

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)



| OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS |

- Panama was the first State to accede the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions after UNHCR launched a campaign promoting accession to commemorate the anniversaries of the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.
- At the ministerial-level meeting held in Geneva in December 2011, Argentina and Colombia pledged to ratify the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, while Honduras, Peru, Nicaragua and Paraguay pledged to ratify both this Convention and the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. (Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Uruguay are already signatories to both Conventions.) Brazil, Costa Rica and Uruguay have each made commitments to establish national statelessness determination procedures.

An emotional moment when the two elder children of this Senegalese refugee family resettled in Argentina are reunited with their parents and siblings.

LATIN AMERICA

- Mexico took an important step to improve its legal framework with the entry into force of its Law on Refugees and Complementary Protection. The new Law grants complementary protection to people not considered as refugees but who have faced death threats or are at risk of torture or other forms of cruel and inhuman treatment.
- Argentina adopted and implemented a protocol for the protection and assistance of unaccompanied and separated children seeking asylum. New standards have been put in place for the treatment of minors seeking asylum, as well as for best interest determination (BID) procedures to be carried out by Argentina's General Office for Public Defence.
- Panama passed a law creating a legal mechanism by which persons under its temporary humanitarian protection regime can apply for permanent residency status, bringing an end to the protracted situation of 863 Colombians living in vulnerable conditions in the southern border area.

Working environment

Despite the need for better mechanisms to identify persons in need of international protection, and ensure their access to asylum procedures, the protection and asylum space in some Latin American countries contracted further in 2011, mainly due to the introduction of restrictive refugee status determination (RSD) and pre-admissibility procedures.

Violence has increased at an alarming rate in Central America, particularly in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Drug-trafficking organizations, transnational youth gangs and other criminal elements continued to challenge national institutions and threaten the civilian population.

The Central American Security Strategy, under which States focus on regional cooperation mechanisms to enhance prevention policies and fight crime, does not address the effects of violence on humanitarian work. Asylum-seekers and refugees travelling through Central America and Mexico within migration movements faced significant risks of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), kidnapping and capture by human traffickers.

The presence of irregular armed actors of the conflict in Colombia in neighbouring countries, mainly Ecuador and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, continued to expose people of concern to various risks, including forced recruitment of children and SGBV.

The number of Haitians migrating to Brazil via Ecuador and Peru increased sharply in 2011. The Brazilian Government continued issuing Haitians with residence permits on humanitarian grounds, enabling them to work legally.

Achievements and impact

The ministerial-level meeting in Geneva commemorating the anniversaries of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1961 Statelessness Convention was attended by 18 Latin American delegations and saw 11 States announce pledges to improve their RSD procedures and conditions for women



and children. Additional efforts were announced by governments to identify durable solutions, notably resettlement, and to further the prevention and reduction of statelessness.

The Mexico Plan of Action continued to guide the strategies of all operations in Latin America. UNHCR advocated for the strengthening of national protection mechanisms and the expansion of partnerships to spur local integration. A regional database giving prominence to livelihoods and local integration strategies was launched to provide a platform to share best practices in the region.

Special programmes were implemented to address the needs of children and women, including a project for women at risk, which strengthened the Solidarity Resettlement Programme in southern Latin America. An innovative approach by the authorities in one province to provide housing for resettled refugees served as an example of how to overcome one of the main challenges hindering local integration.

UNHCR worked jointly with national and international partners to strengthen child protection. National officials, including the police, were trained to respond to the protection needs of unaccompanied and separated minors in particular. UNHCR also strengthened partnerships on issues related to trafficking in persons and unaccompanied children, in particular with regard to their identification and the assessment of their protection needs. It worked closely

with the Human Rights Public Policy Institute of *Mercado Común del Sur* (MERCOSUR) on legal issues related to the human rights of migrant children and refugees.

Cooperation with IOM and dialogue with the institutions of the Central American Integration System was aimed at addressing protection in mixed migratory movements and humanitarian-related issues, while UNHCR's participation in the Regional Conference on Migration (Puebla Process) focused on mixed migration and refugees. UNHCR also gave its support to the resolutions on refugees, IDPs, stateless persons and mixed migration that were approved during the OAS General Assembly held in El Salvador.

Constraints

While Latin American countries have strong regional and national instruments for the protection of persons of concern to UNHCR, challenges still remained. The growing concerns of States as to their national security have continued to threaten protection. Deficiencies were again apparent in identification and referral mechanisms for persons in need of international protection within mixed migration movements. Other problems included low recognition rates; inconsistent RSD systems; restrictive practices such as the establishment of pre-admissibility procedures; high levels of violence; and human trafficking. The effective implementation of existing legal frameworks thus continued to be a challenge across the region.

More than 70 per cent of the total refugee population in Latin America live in urban areas, where competition for scarce resources is high. The local integration of resettled

refugees was jeopardized by lack of access to housing and employment. As voluntary repatriation was not a viable option for most refugees in the subregion, local integration needed to be strengthened, especially for the most vulnerable. Another problem refugees have identified is their discrimination based on race or national origin.

Operations

Operations in **Colombia** and **Ecuador** are described in separate country chapters.

The Regional Office in Buenos Aires covers Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. Standard operating procedures for SGBV were introduced in Argentina, Bolivia and Uruguay, and soon in Paraguay. Achievements in southern Latin America included the adoption of refugee legislation and regulations in Chile, where the Government has increased assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers.

As part of its local integration strategy in **Brazil**, UNHCR supported the consolidation of the Refugee State Committees in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, and the establishment of a Refugee and Migrants State Committee in Rio Grande do Sul.

In Central America (**Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador**) UNHCR worked with Governments and with other UN agencies to establish protection systems for children, especially unaccompanied minors. UNHCR and its partners continued to provide legal support to asylum-seekers and refugees.

Budget and expenditure in Latin America | USD

Country		PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	Total
Argentina Regional Office¹	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 Office²	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
Total budget		52,220,811	188,018	32,567,240	84,976,069
Total expenditure		30,698,376	125,344	16,209,445	47,033,165

¹ Includes activities in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

² Includes the Regional Legal Unit in Costa Rica.

The new General Migration and Aliens Law of **Nicaragua** introduced a special section on stateless people, while **Costa Rica** introduced the Administrative Migratory Tribunal as an independent review body for asylum claims. Costa Rica also adopted regulations to complement its 2010 Immigration Law, enabling asylum-seekers who have not received a resolution to their claims after three months to obtain temporary work permits.

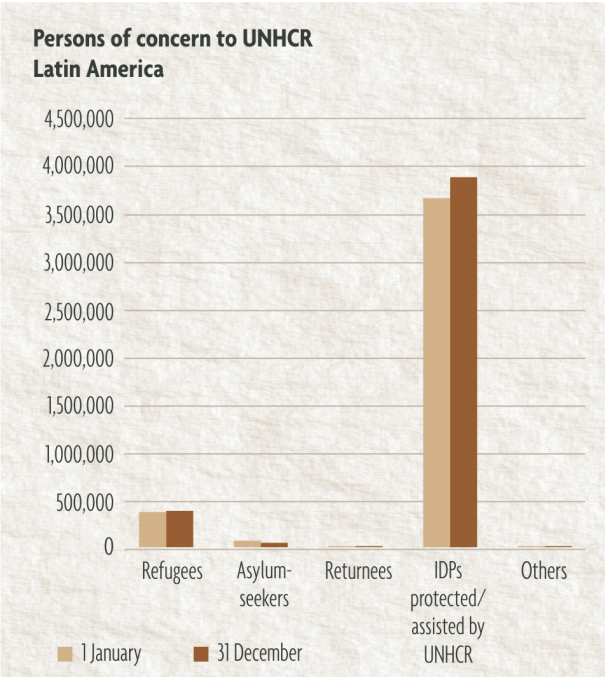
In **Mexico**, UNHCR promoted the inclusion of important safeguards for vulnerable persons in its new Law on Migration, including the right to apply for refugee status for victims of human trafficking; restrictions on the detention of unaccompanied and separated children; and the granting of specific status for stateless people.

UNHCR participated in the regularization of the status of persons under the temporary humanitarian protection regime in **Panama**. The concerned population, living in the Darien region bordering Colombia, can now obtain permanent residence which is a pre-requisite for local integration. The process also includes activities to enhance self-reliance.

In the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela**, registration brigades redoubled their efforts to reach border communities, resulting in the registration of near 3,200 new asylum-seekers in 2011. SGBV prevention and response measures were strengthened in Zulia State.

| Financial information |

UNHCR's 2011 budget for Latin America (excluding Colombia and Ecuador) was close to USD 30 million. Volatile exchange rates and spikes in the cost of living had a



significant effect on operating budgets. Resettlement programmes in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay have proven to be important tools in protecting people of concern in the region, but additional resources would allow these programmes to be more fully implemented. Such resources would also contribute to the local integration of vulnerable persons. Additional funds are also required to ensure the integration of urban refugees. Growing protection needs arising from mixed migration could not be met fully from the available resources.

Voluntary contributions to Latin America | USD

Earmarking / Donor	PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	All pillars	Total
LATIN AMERICA SUBREGION				
United States of America			11,000,000	11,000,000
Latin America subtotal	0	0	11,000,000	11,000,000
ARGENTINA REGIONAL OFFICE				
United States of America	900,000			900,000
Argentina Regional Office subtotal	900,000	0	0	900,000
BRAZIL				
United States of America	650,000			650,000
Brazil subtotal	650,000	0	0	650,000
COLOMBIA				
Canada		4,000,000		4,000,000
CERF		650,000		650,000
<i>España con ACNUR</i>		38,462		38,462
European Union		4,552,721		4,552,721
France		343,406		343,406
Lebara Foundation	141,443			141,443
Luxembourg		328,515		328,515
Netherlands			1,350,000	1,350,000
Norway		1,705,902		1,705,902
Spain		426,056		426,056
Sweden		1,459,428		1,459,428
Switzerland		416,129	430,108	846,237
UN Trust Fund for Human Security		149,372		149,372
Colombia subtotal	141,443	14,069,991	1,780,108	15,991,542
COSTA RICA				
United States of America	400,000			400,000
Costa Rica subtotal	400,000	0	0	400,000
ECUADOR				
<i>España con ACNUR</i>	722,848		18,667	741,514
European Union	1,098,901			1,098,901
Luxembourg	328,515			328,515
Private donors in Italy	62,993			62,993
Spain	1,182,654			1,182,654
Ecuador subtotal	3,395,912	0	18,667	3,414,578
MEXICO				
United States of America	400,000			400,000
Mexico subtotal	400,000	0	0	400,000
PANAMA REGIONAL OFFICE				
United States of America	600,000			600,000
Panama Regional Office subtotal	600,000	0	0	600,000
VENEZUELA				
European Union	885,175			885,175
Venezuela subtotal	885,175	0	0	885,175
Total	7,372,529	14,069,991	12,798,774	34,241,295