UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

AMERICAS FACTSHEET

October 2024

Trinidad and Tobago. *Sophia Rodríguez, an asylum-seeker, holds a t-shirt during UNHCR's distribution of educational kits in Trinidad and Tobago. © UNHCR/Kalifa Sarah Clyne*

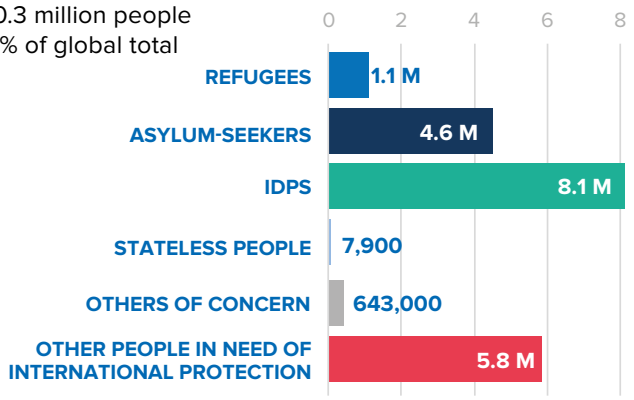
The Americas continues to face an **unprecedented scale and complexity of forced displacement and mixed movements**, where people fleeing conflict, persecution, and violence move alongside those escaping poverty, lack of opportunities, and the impact of climate change. The Region has also demonstrated remarkable solidarity and **is home to important and innovative progress in providing protection and finding solutions**, including through state-led forums such as MIRPS, the Quito Process, and Cartagena +40.

UNHCR supports pragmatic government-led responses. It prioritizes protection, **life-saving assistance, and concrete efforts to find long-term solutions** by fostering cooperation with a wide array of actors, such as development and financial institutions, local authorities, and the private sector, promoting legal and socio-economic opportunities and inclusion into national systems.

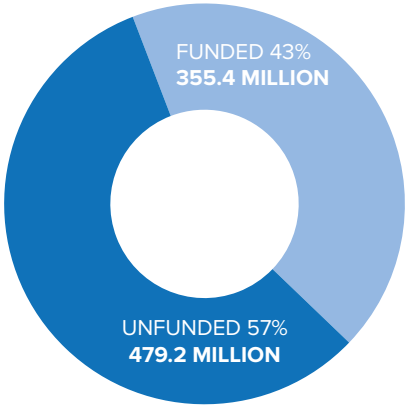
By mid-2024, **over 8.1 million people remained internally displaced in the Americas**. UNHCR works to strengthen national responses by supporting the implementation of national legal frameworks and improving data collection and analysis on internally displaced persons (IDPs), in collaboration with national statistics offices, to inform evidence-based policies that ensure IDPs have access to public services, legal support, and humanitarian assistance.

POPULATION IN THE AMERICAS FROM THE MID-YEAR TRENDS 2024

20.3 million people
17% of global total



FUNDING (AS OF 30 SEPTEMBER 2024)



USD 834.6 MILLION

requested for the Americas in 2024

UNHCR PRESENCE

STAFF

1,359 NATIONAL STAFF
362 INTERNATIONAL STAFF
59,04% WOMEN, **40,79%** MEN

OFFICES

1 REGIONAL BUREAU IN PANAMA
3 MULTI-COUNTRY OFFICES IN ARGENTINA, PANAMA, AND UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
11 COUNTRY OFFICES
8 NATIONAL OFFICES
21 FIELD OFFICES
8 SUB OFFICES
50 FIELD UNITS

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

By mid- 2024, more than 20.3 million forcibly displaced and stateless people were hosted in the Americas, including 5.8 million refugees and asylum-seekers, 8.1 million internally displaced persons, and 5.8 million other people in need of international protection.

UNHCR renewed its **call for a comprehensive hemispheric approach** to address the magnitude and complexity of the mixed movement of refugees and migrants across the Americas, as underscored during the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection ministerial meeting hosted by the Government of Guatemala on 7 May. The hemispheric approach seeks to address the root causes of displacement while enabling humanitarian assistance, protection options, and providing concrete solutions for those in all stages of displacement— in countries of origin, transit, destination, and return. This regional approach builds on strengthened collaboration among States, UN agencies, civil society, the private sector, international development and financial institutions and other key stakeholders, and promotes access to asylum and other legal stay alternatives as well as socio-economic inclusion opportunities.

