

# Guatemala

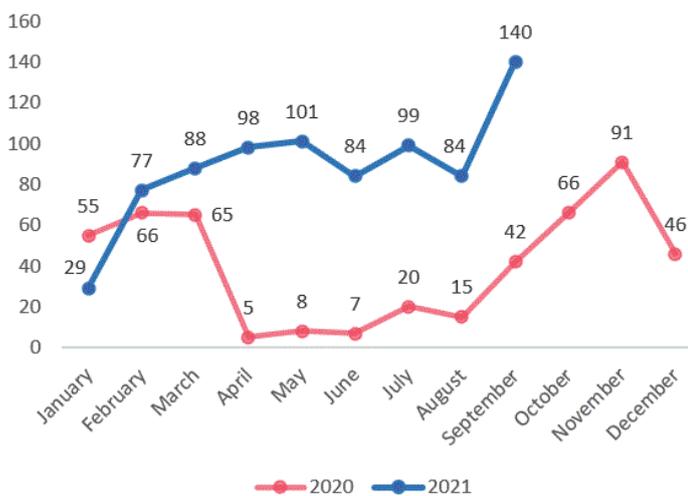
September 2021

In 2021, Guatemala has received the **highest number of asylum applications since the establishment of the Guatemalan asylum system** in 2001. In 2021, 800 new applications have been registered, what is almost the double than in 2020. In total, there are currently **1,308 asylum-seekers and 487 refugees** living in Guatemala.

UNHCR continues to strengthen the asylum system by the provision of both financial and technical support to the National Refugee Department. UNHCR and partners conduct **monitoring activities** along the main border and transit areas, in centres for returnees as well as in vulnerable communities **to identify and assist persons in need of protection.**

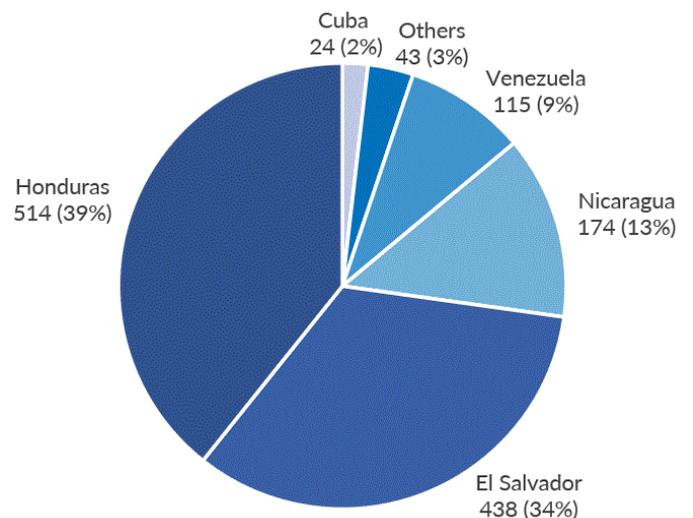
In addition, **UNHCR contributes to local integration opportunities** for asylum-seekers and refugees, **while contributing to the development of Guatemalan host communities**, through projects focusing on childcare, education, health, livelihoods and SGBV.

Monthly Asylum Applications (2020 - 2021)



Source: Guatemalan Migration Institute

Country of origin of Asylum Seekers



## CURRENT CONTEXT OVERVIEW

In 2021, mixed movements have increased significantly in comparison to 2020. In the current year, UNHCR and its partners have provided information, legal counselling, shelter, food, basic medical care, psychological first aid, hygiene kits, anti-COVID PPEs, telephone calls and access to Wi-Fi to a **total of 42,134 individuals in transit**, among them persons in need of international protection. 12,377 correspond to women and children and 249 to LGBTI individuals.

Additionally, expulsions of mostly Guatemalans, Hondurans and Salvadorans under Title 42 from the United States to Mexico and from there to Guatemala continue. Based on monitoring by UNHCR's partners, as well as statistics received by State institutions, UNHCR estimates that since the beginning of August 2021, over 20,000 persons have been expelled to Guatemala, among them at least 376 persons with protection needs were identified.



