

COLOMBIA SITUATION

Costa Rica

Ecuador

Panama

Peru

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)



Operational highlights

- Nationwide consultations in Ecuador under the framework of the Global Needs Assessment (GNA) revealed the main protection requirements of refugees in the country. The need for documentation should be addressed by a large-scale registration exercise benefiting some 50,000 people in refugee-like situations.
- In Colombia, UNHCR's support for the Ministry of Agriculture's Land Property Protection Project helped to improve land subsidy mechanisms for internally displaced persons (IDPs).
- The Colombian Constitutional Court issued several legal orders to protect displaced women and children, benefiting more than 18,000 IDPs.
- New legislation in Panama allows long-staying refugees to seek permanent residence status and incorporates protection safeguards in the migration control regime.

Working environment

Colombia has a well-developed legal framework for the protection of displaced persons, including a comprehensive assistance system. For the 2006–2010 period, the Government has allocated a total of USD 2.5 billion to meet

the needs of the displaced. In spite of this, serious protection gaps continue to exist and, as highlighted during the recent Human Rights Universal Periodic Review, “forcible displacement is the most widespread human rights violation in Colombia.” The number of IDPs has risen since 2004 by an average of some 250,000 people annually. Most of the displaced originate in underdeveloped rural areas, particularly in the border regions. Large urban centres received the highest number of IDPs.

At the regional level, diplomatic relations between Colombia and Ecuador remained tense. While the number of asylum-seekers remained stable in Costa Rica, Panama and Peru, there was an increase of new applications in Ecuador and Venezuela. Surveys revealed that more than 130,000 Colombians were living in refugee-like situations in Ecuador and another 118,000 were in similar conditions in three border states of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Achievements and impact

• Main objectives

Within the context of the Colombia Situation, UNHCR promoted a comprehensive and collaborative response to the displacement crisis. In Colombia, UNHCR sought to narrow the protection gap, primarily by strengthening national protection mechanisms. In asylum countries, the main

priority was to improve the asylum regime and promote durable solutions for refugees, particularly through local integration and resettlement.

● Protection and solutions

In Colombia, UNHCR assisted the Government to improve its response to internal displacement in compliance with the directives of the Constitutional Court and human rights and humanitarian principles.

In line with the law marking 2008 as the Year of the Promotion of the Rights of Displaced Persons in Colombia, budgetary allocations for the implementation of the national IDP policy were substantially increased. State institutions assigned more than USD 560 million to displacement programmes, 13 per cent more than in 2007.

Similar budget increases took place at the local level in some provinces affected by displacement, including Arauca, Antioquia, Norte Santander and Putumayo. UNHCR was present in 41 of the 50 districts most affected by displacement and assisted approximately 572,000 IDPs.

As the situation in Colombia did not allow for the promotion of voluntary repatriation, UNHCR's programmes in the asylum countries focused on local integration within the framework of the three pillars of the Mexico Plan of Action: cities of solidarity, borders of solidarity and solidarity resettlement.

In Ecuador, the enhanced registration will open new opportunities for the integration of some 50,000 of Colombians in refugee-like situations. In Panama, more than 400 refugees from Nicaragua and El Salvador will be able to opt for permanent residency status under a

recently passed law for the regularization of long-staying refugees.

Resettlement remained an important protection tool for refugees in the asylum countries of the subregion. During the year, a total of 271 cases (some 890 individuals) were referred, including 27 cases (more than 80 individuals) from Venezuela, 70 cases (some 180 individuals) from Costa Rica and 184 cases (620 individuals) from Ecuador. Of these, 27 per cent (71 cases) were referred to Solidarity Resettlement countries in southern South America (Argentina, Brazil and Chile), and the remainder to traditional resettlement countries in Europe (Sweden, Norway and The Netherlands), North America (Canada and the United States) as well as to New Zealand.

● Activities and assistance

Community services: In Colombia, UNHCR's guidelines for the protection and care of displaced women, children, youth and people with disabilities were referred to by the Constitutional Court when it issued binding orders to the institutions of the National System for Assistance to IDPs. Guidelines on the provision of protection and assistance to indigenous communities were approved by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, while similar principles for the protection and assistance of Afro-Colombians were being formulated.

