

Bolivia

May 2020

Hosting some **5,707 Venezuelan refugees and migrants**, UNHCR works with the Bolivian government and partners **to guarantee their rights, advocate for their access to territory, asylum and regularization**, while providing with partners **basic goods and services**, such as temporary accommodation, food and hygiene kits.

In 2019, UNHCR's operational capacity was expanded through agreements with new partners, in order to **provide assistance and protection in main urban centres** (La Paz, El Alto and Santa Cruz de la Sierra), **and border areas** (Desaguadero and Villazón).

Bolivia is a State Party to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol since 1982. Bolivia acceded to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness in 1983.

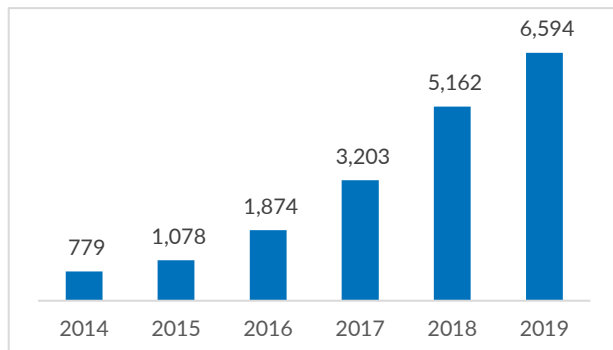
POPULATION OF CONCERN

6,594

Refugees	878
Asylum-seekers	244
Venezuelans displaced abroad	5,472

Source: Official information provided by the Government, as of December 2019

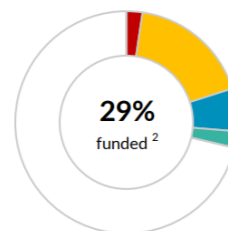
POPULATION OF CONCERN (EVOLUTION)



FUNDING

USD 24 MILLION

requested for the **Regional Office including Bolivia in 2020**



ARGENTINA MCO
as of 10 June 2020

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

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

1 field presence in La Paz



Sensitization session on hands washing with children in La Paz / @UNHCR /W.Wroblewski

Working with Partners

- UNHCR works in close coordination with government counterparts, namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that presides the **National Refugee Commission (CONARE)**, with representatives of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice and Institutional Transparency, where UNHCR is a member with voice. Also, UNHCR works closely with the National Directorate of Migration, the National Office of the Ombudsperson, and other decentralized organisms, such as the Office of the Public Defense for Children and Adolescents.
- A bilateral cooperation agreement was signed between UNHCR and the **National Office of the Ombudsperson in 2019**. The agreement's main objective is the strengthening of technical capacities to provide orientation and legal assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees in Bolivia and to conduct border monitoring, among other joint activities that benefit persons of concern. Currently, UNHCR is supporting the new Office of the Ombudsperson in Desaguadero, within the border Assistance and Orientation Point (PAO).
- UNHCR has broadened the network of partners to scale up the operational capacity on the ground including activities not only in **La Paz**, but also in **El Alto**, **Santa Cruz de la Sierra** and at the **borders**. With **Pastoral Social Caritas Boliviana (PSCB)**, UNHCR's implements activities that aim at providing counselling and basic humanitarian assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers. In addition, UNHCR partnership with **World Vision Bolivia**, who cooperates with **Red Cross Bolivia** and the **National Office of the Ombudsperson's Office**, provides child protection services, primary health care, communication services and legal orientation and assistance. Moreover, UNHCR has an agreement with **Caritas Switzerland** to provide and improve shelters for migrants and refugees through **Fundación Scalabrini Bolivia**, as well as assisting survivors of SGBV and providing child protection through available services and engaging with local communities through **Fundación Munasim Kullakita**.
- UNHCR works together with other UN agencies, such as UNICEF, IOM and OHCHR. UNHCR together with IOM leads the **National Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela** established in 2020.

