The region is at the forefront of durable solutions, with more refugees resettled in the Americas than in any other region of the world. More than 80,000 refugees —80 per cent of all resettlement worldwide—were resettled there in 2016, mainly in Canada and the United States of America but increasingly in Argentina, Brazil and Chile. Most countries in the region provide inclusive public policies; opportunities for integration and naturalization; complementary pathways for admission (see Glossary), such as expanded family reunification programmes or refugee access to temporary labour migration schemes; and apply innovative approaches to resettlement, such as humanitarian visa programmes.

In addition to its continued commitment to solutions, three main situations will be the focus of UNHCR’s work in the region in 2018:

- The implementation of the peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary
The region has seen a tenfold increase in refugees and asylum-seekers from the NCA countries over the last five years, reaching 215,000. Some 46,000 new asylum applications were received in the subregion within the first six months of 2017, and 77,740 people returned to NCA countries between January and July 2017, and 77,740 people returned to NCA countries between January and July 2017. This trend is expected to continue, particularly along the Pacific coast and the border region, mainly affecting Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities.

UNHCR will begin implementing its multi-year, multi-partner protection and solutions strategy. It will work closely with the UN Verification Mission in Colombia to ensure that protection and solutions issues are known, and its alliances with development actors to facilitate durable solutions for IDPs are strengthened. UNHCR will also help enhance the authorities’ knowledge, resources and response to asylum issues, in keeping with Colombia’s growing role as a receiving country for people in need of international protection.

The Office continues to support efforts in Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) to host refugees, in particular Colombians over the past two years, the number of asylum-seekers from the NCA has increased in Belize, Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama. Guatemala is also increasingly perceived by people of concern not only as a country of transit but also a country of asylum.
In 2018, UNHCR will continue working with partners to build stronger asylum systems; establish mechanisms that can respond to urgent protection risks faced by IDPs and other people affected by violence; identify and protect returnees with protection needs; and find durable solutions for all people of concern. UNHCR’s response aims to ensure safe transit by establishing protection networks along the main migration routes and by providing humanitarian assistance, with a special focus on the most vulnerable.

**Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)**

The deteriorating situation in Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) continues to prompt people to flee. The number of asylum applications lodged by Venezuelans around the world rose to approximately 48,500 between January and mid-September 2017, a considerable increase over the 34,000 claims lodged by the end of 2016.

The primary destination countries for Venezuelan asylum-seekers are Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru, Spain and the United States of America. Despite the efforts of host countries to generously meet the increasing needs of Venezuelans fleeing their country, a more robust response is needed to protect their physical security and documentation, and to respond quickly to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV, see Glossary), exploitation, and abuse. In certain areas, armed groups and criminal gangs are exploiting new arrivals and the local population. In 2017, together with partners and respective governments, UNHCR went to Brazil, Colombia, and Trinidad and Tobago to assess border movements, evaluate the humanitarian needs of those crossing, and what would be needed if anyone else arrived. The Office also deployed technical missions to look at cash-based interventions (see Glossary), shelter and registration.

The volatile situation in Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) may result in more Colombians returning home, as well as Venezuelans in need of international protection crossing into Colombia. UNHCR, with partners, will strengthen its programmes in the border areas of neighbouring countries to improve basic humanitarian assistance, including multipurpose cash grants, and to support government registration, documentation, and access to refugee status determination processes for those fleeing, or alternative legal pathways, such as temporary stay arrangements and humanitarian visas. These will enable Venezuelans to normalize their stay in countries, while allowing those who intend to seek asylum to do so.

**REGIONAL STRATEGY**

**Building a harmonized asylum system**

Access to asylum and high-quality decision-making will remain key areas of engagement between UNHCR and States in the region, whether as part of the quality assurance initiative or as part of UNHCR’s provision of technical expertise on refugee law and procedures. To increase the efficiency of their asylum systems, ten States in the region—Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago—have committed to running a quality assurance initiative programme. This should improve the identification, registration and processing of applicants according to their vulnerabilities. It should also help ensure that they are properly interviewed and ultimately receive a fair decision on their claim.

In 2018, UNHCR will prioritize regional cooperation among States’ asylum bodies. To strengthen national asylum systems, particular attention will be paid to managing backlogs in asylum processing. UNHCR’s engagement with countries currently participating in the quality assurance initiative will continue, with a focus on strategic case management and backlog reduction. It will also work to establish asylum systems where these are not yet in place, particularly in the Caribbean region, where governments will progressively assume responsibility for refugee status determination.

In addition, the Office will support the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights and hundreds of civil society organizations across the Americas, including legal clinics, which provide legal counselling and offer representation services to asylum-seekers and refugees through the Americas Network for Refugee Legal Aid.

**Progressing towards solutions**

Argentina, Brazil and Chile will continue their efforts as emerging resettlement countries, with re-designed resettlement and private sponsorship programmes, receiving an increasing number of families affected by the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) and from the NCA.

At the Leaders’ Summit on Refugees, held in the United States of America in September 2016, both Argentina and Brazil committed to admitting 3,000 people affected by the crisis in Syria by combining their humanitarian visa programmes with private sponsorship programmes, including for UNHCR-referred refugees. Brazil has also pledged to establish a State-funded resettlement programme for individuals from the NCA subregion by the end of 2018. Uruguay has also committed to receive families from the NCA.

