UNHCR Costa Rica

July 2022 - December 2022

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

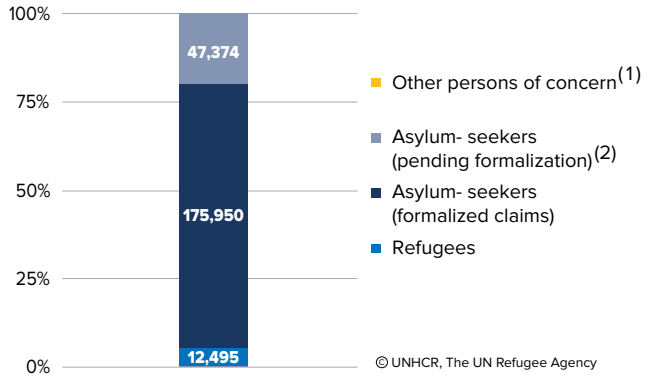
Staff delivering personal care items in "Chepe se Baña" organization warehouse. © UNHCR / Austin Ramírez

*Accumulated from *January to November 2022*
**Accumulated to *November 2022*

Caseload

236,044 210,858 (NIC) People of concern (PoC) Estimate	223,324 205,858 (NIC) Asylum Seekers Estimate	12,495 5,656 (NIC) Recognized Refugees	225 Other persons of concern*

Total Caseload Distribution September 2022

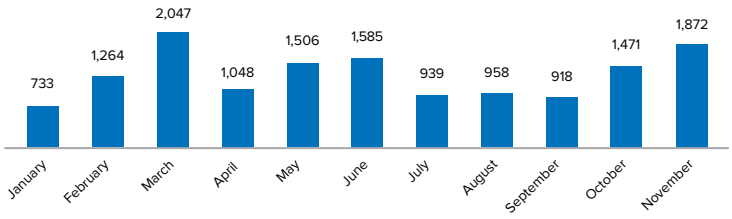


1) Includes recognized stateless and persons pending recognition of their stateless claims.

(2) Persons who have made an appointment with the Refugee Unit to file an asylum claim.

Sources: Migration Authority (Refugee Unit), CVVR,Administrative Migration Tribunal, National Registry, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Workship UNHCR Costa Rica.

Number of people registered by UNHCR Costa Rica



Source: UNHCR - Own data (ProGres database v4) -Being registered in proGres is a requirement for all UNHCR assistance programs-

Assistance provided by UNHCR

USD 1,563,136.09 Total awarded through cash assistance:	1826 HH (4656 individuals) Total individuals benefited with cash assistance	60,570** Number of people active in the UNHCR registration system	22,868 Total people who received information about UNHCR programs	21,022 Total people who received assistance from UNHCR

Regional winner of the 2022 Nansen Refugee Award, Vicenta Gonzalez

For her work defending the rights of vulnerable women from both sides of the Nicaragua-Costa Rica border, Vicenta González was chosen as the regional winner for the Americas of the 2022 UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award. Vicenta founded the Asociación Mujeres Emprendedoras de las Comunidades de Upala (AMECUP), an organization that, through the production and commercialization of cocoa products, is dedicated to helping migrant women, asylum seekers and nationals themselves in the promotion of their rights, access to economic opportunities and to ensure lives free of aggression and violence.

Vicenta González with Swiss and Norwegian ambassadors. The UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award honours individuals, groups and organizations who go above and beyond the call of duty to protect refugees, displaced and stateless people.
© UNHCR / Austin Ramírez

AMECUP's work includes the organization of regular *"afternoon coffee breaks,"* in which women gather at Vicenta's farm and talk openly about taboo subjects, such as gender-based violence. When they identify women experiencing such violence, the members of the association work to find the best solution, be that couple's therapy or finding them refuge.

Vicenta assists women who decide to leave violent relationships by providing temporary shelter or by referring the women to government agencies or NGOs. The lack of jobs in the area often subjects women to abusive relationships, so AMECUP also train survivors with the skills they need to start their own small businesses, providing workshops to launch businesses such as bakery or soap making.

