

# Annual Results Report

**2024**

**Costa Rica**

## Acknowledgements

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### **Note:**

The baseline values presented in this document reflect previous year's progress when available. If such data is not available, strategy baseline values are used instead.

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# Section 1: Context and Overview

## 1.1 Changes to the Operational Context

By the end of 2024, Costa Rica hosted 241,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, 83% of whom are Nicaraguans, making up 52% of forcibly displaced Nicaraguans worldwide.

Nicaragua's human rights situation continued to worsen, with OHCHR's Universal Periodic Review noting declines in rule of law, judiciary independence, and democracy, and documenting violence and persecution, even transnational, against political opponents or anyone perceived as such. New constitutional and legal reforms eliminated power balance, enhanced paramilitary forces, disregarded indigenous autonomy, and restricted and criminalized migration. As conditions worsen, more Nicaraguans are expected to seek asylum in Costa Rica.

In Costa Rica, the Government took positive measures to enhance asylum-seekers' access to asylum procedures and reversed law reforms from 2022, which had substantially restricted access to such procedures. An Executive Decree issued in 2024 allowed the issuance of 20,000 work permits and the renewal of 22,000, promoting asylum-seekers' self-sufficiency, economic and fiscal contributions through formal work. The Migration Authority committed to implementing a strategy designed with UNHCR assistance, to enhance the asylum system, by improving management of new applications and expediting resolution of pending cases.

By mid-2024, Costa Rica hosts the second-highest proportion of asylum-seekers relative to its national population in the Americas, which poses challenges for refugees to integrate meaningfully. Despite positive economic prospects, public budget for social protection has decreased. UNHCR provides evidence-driven advisory on refugees' needs and capacities, liaising with strategic partners to foster local integration through a whole-society approach.

## 1.2. Progress Against the Desired Impact

### 1. Impact Area: Attaining Favorable Protection Environments

People UNHCR serves access the territory and a fair and efficient international protection system.

Population Type	Indicator	
	Baseline	Actual (2024)
1.1 Proportion of people seeking international protection who are able to access asylum procedures		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	58.32%	39.37%
1.2 Proportion of people who are able to move freely within the country of habitual residence		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Stateless Persons	100.00%	100.00%

UNHCR’s interventions and capacity-building activities for migration and law enforcement authorities, both in the capital and at the border, contributed to keeping incidents of refoulement as a very rare occurrence and supported authorities to take corrective measures when risks were identified. As a result, individuals seeking safety in Costa Rica continue to be able to enter the territory and stay in the country until obtaining regular and durable status.

The Government of Costa Rica adopted a strategy to modernize its asylum system, aiming to improve reception conditions and speed up processing of asylum claims in a fair and efficient manner. Key components of this strategy included reorganizing physical archives, digitalizing records, and introducing streamlined and fast-track procedures.

These efforts help to quickly differentiate between clearly valid claims—allowing recognized refugees to remain safely in the country—and clearly unfounded ones. Supporting Costa Rica’s efforts remained essential. The strategy is expected to reduce backlogs, shorten processing times, lower the risk of claim abandonment, and reduce dependence on foreign aid, resulting in a more efficient, flexible, and effective asylum system.

Access to the asylum process also depends on the authorities’ capacity to process claims. A reduction in staffing led to a drop in access rates—from 58% in 2023 to 39% in 2024. However, after increasing staffing levels in October 2024, the number of individual appointments rose by 228%, enabling around 6,500 people who otherwise would not have been able to file their claims to obtain appointments.

The strategy also led to the structural reorganization of the Refugee Unit’s physical archives, significantly reducing wait times for accessing services. As part of this reform, 17,000 files were identified for early closure, helping to reduce the backlog. In addition, 41,799 asylum-seekers were issued work permits.

With UNHCR’s support, more individuals are accessing the statelessness status determination (SSD) procedure thanks to the authorities’ enhanced capacity to reach out to at-risk populations, disseminate information, and process SSD claims. Individuals are also more aware of the procedures for late birth registration. Authorities are better prepared to support the integration of this population as a result of UNHCR’s advocacy and capacity-building efforts.

### 2. Impact Area: Realizing Rights in Safe Environments

People UNHCR serves, including people with heightened needs, effectively access their rights.

Population Type	Indicator	
	Baseline	Actual (2024)
<b>2.1 Proportion of people living below the national poverty line</b>		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	31.10%	23.35%
<b>2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities</b>		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	89.50%	90.22%
<b>2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services</b>		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	69.50%	71.67%

UNHCR's engagement with national authorities and local protection networks has enhanced access to protection by refugees and asylum seekers. Specialized protection services are increasingly accessible for those facing threats to their lives or physical integrity, including refugees experiencing transnational persecution or violence against women. UNHCR's interventions, namely provision of legal assistance, judicial and human rights engagement; have contributed to help overcome discrimination or practical barriers in access to public services. The Ombudsperson's Office, the Costa Rican Bar Association, and the judiciary have proven to be key allies to advocate for refugee rights.

UNHCR identified a 2.5% points increase in refugees and asylum-seekers access to health affiliation (69,5% in 2023 to 72% in 2024). This is especially significant in the North, where lower income, informal work with limited labor rights, and unmet basic needs jeopardize access to healthcare. Through its agreement with the Costa Rican Social Security Fund and partnerships, UNHCR facilitated access to health services for the most vulnerable, including people with chronic conditions, and those facing medical emergencies.

UNHCR observed an 8% decrease in the proportion of the affected population living below the national poverty line (from 31% in 2023 to 23% for 2024 – estimation based on the National Household Survey in triangulation with UNHCR data). The proportion of people residing in physically safe settlements with access to basic facilities is the same as in 2023 (90%). In 2024, the proportion of people who received direct support to cover basic needs fell from 3% in 2023 to 2% in 2024. UNHCR's agreement with the Joint Institute for Social Assistance (IMAS) granted financial aid for basic needs, scholarships, and early childcare to 5,431 people in six IMAS offices.

