

Argentina

June 2020

Hosting some **185,702 refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants, most of them from Venezuela**, UNHCR works with the Argentinian government and partners to **guarantee access to the territory, asylum and regularization**, while also providing **goods and services** so they can cover their basic needs such as housing,

health, clothing items, among others, both in cash and in-kind. UNHCR with its partners also facilitate the **socio-economic integration of refugees and migrants in the local market and communities**. In cooperation with its partner agencies, UNHCR has presence in the northern cities of La Quiaca, San Salvador de Jujuy, Puerto Iguazú, and

Posadas aimed at assisting and orientating refugees and migrants who enter the country by land. Moreover, UNHCR supports the Argentinian government to implement a small-scale **resettlement program and opportunities for complementary pathways**, supported by a network of community sponsors.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

185,702

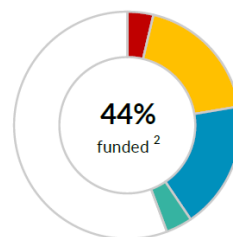
Refugees	3,881
Asylum-seekers	8,044
Others of concern*	443
Venezuelans displaced abroad	173,334

Source: Official information provided by the Government, as of December 2019
* Stateless status applicants

FUNDING

USD 24 million

requested for the **Regional Office including Argentina**



ARGENTINA MCO
as of 22 July 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



Venezuelan family receiving winter kits amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in Buenos Aires / ©UNHCR, J. Caceres, 2020

Working with Partners

- **ADRA** (Agencia Adventista de Desarrollo y Recursos Asistenciales), **CAREF** (Comisión Argentina para Refugiados y Migrantes), **Fundación MIRARES** (Migrantes, Refugiados y Argentinos Emprendedores Sociales) and the **British Council** are UNHCR's partners implementing projects aimed at providing counselling, legal orientation, basic humanitarian assistance, Spanish language training and support for socio-economic inclusion and sustainable livelihoods to refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers.
- UNHCR works in close coordination with Government counterparts, namely the **National Refugee Commission** (CONARE), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Migration Directorate, National Office of the Public Defender, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism, and the Secretariat of Childhood, Adolescence and Family.
- UNHCR works in close cooperation with the **local governments** of the City of Buenos Aires where most of the refugee population resides, as well as of the provinces of Salta, San Luis, Mendoza, La Rioja and Cordoba.
- UNHCR works together with other UN agencies, such as UNICEF, IOM, ILO and UNWOMEN. UNHCR together with IOM leads the **National Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela**.

UNHCR, the Government and IOM coordinate a joint workplan to support policy design, implementation and capacity building of **a resettlement and humanitarian visa program** with the active participation of civil society partners, local governments and hosting community groups, and the financial and technical support of the Sustainable Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Initiative (CRIPS), the **European Union**, and the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI).

- UNHCR leads a strategy with the **private sector** in order to generate awareness and promote the labour insertion of refugees and migrants in the local market, with the financial support of the **European Union**.

Main Activities

Protection

- UNHCR **provides technical support and advice to national authorities involved in the implementation of relevant legislation**, in order to ensure efficient refugee status determination procedures (RSD). Capacity building activities are aimed at strengthening the **National Refugee Commission**, and its technical secretariat, in order to ensure due process in admission, registration, eligibility interviews, RSD assessments and right to appeal.
- UNHCR advocates for the **facilitation of the naturalization procedure for refugees and stateless persons**, and provides the necessary information to ensure they are able to make an informed decision on this option, as well as to ensure the implementation of the new legal framework establishing a statelessness determination procedure.
- UNHCR **produces information and identifies protection risks, promotes human rights and identifies coping mechanisms of Venezuelan nationals** no matter their migratory or refugee status through the implementation of the **High Frequency survey**.
- UNHCR promotes actions aimed at identifying, preventing and **responding to situations of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) survivors** through regular protection dialogues and empowerment activities.
- UNHCR, CONARE and the Committee for integral assistance and protection of refugees and asylum-seekers of the National Office of the Public Defender work under a tripartite agreement to **guarantee legal assistance to asylum-seekers during the refugee status determination procedure**. The legal assistance is free and provided by expert lawyers from the National Office of the Public Defender.
- UNHCR is strengthening the **engagement with community-based organizations of refugees and migrants**. Members of organizations work side by side with UNHCR in the identification of their priority needs and the strengthening of their role as community protection networks. Specific activities include collaborative information materials production, winterization campaign and community replicators trainings on international protection.
- UNHCR engages in **two-way communication with refugees and migrants** through the activation of a protection hotline where refugees and migrants can directly chat with UNHCR, in addition to email and face-to-face orientation. This is enhanced by the training of personnel and the establishment of feedback mechanisms along with partner agencies.

Basic Needs and Durable Solutions

- UNHCR provides **in-kind and cash assistance** to the most vulnerable refugees and migrants, so they can cover for their most vital and essential needs.
- Through the livelihoods Graduation Approach, UNHCR supports the **socio-economic inclusion of extremely poor refugees**, supporting them to achieve a sustained income and overcome extreme poverty, together with specialized partners from the public and private sector.

