



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Advancing together towards integration



2022

**Highlights
UNHCR
Mexico**



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2022
Highlights
UNHCR Mexico

Foreword

I am pleased to share the highlights of UNHCR's work in Mexico in 2022. The high number of asylum claims was addressed with a strategic presence in 18 locations in Mexico, placing our teams closer to the people we serve. Asylum trends have cemented Mexico as a country of both transit and destination. Thousands of asylum-seekers opted to stay in Mexico and enjoy the right to work thanks to Mexico's asylum policy and UNHCR's labour integration programme which has relocated 29,000 refugees and supported the integration of another 70,000 since 2016.

Our work was marked by changes in the U.S. policy on asylum, including the persistency of Title 42, which led to increased movements south to north, and conversely from north to south. This meant uncertainty for people on the move, many of whom opted to stay at the northern border. A significant part of our response was redirected to shelters whose capacities were saturated. It was critical to step-up information campaigns and our communication with communities.

Human mobility requires regional solutions. The adoption of the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection reaffirmed the commitment to jointly protect the rights of people on the move. We celebrate the commitment of the government of Mexico toward the integration of refugees. It is complemented by the MIRPS, which continues to foster inclusion policies and practical solutions. Only concerted regional efforts can

unlock the key to safer routes and durable solutions. This is the aim of the 2nd Global Refugee Forum in 2023, which will focus on the implementation of measurable pledges that make real-life transformations in refugees' lives.

UNHCR stepped-up its support to the government of Mexico in its response to internal displacement. Together with OHCHR, we supported the first visit to Mexico of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons. We undertook consultations with refugee groups to inform UNHCR's multi-annual strategy and help us better assess their needs. COMAR and UNHCR's three-year collaboration plan to digitalise the registration and refugee status determination process was completed.

UNHCR will never cease to commend and appreciate the protection-centered, valiant work of civil society and faith-based organisations whom we are proud to call our partners. We look forward to continuing strengthening our collaboration with NGOs and other UN Agencies with whom close cooperation makes protection and solution strategies stronger.



Giovanni Lepri
Representative
May 2023

CHAPTER 1

2022 operational context and UNHCR response

In 2022, forced displacement continued throughout the hemisphere. The number of new arrivals at the southern border continued to increase, placing **Mexico among the countries with the highest number of asylum applications by December 2022.**

Traditionally, Mexico has been primarily a country of origin and transit. In recent years, there has been a steady growth in the number of people considering Mexico as a country of asylum and a place to establish their new home. This has gone hand in hand with the

increase in Mexico's remarkable capacity to receive and integrate those forcibly displaced in the region and beyond. Following a brief slowdown in the number of arrivals in 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19, the following two years were marked by historic trends in terms of human mobility across the region and into Mexico. In 2021, the number of asylum applications reached a new record with over 130,000 asylum claims, while 2022 represented the second year with the highest number of asylum claims filed, with more than 118,000 individual applications¹.

¹ COMAR. Available here: https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/792337/Cierre_Diciembre-2022_31-Dic._1.pdf



In recent years, refugees found in Mexico the place to establish their new home.

While 2021 was marked by the sudden arrival of tens of thousands of Haitian nationals, in 2022 Mexico witnessed a **notable increase in the number of arrivals and requests for asylum from Venezuelan, Cuban and Nicaraguan nationals.**

The number of applications from Cuban and Venezuelan nationals in 2022 doubled those of 2021, while the number of claims from Nicaraguan nationals in 2022 tripled those of the year prior.² Despite these peaks, Honduras was the most

represented country of origin among the asylum-seeking population by the end of 2022 with 26% of all applications, followed by Cuba (15%), Haiti (14 %), and Venezuela (13 %). The overall number of applications filed by Haitian nationals in 2022 remained high in comparison to years prior to 2021, with 17,153 total applications.

Border restrictions and expulsions from the U.S. of asylum-seekers and migrants under Title 42

² While 8,315 applications were filed by Cuban nationals in 2021, in 2022 asylum claims from individuals of Cuban nationality reached a total of 18,095. Similarly, asylum applications from Venezuelan nationals in 2021 reached 6,220 while in 2022 the total number of applications surpassed twice its 2021 figure with 14,915 claims. A distinctive trait for 2022 is also that new entries of Venezuelan nationals were mainly registered across the land border with Guatemala, as opposed to through airports as was previously recorded and likely highly influenced by the imposition of a visa requirement from January 2022 by the Mexican Government and the difficulty faced by many Venezuelan nationals in accessing official travel documents; individual asylum claims by Venezuelans in Tapachula -in the southern state of Chiapas- account for 5,854 in 2022 while only 683 asylum claims were registered for 2021 (in comparison with 80 in 2020 and 110 in 2019). On the other hand, the number of claims from Nicaraguan nationals tripled in 2022 compared to 2021 (8,984 claims registered in 2022 versus 2,931 in 2021).

related to the Covid-19 public health emergency persisted throughout 2022, with limited humanitarian exceptions. The re-instated **Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP 2.0)** applied across four different ports of entry for eight months before its termination in August, allowed U.S. authorities to **return over 7,000 asylum-seekers to Mexico's northern border**³ –where services are scarce and organized crime is high- to await their asylum hearing dates. Furthermore, changes announced in October 2022 to the **applicability of Title 42 related to Venezuelan nationals** who entered the U.S. irregularly to be expelled to Mexico resulted in overcrowded shelters across central and northern parts of the country and over 6,000 requests for asylum filed in Mexico by Venezuelan nationals within the last three months of the year (double the number of claims filed between January and October 2022).⁴

The complexity of mixed movements of refugees and migrants, and consequent response policies like the MPP and Title 42 increased not only the risk of refoulement (and chain refoulement) but also posed additional pressure on the already overstretched processing capacity of the **Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR)** in the face of the fast-increasing asylum demands and absence of alternative legal pathways for those who need them. Nevertheless, COMAR -with support from UNHCR and its Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI)- has almost **quadrupled**

its processing capacity since 2018, with an overall average recognition rate of 63%. Despite the remarkable progress made, COMAR's resources remain limited and additional efforts are required from the Mexican Government to commit further financial support to increase its operational capacity and infrastructure nationwide to meet the current needs.

To mitigate the pressure on the asylum system, UNHCR – together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) - spearheaded discussions with government institutions towards the end of 2021 and into 2022 in support of legal stay arrangements for those part of mixed movements, while also promoting the integration capacity of local communities in the provision of practical opportunities for those who may not return to their countries of origin. Through this initiative, UNHCR and IOM implemented a pilot programme to support over 1,000 Haitian nationals with relocation and integration assistance across the country in 2022.

In addition to the pressure that mixed movements have placed in the south of the country where 75% of asylum claims are filed, and the impact of the U.S. expulsion policies in the north, Mexico is also experiencing an increase in internal displacement, generated by a rise in violence perpetrated by criminal and drug-trafficking groups and land disputes in at least seven states.

³ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics “Migrant Protection protocols Cohort Report”, December 2022. Also available here: https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-02/2023_0127_public_migrant_protection_protocols_cohort_report_december_2022.pdf

⁴ Between 12 October -the date the new policy changes were announced- and the end of December, more than 6,000 Venezuelans requested asylum in Mexico, duplicating the number of claims filed between January and October 2022.



Ana Iris and her children, Abigail and Joel, from El Salvador were recognized as refugees in Mexico in 2022. The whole family is part of the program "Education without borders" which allows them to continue their studies in Mexico.

Even though there is no official data at national level on internal displacement, there are some approximations, including the Population and Housing Census 2020 conducted by the Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), which yields a figure of 251,513 people who changed their municipality or State in the last five years due to violence or insecurity, and over 24,000 who did so due to natural disasters. Also, the National Survey of Victimization and Perception of Public Safety (2022) estimated that over 831,000 people changed their home or place of residence to protect themselves from crime in 2021. According to the NGO Mexican Commission for the Defense

and Promotion of Human Rights, **over 379,000 people were displaced in Mexico due to incidents of mass violence from 2006 to 2021⁵**, guiding UNHCR's strategy to further engage on this topic under its protection mandate.

Finally, as a key component of its 2022 – 2024 multiannual strategy, UNHCR continued to promote the local integration of thousands of recognized refugees throughout 2022. Those part of the Local Integration Programme (PIL) were relocated to cities with increased prospects of formal employment where UNHCR supported them with job placements, as well as

⁵ There was no data available on the estimated number of persons displaced by violence in 2022 at the time of writing this report.

access to long-term accommodation, education and health services, among others. **In 2022 alone, 12,796 refugees were supported with relocation and integration assistance – the highest number supported in a year to date.** Since the inception of the PIL in 2016, over 29,000 people have benefited from this assistance. An additional 70,000 individuals have been assisted with *in-situ* integration through UNHCR programmes which seek to improve access to education and health services and promote financial inclusion in the cities where refugees and asylum-seekers have already settled. 37 internally displaced persons have also benefited from this assistance through a pilot initiative implemented by UNHCR in coordination with the Mexican

Government and which could be extended as a durable solution for those internally displaced.

UNHCR has continued to strengthen its network of allies for the sustainable integration of people who have been forced to flee through cooperation agreements with federal and state authorities, employment offices, and over 500 private companies willing to hire refugees. Recent studies with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) estimate that USD \$7 million were generated in income taxes per year for the first 25,000 participants of the programme, highlighting the potential significant contribution of refugees and asylum-seekers to local economies when they are also supported to access formal employment opportunities.

UNHCR MEXICO PRESENCE

Country office:

1. Mexico City

Sub-Offices:

2. Monterrey
3. Tuxtla Gutiérrez

Field Offices:

4. Tapachula
5. Ciudad Juárez
6. Tijuana

Field Units :

7. Tenosíque
8. Palenque
9. Guadalajara
10. Aguascalientes
11. Saltillo

Presence:

12. Querétaro
13. León
14. San Luis Potosí
15. Torreón
16. Irapuato
17. Silao
18. Villahermosa

UNHCR liaison on internal displacement:

19. Michoacán
20. Sinaloa
21. Chihuahua



Title 42 and consequences



UNHCR/Archive

Asylum-seekers at COMAR's offices in Tijuana, Baja California.

a new humanitarian parole system for this population, benefiting up to 24,000 individuals. This policy change applied in addition to other nationalities that were already being readmitted to Mexico such as Mexican, Salvadorian, Guatemalan and Honduran.

Even though the expulsion of Venezuelans to Mexico under Title 42 drastically reduced both irregular crossings of Venezuelans from Mexico to the U.S. and secondary movements across the region, the sudden

change in policy also resulted in **overwhelming pressure on civil society shelters** and an **urgent need for an upscaled humanitarian response** to thousands stranded across the country.

In the weeks that followed the official announcement, shelters -in particularly those along the northern border- were reported to be at full capacity, hosting significant numbers of people of Venezuelan nationality, including unaccompanied children. **13,875 Venezuelans were expelled to Mexico between 12 October and 31 December 2022.** Civil society shelters assumed most of the responsibility for the

Throughout 2022, the expulsion of asylum-seekers and migrants from Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala (later also Venezuelan nationals) from the U.S. to Mexico under the Title 42 policy introduced as a Covid-19 public health emergency measure, continued. Between March 2020 (when Title 42 was first applied) and December 2022, over 2.5 million people were expelled to Mexico and other countries.⁶

On 12 October 2022, the Governments of Mexico and the U.S. announced that Mexico would also readmit Venezuelans expelled from the U.S. under Title 42, whilst creating

⁶ U.S. Customs and Border Protection – Nationwide Encounters. Available here: <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/nationwide-encounters>

humanitarian response and had to surpass their own capacity to meet the needs. In parallel, Venezuelan nationals stranded also requested the support of the Venezuelan Embassy in Mexico City to return to their country.

The profile of Venezuelans arriving in Mexico has changed over the years, with more recent arrivals presenting greater vulnerability factors and very limited access to resources. UN Agencies UNHCR, IOM, and UNICEF, together with national and international NGOs coordinated their interventions with Mexican authorities to support those stranded with accommodation, WASH assistance, medical supplies, and increased access to information on the situation at the border. The Mexican Government also responded to the humanitarian needs through *Centros Integradores para Migrantes* in Tijuana (Baja California), Ciudad Juarez (Chihuahua) and Matamoros (Tamaulipas), as well as through smaller shelters established by states and municipalities along the border.

During this time **UNHCR continued to provide protection and humanitarian assistance** amid uncertainty on whether Title 42 would remain in place in the longer-term. Local Title 42 exemption programmes for all nationalities at the northern border were implemented between U.S. authorities and civil society at eight ports of entry. Exemptions were managed by local shelters, NGOs, and, at some ports of entry, with the support of Mexican local authorities. An average of 600 persons accessed U.S. territory daily.

Working with others

With **40 partner organizations across the country** -the majority of which are local actors-⁷, UNHCR continued to expand its network to boost coordination in the areas of protection and durable solutions. UNHCR **cooperates closely with 19 Federal government authorities and public institutions** across different levels and branches of the Mexican Government⁸ and signed 23 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with **authorities of federal and local governments, academic institutions**⁹ and **private sector organizations**. In the field, where UNHCR's presence is strong, dialogue and collaboration mechanisms with state and municipal government authorities were strengthened, namely through new agreements with the local governments of Chihuahua, Nuevo León, Michoacán, Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, Saltillo, and Torreón.

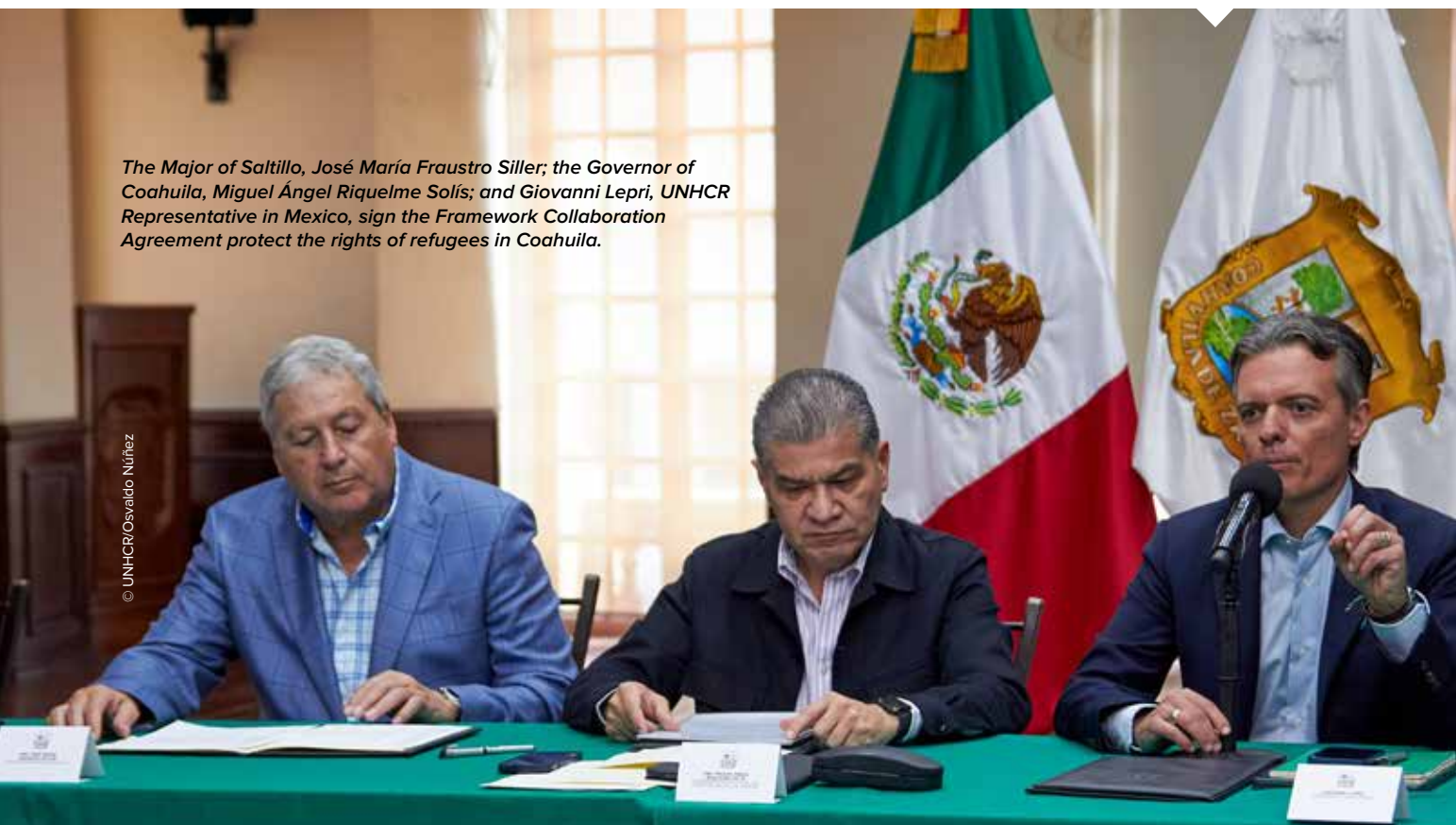
In 2022, the inter-ministerial roundtable on inclusion and integration of refugees set up

⁷ 36 Partnership Agreements established with local organizations, three with international organizations, and one with the UN Agency - IOM.

⁸ At the Federal level, UNHCR works with the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance, the National Migration Institute, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Migration Policy, Registration and Identity Unit, the National Institute of Statistic and Geography, the National Council to Prevent Discrimination, the National System for Integral Family Development, the Public Defender's Office, Child Protection Authorities, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Population Registry, the National Population Council, the Supreme Court, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, and the Taxpayers Registry.

⁹ New Memoranda of Understanding were signed with the Western Institute of Technology and Higher Studies "ITESO", the Autonomous University of Aguascalientes, the Autonomous University of Coahuila and the Iberoamerican University of Puebla.

The Major of Saltillo, José María Fraustro Siller; the Governor of Coahuila, Miguel Ángel Riquelme Solís; and Giovanni Lepri, UNHCR Representative in Mexico, sign the Framework Collaboration Agreement protect the rights of refugees in Coahuila.



with COMAR to implement the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS, in Spanish)¹⁰ was consolidated, becoming an important platform of coordination between government entities, UN agencies and development actors. Four technical roundtables on employment, education, health and identity and documentation receive support from COMAR and UNHCR.

In Mexico's context of complex mixed movements, UNHCR has sought to strengthen coordinated protection responses, maximising efforts and avoiding duplication. Under the overall guidance of the UN Resident Coordinator, UNHCR co-leads

the UN Interagency Group on Human Mobility (GIMH) together with IOM, which covers topics related to refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, and migrants through a set of working groups such as Protection, Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection. The GIMH also includes a Working Group on Inclusion, Integration, and Development; a group on Trafficking, Smuggling, and Disappearances; a Working Group on Internally Displaced Persons, and a Working Group for Shelter, in which many other UN Agencies and organisations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and international and national NGOs, also participate.

¹⁰ As a concrete application of the Global Compact on Refugees, the MIRPS –jointly implemented by Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama- encourages regional cooperation among countries of origin, transit and destination for a greater responsibility sharing in matters of prevention, protection and durable solutions. Mexico (through the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) is implementing a wide range of commitments to provide protection and solutions for those forcibly displaced - focused on self-reliance of refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable groups -, and includes strategies to support host communities. The commitments made in the MIRPS process are complemented by pledges made at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum.

Working with academia

UNHCR has been working in closer collaboration with academia. As such, the first two specialized courses (*diplomados*) in international refugee law and international protection took place in 2022; the first was organized by Mexico's prestigious *Universidad Autónoma de México* (UNAM), jointly with the NGO Sin Fronteras and UNHCR, and the second course was coordinated by UNHCR and the Autonomous University of San Luis Potosí, with an emphasis on labour integration. 82 scholars, government personnel, and employers were trained in the topics with a view to replicate and share the contents of the course within their respective institutions and companies.

At the same time, UNHCR supported the establishment of a clinic to provide legal assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees as an added component within the MoU with the Autonomous University of Aguascalientes, and the hiring of two paralegals currently developing strategic litigation projects on asylum in Mexico within the legal clinic of the Autonomous

University of San Luis Potosí. **UNHCR also worked closely with the Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon in its second year of implementation of its MoU to strengthen services provided by the legal clinic and whose students also contributed to UNHCR's work as online volunteers in the monitoring of the local integration programme.**

Other efforts to strengthen relationships with academic institutions include the development of joint projects including the creation of other legal clinics, with the following ten institutions: Autonomous University of Yucatan, Autonomous University of Durango, Juarez Autonomous University of Tabasco, Autonomous University of Querétaro, Autonomous University of Chiapas, *Tecnológico de Monterrey*, University of Guadalajara, Iberoamerican University of León, Autonomous University of Baja California, and the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico. Furthermore, the implementation of the agreement signed with UNAM in 2021 also resulted in a series of important alliances and activities in 2022.



UNHCR works with academic institutions to generate projects that create awareness about the rights of refugees.

Funding

Through UNHCR’s continuous efforts to strengthen partnerships and create alliances with external stakeholders, donors, and prospective donors, in 2022 UNHCR was able to fundraise USD \$59,5 million to address critical protection issues and provide solutions for forcibly displaced populations in Mexico, as well as continue supporting the strengthening of its asylum system. The visits of UNHCR’s Director of the Division of External Relations, Ms. Dominique Hyde in April and the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, Mr. Raouf Mazou in November were also unique opportunities to strengthen UNHCR’s relationship with external stakeholders and the donor community.

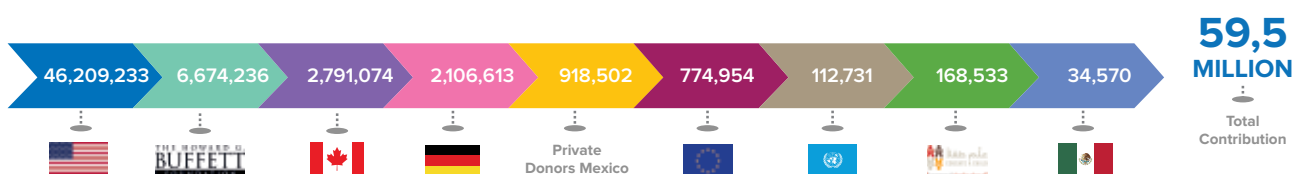
UNHCR received contributions from government (88%) and private donors (12%). The highest level of contributions was granted by the U.S. Government, while new projects were also developed with Canada, Qatar, and the European

Union. Income from private donors in Mexico - both individual and corporate - reached a remarkable USD \$1.6 million in 2022.

UNHCR continued to organize donor field missions, including a multi-donor visit to Tapachula (Chiapas) in December 2022 to create greater awareness of the situation of those forced to flee and their needs. Two comprehensive briefings for the diplomatic community in Mexico and a public presentation of its 2021 Annual Report were also exceptional opportunities to keep external stakeholders abreast of the latest trends, challenges, and opportunities in the field of international protection in Mexico. UNHCR also organized periodic briefings addressed to the diplomatic community.

With an implementation rate of 99%, Mexico positioned itself within the top three operations with the highest implementation rates for UNHCR in the Latin America region.

Contributions to UNHCR Mexico in 2022



UNHCR/Archive



During the 1980s and 1990s, Mexico welcomed thousands of refugees displaced from their countries in Central America due to civil wars.