### 3. Impact Area: Empowering Communities and Achieving Gender Equality

**People UNHCR serves are integrated with host communities and empowered to participate in self-management mechanisms and decision-making while promoting gender equality.**

Population Type	Indicator	
	Baseline	Actual (2024)
<b>3.1 Proportion of people who have the right to decent work</b>		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	49.60%	100.00%
Stateless Persons	49.85%	100.00%
<b>3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education</b>		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	88.30%	85.91%
<b>3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education</b>		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	57.40%	74.12%
<b>3.3 Proportion of people feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark</b>		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	51.24%	49.17%

The refugee and asylum-seeking populations at large are better informed about their rights and services available to them, following a differentiated approach, thanks to broad outreach and communication efforts with the communities, such as individualized information services, along with references to address the needs reached 16,152 people (+49% vs. 2023); 34,000 people accessed information through verbal and written communications, and digital channels reached 1,6 million users (+92% vs. 2023). Communities also inform UNHCR's programming through participatory assessments and other consultation mechanisms.

Selected communities have been supported through targeted community empowerment processes such as the Protective Communities and Urban Nodes initiatives. The development of leadership skills and the conformation of self-organized structures allow communities themselves to play an active role to identify and respond to their protection concerns in a collective manner. As a result, youth and women create new social links and networks leading to greater resilience and capacity to face risks, prevent violence, and promote their inclusion in host communities: Youth networks increased 238% respecting to 2023.

These initiatives are particularly relevant for specific groups, such as Miskitus, women, children, youth, and LGBTI persons who enjoy greater social cohesion through the development of protection networks. In parallel, UNHCR implemented capacity-building activities for national and local authorities to improve access to specialized services. As a result, individuals and groups are empowered, their voices are heard and their cultural identity and own leadership structures are acknowledged and supported.

Refugees and migrants in transit were provided with accommodation, legal aid, and other protection services at the South Migration Reception Station (EMISUR) in Ciudad Neily. This included information provision about risks of violence, particularly for women.

## 4. Impact Area: Securing Solutions

**People UNHCR serves and the communities that host them have increased access to sustainable solutions.**

Population Type	Indicator	
	Baseline	Actual (2024)
<b>4.2a Number of people who departed on resettlement</b>		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	399	4,599
<b>4.3a Number of stateless people for whom nationality is granted or confirmed</b>		
Stateless Persons	119	144
<b>4.3b Number of refugees for whom residency status is granted or confirmed</b>		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2,690	1,888

UNHCR has increasingly invested in promoting integration of Nicaraguan refugees and asylum seekers in Costa Rica. Despite the effects of government's decree restricting de facto the right to work for refugees, the country made some encouraging progress in the inclusion of refugees in the financial system (bank accounts and mobile payments, 72% in 2024) and in reducing the overall unemployment rate (7.2% in 2023 to 6.9% in 2024). UNHCR strengthened its strategic partnerships with international financial institutions such as WB, IADB, and IMF and positioned itself as a key counterpart for technical advice on refugee inclusion, contributing and facilitating dialogue with the Government to build evidence-based analysis on labor, fiscal and social contributions of refugees and migrants to Costa Rican society; hence, the operations' advocacy towards the inclusion of forcibly displaced and host communities in development financing and planning reached a more meaningful stage.

Through resettlement, UNHCR continued to expand third country solutions in 2024. This significantly increased the scale and scope of options available for individuals with international protection needs. It offered a 'one-stop shop' for expedited refugee resettlement and facilitated access to other legal admission pathways in strategic locations. In 2024, 10,698 individuals were submitted for resettlement, and 4,600 individuals departed to resettlement countries. This marked a substantial rise in the number of individuals

referred by UNHCR compared to 2023. UNHCR focused on individuals with specific needs, such as women and children at risk, survivors of violence, people requiring physical and/or legal protection, and those with serious medical conditions.

## 1.3 Challenges to Achieving Impacts

The limited global attention to the protection and human rights crisis in Nicaragua poses a significant challenge in highlighting the needs of those affected. This is particularly critical as Nicaraguans make up approximately 80% of the forcibly displaced persons in Costa Rica.

In 2024, UNHCR and the Costa Rican government successfully reopened access to the asylum process through Executive Decree 44501 in June. However, addressing the negative effects caused by former Executive Decree 43810 since late 2022 requires mid-term efforts. Consequently, relevant impacts in terms of effective access to asylum are not yet visible and will be observed in the future.

The UNHCR-CCSS program has demonstrated the importance of providing access to healthcare for achieving resilience, as half of its beneficiaries have become self-reliant in financing their insurance. Despite this success, healthcare access for the forcibly displaced population remains challenging: 30% of Nicaraguans are uninsured, compared to 10.5% of nationals. Unlike nationals, displaced persons with heightened vulnerabilities do not have access to non-contributory insurance funded by the State. Expanding beneficiaries to include this population is politically inviable due to the system's overall structure and increasing government debt to the CCSS, deemed unsustainable by the IMF and the Finance Ministry.

In education, enrollment gaps between national and Nicaraguan children persisted (6 to 7 percentage points), driven by poverty, digital exclusion, mobility constraints, and discrimination. Risks of violence against women and girls remained high: while known cases rose, underreporting persisted due to stigma, fear of retaliation, and limited survivor-centered services, especially outside urban centers. At the Northern border, rising humanitarian needs strained response capacities, limiting focus on longer-term integration efforts.

## 1.4 Collaboration and Partnerships

In 2024, Costa Rica reaffirmed its commitment to multilateralism by participating in international coordination mechanisms on migration, refugee and natural disasters, both at the regional and global levels. The country chaired the Quito Process Pro Tempore Presidency, enhancing its role in strategic discussions to protect and find solutions for displaced people. Nationally, through MINARE (CRRF), Costa Rica followed up on its 2023 GRF pledges on protection, social protection, statistical inclusion, jobs, livelihoods and local governance. In 2025, Costa Rica will further its leadership by chairing five of such platforms.

