



Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.

FACT SHEET

LATIN AMERICA

Decades of violence and persecution perpetuated by guerrilla groups, paramilitaries, and the Colombian army continue to drive hundreds of Colombians to Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela each month.



COLOMBIAN REFUGEES

Hundreds of thousands of Colombians have fled to Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela because their government is unable to protect them from violence and persecution.

HIAS IN LATIN AMERICA

HIAS has been providing services to Colombian refugees for 12 years. We currently have more than 130 staff members in urban and rural offices in three countries.

LEGAL PROTECTION

The integration of Colombian refugees into the societies of the countries where they flee has been a constant challenge. Despite an ongoing stream of Colombians seeking refuge from the continuing violence in their country, many still struggle to rebuild their lives in countries that keep them on the margins of society. Many individuals who are recognized under international law as refugees are denied the legal protection status in the countries that host them. HIAS advocates for better refugee policies in host countries and for increased resettlement opportunities in the United States.

Because some families in host countries share the same day-to-day challenges and vulnerabilities as the refugee families, HIAS facilitates community development that promotes integration of refugee and host populations.



PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

HIAS provides individual and group therapy for children, couples, and families to help them confront the trauma of living in a country plagued by violence and flight and to address the daily stresses of life as a refugee. A large percentage of Colombian refugees are women who were forced to flee when their husbands were killed or recruited into the militias. HIAS is particularly noted for our work preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence and for preventing exploitation of vulnerable refugees in their host communities.

LIVELIHOODS

Self-sufficiency is crucial to helping people overcome trauma and regain their dignity. HIAS' livelihood programs provide vocational training, employment assistance, and offer grants for refugees to build small businesses. HIAS' advocacy in Ecuador has recently led to the largest bank offering accounts and credit to refugees for the first time.

While HIAS distributes food to refugees in partnership with the United Nations World Food Programme and provides cash for basic needs to newly arrived refugees, most ultimately want to work and rebuild their lives. Helping refugees to establish livelihoods gives them the opportunity to heal, stabilize, and integrate.

COLLEAGUES AND PARTNERS

- **UN:** *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme*
- **International NGOs:** *Jesuit Refugee Service, Refugee Education Trust, Red Cross, International Organization for Migration*
- **Latin American NGOs:** *Asylum Access Ecuador, Caritas, Centro de Atención Legal Popular, Scalabrinian Mission, Fundación Ambiente y Sociedad, Vicariato Apostólico del Darién*



Photo by Carlos Carrillo