



COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

OVERVIEW

**Country: UNHCR Regional Office for the
United States of America and the Caribbean**

Planning Year: 2006

OVERVIEW

The United States is the largest single financial contributor to UNHCR; US funding for UNHCR programs has represented between 25%-30% of UNHCR's overall budgets for the past few years. UNHCR Regional Office for the USA and the Caribbean (ROW) works to promote assistance, protection and durable solutions for refugees and to sustain and enhance political and financial support for UNHCR. This is done in the context of a complex political environment and the continuing aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, which have made immigration and refugee situations seem more complex. ROW is continuously reaching out to key government interlocutors and interacting with civil society and the media both in the US and Caribbean. The timeline for ROW's activities is ongoing, as ROW does not, except for certain activities in the Caribbean, have camp operations. An overview of the context in which each ROW section operates and the goals of that section follow.

Resettlement - The US is the largest resettlement country and a major financial supporter of UNHCR's resettlement efforts. Some 2.4 million refugees have been resettled to the US in the past quarter century through a complex program, comprised of three federal departments, 50 state refugee programs, 8 national NGOs, and hundreds of local NGOs and governments. Over the last several years, the US has provided approximately 20 million dollars in additional funds for UNHCR resettlement operations. ROW works with UNHCR HQ, field offices and US partners to identify appropriate individuals and groups for submission to the US program. ROW coordinates with UNHCR offices in the Americas region for support of emerging resettlement countries and on the resettlement of individual refugees in the region to the US.

External Relations – In 2006, ROW expects to continue promoting political and financial support for refugees, not only in the US and the Caribbean, but worldwide. ROW garners support through advocacy and information-sharing with the administrative and legislative branches of the US government, presenting challenges and constraints to decision-makers and their staff through individual meetings and/or briefings. In particular, ROW will focus on the US Congress, maintaining individual outreach to Senators and Representatives, and working with a senior level network of professional staff in the various relevant committees to UNHCR, e.g., Foreign Relations, International Relations, Judiciary, and Appropriations.

USA Protection – In the United States, Protection will continue to focus on five major issues. The first, access to asylum procedures, includes expedited removal, detention, and the ongoing work of UNHCR's consultant who will monitor the US-Canada "Safe Third Country" agreement. Close relations with the Coast Guard are also a priority on this issue, ensuring access to information on interception at sea and access to asylum procedures in these situations. The second, intertwined with the first issue, is the detention of asylum-seekers, including conditions, alternatives to detention, indefinite detention, and release policies. This will be monitored through on-going visits to detention centers. ROW will also advocate for asylum-seekers through interaction with key lawmakers and Department of Homeland Security personnel. On the third issue, women and children, ROW will focus on US policy regarding gender-based claims, the custody and care of separated children, program development with the US Government Office of Refugee Resettlement, and a focus on best practices regarding custody and care of separated children. The fourth issue is Statelessness, and US policy and practice. Lastly, ROW will focus on the impact of US anti-terrorism policies on asylum-seekers and refugees.

Caribbean –ROW will continue to promote universal accession in the region to both international refugee instruments, appropriate treatment of arriving asylum-seekers, and adequate contingency planning. ROW will also continue its advocacy for the adoption of refugee legislation in accordance with international standards and/or the adoption of workable *ad hoc* procedures/policies to benefit asylum-seekers and refugees. ROW will continue

dissemination of educational teacher materials through Ministries of Education and other means (Rotary Clubs, NGOs, etc), and will seek to strengthen the Honorary Liaison network.

Private Sector Fundraising - UNHCR relies increasingly on the private sector in the US for financial support for its global programs. ROW will continue supporting our national association USA for UNHCR's private sector fundraising activities of obtaining major gifts from individuals, corporations and foundations, specifically through providing guidance on UNHCR's policies and priorities. When appropriate, funds that are raised from the private sector through USA for UNHCR will be targeted to support projects benefiting refugee women and children's projects. ROW will also try to encourage fundraising for education projects for refugee children by utilizing resources within the teacher's network and encouraging American students to participate in raising funds for refugee children, such as supporting the "Lend a Helping Hand to Refugees" campaign.

Public Information - ROW aims to enhance media coverage and public awareness of UNHCR, refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs in the US, Caribbean and worldwide. A well-informed public encourages better protection and integration for refugees and increased levels of public/private financial support. ROW provides multi-media material daily to journalists, academics, private sector donors, educators, NGOs, universities, refugee and asylum groups and the general public. Through its education awareness project and its partners in the US and the Caribbean, ROW's network of educators continues to expand. Media trainings in the Caribbean are conducted to create better awareness of refugee issues among the press. ROW will organize World Refugee Day events in the US, and collaborate with external partners for public awareness activities. Whenever possible, PI will highlight to the media, educators and general public the plight of refugee women and inform them that the majority of refugees are women and children.

Management Structure - The extent and diversity of ROW's objectives and related activities make it critical that there be clear definition of responsibilities and an appropriate management structure. Recent forced staff reductions have also created functional gaps within ROW which require remedy. As of 1 January 2005, 2 new units have been created, Public Information and Caribbean. Both units will come under the supervision of the Regional Representative. A post of Roving Protection Officer has been requested for the new Caribbean Unit, with a view to increased and more mobile geographical cover. In addition, within the Regional Representative's Office, a request has been made for the creation of the post of a Liaison Assistant at the National Officer level. All post creations will be offset by discontinuation of selected existing ROW posts. Assessment and adjustments of the way ROW functions and the means available to effectively perform its functions will continue during the course of 2006.