UNHCR enhanced its collaboration with international financial institutions (WB, IADB, IMF) through technical expertise, needs assessments, advocacy and evidence building. This ensured the inclusion of displaced people in policymaking and public opinion. UNHCR provided technical advice on protection law for an IADB donation on asylum and highlighted inclusion gaps to WB and IADB for advocacy and concessional funding design. UNHCR liaised with development actors and governments to benefit displaced populations and host communities, promoting complementarity and avoiding duplication.

UNHCR opened field offices at South and North borders (Ciudad Neily and Los Chiles) to facilitate



coordination and capacity development with governments and humanitarian partners, ensuring effective access to rights, protection and solutions for refugees and migrants. Multiple projects were implemented directly and through 11 partners.

UNHCR co-led R4V coordination platform with IOM, enhancing response to refugees and migrants in transit under a specific country chapter in the RMRP, the only interagency response plan adopted in Costa Rica in this aim for 2025.

## Section 2: Results

### 2.1. Outcomes and Achievements

#### 1. Outcome Area: Access to Territory, Reg. and Documentation

The Costa Rican government ensures fair mechanisms to provide access to territory and prevent refoulement.

##### Core Outcome Indicators

Population Type	Indicator		
	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
<b>1.1 Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis</b>			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
<b>1.2 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority</b>			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	99.11%	100.00%	99.23%
<b>1.3 Proportion of people with legally recognized identity documents or credentials</b>			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	93.45%	90.00%	84.87%

##### Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2024)
01.1.1 Number of people registered on an individual basis	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	12,363
01.2.1 Number of people supported to obtain civil status, identity or legal status documentation	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	372

### Progress Against the Desired Outcome

National regulations protect refugees and asylum-seekers in Costa Rica against refoulement. However, it is crucial to ensure that police forces present at land and air entries have the technical knowledge on international protection to prevent instances of refoulement.

In 2024 UNHCR focused on strengthening State officials' capacities to ensure compliance with international protection obligations and to promote institutional changes to prevent refoulement. The Professional Migration Police (PPM), responsible for control and surveillance of foreigners entering the country, must complete a Police Management Technical Degree at the National Police Academy. UNHCR, in coordination with the Academy, designed and taught the mandatory training module "Protection of forcibly displaced and stateless persons from a human right perspective," reaching 419 trainee police officers (42% more than in 2023) who gained awareness and tools to prevent refoulement. UNHCR conducted sensitization workshops with PPM at Peñas Blancas official border post (North) on international protection and UNHCR's mandate. UNHCR and its legal partners JMS and CENDEROS developed a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for cases at risk of refoulement in the Northern border, outlining criteria for identification, referral, immediate response, and legal assistance. The SOP is implemented in close contact with border authorities, based on

daily contact and case referral.

Seizing the increased institutional capacity for assistance at the Northern border, UNHCR provided technical advisory to the Human Mobility Working Tables in Los Chiles, San Carlos and Guatuso cantons resulting in the design and implementation of referral pathways, which provide guidance to border actors, ensuring timely assistance and reducing refoulement risks.

At the International Airport Juan Santamaría (San José), UNHCR advocated with the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture. As a result, the Mechanism designed a joint protocol for case management of people in need of international protection detained at the airport. Also, UNHCR and its three legal partners created and implemented SOP for case management of people in need of international protection at the airport. Costa Rican Migration Police (PPM) administrates the “Central Region Detention Centre,” which may hold detainees with irregular migration status who have applied for asylum after their detention. To mitigate their risk of refoulement, UNHCR trained 20 officials on International Refugee Law and provided legal aid through legal partners.

At the Southern border, UNHCR established a Field Unit enhancing engagement with local authorities from the Costa Rica-Panama border, including guidance on international protection, coordination for case management and advocacy in favor of human rights of refugees and asylum-seekers. At EMISUR, 195 asylum cases were referred to the Refugee Unit in Paso Canoas in 2024.

## 2. Outcome Area: Status Determination

**The asylum system is strengthened to ensure effective access to the refugee status determination process.**

### Core Outcome Indicators

Population Type	Indicator		
	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
<b>2.1 Average processing time (in days) from registration to first instance asylum decision</b>			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,164.00	365.00	1,080.00
<b>2.2 Proportion of people undergoing asylum procedures who have access to legal representation</b>			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
<b>2.3 Proportion of people undergoing asylum procedures who have access to an effective appeal mechanism after first instance rejection of their claim</b>			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

### Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2024)
<b>02.1.1 UNHCR has provided capacity development support to strengthen the national status determination system(s), in accordance with international standards</b>	
Stateless Persons	Yes

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR collaborates with national migration institutions and partners to build a fairer, more efficient, and sustainable asylum system. In 2024 Costa Rican authorities, supported by UNHCR, adopted a policy to reduce backlog and optimize the structure of the asylum system under three working pillars: capacity strengthening, improving processes, and protecting rights.

During 2024, after additional resources were provided by UNHCR, monthly registrations of asylum-seekers at the Refugee Unit (RU) rose to 3,775 in November (+331% vs. 1,391 in March 2024), increasing access for refugees and asylum-seekers to initiate their RSD process. Hence, the RU received a total of 28,306 new applications. Additionally, a pre-registration web module for submitting asylum applications was completed, and set to be implemented in 2025. The module is designed to improve access to registration for people in need of international protection.

Additionally, processing time was significantly reduced: 84% of the RU's physical files in the archive were organized in 2024, with this, 17,000 files were identified and prepared, and a digital module in DGME's SINEX platform was developed for the early closure of asylum requests of applicants who did not show up for their eligibility interview. A pilot closed 800 applications in December, aiming to address 36,000 applications in 2025, ultimately reducing the historical backlog. To the same end, other groups of asylum applications will be also closed, such as those in which the applicant has permanently left the country under resettlement or is covered by the Temporary Special Categories implemented in 2021 and 2023.

