

This chapter provides a summary of the general environment in which UNHCR is operating in the Americas, and the organization's planned responses in 2015. Mention is made of major challenges, such as the increasing problems related to the movement of unaccompanied and separate children, which will be given particular focus in UNHCR's work in 2015.

Details of operations plans and budgets for 2015 are provided in the subregional and country chapters which are published in the digital version of the Global Appeal 2015 Update at www.unhcr.org. This Global Appeal will soon be complemented by further information on the redesigned Global Focus website which is being launched at the end of the year.

| WORKING ENVIRONMENT |

- In 2015, participating States in the Cartagena+30 process and those that will adopt the Declaration and new Plan of Action in Brasilia in December 2014, will commit to a wide range of goals aspiring to better protection and solutions. The 10-year Plan of Action will inform and drive UNHCR's strategy and interventions in the region. Accompanying States in the follow-up and implementation of the new Plan of Action will be UNHCR's priority in 2015 and beyond.

- In Central America, violence caused by transnational, organized, criminal armed groups pose a major challenge to local populations, national institutions and regional security. In recent years, asylum applications from individuals from Central American countries, such as El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras have sharply increased in Canada, Costa Rica, Mexico and the United States.

Of particular concern is the movement of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) displaced by violence. Their protection and safety is of central importance to UNHCR's operations in countries of origin, transit and arrival.

- Peace talks between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) continue to seek an end to five decades of armed conflict. The anticipated peace agreement will have important consequences for the humanitarian situation in Colombia. Identifying and consolidating sustainable solutions, including through local integration and possible voluntary repatriation, will need to take account of the foreseeable impact of demobilized armed groups and new armed actors who are violating human rights and forcing people to flee their homes, in some areas for a second or third time.

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An IDP with her grandchild in Altos de la Florida, Colombia.

AMERICAS



UNHCR / S. RICH

- The Colombia-Ecuador border area continues to be affected by conflict. Monthly arrivals from Colombia continue to range between 900 to 1,000 individuals, but access to asylum remains difficult due to legislation introduced in May 2012. Many do not benefit from protection owing to strict pre-admissibility procedures. For the more protracted and mainly urban refugee population in Ecuador, UNHCR is prioritizing durable solutions strategies under a comprehensive solutions initiative (CSI).
- Several countries have shown political commitment to explore protection-sensitive migration schemes to solve protracted refugee situations in Latin America. UNHCR and States in the region will work to develop and implement an innovative tripartite programme to facilitate labour migration with protection

safeguards for Colombian refugees moving to Argentina and Brazil.

- The situation in the Caribbean continues to be characterized by mixed migratory movements on unseaworthy vessels, resulting in frequent accidents and deaths at sea. Caribbean States have committed to enhance their cooperation to address protection concerns of individuals travelling across the region.
- Strategic partnerships will be fostered with key regional actors, including the Organization of American States (OAS) and its Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Central American Integration System (SICA). UNHCR will also continue its close collaboration with IOM and other UN agencies as well as its active participation in the Regional Conference on Migration (Puebla process).

| STRATEGY |

Building on the outcome of the 2014 Cartagena+30 process and based on the Declaration and new Plan of Action to be adopted in Brazil at the end of 2014, UNHCR operations in the Americas will focus on the following main areas:

- Strengthening or building national asylum systems, especially in the Caribbean, taking into account the specificities of insular States and maritime movements: this will include implementing the Quality Assurance Initiative in Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama, with the aim of harmonizing refugee status determination (RSD) in line with international standards;
- Addressing new challenges posed by displacement caused by the activities of transnational, organized crime and other illegal armed groups, as well as gang-related violence in Central America and Mexico: this will include promoting comprehensive solutions for refugees, for example through innovative use of existing regional migration schemes to facilitate human mobility; and ensuring adequate

protection safeguards to accompany the relocation of people to third countries within the region;

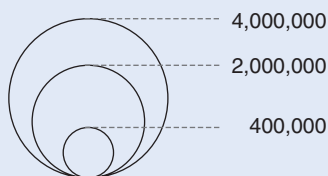
- resolving statelessness through new accessions to the Statelessness Conventions: this will include enacting legislation on nationality and adoption of statelessness status determination procedures, as well as giving attention to groups at risk.

