



“Countries like **Colombia** and **Costa Rica** are going the extra mile to welcome people forced to flee. But they cannot do it alone. Efforts by the international community are essential to support them.”

Filippo Grandi

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

You can read the press release on the High Commissioner's recent visit to the Americas [HERE](#).

— Situational Highlights —

Twelve months after the first cases of COVID-19 were reported in Latin America, the virus has spread throughout the entire region, leaving no country in the **Americas** untouched.

By end of January, more than 47.1 million people had contracted the coronavirus, which represents around two million infections per week. **Brazil** remains among the countries with the highest total incidence of COVID-19, ranking third in confirmed cases (with **9.5 million** cases as of 8 February) and second in the number of deaths.

The past few weeks have seen a rise in the number of coronavirus infections across **South America**, with the total number of active cases currently at 16.4 million. Hospitalizations are on the rise in **Colombia** (with 2.1 million cases), while death rates are cause for concern in **Mexico**.

Panama remains the second country in the Americas with the highest incidence, after the United

States. Across the **Caribbean**, larger islands including the **Dominican Republic, Haiti, Puerto Rico** and **Cuba** continue to drive new infections.

Amid this surge in infection rates, many countries are tightening their border restrictions. However, despite that trend, asylum systems remain entirely or partially operational in some 20 countries throughout the Americas. In Mexico, for example, 6,506 asylum applications were filed in January – a significant rise from the 5,986 claims filed during the same month a year earlier. Also, Guatemala recently announced the establishment of a new asylum unit with a beefed up capacity to receive, process, and adjudicate asylum claims in the country. You can learn more about it [HERE](#).

Initiatives to offer alternative pathways to regularization are also multiplying, despite the pandemic. On February 8, **Colombia** announced an initiative to provide ten-year temporary protection status to

Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the country. More than half of the 1.7 million Venezuelans currently in the country do not have regular status, which of course hinders their access to essential services, protection and assistance. The High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, applauded the Colombian initiative, saying, “This decision serves as a model of pragmatism and humanity.” Read more [HERE](#).

The country's **Temporary Protection Status** will provide Venezuelans in the country access to basic services, including the national health system and COVID-19 vaccination plans.

Regularization is also key to long-term solutions, which are mutually beneficial to both displaced people and their host countries. For example, giving refugees and migrants access to the job market helps ease their dependence on humanitarian assistance while at the same time allowing them to contribute to the post-COVID-19 socio-economic

recovery.

Dominican Republic has launched a regularization pathway for Venezuelans who entered the country regularly between January 2014 and March 2020. Online applications are slated to be open for one month. In **Peru**, UNHCR is supporting migration authorities via a massive SMS campaign aimed at inciting those in irregular situations to pre-register for regularisation.



— Challenges —

With the numbers of Venezuelans leaving their country on the rise, **pandemic-related border restrictions across the region are causing bottlenecks along some border areas, making it difficult for some refugees and migrants to access territory**. And with the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic leading to quarantines or tightened containment measures, it could potentially trigger massive returns by those who are unable to cope with new restrictions. According to Migración Colombia, a total of 125,950 Venezuelans had returned to Venezuela from or through Colombia as of 24 January, 2021. That said, in January, returns to Venezuela through official border crossings with Colombia had all but ceased.



UNHCR is seeing that many Venezuelan refugee and migrant women without regular residence permits are resorting to sex work as a means of survival. **Refugee and migrant women have been widely affected by evictions amid the COVID-19 pandemic**, especially the most vulnerable among them, including pregnant and breastfeeding women, single mothers, transgender women and those engaging in sex work or survival sex. Many women travelling in mixed movements have also reported having been the victims of sexual assault. UNHCR is also concerned that many indigenous communities may not have the internet access or digital literacy necessary in order to register online for services and state-run plans to support the most deprived populations.

Driven by increased insecurity and violence, as well as the socioeconomic fallout of recent tropical storms in **north of Central American** countries, around 8,000 people, mostly Hondurans, entered Guatemala on 15 and 16 January as part of a “caravan” heading towards Mexico and the United States. Most were halted and returned to their country, but because the drivers of displacement continue unabated, additional mass movements are expected in the coming months.

UNHCR's response in the Americas



Since March 2020, UNHCR has been 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. In 2021, UNHCR in the Americas adopted a two-fold strategy aimed at providing immediate assistance for basic need and protection, as well as promoting mid- to long-term solutions, with a focus on regularization and inclusion. UNHCR's advocacy for the inclusion of people of concern in national plans is key, particularly amid the coronavirus pandemic. The scope and success of such initiatives will depend on the amount of funding the region receives, both in terms of humanitarian grants and financial loans to receiving States.

UPDATES FROM THE FIELD

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

Throughout **January 2021**, UNHCR supported **Brazil's** national health response by renovating infrastructure and providing medical equipment such as tents and Refugee Housing Units, or RHUs. (UNHCR provided 128 RHUs in the reporting period). In **Venezuela's** western Táchira state, a new COVID-19 Interdisciplinary Centre was inaugurated with UNHCR support. In **Honduras**, renovations started in three safe houses for IDPs, and construction has begun on two new facilities.

The Office in **Venezuela** carried out the first distribution of hygiene kits, protective equipment, and household items in the north-eastern Sucre state, which benefitted around 500 people. In **Belize**, 100 community health workers received personal protective equipment aimed at allowing them to safely provide primary health care to some 4,800 rural Belizean and refugee households.

In **Ecuador**, UNHCR installed 35 portable handwashing sinks in schools, health centres, temporary shelters, and other public spaces.

Aimed at improving **access to safe water and better sanitary conditions**, the sinks will serve an estimated **40,000 people** per month. Additionally, UNHCR distributed more than 1,000 hygiene kits to people hosted in temporary quarantine shelters in **Chile's** northern Tarapacá region. Also, click [HERE](#) to discover how 12 schools in the **Belizean** capital, Belmopan, improved students' access to water.



Throughout January, some **2,200 people** in the Americas reached out to UNHCR via remote channels such as instant messaging services and hotlines as well as in-person at Attention and Orientation Points. In **Trinidad and Tobago**, UNHCR conducted a verification field mission to renew expired UNHCR documentation for 104 individuals.

In **Honduras**, more than 50 children at heightened risk – including those travelling alone and others who were separated from their parents – were given specialized assistance. In the Ecuadoran border city of Lago Agrio, UNHCR inaugurated a safe house that will host 30 at-risk children from **Ecuador, Venezuela, and Colombia**. Learn more about it [HERE](#).



In January, UNHCR **Venezuela** provided support to **47,000 people** in need, via collective sites or shelters. In **Brazil**, 1,600 Venezuelan refugees and migrants living on the street were relocated to safer sites in Boa Vista, and a year-long plan to close 11 informal sites and relocate people in dire need came to an end.

In the **Colombian** border city of Maicao, temporary centres

received 158 people.

By the end of 2020, UNHCR had provided cash to **373,968 people of concern throughout the Americas**, ensuring safe shelter, and access to food, water, electricity, transportation, and other basics amid these unprecedentedly difficult times.

In January 2021, **2,700 people** in **Argentina, Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador and Trinidad and Tobago** benefitted from cash grants or vouchers aimed at allowing them to meet their basic needs. In cooperation with the Municipality of Lima, UNHCR **Peru** organized a market, where for two months some 200 entrepreneurs, including both locals and refugees and migrants, were able to sell their wares.

In the northern **Costa Rican** town of Upala, on the border with Nicaragua, 100 children were provided with school kits aimed at helping ensure their access to education amid the pandemic. In **Trinidad and Tobago**, 1,080 individuals are currently able to access Equal Place programming via the remote learning modality.

Stories from the field



Venezuelans defy the pandemic to seek a future in Colombia

When Verónica Petit's daughter Franyimar was just a year old, she began to suffer from mobility problems due to the irregular growth of the bones and tendons in her right foot. Doctors told Veronica that without an operation, little Franyimar would have to rely on crutches for the rest of her life. The family is one of many who have sought safety in Colombia. An estimated 5.4 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants are displaced abroad, having fled widespread food and medicine shortages and insecurity back home. The situation in Venezuela represents one of the largest displacement crises in recent history. During a visit to the Colombian border city of Maicao, UNHCR chief Filippo Grandi urged greater support for countries that are hosting millions of displaced Venezuelans amid COVID-19 crisis. Read the full story [HERE](#).

Working in Partnership

R4V

Through its regional Inter-Sector Coordination Group, the **Regional Platform** has developed key messages regarding the inclusion of refugees and migrants in national COVID-19 vaccination plans. In addition to highlighting the overriding policy position on their systematic inclusion, the R4V Platform also calls for the provision of regular and systematic access to territories for all refugees and migrants from Venezuela. Communication campaigns providing relevant information to refugees and migrants are being developed.



MIRPS

The Government of Guatemala presented the final draft of the MIRPS annual workplan, which will be shared with National Technical Teams for their approval. The establishment of working groups will facilitate the inclusion of new partners, such as UN agencies, development banks, civil society, and private sector, which will also be Observers of the MIRPS in virtual meetings.



Don't miss...

HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON EVICTIONS

On February 18, a high-level forum discussed international standards on the obstacles that often prevent displaced people from securing adequate housing throughout the region, as well as to make recommendations for addressing the risk of eviction. You can read the report [HERE](#).



THE NEW LAND. UNHCR AND AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL LAUNCHED A PODCAST

spotlighting the resilience of refugees and migrants in Peru, who are striving for safer futures. Hear the new podcast [HERE](#).



THE EUROPEAN UNION, UNICEF AND UNHCR JOIN EFFORTS TO PROTECT CHILDREN ON THE MOVE IN CENTRAL AMERICA, MEXICO AND SOUTH AFRICA

Read the press release [HERE](#).



WITH REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AT A RECORD LOW IN 2020, UNHCR CALLS ON STATES TO OFFER PLACES AND SAVE LIVES

You can read the press release [HERE](#).



Funding the response

COVID-19 SUPPLEMENTARY APPEAL 2021

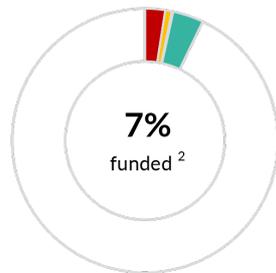
To respond to the most pressing needs resulting from the pandemic, UNHCR is appealing for \$455 million in funding for the Americas in 2021. As of January, donors had already pledged \$18 million.

THE AMERICAS as of 15 February 2021

\$ 712.3 million

UNHCR's financial requirements 2021¹

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



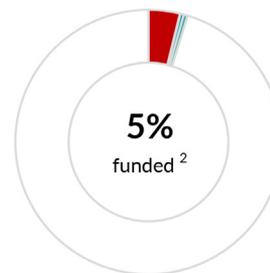
Notes:
1. The financial requirements for The Americas are for the operations in Belize, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America and Venezuela.
2. The percentage funded (7%) and total funding amount (\$50,861,348) are indicative based on the methodology described above. This leaves an indicative funding gap of \$661,488,271 representing 93% of the financial requirements.

CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY as of 15 February 2021

\$ 445.0 million

UNHCR's financial requirements 2021¹

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



Notes:
1. The financial requirements of the Coronavirus Emergency Supplementary Appeal include requirements in Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belize, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Democratic Rep of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Italy MCO, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya and Zimbabwe.
2. The percentage funded (5%) and total funding amount (\$21,608,948) are indicative based on the methodology described above. This leaves an indicative funding gap of \$433,391,052 representing 95% of the financial requirements.

Do you want more info? Check <https://reporting.unhcr.org/>

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 2021:



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