Between September and December, 9,058 asylum-seekers had their data updated, confirming their presence in the country and willingness to continue with the process. This exercise will improve the quality of data of asylum-seekers and will provide a more accurate number of pending cases (backlog).

UNHCR hired a process management consultant who reviewed the workflow at the Refugee Unit and delivered eight products describing the RSD process and providing recommendations to enhance RU's procedures.

The Government of Canada led capacity development workshops for the asylum authorities and eligibility staff (RU and CVRR) on assessment and adjudication of asylum claims of the merits, improving case analysis to ensure fair decisions. Also, new seconded staff for the Refugee Unit at both the South border (1 person at Paso Canoas since 2024) and usual staff at the Northern region (2 staff at San Carlos) mitigate access barriers for asylum-seekers who cannot travel to the Metro Area to advance in their RSD process.

Finally, improvements in infrastructure for registration and RSD interviews were conducted in 2024 (funded through MIRPS resources) which enhanced the process to ensure confidentiality, ultimately improving efficiency in registration.

## 6. Outcome Area: Safety and Access to Justice

**People UNHCR serves have access to legal aid.**

### Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2024)
<b>06.1.1 Number of people who received legal assistance</b>	
Others of Concern	3,169
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	25,119
Stateless Persons	365

### Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR has enhanced protection networks to improve displaced persons' access to rights, with a particular focus on those arriving from Nicaragua seeking safety and physical protection due to transnational political persecution. Notably, the homicide rate in Costa Rica has increased, affecting more deeply Nicaraguans. In 2023, the rate reached 17,2 per 100,000, yet it is 16 if only measured nationals but raises to 26,4 if measured only among Nicaraguans. To better safeguard individuals at heightened risk, UNHCR developed

a comprehensive monitoring and case management procedure, implemented in coordination with the Office for Attention and Protection of Victims. In 2024, more than 70 high-profile cases were covered by this procedure (including family members in one case) which ensures the provision of immediate physical protection and/or multisectoral assistance provided by UNHCR and its implementing partners, including: free legal assistance, psychosocial support, shelter, healthcare, direct support to cover basic needs, and resettlement opportunities (when applicable).

The Costa Rican legislation does not guarantee free legal assistance for persons in need of international protection on administrative processes, including the refugee status determination (RSD) procedure. UNHCR filled this gap through the provision of legal aid to 27,647 individuals through its three legal partners. UNHCR leads a Legal Protection Working Table with legal partners to share trends, challenges and protection gaps regarding asylum and access to rights; and to develop joint litigation actions to address the issues identified.

In order to expand legal protection networks, UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the private law firm Alta Batalla, the first of this nature in the country. The MoU includes capacity-development activities (10 staff reached), joint legal actions to mitigate protection gaps in favor of forcibly displaced people and cooperation through the provision of pro-bono legal services.

## 7. Outcome Area: Community Engagement and Women's Empowerment

**Community groups are functional, inclusive and organized**

**Institutions and other stakeholders promote participation of people UNHCR serves in their decision-making mechanisms.**

**People UNHCR serves and host communities promote peaceful coexistence.**

### Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator			
Population Type	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
<b>7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.</b>			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Moderate	Extensive	Extensive
<b>7.2 Proportion of people who have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms</b>			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	64.15%
<b>7.3 Proportion of women participating in leadership/management structures</b>			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	64.89%	60.00%	73.93%

### Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2024)
<b>07.1.1 Number of people consulted through Participatory Assessments</b>	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	4
Stateless Persons	73
<b>07.2.1 Number of people who used UNHCR- supported feedback &amp; response mechanisms to voice their needs/ concerns/feedback</b>	
Host Community	1,350
Others of Concern	1,016
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	7,729
Stateless Persons	25
<b>07.3.1 Number of people who received protection services</b>	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	31,475

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Providing information for displaced persons is key to promoting more functional and inclusive communities. UNHCR's Information Centre addressed 14,000 queries through two-way communication channels (800-Help and Help mail) to provide information on access to rights, employability, healthcare, financial support and access to free legal advice services. Also, UNHCR enhanced its outreach approach through 165 on-site community information sessions in 31 communities, reaching over 1,600 people through in-person attention. Likewise, UNHCR implemented 18 Mobile Information Centers: 6 in the Metro Area and 12 in the North. In coordination with seven implementing partners and key State entities, over 1,100 displaced persons were reached with key information on access to rights and services, facilitating their integration. In order to keep displaced persons at the center of decisions, UNHCR conducted 29 focus group discussions in both the Metro Area and the Northern region, with over 400 participants in focus groups of different profiles (children, women, indigenous people, LGBTIQ+ population, leaders), allowing for identification of risks and possible solutions. UNHCR strengthened its partnership with the National Directorate for Community Development (DINADECO) by training 25 officials on international protection and by agreeing on a workplan aimed at increasing participation of displaced and stateless persons in national community structures.

Through a differentiated approach, UNHCR and two implementing partners also fostered networks of 254 young refugees in Metro Area and Northern region, strengthening their leadership capacity and meaningful participation in decisions mechanisms. Equally, UNHCR facilitated participation of Miskitus leaders in two key fora with authorities and partners, enhancing safe, inclusive and dignified community engagement. UNHCR launched the second edition of its Inclusive Communities Fund, a grant agreement benefiting 5 community-based organizations (464 refugees and host community members) through technical and financial support to implement projects promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in host communities in the Metro Area, the Northern and Caribbean regions.

