

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

In the Americas, there are a number of important frameworks for regional and subregional cooperation to protect and respond to the needs of refugees, the internally displaced and stateless people. In addition to the longstanding Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, two recent examples are the 2014 Brazil Plan of Action (BPA) and the 2016 San José Action Statement addressing protection needs in the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA). These frameworks not only provide concrete measures to meet the needs of displaced and stateless people, they also establish inclusive processes for pursuing durable solutions involving civil society stakeholders. Despite complex mixed movements throughout the region, which increase the financial requirements, countries in the Americas continue to show their solidarity by offering alternative protection solutions to people of concern.

The BPA is the primary regional framework for cooperation and responsibility-sharing, with 2017 marking the first triennium since its adoption. As requested by States, UNHCR will produce a triennial report on progress, challenges and lessons learned, in close collaboration with the Global Public Policy Institute of Human Rights from Berlin, with a view to identifying priority areas for the next three years.

Community leaders pose for a portrait at the Augusto Alvarado Castro Community Centre in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, where many people are displaced by gang violence.



The Americas



The San José Action Statement was agreed upon at the High Level Round Table discussing the “Call to Action: Protection Needs in the Northern Triangle of Central America” in July 2016. It is the first subregional framework in the Americas to include concrete commitments – by States, international organizations, national human rights institutions, civil society and academia – to address migration and displacement in and from the NTCA. UNHCR is committed to supporting authorities in countries of transit and destination to strengthen asylum systems and to provide opportunities for local integration, alternative pathways for admission, and resettlement. The Office will also support authorities in countries of origin in reinforcing national prevention and protection response mechanisms to mitigate the effects of displacement.

In an important development for the region, after four years of peace talks between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a final peace agreement was signed on 26 September 2016. However, the peace agreement was rejected by less than one percent of the vote in a public referendum held in early October. UNHCR has nonetheless welcomed the commitments made by the parties to maintain a bilateral ceasefire, to continue working to end the conflict and to build a lasting peace. It will closely monitor the evolving situation and support the Government of Colombia’s efforts to ensure protection and solutions for IDPs and refugees.

The region has experienced a notable increase in complex mixed movements in 2016. Recent northward flows, consisting mainly of Cuban and Haitian nationals, have resulted in a growing number of asylum applications. This has impacted asylum space and institutional capacity to respond to the protection needs of people of concern in several countries of transit and destination. In 2017, UNHCR will continue to promote a regional approach to this essentially regional phenomenon, coordinating with IOM and other relevant actors, and actively participating in regional consultative processes.

Several countries in the Americas have continued to demonstrate solidarity by offering solutions for refugees affected by global and regional situations, through increased resettlement places and other alternative pathways for admission, including humanitarian visas. UNHCR will continue to support authorities in establishing and enhancing resettlement programmes, including in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay. The organization will also share successful experiences and lessons learned, including with respect to Canada’s private sponsorship programme. Further, the Office will support the implementation of the new protection transfer agreement, under which Costa Rica will host vulnerable individuals from the NTCA while their asylum applications are processed by the United States of America.

MAJOR SITUATIONS

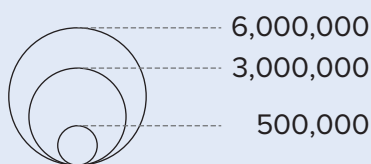
Colombia

The Office continues to promote solutions for internally displaced people through local integration, return and relocation programmes; as well as for Colombian refugees in the region, including through local integration programmes and, when conditions permit, voluntary repatriation programmes. Although peace talks led to a bilateral ceasefire, new displacement continues both within Colombia and across borders, mainly as a result of increased violence by illegal armed groups.

Interest in voluntary repatriation among Colombian refugees in **the Republic of Ecuador** and **the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** is expected to remain limited in the short term. Official figures from the Government of Ecuador indicate that a few hundred Colombians continue to arrive in Ecuador every month. The socio-economic situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is impacting the ability of people of concern to access basic services and meet their basic needs, such as food.



Population of concern as of January 2016



In 2017, UNHCR aims to assist the Colombian authorities to strengthen their capacity to protect and provide solutions for IDPs and host communities, and to implement the Victims and Land Restitution Law. It will work with Colombia and host countries, in particular Ecuador and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, to create and/or improve conditions to pursue durable solutions for refugees, including voluntary repatriation. Lastly, UNHCR will provide technical assistance to the Government of Colombia to strengthen national systems to protect conflict-affected populations and prevent further human rights violations.

