



# Latin America

Argentina  
Belize  
Bolivia  
Brazil  
Chile  
Colombia  
Costa Rica  
Cuba  
Ecuador  
El Salvador  
Guatemala  
Guyana  
Honduras  
Mexico  
Nicaragua  
Panama  
Paraguay  
Peru  
Suriname  
Uruguay  
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

More than 100 displaced families, affected by the Colombian internal armed conflict, live in extreme poverty in Tumaco, Colombia.





## | OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS |

- States, civil society and international organizations gathered in Costa Rica for the Regional Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration.
- In Costa Rica, a new Migration Law passed through the Legislative Assembly.
- UNHCR has established better coordination mechanisms to respond to the significant increase in the number of intra-regional migrants and asylum-seekers.
- Uruguay received the first group of 14 resettled refugees from Ecuador.
- A regional emergency roster was established and 25 staff members trained in the first regional Workshop on Emergencies, held in Ecuador.



## Working environment

Most of the countries in Latin America are party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. The exceptions are the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which has acceded to the Protocol only, and Cuba and Guyana, which are not party to either treaty. The region hosts a total of more than 500,000 refugees, asylum-seekers and others of concern to UNHCR. Most of them are from Colombia, which also has a significant population of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Most refugees in the region have an urban profile and are formally granted access to social and economic rights, such as to health care, education and work. Still, integration into the labour market is incomplete, and remains one of the main impediments to refugees' self-reliance.

Countries in the region saw the arrival of an increasing number of asylum-seekers and migrants, especially from Africa and the Middle East, which is posing a challenge to asylum systems. A regional strategy is being implemented in order to preserve asylum space in a migration picture involving mixed movements, smuggling, trafficking and organized crime.

## Achievements and impact

The Mexico Plan of Action and the High Commissioner's 10-Point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration remained the key strategic frameworks for UNHCR operations in the region. In line with these plans, UNHCR continued to work with governments, NGOs and academic partners to promote refugee protection in the mixed migration context; conducted research and encouraged clarity regarding complex legal questions; and provided technical support for asylum and local-integration systems. The Office also promoted protection networks and case identification mechanisms, monitored borders, and lobbied for the formation of *pro bono* legal representation networks.



Vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees in all the countries of the region received psychosocial, financial and material assistance to help them access housing, livelihoods, health, education and social services.

**Budget and expenditure in Latin America (USD)**

Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
Argentina <sup>1</sup>	3,939,776	1,046,861	4,986,637	3,507,962	1,046,861	4,554,822
Brazil	3,003,993	1,008,331	4,012,324	2,882,962	1,008,331	3,891,293
Colombia	659,454	22,570,757	23,230,211	548,756	17,564,534	18,113,290
Costa Rica	2,905,891	0	2,905,891	2,717,988	0	2,717,988
Cuba	268,000	0	268,000	209,057	0	209,057
Ecuador	11,095,740	0	11,095,740	10,938,740	0	10,938,740
Mexico <sup>2</sup>	1,959,289	0	1,959,289	1,690,035	0	1,690,035
Panama	2,691,013	0	2,691,013	2,438,636	0	2,438,636
Venezuela (Bolivarian Rep.) <sup>3</sup>	4,255,095	0	4,255,095	4,201,297	0	4,201,297
<b>Total South America</b>	<b>30,778,251</b>	<b>24,625,949</b>	<b>55,404,200</b>	<b>29,135,432</b>	<b>19,619,726</b>	<b>48,755,158</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes local integration in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Uruguay, as well as resettlement in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay.

<sup>2</sup> Includes local integration in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Belize.

<sup>3</sup> Includes local integration in Peru.

Note: Excludes indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions against supplementary programmes and the "New or additional activities-mandate-related" (NAM) reserve.