Main Activities

Protection & Durable Solutions

- Provide technical support and advice at the request of national authorities involved in the implementation of fair and efficient **refugee status determination procedures (RSD)** and participate in CONARE's sessions as established by the law.
- Strengthen reception conditions and capacities at the main entry **border** of persons of concern (Desaguadero) through joint **support spaces**- called Assistance and Orientation Points (PAO)- acting as "one-stop" where refugees and migrants have access to information, connectivity and communication services, legal orientation and assistance and primary health care services.
- Support the **Regional Border Protection Network** led by civil society institutions and faith-based organizations, together with national human rights institutions working with migrants and refugees at the border areas of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Peru to coordinate activities with a regional perspective in order to better identify persons of concern to UNHCR, prevent their refoulement and support them through legal counselling, shelter and humanitarian assistance.
- Strengthen institutional capacities of the **National Office of the Ombudsperson** to ensure asylum-seekers and refugees have access to legal orientation and assistance.
- Promote actions addressed to prevent, identify and respond to situations of **Sexual Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)** affecting refugee women and children in coordination with local partners. Regular protection dialogues and empowerment activities are developed with refugee women.
- Promote activities to meet the specific protection and developmental needs of girls and boys and their families. UNHCR has reinforced shelters by including **child friendly spaces** which provide a safe space to learn and play. UNHCR and its partners are also piloting a project in La Paz that provides community psycho-social support and engagement through a mobile service which functions as an informal "class-room" for children, where also the family, and specially women, benefit from an active listening service by trained staff.
- Advocate for the adoption of a law for the protection of **stateless people** and the establishment of a stateless determination procedure in line with the pledges made by the Government of Bolivia (Brazil Plan of Action).

Humanitarian Assistance, Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

- **Humanitarian assistance** is provided to vulnerable persons of concern upon arrival and in main urban centres and at the borders to ensure that their basic needs are covered using in-kind and cash-based assistance.
- Through UNHCR's partner agencies, asylum-seekers and other persons of concern receive **information and orientation** regarding access to rights, protection and local integration, and vulnerable cases are referred to migrant

shelters and community kitchens. Durable shelter solutions and socio-economic inclusion are achieved by using counselling, referrals to specialized services and the provision of multi-purpose cash grants.

- Support infrastructure improvements **of shelters** in order to improve the quality of assistance provided to refugees and migrants.

COVID-19 Situation (as of May, 2020)

- Due to the emergency situation, during May partner agencies have provided **shelter** already to some **441 refugees and migrants**, to help mitigate the negative socio-economic impact of the coronavirus outbreak and for those who had no housing and/or that were in transit to reach other destinations in the country. UNHCR and its partners continue monitoring the situation at borders and advising Venezuelans of the many risks of attempting a return journey under the current circumstances, as several cases of irregular crossings were reported during May.
- Some **718** refugees and migrant benefitted from the **distribution of hygiene kits and cleaning supplies in shelters** where they are being hosted during the quarantine period, while some other **611** benefitted from the distribution of **food**. Moreover, refugees and migrants have benefitted from distribution of **winter clothes and items**, to deal with the harsh climatic conditions and altitude of the country (Andes). The geographical outreach of interventions during the month was wider thanks to UNHCR partners' network in the country.
- UNHCR along with the **Bolivian Red Cross** continued doing both **medical visits to the shelters** where Venezuelan refugees and migrants are hosted and providing **remote medical consultations** benefiting some **406 persons** in May. This allowed to quickly identify and respond to usual respiratory affections typical of the cold temperatures and altitude of La Paz, thus avoiding individuals resorting to already strained public health services.
- UNHCR and its partners continued with its initiative to bring the **mobile friendly space for children** (Aula Movil) to the accommodations where UNHCR is providing shelter to Venezuelan families, conducting games for children, mainly around hygiene and prevention measures against COVID- 19, as they had no access to **educational or recreational means**, nor to distance or virtual schooling. Some **234 children** benefitted form this activity during May.
- UNHCR and its partners have intervened in a timely and effective manner on several occasions during the quarantine period in order to assist and accompany as well as effectively refer to services cases of **gender-based violence** including of children, to **avoid refugees and migrants' evictions, follow up on discrimination and xenophobia events, ensure access to health services**, among other interventions in La Paz, Santa Cruz and Desaguadero.
- In May, UNHCR together with the Ombudsperson's Office and partners **conducted information and awareness sessions for around 150 Venezuelans** currently receiving humanitarian assistance and shelter supported by UNHCR in La Paz, on their rights and duties amidst the quarantine.
- National e-consultations with key counterparts to discuss on **projects to implement for the socioeconomic recovery in favour of refugees and migrants**. Two projects directed at various economic sectors, such as food and catering and textile were identified, targeting over 300 persons directly.
- **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](https://www.unhcr.org).
- Bolivia's National Refugee Commission met on 28 May, with UNHCR participation, and **recognized 45 Venezuelans as refugees**.

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:

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LINKS

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