

Bolivia

June 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.

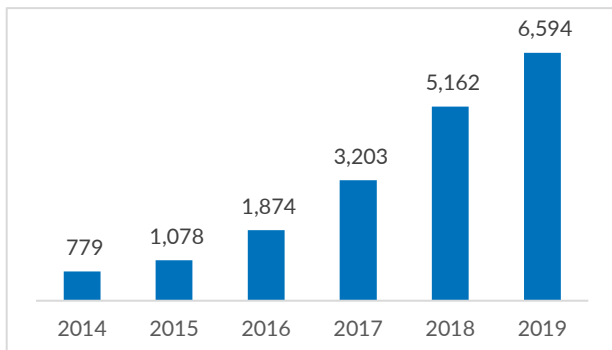
POPULATION OF CONCERN

6,594

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

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

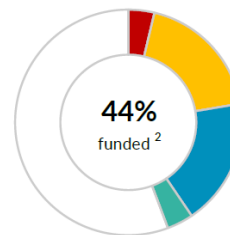
POPULATION OF CONCERN (EVOLUTION)



FUNDING

USD 24 MILLION

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



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

ARGENTINA MCO
as of 22 July 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

1 field presence in La Paz



Venezuelan family during a winter items distribution in La Paz / @UNHCR /S.Aliaga

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 refugees and migrants 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 refugees and migrants 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 June, 2020)

- Due to the current emergency situation, during June partner agencies provided **shelter** to some **295 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. In Villazon, Bolivia's border with Argentina, Venezuelan families (approximately 25 people) and some Colombians stranded were identified by partners, pending the reopening of the Argentine border and without basic means to sustain themselves. In Desaguadero (border with Peru), UNHCR partners identified two new cases of Venezuelan families who arrived at the Attention and Orientation Point (PAO) with the intention of crossing into Peru to return to Venezuela.
- Some **118** 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 **473** 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).
- 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 **201 persons** in June. 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, providing children with school materials and educational books, conducting games for children, mainly around hygiene and prevention measures against COVID-19, as they had neither access to **educational or recreational means** nor to distance or virtual schooling.
- **UNHCR and its partners identified the cases of two unaccompanied Venezuelan adolescents, who are now receiving humanitarian assistance and advice to access the asylum system and be referred to child protection systems in La Paz.** UNHCR and its partners, together with the Ombudsperson's Office, monitored institutional responses given the difficulties noted in handling other similar cases.
- UNHCR and partners monitored the **birth registration and documentation of children born in Bolivia to Venezuelan mothers**, as birth registration offices had remained closed during the quarantine. Since the reopening of the offices partners assisted at least **three cases to enroll children in the Universal Health Insurance and obtaining birth certificates**. In addition, UNHCR partners managed, in coordination with national authorities, for the first time to have Bolivian children to Venezuelan parents accessing an **economic aid of USD 17**, paid every two months for a year to all children under one year old. It is worth mentioning that in the past this population was not included in this scheme. UNHCR partners initially accompanied two cases for the corresponding registration.
- UNHCR, together with its partners and the Ombudsperson's Office for Children and Adolescents (DNA) of La Paz, carried out **six information and awareness sessions for 130 parents of Venezuelan boys and girls hosted in UNHCR supported shelters**, as a preventive measure towards sanctions security or immigration authorities may impose. Partners had identified since the onset of the "dynamic quarantine" in early June an increase of Venezuelan families with children on the main streets of the city, selling products in the streets or asking for alms, in spite of the fact that the movement of children and older adults was prohibited.
- In La Paz, **UNHCR partners implemented a pilot project to carry out activities for the prevention and response of gender-based violence** in two accommodations in which UNHCR and its partners support Venezuelan population, reaching **20 young women** with awareness and information activities.
- In Santa Cruz, UNHCR partners held **two informative workshops on violence prevention and coexistence rules in the hostel managed by partners for Venezuelan population**. The workshops allowed the identification of SGBV cases, two of which decided to make formal complaints and are receiving the corresponding support (legal, psycho-social, in addition to humanitarian assistance) and two continue with comprehensive assistance and accompaniment, but without reporting their case to the authorities. UNHCR partners also **supported other eight SGBV cases** in La Paz, El Alto and Santa Cruz. Women received legal guidance and support to be able to make complaints to the corresponding authorities, as well as psycho-social support, advice and referral to access the asylum system if necessary.
- **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.

- Bolivia's National Refugee Commission met on 25 June, with UNHCR participation, and **recognized 50 Venezuelans as refugees**. UNHCR partners **continued assisting persons of concern to submit asylum requests remotely via e-mail**, a process that presents even more difficulties given the poor connectivity in many sites, and the lack or disuse of emails by asylum-seekers.

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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LINKS

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