

Bolivia

June 2021

Hosting some **10,963 refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants, most of them from Venezuela**, UNHCR works with the Bolivian government and partners to **guarantee their rights, advocate for their access to territory, asylum and regularization**, while providing with partners **basic goods and services**, such as temporary accommodation,

food and hygiene kits. In 2021, UNHCR's operational capacity was expanded through agreements with new partners, to **provide assistance and protection in main urban centres** (La Paz, El Alto and Santa Cruz de la Sierra), **and border areas** (Desaguadero, Pisiga, Villazón and Villamontes).

Bolivia remains a destination and a transit country for asylum seekers, refugees as well as for migrants. The impact of COVID-19 requires the strengthening of the humanitarian response in terms of access to shelter, food, water, clothing and hygiene kits for an increasing number of persons in need.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

10,963

Refugees	1,131
Asylum-seekers	161
Venezuelans displaced abroad	9,644

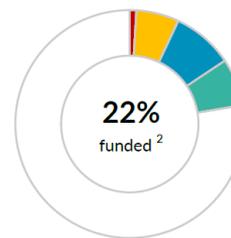
Source: Official information provided by the Government, as of December 2020

FUNDING

USD 38.9 MILLION

requested for the **Regional Office including Bolivia in 2021**

FUNDING UPDATE | 2021



ARGENTINA MCO

as of 8 June 2021

- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
- Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
- Funding gap (indicative)

UNHCR PRESENCE

The UNHCR Regional Office for Southern Latin America based in Buenos Aires covers operations in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Staff in Argentina, Bolivia and Chile:

42 National staff
11 International staff

1 field presence in La Paz



Photo: UNHCR / William Wroblewski. Venezuelan children doing recreational activities in a child friendly space in La Paz

Results in 2021

- From January to March 2021, UNHCR through its partners provided support to **558** persons in vulnerable situations through **multi-purpose cash assistance** and some other **560** with **in-kind assistance** to cover their basic needs; **287** vulnerable individuals were provided with **temporary accommodation**; **1,472** individuals were provided with **free legal assistance, orientation, information** and referral to various service providers; **241 cases of child protection were treated and supported by UNHCR** and/or partners. Additionally, some **532** people received **primary health care** attention, while some **32** people received **livelihoods training or support**.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR works in close coordination with government counterparts, namely the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, that presides the **National Refugee Commission (CONARE)**, with representatives of the **National Directorate of Migration** and the **Ministry of Justice and Institutional Transparency**, where UNHCR is a member with voice together with a partner agency from the civil society (**Pastoral Social Caritas Boliviana**). Also, UNHCR works closely with the **National Office of the Ombudsperson**, and other decentralized organisms, such as the **Office of the Public Defense for Children and Adolescents**.
- A bilateral cooperation agreement was signed between UNHCR and the **National Office of the Ombudsperson in 2019**. The agreement's main objective is the strengthening of technical capacities to provide orientation and legal assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees in Bolivia and to conduct border monitoring, among other joint activities that benefit persons of concern (PoCs). Currently, UNHCR is supporting the new Office of the Ombudsperson in **Desaguadero**, within the border Assistance and Orientation Point (PAO).
- UNHCR has broadened the network of partners to scale up the operational capacity on the ground including activities not only in **La Paz**, but also in **El Alto**, **Santa Cruz de la Sierra** and at the **borders**. With **Pastoral Social Caritas Boliviana (PSCB)**, UNHCR provides counselling and basic humanitarian assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers. In addition, UNHCR partnership with **World Vision Bolivia**, who cooperates with **Red Cross Bolivia** and the **National Office of the Ombudsperson's Office**, provides child protection services, primary health care, information services and legal orientation and assistance. UNHCR also has an agreement with **Caritas Switzerland** to provide and improve shelters for migrants and refugees and provide support to entrepreneurs and seed capital through **Fundación Scalabrini Bolivia**, as well as assisting **sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)** survivors, providing child protection through available services, support for children to access remote education, and engaging with local communities through **Fundación Munasim Kullakita**.
- UNHCR co-leads jointly with IOM the **National Response Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela where 8 partners –UN, CSOs, Refugee's and Migrants' organizations** implement the Response Plan 2021 for the **Southern Cone** complementing Governmental capacities in main urban and border areas of the region.

Main Activities

Protection & Durable Solutions

- Provide technical support and advice at the request of national authorities involved in the implementation of fair and efficient **refugee status determination procedures** (RSD) and participate in CONARE's sessions, as established by the law.
- Improve reception conditions and capacities at the main entry **border** of PoC (Desaguadero) through joint **support spaces**- called Assistance and Orientation Points (PAO)- acting as a "one-stop" point where refugees and migrants have access to information, connectivity and communication services, legal orientation and primary health care services. In other border areas, UNHCR with its partners are strengthening monitoring and response capacities (borders with Chile, Argentina and Paraguay)
- Support the **Regional Border Protection Network** led by civil society institutions and faith-based organizations, together with national human rights institutions working with migrants and refugees at the border areas of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Peru to coordinate activities with a regional perspective to better identify PoCs to UNHCR, prevent their refoulement and support them through legal counselling, shelter and humanitarian assistance.
- Strengthen institutional capacities of the **National Office of the Ombudsperson** to ensure asylum-seekers and refugees have access to legal orientation and assistance with a focus on refugee status determination and migration procedures.
- Promote actions addressed to prevent, identify and respond to situations of **gender-based violence** (GBV) affecting refugee women and children in coordination with local partners. Regular protection dialogues and empowerment activities are developed with refugee women along with assistance to individual cases.
- Promote activities to meet the specific protection and developmental needs of girls and boys and their families. UNHCR has reinforced shelters by including **child-friendly spaces** which provide a safe space to learn and play. This has been recognized as a good practice world-wide. UNHCR and its partners are also piloting a project that provides community

psycho-social support and engagement through a mobile service which functions as an informal “class-room” for children, where also the family, and specially women, benefit from an active listening service by trained staff in La Paz, El Alto and Santa Cruz.

- Advocate for the adoption of a law for the protection of **stateless people** and the establishment of a stateless determination procedure in line with the pledges made by the Government of Bolivia (Brazil Plan of Action).

Humanitarian Assistance, Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

- **Humanitarian assistance** is provided to vulnerable PoCs upon arrival and in main urban centres and at the borders to ensure that their basic needs are covered using in-kind (including warm clothes, first aid kits and kitchen sets) and cash-based assistance. A winterization campaign is about to start for the provision of blankets and winter clothing for new arrived PoCs.
- Through UNHCR’s partner agencies, asylum-seekers and other PoC receive **information and orientation** regarding access to rights, protection and local integration, and vulnerable cases are referred to migrant shelters and community kitchens. Durable shelter solutions and socio-economic inclusion are achieved by using counselling, referrals to specialized services and the provision of multi-purpose cash grants.
- Support infrastructure improvements **of shelters** to improve the quality of assistance provided to refugees and migrants.
- UNHCR’s **Durable Solutions Strategy aims to boost opportunities for self-reliance, integration and empowerment of PoCs** and to facilitate the development of a state-owned comprehensive solutions policy. Structured in macro areas the strategy in Bolivia aims to: 1) advocate for the inclusion of strategic needs in public policies and social protection schemes; 2) create enabling conditions for decent work and wage earning; 3) enhance routes for access to financial services; and 4) promote a conducive environment for business creation.

Coordination

- UNHCR provides coordination, information management and reporting capacities to the **R4V National Platform** to assure a close coordination of the humanitarian response for Venezuelans and their host communities all along the program cycle and to increase the regional visibility of the situation in the **Southern Cone**.
- A Joint Needs Assessment co lead by UNHCR and updated regularly provides key information about main challenges and gaps and thus orients the development of the Plan 2021 including the definition of persons in need, key activities and budget requirements.
- Exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19, UNHCR operational priorities for 2021 are: 1) Ensuring access to the territory and to the RSD procedure, the strengthening of the humanitarian response (access to shelter, food, water, clothing and hygiene kits) in border and urban areas and the implementation of socio-economic recovery projects.
- UNHCR co-leads regular meetings of the National Platform and implements periodic capacity building activities for partners and sectorial co-leads.

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