UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Americas Factsheet

May 2025

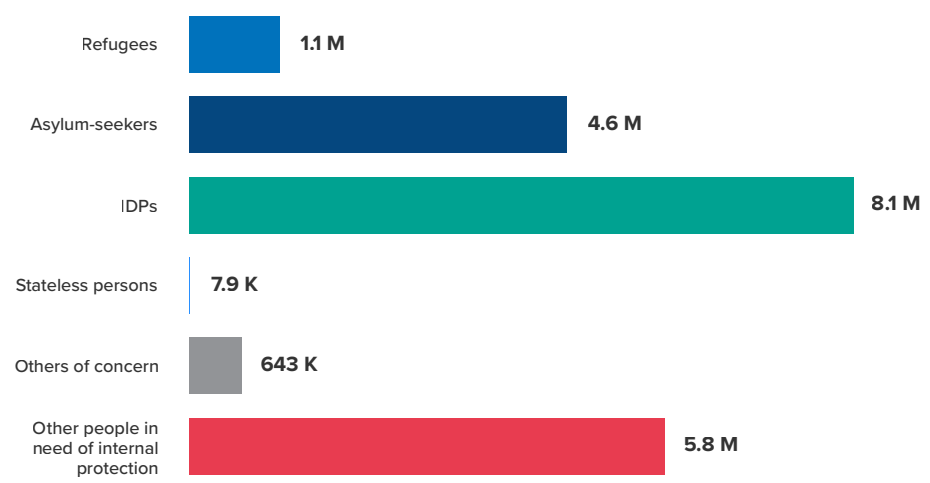
Colombia. María Palacio is a Wayuu leader and teacher committed to the development of her community. María dreams of seeing the settlement legalized and with basic services. © UNHCR/Andrés Gómez

Latin America and the Caribbean remains a region that continues to offer meaningful opportunities to drive progress on protection and solutions for refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless people. Yet, to convert this potential into lasting impact, stronger support and sustained investment from the international community are pivotal to ensuring their rights, safety, stability, and long-term socio-economic integration.

The increasing number of returns in the region needs to be accompanied by strengthened reception and reintegration capacities in countries of origin. UNHCR works to ensure that those in need of international protection are properly identified and that returnees have access to legal, social and economic support to facilitate their sustainable reintegration, reducing the risk of renewed displacement.

POPULATION IN THE AMERICAS FROM THE MID-YEAR TRENDS 2024

20.3 million people | 17% of global total



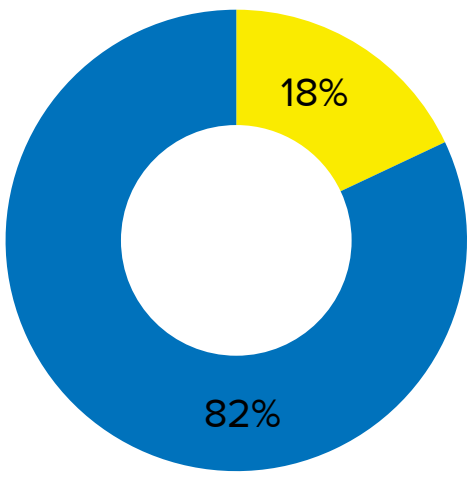
FUNDING (AS OF 30 APRIL 2025)

USD 815.2 million

requested for the Americas in 2025

Funded
150.2 million

Unfunded
665 million



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff

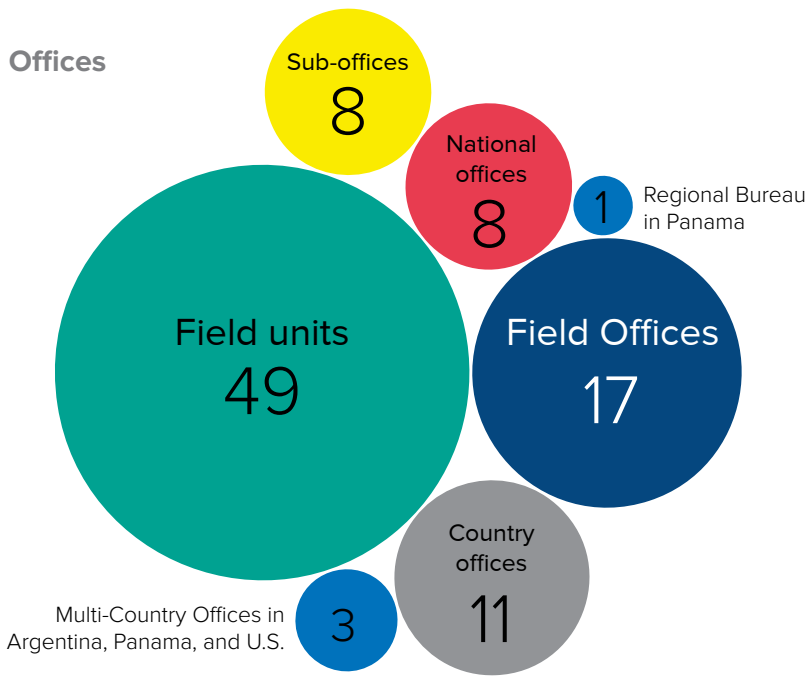
982
National Staff

281
International Staff

732
Women

530
Men

Offices



Makendy, a refugee from Haiti, was relocated through UNHCR's Local Integration Programme to Aguascalientes, where he secured a job an auto parts factory.

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Operational Context

Violence, persecution, human rights violations, insecurity, and the impact of disasters continue to drive forced displacement in the Americas. By mid- 2024, the Americas hosted more than 20.3 million refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless people, 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.1

In 2024, forced displacement in the Americas was worsened by extreme weather events, including severe flooding in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, which affected over 2.3 million people, caused 173 deaths, and displaced over 422,000 individuals, including refugees and others in need of international protection.

The situation in the Americas remains complex in 2025, with continued forced displacement internally and across borders, returns and increasing reverse flows.

Cross-border population movements across the Americas continued to decline in 2025, though dynamics varied across countries. Entries into Panama through the Darien jungle dropped sharply in the first quarter of 2025, with only 2,831 people recorded— a 97% decrease compared to the same period in 2024. However, conflict and violence, particularly in Colombia and Haiti, continue to be major drivers of internal and external displacement.

A growing number of individuals from various nationalities, including Venezuelans, Ecuadorians, and Colombians, have been reported going southbound, including opting for maritime routes. Since January 2025, this increased trend of people heading south has been observed at key border points, accompanied by a rising number of individuals seeking access to national asylum systems.

UNHCR works to strengthen asylum systems, provide emergency shelter, healthcare, and food, and protect vulnerable populations, including displaced children and women at risk of violence. The significant reduction in funding for UNHCR is, however, forcing the organization to downsize life-saving programmes, leaving thousands of refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless people at risk.

[1] Updated figures will be available as of mid-June when the Global Trends Report is published.

Strategy

PROTECT

Strengthening asylum systems

UNHCR strengthens domestic asylum systems through enhanced efficiencies, differentiated processing modalities, improved technology (digitalization), backlog reduction mechanisms, and the provision of legal aid to asylum-seekers. Building and strengthening asylum capacity remains a priority in Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay.

The increase in displacement in Central America and Mexico over recent years has exposed those in need of international protection to heightened protection risks, while placing a tremendous strain on reception systems. By end of 2024, some 78,000 new asylum claims were lodged in Mexico, mostly by Hondurans, Cubans, Haitians, and Salvadorans. Costa Rica remains the main hosting country for Nicaraguans in need of international protection. UNHCR supports States in the subregion to equip asylum systems with the necessary flexibility to process increasing number of requests in a way that promotes fairness and efficiency.

In South America, the prima facie provisions of Brazilian refugee law have enabled the recognition of refugee status for over 153,000 individuals, on a cumulative basis since 2010. In Uruguay, the recent adoption of a prima facie procedure for the recognition of refugee status has identified more than 3,900 eligible Venezuelan asylum-seekers.

Addressing root causes

UNHCR aims to address the root causes of displacement while supporting local governments to provide humanitarian aid, protection services, and tangible solutions for individuals at all stages of displacement. By mid-2024, internal displacement in the Americas had surged to over 8.1 million people across Colombia, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, and Mexico. In Honduras, UNHCR has supported the development of a regulation which foresees a series of comprehensive measures to prevent and respond to internal displacement and collaborates with national statistics offices to improve data collection and analysis on internally displaced people (IDPs). In Mexico, UNHCR has provided technical support to several States to develop legislation regulating IDP responses. In Brazil, UNHCR remains engaged with legislative authorities on the adoption of a national policy to prevent and respond to internal displacement in the context of disasters.

RESPOND

Enhancing humanitarian response

UNHCR supports governments in delivering life-saving humanitarian assistance to people forced to flee their homes. This includes providing access to information, legal aid, shelter, and primary health care, while promoting the inclusion of refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless people in public policies and national systems.

UNHCR is intensifying efforts to reduce the impact of extreme weather disasters on refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless people and advocates for their integration into national adaptation and resilience plans. The agency actively collaborates with governments to enhance emergency preparedness and response, especially considering recent extreme weather-related crises in Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia, and El Salvador.