Voluntary contributions to Latin America (USD)				
Earmarking	Donor	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
Argentina regional office	Norway	295,221		295,221
	United Nations Children's Fund	47,024		47,024
	United States of America	600,000		600,000
<b>Argentina regional office subtotal</b>		<b>942,245</b>		<b>942,245</b>
Brazil	United States of America	608,000		608,000
	<b>Brazil subtotal</b>		<b>608,000</b>	<b>608,000</b>
Columbia	Canada		2,294,408	2,294,408
	Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)		930,000	930,000
	España con ACNUR (Spain)	12,253	397,602	409,855
	European Commission		4,331,152	4,331,152
	France		257,408	257,408
	Germany		431,698	431,698
	HQ Online Donations (Switzerland)	2,897		2,897
	Italy		245,059	245,059
	Luxembourg		332,618	332,618
	Netherlands		1,860,000	1,860,000
	Norway		163,588	163,588
	Spain		2,570,694	2,570,694
	Sweden		604,681	604,681
	Switzerland		404,700	404,700
	UN Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund		346,833	346,833
	United Kingdom		26,081	26,081
	United States of America	338,000	5,673,000	6,011,000
	USA for UNHCR		55,270	55,270
	<b>Columbia subtotal</b>		<b>353,150</b>	<b>20,924,792</b>
Costa Rica	Private donors in Italy	36,365		36,365
	United States of America	1,162,415		1,162,415
<b>Costa Rica subtotal</b>		<b>1,198,780</b>		<b>1,198,780</b>
Ecuador	Ecuador	85,000		85,000
	European Commission	1,049,869		1,049,869
	France	196,850		196,850
	Luxembourg	357,654		357,654
	Private donors in Italy	59,368		59,368
	Spain	1,219,897		1,219,897
	United States of America	3,946,000		3,946,000
<b>Ecuador subtotal</b>		<b>6,914,639</b>		<b>6,914,639</b>
Mexico regional office	United States of America	340,000		340,000
	<b>Mexico regional office subtotal</b>		<b>340,000</b>	<b>340,000</b>
Panama	Germany	183,976		183,976
	United States of America	450,000		450,000
<b>Panama subtotal</b>		<b>633,976</b>		<b>633,976</b>
Venezuela regional office	European Commission	407,816		407,816
	United Kingdom	41,707		41,707
	United States of America	1,380,000		1,380,000
<b>Venezuela regional office subtotal</b>		<b>1,829,523</b>		<b>1,829,523</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>12,820,313</b>	<b>20,924,792</b>	<b>33,745,105</b>

Note: Contributions listed above exclude indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions against supplementary programmes and the "New or additional activities-mandate-related" (NAM) reserve.

In August, the new Migration Law passed the Costa Rican Legislative Assembly with ample support. This law is considered more refugee-friendly and more in line with international standards than its predecessor. The law contemplates the creation of a specific Commission for Visas and Asylum, as well as the establishment of a new administrative tribunal for the processing of appeals.

The November 2009 Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration, hosted by Costa Rica and IOM, had participants from most countries in the Americas. It focused on the implementation of the 10-Point Plan of Action, with the aim of agreeing on better responses to issues such as administrative detention of asylum-seekers,

human trafficking, border monitoring and the arrival of extra-regional irregular migrants.

In the process of decentralization of the Americas Bureau, a UNHCR Deputy Director's Office became fully operational in Panama in the second half of the year. This office, with the support of the Emergency Service, organized the first regional Workshop on Emergency Management. It was held in October in Ecuador and assembled 25 participants from across Latin America. An emergency response team is now ready to be deployed at 72 hours notice. This roster will provide protection support and leadership in man-made emergencies or natural disasters in the region.





Indigenous children in the "boarding school" of Bocas de Yi, a community that has suffered from forced recruitment in the past year.

UNHCR / M.H. VERNER

the needs of women at risk, such as heads of household with local integration problems and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. The House of Rights also provided legal and psychosocial services to 891 persons, including refugees, migrants and local people with scarce economic resources. At the end of the year it welcomed new stakeholders, including UNFPA and the Caritas Labour Rights Centre.

