

# El Salvador

September 2021

Communities in El Salvador are severely affected by gang violence, extortion, death threats, and sexual violence, as well as other serious human rights violations.

Violence and lack of opportunities have forced people to leave their homes in search of protection, access to basic services and livelihood opportunities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the needs of internally displaced persons and those at risk by impacting their access to protection options and livelihoods.

## KEY FIGURES

**71,500**

Internally displaced persons from 2006-2016 according to a profiling exercise led by the Government.

**2,163**

Salvadorans have been deported to the country from January to July 2021.

**428**

Salvadoran children and adolescents deported to the country from January to July 2021.

**11,300**

Persons received support from UNHCR and its partners from January to July 2021. Including individual assistance, emergency shelter, multipurpose grants, and livelihoods guidance.

## FUNDING (AS OF 13 SEPTEMBER 2021)

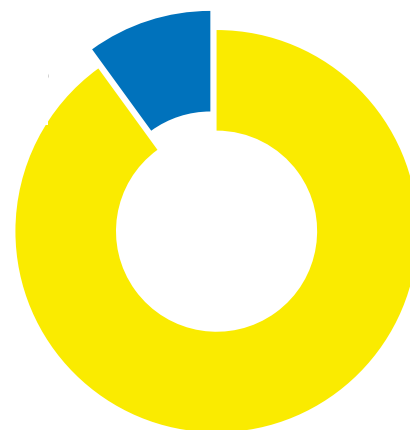
**USD 21.6 M**

UNHCR financial requirements for El Salvador's operation

Unfunded

10%

**2.2 M**



Funded  
90%

**19.4 M**

## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

32 National Staff

22 International Staff

### Offices:

1 Branch Office in Antiguo

Cuscatlan, La Libertad



## Context

- Gang violence and lack of access to effective protection measures has forced tens of thousands to flee internally since 2006. In July 2018, internal forced displacement was officially recognized by the Supreme Court of El Salvador.
- In July 2019, the Salvadoran Government joined the Comprehensive Regional Protection & Solutions Framework (MIRPS in Spanish) to address forced displacement in Central America and Mexico. As part of the country's contributions to the MIRPS, a National Response Plan was created with 49 commitments in protection, health, education, and livelihoods to assist internally displaced persons, refugees, and asylum seekers. Additionally, El Salvador held MIRPS Pro Tempore Presidency during 2020.
- In January 2020, the Legislative Assembly approved the "Special Law for the Comprehensive Care and Protection of People in a situation of Forced Internal Displacement", a fundamental instrument to provide care, protection, and lasting solutions to people internally displaced due to violence from organized crime and criminal gangs, as well as those who may be at risk of displacement. UNHCR has technically accompanied the process since the beginning and has been working with municipal authorities to develop local instruments and referral pathways for internally displaced persons.
- UNHCR leads the Protection Cluster, where at least 28 organizations converge to coordinate the response to vulnerable people affected by different risks including forced displacement and the COVID-19 emergency. The response comprises the delivery of humanitarian assistance, such as food, hygiene kits and psychosocial support, as well as the provision protection services to persons at risk.

## Main Activities

### Community-based Protection

- In 2021, UNHCR has prioritized community-based interventions and expanded its presence in 57 communities in 25 municipalities of El Salvador to mitigate protection risks, particularly impacting children and youth, gender-based violence survivors, LGBTI persons, among others affected by forced displacement. Through a protection-by-presence approach, UNHCR and partners implement programs that strengthen community leaderships, dialogue with national institutions, and develop resilience.
- In 2021, 127 community outreach volunteers have been identified and trained to further strengthen community-based protection mechanisms and to maintain an open channel of communication between UNHCR with communities.
- In June, UNHCR's helpline was established, to date 233 cases (728 individuals) of internally displaced persons and deportees with protection needs have been oriented and assisted through the Support Space or the helpline.
- In July, UNHCR's first Support Space in El Salvador (Espacio de apoyo "a tu lado") was established. Implemented in coordination with partner International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the National Directorate of Attention to Victims and Forced Migration, the initiative seeks to ensure access to protection and assistance of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and persons at risk of displacement through the establishment of a physical space. To date, 196 individuals have been assisted at the Support Space. The services provided in the Support Space are:
  - a) Direct attention provided by UNHCR for identification of protection needs and case management.
  - b) Referral to psychosocial support, mental and physical health services, and legal counselling.
  - c) Inclusion in projects for livelihoods generation and self-sufficiency promotion.

