



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

# Annual Results Report

**2022**

**Costa Rica**

## Acknowledgements

UNHCR would like to thank all the stakeholders that contributed data and evidence to this report and reviewed their progress against the joint results of the strategy, including forcibly displaced and stateless people, host communities and host governments, United Nations agencies, and international and national non-governmental organizations, civil society and private sector. Their contributions enable us to create positive changes in the lives of the people we serve.

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**Downloaded date:** 03/05/2023

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# Section 1: Context and Overview

## 1.1 Changes to the Operational Context

The year was marked by a record number of people in mixed and onward movements in the region. Costa Rica witnessed a continued rise in the number of people seeking asylum, as well transiting through the country, which drastically increased pressures on Costa Rican institutions and public services. In 2022, the country hosted 14,105 refugees, 239,653 asylum-seekers, and 17,228 others in need of international protection.

Presidential elections took place in February, followed by several changes within the Government. On 30 November, the President announced two executive decrees. The first introduced a special residency permit for individuals from Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, whose asylum claims have been rejected or are pending resolution. The second decree introduced multiple modifications to the asylum system, which imposed restrictions on lodging asylum claims and access to work permits and had other significant protection implications on the people that UNHCR serves.

In response to north-bound mixed movements, the Government made efforts to organize the journey through Costa Rica by establishing 'official routes' and discouraging stopovers in San José. UNHCR and partners supported the Government's capacities, as well as directly assisted people in need.

Costa Rica sought increased support through international cooperation to address the human mobility situation. In December, the Global Concessional Financing Facility of the World Bank named Costa Rica eligible for its grant attached to development projects benefiting refugees, asylum-seekers, and host communities. The President also endorsed the Los Angeles Declaration, supporting a collaborative response to the complex human mobility in the region. UNHCR worked closely with the Government to scale up support for strengthening the national asylum system and other institutional capacities.

## 1.2. Progress Against the Desired Impact

### 1. Impact Area: Attaining Favorable Protection Environments

People UNHCR serves access the territory and a fair and efficient international protection system.

Indicators	Population Type	Baseline (2022)	Actual (2022)
1.1 Proportion of individuals seeking international protection who are able to access asylum procedures.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	60.83%	66.81%
1.2 Proportion of PoC who are able to move freely within the country of habitual residence. [GCR 2.1.2]	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
1.2 Proportion of PoC who are able to move freely within the country of habitual residence. [GCR 2.1.2]	Stateless Persons	100.00%	100.00%

Although normative changes to Costa Rica's asylum system introduced through executive decrees on 30 November 2022 presented significant challenges to access the refugee status determination procedure, advancements were made during the year in relation to Costa Rica's adoption of the Asylum Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI). The QAI provided a strong framework through which UNHCR provided technical assistance to the Government to enhance the asylum system, ultimately improving various processes and services accessed by refugees and asylum-seekers.

With UNHCR's support, in May 2022, a differentiated refugee status determination procedure was introduced for cases of extreme vulnerability and strong eligibility for international protection, resulting in the recognition of 3,575 persons as refugees through the year. This procedure allowed for quicker and more efficient access to international protection for asylum-seekers with high-risk profiles.

To promote access to territory and asylum, UNHCR supported the Refugee Unit's staffing presence at the borders and scaled up capacity building efforts for border officials who were engaged in border monitoring and community outreach, resulting in their improved knowledge and response on refugee protection. UNHCR also provided information to displaced persons in border regions and enhanced information campaigns to counteract xenophobia and discrimination.

### 2. Impact Area: Realizing Rights in Safe Environments

People UNHCR serves, including people with heightened needs, effectively access their rights.

Indicators	Population Type	Baseline (2022)	Actual (2022)
2.2 Proportion of PoCs residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	86.00%	88.00%
2.3 Proportion of PoC with access to health services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	62.00%	65.00%

UNHCR worked with both private sector and public institutions to increase the awareness and understanding of employers about the validity and legality of asylum-seeker work permits and identification, with a view to promoting their labour inclusion. The Office also prioritized the provision of cash assistance as humanitarian support to the most vulnerable households and assisted the Government of Costa Rica in

ensuring the access of refugees and asylum-seekers to the national social programs. As a result of these actions, UNHCR estimated a nearly 2% decrease in the proportion of forcibly displaced people in Costa Rica living below the national poverty line (a decrease from 34% to 32% by the end of 2022), based on data provided by the annual National Household Survey (2021 and 2022), in triangulation with UNHCR data. These initiatives also contributed to an increase in the proportion of refugees and asylum-seekers residing in settlements deemed to be safe and secure with access to basic facilities as reported through the yearly household survey, with an increase from 86% to 88% by the end of 2022.

The Costa Rican health system treats all emergency cases and other specific groups of people (e.g., minors, elderly, pregnant women, and lactating women) regardless of insurance status. However, to receive non-emergency care, it has been required that individuals are enrolled in the public health insurance scheme. Employers have normally paid for this insurance, although there is also an option for voluntary payment. Nevertheless, these costs have been prohibitive for many vulnerable refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people, particularly considering the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. To address this challenge, UNHCR continued its agreement with the Social Security Office of Costa Rica to facilitate, through partners, access to health services for the most vulnerable. By the end of the year, UNHCR estimated an increase of 3.5% in the proportion of refugees and asylum-seekers with access to health services (an increase from 62% to 65.5%), based on data from the Costa Rican annual household survey (2021 and 2022), in triangulation with UNHCR data.

