Cities of Solidarity in the Americas

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

In the **Americas**, the majority of refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people live in urban or peri-urban areas. In this context, **local authorities** play a **leading role** in the search and achievement of **local integration**. Local authorities can provide **access to services** in their territory and are also in the position to **generate quick changes in local policies** which can positively and immediately affect the lives of the people of concern to UNHCR. Nonetheless, **challenges** to achieve integration are considerable at the **local level**, above all for small municipalities and peripheral cities due to limited **human** and **financial resources** or little **support** and **coordination** from the central government.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

"Cities of Solidarity" initiative stems from the recommendations identified by States in the region under the **2004 Mexico Plan of Action** and the **2014 Brazil Plan of Action**, aimed at recognizing local governments' efforts to provide protection and integration.

The initiative is mostly implemented through **agreements** between UNHCR and the local authorities under the Cities of Solidarity program. Agreements are usually ratified by the municipal/province councils and become public policies that remain in force through any changes in public administration.

The overarching objective of the Cities of Solidarity is to strengthen protection and integration efforts of local authorities and inspire other authorities to develop inclusive public policies for people of concern to UNHCR in the Americas.

The initiative is geared towards local authorities, namely entities officially responsible for all the public services and facilities in a particular area, below the national or federal state level. Local authorities can be, but not limited to, cities, towns, municipalities, boroughs, cantons, provinces, regions, departments.

41 Cities
6 Provinces
1 Municipalities' Associations

FROM THE FIELD

Local and regional governments in Argentina commit to promote socioeconomic inclusion of refugees

The meeting brought together representatives of local governments from Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, as well as representatives of the **MERCOCIUDADES** network.

Sao Paulo launches new Municipal Policy Plan for Refugees and Migrants

The Plan, to be rolled out from 2021-24, aims to ensure that public policies are driven to respond to the needs of displaced people living in the city.

For more information related to UNHCR's response in the **Americas** at **Global Focus**

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ONGOING INITIATIVES

Cities of Solidarity first National Conference organized in the framework of the MIRPS (Marco de Integral Regional para la Protección y Soluciones) by the Government of Guatemala, the National Association of Municipalities (ANAM) and UNHCR took place on November 30th, 2021 with the participation of UNHCR's High Commissioner, representatives of the refugee community, and mayors of four Cities of Solidarity. Best practices were shared on protection mechanisms to reach the most vulnerable and inclusive practices to strengthen coexistence and social inclusion. With new agreements signed in 2021 with the Departments of Huehuetenango and Quetzaltenango and the Municipalities of Guatemala City and Villa Nueva the total of institutions joining the initiative in Guatemala rose to nine.

New cities in Colombia are recognized as Cities of Solidarity for their work with refugees and migrants from Venezuela.

The city of Arauca, where 26.8% of the total population are Venezuelans, was recognized as a City of Solidarity for strengthening its capacity for direct response through initiatives supported by UNHCR, as the installation of an Attention and Orientation Point for refugees, migrants and returnees in the Booth on the Ecotourism Boardwalk.
The Municipal Health, Education and Sports Secretariats of the city of Quibdó, through joint initiatives with UNHCR, have allowed Venezuelans to access the care routes that the municipality has established as an element for its local integration process.

UNHCR's **Cities #WithRefugees** campaign invites cities and local authorities all over the world who are working to promote inclusion, support refugees and bring communities together to sign the statement of solidarity #WithRefugees. In the Americas 96 cities from 9 countries have already signed the campaign. The campaign aims to give visibility and gather support for local authorities in providing solutions to refugee crises start at the local level and require that everyone plays a part.

The **Regional Framework for Local Governance**, developed by UNHCR and UNDP, highlights the importance of the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees and displaced people in their host communities. The tool has been developed in the framework of the **MIRPS**, the regional chapter of **Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework** for Central America, to invest and promote the role of local authorities in advancing protection and solutions. Regional consultations were held among the MIRPS States on participation in the Cities of Solidarity Initiative. This has brough to the identification of 22 urban locations as suggested focus areas for future investments in municipal capacity development and collaboration.

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