The integration of resettled Palestinian refugees in **Brazil** proved to be more challenging than expected, and a number of refugees from this group relocated to Brasilia. These difficulties represented a set-back for the resettlement programme in Brazil, which will be re-formulated to strengthen the country's capacity to receive resettled refugees. The programme will put greater focus on self-reliance and

seek the stronger involvement of the Government, municipalities and local authorities. In this regard, it is important to underline that the committee on refugees in the State of Sao Paulo is already functioning well and the one in Rio de Janeiro has been established only in late 2009.

In the **Southern Cone**, UNHCR helped governments to develop and implement asylum systems. In particular, UNHCR promoted the adoption of refugee legislation and regulations and provided legal advice to relevant governmental bodies. The improvement of the functioning of the National Refugee Commissions (CONAREs) in the six countries of the region continued to be a major issue, not only to guarantee the existence of fair and efficient RSD, but also to expand their capacities to enable them to take on further responsibilities, including social assistance and the identification of durable solutions.

The Regional Office in **Argentina** helped the CONARE to create on-line courses for capacity building, which are now being used by eligibility and immigration authorities.

## | Constraints |

The majority of the countries of the region, particularly Mexico and the Central American countries, are dependent upon remittances from the United States to varying degrees. The decline in remittances resulting from the financial crises posed a major threat to regional economies and severely affected the coping mechanisms of refugees and others of concern. The lack of formal and informal employment opportunities presented a major obstacle to refugee integration and self-sufficiency.

## | Operations |

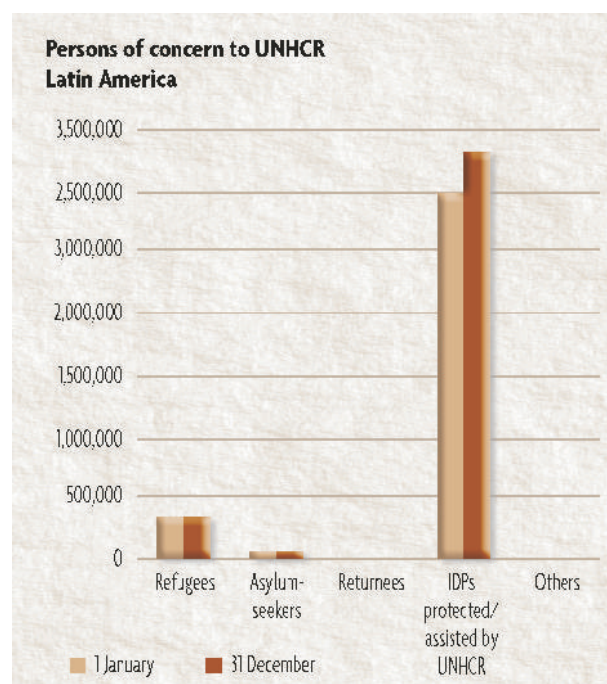
Information on UNHCR's operations in **Colombia and Ecuador** is provided in separate chapters. For the countries related to the Colombia situation (**Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Costa Rica and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela**) please see the text box on page 10.

In **Mexico**, UNHCR worked closely with the *Comision Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados (COMAR)* to provide technical assistance and institutional support for the adoption of refugee legislation in line with international standards. The final draft of the refugee and complementary protection law bill was sent to the President's Office for clearance at the end of 2009.

UNHCR has closely monitored the situation in Honduras, and protection networks were reactivated and contingency plans prepared in case of displacements.

The Office's programmes in **Costa Rica** have been guided by the need to achieve local integration for people of concern. With this aim, legal and psychosocial services were provided to asylum-seekers, refugees, migrants and nationals. These services were provided by partners and other stakeholders, particularly through the integrated community centre known as the "*Casa de Derechos*" (House of Rights), in the county of *Desamparados*.

The microcredit programme was strengthened during the year through additional funding from the Women Leading for Livelihoods (WLL) programme. This enhanced implementing partner capacity, particularly to respond to



## Colombia Situation

In spite of positive action by the State, Colombia continues to experience a severe displacement crisis which has left more than 3 million persons displaced within the country as well as hundreds of thousands living in refugee-like situations in countries of the region, particularly Ecuador, Costa Rica, Panama and Venezuela. In this context, UNHCR has developed a regional strategy to address the needs of both IDPs and refugees in order to ensure their protection and to promote durable solutions. UNHCR also helped implement a differentiated approach to address the needs of groups with specific protection needs, such as women, children, older people and ethnic minorities.

