

Argentina

May 2020

Hosting some **185,702 refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants, most of them from Venezuela**, UNHCR works with the Argentinian government and partners to **guarantee access to the territory, asylum and regularization**, while also providing **goods and services** so they can cover their basic needs such as housing,

health, clothing items, among others, both in cash and in-kind. UNHCR with its partners also facilitate the **socio-economic integration of refugees and migrants in the local market and communities**. In cooperation with its partner agencies, UNHCR has presence in the northern cities of La Quiaca, San Salvador de Jujuy, and Puerto Iguazú,

aimed at assisting and orientating refugees and migrants who enter the country by land. Moreover, UNHCR supports the Argentinian government to implement a small-scale **resettlement programme and opportunities for complementary pathways**, supported by a network of community sponsors.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

185,702

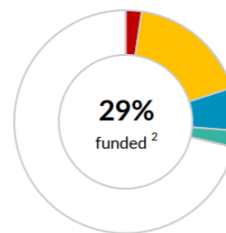
Refugees	3,881
Asylum-seekers	8,044
Others of concern*	443
Venezuelans displaced abroad	173,334

Source: Official information provided by the Government, as of December 2019
* Stateless status applicants

FUNDING

USD 24 million

requested for the **Regional Office including Argentina**



■ Tightly earmarked
■ Earmarked
■ Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
■ Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
□ Funding gap (indicative)

ARGENTINA MCO
as of 10 June 2020

UNHCR PRESENCE

The UNHCR Regional Office for Southern Latin America, based in Buenos Aires, covers operations in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Staff in Argentina, Bolivia and Chile:

41 National staff
10 International staff



Venezuelan receiving food boxes amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in Buenos Aires / ©UNHCR, J. di Benedictis, 2020

Working with Partners

- **ADRA** (Agencia Adventista de Desarrollo y Recursos Asistenciales), **CAREF** (Comisión Argentina para Refugiados y Migrantes), **Fundación MIRARES** (Migrantes, Refugiados y Argentinos Emprendedores Sociales) and the **British Council** are UNHCR's partners implementing projects aimed at providing counselling, legal orientation, basic humanitarian assistance, Spanish language training and support for socio-economic inclusion and sustainable livelihoods to refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers.
- UNHCR works in close coordination with Government counterparts, namely the **National Refugee Commission** (CONARE), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Migration Directorate, National Office of the Public Defender, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism, and the Secretariat of Childhood, Adolescence and Family.
- UNHCR works in close cooperation with the **local governments** of the City of Buenos Aires where most of the refugee population resides, as well as of the provinces of Salta, San Luis, Mendoza, La Rioja and Cordoba.
- UNHCR works together with other UN agencies, such as UNICEF, IOM, ILO and UNWOMEN. UNHCR together with IOM leads the **National Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela**.

UNHCR, the Government and IOM coordinate a joint workplan to support policy design, implementation and capacity building of **a resettlement and humanitarian visa program** with the active participation of civil society partners, local governments and hosting community groups, and the financial and technical support of the Sustainable Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Initiative (CRIPS), the **European Union**, and the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI).

- UNHCR leads a strategy with the **private sector** in order to generate awareness and promote the labour insertion of refugees and migrants in the local market, with the financial support of the **European Union**.

Main Activities

Protection

- UNHCR **provides technical support and advice to national authorities involved in the implementation of relevant legislation**, in order to ensure efficient refugee status determination procedures (RSD). Capacity building activities are aimed at strengthening the **National Refugee Commission**, and its technical secretariat, in order to ensure due process in admission, registration, eligibility interviews, RSD assessments and right to appeal.
- UNHCR advocates for the **facilitation of the naturalization procedure for refugees and stateless persons**, and provides the necessary information to ensure they are able to make an informed decision on this option, as well as to ensure the implementation of the new legal framework establishing a statelessness determination procedure.
- UNHCR **produces information and identifies protection risks, promotes human rights and identifies coping mechanisms of Venezuelan nationals** no matter their migratory or refugee status through the implementation of the **Protection Monitoring Tool**, while at the same time refers individual cases with specific needs to partner agencies.
- UNHCR promotes actions aimed at identifying, preventing and **responding to situations of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) survivors** through regular protection dialogues and empowerment activities.
- UNHCR, CONARE and the Committee for integral assistance and protection of refugees and asylum-seekers of the National Office of the Public Defender work under a tripartite agreement to **guarantee legal assistance to asylum-seekers during the refugee status determination procedure**. The legal assistance is free and provided by expert lawyers from the National Office of the Public Defender.
- UNHCR is strengthening the **engagement with community-based organizations of refugees and migrants**. In that sense, members of organizations work side by side with UNHCR in the identification of their priority needs and the strengthening of their role as community protection networks. Specific activities include collaborative information materials production, winterization campaign and community replicators trainings on international protection.
- UNHCR engages in **two-way communication with refugees and migrants** through the activation of a protection hotline where refugees and migrants can directly chat with UNHCR, in addition to email and face-to-face orientation. This is enhanced by the training of personnel and the establishment of feedback mechanisms along with partner agencies.

Basic Needs and Durable Solutions

- UNHCR provides **in-kind and cash assistance** to the most vulnerable refugees and migrants, so they can cover for their most vital and essential needs,
- Through the livelihoods Graduation Approach, UNHCR supports the **socio-economic inclusion of extremely poor refugees**, supporting them to achieve a sustained income and overcome extreme poverty, together with specialized partners from the public and private sector.

- UNHCR works with financial service providers from the public and private sector in Buenos Aires, Córdoba and Salta to **facilitate access to bank accounts, credit cards and micro-credit** for refugees and migrants who previously were excluded from these services. Activities include advocacy, financial inclusion workshops, financial literacy trainings, such as information sessions for persons of concern.
- As part of its initiative “**Cities of Solidarity**”, UNHCR is working together with ten local governments across the country to facilitate access to information, orientation and improve reception conditions as well as to better **integrate refugees and migrants in their local communities**, strengthening access to rights, employment, as well as social protection and employment promotion schemes.
- Through the initiative **Talento sin Fronteras (Talent without borders)**, UNHCR is engaging the private sector to **facilitate economic inclusion of refugees through access to employment, self-employment and financial services**.
- UNHCR is working with the government of Buenos Aires, micro-finance institutions and civil society to **strengthen micro-businesses through training, finance and coaching**.
- UNHCR promotes **opportunities for resettlement and complementary pathways** for admission of refugees by providing technical support to relevant authorities on case identification and selection, pre-departure orientation and travel, as well as to specialized government entities, universities and sponsors to improve settlement services (counselling, language training, psychosocial support, social inclusion, etc.).
- UNHCR has supported the establishment, training and mutual assistance of a **network of community sponsors** who offer their own resources to expand opportunities **for resettlement and integration of refugees** in their communities. The network is currently comprised of nine faith-based and civil society organizations which encompasses over 59 hosting communities and over 254 sponsor groups, creating a country-wide protection network for refugees.
- UNHCR supports regional efforts led by Argentina to consolidate resettlement and complementary pathways, by introducing **innovative legal and procedural frameworks for community sponsorship**, by convening regional meetings and exchanges of best practices with other countries, and by supporting the States’ participation in global fora and high-level meetings with more experienced countries.
- From January to March 2020, UNHCR through its partner provided **1,021** most vulnerable individuals received multi-purpose cash assistance to cover their basic needs; **478** vulnerable individuals were provided with temporary accommodation; **826** individuals were provided with free legal assistance, orientation, information and referral to various service providers; **154** persons received seed capital to start their own business, and **270** persons were provided with tailored trainings on labor insertion, financial inclusion and entrepreneurship opportunities. UNHCR also provided language training to **87** non-Spanish speaking refugees in order to develop communication skills and to facilitate their social, economic and cultural integration into society.

COVID-19 Situation (as of May, 2020)

- **Two Venezuelans were reported to have tested positive for COVID-19** in one of the most populated and poorest neighborhoods of Buenos Aires city. Both with mild symptoms were hospitalized for a few days, but now are not being accepted by their landlord back in their house to complete their due time in isolation. UNHCR partners are now assisting accordingly with shelter and food.
- UNHCR is providing **cash assistance, in-kind assistance for food and shelter** to the most vulnerable cases of refugees and migrants, especially in urban centres to help mitigate the negative socio-economic impact of the coronavirus outbreak and for those who had no housing and/or that were on transit to reach other destinations in the country. Only in April, UNHCR provided assistance in cash to **1,321 persons** (1,237 Venezuelans), in Buenos Aires city (1,093), Puerto Iguazú (63), La Quiaca (1) and elsewhere (164). UNHCR continued to provide **shelter** as well to some other **111 vulnerable refugees and migrants**.
- As of 28 May, **UNHCR had provided advice to and referred for further assistance** some **550 cases** in Argentina, representing **1,362 refugees and migrants**, since the set-up of remote assistance, via telephone calls, emails and/or WhatsApp. Ninety-seven 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.
- During the month, through direct implementation, UNHCR distributed, in collaboration with national authorities, **1,140 food kits benefiting 3,090 refugees and migrants (including 210 LGBTI refugees and migrants)**, as well as **food for three dining rooms benefiting 2,100 refugees and migrants and vulnerable people in host communities** in Buenos Aires for a week.
- **UNHCR continued to support the National Migration Directorate (DNM)**, during the month acquiring **1,200** protective masks and **2,800** latex gloves, four sanitizing booths to be set up at border points and **287** division crystals for attention to public desks at DNM’s facilities
- UNHCR is **supporting Latin Vox Machine (Venezuelan refugee and migrant founded orchestra) virtual academy project** with some USD 36,000, a digital music education platform that offers training based on a pedagogical system focused on artistic production for persons of all ages, which aims to support the livelihoods of musicians that are part of this orchestra.

- **UNHCR signed an MoU with the Ministry of Social Development and the National Refugee Commission** aiming to facilitate access to rights and socio-economic inclusion of refugees and migrants in the country.
- **UNHCR hosted national e-consultations in order to address the socio-economic recovery of refugees and migrants in the framework of the COVID-19 emergency and post emergency.** The event registered the participation of over 90 relevant stakeholders including national and local government representatives, key UN agencies, partners and NGOs specialized in economic integration, the private sector, chambers of commerce, and refugees and migrants' organizations. Participants worked in discussion groups and analyzed emerging needs, challenges and opportunities for labour inclusion and entrepreneurship of asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants. The main findings of the national consultations and project profiles elaborated with key partners have been shared with relevant donors.
- **UNHCR and partners continue assisting asylum-seekers to put forward new asylum claims, as the National Refugee Commission (CONARE) continues registering asylum applications via email.** CONARE is issuing digital residence certificates (precaria) that are being forwarded by email and with which the applicants have access to all rights. The new procedure implemented by CONARE is available both for people who already had a turn to start their application and for those who may be in an irregular migratory situation.
- **Information material regarding the constantly evolving national response and restrictions and quarantine has been made available for refugees**, as well as organizations requesting UNHCR advice and assistance, on UNHCR's website unhcr.help.org.
- While **borders are closed** during the emergency lockdown, UNHCR and its partners **continue monitoring the situation at the borders, and providing humanitarian assistance** to refugees and migrants stranded at borders (within the country) due to internal transport suspension, and is advocating with authorities to transfer these persons to their final destinations, as well as to facilitate the entry to the territory of individuals for family reunification.

Special thanks to major donors who have provided funds for the Argentina Regional Office and at the regional and global level in 2020:

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External Relations

CONTACTS

Analía Kim, Assistant Communications/PI Officer, Regional Office for Southern Latin America, kiman@unhcr.org, Tel: +54 11 4815-7870

José Manuel Cáceres, Regional Reporting Officer, Regional Office for Southern Latin America, caceres@unhcr.org, Tel: +54 11 4815-7870

William Spindler, Senior External Engagement Coordinator, Regional Bureau for the Americas, spindler@unhcr.org, Tel: +507 6382 7815

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- Website: <https://acnur.org/argentina>
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