ARGENTINA – COVID-19

18 May 2020 | Update #9

Key Figures

- **185,711 persons of concern to UNHCR**, including 3,881 refugees, 8,044 asylum-seekers, 443 others of concern, and 176,343 Venezuelans displaced abroad. So far, **no cases of coronavirus have been reported among refugees, asylum-seekers, others of concern and Venezuelans displaced in Argentina.**
- **Funding**: **US$23.6 million** are required for the operation in 2020, and it has **only covered 12 per cent** of the funds required for its operational needs. While seeking funds to carry out COVID-19 preventive measures and response activities, UNHCR stresses the need for support to be in addition to the existing critical funding requirements laid out in UNHCR's regular Global Appeal for 2020. **For the revised US$755 million appealed for UNHCR's operations in affected countries by COVID-19** until the end of the year, as part of UN inter-agency Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP), **30 per cent has been already funded or pledged**, thanks to the generous and timely contributions of donors.

Situational highlights

- **A total of 8,068 confirmed cases of coronavirus as of 18 May have been reported in Argentina and 373 deaths, with local transmission cases already**.
- **All staff in Argentina continue teleworking mode**, complying with the sanitary restrictions imposed in the country. Partners continue providing remote assistance to refugees, asylum-seekers, Venezuelan displaced and others of concern in Buenos Aires, La Quiaca, Puerto Iguazú, Posadas and San Salvador de Jujuy.
- **President Fernández extended until 24 May a quarantine for its capital Buenos Aires but relaxed the restriction as the the spread of the virus has slowed down elsewhere in the country.** Buenos Aires City and Buenos Aires Province remain Argentina's hardest-hit regions from the coronavirus pandemic. President Fernández said the country had managed to "successfully" contain the coronavirus pandemic, but stressed the crisis was far from over. Argentina's borders will remain closed.
- **On 12 May, UNHCR issued a joint press release with IOM asking for urgent support as COVID-19 inflicts more and more hardship on refugees and migrants from Venezuela.** To support the largely underfunded work of the 151 organizations who are part of the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform (R4V) response, a virtual Pledging Conference will be convened towards the end of the month.

UNHCR's response

- **As of 13 May, UNHCR had provided advice to and referred for further assistance some 397 cases in Argentina, representing 1016 refugees and migrants, since the set-up of remote assistance, via telephone calls, emails and/or WhatsApp.** Unmet basic needs related to the payment of accommodations in which they reside informally and access to food, persists as the main specific protection need reported, followed by lack of legal documentation.
- **UNHCR continues providing cash assistance and shelter** to the most vulnerable cases of refugees and migrants, especially in urban centres**.**
- **UNHCR procured 1,200 protective masks and 28,000 latex** gloves for the **National Migration Directorate (DNM)**.
- **UNHCR is also contributing to the #seamosuno initiative (faith-based organizations alliance with the private sector) in Argentina in order to buy 187,000 kg of rice** which will make part of food kits benefitting refugees and migrants in the country.
- **UNHCR identified a case of a separated minor in the province of Mendoza (Argentina), which already has a tutor designated by the competent authority and accompaniment by a partner of UNHCR.** UNHCR has also identified a new case of GBV in the province of Misiones, which is being accompanied by partners. With this, there are **seven cases of GBV survivors** who are being accompanied by UNHCR, partner agencies and allied organizations since the beginning of the emergency by COVID-19.
- **UNHCR has started to disseminate through different channels a special video about gender-based violence,** as it has identified lately situations where refugees face greater violence risk during quarantine and the present crisis.
- **UNHCR continues to engage with Banco Ciudad in Argentina to enable the opening of bank accounts for refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants who are in a vulnerable situation aggravated due to the COVID-19 emergency.** In the first phase, it is expected to reach around 100 refugees and migrants.

- **UNHCR continues to advocate for the inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in the Emergency Family Support (IFE) provided by the Argentinian government.** On 8 May UNHCR held a meeting with Alejandro Bermejo, Deputy for Mendoza at the National Senate, who presented a bill to include migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees this programme.

- **UNHCR held a meeting with the Undersecretary of Human Rights and Cultural Pluralism of the government of the City of Buenos Aires, to analyze possible lines of joint work and identify proposals to increase opportunities for job placement and entrepreneurship for the migrant and refugee population, in the emergency and post phases - emergency COVID-19.** The city of Buenos Aires stated its commitment and interest to respond to the vulnerable situation of refugees living in the city and promote their livelihoods opportunities.

- As part of UNHCR´s efforts to grant more visibility to the great difficulties that refugees and migrants face due to COVID-19, **Regional Representative gave an <u>interview</u> to the reknown Infobae digital media about the situation in Argentina**. UNHCR was also featured in an **<u>article</u> about the new digital strategies that different humanitarian organizations are adopting** facing the challenges of the context.