



UNHCR
ACNUR

La Agencia de la ONU para los Refugiados



El Salvador

June 2024

Operational Update #6

María Eugenia, 55, shows a poster that reads "My new beginning", representing her life journey. She fled Colombia in 2020, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. In El Salvador, she found hope and support to rebuild her life.

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Key figures

Community-based protection

493

individuals assisted through UNHCR's helpline in June, and 2,638 in 2024.

270

people assisted at the Support Spaces in June, and 2,154 in 2024.

4,529

people reached via Support Spaces mobile units in June, and 39,812 in 2024.

*These figures are updated regularly and may change.



Cash assistance

434

households (1,383 individuals) at heightened risk received cash assistance in June, and 961 households (3,116 individuals) in 2024. This support helps cover basic needs and facilitates livelihoods and education.

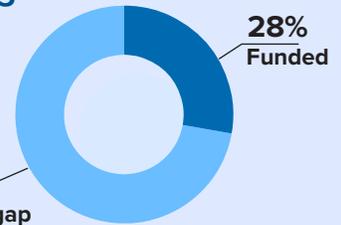


Registration

153

people registered with biometrics in June, and 1,478 in 2024.

Funding



28% of UNHCR's financial requirements for El Salvador received by 30 June 2024.

Highlights

UNHCR, the Ministry of Housing, and the Municipality of San Salvador joined community representatives from La Campanera in the stone-laying event to construct a new communal house. In the past, gangs used this space for meetings and initiation rituals. The initiative is part of UNHCR's tactical urbanism efforts to revamp public spaces formerly under gang control to build trust and peaceful environments in communities affected by forced displacement.

UNHCR and the Directorate for the Reconstruction of Social Cohesion launched the 2024 street soccer tournament "Fútbol Callejero" in Quezaltepeque, La Libertad. In its third year, the tournament will reach 15 additional communities nationwide by end of August and around 1,000 young participants. The initiative expands the use of sports to prevent violence and displacement in communities before under gang control.

UNHCR responded to the international call for support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to help the population affected by heavy rains and floods. The delivery of some 3,200 relief items, such as clothes, blankets, hygiene kits, diapers, and plastic sheeting, contributed to coordinated national effort.



UNHCR delivering hygiene kits to the national authority on women ISDEMU in support for families affected by heavy rains.
© UNHCR / Sonia Aguilar

Protect

- Thirty-eight officials from institutions operating at the Centre for Attention of Migrants (GAMI) enhanced their knowledge on identification of people with specific needs in a workshop delivered by the Directorate for the Attention of Victims (DAV) with UNHCR support. Participants included the National Civil Police, the national authority on women ISDEMU, the National Council for Childhood and Adolescence (CONAPINA), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- UNHCR conducted a workshop on international protection at the Anguiatú border crossing in collaboration with the Refugee Status Determination Commission (CODER), the Ombudsperson's Office (PDDH), and the General Attorney's Office (PGR). Nineteen front-line staff from the General Directorate of Migration and Foreigners (DGME), the General Customs Directorate, and the National Civil Police enhanced their knowledge of protection frameworks for asylum-seekers and refugees.



Front-line staff working at the Anguiatú border crossing during a workshop on international protection facilitated by UNHCR.
© UNHCR

Respond

- UNHCR supports the National Council for Early Childhood and Adolescence (CONAPINA) to build four Community Centres for Comprehensive Care. These centres, located in La Campanera, Las Margaritas, and Tutunichapa I and II, will assist children and adolescents internally displaced or at risk of displacement. Expected to open in the second semester of 2024, the centres will offer psychosocial care services and support to children and their families in communities historically affected by violence.
- To expand outreach and local capacities on women protection, UNHCR and partner ORMUSA briefed San Juan Opico (La Libertad) municipal units for Women and Social Development. Also, 12 women community leaders learned about rights and access to services in a workshop by UNHCR and IRC.

Empower



Women community leaders in La Libertad learning on rights and access to services through a workshop held by UNHCR and partner IRC.
© UNHCR

- Forty-three Judicial Facilitators and ten peace judges from Chalatenango enhanced their knowledge of forced displacement and international protection through a workshop organized by the Supreme Court of Justice with UNHCR's support. Participants learned about the identification of people with specific needs and referral pathways. Similar workshops will continue in other departments in July and August.



