

AMERICAS COVID-19 RESPONSE UPDATE

01 May 2020

Update #6



“This pandemic reminds us that we are facing these challenges together. This month allows us an opportunity to reflect on the importance of the communities we live in and hold dear and our collective efforts to cope and overcome.”

Filippo Grandi

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

The UNHCR press release “UN refugee chief calls for solidarity during Ramadan” can be read [here](#).



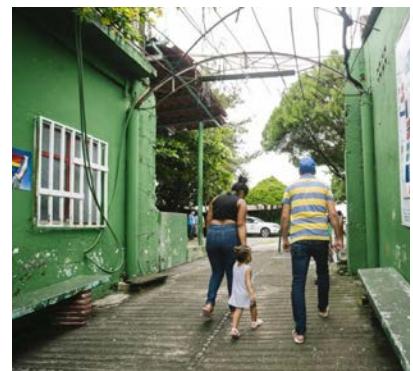
Situational Highlights

In an unprecedented decision, the [Inter-agency Standing Committee \(IASC\) System-Wide Scale-Up Protocols adapted to the global COVID-19 pandemic](#) were activated for six months. The tailored and light system-wide emergency mechanisms focus on those countries included in the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP), with the option to extend to additional countries. The scale-up protocols reflect the roles of the World Health Organization (WHO) and its Director-General and Member States under the International Health Regulations (2005), and the importance of non-IASC

organizations in responding to infectious disease events. They also convey the commitment to work closely with development and peace actors to contribute towards tackling the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. As [reported](#) this week, despite pandemic restrictions, people fleeing violence and persecution continue to seek asylum in Mexico. In the first three months of the year, asylum applications in Mexico were up by 33 percent, compared to the same period last year. The nearly 17,800 new asylum claims in 2020 were principally from nationals of Honduras, Haiti, Cuba,

El Salvador and Venezuela. Some countries in the region have expanded the national programs supporting the population laid off or specially affected the economic impact of by lock downs. Brazil expanded the coverage of Basic Emergency Assistance to adolescent mothers and additional categories of workers. In Canada, asylum-seekers in Quebec are now entitled to free emergency childcare if they work in essential services. Costa Rica expanded the assistance to additional 33,330 families living in extreme poverty. Peru approved temporary public health coverage for refugee and

migrants suspected or positive of COVID-19 and the validity of Temporary Stay Permits was extended.



Challenges



As cases of COVID-19 affecting refugees and migrants increase, in Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela there are fears of spreading among indigenous communities due to dire socio-economic conditions and lack of a proper protection and isolation procedures.

In the region, UNHCR and its partners are adapting all services and prioritizing the needs of those at higher risk, which imply the reallocation of funds to the new requirements in terms of shelter, cash assistance or to enhance remote services. Operations are also working to ensure a progressive resumption of activities in line with countries health response and preventive measures in place.

UNHCR's response in the Americas



Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in the Americas, UNHCR and its partners, in coordination with stakeholders, are developing alternative means of communicating and engaging with communities and mobilizing them.

Teams are ensuring two-way communication, collecting feedback from the communities, analyzing the protection risks, needs and gaps, and coordinating with national authorities and different humanitarian actors a comprehensive response for the protection of persons of concern.

In order to raise awareness about COVID-19 and prevent potential discriminatory behaviour, UNHCR has established community-based prevention activities. In several countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela, UNHCR is implementing peaceful co-existence initiatives to strengthen relations between persons of concern and host communities. These activities aim to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on both communities, reduce the negative psychosocial effects related to isolation and combat xenophobia and exclusion.

As UNHCR is adapting to rapidly changing dynamics in the field, it is also moving forward with creative and flexible approaches to communication with communities.

The key messages of WHO/PAHO and national authorities have been disseminated in all operations. Some of UNHCR offices have adapted these messages to different formats that are more accessible to the communities they serve, including translating them to Spanish and other languages (e.g. Creole, Portuguese). Additional materials for specific groups are also being developed by UNHCR.

Materials developed for social media, to be distributed as posters, or video and audio messages have been distributed extensively. In addition, information on services, preventive measures or access to asylum has been provided via hotlines, call centers or SMS, and during dedicated information sessions in shelters, support spaces or safe spaces. Additionally, currently there are 22 countries in the region that offer information targeted for persons of concern in help.unhcr.org. Some of the operations like Argentina, Aruba, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay have specific sections with information on COVID-19.



