

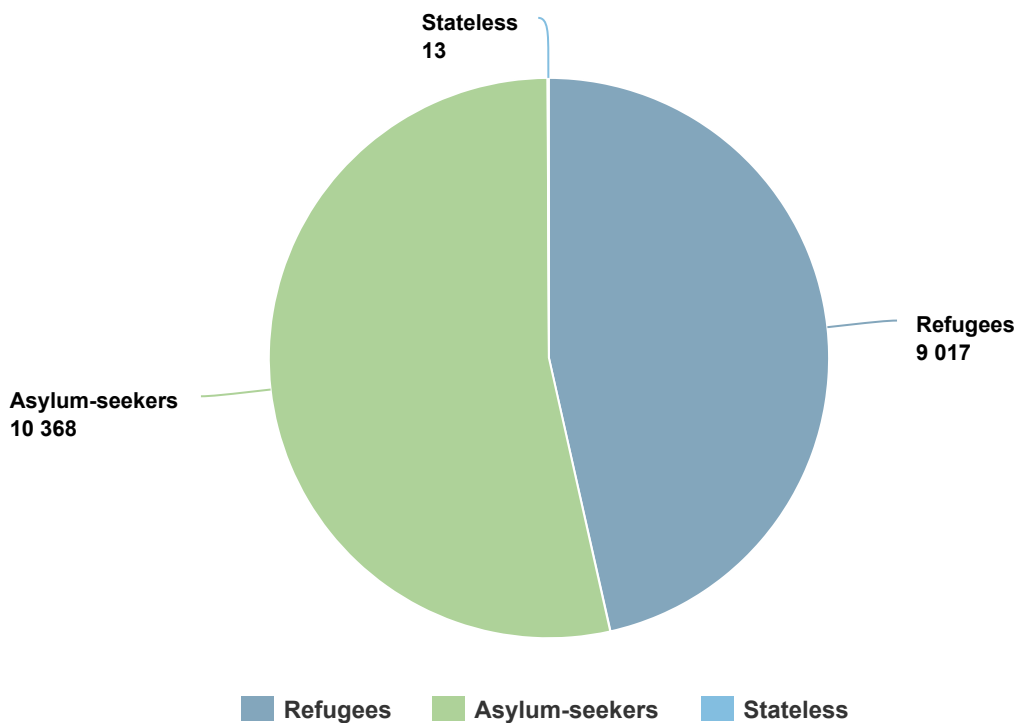
Operation: Mexico



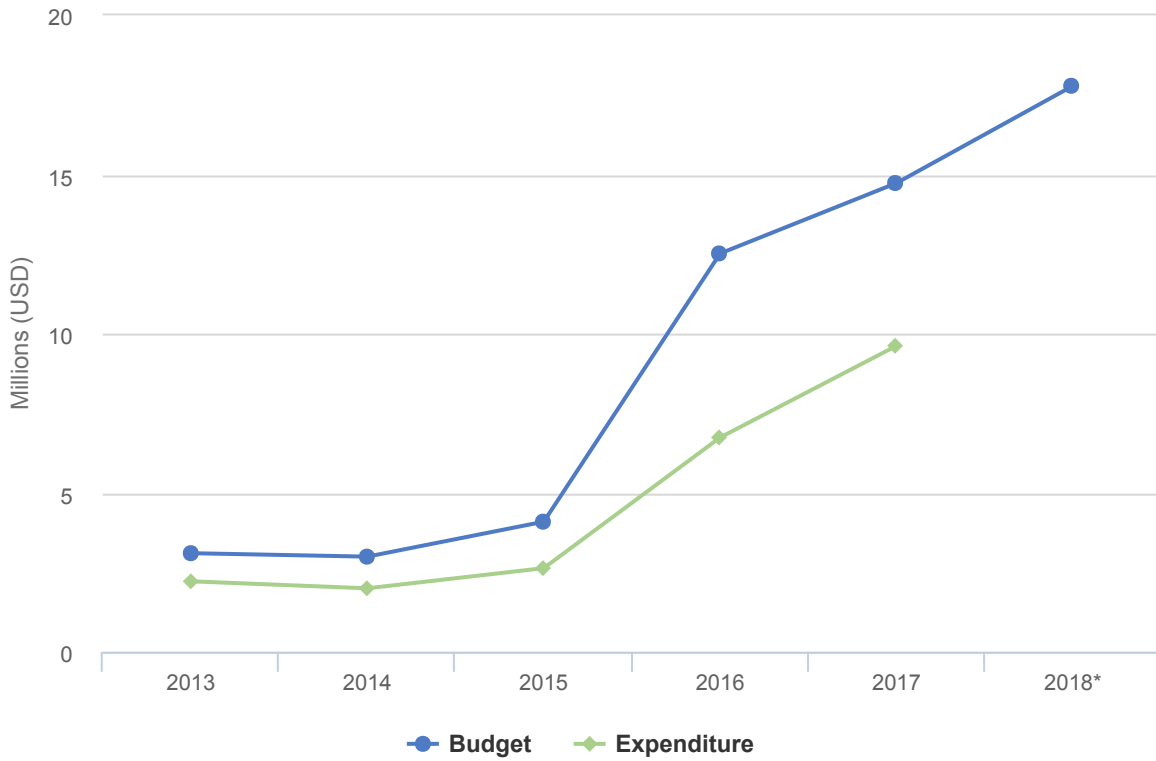
People of Concern

119% INCREASE IN
2017

2017	19,398
2016	8,862
2015	4,286



Budgets and Expenditure for Mexico



Operational context

The main drivers of forced displacement, including violence and persecution by organized criminal actors, persist in the North of Central America resulting in an increasing number of people fleeing violence to seek international protection in Mexico. In 2017 UNHCR observed a significant surge in the number of asylum-seekers from Venezuela, the second most common country of origin after Honduras.

The September earthquakes damaged the office of the Mexican Refugee Commission (COMAR) in Mexico City leading to an increased refugee status determination (RSD) processing times. This had an impact on the shelters' capacities, on service providers, including UNHCR's partners, and more importantly on the access to rights for asylum-seekers.

Concerns remain over the limited capacities of the authorities to conduct adequate screenings to identify individuals with potential international protection needs, together with the absence of mechanisms to adequately inform people on their right to seek asylum.

Population trends

In 2017, close to 14,600 people claimed asylum in Mexico, representing a 66 per cent increase compared to 2016. Only 2,825 people, some 63 per cent of those applicants who concluded the RSD procedure (4,475), were recognized as refugees or received complementary protection, a decrease of 7 per cent compared to 2016.

