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## **Update on UNHCR operations in the Americas**

### **A. Situational analysis, including new developments**

Forced displacement, driven by violence, persecution, human rights violations, conflict and disasters, remains significant in the Americas. By the end of 2024, the region hosted 21.9 million forcibly displaced persons and others in need of protection – accounting for one out of every six displaced or stateless person globally.

During the first half of 2025, northward movements declined sharply, with arrivals at the southern border to the United States of America decreasing by 91 per cent and irregular crossings through the Darién region dropping by 98 per cent compared to the same period the previous year. Meanwhile, southbound movements increased across several Latin American and Caribbean countries, as refugees and migrants sought alternative routes to Spain and other European destinations. Protection risks for people on the move further intensified amid a shrinking humanitarian presence and reduced services, both driven by ongoing funding constraints.

Organized crime and the presence of illegal armed groups remain key drivers of displacement across the region. In Haiti, the widespread control of gangs in Port-au-Prince has displaced 1.3 million persons internally between 2022 and 2025. In Colombia, armed confrontations in the Catatumbo region in 2025 displaced over 62,000 people and led to the confinement of around 27,000 persons. In Ecuador, rising violence has also triggered new waves of forced displacement.

Latin America and the Caribbean is among the world's most vulnerable regions to extreme weather events and disasters. Over 70 per cent of forcibly displaced and stateless persons reside in high-risk areas. The region is also experiencing a rise in returns, which place additional pressure on national systems and reflect the need to strengthen reception capacities, reintegration support and protection-sensitive approaches to mitigate risks and prevent renewed displacement and onward movements.

While the region faces challenges, it also presents important opportunities. The inclusion and integration of migrants and refugees continue to generate significant socioeconomic gains for the region. According to the World Bank, for every sol invested by Peru in the refugee and migrant population, the country received 2.6 soles as return;<sup>1</sup> and in Costa Rica, a study by the International Monetary Fund found that refugees and migrants contributed 6.5 per cent of the GDP during 2017-2021.<sup>2</sup>

States and host communities in Latin America and the Caribbean have made important strides in strengthening asylum procedures, regularization pathways and other legal stay arrangements. These efforts, alongside initiatives promoting socioeconomic inclusion and

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank and UNHCR, *Un Encuentro de Oportunidades: La Movilidad Humana de Venezuela y el Desarrollo del Perú* (2024).

<sup>2</sup> International Monetary Fund, *Characteristics and Economic Impact of Migrants and Refugees in Costa Rica* (2023).

naturalization are critical to helping the displaced find safety and rebuild their lives. In 2024, national asylum systems in the region registered over 240,000 new asylum applications and processed approximately 180,000 cases. These efforts were reinforced by regional processes and frameworks – including the Quito Process, the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (known by its Spanish acronym MIRPS) and the Chile Plan of Action – which reflect the region’s political will and commitment to solidarity and responsibility-sharing.

To address the complex challenges of displacement in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNHCR and its partners pursued sustainable responses. Through a regional lens, sustainable responses aim to promote stabilization and protection while supporting durable solutions from the outset, with an emphasis on local integration. These efforts are coordinated through a broad network of partners working in the region, including the Inter-agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) (known as R4V). However, achieving sustainable responses requires adequate funding and the engagement of development actors, financial institutions and the private sector.

### **South America**

Movements from Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) continue, with an increasing number of Venezuelans returning. At the same time, countries in South America maintain efforts to support displaced Venezuelans by providing legal stay arrangements and temporary protection. In Colombia, more than 1.9 million Venezuelans had received temporary protection permits by September 2025, and an initiative granting residence permits to parents of Venezuelan children with temporary protection is expected to benefit 400,000 individuals this year. Similarly, Brazil recognized 141,300 Venezuelan refugees and granted over 590,100 temporary residency permits. Ecuador issued 17,500 certificates of migratory status and granted 8,200 new visas by September 2025. Since 2022, Chile has issued 110,000 humanitarian residence permits for Venezuelan children and adolescents. Meanwhile, in Uruguay, more than 2,500 individuals accessed a programme that grants residency based on established ties to the hosting country, including on the basis of family connections or an employment contract.

The Inter-agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants is prioritizing life-saving activities, basic needs, and stabilization support for the most vulnerable, benefiting 577,700 refugees and migrants of different nationalities out of the initial target population of 2.34 million. As of June 2025, the number of people reached fell by 46 per cent compared to the same period in 2024. Despite this decrease, UNHCR and partners assisted a total of 344,600 refugees, migrants, and host community members, safeguarding access to essential services, reducing protection risks and fostering resilience.

Colombia is grappling with a complex forced displacement situation, with more than 208,000 new internally displaced persons registered between January and August 2025. At the same time, growing numbers of Colombians are leaving the country seeking international protection. UNHCR is supporting the national and local authorities, as part of inter-agency efforts, to respond to and mitigate increased displacement, which is also impacting Venezuelan nationals living in Colombia.

### **Central America and Mexico**

Displacement across borders and within countries in Central America and Mexico has continued to rise in recent years, placing additional strain on asylum and reception systems. Mexico, for example, received over 42,800 asylum applications between January and June 2025, of which nearly half were submitted by Cubans, followed by Venezuelans (20 per cent), Haitians (12 per cent) and Hondurans (8 per cent). As of June 2025, Mexico has recognized a total of 168,500 refugees.

As asylum applications increase across Central America, UNHCR is supporting governments in strengthening their asylum systems. Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama are working together through the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework to advance protection and solutions across the subregion.

UNHCR also supports the reception and reintegration of returnees and deportees in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. This work includes identifying individuals in need of international protection, providing humanitarian assistance, and fostering community empowerment to facilitate stabilization and reintegration.

### **The Caribbean**

The Caribbean continues to receive refugees and other persons in need of international protection, both from within and beyond the subregion. UNHCR supports governments in developing legal frameworks, policies and practices aimed at preventing refoulement, strengthening national asylum systems, preventing and addressing statelessness, and fostering partnerships that promote stabilization and socioeconomic inclusion.

During the reporting period, indiscriminate violence in Haiti led to severe human rights violations and large-scale internal displacement. In the country, UNHCR works with national institutions, partners and community-based organizations to monitor protection risks, strengthen accountability to affected populations, provide legal assistance and facilitate access to identity and birth registration documents. At the regional level, UNHCR supports governments and partners to ensure that Haitians in need of international protection can access asylum, alternative legal pathways and solutions.

### **Chile Declaration and Plan of Action**

The adoption of the Chile Declaration and Plan of Action in December 2024 marked an important step toward the regional implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees, aiming to strengthen protection and solutions for refugees, internally displaced and stateless persons in Latin America and the Caribbean. At the first meeting of the Follow-up and Coordination Mechanism, held in July 2025 and co-chaired by Chile and Mexico, States agreed on 15 thematic operational priorities for the period 2025 to 2027 and officially adopted the Support Platform – demonstrating strong regional commitment to coordinated action.

### **Extreme weather events, disasters and displacement**

UNHCR is scaling up its efforts to address the growing impacts of extreme weather events and disasters on forcibly displaced and stateless populations. This includes delivering targeted humanitarian assistance, including in Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador and Peru, and providing technical support to governments to ensure protection-sensitive responses. UNHCR also advocates the inclusion of refugees, internally displaced and stateless persons in national adaptation and resilience plans.

A major milestone was reached in July 2025, when the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued Advisory Opinion OC-32/25. The opinion recognizes forced displacement in the context of extreme weather events and disasters, affirming States' obligations to provide legal and humanitarian protection and respect the principle of non-refoulement. It also endorses the Chile Plan of Action, which includes a specific chapter on protection for those affected and displaced by disasters. These regional developments serve as critical tools in lead-up to COP30 in Brazil.

In Brazil, Colombia, Honduras and Mexico, UNHCR supports legal and policy reforms to strengthen protection frameworks for those displaced in the context of extreme weather events and disasters. In parallel, the organization works closely with international financial and development institutions, as well as climate funds, to promote investments that benefit refugees in Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Peru.

## **B. Progress and challenges by impact area in 2024 and updated plans for 2025**

### **Attaining favourable protection environments**

UNHCR prioritized strengthening national asylum systems to assist States in improving case processing efficiency, advancing digital case management, supporting the use of differentiated case processing modalities and addressing persisting backlogs.

Legal stay arrangements have facilitated access to protection and solutions for over 4.5 million refugees and asylum-seekers across more than 20 countries, with new opportunities emerging in Aruba and Peru.

While 15 countries in the region have incorporated the Cartagena refugee definition in their national frameworks, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay have made notable recent efforts in applying it in practice. In Colombia, a decree adopted in January 2025 grants registered asylum-seekers the right to work, significantly contributing to their self-reliance and enhancing their local integration opportunities.

In response to increasing numbers of forced returns, UNHCR is working in El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti and Honduras to support identification, screening, documentation and the provision of protection services for returnees with protection needs.

#### *Pursuing protection and solutions for internally displaced persons*

UNHCR supported States in addressing the needs of internally displaced persons through data collection and analysis, in collaboration with national statistics offices, as well as protection initiatives in communities at risk of displacement.

In Guatemala, UNHCR worked with the National Institute of Statistics to measure internal displacement through its national survey on living conditions. In Mexico, the National Institute of Statistics and Geography will, for the first time, include a question on internal displacement in its 2025 intercensal survey.

In Colombia, UNHCR co-leads the Internal Displacement Solutions Fund with the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the Resident Coordinator's office. The Fund supports the Government in advancing durable solutions through policy coordination, measurement tools and strategic planning aligned with national priorities.

The Ecuadorian Government recently adopted a solidarity law, which includes provisions for victims of violence and establishes a victims' registry under the Ombudsman's office. UNHCR supported these efforts by conducting a study on internal displacement to inform the development of this registry as well as the State's operational response.

#### **Realizing rights in safe environments**

##### *Facilitating access to education*

UNHCR promotes the inclusion of forcibly displaced children and youth in educational systems across the region. Together with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNHCR developed a roadmap to strengthen access to tertiary education and improve the recognition of diplomas for refugees. In May 2025, 45 scholars from the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (known by its German acronym DAFI) participated in a consultation aimed at enhancing refugee student participation.

#### **Empowering communities and achieving gender equality**

In June and July 2025, UNHCR and partners held virtual consultations on asylum, internal displacement and returns, engaging 147 representatives from 105 organizations, including 44 refugee-led organizations, from across Latin America and the Caribbean. Key recommendations included strengthening asylum systems, upholding the rights of internally displaced persons, implementing rights-based and sustainable return programmes, and launching regional campaigns to foster inclusion and counter xenophobia.

The Inter-agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants developed safety audit guidelines to assess risks of violence against women and children in the infrastructure, services and shelter management sectors and ensure that refugee perspectives are integrated into shelter design and operations.

### Securing solutions

To advance sustainable responses, UNHCR fosters refugee self-reliance and strengthens government systems through partnerships with the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Finance Corporation, the World Bank and the private sector. These collaborations support job programmes, financial inclusion, access to the labour market, and the statistical inclusion of forcibly displaced persons.

As of 2025, 85 Cities of Solidarity – including 73 cities as well as provinces and municipal associations – provide protection and integration support for refugees. In Brazil, over 150,000 Venezuelans have been internally relocated to improve their access to services and opportunities. In Mexico, 52,000 refugees have relocated and secured formal employment, with over 650 companies since 2016, and more than 600 refugees have initiated their naturalization process.

UNHCR supports efforts to ensure the safe, dignified return and sustainable reintegration of individuals in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, through initiatives related to documentation, child protection and the prevention of violence and exploitation.

### *Facilitating resettlement and complementary pathways for admission to third countries*

Promoting refugee resettlement, family reunification and other complementary pathways continues to be a priority for UNHCR. Between January and July 2025, UNHCR submitted the applications of 1,562 individuals for resettlement to Argentina, Australia, Canada, Finland, New Zealand, Spain, and the United States of America. During the same period, 3,368 individuals departed to these countries.

In parallel, UNHCR supported the development of labour mobility pathways in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago, facilitating access to receiving countries such as Canada and Italy.

In 2025, Brazil launched a Community Sponsorship Programme to resettle people displaced by the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. New arrivals receive support for reception, housing, access to rights, and socioeconomic inclusion, with over 500 Afghan refugees expected to arrive by year-end.

### *Eradicating statelessness*

UNHCR supported initiatives addressing statelessness across the region. In Peru, it supported the adoption of a statelessness determination procedure. In Costa Rica, UNHCR facilitated the identification of persons at risk of statelessness and in Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), it supported mobile documentation teams to enable late birth registration for indigenous children.

Other important steps were taken by governments in the region to address statelessness. In Colombia, a dedicated statelessness unit was established within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Additionally, the country's National Civil Registry extended for two more years a programme which facilitates the registration of Venezuelan children, regardless of their migratory status and without requiring proof of domicile or residence in the country – an important step to prevent childhood statelessness. In the Dominican Republic, 22 Dominicans of Haitian descent received official nationality documents, building on earlier efforts that saw the issuance of 513 naturalization certificates between 2022 and 2024. In Mexico, the Government began issuing machine-readable identification and travel documents for refugees and stateless persons in January 2025.

## C. Financial information, including updated budget figures

In October 2024, the Executive Committee approved a 2025 budget of \$815.2 million for the Americas region, reflecting a decrease of \$19.4 million, or 2 per cent, compared to the 2024 budget.

The breakdown of the 2025 requirements by impact area, as approved by the Executive Committee in October 2024, is as follows: “attaining favourable protection environments”,

\$332.1 million; “securing solutions”, \$261.4 million; “realizing rights in safe environments”, \$126.0 million; and “empowering communities and achieving gender equality”, \$95.7 million.

As of 31 August 2025, 25 per cent of the Americas region’s 2025 financial requirements were funded, taking into consideration the indicative allocation of unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions.

For 2026, UNHCR is proposing a budget of \$715.2 million for the Americas, representing a decrease of \$100 million, or 12 per cent, compared to the 2025 budget.

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