Northern Triangle of Central America

In 2015, there were almost 55,000 asylum-seekers from the NTCA in North and Central American countries – almost twice as many as in 2014, and more than four times the number registered in 2012. Available data shows this trend has continued in 2016, with 30,900 new asylum applications by NTCA nationals registered in the Americas region between January and June, up some 48 per cent when compared to the same period in 2015. In response to this increasing protection crisis, UNHCR is scaling up its activities, including the promotion of regional cooperation to address emerging challenges.

Further, in July 2016 concerned States participated in the first High Level Round Table on the growing phenomenon of mixed movements, including forced displacement, in and from the NTCA. Convened by UNHCR and the Organization of American States (OAS) in Costa Rica, the meeting concluded with the adoption of the San José Action Statement, a comprehensive plan of action to: prevent and address root causes of displacement and migration in and from countries of origin; enhance asylum and protection responses in countries of transit and destination; and foster regional cooperation.

In 2017, UNHCR aims to establish and strengthen mechanisms for identification and referral of people with protection needs, including asylum-seekers and returnees; adequate reception arrangements; asylum procedures; alternatives to detention; and local integration and resettlement opportunities. It will support authorities in countries of origin to reinforce existing national prevention and protection response mechanisms to mitigate the effects of internal displacement, including welfare institutions for children and women, and ombudsperson's offices. UNHCR will strengthen the inter-agency response to displacement in the subregion, including by working closely with the United Nations Development Group in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNDG-LAC), alongside UN

Resident Coordinators. UNHCR will also continue leading existing inter-agency protection task forces and protection groups in NTCA countries and Panama, along with other stakeholders including UNICEF, UNFPA, OCHA, ICRC, IOM and international NGOs.

REGIONAL STRATEGY

In 2017, UNHCR will maintain its support to Latin American and Caribbean countries as they put into practice the strong framework for regional cooperation and responsibility-sharing provided by the BPA. As the BPA enters its third year, UNHCR will also support consultations among States and civil society that aim to reflect on progress, challenges and ways forward to enhance implementation.

Building a common asylum space

The Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI) is the primary tool used by UNHCR in the Americas region to support States as they seek to enhance the fairness and efficiency of national asylum systems. The Office will continue consolidating progress made under the QAI in Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama, and Peru, as well as expanding

the initiative to other interested States. UNHCR's "QAI toolkit" — an online platform containing a range of tools and good country practices — provides a useful reference point for the region and beyond. Good practices include: capacity building through twinning arrangements; familiarization visits by immigration authorities from countries of asylum to countries of origin; and the strengthening of the CONARE forum, which brings together the presidents of various national refugee commissions in MERCOSUR States with a view to harmonizing asylum systems.

Progressing towards solutions

With the conclusion of the Transitional Solutions Initiative in Colombia in 2016, UNHCR is undertaking several evaluation exercises which will provide a basis for further fine-tuning of its protection and solutions strategy and include lessons learned to be shared with the Government. In Costa Rica and Ecuador, UNHCR will continue promoting self-reliance and the legal and socio-economic inclusion of refugees in host communities, through the scaling up of self-reliance projects such as the "Graduation Model". The Office will also support projects that enhance the provision of documentation and legal status to refugees, with a view to including them in national administrative

and development services. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, for example, following a profiling exercise which will be finalized in early 2017, UNHCR will support the authorities in providing documentation to people of concern to facilitate their access to national services and entitlements, in line with the “National human rights plan”.

In Southern Cone countries, UNHCR will continue supporting efforts by central and municipal authorities to promote inclusive public policies and facilitating refugee integration and self-reliance through livelihood opportunities and partnerships with the private sector. Through the “Cities of solidarity” programme, UNHCR coordinates with municipalities to enhance integration opportunities for refugees, including those who have been resettled.

As global crises continue displacing unprecedented numbers of people, resettlement needs for refugees around the world have never been higher. UNHCR will continue advocating for increased resettlement opportunities, not only with traditional resettlement countries in the region like Canada and the United States of America, but also with emerging resettlement States in Latin America.

