

# MEXICO

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### Main Objectives

- Consolidate the local integration of Guatemalan refugees in the south-eastern states of Campeche, Quintana Roo and Chiapas.
- Find lasting solutions for urban refugees.
- Promote the enactment of national legislation implementing the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol and the establishment of refugee status determination procedures.
- Raise awareness of refugee issues among Government officials, civil society and the population at large.

Planning Figures		
Population	Jan. 2000	Dec. 2000
Guatemalan Refugees	22,500	22,375
Urban Refugees*	2,400	2,400
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,900</b>	<b>24,775</b>

\* UNHCR will assist 500-800 urban refugees in 2000.

**Total Requirements**  
USD 6,604,932





## WORKING ENVIRONMENT

### Recent Developments

When UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration Programme for Guatemalan refugees was concluded at the end of June 1999, approximately 22,500 Guatemalan refugees remained in the three south-eastern States of Campeche (7,100), Quintana Roo (2,900) and Chiapas (12,500). These refugees are to become fully-fledged members of Mexican society in accordance with the Government's Migratory Stabilisation Plan launched in August 1996. More than 2,200 refugees in the states of Campeche and Quintana Roo have already been naturalised thanks to an accelerated procedure, and the rest hold legal immigrant documentation.

Alongside its support for the documentation and naturalisation process, UNHCR has been funding a number of projects promoting the socio-economic integration of the refugees. In Campeche and Quintana Roo most projects have been completed. The seven refugee settlements in Campeche and Quintana Roo have been formally recognised as Mexican villages, and incorporated into the respective municipalities, where basic services are now provided and run by federal and state institutions. One remaining challenge is the question of future ownership of land.

In Chiapas, a three-year integration programme has been developed jointly by UNHCR, the *Comisión Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados* (COMAR) and state authorities. It is designed to enable government ministries to administer services for refugees on an equal footing with services for local Mexican residents. As of mid-1999, 5,080 Guatemalan refugees in Chiapas held legal immigrant documents. More recently, 120 refugees in Chiapas have availed themselves of the new accelerated naturalisation process. Should all eligible refugees choose to apply for naturalisation, significant additional resources would be required in 2000.

The High Commissioner's Global Campaign on Accession to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol made great strides in Mexico in 1999. The international refugee instruments are due to be submitted for approval and ratification to the Senate at the forthcoming session of Congress.

### Constraints

Mexico's limited capacity to deal with an unusually high number of applications for naturalisa-

tion has led to delays. It is hard to establish clear, streamlined procedures for the renewal of legal immigrant documents. In the state of Chiapas in particular, the registration of births remains cumbersome.

Given the complexity of Mexican law on land ownership, the sale and transfer of land to the refugees in Campeche and Quintana Roo will probably be a protracted experience.

If ratification of the international refugee instruments does not occur during the autumn 1999 parliamentary session, the establishment of a national protection framework for asylum-seekers and refugees will be further delayed.



## STRATEGY

### Protection and Solutions

UNHCR will help speed up the paperwork for refugees in Campeche and Quintana Roo who applied for naturalisation prior to 30 June 1999 through the accelerated procedure. Simultaneously, UNHCR will support completion of the legal immigrant documentation process in the three states, ensuring equal benefits for men and women, as well as sustainable mechanisms for the renewal or replacement of documents. In 2000, many legal immigrant documents will be up for renewal in Chiapas and UNHCR will closely monitor the renewal process. Holders of such documents become eligible for permanent residence after five consecutive years of renewal. UNHCR will help refugee women complete the required formalities for migration documents and also pay the related fees.

UNHCR will continue to advocate better birth registration procedures at the local level and explain to refugee parents the need to promptly register every baby.

In Campeche and Quintana Roo, UNHCR will try to initiate the purchase of land by individual refugees, ensuring co-ownership by men and women.

Within the Global Campaign on Accession, UNHCR will continue to advocate accession to the two Statelessness Conventions wherever necessary. If, as is likely, Mexico will have become party to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol,



UNHCR will provide advice for the drafting of national implementing legislation incorporating the principles of international protection and a gender perspective. Pending the enactment of national refugee legislation and the establishment of refugee status determination procedures, UNHCR will continue to conduct eligibility interviews under its mandate. A few urban refugees will be encouraged through counselling and group information sessions to regularise their legal status in Mexico and, whenever possible, obtain legal immigrant documentation or become naturalised.

Training and other capacity-building activities are crucial elements of UNHCR's strategy to strengthen the protection framework. UNHCR will continue to vigorously promote refugee law, particularly through its ongoing training programme for migration officials that includes guidelines on refugee women and children. Likewise, a programme launched in 1998 will forge ahead with its campaign to have refugee and humanitarian law included in university curricula.

