

# Mexico

April 2019

## Key Figures

From January to 31 March 2019, **12,716** people applied for **asylum** in Mexico; **3,904** in January, **4,037** in February, and **4,775** in March.\*

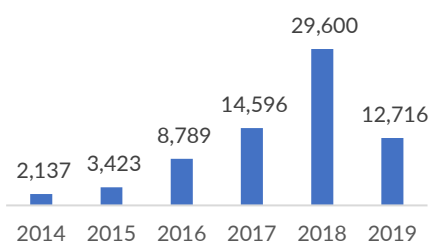
From January-March 2019, the **increase in claimants** over the same period of 2018 was:

- Honduras: 237%
- El Salvador: 112%
- Venezuela: 71%
- Guatemala: 224%
- Nicaragua: 1,367%

In total, **631 people** have been **relocated** to facilitate local integration from 1 January till 31 March 2019.\*  
Preliminary COMAR figures (subject to change).

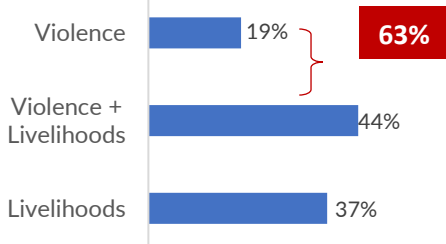
## Evolution of asylum claims

Asylum claims in Mexico  
as of 31 March 2019



## Protection Monitoring

Reasons for leaving country  
of origin (Combined reasons)



Conducted in January 2019 in Ciudad Hidalgo. 988 people interviewed.

## OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

- The number of people arriving at Mexico's southern border with Guatemala fleeing criminal violence, political unrest and economic hardship is soaring. The number of asylum claims in Mexico rose by more than 103% in 2018 over the previous year, from 14,596 to 29,623. The upward trend is likely to continue as the drivers of displacement remain in place and because return options in the region are limited.
- Asylum-seekers from Honduras, El Salvador and Venezuela represent 86% of all asylum claimants so far in 2019. The outbreak of violence in Nicaragua and the deterioration of the situation in Venezuela are also driving an increasing number of people from these countries to seek protection in Mexico.
- A significant percentage of people entering Mexico are fleeing persecution and violence, and are in need of international protection.
- The Mexican Government announced a new migration policy which refers to the Global Compact on Migration. It is expected that during Mexico's current presidency of the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS), Mexico will transform its migration policy from a policy guided by security and control, to an approach which places greater emphasis on human rights, protection and regional cooperation.



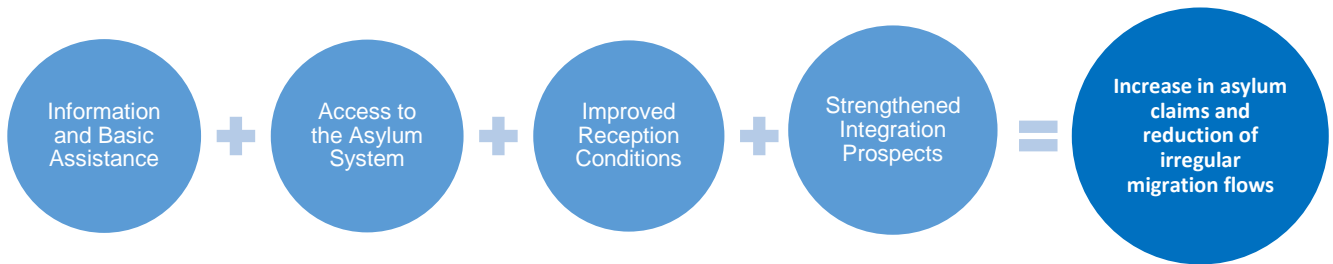
Participatory Assessment in Tapachula, February 2019. © ACNUR/ Rafael Sanchez.

## UNHCR Strategy

UNHCR Mexico has made important commitments to significantly increase its staff and activities to support the work of the Mexican authorities in processing an increased number of asylum claims and ensure protection of its Persons of Concern (PoC). This includes the provision of technical support to ensure timely registration of asylum-seekers, setting up identification and referral mechanisms for those with specific vulnerabilities/needs, increasing the capacity and sustainability of shelters and promoting local integration opportunities.

## Information and Basic Assistance

- One main challenge associated with protecting persons in need of international protection in Mexico has been the lack of information to access the asylum procedure.
- UNHCR, the UN agencies, COMAR and the National Human Rights Commission set up a platform to provide information on the asylum system in the country of origin, transit, and destination for people fleeing from insecurity and persecution. The platform is unique as it is built on a simple and easy to access Facebook page and hotline under the name "Confiar en el Jaguar" (in English 'trust the jaguar'). Facebook is used because it is the principal means of communication for asylum-seekers. UNHCR is currently sharing information and protection messages with people of concern, in addition to directly answering questions or responding to doubts via Facebook's messenger function.



- UNHCR also strengthens the **sustainability and protection capacity of selected shelters** that provide support and assistance to migrants and refugees along the migratory routes in Mexico. Shelters continue to be key actors in identifying persons in need of international protection, inform about the right to seek asylum and refer people in need of international protection to the Mexican asylum system.
- UNHCR also works with a network of legal partners, the **Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR) and the National Migration Institute (INM)** to assure that persons in need of international protection are adequately informed about the asylum procedure and other forms of legal pathways at the point of entry into Mexico.
- The goal is to provide information to 30,000 persons per year. UNHCR is now assisting COMAR to increase its regional presence through the opening of new offices in key locations.
- UNHCR is providing Humanitarian Assistance in the form of **Multi-Purpose Cash Grants (MPG)** intended to cover basic needs such as food, NFIs, and contribution towards housing/utility bills. UNHCR also issues **Sectoral Top Up-Grants** using a protection-lens and in association with other technical sectors so that response options are tailored to the needs of the most vulnerable population. The expansion of its **Cash-Based Intervention (CBI)** program in 2019 allows UNHCR to engage in a more holistic and forward-looking CBI strategy with a view to transitioning over time to the inclusion of PoCs into government social safety programs, while fostering socio-economic inclusion and self-reliance.

### Access to the Asylum System

- UNHCR estimates that the number of people with international protection needs entering Mexico is much higher than those requesting asylum. The absence of proper protection screening protocols for families and adults, the lack of a systematic implementation of existing best interest determination procedures for unaccompanied children and detention of asylum-seekers submitting their claim at border entry points are strong obstacles to accessing the asylum procedure.
- The abandonment rate of asylum procedures, especially in Southern Mexico is a key protection concern. This situation, compounded by insufficient resources and limited field presence of COMAR in key locations in Northern and Central Mexico, continues to pose challenges to efficient processing of asylum claims.
- UNHCR **promotes the capacity and efficiency of Mexico's asylum system**. UNHCR has currently 39 contractors on loan to **COMAR, mainly to support with registration**. Support for additional 63 UNHCR secondments to COMAR is underway. COMAR and UNHCR are discussing additional staffing support. Plans for **additional office expansions** are also being worked on. New COMAR field locations are to include Palenque in Southern Mexico, Monterrey and Tijuana in the North. Through support to COMAR, UNHCR hopes for reduced waiting times for asylum decisions, improved quality of decisions, freedom of movement for asylum-seekers, improved access to documentation and steps to facilitate access to the labour market for asylum-seekers. These steps would reduce the number of people who abandon or withdraw their claims.

### Improved Reception Conditions

- Due to limited COMAR presence in the South and absence of opportunities to apply for asylum at the border, many PoC enter Mexico irregularly. While traveling to locations with COMAR presence they face a risk of being detained.
- Persons in need of international protection often take dangerous routes to reach COMAR offices. Women and girls in particular are at risk of sexual and gender-based violence.
- PoC often seek assistance in the network of shelters located along the migrant routes, which currently includes some 140 shelters. UNHCR will continue **strengthening the capacities of the shelters to carry out this outreach and to provide safe conditions for persons seeking asylum, including necessary legal and psycho-social support**. A range of infrastructure improvements are now being implemented in key locations, including Coatzacoalcos (Veracruz), Mexico City and Monterrey.
- UNHCR will continue to provide trainings to shelter management to reinforce their capacity to provide necessary protection and assistance for persons in need of international protection, starting with the necessary follow-up for release from detention (identification of special needs, capacity to refer to relevant institutions and finally facilitating local integration).



**MEXICO: UNHCR Presence**  
3 April 2019

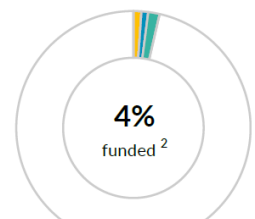


Creation date: 3 April 2019  
Sources: UNHCR

**Offices**

- 1 Branch Office in Mexico City
- 1 Sub Office in Tapachula
- 2 Field Offices in Monterrey and Tenosique

**\$59.6 million**  
UNHCR's financial requirements 2019



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