

Mexico



Main Objectives

Facilitate the legal, economic, and social integration of Guatemalan refugees in Mexico, through the provision of legal documentation and basic services; find durable solutions for urban refugees and develop mechanisms to address their needs; assist national authorities to strengthen the asylum system and to establish a national Eligibility Committee; expand and strengthen the national refugee protection network.

Impact

- The local integration programme was completed for Guatemalan refugees living in Chiapas. All refugees now hold legal documentation; infra-

structure work benefited 1,014 families; and communal credit associations were supported, taking care to promote gender equity.

- In the State of Chiapas, 1,030 Guatemalan refugees (658 women) received Mexican nationality. UNHCR successfully persuaded the authorities to cover related costs. The Government also agreed to continue funding the naturalisation of some 4,000 over the next two to three years.
- 360 Guatemalan refugees (202 women) in the State of Campeche and 82 (46 women) in the State of Quintana Roo were naturalised, bringing the naturalisation programmes to a close in these southern states. In Campeche, 1,065 land property titles were issued to naturalised Guatemalan refugees.
- Long-term solutions were assured for 48 long-

staying urban refugees (27 women) who obtained Mexican nationality and for 409 refugees (173 women), who received residence permits.

Working Environment

The Context

Following UNHCR's suspension of its programme, Mexico funded naturalisation cards and distributed land titles to Guatemalan long-staying refugees in the State of Chiapas, thus providing a lasting solution for the remaining refugees. Mexico became a member of UNHCR's Executive Committee, clearly showing the Government's commitment to the refugee cause.

The National Action Party (PAN), won the presidential elections after 71 years of rule by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

The terrorist attacks in the United States had a profound impact on Mexico. The authorities increased security measures, which resulted in delays in the provision of documents to newly recognised refugees. Additional measures were also introduced to reinforce controls over the southern border with Guatemala and Belize. This was within the framework of *Plan Sur*, a plan to stem the migratory flow through Mexico of people from the south heading towards the USA. It involves co-ordinated efforts by state and federal police forces, the army, the navy and migration officials.

Constraints

Radical administrative changes affecting UNHCR's governmental implementing partner slowed down the implementation of projects in southern Mexico, and the complex legal issues linked to the transfer of land to newly naturalised refugees remained unresolved.

The accelerated termination of the integration programme, recommended in accordance with UNHCR's Action 2, resulted in the completion of only two projects. The suspension of funding for the naturalisation of 3,500 refugees in Chiapas led to a slow down in the distribution of naturalisation cards.

The migratory documents with a distinctive format issued by the Government to Guatemalan refugees in Chiapas continued not to be recognised by local authorities, leading to the refusal of assistance and even to detention. The naturalisation process for refugees in urban areas continued to proceed at a slow pace as refugees had difficulties in meeting the Government's criteria.

Funding

Action 2 imposed new limitations on infrastructural work. Priority went to water system projects and access roads in new settlements. Eight electrification projects were cancelled during the year and it is unlikely that the local government or other agencies will be able to implement them. The reduced budget, coupled with an unexpected increase in arrivals (57 per cent more than the number expected at the beginning of the year), resulted in a 45 per cent reduction of health assistance and a 58 per cent reduction in education allowances (with 62 refugee students losing their scholarships both at primary and secondary levels). UNHCR's implementing partner received non-UNHCR funds for education, health care and meeting basic needs; however, this contribution may not be renewed in the years to come.

Persons of Concern				
Main Origin/ Type of Population	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Guatemala (Refugees)	13,000	11,700	48	56
El Salvador (Refugees)	1,900	190	46	24

Income and Expenditure (USD) Annual Programme Budget				
Revised Budget	Income from Contributions ¹	Other Funds Available ²	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
4,820,727	20,741	4,771,554	4,792,295	4,792,295

¹ Includes income from contributions restricted at the country level.

² Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

Achievements and Impact

Protection and Solutions

The National Eligibility Committee, established in November 2000 following the adoption of implementing legislation, did not become operational in 2001. Seminars and on-the-job training of government officials, through participation in UNHCR's eligibility committee, were conducted with a view to the gradual hand-over of this responsibility to the Government.

