Latin America

Argentina

Bolivia (Plurinational State of)

Brazil

Chile

Colombia

Costa Rica

Cuba

Ecuador

El Salvador

Guatemala

Honduras

Mexico

Nicaragua

Panama

Paraguay

Peru

Uruguay

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

Colombian refugees washing their clothes in a river in Darién province (Panama).

| Working environment |

Latin American countries have developed strong regional and national instruments for the protection of people of concern to UNHCR. Nevertheless, in certain parts of Central America and Mexico, as well as in border areas between Colombia, Ecuador, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Panama, the growing security concerns of States have affected migration controls and access to asylum procedures, with a consequent constriction of the protection space.

In Central America and Mexico, the intensification of activities of transnational criminal organizations, irregular armed groups and human smugglers and traffickers has spurred much displacement and created a more complex environment in which to deliver protection. UNHCR has conducted a study on forced displacement generated by new forms of violence in Central America and presented the results to the countries concerned to spark discussions on how to address these new patterns of displacement.

Several countries in Latin America acceded to the international statelessness accords in 2011 and 2012. Honduras acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, Ecuador and Paraguay became parties to the 1961 Convention on the Prevention and Reduction of Statelessness, and Panama acceded to both the 1954 and the 1961 Statelessness Conventions. Other countries in the region are developing

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statelessness determination procedures to ensure that stateless persons are identified and provided with administrative and legal assistance.

While new displacements within and outside Colombia remain significant and require adequate protection responses, the implementation of the Law on Victims and Land Restitution, together with dedicated integration activities under the UNDP-UNHCR Transitional Solutions Initiative, may provide some prospects for durable solutions.

Most of the refugees and asylum-seekers in Latin America live in urban areas, where local integration opportunities continue to elude them due to xenophobia and discriminatory treatment of foreigners, which have been exacerbated by poor economic conditions. Lack of access to income-generating activities and sustainable housing solutions presents major obstacles on the path to self-reliance and local integration.

Legislative developments in Central America and Mexico have generated political will for the implementation of the Quality Assurance Initiative. Launched earlier this year, this initiative on the part of UNHCR, Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama strengthens the quality of asylum procedures and decisions and ensures that standards and safeguards are aligned throughout the region. Bolivia and Honduras, meanwhile, have passed anti-trafficking laws which address the protection needs of victims.

Strategy

Operations in Latin America, where there is little direct assistance to refugees and internally-displaced persons (IDPs), will be guided by the Mexico Plan of Action and the Brasilia Declaration. The emphasis will be on providing people of concern with access to territorial protection and asylum procedures and protection against *refoulement*, especially in border areas. UNHCR will also ensure access to affordable health, education, livelihood activities and other essential services for people of concern. Reducing protection risks, in particular discrimination, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and child recruitment, will also be priorities.

With regard to comprehensive solutions, UNHCR will enhance and expand partnerships to achieve local integration, despite an environment marked by growing discrimination and xenophobia, SGBV and generalized violence.

UNHCR will continue to support the regional Solidarity Resettlement programme, particularly to strengthen a regional protection and durable solutions response to the Colombian refugee situation.

Constraints

Due to national security concerns, the protection and asylum space is facing a contraction in some Latin American countries. This is mainly due to the introduction of restrictive refugee status determination (RSD) practices, the wide interpretation and determination of manifestly-unfounded cases,

pre-admissibility procedures and a falling recognition rate, in addition to discrimination against refugees.

Several episodes of violence and the intensification of drug-related and other criminal activities in border areas in Central America, Colombia, Mexico and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have made it difficult to ensure staff safety, hindering field interventions in the regions where persons of concern are most vulnerable.

Operations

UNHCR's operations in **Colombia** and **Ecuador** are described in separate chapters.

One of UNHCR's main priorities in **Brazil** is to work for the long-term and sustainable integration of refugees, including through self-reliance. UNHCR will try to get the support of government counterparts and to increase coordination among all stakeholders. It will also help Brazil to implement its pledge to establish a mechanism to determine statelessness.

In **Costa Rica**, based on the positive results of the Quality Assurance Initiative in 2012, UNHCR will help the Government to conduct RSD and advocate for adequate protection space. A recently adopted durable solutions strategy will boost local integration activities and job placements.