The number of refugees and migrants engaged in mixed movements across the Americas reached unprecedented levels in 2023 with a total of 520,085 people crossing the Darien. So far in 2024, as of 31 August, over 238,000 people have crossed Darien, a 30 per cent decrease compared to the same period last year. Venezuelans continue to be the main nationality, followed by Colombians and Ecuadorians. Of note, there is also a change of displacement patterns in the region and the use of new routes transiting through Central America and the Caribbean.

According to UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF´s Mixed Movements Monitoring Q2 2024 report, multiple interconnected factors continue to push individuals into situations of human mobility. Two out of five respondents cited having left their countries both because of violence and difficulties in accessing fundamental rights and basic needs. Seventy-two per cent of respondents experienced or witnessed protection incidents along the route.

STRATEGY

PROTECT

STRENGTHENING ASYLUM SYSTEMS AND PROTECTION ALTERNATIVES

Host countries in the region have made commendable efforts in 2024 to strengthen asylum and expand legal stay arrangements for people in need of international protection.

- **UNHCR supports governments in the region to modernize their refugee status determination systems by promoting targeted investments in case management** digitization, differentiated processing modalities, exchange of country-of-origin information, legal aid, and backlog reductions. Enhanced digitization and the implementation of case management systems including differentiated case processing modalities remain priorities in Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, the United States of America, and Uruguay.
- UNHCR actively supports inter-institutional efforts to ensure the safe, dignified return and sustainable reintegration of individuals in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Together with its partners, UNHCR implements comprehensive protection initiatives for returnees, focusing on personal documentation, child protection, and the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV). To enhance these efforts, UNHCR and its partners are present at key returnee centres, where they identify individuals in need of protection and refer them to appropriate mechanisms for further assistance.

PROTECT

ADDRESSING ROOT CAUSES

The unprecedented movements of refugees and migrants in the Americas are driven by complex and often overlapping factors that have persisted and intensified, leaving people with no viable options but to leave their homes.

- **UNHCR works with States and other stakeholders in developing legal frameworks and public policies** that respond to the needs of internally displaced populations. In Colombia, UNHCR coordinates the Internal Displacement Solutions Fund in close collaboration with UNDP, IOM, and UN Habitat, and supports the development of a national strategy for durable solutions for IDPs, led by the government. In Honduras, UNHCR is supporting State's efforts to implement the IDP law adopted in 2022. In Mexico, UNHCR assists federal entities in adopting IDP policies and has provided technical support to six states for the development of local legislation and prevention and response mechanisms.

- **UNHCR is enhancing its efforts to protect refugees and displaced people from the impacts of climate change.** This includes working with governments to ensure displaced populations are part of national climate plans and contributing to key legal frameworks, such as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights' advisory opinion on the climate emergency. In countries like Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Haiti, UNHCR supports responses to climate-induced emergencies and has launched projects to build resilience in displaced communities. It is also investing in climate-resilient infrastructure in refugee-hosting areas across Central and South America, with the support of international financial institutions.

RESPOND

ENHANCING HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND EFFORTS TO COUNTERACT MISINFORMATION

Unprecedented complex mixed movements throughout the Americas have led to growing humanitarian crises. From January to June 2024, UNHCR supported 49,291 people in the region with cash assistance.

- UNHCR focuses on **strengthening collaborative efforts** to reinforce reception capacity and provide life-saving humanitarian assistance, in critical border areas, including in the Darien region.

- Outside border areas, UNHCR uses cash assistance strategically to promote local integration, serving as a temporary bridge to help the most vulnerable move quickly toward self-reliance, inclusion, and solutions.

- Assistance is provided to a small fraction (under 3%) of the population in need of international protection in the region and for a short duration, with over 96% of multipurpose grants (MPG) for basic needs provided for just 1-4 months. Over 30% of cash assistance in the region is dedicated to promoting specific solutions outcomes.

- To ensure cash assistance reaches those most in need, UNHCR Operations in the Americas use contextualized scorecards to streamline cash assistance targeting and prioritization, promoting efficiencies and objective, data-informed decision-making.

- Together with the Global Cash Hub, the Americas have pioneered the use of next-generation technology, including blockchain and advanced digital platforms, for cash delivery, with ongoing implementation in Argentina and plans for roll-out to other Operations before the end of the year.

- UNHCR leads seven out of 10 Cash Working Groups (CWGs) in the Americas. To enhance efficiencies and reduce assistance duplication in Peru and Mexico, UNHCR developed and implemented innovative inter-agency tools which are used by all CWG members, with strict data protection measures in place.

