

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- At the December 2011 intergovernmental meeting marking the 50th anniversary of the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the 60th anniversary of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, States in the Americas pledged to improve refugee status determination (RSD) procedures, provide better conditions for women and children, and renew efforts to find durable solutions.
- Several countries in the Americas made significant commitments to the prevention and reduction of statelessness globally. Panama acceded to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions in June 2011, while other States pledged to ratify the Conventions.
- In June 2011, Colombia adopted a ground-breaking Law on Victims and Land Restitution, which aims to compensate victims of the armed conflict and establish a land restitution programme. However, some protection concerns in the implementation of the law remain.
- In Colombia and Ecuador, UNHCR has begun to implement a five-year plan to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Displaced women and girls in Colombia participated in a series of dialogues focused on the High Commissioner's Five Commitments to Refugee Women.
- Panama's National Assembly passed a new Law (81/2011), creating a legal mechanism for persons covered by the Temporary Humanitarian Protection regime to apply for permanent residence. The law is helping to end the protracted situation of some 860 Colombians living in vulnerable conditions in the Darien Panama-Colombia border region.
- In 2011 in Haiti, UNHCR participated in the protection cluster led by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and worked to prevent statelessness through birth registration and documentation projects in partnership with local grassroots organizations. UNHCR also supported the establishment of safe houses and income-generating activities for SGBV survivors.
- Costa Rica established an Administrative Migratory Tribunal to provide a second-instance review body for asylum claims, thereby aligning its procedures more closely with international standards on refugee protection.

Shooting a photo reportage about Doris Berrio, founder of the "League of Displaced Women", in Bogota, Colombia.



AMERICAS

| Working environment |

The prevailing political environment in 2011 in the United States of America prevented significant advancement in Congress on refugee-related legislation, although the country still took in 74 per cent of all refugees resettled by UNHCR during the year. However, stricter security-screening measures slowed processing and departures.

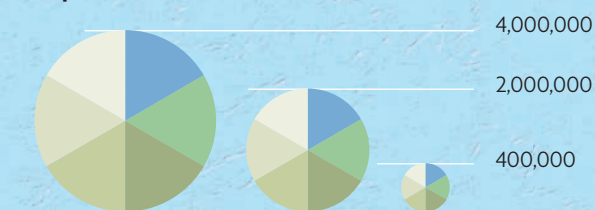
Displacement due to violence and conflict at the hands of irregular armed groups and criminal gangs plagued different parts of Colombia. More than 143,000 new internally displaced persons (IDPs) were officially registered in 2011.

Despite the Colombian Government's renewed efforts to provide solutions to displacement, including through the adoption of the Law on Victims and Land Restitution, returns may be hindered by difficulties in guaranteeing effective law enforcement and security. Furthermore, the spillover of the Colombian conflict into Ecuador and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela exposes refugees and host communities to higher levels of insecurity and has an impact on the delivery of protection.

The Mexico Plan of Action and the Brasilia Declaration continued to guide the strategies of all UNHCR operations in Latin America. The region has strong regional and national instruments for the protection of people of concern to the Office. Nonetheless, UNHCR faced obstacles as it tried to achieve its objectives because of States' growing concerns about national security; low recognition rates; and the establishment of pre-admissibility procedures. These challenges were compounded by a rise in violence, discrimination, xenophobia and risks of human trafficking vis-à-vis asylum-seekers and refugees.



Population size



Achievements and impact

Governments in the Americas played a significant role in the December 2011 intergovernmental commemorative event. Twenty-two delegations attended, with 15 States pledging to (i) improve RSD procedures and the situation of women and children; (ii) intensify the search for durable solutions, notably by strengthening commitments to use resettlement as a protection and solutions tool; and (iii) further the prevention and reduction of statelessness. This included pledges by Argentina and Colombia to ratify the 1961 Statelessness Convention; by Haiti, Honduras, Paraguay and Peru to ratify both Statelessness Conventions; and commitments by Brazil, Costa Rica and Uruguay to establish national statelessness-determination procedures.

Countries in the Americas continued to show their support for UNHCR's mandate by strengthening protection mechanisms for refugees, stateless persons and IDPs by acceding to the relevant international instruments, adopting advanced national legislation and protection mechanisms, and enhancing the search for comprehensive solutions.