UNHCR's 40th anniversary – celebrating 40 years of humanitarian work in Mexico

In 2022 we commemorated 40 years of protection and humanitarian work in Mexico; a period that began with the idea of **supporting the Mexican Government meet the international protection needs of thousands of Guatemalans who arrived across southern Mexico fleeing civil war in the early 1980s**. After receiving initial support through shelters, food, and other services to become self-sufficient, several of them finally settled in Campeche, Quintana Roo and Chiapas, where years later they obtained Mexican citizenship by naturalisation and land property titles.

With the peace agreements in Guatemala and refugees' access to durable solutions -either through repatriation or local integration- UNHCR

scaled down its operation in Mexico in charge of refugee status recognition under its mandate at the time, and until Mexico acceded to the Geneva Convention of Refugees in 2000.

Although the number of refugees in Mexico at the beginning of the new century was relatively low, the country achieved important progress in shaping the regulatory framework: First by acceding to the Refugee Convention and, ten years later – in 2011-, by publishing the Law on Refugees, Complementary Protection and Political Asylum. Three years after the publication of the Law and at the beginning of 2014, UNHCR's operation in Mexico saw the need to expand with the arrival of people fleeing gang violence in Central America.

In these four decades, UNHCR has intervened decisively in support of the lives of hundreds of thousands of people who have arrived in Mexican territory fleeing persecution, violence, and threats in their countries of origin. It has supported the development of a solid institutional and social scaffolding for the

protection of refugees and asylum seekers and is currently building on its protection mandate for internally displaced people as well.

UNHCR is currently present in over 20 cities and has more than 400 staff working relentlessly to assist those seeking protection.

1993. Guatemalan refugees at the beginning of their voluntary repatriation journey.



© UNHCR/A. Serrano

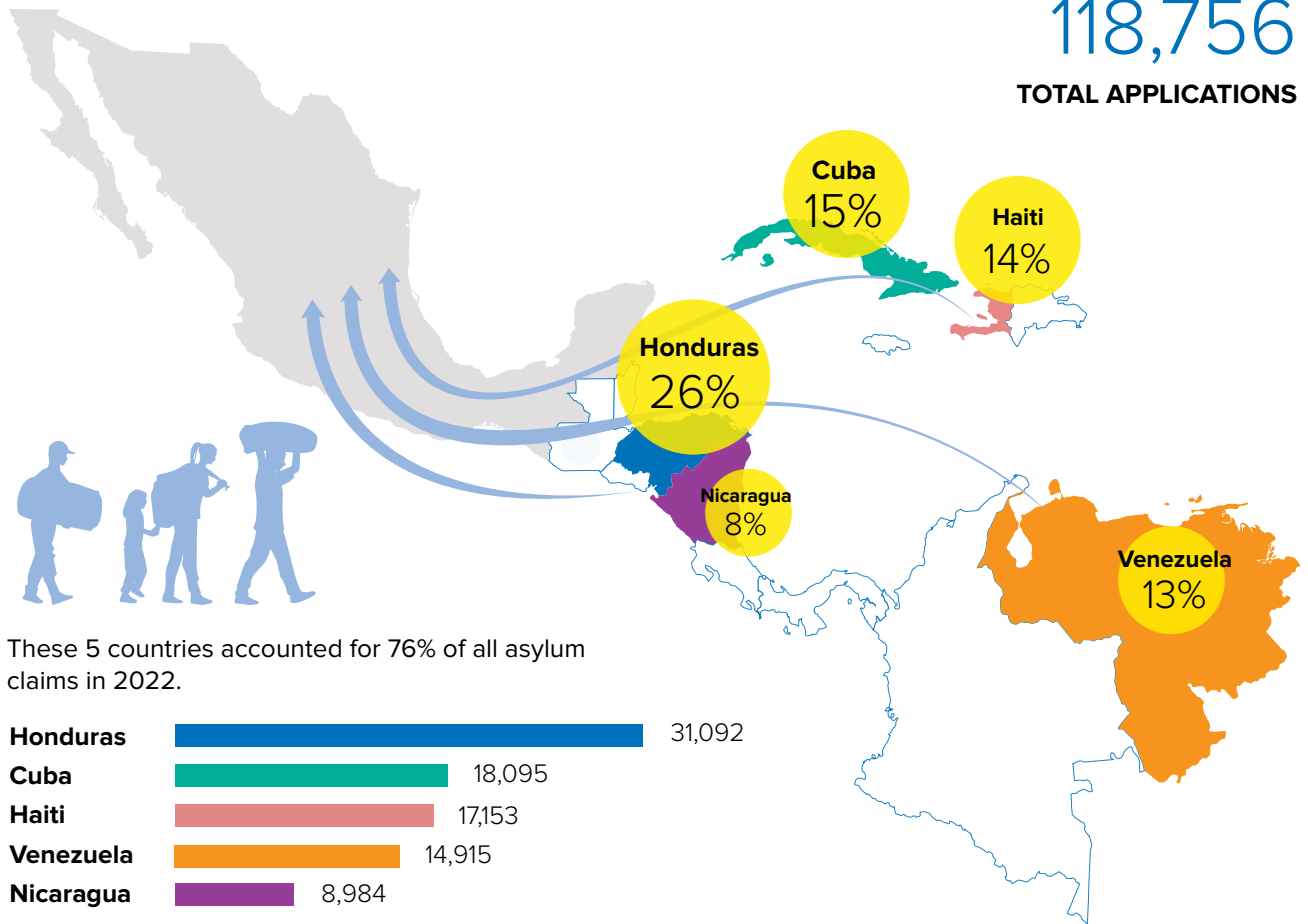


UNHCR Mexico at a glance

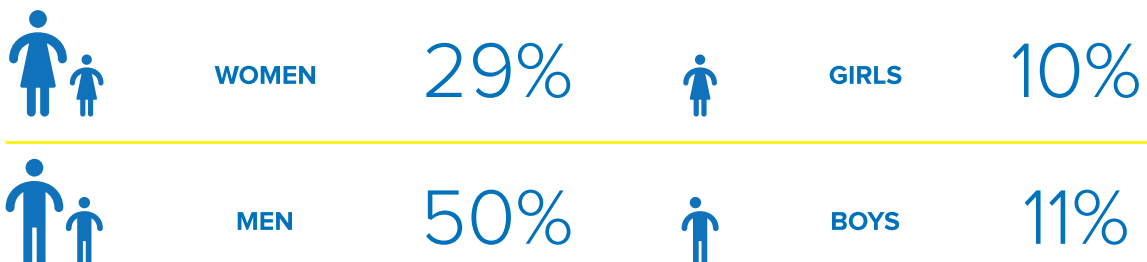
NEW ASYLUM APPLICATIONS IN 2022

118,756

TOTAL APPLICATIONS



POPULATION DISTRIBUTION



UNHCR support to COMAR


187

ADDITIONAL STAFF

provided to COMAR to increase its registration and processing capacity.


64,082

INDIVIDUAL RESOLUTIONS

by COMAR.



TECHNICAL SUPPORT

through the Asylum Quality Initiative (QAI) to improve registration and simplified and differentiated procedures.

UNHCR REGISTRATION AND ASSISTANCE

47,422
INDIVIDUALS

in



2473

FAMILIES

registered with UNHCR across the country and provided with assistance - (45% women, 55% men).
In terms of age cohorts, 12% were children aged 0-5; 19% were aged 5 - 17; 68% were aged 18 - 59; and 1% were above 60; 2% revealed to be LGBTIQ+; 5% were persons with disabilities.


+34,000

INQUIRIES

were responded to through the UNHCR Helpdesk.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE


200,966


ASYLUM SEEKERS

received legal advice by lawyers and paralegals for the first time (both as legal orientation and legal assistance).


8,041

ASYLUM SEEKERS

were represented by UNHCR's network of jurists for the first time (42% women, 57% men, 1% did not specify their gender).


106 **58**

LAWYERS

PARALEGALS

43

PUBLIC DEFENDERS

within UNHCR's network provided legal aid across 31 different cities

COMMUNITY-BASED PROTECTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATION


762
PEOPLE

women, men, children, elderly, refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons and members of host communities joined UNHCR participatory assessments.


818
REPORTS

filed through the Community Based Complaints Mechanism established to share feedback and register complaints.

CHILD PROTECTION



1,152

CHILDREN

supported with specialized case management.



6,047

CHILDREN BENEFITED

from psychosocial, recreational, and educational activities, in 20 child-friendly safe spaces.



66

UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

supported with alternative care.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION, MITIGATION, AND RESPONSE



1,227

SURVIVORS

of gender-based violence received UNHCR counselling and services through UNHCR specialised partners.



1,925

STAFF FROM GOVERNMENTAL AND CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERS

trained on prevention and response to gender-based violence and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse.

VULNERABLE GROUPS



172

UNHCR STAFF, PARTNERS AND AUTHORITIES

trained in the identification of persons with specific needs.



4,551

INDIVIDUALS

benefited from sectoral cash grants for protection needs such as health, emergency housing, and security, among others.

SHELTERS



132 in **48**

SHELTERS

CITIES

supported with infrastructure improvements, personnel, distribution of Non-Food Items, and capacity building.



UNHCR worked closely with UNICEF, IOM, and ICRC to coordinate its shelter interventions and mitigate the risk of duplication.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE



16,952
NEW ASYLUM-SEEKERS

received cash grants as part of the Humanitarian Assistance Programme (49% women, 51% men - 3.6% revealed to be LGBTIQ+).
In terms of the age cohort, 17% were aged 0-5, 24% were aged 5-17, 58% were aged 18-59, and 2% were above 60.

LOCAL INTEGRATION



12,796
REFUGEES RELOCATED
as a part of UNHCR's Local Integration Programme.



43,589
REFUGEES
benefitted from *in-situ* integration support.



+500
PRIVATE SECTOR COMPANIES
are employing refugees



181
REFUGEES
applied for naturalisation

EDUCATION



3,021
ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEE CHILDREN
supported with school enrolment.



213
REFUGEE STUDENTS
received UNHCR scholarships to study at university.

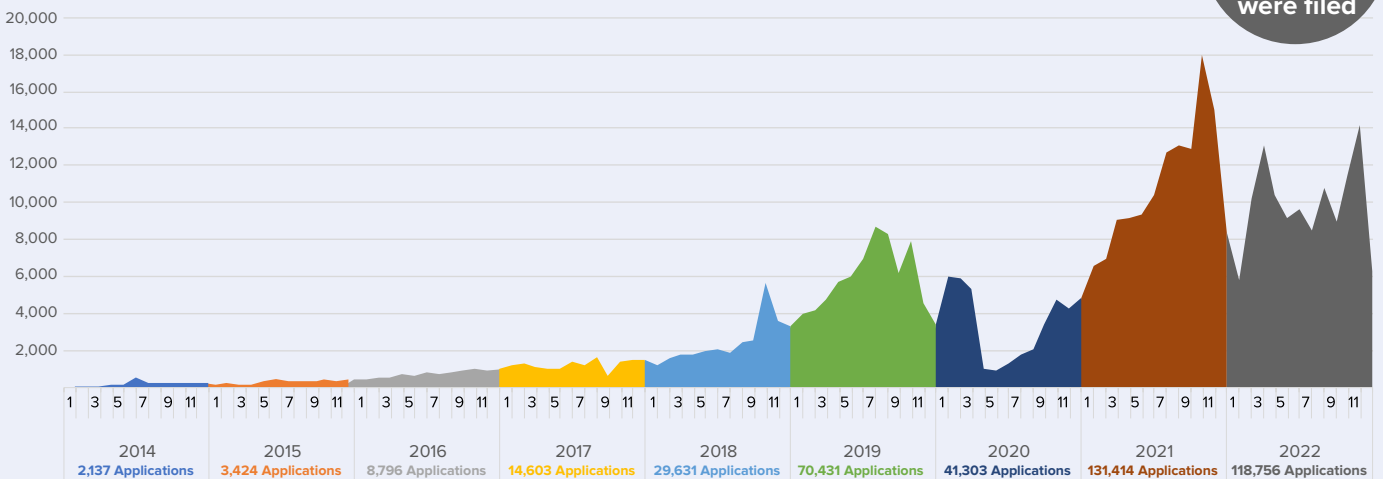


171
ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

receiving support on recognition of their diplomas, access to accelerated education programmes and vocational training to facilitate their job placement opportunities.

