

ARGENTINA – COVID-19

26 March 2020 | Update #2

Key Figures

- **188,728 persons of concern to UNHCR**, including 3,881 refugees, 8,044 asylum seekers, 443 others of concern and 176,360 Venezuelans displaced abroad. So far, no cases of coronavirus have been reported among persons of concern in the country.
- **Funding:** the operation is currently funded at 6 per cent.

Situational highlights

- **A total of 502 confirmed cases of coronavirus as of 25 March have been reported in Argentina and 8 deaths, with local transmission cases already.** The country has declared complete quarantine until at least 31 March, and all borders have closed.
- **All staff in Argentina are now on teleworking mode in coordination with UN country team**, complying with the sanitary restrictions imposed in the country.
- Partners are providing now remote assistance to refugees, asylum-seekers and others of concern.
- **UNHCR has launched globally an emergency appeal for US\$255 million to respond to COVID-19 outbreak, to safeguard those uprooted from their homes as well as the communities that support them.** Funding is part of wider UN appeal for US\$2 billion.

UNHCR's response

- **UNHCR continues to advocate directly or through partners so avenues for asylum remain open, as non-resident foreigners are banned to enter the territory** and migration and asylum authorities also adopted teleworking measures. The office has designed communication products for different social networks with the aim of keeping persons informed about alternative ways of orientation (remote) that UNHCR and its partner agencies will be carrying out in the coming weeks. Telephone hotlines are also available.
- **UNHCR is following up closely with migration authorities, as Argentinian migration authorities have indicated that they are trying to make the prohibition of entry of foreigners who do not reside in the country more flexible, alleging humanitarian reasons to consider people in need of international protection.** As a **good practice**, Argentina has recently established the automatic extension of all temporary and transitory residences for a period of 30 days as of 17 March. Asylum-seekers' temporary documentation will also be automatically renewed if expired during this period.
- **UNHCR and partners have prioritized attention to PoCs living in the streets, since they are the most vulnerable under the current conditions, providing cash assistance to cases in need for at least 14 days.** The office is currently revising its cash-based interventions (CBI) SOPs in order to adjust to the pandemic situation. It also advocating with shelters to allow PoCs to be able to stay indoors the whole day, as many of them only allow persons just to overnight. UNHCR and partners are also support shelters in the country to stock up on cleaning materials.
- **UNHCR with partners is currently mapping out further shelter needs, as it is one of the most pressing needs in order to be able to respond to the needs of persons of concern** in the current situation. Moreover, UNHCR has also engaged with a local partner 100% Diversidad in order to provide humanitarian assistance to vulnerable LGBTQ PoCs in Buenos Aires and other parts of the country.
- **UNHCR in Argentina have been closely coordinating with UNHCR in Brazil and operational partners in order to provide responses for cases stranded on any of the common borders (Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, Uruguay) or in transit and with the intention to continue to Argentina.**
- **Some cases of Venezuelan people, including vulnerable children and women, and of other nationalities (people in need of international protection) were reported to have not been admitted on the northern border of Argentina (17 in Puerto Iguazú) as well as evicted people (previously admitted) in La Quiaca (18 Venezuelans).** After UNHCR advocacy, people were admitted at borders and also back in the hotels where they were staying. In Buenos Aires, some very vulnerable cases have run out of means to cover for their shelter needs.
- **UNHCR is closely coordinating with the UN sister agencies, as well as other partners part of the national platform for the Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela**, in order to channel assistance requests of the national government. As part of this coordination, the platform is exploring avenues in order to put to service the skills of Venezuelan doctors and other health professionals, in spite of the fact they do not have yet their titles revalidated, so they can be incorporated and have their titles revalidated.