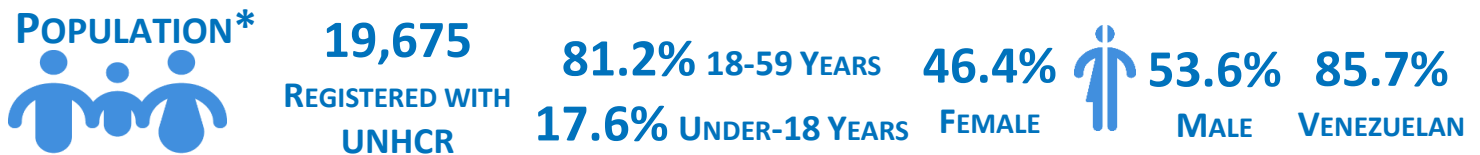


## CURRENT CONTEXT

COVID-19 restrictions imposed in August to treat with an increase in infections, continued for the entire month of September. Consequentially, some economic sectors continued to operate at reduced capacity, leaving many refugees and asylum-seekers with reduced access to basic needs. This resulted in a dramatic surge in interest in UNHCR's cash-based intervention (CBI) program in September when compared with August, as there was a 36% increase in CBI-related queries to the hotlines, and a 170% increase in the number of CBI applications made for the month.

UNHCR in September followed up on reports relating to [detentions](#) of Venezuelans irregularly entering Trinidad by sea, a publicized [case](#) of fatal SGBV involving a Venezuelan victim, and another report of a Venezuelan national who tested positive for COVID-19 after being detained by authorities for 38 days, even though she tested negative upon her arrest. A group of 93 Venezuelans were deported, following a clear [statement](#) from the Prime Minister indicating the Government's intention to deport all Venezuelan nationals who were not registered in the June 2019 Government registration exercise. The Minister of National Security [reiterated](#) this position following the deportation, describing it as an attempt to protect the population of Trinidad and Tobago, from COVID-19. Partners reported increased fear and anxiety among refugees and asylum-seekers due to the environment.

Conversely, the Prime Minister also [encouraged](#) the public to refrain from labelling Venezuelans as carriers of COVID-19.



\*Figures are as at September 30<sup>th</sup> 2020. Registration at UNCHR premises had been temporarily suspended from March 13 to May 26 due to COVID-19. 3,402 individual records were inactivated in April due to registration documentation being expired for more than six months.

## OPERATIONAL UPDATE – EDUCATION ACCESS

### LOCAL SCHOOL TERM OPENS - EQUAL PLACE SEEKS IMPROVEMENTS AND COLLABORATIONS



On September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the 2020/2021 academic year formally began for all local primary and secondary schools. While school-aged refugees and asylum-seekers are unable to attend public school in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) due to administrative and linguistic barriers, [Equal Place](#) (EP), has provided this population with access to education since September 2019.

Due to COVID-19 and the continuing closure of physical spaces, education in T&T convened online via the Ministry of Education's new Student Learning Management System.

EP, a primarily virtual learning intervention which had only paused its services for a three-week period in late-March/early April, continued to seek avenues for expanding its reach to more students in need.

Through a combination of increased tablet distribution, improvements in connectivity, and the hard work of teachers and facilitators, EP was able to expand its reach to an additional 700+ students, reaching a total of **1,042 students** in September. This is a significant increase from the 324 attending learning sessions in April 2020.

However, with a reduction in funding for UNHCR and UNICEF due to the COVID-19 pandemic, significant new sources of funding will be needed to expand the service to the 1000+ more students who have expressed interest in EP but currently remain without access to education.

The Education Working Group continues working to prepare 119 primary-level students to enter schools run by the Catholic Education Board of Management. These students now await the provision of legal documentation in the form of student or Minister's permits to be able to begin engaging in classes alongside local students.

## UNHCR UPDATE

### UNHCR URGES FOR REFUGEE INCLUSION IN COVID-19 SUPPORT RESPONSES

UNHCR and some 100 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), recently called on global leaders to ensure that refugees are included in social safety nets and support services for COVID-19, stressing the need for stronger integration of refugees and refugee-led organisations, their skills and knowledge, in humanitarian responses to the crisis. In a [media release](#), UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, highlighted the need “to shield refugees from the economic impacts of the pandemic, which have hit the most marginalized, including refugees, the hardest.”

## OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS



### COMMUNITY HOTLINE COMMUNICATION

The number of queries recorded for September decreased, from 1476 queries in August, to 1018 queries in September. This may be due to September being the first full month in which a new hotline system was implemented, which reduced capacity from three simultaneously operating hotlines to one daytime hotline and a night hotline. A significant increase was however noted for September in the number of queries relating to multipurpose cash assistance (556 in September compared to 409 in August and 318 in July).



### EMERGENCY CASH AND FOOD ASSISTANCE

Multi-purpose cash grants were approved in September for **65 individuals** facing protection risks with very limited or no ability to achieve self-reliance. Additionally, implementing partner [Living Water Community](#) (LWC), was able to provide **26 beneficiaries** with emergency food assistance, despite funding challenges. In September, UNHCR faced a sharp spike in CBI applications, recording a 170% increase in these applications, when compared with the number received in August. Applications for cash assistance continued to demonstrate the heightened risks faced by refugees and asylum-seekers due to the onset of COVID-19 and challenges of the operational context, which are expected to have a long-term impact on persons of concern. Ninety-four percent of cash applicants reported not being able to meet their basic needs, particularly rent and food, while 72% indicated that either they or their children/household members were reducing the quantity and quality of their food intake, with 23% going for days without eating.



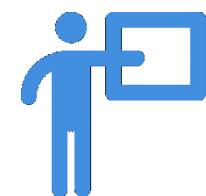
### ACCESS TO MEDICAL HEALTH SERVICES

UNHCR implementing partner [Family Planning Association](#) (FPATT) conducted **199 consultations** on sexual and reproductive health for 178 refugees and asylum-seekers during September, five of whom identified themselves as victims of sexual and gender-based violence. In addition, **18 pediatric care consultations** were conducted in September. Health services were delivered through a combination of telehealth and static clinic modalities.



### MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SERVICES

Psychosocial support was provided for 97 refugees and asylum-seekers in September, with implementing partner [Rape Crisis Society](#) facilitating **110 counselling sessions**, including for victims of sexual and gender-based violence. LWC also conducted psychosocial interventions for **28 individuals** in September, with sessions held for an additional **five victims of trafficking** to help treat with the intense trauma of those experiences.



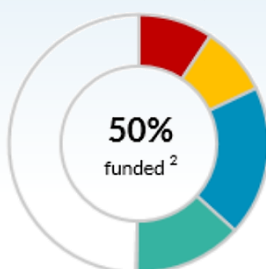
### TRAINING AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

UNHCR delivered a training on refugee protection principles and international human rights to **141 police officers** in September. A second similar training was also conducted for post-graduate students from the Institute of International Relations at the University of the West Indies.

## FUNDING - United States of America Multi-Country Office

Trinidad and Tobago is part of the United States of America Multi-Country Office along with Aruba, Curaçao, Guyana, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and the United States of America.

Financials requirements in 2020 for this office are \$48.5 million<sup>1</sup>. As at October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020, it is 50% funded.



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

<sup>1</sup> The financial requirements for the United States of America MCO include requirements for the Coronavirus Emergency and the Venezuela Situation

<sup>2</sup> The percentage funded includes indicative allocations of softly earmarked and unearmarked contributions

The UNHCR United States of America MCO wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors: the United States of America and the European Union, as well as to the following donors of unearmarked and softly earmarked funds:

Canada | Denmark | France | Germany | Ireland | Netherlands | Norway | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | Private donors Australia | Private donors Germany | Private donors Italy | Private donors Japan | Private donors Republic of Korea | Private donors Spain | Private donors United Kingdom | Private donors USA

For further details on anything included in this report, contact Shemuel London at [london@unhcr.org](mailto:london@unhcr.org). Find more information about UNHCR [here](#) and [click here](#) for more on the work of the UNHCR T&T Operation.