

The Americas

North America and
the Caribbean

Central America and
Mexico

Colombia Situation

Southern South
America

Restricted voluntary contributions (USD)

Earmarking	Donor	AB
Americas		
	Online donations (Headquarters)	100
Sub-total		100
South America		
	Canada	877,193
	United States	2,266,898
Sub-total		3,144,091
Total		3,144,191

The Americas

Operational highlights

- UNHCR strengthened its protection capacity in Colombia by opening new offices in the country and leading the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Protection Cluster.
- The Office provided legal and social support to more than 400,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Colombia.
- A draft law submitted to the Colombian Congress to mark 2007 as the year of the rights of internally displaced people will bring displacement to the forefront of the national agenda.
- In Argentina and Uruguay, new refugee laws that strengthen refugee rights were passed in December 2006.
- Brazil decided to grant protection to asylum-seekers who do not meet the refugee definition criteria under the 1951 Refugee Convention, but who are in need of protection on humanitarian grounds.
- In the Caribbean, UNHCR conducted refugee status determination in nine countries and provided advice to two countries on the treatment of asylum-seekers. The Office strengthened its presence in the Caribbean by opening an office in Miami.



Colombia continues to be caught in an internal armed conflict which affects regional stability. The country has one of the largest populations of internally displaced people in the world. According to the Government's preliminary figures, more than 200,000 newly displaced people were registered in 2006 alone. More than half a million Colombians have fled across their country's borders, particularly to Ecuador, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Panama and Costa Rica.

UNHCR's assessment missions to the Amazon region in Brazil revealed the presence an increasing number of Colombians in need of international protection. Because of security reasons, Colombians are also going to other countries of the region, particularly Chile, Bolivia and Argentina.

In 2006, Colombian authorities, state institutions and humanitarian agencies reported many human rights

Working environment

The Mexico Plan of Action, adopted by 20 Latin American governments, is a continent-wide framework for the protection of displaced people. By adopting the Plan, governments agree to strengthen refugee protection and seek durable solutions for displaced people.

In 2006, several key elections took place in the region, some of which required close monitoring in case they gave rise to new refugee situations. Elections were held in Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Canada and the United States.

violations, including extrajudicial killings and disappearances. Recruitment of children by illegal armed groups continued, and many children remained out of school. Humanitarian problems were exacerbated by the presence of landmines.

An escalation of violence led to new displacements, particularly among indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Many communities remained trapped in the midst of the conflict without any solution in sight. The impact of the demobilization of paramilitary groups remained uncertain. New armed groups have formed and urban militias are still active in many cities. Aerial spraying of coca crops continued to be another possible cause of displacement.

In 2006, more than 50,000 people sought asylum in the United States, the highest number in any industrialized country. In Canada, the Government received some 23,000 asylum applications. Both countries had acceptance rates of between 30 and 40 per cent.

Achievements and impact

Based on UNHCR's Global Strategic Objectives (GSO), the Office's objectives in the Americas were as follows:

- **Improve the protection of refugees, internally displaced people and others of concern in Latin America through the Mexico Plan of Action (GSO No. 1 and 2)**

In 2006, UNHCR ensured that an increasing number of refugees, IDPs and others of concern, including several Colombians who had not sought asylum, could enjoy their basic rights.

Colombia has a sophisticated legal framework to support the humanitarian response, but there is a considerable gap between the legislation and its implementation, particularly at the field level. UNHCR's priority was to reduce this gap, especially in situations of new displacement. To this end, and following discussions with the Government, UNHCR expanded its field presence by opening new offices in Bucaramanga and Villavicencio. Furthermore, a draft law was submitted to Congress by a group of parliamentarians to mark 2007 as the Year of the Rights of Internally Displaced People.

In the Caribbean, the Office's immediate focus was to coordinate activities with concerned States in case of mass migration or refugee emergencies.

- **Attain durable solutions through the Borders of Solidarity, Cities of Solidarity and Resettlement in**

Solidarity components of the Mexico Plan of Action (GSO No. 3)

UNHCR supported local integration of refugees through self-reliance projects and their incorporation in public and private welfare programmes. In border areas, community-based projects were implemented to improve the living conditions both of people in need of international protection and host communities.

In February 2006, a meeting on resettlement in Quito served to strengthen resettlement in the region and was followed by concrete proposals to boost the functioning and the sustainability of the Resettlement in Solidarity programme. During the year, 117 refugees were resettled within the region to Argentina, Brazil and Chile. The main concern for the sustainability of the programme has been to ensure the successful integration of resettled refugees in their host communities.

- **Maintain high protection standards in North America, by closely monitoring asylum systems in the United States and Canada (GSO No. 1)**

Following UNHCR's monitoring report on the first year of implementation of the Safe Third Country Agreement, Canada announced the end of its "direct-back" policy. Under this policy, asylum-seekers arriving at land borders were sent back to the United States with an appointment for an eligibility interview in Canada at a later stage, without knowing if they would qualify for an exception under the Agreement.

Despite continued difficulties with terrorism-related bars to admission to the United States, which affected asylum claims and applications for resettlement, some progress was made in 2006. Several waivers of the "material support" bar to admission to the United States were issued for refugees from Myanmar. In Canada, UNHCR continued to advocate for high standards of refugee protection in asylum policy and practice. These efforts led to better treatment of asylum-seekers and processing of asylum claims, as well as to increased coordination between UNHCR and the Government.

- **Increase political support of North American countries to UNHCR's operations (GSO No.4)**

In 2006, the United States continued to be UNHCR's largest donor, contributing more than USD 329 million. Canada was UNHCR's eleventh biggest donor by contributing some USD 27 million.

The United States also remained the largest resettlement country in the world and became the largest asylum country among industrialized nations. UNHCR strengthened relationships with state refugee coordinators, resettlement NGOs and government



UNHCR / B. Heger

Altos de la Florida, a shantytown where many IDPs live outside Bogotá.

counterparts in the United States by participating in national meetings, conferences and regional working groups. Canada remained another major country of asylum and resettlement.

- **Strengthen partnership arrangements on refugee protection, internal displacement, mixed migratory flows and statelessness (GSO No. 4)**

An Inter-Agency Standing Committee mission visited Colombia in September to launch the Humanitarian Reform Initiative and activate the cluster approach. Three thematic groups were established under the overall leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator. As designated lead agency for the Protection Group, UNHCR coordinated a comprehensive needs assessment and promoted the establishment of regional protection groups in Nariño, Antioquia, Norte de Santander and Chocó.

UNHCR participated in regional meetings on migration issues. The Regional Migration Conference (the Puebla Process) and the Iberoamerican Summit in Montevideo in November 2006 adopted key protection measures to identify asylum-seekers and refugees within mixed migration flows. In 2007, UNHCR is looking forward to

strengthening its cooperation with the Southern Common Market (Mercosur).

Central America faced large and complicated mixed migration movements, with at least 500,000 people crossing the Mexican-Guatemalan border during the year. UNHCR worked with the Mexican Government to promote proper reception, identification and referral mechanisms along the southern border and coasts of Mexico. A mapping exercise on unaccompanied and separated children in migratory flows was carried out at Mexico's southern border to improve protection and assistance for them.

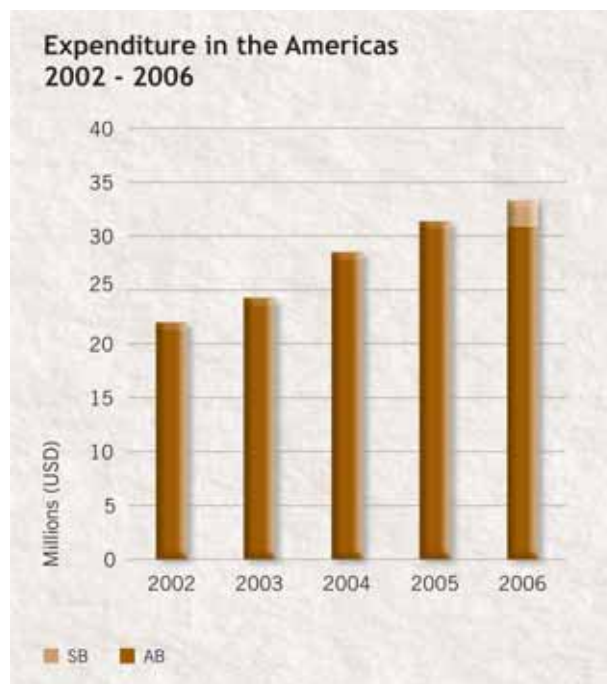
Constraints

Despite considerable progress in the implementation of the Mexico Plan of Action, countries in the region must make a greater commitment to finding durable solutions for displaced people. Governments have to translate political support into practical solutions, while UNHCR and its partners need to mobilize more resources. Furthermore, it has been challenging to maintain visibility for the humanitarian crises in Latin America and to keep refugees and others of concern to UNHCR on the national agenda.

