This chapter provides a summary of the general environment in which UNHCR will operate in Europe in 2016. It presents an overview of the organization's strategy for the region, the main challenges foreseen and the financial requirements for its operational response.

Details of the operations in the region and its subregions in 2016 are presented on the Global Focus website at **http://reporting.unhcr.org**.

| WORKING ENVIRONMENT |

• Latin American and Caribbean countries are demonstrating their strong commitment to enhancing the protection of refugees and other displaced and stateless people, and to fostering innovative durable solutions for them under the Brazil Plan of Action (BPA). The BPA is a framework for cooperation and regional solidarity adopted in December 2014 to strengthen international protection and solutions for those in need in the region (see short feature in this chapter).

• In 2016, UNHCR will strengthen its strategic partnerships with government counterparts, as well as with regional fora and their technical institutions, such as the Central American Integration System and the MERCOSUR Institute for Public Policies on Human Rights.
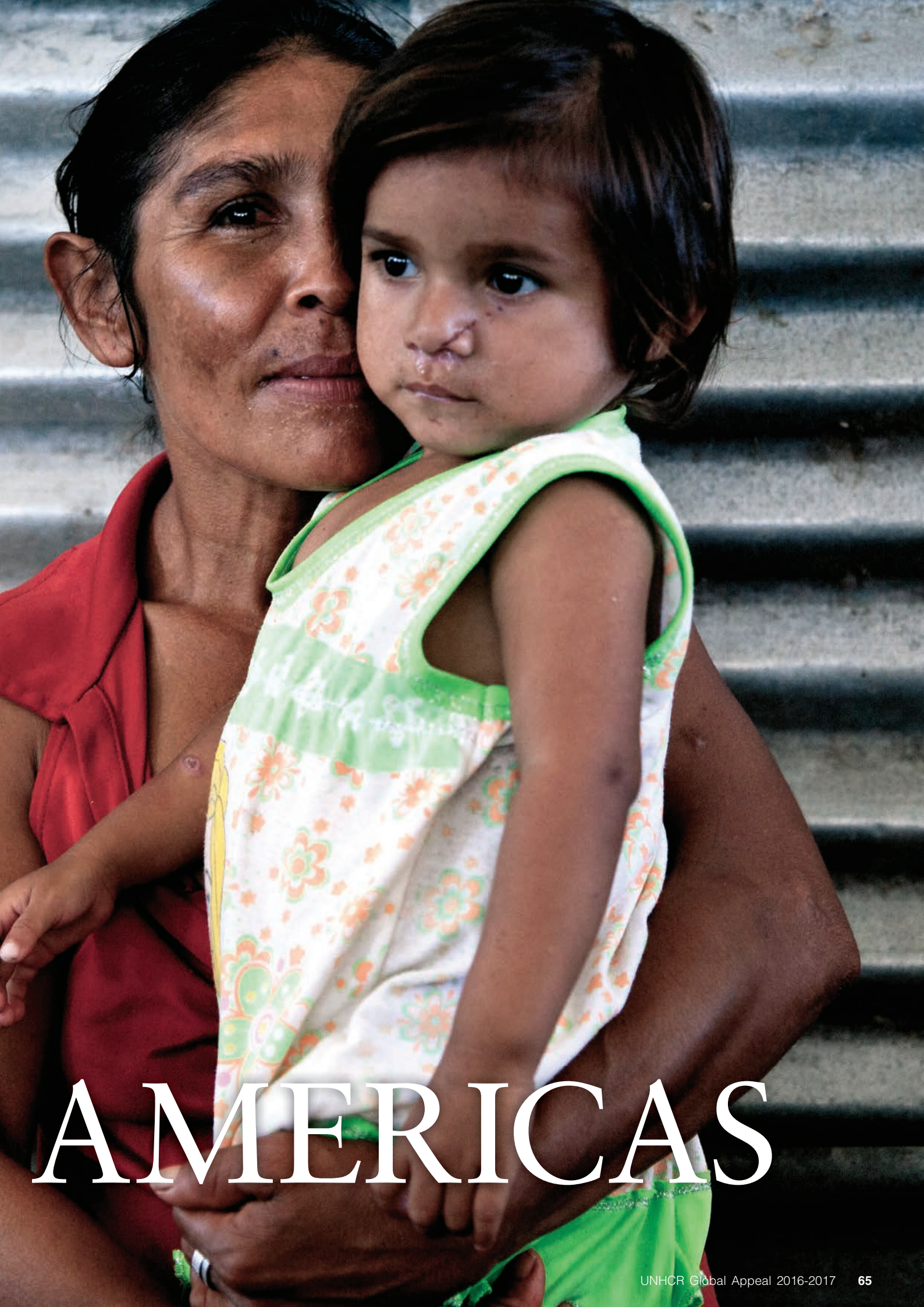
• General elections took place in Canada in 2015 and presidential elections will be held in the United States in 2016. UNHCR will pursue its privileged partnership with the new administrations of these two key countries to maintain and enhance political and financial support for its programmes globally. The announced increase in resettlement opportunities will be given particular focus by UNHCR in 2016 to boost solutions for the ever-increasing number of refugees worldwide.

• The Caribbean is faced with an increasingly complex phenomenon of mixed migration, involving people who may be in need of international protection travelling along with economic migrants. The region also produces refugees and is a transit gateway for refugees and asylum-seekers trying to reach North America. The growing number of arrivals is placing a strain on the limited resources and capacities of small islands and coastal States in the Caribbean region. This situation adversely affects the ability of people in need of international protection to apply for asylum, a concern compounded by currently weak national mechanisms for identifying refugees within mixed migratory movements.

An IDP mother and her child await a solution to their displacement in Fortul, Colombia.

THE

AMERICAS

• In 2015, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras have continued to be affected by violence perpetrated by transnational criminal groups, posing serious risks to local populations and affecting regional security. The number of asylum applications from these countries almost doubled in 2014 compared to 2013. UNHCR has strengthened its presence in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico in order to support these Governments in addressing the protection needs of people of concern, including unaccompanied and separated children displaced by violence in Central America.

• In 2015, more than 55,000 unaccompanied children and children with families from the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA) were apprehended crossing into the United States at the border with Mexico. When compared to the same period in 2014, the rate of arrivals has fallen by half, but the drop is mainly due to arrests and deportations from Mexico, which saw 12,794 children apprehended and detained in administrative detention centres in the first half of 2015. In total, around 65,000 deportations from Mexico had been carried out by the end of August 2015.

• A much-awaited peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) remains the best hope for political and humanitarian solutions after five decades of conflict, not only for Colombians but also for the rest of Latin America. The peace process has led to renewed efforts to secure a ceasefire, despite an escalation in confrontations in the first half of 2015.

• The process has also led to the establishment of a Commission for the Investigation of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition. This body aims to provide access to transitional justice for 6.3 million internally displaced people and up to 360,000 Colombian refugees in the region and beyond, as well as other victims of the conflict. In support of the peace process, UNHCR has assisted the negotiating parties with advice on issues concerning victims' rights and their restoration.

• UNHCR is partnering with MERCOSUR members and associate States to foster harmonized quality asylum systems across the region, building on the international doctrine of the Inter-American Human Rights System. The ongoing regional evaluation of resettlement programmes, carried out with UNHCR's support in five countries, will also help to align resettlement programmes in the Southern Cone with current needs.

• Following the example of Uruguay, which has received an initial group of Syrian refugee families from Lebanon, new resettlement programmes are being explored with Brazil and Chile, with the aim of providing protection and solutions to other vulnerable refugees from the Middle East. Humanitarian visa programmes, developed in Argentina and Brazil, are also pragmatic options to support the global refugee agenda and protect people fleeing the Syrian conflict.

Refugees

Asylum-seekers

Returnees (refugees and IDPs)

Stateless people

Internally displaced people (IDPs)

Others of concern

Size of population of concern
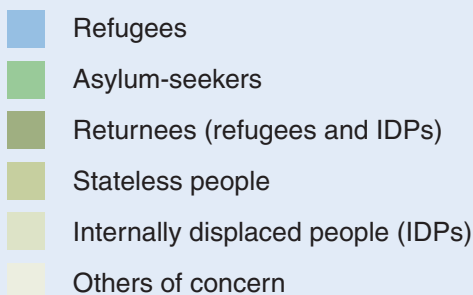**As of January 2015**

6,000,000

3,000,000

500,000

| STRATEGY |

In 2016, UNHCR will place particular emphasis on supporting the efforts of Latin American and Caribbean States in the implementation of the BPA. The BPA strategic programmes, including in the areas of asylum, border safety, comprehensive solutions, labour mobility, maritime protection, safe transit, and statelessness, will be translated into projects implemented throughout the region.
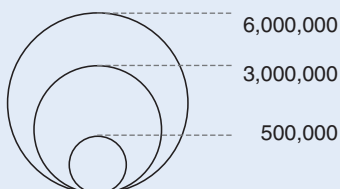
More generally, across the entire region, UNHCR's response to the needs of people of concern will be articulated around the following protection and operational strategies.

○ *Building a common asylum space*

UNHCR will continue to consolidate the Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI) process in Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama, and will expand its support to countries that have expressed interest in joining the QAI, including Chile, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago. In addition to providing technical support to States in implementing the QAI recommendations at country level, UNHCR will develop an online forum with good country examples. Based on the experiences of refugee status determination (RSD) bodies in Canada (CIC), the United States (USCIS) and Mexico (COMAR), a capacity-building model to strengthen RSD procedures in other countries in the Americas region, through a twinning approach, will be replicated elsewhere.

○ *Pursuing durable solutions*

Ongoing efforts to identify comprehensive solutions for displaced Colombians will include: enhanced protection, naturalization, local integration, relocation and voluntary return, resettlement of people with specific needs, and the prospect of labour mobility schemes for refugees with protection safeguards.

In Colombia, the UNHCR-UNDP Transitional Solutions Initiative (TSI) has pilot-tested solutions strategies in 17 communities. Methodologies and lessons learned are being handed over to the respective authorities to replicate and help assure the sustainability of these solutions in affected parts of the country.

In Ecuador, the Comprehensive Solutions Initiative (CSI) for Colombian refugees enables UNHCR to assist the authorities in addressing integration challenges. The Ecuadorian Government is also issuing two-year MERCOSUR visas to Colombians. While these do not provide asylum-protection safeguards, they do allow arrivals to stay legally and find employment. Estimates suggest that some 900 people continue to cross into the country on a monthly basis, most of them fleeing conflict in southern Colombia. A human mobility legislative bill, which includes provisions to deal with the needs of refugees and victims of human trafficking, has been presented to Ecuador's National Assembly.

In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (Venezuela), a protection and solutions strategy under development will focus on facilitating the acquisition of documents for Colombian asylum-seekers to improve their access to basic services and employment. The strategy aims to assist the authorities to ensure that refugees and people in a refugee-like situation enjoy protection and are able to pursue solutions. The strategy will complement those being carried out in Colombia and Ecuador to allow a more comprehensive approach to solutions in the region.

In the Southern Cone, UNHCR has a unique opportunity to consolidate an effective protection space in the subregion. It will promote comprehensive solutions for refugees, including by: expanding the framework of public policies that facilitate local integration; launching more sustainable resettlement programmes; and promoting other forms of admission that will benefit refugees and people in need of international protection from the Middle East and other regions.

○ *Supporting the regional initiative for Central America and Mexico*

In 2016 UNHCR will bolster border monitoring and expand protection networks in Guatemala, Honduras and southern Mexico. This will include: strengthening protection interventions for unaccompanied children in border and transit areas, in line with the best interests of the child principle; and setting up community-based protection and monitoring networks to identify and profile children and other vulnerable groups and establish sound referral mechanisms.

The absence of dedicated State infrastructure for families and children at risk in their home country hampers the delivery of protection responses, such as local integration, safe internal flight alternatives, and emergency responses for deported individuals with international protection needs. However, UNHCR, in coordination with international partners, will continue to identify and evaluate protection mechanisms in the countries of origin and support their implementation by national governments and civil society organizations.

The BPA envisages the establishment of a "human rights observatory on displacement" to facilitate regional coordination, monitoring, and the creation of early warning and rapid response mechanisms for population groups at risk in Central America, particularly unaccompanied and separated children.

○ *Addressing mixed migration movements in the Caribbean*

In the Caribbean, a regional consultative mechanism to enhance protection at sea and solutions for an ever increasing refugee population in the subregion will be established. In addition, UNHCR will work with several countries (the Bahamas, Belize, Curaçao, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Turks Caicos Islands) on multi-year national protection and solutions strategies.

While each national strategy will be tailored to specific protection challenges, the overarching goal is to achieve a gradual transfer of protection responsibilities to Governments in the region.

○ *Working towards ending statelessness*

The vast majority of Latin American and Caribbean States are committed to the eradication of statelessness through the BPA. Nevertheless, there are persistent challenges in some parts of the Caribbean, where safeguards for preventing statelessness and gender discrimination are lacking in some nationality laws.

Moreover, most countries in the region still lack domestic protection frameworks or statelessness determination procedures, as well as mechanisms to facilitate naturalization. In some instances, weak civil registration and documentation systems risk generating statelessness. There is also a need to gather accurate information on the populations at risk of statelessness in some countries.

