

# Americas

North America and  
the Caribbean

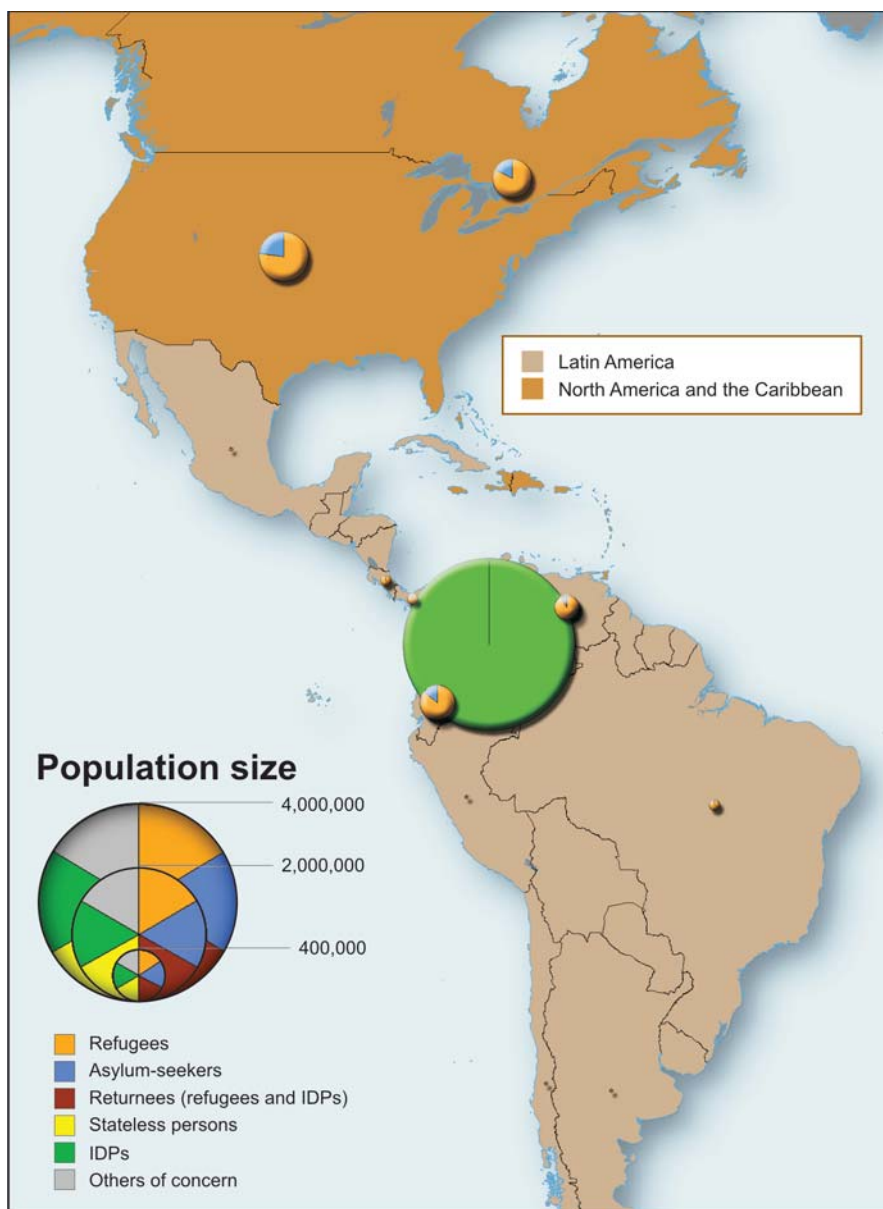
Latin America



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## Operational highlights

- November 2007 marked the third anniversary of the Mexico Plan of Action (MPA). Member States renewed their commitment to uphold and implement the Plan's principles.
- Colombia passed a law proclaiming 2008 the Year of the Promotion of the Rights of Displaced People. The law provides an accountability mechanism for the Government's implementation of legislation on internally displaced persons (IDPs).
- Ecuador launched a development and peace plan to address the humanitarian situation on its northern border.
- Paraguay and Uruguay signed on to the regional resettlement programme. A group of Palestinians became the first refugees from outside Latin America to be resettled in the region under the Mexico Plan of Action.
- Two more cities in Latin America joined the Cities of Solidarity network, which provides basic services and access to the labour market for refugees and IDPs.
- Projects in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela worked to stem sexual and gender-based violence. The projects strengthened national support networks; sensitized officials, refugees and the local population to the issue; and helped victims through vocational training, income-generation programmes, legal aid and psychosocial counselling.



aggravated diplomatic tensions between States, particularly over the situation in Colombia.

There has been no let-up in the humanitarian crisis engulfing Colombia. The Government registered more than 200,000 newly displaced persons in 2007 alone. Hardest hit were underdeveloped rural areas and ethnic minorities, as well as women and female-headed households.

