

El Salvador

October 2024 || Monthly Update #10

After being forced to flee due to gang violence, Saraí, a 25-year-old woman from San Salvador, found hope through healing her mental health and supporting others in her community
© UNHCR / Markel Redondo

Our 2024 response in figures



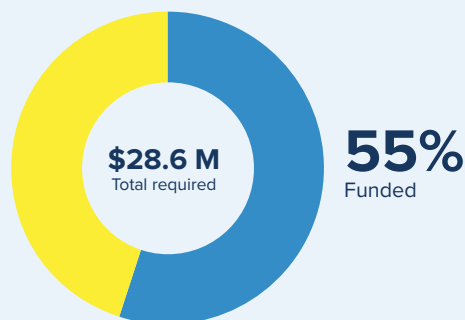
Funding

5,659  individuals at heightened risk received cash assistance

This support helps cover basic needs such as food, rent, documentation, and facilitates activities for economic integration, education, and naturalization.

2,678  people registered with biometrics.

45%
Funding gap



55% of UNHCR's financial requirements for El Salvador received by 31 October 2024.

Highlights



Participants of the diploma on International Protection during the inaugural session in the Diplomatic Institute. © UNHCR / Jacqueline Henríquez

- In collaboration with the Diplomatic Institute “Dr. José Gustavo Guerrero” and CODER, UNHCR launched a Diploma on International Protection for 35 participants from the Refugee Status Determination Commission (CODER), NGOs and academia. This four-month capacity-building programme enhances capabilities for the identification of individuals with international protection needs and strengthens access to asylum.



Children from the Tutunichapa community in San Salvador participating during the play “La Travesía de Gualcho”. © UNHCR / Jacqueline Henríquez

- About 320 children and adolescents in stigmatized communities in San Salvador and San Miguel learned about forced displacement, solidarity, and resilience through “La Travesía de Gualcho” (Gualcho’s Journey) a play produced with UNHCR’s support.

- Fourteen communities in Mejicanos, San Salvador, and Soyapango, supported by UNHCR and the General Directorate for Civil Protection, began establishing emergency committees for early warning systems. This is part of ongoing efforts to strengthen community capacities to prevent, mitigate, and respond to emergencies, and also to reduce climate change related risks. By building community resilience, UNHCR aims to prevent forced displacement in areas previously affected by violence.

Watch video.



UNHCR’s Representative a.i. along the General Prosecutor during the inauguration of a new space for attention to victims in La Libertad.
© UNHCR / Sonia Aguilar

- In Santa Tecla, La Libertad, the General Prosecutor’s Office (FGR) inaugurated a new space for the comprehensive attention to victims, which includes a dedicated area for adolescents equipped by UNHCR. The facility improves the conditions for psychosocial support and care for victims, included those affected by displacement.

Protect



Eleven front-line staff working at Las Chinamas border point with Guatemala enhanced their knowledge on international protection and refugee law in a workshop delivered by UNHCR. Representatives from national authorities on migration, police, customs, education, and health learned to identify people with specific needs and about referral pathways.

UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP completed the third-quarter data collection for the 2024 Regional Mixed Movements Monitoring, which El Salvador joined in April. UNHCR’s interviews with key national actors from migration, police, customs, and health sectors at border points and collective shelters contributed to this effort. The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of mixed movement dynamics, challenges, and opportunities to guide effective humanitarian responses. [Link to Q2 report.](#)

Respond



Shelter coordinators from across the country during the inaugural session of a UNHCR-supported training programme on shelter management and protection. © UNHCR / Thiago Sothe

As co-lead of the CCCM Sector, UNHCR along the National Sectoral Technical Shelter Commission kickstarted training for municipal and national emergency shelter coordinators nationwide. Scheduled until November, the sessions aim at further embedding protection considerations in the coordination and management of temporary shelters. In October, 94 shelter coordinators from San Miguel, Morazán, Usulután, and La Unión participated in two workshops.

Thirty staff members from the General Directorate for Civil Protection, the Ministry of Housing (MIVI), and the Salvadoran Red Cross participated in a training session by UNHCR on assembling emergency tents. This activity contributes to the adequate use of 120 UNHCR family tents donated to Civil Protection and MIVI to strengthen the national emergency response.