Following a surge in the number of manifestly unfounded claims, Ecuador introduced pre-admissibility procedures to the RSD process. Ecuador continued to be the country in Latin America with the highest number of refugees and asylum-seekers, with some 55,000 individuals recognized as refugees. The country's Directorate General for Refugees estimates that up to 1,500 people cross the border from Colombia each month, putting a strain on efforts to comply with international protection standards.

UNHCR's advocacy contributed to the adoption in Panama of Law 81/2011, helping to end the protracted situation of some 860 Colombians living in the border region. Meanwhile, Central American countries have strengthened child protection with UNHCR's support, for instance through national authorities whose staffs have been trained to act as Child Protection Officers in Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Argentina adopted a protocol for the protection of unaccompanied minor asylum-seekers and refugees, involving governmental, NGO and UN partners. In addition, Argentina, Bolivia and Chile have now adopted standard operating procedures for the prevention of SGBV and protection of victims, and similar

procedures are being finalized in Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

In June 2011, UNHCR and OHCHR issued a joint advisory on returns to Haiti, appealing to governments to renew residence permits and other mechanisms allowing Haitians to remain outside the country on humanitarian grounds. The advisory also called on governments to refrain from returning persons with special protection needs to Haiti. A positive example of governmental action in this regard was Brazil's decision to award more than 400 permanent residence visas to Haitians who arrived in the country after the 2010 earthquake requesting asylum.

As the refugee population in the Americas is predominately urban (70 per cent), the Cities of Solidarity programme under the Mexico Plan of Action provides the ideal framework for the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers in the region. Through this programme, in recent years more than 50 agreements have been signed to facilitate the access of asylum-seekers, refugees and IDPs to education, health and employment services. In 2011 the city of Arica, in Chile, became the latest to follow this trend.

To promote local integration in line with its urban refugee policy, UNHCR has implemented public information campaigns to combat xenophobia and discrimination. These campaigns and initiatives include the Shoes Campaign in all the countries of the region, the Living in Solidarity Campaign in Ecuador and the *Convivir Con Tó! Es Vivir con Tolerancia* project in the Dominican Republic.

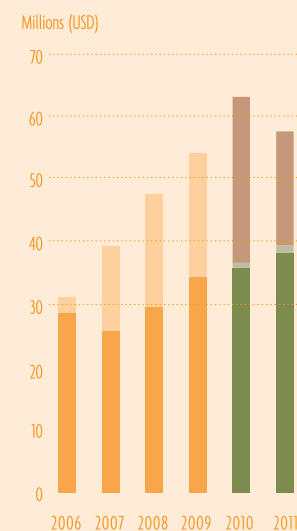
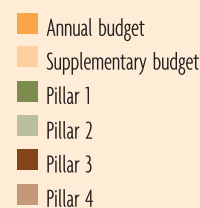
Resettlement continued to be promoted as a durable solution as well as a strategic protection tool, as in the case of extremely vulnerable SGBV cases from Haiti. In the United States and Canada, resettlement programmes are well developed thanks to the investment of substantial resources and a large pool of expertise in the area. The Solidarity Resettlement programmes in Latin America face greater challenges owing to constrained resources, although twinning programmes for Uruguay and Paraguay have enhanced expertise and capacities.

The resettlement of Colombian refugees has been highlighted as a priority in the 2011 Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement. For its part, UNHCR will continue to help strengthen and expand the Solidarity Resettlement programmes in the Americas.

Financial information

Funding gaps in some operations, such as Ecuador and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, affected UNHCR's capacity to support governmental efforts to improve RSD systems. The gaps have also curtailed income generation and community-based activities for promoting the integration of refugees. The restructuring of the Colombia operation and closure of the offices in Barranquilla, Barrancabermeja and Guaviare have reduced the protection afforded to people of concern by the presence of UNHCR in these areas.

Expenditure in the Americas (USD) 2006-2011



Note: Excludes UNHCR's office in New York, which was part of the Americas region through 2006.

While UNHCR welcomes the adoption in 2011 of the Law on Victims and Land Restitution in Colombia, implementation of the law may bring new challenges for protecting people of concern from violence and abuse at the hands of irregular armed groups or narcotics traffickers. As such, the use of voluntary repatriation as a solution will depend on the security and protection available in different parts of Colombia.

| Constraints |

The absence of significant progress in reform of the refugee protection system in the United States, together with the introduction of more security checks, delays in admissions and an increase in denials, hampered UNHCR's resettlement activities.