Community-based projects were the main thrust of UNHCR's local integration programmes in asylum countries. Some 90 projects were implemented in border communities in Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela to promote refugees' rights and their integration into host communities. In Ecuador, new tools were elaborated to counter sexual and

Colombian persons of concern to UNHCR in Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela

Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Colombia	30,830	30,290	46	31
People in a refugee-like situation	Colombia	296,300	21,900	48	46
Asylum-seekers	Colombia	44,260	39,980	44	29
IDPs ¹	Colombia	3,000,000	572,700	48	36
Returnees (refugees)		30	30	52	44
Total		3,371,420	664,900		

¹ According to the Constitutional Court of Colombia, there are serious discrepancies between the real magnitude of the situation and the figures of the national registration system. In a latest Order of Compliance to the Landmark Judgment on Displacement, the Court cites the Director of the Agencia Presidencial de Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional who acknowledged in public statements that IDP figures in Colombia are close to 3 million (Order of Compliance 218, dated 11 August 2006, related to the Landmark Judgment T-025).

Non-Colombian nationals of concern to UNHCR in Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela

Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Cuba	1,610	1,040	39	19
	Nicaragua	820	780	42	25
	Various	2,010	1,750	39	17
People in a refugee-like situation	Cuba	1,000	100	32	5
	Various	6,200	2,500	42	25
Asylum-seekers	Cuba	320	220	31	1
	Peru	1,900	1,900	22	7
	Various	1,110	1,070	24	7
Stateless	Various	10	-	-	-
Total		14,980	9,360		



Colombian IDP children enjoy a meal at the vegetable garden "Fronteras de Paz" in La Dorada, municipality of San Miguel, Putumayo, Colombia

UNHCR / V. MARTÍNEZ

gender-based violence. Job placement centres continue to operate in Costa Rica and Ecuador.

Crop production and food security: In Colombia, technical support was provided to more than 2,000 IDP families in six provinces who worked community gardens to improve their food security status.

Domestic needs and household support: Basic humanitarian assistance was provided to some 9,600 newly arrived asylum-seekers and other persons in need of international protection in all the asylum countries.

Education: In Colombia, education strategies included psychological support to overcome the trauma of forced displacement. These strategies were endorsed by the Ministry of Education and programmes for IDP children and youth were incorporated in the multi-annual development plan. Some 21,000 displaced children were integrated into the educational system.

While refugee children had access to public schooling in all asylum countries in the subregion, problems persisted in remote rural areas. In Ecuador, families in a refugee-like situation received government grants to cover costs related to their children's attendance at public schools. UNHCR provide additional support to some 1,600 students in the form of uniforms and school supplies. Similar education kits were distributed to some 1,550 refugee children in Costa Rica, Panama, Peru and Venezuela.

Food: WFP extended its relief and recovery programme in Ecuador and provided some 21,600 food rations to asylum-seekers with special protection needs. In addition,

under the recovery component of the programme, 3,200 families benefited from food assistance.

Health and nutrition: In all the asylum countries of the subregion, refugee men and women enjoyed the same access as the local population to national health services. UNHCR has cooperation agreements with health institutions to provide refugees with specialized health care. However, as certain treatments need to be paid for by patients, health assistance was provided to some 2,200 refugees and asylum-seekers in need. In Panama, a part of the health budget was used for medical evacuations from the Darien region to better equipped health services in the capital.

UNHCR worked closely with UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNFPA and local NGOs on projects in sexual and reproductive health and the prevention of HIV and AIDS that benefited more than 660 people, the large majority women, children and adolescents. In Costa Rica, UNHCR chaired the UNAIDS thematic group and promoted inter-agency support for national HIV programmes. In Colombia, UNHCR promoted specific programmes for the access of IDPs to the public health care system.

Income generation: In Colombia, income-generating initiatives proved useful in reducing the risk of further displacement. These projects also fostered the participation of women in decision making and enhanced the security of livelihoods for Afro-Colombians in Choco and Narino.

Micro-credits and small-business grants were an important element of UNHCR's local integration strategy in the asylum countries. In Venezuela, a major achievement was the signing of an agreement with the *Banco del Pueblo Soberano* to include refugees in public micro-credit schemes.

More than 220 refugees, 55 per cent of them women, benefited from loans for income generation. Similar arrangements were made in Ecuador with local financial institutions to benefit more than 900 refugees. In Costa Rica, the micro-credit programme provided more than 150 new loans in 2008 (more than 60 per cent to refugee women) benefiting more than 470 families.

Legal assistance: In Colombia, more than 4,300 IDPs received free legal assistance through 14 legal aid clinics in 11 cities operated by 155 law students. Additionally, 30 legal aid brigades were deployed in vulnerable communities.

