



# Southern South America

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## Recent developments

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Most of the countries in Southern South America face increased security problems, political instability and socio-economic difficulties which undermine democratic processes, and make it harder for them to facilitate the local integration of some 8,800 refugees and asylum-seekers.

Within the context of MERCOSUR (see glossary), Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay allow the free transit and residence of citizens. In 2004, Argentina signed a decree allowing undocumented immigrants from non-MERCOSUR countries to legalize their status in the country. Argentina and Chile are also in the process of adopting new refugee legislation. In the context of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, Brazil has presented a proposal to use resettlement as a means of supporting asylum countries in Latin America and of demonstrating support for the principle of responsibility sharing.

Argentina

Bolivia

Brazil

Chile

Paraguay

Uruguay

## Strategic objectives

UNHCR's main objectives in Southern South America are to strengthen national capacities and build local constituencies to reinforce the protection framework and the national refugee commissions, and to progressively transfer responsibility for international protection and local integration to governments and civil society. The Office will focus on fund raising and public awareness activities. In coordination with local authorities, UNHCR will monitor sensitive border areas to ensure respect for the principles of the right to seek asylum.

UNHCR will endeavour in 2005 to increase the number of people resettled to Brazil and Chile, and ensure their local integration. It is expected that Brazil will receive approximately 100 resettled individual cases, and Chile some 60 to 80. Resettlement opportunities in Argentina and Uruguay will also be explored. Durable solutions for long-term refugees will make use of employment and micro-credit schemes.

## Operations

In **Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay** and **Uruguay**, UNHCR will monitor State practices, provide expert advice on refugee issues, and facilitate the harmonization of regional refugee policies. The Office will encourage the incorporation of the broader refugee definition, as reflected



in the 1984 Cartagena Declaration, into countries' national law and eligibility practices.

As a follow-up to the 2002 MERCOSUR agreement on free transit and residence for all of its citizens, local integration will be facilitated for those who flee one MERCOSUR country and seek asylum in another. This will help to regularize the status of thousands of foreigners. UNHCR will monitor this process and ensure that safeguards are in place for refugees and asylum-seekers.

The Office will continue to emphasize the importance of identifying refugees and asylum-seekers within larger migration flows. UNHCR will monitor national authorities and agencies, providing them with legal counselling and information on refugee



Chile: Colombian refugee girls in their classroom. *UNHCR / I. Carmona and D. Guerrero*

issues, to ensure that refugees have access to eligibility procedures.

UNHCR will train its partners on protection and local integration, providing management tools to allow them to meet the needs of refugees more efficiently. UNHCR will expand protection networks through its contacts with a large number of universities participating in the Sergio Vieira de Mello University Chair. The Chair, which is sponsored by UNHCR and other international agencies, focuses on international refugee and human rights law. It is expected that through these additional contacts, civil society will progressively take on responsibilities related to refugee protection.

These networks will engage in advocacy on refugee issues, provide legal expertise, basic material assistance, and support – to enhance the self-reliance of refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR will also maintain regular contacts with other UN agencies, and plan joint activities, several of which will concentrate on raising public awareness of refugee issues.

The implementation and expansion of the resettlement programmes in Brazil and Chile depend on the appropriate selection of cases, the provision of technical assistance to NGOs, as well as the creation of local networks of public and private partners to assist in the integration of



refugees into their new communities. In 2005, UNHCR will support these initiatives, and Brazil and Chile will make efforts to create bilateral agreements with other resettlement countries. At the same time, coordination will be reinforced with resettlement programmes in Costa Rica and Ecuador, as well as with the Resettlement and Special Cases Section at UNHCR Headquarters.

In the Southern Cone, around 40 per cent of refugee needs are covered by national institutions. In 2005, UNHCR will urge NGOs to increase their support to cover refugees' initial and long-term needs, especially food and shelter.

Out of 8,800 refugees and asylum-seekers, UNHCR will facilitate access to basic social services for some 4,300 persons, some 35 per cent of them female. The Office will continue to mainstream gender- and age-specific needs into all activities which it supports. UNHCR will support HIV prevention and information campaigns for migrants and asylum-seekers, following the joint programme initiated with governments in the region in 2004.

In 2005, UNHCR will push for public information and public awareness activities, including media and television campaigns, newspaper articles and posters, to underpin the resettlement programmes in the region. The Office will coordinate a comprehensive media strategy, involving other agencies and government interlocutors, to improve the public image of refugees, and the accuracy of media coverage of refugee issues. UNHCR will also encourage implementing partners to publicize their work with refugees in various UN publications, and on the internet.

Asylum-seekers and refugees in Argentina will receive a comprehensive UNHCR handbook containing details on refugee status determination (RSD) procedures and local sources of support. The handbook will also be adapted for use in other countries in the region.

UNHCR will support efforts to enhance the visibility of the refugee problem. The pro bono support of advertising agencies in Argentina and Brazil will be instrumental in raising local awareness of the refugee situation worldwide. In 2005, UNHCR will expand its range of public information activities, through a pool of dedicated volunteers.

<b>Budget (USD)</b>	
<b>Country</b>	<b>Annual Programme</b>
Argentina	799,114
Brazil	314,339
Regional activities <sup>1</sup>	1,815,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,928,453</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes sums for local integration of refugees in Southern Latin American countries, as well as resettlement of refugees in Brazil and Chile, and scholarships for refugee students.