### 3. Impact Area: Empowering Communities and Achieving Gender Equality

**People UNHCR serves are integrated with host communities and empowered to participate in self-management mechanisms and decision-making while promoting gender equality.**

Indicators	Population Type	Baseline (2022)	Actual (2022)
3.1 Proportion of PoC who have the right to decent work [GCR, 2.1.1]	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	79.26%	85.00%
3.1 Proportion of PoC who have the right to decent work [GCR, 2.1.1]	Stateless Persons	35.12%	41.70%
3.2a Proportion of PoC enrolled in primary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	83.00%	89.00%
3.2b Proportion of PoC enrolled in secondary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	67.01%	70.00%
3.3 Proportion of PoC feeling safe walking alone in their neighborhood (related SDG 16.1.4).	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	76.77%	71.74%

UNHCR observed an increase of 6.3% in the proportion of people in need of international protection enrolled in primary education, and an increase of 3.2% in those enrolled in secondary education. Throughout the year, community groups were also empowered in their knowledge regarding their rights as refugees and asylum-seekers, access to justice, labour rights, the right to sexual and reproductive health, education, gender and diversity.

Regarding inclusion, the Office changed its strategy and targeted households, not only individuals, thus, providing an effective response for the family unit. By the end of 2022, UNHCR reached a 4% increase in the proportion of people that could exercise their right to work, considering a 79% access baseline and an 83% endline at the end of 2022, for asylum-seekers and refugees. The increase was higher for stateless persons (7%).

Furthermore, UNHCR pursued discussions to implement an area-based approach for the North of the country and developed, in coordination with the Resident Coordinator, a concept note that was expected to be a starting point for conversations with various stakeholders including financial institutions.

Lastly, UNHCR identified an almost 5% decrease in the proportion of people under its mandate who felt safe in their communities, from 77% to 71.8%. This was in line with the general perception within the country according to national surveys, not only refugees and asylum-seekers. Through participatory assessments, UNHCR identified that it was mainly female adolescents who expressed not feeling safe on journeys from their homes to their educational institution, particularly because of their gender and the safety issues in their communities.

## 4. Impact Area: Securing Solutions

**People UNHCR serves and the communities that host them have increased access to sustainable solutions.**

Indicators	Population Type	Baseline (2022)	Actual (2022)
4.2a Number of PoC who departed on resettlement. [GCR 3.1.1]	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	2
4.2b Number of PoC who departed through complementary pathways	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
4.3a Number of stateless persons for whom nationality is granted or confirmed.	Stateless Persons	69	32
4.3b Number of refugees for whom residency status is granted or confirmed.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	32	34

Regarding Costa Rica's pledges in the High-Level Segment on Statelessness, the country made important progress in the prevention and eradication of statelessness, with a procedure for determining the status of statelessness as well as the mechanisms for the acquisition of the Costa Rican nationality through naturalization. UNHCR provided technical support to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Civil Registry Office in this matter.

The Office also supported the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in strengthening its differentiated approach as a fundamental part of the Costa Rican statelessness status determination. This approach identified the applicants who were in vulnerable conditions that merited the reduction of the requirements and provided timely reference to national institutions for access to social programs and the effective enjoyment of rights. UNHCR also facilitated the continuous coordination between these institutions and implementing partners to ensure access to the relevant procedures, particularly in the rural areas.

Furthermore, UNHCR identified a decrease in the number of stateless persons for whom nationality was granted or confirmed, from 69 as a baseline to 32 as an endline at the end of 2022. The difference corresponds to the number of the recognized stateless persons that accomplished all the requirements to access the naturalization process, which included a period of regular stay in the country of two years, counted from the request of the statelessness procedure. This decrease was not necessarily negative, but a positive impact of the strategy in the past period to reduce the number of stateless people in Costa Rica.

Lastly, according to the Civil Registry of Costa Rica, 34 refugees acquired the Costa Rican nationality through a naturalization process. Although not an extensive number, this was a durable solution pathway that, aside all the recent changes, had not been modified.

## 1.3 Challenges to Achieving Impacts

According to the 2021 Global Trends Report published by UNHCR, by the end of June 2022, Costa Rica was the world's 4th largest recipient of new individual asylum claims: almost 120,000 Nicaraguans registered as they fled the growing socio-political crisis and increasing political persecution in their country. By end of 2022, approximately 271,000 forcibly displaced people were hosted by Costa Rica.

The increasing number of people approaching the asylum system overwhelmed its capacities, causing long delays and backlogs in the registration and adjudication of asylum applications. Nicaraguan asylum-seekers waited an average of 5-7 months to formalize their request and receive their identification which allowed them access to formal employment and the Social Security System. Throughout 2022, Costa Rica also became a transit country for thousands of people in mixed movements heading to the north of the continent which led to higher visibility of the region and increased scrutiny on the Government's actions. As the numbers increased and neighbouring and destination countries started to implement their own measures to manage the situation, more people were left stranded in Costa Rica with few resources and even fewer options to regularize their status. There was an increase of xenophobic actions and discourse by the public in response to the perceived abuse of the national systems, particularly the asylum system.

In November, the President issued two decrees that substantially modified the national asylum system to ensure that those requesting asylum would also have access to the process and to provide an alternative pathway to persons as means to decrease the backlog. The changes raised concerns, including the transition between asylum-seeker and special migratory status; limits to lodge asylum claims; asylum claims being declared manifestly unfounded without adequate screening; restrictions to freedom of movement; and the right to work.

## 1.4 Collaboration and Partnerships

In 2022, UNHCR strengthened its relationship with traditional and new donors, ensured Costa Rica's participation in multilateral platforms such as the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) and the Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V) and enhanced its relationship with the private sector. UNHCR also engaged with international financial institutions including World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank and advocated for their participation in addressing the development needs of host communities in the northern region of Costa Rica.

Thanks to the support provided by donors to the Office, UNHCR supported actions to ensure safe access to the territory, enhance the asylum system and the digitization project, and promote livelihoods and the timely delivery of humanitarian aid and cash-assistance. Additional funding supported education, child protection and the prevention and attention to gender-based violence survivors. UNHCR also successfully completed a project to promote employment and social protection. The Office also strengthened the asylum capacity by supporting activities to address the Refugee Unit's backlog and delivered free legal information. Donors also provided UNHCR with additional funding to deliver information and assistance to female asylum-seekers with HIV.

UNHCR contributed to Costa Rica's inclusion in the Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF). The GCFF was created to assist middle-income countries, hosting many asylum-seekers and refugees. UNHCR started its advocacy in 2021 and continued throughout 2022 when a "Protection Refugee Policy Review" was prepared and submitted to the GCFF. The document certified Costa Rica's refugee situation and favorable protection policy resulting in a first action of \$20 million on concessional funding.



## Section 2: Results

### 2.1. Outcomes and Achievements

#### 1. Outcome Area: Access to Territory, Reg. and Documentation

The Costa Rican government ensures fair mechanisms to provide access to territory and prevent refoulement.

Indicators	Population Type	Baseline (2022)	Target (2022)	Actual (2022)
1.1 Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	76.48%	100.00%	83.84%
1.2 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority. [SDG 16.9.1 - Tier 1]	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	94.17%
1.3 Proportion of PoC with legally recognized identity documents or credentials [GCR 4.2.2].	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	68.70%	90.00%	87.60%

#### Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2022, Costa Rica hosted 271,000 forcibly displaced persons, of which 83% were Nicaraguans, followed by 11% Venezuelans, 2% Cubans, 2% Colombians and 2% from other nationalities. The Government of Costa Rica continued the registration and the refugee status determination processes and in parallel, UNHCR continued to record forcibly displaced and stateless people in proGres for programmatic response and management of humanitarian assistance. Throughout the year, over 17,000 individuals were processed by UNHCR, with 14,600 individuals being newly registered in the proGres database (70% were Nicaraguans and 0.05% individuals with stateless status). Remote registration was provided for urgent cases and people with heightened needs. This process facilitated access to protection and financial and legal services via internal and/or external referrals. Over 33,300 requests were received with 26,500 being for new registrations and 6,900 for contact number updates through this platform.

UNHCR also advanced on the digitization project to strengthen the Government's asylum system, by developing the first stage on the database to improve processing of asylum claims for the Refugee Unit at the Directorate for Migration and Foreigners. This effort was expected to significantly reduce the registration and the refugee status determination backlog, as well as to facilitate the identification of vulnerable people through its online self-service pre-registration platform.

Considering the need to strengthen presence and protection in the porous border areas, UNHCR conducted 170 border monitoring activities in the northern region (Upala, Los Chiles, La Cruz y San Carlos) and undertook seven missions to the southern border to monitor mixed movements, provide humanitarian assistance, and coordinate relevant actions with stakeholders. UNHCR also strengthened coordination mechanisms with local authorities and civil society organizations to improve access to the territory of people seeking international protection in Costa Rica. In addition, UNHCR conducted daily monitoring on the southern border and conducted three capacity-building sessions in international refugee law for 30 police and migration officers. These interventions provided relevant data about people entering the territory and promoted a safer environment in the borders.

Moreover, UNHCR insured 6,400 refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in partnership with the Costa Rican Social Security Fund of which 67.5% were Nicaraguans, 11.4% were Venezuelans and 21.1% were of other nationalities. By the end of 2022, 4,800 health insurance cards were distributed to the insured through postal services. Over 15,500 referrals were made by both UNHCR and partners for people in need of international protection to have access to assistance and services including 24.3% for cash assistance,

16.8% for livelihood opportunities, 16.6% for psycho-social assistance, 13.4% for legal aid and 28.9% for other related support.

## Challenges to Achieving Outcome

Most people seeking international protection in Costa Rica used irregular crossing points, either because of visa requirements or lack of documentation. Consequently, the forcibly displaced and stateless people are likely to be subjected to different forms of violence, including sexual violence and human trafficking. The high rotation of police and migration officers increased the efforts to implement effective individual capacity-building activities. In addition, there was not enough official information for asylum-seekers, creating practical barriers, especially for people with heightened needs. Moreover, the \$68 cost of the refugee identity card prevented people with limited resources from accessing documentation.

In December 2022, the Government of Costa Rica issued a decree that brought significant changes to the asylum system, including the expansion of inadmissibility criteria and additional requirements for documentation.

## 2. Outcome Area: Status Determination

**The asylum system is strengthened to ensure effective access to the refugee status determination process.**

Indicators	Population Type	Baseline (2022)	Target (2022)	Actual (2022)
2.1 Average processing time (in days) from registration to first instance asylum decision (disaggregated by individual and group procedures).	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,351.00	365.00	1,078.00
2.2 Proportion of individuals undergoing asylum procedures who have access to legal advice or representation.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
2.3 Proportion of individuals undergoing asylum procedures who have access to an effective appeal mechanism after first instance rejection of their claim.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

During 2022, continuous support was given to the asylum system through the Asylum Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI) consultancy, including to the government's Refugee Unit, the Commission on Restricted Visas and Refuge, and the Administrative Migration Tribunal. Through this initiative, UNHCR also conducted trainings on credibility, country-of-origin, refugee status determination, and the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees for the UNHCR-supported staff in the three instances.

Furthermore, UNHCR proposed the use of accelerated/simplified procedures to process and recognize cases with a high presumption of refugee eligibility for Nicaraguan, Venezuelan, and Cuban nationals. This modality hastened the processing of cases with evident needs for international protection, increasing the refugee recognition rate of the Refugee Commission to 80%.

In the Refugee Unit, an improvement in the reception area reduced waiting time from 180 minutes to 90, allowing more asylum seekers to get registered. To ensure a better understanding and access to the process, information material (videos and banners) was developed and displayed in the Refugee Unit. For the Administrative Migration Tribunal, three QAI roundtables with the Judges and UNHCR-supported staff were organized to improve the distribution and work of the personnel and, thus, improve the quality of decisions. The evaluation tools were validated in this space. A manual for hearings (including remote

hearings) was developed for the Tribunal and was used during the year.

Discussions regarding the possible implementation of the refugee definition of the 1984 Cartagena Declaration were held with the three Commissioners of the Refugee Commission, the Refugee Director, and UNHCR. These meetings were on hold at the end of 2022.

UNHCR also made advances in the first phase of the digitalization project; an IT consultancy company began to develop the database to improve processing asylum claims for the Refugee Unit at the Directorate for Migration and Foreigners to strengthen the Government's asylum systems. It was expected that this phase would be completed and ready to start the implementation tests by March 2023.

## Challenges to Achieving Outcome

In 2022, there were plans to implement metrics for eligibility officers at the Refugee Unit to enable individual and operational productivity to be measured. The process of implementing the Cartagena Declaration's refugee definition, which included an exchange of experiences with Mexico and Brazil, was also a priority. However, on 1 December 2022, the Government issued Executive Decree N°43.810, limiting foreigners from accessing the national asylum system by 1) imposing temporary inadmissibility (30 calendar days) from arrival in Costa Rica; 2) considering manifestly unfounded the cases of those arriving from a safe third country (to be defined); 3) by requiring asylum-seekers seeking the right to work to be affiliated to the Costa Rican Social Security Fund and requiring recognized refugees to renew their ID card. These changes, particularly the latter, hampered progress in the backlog strategy as resources were rerouted toward the implementation of the new decree. Equally, the need for refugee status determination modalities based on fairer and more efficient procedures were also generated by a reported increase in the overall average case processing time of asylum claims from registration to the first instance asylum decision.

## 6. Outcome Area: Safety and Access to Justice

**People UNHCR serves have access to legal aid.**

### Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR broadened the capacity of displaced communities to access justice by providing legal information to over 21,000 people, legal assistance to 3,500 people, and 1,000 legal representations on the refugee status determination procedure and access to rights in San Jose, and in the northern and southern border. In 2022, UNHCR also promoted access to justice by enhancing institutional capacity. In addressing the need to strengthen the protection network, UNHCR facilitated three sessions of the protection working group to discuss protection gaps, trends and policies. This group also coordinated actions related to the issuance of Executive Decree 43.810-MGP in December. UNHCR also signed an Addendum to the Memorandum of Understanding with the Costa Rica Bar Association to create a Pro Bono program that benefitted people in need of international protection by providing legal services at no cost.

UNHCR enhanced the application of International Refugee Law by providing two capacity-building sessions for 20 people of the Sub-Commission on Access to Justice for the Migrant and Refugee Population and two training sessions for members of the Ombudsman's Office. UNHCR also conducted four training sessions for Judicial Facilitators in La Cruz, Guatuso, Los Chiles, and San Carlos, with the participation of 30 individuals.

UNHCR continued to support the National Civil Registry Office in the statelessness prevention actions, and the coordination between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and partner Jesuit Migrant Service to strengthen the actions for the eradication of statelessness. UNHCR provided technical support to achieve their High-Level Segment on Statelessness and Global Refugee Forum pledges.

In the framework of the commemoration of the #IBelong campaign, UNHCR conducted a joint mission with the Ministry, with the participation of the director of the Civil Registry office in Upala, and the Jesuit Migrant Service. The mission was instrumental in the development of two capacity-building and sensibilization activities with the participation of about 30 people from local institutions and community organizations. The Ministry also assisted four people at risk of statelessness, opening the files in the framework of the Stateless Status Determination and conducting the interviews. UNHCR, for its part, set up information

stands at the Upala fair, identifying and referring over 20 people at risk of statelessness. UNHCR also promoted community mobile attention and registration for people at risk of statelessness in San Carlos, where close to 400 households were attended to, and over a dozen people were identified in this condition. UNHCR, through its program “Integrating Voices”, delivered information to communities in Upala, Los Chiles, La Cruz, Guatuso and San Carlos about protection issues, access to justice and legal advice in coordination with partner agencies.

## Challenges to Achieving Outcome

The Office identified that there was no public free legal service for those seeking international protection in the country, which made access to justice difficult for the affected population. UNHCR identified the need to improve the legal response for forcibly displaced and stateless people who suffered a security risk in Costa Rica. For this, a case referral mechanism involving the Protection of Witnesses and Victims’ Office of the Judiciary needed to be improved to provide a more effective access to justice to survivors of domestic violence.

The main challenge that the country encountered regarding people at risk of statelessness was for those who had been unable to register their births (primarily in Nicaragua). The development of actions supporting the local integration of stateless people and applicants for statelessness was also important so that they could effectively have full access to rights in Costa Rica.

## 7. Outcome Area: Community Engagement and Women's Empowerment

**Community groups are functional, inclusive and organized**

**Institutions and other stakeholders promote participation of people UNHCR serves in their decision-making mechanisms.**

**People UNHCR serves and host communities promote peaceful coexistence.**

Indicators	Population Type	Baseline (2022)	Target (2022)	Actual (2022)
7.1 Proportion of PoC who participate meaningfully across all phases of the OMC.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
7.2 Proportion of PoC who have access to effective feedback and response mechanisms.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
7.3 Proportion (and number) of active female participants on leadership/management structures.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	56.06%	60.00%	56.76%

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In coordination with partners, UNHCR implemented the Mobile Information Centres initiative in six communities to strengthen two-way communication with refugees and asylum-seekers and share information with the communities. More than 900 people participated and around 1,500 inquiries were answered (mainly about refugee status determination, livelihoods and access to health services and education). The implementation of this Communications with Communities intervention promoted community engagement and the participation of refugees and asylum-seekers in the decision-making processes of UNHCR.

In response to an identified need, UNHCR took actions to promote and strengthen the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) of the people under its mandate. A workshop for eight psychologists of the Psychological Support Unit of the emergency 9-1-1 line was held, ensuring that the specific risks for forcibly displaced and stateless people were understood. Furthermore, UNHCR published a digital mental health first aid guide, providing tools and resources to promote the well-being of the affected population.

UNHCR also conducted a Participatory Assessment exercise in San Jose and the northern region, with 150 refugees and asylum-seekers participating in the Metropolitan Area and 220 in the north. Two assessments were conducted in Upala and Los Chiles, with the participation of a gender-based violence prevention committee of local authorities, resulting in the establishment of a referral pathway.

During the 16 Days of Activism of 2022, UNHCR successfully hosted a film screening in San Jose of "El Despertar de las Hormigas" (The awakening of the ants), in which 40 refugees and asylum-seekers participated as well as members of the community. In the north, UNHCR coordinated a gender-based violence prevention workshop with the local authorities in Upala and a film screening in Los Chiles. 200 women from the affected population and host communities participated, and two radio programs were broadcasted weekly in November. Both interventions were aimed at enhancing the empowerment of women.

## Challenges to Achieving Outcome

The need to strengthen the network of community leaders was a challenge for the Office. The limited community structure was especially challenging during the situation with the mixed movements as the Office had limited information regarding the scenario. Also, the nature of the dispersed community structure in San Jose and Upala hindered UNHCR from reaching a greater number of people.

Many of the affected population had limited access and knowledge regarding digital communication channels, especially in the northern zone, hence the importance in developing materials with accessible and easy-to-read content. In remote border communities, distance and limited and costly transportation services affect access to information, programmes, and services of local institutions, including health and informative campaigns.

## 8. Outcome Area: Well-Being and Basic Needs

**People UNHCR serves have access to assistance and services to cover their basic needs**

**People UNHCR serves have access to government run programs to address their specific needs.**

Indicators	Population Type	Baseline (2022)	Target (2022)	Actual (2022)
8.1 Proportion of PoC in need that receive cash transfers or in-kind assistance.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	73.28%	75.00%	73.08%
8.2 Proportion of PoC with primary reliance on clean (cooking) fuels and technology [SDG 7.1.2 Tier 1]	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	93.00%	95.00%	95.00%

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR developed a sports strategy, "Somos una comunidad" in the north, where 370 people participated in five activities that promoted peaceful coexistence and encouraged their integration with the host communities. As complementary actions, UNHCR donated 9,500 core relief items, 100 sexual and reproductive health kits and 140 hygiene kits during these activities in the communities. Additionally, in response to the increased arrival of the mixed movement population and to address their

most immediate basic needs, UNHCR distributed 11,500 hygiene items, 4,600 personal protective equipment, 1,200 blankets and 590 raincoats. In the north, UNHCR distributed additional 5,400 core relief items benefitting approximately 2,700 refugees and asylum-seekers and host communities.

UNHCR also assisted 250 people in situation of vulnerability with shelter that otherwise would have spent the night on the streets. Due to the housing costs in Costa Rica being very high, they only had insecure and very limited options or risked homelessness.

UNHCR worked with the Ministry of Education through a cooperation agreement, to guarantee the right to education of forcibly displaced and stateless people. Together with Defense of Children International, partner agency, UNHCR provided support to 115 individuals with educational needs to guarantee their access to education. Additionally, 1,180 refugees and asylum-seekers were assisted through the distribution of scholar kits, and 245 with the donation of tablets.

The Child Protection responses were a collaboration between the Child Protection Institute and the Migration Authority. In the framework of a Memorandum of Understanding with these institutions, the Office worked on Child Protection initiatives to promote the protection of minors with international protection needs. Through UNHCR's partner agency, 600 minors at heightened risk were assisted and their cases were referred to national institutions.

Regarding gender-based violence, UNHCR supported three safe houses through partner agency CENDEROS, where 230 survivors were sheltered and given needs-based assistance. Other 40 survivors benefitted from a UNHCR training module to strengthen economic self-reliance, resulting in 10 of them creating and consolidating their business plans.

