

# CHILE NEWSLETTER

Cities have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response around the world, including in Chile. Despite the complex situation faced, cities have found innovative, rapid and inclusive ways of responding to new vulnerabilities and needs faced by their residents, including refugees and migrants.



*Between June and September 2020, during the peak of the COVID-19 contagion, a **total of five Chilean cities signed a Cities of Solidarity agreement with UNHCR***

## INCLUSION IN TIMES OF COVID-19

# CITIES AS FRONTLINE RESPONDERS

The Venezuelan displacement situation, causing more than 5 million people to seek new beginnings across Latin America, is one of the largest situations to have affected the continent. It is also one of the most urban displacement situations, as the majority of Venezuelan refugees and migrants have settled in urban hubs across Colombia, Ecuador, Chile, Peru and other parts of the continent.

In Chile, close to 70 per cent of Venezuelan refugees and migrants have sought new beginnings in and around Santiago de Chile (capital city), in the *Region Metropolitana*. Since the declaration of emergency in Chile on 18 March 2020 and the stark increase of

COVID-19 positive cases in Chile, municipalities across Chile have launched and sustained solidarity campaigns for their residents, established sanitary measures across their municipalities, assisted families with the sudden loss of employment of many and the increase in evictions and homelessness and facilitated access to basic services, including for some of their most vulnerable residents.

Given the specific displacement and migration dynamics in Chile, mayors and their municipalities have become key actors in facilitating the socio-economic inclusion of refugees and migrants at the local level,

often providing access to key services, information and orientation through dedicated “Migration offices” or municipal departments for human rights.

### CITIES OF SOLIDARITY

In the Americas, the *Cities of Solidarity* framework was developed following the recognition of the role of cities as humanitarian responders to the plight of refugees in the *Mexico Declaration and Plan of Action to strengthen International Protection of Refugees in Latin America (2004)* and the *Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action (2014)*. The framework provides for collaboration between cities and humanitarian actors on concrete initiatives related to the **local integration** of refugees, **resettlement and voluntary repatriation**. One of the objectives of the Cities of Solidarity platform is to promote the local integration and self-reliance of refugees in urban areas through concrete initiatives taken by local governments, in collaboration with UNHCR.

Between June and September 2020, during the peak of the COVID-19 contagion, a **total of five Chilean localities signed a Cities of Solidarity agreement** with UNHCR. In a moment of need, *Estación Central, Santiago, La Pintana, Recoleta* and *Ñuñoa* signed the agreement in search of an operational partnership that would help improve the situation of some of their most vulnerable residents. All five municipalities are based in the *Region Metropolitana* and have welcomed substantial numbers of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, as well as others, into their midst.

In a strong show of solidarity during particularly hard times, the mayors of all five municipalities have recognized the importance of providing **equal access to services and assistance** to their residents, while providing tailored assistance to the particularly vulnerable ones.

Over the past couple of months, **Estación Central** has faced a particularly dire housing crisis as the lack of adequate housing and the loss of income has resulted in threats and actual evictions for their residents. In response, Mayor Delgado has taken steps to increase social housing in his municipality, working closely with future residents.

UNHCR is also working closely with the Municipality of **Santiago** to create better access to socio-economic opportunities for refugees and migrants at the local

level. Partnering with ILO, IOM and the municipality and counterpart agencies in **Mexico City**, the project seeks to further access to employment and social protection programmes, while developing inclusive livelihoods approaches.



Chile. UNHCR supports refugees and migrants receiving food box delivered by the Municipality of Estación Central ©UNHCR/2020

Providing innovative emergency employment solutions, the municipality of **La Pintana** developed a plan to offer transitory employment opportunities to its residents, while reserving a certain percentage of these jobs for refugees and migrants.

In Northern Chile, the municipalities in Alto Hospicio, Iquique and Arica, all of them hubs for refugees and migrants, have similarly expressed an interest in signing the *Cities of Solidarity* framework agreement. In these cities, UNHCR already has close working relations with relevant municipal counterparts and has been collaborating in cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms with local government counterparts to ensure responses are tailored to the specific needs of refugees and migrants on the ground.

Other cities, such as Valparaíso, took steps early on to decentralize access to social protection services and basic medical care for its residents, facilitating all residents' access to much-needed emergency assistance and aiding the collection of detailed data on the types of needs and responses required at by district.

### PROVIDING CONCRETE TOOLS

On 8 September, UNHCR launched a series of webinars tailored to cities in Chile. The first talk, organized jointly with the *Fundación ProBono*, focused on evictions and practical measures that can be taken to prevent and address this kind of situations. Future webinars will focus on various themes including multi-cultural or cultural awareness practices, good practices developed in the area of integration, child protection in the context of integration and mental health/well-being and local approaches to gender mainstreaming. All topics were identified in discussions with municipalities and, depending on the uptake, the webinars are expected to continue for a while longer, covering other important protection and solutions-related issues. Depending on the thematic focus of the discussion, UNHCR will co-host the discussion with relevant national partners and experts.

### RESPONSE ACTIVITIES THANKS TO OUR DONORS AND PARTNERS

In September, conjunction with partner World Vision International, Scalabrini Foundation, persons from Arica received financial assistance to cover rent payments, hygiene kits, gallons of gas and mobile data cards. Other persons were assisted with medical assistance, with the support of IFRC in the same city in the North of Chile.

New Venezuelan cases received direct counseling by UNHCR staff in Arica, Antofagasta and Santiago. Additionally, Colombian, Cuban, Dominican, Peruvian and Palestinian cases received information and orientation and were referred to partners accordingly.

**Unilever**

Unilever, one of UNHCR's private donors, is providing essential supplies - such as soap, hand sanitizer and disinfectant - to over 40 UNHCR operations to support us during COVID-19.

UNHCR in Chile received more than 300,000 of these items and its staff are working hard to give them to partners in October.



### ¡WE ARE PROUD!

#### #PeriodismoSinEtiquetas

More than 2,000 persons participated in an online course entitled "Periodismo sin Etiquetas".

The course offered journalists across Latin America the opportunity to learn more about UNHCR's work and opportunities to reflect on inclusive ways of reporting on refugee and migration-related topics. The course was jointly developed by the Knight Center at the University of Texas, UNESCO and UNHCR.



## #DeCorazón



This year, United Nations Secretary- General Antonio Guterres stated that “the Covid-19 pandemic continues to unleash a tsunami of hate and xenophobia, scapegoating and scare-mongering” and urged governments to “act now to strengthen the immunity of our societies against the virus of hate”.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation of refugees and, at the same time, exposed them to stigmatization and discrimination.

In this context, UNHCR in Chile is developing multiple projects that seek to promote inclusive environments and in October UNHCR will launch a virtual campaign titled **#DeCorazón**, through an online platform that will link refugees and migrants offering art, history, and

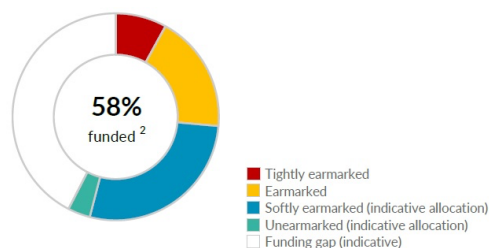
other thematic online free classes with Chileans interested to join. The platform aims to become a place of convergence, where refugees and migrants interact with host communities, sharing with them their culture, talents, knowledge, and skills.

## DONORS

FUNDING (AS OF 22 SEPTEMBER 2020)

# USD 25.6 M

**requested** for the UNHCR operation MCO Argentina (incl. Chile).



## 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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