[Watch video.](#)



Around 80 people in La Campanera (Soyapango district), including children, youth, and adults, joined a community day jointly organized by local leaders, UNHCR, the Ministry of Justice, and the Soyapango District. The activity promoted knowledge on rights, social cohesion and community engagement through activities such as graffiti painting, recycling, and tree planting,

In Sonsonate, 62 UNHCR outreach volunteers attended a workshop led by the Ombudsperson's Office (PDDH) to deepen their understanding of older people's rights and protection mechanisms. The session covered types of violence and the Special Law for the Protection and Rights of Older People.

Empower



UNHCR's outreach volunteers from various regions learned on older people's right through workshops by PDDH in Sonsonate. © UNHCR

Solve



Participants of the My First Job Programme from various departments during skills training sessions for employability. © UNHCR

Under the Graffitiour initiative, led by the Directorate for the Reconstruction of Social Cohesion with support from UNHCR in Mejicanos, San Salvador, 11 participants from the Súper Pilas livelihoods programme presented their business ideas for evaluation. Through its support for Graffitiour and local entrepreneurs, UNHCR aims to revamp spaces in communities historically affected by forced displacement.

The fourth employment route in 2024 of the My First Job programme engaged 97 young people displaced or at risk of displacement in Santa Ana, San Salvador, San Miguel, and San Vicente. UNHCR, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MTPS), and World Vision led the event, which included a one-day training by MTPS job experts to enhance participants' employability skills. UNHCR and MTPS will soon connect them to decent job opportunities.

Under the Creating Opportunities programme, 11 women from Zacamil, San Salvador, completed training in the ILO's methodology to strengthen their business ideas. In Apopa, 24 participants completed training in hospitality, a high-demand sector in the region. UNHCR supports capacity-building in such sectors to expand youth's livelihood opportunities.



Stories from the field

Access to Mental Health: A Priority for a Displaced Leader in El Salvador

Through her leadership, Saraí promotes mental health and emotional well-being in her community.

Saraí, a community leader in San Salvador discuss community challenges with UNHCR's Deputy Representative for Protection.
© UNHCR / Markel Redondo

"Seeing kids playing in the streets again and neighbours reconnecting gives me hope." For Saraí, a 25-year-old from Mejicanos, San Salvador, these simple joys were unimaginable for most of her childhood. Her community, once full of life, became dominated by gang violence, fear, and restrictions. As a child, Saraí rarely left her home, and by 15, the constant harassment from gang members became unbearable. One night, after a young woman was murdered near her home, a neighbour warned her, "If you don't leave now, you won't have another chance." That night, Saraí fled, leaving behind everything she knew. The decision was heartbreaking, and adjusting to life away from her home wasn't easy.

Some years after, in the context of a significantly weakened territorial control of gangs, she was able to return home. Still struggling with anxiety and emotional trauma, Saraí found hope when she learned about the Centre for Emotional Intelligence (CIE), supported by UNHCR. There, she accessed free psychological care, which helped her rebuild her mental health. "At the CIE, I learned to manage my emotions, heal, and see things differently," she explains. This transformation inspired her to encourage others needing emotional support to seek help at the centre.

She also joined a youth committee focused on creating positive change. Together, they restored public spaces, cleaned a sports field, organized movie nights, and organized soccer tournaments in the community. These efforts fostered community participation and enhanced social cohesion, bringing together young people from different neighbourhoods.

Saraí also became involved with the CUBO community centre, where she participates in workshops and mental health activities to empower people of all ages. She studies public relations and dreams of using her career to promote the resilience and progress of communities like hers.

"Seeing people in the community interacting with each other motivates me," she shares. "I want to keep creating opportunities for others."

UNHCR in El Salvador coordinates with national institutions and partners to provide essential psychological support for people forcibly displaced and at risk of displacement, enabling people like Saraí to rebuild their lives with dignity.

[Read full story.](#)



In 2024, UNHCR is appealing for USD 28.6 million to provide protection, responses, empowerment and solutions to refugees, asylum-seekers, and internally displaced persons in El Salvador. The best way to support UNHCR's appeal is through unearmarked contributions. Such flexible funding at the global level is key in allowing a timely response to evolving needs wherever required.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is grateful for the support in 2024 of:



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