

PROTECTION MONITORING: MEXICO

SNAPSHOT MARCH & APRIL 2024

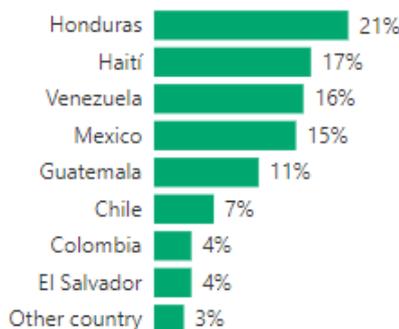
This SNAPSHOT summarizes the findings of Protection Monitoring conducted during the two-month period. Protection Monitoring is part of the humanitarian response of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) in Mexico to the crisis affecting mixed migration flows. DRC conducts this Protection Monitoring in Tapachula, Reynosa and Matamoros. The activities are carried out with the financial support of the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) and the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) of the United States Department of State. The intervention is conducted in association with Save the Children Spain and Mexico, Plan International USA and Mexico, HIAS Mexico, Doctors of the World France and Switzerland, and Alternativas Pacificas. To view the interactive Dashboard of the results of this period and since the start of the Protection Monitoring program, click [here](#).

During March and April 2024, COMAR registered new asylum applications from just over [13,000 people](#) nationwide, which represents a significant decrease relative to the approximately 24,000 applications registered in the same months of 2023 and the 23,000 applications received in the same period in 2022. The practices of the INM and COMAR in Tapachula continued to limit access to the formalization of applications by people on the move; 21.8% of respondents in this location had not attempted to start the process, mainly because they did not understand it, and 44.2% of respondents who had tried to start the asylum process still did not have an appointment to formalize their request. During March, some parts of the northern border saw [an increase](#) in the arrival of people on the move following a judicial ruling that paused the implementation of a local law in the United States that would have worsened the dynamics of detention and deportation. However, the number of irregular crossings into the United States apparently continued to decline, according to official communications from US immigration authorities, with a constant flow of people entering through regular channels: more than [44,000 people](#) were processed along the entire border through the application CBP One during March and [41,400 people](#) in April. However, the saturation of the application and the limited availability of appointments – only 12.5% of respondents monitored between Reynosa and Matamoros reported having an appointment – led to prolonged stays on the northern border; 53.9% of respondents in these same locations had been waiting for access to US territory for more than one month.

KEY FIGURES

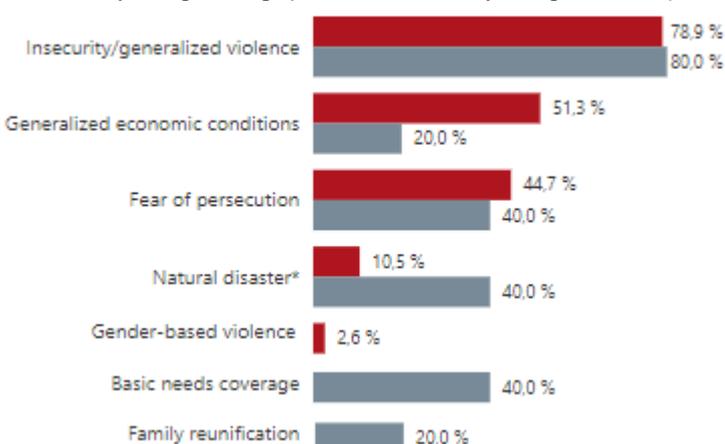
Between March and April 2024, 81 interviews were conducted, covering a total of 184 people.

