

# Guatemala

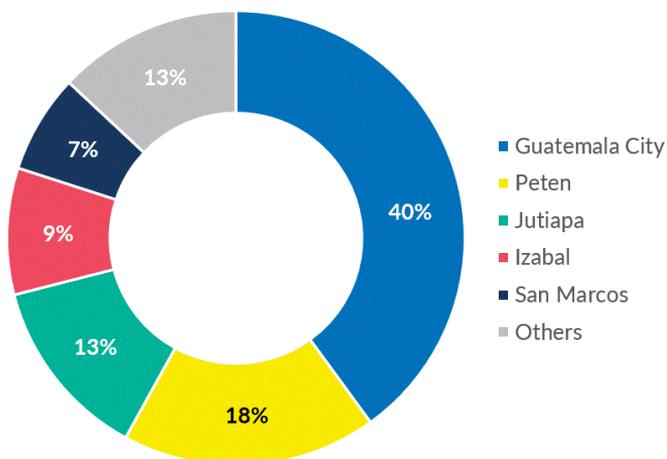
November 2021

To date, **1,004 new asylum applications** have been registered making it the highest number of applications Guatemala has ever received in one year. In total, there are currently **1,423 asylum-seekers and 487 refugees** living in Guatemala.

UNHCR and its partners conduct monitoring activities along the main border and transit areas to identify and assist persons in need of protection who are part of the mixed movements. In 2021, the **National Protection Network has assisted over 51,000 individuals in transit, 4,000 of them were assisted in November.**

In the centres for returnees in Guatemala City and Tecun Uman, UNHCR has identified **796 Guatemalans with protection needs among the deportee population.** In addition, **4,746 Guatemalans at risk of displacement** have been identified in departments with high-out migration.

Asylum-seekers and refugees according to department

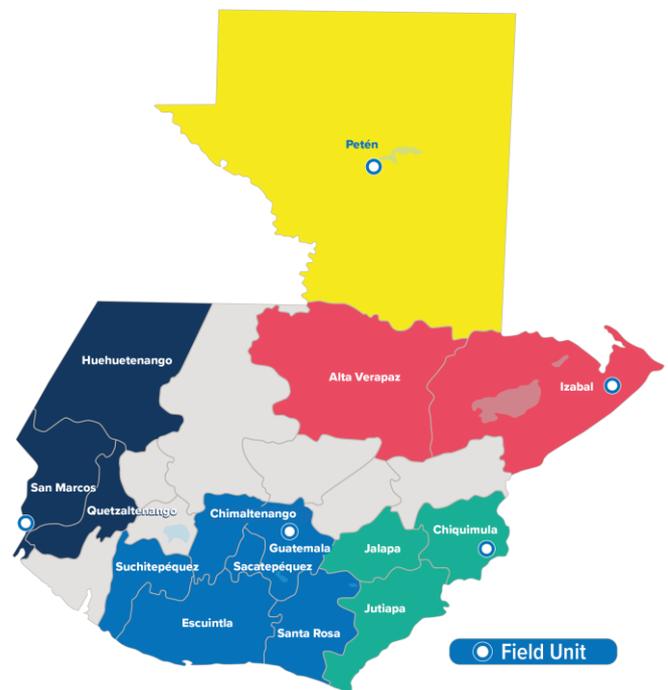


## VISIT OF UNHCR'S HIGH COMMISSIONER

UNHCR's High Commissioner, Filippo Grandi, carried out an official five-day mission to Guatemala. In Peten, he met with the mayors of the Solidarity Cities Flores and San Benito as well as with asylum-seekers and refugees, who are part of the Green Jobs livelihood initiative. He also got to know UNHCR's community-based protection outreach strategy in practice through visiting partners' innovative mobile units managed by the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH), the Secretariat against Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons (SVET), the Guatemalan Red Cross and the NGO Refugio de la Niñez (RDN). In Amatitlan, the High Commissioner inaugurated a new Youth Community Centre managed by the Social Welfare Secretariat and in Villa Nueva he participated in the municipal's integration fair in a neighborhood known for registering high-out migration. In Guatemala City, he met the President, the Vice President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala and Representatives of IOM, UNICEF and UN Women. In Antigua Guatemala, he participated in the annual MIRPS meeting as well as Cities of Solidarity's First National Conference.

- [READ UNHCR's press release on the High Commissioner's visit to Guatemala](#)

Area of responsibility of each of UNHCR's five field units in Guatemala



United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, the President of Guatemala, Alejandro Giammattei, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala, Pedro Brolo, and the OAS Head of Mission in Guatemala, Diego Paz, at the fourth annual meeting of the MIRPS in Antigua Guatemala. ©UNHCR/Daniel Calderon/2021

## Working with Partners

- UNHCR has **partnership agreements** with 13 partner organizations and two sister UN Agencies (UN Women and World Food Program). In addition, UNHCR works closely with other civil society organizations and governmental institutions to protect people in need of international protection.

