

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

In 2015, UNHCR worked in the Americas region to address multiple challenges, particularly: placing renewed focus on solutions in the region through the Brazil Plan of Action (see *Glossary*) and on resolving statelessness in several countries; supporting ongoing efforts to consolidate a peace agreement in Colombia; and responding to the needs of increasing numbers of displaced people who were fleeing violence and criminal activities in the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA).

Refugees from El Salvador enjoying a rainy day outside their house in Chiapas, Mexico.

UNHCR/Marikel Redondo

The



*Peace
& Love*
BIG PEAK PARTY

Americas

MAJOR OPERATIONS

This overview highlights key aspects of the main situations that required emergency or sustained response from UNHCR and its partners in the region in 2015. More details on individual operations are available in the relevant subregional and country operations pages on the Global Focus website (<http://reporting.unhcr.org>).

In 2015, the Government of **Colombia** continued to engage in peace talks with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia to end the 50-year armed conflict that has generated over 6.7 million internally displaced people (IDPs) and some 350,000 refugees. Ongoing negotiations were due to be finalized with the signature of a peace agreement in the first half of 2016.

In 2015, the severity and scale of violence in the NTCA, namely in **El Salvador**, **Guatemala** and **Honduras**, reached unprecedented levels. The increased presence and activity of criminal organizations and other illegal armed groups triggered the flight of hundreds of thousands of people to neighbouring countries, mainly Mexico and the United States. Almost 40,000 people crossed

the border into the United States between October and December 2015. Globally, the number of asylum requests submitted by individuals from the NTCA reached more than 55,000 in mid-2015, more than four times the number in 2010.

In the **Dominican Republic**, the authorities provided assurances it would not deport undocumented individuals with a legitimate claim to Dominican nationality, and examined options to identify nationality solutions for those who were left stateless.

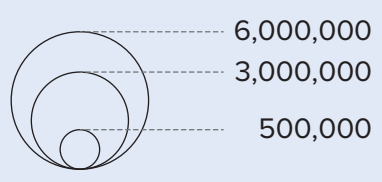
Collaboration between the Citizenship and Immigration Services of **Canada** and the **United States** resulted in a capacity-building model with **Mexico** (*Comisión Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados*), to strengthen refugee status determination procedures.

In the Americas, UNHCR continued its close collaboration with regional mechanisms, including the Organization of American States (OAS) and its inter-American human rights bodies, the Central American Integration System (SICA), and MERCOSUR, as well as with regional fora dealing with issues related to refugees, displaced and stateless people, such as the Regional Conference on Migration.



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

Population size



In May 2015, a letter of intent was signed between the MERCOSUR Institute of Public Policies on Human Rights and UNHCR, and a work plan was agreed upon to support the Brazil Plan of Action.

Inter-agency cooperation improved in 2015, in particular with respect to addressing statelessness in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Working within the inter-agency framework also continued to be a priority in the context of the Colombia peace process.

In June 2015, UNHCR, the Center for Justice and International Law, and the Open Society Justice Initiative organized the first regional meeting of the Americas Network on Nationality and Statelessness in San José, Costa Rica.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Already in its first year, the Brazil Plan of Action (see *Glossary*) made important strides in building and consolidating asylum systems, and in implementing the programmes aimed at enhancing the quality of asylum. The main achievements in these areas during 2015 are outlined below.

Enhancing the quality of asylum

Significant progress was made in the context of the Quality Assurance Initiative (see *Safeguarding fundamental rights* chapter). Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Panama continued to align national procedural standards on refugee status determination to international ones, while additional countries started quality assurance initiatives, including Argentina and Chile. The Plurinational State of Bolivia, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago also expressed interest in taking part.

Eradicating statelessness

El Salvador became party to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, while Belize became party to the 1961 Convention on the

Reduction of Statelessness. *Chiriticos*, a project undertaken in Costa Rica, assisted indigenous children and youth of Ngöbe-Buglé origin with late birth registration and documentation procedures, in cooperation with the Government and UNICEF. The nationality of nearly 1,400 Ngöbe-Buglé individuals was confirmed. The Dominican Republic signalled its commitment to finding solutions for those born in the country but whose nationality remains undetermined.