- UNHCR works to **scale up innovative tools and coordinated efforts to counter disinformation and misinformation**, and provide reliable information to refugees and migrants about the risks of the journey and available alternatives.

- To combat disinformation and misinformation, and strengthen communication with communities, UNHCR has invested in creating and amplifying trusted, reliable information platforms, such as **Trust the Jaguar**, **Trust the Toucan**, and **Somos Panas**.

- In fulfilment of a pledge made by the United States of America at the Second Global Refugee Forum, six MIRPS "Good Practice Implementation Projects" were launched in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico, focused on promoting access to services addressing basic needs, mental health, and psychosocial support services, labour integration, and solutions to internal displacement.

EXPANDING RESETTLEMENT AND SAFE ADMISSION PATHWAYS

- Predictable and accessible safe admission pathways have the potential to reduce onward movement and dangerous journeys of refugees and migrants and contribute to responsibility-sharing between States. UNHCR promotes safe pathways for **refugee admission**, including through family reunification, resettlement, and other complementary pathways.
- The **Safe Mobility Offices (SMO) Initiative**, launched in mid-2023 by the United States of America in close collaboration with governments in the region, UNHCR, IOM, Spain, Canada, New Zealand, and other partners, provides a streamlined process for refugee resettlement and other admission pathways for migrants. The SMO initiative has already broadened access to resettlement for many countries.
- From 1 January to 25 September 2024, UNHCR referred 58,486 individuals for resettlement to Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Spain, and the United States of America, a 430% increase compared to the same period in 2023.
- UNHCR works with partners to **expand access to family reunification** mechanisms across the Americas, based on broadening of relevant selection criteria, **strategic use of private sponsorship programmes**, and stronger support to facilitate refugee access to humanitarian parole.

INVESTING IN INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION

Quality legal stay arrangements, documentation, access to services and livelihoods opportunities enable people in need of protection and others on the move to thrive in their host communities. Some countries have made great strides, yet many challenges remain. National services and labour markets in many host communities have become overstretched and further investment is needed.

Mexico. Refugees can rebuild their lives in Aguascalientes through a relocation and integration programme. © UNHCR/Jeoffrey Guillemard

- UNHCR integrates **longer-term solutions perspective** in the responses to mixed movements, drawing on the tools and approaches of development agencies. In Brazil, since the inception of the government's Operation Welcome programme in 2018, more than 137,000 Venezuelans have been internally relocated and received integration services (including on housing, labour insertion, social benefits, and education), with the support of UNHCR. Since the launch of the Local Integration Programme in Mexico in 2016, more than 45,000 refugees have relocated from the south to the centre and north of the country and found formal employment, in partnership with more than 600 companies.
- UNHCR works in close cooperation with UN Country Teams and local authorities to ensure that efforts towards the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless populations are embedded in United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF) and National Plans.
- In 2024, several States in the region established new or expanded legal stay arrangements and temporary protection processes for Venezuelans. In Colombia, out of 2.9 million Venezuelans, more than 1.9 million have received temporary protection permits, and a new process was announced in June to provide legal residency to some additional 600,000 people. In Ecuador, a new regularization process was announced in May to benefit some 100,000 Venezuelans, in addition to the over 95,000 who have already obtained temporary residence visas by April. Brazil recognized over 132,000 Venezuelans as refugees and granted over 411,000 temporary residency permits. In May, Uruguay adopted two programmes to provide legal stay solutions for over 23,500 Venezuelan and Cuban nationals pending asylum applications filed by Venezuelan and Cuban nationals. Argentina recently announced a regularization process to benefit Venezuelan nationals.

SOLVE

COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

- UNHCR co-leads with IOM the regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V), working with 250 organizations who implement the 2023-2024 Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) across 17 countries. On 5 September, R4V published the Refugee and Migrant Needs Analysis (RMNA) for 2024. This document provides a comprehensive and evidence-based assessment of the situation and needs of refugees and migrants in the countries covered by the R4V response. The findings of the RMNA 2024 highlight that **4.2 million Venezuelans living in the region still face difficulties in accessing essential services and formal employment**, despite the laudable achievements of host countries in providing humanitarian assistance, protection, and integration opportunities.
- Both agencies also provide technical support, alongside IOM as part of the Secretariat, to the regional intergovernmental mechanism Quito Process - an initiative among 13 Latin American and Caribbean countries that host refugees and migrants, mainly from Venezuela, that seeks to harmonize domestic policies and responses to displacement in receiving countries. The Government of Costa Rica holds

the pro-tempore presidency (PPT) for 2024. The **Quito Process** has held to date two in-person meetings on 2-4 July and 10-11 September to discuss safe routes and protection and regular pathways for human mobility, including family reunification, regularization, and child protection. During this second meeting the study "**Family Reunification Procedures: Good Practices and Challenges within the framework of the Quito Process**" was launched and a discussion about the elaboration of a regional operational guideline to facilitate family reunification procedures within Quito Process State members took place.