UNHCR estimated a significant higher increase in claims. However, the difficulties faced by COMAR to fully resume its operations after the earthquakes resulted in an impact on the processing of claims leading to a backlog of 7,719 applications, an increase of 496 per cent compared to 2016.

Key achievements

- UNHCR and partners carried out 657 monitoring visits to 17 detention centers in 13 States. More than 13,400 potential asylum-seekers were informed on their right to claim asylum and on the asylum procedure.
- Two new shelter projects were initiated, increasing the reception capacity of the sites with 70 additional spaces, to accommodate a minimum of 2,070 people.
- More than 7,000 people of concern received legal aid including individual legal advice and legal representation.
- 136 individuals were relocated to Saltillo between 2016 and 2017 to improve their local integration prospects.
- The Government of Mexico joined five other Central American countries in adopting the San Pedro Sula Declaration, which includes 39 concrete commitments to improve the refugee response in Mexico, such as stepping up dissemination of information on access to asylum; increase the capacity of shelters to provide alternatives to detention; grant asylum-seekers access to the national health system and state social social programmes.

Unmet needs

The capacity to effectively implement a comprehensive durable solutions strategy remained a major gap in UNHCR's operation in Mexico. While the country has a significant potential to integrate refugees, the persistent lack of resources by UNHCR to more efficiently coordinate and build networks around integration objectives continued to affect refugees both in Mexico City and Southern Mexico.