The Northern Triangle of Central America

In 2015, the severity and scale of violence in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala reached unprecedented levels, leading to an increase in displacement. UNHCR developed a regional protection and solutions strategy to support authorities in countries of origin, transit and asylum, to: create robust protection systems; preserve asylum space; and strengthen frameworks and policies on asylum, internal displacement and solutions.

In 2015, UNHCR published the study *Women on the Run*, illustrating the consequences of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, on female refugees and asylum-seekers. In June 2015, the Central American

Integration System (SICA) approved the establishment of the Human Rights Observatory on Displacement. The Government of Honduras, in cooperation with UNHCR and the Joint IDP Profiling Service, conducted an IDP profiling exercise that will help in developing protection policies and adopting measures to prevent forced displacement.

Mixed movements in the Caribbean

Eight key partner countries and territories – Aruba, the Bahamas, Belize, the Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Turks and Caicos Islands – took important steps towards establishing the Caribbean Consultations on Migration, a forum to discuss protection safeguards in the management of mixed migration.

The Caribbean saw positive legislative and policy developments on refugee protection, drafted in Curaçao and Turks and Caicos Islands. Eligibility commissions were set up in Antigua, the Bahamas and Barbuda to process Syrian asylum-seekers' claims. Belize reactivated its refugee eligibility committee and Trinidad and Tobago established a refugee unit, while UNHCR assisted

the Government with the development of refugee legislation and the related asylum system.

Local integration

For the majority of people of concern to UNHCR in the region, local integration remained the solution that offered the best opportunities. In Ecuador, the Graduation Model – a poverty-reduction approach – supported hundreds of families in increasing their chances of local integration. In Costa Rica, the active participation of government institutions and private-sector organizations under the social responsibility scheme *Vivir la Integración* opened up new opportunities to effectively ensure refugees' access to employment.

In Colombia, UNHCR developed new protection and solutions strategies built on the Transitional Solutions Initiative experience, whose lessons learned will be shared with the Colombian Government.

Resettlement and other forms of admission

The region demonstrated firm solidarity and responsibility sharing in the context of the global refugee crisis. Canada and the United States met more than 80 per cent of the global quota agreed by resettlement countries. Canada resettled close to 20,000 refugees in 2015 through both Government-assisted and private sponsorship programmes.

Canada's decision to resettle some 25,000 Syrian refugees in addition to its regular resettlement programme was an outstanding example of solidarity and responsibility-sharing. The United States announced a dedicated resettlement programme for Central Americans in addition to the existing family reunification programme, which benefits children with documented relatives residing in the country.

Brazil extended the validity of humanitarian visas for people affected by the Syria crisis for an additional period of two years. It also granted permanent residency on humanitarian grounds to some 44,000 Haitians, many of whom were displaced by the 2010 earthquake. Argentina extended its humanitarian visa

programme for Syrians for another year. In line with the Brazil Plan of Action, an evaluation on the Solidarity Resettlement Programme was carried out in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Regional cooperation

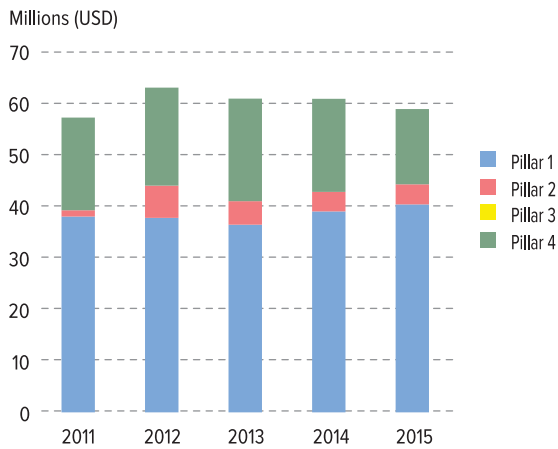
Within MERCOSUR, the CONARE (national refugee commissions) Presidents' Meeting was institutionalized as a primary vehicle for the implementation of the Brazil Plan of Action in South America.