UPDATES FROM COUNTRIES

 **Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay:** During the last month there has been an increase in the daily peaks number of consultations on the HELP websites in the four countries, through which UNHCR disseminates information on services and access to asylum. Content is produced daily to raise awareness of the importance of solidarity and non-discrimination towards the population of concern to UNHCR, such as videos, photographs, quizzes and flyers. A series of videos to promote solidarity towards refugees in the context of COVID-19 were also released. Watch one of the videos [HERE](#).

 **Colombia:** in Barranquilla, UNHCR produced three communication tools developed with UN Women within the framework of the [Somos Panas Colombia](#) campaign, containing messages on the institutional response roadmap for SGBV survivors, on self-care and self-protection. UNHCR continues to support survivors of SGBV in Bogota through an open communication channel between its call center and Linea Púrpura (a helpline for victims of gender violence). A total of new 53 hotlines for assistance of cases were created.

 **Costa Rica:** UNHCR's Information Center handles a high call volume, with almost 900 inquiries received in a single week (20-26 April). Humanitarian assistance related to basic needs is the main focus of calls. In addition, the operation continues registering new cases by remote means, with some 4,500 since March.

 **Ecuador:** On 17 March, the operation launched HELP ACNUR, a WhatsApp information line for mass communication which provides information daily to those who register to receive it and takes written messages. Since 18 March, 3,726 emergency and non-emergency cases have been assisted through UNHCR Protection Lines (79 percent Venezuelans and 19 percent Colombians). Of all requests, 28 percent were related to cash assistance followed by requests for food aid. Supported by UNHCR, the Public Defender's Office facilitated remote legal advice on international protection and alternative visas to 26 asylum seekers and refugees in Sucumbíos province. By 20 April, 6,367 people had registered, and more than 294,000 messages had been sent (92 percent were read). Most of the messages received requested information on access to food and food cards.

 **El Salvador:** Under the Protection Cluster, UNHCR co-leads the response to deported persons with protection needs after they exit quarantine centers. Psychosocial support is provided through social media mental health campaigns and online psychosocial care to deportees, including unaccompanied children returned from Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala and the United States.

 **Guatemala:** Refugees and asylum seekers who have lost their income due to the COVID-19 emergency will be prioritized for inclusion in the "Empleos Verdes" initiative and will be trained in agriculture and environmental science to work in FUNDAECO's ecological reserves as groundskeepers.

 **Honduras:** As part of UNHCR efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance to displaced populations, Personal Protection Equipment has been delivered to deported children and internally displaced people. Individual and group counselling and guidance on protection alternatives was provided to 97 people at the Temporary Isolation Center for deportees from the US and Mexico. UNHCR and World Vision have developed a joint tool to provide humanitarian assistance to families with vulnerabilities in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula.

 **Mexico:** During the reporting week, 259 people of concern to UNHCR in southern Mexico and Mexico City received orientation and information on access to and preventive health measures. UNHCR continues to remotely monitor the local integration of refugees relocated in Saltillo, Guadalajara and Monterrey.

 **Peru:** With PLAN and UNICEF, UNHCR is identifying families with school-aged children in shelters in Tumbes to develop an education-insertion plan. UNHCR has supported some 230 SGBV cases since the emergency started. Thanks to the support of Peruvian and Venezuelan volunteers, over 11,600 refugees and migrants participated in eight live online workshops on diverse skills as part of the campaign [TuCausaEsMiCausa](#).

 **Trinidad and Tobago:** In response to the Caribbean Health Agency's (CARPHA) published call for experts to expand its pool of skilled professional, UNHCR has already screened 400 candidacies of persons of concern, which will be shared with the national agency.

Stories from the field

The ongoing crisis in Venezuela has forced an estimated 4,000 indigenous Venezuelans to seek safety across the border, in neighboring Brazil. Given indigenous peoples' unique susceptibility to many illnesses, effectively communicating the steps they can take to protect themselves amid the coronavirus pandemic is nothing short of essential. UNHCR's Brazil office, in partnership with the Federação Humanitária Internacional, or FFHI, have launched a multilingual pamphlet providing health tips especially tailored for the Warao and Eñepa communities. Produced through a participative process with the communities, the pamphlet is written in Spanish, Portuguese, Warao and Panare and includes drawings that represent the indigenous understanding of illnesses and the environment. It provides potentially life-saving advice about basic hygiene —seen as key to preventing the transmission of COVID-19— as well as information about such illnesses as tuberculosis, pneumonia and asthma, which tend to affect indigenous communities. The 28-page-long pamphlet can be printed out and distributed in health clinics. "The pandemic represents an additional danger for Venezuela's indigenous population" said Sebastián Roa, a Brazil-based UNHCR protection officer specializing indigenous issues. "This pamphlet is an intercultural instrument, made for them."

The publication was produced through a participative process with the communities and with the use of drawings as a resource to represent their understanding of illnesses and their environment. You can read it [HERE](#).



Coordination and Response to date

The revised RMRP will be launched based on a preliminary review of activities submitted by R4V partners, the financial requirements are expected to slightly increase from the original plan launched in November 2019 (USD 1.35 billion). A considerable amount of activities have been re-prioritized in order to respond to the spread of COVID-19 in the

region. Approximately a dozen new organizations have joined the RMRP.

The Platform continues to produce weekly [flash updates](#) and thematic guidance for the inter-agency response, all available at [R4V.info](#).



R4V - COVID-19 Flash Update
- 22 April 2020



M Consultations continue among the seven members of comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework for forced displacement in Central America (MIRPS) together with the group's Pro-tempore Presidency, the OAS

and UNHCR. A Senior CRR Assistant has been recruited to support the MIRPS Pro-tempore Presidency, held by the government of El Salvador in 2020.



Don't miss out

UNHCR COVID-19 DATA PORTAL IS NOW LIVE!

This portal/website serves as a central point of information on UNHCR's Covid-19 response for partners, media and other external users. It includes global guidance, sitreps and links to other UNHCR/ Covid-19 related sites such as the press releases, Global Compact on Refugees, Global Focus, IASC and clusters. The website can be viewed [HERE](#).



UNHCRs Global Focus COVID-19 Situation Site



For more information,
[click here](#)

UNHCR Colombia highlights the latest song from Chocquibtown as a solidarity and togetherness anthem



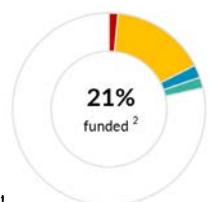
You can read the press release here:



Funding the response

Financial Information

UNHCR Americas - Funding Update



\$ 528.1 million

UNHCR's financial requirements 2020^a

Notes:
1. The financial requirements for The Americas are for the operations in Belize, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America and Venezuela.

While seeking funds to carry out COVID-19 preventative measures and response activities, UNHCR stresses the need for support to be in addition to the existing critical funding requirements laid out in UNHCR's regular Global Appeal for 2020. It is vital that the

international community keeps supporting the millions of refugees and internally displaced people already living a precarious existence, for whom already limited self-reliance opportunities are likely to shrink further as a result of the economic impact of the crisis.

THE AMERICAS as of 14 April 2020

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

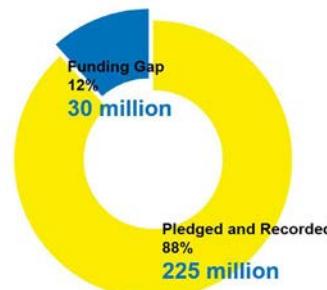
Total contributed or pledged:
USD 225M

Including:

United States of America	\$64.0M
Germany	\$38.0M
European Union	\$28.7M
United Kingdom	\$24.8M
Japan	\$23.9M
Denmark	\$14.6M
CERF	\$6.9M
Canada	\$6.4M
Ireland	\$3.3M
Sweden	\$3.0M
Sony Corporation	\$3.0M
Finland	\$2.4M
Education Cannot Wait	\$1.8M
Qatar Charity	\$1.5M
Australia	\$0.8M
Private donors	\$0.5M
Portugal	\$0.1M
Liechtenstein	\$0.1M

USD 255 million

requested for UNHCR's COVID-19 response globally over the next nine months



UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have provided generous and timely support to the Coronavirus Emergency Situation globally, and to the Americas, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked funding.

Thanks to donors in 2020:

