A former Meskhetian Turkish refugee from Uzbekistan resettled with his family in the United States is now a US citizen and runs a thriving car repair business.

| OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS |

• Addressing statelessness was high on the agenda of UNHCR's operations in the Americas. Paraguay, Ecuador, Honduras and Jamaica ratified one or both of the statelessness conventions, while several more countries in the region are in the process of ratifying or acceding to the conventions. Documentation projects in Haiti and the Dominican Republic benefited thousands of undocumented individuals who were at risk of becoming stateless.

• Incorporating age, gender and diversity considerations into all programming was at the heart of UNHCR's protection strategy for the region in 2012. The provision of support for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) was made a priority in Haiti, Colombia, Ecuador and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

• While continuing to provide protection to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Colombia, UNHCR worked with UNDP to implement the Transitional Solutions Initiative (TSI). The TSI supports both host communities and IDPs in order to help the latter integrate into new communities.

• In close collaboration with the Governments of Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama, UNHCR implemented the quality assurance initiative (QAI), which aims to strengthen national refugee status determination (RSD) programmes. The primary goals of the QAI are to improve the quality of decision-making while upholding the integrity of asylum systems and harmonizing standards at the regional level.

• The revamping of the National Eligibility Commission (*Comisión Nacional de Refugiados*) in the Dominican Republic in 2012 was a leap forward for refugee protection in the Caribbean. The Commission is now able to process the backlog of applications of some 800 asylum-seekers awaiting status determination.

• Almost 60,000 refugees found resettlement solutions through UNHCR in the United States of America and Canada in 2012. These two countries accepted over 80 per cent of all those resettled during the year. In an effort to boost protection and find solutions for the most vulnerable persons of concern, UNHCR in Ecuador submitted twice as many resettlement applications for Colombian refugees in 2012 as it had the year before.

AMERICAS

NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

LATIN AMERICA

- Refugees
- Asylum-seekers
- Returnees (refugees and IDPs)
- Stateless people
- Internally displaced people (IDPs)
- Others of concern

Population size

4,000,000

2,000,000

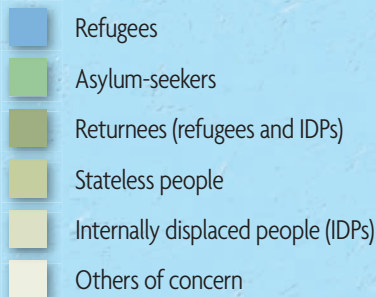400,000

Working environment

The outcome of elections in many States of the region, such as the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, the United States, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, allowed for the continuation of good working relationships with confirmed administrations, as well as the opening up of several new opportunities to enhance refugee protection in the Americas.

In 2012, Colombia established the institutional and administrative structures required to implement the Law on Victims and Land Restitution. However, registration of victims under this law met with delays and inconsistencies that UNHCR is working to help rectify. The initiation of promising dialogue between the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC) and the Government has raised hopes for an end to the long-lasting conflict. The successful implementation of the TSI, aimed at fostering the integration of IDPs, is another potential avenue for solutions. Nevertheless, new displacement continued in 2012, affecting large numbers of persons both within Colombia, as well as into neighbouring countries.
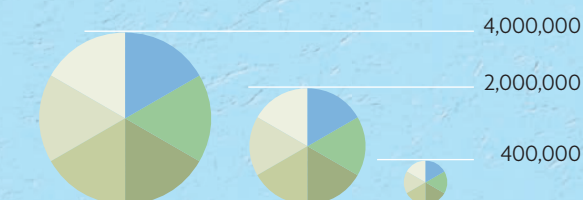
UNHCR continues to be concerned by the increasing number of maritime incidents arising from people travelling in often unseaworthy vessels that are frequently intercepted or rescued at sea. The maritime environment in the northern Caribbean remained extremely complex, and ensuring asylum safeguards in the context of interception and rescue at sea is an ongoing challenge. In 2012, there were record-breaking numbers of interceptions and interdictions, especially of Haitian and Cuban nationals. The US Coast Guard alone intercepted more than 2,200 people at sea, while hundreds more were picked up in the waters of other Caribbean States and territories.

The Central American countries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras are experiencing the effects of displacement due to national and transnational organized crime. While the issue is being addressed from a security angle, the humanitarian and protection perspectives require additional attention.

| Achievements and impact |

UNHCR's operations in the Americas helped advance its Global Strategic Priorities in the following areas: (i) advocacy for the respect of international standards; (ii) prevention and reduction of statelessness through accession to international instruments and documentation of the most vulnerable cases; (iii) strengthening of SGBV response and child protection programmes; and (iv) intensification of the search for durable solutions.

More than 52,000 refugees were resettled in the United States, where UNHCR promoted full integration, especially for women at risk. Although Canada's resettlement quota was not quite reached, mainly due to the closure of its embassy in Damascus, almost 10,000 refugees were resettled in the country. Canada also provided third-country solutions for some of the most vulnerable victims of SGBV in Haiti.

