



- 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)**

| Working environment |

Latin American countries host hundreds of thousands of refugees, asylum-seekers and others of concern to UNHCR. Most come from Colombia, which also has one of the biggest populations of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world. An aggravation of the humanitarian situation in Colombia, particularly in remote rural areas, has left more than three million people displaced within the country, while hundreds of thousands have sought refuge in other countries in the region. At the same time, national security concerns related to cross-border movements have increased tensions among Andean countries. In Honduras, a political crisis has emerged following the ousting of the President at the end of June 2009. UNHCR, in

Latin America

coordination with the UN system, is closely monitoring the situation and has developed contingency plans for the neighbouring countries.

With the exception of Cuba, all countries in the region are party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol. November 2009 will mark the 25th anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees and the 5th anniversary of the Mexico Plan of Action. Since the adoption of the Mexico Plan of Action, many countries have amended their legislation to improve the protection of refugees and IDPs. It is expected that 13 countries would have included the broader refugee principles of the Cartagena Declaration in their legislation by 2010.

In Chile, a new refugee law has been approved by Parliament and will be presented to the Senate in October 2009 for final approval. Refugees and asylum-seekers in

Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay benefit from a legal framework that is generally in line with international protection standards. These countries have set up national refugee commissions to handle asylum applications and seek durable solutions for refugees. They have also ratified the relevant international and regional instruments on human rights.

A regional conference on refugee protection and international migration in the Americas will be held in November 2009 in Costa Rica. The conference seeks to encourage sound management approaches to regional migration, which balance international protection needs with national security concerns. The results will be used to implement a regional strategy for migration based on UNHCR's 10-Point Plan of Action.

| Strategy |

UNHCR's strategy in the region is based on the Mexico Plan of Action. The Plan is comprised of three main pillars that address urban displacement, protection in the sensitive border areas and resettlement.

The Cities of Solidarity pillar supports the local integration and self-reliance of people in need of international protection in urban areas. It aims to ensure that refugees receive health care, education, access to employment and housing, on par with services provided to nationals. UNHCR implements income-generating projects for refugees and promotes their free access to the labour market. National and local governments play an important role in this context by implementing refugee-friendly policies and allocating funds for integration programmes.

The Borders of Solidarity pillar helps UNHCR to address protection concerns at borders—primarily those between Colombia and its neighbours. Local integration along the borders is promoted by linking refugee assistance to national and regional development plans. This approach benefits refugees and the local host communities.

The Resettlement in Solidarity pillar is a regional responsibility-sharing programme. It benefits a limited number of refugees who face protection risks in their countries of asylum. Since 2004, more than 500 people have been resettled in Argentina, Brazil and Chile. Uruguay joined the programme in 2009 by resettling a first group of 14 Colombian refugees from Ecuador. The integration of resettled Palestinian refugees in Chile and Brazil is also progressing.

UNHCR began decentralizing its Bureau for the Americas in July 2009, with the establishment of the Deputy Director's office in Panama. The office will work closely with the UN Regional Director's Team and provide legal and technical support to UNHCR's operations in Latin America. It will also work to develop regional emergency preparedness and response capacity in Latin America.

| Constraints |

Throughout the region, unemployment and limited access to labour markets, partly due to the lack of required documentation, hamper the local integration of refugees and their search for economic self-reliance. The region is receiving a growing number of asylum-seekers and economic migrants, especially from the Horn of Africa and the Middle East, posing new challenges to sometimes fragile asylum systems. In Colombia and its neighbouring countries, security remains the main constraint, restricting access to displaced people and the delivery of protection.

| Operations |

UNHCR's operations in **Colombia** and **Ecuador** are described in separate country chapters.

UNHCR's **Regional Office in Argentina** will focus on strengthening national and regional networks in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay for the protection of



refugees and asylum-seekers. It will monitor the implementation of national laws and the strengthening of institutional structures and refugee status determination (RSD) procedures. The Office will assist new arrivals and people with specific needs, as well as seek durable solutions for those who cannot return home. It will also develop resettlement capacity, consolidating existing resettlement programmes. Furthermore, the Office will advocate for refugee protection in mixed migration movements through the Specialized Migratory Forum of MERCOSUR.

In **Brazil**, the Office will lobby for the formulation of public policies that aim to protect the rights of refugees, including their access to social welfare programmes. Strengthening the resettlement programme will be another key objective for the Office.

In **Central America**, UNHCR will seek to strengthen legislation and national capacities for refugee protection within mixed migratory flows, support the establishment of civil society protection networks, and address problems that hamper the local integration of refugees. The Deputy Director's office in Panama will seek to overcome impediments to status regularization in Central America, including non-recognition of diplomas or certificates and difficulties in accessing public services. It will also strengthen cooperation with relevant institutions to help refugees enter the local labour markets.