Given the complex nature of the security situation in Central America, UNHCR's regional protection approach will focus on targeted interventions, within countries of origin (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras) as well as in countries of transit and asylum (in particular Mexico and the United States and to a lesser extent Costa Rica and Nicaragua). The goals will be to address the humanitarian consequences and respond to the protection needs of people forcibly displaced due to transnational organized crime and violence by illegal armed groups. UNHCR will strengthen capacity in the fields of border monitoring, child protection, and cluster coordination (Honduras).



- Refugees
- Asylum-seekers
- Returnees (refugees and IDPs)
- Stateless people
- Internally displaced people (IDPs)
- Others of concern

Population size



With hopes for a peace agreement soon in Colombia, UNHCR will nevertheless continue to assist the Government to strengthen the protection of internally displaced people, including those recently displaced by illegal armed groups. Measures will also concern the displaced who cross borders in search of protection, particularly to Ecuador and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (Venezuela). The Office will simultaneously pursue sustainable solutions through the Transitional Solutions Initiative (TSI), under joint implementation with UNDP and the Government. The TSI is facilitating the development of methodologies that the authorities can replicate on a wider scale in other affected areas. UNHCR and UNDP will continue providing technical support to ensure the sustainability of the Initiative. Solutions strategies in Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela will be consolidated to ensure greater synergies and improvements to the lives of people of concern.

Renewed efforts will also be made to address shrinking protection space for Colombian asylum-seekers in Ecuador through advocacy with the authorities and other partners. This work will help counter the rise in xenophobia and discrimination against Colombian refugees and asylum-seekers.

In Venezuela, UNHCR will work to ensure that asylum and protection remain available to people fleeing conflict in Colombia. Assisting the authorities to raise their capacity to register asylum-seekers and adjudicate cases for refugee status will be a primary objective for the Office in 2015.

In the Caribbean, UNHCR will work with governments to develop protection-sensitive processes and procedures that enable the early identification and referral of asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless people, as well as vulnerable migrants, including victims of trafficking and unaccompanied and separated children. The establishment of a Regional Consultative Process will ensure better coordination on asylum, refugee and statelessness issues in mixed migration movements.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

UNHCR's operational budget for the Americas has remained relatively stable over the last five years. A moderate increase was recorded in 2014-2015 with the new focus on the TSI for Colombia, the CSI for Ecuador and the preparations for the Cartagena+30 consultations.

In 2015, the budget set for the region is USD 117.3 million. The increased needs correspond to requirements for the new regional initiative for the protection of forcibly displaced populations in Central America and Mexico, and for the follow-up measures foreseen in the Plan of Action to be adopted in December 2014.

UNHCR's operations in Canada and the United States will further promote the expansion of resettlement programmes, aiming at increasing the number of places offered, and advocating for more flexible approaches so that several thousand more refugees may find the durable solutions they need. The Solidarity Resettlement Programme will continue to be applied in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay, with a view to including refugees from other parts of the world, such as Syrians.

In Southern America, UNHCR will be piloting an innovative solution for Colombian refugees. Protection-sensitive migratory frameworks based on regional human mobility schemes will permit the voluntary movement of these refugees from Ecuador to Argentina or Brazil, in application of the freedom of movement provision of the extended Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) agreements.

| CHALLENGES |

While progress in Colombia is being made in negotiating a peace agreement, resolving fifty years of conflict will remain a considerable challenge. A few years will be required for an eventual peace process to stabilize. In this transitional phase, balancing continued protection needs with the implementation of opportunities for durable solutions will be crucial.

