

AMERICAS COVID-19 RESPONSE UPDATE

27 July 2020
Update #14



“COVID-19 is occurring against the backdrop of existing conflicts, natural disasters, insecurity and large-scale displacement. With the pandemic compounding already significant humanitarian needs globally, and with the majority of refugees being hosted in low- and middle-income countries with weak health systems and water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure, this has required UNHCR to revamp its efforts with Governments, partners, persons of concern and host communities to mitigate the pandemic’s impacts.”

Kelly T. Clements
UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees

You can read the document of 78th Standing Committee meeting [HERE](#).



Situational Highlights

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres warned that the global spread of the coronavirus appears likely to spark the deepest recession in a century, exacerbating poverty and inequalities throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

With more than 14 million COVID-19 cases and more than 300,000 deaths, the Americas continue to be the epicentre of the pandemic, representing 53 per cent of cases reported globally. **Mexico** became the world’s fourth country in terms of deaths due to COVID-19, with more than 40,000 deaths, while in **Peru**, 1 per cent of the population has contracted the disease. And with more than 330,000 cases, **Chile** has one of the world’s highest per capita infection rates - with 16.6

positive cases per 1,000 inhabitants. Despite the fact that mobility restrictions remain in place throughout much of the region, population movements continue. Between 4 April and 15 July, around 52,000 **Venezuelans** are known to have returned to their country after crossing over the border with Colombia. While some were returning from Colombia, others were coming back from as far away as Ecuador or even Peru. On the **Colombian** border city of Cucuta, UNHCR is supporting inter-agency efforts in the Transitory Health Care Centre in Tienditas, where some 500 Venezuelans who are awaiting authorization to re-enter their country are receiving assistance. Authorities in the **Dominican**

Republic estimate some 82,000 people returned to Haiti as of 13 July, while authorities in **Panama, Costa Rica and Nicaragua** agreed to facilitate the transit of some 1,000 Nicaraguans in Panama back to their country.

In **Mexico**, asylum applications increased by 30 per cent in June, and in **Peru**, some 14,300 asylum claims were filed remotely after a new mechanism went into effect on 22 June. **Bolivia** recently recognised 50 Venezuelans as refugees, and **Paraguay** is working to grant documentation to 720 people who were awarded refugee status in 2019. In **Guatemala**, 80 asylum claims have been made since the start of the pandemic, including seven in the last month, despite

border restrictions. In **Ecuador**, rising numbers of Venezuelans are failing to show up to appointments to renew their documentation, out of fear of infection or due to a lack of resource. The trend is of concern. The High Commissioner, Filippo Grandi, released a statement expressing UNHCR’s concerns about planned changes to the asylum system in the United States. Read the Statement [HERE](#).



Challenges

In **North of Central America**, the ongoing increase in COVID-19 cases has prompted countries in the region to extend lockdowns, thus delaying economic recovery plans. WHO/PAHO has predicted that infections will peak in July and August, if current trends remain constant. Honduras is giving all deportees returned to the country a rapid COVID-19 test, using blood samples, and only those who test positive are moved to isolation centres. In Guatemala, a new health protocol requires deportees who test positive but are asymptomatic to return to their place of origin and quarantine at home instead of staying in shelters.



In **Colombia**, a decree that had shielded all those living in Colombia – refugees, migrants and Colombian nationals, alike – from eviction during the pandemic lapsed at the end of June. 82 people were evicted in June. Most of those who lost their homes were unable to make rent after having lost their incomes as a result of coronavirus-related restrictions. In **Ecuador**, from 17 March-30 June, the Office of the Ombudsman provided advice to 804 cases on matters related to looming evictions and resolved 313 of those cases positively. During the same period, the country’s Public Defender’s Office received 321 eviction-related cases and resolved 154 of them through mediation.

In **Panama**, UNHCR partner organizations supported nine families in mediating their eviction cases.

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. See also a document on [UNHCR COVID-19 emergency response in the Americas](#) since March 2020.

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

Brazil: The remote northern city of Boa Vista has inaugurated a new facility within the existing Protection and Care Area to provide primary health care for those with confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19. Severe cases can be referred directly to the centre's hospital area. More than 600 people have been isolated in this site since its inauguration, and the clinical care area has treated 191 individuals to date.