To promote peaceful coexistence in host communities and prevent violence against refugee children, UNHCR, together with partner DNI, held community fairs called "Rights without Borders" in three communities with 329 participants at the Metro Area. UNHCR also conducted a "training of trainers" workshop with 24 community representatives on access to rights for refugees and stateless persons, showing available assistance and protection services to enhance their capacity to be information replicators. Likewise, UNHCR also held the "Gathering Stories" Community Festival in Alajuelita canton, jointly with local authorities and CBOs, creating an integration space and raising awareness on refugees' contributions in Costa Rica through art and culture.

## 8. Outcome Area: Well-Being and Basic Needs

**People UNHCR serves have access to assistance and services to cover their basic needs**

**People UNHCR serves have access to government run programs to address their specific needs.**

### Core Outcome Indicators

Population Type	Indicator		
	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
<b>8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items</b>			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2.85%	5.00%	5.02%
<b>8.2 Proportion of people with primary reliance on clean (cooking) fuels and technology</b>			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	94.00%	100.00%	95.85%

### Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2024)

<b>08.1.1 Number of people who received cash assistance</b>	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	12,112
<b>08.2.1 Number of people who received non-food items</b>	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,084

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR observed a 2.5 pp increase in refugees and asylum-seekers' health access (69.5% in 2023 vs. 72% in 2024). Its continued agreement with Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS) benefited 5,000 vulnerable displaced people monthly (75% Nicaraguans, 12% Venezuelans). Casa Maria Auxiliadora and HIAS provided complementary healthcare (2,800 beneficiaries at Metro Area, 3,893 at EMISUR). UNHCR enhanced health strategies at borders: In the North, through training for medical staff, advocacy for forcibly displaced people's healthcare inclusion, prevention (e.g. SRH, waterborne diseases), disaster response and delivery of 3,000 mosquito nets. At the South, coordinating with health authorities to address specific health needs, e.g. through WASH and hydration supplies for authorities and Indigenous communities.

Inclusion in State's social protection scheme increased (72% in 2024 vs. 62% in 2022), which is key for mid- and long-term care. UNHCR's agreement with the Joint Institute for Social Assistance (IMAS) granted financial aid for basic needs, scholarships and early childcare to 5,431 people in 6 IMAS offices. UNHCR's direct assistance strategy helps vulnerable families cover basic needs, reaching 3,559 people in 2024 (78% Nicaraguans, 53% female, 43% children). Post-delivery monitoring showed 86% of beneficiaries felt safe accessing their assistance and used it on food (96%), rent (68%) and WASH items (41%). Reports of negative coping strategies increased (28% asked for money on streets, 24% did not have money to send children to school); possibly given household's reduced income-earning capacity after direct assistance to cover survival needs ended: 41% could cover half their expenses, 42% covered less than half.

UNHCR provided multi-sectoral assistance to various populations. Jointly with children's authority (PANI), Education Ministry and CSO, 4,302 people accessed child protection services (+81% vs. 2023), through case management, capacity-building and peaceful coexistence promotion. Technical support and advocacy resulted in 893 children enrolled to education and 650 school kits delivered. Through partner HIAS, 625 people living on the streets accessed temporary shelter, reducing vulnerabilities and enabling livelihoods. Partnering with CENDEROS, UNHCR complemented State's response to violence against women and girls through two Safe Houses, sheltering and providing intersectoral aid to 293 survivors and their families; and reached 970 people through mental health programs. UNHCR also enhanced partners' psychological first aid skills for case management and referral.

UNHCR supported four CSOs in the North, providing hygiene kits, hydration kits, household items and non-perishable food for them to assist people in mixed movements, and ensuring food security for vulnerable Miskitus refugees. UNHCR also supplied local authorities with 6,200 WASH kits at both borders (1,200 North, 1,800 South) to assist response to mixed movements.

## 13. Outcome Area: Self Reliance, Economic Inclusion and Livelihoods

**An interagency area-based approach increases solutions, opportunities and contributes to local development in the host community.**

**People UNHCR serves have access to decent, formal employment opportunities.**



## Core Outcome Indicators

Population Type	Indicator		
	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
<b>13.1. Proportion of people with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider</b>			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	66.30%	70.00%	61.22%
<b>13.2. Proportion of people who self-report positive changes in their income compared to previous year</b>			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	11.42%	33.00%	9.78%

## Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2024)
<b>13.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from livelihoods and economic inclusion interventions</b>	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	4,430

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2024, UNHCR established indicators to assess access to financial services, income, and unemployment among forcibly displaced and stateless individuals. According to the National Household Survey (IICE, 2024), refugee employment fell to 7%, matching nationals. However, wage disparities remain: Nicaraguan refugees earn 35% less than Costa Ricans, and face higher informal employment (45% vs. 37%).

Financial inclusion showed mixed results. While 61% reported owning a bank account and using electronic payments (target: 70%), perceived income improvements fell short. Barriers to formal work until mid-2024 likely constrained earnings, although macroeconomic stability helped mitigate impacts.

Through the Vivir la Inclusión collaboration framework, UNHCR and Fundación Omar Dengo reached 4,430 people—mostly asylum-seekers — via assessments, counseling, and work plans. Of these, 59% were women and 94% lived in the Metro Area. Training reached over 1,700 people through financial education, technical courses, and job search coaching. A total of 139 received financial support, including 101 scholarships and 38 seed capital grants, four of which supported collective initiatives by RLO like the Campesino Movement in the Northern region.

The Vivir la Inclusión quality seal recognized 41 promoting refugee inclusion. As a result, 308 refugees gained formal jobs, 346 joined recruitment processes, and 2,464 benefitted from training, including a skill-building platform. Also, 92 scholarships and 20 degree validation grants supported professional development.

Eight refugee-led businesses secured service contracts with the Business Development Alliance and Accenture, expanding market access and visibility. Seed capital also supported the progress of small businesses. Multisectoral assistance included healthcare for 1,207 people, psychosocial support for 432, shelter for 789, and 960 hours of free legal counseling. Additionally, 500 clothing items were distributed among solidarity closets, and 96 university students received refugee-related training. Total investment reinforced multisectoral networks and expanded inclusion efforts.

