

IV. Institutional Resources/Programmes

A. Refugee Machinery of the Government of Costa Rica

Policy Towards Refugees: Generous asylum policies are applied by Costa Rican authorities. Costa Rica ratified the Convention and Protocol in 1977. The procedure for the recognition of refugees was put into effect in 1983. The Constitution of Costa Rica affords aliens the same rights and obligations as those enjoyed by Costa Rican nationals, with the certain usual exceptions.

Government Organization: The DIGEPARE (Dirección General para la Protección y Ayuda a Refugiados) is the governmental body responsible for ensuring that activities on behalf of refugees are in accordance with the policies set down by the "Consejo Nacional para los Refugiados".

Refugee determination is carried out by the Migration Board.

Ministries of Health and Education cover the supervision and implementation of their respective sectors in all refugee camps.

All refugees in Costa Rica benefited from the agreement signed between UNHCR and the Caja Costarricense del Seguro Social which granted access by refugees to health institutions at the same level as nationals.

Relationship with UNHCR: The DIGEPARE is the executive government body responsible for refugee matters in the country. UNHCR provides support to DIGEPARE, as well as to the Refugee Immigration Department (Ministry of the Interior), in order to strengthen the determination of refugee status and the documentation of all refugees in the country. UNHCR also provides support to the Ministry of Labour, to facilitate the labour-insertion of refugees, thus avoiding the displacement of the national labour market.

Support is also provided to the Ministries of Health and Education, to ensure adequate coverage of such Ministries in refugee camps.

B. UNHCR Presence (as of February 1990)

UNHCR Regional Office in Costa Rica

Mail Address:	Apartado Postal 12 Ferrocarriil Pacífico 1009 San José
Street Address:	Los Yoses Del Automercado 175 Este San José
Cable Address:	HICOMREF San José (Costa Rica)
Telex:	2395 ACNUR San José (Costa Rica)
Telephone:	00506 34 23 03 (dir to RR) 34 04 31 (dir to Admin) 34 20 21 53 10 07 34 20 22 24 87 97 25 54 98 25 75 54 34 21 97

Working Hours:	Monday through Friday 0800-1230; 1330-1630
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Regional Representative:	Werner Blatter
Head of CIREFCA Support Unit:	José-María Mendiluce
Deputy Regional Representative and Head of Costa Rica Unit:	Ana Liria-Franch
Senior Protection Officer:	Teresa M. Tirado
Senior Regional Project Officer: (Social Services)	Patricia Ann Drolet
Programme Officer, CIREFCA Support Unit:	José Riera
Programme Officer:	Cesar Pastor-Ortega
Field Officer:	Gérard L. Fayoux
Procurement Officer:	Antonio Gómex de la Torre
Assistant Programme Officer:	Jozef K. Merckx
Assistant Protection Officer:	Pauline Decamps
Associate Field Officer:	Kadem Ivonne Villamar

C. UN Agencies and their Refugee-related Activities

World Food Programme:	In 1988, WFP provided 1338 MT of food to refugees in Costa Rica. The cost of the food amounted to US\$ 462,900, including transport. The commodities for 1988 were 250 MT of beans, 93.5 MT of vegetable oil, 630 MT of maize, 460 MT of rice and 60 MT of canned meat. This covered the needs of 15,000 beneficiaries (3,000 families).
World Health Organization:	WHO or PAHO (Pan American Health Organization) has been assisting the Ministry of Health with the establishment of a diagnosis system for the eradication of malaria.
United Nations Development Programme:	UNDP programmes are wide-ranging, including activities to promote exports, support in the re-negotiation of foreign debt, support for national efforts to provide low-cost housing, assistance in developing prevention and comprehensive care for people with drug dependencies, assistance in providing safe drinking water to rural populations, and support for projects which aim to identify the causes of women's unequal participation in development. Programming resources for the period 1987-1991 amount to US\$ 9,647,800.

D. Voluntary Organizations

International and Voluntary Agencies:	There are numerous international and voluntary agencies active in Costa Rica, not all of which are UNHCR implementing partners. These organizations operate programmes which include disaster relief, public health education and the provision of medical assistance, potable water, and vocational and women's education.
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These organizations include CARE, Caritas de Costa Rica, Catholic Relief Services, Church World Service, Goodwill Caravans, the International Committee of the Red Cross, League of Red Cross Societies, Lutheran World Federation, Partners of the Americas, the Salvation Army, Southern Baptist Convention, World Concern, and World Vision International. Details on the activities of these organizations are to be found in Annex I.

The implementing agencies for UNHCR in Costa Rica are: the Costa Rican Red Cross, the International Rescue Committee, ACIAR (Asociación Centro Integral para Refugiados), and IMAS (Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social) and the Latin American Foundation for the Development of Projects (FLADEPRO).

Costa Rican
Red Cross:

The Costa Rican Red Cross is responsible for the implementation of the multipurpose assistance programme for Nicaraguan ladinos in Alvaperal and Boca de Arenal reception centres, including food, nutrition, housing, health, environmental health, water supply, education, and counselling.

International
Rescue
Committee:

The International Rescue Committee is similarly responsible for the multipurpose assistance programme for Nicaraguan ladinos, creoles, and miskitos in Achioté and Tilarán transit camps.

ACIAR:

ACIAR is responsible for counselling, education, multipurpose assistance, help for handicapped refugees and minors, as well as short-term vocational and technical training and job placement for urban Nicaraguans and Salvadorians. It is also responsible for food, household goods, health, professional training, and agriculture for rural Salvadorians.

IMAS:

IMAS is responsible for the distribution of WFP food to agencies administering refugee centres/camps for urban and semi-urban Nicaraguans and Salvadorians.

E. Other Organizations

European Economic
Community:

In 1985, the EEC made a special contribution to the government of Costa Rica for the integration of refugees. The project is being implemented by the Dutch Royal Tropical Institute and DIGEPARE.

ANNEX I

A. UNHCR Assistance Programmes

Refugee population and developments

In the course of the preparation of the CIREFCA conference, government sources estimated that at the end of 1988 some 250,000 displaced Central Americans were in Costa Rica. At the end of 1989, 30,912 refugees were receiving assistance from UNHCR. Of these, 26,485 were Nicaraguans, 3,965 Salvadorians with 462 others.

Integration was possible for a significant number of refugees either spontaneously or as a result of having obtained work permits. A large percentage of the refugee population lives in urban areas, while the others reside in six rural centres located in various parts of the country. The refugees' living standard is comparable to that of low income earners in the national population.

Aims and achievements of 1988 Assistance Activities

Local integration continued to be an important objective of UNHCR's assistance programme. For urban refugees, efforts were concentrated on the search for employment, training linked to employment, loans for the creation of refugee enterprises and legal assistance and counselling with a view to obtaining work permits. As a result of these efforts, 815 one-year work permits were obtained. For rural refugees, employment opportunities in seasonal agricultural activities were found through the efforts of mobile labour insertion teams and, in 1988, the Ministry of Labour issued 10,368 temporary work permits, enabling access to employment in rural areas. Despite these encouraging results, the degree to which local integration could be achieved was limited by a number of factors, such as the country's present socio-economic situation, the refugees' educational and socio-economic background and Costa Rican labour legislation which gives preference to the national labour force and limits the employment of aliens to 10 per cent of total employment opportunities.

UNHCR also embarked on documentation of refugees, a pre-requisite for the issuing of work permits, by assisting the Office of Immigration for Refugees in connection with this matter. Some progress and improvements in programme management were made, particularly in the areas of co-ordination with government institutions, re-inforcement of the technical capacity of implementing partners and bulk purchase and storage of commonly distributed assistance items.

Outline of Activities in 1989 and Proposals for 1990

The CIREFCA conference represented an important step towards achieving the objective of local integration discussed in the preceding paragraphs. The Costa Rican Government presented initiatives to the Conference, which included the gradual emptying and eventual closure of refugee camps and the local integration of the dispersed refugee caseload, including the undocumented Nicaraguans.

This strategy should open a new phase of UNHCR activities requiring even closer co-ordination with government institutions, other United Nations organizations and implementing partners. The care and maintenance aspect of the programme is to be gradually diminished, in favour of activities linked to employment and integration.

Implementation

The Directorate for Refugees' Protection and Assistance (DIGEPARE), a government body established within the Costa Rican Presidency, is charged with the responsibility for co-ordinating refugee assistance in Costa Rica. The Centre for Integrated Attention to Refugees Association (ACIAR) implements the programme for urban and dispersed refugees. The rural programme is implemented by the Costa Rican Red Cross, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and the Latin American Foundation for the Development of Projects (FLADEPRO). A national foundation, the Costa Rican Development Foundation (FUCODES), is responsible for a loan project, mainly benefiting urban refugees. In 1989, UNHCR continued to fund refugee health care and education through the Ministry of Health, the Costa Rican Social Security Fund and the Ministry of Education.

General Programmes

Local Integration

The salient feature of the assistance programme for the urban and dispersed caseload was the emphasis on newly documented refugees (most of them Nicaraguans). In addition to health insurance coverage and basic education, material assistance was delivered temporarily and, when appropriate, linked to training activities with special reference to areas of detected labour demand and preparation for the management of small businesses. Efforts to train women for non-traditional areas of employment continued. The small credit scheme, successfully implemented since 1987, was also continued. The decentralization of the administration by the Costa Rican Social Security Fund enabled better health coverage of the dispersed population while avoiding a pull factor to the capital. The 1989 appropriation for urban refugees was increased slightly to cover the needs of new arrivals and to expand activities in the areas of education, training and support to refugee enterprise. It was expected that the emphasis on these activities would be continued in 1990 with a slightly increased appropriation (reflecting an increase in the number of beneficiaries) compared with 1989.

In 1989, enhanced employment opportunities which existed in Costa Rican agriculture enabled rural refugees to begin to benefit from local settlement assistance. Efforts were made to limit external material assistance in camps and certain needs were covered by the refugees themselves. Nonetheless, it was proposed to continue to include medical care, education, lodging, agricultural production workshops and training in the appropriation for 1990. CIREFCA provided the impetus to reinforce activities linked to integration during the second part of 1989 and throughout 1990: (i.e., continued activities in areas of detected employment opportunities, and support to productive projects and refugee enterprises). Emphasis was given to legal assistance linked to applications for work permits and employment counselling. Refugee agricultural production and workshop activities in rural centres were expanded. It was further decided that the stated policy of emptying and eventually closing refugee camps in favour of integration in surrounding communities would be emphasised in 1990. The 1989 revision reduced the appropriation for that year with a similar figure proposed for the initial 1990 appropriation.

Voluntary Repatriation

The total number of repatriants in 1988 was 303, the majority of whom (238) returned to Nicaragua, most of them to the Atlantic Coast region. The tripartite commission established in 1987 (Costa Rica, Nicaragua and UNHCR) met on a regular basis throughout 1988, facilitating procedures for voluntary repatriation. At the beginning of 1989, an information campaign was undertaken within the framework of this commission, for understanding among refugees of the situation prevailing in their countries of origin. As a result, during the first four months of 1989, 280 Nicaraguans opted for voluntary repatriation. On the basis of this trend, the 1989 appropriation was substantially increased. However it was envisaged that the 1990 appropriation would be smaller, although the number of repatriants foreseen would be higher. The cost of the promotion campaigns included in the 1989 appropriation would not be included in the 1990 budget.

Special Programmes

Education Account

The 1989 allocation was reduced to account for a lower beneficiary caseload (to 70 from the 80 originally foreseen). This trend was expected to continue in 1990 and the appropriation reduced accordingly.

Trust Funds

In 1988, supplementary food needs were covered by a donation of 133 MT of sugar at \$39,900. A housing project valued at \$1.6 million was established in 1989 with the expectation of expansion in 1990.

B. Activities of Voluntary Organizations

CARE

Calle 23; Avenidas 12 y 14
Apartado 3751
San José
Tel.: 33.98.87, 33.98.64

Programmes include food supply, food-for-work, P.L. 480, mother/child health, agricultural training, potable water, and community centres. CARE works with the GOCR's Ministries of Health and Agriculture and the National Institutes of Insurance and Social Assistance.

Caritas de Costa Rica

Barrio La Cruz, 150 metros sur de La Cruz, Casa No. 3630
Apartado 5160-1000
San José
Tel.: 27.23.58, 27.05.95

Programmes include the creation of work for refugees, training of volunteers to work with the poor, and assistance to people unable to work due to illness and age as well as women with small children. Caritas provides food and clothes to those in need. The Caritas network is nation wide and could assist in distributing relief supplies in the event of an emergency.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS)

Apartado 5483-1000
San José
Tel.: 31.49.67

Programmes include cooperatives, agricultural training, nutrition and public health education, clinics, refugees, and food distribution centres. CRS works with Caritas de Costa Rica, supplying Caritas with food and medicines that are stored for possible use in an emergency.

Church World Service

a/c Asociación Caravanas de Buena Voluntad (Goodwill Caravans)
Apartado 10250-1000
San José
Tel.: 26.63.50, 26.35.71

Programmes focus on food and medical supplies in cooperation with the local Goodwill Caravans.

Goodwill Caravans

(Asociación Caravanas de Buena Voluntad)
San Francisco de Dos Ríos (behind the Radio Emisora Faro del Caribe)
Apartado 10250-1000
San José
Tel.: 26.63.50

Programmes include the provision of medical assistance as well as other social services benefiting women, the poor, communities, and Costa Rican youth. The organization also provides assistance to farmers and health education to various communities throughout the country. Through its emergency programme, Goodwill Caravans has the resources to mobilize and distribute food, medical and general aid.

International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC)

League of Red Cross Societies

14th Avenue between 6th and 8th Streets

San José

Tel.: 33.70.33

Have small offices close to the Costa Rican Red Cross (CRCR).

Lutheran World Relief, Inc (LWR)

a/c Asociación Caravanas de Buena Voluntad

Apartado 102250

San José

Tel.: 26.63.50, 26.35-71

LWR cooperates with CWS and Goodwill Caravans. Programmes include agricultural cooperatives, community centres, nutrition education, potable water, preventive medicine, and sanitation.

Partners of the America

a/c Dr. Sherman Thomas

Apartado 219 Desamparados

San José

Tel.: 25.87.88

Programmes utilize local and U.S. volunteers to promote educational exchange, vocational and women's education, and rehabilitation.

The Salvation Army

Avenida 5a, entre 6 y 8

Apartado 6227

San José

Tel.: 21.82.66

Programmes include resettlement and social welfare.

Southern Baptist Convention

Apartado 4035-1000

San José

Tel.: 25.48.85

Works through local churches in cooperation with CESAD, a consortium of evangelical denominations organized to carry out relief efforts. Programmes focus on food distribution centres and refugees.

World Concern

a/c Caravanas de Buena Voluntad
Apartado 10250-1000
San José
Tel.: 26.35.71

Programmes focus on agricultural training in cooperation with Goodwill Caravans and the Ministry of Health.

World Vision International (WVI)

Curridabat Apartado 133
San José

WVI works through local churches and municipal institutions and focuses on disaster relief and rehabilitation.

C. Addresses of Voluntary Agencies Implementing UNHCR Programmes

Asociación Centro Integral de Atención a Refugiados

P.O. Box 416-1002
San José

Costa Rican Red Cross

P.O. Box 1025-1000
San José

International Rescue Committee

P.O. Box 8473-1000
San José

D. Addresses of UN Agencies

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Los Yoses 100 Sur de la 4a Entrada
Apartado 4540-1000
San José
Tel.: 25.03.6536

World Food Programme (WFP)

a/c United Nations
Los Yoses 100 Sur de la 4a Entrada
Apartado 4540-1000
San José
Tel.: 24.52.81

Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO)

a/c Dr. Hugo Prado Monje
Emergency Preparedness & Disaster Relief Coordinator
Apartado 3745-1000
San José
Tel.: 33.38.63, 22.35.78