

Costa Rica

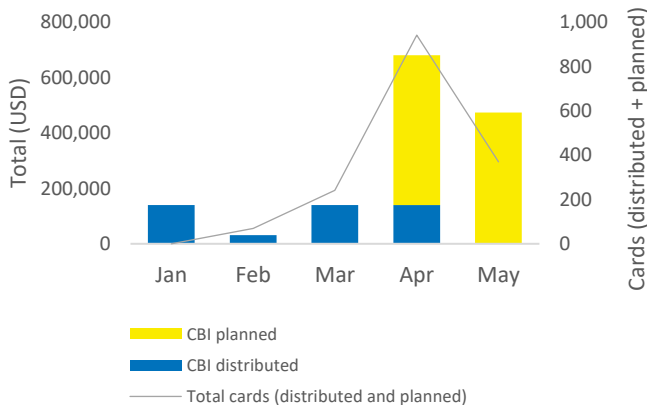
April 2020

Costa Rica is host to asylum-seekers primarily from Latin America and the Caribbean, and a transit point for others. The country has experienced an upward trend in the number of asylum applications received as a result of political unrest and violence in the region. Since the onset of the socio-political crisis in Nicaragua in April 2018, over 86,000 individuals have sought asylum in Costa Rica.

This influx has caused significant strain to the national systems, resulting in delays of up to nine months to file asylum claims, and an additional three months to obtain work permits. This prevents persons of concern (PoC) from accessing the labor market and meeting their basic needs. UNHCR works with the Costa Rican Government to address these needs. To address the significant gaps faced

by the most vulnerable PoC in meeting their basic needs, a multipurpose cash assistance program is managed by UNHCR under direct implementation. Cash assistance is an integral part of the Operation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Aside from multipurpose cash assistance targeting the most socioeconomically vulnerable families, emergency COVID-19 grants are now being provided to those most affected and at risk under the outbreak.

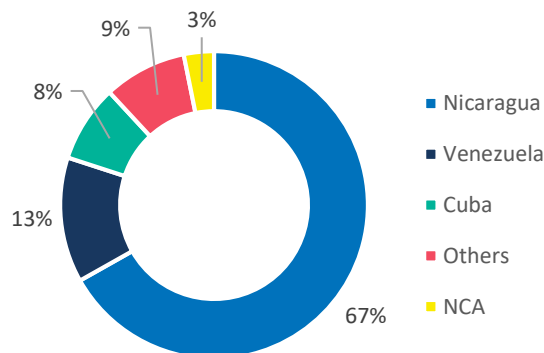
Cash assistance - planned and distributed in 2020



CBI Caseload

1,904 households targeted

Breakdown by country of origin



COVID-19 MEASURES

Strict preventative measures were implemented in mid-March to rapidly resume CBI distributions, while protecting beneficiaries and staff members. These include:

- Adequate distance between all persons at the distribution site
- Hand washing prior to entering waiting area
- Small groups of 10 beneficiaries per distribution cycle
- Training beneficiaries on how to best protect themselves and their families under COVID-19

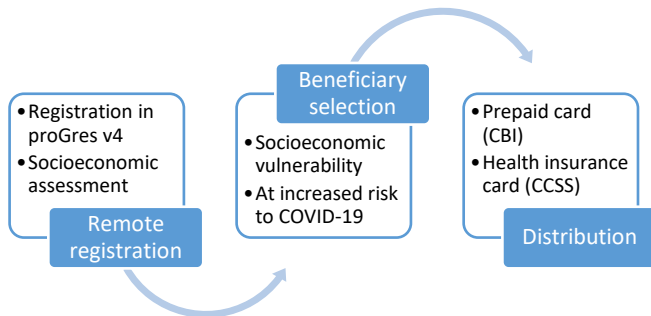


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CBI staff instructs beneficiary on informed consent and provides health insurance card

Cash-based intervention activities under COVID-19

Under COVID-19, the Costa Rica Operation implemented strict preventative measures to minimize the risk of transmission at the outset of the pandemic. The CBI Team schedules smaller groups of 10 persons per distribution and increasing the number of distributions from two longer (morning and afternoon) to eight shorter distributions per day. Through close coordination with the on-site security team, access to the distribution site is restricted and crowds



Integration of registration, CBI and CCSS under COVID-19

are controlled. Beneficiaries do not touch any surfaces during the distribution process and wash their hands prior to entering the waiting area with limited seating to ensure distance is maintained. Cleaning staff disinfect all surfaces between each group, including chairs, doors, hand washing station, tables, and pens used to sign consent forms. Beneficiaries under the emergency COVID-19 grant are advised to send a family member to collect the assistance, since they are in a high-risk group.

Distributions for CBI and CCSS (health insurance) are coordinated with Registration in order to minimize the number of distributions beneficiaries need to attend, further reducing risk of exposure. These strict measures allow staff to safely continue distributions and minimize risks both for beneficiaries and the staff themselves. The measures will allow UNHCR to distribute assistance to 1,300 additional households in April and May, which could be scaled up with significantly with additional funding.

Multi-purpose cash assistance

Regular cash assistance programs are being implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic without delay. A total of 241 socioeconomically vulnerable households received prepaid cards and top-ups under the new procedures at end March and an additional 571 HHs have been selected for distributions in April and May.

Emergency COVID-19 grants

Emergency COVID-19 grants were developed at the outset of the emergency. The grants target households at increased risk to COVID-19, including the elderly and persons with chronic medical conditions. 475 HHs have been selected thus far and the first distributions are scheduled for 6 April. All beneficiaries receive training on reducing risks related to COVID-19 in their daily life and will benefit from health insurance under the CCSS project to further reduce their vulnerability. Emergency one-off grants will be available to households experiencing shocks exacerbating their vulnerability.



CBI staff provide soap to wash hands prior to distribution

Needs

The budget of USD 1.6 million will be disbursed by May. To respond to the increased need for cash assistance due to COVID-19, the Costa Rica Operation requires an additional 2.4 million USD to assist over 2,700 new HHs.

Current budget: 1.6 million USD

Additional budget required: USD 2.4 million

CONTACT

Ana Maria Baracaldo | baracala@unhcr.org | Tel: +506 7181 7608 | Twitter [@ACNUR_CostaRica](https://twitter.com/ACNUR_CostaRica)