Launched in 2016 and piloted in Costa Rica, El Salvador and the United States of America, the protection transfer arrangement aims to facilitate the humanitarian evacuation of people at heightened risk. In 2018, it will be expanded to the three NCA countries and aims to reach a referral capacity of nearly 1,100 people, depending on the availability of funding and the receiving countries. While the Americas are providing more opportunities for local integration as a durable solution, some resettlement needs prevail for cases whose specific protection needs prevent them from achieving local integration. Excluding the protection transfer arrangement cases, around 1,800 people have been identified as needing resettlement as the only viable durable solution in 2018, which indicates that resettlement is a strategic protection tool in the region.

UNHCR will continue promoting the inclusion of refugees and other people of concern in national plans and policies in the region. In Ecuador, the “graduation approach” (see Building better futures chapter and Glossary) helps people of concern to become free of poverty and self-reliant and, ultimately, facilitates their local integration. Taking advantage of the momentum created by the adoption of Ecuador’s Human Mobility Law, and the commitments on naturalization included.
Ending statelessness

The region will continue working towards the eradication of statelessness by 2024. UNHCR will continue to advocate that the Governments of Chile, El Salvador, Mexico, as well as Caribbean countries, accede to one or both statelessness conventions. Furthermore, the Office will keep promoting the adoption and implementation of domestic frameworks to ensure the protection of stateless migrants and access to facilitate naturalization in Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Panama, Paraguay and Uruguay. UNHCR will provide interested States with technical assistance to address gaps in nationality laws that may generate cases of statelessness, and will support strategic partnerships and initiatives to prevent statelessness through universal birth registration, in line with goal 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Despite notable progress in Latin American countries, UNHCR will continue to work with Caribbean States to ensure the acquisition, confirmation or restoration of nationality for stateless persons in the region. Despite the closure of the its office in Haiti in 2018, UNHCR will maintain its engagement with the Government, in particular to provide technical assistance for the adoption of a new nationality law and for the implementation of the statelessness conventions.

Strengthening regional cooperation

The Americas will continue working under the Brazil Plan of Action, the regional framework for cooperation and responsibility-sharing in Latin America and the Caribbean. The triennial evaluation of the Plan—which took place in 2016 on the statelessness, solutions and quality of asylum chapters—will help inform the process leading towards the development of the global compact on refugees through a regional conference in Brasilia in February 2018.

The Caribbean Migration Consultations will address challenges related to mixed movements and develop protection-sensitive responses across the subregion. In 2018, UNHCR is expecting to formalize its cooperation with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Implementing Agency for Crime and Security to jointly provide support and capacity-building for Caribbean governments on matters related to refugee protection and mixed movements.

UNHCR will continue to foster regional cooperation and alliances with the UNDG-LAC, regional and subregional mechanisms such as OAS, MERCOSUR and the Central American Integration System, as well as multilateral development banks, civil society, the private sector and other relevant partners. Enhanced coordination with the regional consultation forums on migration (Lima and Puebla processes) will contribute to the inclusion of protection safeguards when identifying people in need of international protection within mixed movements.

CONRAINTS

The increased number of people seeking asylum throughout the region during the last few years is taking its toll on national asylum systems. The quality assurance initiative will therefore remain UNHCR’s primary means of helping to strengthen asylum systems and to improve strategic case management.

Ensuring States can respond effectively to the region’s asylum-migration nexus, and building the capacity within the region to process applications through migration pathways, when possible are an important part of UNHCR’s response to mixed movements. In the Caribbean, this includes promoting a consistent approach to refugee protection within the region’s broader migration trends. The operational challenges posed by mixed movements from other continents are expected to continue, as is an increasing number of Cuban and Haitian and nationals transiting through the region, some of whom may have international protection needs.

Opportunities for local integration of people of concern are limited in the Caribbean, despite gradual progress. In this context, resettlement is used as a protection tool for a small number of refugees for whom this durable solution is crucial.
Regional priorities include a focus on improving reception conditions and border monitoring; access to quality status determination; potential for integration; and women’s empowerment, child protection and SGBV prevention and response. With respect to UNHCR’s protection response, a funding shortfall would limit UNHCR’s capacity to monitor humanitarian needs and new displacements in some areas of Colombia, where these continue to occur, and to respond appropriately to the needs of the most vulnerable. Regarding the regional response in the NCA, a funding shortfall could hinder efforts to prevent greater displacement and to address the risks that people of concern face, particularly those who are forced to take insecure routes to seek safety and are susceptible to exploitation (such as SGBV, trafficking, or forced recruitment).

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

As the region with the smallest budgetary requirements, at just $152.6 million, the Americas represents 2 per cent of the organization’s overall budget for 2018, or an increase of 2.7 per cent since 2017. With its focus on obtaining durable solutions, the budget for refugee programmes in this region is the most significant and has more than doubled in the last five years. Within the region, the Latin America subregion has the greatest budgetary needs, accounting for more than 82 per cent of the region’s allocation. This is largely due to the increasing arrivals from Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), the growing humanitarian needs in the NCA, and continued stabilization efforts in Colombia. There is also a particular need to support UNHCR’s operational presence and monitoring capacity in border areas.

**THE AMERICAS 2018 BUDGET BY RIGHTS GROUP | USD millions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rights Group</th>
<th>Percentage of global field budget</th>
<th>2018 budget</th>
<th>2019 budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Durable Solutions</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>$30.8 million</td>
<td>$31.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership, Coordination &amp; Partnerships</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>$4.5 million</td>
<td>$4.9 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logistics and Operations Support</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<td>$8.8 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Headquarters &amp; Regional Support</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basic Needs &amp; Essential Services</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>$18.1 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Empowerment &amp; Self Reliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fair Protection Processes &amp; Documentation</td>
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<td>Favourable Protection Environment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>$152.6 million</td>
<td>$155.7 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BUDGETS FOR THE AMERICAS 2010-2019 | USD**