## Main Activities

### Response to Basic Needs

- In November, UNHCR through its CBI programme has provided **multipurpose cash grants and cash for livelihoods** to 624 asylum-seekers and refugees and 727 Guatemalans in need of international protection who are part of the Protection Transfer Arrangement (PTA) programme. In addition, **4,595 Guatemalans affected by or at risk of displacement received cash assistance**. In 2021, UNHCR has supported 9,475 asylum-seekers, refugees as well as Guatemalans in need of international protection and at risk of displacement with CBI. In total, UNHCR has **distributed over 2.8 million USD** enabling recipients to fulfil their basic needs, reduce protection risks and improve their livelihood opportunities.
- In Santa Elena, Peten, the **infrastructure of the multisectoral Orientation, Information and Humanitarian Assistance Centre**, located next to the bus terminal, **was improved** with UNHCR's support.
- In Tecun Uman, UNHCR **installed a cell phone charging station** so that refugees and migrants can stay in touch with their families and access information on the services provided by the National Protection Network.

### Governance, Prevention and Protection

- **The fourth annual meeting of the MIRPS was held in Antigua Guatemala.** The MIRPS is a regional platform that promotes the protection of and search for solutions for refugees and displaced people in Central America and Mexico, by strengthening the asylum and reception systems as well as supporting access to protection services and solution pathways for displaced people and others at risk of displacement. In addition, projects are being implemented in countries of origin, transit and destination to foster better protection environments for displaced persons and host communities. In the annual meeting Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama agreed to promote a coordinated and collaborative response to large-scale mixed movements, to continue strengthening asylum systems and complementary pathways, and to develop durable solutions for forcibly displaced persons, asylum-seekers, refugees and returnees in need of protection. The pro-tempore presidency of the MIRPS held by Guatemala in 2021 was handed over to Honduras for 2022.

- [READ UNHCR's press release on the annual regional meeting of the MIRPS in Antigua Guatemala](#)

- **Cities of Solidarity's first National Conference** took place with the participation of UNHCR's High Commissioner, representatives of the refugee community in Guatemala, mayors of the four Cities of Solidarity San Benito and Flores (Peten), Esquipulas (Chiquimula) and Puerto Barrios (Izabal) as well as representatives of other Municipalities which support the initiative. Best practices were shared of protection mechanisms established and projects implemented in each of the Municipalities in coordination with local actors. New cooperation agreements with the



The first Cities of Solidarity Conference organized by the Government of Guatemala, the National Association of Municipalities (ANAM) and UNHCR took place in Antigua Guatemala with the active participation of refugees. ©UNHCR/Daniel Calderon/2021

Municipality of Villa Nueva and the regional Governors of Huehuetenango and Quetzaltenango were signed in support of the development of the initiative.

- Together with IOM, UNICEF, the U.S. Embassy and the Guatemalan Migration Institute (IGM), UNHCR inaugurated the **first Migration Resource Centre (MRC) in Quetzaltenango**, where comprehensive protection services will be provided in an inter-institutional manner to refugees, migrants, returnees and people at risk of displacement, including medical and psychological assistance, legal counselling and referrals to other services.
- Under the presence of UNHCR's High Commissioner and members of the community, a **new Youth Community Centre in Amatitlan, Guatemala, was inaugurated**. This as well as the other four Centres in the urban area of Guatemala City is managed by the Social Welfare Secretariat and was equipped with UNHCR's support. It provides comprehensive protection services in a safe space for children and their parents, including for refugees, who are at risk in their communities due to violence and poverty.
- In Santa Elena, Peten, UNHCR with the support of RDN **improved the infrastructure of the Catholic church-run shelter Santo Domingo**, who offers protection to unaccompanied children on the move as well as to children of the host community, especially to girls at risk.
- To strengthen the Guatemalan Migration Institute's capacity to register asylum claims at the Guatemalan Honduran border El Corinto, UNHCR donated a **fully equipped workstation** to IGM.
- The project called **UNIVETs** (Unidades Móviles contra la Violencia Sexual y Trata de Personas in Spanish) implemented by the Office against Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons (SVET) and supported by UNHCR through its partner Refugio de la Niñez (RDN) has further expanded its activities. Since September 2021, the **six units informed over 22,000 people**, among them persons on the move, about the services available for survivors of sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking in persons. In addition, over **1,600 government officials were trained by the UNIVETs** on the prevention of and response to GBV.
- In 2021, **UNHCR has trained over 4,700 people, 1,000 of them in November**, on its mandate, international refugee law, referral pathways of identified cases and services available to refugees and people in transit.
- In 2021, UNHCR has carried out over **130 protection monitoring missions, 16 of them in November**, across different locations and border areas to guarantee persons in need of international protection have access to the Guatemalan territory and its asylum system.
- In the **two Centres for Returnees in Guatemala City and Tecun Uman, San Marcos**, 319 Guatemalan deportees were interviewed by UNHCR's partner Refugio de la Niñez in November. 75% (239) of them were identified with protection needs and were referred to the PTA program or to other protection mechanisms.
  - **READ** the two newest fact sheets on the work of UNHCR's Field Units in [Tecun Uman](#) and [Guatemala City](#)



