

The Americas

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The region is at the forefront of durable solutions, with more refugees resettled in the Americas than in any other region of the world. More than 80,000 refugees —80 per cent of all resettlement worldwide—were resettled there in 2016, mainly in Canada and the United States of America but increasingly in Argentina, Brazil and Chile. Most countries in the region provide inclusive public policies; opportunities for integration and naturalization; complementary pathways for admission (see *Glossary*), such as expanded family reunification programmes or refugee access to temporary labour migration schemes; and apply innovative approaches to resettlement, such as humanitarian visa programmes.

In addition to its continued commitment to solutions, three main situations will be the focus of UNHCR's work in the region in 2018:

- The implementation of the peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary

A family of Venezuelan children and their older Colombian-born relatives stand outside their wooden house in Barrio Camilo Daza in the city of Cúcuta, Colombia. Mother of four, Aide Caceres (far left) recently brought her children here because of the situation in Venezuela, but is unable to access health and education for them as they are undocumented Venezuelans.

Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and negotiations with the rebel National Liberation Army (ELN).

- The deteriorating situation in Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) that is likely to continue generating population outflows.
- The growing displacement from and within the North of Central America (NCA), including El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. In the Caribbean, UNHCR will develop regional safeguards to enhance refugee protection, enhance the quality of asylum procedures and promote durable solutions. It will also support efforts aiming to progressively eradicate statelessness.

The Office also expects the number of complex mixed movements to continue increasing in 2018, with the combination of refugee flows and mixed movements requiring a range of responses from UNHCR.

In line with the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants (see *Glossary*), the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework (CRPSF) has been developed by Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama. The CRPSF includes national action plans that have been informed by extensive national and local consultations and which build upon existing solidarity and responsibility-sharing mechanisms in the region, including the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action (see *Glossary*) and the San José Action Statement. The CRPSF will support States to implement their commitments, while identifying and addressing remaining gaps through “whole-of-society” integrated responses as well as the mobilization of additional resources for implementation.

In recent years, an ever-increasing number of people seeking asylum has put a strain on the region’s asylum systems. This is likely to

continue in 2018. UNHCR will therefore continue to prioritize the implementation of programmes in the Brazil Plan of Action, which was adopted by 28 countries and three territories in Latin America and the Caribbean.

MAJOR SITUATIONS

Colombia

Approximately 7.6 million IDPs have been registered as internally displaced in Colombia since 1985. Since the signature of the peace agreement in December 2016, the FARC have begun disarming and reintegrating into civilian communities. However, other illegal armed groups are now vying for territorial control, and forced displacement continued with over 8,700 IDPs newly displaced between January and August 2017. This trend is expected to continue, particularly along the Pacific coast and the border region, mainly affecting Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities.

UNHCR will begin implementing its multi-year, multi-partner protection and solutions strategy. It will work closely with the UN Verification Mission in Colombia to ensure that protection and solutions issues are known, and its alliances with development actors to facilitate durable solutions for IDPs are strengthened. UNHCR will also help enhance the authorities’ knowledge, resources and response to asylum issues, in keeping with Colombia’s growing role as a receiving country for people in need of international protection.

The Office continues to support efforts in Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) to host refugees, in particular Colombians over the years. UNHCR will continue working with partners to ensure quality protection standards for refugees, asylum-seekers

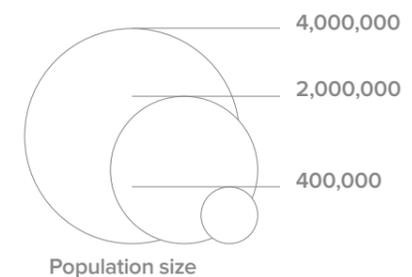
and stateless persons in the country, providing them with comprehensive, complementary and sustainable solutions; and promoting safe borders and emergency preparedness to better protect all people of concern.

With the authorities in Ecuador, UNHCR will look to strengthen the national asylum system, building its capacity to provide legal assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers; and achieving self-reliance for refugees through the “graduation approach” (see *Building better futures* chapter and *Glossary*).

North of Central America

The region has seen a tenfold increase in refugees and asylum-seekers from the NCA countries over the last five years, reaching 215,000. Some 46,000 new asylum applications were received in the subregion within the first six months of 2017, and 77,740 people returned to NCA countries between January and July 2017 from Mexico and the United States of America, a significant proportion of whom had protection needs. The Government of Honduras estimates that from 2004 to 2014, 174,000 persons were internally displaced in their country.

The reasons for the increased displacement are complex and multifaceted but violence and insecurity remain the major contributing factors. An increase in asylum claims in this subregion is expected to continue in 2018. During the past two years, the number of asylum-seekers from the NCA has increased in Belize, Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama. Guatemala is also increasingly perceived by people of concern not only as a country of transit but also a country of asylum.



IDPs and members of host communities benefited from community-based infrastructure and empowerment projects.

In 2018, UNHCR will continue working with partners to build stronger asylum systems; establish mechanisms that can respond to urgent protection risks faced by IDPs and other people affected by violence; identify and protect returnees with protection needs; and find durable solutions for all people of concern. UNHCR's response aims to ensure safe transit by establishing protection networks along the main migration routes and by providing humanitarian assistance, with a special focus on the most vulnerable.

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The deteriorating situation in Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) continues to prompt people to flee. The number of asylum applications lodged by Venezuelans around the world rose to approximately 48,500 between January and mid-September 2017, a considerable increase over the 34,000 claims lodged by the end of 2016.

The primary destination countries for Venezuelan asylum-seekers are Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru, Spain and the United States of America. Despite the efforts of host countries to generously meet the increasing needs of Venezuelans fleeing their country, a more robust response is needed to protect their physical security and documentation, and to respond quickly to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV, see *Glossary*), exploitation, and abuse. In certain areas, armed groups and criminal gangs are exploiting new arrivals and the local population. In 2017, together with partners and respective governments, UNHCR went to Brazil, Colombia, and Trinidad and Tobago to assess border movements, evaluate the humanitarian

needs of those crossing, and what would be needed if anyone else arrived. The Office also deployed technical missions to look at cash-based interventions (see *Glossary*), shelter and registration.

The volatile situation in Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) may result in more Colombians returning home, as well as Venezuelans in need of international protection crossing into Colombia. UNHCR, with partners, will strengthen its programmes in the border areas of neighbouring countries to improve basic humanitarian assistance, including multipurpose cash grants, and to support government registration, documentation, and access to refugee status determination processes for those fleeing, or alternative legal pathways, such as temporary stay arrangements and humanitarian visas. These will enable Venezuelans to normalize their stay in countries, while allowing those who intend to seek asylum to do so.

REGIONAL STRATEGY

Building a harmonized asylum system

Access to asylum and high-quality decision-making will remain key areas of engagement between UNHCR and States in the region, whether as part of the quality assurance initiative or as part of UNHCR's provision of technical expertise on refugee law and procedures. To increase the efficiency of their asylum systems, ten States in the region—Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago—have committed to running a quality assurance initiative programme. This should improve the

identification, registration and processing of applicants according to their vulnerabilities. It should also help ensure that they are properly interviewed and ultimately receive a fair decision on their claim.

In 2018, UNHCR will prioritize regional cooperation among States' asylum bodies. To strengthen national asylum systems, particular attention will be paid to managing backlogs in asylum processing. UNHCR's engagement with countries currently participating in the quality assurance initiative will continue, with a focus on strategic case management and backlog reduction. It will also work to establish asylum systems where these are not yet in place, particularly in the Caribbean region, where governments will progressively assume responsibility for refugee status determination.

In addition, the Office will support the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights and hundreds of civil society organizations across the Americas, including legal clinics, which provide legal counselling and offer representation services to asylum-seekers and refugees through the Americas Network for Refugee Legal Aid.

Progressing towards solutions

Argentina, Brazil and Chile will continue their efforts as emerging resettlement countries, with re-designed resettlement and private sponsorship programmes, receiving an increasing number of families affected by the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) and from the NCA.

At the Leaders' Summit on Refugees, held in the United States of America in September 2016, both Argentina and Brazil committed to admitting 3,000 people

affected by the crisis in Syria by combining their humanitarian visa programmes with private sponsorship programmes, including for UNHCR-referred refugees. Brazil has also pledged to establish a State-funded resettlement programme for individuals from the NCA subregion by the end of 2018. Uruguay has also committed to receive families from the NCA.

