UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

AMERICAS FACTSHEET

April 2024

Colombia. A group of children look at a mural in Noanamá in Quibdó, Chocó Department. Noanamá is one of the largest Afro-Colombian communities in the San Juan River region and is directly affected by forced displacement and confinement because of the armed conflict in Chocó. © UNHCR/Nicolo Filippo Rosso

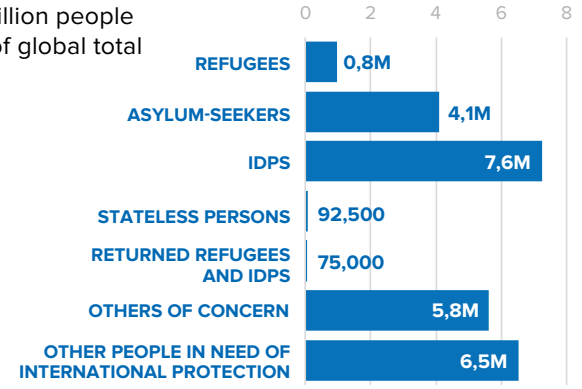
The Americas region continues to face an **unprecedented scale of forced displacement and mixed movements**, where people fleeing conflict, persecution, and violence move alongside those escaping poverty, lack of opportunities, and the impact of climate change.

UNHCR prioritizes **life-saving assistance and efforts to find long-term solutions** by fostering cooperation with a wide array of actors, such as local authorities and the private sector, including to provide **livelihood opportunities** and promote **inclusion** into national systems.

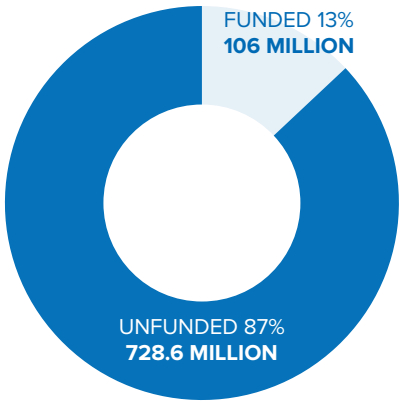
By mid-2023, over **7,622,000 people remained internally displaced**. UNHCR prioritizes its work to **strengthen national responses**, including to help ensure that internally displaced people (IDPs) can access public services, legal support, and humanitarian assistance.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR THE AMERICAS FROM THE GLOBAL APPEAL 2024

25 million people
19% of global total



FUNDING (AS OF 29 FEBRUARY 2024)



USD 834.6 MILLION

requested for the Americas in 2024

UNHCR PRESENCE

STAFF

2,015 NATIONAL STAFF
511 INTERNATIONAL STAFF
59,7% WOMEN, **37,2%** MEN

OFFICES

1 REGIONAL BUREAU IN PANAMA
3 MULTI-COUNTRY OFFICES IN ARGENTINA, PANAMA, AND U.S.
11 COUNTRY OFFICES
8 NATIONAL OFFICES
21 FIELD OFFICES
8 SUB OFFICES
49 FIELD UNITS

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

By mid-2023, the Americas hosted 22 million forcibly displaced and stateless people, including some 4.6 million asylum-seekers and refugees, 7.6 million internally displaced people and nearly 5.3 million people in need of international protection, a surge of half a million people compared to 2022. The region faces unprecedented numbers of displacement and mixed movements, with people fleeing violence and persecution alongside those seeking to escape poverty, a lack of opportunity and the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters. Reception mechanisms, already strained, are overwhelmed as a result.

To address the challenges of forced displacement – including internal displacement and mixed movements – UNHCR employed a comprehensive approach in the Americas to strengthen access to asylum and other forms of protection and solutions. UNHCR also supported responsibility-sharing arrangements to improve and stabilize the situation of displaced populations across the entire region, including through the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection. In response to continued internal displacement, UNHCR prioritizes supporting national responses to help ensure that internally displaced people (IDPs) can access public services, legal support, and humanitarian assistance.

The number of people engaged in mixed movements across the Americas reached unprecedented levels in 2023. As of the end of 2023, a total of 520,085 people had crossed the Darien on their journey north since January. This marks a new record for the number of people in mixed movements, representing a three-fold increase in the number of arrivals in Panama since 2021, and double the number of those arriving in 2022. As of 28 February, 73,167 people have entered Darien irregularly in 2024. Venezuelans remain the primary group crossing (46,835 people), followed by Ecuadorians (5,658 people) and Haitians (4,823 people).