The protection and asylum space in some Latin American countries has also been

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE IN THE AMERICAS | USD

Country		PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	Total
NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN					
Canada	Budget	2,321,843	0	0	2,321,843
	Expenditure	1,871,665	0	0	1,871,665
United States of America Regional Office ¹	Budget	6,452,322	2,372,077	6,477,459	15,301,858
	Expenditure	5,573,635	1,106,965	1,863,358	8,543,958
Subtotal	Budget	8,774,165	2,372,077	6,477,459	17,623,701
	Expenditure	7,445,300	1,106,965	1,863,358	10,415,623
LATIN AMERICA					
Argentina Regional Office ²	Budget	5,689,938	188,018	0	5,877,956
	Expenditure	3,944,212	125,344	0	4,069,556
Brazil	Budget	4,762,519	0	0	4,762,519
	Expenditure	3,612,778	0	0	3,612,778
Colombia	Budget	891,090	0	32,567,240	33,458,330
	Expenditure	869,021	0	16,209,445	17,078,466
Costa Rica	Budget	2,388,301	0	0	2,388,301
	Expenditure	1,844,640	0	0	1,844,640
Ecuador	Budget	21,638,637	0	0	21,638,637
	Expenditure	11,368,334	0	0	11,368,334
Mexico	Budget	2,032,649	0	0	2,032,649
	Expenditure	1,634,431	0	0	1,634,431
Panama Regional Office ³	Budget	6,640,295	0	0	6,640,295
	Expenditure	3,568,476	0	0	3,568,476
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Budget	8,177,382	0	0	8,177,382
	Expenditure	3,856,484	0	0	3,856,484
Subtotal	Budget	52,220,811	188,018	32,567,240	84,976,069
	Expenditure	30,698,376	125,344	16,209,445	47,033,165
Total	Budget	60,994,976	2,560,095	39,044,699	102,599,770
	Expenditure	38,143,676	1,232,309	18,072,803	57,448,788

¹ Includes Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, 12 Independent Caribbean States, 3 other CARICOM States and UK and Dutch territories in coordination with the Europe Bureau.

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

³ Includes the Regional Legal Unit in Costa Rica.

shrinking with the introduction of restrictive RSD practices and pre-admissibility procedures, as well as a drop in the recognition rate. A hardening in public attitudes towards refugees, particularly Colombian nationals, has led to rising discrimination and xenophobia, more difficult living conditions for people of concern and fewer opportunities for UNHCR to engage in dialogue and advocacy with the authorities.

In Central America and Mexico, an increase in insecurity and displacement, due to intensified activities by transnational criminal

organizations, irregular armed groups and human smugglers and traffickers, has made it more difficult to deliver protection.

In the Caribbean, with a continuous flow of people travelling in small and often unseaworthy vessels which are intercepted or rescued at sea, maritime incidents remain a serious concern for UNHCR. The maritime environment in the northern Caribbean is extremely complex, and ensuring asylum safeguards in the context of interception and rescue-at-sea is very challenging. ■

VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE AMERICAS | USD

Donor	PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	All pillars	Total
Brazil			100,000		100,000
Canada			4,000,000	509,684	4,509,684
CERF			650,000		650,000
España con ACNUR	722,848		38,462	18,667	779,976
European Union	1,984,076	653,257	5,298,001		7,935,334
France			343,406		343,406
Lebara Foundation	141,443				141,443
Japan Association for UNHCR			1,854		1,854
Luxembourg	328,515		328,515		657,030
Netherlands				1,350,000	1,350,000
Norway			1,705,902		1,705,902
Private donors in Argentina			13,617		13,617
Private donors in Italy	62,993				62,993
Private donors in Switzerland			36,503		36,503
Private donors in the United Kingdom			396		396
Spain	1,182,654		1,799,683		2,982,337
Sweden			1,459,428		1,459,428
Switzerland			416,129	430,108	846,237
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights			100,000		100,000
UN Trust Fund for Human Security			149,372		149,372
United States of America	2,950,000	400,000		12,300,000	15,650,000
Total	7,372,529	1,053,257	16,441,268	14,608,458	39,475,513