

Guatemala

January 2022

In the first month of 2022, **70 new asylum applications** have been registered and **86 people were granted refugee status**, what is the highest number that has ever been recognized in one month since the establishment of the Guatemalan asylum system. In total, there are currently **573 refugees** living in Guatemala.

UNHCR and its partners conduct daily monitoring activities along the main border and transit areas to identify and assist persons in need of international protection who are part of the mixed movements. In January 2022, the **National Protection Network assisted 12,700 people, which sums up to the 53,300 individuals assisted in 2021.**

In the **Centres for Returnees and Deportees** in Guatemala City and Tecun Uman, UNHCR has embedded protection screening and referral. In addition, UNHCR keeps promoting protection mechanisms for **Guatemalans at risk** residing in departments with high-out migration.

UNHCR's presence in Guatemala



Staff

79 National staff

50 International staff

54% Women / 46% Men

Offices

1 Country Office in Guatemala City

5 Field Units in:

Esquipulas, Chiquimula

Guatemala City

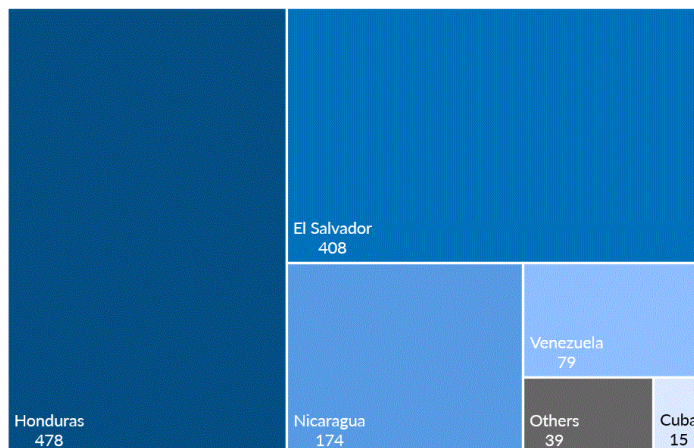
Puerto Barrios, Izabal

Santa Elena, Peten

Tecun Uman, San Marcos



Country of origin of the currently 1,193 asylum-seekers in Guatemala



HEIGHTENED MIXED MOVEMENTS

The daily mixed movements have increased from the beginning of January 2022, notably of Venezuelans. In addition, on 15 January several groups of a total of approximately 600 people, mainly from Honduras and Nicaragua, left from San Pedro Sula, Honduras, towards El Corinto border, Izabal, Guatemala. UNHCR's partners Guatemalan Red Cross, Pastoral de Movilidad Humana, Refugio de la Niñez, and the Human Rights Ombudsperson's Office through its mobile unit, provided information and humanitarian assistance such as basic medical care, hygiene kits, snacks, water, phone calls and shelter, while identifying people in need of international protection. Furthermore, through the Working Group on Migration and Protection UNHCR's Field Unit in Puerto Barrios coordinates with local governmental institutions and civil society organizations, to ensure forcibly displaced people have access to the Guatemalan asylum system.



Provision of 90 blankets to the migrant shelter in Santa Elena, Flores, Peten, in response to the heightened mixed movements. ©UNHCR/Angela Hurtado/2022

Working with Partners

- UNHCR Guatemala signed **new partnership agreements with 13 non-governmental organizations for the year 2022**: Action against Hunger, Fundación para el Ecodesarrollo y la Conservación, Guatemalan Red Cross, Ixqik, La Alianza, Lambda, Misioneros de San Carlos Scalabrinianos, Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala, Pastoral de Movilidad Humana, Refugio de la Niñez, Save the Children, Tierra Nueva, World Vision. In addition, UNHCR works closely with UN Women, IOM, UNICEF and governmental institutions to protect people forced to flee because of conflict and persecution.
- Within the framework of the United Nations System, **UNHCR co-leads the Protection Cluster with UN Women** through which the UN agencies in the country coordinate their protection activities. In addition, UNHCR is a **member of the UN Specialized Working Group on Migration (GEMIG)** that supports the Guatemalan authorities in developing policies on migration and forced displacement.

Main Activities

Response to Basic Needs

- In 2022 UNHCR keeps providing cash through its CBI programme to asylum-seekers, refugees as well as Guatemalans at risk who are in the process of being resettled to another country. In order to deliver cash assistance directly to beneficiaries of the programme, **UNHCR signed an agreement with Banrural**, the bank with the largest presence in the country. The new modality allows the UN Refugee Agency to maximize its capacity to provide direct assistance to people in need, reducing timing and cost of the transactions.
 - [READ the newest fact sheet on UNHCR's cash-based interventions](#)
 - [READ UNHCR's press release on the agreement with Banrural](#)
- In response to the increased mixed movements, **UNHCR provided 90 blankets to the migrant shelter in Santa Elena, Peten**, which is managed by partner Pastoral de Movilidad Humana.
- Several billboards with information on the prevention of gender-based violence as well as the humanitarian assistance provided by local communities and UNHCR's partners were installed in Peten along the migration routes to La Tecnica and El Ceibo borders with Mexico.
- In January, **more than 150 people contacted UNHCR's helpline** either by phone call or WhatsApp to obtain information on the Guatemalan asylum system or the services provided by UNHCR and its partners.



Signing of the agreement between the CEO of the Banrural bank and UNHCR's representative in Guatemala, Besem Obenson. ©UNHCR/Victor Sánchez/2022

Governance, Prevention and Protection

- In the first month of 2022, the **Guatemalan National Migration Authority granted refugees status to 86 people** (33 Hondurans, 29 Salvadorans, 12 Nicaraguans, 11 Venezuelans and one Cuban), what is the highest number that was ever recognized in one month since the establishment of the Guatemalan asylum system. The last recognition by the Migration Authority dates back to September 2021. UNHCR and its partners have continued

their advocacy efforts and offered support to the Guatemalan State institutions to achieve a more predictable, timely and systematic processing of the asylum claims.

- As part of UNHCR's efforts to further strengthen its ties with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and support their capacity to assist people in need of protection, the **offices of the Directorate General for Consular and Migration Affairs (Digracom) were refurbished and equipped with UNHCR's support.** The new offices were inaugurated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pedro Brolo, and UNHCR's Representative in Guatemala, Besem Obenson, on 26 January 2022.
 - [READ UNHCR's press release on the inauguration of Digracom's new offices in Guatemala City](#)
- UNHCR held a **training on conducting Best Interest Assessments** and the referral route of unaccompanied children, for staff members of its partner Refugio de la Niñez working in Guatemala City, Izabal, Peten and San Marcos. In addition, a workshop on international protection with a focus on child protection was provided to 40 employees of the Attorney General's Office (PGN) working in different regions of the country.
- In order to **strengthen the capacity of the Municipality of Villa Nueva to provide protection services** to refugees and Guatemalans at risk, UNHCR donated PPEs (such as 12,500 facemasks, 7,500 gloves, 5,000 hand sanitizer gels), 11 computers, two beamers, 300 soccer uniforms, 300 soccer balls, among other items, to the Municipal Offices for Women Affairs, Health and Comprehensive Security. The donation was made in the framework of the Solidarity City agreement signed between the Municipality and UNHCR.
- In January, **UNHCR provided seven information sessions to people of the mixed movements** who stayed at the migrant shelter in Esquipulas, managed by partner Pastoral de Movilidad Humana, with the objective to identify those in need of international protection. In this way, 300 people (36% from Haiti, 33% from Venezuela, 13% from Honduras, 6% from Nicaragua, among others) were informed about their rights.
- **UNHCR Guatemala hosted a visit of UNHCR Honduras to strengthen binational coordination mechanisms** and ties between the two operations. As part of the visit, protection activities in the departments of Chiquimula, Izabal, Peten and Guatemala City were presented. In addition, the Field Units in Izabal and Esquipulas reviewed their binational field workplan with their mirror offices in San Pedro Sula and Ocotepeque in Honduras.
- UNHCR and its partners continue conducting protection screenings and referrals in the two Centres for Returnees and Deportees in Guatemala City and Tecun Uman, San Marcos. As part of a series of infrastructure improvements implemented by UNHCR through its partner Refugio de la Niñez **in the Centre in Tecun Uman, office spaces of the Guatemalan Migration Institute were improved.**

Enhanced community-based protection in communities affected by or at risk of displacement

- UNHCR's partners Fundaeco and Guatemalan Red Cross provided foldable beds, medicines, personal hygiene and biosecurity kits, blankets and towels to 12 solidary families residing along the migration routes Bethel – La Tecnica and El Naranjo – El Ceibo, Peten, as well as in Morales, Izabal. Solidary families are volunteers from local communities who provide humanitarian assistance to people on the move. The support aims to **strengthen their capacities to identify, assist and refer people in need of international protection** who are part of the mixed movements.
- In the department of Alta Verapaz, the joint UNHCR – UN Women project implemented in coordination with CICAM (Centre for Research, Training and Support of Women) finalized. As part of the closing ceremony, cell phones



A woman of a solidary family provides drinking water and information to people on the move in Izabal on the border with Honduras. ©UNHCR/Rubén Salgado/2021

and certifications were handed over to **33 women who were trained on leading women's empowerment as well as gender-based violence prevention and response networks** in the three municipalities of Coban, San Pedro Carcha and San Cristobal Verapaz.

- UNHCR and members of the local communities, including female protection agents trained as part of the project, **inaugurated two community centres** in the villages Nuevo Queja and Santa Elena in San Cristobal Verapaz, Alta Verapaz, that were built jointly by UN Women and CICAM with UNHCR's funds. The centre in Nuevo Queja (a village that was heavily affected by the hurricanes ETA and IOTA in November 2020) supports indigenous Maya Poqomchi women's community protection networks and provides services to pregnant women. The second centre in Santa Elena is used as a safe space for women and children.



Inauguration of the new community centre in the village Nuevo Queja, San Cristobal Verapaz, Alta Verapaz. ©UNHCR/Jaqueline Recinos/2022

Durable Solutions

- In the framework of the initiative Cities of Solidarity, of which the Municipality of Puerto Barrios is part, UNHCR through its partner Refugio de la Niñez **renovated and equipped three schools** to promote local integration opportunities for asylum-seeking and refugee children. The roofs and floors of the schools were refurbished and new chairs, tables as well as chalkboards were donated. Representatives of the Ministry of Education, teachers and members of parents' associations participated in the inauguration event.
- As part of the Renaciendo en Guate (Starting over in Guatemala) communication campaign of the Ministry of Labour and UNHCR, **a new video with testimonies of asylum-seekers and refugees was published**. The campaign aims to promote their labour and economic inclusion in the country.
 - **WATCH** the new video published by the Ministry of Labour
- In San Cristobal Verapaz, Alta Verapaz, UNHCR through its partner World Vision and in coordination with the Municipality **inaugurated a remodelled and fully equipped livelihoods training centre**. The centre will provide certified trainings, supporting entrepreneurship and employability for Guatemalans at risk, with special emphasis on IT, cuisine and apparel manufacturing. Among the items donated there are: 12 computers, 15 sewing machines, one industrial oven, printers and projectors.

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