CONSTRAINTS

Peace negotiations in Colombia have only involved the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia; no other armed groups have yet participated. The final signature of the peace agreement, negotiations over demobilization and restitution to victims, and agreements with other armed groups, is still pending.

Despite positive developments in Colombia, Ecuador still received approximately 500 asylum-seekers per month in 2015. ■

Expenditure in the Americas | 2011-2015



Financial information

UNHCR's 2015 budget stood at USD 117.4 million. This corresponded to an enhanced commitment by States, within the framework of the Brazil Plan of Action, to strengthen protection and solutions for asylum-seekers, refugees, internally displaced and stateless persons.

Needs have also increased in the region due to continued displacement from Central America. UNHCR was able to establish a presence in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, as well as open offices at the southern border of Mexico to address the plight of thousands of children, women and families who travel across the region to find protection from violence and persecution at the hands of criminal armed groups.

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE IN THE AMERICAS | USD

Operation		Pillar 1 Refugee programme	Pillar 2 Stateless programme	Pillar 3 Reintegration projects	Pillar 4 IDP projects	Total
NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN						
Canada	Budget	1,623,740	60,216	0	0	1,683,956
	Expenditure	1,266,926	32,081	0	0	1,299,008
United States of America Regional Office ¹	Budget	11,328,996	8,971,004	0	0	20,300,000
	Expenditure	4,957,500	2,904,874	0	0	7,862,375
Subtotal	Budget	12,952,737	9,031,219	0	0	21,983,956
	Expenditure	6,224,427	2,936,956	0	0	9,161,382
LATIN AMERICA						
Argentina Regional Office ²	Budget	5,063,436	86,221	0	0	5,149,656
	Expenditure	3,233,463	86,221	0	0	3,319,683
Brazil	Budget	6,913,141	185,717	0	0	7,098,857
	Expenditure	2,768,963	65,463	0	0	2,834,426
Colombia	Budget	1,289,231	0	0	30,360,765	31,649,996
	Expenditure	659,324	0	0	14,642,169	15,301,493
Costa Rica	Budget	3,028,757	0	0	0	3,028,757
	Expenditure	2,505,656	0	0	0	2,505,656
Ecuador	Budget	22,043,587	0	0	0	22,043,587
	Expenditure	12,674,036	0	0	0	12,674,036
Mexico	Budget	4,088,576	0	0	0	4,088,576
	Expenditure	2,628,725	0	0	0	2,628,725
Panama Regional Office ³	Budget	9,381,121	836,835	0	0	10,217,956
	Expenditure	5,052,060	824,888	0	0	5,876,948
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Budget	10,750,134	0	0	0	10,750,134
	Expenditure	4,360,002	0	0	0	4,360,002
Regional activities ⁴	Budget	1,416,656	0	0	0	1,416,656
	Expenditure	418,164	0	0	0	418,164
Subtotal	Budget	63,974,638	1,108,772	0	30,360,765	95,444,175
	Expenditure	34,300,391	976,571	0	14,642,169	49,919,131
Total Americas	Budget	76,927,375	10,139,991	0	30,360,765	117,428,131
	Expenditure	40,524,818	3,913,527	0	14,642,169	59,080,514

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 Includes the Regional Legal Unit in Costa Rica

⁴ Regional activities cover the entire Americas region

VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE AMERICAS | USD

<i>Donor</i>	Pillar 1 Refugee programme	Pillar 2 Stateless programme	Pillar 4 IDP projects	All pillars	Total
Argentina				123,420	123,420
Brazil	641,093				641,093
Canada	25,000		1,947,420	1,966,955	3,939,375
Central Emergency Response Fund		267,984	244,996		512,980
Denmark	146,000				146,000
European Union	2,933,835		730,063		3,663,899
Mexico	75,000			50,000	125,000
Private donors in Italy				79	79
Private donors in Spain	4,568		6,557		11,126
Republic of Korea			780,000		780,000
Spain			433,369		433,369
Switzerland			1,040,583		1,040,583
United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS	120,000				120,000
United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security	123,050	141,775			264,825
United States of America	856,000	100,000		20,000,000	20,956,000
Total	4,924,547	509,759	5,182,989	22,140,454	32,757,748

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