New Asylum Applications in Mexico Monthly Evolution | 2014 - 2022

In 2022
118,756
Applications were filed



Source: COMAR 2014-18, SIRE 2019-2021

UNHCR Mexico within the regional context



CHAPTER 3

Ensuring access to international protection and protection responses

Mexico has seen a continuous growth in mixed movements of refugees and migrants across both its southern and northern borders in recent years. In the south, the unprecedented increase of arrivals coupled with the absence of legal stay alternatives has resulted in an overwhelming pressure on Mexican authorities, and most particularly on COMAR's already overstretched capacity. While recent experience has shown that the profiles of those transiting through the region and into Mexico can quickly change highlighting the need for an evolving response,

one concerning trait of 2022 was the heightened vulnerability of individuals and family groups and the growing risks to which they are exposed along their route.

With Mexico having become one of the countries with the highest number of asylum applications in the world, the need for UNHCR to continue supporting COMAR to ensure effective access to international protection for those forced to flee and the availability of a comprehensive response is more important than ever.



Staff from Refugee Service Center provide information about humanitarian assistance for asylum-seekers.

Access to asylum

Since 2018, UNHCR has provided technical and financial support to COMAR both through its Quality Asylum Initiative (QAI) programme which consists of simplified and more efficient processing measures, as well as with personnel and material resources.

Though remarkable progress has been made as a result of this close collaboration -evidenced by COMAR's fourfold increase in its processing capacity over the course of four years- the growing number of asylum applications and the absence of regular stay alternatives imply that in 2022, COMAR only managed to process 58% of the total number of claims filed (in 2021, this figure stood at 44%). By the end of 2022, COMAR had issued 64,082 individual decisions, with an overall recognition rate of 63%.

Access to information

UNHCR continues to regard access to timely and reliable information as a linchpin of assistance. To better reach those who have been forced to flee with the information they need to take well-informed decisions – be it about access to protection, their rights, or local integration perspectives –, UNHCR collaborated with 31 refugee outreach volunteers who provided information to more than 12,000 individuals across communities in seven cities (Acayucan, Tapachula, San Luis Potosí, Saltillo, Mexicali, Tijuana, and Monterrey).

Access to information was also enhanced through the use of innovative channels to produce and distribute protection materials. The national HelpDesk received and answered more than 34,000 queries (a 211% increase in the average



Visit to the offices of COMAR in Tapachula, Chiapas.

© UNHCR/Pierre Marc-Rene

attending rate since the establishment of the service in 2020). The *Confía en El Jaguar* (Trust the Jaguar) Facebook page increased its outreach to users by 86% compared to 2021, bringing the total number of users to over 87,000 of whom nearly 50% were women. The *Confía en El Jaguar* Facebook page reaches its audience within the digital community with diverse content through the use of videoblogs, Facebook Lives (six were aired in 2022, reaching over 290,000

viewers), and information cards. The national Help webpage also received more than 211,000 visits in 2022.

Ten short documentaries titled “From refugees to refugees” were produced and shared on UNHCR platforms, where refugees told their life experiences in Mexico. Naturalisation, access to health services, and family reunification were among the topics that generated the most interaction.

Support to the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR)

To enhance COMAR's physical presence in the country and strengthen its technical capacities and efficiency of asylum processing, UNHCR contributed resources to:



Recruit **187 people** and **train 49 staff**.



Purchase five **mobile offices for COMAR**, providing additional interviewing areas.



Purchase **printing and scanning equipment** and stationery – essential tools in the asylum procedure.



Cover **operating expenses** (telecommunication, internet, security, cleaning) for all COMAR offices.



Contract **interpretation services** for asylum interviews.

UNHCR and COMAR have strived to ensure that COMAR's asylum procedures function in a fair and efficient manner through the implementation of streamlined registration procedures and a solid strategy of differentiated case processing modalities, which explains the notable results in terms of admissions and adjudications.

In parallel, UNHCR has been working with COMAR and in cooperation with other governmental institutions such as the Ministry of External Relations (SRE), the National Institute for Migration (INM), and the National Population Registry (RENAPO) on a digital overhaul of COMAR's processing as part of a multi-annual strategy. The "Digital Transformation" includes several main projects, the first being a Verification, Digitization, and Reorganization of all the physical files. The project advanced with impetus in 2022 and was completed in seven offices across the country, allowing the staff in those offices to access the files directly online,

through an interoperability scheme with a new registration and case management system, in fact the second – and more complicated – project of the digital transformation.

Though the new version of COMAR's Registration and Case Management System -"SIRE"- has been three years in the making, in 2022 it entered the implementation phase, first as a pilot in Mexico City and Tapachula (Chiapas), and then in Palenque (Chiapas), Monterrey (Nuevo León) and Tenosique (Tabasco). The system's design simplifies all COMAR processing activities in a modular structure, with a strategic approach to case and identity management. Among the functions introduced are the self-registration and frontloading logic for triaging, the automatic issuance of documentation, access to digitized case files, a self-service module where asylum-seekers can consult the status of their claims online and update their contact information, and the interoperability schemes with other



COMAR staff assist asylum-seekers in Tapachula, Chiapas.

institutions' systems ensuring coherence and efficiency throughout the process, from registration to final decision. The impact of the pilot in Mexico City was immediately visible: waiting times to access the procedure were reduced, mirroring COMAR's increased capacity to register. The national launch of the new case management database is scheduled for 7 February 2023 nationwide.

UNHCR will continue to support the inclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees into the integrated federal civil registry digital identity project, which provides for important protection dividends, such as the immediate restoration of dignity through the recognition of asylum-seekers' identity and

the rights that this recognition entails. This project includes the provision of biometric engines to RENAPO with the objective of fostering a trusted federal – biometrically enabled – identity services provider, which will improve the asylum system's integrity and also simplify access to a variety of services and rights. The first practical application will be a pilot with Banorte for financial inclusion foreseen in the first half of 2023.

UNHCR continues to advocate for the optimization of simplified and efficient processing modalities and for the correct interpretation of Refugee Status Determination (RSD) standards to guarantee the quality of interviews, legal assessments, and the integrity of the asylum system.

Access to legal aid

Through a robust network of 106 lawyers, 58 paralegals and 43 public defenders strategically placed in over 31 cities across the country, UNHCR provided protection counselling, orientation, and legal assistance for people in need of international protection in 2022. UNHCR's objective is to provide individuals with reliable information and tools to make well-informed decisions and mitigate risks associated with perilous journeys, smuggling, or human trafficking.

Legal representation of complex cases is taken on by UNHCR's pro-bono allies, who also provide legal opinions on intricate matters both for UNHCR and its NGO partners - two new

law firms joined UNHCR's network of pro-bono allies in 2022. At the same time, UNHCR works with eight human rights clinics in universities in Guadalajara, Monterrey, Aguascalientes, San Luis Potosí, Mexico City, Puebla, Tabasco, and Queretaro.

In 2022 alone, paralegals and lawyers reached 200,966 people with information and legal advice, ensuring efficient access to asylum or immigration procedures in Mexico.

Paralegals assisted refugees on cases related to access to refugee status; violations of due process and other rights within the framework of the refugee status recognition procedure, detention of asylum-seekers and refugees with documentation, and people in need of international protection at risk of refoulement.

Response to people in detention



454

MONITORING VISITS
of migrant detention centres conducted by UNHCR.



35,149

PEOPLE IN DETENTION
received orientation on their right to request asylum.



516

ASYLUM-SEEKERS
released from detention, including six children (50% from Honduras, 14% from Colombia, and 13% from Cuba).



5,088

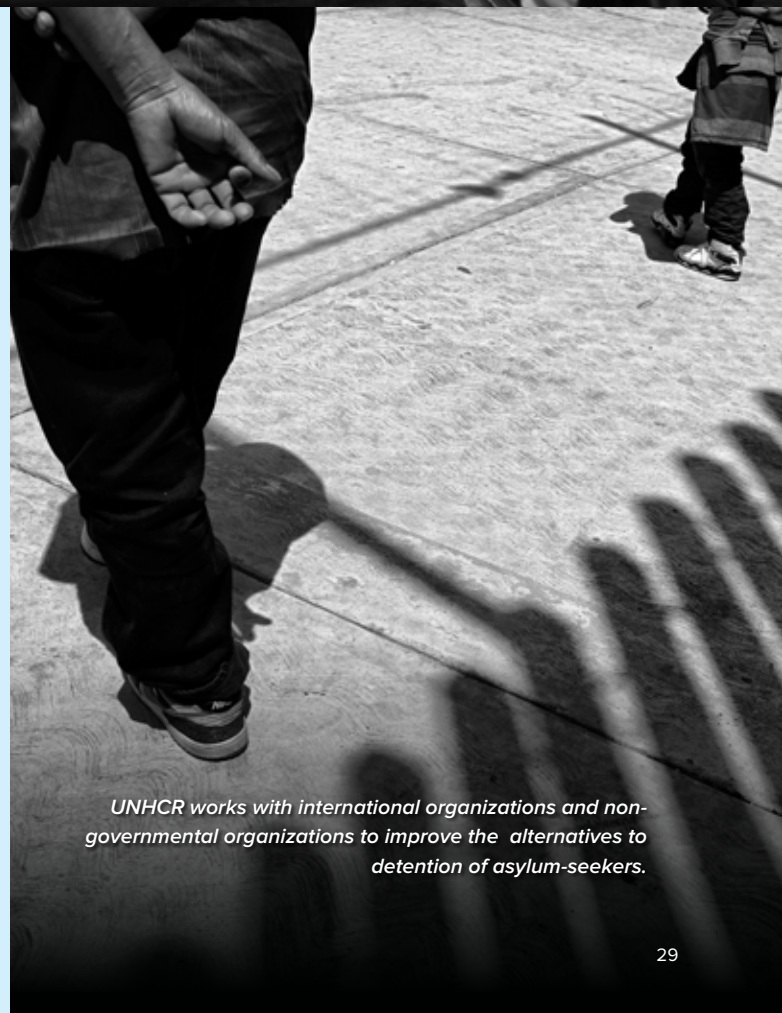
PEOPLE
received legal orientation while in detention.



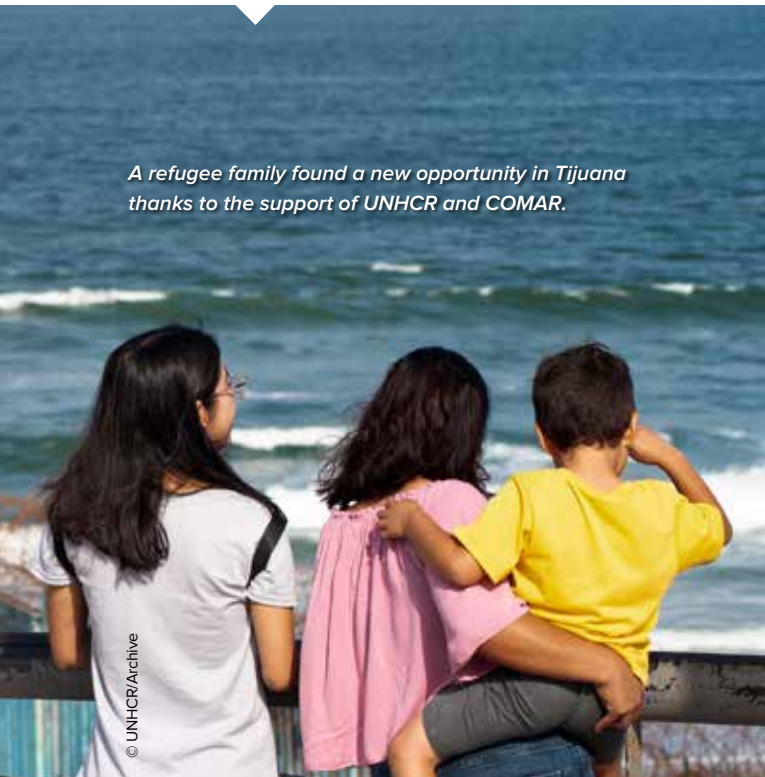
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Legal challenges related to the detention of asylum-seekers in Mexico continue to be a key protection concern. In some cases, immigration detention in Mexico ends in refoulement: in 2022, 31 cases involving 53 refugees and asylum-seekers deported to their country of origin were identified. UNHCR has intervened successfully in several cases with INM.

UNHCR identified certain additional challenges for those in need of international protection, such as the lack of access to immediate documentation, the lack of valid documents for applicants who are in review appeals, annulment of amparo proceedings, lack of clear criteria that allow a person to adequately justify why they did not approach COMAR within the 30-day period stipulated in the legislation, and significant delays in the procedures for recognition of refugee status, among many others.



UNHCR works with international organizations and non-governmental organizations to improve the alternatives to detention of asylum-seekers.



A refugee family found a new opportunity in Tijuana thanks to the support of UNHCR and COMAR.

© UNHCR/Archive



© UNHCR/Pierre Marc-René

Luis Castro arrived in Chiapas in 1981 with his family. He later participated in the restoration work of the archaeological site of Edzná.

Resettlement

Through resettlement, UNHCR finds durable solutions for the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers as per the Global Compact for Refugees, particularly for cases who face protection challenges in the first country of asylum. Thanks to the solidarity of countries such as the U.S., Canada, and Australia, throughout 2022 UNHCR Mexico was able to identify, interview, and submit for consideration 332 persons to be resettled to a third country of asylum, exceeding the expected quota of 330.

Those identified and referred were women and girls at risk (58%), survivors of violence and/or torture (30%), or individuals who had legal and/or physical protection needs (12%). Most of the refugees and asylum-seekers considered for resettlement were from Honduras and Guatemala; 64% were women.

One of Mexico’s archaeological sites in the Yucatan Peninsula is restored with the support of Guatemalan refugees

The ancient Mayan site of Edzná stands out for its greatness in the middle of the jungle; it is one of the most visited tourist attractions in the Yucatan Peninsula. Guatemalan refugees, such as Luis Castro, now 76, participated in its restoration in the 1980s and 1990s.

“I feel at peace, happy because I did a very special job. Thank you for taking us Guatemalans into consideration,” said Luis, who is now a Mexican citizen.

The Civil War in Guatemala in the early 1980s led thousands of Guatemalans to flee their country. Some 46,000 Guatemalans settled in the state of Chiapas, at a time when UNHCR and COMAR started their operations in the country.

Half of the Guatemalan refugees were relocated to the states of Campeche and Quintana Roo, where settlements such as Quetzal Edzná were created. Today, these settlements are towns integrated into the social, political, and economic life of their states.

The Mexican Government, through COMAR and in collaboration with UNHCR, set up livelihood projects, such as Edzná's restoration. **“This was a very innovative experience. Mexicans adapted to work with Guatemalans, and they adapted to the Mexican**

way of working,” said Adriana Velázquez Morlet, Director of the National Institute of Anthropology and History Center in Campeche.

Renee Cuijpers, who worked in the UNHCR office in Campeche at the time and is now UNHCR Mexico's Deputy Representative, said that this project was very important in the integration of Guatemalan refugees in Mexico, who received training, were guided by experts and were able to participate in the restoration process of the archaeological site.

“This is an example of contribution by the refugee community to Mexico,” said Cuijpers.

Archaeological site of Edzná in Campeche.



CHAPTER 4

Reception conditions and access to services with attention to specific needs

In 2022, the capacity of UNHCR and its partners to provide adequate reception conditions and respond to the most basic humanitarian needs of people who have been forced to flee was challenged by limited funding availability and the magnitude and complexity of mixed movements: While the capacity of shelters in Mexico to host and provide protection services across the country was stretched beyond limits, UNHCR's Humanitarian Assistance Programme -which enables the most vulnerable asylum-seekers to cover their basic needs with a cash grant pending a decision on their asylum application-, was also further reduced to cover only 40% of the total number of requests.

To include the perspective of asylum-seekers and refugees in the design of UNHCR's programmes and strategies, participatory assessments were conducted across the country, involving 772 refugees, asylum seekers, and members of host communities, ensuring women, men, children, elderly persons, and all sectors were represented, also people with specific needs such as persons with disabilities and serious medical conditions, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LBGTIQ+), and survivors of gender-based violence, among others. Through these consultations, they were able to express their views on needs, gaps, solutions and actions to be prioritized for UNHCR's 2023 strategy.



Members of Clowns without Borders share a moment with children after their performance in Tamaulipas.

Smiles that last

Amid the difficult living conditions, the uncertainty and, at times, the lack of hope at Mexico's northern border, bringing smiles to faces is not an easy task. But this was no obstacle for *Clowns Without Borders*, a Spanish organization dedicated to creating moments of happiness in complex environments. Invited by UNHCR Mexico as part of a pilot program, they toured 10 shelters in four cities and brought smiles to the faces of more than two thousand people.

“The smiles, the hugs, the kisses - we always take this with us; to see those happy children. It has been proven that this lasts, even if it is one day or one hour, this lasts in time and they remember and dream with red noses”, says Ana Chicana, member of *Clowns Without Borders*.

The shelter Casa Monarca in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, is a place where forcibly displaced people are able to start their integration into the community.

© UNHCR/Stephanie Galeana



Shelters

In Mexico, shelters play a central role in the humanitarian response for people who have been forced to flee and in the delivery of protection services such as accommodation, access to information, assistance to specific needs, legal orientation and advice, medical support, and psychosocial assistance.

To further strengthen protection capacity in shelters, UNHCR designed a tool to evaluate the level of implementation of the minimum standards, which also include protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, prevention of gender-based violence, and child protection, amongst others. Such tools help improve the performance of shelters against identified gaps and provide the necessary support to help them meet the minimum protection standards.

Throughout the year, UNHCR conducted 1,669 monitoring visits to 144 shelters and organized 193 informative talks across 52 shelters, with 5,460 individuals reached.



89

SHELTER STAFF
participated in **22**
training sessions
delivered by UNHCR.



26

shelters supported
with **67 infrastructure**
improvements.



+15,000

PEOPLE

accessed comprehensive
assistance including
adequate housing,
MHPSS, and legal aid
through **20 shelter**
partners.



14,000

PERSONS

received psychosocial
support through shelters
and specialized partners
assisted by UNHCR.

Furthermore, UNHCR supported shelters across the country -mainly run by civil society organisations- with the following distributions:



18,163

cleaning
materials
and personal
protective
equipment
(PPEs).



85,002

hygiene items
(including
personal
hygiene kits,
diapers, and
first aid items).



20,300

domestic
and kitchen
appliances.



7,207

furniture items
(including
beds,
mattresses,
desks, and
chairs).



5

computers
and printing
kits.



80

food
packages.



828

financial and
management
support.

UNHCR actively participated in the discussions of the Interagency Shelter Working Group in 2022, seeking to foster a coordinated response in the different areas of reception and shelter of migrants and people in need of international protection in the country. The Group – which includes the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), IOM, and UNICEF - developed a digital platform to coordinate interventions and support in shelters. The platform systematizes information on the characteristics and needs of each shelter and shares interagency standards for safe shelters and protective spaces. The license of the platform was financed by UNHCR in its first year. In 2022 dedicated working groups on shelter were also established across the northern border in Tijuana (Baja California) and Matamoros (Tamaulipas), as well as in the southern city of Tapachula (Chiapas).



© UNHCR/Ivan Stephens

Refugee children play at the shelter CAFEMIN in Mexico City.

Emergency support to shelters in response to the increase in arrivals from Venezuela

Mexico witnessed a sharp increase in the number of asylum applications filed by Venezuelan nationals following the U.S. Government's official announcement on 12 October related to changes to the applicability of Title 42 foreseeing that Venezuelan nationals who entered the U.S. between ports of entry without authorisation be expelled back to Mexico.¹¹ While thousands of Venezuelan nationals who had aspired to reach Mexico's northern border were stranded across

several cities in Mexico and thousands more were being returned, the need for shelter and other protection services further increased.

In Mexico City, UNHCR participated in the humanitarian response coordinating the activities of approximately 35 civil society organizations, partners, and shelters seeking to assist Venezuelan nationals who were either in transit northwards or expelled back to Mexico under Title 42.

¹¹ See press release of the Department of Homeland Affairs, dated 12 October 2022, available at: <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2022/10/12/dhs-announces-new-migration-enforcement-process-venezuelans>.

As part of the emergency response, from October to December 2022 UNHCR supported 61 shelters throughout the country with the delivery of over 61,000 Non-Food Items (NFIs), as follows: 39,774 NFIs to 39 shelters at the northern border, creating 474 new accommodation spaces; 19,536 NFIs to 8 shelters in Mexico City, creating 195 new accommodation spaces; and 1,699 NFIs to 14 shelters at the southern border, creating a further 1,750 new accommodation spaces.

During the months of October and November, UNHCR delivered 1,300 dormitory supplies, food, and equipment for the reopening of the shelter Arcángel Rafael in the Iztapalapa neighborhood of Mexico City, which has the capacity to host 150 people. In December 2022, security equipment -including video cameras- were installed in four shelters: Casa Monarca in Monterrey (Nuevo León), Casa Peña in Mexico City, ABBA in León (Guanajuato), and J'tatic in Palenque (Chiapas).

Humanitarian Assistance Programme

A total of 16,952 vulnerable asylum seekers in nine locations across the country received Multi-Purpose Cash Grants in 2022 as part of the Humanitarian Assistance Programme. The essential objective of this programme is to allow those considered as most vulnerable to be able to cover their basic needs while they undergo the asylum process, thereby also mitigating the risk of abandonment of their process due to the lack of minimal financial resources. This assistance, which is available for up to four months and subject to monthly in-person verifications, amounted to almost USD \$4 million in 2022.

Following adjustments by UNHCR in the targeting process, a total of 42,461 persons were targeted, with an overall 40% eligibility rate over the year. The post-distribution monitoring confirmed that close to 66% of the asylum-seekers who received this grant were able to cover all or most of their basic needs, 86% accessed the required goods and services, and almost 75% of the respondents reported being very satisfied with the attention received.

UNHCR also resumed the leadership of the Cash-Based Interventions Working Group in 2022 and established a strong, collaborative relationship between Government counterparts and other actors involved in this response. Given the many actors involved, UNHCR also developed an online platform to reduce the risk of duplication of assistance and enhance complementarity in cash-based interventions.



UNHCR staff distributing humanitarian assistance to refugees in Veracruz.