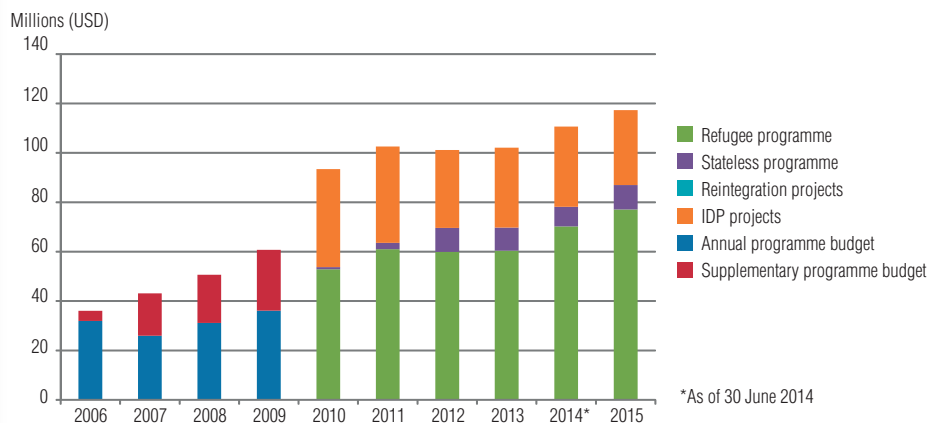
The security situation remains volatile in border areas between Colombia and neighbouring Ecuador and Venezuela. Access to these areas, where asylum-seekers continue to arrive in high numbers, is difficult, preventing adequate protection and assistance. Violence and criminal activities of illegal armed groups in Central America and Mexico continue to put lives of concerned populations at significant risk and cause displacement. The increased insecurity and intensification of activities of transnational criminal organizations have an impact on people of concern, and

bring added risks for delivering protection. Xenophobia and discrimination, in particular against Colombian and Haitian refugees and other people of concern of Haitian descent, continue to have a significant impact on protection, slowing down any progress in advocating for rights.

In the Caribbean, the sheer vastness of the area, together with the complexity of mixed migratory movements by sea, demand ever more coordinated efforts among countries and territories in the region, to assure access to international protection for asylum-seekers and refugees.

Statelessness remains an acute problem in the Caribbean. Solutions for individuals with undetermined nationality in the Dominican Republic are required. Gender imbalances in the passing on of nationality, as well as lack of documentation to prove nationality, remain common issues throughout the subregion. ■

BUDGET FOR THE AMERICAS | 2006-2015



BUDGETS FOR THE AMERICAS | USD

Operation	2014	2015			Total
	Revised budget (as of 30 June 2014)	PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	
NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN					
Canada	2,042,060	1,630,741	53,216	0	1,683,956
United States of America Regional Office ¹	18,385,198	11,328,996	8,971,004	0	20,300,000
Subtotal	20,427,258	12,959,737	9,024,219	0	21,983,956
LATIN AMERICA					
Argentina Regional Office ²	4,304,636	4,696,038	73,035	0	4,769,073
Brazil	8,197,880	6,913,141	185,717	0	7,098,857
Colombia	30,540,097	1,289,231	0	30,360,765	31,649,996
Costa Rica	2,885,871	3,134,757	0	0	3,134,757
Ecuador	21,010,276	22,514,110	0	0	22,514,110
Mexico	2,943,463	4,088,576	0	0	4,088,576
Panama Regional Office ³	8,429,731	9,627,586	551,975	0	10,179,561
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	10,950,133	10,950,134	0	0	10,950,134
Regional activities ⁴	937,000	931,345	0	0	931,345
Subtotal	90,199,086	64,144,918	810,726	30,360,765	95,316,409
Total	110,626,343	77,104,655	9,834,945	30,360,765	117,300,365

¹ Includes Haiti, 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 Includes the Regional Legal Unit in Costa Rica

⁴ Regional activities cover the entire Americas region