

CHILE

North of Chile

Already over a year, since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, the humanitarian impact of COVID-19 on refugees and migrants continues to be disproportionate. **Since the border closure measures declared by national authorities, the intensification of socio-economic crisis has increased the population in need of humanitarian support:** both new arrivals, whose numbers have augmented exponentially over the past months (August, September and October) and persons who were already residing in the country that are not being able to cover their basic needs anymore. While borders have remained closed for all of the year so far, the latter has brought along heightened protection incidents such as the **increase of irregular movements at land borders 2021** and new barriers to claim asylum at entry points. **UNHCR is providing**

protection and assistance for the most pressing needs. At present, official numbers report the **arrival of an average of 200 - 500 persons daily through the Bolivian/Chilean border** mainly Venezuelan refugees and migrants. According to information from the Investigative Police (PDI), **as of September 2021 some 33,503 people self-reported themselves to the authorities for having had entered the country irregularly, mostly through Tarapaca.** In 2019 only 8,048 people had entered in these conditions, and in 2020 the number doubled to 16,848.. Chile is home to an estimated 493,000 refugees and migrants (up to June 2021), mostly Venezuelan refugees and **migrants-** this without including the number of persons who entered irregularly. and who see Chile as their country of destination.

UNHCR has closely followed up on these developments and has been monitoring the situation in the north of Chile, in a context of continuous irregular arrivals via Bolivia in extreme vulnerability with the harsh climatic conditions of the northern part of the country, where the nights are cold and temperature drops quickly, routinely below zero and as low as -20. Some 20 deaths, including a baby, have been reported at borders

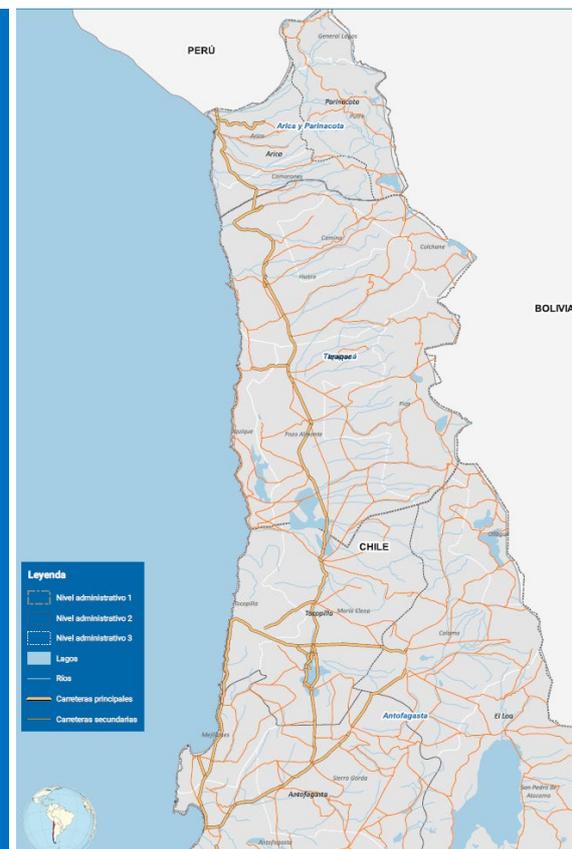


Refugees and migrants in the Chilean border receiving food © UNHCR/G. Prieto, 2021

RESPONSE

Thanks to the generous support of donors and in coordination with partners, UNHCR has reached some **16,924 people in the north Chile with concrete humanitarian aid and protection** until October 2021. Over the southern hemisphere winter months (June, July, August), UNHCR distributed winter kits and thermal blankets, as well as cash assistance and electronic vouchers so those in need could buy heaters, fuel and winter clothes. UNHCR also supported the access of children to education through the provision of tablets to vulnerable children. Sim cards were also provided. UNHCR has also been providing legal assistance to Venezuelan refugees and migrants and conducting frequent border monitoring.

Up to October 2021, UNHCR had provided in the regions of **Antofagasta, Arica, and Tarapaca** 9,852 people with information and legal assistance by UNHCR and/or implementing partners (in-person or remotely, ex. Hotlines/call centres, WhatsApp, etc.); provided 969 people with health consultations (primary, secondary, tertiary, mental, sexual and reproductive health); 2,747 people received cash grants or vouchers; 866 people received food assistance (in-kind); 915 people were supported with shelter, settlement or temporary collective accommodation solutions; 1,473 people received shelter kits and essential household items and clothes; and 102 people were supported to access new employment opportunities or maintain them.

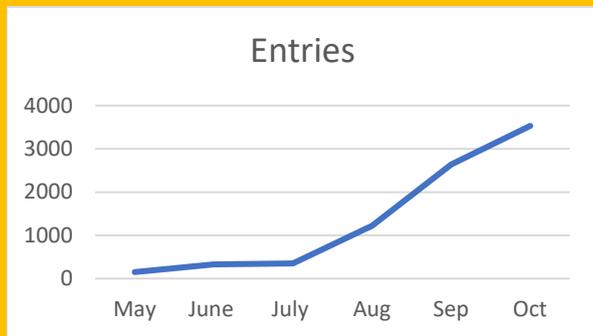




Refugees and migrants from Venezuela waiting for humanitarian assistance in Colchane, Tarapacá. © UNHCR/Germán Prieto, 2021

ENTRIES VIA TARAPACA AS PER SELF-REPORTED POCS OVER THE LAST MONTHS

Source: Carabineros de Chile



UNHCR sharing information. © UNHCR/R. Mattar, 2021

TARAPACA

After [the incidents of 25 September](#), where about 3,000 people marched in the northern Chilean port city of Iquique (1,790 km away from the capital city Santiago) to protest the presence of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, the Government announced [new measures that will be implemented](#) to face the phenomenon of human mobility in the north of the country. The actions are being carried out mainly in the cities of Colchane (border with Bolivia and at 3,800 meters above sea level) and Iquique (237km from Colchane). The Government defined specific humanitarian, border control and health initiatives, which includes: increasing the protection at the border by adding new control and observation points; the installation of a Carabineros camp in Colchane, to support the logistical tasks of the police personnel; the installation of satellite trucks, which will make it possible to have real-time people's monitoring rooms; the installation of first reception centers (Colchane, Huara)- where people will receive food, clothes and hygiene items; day facilities for children and families in Colchane and Iquique; and the reinforce of sanitary residences in Iquique and Huara. Hostels' lodging capacities are being reinforced too.



UNHCR staff monitoring refugees' and migrants' conditions at first reception center in Colchane. © UNHCR/R. Mattar, 2021



Refugees & migrants from Venezuela arriving in Chile after crossing the Bolivian - Chilean border © UNHCR/J. Caceres, 2021

In these first reception centers, there will be health personnel and will provide health care and manage the isolation of people, given the context of COVID-19 and refugees and migrants will self-denounce declaring their irregular entry into the country, prior to their transfer to the sanitary residences/quarantine shelter.

On 27 October, the Presidential Delegation of Tarapacá in Chile informed the press about the upcoming opening of a new temporary quarantine shelter for refugees and migrants who have recently arrived in the country through the northern border. The shelter, which will have capacity for a total of 250 refugees and migrants, is the fifth health residence for refugees and migrants in the region and will be set up 25 kilometers south of the city of Iquique, on a land donated by the Arturo Prat University. UNHCR will provide technical and financial support; the Agency will donate refugees housing units (RHUs) and will equip the temporary quarantine shelter with all the items necessary for the proper functioning of the residence. The administration and daily management of the center will be in charge of the Ministry of Health.

UNHCR will continue with partners supporting refugees and migrants newly arrived with food, warm clothes and hygiene kits. Moreover UNHCR has provided support to enhance police stations infrastructure in the area, allowing better conditions for the workers to receive and orientate refugees and migrants.

ARICA / PARINACOTA

On 1 October the Mayor of Arica declared an “emergency situation” in the entire jurisdiction due to the humanitarian crisis generated by the increase in population mixed flows (Mayor’s Decree No. 6419). This has been evidenced by the increase of tents by the beach area: around 50 tents (between 150 and 200 people), without access to drinking water, WASH facilities and other basic services. Authorities are convening different meetings with CSOs and public institutions in the area to address the situation. Carabineros (police) continues to be a key actor in the response, particularly for the delivery of humanitarian aid to refugees and migrants (delivery of clothes, hygiene items, diapers, water and food). UNHCR has supported refugees and migrants in the area as well with the said items in coordination with Arica’s municipality.





ANTOFAGASTA

During September and due to health controls in the Antofagasta region, the health authorities began to carry out 400 COVID-19 antigen tests per day, of which approximately 40 per cent corresponded to Venezuelan refugees and migrants who had entered the country irregularly via Colchane (Tarapaca). Due to this situation, a large number of them, unable to continue their journey southwards, improvised tents in the parking lot of the Antofagasta bus terminal, in non-optimal sanitary conditions. UNHCR and partners, other civil society organizations (CSOs) and authorities organized themselves in shifts to provide humanitarian aid to people arriving and staying at the terminal. To date, there are no longer people in this situation, however, more people have been identified living on the street or in shelters.

Regional authorities have therefore convened a working group to address the situation. Within the initiatives and with the support of CSOs, at the end of October a shelter with capacity for 30 people was set up in the southern sector of Antofagasta, where 3 meals a day will be provided to refugees and migrants.

Moreover, UNHCR has provided food, hygiene kits, warm clothes, diapers and other supplies to refugees and migrants in the region, also with the support of the Municipality.

Emerging needs and new opportunities

Following the variable but still steady arrivals' flow of Venezuelan refugees and migrants into Chile and the exponential increase of daily arrivals over the past quarter (August-Oct), there is a need to urgently scale up the humanitarian response through UNHCR's presence in Arica and Parinacota, Tarapacá and Antofagasta regions, and also in Santiago. These presences should be maintained throughout 2022. **Immediate people's needs identified by UNHCR include the continuous provision of food, WASH facilities, temporary shelter, asylum and migratory information and transportation.**

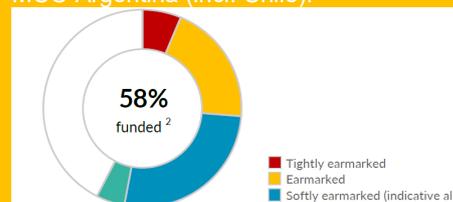
A recent joint mission with the Government opened up new opportunities for action, as local and regional authorities recognized an increase need for humanitarian assistance, that also consider the requirements of hosting communities. Therefore, the assistance provided by international organizations as well as civil society is paramount to alleviate the current situation. Authorities recognized the importance of engaging with UNHCR and other relevant international organizations in these efforts, in order to complement the response provided to refugees and migrants in the country. Furthermore, the humanitarian needs, although very much concentrated in the northern regions at present, are also expanding to Santiago Metropolitan Region and other Regions further south, as persons start looking for opportunities elsewhere.

Chile is the eighth OECD country that received the most refugees and migrants as a percentage of its population in 2020. This is stated in a recently published **report** by the organization. Although the country almost quadrupled the number of foreigners in the national territory, the proportion of the total population is still well below the block average (7.8% vs. 14.1%). The report highlights the country as the fourth one with highest employment rate for this group.

FUNDING (AS OF 16 NOV 2021)

USD 38.9 M

requested for the UNHCR operation MCO Argentina (incl. Chile).



UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds in 2021

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LINKS

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