*In 2023, Venezuelans represented 63% of those crossing. **According to UNHCR's Protection Monitoring reports**, nearly half of the Venezuelans interviewed came directly from Venezuela. Other nationalities of asylum-seekers and migrants crossing the Darien in 2023 include Ecuadorians (10%), Haitians (9%), and Colombians (3%), and over 100 other nationalities.*

STRATEGY

PROTECT

STRENGTHENING ASYLUM SYSTEMS AND PROTECTION ALTERNATIVES

Countries hosting refugees and migrants made commendable efforts in 2023 to strengthen asylum and expand legal stay arrangements for people in need of international protection. However, increasing numbers and limited regular migration alternatives outside of asylum are overwhelming the asylum systems.

- **UNHCR works to enhance the digitalization and implementation of innovative case management across asylum systems.** UNHCR also works to improve accessibility through secure online pre-registration and scheduling tools and access to documentation processes.
- **UNHCR supports the use of case streaming and differentiated case processing modalities**, key elements of fair and functioning asylum systems throughout the region.

ADDRESSING ROOT CAUSES

The unprecedented mixed movements of refugees and migrants in the Americas is linked to complex and often overlapping drivers of displacement and population movements that have persisted and intensified, forcing, or leaving people with few options but to leave home.

- **UNHCR works with States and other stakeholders in developing legal frameworks and public policies** that respond to the needs of displaced populations.
- **UNHCR supports States in increasing their climate preparedness** through strengthening 1) legal protections for those forced to flee due to the effects of climate change, and 2) the inclusion of displaced people in the climate response of host countries in the region.

PROTECT

EXPANDING RESETTLEMENT AND SAFE PATHWAYS

A **responsive third-country solutions framework** iincludes refugee resettlement, complementary pathways to protection and solutions for refugees, as well as regular pathways for migrants. Such pathways have potential to reduce onward movements and dangerous journeys of refugees and migrant and can also provide mechanisms for responsibility-sharing between States.

- 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, and other partners, provides a streamlined process for refugee resettlement and other pathways for migrants. In its initial pilot phase launched in Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Guatemala, the SMO initiative has already broadened access to solutions.
- UNHCR works to **expand access to family reunification mechanisms** across the Americas, based on broadening of relevant selection criteria, **strategic use of sponsorship programmes**, and stronger support to facilitate refugee access to parole and labour mobility mechanisms.

RESPOND

ENHANCING HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND EFFORTS TO COUNTERACT MISINFORMATION

Unprecedented complex mixed movements throughout the Americas have led to growing humanitarian crises, with refugees and migrants on the move facing grave risks along their journey. States as well as international and humanitarian organizations are providing life-saving humanitarian assistance, legal advice, psychosocial support, reliable information, and dedicated multi-stakeholder coordination platforms.

- UNHCR focuses on **strengthening collaborative efforts** to reinforce reception capacity and provide life-saving humanitarian assistance, including in the Darien region.
- UNHCR works to **scale up innovative tools and coordinated efforts to counter misinformation** and provide reliable information to refugees and migrants about the risks of the journey and available alternatives.
- To combat misinformation, UNHCR has invested in creating and amplifying **trusted, reliable information platforms**, such as Trust the Jaguar, Trust the Toucan, and Somos Panas.

SOLVE

INVESTING IN INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION

Legal stay arrangements, documentation, access to services, and livelihoods help ensure that people in need of protection and others on the move can thrive in host communities. Through an area-based approach, projects and activities implemented also benefit hosting communities. Some countries have made great strides in creating welcoming policies and conditions that facilitate integration and inclusion, yet many challenges remain. National services and labour markets in many host communities have become overstretched and further investment is needed.

- UNHCR integrates **longer-term solutions perspective** in the responses to mixed movement of refugees and migrants, drawing on the tools and approaches of development agenciesdrawing on the tools and approaches of development agencies.

PROTECTION-SENSITIVE RETURN AND READMISSION

While ensuring respect for the principle of non-refoulement by States not to return, expel, push back or informally transfer asylum seekers where they would face persecution, protection-sensitive return, and specific types of transfer arrangements (such as readmission) can, however, play an important role in a strengthened comprehensive response.

- UNHCR works to **enhance the support to reception and reintegration** programmes in countries of origin to ensure the rights and dignity of returnees, including the monitoring of the situation of forced returns for people not in need of international protection.

COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

● UNHCR co-leads with IOM the regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V), coordinating with 248 organizations who implement the 2023-2024 Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) across 17 countries, based on findings of the Regional Refugee and Migrant Needs Analysis (RMNA). Across the region, integration, protection, and food security were identified as the top priority needs. Both agencies also provide technical support to the regional inter-governmental Quito Process — an initiative among 12 Latin American countries that host refugees and migrants from Venezuela and that seeks to harmonize domestic policies and responses to displacement and migration in receiving countries.