#### Assistance

Until July 2000, UNHCR will continue to help approximately 100 refugee students enrolled in various educational programmes in Campeche and Quintana Roo to conclude their studies. UNHCR will continue to facilitate the repatriation of up to 125 refugees to Guatemala, if and when requested. Through its cooperation with the local refugee organisation, now a legally registered Mexican NGO, UNHCR will keep track of the 13 credit associations with a membership of close to 700 persons (more than half of them women) which operate in the two states.

In Chiapas, UNHCR will fund the continued development of social infrastructure. Although it will gradually transfer responsibility for basic services to the Government, some assistance will continue in 2000, primarily in nutrition, health, and education. Financial support will be provided to public and private clinics for medical services for the disabled, as well as for reproductive health. Midwives and community health workers will be helped to become more autonomous. Efforts will continue to integrate refugee students into the national educational system. Adults, particularly women, will be encouraged to attend vocational and technical courses to increase their chances of joining the labour market. Special support will be provided to girls attending Mexican schools as well as to families with limited financial resources.

Mechanisms to secure the long-term economic and social sustainability of the savings and micro-credit scheme (established in Chiapas in 1998) will be in place by the end of the year 2000. The forestry project in Montebello National Park will receive continued support and UNHCR will look into the possibility of transferring the project to a national institution.

UNHCR estimates that between 500 and 800 urban refugees will continue to need financial assistance and services in 2000. Most of them took refuge from the Central American conflicts back in the 1980s.

#### Desired Impact

By the end of 2000, citizenship will have been granted to all Guatemalan refugees in Campeche and Quintana Roo who submitted their naturalisation applications in 1998 and during the first half of 1999, and at least half of those whose applications were submitted during the second half of 1999. By then the purchase of land by naturalised refugees will be well underway, as will be the process whereby land tenure is put on a firm legal footing.

In Chiapas, all adult refugees born outside Mexico will hold legally valid immigration documents. All children born prior to 2000 will have been properly registered and will have been issued with a birth certificate. At least 90 per cent of new-born babies will be registered within the six-month period stipulated by Mexican law without external support.

The bulk of the infrastructural works funded by UNHCR will have been completed. The refugees are expected to have access to basic health care in their respective municipalities and primary and secondary education. Refugee women are expected to participate actively in savings and micro-credit groups, food acquisition and distribution, and have access to gainful employment.

## ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

#### Management Structure

The Regional Office in Mexico City covers seven countries other than Mexico: Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. After the closure of the office in



Campeche in December 1999, only the office in Comitán, Chiapas will remain open in 2000.

UNHCR's activities in Mexico will be conducted by ten international and 19 national staff. Due to the much-reduced office in Guatemala, the closure of the office in Campeche and the discontinuation of a United Nations Volunteer presence in Belize, staff in Mexico City will undertake frequent missions to these areas.

### Coordination

UNHCR is the only UN organisation with a field presence in the states of Campeche, Quintana Roo and Chiapas. The European Commission (EC) opened an office in Campeche in 1997 to monitor the implementation of a micro-regional development project targeting the refugee population and the surrounding Mexican communities. The EC works closely with UNHCR and local institutions to assist and streamline all aspects of the refugees' integration.

UNHCR coordinates closely with its Government counterpart and main implementing partner, COMAR, both at the federal and local level. In Chiapas, monthly meetings take place between UNHCR and the NGOs participating in the integration programme to exchange information and discuss strategy. Representatives of refugee organisations such as the Integration and Community Development Committee and the Network of Community Health Workers and Midwives have recently joined the meetings. UNHCR also consults and cooperates with the relevant state authorities in Chiapas, in particular the state development commission.

In Mexico City, UNHCR works closely with the National Migration Institute (INM) as well as a national NGO. Capacity-building and training for migration officials continue to be coordinated with COMAR, INM and the National Human Rights Commission. The campaign to promote attention to refugee law and humanitarian law in academic institutions will continue to be coordinated with ICRC.

Offices
Mexico City Comitán
Partners
<b>Government Agencies</b>
<i>Comisión Nacional de Ayuda a Refugiados</i>
<b>NGOs</b>
<i>Investigación y Desarrollo Femenino Capacitación y Asesoría en Medio Ambiente y Defensa del Derecho a la Salud, AC Desarrollo Sustentable para la Mujer y la Niñez, AC Red de Mujeres pro Derechos de Educación y Salud, AC Administración RH, SA de CV</i>

Budget (USD)	
Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	816,920
Community Services	727,400
Domestic Needs/ Household Support	88,078
Education	745,472
Food	100,000
Health/Nutrition	316,000
Income Generation	505,500
Legal Assistance	747,214
Operational Support (to Agencies)	781,236
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	440,000
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>5,267,820</b>
<b>Programme Support</b>	<b>1,337,112</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,604,932</b>