UNHCR promoted local integration as a durable solution for refugees. In Chiapas, as a result of UNHCR's persistent call for issuance of personal documentation, 6,766 refugee children (85 per cent) were issued with birth certificates; 4,245 Guatemalan refugees received residence permits (achieving 100 per cent coverage); 1,038 Guatemalan refugees were naturalised and the rest had their residency documents renewed.

UNHCR ensured that special consideration was given to the particular needs of women asylum-seekers, through individual access to eligibility procedures, accelerated issue of personal documentation and specialised counselling. Women's rights and their specific protection needs were promoted in the context of refugee law dissemination and training activities. Issues directly affecting refugee women's rights, such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, discrimination, abandonment, child support and child custody, featured prominently among the cases addressed by a local lawyer, under the supervision of UNHCR.

UNHCR continued strengthening the local refugee protection network in terms of capacity-building, information-sharing, linkages and overall commitment to refugee protection. It also advocated for a higher visibility of frequently overlooked asylum issues, amid efforts to discourage illegal migration, and actively monitored access to asylum, directly and through refugee protection networks.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: Community service activities aimed at providing vulnerable and disabled refugees with financial and psychological support

in order for them to better integrate into Mexican society. Victims of domestic and sexual violence received financial and psychological assistance. Two training sessions were held and presentations made on alcohol abuse, drug addiction and reproductive health.

Domestic Needs/Household Support: In 2001, 161 persons (35 of them women) were officially recognised as refugees. After an assessment of their needs, 122 of them were provided with material assistance such as food or lodging for a limited period of two to six months, depending on how vulnerable they were while they were waiting to obtain work permits.

Education: Due to financial constraints, UNHCR supported the education of only 93 refugee children (48 per cent girls) despite an initial planning figure of 157. Twelve single mothers were granted assistance for child care. Spanish classes were provided for 80 newly-arrived refugees (seven women), and vocational training for seven refugees (one woman). In Chiapas, the transfer of the literacy project to the National Institute of Adult Education (INEA) was concluded with the participation of 828 refugees (66 per cent women).

Health/Nutrition: In Chiapas, following the transfer of all basic health services to the Government during 2000, UNHCR's support in this sector concentrated on reinforcing local health organisations with the creation of a network with links to the national health system. This support included assistance to 238 refugee patients (70 per cent women) and 155 surgical interventions. Improvements were made in the reproductive health sector with 3,649 consultations carried out by a local NGO. For refugees in urban areas, financial support for medical assistance was granted to recently arrived refugees or refugees found to be in extremely vulnerable situations.

Income Generation: Following the example of credit systems established in the states of Campeche and Quintana Roo, a community credit project conducted by refugees continued operating in Chiapas through 20 communal credit associations for 1,312 partners (47 per cent women), of which 733 received credits for productive projects.



Mexico

A happy Guatemalan refugee girl. *UNHCR / D. Bregnard*

Legal Assistance: In 2001, UNHCR's implementing partner provided a total of 2,000 consultations for urban refugees regarding immigration matters. A total of 511 refugees (209 women) received legal assistance. UNHCR focused on promotion of naturalisation, 48 naturalisation applications were approved (27 women) and 88 were pending at the end of the year. In strengthening the local protection network, UNHCR gave special attention to capacity-building, information-sharing and dialogue to foster commitment to refugee protection among NGOs and human rights commissions. Training activities to promote refugee law were held for 180 migration officials (52 women).

Operational Support (to Agencies): Administrative support and training was provided to three NGOs and one government partner. With the completion of assistance activities in Chiapas, collaboration with two of the NGOs came to an end in December 2001.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: In Chiapas, a major effort to consolidate basic infrastructure for old and new settlements was continued by UNHCR and its governmental implementing partner. 16 water systems were built, benefiting 1,014 refugee families (more than 5,000 people). In addition, 21 other construction works, including four electrification systems, 12 rural schools, two rural clinics, one access bridge, and two access roads were completed, with the participation of the beneficiary communities, comprising more than 550 families.

