

# AMERICAS

## | OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS |

- UNHCR welcomed positive developments in the United States of America, such as new parole guidelines that treat asylum-seekers more favourably, and repeal of the inclusion of HIV on the list of medical conditions that bar refugees and other immigrants from entering the country.

- The protection of refugees in countries neighbouring Colombia was advanced by the successful completion in Ecuador of an enhanced registration process. Similar initiatives are being promoted to strengthen the asylum regime and effectively protect all people of concern throughout the region.

- Despite a number of positive developments, the pace of internal displacement in Colombia continued to be relentless. In 2009, UNHCR reinforced its capacity to support the Government in its efforts to narrow protection gaps, focusing on the implementation at the local level of national policies to protect the rights of internally displaced

persons (IDPs) and addressing the plight of groups with specific protection needs.

- In Latin America, more than 70 per cent of people of concern to UNHCR reside in urban centres. In the spirit of the Mexico Plan of Action, to safeguard refugees in the continent, partnership will be crucial in the implementation of UNHCR's new policy on urban refugees and in the consolidation of the "Cities of Solidarity" and "Solidarity Resettlement" programmes.

- The Regional Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration, held in Costa Rica in November 2009, offered an opportunity to identify the main protection challenges in the region's complex mixed-migration context with the aim of finding responses to them. The implementation of a regional strategy in the framework of the 10-Point Plan of Action will require a comprehensive and collaborative approach to develop protection-sensitive migration policies.



**Alketa, an Albanian refugee,** fled a crisis in Albania and has worked for years in a flower shop and grocery store in Argentina. She is now studying cooking, hoping to pursue a career as a chef.

## | Working environment |

There are many examples of governments in the region that are ready to work with UNHCR and believe there is added value in systems that address the protection needs of people on the move, particularly in cases of mixed migration, where different populations use the same means of travel, face similar risks and have similar protection needs.

As part of the decentralization process, as of July 2009 headquarters functions of the Bureau of the Americas have been divided between Geneva and Panama. The Bureau in Panama is liaising with the UN Regional Director's Team and - with the support of a Legal and a Technical Regional Hub - has provided support to UNHCR's operations in Latin America. This office has also developed a regional emergency preparedness and response capacity in Latin America.

## | Achievements and impact |

### ● *Redoubling efforts to protect persons of concern*

The legal framework for the protection of refugees in the region continued to be strengthened. In Costa Rica, a new migration law expressly recognizes gender-related persecution as a basis for refugee recognition. In Colombia, a new refugee decree incorporates the broader refugee definition of the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees. This makes Colombia the 14th country in the region to include such a definition in its legal system.

Draft legislation on refugee protection is being discussed by the legislative bodies of Mexico and Chile. In the absence of a relevant law, Jamaica adopted a new refugee policy to meet its 1951 Convention obligations and established formal procedures for refugee status determination (RSD).

In Colombia, notwithstanding positive developments in the implementation of national IDP policies and a significant increase in the State's budgetary allocations for affected populations, displacement continues to occur at a high rate. This ongoing situation presents a challenge for the humanitarian community, with more than 3 million Colombians displaced within the country and hundreds of thousands of people in a refugee-like situation outside it.

In 2009, UNHCR's protection delivery capacity was strengthened through the opening of new offices on the Pacific Coast and in the south-eastern provinces, as well as through the consolidation of inter-agency coordination mechanisms. The protection of civilians was at the core of this strategy, which was implemented in the 87 districts most affected by displacement.

UNHCR also contributed to the implementation of a differentiated approach to address the needs of groups with specific protection needs, such as indigenous communities and Afro-Colombian populations. The land protection project was of crucial importance in efforts to safeguard the property rights of IDPs and help them find durable solutions. As part of a regional approach, UNHCR has also implemented cross-border activities benefiting both IDPs and refugee populations.

UNHCR is committed to working with countries hosting Colombian people of concern. The enhanced registration carried out by the Government of Ecuador with UNHCR's support has resulted in the registration and documentation of more than 23,000 refugees. UNHCR also provided technical assistance on the issue of exclusion to help identify any cases not warranting international protection. This collaboration has proven successful in providing for a fair and effective RSD procedure; however, it also requires further support to ensure that recognized refugees have access to integration opportunities in the country.

In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, an agreement between UNHCR and the Government is strengthening the RSD system in order to address the existing backlog of asylum claims. In Panama, the regularization of status under the temporary humanitarian protection regime, which was agreed to by the Colombia-Panama Neighbourhood Commission, is an important development, pending the passage of new legislation.

In the United States of America, reform of the detention system will continue to be the focus of the Office's protection work. Following the issuance of the new parole guidelines, for asylum-seekers who demonstrate a credible fear of persecution or torture, UNHCR was involved in monitoring the implementation of the guidelines as well as following discussions on alternatives to detention.

In the Caribbean, where four States have yet to adhere to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, UNHCR continued to support RSD and engage with governments on the identification and non-detention of asylum-seekers.

### ● *Promoting solutions focusing on refugees in urban settings*

Within the framework of the Mexico Plan of Action, the Cities of Solidarity initiative has developed from a mere concept to a platform that convenes refugees, asylum-seekers, host communities and local authorities in an effort to integrate people of concern as they become accustomed to the dynamics of small and large urban centres. More than 25 local governments

are actively engaged in welcoming and assisting spontaneous or resettled refugees.

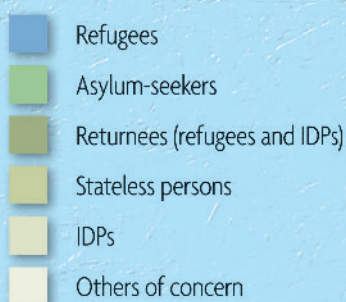
The implementation of an integrated strategy has also been successful in urban neighbourhoods. In Costa Rica, a micro-credit scheme and the “House of Rights” project helped to promote the protection and local integration of refugee families. Similar initiatives have been launched in the Southern Cone and the Andean regions.

In almost all Latin American countries, refugees and asylum-seekers have access to health and education services. However, there are significant challenges inherent in implementing livelihood strategies in urban settings. The vast majority of refugees and asylum-seekers live below the poverty line and work in the informal sector. Few families are able to take advantage of local programmes in the housing sector.

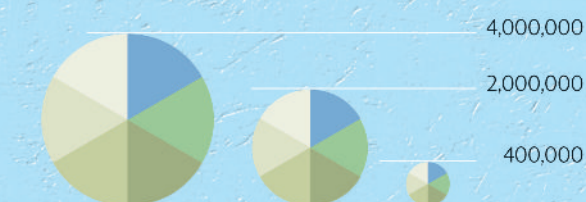
Under the “Solidarity Resettlement” programme, 121 Colombian refugees who were living temporarily in Ecuador and Costa Rica have been resettled in several cities of the Southern Cone, bringing the total of those benefiting from the programme since 2004 to almost 1,000. In addition to Argentina, Brazil and Chile, which remain committed to this programme, Uruguay in 2009 accepted its first group for resettlement, made up of some 15 refugees. This programme, in addition to the solidarity component, is also exploring additional opportunities for durable solutions in the region.

## Constraints

While the Americas region, in particular the Latin American subregion, has contributed to the development of tools and mechanisms that promote protection and achieve solutions, in the current regional context, humanitarian problems require a collaborative approach involving States, civil society and the international community. The main challenge is to consolidate partnerships to address protection issues in situations of discrimination and growing migratory movements of a mixed nature. UNHCR is therefore working on strengthening alliances with other UN agencies and building strategic partnerships with international and regional organizations, including IOM, the IFRC and the Organization of American States (OAS). It is also bidding to expand ties with subregional forums, such as the Puebla and Lima processes. ■



Population size



Budget and expenditure in the Americas (USD)						
Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	Annual budget	Supplementary budgets	Total	Annual budget	Supplementary budgets	Total
<b>North America and the Caribbean</b>						
Canada	1,501,797	0	<b>1,501,797</b>	1,439,846	0	<b>1,439,846</b>
United States of America <sup>1</sup>	3,829,096	0	<b>3,829,096</b>	3,809,311	0	<b>3,809,311</b>
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>5,330,893</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,330,893</b>	<b>5,249,157</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,249,157</b>
<b>Latin America</b>						
Argentina <sup>2</sup>	3,939,776	1,046,861	<b>4,986,637</b>	3,507,962	1,046,861	<b>4,554,822</b>
Brazil	3,003,993	1,008,331	<b>4,012,324</b>	2,882,962	1,008,331	<b>3,891,293</b>
Colombia	659,454	22,570,757	<b>23,230,211</b>	548,756	17,564,534	<b>18,113,290</b>
Costa Rica	2,905,891	0	<b>2,905,891</b>	2,717,988	0	<b>2,717,988</b>
Cuba	268,000	0	<b>268,000</b>	209,057	0	<b>209,057</b>
Ecuador	11,095,740	0	<b>11,095,740</b>	10,938,740	0	<b>10,938,740</b>
Mexico <sup>3</sup>	1,959,289	0	<b>1,959,289</b>	1,690,035	0	<b>1,690,035</b>
Panama	2,691,013	0	<b>2,691,013</b>	2,438,636	0	<b>2,438,636</b>
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) <sup>4</sup>	4,255,095	0	<b>4,255,095</b>	4,201,297	0	<b>4,201,297</b>
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>30,778,251</b>	<b>24,625,949</b>	<b>55,404,200</b>	<b>29,135,432</b>	<b>19,619,726</b>	<b>48,755,158</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>36,109,144</b>	<b>24,625,949</b>	<b>60,735,093</b>	<b>34,384,589</b>	<b>19,619,726</b>	<b>54,004,315</b>