In **Cuba**, UNHCR works with the Government to provide assistance to mandate refugees, and will continue to do so in 2013.

In **Mexico**, UNHCR will ensure that people of concern have access to the territory as well as to basic services such as health care, including for those living with HIV, and education. Local integration will be promoted, in particular for children travelling alone and for vulnerable women. UNHCR will improve the detection and identification of asylum-seekers and ensure they are informed of their right to seek asylum. Measures will be taken to protect victims of trafficking who could also be refugees.

In **Panama**, UNHCR will support the implementation of the 2011 law permitting the regularization of some 900 refugees, mainly Colombians, who had lived under a Temporary Humanitarian Protection Regime (THP) for 10 years. This measure will enable them to integrate locally.

The Regional Technical Hub in Panama and the Regional Legal Unit in Costa Rica will be strengthened. They are expected to support the implementation of UNHCR's regional strategies on SGBV, statelessness, information and programme management, and private-sector fund raising.

UNHCR's office in **Buenos Aires** will develop comprehensive strategies in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay to promote access to effective legal remedies and expand livelihood opportunities for asylum-seekers, refugees and resettled refugees.
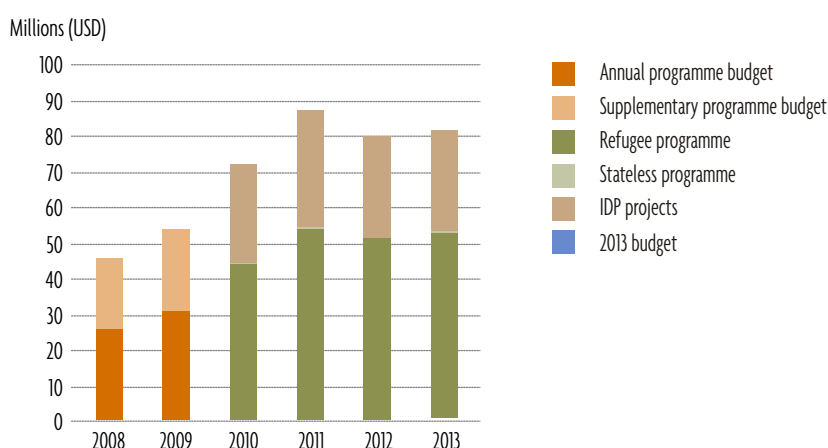
In the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela**, UNHCR's main objective is to increase access for asylum-seekers and refugees to fair and institutionally robust asylum procedures managed by the Government. In addition, UNHCR will help the Government and hosting communities to improve their ability to absorb those being integrated locally.

Financial information

The 2013 budget for Latin America is little changed from that of the previous year, and represents almost half of the total financial requirements for the Americas. However, funding new initiatives and additional priorities in the subregion will continue to be a challenge, as operations are mainly funded by unearmarked contributions. Plus, inflation and unfavourable exchange rates persist in some countries in the subregion.

UNHCR's budget in Latin America 2008 – 2013

Millions (USD)

- Annual programme budget
- Supplementary programme budget
- Refugee programme
- Stateless programme
- IDP projects
- 2013 budget

UNHCR's budget in Latin America (USD)

OPERATION	2012 REVISED BUDGET (as of 30 June 2012)	2013			
		REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	STATELESS PROGRAMME PILLAR 2	IDP PROJECTS PILLAR 4	TOTAL
Argentina Regional Office[1]	4,415,384	4,267,028	123,940	0	4,390,968
Brazil	4,616,202	4,846,818	208,868	0	5,055,686
Colombia	29,392,758	1,248,750	0	28,388,581	29,637,332
Costa Rica	2,839,617	2,041,014	0	0	2,041,014
Ecuador	21,090,255	21,072,741	0	0	21,072,741
Mexico	2,990,011	3,098,122	0	0	3,098,122
Panama Regional Office[2]	5,077,110	5,521,841	142,516	0	5,664,357
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	9,053,633	9,954,812	0	0	9,954,812
Regional activities[3]	0	160,744	0	0	160,744
Total	**79,474,971**	**52,211,870**	**475,324**	**28,388,581**	**81,075,775**

[1] Includes activities in Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.
[2] Includes the Regional Legal Unit in Costa Rica.
[3] Regional activities cover the entire Americas region.