Nationality



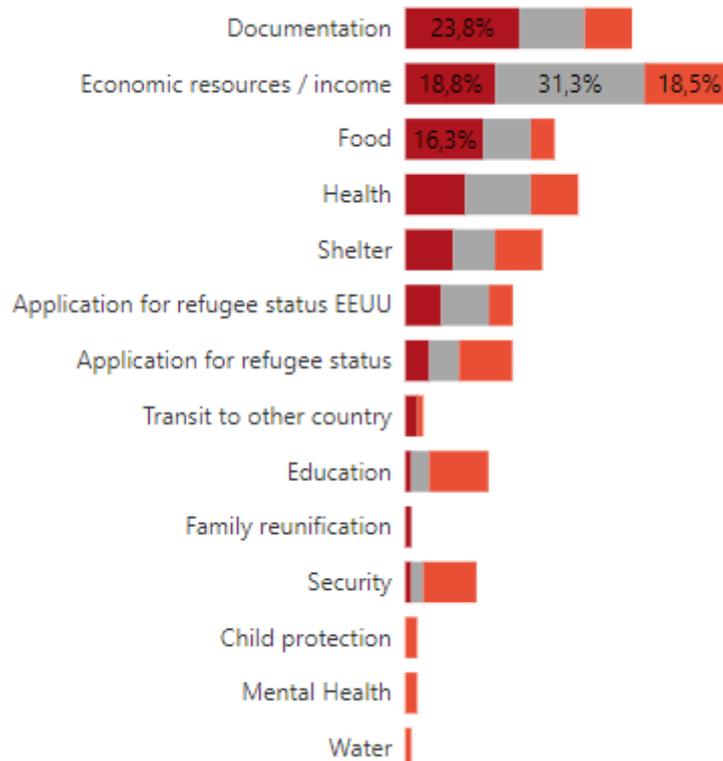
Flight Motives

● Country of origin (foreign persons) ● Community of origin (Mexican persons)



Main Priorities

● Priority 1 ● Priority 2 ● Priority 3



PRIORITY ISSUE: DENIAL OF RIGHTS & SERVICES

People affected by humanitarian crises continue to be the bearers of numerous human **rights** that must be guaranteed through the provision of different **services**, such as health and education. Although the specific rights that people have in humanitarian contexts may vary – for example, there is special protection of multiple rights for refugees – all people have minimum rights, regardless of their legal status or nationality. However, affected people often experience **deliberate deprivation** of access to services and other rights to which they are legitimately entitled. Likewise, in some humanitarian contexts, this protection threat is experienced as a result of the **lack of recognition of humanitarian needs** and the denial of assistance to certain population groups.

It is this deliberate **denial** of rights that distinguishes this protection risk from humanitarian needs that arise in other sectors, such as health or education. Access to services may vary according to the context, with reduced supply or performance of existing systems constituting a factor that may increase **vulnerability** or decrease the **capacity** to cope with various protection threats. However, these generalized situations may justify a variation in access to services and do not constitute a protection risk in themselves. The deliberate deprivation of rights and services arises from an intentional action, aimed at preventing people from accessing the resources, goods or services to which they are entitled.

On both of Mexico's borders, people in mixed migratory movements face a humanitarian crisis characterized by the absence of an adequate humanitarian response. There is an **absence of reception measures** for people on the move, such as shelters, community kitchens and other facilities to address the immediate needs of the population, with some exceptions in the Migrant Integration Centers (CIM) run by the federal government and some shelter initiatives from state and local authorities on the northern border of the country. Nor has there been a request to the international community to support the response or to international organizations to activate the corresponding sectoral cluster systems. This omission exposes affected people to concerning housing conditions and barriers in accessing food and water that increases **vulnerability** to negative coping mechanisms and other protection risks. Between March and April, 28.4% of respondents were unhoused, and 1.2% were sheltering in an informal settlement. This data evidences the insufficient availability of safe and decent **shelter** options to receive people on the move. Likewise, 69.8% of respondents during the two-month period reported that their households had to reduce **food** consumption. These needs are not surprising considering that 53.1% of respondents reported not having any source of income and given the lack of response by the authorities to these basic needs. Despite the efforts of some humanitarian organizations and agencies, 48.1% of respondents reported not having received any type of assistance in Mexico. The lack of recognition of humanitarian needs is also reflected in the absence of predictable pathways to obtain documentation and free movement through the territory. Unlike other countries in the region, Mexican authorities have not adopted specific measures or streamlined existing procedures for obtaining **documentation**. 47.2% of respondents reported not having been able to access

access documentation in Mexico that could facilitate their access to rights and services.

This lack of recognition is specifically related to the humanitarian crisis and the associated needs of people on the move in practice. On paper, Mexico has adopted numerous policies, plans and protocols to guide different aspects of migration management. Despite having adopted a [new migration policy](#) in 2018, a [Migration and Development Plan](#) in 2019 and a [sectoral program](#) in 2020 that recognize an increase in people entering Mexican territory, these measures focus on strengthening institutions such as the INM and COMAR and the promotion of safe, orderly and regular migration, without recognizing and contemplating how to comply with the obligation to attend to the humanitarian needs of those on the move. Although at the federal level, some initiatives have been taken, such as the consolidation of the [Comprehensive Health Care Plan for the Migrant Population](#) in 2019 and the [Protocol for Access of Migrant Children and Adolescents to Basic Education in Mexico](#) 2022, these frameworks have not been accompanied by the allocation of sufficient human or financial resources or the design of appropriate programs to guarantee access to the rights to health and education without discrimination. This gap appears larger in the face of the continuous increase in arrivals of persons on the move to Mexico since these frameworks were adopted. This reality generates multiple situations of denial of rights and services in different parts of the country.