The number of large-group displacements in Colombia resulting from violence by illegal non-State actors rose in 2012, sending a continuous outflow of individuals from affected areas into Ecuador and requiring UNCHR to focus on the humanitarian needs of the newly displaced. Meanwhile, successes in Colombia included the implementation of the TSI at five initial sites and the increase in processed cases related to land restitution and compensation for victims.

UNHCR's comprehensive solutions strategy in Ecuador gave priority to improving documentation for refugees and asylum-seekers and supporting local integration by advocating for the allocation of residence permits or naturalization. Given the predominantly urban nature of the refugee population in Ecuador, UNHCR'S community outreach interventions helped enhance communication with persons of concern and adjust assistance to meet their changing needs. Particular attention was given to programmes fostering self-reliance and integration of refugees.

A presidential decree in December 2012 brought into effect a new law on refugee protection in the Plurinational State of Bolivia. The new statute is an important step forward in bringing the country's legislation into compliance with international standards, particularly with respect to the *non-refoulement* principle, as well as child protection.

Welcome progress was noted in several countries where age, gender and diversity considerations are being included in national systems. Brazil, for example, increased recognition of refugee status to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex individuals. Costa Rica now accepts gender-based persecution as grounds for recognition. Women who were victims of human trafficking are also recognized under national refugee protection standards.

Advocacy for the screening and profiling of asylum-seekers and refugees, the promotion of alternatives to detention and the building of capacity to avert *refoulement* were at the centre of UNHCR's strategy for the Caribbean. The organization's interventions resulted in the release of at least 35 asylum-seekers from detention in various Caribbean countries, with members of the UNHCR Honorary Liaison

network securing shelter and assistance upon release. UNHCR also performed RSD for more than 120 cases and referred for resettlement almost 100 cases.

UNHCR lobbied the Cuban authorities to assess the asylum claims of almost 50 Syrians fleeing conflict and violence in their country. All were subsequently accepted for resettlement.

In 2012, changes in the Constitution of Haiti allowed Haitians to hold dual nationality and introduced the possibility of nationality being reacquired by those who had lost it. Haiti is currently drafting a revised nationality law that will reduce the risk of statelessness. UNHCR implemented a number of projects related to granting of birth certificates as well as supporting submissions for identity documents.

Positive developments in the Dominican Republic were the reactivation of the National Eligibility Commission, the adjudication of some pending cases and the strengthened efforts to prevent statelessness among undocumented individuals of Haitian descent.

Mexico developed a child protection strategy and became one of the pilot countries for the implementation of UNHCR's Framework on the Protection of Children. Mexico demonstrated progress in this area with the introduction of the Migration Law and the Refugee and Complementary Protection Law, which both require the authorities to determine and uphold the best interests of the child in all decisions they make on his or her behalf.

Under the auspices of Brazil's Ministry of Justice, UNHCR launched formal consultations with MERCOSUR members and associated States on the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration. The consultations were held in November 2012 in the city of Fortaleza, with the participation of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Participating States discussed gaps and challenges in the field of international protection, and agreed to commemorate the Cartagena Declaration's 30th anniversary in December 2014 by adopting a plan of action to address those challenges.

| Constraints |

The security situation remained volatile in some parts of the region, with Central America falling prey to the increase in the activities of national and transnational criminal organizations, including local gangs, drug cartels, human traffickers and smugglers. Security was a major preoccupation in the countries bordering Colombia. Access, and therefore the ability of UNHCR to provide adequate protection and assistance, to persons of concern remained challenging, especially in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The security of the staff of UNHCR and partner organizations was also a concern in some operations. In Haiti, political violence and several instances of kidnapping of international aid workers added to an already difficult operational environment.
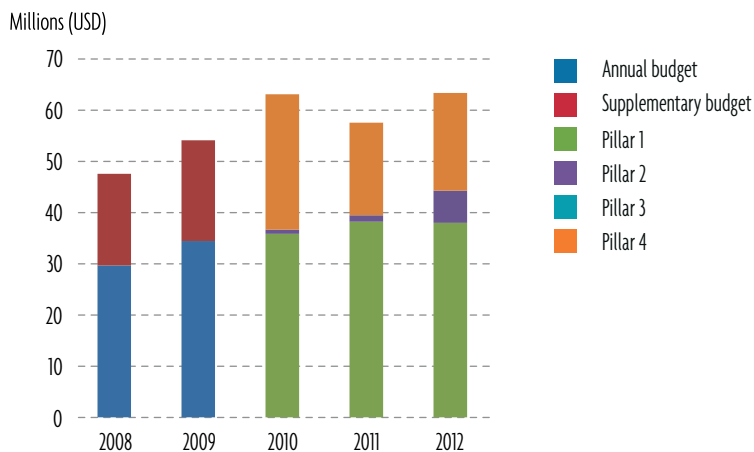
Canada adopted the Protecting Canada's Immigration Systems Act in 2012. The Act introduced a number of provisions, including an appeal procedure, measures to discourage human smuggling, and the safe country concept. It also reduced the time required for processing asylum claims. Ecuador's Decree 1182 introduced pre-admissibility procedures based on tight timelines for asylum applications and more restrictions to admissibility based on grounds of criminality. Decree 1182 also marked the abandonment of the extended definition of "refugee" in the Cartagena Declaration. While the Decree was intended to uphold the integrity of asylum, these measures may make it difficult for asylum-seekers to access international protection.