● As the Technical Secretariat of the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS), UNHCR and the OAS support, under the leadership of Belize Pro tempore presidency (PPT), the seven MIRPS states (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Panama) in the implementation of regional and national action plans focused on access to protection, education, health, and livelihoods for displaced persons in the region. The MIRPS now operates under the MIRPS Statutory Charter, a milestone document adopted in the VI MIRPS Annual Meeting on 24 January 2024. Belize, along with the Government of Panama, as past PPT, and the Government of Costa Rica, as the upcoming PPT in 2025, it forms the MIRPS Troika. The MIRPS States held a regional meeting in Panama on 4-5 September to improve the MIRPS results-based management and communications and finalized the MIRPS theory of change and revision of indicators. The MIRPS Annual meeting will be held on 5 December in Belize.

● The 2024 Pro Tempore Presidencies of the Quito Process and the MIRPS will convene a joint technical meeting on asylum on 15 and 16 October in Panama City, with the support of UNHCR and the OAS. This collaboration marks a significant milestone, as two distinct intergovernmental processes join efforts to address a key priority within their annual work plans. The meeting will provide a valuable platform for member States to enhance cooperation and share experiences on strengthening their asylum systems, especially in the face of unprecedented number of people seeking protection and the challenges States face in improving the fairness and efficiency of case adjudication. UNHCR´s goal is to assist States in effectively implementing the asylum strengthening component of the hemispheric approach.

● The **1st Regional Meeting of Cities of Solidarity** took place in Montevideo on 25-26 April, organized in collaboration with the Municipality of Montevideo, and endorsed by the Chilean government as leader of the Cartegena+40 process. With the participation of 17 municipalities from 11 countries in the region, and UN agencies, the meeting culminated with the adoption of the **Montevideo Declaration** on Contributions of Cities of Solidarity to the Chile Plan of Action (2024-2034). **Four new cities** joined the initiative so far in 2024, El Estor, Los Amates, and Morales (Guatemala), and Maipú (Argentina). In Ecuador, on 18 July, UNHCR supported the first **"Meeting of Local Governments for Inclusive Economic Development"** aimed at finding lasting solutions to the needs of forcibly displaced people in the country.

● The Government of Guatemala hosted the **Second Cities of Solidarity National Conference and the Regional Meeting of the MIRPS Regional Technical Team on Local Governance** in Guatemala City on 25-26 September, with the support of the United States of America on behalf of the MIRPS Support Platform. The National Conference, with the participation of the Vice President of Guatemala, commemorated the milestone of 19 municipalities being part of the Cities of Solidarity initiative, and the signing of a Declaration that reiterated the commitment of local authorities in Guatemala to promote the legal, socio-economic, and cultural integration of refugees. The MIRPS Regional Meeting (with the participation of Belize, Honduras, Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama, and Uruguay) was aligned with the workplan of the **MIRPS Regional Technical Team on Local Governance**, which is jointly led by the Municipalities of Guatemala City and San Benito.

● UNHCR continues to strengthen **strategic partnerships** with key development actors across the Americas, including the **World Bank**, **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)**, **International Finance Corporation (IFC)**, USAID, and the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, with the goal to include forcibly displaced and stateless populations in development opportunities. These efforts have led to scaled-up investments in key hosting countries such as Colombia, Costa Rica, Peru, Chile, Belize, and Ecuador through the IDB Grant Facility and the **Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF)**, in regularization programmes, and in investments in government services such as health, housing, and education. UNHCR works with development actors on the design of relevant data and evidence-generating activities as well to inform policy and programming for inclusion in national services, labour market integration and addressing the root causes of displacement. At the regional level, the World Bank, IDB, USAID, and IMF have joined UNHCR and IOM to support the implementation of the Los Angeles Declaration pledges and to participate in the Cartagena +40, MIRPS and Friends of Quito processes.

