



AMERICAS OPERATIONAL UPDATE

JANUARY TO MARCH 2024

Panama. UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees Kelly T. Clements visits a temporary migrant reception centre in the Darien where UNHCR supports refugee and migrant survivors of gender-based violence and provides shelter and information. © UNHCR/Tito Herrera

UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, Kelly T. Clements, on 26 January called on the international community to **intensify efforts to improve the situation of refugees and migrants in the Americas**, as she concluded a two-day visit to Panama. The challenges posed by complex refugee and migrant movements in the Americas must be approached from a comprehensive and collaborative regional perspective, Clements said. “We need to provide increased aid to vulnerable individuals, reinforce support to host communities, and expand resettlement opportunities and access to other regular mechanisms for support. This strategy is crucial for managing well the complex issues at hand at this important moment.”

Kelly T. Clements
UN Deputy Commissioner for Refugees

The press release is available [here](#)

HIGHLIGHTS

Kelly T. Clements’s visit came as the number of refugees and migrants crossing the Darien jungle, situated between Colombia and Panama, reached 520,000 people in a year, the highest recorded. As of 31 March 2024, over 109,069 people have undertaken the perilous journey, a 24% increase compared to the same period in 2023. On 24 January, the Deputy High Commissioner attended the VI Annual Meeting of the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) during which countries in the **region committed to redoubling efforts to address forced displacement**. She also travelled to the Darien and attended the opening of a local branch of Panama’s National Refugee Office

(ONPAR) in the town of Metetí. This office will ensure that individuals who cross the Darien can seek asylum and have access to documentation and basic services.

On 29 February, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) held a first-of-its-kind hearing on “The Human Rights of People on the Move due to the effects of Climate Change.” At this unprecedented event, **UNHCR warned that the effects of climate change are exacerbating forced displacement within and across borders**, increasing the vulnerability of displaced people and hindering durable solutions. During the hearing, Isabel Márquez, UNHCR Americas Bureau’s Deputy

Director, highlighted the interconnection between climate change and other causes of forced displacement, including violence, persecution, and human rights violations. Climate action is a priority for UNHCR, as the organization continues to strive to protect and find durable solutions for the people UNHCR works with and for around the world. The newly launched [Focus Area Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024-2030](#) clarifies UNHCR’s role in climate action, in line with the organization’s mandate.

In the frame of the celebration of International Women’s Day on 8 March, UNHCR directed its attention to this year’s theme: “Invest in women: Accelerate progress”. UNHCR’s [Refugee-led Innovation Fund](#) illustrates the organization’s grassroots approach, ensuring that women with lived experiences of displacement are directly provided with much needed financial resources, along with programmatic and organizational support, to implement innovative solutions to tackle challenges

faced by their communities. At global level, every year one third of funding from the Refugee-led Innovation Fund is allocated to organizations led by displaced women. In 2024 in the Americas, UNHCR has disbursed small grants to [four organizations led by displaced people, including women-led organizations](#).

Amidst the rapidly deteriorating political, security, human rights and humanitarian situation in Haiti, UNHCR [issued](#) on 20 March [new legal guidance](#) to ensure that international refugee protection is provided for Haitians who need it. In this guidance, UNHCR considers that Haitians falling within one or more risk profiles, including political activists, journalists, judges, lawyers, and others fighting corruption and crime, among others, may be in need of international refugee protection in line with the 1951 Convention, its 1967 Protocol and-or the regional refugee definition recommended by the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees.

UNHCR’S RESPONSE IN THE AMERICAS

To support the communities affected by wildfires in the Valparaíso region of Chile, in February, and as part of the United Nations System’s response in the country, UNHCR supported the national government with the delivery of 48 refugee housing units (RHU) designed to [provide shelter to people in emergency situations](#). Additionally, UNHCR provided nearly 2,000 thermal blankets and over 5,000 solar lamps. Considered the most serious catastrophe Chile has experienced since the 2010 earthquake, the fires burned thousands of homes and caused 131 deaths. The region of Valparaiso hosts 6.1% of the total number of foreigners in the country, mainly Venezuelans, Haitians, and Colombians. The transfer of this aid, coordinated jointly with the National Disaster Prevention and Response Service (SENAPRED) of the Government

of Chile, was made possible thanks to UNHCR’s alliance with LATAM group’s Solidarity Plane Programme, which for over 10 years has provided free transportation for passengers and cargo to support communities in South America facing health, environmental, and natural disasters. As part of the solidarity with Chile, individual donors of España con ACNUR (Spain with UNHCR) also contributed with funds for this emergency response.

During the first three months of 2024, UNHCR teams in the Americas significantly scaled up efforts to find third country solutions for people in need of international protection. Over 16,000 individuals were referred to different countries for resettlement in this period.

RESPONSE IN PROGRESS: AS OF APRIL 2024



19,954 people who received non-food items



50,799 people who received shelter and housing assistance



6,510 children and caregivers who received child protection services



27,509 people receiving cash assistance



5,037 people who benefitted from specialized gender-based violence programmes



16,573 people supported to obtain civil status, identity or legal status documentation



140,251 people reached through information, awareness, and/or sensitization sessions



5,674 people participating in peaceful coexistence projects



6,930 people who benefitted from livelihoods and economic inclusion interventions



130,263 people accessing community centres, support spaces, or other structures



12,833 consultations in UNHCR supported mental health and psychosocial support services



42,689 people who received legal assistance

ONGOING INITIATIVES...



COSTA RICA
 UNHCR, and CCSS renew [health insurance agreement for refugees and asylum-seekers](#) in 2024.



GUATEMALA
 UNHCR and the Vice Presidency of Guatemala promote [mobile units for the prevention](#) of human trafficking and violence against women.



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
 Transformation of [young leaders](#) through spokesperson workshops in the Dominican Republic.



PERU
 Municipality of Surquillo and UNHCR sign an [agreement for the recovery of public spaces](#) and provision of services for the community.



EL SALVADOR
 Community committees implement [best practices in protecting children from forced displacement](#).



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 A Philadelphia community centre provides [refuge and hope to Ukrainian families](#).

OUR WORK IN ACTION

ECUADOR: VIOLENCE AND XENOPHOBIA THREATEN ACCESS TO EDUCATION



Ecuador has experienced an upsurge in violence in recent years, largely fueled by disputes between criminal groups across the country. UNHCR and partners work directly with communities and schools across the country to assist families most in need. One approach - carried out in over 250 schools since 2019 - is called Breathing Inclusion. It encourages children and teachers to explore concepts of identity, diversity, justice, and social change to help combat prejudice and discrimination. It also tackles xenophobia through games and community activities. Read more [here](#).

COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

R4V Regional Platform issued on 5 March the [Movements Report](#) covering October to December 2023, including an analysis of relevant data and trends. The report highlights increasing northward movements along the Andean Corridor, where, in the last quarter of 2023, there were about 3 movements north for every 2 south. These movements of largely Venezuelan refugees and migrants were accompanied by an increasing number of Ecuadorians leaving their country in the wake of a significant deterioration in the security situation.

Forcibly displaced people in Latin America and the Caribbean can contribute significantly to the economies where they live if they have the opportunity, according to [two new studies](#) released on 26 February by the World Bank (WB), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and UNHCR. The studies, "[Venezuelans in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru – A Development Opportunity](#)" (WB and UNHCR) and "[Socio-Economic Integration of Forcibly Displaced Populations in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)" (IDB, OECD, and UNHCR), are examples of inter-agency cooperation to respond to the needs of forcibly displaced people. They highlight how targeted policies can ease access to formal labour markets and basic services, such as education and healthcare, to enable refugees and migrants to better contribute to their host countries.

DON'T MISS...



COLOMBIA

UNHCR supported a [study on media coverage regarding Venezuelan refugees and migrants](#) in Colombia. The analysis results show that this population holds a prominent place in the news agenda, although challenges persist in countering stigmatizing narratives against them and achieving greater coverage of issues related to their access to rights and integration.



MEXICO

Amal means hope, and it is what she brings to each place she visits. The puppet representing a 10-year-old Syrian refugee girl has become a global icon for human rights. After visiting 15 countries, [Amal arrived in Mexico to journey over 5,000 kilometers and visit 7 cities across the country](#). Approximately 500,000 people, including representatives from civil society, governments, and artistic collectives, accompanied her during her Mexican journey.



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

UNHCR promotes a coordinated approach within and between communities and the local, state, and federal government, publishing a [toolkit on asylum-seeker reception in the U.S.](#) on best practices in receiving asylum-seekers in communities throughout the United States.



REGIONAL

UNHCR launched the first edition of [#VocesHumanitarias](#), a monthly newsletter now available on LinkedIn. Through *Voces Humanitarias*, UNHCR's audiences can dive into the humanitarian world with exclusive interviews with UNHCR staff and updates on forced displacement.

SPOTLIGHT PUBLICATIONS IN THE AMERICAS



REGIONAL:
Americas Factsheet
1 April 2024



REGIONAL:
Forced Displacement
in and from El Salvador,
Guatemala and
Honduras- January
2024



REGIONAL:
Spotlight Note: Socio-
economic integration
of forcibly displaced
populations in Latin
America and the
Caribbean



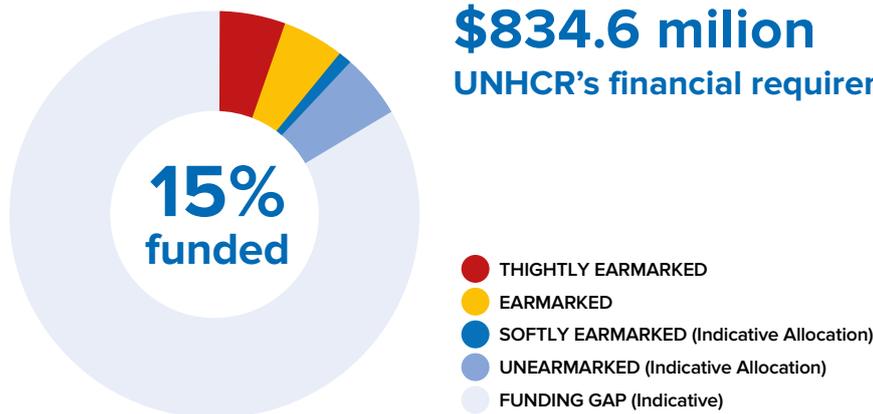
REGIONAL:
Venezuela Situation
Factsheet- January
2024

Do you want more info? Check <https://reporting.unhcr.org/americas>

FUNDING THE RESPONSE IN 2024

(AS OF 31 MARCH 2024)

UNHCR's humanitarian response in the Americas is made possible thanks to the generous support of major donors who have contributed unrestricted funding to UNHCR's global operations and to donors who have contributed directly to UNHCR operations in the Americas. UNHCR appealed for \$834.6 million in funding in 2024 to respond to the most pressing needs in the Americas. As of 31 March, donors had pledged \$123 million.



Thanks to all our donors in 2024 (as of 31 March 2024)

Australia | Belgium | Canada | Denmark | European Union | Germany | Ireland | Italy | Luxembourg | Norway | Netherlands | Republic of Korea | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | United States of America | CERF | Leaving No One Behind – The Internal Displacement Solutions Fund | United Nations Children's Fund | UN Programme On HIV/AIDS

And to our private donors:

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