UNHCR's mandate in Colombia is to strengthen national mechanisms in order to prevent displacement as well as to protect, assist and find durable solutions for IDPs. In line with the Action Plan signed with the Government, the main focus in 2009 was to bridge gaps in the implementation of national policies and programmes at the local level. Accordingly, an integrated strategy was implemented in the 63 districts most affected by displacement to promote public policies at local level and enhance communities' participation and self-management in the task. Strategic priorities included the provision of national identification documents to 170,000 IDPs and the protection of 430,000 hectares of land belonging to displaced people, benefiting close to 10,000 IDPs or others at risk of displacement.

UNHCR also worked with the governments of countries hosting Colombian refugees.

The Enhanced Registration Programme in Ecuador, part of a process launched with the comprehensive needs assessment piloted in the country, deserves a special mention. Led by the Government with UNHCR's support, the programme has resulted in the registration and documentation of more than 21,270 refugees. UNHCR also provided technical assistance in the revision of the current refugee legal framework and in the inclusion of protection-related issues in the Human Mobility Code.

Similar processes were also promoted in other countries neighbouring Colombia. In Venezuela, UNHCR and the Government implemented a refugee status determination (RSD) project aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of asylum procedures throughout the country and reducing the backlog of asylum claims. In Panama, through an exceptional law, some 233 long-standing refugees were granted permanent residence. A major challenge remains the regularization of persons under a temporary humanitarian protection regime, agreed by the Colombia-Panama Neighbourhood Commission.

The Borders of Solidarity Programme strove to help both refugees and local host communities to improve living conditions in a spirit of coexistence. At the regional level, more than 80 projects were implemented in border communities, benefiting approximately 73,000 refugees and the local population.

Meanwhile, the Cities of Solidarity programme aimed at refugees living in urban areas worked to ensure effective integration through self-reliance activities. More than 1,200 refugees benefited from loans granted by state institutions, such as the Banco Solidario del Pueblo in Venezuela, and credit schemes managed by local organizations.

The implementation of an integrated strategy has also been successful in various urban neighbourhoods. In Costa Rica, micro-credit programmes implemented in conjunction with the legal and social counselling provided by the House of Rights have been effective in protecting refugee families and promoting their local integration.

As part of a regional approach, new strategies were developed to enhance border monitoring and support communities hosting persons in need of protection. Eleven bi-national projects were implemented in three border areas affected by displacement. This programme included missions, community-based projects and campaigns involving actors on both sides of the border. A priority was to support indigenous communities in the border areas of Colombia who have been disproportionately affected by displacement.

**Chile** and **Bolivia** made sustained efforts to adopt or amend legislation in line with international refugee law and standards.

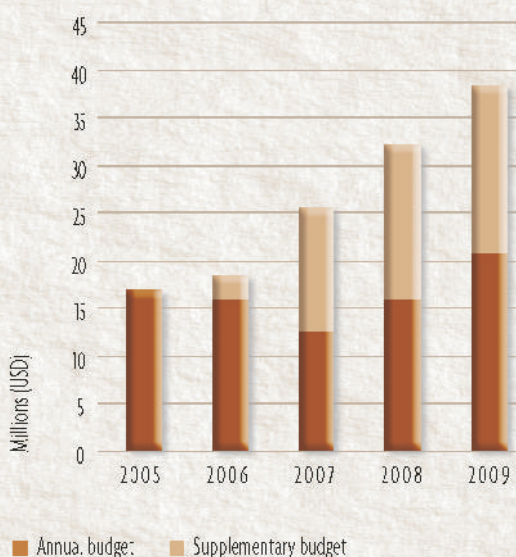
The Solidarity Resettlement Programme continued in Argentina and Chile, as did the special programme for women at risk. The latter, initiated in 2008, supported the resettlement of this particularly vulnerable group of beneficiaries.