Brazilian nun who champions refugees wins UNHCR's Nansen Award

Having dedicated her life to the refugee cause, Sister Rosita Milesi continues to shape and personify Brazil's welcoming approach to people forced to flee. Sister Rosita has personally assisted thousands of people on the move – helping them access legal documentation, shelter, food, health care, language training and access to the labour market in Brazil.

Read more **here.**

Sister Rosita Milesi stands inside the Catedral Metropolitana de Brasilia in the centre of Brazil's capital. © UNHCR/Marina Calderon

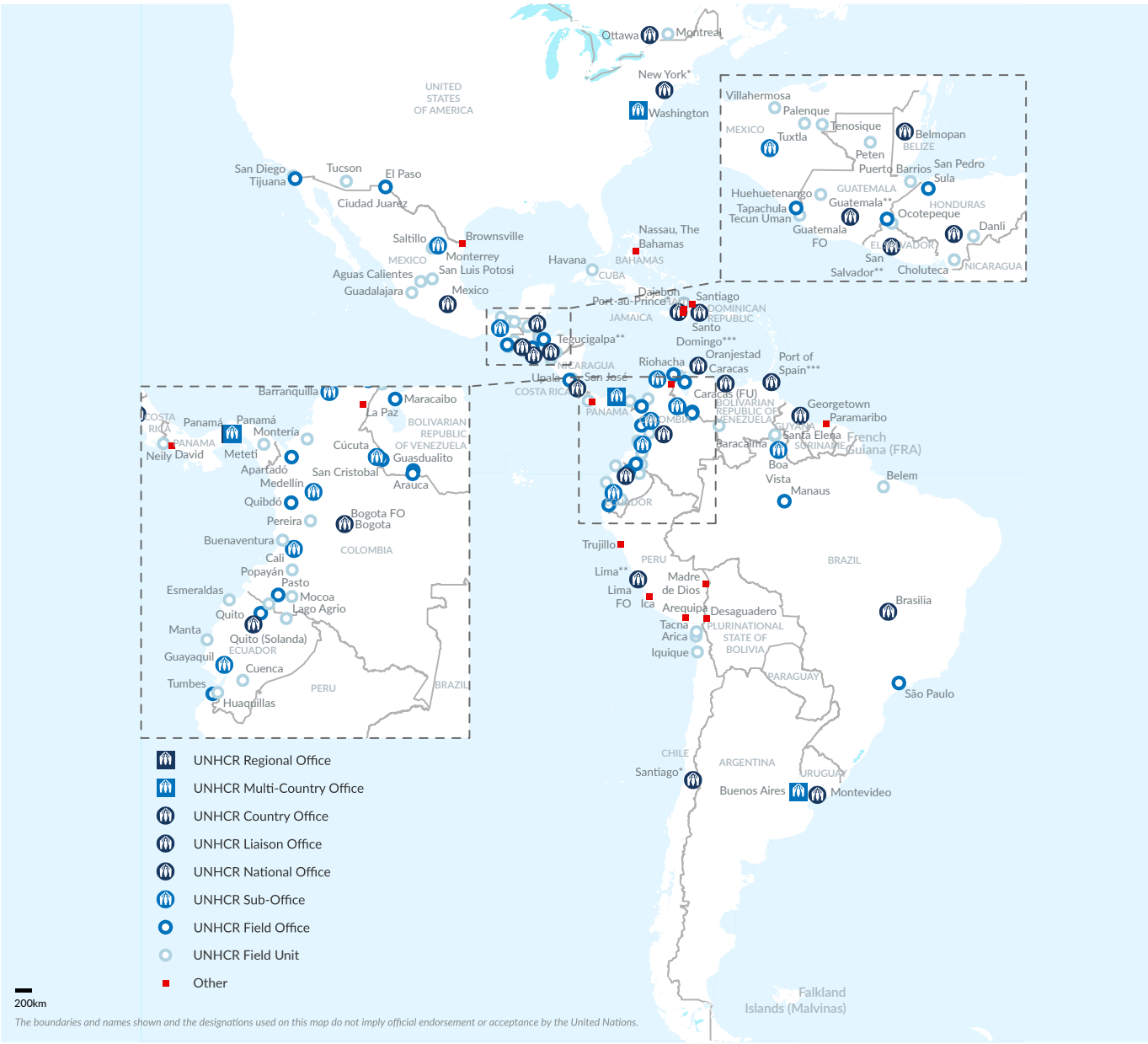
POLICY PRIORITIES

- Promoting localization and engaging with refugee-led organizations remains central to UNHCR's protection and solutions centred responses. Over 22 refugee-led organizations are being supported with Grant Agreements in 2024.

