



UNHCR

The UN Refugee Agency



UNHCR MEXICO

Operational Update

N. 4 | JANUARY – JUNE 2023

KEY FIGURES

ACCESS TO TERRITORY, INFORMATION AND ASYLUM PROCEDURES



A total of **76,853** people have sought asylum in Mexico in 2023 as of June 30. This includes **29,924** new individual asylum applications from **Haitians**, followed by **18,671** applications from **Hondurans**, **5,577** applications from **Cubans**, and **3,737** applications from **Venezuelans**.

RECEPTION CONDITIONS AND ACCESS TO SERVICES WITH ATTENTION TO SPECIFIC NEEDS



So far in 2023, **8,148** individuals have been assisted through cash-based interventions and multi-purpose cash grants as part of UNHCR's Humanitarian Assistance Programme.



128,208 NFI items were distributed across **69** shelters in Mexico by UNHCR and partners.

ENSURING SUSTAINABLE INTEGRATION



So far in **2023**, **2,836** persons were relocated, including 2,337 refugees with Permanent Residence Permits.



In May, **41 refugees** submitted their naturalization requests before the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the support of UNHCR and partners. So far this year, **213 people** have completed their naturalization process.

FUNDING



22% of UNHCR's financial requirements for Mexico received by 31 May.

HUMAN MOBILITY AND ASYLUM TRENDS

By the end of June 2023, Mexico received **76,853** asylum applications since the start of the year. This figure not only surpasses the total number of asylum claims during the same 6-month period in 2022 by more than **18,000** but also surpasses the total number of claims during the corresponding period in 2021 by more than **25,000**. In May 2023, Mexico registered a record high of **14,840** new individual asylum applications. There has been a notable increase in asylum claims from Haitian and Honduran nationals. As of June 2023, **Haitian nationals and their dependents** were the most represented nationality among the asylum-seeking population, comprising **39% of all claims**.





The arrival of people on the move across **southern Mexico** was particularly noticeable at the main entry point into Mexico, the border town of Tapachula. In January alone, over **21,500** people registered for an appointment with COMAR with an increase in new arrivals from Cuba throughout the first semester. Additionally, large groups were also seen in Palenque (Chiapas) and Tenosique (Tabasco), particularly in March. It is important to note that although many people registered for an appointment with COMAR, a large proportion have not attended their appointments. The “no show” rate ranged from **58 to 77 percent** during the first semester of 2023.

At the **northern border** of Mexico, substantial changes to U.S. policies have contributed to shifting dynamics. When the U.S. Government announced the lifting of Title 42 restrictions for May 12, 2023, many expected an increase in the number of refugees and migrants arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border. In preparation for the lifting since the beginning of the year, the Biden administration has implemented a series of initiatives for asylum seekers and migrants to access U.S.

territory and legal pathways, which while welcomed by UNHCR also came with further restrictions on access to the U.S. asylum system.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency introduced access to the CBP One app, allowing individuals to request appointments for exceptions to Title 42. When Title 42 lifted, the app began to serve as a scheduling tool for individual asylum-seekers and migrants seeking entry into the United States at a port of entry. Although the capacity for accessing appointments through the app has slowly increased, the rollout of the app has led to frustration over long waiting times. The limited number of available appointments through the app have not met the high demand from the thousands of people who were already waiting at border cities for months at a time.

After May 12, CBP has also accepted people walking up to ports of entry to access asylum, but access has varied by port and related capacities. As such, Mexican authorities, shelters and civil society organizations have managed unofficial “entry lists,” prioritizing

individuals for crossing but without a common understanding of the eligibility criteria.

Shelters across the country continue to operate near or at full capacity, although occupancy rates are constantly in flux. **Informal settlements are widespread**, particularly in cities like Matamoros and Reynosa, as well as some other locations. Informal settlements raise grave protection concerns for the people living there, including security, access to WASH, overall living conditions, and risk of infectious disease. Organized crime poses a serious protection risk in all informal settlements. In Matamoros, members of organized crime groups have been charging money for access to the camp, threatening and burning tents, and perpetrating physical and sexual violence.

Mexico City continues to face an unprecedented situation regarding population movements. From January to June 2023, **24 percent** of all asylum applications were filed at the COMAR Delegation in Mexico City, which amounts to nearly **18,000** asylum claims. Throughout the first semester of 2023, civil society shelters remained at or above their maximum capacity, with some operating at **300 percent** over their adequate care capacity. This has led to changes in their care model and created various protection

challenges, including security incidents and conflicts among the housed population and with neighbors. A government shelter opened in Tláhuac in late March, with an initial planned capacity of 150 people. Within weeks, it housed over 700 individuals, mostly Haitian families, and by mid-May, the number grew to over 5,000 people living in deplorable conditions and without access to basic services, like clean water or sanitation. The shelter closed in mid-May, and INM (National Migration Institute) transported the housed population to various cities in the central part of the country. The shelter later reopened with more accommodation space and control over the number of people. Another ongoing challenge for UNHCR is the provision of information to ensure that individuals can make informed decisions. UNHCR's Communications with Communities team has produced informative materials about asylum procedures in Mexico, CBP One, and other forms of regularization, which are shared widely with organizations in Mexico City. Furthermore, UNHCR's partner, *Programa Casa Refugiados*, established a permanent protection desk in Tláhuac, and UNHCR has increased the number of paralegals in the city to provide increased access to information and guidance at key locations, like shelters, bus terminals, and outside the offices of COMAR.



UNHCR HIGHLIGHTS



World Refugee Day.

UNHCR commemorates

the strength, courage and perseverance of millions of refugees during the month of June for World Refugee Day (WRD) through a series of activities in southern, central, and northern Mexico.



Southern Mexico:

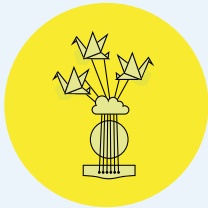
UNHCR, in partnership with the Tapachula City Council, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and Proyecto Perla, jointly organized two showings of the theatre play “Small and Extraordinary Things,” including one specially arranged for schools and another open to the public. In total, 1,524 people saw the play, which encourages viewers to reflect on the plight of people forced to flee their homes. In addition, UNHCR and the Tapachula Secretary of Culture organized a conversation with the actors of the play about how artistic expression can serve as a tool to raise awareness and promote social transformation. In Palenque, UNHCR held a community fair, which included awareness-raising workshops on the basic principles of international protection for 45 leaders in the PakalNa neighbourhood, and unveiled a colorful sign with big letters that spell out the name of the neighbourhood and incorporate regional elements.





Northern Mexico: Over 41,422 people participated in 29 activities in

Monterrey, Saltillo, Tijuana, and Ciudad Juárez, including cultural, educational, athletic, informational, and environmental activities. For example, in Monterrey, 640 people participated in an Inclusion Fair, organized with the Secretary of Equality and Inclusion, receiving follow-up attention from UNHCR about health, employment, educational, and legal processes. In Tijuana, 500 people participated in the second annual 5K race, “Tijuana con los refugiados,” which benefited the civil society organization *Proyecto Salesiano*.



PALOMAZO
por los Refugiados



Mexico City: UNHCR Mexico organized the fourth consecutive

edition of the “*Palomazo por los Refugiados*,” featuring songs related to human mobility. For the first time, the *Palomazo* was organized as a live event, held at the Simón Bolívar amphitheatre at the Former College of San Ildefonso at UNAM. It featured the musical group Paté de Fua with special guests Ximbo, Leiden, and two young refugees from Venezuela, Sayd Hortúa (violin), and Adriana Figueredo (singer).





UNHCR Monterrey and Via Educación co-developed a **Women’s Literary Initiative**, which brought together a group of 15 women from refugee and host communities. The main goal was to create a safe and supportive environment for the participants to share, reflect, and connect through their stories and experiences. By engaging in the shared reading of multicultural books, the initiative fostered community bonds and empowered the women to develop their collective strength.



COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITIES (CWC)

The “*Trust the Jaguar*” Facebook page has emerged as the primary information source for people on the move in Mexico. From January 1 to May 31, the page reached 121,389 followers, representing a 39% growth rate since December 31, 2022. The page received 3,177,571 visits, and its posts reached 2,196,660 users. During the same period, the [UNHCR Mexico help website](#) received 104,545 visits, which is an 11% increase from the average number of monthly visits in 2022. In May, the CWC team posted information about End of Title 42, Title 8, and the Transit Bar on Facebook, sharing four social media cards in Spanish and Creole. Additionally, the information was shared on 20 shelter screens nationwide.



The **Territorio Joven** Initiative, led by the Ministry for Youth and Sports, focuses on promoting peaceful coexistence. The program provides physical spaces and activities that enhance classes and encourage youth participation in political and social life. Through social activities, artistic classes, and capacity-building, refugee and Mexican youth foster social cohesion and develop a sense of belonging and identity. UNHCR is supporting Territorio Joven in constructing a small cinema that can be used by the community to screen movies and to host forums and other peaceful co-existence activities.



UNHCR remains committed to preventing and responding to gender-based violence both in cross-border and internal displacement contexts. UNHCR collaborated with the Morelia Municipal Institute for Women in Morelia, Michoacan on a series of activities from 24 to 26 May. During the “Forum on GBV Prevention and Response in Internal Displacement Settings,” UNHCR provided technical capacity building for key government counterparts and NGOs, through workshops, discussions, and other activities



PILOT PROJECT AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE



UNHCR is supporting the Digital Transformation of COMAR. **By May 2023, more than 118,000 out of 206,000 casefiles had been digitized. Most of the digitized files are in the COMAR offices in Tapachula (Chiapas) and Tijuana (Baja California).** To ensure the sustainability of the digitization process, UNHCR organized a nationwide training to teach COMAR personnel how to digitize



archive systems. In addition, a new project focused on digital signatures is planned for this year to prevent the increase of physical archives.

Currently, UNHCR and COMAR are collaborating on a **pilot project for the SIRE Case Management System** at the temporary shelter in Tláhuac, with plans to expand to COMAR’s Mexico City offices. The Statistics Module of the SIRE



Case Management System has been enhanced to include new queries, personalized dashboards, and general reports that are generated on a weekly or monthly basis. Analysis and Statistics Unit staff have been trained and in May, an extensive process began to review the data migration of the final resolutions of the protection area and the personal data of the registration area.



New Internal Displacement Bulletin
- **“A look at the advances and challenges in the protection and solutions for internally displaced persons during the second half of 2022”**

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds. As of 3 July 2023, UNHCR Mexico is 40% funded having required US\$119.7 million to respond to the needs of thousands of asylum-seekers, refugees and those internally displaced in Mexico. Timely funding is urgent to ensure the continuity of our activities. UNHCR’s humanitarian and durable solutions response in Mexico is made possible thanks to the generous support of major donors who have contributed unrestricted funding to UNHCR’s global operations, and to donors who have generously contributed directly to UNHCR operations in Mexico. Special thanks to all our donors in 2023 (as of July 3):



Private donors Australia | Private donors Japan | Private Donors Korea | Private donors Mexico | Private donors Spain | Private donors United States of America

UNHCR thanks all our individual donors that every month contribute to our mission.

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