



ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN THE AMERICAS

2022 floods in La Sierpe, municipality of Majagual in the department of Sucre, Colombia. © UNHCR/Catalina Betancur Sánchez

UNHCR'S VISION

By 2030, increasing numbers of forcibly displaced and stateless people fleeing from climate-fuelled crisis and/or living in climate-vulnerable countries find solutions, are protected and resilient to the impacts of climate change, and are living self-sufficient lives.

CONTEXT

The adverse effects of climate change in the Americas are becoming even more evident, with severe and unpredictable weather events like El Niño and La Niña. Combined with existing socio-economic and security challenges, it heightens the risk of displacement for millions, both within and across borders.

Many refugees and asylum seekers come from or live in highly climate-vulnerable areas and often remain in similar situations, lacking the resources to cope with and recover from climate-related shocks, which impedes durable solutions. Addressing their needs through enhanced protection contributes to regional stability and development.

As climate change intensifies, adaptation and preparedness measures are urgently needed to prevent worsening vulnerabilities and increased displacement. This urgency calls for stronger protection mechanisms, enhanced resilience, and solutions for forcibly displaced people and host communities. UNHCR is leveraging all its technical expertise and extensive operational capacity to mitigate the impact of climate change on vulnerable populations and to contribute to disaster response efforts.

FIGURES AND TRENDS

GLOBAL



- Climate-related disasters caused more than half of the new displacements recorded globally in 2023, with **26.4 MILLION PEOPLE DISPLACED** by extreme weather events, floods, and droughts.¹
- Nearly **60%** of these people, both refugees and internally displaced persons, live in **COUNTRIES THAT ARE AMONG THE MOST VULNERABLE TO DISASTERS AND CLIMATE CHANGE.**

DISPLACEMENT IN THE AMERICAS



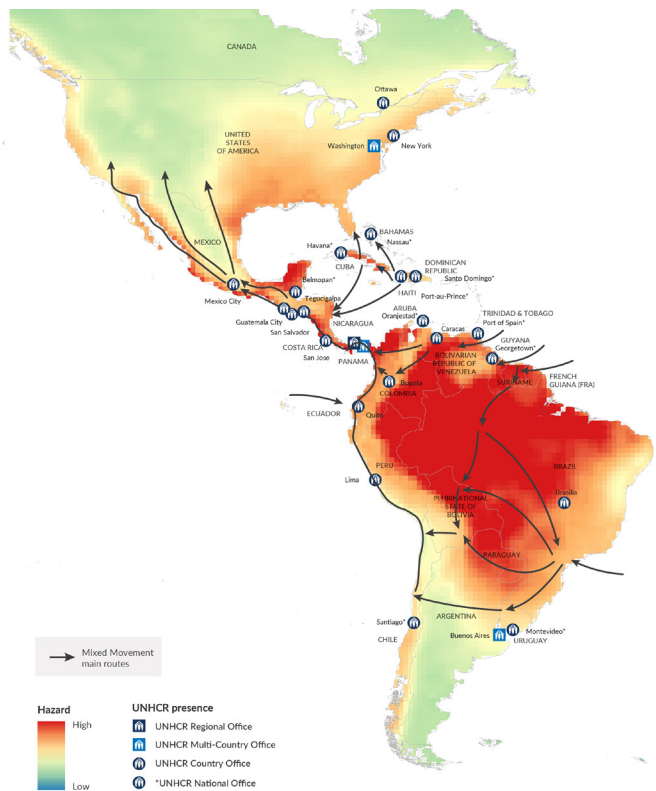
- The Americas region hosted **23 MILLION PEOPLE PROTECTED** or assisted by UNHCR, partner organizations and states by December 2023.
- Disasters have triggered an annual average of **2.1 MILLION INTERNAL DISPLACEMENTS** in the past decade, mainly due to weather-related hazards (2023 Global Report on Internal Displacement).

THE AMERICAS COMPOSITE HAZARD BASELINE | 1981-2010
Information as of November 2023



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
Printing date: Mar 2023 Sources: CGIAR, UNHCR Author: UNHCR - Americas Bureau DIMA/IM

THE AMERICAS COMPOSITE HAZARD FUTURE | 2030
Information as of November 2023



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1. <https://api.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/IDMC-GRID-2024-Global-Report-on-Internal-Displacement.pdf>

UNHCR AMERICAS STRATEGIC PLAN FOR CLIMATE ACTION 2024-2030

To operationalize its commitment to reduce and manage the effects of climate change on forcibly displaced and stateless people, UNHCR’s newly released a global [Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024-2030](#).

