

FEMSA promotes labor and social inclusion of refugees in Mexico

- Through various actions in favor of labor and social inclusion, FEMSA offers refugees the conditions to get a formal job.
- In collaboration with UNHCR, FEMSA has developed a strategy that has enabled the employability of more than 1,500 refugees in Mexico.

Mexico City, Mexico. June 20, 2023. – To celebrate World Refugee Day, FEMSA recognizes the strength and courage of people who have been forced to leave their homes to escape situations of conflict, violence, persecution or natural disasters. Through the refugee inclusion program, in collaboration with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Tent Partnership for Refugees, the company promotes the economic and social integration of refugees, offering them formal employment opportunities.

With the integration of refugees into its workforce and to commemorate this important date, FEMSA embraces the UNHCR theme for this year: "Hope away from home, for an inclusive world for refugees."

The stories of the refugees who join the program have a common denominator: leaving their country of origin, leaving everything behind, bordered by violence, precariousness and the lack of opportunities to start over.

"I arrived in Mexico in 2018 almost 4 years ago. I settled in Monterrey with the United Nations and one day OXXO and other companies came to recruit staff and talked about the benefits of the company, so I chose to start working there. I've been here 3 and a half years. It is a good company, I have a good salary, it respects everything the law states and I am happy because Mexico is a good country. Companies like FEMSA open doors for people from other countries like me", Martín, who arrived to Monterrey from El Salvador fleeing the violence there.

Martín also recognizes that he has a lot to contribute, and that by finding a formal employment opportunity he can continue to develop and reduce the risk factors of his vulnerable situation.

"When I arrived at OXXO, I spent some time as an employee on the sales floor. I thought that I couldn't grow any more, but everything is possible at OXXO. Here they do not discriminate you for being foreigner, your growth depends solely on your effort, it doesn't matter who you are or where you come from, the doors are always open to go as high as you want to go, and I am very grateful to FEMSA for that," said Martín.

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Refugees are those who flee armed conflict or persecution in search of safety in nearby countries. Their situation is intolerable in many cases, and they need asylum in other places to safeguard their lives.

Labor and social inclusion

As a responsible employer, FEMSA recognizes refugees and migrants as an integral part of the communities, working under the philosophy that all people, regardless of their origin or condition, should have the opportunity to access decent employment, even more so when in Mexico, the legal and economic conditions are favorable to facilitate the labor integration of this sector.

“FEMSA has the unwavering priority of being a leading company in inclusion, equity and diversity in Latin America. As a responsible company, it must offer opportunities to migrants and refugees, because hiring and training them adds value to employees, consumers, and communities,” said José Antonio Fernández, Executive Chairman of FEMSA's Board of Directors.

Initially, FEMSA implemented a pilot program in Monterrey, Nuevo León, in which the necessary adjustments and adaptations were identified to employ refugees and promote their integration into our work system. Currently, through OXXO and OXXO Gas, FEMSA has employed more than 1,500 refugees and migrants from neighboring countries in Central America and the Caribbean, mainly Haiti, Honduras, El Salvador, Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.

Data from the UNHCR itself indicates that as a result of FEMSA's active participation, around 500 companies have joined to replicate this type of action.

The constant efforts in terms of inclusion allowed FEMSA to form part of the TENT Partnership for Refugees since October 2020, the global network of companies that provide support to refugees.

An example of success in the labor inclusion of refugees is OXXO, since with their Visitor for Humanitarian Reasons Card or Permanent Residence Card, refugees can apply for the various operational or administrative vacancies available, the same way Mexicans do.

They can also access the benefits of working in the FEMSA family, and the different opportunities to make a career plan in the company, in the same way that compatriots can do. This process includes everything from personal development opportunities and medical assistance, to access to scholarships for themselves and/or their families, among others.

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Fernández Carbajal called for more companies to integrate migrants and refugees into their workforce, not only to benefit from their talent and cultural contributions, but also to support the economic recovery of Latin America.

“We are convinced that helping refugees benefits FEMSA and the communities we serve, since inclusive and diverse companies can add 35% more value to the business. The refugees employed by FEMSA form a great sense of belonging and a desire to keep growing in Mexico, despite the high turnover of personnel in retail at a national level”, he said.

About FEMSA

FEMSA is a leading company that creates economic and social value through companies and institutions and seeks to be the best employer and neighbor of the communities where it has a presence. It participates in retail trade through its Proximity Division, which includes OXXO, a chain of small-format stores, OXXO Gas, a chain of service stations, and Valora, our European retail unit that operates convenience and food service stores. In retail trade, FEMSA also participates through a Health Division, which includes pharmacies and related activities; and the Digital@FEMSA Division, which includes Spin by OXXO and OXXO Premia, as well as other loyalty initiatives and digital financial services. In the beverage industry, it participates by operating Coca-Cola FEMSA, the world's largest bottler of Coca-Cola products by sales volume; and in the beer sector, as the second largest shareholder of Heineken, one of the world's leading beer companies with a presence in more than 70 countries. FEMSA also participates in the logistics and distribution industry through FEMSA Strategic Business, which additionally provides refrigeration solutions at the point of sale and plastic solutions to its companies and external clients. Through its Business Units, it employs more than 350,000 employees in 18 countries. FEMSA is a member of the Dow Jones MILA Pacific Alliance Sustainability Index, the FTSE4Good Emerging Index and the S&P/BMV Total México ESG Index, among other indices that assess its sustainability performance.

About FEMSA's Proximity Division

FEMSA's Proximity Division generates economic and social value in the countries where it has a presence. It operates different small-format retail chains in Latin America and Europe, among which are the OXXO stores. It also operates service stations under the OXXO GAS brand in Mexico, and Valora, our European retail unit that operates convenience and food service stores. Through its business units, FEMSA's Proximity Division serves more than 13 million consumers every day and employs more than 160,000 employees, promoting inclusion, diversity, and Sustainability practices in its teams to operate in harmony with the planet, community and value chain.

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