

Guatemala

July 2021



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FACTSHEET

479

Number of refugees currently in the country as of July 2021

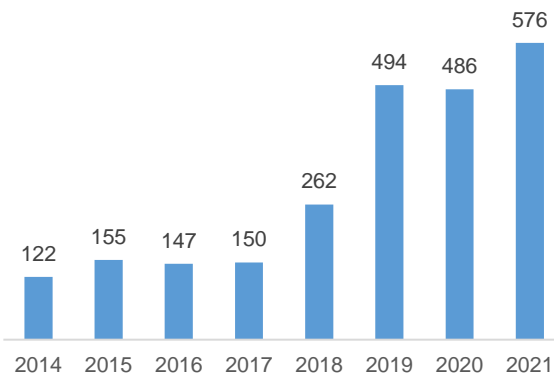
1174

Number of asylum-seekers as of July 2021

26,441

People in transit assisted by the National Protection Network between January and July 2021

Asylum Applications per Year (2014 - 2021)



120% of increase in new applications between 2018 and 2021 (up to July)

Source: Guatemalan Institute of Migration

- Since 2013, UNHCR has been supporting and assisting the Guatemalan State in ensuring that persons in need of international protection have access to the territory and asylum procedures. In 2020, UNHCR strengthened its presence in all bordering areas in Petén, Esquipulas, Puerto Barrios and Tecún Umán where UNHCR promotes humanitarian assistance and protection response with local authorities.
- UNHCR provides technical support to implement the regional protection and solutions strategy (MIRPS) for the Central American Countries situation, as Guatemala has the Pro Tempore Presidency this year.
- Most refugees and asylum-seekers reaching Guatemala are from Central America (El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua).
- UNHCR supports the identification of people in need of protection among the returnee population and is expanding its capacity to provide assistance for their reintegration in 2021.

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

85 National Staff
38 International Staff

Offices:

01 Country Office in Guatemala City
01 Field Office in Petén
01 Field Unit in Esquipulas
01 Field Unit in Izabal
01 Field Unit in Tecún Umán



The boundaries and Names shown and the designations used do not imply Official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nation

Main Activities

- Guatemala as a country of origin, transit, destination and return in the northern region of Central America, experiences complex human mobility dynamics and faces challenges in identifying and responding to the protection needs of people on the move. UNHCR's actions are mainly aimed at refugees and asylum seekers, people in need of protection in mixed movements, returnees in need of protection and host communities.
- UNHCR monitors deportation and returns of Guatemalan nationals by land and air, providing information on international protection, and eligibility screening for further assistance and protection response.
- New premises for the Department of Refugee Status Recognition (DRER), located in the Guatemalan Institute of Migration (IGM) were inaugurated in February 2021 with the support of UNHCR to increase their processing capacity with specially designed interview spaces, a child friendly space and meeting rooms for the National Commission for Refugees (CONARE). 25 new lawyers, social workers and psychologists were recruited, and a new registration and case tracking database was set up to expand DRER's capacity. UNHCR provides continuous technical guidance and support to both DRER and CONARE.
- UNHCR Guatemala conducted Participatory Assessments in 2021 with refugees and asylum-seekers in Guatemala City, the Departments of Izabal, Petén, Quetzaltenango, San Marcos and Chiquimula with results indicating that the major challenges for persons of concern are a) lack of state documentation, b) substandard employment conditions and pay, and c) high levels of discrimination and xenophobia in the host community. Participants also highlighted lack of community networks and support systems, and severely limited awareness of sexual and reproductive health and GBV resources.



In Petén clean-up activities of the lake were conducted with the support of partners and local authorities, with the participation of refugees ©UNHCR/2021

- In the context of COVID-19, UNHCR and partners maintained its presence providing assistance along the main routes used by persons in the mixed movements. In 2021, face masks, soaps, alcohol-based hand rubs and ecofilters to access clean water were distributed among UNHCR's partners in Guatemala, frontline workers, and host communities, while providing training on international protection and referral mechanisms of refugees identified. Protocols were also applied with the support of UNHCR in temporary shelters that continued providing services in a safe environment despite COVID-19 restrictions.
- UNHCR supported partners with the construction and rehabilitation of safe shelters and information centres on the main entry, transit and exit routes of Guatemala. Staff and maintenance have also been provided in order to guarantee adequate humanitarian and legal assistance, psychosocial assistance and medical care, while identifying protection needs and making referrals to available services for people in need of protection.



UNHCR in coordination with partners provides temporary shelter for people of concern at risk, including children ©UNHCR/2021

Protection

- As part of the Protection Transfer Arrangement (PTA) program, Guatemalans at high-risk who qualify for international protection are identified and referred for resettlement consideration through a partner consortium. UNHCR also receives referrals of persons of concern of other nationalities at risk in Guatemala, who qualify for international protection and meet resettlement criteria. UNHCR Guatemala receives and further assesses the referrals for resettlement consideration before submitting them to a resettlement country. The main resettlement countries receiving submissions from Guatemala are the United States and Australia.
- To strengthen national child protection systems UNHCR and partner Refugio de la Niñez (RdN) provide technical and financial support to the Social Welfare Secretariat (SBS) for the creation of a comprehensive attention model for community foster care of UASC with international protection needs. UNHCR provides ongoing support to the Attorney General's Office (PGN) to improve the identification of and assistance to UASC in transit, asylum seekers/refugees and others in need of international protection. The government with the support of organizations and UNHCR released a Protocol for the Care of Unaccompanied or Separated Children and Adolescents in the context of human mobility to provide them a differentiated protection response.
- Support is provided to the Ombudsperson's Office (*Procuraduría de Derechos Humanos* in Spanish) to ensure more effective human rights monitoring in key areas of entry, transit and destination of persons of concern. PDH has implemented a mobile model project called "Las ProcuMóvil" to offer information services as well referrals for protection response to needs of the most vulnerable persons on the move.
- In Guatemala, UNHCR supported the expansion of the capacity to identify cases of survivors of gender-based violence in high-risk communities in coordination with the Office Against Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons (*Secretaría Contra la Violencia Sexual, Explotación y Trata de Personas* in Spanish). Six new mobile units were donated to deploy them in 17 departments as an innovative model that will reach Guatemalans at risk, refugees, people in transit and others of concern.
- UNHCR works with LAMBDA to help identify and support asylum-seekers and refugees from the LGBTQI community and access to legal assistance and temporary safe shelters.

Response to basic needs and livelihoods



UNHCR in coordination with partners conducts registration activities in vulnerable host communities to provide assistance ©UNHCR/2021

- UNHCR started the implementation of a new Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion strategy for Guatemala aiming at mobilizing a large coalition of actors, including ministries, private sector companies, public-private business initiatives, local governments. Pilot projects with Manpower, Talento Sin Fronteras and the Municipality of Guatemala are being implemented to improve access to market-based income generation activities to support asylum-seekers and refugees to meet basic needs. Initiatives started in Petén department with FUNDAECO and Turi-Integra and are currently being expanded to include more people from the host communities as well. Agreements with AGEXPORT, Grupo de Gestores and ANAM are implemented in 2021, while other partnerships started to expand initiatives including refugees and asylum-seekers.
- UNHCR and the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare of Guatemala initiated this year joint work to promote the employability of refugees, asylum-seekers and returnees in the country. The agreement includes strengthening the conditions of access to work for refugees and applicants for refugee status through formal employment or self-employment to improve the self-sufficiency and resilience of this population and host communities.
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Security, National Association of Municipalities, Grupo de Gestores, AGEXPORT, Manpower Group, FUNDAECO and UNHCR established a roundtable to design livelihoods and economic inclusion, promoting activities for approximately 2,500 refugees, asylum seekers, returnees and Guatemalans at risk of displacement.
- A total of 852 beneficiaries in 324 households received cash assistance in June. The total reached in 2021 is 1,472 people supporting asylum-seekers, refugees, and others of concern. In a Post Distribution Monitoring exercise 96% of households that received cash assistance report a significant or moderate improvement in living conditions and 89% in stress reduction. In vulnerable communities within the country, UNHCR and partners are conducting registration activities for evaluation and further assistance for livelihoods.

New opportunities in Guatemala for refugees



“It’s hard to be away from family, but we are getting better thanks to the opportunities we received.”

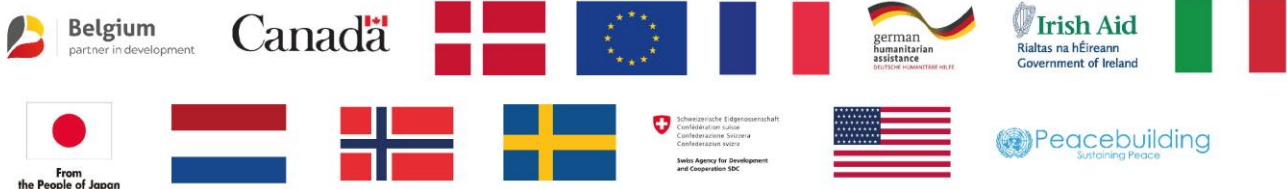
David, Salvadorian refugee in Guatemala

Thanks to UNHCR partnerships with the private sector, a Salvadorian refugee family in Guatemala City is rebuilding their new country by having access to work

Working with Partners

- In 2021, the Government of Guatemala has the incoming Pro-Tempore Presidency of the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS), which is expanding its operational capacity to respond to forced displacement in the region through the adoption and implementation of commitments in their National Action Plan. **Guatemala** as the MIRPS Presidency and **Spain**, as the Support Platform's Presidency, discussed next steps on their joint work within the 2021 workplan and agreed to strengthen efforts to engage and leverage support from interested states, regional institutions, and other stakeholders. Other local initiatives are promoted and implemented under this framework with UNHCR's support, such as the Solidarity Cities initiative creating greater engagement for a joint response for people in need of protection in the North of Central America.
- UNHCR works with 10 partners from civil society and faith-based organizations, which include specialized NGOs in child protection, sexual and gender-based violence, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex (LGBTI) population. Eleven partners comprise Guatemala's National Safe Spaces network (NSS), which operates through 10 shelters (including one exclusively for unaccompanied children) and 33 protection and information points, strategically placed along the migration routes to provide information on asylum and humanitarian assistance.
- Under the United Nations Country Team, UNHCR is part of two inter-agency groups: the UN Specialized Group on Migration and the Protection Cluster. The Specialized Group on Migration coordinates the provision of support and technical guidance related to Human Mobility. The Protection Cluster is led by UNHCR and coordinates the protection response to situations such as natural disasters and large mixed movements of persons known as "Caravans".
- In Guatemala UNHCR, IOM and UNICEF signed a letter of understanding with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Guatemala Institute of Migration to strengthen response and coordination capacities.

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