With respect to the right to health, although Mexico's legal framework guarantees the right of every person in Mexican territory to health services, the people monitored report different dynamics that cause the **denial of access to public health services**. 45.7% of respondents stated that members of their household had not received the medical care necessary to address their health needs.

Approximately half of all respondents referred to structural factors, such as the absence of a specialized care, which undermine their self-protection capacities. However, a significant proportion of respondents highlighted particular aspects of their experiences as people on the move as the main barriers to receiving medical care. 57.1% referred to a lack of information about their rights and the relevant processes, while more than a third cited the costs associated with transportation to health centers and corresponding treatments as important barriers. This reflects a lack of adaptation of existing health services to the dynamics of migration flows, including the areas where affected people are housed and the availability of basic medications and other treatments at no cost in health centers. In Tapachula, some participants in information dissemination activities confirmed that, in health centers in the area, they are asked for documentary proof of domicile as a requirement to receive medical care. Considering that the vast majority of those on the move in this location does not have a formal arrangement for their accommodation – only 33.3% were sheltered in private housing and many of these people reported not having a good relationship with their landlords – almost none of the monitored persons can meet the requirement of presenting a utility bill or another type of formal proof of their domicile.

Likewise, barriers to the enrollment of children and adolescents (NNA) in **public schools** were documented. In Tapachula, some of those covered by monitoring related how in local schools, officials denied the enrollment of their sons and daughters as a result of being unable to produce a CURP, a Mexican identification number. Of the households monitored in this location during the two-month period, 14.8% of

those with at least one school-age member reported that the lack of documentation contributed to the child not studying.

Although some of these limitations arise from the systematic practices of some public institutions, others are related to the arbitrary actions of some public officials. The latter is evident in relation to the denial of **access to justice**. In Tapachula, some persons of concern reported having approached the local prosecutor's office after suffering a robbery, but were discouraged by the personnel from reporting the incident. Another person who had suffered an express kidnapping said that the prosecutor's office staff refused to accept the report because they considered that the facts alleged by the person of concern were not credible. In Reynosa, participants in a focus group stated that they felt unprotected by the authorities and stated that they did not follow up on their complaints of kidnapping, robbery and other forms of violence. Although 38.3% of respondents stated that a member of their household had experienced violence in Mexico, only 6.5% filed a complaint with the authorities and in none of these cases was there a response. The main barriers cited regarding access to justice were fear of retaliation (22.8%) and fear of the authorities (19.0%).

Although various humanitarian actors have undertaken efforts to address the sectoral needs of affected people and strengthen access to health and educational services in general, these interventions are not sufficient to address the needs of the population. The efforts of relevant organizations and agencies to mitigate the risks derived from the lack of access to services and rights do not make up for the lack of an orderly and coordinated response to humanitarian needs in the country.



REYNOSA & MATAMOROS

The **eviction** of the informal camp on the edge of the border bridge in Matamoros continued at the beginning of March, with media reporting actions by immigration authorities to [destroy the provisional shelters](#) of the dozens of people who remained in this settlement. This is tied to an increase in people housed in temporary shelters – 88.5% of respondents during the two-month period – and private homes – 3.8% of respondents –.

Some key informants alleged the use of force by authorities in these eviction incidents, along with physical **violence** and verbal abuse towards persons of concern. Likewise, monitoring of local context in this locality confirmed an increase in robberies and other forms of violence during the two-month period. These dynamics contribute to Reynosa being the place with the highest **perception of insecurity** in the state of Tamaulipas, according to statistics from the first quarter of the year published by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography, with 79.2% of people surveyed reporting a [perception of insecurity](#). This coincides with the findings of the Protection Monitoring, in which 42.3% of respondents between Reynosa and Matamoros reported perceiving that their environment was 'very unsafe', and 23.1% 'unsafe.' In this context, the national defense authority deployed [300 troops from the national army](#) during the month of April, with the aim of reinforcing security in the municipality. For affected persons, the presence of military and other law enforcement authorities is also associated with an environment characterized by the presence of weapons and the occurrence of incidents of violence. Some key informants confirmed an

increase in the presence of **armed organized crime actors** inside the shelters that house affected people. During the month of April, some spaces dedicated to providing shelter for people on the move in Reynosa also reported incidents of **harassment and threats** by authorities.

Faced with these and other risks of violence, the population of concern adopts evasion strategies and adjusts their behaviors to **cope** with the situation. According to one key informant, many affected persons avoid going out late at night and go out in groups during the day instead of going out alone to reduce their exposure to violence. However, they must balance their interest in remaining in the shelter or settlement as a risk avoidance strategy with their need to go out to access services or make purchases for basic needs.

In addition to exposure to violence, the population's ability to cover their basic needs is also impacted by the lack of economic resources. 43.8% of respondents monitored in Reynosa and Matamoros during the two-month period reported not having any source of income and 96.2% reported that no member of their household was working, mainly due to insecurity and lack of immigration documentation. Faced with this situation, people of concern in Reynosa and Matamoros depend mainly on remittances, with a limited proportion seeking to generate an income through the informal economy. However, during April, after pressure from local merchants, the municipality of Reynosa took measures to [relocate street vendors](#) belonging to the population of concern who carried out their business on an important pedestrian street in the city.



TAPACHULA

During March, [COMAR resumed](#) the implementation of the obligation for people seeking recognition of refugee status to physically appear every 15 days before the authorities to sign and verify their continued presence at the place of application. This requirement, which had been suspended since the Covid-19 pandemic, leads COMAR to declare as abandoned the asylum applications of people who do not show up to sign. Although this change was officially announced through COMAR's social networks, the prompt application of the change brought confusion and misinformation among people of concern. Legal aid activities revealed doubts among the population regarding who must comply with this obligation, as well as the place, date and time for them to appear and sign. This misinformation is particularly worrying considering the limited supply of legal aid services. At the time of monitoring, none of the respondents Tapachula with a process before the COMAR had received support from a lawyer. This signature requirement impacts people at different stages of the process and forces them to remain near Tapachula or certain other designated offices where they must appear to sign every 15 days. Likewise, it involves the cost of transportation and an interruption to the obligations of a regular job that is prohibitive for some asylum-seekers.

Against this background, there has been a decrease in applications before the COMAR. In April, there was a [decrease in the number of people](#) visiting the Ecological Park to register and begin the asylum process with COMAR, in contrast to March, when it was sometimes necessary to wait two to three days to be seen by the COMAR at this location. This trend has also been confirmed by COMAR in its [monthly reports](#), since from January to April 2024, 10,185 new asylum applications were registered in Tapachula, representing a total of 19,272 applicants. This marks a significant reduction compared to the same period in 2023, when 43,680 cases were recorded, equivalent to 77,416 people.

At the same time, the INM moved the functions from its offices in the municipalities of Huixtla and Suchiate to

Tapachula, [provoking protests outside the INM offices](#) in Suchiate around the additional challenges that this situation creates for obtaining documentation. In the same way, the INM implemented a new practice of physically transferring persons of concern from the place of their irregular entry into Mexico on the banks of the Suchiate River to the city of Tuxtla Gutierrez, without passing through Tapachula. Considering the absence of an effective mechanism to request asylum at the border and that the COMAR office in Tuxtla Gutierrez is for coordination purposes and cannot accept asylum applications, people affected by this practice of INM transfers have limited access to the asylum system.

These changes contributed to the fact that 39.8% of respondents in Tapachula had not received any official document during their stay in the country and 90.9% did not have any valid document conferring legal status. The frustration of the population regarding the issue of access to documentation, together with the conditions of growing insecurity in Tapachula, contributed to the departure of two caravans. In March, a collective movement of approximately [2,000 people](#), mostly from Central America and Venezuela, departed Tapachula. Some of these reported having suffered robberies, extortion and assaults while they were unhoused in Tapachula. At the end of April, another collective group left Tapachula, mainly composed of people Cuban nationals.

A direct observation carried out at the border crossing and around the Suchiate River confirmed the presence of informal camps inhabited by Venezuelan nationals, among others, who reported having suffered extortion and lacking the means to continue their journey towards Tapachula. They expected to be processed by the INM for a transfer to Tuxtla Gutierrez to be able to continue on their way to Mexico City to begin the process of requesting an appointment through the CBP One application.

This document is part of the humanitarian response activities of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) in Mexico, with the financial support of the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) and the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) of the United States Department of State. It is not a publication of ECHO or PRM. The financing agencies are not responsible for the use that may be made of the information contained in the document and do not necessarily support its contents. All of the opinions expressed herein belong exclusively to DRC and should not be interpreted in any way as the official opinion of the United States or of the European Union or its Member States.

