

LATIN AMERICA

Young Colombian refugees at a community school in Providencia (Ecuador)

UNHCR
2012 GLOBAL REPORT

Argentina
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
Brazil
Chile
Colombia
Costa Rica
Cuba
Ecuador
El Salvador
Guatemala
Honduras
Mexico
Nicaragua
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
Uruguay
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

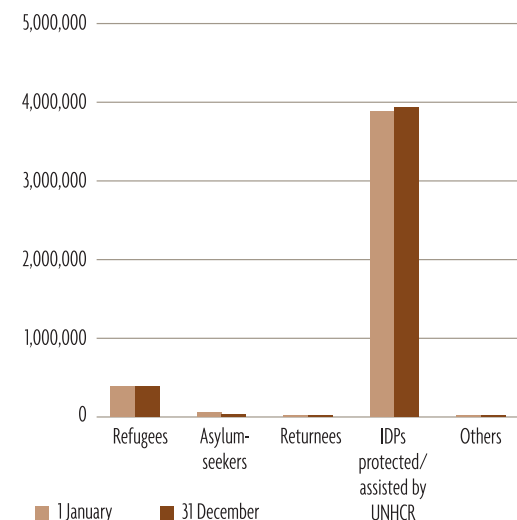
Overview



Highlights

- The quality assurance initiative (QAI) to strengthen national refugee status determination (RSD) is being implemented in Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama.
- Violent organized crime networks caused new displacement in several Central American countries.
- Three Latin American countries – Ecuador, Honduras and Paraguay – acceded to the Statelessness Conventions.
- A new law on refugee protection came into effect in the Plurinational State of Bolivia.
- Formal consultations were launched on the celebrations to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration.
- The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela continued to receive a steady flow of Colombians seeking protection.
- Brazil began to naturalize Angolan and Liberian refugees.

People of concern to UNHCR in 2012
Latin America



Working environment

New displacement is being driven by transnational organized crime in Central America. At the request of UNHCR, the International Centre for the Human Rights of Migrants conducted a study, *Forced Displacement and Protection Gaps Induced by Violence and Criminality in Central America*, which was shared with governments, organizations and other stakeholders in the region. The study, which confirmed that El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras are experiencing displacement due to organized crime, noted that the matter is being dealt with from a security angle, with little attention paid to its impact from a humanitarian and protection perspective.

UNHCR offered technical support to institutions such as the violence observatories in Guatemala and Honduras and the national statistics and census departments that are monitoring the trends and magnitude of displacement.

Despite positive developments in Colombia, the situation in the country continued to propel large numbers of Colombian asylum-seekers into neighbouring countries.

Achievements and impact

The Latin America region as a whole made notable progress towards ratification of international refugee and statelessness instruments. Paraguay acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness in June 2012 and began the domestic legal process for accession to the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons. Ecuador ratified the 1961 Convention, while Honduras ratified both Statelessness Conventions. UNHCR remains committed to assisting those countries in the Americas that have pledged to ratify the Statelessness Conventions, such as Argentina, Colombia and Peru, or to adopt national statelessness determination procedures, such as Brazil, Costa Rica, Peru and Uruguay.

Formal consultations regarding the Cartagena+30 celebrations were launched by Brazil. Member and Associate States of the Mercosur economic bloc signed a Declaration of Principles on the International Protection of Refugees, reasserting their commitment to *non-refoulement*; respect for age, gender and diversity inclusion principles; and family reunification. They also agreed to avoid restrictive migration policies, adopt Cartagena's wider definition of a "refugee", and create national and regional resettlement programmes.

The Mexican, Costa Rican and Panamanian Governments pledged to work closely with UNHCR to guarantee that their RSD procedures are in accordance with the highest international protection standards. The quality assurance initiative (QAI) to strengthen national refugee status determination (RSD) procedures is being implemented in the three countries.

UNHCR is developing a network of partners who have set up reception facilities to provide shelter for migrants, asylum-seekers and recognized refugees. Though the majority of them are not regular implementing partners, UNHCR recognizes the value of their contribution to people of concern, and whenever possible, tries to support these organizations.

In 2012, UNHCR continued to increase access to public programmes and livelihood projects for people of concern. At the state and municipal levels, UNHCR supported several initiatives to reduce their barriers to employment and inclusion in work schemes. To promote local integration, UNHCR implemented and supported community projects in border communities, particularly in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

UNHCR and its partners provided legal, psychological and social support in many cities in Latin America, but working in urban areas presented challenges.

To address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), offices in the region strengthened existing networks of safe houses and supported the creation of new ones. Programmes to build local capacity, raise awareness of displacement issues, and provide training on the ways to prevent and respond to SGBV were carried out in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama and Peru. Similar capacity-building and training initiatives targeting law enforcement services, the judiciary and border officers were carried out in Colombia, Peru and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

UNHCR is also committed to ensuring that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex (LGBTI) persons of concern are protected against SGBV. Sensitization activities and advocacy in support of the rights of these populations were carried out in conjunction with government and civil-society partners in Brazil, Chile, Panama and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Thanks to these efforts, in 2012 Brazil increased the recognition rates for LGBTI cases in need of protection.

Constraints

Asylum-related issues do not always get political attention. Frequent changes of those responsible for making decisions regarding people of concern also had an impact on UNHCR's activities.

The search for alternatives to detention for unaccompanied and separated children continued to be a major challenge in the region. For instance, in Mexico the legal framework establishes that unaccompanied and separated children can be detained only on an exceptional basis and for the shortest possible time, and that they should be referred to specialized shelters. However, given the magnitude of migration in mixed flows, and UNHCR's limited presence in the Field, it is nearly impossible to monitor detention conditions and access to the asylum process for this vulnerable group.

Local integration continued to be difficult due to the difficult economic situation in the majority of the countries of the region and the common sentiment of prejudice against foreigners, including refugees. People who are not from South America faced even more obstacles to local integration owing to cultural and linguistic barriers and a lack of community support. Xenophobia and racial discrimination also made it difficult for refugees to find employment.

Operations

Operations in **Colombia** and **Ecuador** are described in separate chapters.

UNHCR was active in promoting the adoption of a refugee law in the **Plurinational State of Bolivia** and in drafting a legal amendment to **Peru's** migration legislation aimed at incorporating humanitarian visas for non-refugees in need of international protection. It also assisted in elaborating rules of procedure for the implementation of **Argentina's** refugee law. In **Uruguay**, UNHCR helped draft and review a legal proposal for the implementation of the 1954 Statelessness Convention and the establishment of a statelessness status determination procedure.

Following activation of UNHCR's cessation clause for Angolan and Liberian refugees, the Government of **Brazil** issued a decree making provisions to allow members of these groups permanent residence. The move will benefit 1,688 Angolan and 258 Liberian refugees, most of whom are well-integrated into Brazilian society.

The search for durable solutions in **Costa Rica** in 2012 was marked by renewed efforts to engage new partners in the integration of refugees, mainly private companies that could offer employment opportunities.

In 2012, given its commitment to strengthening child protection mechanisms as well as its particularly challenging context of mixed migration and urban refugees, **Mexico** was selected as one of 11 countries to pilot UNHCR's Framework for the Protection of Children.

Panama, under the leadership of its National Refugee Office, began implementing legislation to allow 863 Colombian refugees living in the province of Darién to move from temporary humanitarian protection status to permanent residency.

During the reporting period, a total of 2,004 people were registered, given legal aid and assisted in asylum procedures by UNHCR and its partners in **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela**. Some 1,180 individuals were recognized as refugees. Approximately 11,000 decisions on status were made by the National Commission for Refugees, a sharp rise compared to previous years.

| Financial information |

Operations in the subregion have been constrained by limited resources, with overall expenditures of USD 48.6 million, against a total budget of USD 79.5 million. Nevertheless, much was done to maximize results, benefit from collaborative networks and

incorporate refugee issues into national social plans. However, lack of sufficient funds made it difficult to implement durable solutions that required significant investments.

Budget and expenditure in Latin America | USD

Operation		PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	Total
Argentina Regional Office	Budget	4,415,384	0	4,415,384
	Expenditure	3,763,087	0	3,763,087
Brazil	Budget	4,616,202	0	4,616,202
	Expenditure	2,581,376	0	2,581,376
Colombia	Budget	1,039,539	28,353,219	29,392,758
	Expenditure	885,555	17,084,575	17,970,130
Costa Rica	Budget	2,832,391	0	2,832,391
	Expenditure	2,011,931	0	2,011,931
Ecuador	Budget	21,100,405	0	21,100,405
	Expenditure	12,693,093	0	12,693,093
Mexico	Budget	2,990,011	0	2,990,011
	Expenditure	1,628,675	0	1,628,675
Panama Regional Office¹	Budget	5,129,961	0	5,129,961
	Expenditure	3,744,835	0	3,744,835
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Budget	9,053,633	0	9,053,633
	Expenditure	4,241,324	0	4,241,324
Total budget		51,177,526	28,353,219	79,530,745
Total expenditure		31,549,876	17,084,575	48,634,451

¹Includes the Regional Legal Unit in Costa Rica.

Voluntary contributions to Latin America | USD

Earmarking / Donor	PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	All pillars	Total
LATIN AMERICA SUBREGION				
United States of America			14,400,000	14,400,000
Latin America subtotal	0	0	14,400,000	14,400,000
ARGENTINA REGIONAL OFFICE				
Argentina	126,000			126,000
United States of America	100,000			100,000
Argentina Regional Office subtotal	226,000	0	0	226,000
BRAZIL				
International Olympic Committee	4,184			4,184
United States of America	50,000			50,000
Brazil subtotal	54,184	0	0	54,184
COLOMBIA				
Canada		1,876,173		1,876,173
Central Emergency Response Fund		480,000		480,000
<i>España con ACNUR</i>		47,970		47,970
European Union		3,939,306		3,939,306
France		338,600		338,600
Luxembourg			466,667	466,667
Norway		1,698,114		1,698,114
Spain		1,442,605		1,442,605
Sweden		1,454,294		1,454,294
Switzerland			1,088,139	1,088,139
United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security		62,238		62,238
United States of America	100,000			100,000
Colombia subtotal	100,000	11,339,299	1,554,806	12,994,105
ECUADOR				
Brazil			550,000	550,000
Colombia	1,000,000			1,000,000
<i>España con ACNUR</i>	687,451			687,451
European Union	1,192,052			1,192,052
USA for UNHCR	50,000			50,000
Ecuador subtotal	2,929,504	0	550,000	3,479,504
MEXICO				
United States of America	50,000			50,000
Mexico subtotal	50,000	0	0	50,000
PANAMA REGIONAL OFFICE				
Sweden	52,844			52,844
United States of America	78,603			78,603
Panama Regional Office subtotal	131,447	0	0	131,447
VENEZUELA (BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF)				
European Union	878,035			878,035
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) subtotal	878,035	0	0	878,035
Total	4,369,171	11,339,299	16,504,806	32,213,275

Note: Includes indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions to Pillars 3 and 4, supplementary budgets and the “New or additional activities – mandate-related” (NAM) Reserve.