Chile: UNHCR and partners are supporting families whose circumstances have deteriorated with the start of the Southern Hemisphere winter, providing them with digital vouchers to help pay for essential purchases, such as food or hygiene products. The office also contributed 3,700 kits to the Ministry of Social Development and Family's "Plan Protegido Invierno," or "Protected Winter Plan." Over the last three weeks, UNHCR has distributed boxes with food, warm clothing, hygiene kits and blankets, as well as school kits, to extremely vulnerable refugees and migrants in the northern border city of Arica. A joint program with the International Federation of the Red Cross is also providing medical assistance to that same population.

Colombia: Since the beginning of the quarantine, UNHCR has delivered 301 Refugee Housing Units, or RHUs, to health authorities in various departments to help beef up their COVID-19 health responses. UNHCR's support of local authorities also included the delivery of equipment, such as 18 Intensive Care Unit beds that were distributed to hospitals in the eastern border city of Arauca (see video link). Thanks to UNHCR's support, a new protection space serving pregnant and breastfeeding women, as well as survivors of sexual violence, was opened at the University Hospital in the mountainous Santander department. The space has already served 492 pregnant and breastfeeding women and also allowed for the identification of SGBV cases, which were referred to UNHCR safe houses for assistance and support.

Costa Rica: Since March, around 10,500 individuals were registered remotely and provided assistance including legal aid, psychosocial support, education or livelihoods guidance. Over 59 per cent of those assisted had one or more specific protection need, including pre-existing medical conditions. UNHCR's Information Centre has received some 1,000 requests for support per month – 60 per cent of them from Nicaraguan refugees and asylum seekers. Queries about socioeconomic assistance or the asylum process are among the most frequent questions. It is clear that the confinement measures and the deteriorating economic situation have resulted in a spike in suicidal ideations among those who have approached UNHCR for assistance.

Mexico: Since the beginning of the Local Integration Programme in April 2020, 114 refugees and migrants with professional experience in the health sector have been identified, with 17 of them having been hired by health services in the southern border city of Tapachula (14), in the capital, Mexico City (2), and the central city of Aguascalientes (1). Under this program, UNHCR is also referring unemployed refugees to local companies for job placement opportunities. The convenience store chain OXXO has hired 300 people of concern to UNHCR.

North of Central America: In **Guatemala**, cash assistance has been provided to more than 100 people via pre-paid cards, while an additional 150 cases are under assessment. In **El Salvador**, UNHCR and partners have provided 319 families with assistance in purchasing food and hygiene products and provided the Directorate of Attention to Victims with vouchers for essential items, to be given to deportees with protection needs. Additionally, UNHCR is supporting State health responses with by providing RHUs in Guatemala and Honduras. UNHCR and partner organizations also distributed humanitarian assistance to 300 families from Honduras' Afrodescendent Garifuna community in Tornabe, on the country's northern Caribbean coast.

Peru: Since the COVID-19 emergency was declared, UNHCR has organized over 760 activities aimed at promoting psychosocial support and empowerment, in a bid to mitigate Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. In Cuzco and Lima, some 50 teenagers participated in SGBV-prevention sessions conducted by UNHCR partner Plan International, while another partner, CAPS, offered activities on protection and referral pathways for some 220 staff members of civil society organizations.

Venezuela: The UNHCR Representative and the governor of the state of La Guaira, north of Caracas, inaugurated a triage centre in the former sea resort village of Los Caracas. Built from RHUs, the triage facility will be used to process returnees, following the expected resumption government-run flights. The flights were suspended three weeks ago in response to a spike in the number of passengers with COVID-19. The centre in Los Caracas is one of several first-response facilities that UNHCR has set up in strategic entry points, within the framework of the interagency response to returns and the COVID-19 pandemic.

GIFMM Joint Needs COVID-19 June 2020

The Interagency Group on Mixed Migration Flows (GIFMM), together with 29 partners, carried out a joint needs assessment in 26 departments throughout Colombia. The aim was to better understand the pandemic's impact on Venezuelan households. The assessment included included questions about the access and availability of basic goods and services, living conditions since the start of preventive isolation measures, the reception of humanitarian assistance, as well as other needs. Results showed the three main needs to be food (92 per cent), housing support (66 per cent) and access to employment or livelihoods (53 per cent).

Full Report



Executive Summary



Stories from the field

"If it weren't for this shelter, I'd be living on the streets"

The Vicaría de Santiago shelter in Chile provides women-led families of refugees and migrants from Venezuela with a safe space to get out of the Southern Hemisphere winter chill and back onto their feet. The temporary residence, which receives support from UNCHR and the Canadian Embassy, is currently home to more than 70 vulnerable women and children. To read the full story, click [HERE](#).



Coordination and Response to date



RMRP

R4V. Regional Platform launched planning instructions for the Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) 2021.

The document will guide the overall planning process of the RMRP 2021. Monthly COVID-19-related activities of Platforms and Regional Sectors are available in the [Flash Update COVID-19](#), and a [dashboard](#) can be accessed on [R4V.info](#). The Platform has updated its narrative contribution for the third iteration of the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) COVID-19.

MIRPS

The MIRPS working group on Internal Displacement has been established to provide a platform for government officials from throughout the region to discuss and learn from experts on preventing and addressing internal displacement, in line with international standards.

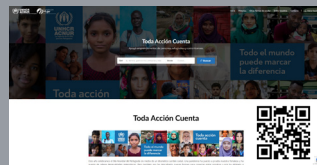
Under the auspices of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the GP20 initiative on internal displacement, UNHCR co-organized the online Latin America Regional Exchange on Preventing and Addressing Internal Displacement. Honduras, Mexico, Colombia and El Salvador shared experiences and swapped lessons learned about internal displacement, including identifying challenges and opportunities for improved protection, assistance and solutions for IDPs.



Don't miss...

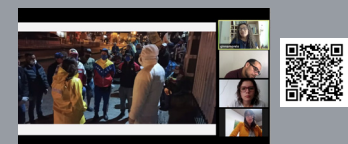
SUPPORT THE RESILIENCE OF REFUGEE ENTREPRENEURS IN COSTA RICA.

This year, we celebrated World Refugee Day against a background of dramatic social change. The pandemic has tested our strength and highlighted systematic inequalities. But we have also discovered new ways to connect with each other and have found ways of moving forward. Click [HERE](#).

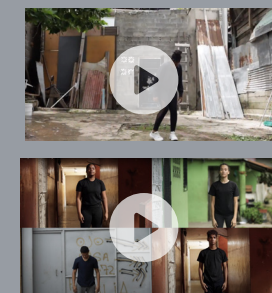


TRAINING WITH FUNDACIÓN GABO

Twelve journalists from throughout South America – selected from an applicant pool of more than 150 – took part in a remote, two-week-long workshop entitled “Refugees and Migrants: How to Report on the Venezuelan Crisis.” Three UNHCR staffers delivered sessions on international refugee law, the Venezuelan situation and how to cover refugees without endangering them. Join the conversation [HERE](#).



How are dreams born – a contemporary dance piece about forced displacement from those rebuilding their lives in Panama



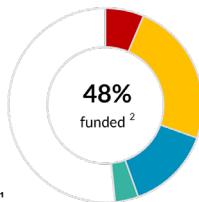
Youth with Refugees Art Contest Winners are having their illustrations animated.



Funding the response

Financial Information

UNHCR AMERICAS - Funding Update



THE AMERICAS as of 22 July 2020

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

\$ 611.8 million

UNHCR's financial requirements 2020¹

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. 2. The percentage funded (48%) and total funding amount (\$296,112,825) are indicative based on the methodology described above. This leaves an indicative funding gap of \$315,725,548 representing 52% of the financial requirements.

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 keep 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.

Total contributed or pledged to the COVID-19 appeal:

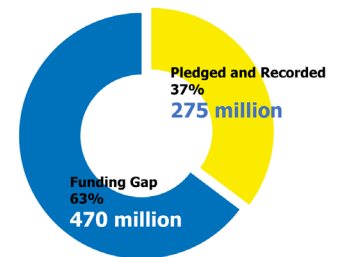
USD 275M

Including:

United States	\$64.0M
European Union	\$42.5M
Germany	\$39.2M
United Kingdom	\$25.3M
Japan	\$23.9M
Denmark	\$14.6M
United Nations Foundation	\$10.0M
Private donors	\$7.9M
CERF	\$6.9M
Canada	\$6.4M
France	\$4.6M
Qatar Charity	\$3.5M
Spain	\$3.4M
Ireland	\$3.3M
Sweden	\$3.0M
Sony Corporation	\$2.9M
Finland	\$2.4M
Austria	\$1.8M
Education Cannot Wait	\$1.8M
Norway	\$1.4M
UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe	\$1.1M
USA for UNHCR	\$1.0M

FUNDING (AS OF 13 JULY)
USD 745 million

requested for UNHCR's COVID-19 response globally until the end of the year



UNHCR is grateful for the critical and generous support provided by donors 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:



And to our private donors:

España con ACNUR | Private donors Australia | Private donor Brazil | Private donors France | Private donors Mexico | Private donors Japan | Private donors Spain | Private donors Republic of Korea | Private donors United Kingdom | Private donors USA | USA for UNHCR