Inauguration of the new Youth Community Centre in Amatitlan, Guatemala City, by UNHCR's High Commissioner, Filippo Grandi, UNHCR Guatemala's Representative, Besem Obenson, and the Head of the Social Welfare Secretariat, Francisco Molina. ©UNHCR/Santiago Escobar/2021

### Enhanced community-based protection in communities affected by or at risk of displacement

- UNHCR and its partners have identified and registered **4,746 Guatemalans affected by or at risk of displacement** in the departments of San Marcos, Huehuetenango and Alta Verapaz. Based on their individual protection needs, the selected people receive support, including cash grants to access basic needs and/or improve livelihoods mechanisms, contributing to stabilize this population at risk in their places of origin.

- As part of UNHCR's community-based protection strategy and in the framework of the partnership agreement signed between UNHCR and UN Women, **Municipal Offices for Women as well as female community leaders in Alta Verapaz, Escuintla, Izabal, Jutiapa, Santa Rosa and Suchitepequez are being trained** on leadership, empowerment, public policies and establishing and strengthening community protection networks.
- At the Guatemalan-Belizean border village El Arenal, Peten, a **community-based protection project was implemented** by UNHCR's partner Refugio de la Niñez. 10 recycling bins, four benches and two information billboards on services provided by UNHCR, partners and local institutions to refugees were installed. In addition, a workshop on environmental and refugee protection was provided to 62 members of the community.

## Durable Solutions

- In Villa Nueva, Guatemala City, an **integration fair co-organized by the Municipality and UNHCR took place** with the participation of UNHCR's High Commissioner, Canada's Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, the mayor of Villa Nueva as well as members of the host community, among them refugees. As a result of the Letter of Understanding signed between the Municipality and UNHCR in mid-2021, protection mechanisms for refugees as well as Guatemalans at risk residing in Villa Nueva are being strengthened.
- In Izabal, the Solidarity City Puerto Barrios, with the support of UNHCR, promoted **Sport for Protection** activities among youth of the host community and 10 asylum-seekers and refugees, who carried out together the First Municipal Youth Rally. To further contribute to the local integration of refugees, a **storytelling activity** was organized in the municipal library that had been equipped by UNHCR in 2020.

### 16 days of activism against gender-based violence (GBV)

- In **Guatemala City**, together with UN Women and the Guatemalan Nobel Peace Prize laureate Rigoberta Menchú, UNHCR's Representative participated in the launch of 2021's 16 days of activism against GBV under the "End violence against women now!" slogan.
- In **Izabal and Jutiapa**, UNHCR trained 43 government officials and civil society actors on refugee protection, protection of women as well as on the prevention and elimination of GBV.
- In **Peten**, UNHCR participated together with its partner organization Ixqik and the local women's network in a radio broadcast to discuss strategies to prevent and respond to GBV in the context of human mobility. In addition, a departmental women's market was organized with the support of UNHCR and the Solidarity City San Benito, where refugees as well as women of the host community sold their products.
- In **Quetzaltenango** a vigil was held commemorating the victims of gender-based violence in Guatemala. In **San Marcos**, the Municipal Office for Women and UNHCR organized an event during which members of the host community and asylum-seekers jointly carried out activities to learn about UNHCR's mandate, its partner Tierra Nueva's work and about GBV as a cause of forced displacement.



## UNHCR's financial requirements for the Guatemala operation

(as of 7 December 2021)

**Funded: 32.9 million USD (84%)**

**Unfunded: 6.2 million USD (16%)**

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



| Private donors Australia | Private donors Italy | Private donors Japan | Private donors Republic of Korea | Private donors Spain | Private donors Sweden

### Contacts:

Besem Obenson, Representative UNHCR Guatemala, obenson@unhcr.org,  
 Marco Baumgartner, Associate Reporting Officer, baumgarm@unhcr.org