

2017 Year-End report

23/7/2018

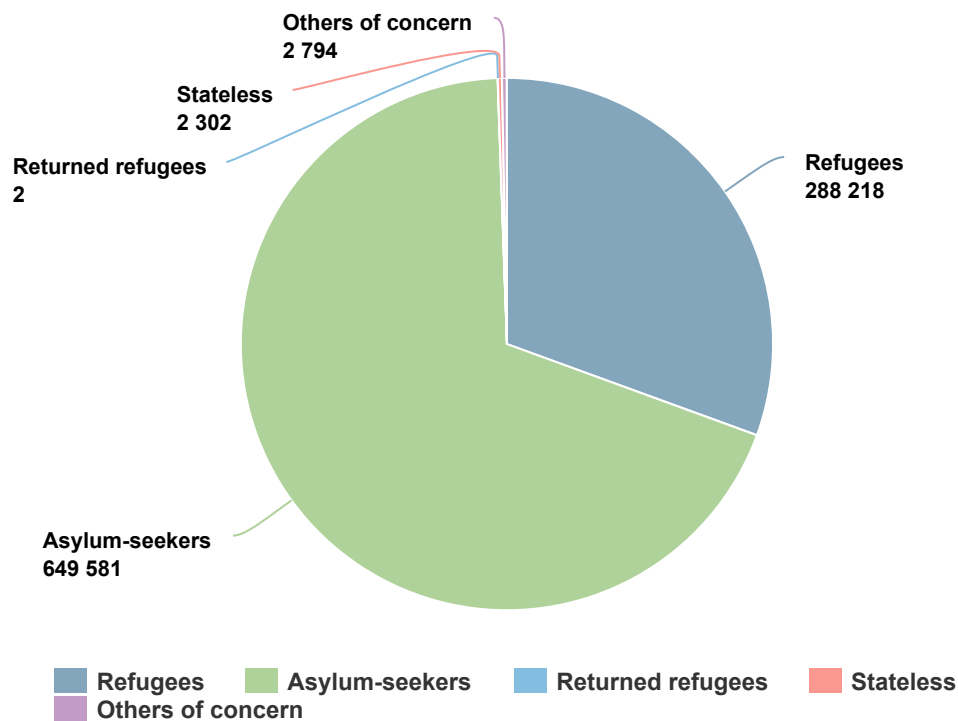
Operation: United States of America Regional Office