Judicial Facilitators in Chalatenango participating in workshops on forced displacement and international protection held by UNHCR and the Supreme Court of Justice.
© Supreme Court of Justice

- Community groups and youth committees in prioritized communities across the country gained a better understanding of UNHCR's 2024 Community Initiatives through briefings and workshops. Youth Committees in Soyapango prioritized activities for the prevention of forced displacement and gender-based violence.

Solve

- As the final stage of the livelihoods Súper Pilas programme, eight entrepreneurs from San Miguel presented their business projects to an evaluation panel by UNHCR and World Vision. The panel identified proposals that will receive seed capital to implement their ideas.
- In Zacamil, San Salvador, 29 participants completed the Creating Opportunities vocational training in international cuisine. The process, which applies ILO's Start and Improve Your Business methodology, aims to widen youth opportunities.



Cooking dreams: How Maria Eugenia builds a new future in El Salvador

Maria Eugenia, a refugee from Colombia sharing traditional food recipes in an international cooking class.
© UNHCR / Jacqueline Henríquez

Eager to taste the dishes Maria Eugenia prepares, people wait in line for several minutes. At community events or fairs, her arepas and empanadas are among the most requested foods. “Sometimes people confuse my arepas with Salvadoran pupusas, but when they taste them, they notice the difference and fall in love with the flavour too” says Maria Eugenia.

Originally from Colombia, Maria Eugenia developed a passion for cooking from a young age. Her fondest memories are cooking traditional dishes with her mother. “My mum was my best friend, and cooking brought us closer together,” she says. A typical weekend lunch would become a family celebration when they cooked together.

In 2020, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, she was forced to flee her country due to violence. She left everything behind, including her dream of opening a restaurant. She arrived in El Salvador and was recognized as a refugee by the Commission for Refugee Status Determination (CODER) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

She faced many challenges to start anew, particularly in finding a job. However, everything changed when, through a friend, she learned about the livelihoods programmes of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and its partners. There, Maria Eugenia found a

support network and help to outline her life plan and develop a business plan to bring her entrepreneurial vision to action. “That sense of belonging gave me the strength to keep going. Even my passion for cooking came back,” she says.

Maria Eugenia is more confident and enjoys telling her story to empower others. She participates in cultural activities where she shares about the gastronomy of her country and her culinary skills.

UNHCR, together with its partners, supports national efforts to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees in El Salvador receive support and access to opportunities to rebuild their lives.

Maria Eugenia makes a living with her Colombian food venture and receives increasing orders as her customers spread the word about her good cooking. In her free time, she enjoys sharing with her Salvadoran friends and dancing salsa to reconnect with her roots.

“A new beginning means realizing that you can turn the page and make great plans for your future,” she says. “I found hope, even away from home, and I am still working towards my dream of opening a restaurant to share my culture and where everyone feels welcome,” she concludes.

In 2024, UNHCR appeals for USD 28.6 million to provide protection, responses, 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 the global level is key in allowing a timely response to evolving needs wherever required.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is grateful for the support in 2024 of:



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world refugee day

Activities

Graphic design students from University José Matías Delgado developed and **presented a campaign** to commemorate World Refugee Day. The exercise allowed to raise awareness about forced displacement and the materials developed will serve as input for communications products. Also, 50 students from the University José Simeón Cañas learned about statelessness and refugee protection law through a workshop held by UNHCR.



People from the IVU community in San Salvador took part in a **multicultural fair** organized by UNHCR, IRC, FUNDASAL, ORMUSA and World Vision to commemorate World Refugee Day. About 50 participants, including refugees, internally displaced and people at risk of displacement, enjoyed sports, cultural, and artistic activities to promote solidarity and peaceful coexistence.

The participants of the Model United Nations "MUN for Everyone" from the Higher School of Economics and Business of El Salvador (ESEN) took part in an **interactive workshop** to learn about UNHCR's work in El Salvador and globally. Nine youth representatives from Soyapango, Apopa, and San Vicente participate in this programme with UNHCR support.



In partnership with the Modern Museum of Art MARTE, UNHCR conducted a **self-portrait session** with eight forcibly displaced people. This session, designed to prompt reflection on identities, enabled the collection of testimonies and audiovisual material to commemorate World Refugee Day.

Throughout the month, people shared solidarity messages with those forced to flee:

