

ON THE BRINK

AMERICAS

OVERVIEW

The devastating toll of aid cuts on people forced to flee

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Glorianne, and her daughter Marybelle, Haitian refugees in Brazil whose NGO help refugee and migrant women and children from Haiti access education, health care and gender-based violence support. ©UNHCR/Marina Calderon

The impact of aid cuts on refugees and other forcibly displaced people in the Americas

In 2025, the Americas region is facing a humanitarian tipping point. A dramatic reduction in funding to UNHCR and its partners has forced the suspension or scaling back of critical services for millions of forcibly displaced and stateless people. [Across Latin America and the Caribbean, the consequences are stark: protection systems are weakening, integration pathways are closing, and the most vulnerable are being left behind](#). Although the region holds real potential to advance protection and solutions, these opportunities are now in jeopardy due to critical funding shortfalls, leaving millions to face deteriorating living conditions, heightened risks of exploitation and abuse, and the threat of further displacement.

A region under strain

The Americas hosts nearly 22 million forcibly displaced people. Yet, [only 20% of UNHCR's financial requirements in the region have been met this year](#). As a result, [42% of UNHCR's programmes have been cut](#). The effects are widespread and devastating:



Cuts are jeopardizing the legal status and regularization of asylum-seekers and refugees due to reduced capacity-building and slower case processing.



In countries like Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile and Mexico, the lack of legal status is not merely a bureaucratic delay—it results in prolonged insecurity, deepening poverty as refugees are excluded from formal employment, and greater exposure to exploitation and abuse.



Cuts to local integration programmes in Colombia, Brazil and Ecuador are increasing the risk of xenophobia and onward movement.



Suspension of support for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees is placing additional pressure on local communities.



The lack of reintegration support is contributing to further displacement, undermining regional stability.

Country level impact

Brazil. Over 335,000 people are losing access to essential services such as documentation, protection screening and orientation. Budget cuts have halted support for shelters, delayed access to legal aid, and reduced livelihoods and integration support.

Chile. 11,600 people will not receive basic assistance, including rental support, legal aid and psychosocial care. UNHCR will no longer have a presence in border areas with Peru and Bolivia, affecting over 5,000 people who benefitted from direct assistance.

Costa Rica. Over 6,500 asylum-seekers will lose legal assistance, leaving them without support to navigate the asylum system. A 77% drop in registration capacity is delaying access to essential services like health care, education, and jobs.

El Salvador. Territorial coverage has shrunk from 60 to 11 communities. Only the most urgent protection cases are being addressed.

Haiti. The termination of UNHCR's partnerships with two national NGOs at Haiti's border has left thousands of returnees—especially women, children, and those with specific needs—without critical protection services. This gap exposes them to heightened risks and unmet humanitarian needs.

Honduras. Plans to expand field presence were cancelled. Instead, three field units were closed, and nine projects were cut or terminated.

Peru. Only 600 of 3,000 targeted families are receiving basic assistance. UNHCR will phase out its presence in several locations and disband its resettlement team.

Bolivia. The scaling down of support at key border points has limited access to vital humanitarian assistance for the most vulnerable. Hundreds of forcibly displaced people will lose access to emergency shelter in La Paz, leaving those with disabilities or medical conditions without safe or accessible housing.

Colombia. 500,000 Venezuelans risk being undocumented. Support for 105,000 people in informal settlements and child protection initiatives for 17,000 has been terminated.

Ecuador. 17,000 people are losing legal assistance. 4,500 asylum seekers may not access the asylum process, and 4,000 displaced and stateless will not receive basic assistance to cover access to food, rent, housing and health.

Guatemala. Field presence and partnerships have been reduced, with staffing down 76% and partners dropping from 10 to 4. Only 34,656 people received support in 2025, a 67% decrease, despite record-high refugee applications.

Mexico. A 30–40% reduction in UNHCR's partnership with COMAR has led to the loss of over 50 positions—mostly protection staff – severely weakening Mexico's asylum system. This downsizing threatens to worsen the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) backlog, leaving thousands in legal and personal limbo.

MCO Panama. Regional restructuring resulted in the closure of the office in Guyana and Suriname, along with a reduced presence in Aruba and Trinidad and Tobago. The office in Darién has now transitioned into a UN House.

Venezuela. 15,000 refugees, returnees, and people at risk of displacement will lose access to basic assistance and or essential services like electricity and water—undermining community stability and increasing the risk of further displacement.

RMRP 2025: Reprioritizing Under Pressure

The [Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan \(RMRP\)](#) for Latin America and the Caribbean has also undergone a “hyper-prioritization”. The target population has been reduced from 2.3 million to 577,700, and the budget from \$1.4 billion to \$447.3 million. Key shifts include:



Prioritizing life-saving protection, food, health, and shelter.



Reduction in the strengthening of local leadership, especially refugee and migrant-led organisations.



Sharpen focus on education, livelihoods, and long-term integration efforts.



Preserving core services for survivors of violence, unaccompanied children, and those at risk of trafficking.

A call for urgent action

The humanitarian community in the Americas is at a crossroads. Without immediate and flexible donor support, the region risks a reversal of hard-won gains in protection, inclusion, and stability. UNHCR and its partners remain committed to delivering principled, efficient, and community-driven responses—but they cannot do it alone.

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