Ending statelessness

Latin America and the Caribbean was the first region to formally endorse the High Commissioner’s call to end statelessness by 2024 through the signature of the BPA. UNHCR’s efforts to address and

resolve existing cases of statelessness within the region will include a strong focus on the Caribbean; in other countries the main goal will be ongoing prevention. The Office will seek to ensure that all countries are able to identify, protect and eventually facilitate solutions for stateless people, including naturalization.

In Costa Rica, UNHCR will continue working with the Supreme Electoral Tribunal to enhance birth registration of Ngöbe Bugle indigenous people and transnational migrant workers of Nicaraguan origin, as part of efforts to eradicate the risk of statelessness in the country. The Government of Costa Rica has endorsed UNHCR’s #IBelong campaign, and regulations on statelessness determination procedures have recently been enacted.

Regional cooperation

Strategic regional cooperation is key to enhancing protection of and solutions for displaced and stateless people. In 2017, UNHCR will continue strengthening its cooperation with the UNDG-LAC; regional and subregional mechanisms such as the OAS, MERCOSUR, and the Central American Integration System; multilateral development banks; civil society; and the private sector. UNHCR will also enhance coordination with the various regional consultative fora on migration (the Lima and Puebla processes, as well as the recently established process for the Caribbean), to ensure that safeguards are in place to identify people in need of international protection travelling as part of mixed movements.

Solidarity with the Northern Triangle of Central America in seeking and implementing durable solutions

UNHCR's protection and solutions strategy for the situation in the NTCA is fully aligned with, and draws on key elements of, the BPA. It ensures that prevention, protection and solutions interventions are embedded within comprehensive efforts to address root causes of displacement, through existing national and regional strategies and taking into account the magnitude and patterns of displacement, as well as the profiles of displaced people. It aims to address the protection needs of three main population groups: asylum-seekers and refugees, including those in transit; returned people with specific needs and vulnerabilities; and internally displaced people in countries of origin, transit and asylum. There is particular focus on the specific needs of children, women, and LGBTI populations of concern.

Regional solidarity with the Caribbean for a comprehensive approach to international protection and durable solutions

In the Caribbean, UNHCR will continue with its strategic and innovative approach in addressing protection challenges.

In line with the launch in 2016 of the "Caribbean Regional Consultative Process", Caribbean States will meet regularly to strengthen cooperation and coordination in addressing complex mixed movements by sea, focusing on data sharing, exchange of best practices, and capacity building. UNHCR encourages and supports such initiatives, with special focus on twinning and other forms of State-to-State cooperation.

CONSTRAINTS

Increasing mixed movements in Latin America and the Caribbean are challenging the institutional response capacities of asylum countries, traditionally used to address smaller numbers and more homogenous types of claims. The numbers of asylum-seekers from within and outside the region are expected to keep rising in 2017. UNHCR will work with governments to ensure access to refugee status determination procedures for those seeking international protection, including through alternative case processing strategies. ■

Financial information

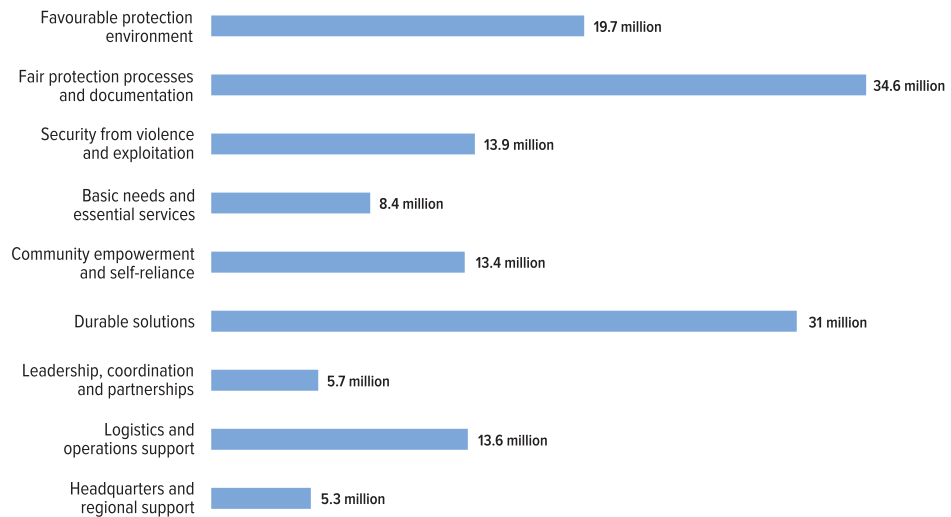
UNHCR’s budgetary requirements for the region in 2017 are \$145.6 million. While the budget for the Americas has remained relatively stable during the last five years, requirements increased by almost 20 per cent in 2016 due to the growing displacement crisis in the NTCA and the earthquake emergency in Ecuador. Notwithstanding the security challenges in the NTCA and the opportunities and challenges