● UNHCR, jointly with the Organization of American States (OAS), as the Technical Secretariat of the **Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS)**, supports 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. In 2023, the MIRPS Support Platform made possible three regional field-based exchanges to share and expand good practices on protection and solutions, which will now be expanded through specific projects in 2024.

● In 2023, the cities of Medellin and Pereira (**Colombia**) and San Cristobal (**Venezuela**) joined the UNHCR's Cities of Solidarity iinitiative aimed at fostering protection and integration of refugees. Furthermore, Montevideo (**Uruguay**) renewed its agreement. In Chile, in the framework of the initiative, nearly 100 representatives of regional and municipal authorities participated on 5-6 December in Santiago, to the "First Meeting of Local Governments and Human Mobility", organized by the National Migration Service (SERMIG) and UNHCR.

● UNHCR continues to strengthen **strategic partnerships** with key development actors across the Americas region, including the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These efforts have led to scaled-up investments in key hosting countries such as Colombia, Costa Rica and Ecuador through the IDB Grant Facility and the Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF) **in regularization programs and 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 social inclusion and labour market integration. At the regional level, the World Bank, IDB, USAID and IMF have joined UNHCR and IOM to support implementation of the Los Angeles Declaration pledges and to participate in the MIRPS and Friends of Quito processes.

POLICY PRIORITIES

● Localization and partnership were priorities for UNHCR to implement the **age, gender and diversity (AGD)** policy in the region. Twenty-seven organizations participated in a localization workshop, and UNHCR held regional NGO consultations on local integration and gender equality. UNHCR also identified nearly 300 refugee-led organizations, partners and some 60 leaders, mostly women, who supported refugees with empowerment, humanitarian aid, gender-based violence responses, and psychosocial support.

● UNHCR iin the Americas works in Spanish, Portuguese, French, English and Dutch with over **152 partnership agreements**, including local and international NGOs, governments, community-based led organizations, and other partners. **Seventy-eight per cent of partner agreements in the Americas are with local and refugee or IDP-led NGOs**, and UNHCR remains committed to further promote localization efforts and the meaningful participation of the populations with and for whom UNHCR works.

● Countries in the Americas are increasingly exposed to the **adverse effects of climate change and disasters**. Peaking temperatures, floods and drought aggravated by the weather phenomenon El Niño, increase the risk of displacements as well as the vulnerability of already displaced populations and host communities. UNHCR Americas has developed a regional long-term strategic plan to guide its efforts on Climate Action. UNHCR will strengthen access to international protection through working with Governments and intergovernmental organizations to enhance national and regional legal mechanisms. UNHCR will also engage actively with Governments and local authorities to include refugees, other forcibly displaced and stateless people in **national adaptation plans** (NAP), as well as to contribute to the design and implementation of **Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies, Early Warning Systems, and Early Action protocols**.

● Environmental sustainability in the Americas is addressed through innovative UNHCR initiatives like waste management, mangrove restoration, and promoting a green economy under the Environment and Climate Action Innovation Programme.