Community-based protection

UNHCR prioritized the effective participation and involvement of refugees and host communities in its programming throughout 2022 by investing in strengthening 41 of its staff's capacity and drafting new operational guidelines on community mobilization to provide technical orientation to thematic focal points. Furthermore, yearly participatory assessments and feedback sessions were conducted with people whom UNHCR serves to integrate their opinions into the Operation's planning exercises. In León and Saltillo, UNHCR supported the establishment of a network of refugees who wished to provide orientation and help to new arrivals, while in Mexico City, UNHCR worked closely with four groups of refugees to seek their feedback on the Operation's strategy and communication materials. Of these, 60% were women. In the southern city of Tapachula, UNHCR also carried

out feedback sessions: amongst the main concerns conveyed by the affected population were of health and accommodation, as well as the long waiting times to which they are subject before COMAR.

As regards Accountability to Affected Population – a central pillar of our work – a complaints and feedback mechanism is in place so that people under UNHCR's mandate can report any concerns, including allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. A total of 818 reports were filed in 2022, primarily to request information or assistance, provide feedback, request a review of decisions on denied cash grants, and flag situations of protection risks and potential cases of misconduct. UNHCR was able to follow up on -and resolve- 66% of the reports received in 2022.



Community-based protection aims to ensure that refugees and host communities participate actively in decisions that affect them.



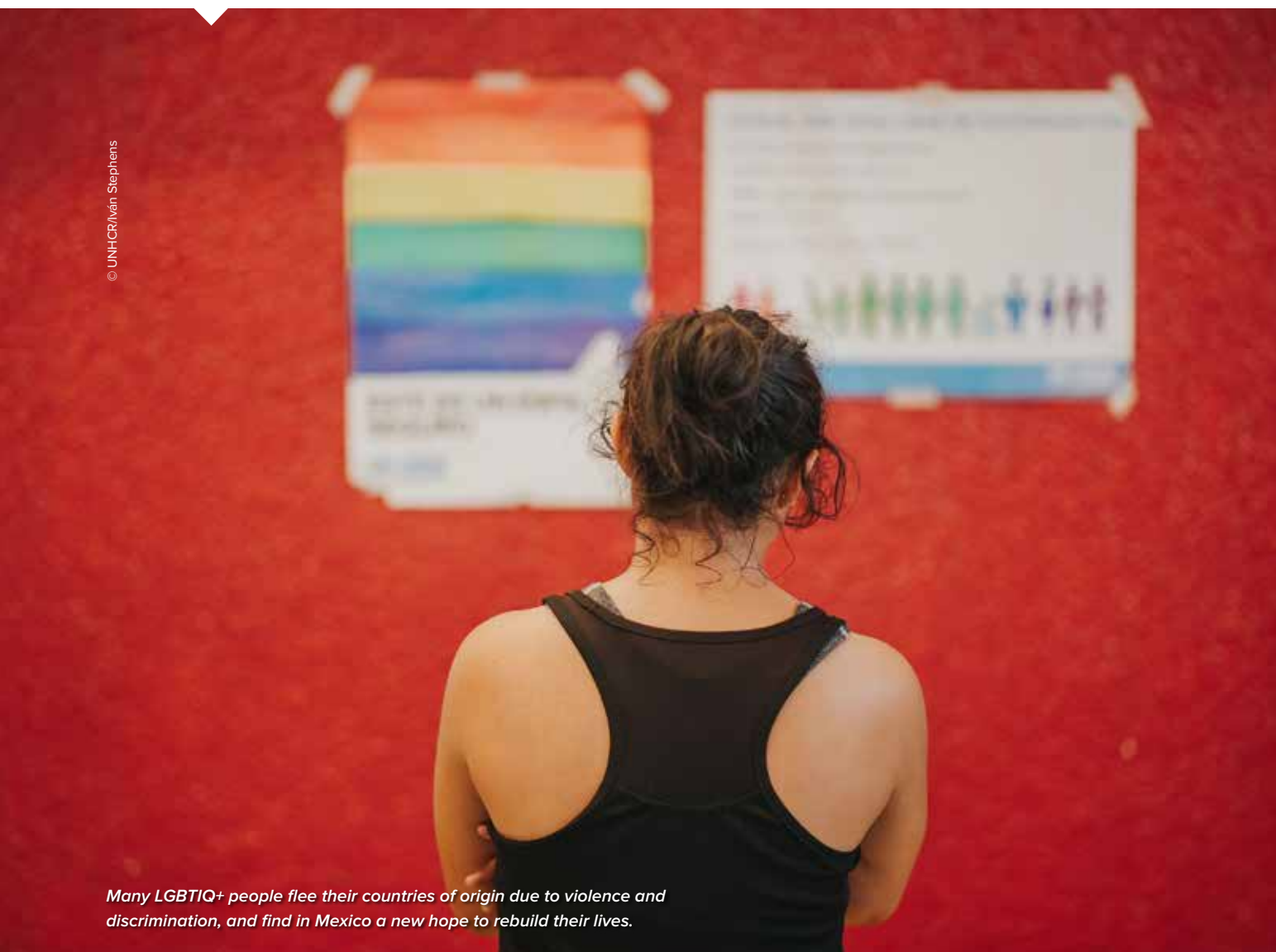
UNHCR works with partners and allies so the LGBTTIQ+ community achieve full integration in Mexico.

Mexico, an air of freedom for a transgender refugee woman from Venezuela

Nickoll was forced to flee Venezuela after she was diagnosed with HIV in the midst of economic and social difficulties that restricted her access to health services and, in her case, to essential treatment to keep her health stable. She fled alone, in her twenties, after her family and those closest to her discriminated against her when she recognized herself as a trans woman.

“When I was five years old, I designed a dress with a sheet.

This was what I felt was happening to me, even if I didn’t understand it. How does a mother and your own family abandon you as a child because of prejudice? I can tell you I’m still broken”, says Nickoll.



Many LGBTIQ+ people flee their countries of origin due to violence and discrimination, and find in Mexico a new hope to rebuild their lives.

Nickoll's story represents that of dozens of LGBTIQ+ people fleeing their countries of origin because of violence and discrimination. Stigma and rejection of LGBTIQ+ individuals make it extremely difficult to get a job, open a bank account, access public health services, and hamper their chances for full integration.

Despite these difficulties, Nickoll has had the support of friends, institutions, partner organizations, and allies of UNHCR that have accompanied her in her asylum and integration

process in Mexico. For example, Clínica Condesa provided her with free health services and access to medical and hormonal treatment. In parallel, Programa Casa Refugiados provided her with guidance on her naturalisation process, her legal change of name and gender, and humanitarian economic assistance.

Five years after being recognized as a refugee, Nickoll now works in Mexico City for a global non-profit organization that provides HIV/AIDS medicine free of charge, advocacy, and referrals to health services.



UNHCR works with national authorities and other international organizations to assist, protect, and find durable solutions for children forcibly displaced.

Child Protection

In 2022, UNHCR -in coordination with UNICEF- made significant efforts to strengthen the inclusion of refugee children in the national child protection system and ensure timely and comprehensive protection responses, improving reception conditions and access to asylum, and advocating for the implementation of the legal reforms that aim at eradicating child detention in the migratory context.

The European Union project “*EU Global promotion of best practices for children in migration*” played a key role in supporting

these efforts. UNHCR provided temporary staffing support, technical assistance, and on-the-job training to Child Protection Authorities. Furthermore, UNHCR partnered with three specialized NGOs to provide alternative care for asylum-seeking and refugee children, and with Save the Children to provide specialized case management services, implement psychosocial, recreational, and educational activities in child-friendly safe spaces, support school enrolment, implement peaceful coexistence activities and provide positive parenting techniques to prevent violence in the family.

UNHCR continued to provide technical assistance to Child Protection Authorities for the implementation of the mechanism in Tijuana for the transfer of unaccompanied children for whom accessing the U.S. protection system was determined to be in their best interest. UNHCR also led the interagency advocacy efforts with UNICEF for its expansion to Ciudad Juárez: 23

children were processed and had access to the U.S. child protection system and family reunification in 2022. In terms of inter-agency collaboration, UNHCR developed a work plan with UNICEF and co-lead the Child Protection Sub-Group with UNICEF. UNHCR worked with four specialized partners on child protection: Save the Children, SOS Children’s Villages, Covenant House, and JUCONI.

Working with Child Protection Authorities and partners



2,161

PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

provided with positive parenting and care techniques.



8,529

CHILDREN

supported by additional staff provided to Child Protection Authorities, referring 38% of them to asylum procedures and/or temporary immigration status to prevent refoulement.



909

GOVERNMENT, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND UNHCR STAFF

trained on refugee child protection.



© UNHCR/Diego Menabrito

Local and refugee children play together during the World Refugee Day in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon.

Preventing, mitigating, and responding to gender-based violence

871
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE RISK MITIGATION ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN, such as delivery of dignity kits and service maps.

1,058
PEOPLE sensitised on gender-based violence prevention.

Gender-based violence prevention and response was strengthened in 2022 through capacity building and coordination with partners, increasing community awareness and reducing the risk of gender-based violence, particularly in shelters. Specialized partners undertook training sessions and participated in sensitization activities on gender-based violence prevention, including talks on human rights, conflict resolution, positive child-rearing, and gender-based violence specifically.

In terms of risk mitigation, UNHCR increased awareness of gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive rights and distributed menstrual hygiene dignity kits. UNHCR continued to respond to reported incidents

of gender-based violence through UNHCR's specialized partners (*Médicos del Mundo*, ALPAZ, DHIA, and HIAS) who provided a quality response to survivors of gender-based violence. UNHCR and partners increased access to services by 44.5% in 2022 and survivors expressed an overall 86% satisfaction with the services they accessed.

In terms of protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, all 38 UNHCR partners were evaluated according to Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) standards in 2022, with close follow-up made on any partner that had demonstrated low capacity. Jointly with UNFPA, UNHCR co-led the interagency Sub-Group on gender-based violence.



Two refugee children paint a community banner during World Refugee Day activities in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon.



UNHCR works to provide shelter, food, water and medical assistance, taking into special consideration the specific protection needs of forcibly displaced people.

Assisting persons with specific protection needs



14,335

PEOPLE WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS

received mental health and psychosocial support.



93

INDIVIDUALS

chose to relocate with UNHCR support for protection or health reasons. 69% of these relocations involved women at risk, and 16% LGBTQI+ persons at risk.



18

PERSONS WITH DISABILITY

supported through the Local Integration Programme (11 relocated and seven identified *in-situ*).

In addition to the participatory assessments undertaken to include the views of people with specific needs within UNHCR’s programming, two key achievements can be highlighted: the creation of a roadmap for the relocation of persons with disabilities to the center of the

country to promote their full social and economic inclusion; and the provision of mental health and psychosocial support services to foster long-term recovery for persons who experienced trauma during their journeys or once arrived in Mexico.