In April 2009, **Uruguay** received the first group of 14 resettled refugees from Ecuador. In **Paraguay**, preparatory work to receive cases in the course of 2010 continued with the Government and partners.

## Financial information

The fragile socio-economic situation of the majority of the countries of the region made it difficult for them to meet refugee needs in their national budgets. The annual budget increased in Ecuador due to the global needs assessment pilot, as well as in Panama when the office of Deputy Director moved to the region from headquarters. This year, even countries like Chile and Brazil, who used to contribute directly to UNHCR's implementing partners, encountered difficulties in doing so.

Expenditure in the Colombia Situation  
2005 - 2009





**Budget, income and expenditure for the Colombia Situation (USD)**

	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available	Total expenditure
<b>Annual budget<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>21,607,193</b>	<b>10,930,068</b>	<b>28,911,744</b>	<b>39,841,812</b>	<b>20,845,417</b>
IDP Operations in Colombia SB	24,235,500	22,412,723	849,264	23,261,987	17,821,609
<b>Total</b>	<b>45,842,693</b>	<b>33,342,792</b>	<b>29,761,008</b>	<b>63,103,799</b>	<b>38,667,025</b>

Note: Supplementary programmes do not include seven per cent support costs that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR. Income from contributions includes contributions earmarked at the country and situation level. Other funds available include transfers from unearmarked and broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

<sup>1</sup> Annual Budget includes expenditure in Colombia (USD 548,756) Costa Rica (USD 2,717,988) Ecuador (USD 10,938,740) Panama (USD 2,438,636) and Venezuela (USD 4,201,297).

**Financial report for UNHCR's operations for the Columbia situation**

Activities and services	Current year's projects			Previous years' projects
	Annual budget <sup>1</sup>	Supplementary budgets	Total	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	4,021,944	5,531,960	9,553,904	0
Community services	1,364,498	1,343,587	2,708,085	1,030,238
Crop production	74,664	13,592	88,256	95,008
Domestic needs, household support	1,078,175	0	1,078,175	53,622
Education	370,252	367,287	737,539	265,217
Food	96,922	0	96,922	6,086
Health and nutrition	508,542	18,390	526,932	153,950
Income generation	579,567	10,496	590,063	194,541
Legal assistance	2,856,768	3,219,905	6,076,673	1,169,034
Operational support (to agencies)	1,638,494	1,048,638	2,687,132	340,900
Sanitation	52,568	0	52,568	260
Shelter and infrastructure	303,613	234,677	538,290	192,655
Transport and logistics	65,697	0	65,697	4,312
Water	132,308	0	132,308	8,228
Instalments to implementing partners	2,549,266	3,336,231	5,885,497	(3,514,051)
<b>Subtotal operational activities</b>	<b>15,693,278</b>	<b>15,124,763</b>	<b>30,818,041</b>	<b>0</b>
Programme support	5,152,139	2,439,771	7,591,910	0
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>20,845,417</b>	<b>17,564,534</b>	<b>38,409,951</b>	<b>0</b>

**Cancellation on previous years' expenditure** (190,391)

**Instalments with implementing partners**

Payments made	8,224,132	7,836,482	16,060,614
Reporting received	(5,674,866)	(4,500,251)	(10,175,117)
<b>Balance</b>	<b>2,549,266</b>	<b>3,336,231</b>	<b>5,885,497</b>

**Previous year's report**

Installments with implementing partners:			
Outstanding 1st January			3,989,084
Reporting received			(3,514,051)
Refunded to UNHCR			(407,205)
Currency adjustment			5,753
<b>Outstanding 31st December</b>			<b>73,581</b>

<sup>1</sup> Annual Budget includes expenditure in Colombia (USD 548,756) Costa Rica (USD 2,717,988) Ecuador (USD 10,938,740) Panama (USD 2,438,636) and Venezuela (USD 4,201,297).