Eighty-five documentation campaigns were carried out in 18 departments of Colombia and the District of Bogota in 2008. Through UNHCR's project with the Colombian National Registry Office, some 121,000 IDPs and people at risk of displacement received documentation.

In asylum countries, the slow pace of RSD decisions led to growing backlogs. At the end of 2008, there were more than 44,000 pending applications in the region. Therefore, training on RSD was intensified for all national eligibility commissions.

Operational support (to agencies): Intensified awareness campaigns raised the visibility of refugee issues in Colombia and neighbouring countries. A major public information campaign called 'Run for Life' was launched in Colombia with the participation of 13 States, NGOs and private organizations.

Shelter and other infrastructure: In Colombia, Practical Protection Projects (PPPs) improved the living conditions of IDPs and prevented displacement. In 2008, some 30 projects in the areas of education, community infrastructure, health and legal support were implemented in communities affected by massive displacement. UNHCR also contributed to the emergency response to 12 large displacements in Narino.

In Ecuador, rental support was given to 11,500 asylum-seekers and to refugees awaiting resettlement. Some 5,000 women with specific protection needs received safe shelter. In Panama, UNHCR provided additional support to vulnerable indigenous families in southern Darien.

Transport and logistics: In Ecuador, operational funds covered the cost of transporting food and non-food items. Logistical support was provided to relocate more than 1,100 refugees for security reasons or to assist resettlement in Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela.

Water and sanitation: In Panama, water supply systems and latrines were rehabilitated in four remote settlements hosting Colombians in a refugee-like situation. UNICEF provided technical support and the water systems will be managed by the Ministry of Health and local communities. Two similar projects were also implemented in three border communities hosting refugees in Ecuador.

○ Constraints

As observed by the UN Secretary-General's Representative on internal displacement, the overall situation of internal displacement in Colombia remained bleak. New displacements occurred at a high rate, particularly in the

south of the country, due to the ongoing conflict and the emergence of new armed groups.

Security and law enforcement were also at the top of the political agenda in other countries of the Andean region. Despite major achievements in the improvement of the asylum regime in Ecuador, the reintroduction of intensive checks for all Colombian nationals might affect asylum-seekers. Diplomatic tensions between Colombia and its neighbours had a negative impact on public opinion, creating additional obstacles to the refugees' local integration.

| Financial information |

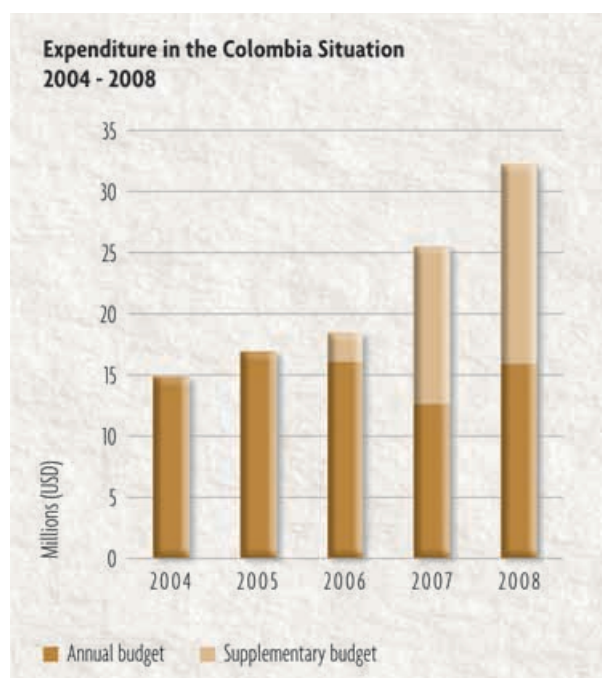
The Colombia situation continues to receive strong donor support. In spite of exchange rate losses, the IDP operation in Colombia was fully funded. The donor base for the region was expanded, with new contributions from local embassies, the private sector and UN funds.

Extra-budgetary funds were made available to implement health programmes and those related to sexual and gender-based violence in Colombia and neighbouring countries.

| Organization and implementation |

In Colombia, UNHCR operated in 41 of the 50 districts most affected by displacement through a network of 11 field offices coordinated from Bogota. In view of the escalation of violence in Arauca, a field office was opened in this area close to the Venezuelan border. UNHCR's operation in Colombia counted 102 staff reinforced by 48 JPOs, UNVs and secondees. Consistent with UNHCR's global staffing policies, a greater proportion of staff in Colombia was national (73 per cent) and based outside Bogota (70 per cent).