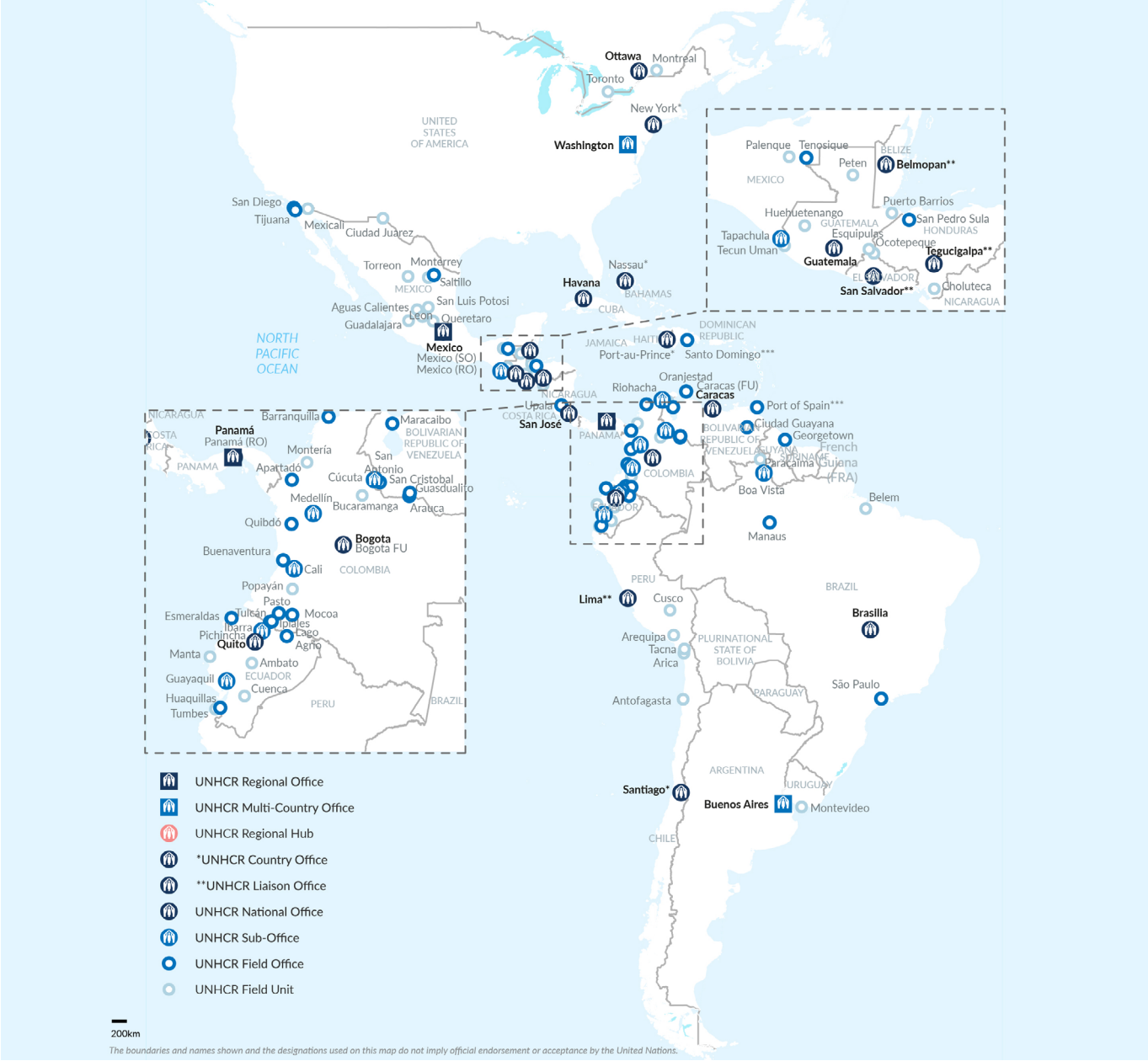
Guatemala. Hilda Rosalia Mas Macz, 33, poses for a portrait. She is the administrative secretary of the "Ak'Tenamit" Educational Centre. She is an indigenous Mayan Q'eqchi' woman from the area and has been working at the Educational Centre for 8 years, after graduating from the same educational centre. UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding with 'Ak'Tenamit' to promote community empowerment, livelihood opportunities and protection prevention and response activities for refugees and Guatemalans at risk. © UNHCR/Nicolo Filippo Rosso

INNOVATION

UNHCR's innovative efforts in the Americas since 2018 have led to over 30 projects aimed at supporting forcibly displaced individuals through novel solutions.

These efforts include the **Refugee-led Innovation Programme**, supporting initiatives in the Americas that focus on preserving indigenous heritage, enhancing food security, using art therapy for returnees, and establishing digital hubs and community tourism. The **Digital Innovation Programme** is improving refugee´s and migrants' digital access by investing in community-led cybersecurity and advancing healthcare access for indigenous communities online. The **Data Innovation Programme** supports climate action for indigenous women and supports small businesses with automated cash assistance.

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



TIMELY FUNDING

As of 29 February, UNHCR in the Americas is 13% funded, having required in 2024 **$834.6 million** to respond to the needs of millions of refugees and others seeking safety and dignified lives. **Timely funding** is urgent to **ensure the continuity of life-saving activities** in the region: unrestricted **cash assistance**; distribution of **core and hygiene items**; provision of **emergency shelter** in border areas and for those facing evictions, and support to States for **regularisation** and documentation.

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 29 February 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 | UN Programme On HIV/AIDS | |

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COLOMBIA SITUATION:
$56.8 million UNHCR's financial requirements in 2024 (12% funded as of 29 February 2024)

NORTH OF CENTRAL AMERICA SITUATION:
$255.3 million UNHCR's financial requirements in 2024 (16% funded as of 29 February 2024)

VENEZUELA SITUATION:
$399.4 million UNHCR's financial requirements in 2024 (12% funded as of 29 February 2024)

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