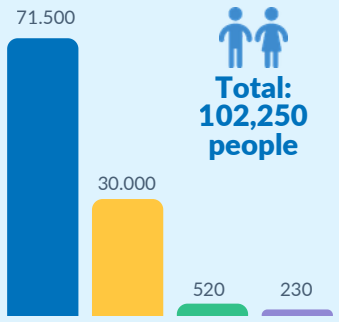
EL SALVADOR

FACTSHEET | JANUARY 2026

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR works in El Salvador to **provide essential assistance and strengthen responses** for refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees with protection needs, and people internally displaced or at risk of displacement. Together with communities, organizations, the UN, the Government, development actors, and the private sector, UNHCR works to seek solutions to displacement caused by decades of gang violence in communities. UNHCR supports national government efforts toward its commitments under the Global Refugee Forum and the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS).

TARGET POPULATION 2026

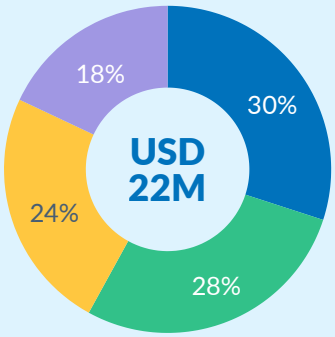


Total: 102,250 people

Estimated population projections

- Internally displaced people
- Others of concern
- Asylum-seekers
- Refugees

FINANCIAL NEEDS



Budget for UNHCR's operation in El Salvador based on population needs

By area of impact:

- Empower
- Respond
- Solve
- Protect

128,618 asylum-seekers from El Salvador worldwide by the end of 2025.

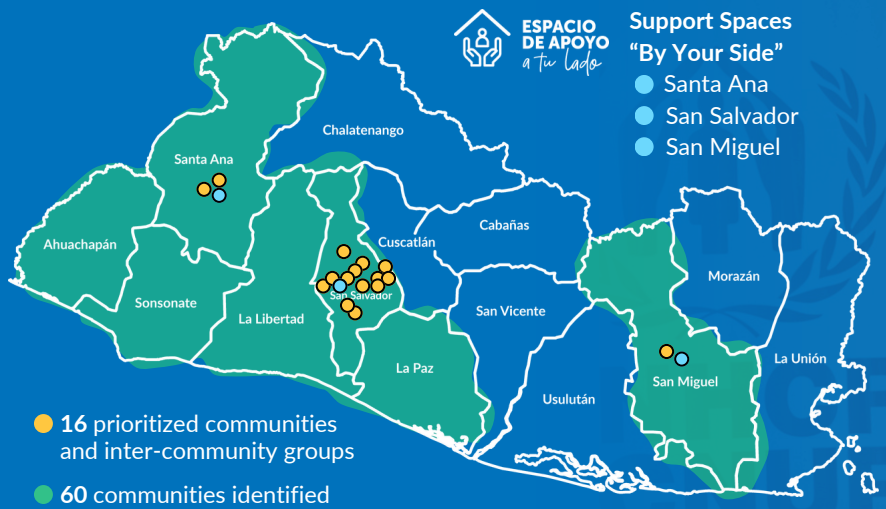
72,944 refugees from El Salvador worldwide by the end of 2025.

71,500 people internally displaced between 2006 and 2016.

180 people (111 cases) claimed asylum in El Salvador in 2025. Main nationalities: Cuba, Honduras, Venezuela, Guatemala, Nicaragua, others.

16,051 people from El Salvador returned in 2025.

TERRITORIAL PRIORITIZATION



- **16** prioritized communities and inter-community groups
- **60** communities identified with needs

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PRIORITIZED ACTIVITIES

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Ensure access to asylum
Guidance, assistance, and technical capacity-building to enable people seeking international protection in El Salvador to access the asylum procedure, specialized services, and meet their urgent needs, thereby reducing their vulnerability and facilitating their integration.

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Provide and promote essential services for vulnerable populations
Psychosocial support, mental health services, emergency shelter, and life-saving assistance for people affected by historical violence and forced displacement to prevent further vulnerabilities and reduce protection risks.

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Address urgent needs
Assistance to displaced people or those at risk with urgent needs such as shelter, food, and essential relief items to reduce protection risks.

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Promote integration and solutions in the country
Promotion of livelihood opportunities to enable forcibly displaced people to stabilize, integrate into their communities, and rebuild their lives.

CONTEXT

In 2026, global financial cuts have significantly impacted UNHCR's operational capacity at the local level. The community presence has been drastically reduced: from 60 communities identified with needs, UNHCR currently works with 11.
Individual case management has also been reduced, along with specialized interventions for children and for the prevention and response to violence against women and girls. Educational and livelihood support programs have also been discontinued.
Despite this challenging context, **UNHCR remains present in the country,** focusing its efforts on providing technical assistance, protection, and coordinating responses for people in the most vulnerable situations.

- The historical backdrop of violence in El Salvador is one of the main causes of both internal displacement and cross-border displacement. Threats, extortion, violent crime, and forced recruitment by gangs over decades deeply affected people's lives, impacting their well-being and mental health, weakening social cohesion, and limiting access to opportunities.
- The general improvement in the current security environment offers opportunities to promote solutions to forced displacement. Although displacement dynamics have changed in recent years, some people continue to leave El Salvador for various reasons, including economic hardship, family reunification, violence against women and girls, and the impacts of extreme weather events.
- El Salvador is committed to strengthening protection for refugees, internally displaced persons due to historical violence, returnees with protection needs, and stateless persons. It is a signatory of the 1951 Convention, the 1967 Protocol, and the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. Since 2002, El Salvador has had a Refugee Status Determination Law, and in 2020, it approved the Special Law for the Comprehensive Attention and Protection of Internally Displaced Persons.
- As part of these commitments, El Salvador participates in the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) to address forced displacement in Central America and Mexico and holds the Pro Tempore Presidency in 2026. The MIRPS National Action Plan includes 47 commitments in protection, health, education, and livelihoods to assist people forced to flee and promote durable solutions.
- In 2023, El Salvador committed at the Second Global Refugee Forum to reform its asylum law, expand employment and livelihood opportunities for displaced persons, work to prevent and seek solutions to forced displacement through cultural, artistic, and sports activities, and accede to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.
- In 2024, El Salvador actively participated in the Cartagena +40 process and endorsed the Chile Declaration and Action Plan to strengthen a regional collective approach to solutions for forcibly displaced people.

RESPONSE

UNHCR's 2023–2026 Strategy in El Salvador is based on continuous needs assessments and existing progress to protect, assist, empower, and find solutions for people forced to flee and their communities. UNHCR seeks to actively engage and include the perspectives of affected people in the decisions that affect their lives, acting as a catalyst to promote well-being.

IMPACT AREAS	OUTCOME AREAS
PROTECT Forcibly displaced people fully exercise their rights and access protection.	**Refugee status determination** Asylum-seekers have access to a fair and efficient refugee status determination procedure, and their asylum claims are processed in a fair and timely manner. **Protection policies and legal framework** The rights of displaced people are recognized and guaranteed within the national legal framework and public policies.
RESPOND Forcibly displaced people meet their basic needs.	**Case management** Individual case management supports the identification, registration, and response to people with protection needs. **Inter-agency coordination** Inter-agency coordination strengthens the humanitarian emergency response.
EMPOWER Forcibly displaced people are empowered, informed, and active agents in their own protection and solutions.	**Communication with communities** Effective two-way communication and accountability mechanisms for forcibly displaced people are fully operational. **Strengthen participation capacities** Communities strengthen their capacities to promote the participation of displaced people in managing protection risks, fostering peaceful coexistence and community integration.
SOLVE Forcibly displaced people find solutions, become self-reliant, and contribute to the development and resilience of their communities.	**Self-reliance, economic inclusion, and livelihoods** Forcibly displaced people have access to livelihoods and opportunities for economic inclusion. **Local integration and other solutions** Forcibly displaced people have access to programmes that promote solutions to displacement.

ACTIVITIES IN 2026

Achieving favorable protection environments

- Support and accompaniment to the Commission for Refugee Status Determination (CODER) in implementing a strategy to strengthen institutional capacities, including streamlining processes to ensure fair and efficient procedures.
- Technical support to institutions and key actors to include internally displaced persons in government programmes and strengthen legal frameworks.

Realization of rights in safe environments

- Assistance to displaced people and those at risk in three UNHCR "A Tu Lado" support spaces, in coordination with national actors and partner organizations.
- Coordination of efforts to provide support for urgent needs, including food, core relief items, relocation, and safe shelter for people at heightened risk.
- Mental health services, including psychosocial support and psychological assistance, in coordination with partner organizations and the National Council for Early Childhood, Childhood and Adolescence (CONAPINA).
- Analysis and joint humanitarian responses with local, national, and international organizations.

Empowering communities

- Participatory assessments with prioritized communities to include the perspectives, priorities, and needs of forcibly displaced people in community work plans and UNHCR programmes.
- Support to prioritized community groups leading initiatives for peaceful coexistence, mitigation of the impact of extreme weather events, and prevention of violence and displacement.
- Strengthening compliance with protocols to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), including accessible reporting mechanisms and improved accountability.
- Promotion of educational, cultural, and sports activities to foster safe environments for displaced youth.

Ensuring solutions

- Collaboration with the Government, the Humanitarian Country Team, the private sector, and development actors to improve the living conditions of people affected by displacement in historically stigmatized communities, addressing poverty, inequality, social exclusion, and access to essential services.
- Referral mechanisms to vocational education and entrepreneurship initiatives to expand livelihood opportunities for refugees, displaced persons, and those at risk of displacement.

Partnerships

- Coordinated work with 25 partners, including the Government, organizations, the UN, the private sector, and academia, to strengthen national responses.
- As part of the Humanitarian Country Team, UNHCR leads the Protection Sector, co-leads the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Sector, and participates in the Emergency Shelter Sector.
- Support to the Government in implementing the MIRPS National Plan and commitments under the Global Refugee Forum.

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UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is thankful for the support in 2026 from:

Australian Aid | En colaboración con Canadá | German humanitarian assistance | Irish Aid | KOICA Korea International Cooperation Agency | Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft / Confédération suisse / Confederazione Svizzera / Confederaziun svizra – Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

Private donors: Spain

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