- **Seventy-two per cent of partner agreements in the Americas are with local and refugee or IDP-led NGOs**, and UNHCR remains committed to further promoting localization efforts and the meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless people. The establishment of a coordination group of 150 organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people has played a leading role in the Cartagena+40 process. Five organizations from the region participated in the global NGO consultations, with the main emphasis on women-led organizations.

- The adverse effects of climate change in the Americas are becoming even more evident, with severe and unpredictable weather events like El Niño and La Niña. Combined with existing socio-economic and security challenges, it heightens the risk of displacement for millions, both within and across borders. In the region, disasters have triggered an annual average of 2.1 million internal displacements in the past decade, mainly due to weather-related hazards (2023 Global Report on Internal Displacement). To operationalize its commitment to reduce and manage the effects of climate change on forcibly displaced and stateless people, UNHCR released its global **Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024-2030**. **Ecuador** and **Honduras** are among 22 identified countries by UNHCR worldwide where data demonstrates the impact of the climate crisis will only get worse by 2030.

UNHCR PRESENCE IN THE AMERICAS 2024 (Information as of September 2024)



CARTAGENA +40

The consultative phase of the Cartagena +40 Process was completed on 20 June *after four consultations: Protection (Mexico, 4 and 5 April); Solutions (Brasilia, 16 and 17 May); Caribbean countries (Bogotá, 18 June); and Displacement in disasters (Bogota, 19 and 20 June).* ***More than 450 participants from 24 Latin American and Caribbean governments****, refugee-led and civil society organizations, academia, local governments, and municipalities, UN agencies and international organizations, private sector, multilateral development banks, and observer States participated throughout this phase. Conclusions and recommendations were drafted after each consultation, compiling more than 300 interventions. These inputs have been included in the* ***draft of the Declaration and the Plan of Action of Chile 2024-2034****. Additionally, Chile submitted a proposal for the establishment of a follow-up mechanism to the Cartagena+40 Process.*

INNOVATION

The Americas continues to lead the way in piloting innovative solutions that support the delivery of UNHCR's protection mandate and offer forcibly displaced individuals the opportunity to directly lead and implement projects that address challenges affecting their lives. Through its **Data**, **Digital**, **Environment and Climate Action**, and **Refugee-led Innovation** Programmes, UNHCR has driven impactful change with 27 innovation projects across 2023 and 2024, supported by over $2.1 million in regional investment. These initiatives emphasize grassroots leadership and community-driven solutions, tackling critical issues such as food security, economic integration, and social cohesion. Initiatives supported include establishing a refugee-led green economy, the development of a data-driven protection prioritization tool, addressing cybersecurity for refugees, creating a digital hub, and piloting a regenerative community tourism project, among others.

Argentina. Lormys Rojas, creator of the Foundation for the Cultural Integration of Migrants and Refugees (FICU), poses for a portrait during World Refugee Day in Buenos Aires. The Foundation for the Cultural Integration of Migrants and Refugees (FICU) is an organization that, together with UNHCR, advocates for the integration of the displaced population through cultural, social, and community activities. Its founders and members participated in the event in commemoration of World Refugee Day. © UNHCR/Fernando Minnicelli

TIMELY FUNDING

As of 30 September, UNHCR in the Americas is 43% funded, having required in 2024 $834.6 million to respond to the needs of millions of refugees and others seeking safety and dignified lives. UNHCR's humanitarian and longer-term 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 generously contributed directly to UNHCR operations in the Americas.

Thanks to all our donors in 2024 (as of 30 September 2024)

Argentina | Australia | Brazil | Belgium | Canada | China | Denmark | European Union | France | Germany | Guyana | Ireland | Italy | Luxembourg | Mexico | Norway | Netherlands (Kingdom of) | Republic of Korea | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | United States of America | Central Emergency Response Fund | International Organization for Migration | Leaving No One Behind – The Internal Displacement Solutions Fund | United Nations Children's Fund | UN Joint Programmes | UN Programme On HIV/AIDS | World Food Programme

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CONTACTS

SALVADOR SANTIESTEBAN, Reporting Officer, Regional Bureau Americas ***santiest@unhcr.org***

Links Americas: GLOBAL FOCUS · DATA PORTAL · X: @ACNUR_ES