In 2016, UNHCR's will seek to resolve cases of statelessness in the Caribbean. In the rest of the continent, efforts will be pursued to reduce statelessness through prevention strategies, in order to ensure that all countries are able to identify, protect, and eventually facilitate the naturalization of stateless people.

| CHALLENGES |

Despite positive advances, including the announced signature of a peace agreement by the Government of Colombia and the FARC negotiators, observers believe that such an outcome is unlikely to see immediate peace. The "construction" of peace will likely be accompanied by an initial increase in violence and displacement in various parts of the country as new dynamics take hold. A demobilization process could also see the resurgence of other illegal armed groups. UNHCR will support the Government during this delicate phase and help it to continue to protect and assist internally displaced people and refugees, as well as affected communities, and to promote their access to sustainable solutions.

The wide geographic expanse of territory between the NTCA and Mexico – characterized by porous borders, fluctuating migration patterns, and uneven government

law enforcement capacity, combined with limited human resources and sometimes institutional fragilities – poses many challenges for monitoring border regions and migratory routes, and supporting community-based protection.

Maritime incidents continue to be reported in the Caribbean, where States struggle to manage an ever-increasing number of mixed migratory movements, including the use of on unseaworthy vessels often operated by people in smuggling and human trafficking networks. Refugees are taking enormous risks to escape persecution and life-threatening situations. Maritime interception, disembarkation and return procedures often ignore the necessary safeguards for people with specific protection needs, violating the principle of non-refoulement. ■

Brazil
Plan
of Action

A roadmap for sustainable solutions

In December 2014, virtually all Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean adopted the Brazil Declaration and its Plan of Action. This establishes a roadmap to strengthen protection and promote sustainable solutions for refugees, displaced and stateless people in the region, within a framework of enhanced cooperation and solidarity.

UNHCR'S ACTIVITIES IN 2016-2017

In support of States, UNHCR will mobilize efforts to achieve five main goals over the next two years:

• Realize comprehensive solutions and support the peace process in Colombia, fostering the solidarity resettlement programme in Latin America, the labour mobility programme and local integration;

• Address protection needs of those who are fleeing violence at the hands of organized crime and gangs from the northern triangle of Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras);

• Support the consolidation of a common asylum space in the MERCOSUR area, namely through the Quality Assurance Initiative for refugee status determination;

• Strengthen protection and solutions response capacities in the Caribbean, through the establishment of a regional consultative mechanism;

• Advance the eradication of statelessness on the continent through the ratification of relevant international instruments, solving gender discrimination in transmitting nationality.

In Brazil football is a culture, and a way of integrating refugees in the country.
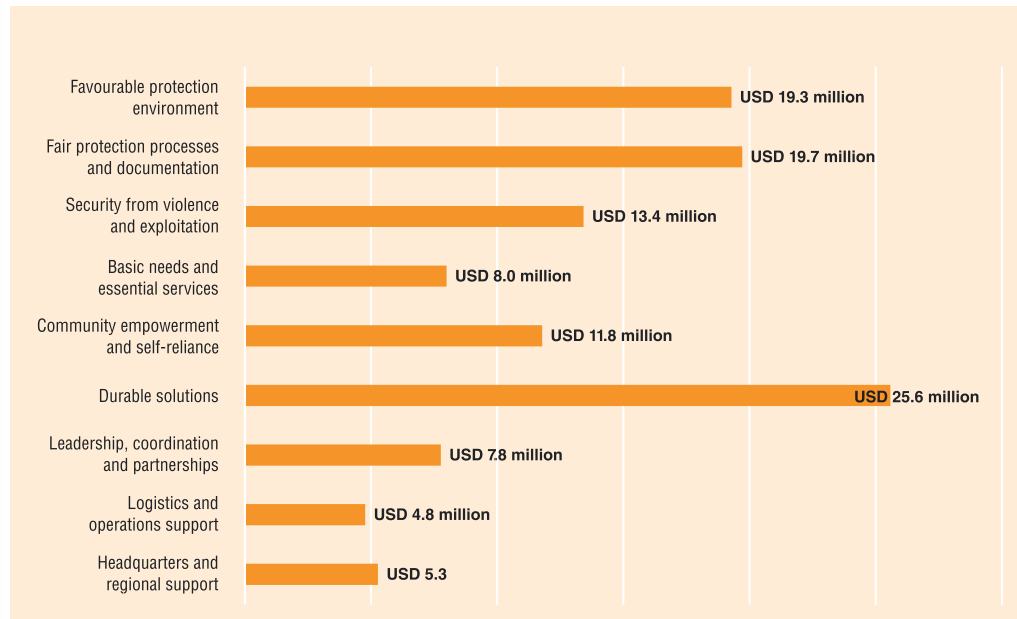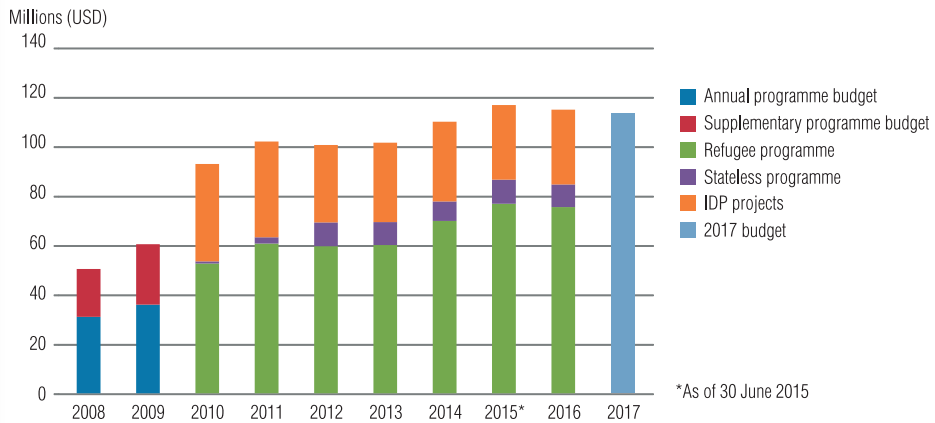
FINANCIAL INFORMATION

In the past five years, comprehensive needs for the Americas have grown from USD 93 million in 2010 to USD 117 million in 2015. The increase was related to new displacements following the earthquake in Haiti and to criminal and gang violence in Central America, as well as to new opportunities for solutions for IDPs in Colombia and for refugees in Costa Rica and Ecuador.

In 2016, the requirements remain stable, at USD 115.6 million. Predictable and flexible funding will enable UNHCR to support States in the region to implement the various elements of the Brazil Plan of Action, from the quality of asylum initiative to solutions and the eradication of statelessness.

BUDGET FOR THE AMERICAS | 2016 by Rights Group

Rights Group	Budget
Favourable protection environment	USD 19.3 million
Fair protection processes and documentation	USD 19.7 million
Security from violence and exploitation	USD 13.4 million
Basic needs and essential services	USD 8.0 million
Community empowerment and self-reliance	USD 11.8 million
Durable solutions	USD 25.6 million
Leadership, coordination and partnerships	USD 7.8 million
Logistics and operations support	USD 4.8 million
Headquarters and regional support	USD 5.3

BUDGET FOR THE AMERICAS | 2008-2017

Millions (USD)

Legend:
- Annual programme budget
- Supplementary programme budget
- Refugee programme
- Stateless programme
- IDP projects
- 2017 budget

*As of 30 June 2015

BUDGETS FOR THE AMERICAS | USD

Operation	2015 Current budget (as of 30 June 2015)	2016 PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	2016 PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	2016 PILLAR 3 Reintegration projects	2016 PILLAR 4 IDP projects	2016 Total	2017
NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN							
Canada	1,683,956	1,242,182	65,258	0	0	1,307,439	1,505,392
United States of America Regional Office[1]	20,300,000	11,200,765	8,235,049	0	0	19,435,814	19,465,214
Subtotal	**21,983,956**	**12,442,947**	**8,300,307**	**0**	**0**	**20,743,254**	**20,970,606**
LATIN AMERICA							
Argentina Regional Office[2]	4,958,656	4,618,855	121,022	0	0	4,739,876	4,976,869
Brazil	7,098,857	6,023,078	215,385	0	0	6,238,463	6,803,090
Colombia	31,649,996	911,891	0	0	30,521,660	31,433,551	31,657,001
Costa Rica	3,134,757	3,137,115	0	0	0	3,137,115	3,101,924
Costa Rica Regional Legal Unit	0	1,961,215	580,356	0	0	2,541,571	2,591,571
Ecuador	22,234,587	19,995,565	0	0	0	19,995,565	18,500,001
Mexico	4,088,576	5,328,026	0	0	0	5,328,026	5,216,478
Panama Regional Office	10,111,956	9,980,684	0	0	0	9,980,684	9,221,133
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	10,750,134	9,137,293	0	0	0	9,137,293	8,795,337
Regional activities[3]	1,416,656	2,301,964	0	0	0	2,301,964	2,118,393
Subtotal	**95,444,175**	**63,395,685**	**916,763**	**0**	**30,521,660**	**94,834,107**	**92,981,797**
Total	**117,428,131**	**75,838,632**	**9,217,069**	**0**	**30,521,660**	**115,577,361**	**113,952,403**

[1] Includes Haiti, the 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] Regional activities cover the entire Americas region