Launched in 2016 and piloted in Costa Rica, El Salvador and the United States of America, the protection transfer arrangement aims to facilitate the humanitarian evacuation of people at heightened risk. In 2018, it will be expanded to the three NCA countries and aims to reach a referral capacity of nearly 1,100 people, depending on the availability of funding and the receiving countries.

While the Americas are providing more opportunities for local integration as a durable solution, some resettlement needs prevail for cases whose specific protection needs prevent them from achieving local integration. Excluding the protection transfer arrangement cases, around 1,800 people have been identified as needing resettlement as the only viable durable solution in 2018, which indicates that resettlement is a strategic protection tool in the region.

UNHCR will continue promoting the inclusion of refugees and other people of concern in national plans and policies in the region. In Ecuador, the "graduation approach" (see *Building better futures* chapter and *Glossary*) helps people of concern to become free of poverty and self-reliant and, ultimately, facilitates their local integration. Taking advantage of the momentum created by the adoption of Ecuador's Human Mobility Law, and the commitments on naturalization included

in the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action, UNHCR will advocate the implementation of simplified naturalization procedures. In Colombia, the Office will focus on increasing IDPs' access to durable solutions by supporting the Government with the

legalization of informal settlements; providing technical assistance to strengthen public policies for solutions; and assisting selected communities with return, relocation, local integration and collective reparation processes.



Musician who fled Colombia finds his forte in Canada

“When you have to flee abruptly, you find home not in terms of place, but the likeminded people who make you feel like family.” Ruben Esguerra, Colombian refugee speaks of his experience of being welcomed in Canada.

Ruben Esguerra, 37, arrived in Canada 28 years ago after fleeing conflict in Colombia.

Ending statelessness

The region will continue working towards the eradication of statelessness by 2024. UNHCR will continue to advocate that the Governments of Chile, El Salvador, Mexico, as well as Caribbean countries, accede to one or both statelessness conventions. Furthermore, the Office will keep promoting the adoption and implementation of domestic frameworks to ensure the protection of stateless migrants and access to facilitated naturalization in Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Panama, Paraguay and Uruguay. UNHCR will provide interested States with technical assistance to address gaps in nationality laws that may generate cases of statelessness, and will support strategic partnerships and initiatives to prevent statelessness through universal birth registration, in line with goal 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Despite notable progress in Latin American countries, UNHCR will continue to work

with Caribbean States to ensure the acquisition, confirmation or restoration of nationality for stateless persons in the region. Despite the closure of the its office in Haiti in 2018, UNHCR will maintain its engagement with the Government, in particular to provide technical assistance for the adoption of a new nationality law and for the implementation of the statelessness conventions.

Strengthening regional cooperation

The Americas will continue working under the Brazil Plan of Action, the regional framework for cooperation and responsibility-sharing in Latin America and the Caribbean. The triennial evaluation of the Plan—which took place in 2016 on the statelessness, solutions and quality of asylum chapters—will help inform the process leading towards the development of the global compact on refugees through a regional conference in Brasilia in February 2018.

The Caribbean Migration Consultations will address challenges related to mixed movements and develop protection-sensitive responses across the subregion. In 2018, UNHCR is expecting to formalize its cooperation with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Implementing Agency for Crime and Security to jointly provide support and capacity-building for Caribbean governments on matters related to refugee protection and mixed movements.

UNHCR will continue to foster regional cooperation and alliances with the UNDG-LAC, regional and subregional mechanisms such as OAS, MERCOSUR and the Central American Integration System, as well as multilateral development banks, civil society, the private sector and other relevant partners. Enhanced coordination with the regional consultation forums on migration (Lima and Puebla processes) will contribute to the inclusion of protection safeguards when identifying people in need of international protection within mixed movements.

CONSTRAINTS

The increased number of people seeking asylum throughout the region during the last few years is taking its toll on national asylum systems. The quality assurance initiative will therefore remain UNHCR's primary means of helping to strengthen asylum systems and to improve strategic case management.