## Working environment

The region's political environment was marked by institutional reform and the consolidation of democracy. However, political change led to internal unrest and

In recent years, the flashpoints in Colombia's internal conflict have moved from the country's central regions towards its border provinces of Arauca, Nariño and Putumayo, leading to massive displacement in these areas. The shift in the conflict has had an impact on the

country's neighbours, who have received up to half a million displaced Colombians.

The majority of Colombians in Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have not been registered by the respective governments. Most live in the poorer outskirts of urban areas or in rural communities in remote border regions. Between 75 and 90 per cent of them live below the poverty line. A growing number of Colombians have also fled farther afield: Some 50,000 have sought asylum in the southern regions of Latin America, in Europe and in North America.

In 2007, the United States was the world's top destination for asylum-seekers, receiving some 49,200 new asylum claims. Canada, where the number of asylum-seekers increased for the second consecutive year, received more than 28,300 new asylum applications.

## Achievements and impact

Based on its Global Strategic Objectives (GSOs), UNHCR's goals in the Americas were to:

- **Improve the protection of refugees, internally displaced persons and others of concern in Latin America through the Mexico Plan of Action (GSOs 1 and 2)**

Twelve countries in the region have applied the broad definition of refugee in the 1984 Cartagena Declaration in their national refugee legislation. Recently adopted refugee laws in southern Latin American countries protect women and children. In Ecuador, refugee children benefit from the national child-protection programme. Costa Rica established standard operating procedures to address sexual and gender-based violence and integrated HIV and AIDS prevention measures into national assistance programmes.

Colombia has a sophisticated legal framework for the protection of displaced people and a comprehensive assistance system. However, there is a considerable gap between the legislation and its implementation at the field level, as indicated in various judgments of the Constitutional Court and in UNHCR's evaluation of public policies. To address this issue, the Colombian Congress proclaimed 2008 the Year of the Promotion of the Rights of Displaced People. The goal is to strengthen legislation on IDPs, provide accountability for its implementation, and involve provincial governments and the private sector in helping the displaced. The Government also increased its 2008 budget for IDP programmes by USD 50 million.

In Colombia's neighbours, the challenge is to protect undocumented Colombians that are in need of international protection. UNHCR conducted surveys in Brazil, Ecuador and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in 2007 to estimate the number of Colombians in these countries, identify their protection needs, and design registration and documentation procedures. At the northern border in Ecuador, preliminary results indicate that between 60 and 70 per cent of some 80,000 Colombians are in need of international protection.

In the Caribbean, UNHCR conducted refugee status determination (RSD) for more than 100 asylum-seekers in nine countries. It also provided advice and training to governments on asylum procedures and visited detention centres to help identify asylum-seekers within undocumented migrant groups.

- **Attain durable solutions through the Borders of Solidarity, Cities of Solidarity, and Resettlement in Solidarity components of the Mexico Plan of Action (GSO 3)**

To promote the economic integration of Colombian refugees in neighbouring countries, UNHCR funded approximately 190 income-generation projects in some 100 communities. These benefited more than 230,000 people, both refugees and the local population, in border areas. In Ecuador, the Government launched a development and peace plan to address the humanitarian situation in four border provinces. The plan offers a new opportunity to improve the asylum regime and meet the needs of refugees and other displaced people while also benefiting host communities.

National and provincial authorities in Latin America continued to foster local integration and self-sufficiency in urban areas. The Cities of Solidarity network was expanded to 26 cities in seven countries with the addition of Rosario in Argentina and La Calera in Chile. Over the past few years, the Governments of Argentina, Brazil and Chile have gone beyond providing basic services to refugees; they have also increased funding to incorporate refugees into social programmes and facilitate their local integration.

Colombia strengthened public programmes and increased funding to protect and assist IDPs. In 2007, the Government consolidated its network for the attention and orientation of vulnerable people and surpassed its objective of registering and providing documents to 400,000 people.

In Costa Rica, a joint effort by UNHCR and local and international partners saw the House of Rights established in the municipality of Desamparados.

The House offers legal and psychosocial services to displaced people and the host community in order to promote coexistence and local integration. It also seeks to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence and HIV and AIDS.

The Resettlement in Solidarity programme is one of the best examples of cooperation in Latin America, and has provided durable solutions for many refugees from the region. In 2007, it opened its doors to refugees from other regions as well. Resettlement programmes were operating in Argentina, Brazil and Chile, and in 2007 a total of 233 refugees were resettled in these countries. The figure includes some 100 Palestinian refugees resettled in Brazil, while the rest are predominantly Colombian refugees. In June 2007, Paraguay and Uruguay also signed framework agreements on resettlement.

In order to support new resettlement countries, the Government of Norway provided capacity building for government officials, NGOs and UNHCR staff in Argentina, Brazil and Chile. Participants were trained in resettlement-related selection, reception and integration techniques.

- **Maintain high protection standards in North America by closely monitoring asylum systems in the United States and Canada (GSO 1)**

In the United States, there were achievements in ensuring that international standards of protection were met for people of concern to UNHCR, despite the focus on national security. Congress enacted legislation that expanded the Administration's authority to exempt refugees and asylum-seekers from terrorism-related bars. The law exempted some groups from being labelled as members of a "terrorist organization". The legislation did not, however, change the broad definition of terrorism which continues to negatively impact large numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers.

In Canada, UNHCR continued to advocate the highest possible standards in refugee protection. The Office made several recommendations on management and operational issues relating to asylum-seekers at land ports of entry. This led to better treatment and processing of asylum-seekers, as well as improved coordination between UNHCR and the Government on



Indigenous people and other minorities are disproportionately affected by violence and displacement in Colombia.

UNHCR/M.H. Verney

refugee issues. The year also saw an improvement in the conditions of detention for those held on immigration charges, particularly in provincial jails.

- **Increase North American countries' support for UNHCR's operations (GSO 4)**

The United States was again UNHCR's largest donor, with a contribution of USD 367 million. Canada contributed CAD 40 million, its highest donation in the last 15 years.

In 2007, the United States resettled some 31,800 refugees who were submitted by UNHCR. This represents more than half of the refugees resettled globally under UNHCR auspices. Canada surpassed its 2007 resettlement target by accepting some 11,200 people.

- **Strengthen partnership arrangements on refugee protection, internal displacement, mixed migratory flows and statelessness (GSO 4)**

In the spirit of the United Nations Humanitarian Reform programme, UN Country Teams in Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela worked together to support IDPs and refugees.

Twelve UN agencies are part of an inter-agency effort to assist and develop local refugee-hosting communities in the northern border areas of Ecuador. The inter-agency budget for this initiative was increased from USD 7.7 million in 2006 to USD 11.5 million in 2007, and more than 50 projects have been implemented. In 2007,

UNHCR also coordinated inter-agency efforts to boost contingency planning and emergency response capacity in Ecuador.

In Colombia, a total of 20 UN agencies and international NGOs participated in the Inter-agency Humanitarian Group. Under the leadership of UNHCR, the IASC Protection Group established local branches in six regions to improve protection in the provinces affected by the conflict, particularly in border areas.

In the Caribbean, UNHCR improved the capacity of government and civil society partners to identify asylum-seekers within migration movements and to ensure that they have access to asylum procedures. UNHCR continued to work with a network of NGO partners and honorary liaisons that supported the Office by assisting and counselling asylum-seekers, conducting RSD, searching for durable solutions, monitoring the media and reporting on arrivals and national asylum practices.

In Mexico, UNHCR collaborated with UN agencies, NGOs and government partners coping with mixed migratory flows in the south of the country, as well as unaccompanied or separated children and victims of trafficking. UNHCR's presence at the southern border was essential in ensuring that asylum-seekers within mixed migratory flows had access to international protection.

## Constraints

Some countries that have adopted the MPA still need to take a more active role to improve national asylum legislation and facilitate local integration. UNHCR also faces challenges in raising awareness of its work in the region. In Colombia, the ongoing conflict makes it harder for humanitarian agencies to reach affected communities, especially in rural and border areas. The problem is exacerbated by landmines in some areas.

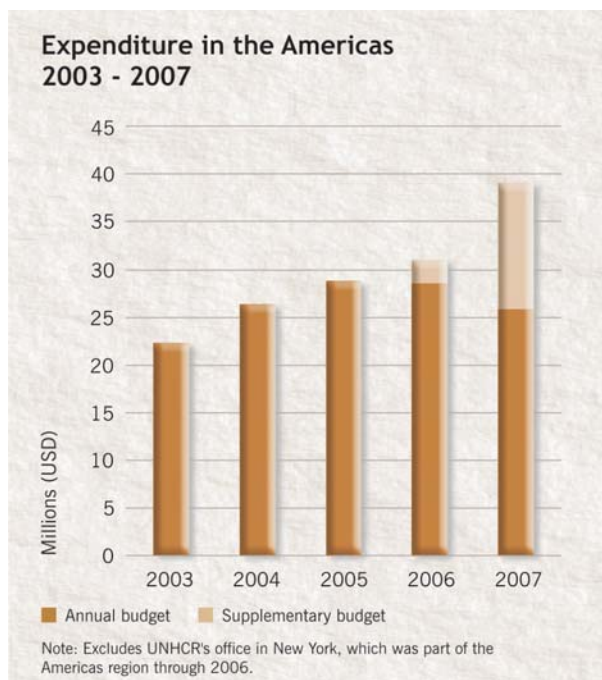
The preoccupation with national security in North America and in Colombia's neighbours hampers the protection of asylum-seekers and refugees. In the Caribbean, the lack of legal and operational frameworks

and the emphasis on migration-control measures poses constraints for UNHCR.