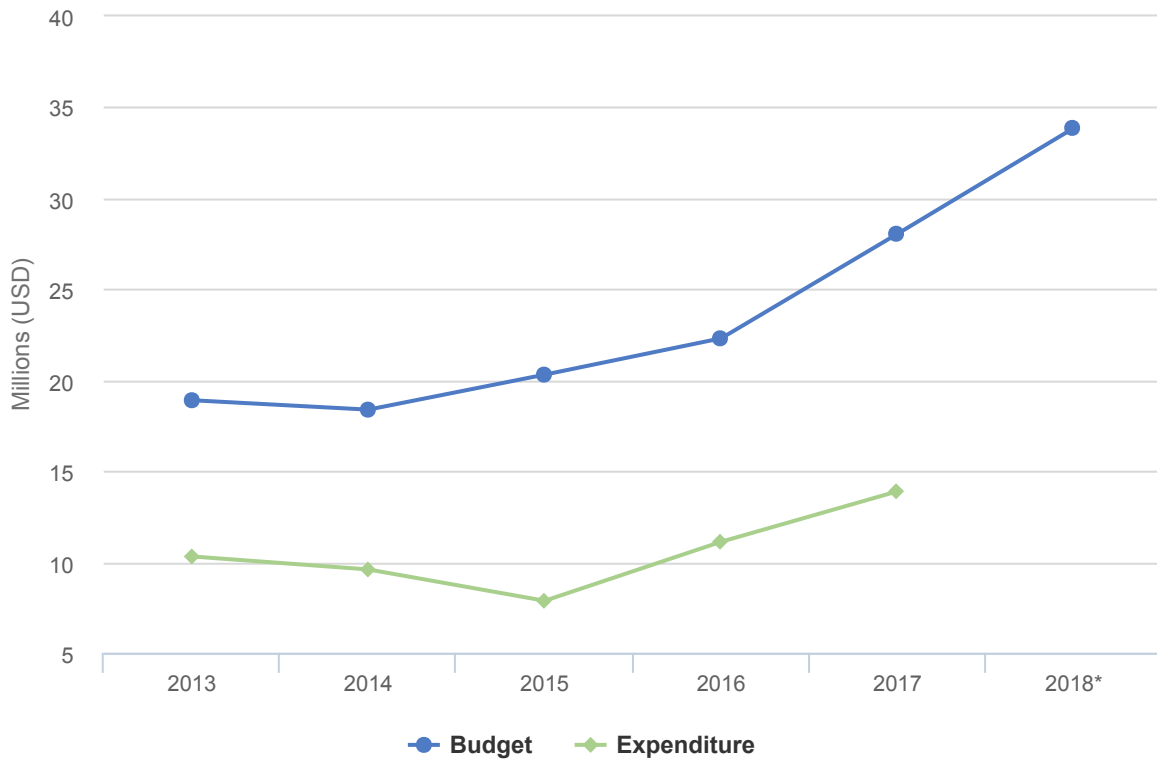
People of Concern

**14% INCREASE IN
2017**

2017	942,897
2016	824,071
2015	696,796



Budgets and Expenditure for United States of America Regional Office



Operational context

As a result of the change of government in the United States of America in 2017, the refugee policy experienced new uncertainty, resulting in challenges for UNHCR and people of concern. The increased politicization of refugee protection urgently threatened to narrow the asylum space and shift public opinion. Meanwhile, mixed movements from the North of Central America increased, and the unfolding Venezuela situation in the Caribbean resulted in increased numbers of asylum-seekers requiring direct protection and assistance interventions.

Population trends

In 2017, there was a continued increase in asylum claims lodged in the US, with the backlog topping 700,000. Stateless people remained unidentified and unaccounted. UNHCR resettlement arrivals to the US decreased to 24,559 - despite this, the United States remain the world's largest resettlement country.

In the Caribbean, several countries directly off the coast of Venezuela – particularly Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba and Curaçao – were hosting significant numbers of Venezuelans by end 2017, particularly considering their population sizes: in Trinidad and Tobago, the Venezuelan population was estimated at 40,000 (representing 3 per cent of the total population); in Aruba, at 20,000 (16 per cent); and in Curacao, at 5,000 (3 per cent).

Key achievements

- Due in part to concerted advocacy and engagement from the Regional Office, the US remained UNHCR's largest donor in 2017.
- For protection and solutions in the US, major achievements included the holding of a high-level protection dialogue with the new US Administration, the provision of technical advice as member of advisory committee for DHS case management ATD for families, until the closure of the programme mid-year; and the sharing of a confidential report on detention of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC).
- The Regional Office reoriented its Caribbean Protection and Solutions Strategy to support governments to respond to the growing number of Venezuelans arrivals through reception, registration, the provision of humanitarian assistance and the introduction of community based initiatives. Significant strides were also made towards accomplishing some of the original goals of the Strategy including the consolidation of the Caribbean Migration Consultations (CMC) as a regional process, with The Bahamas hosting the annual meeting on refugee protection in December 2017, attended by 18 Caribbean countries, as well as CARICOM, CARICOM IMPACS, IOM and UNHCR.
- In the Dominican Republic, UNHCR continued to work with the authorities to strengthen the legal system on refugee protection and the functioning of the CONARE, the Dominican Commission for Aid to Refugees. At the request of the authorities, UNHCR submitted advisory opinions on individual cases concerning the interpretation of the refugee definition. In addition, public officials attended several trainings and workshops organized by UNHCR on international refugee law.
- The Office achieved its central communications objectives in 2017, engaging with a wide range of media in the United States and the Caribbean; the positive results of this focused media engagement were recorded from diverse publications ranging from ardent supporters of UNHCR to skeptics and critics.

Unmet needs

- Due to funding constraints, UNHCR could not support people of concern in accessing legal counselling, particularly in adversarial proceedings before the immigration courts, in the United States.
- The absence of a UNHCR presence and partners in key Caribbean countries constitutes the largest challenge to preserve and enhance protection space and strengthen national refugee protection mechanisms in the region.

- By the conclusion of the EU funded registration project, UNHCR was not able to respond to the total number of cases referred to it by IOM in Haiti. IOM referred some 8,400 families representing an average of 33,200 people of which UNHCR has only been able to verify and register some 2,200 families.
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