in Colombia, the protection environment in the region remains strong and dynamic. The BPA and the San José Action Statement, in particular, are promising initiatives that require appropriate international support to assist States translate their protection and solutions commitments into practice.

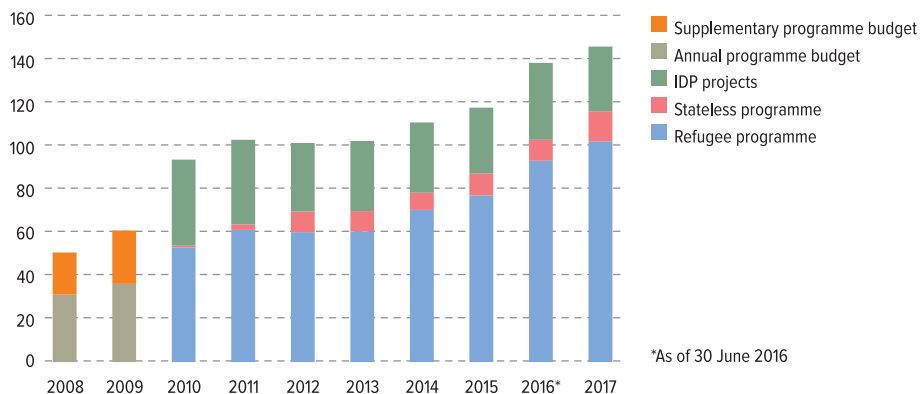
The most significant funding needs in the region are for UNHCR’s

operations in Colombia, Ecuador and the NTCA. The largest budgetary requirements relate to: improvement of reception conditions; improved access to quality status determination; and realizing the potential for local integration. Financial shortfalls will seriously affect the support that can be provided by the Office for implementation of the BPA, the QAI and multi-year protection and solutions strategies.

The Americas 2017 budget by rights group | USD millions



Budgets for the Americas 2008-2017 | USD millions



BUDGETS FOR THE AMERICAS | USD

Operation	2016 Current budget (as of 30 June 2016)	2017				Total
		Pillar 1 Refugee programme	Pillar 2 Stateless programme	Pillar 3 Reintegration projects	Pillar 4 IDP projects	
NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN						
Canada	1,530,119	1,593,006	165,235	0	0	1,758,241
United States of America Regional Office ¹	21,535,193	14,683,831	12,155,692	0	0	26,839,523
Subtotal	23,065,313	16,276,838	12,320,926	0	0	28,597,764
LATIN AMERICA						
Argentina Regional Office ²	4,739,876	4,649,331	125,073	0	0	4,774,405
Brazil	6,238,463	4,157,209	179,138	0	0	4,336,348
Colombia	31,433,551	971,256	0	0	26,868,265	27,839,522
Costa Rica	4,403,876	5,860,220	371,103	0	0	6,231,323
Costa Rica Regional Legal Unit	2,772,777	3,087,730	846,399	0	0	3,934,130
Ecuador	24,995,565	18,913,000	0	0	3,000,000	21,913,000
Mexico	12,429,043	17,877,287	0	0	0	17,877,287
Panama Regional Office	16,916,769	20,178,410	0	0	0	20,178,410
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	9,137,293	7,901,608	0	0	0	7,901,608
Regional activities ³	2,044,001	2,059,723	0	0	0	2,059,723
Subtotal	115,111,214	85,655,776	1,521,714	0	29,868,265	117,045,756
Total	138,176,526	101,932,614	13,842,641	0	29,868,265	145,643,520

¹ Includes Haiti, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, 12 Independent Caribbean States, three other CARICOM States, and British and Dutch overseas territories in coordination with the Europe Bureau

² Includes activities in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay

³ Regional activities cover entire Americas region