## Financial information

Contributions for Latin America have increased by 72 per cent since the adoption of the MPA. In 2007, countries in the region also gave financial support to the Plan. However, many of the needs of the large number of undocumented people in need of international protection in the region remain unmet. These include community-based local integration in the border areas affected by the Colombia situation; humanitarian assistance for individuals with specific needs; and self-reliance projects in urban areas and border areas. Furthermore, the sustainability of the regional resettlement programme will depend on adequate funding and the ability of the involved States to consolidate reception and integration mechanisms.

In Colombia and its neighbouring countries, UNHCR has expanded its operations in the past five years to protect the big number of displaced people. In other parts of the region, expenditure levels have remained stable.



## Budget and expenditure (USD)

Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	Annual budget	Supplementary budget <sup>1</sup>	Total	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
North America and the Caribbean						
Canada	1,697,865	0	1,697,865	1,673,945	0	1,673,945
United States of America <sup>2</sup>	3,799,126	0	3,799,126	3,780,983	0	3,780,983
Sub-total	5,496,991	0	5,496,991	5,454,928	0	5,454,928
Latin America						
Argentina <sup>3</sup>	2,696,031	80,482	2,776,513	2,684,424	52,946	2,737,371
Brazil <sup>4</sup>	2,591,391	533,010	3,124,401	2,573,305	499,581	3,072,886
Colombia	697,452	16,599,215	17,296,666	676,771	12,874,740	13,551,511
Costa Rica	2,005,493	0	2,005,493	1,995,559	0	1,995,559
Cuba	221,100	0	221,100	210,109	0	210,109
Ecuador	5,229,870	0	5,229,870	5,215,949	0	5,215,949
Mexico <sup>5</sup>	2,277,510	0	2,277,510	2,267,874	0	2,267,874
Panama	1,044,296	0	1,044,296	1,040,605	0	1,040,605
Venezuela <sup>6</sup>	3,667,318	0	3,667,318	3,662,948	0	3,662,948
Sub-total	20,430,460	17,212,707	37,643,166	20,327,545	13,427,267	33,754,813
Total	25,927,451	17,212,707	43,140,158	25,782,473	13,427,267	39,209,740

<sup>1</sup> Does not include a seven per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

<sup>2</sup> Includes legal assistance and durable solutions for asylum-seekers and refugees in the United States, as well as protection of refugees and capacity building in the Caribbean. In 2007, the budget for the New York Office was moved to the Executive Office, Headquarters.

<sup>3</sup> The annual budget includes local settlement in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, as well as resettlement in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. The supplementary budget includes resettlement of Iraqis from the Middle East.

<sup>4</sup> The supplementary budget includes resettlement of Iraqis from the Middle East.

<sup>5</sup> Includes local settlement in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Belize.

<sup>6</sup> Includes local settlement in countries belonging to the Colombia Situation.

## Restricted voluntary contributions (USD)

Donor	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
<i>Association française de soutien à l'UNHCR</i>	239,334	0	239,334
Brazil	30,000	0	30,000
Canada	423,729	2,244,828	2,668,556
CERF	0	1,302,000	1,302,000
Colombia	465,000	0	465,000
<i>España con ACNUR</i>	89,379	134,409	223,788
European Commission	1,920,666	3,237,655	5,158,321
International Olympic Committee	30,500	0	30,500
Japan	500,000	0	500,000
Japan Association for UNHCR	77,760	0	77,760
Luxembourg	341,997	318,057	660,055
Mexico	3,479	0	3,479
Netherlands	0	1,492,650	1,492,650
Norway	817,564	390,756	1,208,321
Online donations (Headquarters)	35,071	19	35,089
Pan American Development Foundation	0	38,634	38,634
Private donors in Canada	20,000	0	20,000
Private donors in Italy	12,814	0	12,814
<i>Stichting Vluchteling (Netherlands)</i>	773,979	0	773,979
Spain	1,610,919	2,509,396	4,120,316
Sweden	1,164,483	406,114	1,570,597
Switzerland	204,918	381,148	586,066
UNAIDS	100,000	0	100,000
UN Trust Fund for Human Security	306,252	0	306,252
United Kingdom	163,363	24,839	188,203
United States	7,083,651	2,470,869	9,554,520
USA for UNHCR	0	9,393	9,393
Total	16,414,861	14,960,766	31,375,627

Note: Contributions shown exclude indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions against supplementary programmes and the "New or additional activities - mandate related" (NAM) Reserve.