Note: Excludes indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions against supplementary programmes and the "New or additional activities-mandate-related" (NAM) reserve.

<sup>1</sup> Includes legal assistance and durable solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers in the United States, as well as protection of refugees and capacity building in the Caribbean.

<sup>2</sup> Includes local integration in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Uruguay, as well as resettlement in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay.

<sup>3</sup> Includes local integration in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Belize.

<sup>4</sup> Includes local integration in Peru.

## Voluntary contributions to the Americas (USD)

Donor	Regional funding	Annual Budget <sup>1</sup>	Supplementary Budgets	Total
Canada	805,153		2,294,408	<b>3,099,561</b>
Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)			930,000	<b>930,000</b>
Ecuador		85,000		<b>85,000</b>
<i>España con ACNUR</i> (Spain)		12,253	397,602	<b>409,855</b>
European Commission		1,457,685	4,331,152	<b>5,788,837</b>
France		196,850	257,408	<b>454,259</b>
Germany		183,976	431,698	<b>615,674</b>
HQ Online Donations (Switzerland)		2,897		<b>2,897</b>
Italy			245,059	<b>245,059</b>
Luxembourg		357,654	332,618	<b>690,272</b>
Netherlands			1,860,000	<b>1,860,000</b>
Norway		295,221	163,588	<b>458,809</b>
Private donors in Italy		95,733		<b>95,733</b>
Spain		1,219,897	2,570,694	<b>3,790,591</b>
Sweden	1,040,312		604,681	<b>1,644,993</b>
Switzerland			404,700	<b>404,700</b>
UN Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund			346,833	<b>346,833</b>
United Kingdom		41,707	26,081	<b>67,788</b>
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)		47,024		<b>47,024</b>
United States of America		9,120,778	5,673,000	<b>14,793,778</b>
USA for UNHCR			55,270	<b>55,270</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,845,465</b>	<b>13,116,676</b>	<b>20,924,792</b>	<b>35,886,933</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes earmarking at the subregional, country, thematic and sector levels.

Note: Contributions shown exclude indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions against supplementary programmes and the "New or additional activities - mandate related" (NAM) Reserve.

## Financial information

**In Canada and the United States, UNHCR sought to ensure** maximum political and financial support for its global operations. The United States continued to be the largest funder of UNHCR's programmes and Canada is also high on the list of donors.

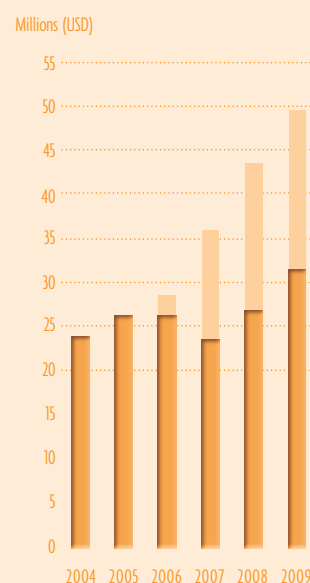
The fragile socio-economic situation in the majority of the countries of the region makes it difficult for them to realize their commitments to include refugee needs in their national budgets.

Financial requirements in the Americas increased steadily in 2009. This was mostly due to the expansion of the supplementary programme for IDPs in Colombia. The Annual Programme Budget has also risen due to the increase in the number of displaced people being assisted and the reinforcement of programmes to protect unregistered individuals in refugee-like situations in the countries neighbouring Colombia, in particular the implementation of the global needs assessment pilot project in Ecuador.

The cost of improving staff security has added to financial requirements. Furthermore, the purchasing power of budgets has been eroded by inflation and unfavourable exchange rates in many countries.

### Expenditure in the Americas 2004-2009

■ Annual budget  
■ Supplementary budget



Note: Excludes UNHCR's office in New York, which was part of the Americas region through 2006.