Her support and story has brought a change to the lives of hundreds of women who turned to her for comfort, hope and opportunity. From 2018 to date, she says that she has registered support for more than 400 women, most of them fleeing violence in Nicaragua. Please reger to page 6, you will find Vicenta life´s story.

Antixenophobia campaign highlights the contributions of asylum-seekers to Costa Rican society and economy

On early July, the video campaign *"A Refugee's Footprint"* (La Huella de un Refugiado), showcased the stories of friendship between refugees, asylum seekers entrepreneurs and their Costa Rican customers.

The social media campaign told the story of Dulce*, Ligia and José, through the eyes of their clients, who also became their friends. The videos highlighted the economic impact of refugees through their innovation and entrepreneurial skills, but also how they created valuable relationships with people in their communities as a means to overcome xenophobia.

The campaign was successful, and exceeding initial projections/estimates "70% beyond initial projections". It reached over a million people in the course of three weeks and had over two million interactions.

UNHCR strengthens the response to mixed movements in the country

UNHCR assisted throughout the territory, ensuring close coordination between its offices in Paso Canoas, San José and Upala to assist persons transiting through Costa Rica in mixed movements. *© UNHCR / William Aguilar*

Since August, Costa Rica experienced the arrival of persons in mixed movements with an increase in entries through the southern border. The numbers reached historic peaks with as many as 1,000 or more entries per day. Persons in mixed movements arrived at the Paso Canoas border, remained in the area for a day or two to rest, and then continued their journey northward. Some of them stayed longer in Costa Rica due to a lack of funds to enter Nicaragua or because they were facing a health issue.

To assist with the situation, UNHCR deployed a Protection Associate to Paso Canoas, and sent two more staff to support the response. Through this presence in the field, UNHCR has been able to strengthen collaboration with local authorities, including the Migration Authority, Migration Police, Border Police, San Vito Municipality, Policy Department, Ministry of Health, Costa Rica Bar Association and and the National Children´s Institute.

In coordination with the above-mentioned institutions, UNHCR has been able to provide humanitarian assistance, identify vulnerable cases and make timely referrals to public assistance programs.

UNHCR assisted all persons of interest throughout its territory with close coordination between its offices in Paso Canoas, San Jose and Upala.

UNHCR has also led several initiatives to provide humanitarian assistance in coordination with the Office of the Resident Coordinator and civil society groups. For example, UNHCR donated core relief items to NGOs including Alianza Ven CR and “Chepe se baña” in San Jose. Over 1000 bars of soap, 1,000 blankets, 600 rain jackets, gloves, 7,000 masks and cleaning items to were distributed to ensure they could provide the necessary assistance to vulnerable cases in mixed movements.

UNHCR also participated in the delivery of 400 breakfast at the southern border to people in transit in coordination with the District Network (Red Distrital), the local Development Association of Paso Canoas and a local church. Staff also coordinated the delivery of over 4,000 items to be distributed to the EMIBISUR (Migrant Assistance Center) and Fundación Cadena. Also, in coordination with the World Health Organization, UNHCR assisted in providing equipment for a medical clinic in Paso Canoas.

UNHCR also deployed stadd and partners to southern, northern and communities in San Jose, to perform Rapid Needs Assessments involoving over 350 persons in mixed movements to better understand their needs.

MINARE organizes event with donors

On September14, the MINARE Technical Team convened its first donor event chaired by the Vice Minister of interior, Mrs Marlen Luna, jointed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The event advocated for greated support from the international community for the implementation of commiments assumed as part of the MINARE (Costa Rica´s comprehensive Rewfugee Rsponse Framework). It focused on presentinf donors with an overview of the MINARE, as well as prioritized projects and financial needs that were presented at the September 21 MIRPS event, convened by the MIRPS Regional Support Platform.

During the meeting, several countries expressed interest in supporting the MINARE and learning more about its projects.