## 15. Outcome Area: Resettlement and Complementary Pathways

**Opportunities for resettlement and complementary pathways of people UNHCR serves are**



increased.

Core Outcome Indicators

Population Type	Indicator		
	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
15.1 Number of refugees submitted by UNHCR for resettlement			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	3,763	7,200	10,660

Core Output Indicators

Population Type	Indicator
	Actual (2024)
15.1.1 Country issues machine-readable travel documents	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2024, UNHCR continued its resettlement efforts, significantly expanding opportunities for refugees and individuals in need of international protection who were unable to find solutions in Costa Rica. This expansion was achieved through strengthened coordination with resettlement countries and close collaboration with operational partner IOM, resulting in more effective implementation and increased resettlement opportunities. Following September 2024, the program broadened its eligibility criteria to include Nicaraguan, Venezuelan, and Ecuadorian nationals who had been present in Costa Rica on or before 15 September 2024. This policy shift led to a rise in the number of cases processed by UNHCR Costa Rica, supported by a well-trained resettlement team. Compared to 2022, 2024 saw an increase in the number of individuals referred by UNHCR for resettlement. Over the year, 10,698 individuals were submitted for resettlement, and 4,600 successfully departed to new host countries.

The capacity building of child protection implementing partners, along with the formalization of standard operating procedures, has significantly improved the identification and processing of Best Interests Determination (BID) cases, ensuring a steady and more efficient case flow. As a result, in 2024, UNHCR implementing partners received 72 cases to determine whether resettlement was in the best interests of the minors involved. Of these, 12 withdrew from the process before the BID assessment. Consequently, the members of the BID Panel evaluated a total of 60 cases, with resettlement deemed not in the best interests of the children in only one instance.

As part of the outreach strategy, efforts extended to 87 communities across 23 cantons in 5 provinces. From January to November, nearly 366 community sessions were held, offering official information about the initiative and the services provided by UNHCR and IOM in Costa Rica. Given the low levels of digital literacy among the displaced population, these outreach sessions played a crucial role in guiding individuals on how to register in the tool, which in turn led to a high number of cases being identified as potentially in need of resettlement. These activities reached more than 6,200 individuals and resulted in 905 referrals for protection cases requiring UNHCR’s intervention. This was achieved in collaboration with IOM, partner organizations, civil society groups, community-based organizations, and local leaders from both the Northern region and the Metro Area (GAM) of Costa Rica.

16. Outcome Area: Integration and other Local Solutions

The Costa Rican government utilizes effective and comprehensive mechanisms to prevent statelessness.

## Core Outcome Indicators

Population Type	Indicator		
	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
<b>16.1 Proportion of people with secure tenure rights to housing and/or land</b>			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	85.20%	89.00%	83.16%
<b>16.2 Proportion of people covered by national social protection systems</b>			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	69.50%	74.00%	72.03%

## Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2024)
<b>16.1.1. Government Social protection system is inclusive of forcibly displaced and stateless people</b>	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Partially
<b>16.2.1 Number of people supported by UNHCR to acquire nationality, permanent residency status or to access naturalization procedures</b>	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	215
Stateless Persons	16

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2024, Costa Rica recognized 90 people as stateless, and 143 were waiting for their resolution as of end of the year. UNHCR collaborated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to enhance the statelessness recognition procedure, by recruiting two professionals to apply age, gender, and diversity (AGD) considerations. This secondment of staff allowed UNHCR to make flexible some requirements for vulnerable persons and comply with norms on resolution times. UNHCR, through partner Jesuit Migration Service (JMS) provided legal information on late birth registration and statelessness recognition procedures to 998 individuals (+59% vs. 2023), legal assistance to 277 people and legal representation to 85 individuals (+35% vs. 2023) to prevent statelessness and effectively access their rights. As well, 43 refugees and stateless persons were provided with legal assistance to acquire the Costa Rican nationality. UNHCR facilitated the presence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Civil Registry in hard-to-reach communities with high presence of stateless persons. Through four joint missions at the Northern region, geographic access barriers were mitigated, given that the statelessness determination procedure is only implemented in the capital. Such missions allowed information sharing on late birth registration and statelessness determination procedures, case management at communities (29 cases initiated and interviewed), while facilitating liaison and capacity development with local entities. At the South border, UNHCR and the Civil Registry prioritized to address the risk of statelessness of Ngäbe-Buglé Indigenous people, reaching 23 people from El Gallo community (Coto Brus canton) through legal information and advisory and 18 State officers from the Coto Brus Interinstitutional Coordination Cantonal Council (CCCI) through capacity-building. This work allows risk mapping and evaluation, key to negotiate a binational session with the Panamanian Electoral Tribunal in 2025.

UNHCR, the Civil Registry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also led joint training sessions with key institutions: 150 members of the National Children's Trust Fund (PANI) country-wide learned tools for statelessness prevention and response and 122 staff from the Joint Institute for Social Assistance (IMAS) gained awareness to facilitate access of stateless persons to social security programs.

UNHCR has advocated and provided technical support to enhance institutional management of statelessness while reaffirming Costa Rican State leadership in prevention, protection and inclusion: In

2024, Costa Rica Joined UNHCR's global Alliance to End Statelessness and Solution Seekers Program. Meanwhile, UNHCR continued providing technical support to the Liaison Commission on Statelessness, led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including the development an action plan to guide institutional commitments and actions towards the Solution Seekers Program.

