

20 June 2013



UNV Associate Protection Officer Alba Marcellán (left) during an activity at the Don Bosco school in Caracas on World Refugee Day 2012 organized by UNHCR, Caritas and HIAS.
© UNV, 2012

No one wants to be a refugee

One of the most exciting things about being a UN Volunteer with UNHCR is the possibility to contribute to the huge but rewarding task of directly supporting those who have had to flee their home countries, and who may never be able to go back and see their friends and families.

Caracas, Venezuela: I have been working as a UN Volunteer Associate Protection Officer at the Protection Unit of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Caracas since April 2012. My role is to provide legal advice to asylum-seekers and refugees in the country, as well as to contribute to the compilation and analysis of country of origin information that shall serve as the basis for the drafting of legal and policy documents.

During 2013 UNHCR will pursue the work initiated in 2011 with its natural counterpart, the National Commission for Refugees, which is the institution in charge of processing asylum applications. Among other activities, we undertake joint monitoring and registration missions to disseminate information. In areas where neither the Commission nor UNHCR have offices, we inform people who might be in need of international protection about the possibility to submit applications

Besides this, we offer technical assistance to relevant institutions and organizations, organizing trainings, producing public information documents and providing legal advice and humanitarian assistance to persons of concern.

Apart from the more technical work, UNHCR develops different activities to reach the communities. One of the main activities is participatory assessment, where we gather with both refugees and host communities, and exchange ideas on their needs and concerns.

Another crucial activity is training on issues of interest such as prevention of HIV/AIDS, and raising awareness about gender-based violence.

On the occasion of World Refugee Day, UNHCR is organizing a series of events in Caracas and its field offices aimed at giving visibility to the situation of refugees, and promoting the respect and protection of their rights.

One of the most exciting things about being a UN Volunteer with UNHCR is the possibility to contribute to the huge but rewarding task of directly supporting those who have had to flee their home countries, and who may never be able to go back and see their friends and families.

As the 2012 UNHCR campaign stated, "No one wants to be a refugee". For those who are forced to flee their homes, UNHCR tries to provide the most appropriate durable solution.

Bio: *Alba Marcellán (Spain) is an international United Nations Volunteer at the Protection Unit of UNHCR in Caracas, Venezuela. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Law, and a Masters in Human Rights and Democratization. Before Venezuela, she worked on peace-building and development projects in Colombia.*

Latin America and the Caribbean

• Venezuela • refugees • Human Rights

Sustainable Development Goal: