

ARGENTINA – COVID-19

20 June 2020 | Update #13

Key Figures

- **185,711 persons of concern to UNHCR**, including 3,881 refugees, 8,044 asylum-seekers, 443 others of concern, and 176,343 Venezuelans displaced abroad. **Two Venezuelans were reported to have tested positive for COVID-19** in one of the most populated and poorest neighborhoods of Buenos Aires city. UNHCR partners are now assisting them accordingly with shelter and food.
- **Funding: US\$24 million** are required by UNHCR for the operation in the sub-region (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay) in 2020, and it has **only covered 29 per cent** of the funds required for its operational needs. **Current funds to continue cash-based interventions are enough until end-June. Funding is urgently needed to cover the most pressing humanitarian needs during the winter** (shelter, food, hygiene kits, and winter clothing and blankets) for the most vulnerable asylum seekers, refugees, mainly **Venezuelan displaced**. While seeking funds to carry out COVID-19 preventive 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. **For the revised US\$755 million appealed for UNHCR's operations in affected countries by COVID-19** until the end of the year, as part of UN inter-agency Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP), **32 per cent has been already funded or pledged**, thanks to the generous and timely contributions of donors.

Situational highlights

- **As of 12 May, Argentina reports 39,570 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 980 deaths.**
- **All staff in Argentina continue teleworking mode**, complying with the sanitary restrictions imposed in the country. Partners continue providing remote assistance to asylum-seekers, refugees, Venezuelan displaced and others of concern in Buenos Aires, La Quiaca, Puerto Iguazú, Posadas and San Salvador de Jujuy.
- **Coronavirus cases may peak in sometime between the end of June and beginning of July despite cases and virus-related deaths increasing at a faster pace**, according to Health Minister Ginés González García. The quarantine is expected to go until at least 28 June, and the government tightened on 17 June restrictions to limit circulation on public transit in the Buenos Aires area, where most cases continued to be concentrated.
- The **humanitarian impact of COVID-19 on asylum seekers, refugees and Venezuelan displaced is disproportionate** since most of them **have lost their jobs and livelihoods in the informal market**. Many of them have been confronted with a situation of **being on the street without access to shelter, food and income** to pay for their more basic needs. This **precarious situation** will be exacerbated by the arrival of the **winter**. They cannot access **social programs** due to **lack of documentation** and/or **not complying with requirements related to the length of their residence** in the country.
- On 18 June, UNHCR released the **Global Refugee Trends 2019** highlighting that there are **79,5 M displaced in the world** at the end of 2019. This means that **1% of the total global population is displaced**. The top **5 countries of origin of refugees and displaced persons** remain: **Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Myanmar**. **40 M displaced are children**.

UNHCR's response

- **As of 19 June, UNHCR had provided advice to and referred for further assistance some 647 cases in Argentina, representing 1,494 refugees and migrants, since the set-up of remote assistance, via telephone calls, emails and/or WhatsApp.** Ninety-eight per cent of the cases are Venezuelans, with 78 per cent living in the greater Buenos Aires area. Unmet basic needs related to the payment of accommodations in which they reside informally and access to food, persists as the main specific protection need reported, followed by lack of legal documentation.
- **In Argentina, during the second week of June, UNHCR partners provided with assistance in cash to some new 246 refugees and migrants.** UNHCR continued to provide shelter as well to some other **111 vulnerable refugees and migrants**. UNHCR partners also provided advice to some **171 persons**, 49 of them who got in touch with partners for the first time during last week.
- **UNHCR facilitated the opening 64 bank accounts for refugees and migrants in coordination with Banco Ciudad of Buenos Aires and the government of the city of Buenos Aires, providing them for the first time to have access to financial services in the country.** The bank was able to facilitate the processing for all the recipients, preventing them from doing it in person amidst the quarantine and the social isolation measures in the COVID-19 context. UNHCR will continue to advocate for the opening of more accounts for refugees and migrants, as this will facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance in case its needed.

- On 17 June, Argentina's National Refugee Commission (CONARE) recognized 36 asylum-seekers as refugees. During 2020, CONARE has received 1,046 asylum applications, of which 407 were registered remotely in the context of the health emergency. **CONARE has formally requested UNHCR's advice for the regulations to be applied as exceptions to the closure of borders for people in need of international protection.**
- On 18 June, UNHCR was invited to be part of the **national inter-institutional coordination mechanism for refugees and migrants**, headed by the **Ministry of Social Development**. This coordination mechanism brings together **23 organizations** (line ministries at national, provincial and local level as well as UNHCR and IOM) to **coordinate and complement the humanitarian response to refugees and migrants.**
- On 17 June, Regional Representative briefed the Ambassadors of **Kuwait** and **Switzerland** respectively on UNHCR operational response to COVID-19 in Argentina.
- On 19 June, UNHCR presented before representatives from the Embassies of **Canada, European Union, France, Italy, Japan, Norway, Qatar, Spain, United Kingdom, and USA** the main findings of the **national consultations on socio-economic recuperation** of asylum seekers, refugees and others of concern to UNHCR in Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay, during and post COVID-19 crisis, as well as the **20 priority projects** identified. Total financial requirements amount to 5,7 million, out of which **3,4 million** are requested to the international community.
- As part of the [World Refugee Day](#), this week UNHCR has been supporting 12 gastronomic businesses to prepare meals to be distributed to community food services for destitute refugees, migrants and local populations. These **solidarity actions** form part of the campaign: **Everyone can make a difference. Every action counts.**



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