In the neighbouring countries, UNHCR had 94 staff in nine offices with a high proportion of national employees (71 per cent). Field operations were strengthened, particularly in border areas, by 55 JPOs, UNVs and secondees. Additional personnel were also deployed to support the GNA and the Enhanced Registration Project in Ecuador.



Working with others

In Colombia, the Government and UNHCR agreed on a Plan of Action for 2009. New operational agreements were signed with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the *Superintendencia de Notariado y Registro* to strengthen protection and improve the restitution of land and assets to IDPs. Alliances were also made with relevant State agencies to mainstream age, gender and diversity considerations in public programmes for displaced women, boys and girls, adolescents, older people, those with disabilities and indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Within the context of humanitarian reform, the inter-agency protection working group promoted the reinforcement of early warning mechanisms at national level and implemented joint initiatives in six regions affected by displacement.

In the neighbouring countries, UNHCR coordinated its activities with governments and a wide range of national and international partners. A positive example of dynamic partnership was the implementation of the GNA in Ecuador. Under the overall leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNHCR, this initiative involved the Government, civil society and donors.

Overall assessment

UNHCR's work was part of a comprehensive regional approach to improve the protection of Colombian IDPs and refugees.

In Colombia, despite policy developments at the national level, there are important gaps in the implementation of IDP policies at local level. Budgets allocated to IDP issues decreased in regions affected by displacement such as Narino, Santander and Alantico.

In asylum countries, the major challenge was to protect the large majority of unregistered Colombians in refugee-like situations. A major development in this regard was a survey in Ecuador that mapped unmet needs. Late in the year a comprehensive plan was drawn up to address the protection and humanitarian needs of refugees. A milestone in this process was an enhanced registration project piloted in two border communities.

Partners
<p>Colombia</p> <p>Government: <i>Agencia Presidencial para la Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional, Consejería Presidencial para la Equidad de la Mujer, Programe Presidencial Colombia Joven</i>, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior and Justice, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Social Protection, Ministry of the Environment, Housing and Territorial Development, <i>Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar, Defensoría del Pueblo</i> (Ombudsman's Office), <i>Procuraduría General de la Nación</i> (Prosecutor's Office), <i>Contraloría General de la Nación, Registraduría</i> (National Registry), <i>Universidad Nacional, Universidad de Antioquia</i>, Departmental Governments and Mayor's Offices (key regions), Colombian Armed Forces, the Constitutional Court, <i>Instituto Colombiano de Desarrollo Rural</i> (INCODER)</p> <p>NGOs: <i>Caritas Diocesana Medellín, Casa de la Mujer, Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular, Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli, Consultoría de Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento</i> (CODHES), <i>Corporación Opción Legal Fundación Compartir, Fundación Mujer y Futuro, Instituto Latinoamericano de Servicios Legales Alternativos</i> (ILSA), <i>Liga de Mujeres Desplazadas</i>, <i>Opportunity Internacional, Organizaciones de Población Desplazada, Programa Desarrollo y Paz Magdalena Medio, Secretaría Nacional de Pastoral Social, Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia</i> (ONIC)</p> <p>Others: WFP, UNICEF, UNDP, PAHO/WHO, UNHCHR, ICRC, IOM</p>
<p>Cluster Leads</p> <p>Protection: UNHCR and Norwegian refugee Council</p> <p>Emergency Assistance and Basic Services: UNICEF, WFP, PAHO/WHO, OXFAM (rotating)</p> <p>Early Recovery: UNDP, IOM, Mercy Corps</p>
<p>Asylum countries</p> <p>Costa Rica</p> <p>Government: Ministry of Labour</p> <p>NGOs: <i>Asociación de Consultores y Asesores Internacionales</i> (ACAI), <i>Asociación de Profesionales en Desarrollo</i> (APRODE)</p> <p>Others: United Nations Volunteers (UNV), UNAIDS Working Group</p>
<p>Ecuador</p> <p>Government: Ministry of Foreign Affairs</p> <p>NGOs: <i>Centro de Estudios de Población y Desarrollo Social, Cooperazione Internazionale</i> (COOPI), <i>Ecuadorian Red Cross, Fundación Ambiente y Sociedad</i> (FAS), <i>Fundación Esquel</i>, Hebrew Immigrant Ais Society (HIAS)</p> <p>Others: World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Volunteers (UNV)</p>
<p>Panama</p> <p>Government: ONPAR</p> <p>NGOs: Red Cross, VIDA, <i>Pueblos del Bosque</i></p> <p>Others: United Nations Volunteers (UNV)</p>
<p>Peru</p> <p>Government: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ombudsman's Office, Ministry of Defence</p> <p>NGOs: <i>Comisión Católica Peruana de Migración</i> (CCPM)</p> <p>Others: National Human Rights Co-ordination Platform (<i>Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos</i>, CNDH)</p>
<p>Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)</p> <p>Government: National Commission for Refugees (CNR), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of the Interior and Justice, Ombudsperson's Office, Regional Technical Secretariates (STRs), Táchira Governor's Office, Mayor's Office of Maracaibo, <i>Banco del Pueblo Soberano</i>, Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Culture/Cinemateca Nacional</p> <p>NGOs: Jesuit Refugee Service, Caritas, <i>Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli</i> (CISP), <i>Comisión Justicia y Paz</i>, CISOR, <i>Niña Madre</i>, Project Counselling Service (PCS)</p> <p>Others: UN agencies (UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, FAO, UNIFEM, UNV) and IOM. FUDEP, FUNDESTA, Norwegian Refugee Council, Red Cross-Zulia Section, <i>Fe y Alegria, Universidad de los Andes, Universidad Nacional, Experimental del Táchira, Universidad del Zulia, Red Venezuelana sobre Violencia contra la Mujer</i>, Wills Wilde, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, <i>Circuito Gran Cine</i>, CAVECOL, <i>Fusion Films, Empresas Polar</i></p>

Budget, income and expenditure for the Colombia Situation (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions *	Other funds available	Total funds available *	Total expenditure
Annual budget **	16,370,074	8,766,543	8,681,472	17,448,015	15,926,664
IDP Operations in Colombia SB	18,719,716	16,854,014	1,419,621	18,273,635	16,239,244
Total	35,089,790	25,620,557	10,101,093	35,721,650	32,165,908

Note: Supplementary programmes do not include seven per cent support costs that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR. Income from contributions includes contributions earmarked at the country and situation level. Other funds available include transfers from unearmarked and broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

* Total funds available and income from contributions include currency adjustments.

** Includes budgets for Colombia (767,044), Costa Rica (3,389,350), Ecuador (7,356,685), Panama (1,278,632), Peru and Venezuela (3,578,363)

Financial report for UNHCR's operations for the Colombia Situation (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects			Previous years' projects
	Annual budget ¹	Supplementary budget	Total	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	3,405,041	5,421,845	8,826,886	
Community services	1,536,216	1,332,543	2,868,759	333,613
Crop production	5,364	249,755	255,119	52,838
Domestic needs and household support	496,274	-	496,274	47,441
Education	285,508	330,091	615,599	258,573
Food	81,739	-	81,739	4,251
Health and nutrition	404,076	22,050	426,126	15,302
Income generation	499,756	105,925	605,681	101,921
Legal assistance	2,115,233	2,416,979	4,532,212	325,096
Operational support (to agencies)	1,300,301	1,322,387	2,622,688	130,066
Sanitation	649	18,824	19,473	-
Shelter and infrastructure	159,558	103,615	263,173	92,973
Transport and logistics	37,438	-	37,438	3,772
Water	63,631	14,591	78,222	6,832
Instalments to implementing partners	1,062,903	2,926,181	3,989,084	(1,372,679)
Subtotal operational activities	11,453,687	14,264,786	25,718,473	
Programme support	4,472,977	1,974,458	6,447,435	
Total expenditure	15,926,664	16,239,244	32,165,908	
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure				(10,070)
Instalments with implementing partners				
Payments made	5,310,110	7,262,886	12,572,996	
Reporting received	(4,247,206)	(4,336,705)	(8,583,911)	
Balance	1,062,903	2,926,181	3,989,084	
Outstanding 1st January				1,702,946
Reporting Received				(1,372,679)
Refunded to UNHCR				(397,678)
Currency Adjustment				67,410
Outstanding 31st December				-

¹ Annual Budget includes expenditure in Colombia (USD 717,362), Costa Rica (USD 3,148,513), Ecuador (USD 7,252,374), Panama (USD 1,233,116), Peru and Venezuela (USD 3,575,299)