Young refugees attending a protection workshop in Elias Pina, Dominican Republic.

AMERICAS

| WORKING ENVIRONMENT |

Despite the existence of strong regional and national laws and regulations on the rights of refugees and the internally displaced in the Americas, certain trends in the region could affect the protection space for people of concern to UNHCR in 2013. Difficulties in access to territory, the establishment of pre-admissibility procedures, and low-recognition rates conspire to make it hard for those deserving asylum to gain access to their rights. The preoccupation of States with national security has also partially closed the door to those who have had to flee their home. In some countries, violent drug-trafficking, poverty and inequality pose additional challenges.

Yet UNHCR has also received considerable support from governments in the region in fulfilling its mandate. The UNHCR-sponsored intergovernmental commemorative event in Geneva in December 2011 saw several States in the region pledge to improve refugee status determination (RSD) procedures; strengthen the protection of women and children; intensify the search for durable solutions; and reduce the incidence of statelessness, including by ratifying the statelessness conventions. In 2012, UNHCR helped many Governments to fulfil these commitments, and it will continue to do so in 2013. UNHCR is studying the appropriate legal and policy responses to assist governments in countries plagued by extreme levels of violence, poverty and criminality, all of which generate forced displacement.

| Strategic objectives |

In 2013, UNHCR will closely monitor protection- and solutions-related legislative and operational developments across the Americas region. Wherever necessary, it will take prompt action to promote the adoption and implementation of the highest protection standards and the realization of the most suitable durable solutions for people of concern to the Office.

UNHCR's strategy in the Americas, in line with the Global Strategic Priorities for the biennium 2012-2013, will focus particularly on:

○ *Maintaining the quality of protection*

UNHCR will advocate for the rights of people of concern to be recognized in law and in practice, with emphasis on ensuring access to territorial protection and asylum procedures. It will work with Governments to find alternatives to detention and promote the adoption of nationality laws and practices that prevent and/or reduce statelessness.

In the Caribbean, UNHCR will strengthen its partnership with the Red Cross and other members of the Honorary Liaison Network in order to increase effective access to protection and respect for refugee rights.

○ *Promoting the adoption of protection-sensitive policies in the context of mixed migration movements*

UNHCR will work with Governments in the region to ensure that protection safeguards are implemented in mixed migratory movements, particularly in the Caribbean and Central America. Operational coverage of the subregion has been strengthened by an increase in the number of field missions; the expansion of monitoring of detention and maritime incidents; enhanced support to, and oversight of, NGO partners; improved needs assessment; and an increase in direct material assistance to refugees.

○ *Assessing trends and patterns of violence, displacement and protection gaps caused by the so-called new forms of violence*

In Central America, an increase in insecurity and displacement due to the activities of transnational criminal organizations and human smugglers and traffickers will heighten the protection needs of affected populations, in addition to making it more difficult to deliver protection. UNHCR will work with Governments and civil society to overcome these challenges.

○ *Strengthening the incorporation of the Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) approach in all protection and operational activities*

