



“The need to support mental health assistance for displaced populations was critical before the pandemic, but now we are dealing with an emergency and a picture of widespread despair (...) If we don't address their wellbeing now in a holistic way, the effects may be irreversible and last for generations.”

Filippo Grandi

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

You can read the full press release on World Mental Health Day [HERE](#).

Situational Highlights

According to PAHO/WHO, five of the 12 countries reporting the highest numbers of total coronavirus cases are located in Latin America: Brazil (with 5 million), Colombia (902,000), Argentina (883,000 cases), Peru (846,000), and Mexico (814,000). Argentina has reported a rapid increase in both cases and deaths, even as new cases have fallen in Brazil, Colombia and Peru. Aruba and Guyane Francaise are reporting the region's highest cumulative rate (of around 3,900 cases per 100,000 people), followed by Panama (with 2,800 cases per 100,000 people), Peru (2,600), Chile (2,500) and Brazil (2,400). Venezuela is reporting a total of 83,137 cases, although the number of new cases

is declining, from 1,200 new cases daily in early September to daily counts of around 700 in recent days. In Nicaragua, the official tally includes 5,170 total cases and 151 deaths.

Cross-border movements are on the rise as mobility restrictions are eased throughout Latin America. According to Migracion Colombia, 110,917 people had returned to Venezuela either from or through Colombia as of 4 October. On the other hand, Colombian authorities expect as many as 200,000 Venezuelans to enter Colombia by the end of the year as the Colombian economy begins to reactivate. Although the border between Venezuela and Brazil remains closed, 324 Venezuelans

crossed back into Venezuela from the Brazilian border town of Pacaraima between 23 September and 8 October, bringing to 3,949 the total number of returns there since March. Venezuela-bound movements have also been noted in other parts of the region, such as the Ecuadorian border with Colombia, where some 150-200 people are crossing daily. In Brasil, data released on 3 October by the Caixa Econômica Federal shows that over 149,000 foreign nationals, including 42,519 Venezuelans, have received the government's COVID-19 emergency basic income. The Peruvian government decreed that the country's national health system must cover burial and cremation

expenses for Venezuelans and other foreigners who have died in Peru during the state of emergency. In the north of Central America, 67 of the recent group of an estimated 5,000 people who departed from Honduras, traveling north, were found to have international protection needs. At least 35 of them sought asylum in Guatemala. And despite the continued closure of Panama's borders, around 700 people recently entered the country via irregular routes, such as through the Darien Gap. According to the Dominican Republic's Directorate General of Migration, around 160,755 Haitians had returned to Haiti as of September.

Challenges

Because the spread of COVID-19 has yet to be contained in the region, it is feared that the resumption of regional movements – with the potential for massive influxes once border restrictions are lifted – may pose health, security and operational challenges at border crossings throughout Latin America. To mitigate the potential impact of the lifting of restrictions, UNHCR is reinforcing its presence along the principle border regions, scaling up monitoring of non-official crossings, and also preparing to deliver lifesaving assistance.



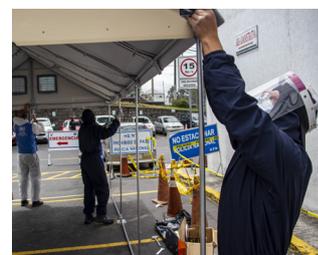
For most refugees and asylum seekers, food security continues to be among their primary concerns. Over 840 inquiries to UNHCR's Information Centre in Costa Rica demonstrate that refugees and asylum seekers are having a hard time keeping themselves and their families fed. Those who have tested positive for COVID-19 and have been issued a health order that prevents them from working or buying food are particularly hard hit. Difficulties in paying rent and fear of eviction were also common worries among those who contacted the Information Centre. For many, cash support is nothing short of a lifeline – their only means of covering their basic needs.

Following a spike in evictions during the pandemic, on 7 October the protection sector of the Regional Inter-agency Coordination Platform (R4V) launched a regional survey aimed at compiling the profiles of those who have been evicted or are at risk of eviction. The survey, which has the support of 32 organizations, will gather data from seven countries, with the results to be used in the design of eviction mitigation programs. Three regional organizations – COOPI, Save the Children and HIAS – are responsible for the information-gathering process, and preliminary results are expected by late November.

UNHCR's response in the Americas



Despite the pandemic-related restrictions, UNHCR is working to provide emergency assistance, including safe shelter spaces and cash-based assistance, as well as to advocate for the inclusion of refugees in national public health responses, social safety nets and emergency assistance plans. Urgent action is required to help the most vulnerable refugees and IDPs, particularly those in countries where they are unable to access state-run social protection schemes. With the coronavirus crisis exacerbating already dire humanitarian needs globally, timely and flexible support from governments, the private sector and individuals remains critical. Click [HERE](#) to see an update on UNHCR's COVID-19 emergency response in the Americas since March, 2020.



UPDATES FROM COUNTRIES

(Please note that the list is not exhaustive and mostly reflects the reporting period.)

 **Bolivia:** In Bolivia's commercial capital, Santa Cruz, UNHCR partner Fundación Munasim Kullakita organized a community health brigade to give Venezuelan families access to medical care, including gynaecological and pediatric care. Around 130 people received treatment thanks to the initiative, which took place in coordination with local health authorities and the Red Cross. Additionally, a "mobile classroom" was set up to provide participating children with information about health and dental care.

 **Brazil:** In the far-northern city of Boa Vista, UNHCR worked with PAHO to develop information materials on suicide prevention, which were distributed to over 12,000 people, thanks to the support of local authorities, implementing partners, community leaders and outreach volunteers. In the Amazonian city of Manaus, a series of sessions provided 539 refugees and migrants information about COVID-19 prevention measures and basic hygiene. In the northern border town of Pacaraima, 307 Venezuelan refugees and migrants and 219 Brazilians were also informed about COVID-19 prevention and via WhatsApp groups.

 **Ecuador:** As part of a multipartner effort, UNHCR launched a new initiative that connects small businesses with clients through a bike-based delivery service run by refugees in three neighbourhoods of the capital, Quito. Made possible thanks to the Banco del Pichincha, the International Development Bank, the Alliance for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and Fundación Crisfe, among other organizations, the project aims to help give vulnerable refugees, migrants and locals the tools to support themselves. The initiative is particularly important given the pandemic-related restrictions that have cost many their livelihoods.

 **Colombia:** To help guarantee access to education amid the pandemic, Aldeas Infantiles built two emergency classrooms in the northeastern border city Maicao, with UNHCR's support. An additional 150 children from the Santafé Las Playas Educational Institution in the town of Pescadores, in the western Antioquia department, were given educational kits.

 **Costa Rica:** UNHCR distributed cleaning kits, blankets and soap to approximately 70 Nicaraguan households in and around the Costa Rican capital, San José, and along the country's northern border with Nicaragua. Since September, 477 households in dire need on account of the coronavirus crisis have received cash support, bringing the total thus far this year to 2,740 households.

 **Mexico:** Throughout September, UNHCR's helpline provided information on access to services and assistance to 5,255 refugees and asylum seekers. (That averages out to some 250 calls per day.) Callers' main concerns centred around meeting basic needs and worries about protocols for asylum procedures amidst the coronavirus pandemic. To help mitigate the pandemic's impact, over 13,000 people have been given cash assistance since March, while 3,759 people have been put up in shelters.

 **North of Central America:** In El Salvador, educational materials were distributed under the Familia Activa project, which supports efforts to prevent violence, forced displacement and gang recruitment. In Honduras, UNHCR delivered 1,152 bars of soap, as well as educational materials, in the high-risk Tegucigalpa communities of La Era and La Esperanza. In Guatemala, 269 people have received cash assistance since the start of the country's CBI programme in May.

 **Venezuela:** UNHCR and partner CISP refurbished the facilities of the Miguel Carrillo School, which serves some 250 children in the border community of Puente Páez. A nearby health centre in El Amparo was also refurbished, thus improving access to health services for some 400 people each month.

Stories from the field

UNHCR and Unilever join efforts in Latin America to fight COVID-19

UNHCR and Unilever have announced that together they have delivered approximately 1.5 million bars of soap to date to help refugees in Latin America prevent COVID-19. The donation will help those who have been forcibly displaced and their host communities in their efforts to improve hygiene measures and prevent the spread of the virus. The total donation, which includes more than 4.3 million bars of soap, will be distributed to shelters and reception centres in 17 countries, from Argentina to Guatemala. To read the full story, click [HERE](#).



Coordination and Response to date



MIRPS

The MIRPS working group on Internal Displacement held its third meeting, focused on planning, budgeting and interinstitutional coordination, on 30 September. The experts shared lessons learned in coordinating mechanisms for IDPs in Colombia, Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, among other places. The Panel of Experts held a dialogue with MIRPS countries, providing guidance for their emerging systems to

protect IDPs, especially for Mexico, where last week a bill was approved by the Chamber of Deputies and is now awaiting approval in the Senate. A MIRPS-CRM (Regional Migration Conference) workshop took place on 6 and 7 October to share main areas of work and find areas for collaboration. A joint work plan will be developed on common areas of interest, including differentiated entry systems and a training

module for migration officials.

Visit the MIRPS homepage [HERE](#):