Financial information

Due to the 20 per cent capping of budgets, important protection activities were postponed in countries hosting Colombian refugees. These included the reinforcement of registration capacities and the profiling of unregistered Colombians of concern to UNHCR. Support for host communities and local integration in rural areas, as well as microcredits for urban refugees, were also affected by the budget capping.

In Colombia and its neighbouring countries, UNHCR's operations have gradually expanded to strengthen protection, particularly in border areas and cities with the highest concentration of IDPs and refugees. Consequently, expenditure in the region has increased substantially during the last five years.



Budget and expenditure (USD)						
Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	AB	SB ¹	Total	AB	SB	Total
North America and the Caribbean						
Canada	2,055,958	0	2,055,958	1,669,177	0	1,669,177
Cuba ²	287,500	0	287,500	281,611	0	281,611
United States of America	4,280,643	0	4,280,643	3,557,220	0	3,557,220
UNHCR Office in New York ³	2,687,889	0	2,687,889	2,306,660	0	2,306,660
Regional activities ⁴	160,000	0	160,000	152,290	0	152,290
Sub-total North America and the Caribbean	9,471,989	0	9,471,989	7,966,958	0	7,966,958
Central America and Mexico						
Mexico	1,853,227	0	1,853,227	1,583,870	0	1,583,870
Regional activities ⁵	936,155	0	936,155	909,003	0	909,003
Sub-total Central America and Mexico	2,789,382	0	2,789,382	2,492,873	0	2,492,873
Colombia Situation (Northern South America)						
Colombia	8,146,735	4,112,150	12,258,885	7,268,217	2,543,791	9,812,008
Costa Rica	1,715,953	0	1,715,953	1,505,282	0	1,505,282
Ecuador	3,924,809	0	3,924,809	3,691,502	0	3,691,502
Panama	932,065	0	932,065	816,301	0	816,301
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	1,903,555	0	1,903,555	1,709,650	0	1,709,650
Regional activities ⁶	1,062,366	0	1,062,366	967,098	0	967,098
Sub-total Colombia Situation	17,685,482	4,112,150	21,797,632	15,958,050	2,543,791	18,501,842
Southern South America						
Argentina	912,105	0	912,105	820,517	0	820,517
Brazil	2,376,207	0	2,376,207	2,238,009	0	2,238,009

Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	AB	SB ¹	Total	AB	SB	Total
Regional activities ⁷	1,394,328	0	1,394,328	1,387,261	0	1,387,261
Sub-total Southern South America	4,682,641	0	4,682,641	4,445,787	0	4,445,787
Total Americas	34,629,494	4,112,150	38,741,644	30,863,669	2,543,791	33,407,460

¹ Does not include a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

² UNHCR's activities in Cuba are administered by the regional office in Mexico.

³ For a description of activities relating to the Office in New York, please refer to the Headquarters chapter under Executive Direction and Management.

⁴ Includes refugee protection and capacity-building activities in the Caribbean.

⁵ Includes material and legal assistance to refugees in Mexico and Central America, promotion of refugee law, strengthening national capacities and public awareness-raising.

⁶ Includes care and maintenance and durable solutions for refugees in Northern South America.

⁷ Includes local integration of refugees in Southern South America.

Restricted voluntary contributions (USD)			
Donor	AB	SB	Total
<i>Association française de soutien à l'UNHCR</i>	0	120,919	120,919
Australia for UNHCR	0	74,892	74,892
Canada	1,383,213	0	1,383,213
European Commission	3,662,265	637,755	4,300,020
Germany	310,559	0	310,559
Japan	300,000	0	300,000
Luxembourg	658,762	0	658,762
Mexico	1,748	0	1,748
Netherlands	1,386,000	0	1,386,000
Norway	342,458	296,625	639,084
Online donations (Headquarters)	704	0	704
Private donors in Argentina	54,841	0	54,841
Private donors in Canada	70,000	0	70,000
Private donors in Italy	330,491	0	330,491
Spain	970,040	1,645,967	2,616,007
Sweden	1,381,910	0	1,381,910
Switzerland	641,635	0	641,635
UN Trust Fund for Human Security	185,565	0	185,565
United Kingdom	224,634	0	224,634
United States	8,855,690	123,902	8,979,592
USA for UNHCR	251,000	0	251,000
Total	21,011,515	2,900,060	23,911,574