UNHCR also provided cash assistance to 4,800 especially vulnerable people: 89% were Nicaraguan and 75% were women. The assistance was delivered via prepaid card for 3 months: \$306.88 average per month, for a total \$1,744,699. Post-delivery monitoring showed that 64% of respondents confirmed that assistance improved their living conditions significantly and 60% reported the financial burden was reduced substantially. The top five expenditures were food, hygiene items, rent, utilities and bills and transport. Respondents also reported a decrease in stress due to the assistance, with 91% reporting a significant or moderate reduction in stress levels. Furthermore, UNHCR, through its partnership with the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (for its acronym in Spanish: CCSS), provided access to healthcare treatment to 6,420 refugees and asylum-seekers that otherwise would not be able to access it.

## Challenges to Achieving Outcome

The Office made efforts to implement the UNHCR policy on gender-based violence; however, mainstreaming prevention and risk mitigation remained a challenge. Also, there were barriers to access to employment and limited social programmes offered by the government that limited an adequate exit strategy for gender-based violence survivors in safe houses.

Moreover, although UNHCR supported access to medical care assistance for more than 6,000 refugees and asylum-seekers through its partnership with the Social Security Fund, some 2,000 individuals with medical concerns were not able to access this assistance for lack of sufficient funding.

## 13. Outcome Area: Self Reliance, Economic Inclusion and Livelihoods

**People UNHCR serves have access to decent, formal employment opportunities.**

**An interagency area-based approach increases solutions, opportunities and contributes to local development in the host community.**

**People UNHCR serves have access to decent, formal employment opportunities.**

Indicators	Population Type	Baseline (2022)	Target (2022)	Actual (2022)
13.1. Proportion of PoC with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider [SDG 8.10.2 Tier 1].	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	31.63%	60.00%	22.63%
13.2. Proportion of PoC who self-report positive changes in their income compared to previous year.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	8.20%	33.00%	29.35%
13.3 Proportion of PoC (working age) who are unemployed.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	10.78%	10.00%	9.28%

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2022, there was a 19% increase in the proportion of people who self-reported positive changes in their income compared to the previous year. UNHCR also observed a 2% decrease in the proportion of working-age people who were unemployed.

These positive outcome results were achieved, in-part, through the inclusion of 2,100 refugees and asylum-seekers (over 900 in the northern region and 1,200 in the Metropolitan Area) from Nicaragua (55%), Venezuela (25%) and others (20%) in employment facilitation activities. Out of these, 1,900 participated in activities to promote waged employment such as participation in technical training courses and job intermediation activities. The remaining 200 people participated in self-employment promotion activities, which included a business management training course and business formalization support. Some 150 received a business start-up grant or a self-employment cash grant.

UNHCR's engagement with private sector companies and organizations, as well as its collaboration with public institutions and civil society partner organizations through private sector partnerships and the Vivir la Integración inclusion framework, also contributed to the past year's results. Within these strategic lines, UNHCR and its partner Fundación Mujer engaged with over 50 companies in four private sector events, 40 awareness workshops, and three job fairs and job intermediation activities, which facilitated access to work to the people whom UNHCR serves and to improve employer's knowledge of their legal rights to work, their specific situation and access barriers as well as their employment potential.

UNHCR also recognized 30 organizations with the Vivir la Integración Seal. These efforts were aimed at ensuring equitable inclusion and the consideration of the specific vulnerabilities of refugees and asylum-seekers in national and local government employment and self-employment programs, resulting in 45 inclusion actions that were documented, verified, and endorsed by the VLI Seal's Evaluation Committee. New companies such as AR Holdings, Baxter, and Coca-Cola FEMSA, stood out for their refugee recruitment efforts and inclusion of refugee-led small businesses, as well as civil society organizations like AMECUP, Alianza VenCR, and SOS Nicaragua for their work in support of the affected population.

To support the national and local government's development efforts and to strengthen its livelihoods strategic approach in the country, UNHCR assisted Costa Rica's National Learning Institute (INA) and its National Employment Agency (ANE) with communication material, to promote access to their services available, including asylum-seekers and refugees.

## Challenges to Achieving Outcome

The financial inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people was identified as a main challenge within the self-reliance, economic inclusion, and livelihoods outcome area. In 2022, UNHCR registered a 9% decrease in the proportion of people that had access to a bank account or mobile-money-payments with a financial service provider (32% baseline versus 23% endline result). This drop in access to financial services could not be directly attributed to any significant change in policy or operational context. However, it might point to either a behavioural change regarding refugees' needs or wants with respect to these services or a change in financial service providers' willingness to grant them access. There was no conclusive evidence about either conjecture based on the existing data.

## 15. Outcome Area: Resettlement and Complementary Pathways

**Opportunities for resettlement and complementary pathways of people UNHCR serves are increased.**

Indicators	Population Type	Baseline (2022)	Target (2022)	Actual (2022)
15.1 Number of refugees submitted by UNHCR for resettlement.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	519	537
15.2 Average processing time from resettlement submission to departure under normal priority.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Unknown	480.00	187.00

### Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR sought to provide forcibly displaced and stateless people with increased access to sustainable solutions. In 2022, UNHCR re-opened resettlement activities in Costa Rica, closely coordinating with resettlement countries and the International Organization for Migration in its implementation.

UNHCR developed standard operating procedures for the case processing for resettlement from Costa Rica, including identification and referral of refugees at heightened risk; needs assessment, interviews and submission processes; and support for pre-departure logistics for resettlement cases. Standard operating procedures also included measures to ensure fraud prevention and mitigation. Moreover, UNHCR ensured an ongoing capacity-building of staff.

In 2022 UNHCR identified 7,200 individuals with specific needs in Costa Rica and conducted 3,750 needs assessment interviews of which 1,460 were recommended for resettlement consideration. From those, 730 individuals had a resettlement interview in 2022, and 540 individuals were submitted to resettlement countries.

