



## HIGHLIGHTS

**8,781**

People applied for asylum in Mexico in 2016, **91.6%** from the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA)

**More than 8%**

The monthly increase in the number of asylum claims in 2015 and 2016

**4,693**

Persons of concern housed in **14** shelters supported by UNHCR in 2016

**175%**

Increase in the number of those recognised as refugees or who received complementary protection, between 2015 and 2016

**500,000**

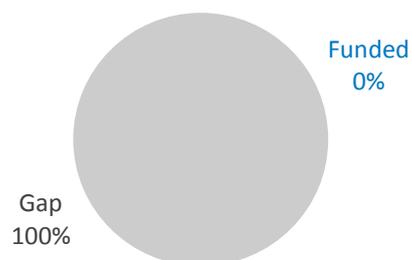
Estimated number of people who irregularly cross the southern border of Mexico each year

## Context information

- At the New York Leaders' Summit on Refugees, Mexico recognised the increase in the numbers of refugees and committed to take specific steps to respond.
- The vast majority (91.6%) of asylum seekers reaching Mexico are from the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA). Their protection needs have generally been overlooked, mainly as they have often been viewed as migrants in transit.
- Less than 10% of the estimated number of people from the NTCA who irregularly enter the country each year apply for asylum, also due to the lack of information on the asylum procedure in Mexico.
- The number of people detained by migration authorities in 2016 reached 188,595 (152,231, or 80.7% of whom were from El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala).

## Funding requirements

**USD 14.7 million** requested



## UNHCR Presence



**Staff:**  
**37** nationals  
**10** internationals  
**75** affiliated work force (including 29 who are working with COMAR)

**Offices:**  
**4** offices located in:  
Mexico City (Branch Office); Tapachula, State of Chiapas, Tenosique, State of Tabasco, Acaycan, State of Veracruz and Saltillo, State of Coahuila

## WORKING WITH PARTNERS

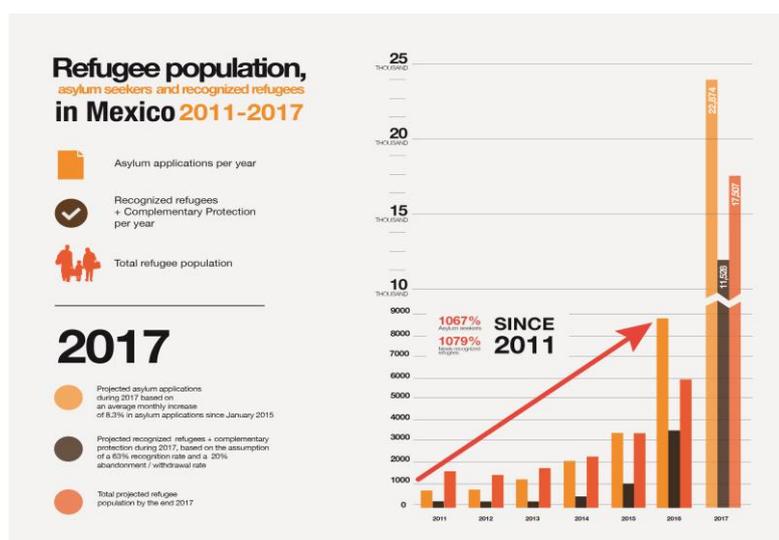
- UNHCR collaborates with key actors, both UN and governmental as well as civil society organisations, particularly in the southern part of Mexico and in the capital city.
- The **Mexican Refugee Commission (COMAR)** is UNHCR's major government partner. Its main duty is to determine refugee status but it also plays an important role in referring asylum seekers and refugees to specific social services. UNHCR also works with the **National Migration Institute (INM)**, the government body in charge of migration enforcement and screening, referral of individuals who want to request asylum to COMAR, determination of statelessness as well as issuance of documentation to asylum seekers (humanitarian permits) and refugees (permanent residence cards).
- In close cooperation with UNICEF, UNHCR is also supporting the Child Protection Authority (*Procuraduría*) for the implementation of best interest determination procedures for asylum-seeking and refugee UASC.
- UNHCR cooperates with 35 different shelters in Mexico and closely coordinates its work with the ICRC and IOM.

## MAIN ACTIVITIES

### Protection

UNHCR is seeking to increase the availability of information on the asylum procedure and access to the asylum procedure by:

- Increasing capacity of the COMAR to receive and process claims, in particular in light of the spike in asylum applications of 156.4% in 2016 compared to 2015 (this trend continued in early 2017).
- Ensuring that the INM provides information on asylum, refers cases and implements alternatives to detention for asylum seekers.
- Supporting development of best interest determination procedures by the Child Protection Authority to prevent *refoulement* of unaccompanied children.
- Providing information, legal assistance and representation through a network of civil society shelters, NGOs, and University Law clinics, as well as the Public Defender's Office. In 2016 more than 5,000 potential asylum seekers received individual legal assistance.
- Promoting alternative to detention: between July 2016 and February 2017 UNHCR supported INM and COMAR in providing alternatives to detention to 769 people who were transferred to civil society shelters.
- In 2016 UNHCR provided regular information on the asylum procedure to 19 shelters and more than 17,000 potential asylum seekers received information on the asylum procedure (mainly in shelters).



### Shelter and Cash-based interventions

#### Providing significant support to develop and improve infrastructure

- Since the second half of 2016, 17 shelters started carrying out infrastructure improvements.
- At the end of 2016 there were a total of 1,999 shelter spaces available to UNHCR persons of concern, with 883 spaces for men, 384 for women, 302 for families, 36 for LGBTI, 151 for women with children and 254 for unaccompanied and separated children. Of the total number of spaces, in 2016 UNHCR supported the creation of 908 new ones.
- UNHCR Mexico has increased its cash-based assistance. In 2016, USD 429,784 (average per month of USD 35,815) was delivered in cash assistance to 4,552 people.

#### Durable Solutions

- Local integration remains the most appropriate durable solution for refugees in Mexico. Domestic law contains provisions which facilitate integration, ensuring refugees' social and economic rights, including provisions on access to health services, employment, and the right to obtain identification, travel documents and residence.
- However, despite the legal framework, integration efforts are hindered by lack of implementation, difficulties in accessing refugees in large urban centers, partners' limited financial and human resources which also limits their presence in the field.
- A multi-year Durable Solutions Strategy is being developed.

#### Contact:

Clarissa Winter Beatty Podbielski, Reporting Officer, [WINTER@unhcr.org](mailto:WINTER@unhcr.org), Tel: +5255 5083 1720

Catia Lopes, External Relations Officer, [LOPES@unhcr.org](mailto:LOPES@unhcr.org), Tel: +4102 2739 7204

Website: [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org) / [www.acnur.org](http://www.acnur.org)