SOLVE

Investing in integration

Stabilization and long-term integration are critical pillars in addressing forced displacement across the Americas. By fostering access to employment, housing, health, education, and social protection programmes, UNHCR seeks to support refugees in rebuilding their lives, promote social cohesion, and stabilization while reducing the risks of undertaking dangerous journeys. UNHCR continues strengthening its collaboration with governments, civil society, international financial and development institutions, and the private sector to support national strategies that empower refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless people, facilitate local integration, and enhance community cohesion.

In 2024, UNHCR worked with development and financial actors such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. UNHCR has also partnered with the International Finance Corporation to advance financial inclusion for refugees. Statistical inclusion for persons in need of international protection has helped ensure their inclusion in government planning.

UNHCR collaborates with the private sector to connect refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless people with job opportunities. In Brazil, 147,000 Venezuelans have been relocated internally and received housing, access to employment, social benefits, and education. In Mexico, more than 50,000 refugees and asylum-seekers have relocated from the south to the centre of the country and have found formal employment with more than 650 companies since 2016. Moreover, 600 refugees initiated their naturalization process with the help of UNHCR in 2024. In Ecuador, 102 private sector companies and chambers of commerce have become allies in promoting and stewarding inclusive policies towards people forced to flee. By the end of 2024, in Peru, 2,794 individuals benefitted from livelihoods and economic inclusion interventions, including technical training programmes, support for self-employment and wage-employment, and support to skills certification and/or diploma recognition amongst others. This includes supporting youth aged 17 to 25 with access to employment following technical training.

In the Americas, local authorities are crucial for integrating refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless people, especially in urban areas. The "Cities of Solidarity" initiative supports local governments' efforts, based on the Mexico and Brazil Plans of Action. The Chile Plan of Action seeks to further promote and strengthen the Cities of Solidarity programme, through joint work with municipalities, local authorities, partners and other local actors. These efforts help provide access to basic social services and facilitate social cohesion and peaceful coexistence through public policies that remain in force despite any changes in public administration.

Legal stay arrangements

UNHCR supports States that have implemented protection sensitive legal stay arrangements for people in need of international protection, including refugees and others, through material and technical assistance, capacity development, and public information campaigns to maximize the long-term impact of these initiatives as a tool for protection, socio-economic integration and development.

Several States in the region have established new or expanded legal stay arrangements and temporary protection processes for Venezuelans. In Colombia, 2.4 million Venezuelans have been able to access temporary protection permits, and a new process (PEP Tutor) was announced in June 2024 to benefit some additional 600,000. In Ecuador, a new regularization process resulted in 14,905 temporary stay certificates, and almost 15,000 new or renewed VIRTE visas. Brazil granted over 479,000 temporary residency permits. In Uruguay, more than 2,500 asylum-seekers with a pending asylum claim have accessed the “Residencia por Arraigo” programme. Argentina announced in 2024 a regularization process to benefit Venezuelan nationals, which was extended until 19 January 2025. In Peru, since 2021, 90,000 individuals, mostly Venezuelans, have benefitted from a humanitarian stay permit.

SOLVE

Living in uncertainty: funding cuts put the homes of displaced families in Colombia at risk

Like thousands of displaced people in Colombia, María lives in an informal settlement. Legalizing these spaces is essential for them to access water, housing, sanitation, and other essential services.

Protection-sensitive return

UNHCR has been working closely with national authorities from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras to strengthen protection-sensitive responses for the reception and reintegration of returnees. Efforts focus on developing protocols for dignified reception, enhancing screening for the identification of protection needs and referral mechanisms, and improving access to protection services for returnees. Capacity-building initiatives for State institutions, combined with strengthened coordination among government agencies, UN partners, and civil society, are crucial to ensuring the safe and dignified reintegration of returnees while upholding their rights and promoting long-term community stability.

Most notably, in Honduras UNHCR supported the issuance of a Protocol for the identification of persons with protection needs, which was issued on March 11th, 2025, and involved the Secretaries of Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Children and Adolescents as well as ICRC, Honduran Red Cross, NRC, and UNHCR.

UNHCR has also recently enhanced its engagement on returns in Haiti, with a focus on supporting the government capacity to receive returnees, ensuring a protection-sensitive approach, strengthening the ability to identify and deliver specialized services for returnees with protection needs and support with issuance of documentation.

Coordination and Partnerships

The Americas are at the forefront of implementing the Global Compact on Refugees through various regional coordination mechanisms and regional state-led processes, such as the R4V platform, Quito Process, MIRPS, and the Cartagena +40 process.

UNHCR, in partnership with IOM, leads the R4V platform in 17 countries in the Americas, incorporating of large numbers of civil society, and refugee and migrant-led organizations to further localization of the response. In addition, a cornerstone of the overall strategy remains efforts to transition from humanitarian assistance to stabilization and socio-economic inclusion activities.

In Haiti, UNHCR is partnering with WFP to broaden access to their hotline and develop a joint interagency feedback and response management system, uniting 18 agencies, as part of an effort to make humanitarian response more focused on people's needs.

As part of the Cartagena+40 process, on 12 December 2024, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean adopted the Chile Declaration and Plan of Action, reaffirming their commitment to protection, and sustainable responses for refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless people in the region. In line with the Global Compact on Refugees, the Chile Declaration and Plan of Action engages multiple stakeholders under a comprehensive approach across all stages of displacement. Notably, refugee-and-displaced-led organizations in the region actively engaged throughout the process and have formally pledged to participate and follow-up on the implementation of the plan.

UNHCR played a key role in the adoption of the plan, acting as Technical Secretary of the Cartagena +40 Process. This included preparing and developing key thematic regional consultations in Mexico, Colombia and Brazil and supporting States in drafting the Chile Declaration and Plan of Action, as well as its adoption at a high-level meeting in December 2024, in Santiago de Chile.

UNHCR remains committed to further promoting localization efforts and the meaningful participation of refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless people. Seventy-two per cent of partner agreements in the Americas are with local and refugee or IDP-led NGOs.

In 2025, UNHCR is working with the Latin American and Caribbean refugee-led organizations Articulation Group (GARLOS) on strengthening local chapters and advancing training, communications, and advocacy products, including training on international protection, asylum and solutions.

Private Sector

UNHCR and FEMSA, Mexico's largest multinational beverage and retail company, are launching a three-year partnership to support over 19,000 refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless people and host community members across Mexico and Latin America. Beginning in 2025, FEMSA's financial contribution will help advance labour integration, promote peaceful coexistence, and expand access to employment, financial services, and sustainable solutions through its operations.

Innovation

The Americas continues to lead in piloting innovative solutions that strengthen UNHCR's protection mandate and empower refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless people to take a leading role in the humanitarian response—designing and implementing projects that address the challenges they face firsthand.

Through UNHCR´s Environment and Climate Action Innovation Fund, the Guardians of the Mangrove project in Colombia engaged over 200 forcibly displaced people in restoring mangroves, removing 2.5 tons of waste, promoting sustainable livelihoods, and building ties with local authorities—gaining international recognition at COP16. In Panama's Darién region, the Data Innovation Fund supported a participatory mapping initiative led by Indigenous women that tackled the environmental impact of displacement in Bajo Chiquito and improved community resilience through waste management. Under the Refugee-Led Innovation Fund, Fundación Genval's project in Soacha, Colombia, engaged almost 700 people in community-led tourism and agroecology, diversifying livelihoods and empowering local leaders—fostering social cohesion between forcibly displaced and host communities and long-term resilience.

Response to Extreme Weather-Related Disasters

UNHCR is increasing efforts to mitigate the impact of extreme weather events and disasters on refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless people while supporting disaster response. It has identified three key priorities: protection-centered climate action, timely responses to emerging challenges, integrating climate adaptation into humanitarian programmes.

The Chile Declaration and Plan of Action includes specific provisions to protect vulnerable populations and strengthen practical legal protection mechanisms amid climate-related disasters. This is especially critical given the significant overlap between climate-affected areas and communities inhabited by refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless people, resulting in compounded vulnerabilities.

In 2024, UNHCR also participated in hearings before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in Manaus, following its submission of an Amicus Brief for an Advisory Opinion on States' human rights obligations in the context of the climate emergency, as requested by Colombia and Chile. This ongoing engagement highlights UNHCR's continued commitment in 2025 to strengthen legal frameworks that protect displaced populations facing the growing impacts of climate change.

UNHCR is grateful for the contributions of donor countries that contribute in the Americas and to global programmes with flexible funding:

Australian Aid · Belgium partner in development · In partnership with Canada · 中国援助 CHINA AID FOR SHARED FUTURE · German humanitarian assistance DEUTSCHE HUMANITÄRE HILFE · Irish Aid An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha Department of Foreign Affairs · From the People of Japan · LUXEMBOURG AID & DEVELOPMENT · KOREA Sharing Hope Sharing Future · Cooperación Española · Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft Confédération suisse Confederazione Svizzera Confederaziun svizra Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC · UKaid from the British people · United Nations CERF Central Emergency Response Fund · Internal Displacement Solutions Fund

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As of 30 April 2025

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