

## UPDATE #13 ON UNHCR COVID-19 RESPONSE IN COLOMBIA



*In La Guajira, UNHCR in conjunction with the World Food Programme delivered 600 school kits to communities within the framework of the School Meals at Home programme which aims to support families around Colombia in order for children to continue learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. ©World Food Programme.*

### CURRENT CONTEXT

The Colombian Ministry of Health confirmed 862,158 cases of COVID-19 as of Monday, 5 October, with Bogotá concentrating the highest number (276,839 confirmed cases). A total of 26,844 individuals have died from COVID-19 and 766,300 cases have recovered.

According to Migración Colombia, 110,917 Venezuelans have returned to Venezuela from or through Colombia as of Sunday, 4 October.

The number of Venezuelans stranded on the Colombian side of the border with the intention to

return to Venezuela has decreased further: Migración Colombia reports on Tuesday, 22 September this number dropped to 719 (from 880 as registered on 8 September). In addition to the 478 Venezuelans in the Transitory Health Attention Center (CAST in Spanish) at the Tienditas International Bridge near Cúcuta, there are 376 Venezuelans in Hotel Villa Antigua, 396 Venezuelans in La Parada (Cúcuta) and 20 Venezuelans in the Scalabrini shelter.

GIFMM Cúcuta partners have witnessed an increasing number of arrivals from Venezuela, primarily through informal entry points with no

sanitary controls since the Colombia-Venezuela border is still officially closed. Contingency plans are being evaluated to respond to a possible large-scale influx.

Between 10 and 23 September, GIFMM partners reported that 10,579 Venezuelans entered Colombia while 8,376 returned to Venezuela via 38 informal crossing points being monitored in the municipalities of Saravena, Arauquita and Arauca. On average, 80-100 Venezuelans entered daily via Arauca.

At the bus station in Maicao (La Guajira), UNHCR has also noted an increase in the number of Venezuelans arriving from Venezuela who express an intention to travel further inland. Bio-security measures (hand washing, temperature taking, disinfection of baggage, etc.) are implemented at the bus station by the Health Secretary as well as by bus companies.

Similar trends have been noted in Cali where UNHCR's partner Alianza por la Solidaridad (APS) has identified an increase in the flow of Venezuelans moving in the direction of the southern borders with Ecuador and Peru (i.e., 200 Venezuelans per week). Venezuelans interviewed express intentions to enter Ecuador or Peru to reunify with relatives who could help them find employment.

As per GIFMM monitoring, between 12 June and 29 September, 774 eviction reports were registered (including 426 evictions and 348 risks) affecting 1,761 Venezuelans, as per the following breakdown: 53.7 percent females, 43.2 percent males and 0.5 percent others (2.6 percent does not have information disaggregated by gender). Additionally, 1,773 Venezuelans have identified themselves as being at risk of eviction.

According to external sources, seven massacres have occurred during the reporting period in the municipalities of Tarazá (Antioquia), Ocaña (Norte de Santander), Buenos Aires (Cauca), El Charco (Nariño), Algeciras (Huila), Quibdó (Chocó) and Soacha (Cundinamarca). These numbers show a growing tendency: September was the month with the most massacres in 2020, with at least 16 events registered.

The presence and hostilities between illegal armed actors, which have mostly caused these

events, have also increased the risks of displacement in Chocó (Baudó River Basin) and Nariño (municipalities in Cordillera, Telembí, Pacífico Sur and Sanquianga subregions). In several cases, such hostilities have also made it impossible for people affected by mass displacements to return to their places of origin and have restricted humanitarian access to communities affected by confinement and restrictions on mobility in these same areas. Despite the fact that emergency aid has been provided in a number of events, it is still difficult for communities to report these events in a timely manner to the institutions responsible for providing assistance.

## **UNHCR'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN THE PAST 2 WEEKS**

### **Health and hygiene/prevention measures**

In Cali, four Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) donated to the Cali Health Secretary were delivered to the following public hospitals: Carlos Holmes Trujillo Hospital (x2), Joaquin Paz Borrero Hospital (x1) and Primitivo Iglesias Hospital (x1). In Ipiales, UNHCR Pasto delivered and installed two RHUs to the Colombian Red Cross Ipiales to use as a child-friendly space for children and adolescents accessing health services (especially due to malnutrition) and humanitarian assistance.

In Tumaco, the Divino Niño Hospital has set up one of four RHUs donated by UNHCR Pasto, which will be used as a screening area for suspected COVID-19 cases. UNHCR Cucutá helped install oxygen delivery networks for 23 ICU beds at the Erasmo Meoz Hospital as well as air conditioning units in RHUs used as isolation spaces for people who have tested positive for COVID-19.

38 cases in Arauca received sexual and reproductive health services, and in Cali seven cases of people living with HIV are receiving treatment through UNHCR's partner, Profamilia.

### **Protection**

In a joint field mission with UNHCR, Barranquilla's Registrar re-launched the Mobile Registration Unit

for Vulnerable Populations, which has begun operating in a Comprehensive Development Center to provide documentation to 600 Colombian returnees.

UNHCR offices from Pasto and Tulcan (Ecuador) met to coordinate the response to documentation and other protection needs identified among refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers crossing the border between these two countries through irregular pathways (while borders are still closed). Currently, between 15-50 people have been crossing the border via *trochas* on a daily basis, while partner Pastoral Social Ipiales from the Support Space in El Pedregal reported about 90 persons crossing through El Pedregal per week for the month of September. The following countries were reported as destinations: Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela, as well as other countries in the region.

UNHCR continues to provide protection trainings to staff of partners, State institutions and Venezuelan organizations. UNHCR Pasto trained 53 municipal officials and staff of the Public Prosecutor for Peace, the Public Prosecutor for Ethnic Matters, the National Ombudsperson's Office, and the Ministry of the Interior from 14 municipalities in Nariño. Virtual training sessions also took place in Lebrija, Santander, and in Medellín with the LGBTI Social Alliance Antioquia. In Cali, UNHCR trained 26 partner staff on its registration system PRIMES and identification of Specific Needs.

In Barranquilla, UNHCR facilitated a training on International Refugee Law to 72 teachers and students of the Legal Clinic at the Cooperative University and another one for 53 staff from the ICBF Regional Units in Magdalena and Bolívar. The Office also attended the Coordination Roundtable on trans persons led by the Women's Office of the Town Hall in Barranquilla and UN Women, and will support activities to prevent xenophobia.

A total of 2,586 cases were supported and oriented through the 12 Local Ombudsperson's Offices (Personerías) and Legal counsels in Norte de Santander and Arauca. UNHCR continues to refer cases to the University Legal Clinics for legal

assistance with the asylum-seeking process: in Arauca (24) and in Cucuta (43).

Six youths in the municipality of Arauquita who had been recruited into illicit activities have been released and reunited with their families.

In Cucutá, UNHCR constructed two classrooms with a capacity of 35 students each at the Mega Colegio school in Villa del Rosario in order to increase the capacity of the school, where more than 700 Venezuelan students are enrolled. 48 children at risk were identified, of which 25 correspond to children at risk of not attending school, 3 teenage pregnancies, 1 child parent, 15 separated children and 4 unaccompanied children.

In Arauca, 18 cases of SGBV were assisted through the Centro de Primera Acogida and 9 cases (18 persons) through UNHCR's safe houses in Cucuta. 81 cases received psychosocial assistance, legal advice, nutritional orientation and activation of complementary pathways through La Casa que Abraza in Cucutá.

Finally, in Cali five women survivors of gender-based violence and two single at-risk women (one of whom was engaged in survival sex work) were identified at the PAO and received information and/or humanitarian assistance.

In coordination with HIAS, UNHCR held two virtual focus groups with 24 persons on the impact of COVID-19 on refugees and migrants from Venezuela, Colombian returnees and host communities in Barranquilla and Soledad. Additionally, it conducted two virtual focus groups on the same topic with 3 community-based organizations in Atlántico and Bolívar.

Somos Panas Colombia, through its social media, [continues disseminating useful information for refugees and migrants](#), including: UNHCR helplines, recommendations inviting the population to consult reliable sources and avoid misinformation regarding COVID-19, and materials in the framework of the International Day of the Arepa, as a symbol of unity between Colombian and Venezuela culture and culinary traditions.

The premiere of the series [Amigos Sin Fronteras](#) was broadcasted on 19 September via Señal



Colombia TV Channel. Developed in alliance with UNICEF and RTVC, the series highlights the importance of promoting solidarity and provides tools to children and youth to react against xenophobia. The [second chapter of Somos Panas Colombia's magazine](#) was broadcasted on YouTube, focusing on the benefits of hiring Venezuelan population and their contribution to the economic growth.

### Cash-Based Assistance

Nearly 40,000 individuals (9,900 families) have received multipurpose cash nationally in cooperation with UNHCR's partners, 79% of the total planned. So far, 875 interviews have been carried out as part of the post distribution monitoring (57 percent of the planned total).

### Shelter, NFIs and WASH

On 17 September, the Integrated Assistance Centre (CAI in Spanish) in Maicao, reopened its doors for new entries. The Centre received new Venezuelan families in vulnerable conditions after six months of lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic during which time only previously hosted families were allowed to stay at the Centre. Cases with specific protection needs and reunifications were prioritized. A total of 12 families underwent a comprehensive medical examination and will initially stay in isolation in the newly built phase IV for 14 days until they are able to move to phase I and II. If cases of respiratory illness are identified in the CAI they will be relocated to phase III.

In Cali, UNHCR assisted 28 families with core-relief items (CRI) in coordination with the Venezuelan organization COLVENZ. In Barranquilla and the Atlantic coast, UNHCR donated 327 hygiene kits and 800 surgery masks to community-based Venezuelan organizations.

UNHCR donated five stretchers to the San Francisco Hospital in Quibdó (Chocó), increasing the municipality's COVID-19 response capacity.

UNHCR and UNICEF held a coordination meeting related to the WASH response (installation of tanks and filters by UNHCR and community training by UNICEF) in the neighborhood La Victoria, Quibdó. UNHCR also distributed

hygiene-shelter kits to 236 disaster-affected families in Lloró (Chocó) in coordination with NRC and the local authorities.

### FUNDING NEEDS

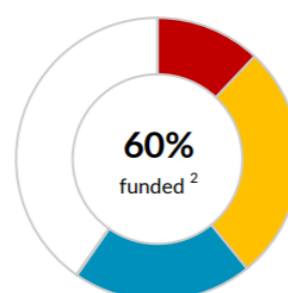
Under its revised Coronavirus Emergency Appeal, UNHCR is appealing for USD 745 million globally, including USD 17.3 million in Colombia. UNHCR's Global Appeal is now funded at 61%, with USD 454.2 million in contributions received. Overall, UNHCR Colombia is currently funded at 60%.

### UNHCR's response in Colombia is possible thanks to the contribution of private donors and:

Austria, Canada, Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Chanel Foundation, Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, KOICA, Latter-day Saints Charities, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Major League Baseball Players Trust (MLBPT), Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UN Human Security Trust Fund (UN HSTF), UN Peacebuilding Fund, UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United Kingdom, United States of America, and USA for UNHCR.

**\$96.6 million**

UNHCR's financial requirements 2020



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