees throughout 2024.

UNHCR's efforts also extended to improving reception conditions at key transit points. In collaboration with local authorities and partners, UNHCR worked to enhance the capacity of shelters and other facilities to accommodate the increasing number of people in mixed movements. This included the installation of visibility materials at bus terminals and other transit points to provide clear information on available services and protection measures.

Thousands of people in transit pass through various points in Honduras, where, thanks to the UNHCR Mobile Information Service, they are provided with crucial information on international protection, shelter services, and access to communication tools.

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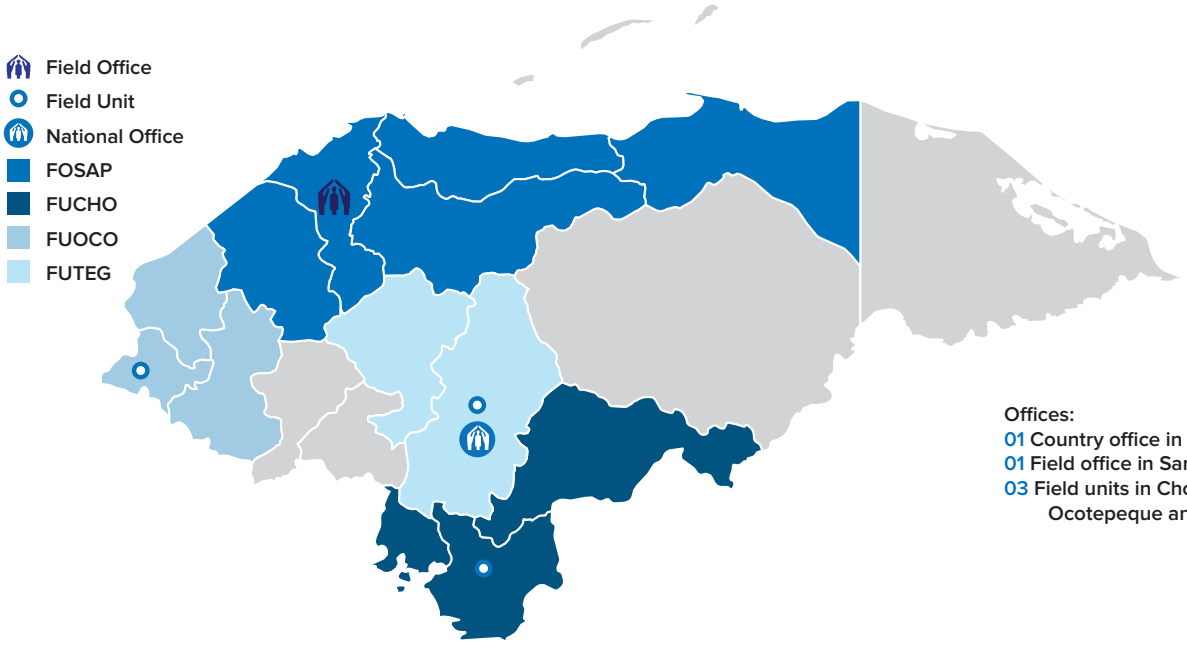
EMPOWER

UNHCR's community-based protection and capacity-building initiatives in May focused on empowering local communities and addressing gender-based violence (GBV). These efforts aimed to enhance the resilience and self-reliance of displaced populations and those in mixed movements.



Offices:
01 Country office in Tegucigalpa
01 Field office in San Pedro Sula
03 Field units in Choluteca, Ocotepeque and Tegucigalpa

During the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) **UNHCR joined more than 15 LGBTQI+ organizations to discuss protection, legal reforms and inclusion in a forum held in Tegucigalpa and Choluteca.** UNHCR, the Diverse Association of Southern Honduras (ADISH) and the Association for Active Citizenship (ACI Participa) developed the forum "Free To Be Different, Equal In Rights, Conditions And Opportunities" on 17 May. Around 60 people attended, representing the Public Prosecutor's Office, local authorities, the Roundtable on Access to Justice, LGTBIQ+ organisations and civil society from the departments of Choluteca and Valle. UNHCR shared information on the legal situation of LGBTIQ+ people in Honduras, the approach of the UNHCR to their situation when in human mobility and the promotion and fulfilment of the human rights of this community by Honduras.

Training sessions on GBV, human rights, and protection concepts were conducted for community leaders, volunteers, and justice actors. In Las Lajitas, San Marcos of Ocotepeque, the National Vocational Training Institute (INFOP) and UNHCR trained 26 women on digital protection risks and vocational skills in bakery, enhancing their economic opportunities and resilience. These sessions aimed to build local capacity and promote community-led protection initiatives.

International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOBIT) was celebrated in Choluteca, where the realities of access to justice for LGBTIQ+ people and forced displacement as a factor to be considered on the agendas of decision-makers were addressed.

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Awareness programs and events were a key component of UNHCR's empowerment strategy. From 23 to 26 May, UNHCR and the Women's and Family Development Unit (UDIMUF) **held awareness sessions on protection concepts and GBV at La Ceiba's community fair, reaching approximately 300 people.** These activities aimed to raise awareness about GBV and promote community safety.

Furthermore, **UNHCR and Ciudad Mujer in the south-east department of Valle continued with the Diploma for the Training of Trainers in Gender and Human Rights.** In May, two modules were delivered on sexual and reproductive health, minimum standards for responding to gender-based violence and economic empowerment. 14 women attended the course, including representatives of women's offices and women's networks. Additionally, Ciudad Mujer, the Secretariat of Women's Affairs (SEMUJER) and UNHCR delivered the second module of the Gender Training Programme for 20 fathers and mothers in Las Flores San Marcos de Colón, improving their knowledge of sexual and reproductive health.

UNHCR, in partnership with other organizations, **continued to support community leaders through training and empowerment programs.** From 27 to 30 May, UNHCR and Children International empowered 54 community leaders with training on GBV and human rights, fostering stronger community networks. Workshops with community organizations focused on designing monitoring tools for context analysis, involving 17 community leaders. Additionally, UNHCR organized an event in Tegucigalpa with and for 21 refugees and asylum seekers from Nicaragua, Colombia, and El Salvador, during which a workshop on national refugee legislation, their rights and the available local integration programmes was provided.

Over 100 young people living in high-risk neighbourhoods participated in sports activities, organized in collaboration with the National Commission for Sports, Physical Education, and Recreation (CONDEPOR). These activities were designed to promote teamwork, leadership, and positive social interactions, helping to reduce the risk of forced recruitment into gangs. Additionally, a menstrual hygiene workshop was held for 13 girls and four women in an urban community disproportionately affected by violence, enhancing their awareness and health practices. Furthermore, UNHCR conducted a workshop with 25 officials from the Municipality of the Central District (AMDC) and the Secretariat of Social Development (SEDESOL), focusing on international protection principles and the rights of people in mixed movements, as part of a broader strategy to establish the Municipality as a City of Solidarity.

UNHCR also donated tools and equipment to the Municipal Emergency Committee of the Central District to **strengthen two local emergency committees in urban areas at high risk of displacement due to violence and climate-related catastrophes.**

In the south-east, at the Las Manos border in Paraíso, **UNHCR supported the leadership of the Las Manos community in the development of an activity on peaceful coexistence, under the slogan "En Las Manos te damos la Mano".** This event aimed to strengthen ties between members of the local community, organisations present in the area and people in mixed movements passing through the area, to promote non-discrimination and to reduce the risks of xenophobia. 11 organisations provided services to over 400 people in health, prevention of gender-based violence, arts, and culture.

SOLVE

UNHCR's livelihoods programs in May aimed to enhance economic opportunities and stability for displaced populations.

On 7 May, **UNHCR signed a Letter of Understanding with the digital graphic design company GraphXSource, strengthening the inclusion of displaced people in certified courses to improve job placement opportunities for young people.** Additionally, UNHCR, GraphXSource, and the Business Development Centre (CDE) organized an exchange visit with 40 young people currently participating in the Graphic Design career, fostering peer learning and skill development.

UNHCR's partner, the Business Development Centre (CDE) in Choluteca, **held training sessions for 16 local entrepreneurs who have been forcibly displaced.** These sessions focused on refining business profiles, identifying promising business ideas, and equipping participants with the skills to confidently present their business plans. This initiative is part of UNHCR's broader strategy to foster local entrepreneurship and stimulate economic growth within displaced communities.

In collaboration with the National Vocational Training Institute (INFOP), **UNHCR facilitated vocational training sessions in the south-eastern region to improve the employability of displaced individuals.** These sessions covered various vocational skills, including digital protection and bakery. Furthermore, the Training of Trainers (ToT) program on Soft Skills for the Labour Market, developed by INFOP with UNHCR support, is set to start in June, targeting various actors who work with displaced populations.

UNHCR's efforts also extended to supporting displaced women in the Lempa region. The Business Development Centre (CDE) held the final session of a business plan workshop in Ocotepeque, with 20 displaced women, returnees, and GBV survivors participating. This initiative is part of broader efforts to strengthen livelihoods and support the stabilization of families through economic empowerment.

UNHCR and the graphic design company GraphxSource will continue to strengthen the inclusion of displaced people with certified courses to improve the employment opportunities of young Hondurans.

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Also, **CDE Gulf of Fonseca and UNHCR in Choluteca selected seven beneficiaries out of 15 participants of livelihood programmes to receive seed capital.** This will contribute to improving the living conditions of people forced to flee and at risk of displacement.

Throughout May, **UNHCR participated in various events to promote sustainable development and economic opportunities for displaced populations.** During Sustainability Week 2024, UNHCR engaged in roundtable discussions with private sector actors to promote fair and inclusive employability, contributing to the development and diversity of the local economy. These initiatives highlight UNHCR's commitment to creating sustainable and resilient livelihoods for displaced individuals and communities.

In summary, **UNHCR's comprehensive efforts in May 2024 reflect a strong commitment to protecting vulnerable populations, enhancing institutional capacities, and fostering community resilience** amidst ongoing crises in Honduras.

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR thanks the contributions of donor countries such as

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*As of May 2024

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