### Challenges to Achieving Outcome

The Office encountered challenges in some resettlement cases with children who faced difficulties completing their processes due to the lack of a valid exit permit for the children traveling without one or both of their parents.

## 16. Outcome Area: Integration and other Local Solutions

**The Costa Rican government utilizes effective and comprehensive mechanisms to prevent statelessness.**

Indicators	Population Type	Baseline (2022)	Target (2022)	Actual (2022)
16.1. Proportion of PoC with secure tenure rights and/or property rights to housing and/or land [revised SDG indicator 1.4.2].	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	82.80%	85.00%	85.11%
16.2. Proportion of PoC covered by social protection floors/systems [SDG 1.3.1].	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	61.60%	70.00%	65.50%



## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR supported the National Civil Registry Office in the statelessness prevention actions and assisted in the coordination between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and partner Jesuit Migration Service to strengthen actions for the eradication of statelessness. In 2022, UNHCR supported the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by recruiting a psychologist and a lawyer to strengthen its differentiated approach as a fundamental part of the Costa Rican Stateless Status Determination.

UNHCR provided technical support to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the national Civil Registry Office to achieve its High-Level Segment on Statelessness and the Global Refugee Forum pledges. In the framework of the commemoration of the #IBelong campaign, UNHCR conducted a joint mission with the Ministry, with the participation of the director of the Civil Registry office in Upala, and the Jesuit Migrant Service. The mission was instrumental in the development of two capacity-building and sensibilization activities with the participation of 33 people from local institutions and community organizations. The Ministry also assisted four people at risk of statelessness, opening the files in the framework of the statelessness status determination and conducting the interviews. UNHCR set up information stands at the Upala fair, and 21 persons at risk of statelessness were identified and referred.

UNHCR promoted community mobile attention and registration for persons at risk of statelessness in San Carlos, where 390 households were assisted, and 14 people were identified in this condition.

UNHCR broadcasted radio episodes within the programme “Integrating Voices”, bringing information to communities in Upala, Los Chiles, La Cruz, Guatuso, and San Carlos about protection issues, access to justice, and legal advice in coordination with partner agencies.

## Challenges to Achieving Outcome

The main challenge regarding people at risk of statelessness were for those who had been unable to register their births, primarily in Nicaragua. The development of actions supporting the local integration of stateless persons and applicants for statelessness was also important, so that they could effectively have full access to rights in Costa Rica.

## 2.2. Age, Gender and Diversity

UNHCR implemented community engagement activities in line with an overall Community-Based Protection (CBP) strategy based on UNHCR's age, gender and diversity and accountability to affected people (AAP). Moreover, the Operation's AGD and AAP interventions for the people who had been forced to flee, were strengthened through engagement with diverse populations – ensuring the participation of children, women and girls, older persons, the Miskito indigenous community, people with heightened needs, afro-descendants and LGBTIQ+ persons.

In 2022, UNHCR implemented several surveys, focus group discussions and individual interviews with an AGD approach to ensure meaningful participation and inclusion of the people whom UNHCR serves. Particularly, the operation achieved the completion of four rounds of the High-Frequency Survey (HFS) and finalized a narrative report as a result. The Office ensured the inclusion of all population groups which strengthened the AGD and AAP approach. During the year, 1,200 HFS were conducted in the GAM (Greater Metropolitan Area) and 500 in Upala, including diverse groups of people living in different areas.

Additionally, the Participatory Assessment was conducted during 2022, with a total of 370 participants (150 for GAM and 220 for Upala). The Participatory Assessment was concluded through 15 focus group discussions each in GAM and in Upala with participants from various nationalities (Nicaraguans, Venezuelans, Cubans and from the north of Central America) and following an AGD approach.

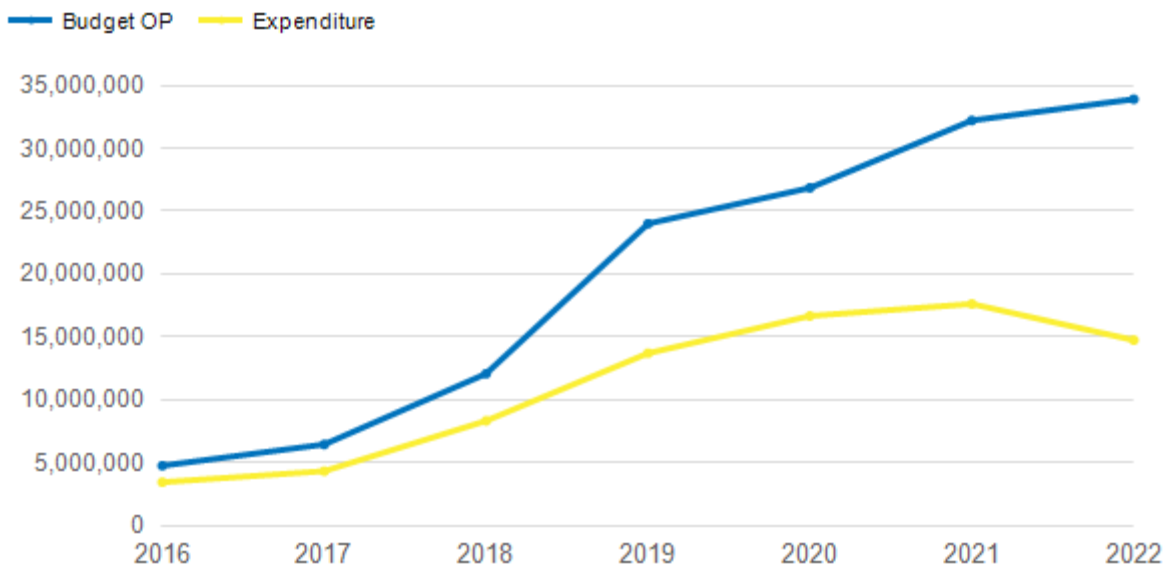
## Section 3: Resources

### 3.1 Financial Data

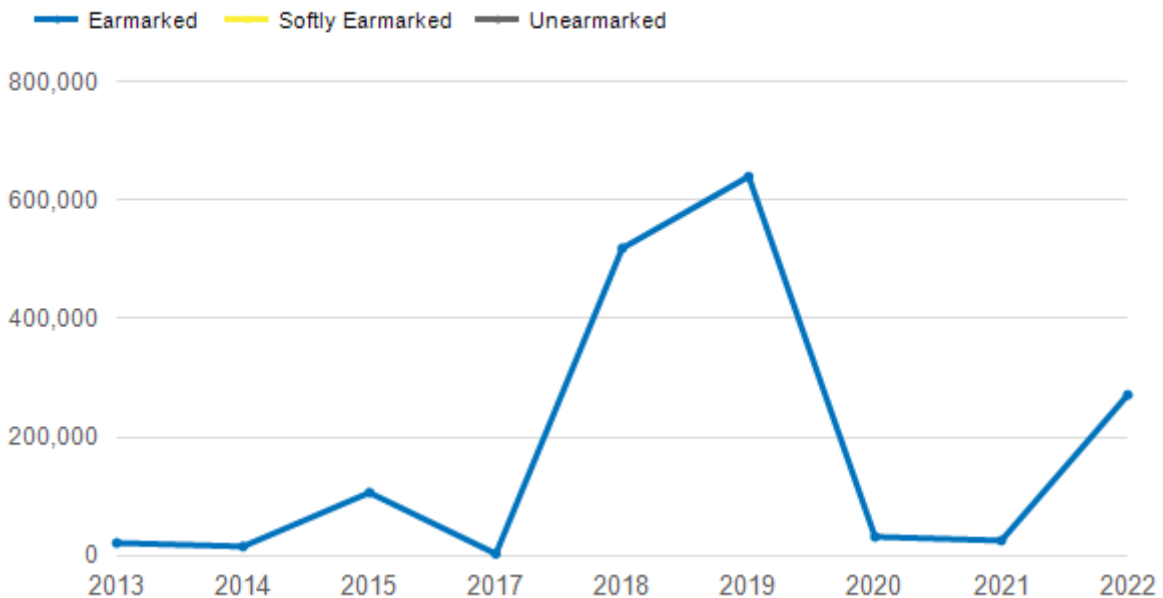
Impact Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
IA1: Protect	7,002,714	2,375,316	33.92%	2,375,316	100.00%
IA2: Respond	19,074,671	9,004,501	47.21%	9,004,501	100.00%
IA3: Empower	3,165,960	1,646,858	52.02%	1,646,858	100.00%
IA4: Solve	4,658,674	1,726,023	37.05%	1,726,023	100.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,902,019</b>	<b>14,752,697</b>	<b>43.52%</b>	<b>14,752,697</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Outcome Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
OA1: Access/Doc	2,529,335	333,733	13.19%	333,733	100.00%
OA2: Status	3,987,803	1,765,468	44.27%	1,765,468	100.00%
OA6: Justice	907,437	680,426	74.98%	680,426	100.00%
OA7: Community	3,165,960	1,647,023	52.02%	1,647,023	100.00%
OA8: Well-being	12,158,063	6,382,536	52.50%	6,382,536	100.00%
OA13 Livelihood	7,605,212	1,956,773	25.73%	1,956,773	100.00%
OA15: Resettle	951,241	736,537	77.43%	736,537	100.00%
OA16: Integrate	485,576	288,294	59.37%	288,294	100.00%
EA17: Systems	1,324,793	663,100	50.05%	663,100	100.00%
EA18: Support	201,523	94,009	46.65%	94,009	100.00%
EA20: External	585,076	204,797	35.00%	204,797	100.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,902,019</b>	<b>14,752,697</b>	<b>43.52%</b>	<b>14,752,697</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

### Budget and Expenditure Trend



### Contributions Trend by Type



## 3.2. Resources Overview

The new Government of Costa Rica faced many challenges, particularly the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the local economy and namely, ensuring the provision of basic social services to a sector of the population with few sustainable livelihoods opportunities. Therefore, there was an increased need for the cash assistance and Social Security Fund programmes that UNHCR tried to address. Despite the effort, 4,000 people in need of medical attention were left behind due to a funding gap of \$1.2 million.

The regular start of resettlement activities that began in 2022 involved a reallocation of resources and reprioritization of other activities in the Office to cover its costs including missions, capacity-building and equipment, and renovation in both UNHCR offices in San Jose to create workspaces for the new Resettlement staff. A total of about \$700,000 was required to address the critical needs related to resettlement processing activities - including travel costs for documentation, interviews, local

transportation for the affected population and staffing costs.

Since February 2022, UNHCR maintained a minimum core presence with just one staff in the south of the country. After September 2022, the Office had to prioritize its presence at the southern border because of the mixed movements increase. As UNHCR got more involved, considerable resources were reoriented to short-term missions of protection and field staff to the south.



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

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