Attendees included representatives from the MIRPS Support Platform including: Switzerland, Colombia, USA, Canada, Uruguay, Argentina, EU, IDB and other potential donors including Korea and Germany.

During the event, UNHCR presented the achievements of MINARE and the impact on the lives of refugees. *© UNHCR / Austin Ramírez*

On September 21, during the Solidarity event convened in the marging of United Nations General Assembly, the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed his concern over the incresead in asylum claims in the hemisphere and its implications for Costa Rica. He also used the opportunity to present three projects: the regionalization of the Refuge Unit, access to social protection programs and access to the public health system through the agreement between UNHCR and the CCSS.

Costa Rica has played a key role in the MIRPS process by leading the working group on Jobs and Livelihoods. As group leader, the National Technical Team set the vision and roadmap to develop a regional certification strategy. This topic was further discussed and developed during a regional workshop in Panama in November 22-23.

Costa Rica was recognized for its leading role and convening power to expand participation in this workgroup by key stakeholders such as Technical Education Institutes, Labor Ministries and Migration Authorities.

UNHCR provides information to Costa Rican communities

UNHCR´s Mobile Information Centers visited 6 communities in the reater metropolitan area of San Jose.

UNHCR continues strengthening its Communication with Communities (CwC) strategy by ensuring its presence in communities and reinforcing two-way communication with the people it serves.

During the second semester of 2022, UNHCR facilitated monthly visits by the Mobile Information Centers to San Sebastián, La Carpio, Casco Central de San José, Guadalupe, Alajuelita and Tibás reaching over 900 people. At least 35% of the family groups were new registrations. All of them completed the socio-economic assessments that make them elegible for programs.

Most common inquiries included information on employment, courses and training, followed by information on the agreement between UNHCR and the CCSS as well as advice on access to rights of minors (170 participats were minors).

UNHCR deployed Mobile Information Centers in the greater metropolitan area. *© UNHCR / Abel Belkacemi*

Mobile Information Centers aim to reach persons with mobility restrictions or limitations in accessing information through technological means, such as persons with disabilities and the elderly. Additionally, Mobile Information Centers strengthen UNHCR´s relationship with other community actors and community leaders, who are key for other community-based protection activities.

Adolescent Network: Celebrating the Sustainable Development Goals Week 2022

Adolescents plant climate change resistant trees in Parque La Libertad, located in San José. © *UNHCR / Austin Ramírez*

On September 23, to celebrate the Sustainable Development Goals Week 2022, UNHCR and its partner Defense for Children International (DNI) coordinated an activity with 17 children from the "Red de Adolescentes". The adolescents volunteered to work at Parque la Libertad, 32 hectares of protected public land in San José that is part of a biological conservation corridor that protects local rivers.

The participants worked at the botanical garden and planted climate-change resilient plants that help pollinizers and others with medicinal properties. Also, they learned to create planters with recycled materials and were able to take a pollinizer plant back home.

The *'Red de Adolescentes'* is a network that is coordinated and supported by UNHCR's Child Protection partner DNI to amplify the voice of adolescents and to be agents of change in issues that affect them. In line with the network's objectives, participants learned about their actions' impact on the park and the host community and the importance of environmental conservation as agents of change in their communities.

The activity responded to a 2021 particpatory assessment in wich interest was expressed in activities that could contribute to changes in the host communities.

UNHCR launches automatic response service

On September 29, UNHCR actived on the automatic WhatsApp messaging service (+506 4002-3796) to provide information on assistance programs and partner agencies in Costa Rica.

The Chat Bot also provides information on refugee status determination procedures, as well as the rights and duties of refugees and asylum-seekers. Special information is available for survivors of gender-based violence, access to justice, information for minors, access to services and institutions, and many others topics.

The service is free that has already been accesed by tousands of people since it was launched.

The service can be accessed through the number +506 4002-3796.

UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Operations visits Costa Rica

During his visit, Raouf Mazou spoke with the Major of Upala, in the northern region. *© UNHCR / Austin Ramírez*

Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, Raouf Mazou, visited to Costa Rica from 20-22 of October.

During his visit, Mr. Mazou met with President Chaves to discuss Costa Rica's situation as a host and transit country for thousands of refugees from different countries in the region. Presidente Chaves reiterated Costa Rica's commiment to observe its internacional commiments on protection and integation of forcibly displaced persons but was also emphatic on the need for additional fundind from the international community.

The Assistant High Commissioner also visited Upala, where he met with local authorities and persons of concern to see first-hand protection and integration challenges but also to see the efforts carried out by UNHCR's field office.

During his visit to Upala, the Assistant High Commisioner met Vicenta Gonzalez, winner of the regional Nansen Award for the Americas 2022, who empowers women through her cocoa cooperative.

"Doña Vicenta is an inspiration and an example of work to integrate national women and asylum seekers, giving them the opportunity to live in dignity and rebuild their lives," Mazou said in recognition of Mrs. González´ work.

UNHCR joins 16 days of activism campaign against gender-based violence

UNHCR joined the 16 days of activism campaign against gender-based violence with activities involving asylum seekers, refugee women and girls in the country. As part of the activities, UNHCR organized activities with adolescent refugees and asylum seekers and sponsored the screening of the film *"El despertar de las hormigas"* by director Antonella Sudasassi.

UNHCR High Profile Supporter and world boxing champion Hanna Gabriels, called for the elimination of all gender violence through UNHCR social networks in Costa Rica.

World champion boxer Hanna Gabriels has been UNHCR High Profile Supporter since 2019. *© UNHCR / Manrique Cortés*

UNHCR and the Bar Association reinforce their partnership

The agreement was signed at the Bar Association offices on November 23. *© UNHCR / Austin Ramírez*

On November 23, UNHCR and the Costa Rican Bar Association signed the extension of an agreement between both institutions. This renewal will allow members of the association to receive training in international refugee law and strengthen their capacities in to assist asylum seekers, refugees, stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness through of a Pro Bono program under which the collegiate lawyers will provide legal services. The agreement was signed by the president of the bar Association, Mr. Álvaro Sánchez, and the UNHCR Representative in Costa Rica, Milton Moreno.

IV Edition of the Living the Integration Seal

The *"Living the Integration"* Seal is an official certification that UNHCR Costa Rica grants companies, organizations and institutions that demonstrate a commitment to refugees and asylum seekers to assist. The organizations applying for the Seal know and value the contributions of refugees to the economy and cultural diversity of Costa Rica.

These organizations promote integration of this population by protecting and promoting their rights, and, with their example, they call for a more inclusive and supportive country for all of those who call Costa Rica their home.

In the fourth edition, 38 applications were received, and 30 organizations were awarded a recognition for 45 inclusion actions that were documented and verified by an Evaluation Committee. Among the award-winning organizations, 11 are from civil society, 9 the private sector, 4 from the public sector, 3 from local governments, and 3 are academic institutions.

Of the private sector companies, Western Union, Boston Scientific and Starbucks stood out for their inclusion practices in two or more categories.

Banco Nacional de Costa Rica, the biggest bank in the country, wins the seal in the categories *"Development and Formation" and "Diversity and Inclusion". © UNHCR / Abel Belkacemi*

Stories

Former midwife delivers safety and hope to Nicaraguan refugee women

© UNHCR / Nicolo Filippo Rosso

Women have been travelling to Vicenta Gonzalez's farm to seek her help for nearly half a century. The farm is located at the end of bumpy dirt road in a remote region of northern Costa Rica, and during the rainy season the road becomes an almost impassable with mud. Even then, her driveway is continually abuzz with vehicles of all kinds and a steady stream of visitors who also make the trip to Vicenta's place on foot.

Read more

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For more information contact Austin Ramírez, Senior Communications Assistant:
ramirezr@unhcr.org