The AGDM approach will continue to be one of the strategic priorities for UNHCR in the Americas. Through advocacy and awareness raising with local, national and regional authorities, UNHCR will make sure that AGD considerations are deeply rooted in all its activities in the region.
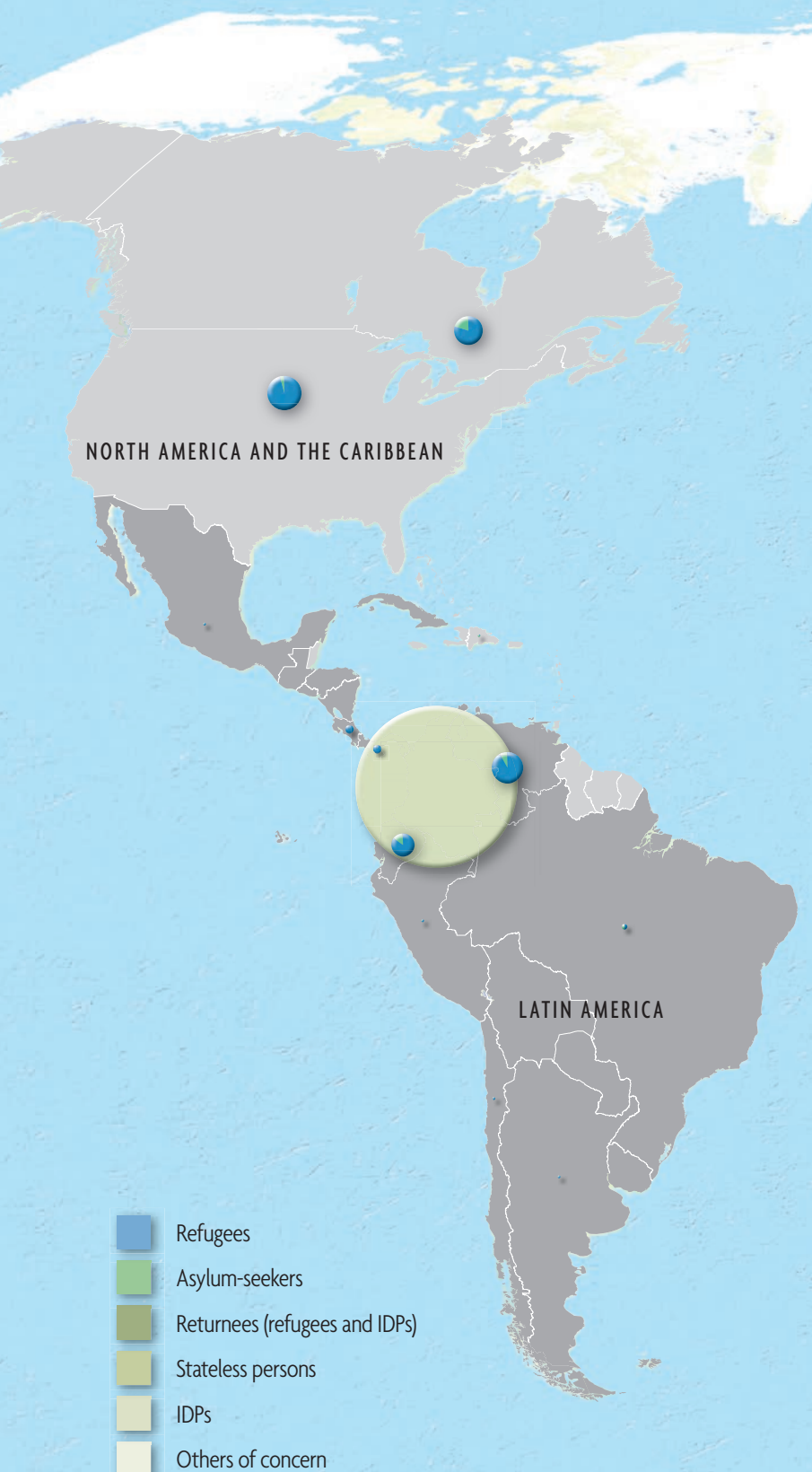
Moreover, UNHCR will promote effective protection, prevention, identification and response mechanisms to combat sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and support for victims. In addition, specific protection programmes will take into consideration the needs of children, adolescents, women, men, people of African descent, indigenous groups, those people with specific needs, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals. All activities will be conducted within a rights-and community-based framework and with the aid of strategic partnerships.

○ *Developing and achieving comprehensive solutions for persons of concern*

In 2013, UNHCR will define and implement comprehensive solutions that focus on permanent residence and naturalization for people of concern. The search for resettlement will continue and urgent cases requiring immediate attention will be proposed for emergency resettlement. Throughout, the needs and resources of host communities will be taken into account.

In Canada, UNHCR will provide technical advice and support, as required, on the implementation of the new *Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act.* In the United States, UNHCR will work closely with the Government in the areas of protection of children, alternatives to detention and compliance with international standards on refugee law. In the Caribbean, there will be a strong focus on the prevention and reduction of statelessness and other nationality issues, mainly through birth registration and documentation. Protection safeguards in mixed migration, alternatives to detention and capacity building will be also prioritized in this subregion.

In Latin America, the Mexico Plan of Action and the Brasilia Declaration will continue to guide the strategies of all operations.

NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

LATIN AMERICA

Refugees

Asylum-seekers

Returnees (refugees and IDPs)

Stateless persons

IDPs

Others of concern

UNHCR in Colombia will continue to ensure that IDPs, refugees and people at risk of displacement fully enjoy their rights under Colombian and international law. The potential for durable solutions raised by the Law on Victims and Land Restitution adopted in June 2011 will be looked into as long as the displacement of communities at risk can be prevented and the protection of those who reclaim their lands can be ensured in the long term.
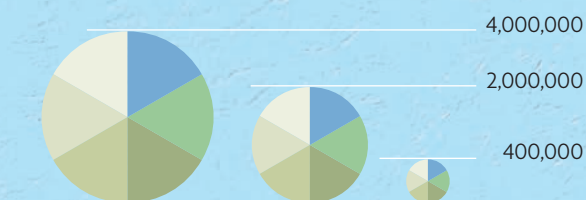
The Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI) in RSD will continue in Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama. Efforts will also be made to create a QAI model tailored to the region.

Ecuador remains the country with the largest refugee population in the region. The Government's efforts to assist the refugees have come under enormous pressure from the large numbers of new arrivals, leading to the introduction of restrictive measures affecting the asylum process. To address this situation, UNHCR will advocate for greater access to the asylum system and help those trying to gain it, with a particular emphasis on helping urban refugees to receive affordable health, education and other essential services while ensuring dignified livelihoods.

The Solidarity Resettlement programme remains a fundamental pillar of the durable solutions strategy for Latin American countries. UNHCR will work with participating countries to strengthen the programme and expand the resettlement of refugees from the region.

Regional strategic partnerships with the Organization of American States, the Regional Conference on Migration (Puebla Process), the South American Conference on Migration, and MERCOSUR will be pursued.

Population size (as of January 2012)

4,000,000

2,000,000

400,000

Financial information

In 2013, the comprehensive needs identified in the region call for a budget of USD 101.7 million, practically the same level as the revised 2012 budget (as of 30 June 2012).

Capacity building and a steady growth in staffing in the areas of protection, statelessness, SGBV, project control, programme and data management will be maintained in 2013. The sustainability of these positions is key to the effective implementation of UNHCR's mandate in the region. New opportunities for promoting solutions for Colombian IDPs should result from the UNHCR-UNDP Transition Solutions Initiative project. This multi-year endeavour remains underfunded and requires the support of the international community.

| Challenges |

While the region has strong regional and national instruments for the protection of people of concern, challenges to UNHCR's ability to achieve its strategic objectives in the region include: growing concerns of States over national security issues; low-refugee recognition rates; the establishment of pre-admissibility procedures; increasing levels of violence, discrimination and xenophobia; and rising instances of human trafficking.

Elections taking place in 2012 in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Mexico and the United States may offer a new political landscape in 2013 with new challenges and new opportunities.
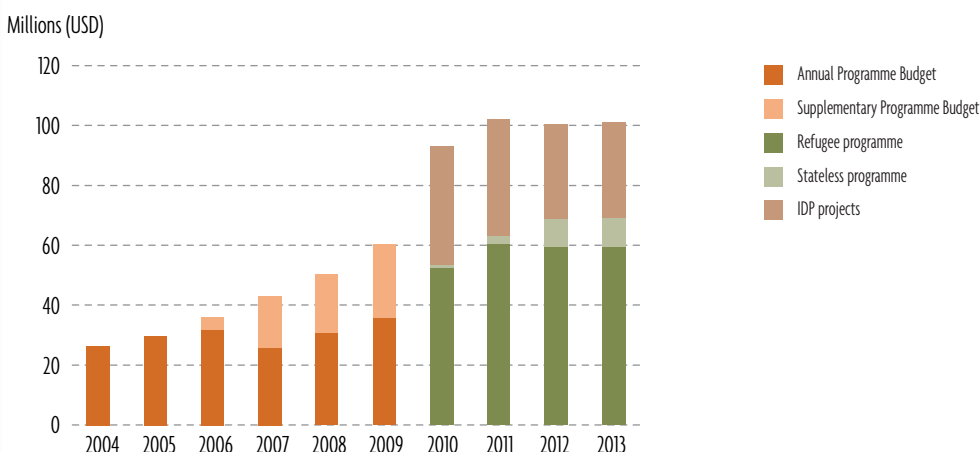
Increased insecurity and displacement due to intensification of transnational criminal organizations' activities will have an impact on persons of concern, particularly in the Caribbean, Central America and Mexico, where UNHCR will have to ensure protection of people of concern in a more complex environment and in a context of mixed migratory movements.

In the Caribbean, maritime incidents continue to be a concern for UNHCR due to the continuous flow of people travelling in small and often unseaworthy vessels which are intercepted or rescued at sea. The maritime environment in the northern Caribbean is extremely complex, and ensuring asylum safeguards in the context of interception and rescue-at-sea remains a challenge.

In Colombia, despite the Victims and Land Restitution Law, displacement continues to occur in certain regions due to the presence of illegal armed groups and criminal organizations. The potential for return may be hindered by a lack of effective guarantees of law enforcement control and security. ■

UNHCR's budget in the Americas 2004 - 2013

Millions (USD)

Legend:
- Annual Programme Budget
- Supplementary Programme Budget
- Refugee programme
- Stateless programme
- IDP projects

UNHCR BUDGET IN THE AMERICAS | USD

Operation	2012 Revised budget (as of 30 June 2012)	2013 PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	2013 PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	2013 PILLAR 3 Reintegration projects	2013 PILLAR 4 IDP projects	Total
NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN						
Canada	1,451,045	1,675,489	33,225	0	0	1,708,714
United States of America Regional Office[1]	20,105,657	6,077,271	9,286,420	0	3,513,278	18,876,969
Subtotal	21,556,702	7,752,760	9,319,646	0	3,513,278	20,585,683
LATIN AMERICA						
Argentina Regional Office[2]	4,415,384	4,267,028	123,940	0	0	4,390,968
Brazil	4,616,202	4,846,818	208,868	0	0	5,055,686
Colombia	29,392,758	1,248,750	0	0	28,388,581	29,637,332
Costa Rica	2,839,617	2,041,014	0	0	0	2,041,014
Ecuador	21,090,255	21,072,741	0	0	0	21,072,741
Mexico	2,990,011	3,098,122	0	0	0	3,098,122
Panama Regional Office[3]	5,077,110	5,521,841	142,516	0	0	5,664,357
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	9,053,633	9,954,812	0	0	0	9,954,812
Regional activities[4]	0	160,744	0	0	0	160,744
Subtotal	79,474,971	52,211,870	475,324	0	28,388,581	81,075,775
Total	101,031,673	59,964,630	9,794,969	0	31,901,859	101,661,459

[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.
[4] Regional activities cover the entire Americas region.