Transport/Logistics: UNHCR's implementing partner provided transportation to relocate 117 people (59 women) within the state of Chiapas. In addition, transportation was provided for activities aimed at fostering integration of refugees into local communities.

Organisation and Implementation

Management

In addition to the UNHCR Office in Mexico City, which serves as the Regional Office, there is one Sub-office in the State of Chiapas. A total of 29 staff served in these two offices at the beginning of

the year (six international, 15 general service, three national officers and five UNVs). After assistance activities in Chiapas were terminated, the number of staff was reduced to 24 (five international, 13 general service, two national officers and four UNVs).

Working with Others

As UNHCR remained the only UN agency with a presence in Chiapas, co-operation with other UN agencies outside the area was rather difficult. Despite efforts to obtain an extension of the European Union's project for the definitive integration of Guatemalan refugees into Chiapas, changes in the federal government and within UNHCR's implementing partner brought negotiations to a halt (expected to resume in 2002). UNHCR worked with three NGO partners in Mexico and one government partner, *Comisión Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados (COMAR)*, which managed the integration projects in Chiapas, Campeche and Quintana Roo.

As a result of discussions with various NGO partners in Mexico and in the region, and because of budget reductions made by Action 2, higher levels of outside funding were obtained during 2001 than in previous years. Of special note was the success of one of UNHCR's implementing partners in receiving assistance from the federal government's social development fund (SEDESOL).

Overall Assessment

Following Mexico's ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol, the Government started taking over tasks related to refugee status determination. This important achievement, together with the work of the refugee protection network, has enhanced the protection of asylum-seekers and refugees, particularly in border areas. The protection network was a valuable partner in advocating for refugee rights, and in identifying and counselling refugees and asylum-seekers.

The rights of refugee women continued to be protected. Training and capacity-building of government authorities and refugees, led to more equal access to documentation and naturalisation for men and women.

The emphasis continued to be placed on the naturalisation and documentation of long-staying refugees in urban areas in order to improve their job opportunities and their access to national services.

The last phase of UNHCR's direct assistance to refugee communities in Chiapas was completed. Over 1,000 refugee families, living in isolated and deprived communities, were given access to potable water. Likewise, vulnerable refugees benefited from agricultural grants that resulted in 93 per cent of identified cases attaining a minimum level of self-sufficiency.

Offices

Mexico City
Comitán
Chiapas

Partners

Government Agency

Comisión Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados (COMAR)

NGOs

Capacitación Asesoría, Medio Ambiente y Derecho a la Salud (CAMADDS)

Promotores de Administración y Contabilidad para Empresas de Producción, Industrialización y Comercio (PACEPIC)

Sin Fronteras

Financial Report (USD)				
Expenditure Breakdown	Annual Programme Budget		Annual Programme Budget	
	Current Year's Projects	notes	Prior Years' Projects	notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	874,118		0	
Community Services	139,500		63,671	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	141,280		34,954	
Education	111,385		20,539	
Health / Nutrition	210,045		47,103	
Income Generation	140,676		44,800	
Legal Assistance	260,962		251,524	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	340,330		246,643	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	891,831		91,739	
Transport / Logistics	32,926		12,998	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	373,043		(809,787)	
Sub-total Operational	3,516,096		4,184	
Programme Support	1,264,483		0	
Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries	4,780,579	(3)	4,184	(5)
Unliquidated Obligations	11,716	(3)	0	
TOTAL	4,792,295	(1) (3)	4,184	

Instalments with Implementing Partners

Payments Made	1,737,645		0	
Reporting Received	1,364,602		809,787	
Balance	373,043		(809,787)	
Outstanding 1st January	0		833,691	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		21,763	
Currency Adjustment	0		(11,686)	
Outstanding 31 December	373,043		(9,545)	

Unliquidated Obligations

Outstanding 1st January	0		16,767	(5)
New Obligations	4,792,295	(1)	0	
Disbursements	4,780,579	(3)	4,184	(5)
Cancellations	0		12,583	(5)
Outstanding 31 December	11,716	(3)	0	(5)

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

- (1) Annex to Statement 1
- (3) Schedule 3
- (5) Schedule 5