### Durable Solutions and Livelihoods

- UNHCR supports small-scale entrepreneurship initiatives and vocational education strategies focused on access to employability and self-employability to support IDPs, deportees with protection needs and persons at risk of displacement in becoming self-reliant. Up to June 2021, 551 persons of concern to UNHCR were provided with guidance on business market opportunities.
- UNHCR and the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare of El Salvador signed a Memorandum of Understanding to promote the employability of forcibly displaced people in the country through "My First Job" program. To date, 349 forcibly displaced persons and at-risk youth are enrolled in the program and undertaking apprenticeships with businesses throughout El Salvador.

- UNHCR and World Vision implement the innovative program "Super Pilas", that focuses on building soft skills and life skills by orientating participants to work towards suitable objectives according to their profiles: vocational training, entrepreneurship and/or formal employment. A total of 221 participants are currently enrolled in the program.
- UNHCR and the Salvadoran Institute for Professional training (INSAFORP) have provided 295 IDPs and at-risk youth with professional training through the first phase of the program *Creating Opportunities*. This program is focused on strengthening the professional or self-employment skillsets of youth, in alignment with their personal or family life plan. This program also will support their job placement through the allocation of their profiles in the employment bureaus of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, INSAFORP will also refer profiles to interested enterprises.

## Education

- UNHCR supports the renovation of four public schools in three departments to facilitate education for 1,500 children in host communities, IDPs and persons at risk of displacement.
- UNHCR supports an accelerated learning programme jointly with the Ministry of Education for IDPs and community-based interventions to promote community integration.

## Health

- UNHCR in coordination with the Ministry of Health and Caritas carried out a consultation with refugees and asylum-seekers to better understand the barriers and risks they face to access the COVID-19 vaccine in the country. Among the identified challenges were difficulties registering to the national vaccination system with their residency number, and discrimination when they try to access health services. As a result, the Ministry of Health coordinated with the National Commission for Refugee Status Determination (CODER) and implementing partner Caritas to obtain the list of asylum-seekers and refugees and allow them into the national vaccination system. A similar consultation was held with IDPs, where they emphasized the importance of having clear and widespread information about the vaccine and the vaccination plan. Some IDPs had already accessed the vaccine, while others are waiting for their age group call. In general, they have not face barriers as consequence of their displacement to access the vaccine.
- UNHCR, supports the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Culture Medical Campaign for elderly indigenous people in Morazán and Santo Domingo's departments. Approximately 240 elderly people from nearby rural and indigenous areas at risk of forced displacement received medical assistance. Some of them also received donated equipment, such as walkers and walking sticks.

## Food Security and Nutrition

- UNHCR supports the National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONNA) and the Salvadoran Institute for the Comprehensive Development of Children and Adolescents (ISNA) with the provision of food for children and their families during the reception process for deportees.
- In the first half of 2021, UNHCR has provided humanitarian assistance through cash-based interventions to 667 families, consisting of 2,392 individuals who have been forcibly displaced or at risk of displacement. This support helps vulnerable people cover basic needs such as food, rent, documentation, and transportation.

## Shelter and NFIs

- UNHCR works together with faith-based organizations and other partners to provide shelter and basic humanitarian assistance to persons in need of protection. UNHCR has also supported safe houses in coordination with the Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women for SGBV survivors and displaced women.

**UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is grateful for the support of:**



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