Ensuring States can respond effectively to the region's asylum-migration nexus, and building the capacity within the region to process applications through migration pathways, when possible are an important part of UNHCR's response to mixed movements. In the Caribbean, this includes promoting a consistent approach to refugee protection within the region's broader migration trends. The operational challenges posed by mixed movements from other continents are expected to continue, as is an increasing number of Cuban and Haitian and nationals transiting through the region, some of whom may have international protection needs.

Opportunities for local integration of people of concern are limited in the Caribbean, despite gradual progress. In this context, resettlement is used as a protection tool for a small number of refugees for whom this durable solution is crucial.

More details on individual operations are available in the relevant subregional and country operations pages on the Global focus website (<http://reporting.unhcr.org>).

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

As the region with the smallest budgetary requirements, at just \$152.6 million, the Americas represents 2 per cent of the organization’s overall budget for 2018, or an increase of 2.7 per cent since 2017. With its focus on obtaining durable solutions, the budget for refugee programmes in this region is the most significant and has more than doubled in the last five years.

Within the region, the Latin America subregion has the greatest budgetary needs, accounting for more than 82 per cent of the region’s allocation. This is largely due to the increasing arrivals from Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), the growing humanitarian needs in the NCA, and continued stabilization efforts in Colombia. There is also a particular need to support UNHCR’s operational presence and monitoring capacity in border areas.

Regional priorities include a focus on improving reception conditions and border monitoring; access to quality status determination; potential for integration; and women’s empowerment, child protection and SGBV prevention and response.

With respect to UNHCR’s protection response, a funding shortfall would limit UNHCR’s capacity to monitor humanitarian needs and new displacements in some areas of Colombia, where these continue to occur, and to respond appropriately to the needs of the most vulnerable.

Regarding the regional response in the NCA, a funding shortfall could hinder efforts to prevent greater displacement and to address the risks that people of concern face, particularly those who are forced to take insecure routes to seek safety and are susceptible to exploitation (such as SGBV, trafficking, or forced recruitment).

THE AMERICAS 2018 BUDGET BY RIGHTS GROUP | USD millions



BUDGETS FOR THE AMERICAS | USD

OPERATION	2017 Current budget (as of 30 June 2017)	PILLAR 1 PILLAR 2 PILLAR 3 PILLAR 4				TOTAL	2019 Proposed budget
		2018 Refugee programmes	2018 Stateless programmes	2018 Reintegration projects	2018 IDP projects		
NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARRIBBEAN							
Canada	1,758,241	1,836,756	50,595	-	-	1,887,351	1,810,350
United States of America Regional Office ¹	28,126,070	17,292,233	8,217,022	-	-	25,509,256	22,834,929
SUBTOTAL	29,884,311	19,128,989	8,267,618	-	-	27,396,607	24,645,279
LATIN AMERICA							
Argentina Regional Office ²	5,547,848	6,186,526	163,870	-	-	6,350,396	4,458,398
Brazil	5,766,676	6,017,070	103,867	-	-	6,120,936	5,671,089
Colombia	28,686,415	3,320,005	-	-	21,556,495	24,876,500	24,833,046
Costa Rica	6,455,431	8,019,699	-	-	-	8,019,699	10,263,930
Costa Rica Regional Legal Unit	4,002,099	3,142,349	806,118	-	-	3,948,467	3,948,466
Ecuador	21,763,000	19,560,801	-	-	-	19,560,801	17,999,943
Mexico	14,677,287	16,145,000	-	-	-	16,145,000	16,599,999
Panama Regional Office ³	22,672,194	25,883,586	-	-	-	25,883,586	26,308,183
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	8,166,950	10,805,911	-	-	-	10,805,911	19,339,833
Regional Activities ⁴	2,517,018	3,444,860	-	-	-	3,444,860	2,500,000
SUBTOTAL	120,254,919	102,525,806	1,073,855	-	21,556,495	125,156,157	131,922,887
TOTAL	150,139,230	121,654,796	9,341,473	-	21,556,495	152,552,764	156,568,166

¹ Includes Haiti, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, 12 independent Caribbean States, three other CARICOM States, and British and Dutch overseas territories in coordination with the Europe Bureau.
² Includes activities in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.
³ Includes activities in Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.
⁴ Regional activities cover the entire Americas region.

BUDGETS FOR THE AMERICAS 2010-2019 | USD

