



# **COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN**

**Regional Legal Unit in the Americas**

**Planning Year: 2004**

## **COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN – 2004**

### **REGIONAL LEGAL UNIT**

#### **Part I : Executive Summary**

##### **(a) Context and Beneficiary populations**

The rationale for the presence of the Regional Legal Unit in the Americas and involvement in the region is:

To provide technical services for the strengthening of the legal framework in the Americas through promotion and dissemination of refugee law, enhanced co-operation with the organs of the Inter-American system, the integration of human rights into refugee protection and the provision of legal advice to offices in the region.

The Regional Legal Unit, based in San Jose, Costa Rica, is under the supervision and purview of the UNHCR Regional Office in Mexico.

##### **Political context**

In a context in which there is a increasing interest of governments to adopt restrictive policies, the Regional Legal Unit follows up on legal developments in the region and advocates for enhanced protection for the population of concern to UNHCR in the Americas.

##### ***Security situation***

N/A

##### **Protection issues**

The Regional Legal Unit focuses on the reinforcement of the legal framework for the protection of persons of concern to UNHCR in the Americas. The integral approach adopted by the Unit includes training and technical legal advice to strengthen local capacities of governments, non-governmental organisations and other sectors of civil society. As a result of its advocacy efforts, issues of concern to UNHCR are currently reflected in the hemispheric agenda of the OAS and echoed by its various political and human rights organs. Over the course of the past year, then the Regional Legal Unit has focused on issues such as restrictive interpretations of international standards, detention, quality of asylum and the implementation of national RSD mechanisms and refugee legislation. A culture of refugee protection is being further developed through the consolidation of the Spanish web site.

##### **UNHCR's role.**

The Regional Legal Unit provides technical support in areas related to protection and human rights in the Americas, giving priority to advocacy and capacity building

efforts, in close co-ordination with external actors in the region, with the objective of enabling UNHCR to concentrate more on its supervisory responsibility.

### **Overview of each beneficiary population.**

Because of the capacity building focus of the Regional Legal Unit, the beneficiaries of its activities are: governments, non-governmental organisations and other sectors of civil society, as well as UNHCR offices in the region. The Regional Legal Unit thus contributes to the strengthening of the legal framework for the protection of populations of concern to UNHCR in the Americas.

### **Policy issues**

Gender equity, refugee children, the elderly and environmental concerns are duly reflected in the activities undertaken by the Regional Legal Unit.

### **Linkages with other countries within a defined “situation”**

While the Regional Legal Unit does not per se address the particular situation of any caseload, it contributes to the implementation of the regional strategy to respond to the humanitarian needs of Colombians in need of protection, as well as to the design of institutional memory on protection and legal issues in the Americas.

### ***Capacity and presence of implementing partners***

Because of the capacity building focus of the activities undertaken by the Regional Legal Unit, the implementation of the project will be directly undertaken by UNHCR professional staff, in conjunction with the human rights organs of the Inter-American System, the University for Peace and some sectors of civil society (i.e. Academia and NGOs).

### **Presence and roles of other UN agencies and international organisations**

As part of the provision of technical services by the Regional Legal Unit, strategic alliances have been consolidated with the organs of the Inter-American system and the University for Peace for the promotion of human rights and refugee law, advocacy efforts and training. The RLU has also co-ordinated with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Division for the Advancement of Women and UNICEF on an *ad hoc* basis. In co-ordination with offices in the region and DIP, the RLU drafts and/or reviews confidential comments provided to UN human rights treaty bodies to address protection concerns in countries in the region.

**(b) Selected Programme Goals and Objectives**

<b>Name of Beneficiary Population / Theme:</b> <i>“Provision of technical support services for the promotion of refugee law and consolidation of UNHCR’s working relationship with the OAS political and human rights organs”</i>	
<b>Principal Objective</b>	<b>Related Outputs</b>
Reinforce the legal framework for refugee protection in the Americas through the promotion of refugee law, the enhanced co-operation with the organs of the Inter-American System, the integration of human rights into refugee protection and the provision of legal advice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refugees issues are included and properly addressed in the agenda of regional organisations and their organs.</li> <li>• OAS organs are more aware of refugee issues in the Americas</li> <li>• Refugee protection is strengthened by the integration of human rights norms and standards</li> <li>• National institutions are better prepared to grant protection to those who need and deserve it</li> <li>• New protection tools are available to UNHCR offices, governments and non-governmental organisations to strengthen their capacities to provide protection in the Americas</li> <li>• UNHCR concentrates more on its supervisory responsibility</li> </ul>