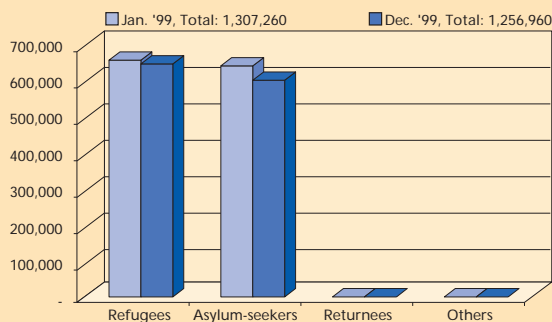


cies. UNHCR was concerned about the lack of an appeals channel for rejected asylum-seekers, and the inability of refugees recognised under the 1951 Convention, but without adequate identity documents, to obtain permanent residence status and therefore to reunite with family members and obtain refugee travel documents. The Office was in regular contact with the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to advocate for measures to strengthen refugee protection in Canada.

In the United States, UNHCR's protection advocacy focused on encouraging reforms to those aspects of the 1996 immigration legislation that adversely affect refugees and asylum-seekers. These include the "expedited removal" of undocumented persons arriving in the country, the increased use of detention of refugees and asylum-seekers, and the barring of access to asylum and non-refoulement protection for those convicted of relatively minor crimes.

The Caribbean nations received small but increasing numbers of asylum-seekers, both from within the region and from other continents. More than 500 persons sought asylum in the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica during the year. While small in absolute terms, the volume of asylum applications represented a challenge for the institutions and officials responsible for refugee status determination in these countries.

Persons of Concern to UNHCR



PROGRESS TOWARDS SOLUTIONS

The proposed reforms to Canada's immigration and refugee policies indicated that the Government would continue to place strong emphasis on resettlement as a means of providing protection and would reduce the role immigration criteria play in the selection of refugees for resettlement. A new Refugee Resettlement Model designed to achieve this goal is being implemented and an Urgent Protection Pilot Project was launched for the rapid resettlement of refugees with

critical protection needs. It is also hoped that the Canadian public's positive experience with the refugees from Kosovo will translate into renewed support for other refugees and revitalise Canada's private sponsorship resettlement programme.

UNHCR's monthly meetings with senior officials of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) facilitated progress on issues of mutual interest and concern. For example, UNHCR and the INS negotiated guidelines governing UNHCR's access to ports of entry to observe a critical stage of the "expedited removal" process at airports and land borders. The guidelines will be given to INS personnel nation-wide. The INS also made some improvements to its detention policies and practices and introduced Guidelines on Children Seeking Asylum that incorporate many of the international standards advocated by UNHCR. By the end of the year, two separate bills, one to limit use of the expedited removal procedure to migration emergencies and the other, to restrict the detention of asylum-seekers, had been prepared for Congressional action. Two encouraging developments were noted: the doubling of admission ceilings for refugees from Africa and the Middle East since 1998, and the increased availability of waivers for HIV-positive refugees seeking resettlement.

UNHCR focused on building the foundation for refugee protection in the Caribbean by promoting accession to international refugee instruments, and the establishment of national legal and institutional arrangements for asylum and assistance to refugees. A positive development in this respect was that St. Vincent and the Grenadines acceded to the 1954 Convention on Statelessness in May. UNHCR met government representatives of Barbados, Cuba, Grenada, St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, none of which have yet acceded to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. There were signs that certain countries might take this step in 2000 (Cuba was considering only the latter instrument) although, for some, the enactment of national refugee legislation was clearly not a priority. A sixth country, St. Kitts and Nevis, will be invited to participate in similar discussions in 2000.

OPERATIONS

In North America, UNHCR's legal and resettlement counselling staff responded to thousands of requests for information and advice from individual refugees and

asylum-seekers, lawyers, NGO staff and people seeking to reunite with family members through resettlement. The United States and Canadian resettlement programmes continued to account for more than two-thirds of all refugee resettlement worldwide.

UNHCR in **Canada** worked closely with the Government on the development of the new Refugee Resettlement Model and the Urgent Protection Pilot Project. Towards the end of the year, a more vigorous approach to public awareness was initiated, reaching out to the media, educators and potential partners in the advocacy community.

In the **United States**, UNHCR intervened as *amicus curiae* (providing advice as a “friend of the court”) before the United States Supreme Court in the case of *INS v. Aguirre-Aguirre*, which involved the exclusion of a Guatemalan asylum-seeker on the basis of his having allegedly committed a “serious non-political crime”. The Kosovo Emergency provided a tremendous stimulus to UNHCR’s educational, public awareness and private-sector fundraising efforts. A network of 2000 teachers interested in refugees and human rights issues was formed, and several hundred of them are already using teaching materials distributed by UNHCR. The United States Association for UNHCR (“USA for UNHCR”) raised close to three million dollars in private contributions for Kosovo.

In the **Caribbean**, countries facing increasing numbers of asylum-seekers have expressed an interest in codifying their current *ad hoc* procedures. UNHCR’s Caribbean protection network, which is built around volunteer honorary liaison persons in twelve Caribbean countries, has proven to be an effective, low-cost means of facilitating these efforts. UNHCR worked closely with the Director of Migration in the **Dominican Republic** to help eligible Haitian refugees integrate locally. Of some 939 Western Saharan refugees

in **Cuba** (who first found asylum in Algeria and later came to Cuba as scholarship students), 111 completed their studies and returned to their country of first asylum with UNHCR’s assistance.

FUNDING

UNHCR’s presence and work in North America and the Caribbean is covered under General Programmes. The overall shortfall in funding of these programmes in 1999 resulted in some limitations to government and NGO outreach efforts, as well as reduced participation in regional activities.

Voluntary Contributions – Earmarked

There were no voluntary contributions earmarked for North America and the Caribbean.



Budget and Expenditure (USD)

Country	Working Budget*		Expenditure*	
	General Programmes	Special Programmes	General Programmes	Special Programmes
Canada	937,937	0	907,183	0
Cuba	513,490	0	480,590	0
United States of America	4,278,704	50,000	4,268,075	50,000
Regional Projects	156,122	0	151,000	0
TOTAL	5,886,253	50,000	5,806,849	50,000

* Figures do not include costs at Headquarters.