CHAPTER 5

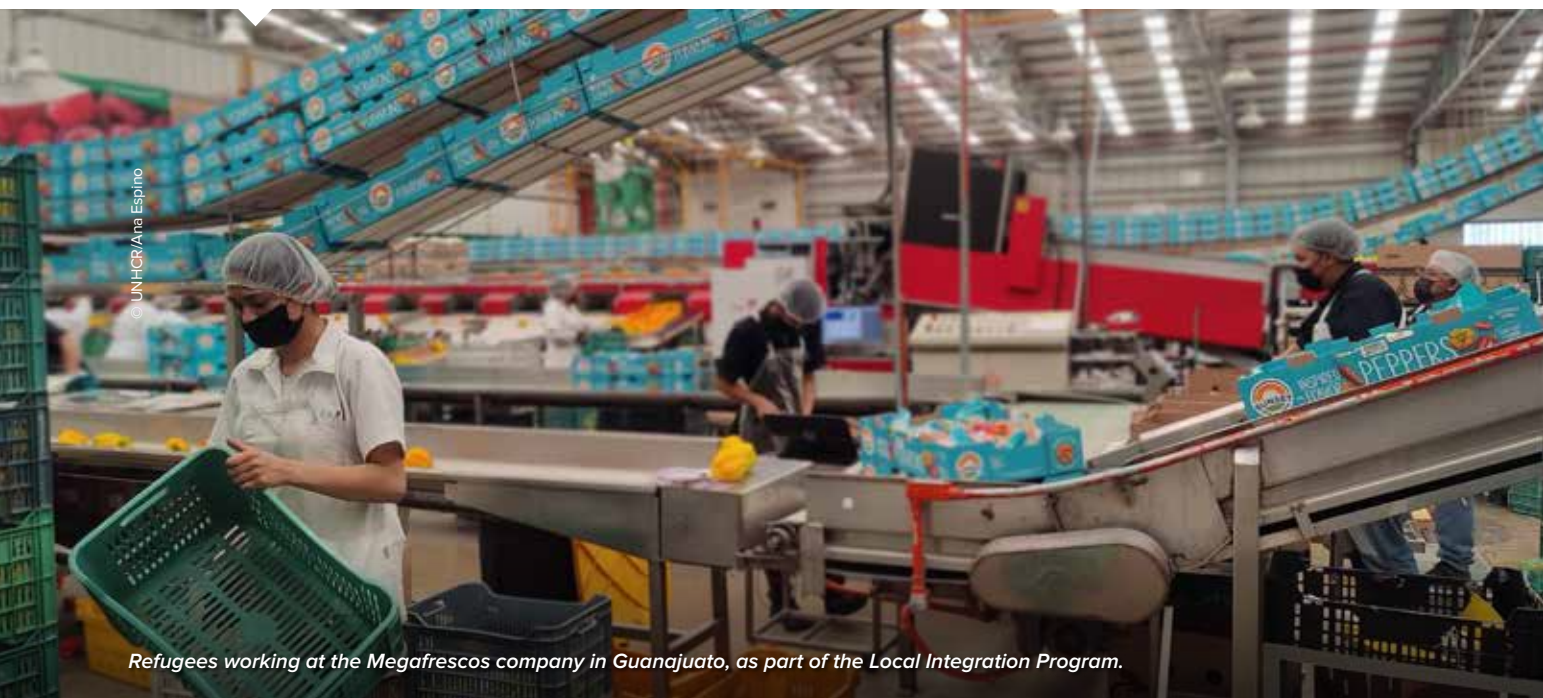
Sustainable solutions for refugees

In 2022, UNHCR Mexico implemented 121,646 durable solution interventions ranging from access to documentation, job placement, school enrolment, and across the integration path up to naturalisation, supporting almost 43,600 refugees and asylum seekers in their local communities across 15 states.¹²

In addition, to the support provided to recognized refugees and people with complementary protection granted by COMAR within the Local Integration Programme,

UNHCR also increased its efforts to engage several financial institutions to promote financial inclusion. UNHCR established a formal dialogue with several banks such as BBVA, Santander, HSBC, Scotiabank, and CitiBanamex to advocate for the opening of bank accounts for refugees, addressing the barriers to financial inclusion. The World Bank office in Mexico also engaged with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to articulate the business case and demonstrate the economic benefits of financial inclusion.

¹² Aguascalientes, Baja California, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Ciudad de México, Coahuila, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Querétaro, Quintana Roo, Nuevo León, Puebla, San Luis Potosí, Tabasco, and Veracruz



Refugees working at the Megafrescos company in Guanajuato, as part of the Local Integration Program.

Local Integration Programme: relocation and integration, and *in-situ* integration

UNHCR continues to promote and support the integration of thousands of recognized refugees through their relocation to 11 cities across central and northern parts of the country with increased prospects of formal employment. Once relocated, UNHCR accompanies those part of the Local Integration Programme (PIL) to access employment, housing, education and health services, among others. All this aiming at “total integration” as a public official mentioned in one of the locations of integration.

In 2022 alone, over 12,000 refugees chose to

be supported with relocation and integration assistance from UNHCR’s PIL – the highest number supported in a year to date. Since its inception in 2016, over 29,000 people have chosen to receive relocation and integration support through the PIL an additional 70,000 individuals have been assisted with *in-situ* integration for those who wished to remain in the localities where they initiated asylum procedures with COMAR.¹³ UNHCR has cooperation agreements with federal and state authorities, employment offices, and over 500 private companies willing to hire refugees.¹⁴

¹³ Ten teams provided local integration and protection support (EAPI) through home visits and counselling sessions for populations *in-situ* in Mexico City, Tapachula, Tuxtla and Palenque (in Chiapas), Tenosique and Villahermosa (in Tabasco), Acayucan (Veracruz), and in Tijuana and Mexicali (Baja California). The teams conducted 8,403 interviews, targeting 13,233 asylum seekers and refugees, in order to identify protection needs and monitor local integration processes, referring people to relevant services and programmes where necessary.

¹⁴ These include Mabe, Kolon, Kimberly-Clark, Palliser, Lennox, General Motors, Femsas, Hyatt, Home Depot, Soriana, Holiday Inn, Nissan, Exxon Mobil, Uber, Procter & Gamble, Lear, Faurecia, Amazon, and Lego and many others.

Of those who took part in the PIL in 2022, over 1,000 individuals were part of the Relocation Pilot for Haitians implemented in coordination with IOM, and 37 people were internally displaced persons who accessed the

programme within the framework of the pilot projects agreed upon with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Interior. The latter is a pilot initiative that might be extended as a durable solution for those internally displaced.

Refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and locals participate in a tailoring workshop with sewing machines donated by UNHCR at Territorio Joven in Tapachula.





Violeta and her family find protection in one of the UNHCR-funded shelters in southern Mexico.

Education

In line with its [2030 Education Strategy](#), UNHCR and its partners continued to promote the school enrolment of children asylum-seekers and refugees. Over 3,000 children were supported by UNHCR to cover education-related costs throughout the year. 2022 also marked the third year of implementation of the *Educate A Child* project to promote the school enrolment of out-of-school children in primary education and their retention in schools. Project interventions included the provision of financial assistance to refugee students, including over-aged learners, the renovation and refurbishment of educational infrastructure, and training and sensitization sessions for teachers. An innovative awareness-raising and sensitization campaign was developed under the Educate A Child project, in coordination

with COMAR and the Ministry of Public Education with the Mexican Radio Institute (IMER). Jointly UNHCR and IMER developed radio spots nationwide, sharing messages on the right to education of refugee children.

In 2022, UNHCR Mexico granted 15 new scholarships under the Global Albert Einstein German Academic Initiative (DAFI) University Scholarship Programme (reaching a total of 52 DAFI students) and celebrated the graduation of 14 DAFI students in the course of the year. Additionally, UNHCR supported another 161 students within tertiary education programmes, including 39 students who were connected to university programs by UNHCR's partner Habesha. 22 higher education refugee students also graduated in 2022.



Raybeli is a beneficiary of the DAFI Scholarship Program, which allows her to continue her higher education in Mexico.

30 years of DAFI. Impact of scholarship programmes for refugees

The DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Initiative) University Scholarship Programme for Refugees, funded by the German government, commemorated 30 years of supporting the education of thousands of scholarship recipients in Mexico.

The DAFI program is a pillar of UNHCR's strategy to ensure that 15% of refugee youth pursue higher education by 2030. 25 universities in Mexico participate in the DAFI Initiative, hosting 52 refugee students (22 men and 30 women) from Venezuela, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Colombia, and Nicaragua.

Raybeli Castellano, 27, is one of the scholarship recipients. She recalls that in 2018, she arrived alone in Mexico leaving behind her family in Venezuela.

“I came with dreams, hopes, and I knew there was help from UNHCR. In 2020, I started studying international business at UNITEC, but in 2021 I became unemployed. I came to UNHCR, and thanks to the scholarship they granted, I am two semesters away from finishing. Without the UNHCR scholarship, my studies and my dreams would be on pause”.

Naturalisation and family reunification



181

PEOPLE

submitted their request for **naturalisation** to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the support of UNHCR and its partners.

With the reinstatement of the naturalisation procedure by the Mexican Government following its suspension since the onset of the pandemic, nearly 200 refugees submitted their request for naturalisation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the support of UNHCR and its partners. UNHCR also assisted refugees in their naturalisation processes during 2022 through cash grants to cover the naturalisation fees, as well as the travel costs to Mexico City for refugees living in other parts of the country. In the last quarter of the year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs opened four offices in the cities of Monterrey (Nuevo León), Mérida (Yucatán), Puebla (Puebla) and Pachuca (Hidalgo), and established online processes aimed at removing some of the practical challenges identified in the submission of the naturalisation requests. UNHCR collaborated closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to address the requests of hundreds of refugees who met the criteria and were interested in initiating their naturalisation process.

UNHCR also continued to provide information on family reunification and supported legal partners and the Federal Institute of Public Defense



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supported with **cash grants** for naturalisation.

(IFDP), playing a key role in the accompaniment of refugees in their family reunification processes. UNHCR worked with global partner Miles4Migrants and, in close coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, supported two vulnerable cases involving unaccompanied children. The cases involved the reunification of two Haitian girls of seven and four years of age with their families after being stranded in the Dominican Republic due to visa complications, and a case of three Haitian adolescents (two girls and a boy) who were reunited with their family in Mexico.



UNHCR team provides assistance to asylum-seekers in Tijuana, Baja California.

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CHAPTER 6

Peaceful coexistence

To promote peaceful coexistence and understanding between local communities and those forced to flee, UNHCR refurbished nine community centers throughout the country, supported 17 refugee-led initiatives that promote dialogue and community-building with local populations, and supported 62 awareness-raising and sports activities that build understanding between local communities and persons in human mobility.

A new working group was established, bringing together the National Council to Prevent Discrimination (CONAPRED), COMAR, and UNHCR. The group created the “*Jornadas*” for Inclusion and Non-Discrimination”, where a series of joint activities were carried out in seven localities where incidences of discrimination and xenophobia were reported -Apizaco, Tenosique,

Palenque, Guadalajara, Tijuana, Mexicali and Tapachula. Activities included focus group discussions, promoting dialogue with local and refugee populations, meetings with local authorities to raise awareness on the importance of promoting inclusion, trainings to prevent racial profiling with 200 local authorities including police, health and education officers, and cinema debates and sports rallies between local communities and refugee population that brought together more than 220 participants.

In Tapachula, UNHCR continued to support the infrastructure of *Territorio Joven*, a public youth space managed by the Youth Secretariat of the Tapachula City Council. These improvements foster a conducive environment for dialogue, play, and activities that bring together refugees and local communities.

The Suchiate River is one of the main routes of entrance to Mexico for thousands of Central Americans fleeing their homes due to violence.



Humanitarian-development Nexus

Despite Mexico's increasing level of development, large regional disparities persist, with significant gaps in the south and southeast of the country. Chiapas is among the four states in Mexico with the lowest levels of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita and schooling in the country, in addition to having one of the highest percentages of people living in poverty. In Tapachula, a city of 340,000 inhabitants, 54% of the population lives in poverty, while 12% lives in extreme poverty.

Additional pressure has been placed on local systems and social services by the large number of refugees and migrants entering Mexico through the southern border. The substantial increase in mixed movements to Mexico since 2021 and the growing number of asylum requests -75% of which were presented in Chiapas in 2022, mainly in the city of Tapachula -, prolong

waiting times for asylum-seekers who may not leave the state of Chiapas until their request has been processed and therefore generate extraordinary and long-lasting pressure on health and education services and saturate the labour market in Chiapas. In 2021, only 40% of migrants and 37% of refugees in Tapachula were employed.

Moreover, while the host population in Tapachula has been generally receptive to new arrivals, supported in great measure by positive messages from the local administration, tensions and situations of xenophobia have increased in recent years, requiring interventions that promote peaceful coexistence and win-win solutions that can reach the most vulnerable populations, be they local or on the move.

Considering these challenges, the United Nations Country Team, together with the Municipality of Tapachula, have developed a set of coordinated actions and proposals for technical assistance to support the humanitarian- development nexus. **The Tapachula Area-Based Approach (or otherwise known as ABA Tapachula) is a solutions strategy that addresses the humanitarian and development needs of the refugee, migrant, and local populations, considering long-term impact of interventions to support local systems and build their resilience and ability to manage the growing population in the South.** The territorial approach is in line with the 2020-2025 Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework between the Mexican Government and the UN, and the UN's 2021 *Plan de Desarrollo Integral* for Central America and southern Mexico.

An interagency working group bringing together 10 UN Agencies and the Office of the Resident Coordinator was established in April 2022 with a view to develop the ABA Tapachula initiative. In October, the municipality of Tapachula hosted a workshop with the participation of NGOs, UN agencies and government representatives to decide on joint project proposals in line with the 5 priority areas defined under the ABA initiative, namely improving reception conditions, supporting health, education and labour inclusion, and fostering social cohesion. In December, the municipality jointly with the interagency working group invited embassies based in Mexico and international development actors to Tapachula to discuss 13 project proposals that had been developed for the five thematic areas. The event provided an opportunity to generate interest from donors to support the projects.

UNHCR, GIZ, the municipality of Tapachula and the local community painted a mural to promote the coexistence of the local and refugee communities.



Supporting communities *The Club Unión* in Nuevo León

Sports clubs play a vital role in the social fabric of northern Mexico, enthusing youths and bringing together crowds for sports events. Capitalising on this passion for sports, UNHCR partnered with sports clubs to promote the cause of refugees and raise awareness and bring communities together. In 2022, the main football, basketball, and baseball clubs of Nuevo León - Fuerza Regia, Rayados, Tigres, Sultanes, and Powerchair -, joined UNHCR to promote an awareness campaign called *Un Solo Equipo: El “Club Unión”*. The Club shares information and raises awareness among the local population in Nuevo León on refugee issues and reduces negative

attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers.

Jointly with partner *Vía Educación*, UNHCR undertook peaceful coexistence and community-based initiatives in the north, including dance workshops, sporting events, cultural events, and awareness campaigns on the plight of refugees. These initiatives brought together academia, the private sector, government, and civil society organizations, together with 1,187 people who had been forced to flee and who participated alongside 699 individuals from host communities. In 2023 UNHCR will seek to expand the campaign beyond the state of Nuevo León.



In October, Powerchair Mexico teamed up with UNHCR to include refugees and represent The Club Unión.

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Fostering employment and livelihoods in Tapachula (Chiapas)

Regular engagement with authorities, local communities, asylum-seekers and refugees in Tapachula has made clear the challenges faced by all to obtain formal employment. As a response, UNHCR and the International Labour Organization (ILO) joined forces to support the National Employment Service (SNE) office in Tapachula. The new SNE office opened in August 2022 following its expansion and refurbishment under a European Union-funded project, “Promotion of Employment and Social Protection within the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework in Central America and Mexico”.

Since 2018, the SNE in Tapachula has assisted asylum-seekers and refugees by linking them to formal employment and collaborating with

UNHCR to promote their right to decent work, providing spaces for participation in monthly discussions with personnel from Human Resources departments and unions in Tapachula. The 2022 renovation of the SNE offices included the refurbishment of the waiting area for 35 people, 11 work cubicles for individual attention, three administration cubicles, a management office, a meeting room, a child-care area, a room for capacity building, a computer room to facilitate the search for job opportunities, bathrooms for users and adaptations in the access ramp and inclusive bathrooms for people with disabilities and job seekers with children. The project also provided new furniture, computer, and audio-visual equipment to facilitate job searching.





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Refugee musicians were part of the Palomazo for Refugees 2022.



PALOMAZO
por los Refugiados
2022



Promoting inclusion through information, communication, and awareness raising

Refugees join famous artists in the 2022 Palomazo edition

For the third year in a row, UNHCR organized the event *Palomazo for Refugees*, a 60-minute audiovisual piece that brought together famous rock and jarocho artists who shared the stage with refugee musicians. In Mexican popular culture, a “palomazo” is a jam session or an impromptu get-together by a group of friends or musicians who play songs together. In 2022, UNHCR was thrilled to work with artists **Andrea Echeverri, Rubén Albarrán, Vivir Quintana, Ximbo, Leiden and the group Caña Dulce, Caña Brava** who performed popular Latin American songs such as *La*

Llorona and *Guantanamera*. They played alongside young Venezuelan refugee Sayd Hortúa, a violin student and DAFI scholarship holder; Venezuelan singer Laura Pérez; and Colombian duet **Los Folkólor**, whose performance conveyed messages on the need for more empathy and understanding towards refugees. As in previous years, UNHCR partnered with W Radio -one of the most important radio stations in Mexico– to broadcast the *Palomazo*, and was also aired on UNHCR’s social media platforms.

CHAPTER 7

Internal Displacement

According to the 2020 census conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), approximately 286,000 people were displaced from their municipality or state of origin in the last five years due to violence, criminal insecurity, or disasters. Citing additional numbers from monitoring by the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights, 379,322 people have been internally displaced in mass events due to violence between 2006 to 2021.

The States are primarily responsible for providing protection, assistance and solutions for internally

displaced persons (IDPs). Therefore, the international community -including UN Agencies- have only a complementary role. Within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), UNHCR leads the global protection cluster. Therefore, in line with its global protection responsibility for IDPs, UNHCR has been working with the Government on five main axes of response since 2019: (i) technical assistance for a legal and public policy framework; (ii) information management; (iii) capacity building; (iv) coordination with UN agencies and international stakeholders and (v) promoting operational responses.



UNHCR works to protect internally displaced people, providing assistance and helping identify solutions for displaced communities.

© UNHCR/Jeoffrey Guillemard

In 2022, through the Interagency Working Group on IDPs, UNHCR and ICRC coordinated the production of a Manual on Internal Displacement for the Supreme Court of Justice¹⁵. The Manual -the first of its kind at the regional level- is a tool to help justice operators find the most relevant standards to guarantee and implement the rights of IDPs. As additional capacity-building interventions, UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior's Migration Policy Unit (UPMRIP) produced an analysis of the regulatory and public policy framework in Mexico¹⁶ to support the Government in the design of comprehensive assistance routes and protection mechanisms for IDPs at the federal level. As a follow-up, UPMRIP and UNHCR held a workshop in August with 41 authorities to introduce the report and discuss proposals to advance its findings.

The Working Group on IDPs, co-led by UNHCR, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and IOM, developed its terms of reference and a work plan for the year, which included the first-ever Interagency Course of the United Nations System and the ICRC on Internal Displacement for officials at the federal and local levels, IDPs, civil society, academy, and private sector representatives. Also, UNHCR coordinated comments by UN Agencies on the draft laws on IDPs proposed by the states of Michoacan and Estado de México.

UPMRIP, UNHCR, OHCHR, IOM, ICRC, and the Joint Internal Displacement Profiling Service (JIPS) organized a workshop with 70 federal authorities with the attendance of authorities also from the

¹⁵ <https://www.scjn.gob.mx/derechos-humanos/sites/default/files/Publicaciones/archivos/2022-06/Manual%20sobre%20desplazamiento%20interno.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://portales.segob.gob.mx/work/models/PoliticaMigratoria/CPM/DFI/biblioteca/bd/90.pdf>

states of Chiapas, Chihuahua, Guerrero, Michoacán, Sinaloa, and Zacatecas to discuss methodologies to generate official data on internal displacement – which does not currently exist. As a follow-up to the workshop, UPMRIP requested support from UNHCR to work with various data initiatives during 2023. During 2022, UNHCR scaled up its presence on internal displacement matters to the states of Chihuahua, Michoacán, and Sinaloa.

In Chihuahua, UNHCR continued to facilitate the coordination of the Working Group of the Profiling Exercise. The group successfully collected quantitative and qualitative data, provided data analysis, and jointly revised the findings. Preliminary results have already been considered for the 2023

State Budget, and IDPs were included in the State Development Plan.

In Michoacán, UNHCR collaborated with the Government to organise seven dialogue tables with 17 institutions and civil society members of the Inter-Institutional Committee for Attention of Internal Displacement, to consolidate the Law initiative.

In Sinaloa, UNHCR provided technical assistance to the Government of Sinaloa with the IDP registration tool and UNHCR supported the government in the design of a participatory methodology for the collection of inputs to inform the development of adequate regulation and an accompanying protocol to effectively implement the 2020 IDP law of Sinaloa.



UNHCR works to strengthen United Nations response to internal displacement.



Elba presents the book “From Our Table to Yours: Fusion Cuisine” at the Guadalajara International Book Fair 2022.

International Book Fair of Guadalajara features refugee chefs from across the region with a book of fusion cuisine

The Guadalajara International Book Fair, one of the largest in the world, was the venue for the presentation of *“From Our Table to Yours: Fusion Cuisine”*, a book produced by UNHCR that contains stories and recipes of refugee chefs and forcibly displaced persons from Latin America and the Caribbean. Through their dishes, the chefs share stories about their countries of origin and recount their personal journeys that led them to the world of food and gastronomy. The common thread for the chefs featured in the book is that food brings communities together and acts as a bond with the communities that host them.

Elba and Dayana Andara are sisters and refugees from Venezuela. They now live in Puebla and share a passion for gastronomy. The sisters play the leading role in the Mexico chapter of the book and

were invited by UNHCR to present the book in the international cuisine area of the Fair.

Elba and Dayana shared the secrets of their Venezuela-Mexico fusion recipes and talked about their integration process, and the opportunities for social and economic growth they enjoyed when they started a gourmet food and jam business thanks to the support of a programme to strengthen local entrepreneurship by the State of Puebla with the accompaniment of UNHCR.

“When you cook for someone, you are giving them a little bit of your heart, it is a sign of love. With the support we received, we offer better quality products and in larger quantities; I hope to soon be able to consolidate my business to keep sharing a little bit of my country”, said Elba to the crowd.



© UNHCR/Mark Henley

The High Commissioner's Dialogue is a biennial event which enables a lively and informal discussion on new or emerging global protection issues.

Looking ahead into 2023 with the Global Refugee Forum

The second Global Refugee Forum will take place in Geneva, Switzerland, from 13- 15 December 2023. The GRF is the world's largest international gathering on refugees. It was first launched by UNHCR in 2019 as a platform to be held every four years to advance the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees. Hosted by Switzerland and UNHCR, the second Forum will be co-convened by UNHCR and six states -Colombia, France, Japan, Jordan, Niger, and Uganda.

At the first Forum in 2019, states, organizations, and other stakeholders globally produced more than 1,600 practical pledges in support of refugees

in areas, from job creation to education, protection, clean energy, and social inclusion. The second forum will focus on the practical implementation of existing and new pledges with a view to “make real and transformational improvements for refugees and host communities”, according to the co-conveners. In Mexico, preparations for the Forum have begun through the preparation of a roadmap that foresees a follow-up on the 2019 pledges and the identification of new, practical and measurable pledges focused on access to asylum, socioeconomic and labor inclusion, and improved reception conditions for refugees, asylum-seekers and host communities.



Katherine, DAFI scholar, at Territorio Joven, a space where the local and refugee community meets to work on common projects for their development and integration in Tapachula, Chiapas.

UNHCR is grateful for the generous support provided by donors globally, as well as those who contributed with earmarked and unearmarked funds to Mexico Operation and its programs in 2022



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2022 Highlights UNHCR Mexico

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Thanks to the support of local programs and the assistance of UNHCR, Elba, a Venezuelan refugee in Puebla, expanded her business and with is sharing her “Frasquitos de Felicidad” with her community.

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