In **Costa Rica**, UNHCR's main focus will be on local integration, with particular attention to the consolidation of its micro-credit scheme, which provides small loans to asylum-seekers and refugees.

In **Cuba**, although the Government offers free health care and education to refugees, local integration is unlikely. Resettlement and voluntary repatriation are therefore the only durable solutions. UNHCR will provide material assistance and legal protection for the small number of refugees in the country, until solutions can be found.

In **Mexico**, UNHCR will seek to ensure that asylum-seekers within mixed migratory flows are identified and have access to fair and efficient asylum procedures. In this context, UNHCR's presence at Mexico's southern border is essential.

In **Panama**, UNHCR will advocate for the rights of refugees and train Government officials and border authorities on asylum issues. UNHCR's main challenge continues to be the regularization of Colombians under the temporary humanitarian protection regime in Panama, for which an agreement was signed at the end of 2008 between the countries concerned.

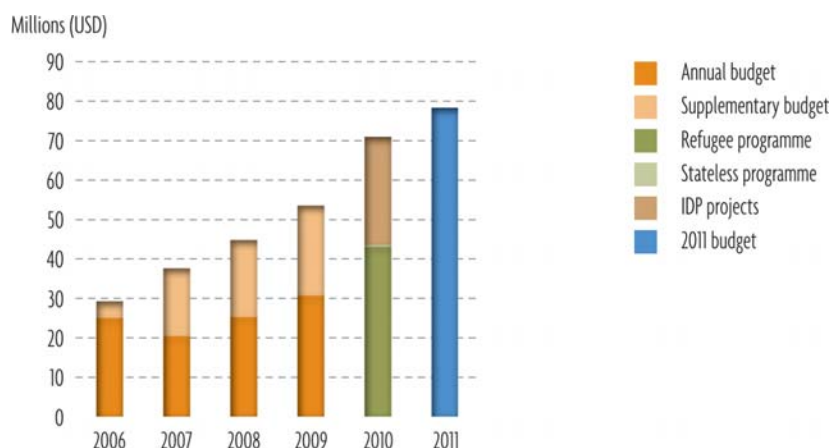
In the Bolivarian Republic of **Venezuela**, UNHCR's priority in 2010 is to register and provide documents to all asylum-seekers. At the same time, it will continue to promote local integration and develop a more comprehensive resettlement programme to address the needs of Colombian refugees with specific needs.

Financial information

UNHCR's financial requirements in Latin America have increased steadily in recent years. This is mostly due to the Office's greater involvement with IDPs in Colombia and the reinforcement of protection for unregistered individuals in refugee-like situations in the neighbouring countries. The bigger budget also takes into account greater resettlement needs in some Latin American countries. Furthermore, the cost of ensuring and improving staff security has added to financial requirements. In 2010, the budget will cover needs based on comprehensive assessments in all countries of the region. Though budgets have grown larger, their purchasing power has been reduced by inflation and unfavourable exchange rates in many countries.

Additional funds made available through the global needs assessment pilot project in Ecuador have allowed UNHCR, the Government and their partners to strengthen protection in the country and support the local integration of up to 140,000 Colombians in need of international protection. The Government's enhanced registration process represents a particularly good example of successful protection solutions, benefiting some 60,000 people by the end of 2010.

UNHCR's budget in Latin America 2006 – 2011



UNHCR budget for Latin America (USD)

COUNTRY	2009 REVISED BUDGET ¹	2010				2011
		REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	STATELESS PROGRAMME PILLAR 2	IDP PROJECTS PILLAR 4	TOTAL	
Argentina ²	3,771,985	5,222,373	107,761	0	5,330,134	6,150,600
Brazil	3,138,561	3,519,965	0	0	3,519,965	3,880,700
Colombia	23,428,553	957,302	59,852	27,476,204	28,493,358	30,174,100
Costa Rica	3,257,400	2,308,732	0	0	2,308,732	2,308,700
Cuba	268,000	0	0	0	0	0
Ecuador	10,735,401	16,186,546	225,594	0	16,412,140	19,995,700
Mexico	2,087,061	1,730,414	0	0	1,730,414	1,663,400
Panama ³	3,147,512	6,582,249	0	0	6,582,249	6,920,600
Venezuela (Bolivarian Rep.)	3,769,219	6,659,282	0	0	6,659,282	7,474,800
TOTAL	53,603,692	43,166,861	393,207	27,476,204	71,036,273	78,568,600

¹ Includes supplementary programme requirements in Colombia of USD 22,828,757.

² Includes local integration and resettlement in Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Paraguay and Uruguay.

³ Includes the Legal Unit in Costa Rica and the Deputy Director's Office in Panama, which covers Cuba, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua.