



“ These men, women and children cannot be left behind, and we cannot allow the pandemic to distract us from meeting their growing needs while searching for solutions to their plight. UNHCR appeals in the most urgent terms for those with means to continue to support the humanitarian response around the world ”

Filippo Grandi

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

You can read the full press release on the Pledging Conference [HERE](#).

## Situational Highlights

In November alone, the Americas reported more than six million new cases of COVID-19, according to PAHO/WHO, which represented a 30 per cent increase on October's new case numbers. New daily cases have reached record highs in the United States (which has seen a total of 14.5 million cases) and Canada (with 410,000 total cases). In Central America, health authorities in Honduras (which has seen 111,000 cases) and Belize (with 7,600 total cases) are closely monitoring the situation in the wake of Hurricanes Eta and Iota. Panama (with 175,000 cases) has, for the past couple of weeks, reported an increase in the number of cases nationwide, with the indigenous

region of Guna Yala seeing the steepest rise in cases. In South America, Brazil (with 6.57 million total cases) has seen an increase in case numbers in several states, even as the number of new infections has been falling in Argentina (with 1.45 million total cases) since early November. In the Caribbean, local outbreaks have been reported in eastern and central provinces of Cuba (with a total of 8,800 cases). Brazil and Colombia (with 1.36 million cases) both extended the closure of their land borders, while Venezuela announced restrictions would be lifted for the entire month of December. Countries throughout the region

continue to facilitate refugees' and migrants' access to protection and regular stays. By the end of November, Colombia had received 15,479 applications for its new PEP VI stay permit, which allows Venezuelans who entered the country regularly before 31 August 2020 to regularize their status. Costa Rica created a new special category of stay permit, based on humanitarian grounds, aimed at Venezuelans, Nicaraguans, and Cubans who had had their asylum claim denied. In late November, Guyana resumed its paper-based registration, which had been on hold since March. Mexico made progress, legislatively, with the

publishing of a reform that brings the Refugee and Migration Laws into alignment with the General Law on the Rights of Children.



## Challenges

As the coronavirus pandemic drags on, a lethal mix of confinement, deepening poverty and economic duress is unleashing a renewed wave of violence that is hitting refugee, displaced and stateless women and girls particularly hard. The UNHCR-led Global Protection Cluster, a network of UN agencies and NGOs providing protection to people affected by humanitarian crises, reported increases in gender-based violence in at least 27 countries. The sale or exchange of sex as an economic coping mechanism was also reported in at least 20 countries. Incidents of gender-based violence against Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Colombia have increased by 40 per cent over the first three quarters of the year, compared to the same period last year. Calls to domestic violence hotlines in Colombia have also increased by 153 per cent.



As borders remain closed across the region, people are crossing via informal routes, where illegal armed groups and smuggling and trafficking networks operate. Rapid field assessments suggest that some 500-700 people are exiting Venezuela daily. UNHCR is [warning of unprecedented levels of trauma and despair among newly arrived refugees and migrants from Venezuela](#), many of whom are arriving in desperate conditions into host communities hard hit by the pandemic. Those fleeing include unaccompanied children and adolescents who have either left or been separated from their families and require specialized care and protection arrangements.

The pandemic and recent natural disasters in the north of Central America have worsened the plight of women in countries already beset by weak institutional support, obstacles to accessing resources and services, economic challenges, isolation, and economic dependence. The countries of the north of Central America registered 1,709 femicides from January – September, 2020. The situation in collective sites sheltering those uprooted by the recent hurricanes, Eta and Iota, is also particularly dire.

## 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.)



**Brazil:** For the first time since the start of the Brazilian government's Operação Acolhida, a group of 18 elderly refugees and migrants with disabilities and other needs was relocated to Nova Iguaçu, a Rio de Janeiro suburb. They were received in a shelter that had been equipped by UNHCR prior to their arrival. The relocations were a result of advocacy coordinated by UNHCR Boa Vista and São Paulo's Municipal Social Assistance Secretariat, as well as the Ministry of Citizenship.



**Colombia:** UNHCR donated around 1,700 household items, including kitchen kits, solar lamps, mosquito nets and hygiene kits, to the City Halls of the eastern border cities of Maicao and Riohacha to help support their emergency response to torrential rainy season downpours that have affected thousands of people. The National Unit for Risk Management, which is coordinating the emergency response, has delivered more than 2,400 humanitarian aid kits. Additionally, UNHCR joined up with the "Venezolanos en Barranquilla" NGO to distribute hygiene kits.



**Costa Rica:** UNHCR partnered with Costa Rica's Association of Psychologists to help provide refugees and asylum-seekers with mental health tools – which are particularly crucial amidst the ongoing pandemic. The Association of Psychologists launched a training programme for some 50 volunteers – mostly from Nicaragua and the countries of the north of Central America – that addressed such topics as mental health, self-care, collective-care and psychological first aid. By providing attendees with basic skills on mental health and psychosocial support, the sessions aimed to create a grassroots network for community-level support in communities that are playing host to refugees both in the capital, San José, and the northern border region.



**Mexico:** UNHCR opened the first shelter in Mexico dedicated exclusively to assisting refugees and asylum seekers. Located in the southern border city of Tapachula, the new facility has a maximum capacity of 300 people. The initiative, which was undertaken in cooperation with the non-for-profit group Hospitalidad y Solidaridad, responds to the increase in asylum requests in Mexico – 60 per cent of which are filed in Tapachula. And with shelters along the southern border reporting a rise in the number of people seeking help, compared to previous months, shelter monitoring visits have resumed in many localities.



**North of Central America:** By the end of November, UNHCR had provided multipurpose or emergency cash or vouchers, either directly or through partners, to over 1,000 individuals throughout the north of Central America. Recipients included 452 individuals in Belize and around 140 families, or some 400 people, in Panama. In Guatemala, 412 families have been enrolled in the cash support programme since May. In El Salvador, UNHCR identified 96 new cases (representing 369 individuals) in need of cash support.



**Peru:** As of the end of November, 1,480 people had taken part in workshops organized by UNHCR and partners to help give refugees and migrants them the skills they need to find jobs and to better understand their rights and complaint mechanisms through which to report exploitation and abuse. In addition, around 50 entrepreneurs in Cuzco and Madre de Dios received seed money to help them put their business plans into action. UNHCR and HIAS also gave two workshops on financial literacy and livelihoods in shelters in Lima that benefitted some 25 refugees and migrants. Additionally, UNHCR shared the profiles of Venezuelan job-seekers with more than 50 human resource staff and managers from the private sector.



**Southern Cone:** UNHCR launched a series of projects aimed at facilitating the economic recovery and helping refugees and migrants in Argentina, Bolivia and Uruguay access the labour markets. The projects, which are expected to reach 235 direct beneficiaries and more than 700 indirect beneficiaries, include: A professional training in Uruguay that gives attendees the skills to access those sectors that have remained open throughout the pandemic; seed capital and technical assistance to help set up small businesses in Bolivia; and job-matching programme in Uruguay that works in coordination with private sector corporate social responsibility programmes. In Argentina, medical personnel were provided with help validating their diplomas so they are able to work in public and private health centres.



**Venezuela:** UNHCR donated and installed 15 Refugee Housing Units, or RHUs, to local health centres in the western border state of Táchira. Many of the RHUs are to be used for respiratory triage and COVID-19 testing, while some will serve as triage areas at the social security hospital, which has recently seen its sanitation facilities upgraded. UNHCR also delivered mattresses, mosquito nets and kitchen items to 754 families in the region.

## Stories from the field

### Forced back home by the pandemic, Venezuelan grandmother sees no choice but to flee once again.

When Rosalba\* decided to flee her native Venezuela, she never imagined she would end up facing so many hardships abroad that returning home would eventually come to seem like her only viable option. But three years after the 48-year old grandmother and her family left the bustling Venezuelan port city of Maracaibo, seeking safety in neighbouring Colombia, the coronavirus pandemic made it impossible for them to make ends meet. With the spectre of hunger and imminent eviction looming large, they took the wrenching decision to make the risky trip back home. With Latin America hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, and lockdown and other restrictions taking a terrible economic and social toll throughout the region, tens of thousands of the estimated 5.4 million Venezuelans refugees and migrants living abroad have taken the drastic step of returning home over the past months. Driven by many of the same factors that pushed Rosalba and her family to leave – penury and potential eviction – many have made the dangerous journey by whatever means possible, by bus, hitchhiking or even by foot, from as far away as Ecuador or Peru. The already difficult trip has been made that much harder by pandemic-related border closures that have forced many to resort to clandestine crossings that put them at even greater risk. But like Rosalba, many of those who returned home during the pandemic have packed their bags and left once again amid the continued deterioration of conditions inside Venezuela. Click [HERE](#) to read the webstory, by Riohacha PI Ángela Méndez-Treviño.



## Coordination and Response to date

### MIRPS

**At the Third Annual Meeting of the MIRPS, six Central American nations and Mexico reviewed progress and set new priorities to address forced displacement in the region.** During the high-level segment on 8 December, MIRPS states adopted a political declaration reaffirming their commitment to addressing forced displacement. The Pro-tempore Presidency was officially handed over to Guatemala. The technical segment of their third annual meeting – which included the participation of local authorities, the IDP working group, civil society and the private sector, as well as the Support Platform – served to take stock of the progress that has been made, despite the challenges stemming from COVID-19 and the recent spate of natural disasters. They also presented their quantified priorities for 2021, consolidated into concrete concept notes that will be reviewed by the Support Platform to assess possible means of cooperation. Consult the MIRPS annual report 2020 and the press release [HERE](#).



## RMRP

Launched on 10 December, the **Regional Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela for 2021** includes requirements amounting to USD 1.44 billion to support some 3.3 million people across 17 countries. As a result of the cooperation among 158 organizations, the RMRP is the geographically largest response plan in the world. Taking into account the severity of the economic downturn resulting from the pandemic in Latin America and its dire impact on refugees and migrants, the 2021 RMRP focuses on facilitating social and economic integration (which accounts for 18 per cent of the total budget, or USD 263 million). The launch event included the participation of UNHCR High Commissioner Filippo Grandi, IOM Director General, Antonio Vitorino, and UNHCR-IOM Joint Special Representative for refugees and migrants from Venezuela, Eduardo Stein. Canada's Minister of International Development, Karina Gould, announced that the next international donor conference in support to Venezuelan refugees and migrants is to be held in 2021. Click here to read the press release [US\\$1.44 billion needed to support refugees and migrants from Venezuela amid COVID-19](#)



### Don't miss...

**FORCED DISPLACEMENT PASSES 80 MILLION BY MID-2020 as COVID-19 tests refugee protection globally according to latest UNHCR mid-year trends report available [here](#)**



**READ [HERE](#) THE STORY ELVIA, A VENEZUELAN UN VOLUNTEER WHO DRAWS ON HER OWN EXPERIENCE TO ASSIST VENEZUELAN REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS**

A nurse by training, Elvia worked as an assistant in a gynaecological clinic in her native Venezuela. She is currently a Local Liaison Promoter with the Refugee UN Volunteer programme in her host city of Cúcuta, on Colombia's eastern border with Venezuela.



**CAMPAIGN RELEASE "Doy la cara"**

Gabriel and hundreds of thousands of people forced to flee Central America cannot show their faces, but through yours, the world can learn their stories.

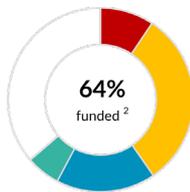
Find more [HERE](#)



# Funding the response

## Financial Information

### UNHCR AMERICAS - Funding Update



### THE AMERICAS

as of 15 December 2020

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

**\$ 611.8 million**

UNHCR's financial requirements 2020<sup>1</sup>

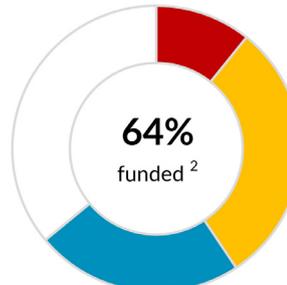
Notes:  
1. The financial requirements for The Americas are for the operations in Belize, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America and Venezuela.  
2. The percentage funded (64%) and total funding amount (\$389,616,710) are indicative based on the methodology described above. This leaves an indicative funding gap of \$222,221,663 representing 36% 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.

**\$ 745.1 million**

UNHCR's financial requirements 2020<sup>1</sup>



### CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY

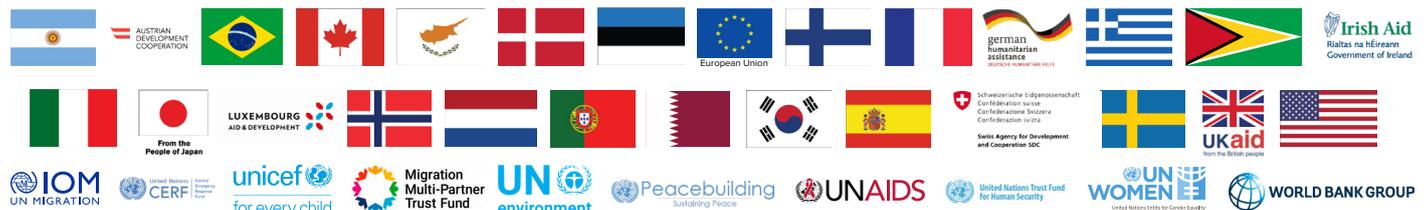
as of 8 December 2020

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

Notes:  
1. The financial requirements of the Coronavirus Emergency include requirements in Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Bangladesh, Belize, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali and Zimbabwe.  
2. The percentage funded (64%) and total funding amount (\$476,795,740) are indicative based on the methodology described above. This leaves an indicative funding gap of \$268,333,759 representing 36% of the financial requirements.

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:

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