### Other Core Outcome Indicators

Population Type	Baseline	Target(2024)	Actual(2024)
<b>3.1 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol</b>			
None	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned
<b>3.2 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness</b>			
None	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned

### Other Core Output Indicators

Population Type	Actual (2024)
<b>03.1.1 UNHCR has engaged in legislative and judicial processes to strengthen laws and policies for the protection of refugees, IDPs, returnees and stateless people and/or the reduction and prevention of statelessness</b>	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Stateless Persons	Yes
<b>04.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from specialized GBV programmes</b>	
Host Community	32
Others of Concern	41
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	328
Stateless Persons	13
<b>05.1.1 Number of children and caregivers who received child protection services</b>	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2,166
Stateless Persons	15
<b>09.1.1 Number of people who received shelter and housing assistance</b>	
Others of Concern	453
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	170
<b>10.1.1 Number of individual consultations in UNHCR supported health care services</b>	
Host Community	37
Others of Concern	4,307
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	6,912
Stateless Persons	36
<b>10.2.1 Number of consultations in UNHCR supported mental health and psychosocial support services</b>	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	3,268

11.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from education programming	
Host Community	219
Others of Concern	33
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	636
Stateless Persons	5
14.1.1 Number of people who received counselling and/or information on voluntary repatriation	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0

## 2.2. Age, Gender and Diversity

UNHCR increased efforts in promoting participation of Miskitus Indigenous displaced persons, especially of those recently arrived in Costa Rica. UNHCR set up a bank of Miskito interpreters to mitigate language barriers and facilitate access to the RSD process, State's social programs and to conduct culturally relevant registration and resettlement interviews. These actions enhanced recognition of the value of Miskito community leadership, thus strengthening social cohesion and promoting spaces that protect their identity without discrimination and impact the development of strategies for peaceful coexistence and empowerment of host communities.

UNHCR also fostered meaningful participation of children and youth networks, 254 children from Metro Area and Northern region shared their views on needs and priorities towards their inclusion in Costa Rica with the Legislative Assembly (representing the Commission on Childhood and Youth), the Ombudswoman's Office and the Children's authority.

UNHCR increased capacity-development and technical advisory to partners and institutions on violence against women and girls. Technical groups were organized to develop two SOP: one on case management and referral, and other to address specific situations of violence. UNHCR complemented State's response to violence against women and girls through 2 Safe Houses, sheltering and providing intersectoral aid to 293 survivors and their families; and reached 970 people through mental health programs.

UNHCR trained eight staff of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (CONAPDIS) on International Refugee Law while designing and implementing a reference mechanism for effective access to social programs.

UNHCR strengthened capacities of two local refugee-led organizations assisting LGBTIQ+ population: IRCA and MESART. This included awareness of International Refugee Law to enhance their advocacy efforts and design of a bidirectional referral pathway for specialized services.

## Section 3: Resources

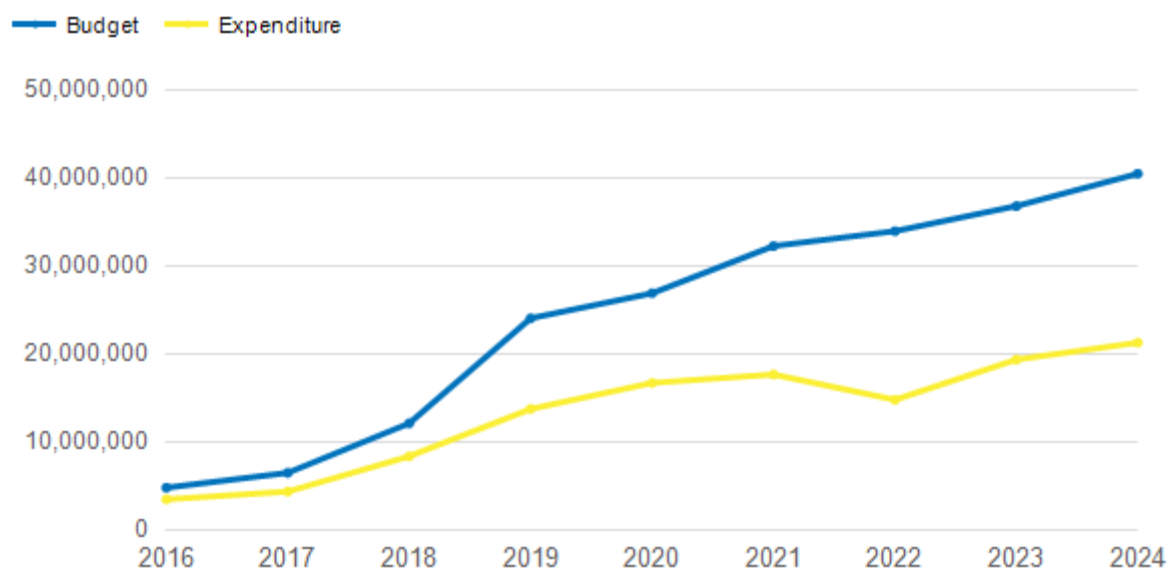
### 3.1 Financial Data

(Financial figures in USD)

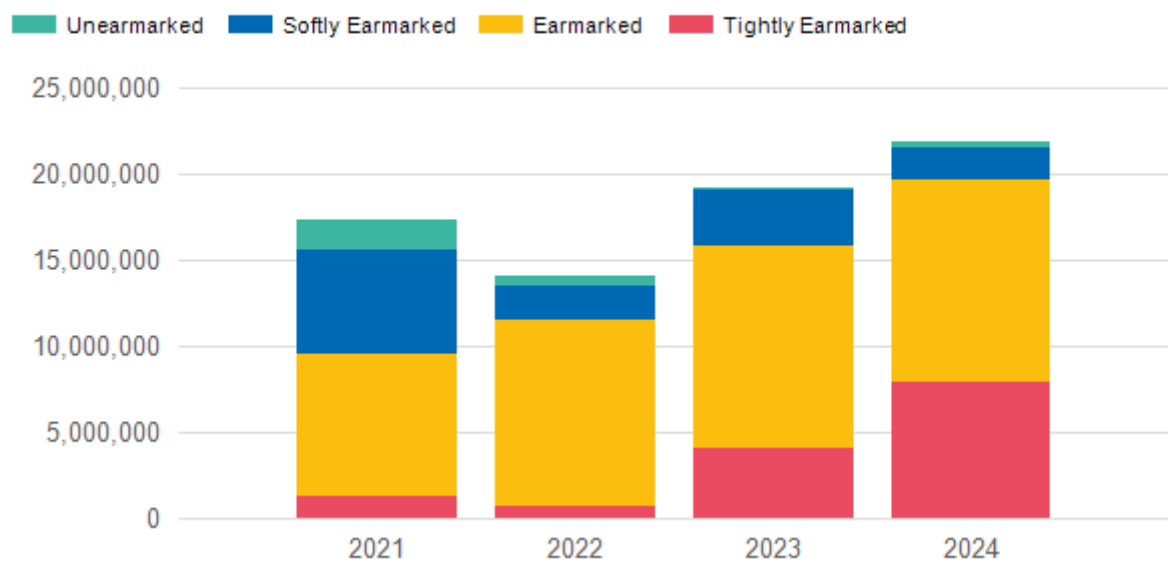
Impact Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
IA1: Protect	9,927,767	4,142,718	41.73%	4,142,718	100.00%
IA2: Assist	19,959,757	7,727,550	38.72%	7,517,165	97.28%
IA3: Empower	3,238,083	1,942,022	59.97%	1,936,076	99.69%
IA4: Solve	7,301,040	7,644,595	104.71%	7,644,595	100.00%
All Impact Areas		70,000			
<b>Total</b>	<b>40,426,647</b>	<b>21,526,885</b>	<b>53.25%</b>	<b>21,240,555</b>	<b>98.67%</b>

Outcome Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
OA1: Access/Doc	2,347,050	818,356	34.87%	818,356	100.00%
OA2: Status	5,597,767	2,625,921	46.91%	2,625,921	100.00%
OA6: Justice	2,382,081	946,526	39.74%	895,145	94.57%
OA7: Community	3,238,083	1,942,022	59.97%	1,936,076	99.69%
OA8: Well-being	16,272,537	6,443,110	39.59%	6,284,106	97.53%
OA13: Livelihood	4,202,125	1,852,620	44.09%	1,782,620	96.22%
OA15: Resettle	3,157,339	5,973,169	189.18%	5,973,169	100.00%
OA16: Integrate	1,982,950	698,441	35.22%	698,441	100.00%
EA17: Systems	419,536	96,547	23.01%	96,547	100.00%
EA18: Support	373,006	48,273	12.94%	48,273	100.00%
EA20: External	454,174	81,900	18.03%	81,900	100.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40,426,647</b>	<b>21,526,885</b>	<b>53.25%</b>	<b>21,240,555</b>	<b>98.67%</b>

Budget and Expenditure Trend



Contributions Trend by Type



### 3.2. Resources Overview

Positive global views of Costa Rica, marked by its socioeconomic stability as an OECD member transitioning into a high-income country, contrasts with challenges of hosting simultaneously a long-term diaspora of Nicaraguan refugees and migrants - which will stay and continue arriving, and temporary flows of population in mixed movements, increased since 2022.

Hosting displaced persons was a proportionally high effort: by end 2024, 9% of Costa Rica population is foreign, and the country hosts the third highest rate of asylum-seekers relative to national population in the Americas. Timely response is hindered by restrictions on public expenditure (e.g. foreign debt, fiscal rule)

jeopardizing timely response. Increased social protection demands had impacts in terms of social policy, overstretching the country's capacity, increasing vulnerabilities and inequalities, particularly at rural areas and at urban, marginalized settings, worsened by unprecedented security challenges: 2023 and 2024 had the two highest homicide rates ever registered.

Addressing such rapidly evolving situations requires increased international support, not necessarily catalyzed by traditional humanitarian channels nor conflict-based response. Hence, flexible funding is increasingly relevant as it enables territorial prioritization to address emerging situations while mobilizing State's response –complemented by social protection initiatives funded through earmarked funds. The opening of a Field Unit at the South and the launch of the asylum strategy were achieved thanks to flexible funding.

Besides achieving contributions by donor countries (Canada, Denmark, EU, US), UNHCR also leveraged support from UN (e.g. UNAIDS, WFP, PBF) and IFIs (WB, IDB) to advocate for solutions and inclusion. UNHCR will keep leveraging partnerships with development actors, advocating for increased government ownership of services, and promoting multi-year flexible funding, bridging gaps between emergency response and solutions.

## Section 4: Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

### 4.1 Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

Three main lessons will guide UNHCR's future outlook:

Considering that people arriving in Costa Rica intend to stay long-term, the strategy of providing regularization through a fair and efficient asylum system along with interventions fostering social inclusion remains critical. If this pathway does not solidify, economic and social gaps between refugees and asylum-seekers and the national population will continue increasing, resulting in pressure on the State's social protection schemes and risking fueling social conflict.

Social protection strategies aimed at closing gaps in State's offer have proved to be critical to ensure swift basic assistance for highly vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers as well as for those who recently arrived. This investment, along with sustainable exit strategies for social programs, is the most efficient way to ensure dignified living conditions while at the same time supporting refugees' self-reliance to avoid future surcharges on social protection provision. From a mid-term perspective, it is important to transform the current vision of support (e.g. seconded staff, direct delivery) and work together with the State in plans which would eventually manage to include this population in national social schemes. The State's ownership and leadership must be factored in from the start and is indispensable to offset backlogs in access to documentation and enabling enjoyment of rights.

Finally, labor market has proved to positively absorb forcibly displaced population workforce while acknowledging their capacities. This favorable scenario invites to enhance efforts towards private sector commitment in regard to decent work and inclusion while strengthening legal protection to counteract informality and labor exploitation.





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