Providing assistance to a person applying for asylum in Guatemala at El Corinto border, Izabal. ©UNHCR/Marco Baumgartner/2021

## Working with Partners

- UNHCR has **partnership agreements with 13 organizations** in Guatemala: 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 two agencies from the UN family (World Food Program and UN Women). UNHCR also works closely with other civil society organisations and governmental institutions to protect people forced to flee because of conflict and persecution.
- **UNHCR co-leads the Protection Cluster** with UN Women and has facilitated monthly virtual sessions resulting in the strengthening of the knowledge on international protection among the 16 participating national and international organizations. In addition, under UNHCR's leadership, the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for the protection sector were elaborated and published.
  - [READ the Humanitarian Needs Overview and the Humanitarian Response Plan for Guatemala](#)

## Main Activities

### Response to Basic Needs

- At the Guatemalan border with Honduras El Cinchado / El Corinto, UNHCR donated a **Refugee Housing Unit** that is being used by the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance to apply COVID-19 health protocols to people entering Guatemala.
- In 2021, UNHCR through its cash-based interventions (CBI) has provided **multipurpose cash grants and cash for livelihoods** to 1,196 Guatemalans in need of protection and to 989 asylum-seekers and refugees. 72% of the beneficiaries are women and children. In total, UNHCR has distributed 977,558 USD enabling recipients to fulfil their basic needs and improve their livelihood opportunities. UNHCR is currently further expanding its CBI program to include new population groups such as Guatemalan deportees with protection needs identified by UNHCR's partners in the Returnee Centres in Tecun Uman and in Guatemala City.
  - [READ the Factsheet on UNHCR's cash-based interventions in Guatemala](#)

### Governance, Prevention and Protection

- In 2021, **Guatemala holds the Pro-Tempore Presidency of the MIRPS**. In September, UNHCR Guatemala participated in a preparatory meeting of Guatemala's and Mexico's National Technical Teams of the MIRPS where best practices regarding the strengthening of asylum systems and access for asylum seekers and refugees to the labour markets were shared.
- At the end of August 2021, the State-run community outreach project- UNIVETs (*Unidades Móviles contra la Violencia Sexual y Trata de Personas in Spanish*) implemented by the Government Office against Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons (SVET) and supported by UNHCR through its partner Refugio de la Niñez, was officially launched. During the first month of its functioning, the **six mobile units informed over 2,000 people**, among them 547 persons on the move, about the services available for survivors of sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking in persons in 29 municipalities of the departments Alta Verapaz, Chiquimula, Guatemala, Huehuetenango and Peten. In addition, 223 government officials were trained by the UNIVETs on the prevention of and response to GBV.
- UNHCR and its partners regularly carry out **home visits to asylum-seekers and refugees** to identify, refer and follow up on their individual needs. In Peten, a local Case Management Working Group, comprised of UNHCR and its partner Refugio de la Niñez, was established to follow up on cases with special protection needs.

- UNHCR through its partners has embedded protection screening and referral of cases with protection needs at the **Center for Returnees in Tecun Uman and Guatemala City**. In September, 328 interviews were conducted by UNHCR's partner Refugio de la Niñez in both Centres and a total of 183 Guatemalans in need of protection were identified and referred to the Protection Transfer Arrangement (PTA) program or to other protection mechanisms. In Tecun Uman, UNHCR supported the improvement of the infrastructure of the Center through the **construction and equipment of two rooms** for confidential interventions, protection screenings, migratory procedures and the provision of humanitarian assistance.



Home visit to an asylum-seeker carried out by UNHCR and partners in Suchitepequez. ©UNHCR/Miguel Juarez/2021

- In Izabal, a five-session course on international refugee protection hosted by UNHCR and the public university of San Carlos was held with 32 participants from local institutions, NGOs and community organisations. In 2021, **UNHCR has trained over 3,200 persons** on its mandate, international refugee law, referral pathways of identified cases and services available to asylum-seekers, refugees and persons in transit.
- In Peten, **solar street lightening systems** were installed to prevent security incidents and GBV among persons in transit, refugees and host communities. In total 48 solar lamps have been installed along the main transit routes and 42 persons of the local communities were trained on the maintenance.

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

- In the framework of the new partnership agreement signed between UNHCR and UN Women and in collaboration with the National Association of Municipalities, the first field activities took place in September. The project aims to **strengthen local communities' and institutions' efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence** in different departments of Guatemala. As part of the project, a first workshop was provided to the Municipal Women's Directorate in El Estor, Izabal, on leadership, empowerment, public policies and strengthening of community protection networks.
- As part of UNHCR's strategy to expand its programs to new population groups, more than **3,000 Guatemalans affected by or at risk of displacement in socially vulnerable communities have been identified and registered** by UNHCR and its partners. Based on their individual protection needs, the selected people will receive support, including cash grants to access basic needs and/or improve livelihoods mechanisms, contributing to stabilize this population at risk in their places of origin.

### Durable Solutions

- UNHCR published its **2021-2023 livelihood and economic inclusion strategy** that aims to promote self-reliance of asylum-seekers, refugees and Guatemalans with protection needs, and build on their skills. The strategy consists of two main components: i) Generate market-based livelihood opportunities for the mentioned population groups; ii) Promote the inclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees in public and private services with a special emphasis on socioeconomic and employment programs. In this regard, letters of understanding were signed with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, AGEXPORT, CentraRSE, Crehana, INTECAP, among others.
  - [READ UNHCR's Livelihood Strategy 2021-2023 for Guatemala](#)

- In the town of Xela located in the department of Quetzaltenango, UNHCR together with its partner Tierra Nueva inaugurated a project that consists of the **establishment of a computer lab** inside a library managed by the civil society organization Sacándole Brillo a Xela (Brightening Xela). Thirty-one computers and one photocopier machine were donated. In addition, 15 bicycles were donated to establish a **free public transport network** called BiciRed in Guatemala's second largest city. The UNHCR funded project facilitates asylum-seekers, refugees and members of the host community access to virtual education, vocational trainings, loan of books and sociocultural activities that contribute to peaceful coexistence.



Use of the newly established computer lab in Quetzaltenango. ©UNHCR/Maribel Tobar/2021

- As part of its livelihood strategy, UNHCR reached an agreement with Crehana, a company specialized in teaching interactive online courses, who as part of its corporate social responsibility committed itself to provide **100 scholarships to asylum-seekers, refugees and members of the host communities**. UNHCR through its partners provided 55 tablets to the most vulnerable people elected for scholarships to guarantee access to the virtual training courses. Based on the individual livelihood needs, each person can choose among the following courses: Customer Service, Sales, Digital Marketing, Crafts and Cooking.
- In Peten, as part of the livelihood project TURI-INTEGRA, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA) in coordination with UNHCR's partners provided a **training on the elaboration of soaps and cleaning supplies** to asylum-seeker and refugee entrepreneurs.
- In Morales, Izabal, as part of the commemoration of the independence of the Central American nations, 20 Nicaraguan, Honduran and Salvadorian asylum-seekers and refugees celebrated together with local university students the coexistence of Central American peoples. The event was hosted by the municipality of Morales and UNHCR's partner FUNDAECO, and included a **gastronomy fair, music and poetry**.



Follow UNHCR Guatemala's Representative Besem Obenson on Twitter to receive the latest information on ongoing activities:



@RepACNURGuate

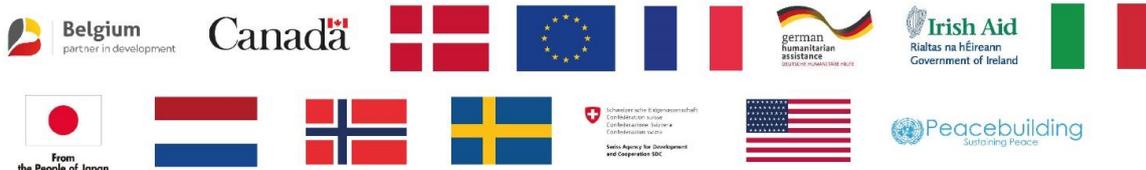
## UNHCR's financial requirements for the Guatemala operation

(as of 26 October 2021)

**Funded: 31.5 million USD (81%)**

**Unfunded: 7.6 million USD (19%)**

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



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