Widespread xenophobia and racism throughout the region continued to plague Colombian asylum-seekers and refugees as well as individuals of Haitian descent. Prejudice against these populations hindered their access to employment, microcredit and livelihood opportunities. In certain instances, they were denied access to education, health care and other basic services. ■

Financial information

UNHCR'S requirements in the region have remained constant for the past five years. The final budget stood at USD 101 million. Total funds available reached just USD 63.2 million. This funding shortfall affected the 2012 TSI programme, many components of which could only be implemented at the start of 2013. While UNHCR continued to reinforce protection and solutions activities for urban refugees, the scattered nature of the populations of concern and the high cost of assisting them meant that many needs could not be met. The operations most affected by the financial constraints were Colombia, Ecuador and Panama.

Expenditure in the Americas 2008-2012

Millions (USD)

Legend:
- Annual budget
- Supplementary budget
- Pillar 1
- Pillar 2
- Pillar 3
- Pillar 4

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE IN THE AMERICAS | USD

Operation		Pillar 1 Refugee programme	Pillar 2 Stateless programme	Pillar 4 IDP projects	Total
NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN					
Canada	Budget	1,440,845	152,427	0	1,593,272
	Expenditure	1,439,963	142,826	0	1,582,789
United States of America Regional Office[1]	Budget	7,316,786	9,492,805	3,203,654	20,013,245
	Expenditure	4,921,684	6,118,673	1,991,868	13,032,225
Subtotal	Budget	8,757,631	9,645,232	3,203,654	21,606,517
	Expenditure	6,361,647	6,261,499	1,991,868	14,615,014
LATIN AMERICA					
Argentina Regional Office	Budget	4,415,384	0	0	4,415,384
	Expenditure	3,763,087	0	0	3,763,087
Brazil	Budget	4,616,202	0	0	4,616,202
	Expenditure	2,581,376	0	0	2,581,376
Colombia	Budget	1,039,539	0	28,353,219	29,392,758
	Expenditure	885,555	0	17,084,575	17,970,130
Costa Rica	Budget	2,832,391	0	0	2,832,391
	Expenditure	2,011,931	0	0	2,011,931
Ecuador	Budget	21,100,405	0	0	21,100,405
	Expenditure	12,693,093	0	0	12,693,093
Mexico	Budget	2,990,011	0	0	2,990,011
	Expenditure	1,628,675	0	0	1,628,675
Panama Regional Office[2]	Budget	5,129,961	0	0	5,129,961
	Expenditure	3,744,835	0	0	3,744,835
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Budget	9,053,633	0	0	9,053,633
	Expenditure	4,241,324	0	0	4,241,324
Subtotal	Budget	51,177,526	0	28,353,219	79,530,745
	Expenditure	31,549,876	0	17,084,575	48,634,451
Total	**Budget**	59,935,157	9,645,232	31,556,873	**101,137,262**
	Expenditure	37,911,523	6,261,499	19,076,443	**63,249,465**

[1] Includes 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 the Regional Legal Unit in Costa Rica.

VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE AMERICAS | USD

Donor	Pillar 1 Refugee programme	Pillar 2 Stateless programme	PIllar 4 IDP projects	All pillars	Total
Argentina	126,000				126,000
Brazil				550,000	550,000
Canada			1,876,173	3,309,930	5,186,102
Central Emergency Response Fund			887,375		887,375
Charities Aid Foundation				93	93
Colombia	1,000,000				1,000,000
España con ACNUR	687,451		47,970		735,421
European Union	2,070,088	5,160,317	3,939,306		11,169,710
France			338,600		338,600
Holy See			5,000		5,000
International Olympic Committee	4,184				4,184
Luxembourg				466,667	466,667
Norway			1,698,114		1,698,114
Spain			1,442,605		1,442,605
Sweden	52,844		1,454,294		1,507,138
Switzerland				1,088,139	1,088,139
United Nations Population Fund			98,431		98,431
United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security			62,238		62,238
United States of America	378,603			18,400,000	18,778,603
USA for UNHCR	50,000				50,000
Total	4,369,171	5,160,317	11,850,105	23,814,829	**45,194,421**

Note: Includes indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions to Pillars 3 and 4, supplementary budgets and the "New or additional activities – mandate-related" (NAM) Reserve