UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Americas Operational Update

October - December 2024

Chile. Participants at the Cartagena+40 event in Santiago de Chile during the adoption of the Declaration and Plan of Action of Chile 2024-2034. © UNHCR/Eugenia Paz.

On 12 December, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean adopted the Chile Declaration and Plan of Action, renewing their commitment to solidarity, protection and sustainable solutions for refugees, displaced people and stateless persons in the region. The Chile Declaration and Plan of Action provide a renewed and innovative framework for common action to improve policies, legal frameworks, and practices, and will guide States over the next decade through common responses to the challenges faced by refugees, displaced people and stateless persons in all stages of displacement.

The press release is available here

HIGHLIGHTS

The Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform (R4V) launched its Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) 2025-2026 on 6 December. The RMRP brings together 230 partners across 17 countries to implement 23,600 activities in nine sectors to assist over 2.34 million refugees, migrants, and host communities, requiring USD 1.4 billion in its first year. These activities address needs identified in the 2024 Refugee and Migrant Needs Analysis (RMNA).

During the last quarter of 2024, UNHCR made considerable progress in strengthening regional Shelter and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) capacity-building responses. An ecological brigade community project was implemented in three sites in northern Brazil to promote environmental awareness and leadership development. In Boa Vista, 92 participants took part in 83 activities. These offered training in composting, community gardening, soil preparation, and waste management, contributing to sustainable development and community well-being. Ecuador achieved notable improvements in shelter and CCCM responses through infrastructure upgrades in various cities and the completion of a key formal shelter in Cuenca. A provincial gathering in Manta provided training on how to improve shelter safety and protection and delivered kits and staff training so that 18 formal shelters would be better prepared for emergencies.

Rosita Milesi, a Brazilian nun, lawyer, social worker, and movement builder who has championed the rights and dignity of refugees and migrants for nearly 40 years, was honoured as global laureate of the 2024 UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award from UNHCR. Rosita Milesi has personally assisted thousands of people – helping them access legal documentation, shelter, food, health care, language training and access to the labour market in Brazil.

UNHCR's response in the Americas

In November, heavy rains and flooding in Chocó, Colombia, affected over 180,000 people, mainly Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, across 27 municipalities. The disaster led to significant losses and contamination of water sources. The San Juan subregion also faced severe mobility restrictions due to illegal armed groups. In response to these humanitarian needs, UNHCR in coordination with the local humanitarian team (ELC) and national and local institutions, mobilized efforts to support affected individuals and communities and delivered: hygiene kits (1,400); water purification tablets; and solar lamps (620). In a second wave of distribution, UNHCR purchased and dispatched shelter kits including family tarpaulins, mattresses, bedsheets, and blankets (950 each), hammocks (600), and mosquito nets (5,000). UNHCR remains on the ground in Chocó, working with the Colombian government, local authorities, and partners to provide life-saving assistance to affected populations.

From 14 to 22 November, Tropical Storm Sara affected 250,900 people in Honduras, with over 80,000 suffering material losses. Rural and Afro-Honduran communities faced severe damage to infrastructure and livelihoods. UNHCR assessed protection risks in shelters, identifying violence against women and girls and mental health needs, which were addressed by partner Médecins du Monde, in coordination with the Secretariat of Health, providing comprehensive medical assistance. Among those affected, there were also people who had been displaced due to violence and had to be relocated, highlighting the double impact of violence and disasters. Additionally, the Government distributed non-food items donated by UNHCR.

Response in progress: As of December 2024

People who received non-food items
375,937

Number of people who received protection services
961,218

People reached through information, awareness, and/or sensitization sessions
540,217

People accessing community centres, support spaces, or other structures
483,162

People who received shelter and housing assistance
221,544

People who received legal assistance
300,692

People participating in peaceful coexistence projects
78,639

Consultations in UNHCR supported mental health and psychosocial support services
147,715

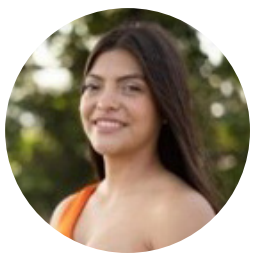
Children and caregivers who received child protection services
41,544

People supported to obtain civil status, identity, or legal status documentation
147,020

People who benefitted from livelihoods and economic inclusion interventions
85,716

Number of people supported with access to water and/or sanitation services
17,652

Ongoing initiatives...



El Salvador:

Access to mental health is the priority for a displaced community leader in El Salvador. Through her leadership, Saraí seeks to ensure that youth feel safe and empowered to talk about their emotions, promoting an environment of support and emotional well-being.

Mexico:

Twins Jessica and Jessie Valcin remember that, from an early age, their home in Port-au-Prince was open to anyone in need. Daughters of a nurse, they grew up with the idea that helping their community was the most important thing. As refugees in Mexico, they now support their community in Tijuana, Baja California, where they have attended university and found work. In 2024, Jessica was hired as an interpreter for UNHCR and Jessie joined the organization "Al Otro Lado".

Panama:

Social media campaign tackles misinformation about treacherous Darién jungle. UNHCR's 'Trust the Toucan' initiative uses social media to share testimonies from refugees and migrants who have survived the perilous crossing, in order to expose the dangers that they faced.

Trinidad and Tobago:

A doctor in Trinidad and Tobago learned Spanish to help refugees feel welcome. Doctor Felicia Mathews brings hope and comfort to refugees who face language barriers when accessing healthcare in the Caribbean islands. In 2024, over 33,000 asylum-seekers and refugees were registered with UNHCR in Trinidad and Tobago, originating from over 41 countries. The largest group is composed of people from Venezuela who primarily speak Spanish.

Our work in action

Ecuador: UNHCR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility presented a toolkit designed to promote protection, integration, and solidarity towards people forced to flee.

UNHCR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility launched on 29 November the toolkit "Aliados por Un Mundo Posible," a practical and educational resource designed to strengthen protection, integration, and solidarity for forcibly displaced people and local communities. The toolkit was handed over to the Ministries of Education, Health, Economic and Social Inclusion, Women and Human Rights, and the Secretariat of Communication.

Coordination and partnerships

On 14 October UNHCR and the Scalabrinian Foundation signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Geneva to strengthen their strategic partnership in the Americas. This agreement establishes priority areas to maximize protection and assistance for forcibly displaced and stateless people in the region, with a special emphasis on women and girls.

Under the leadership of the Quito Process and MIRPS Pro-tempore presidencies, Costa Rica and Belize respectively, UNHCR supported a Regional Meeting with National Refugee Commissions on asylum capacity development in Panama on October 15-16. Participants included Member States and representatives from various international processes. States committed to strengthening asylum systems through digitization, differentiated case processing, backlog reduction, and good practice exchanges, recommending annual meetings.

The 10th Plenary Meeting of the Quito Process, led by Costa Rica, resulted in the adoption of the "San José Chapter" declaration. Guatemala joined as a member state, and Ecuador assumed the 2025 Presidency. The meeting concluded with the adoption of the Annual Declaration, adopted by most member States, and the handover of the Pro-tempore Presidency to Ecuador. UNHCR and IOM issued a joint statement.

The COP 16 UN biodiversity summit held in Cali in October resulted in significant agreements, including a new subsidiary body to protect indigenous knowledge. On the sidelines of the Conference, UNHCR highlighted that biodiversity loss puts the most vulnerable people, such as displaced persons, indigenous communities, women and girls, at greater risk, also exacerbating forced displacement. This is of special relevance in the Americas region, where around 86% of asylum-seekers, refugees, and stateless people live in countries highly vulnerable to extreme weather disruptions, compared to 75% worldwide.

The VII MIRPS Annual Meeting, hosted by Belize on 5 December, featured high-level delegations from MIRPS States and Support Platform Members. The meeting included thematic discussions on strengthening asylum systems and the adoption of the Belize City Declaration. MIRPS States adopted the Belize City Declaration reaffirming their commitment to enhance protection and promote durable solutions for displaced people in Central America and Mexico.

UNHCR prioritized the meaningful participation of refugee-led organizations in regional processes, notably, the Regional Group of refugee-led organizations (RLO) of Latin America and the Caribbean (GARLOS) represents over 200 RLO in several countries in the region. Their participation opened spaces for integration and the establishment of proposals and decision making from the perspective of those affected. The GARLOS played a crucial role in the review and development of the Chile Declaration and Action Plan and actively participated in the December ministerial event in Chile, sharing their valuable insights and expertise.

UNHCR, UN Women and UNFPA joined forces with four women-led organizations to advance gender equality and localization. As a result, they co-organized a three-day regional meeting with 25 organizations from 15 countries in the Americas. The outcome of this meeting was increased networking among women-led organizations and a roadmap to enhance local partnerships and stronger gender equality.

Do not miss...

Colombia:

Esneda Saavedra's Yukpa community has endured decades of conflict and displacement. With disaster and biodiverity crises threatening their survival, she raised her voice at COP16. As a human rights advisor for the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), she advocates for indigenous rights at a national level. Supported by UNHCR, ONIC leads advocacy spaces with institutions at the local and national levels.

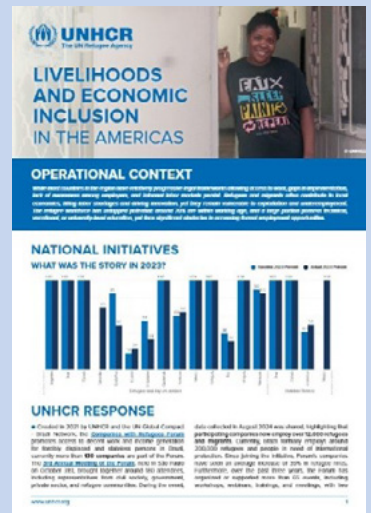
Spotlight publications in the Americas

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

Regional: IDPs in the Americas- December 2024

Regional: Cities of Solidarity in the Americas factsheet- December 2024

Regional: R4V Movements Report Q3



Regional: Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion Factsheet- December 2024

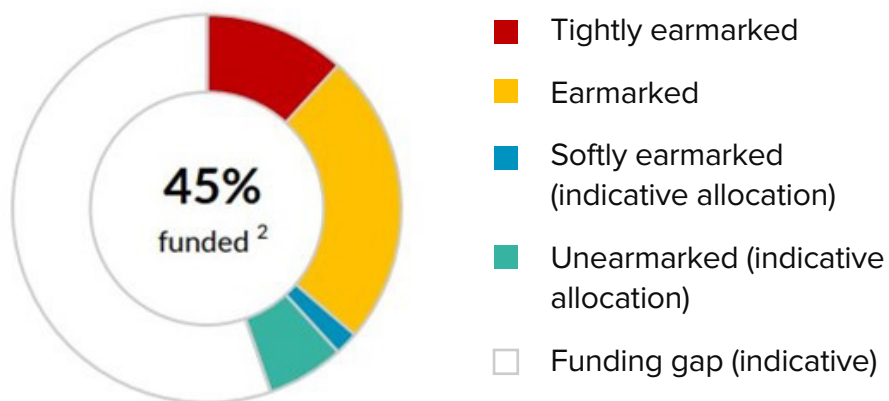
Funding the response in 2024 (as of 31 December 2024)

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 December, donors had pledged $373.4 million.

Notes:

1. *The financial requirements for The Americas are for the operations in Belize, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America, and Venezuela.*
2. *The percentage funded (38%) and total funding amount ($315,693,643) are indicative based on the methodology described above. This leaves an indicative funding gap of $511,738,237 representing 62% of the financial requirements.*

$834.6 million **UNHCR's financial requirements 2024**



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

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

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