A Strategic Plan for the Americas will be available in the coming months. The plan will be tailored to the region’s specific needs and challenges, leveraging regional expertise and partnerships to implement effective climate adaptation and preparedness measures.

UNHCR HAS SET FOUR INTER-DEPENDENT OBJECTIVES THAT WILL SUPPORT NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS AS WELL AS OUR PARTNERS:

PROTECT LEGAL PROTECTION	RESPOND ACCES TO SUSTAINABLE SERVICES	SOLVE RESILIENCE AND SOLUTIONS	SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS
<p>People fleeing persecution, violence and human rights violations occurring in relation to the adverse effects to climate change and disasters who need protection are effectively protected.</p>	<p>Forcibly displaced and stateless people and their hosts have increased access to services that promote the rights-based, sustainable use of natural resources and a clean and healthy environment.</p>	<p>Forcibly displaced and stateless people and their hosts have improved physical and economic means to prepare, withstand, recover and be protected from the impacts of climate change.</p>	<p>UNHCR operates sustainably with systems in place to minimize negative impacts on the environment and the climate.</p>

ENHANCING PROTECTION AND RESILIENCE: UNHCR’S ADDED VALUE IN THE RESPONSE TO CLIMATE DISPLACEMENT

UNHCR is strengthening its operations to meet the humanitarian and protection needs exacerbated by the climate emergency. This includes preparedness and response to disaster related displacement, the implementation of environmentally friendly programmes that protect people and the environment, to enhancing the resilience of displaced and host communities to climate shocks.

UNHCR’s field presence and operational capacity enable effective emergency responses.

For example, UNHCR works with local authorities, partners, and civil society to mitigate the effects of the devastating floods in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

UNHCR’s collaboration with governments, UN agencies, and various stakeholders helps create and strengthen regional legal frameworks that address the unique vulnerabilities of these populations in the context of displacement due to climate-related hazards.

For example, UNHCR supports States in producing evidence on how climate change intersects with violence and persecution and advocates for stronger legal protection mechanisms. UNHCR also contributes to States and multilateral organizations such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, emphasizing the need for inclusive national adaptation plans and legal frameworks to protect displaced populations.

UNHCR is actively supporting the [Cartagena +40 Process](#). Convened by Chile and Colombia, the third consultation will focus on [Protection in Contexts of Forced Displacement due to Disasters](#).

By actively engaging in global climate action conversations such as COP28, UNHCR continues calling for the inclusion of displaced communities' experiences and solutions in global discussions. UNHCR also collaborates with governments, the private sector, and communities to address the climate-displacement nexus through innovative and inclusive solutions, urging global participation in climate action pledges for a sustainable future.

STEPPING UP FOR CLIMATE ACTION

In April 2024, UNHCR launched the [Climate Resilience Fund](#) with a target of raising US\$100 million by 2025. It aims to enhance the protection of refugees and displaced communities most threatened by climate change. The Fund aims to build resilience and reduce vulnerability by financing efforts to equip these communities to prepare for, withstand, and recover from climate-related shocks. The Fund will support sustainable resources, clean energy, climate-resilient shelters, and climate-smart livelihoods, involving affected communities in project design and aligning with national climate strategies.



LEARN MORE ABOUT UNHCR'S CLIMATE RESILIENCE FUND:

<https://reporting.unhcr.org/spotlight/climate-action/unhcr-climate-resilience-fund>

Through the [Environment and Climate Action Innovation Fund](#), UNHCR is providing its operations with a unique support structure for testing new approaches that address key environment and climate-related challenges impacting forcibly displaced people and those who host them, developing solutions jointly and building their resilience.

In the **Americas**, the Fund has supported 8 projects with over USD 700,000 invested. Projects have been highly diverse. In Brazil, a team has tested different locally sourced materials to construct more sustainable and cooler shelters to withstand ever increasing heatwaves. In Chile, the team worked with refugees to co-design relief items that promote a circular economy approach and reduce waste. In Colombia, community hydroponic and traditional gardens have been set up in the outskirts of the city of Medellin not just to provide alternative food sources, but as a hub for inter-generational and cross-community exchanges to build social cohesion.



LEARN MORE ABOUT UNHCR'S ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION INNOVATION FUND:

<https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/environment-and-climate-action-innovation/>



UNHCR staff member conducts interviews at a temporary shelter in Porto Alegre, Brazil, to assess the needs of vulnerable people, including refugees and people in need of international protection, who have been displaced by flooding in Rio Grande do Sul. © UNHCR/Vanessa Beltrame.