- UNHCR works with financial service providers from the public and private sector in Buenos Aires, Córdoba and Salta to **facilitate access to bank accounts, credit cards and micro-credit** for refugees and migrants who previously were excluded from these services. Activities include advocacy, financial inclusion workshops, financial literacy trainings, such as information sessions for persons of concern.
- As part of its initiative **“Cities of Solidarity”**, UNHCR is working together with **ten local governments** across the country to facilitate access to information, orientation and improve reception conditions as well as to better **integrate refugees and migrants in their local communities**, strengthening access to rights, employment, as well as social protection and employment promotion schemes.
- Through the initiative **Talento sin Fronteras**, UNHCR is engaging the private sector to **facilitate economic inclusion of refugees through access to employment, self-employment and financial services**.
- UNHCR is working with the government of Buenos Aires, micro-finance institutions and civil society to **strengthen micro-businesses through training, finance and coaching**.
- UNHCR promotes **opportunities for resettlement and complementary pathways** for admission of refugees by providing technical support to relevant authorities on case identification and selection, pre-departure orientation and travel, as well as to specialized government entities, universities and sponsors to improve settlement services (counselling, language training, psychosocial support, social inclusion, etc.).
- UNHCR has supported the establishment, training and mutual assistance of a **network of community sponsors** who offer their own resources to expand opportunities **for resettlement and integration of refugees** in their communities. The network is currently comprised of nine faith-based and civil society organizations which encompass over 59 hosting communities and over 254 sponsor groups, creating a country-wide protection network for refugees.
- UNHCR supports regional efforts led by Argentina to consolidate resettlement and complementary pathways, by introducing **innovative legal and procedural frameworks for community sponsorship**, by convening regional meetings and exchanges of best practices with other countries, and by supporting the States’ participation in global fora and high-level meetings with more experienced countries.

COVID-19 Situation (as of June, 2020)

- **The humanitarian impact of COVID-19 on asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants is disproportionate since most of them have lost their jobs and livelihoods in the informal market.** Many of them have been confronted with a situation of being on the streets without access to shelter, food and income to pay for their more basic needs. This precarious situation will be exacerbated by the arrival of the winter. They cannot access social programs due to lack of documentation and/or not complying with requirements related to the length of their residence in the country.
- UNHCR provided **cash assistance, in-kind assistance for food and shelter** to the most vulnerable cases of refugees and migrants, especially in urban centres to help mitigate the negative socio-economic impact of the coronavirus outbreak and for those who had no housing and/or that were on transit to reach other destinations in the country. In June, UNHCR provided assistance in cash to **1,227 persons** (1,171 Venezuelans), in Buenos Aires city (859), Puerto Iguazú (22), and elsewhere (346). UNHCR continued to provide **shelter** as well to some other **111 vulnerable refugees and migrants**.
- As of 24 June, **UNHCR had provided advice to and referred for further assistance** some **709** cases in Argentina, representing **1,494 refugees and migrants**, since the set-up of remote assistance, via telephone calls, emails and/or WhatsApp. Ninety-eight per cent of the cases are Venezuelans, with 78 per cent living in the greater Buenos Aires area. Unmet basic needs related to the payment of accommodations in which they reside informally and access to food, persists as the main specific protection need reported, followed by lack of legal documentation.
- On 17 June, **the 2020 winterization campaign was launched in Argentina, which delivered 1,500 warm clothes kits and 3,800 blankets to Venezuelan refugees and migrants that will spend their first winter in Buenos Aires.** The campaign constitutes a joint effort of **four Venezuelan community organizations** who, thanks to their community protection networks, managed to open **30 delivery points** in greater Buenos Aires to decrease and shorten the circulation during quarantine in place in the country. In addition to the kits, UNHCR designed an on-line tool where persons enrolled through a virtual form, being able to select the delivery point closest to their homes.
- **On 22 June six families (20 people) who were stranded in the city of Puerto Iguazu (Argentina-Brazil border) were able to move to their final destinations and reunite with their families in Buenos Aires thanks to the efforts of UNHCR and its partners.** All 20 people have applied for asylum using the remote procedure recently enabled by National Refugee Commission (CONARE). Partners in Buenos Aires are already in contact with families to continue the support. UNHCR is aware of at least **23 other people stranded in Foz do Iguazu (Brazil)** waiting for to enter Argentine territory. While **borders are closed** during the emergency lockdown, UNHCR and its partners **continue monitoring the situation at the borders, and providing humanitarian assistance** to refugees and migrants stranded at borders (within the country, and specially the border area with Bolivia) due to internal transport suspension, and is advocating with authorities to transfer these persons to their final destinations, as well as to facilitate the entry to the territory of individuals for family reunification.
- **UNHCR and partners continue assisting asylum-seekers to put forward new asylum claims, as the National Refugee Commission (CONARE) continues registering asylum applications via email.** On 17 June, Argentina’s National Refugee Commission (CONARE) recognized **36** new refugees. During 2020, CONARE has received **1,046**

asylum applications, of which 407 were registered remotely in the context of the health emergency. CONARE has formally requested UNHCR's advice for the regulations to be applied as exceptions to the closure of borders for people in need of international protection.

- In coordination with **six different associations** of Venezuelans living in Argentina, **UNHCR organized five webinars on International Protection principles and access to RSD procedures in Argentina with the participation of 70 Venezuelans**. Most of the participants work as volunteers in these organizations and help Venezuelans arriving in Argentina to access rights, integrate and regularize their migratory situation in the country. According to them, there is a lot of misinformation among the Venezuelans living in Argentina about the RSD procedures and rights and duties of refugees, so they felt that discussing these topics and learning more about refugee rights would better equip them to provide accurate information to members of their communities.
- **UNHCR facilitated the opening 64 bank accounts for refugees and migrants in coordination with Banco Ciudad of Buenos Aires and the government of the city of Buenos Aires**, providing them for the first time to have access to financial services in the country. The bank was able to facilitate the processing for all the recipients, preventing them from doing it in person amidst the quarantine and the social isolation measures in the COVID-19 context.
- On 18 June, **UNHCR was invited to be part of the national inter-institutional coordination mechanism for refugees and migrants, headed by the Ministry of Social Development**. This coordination mechanism brings together 23 organizations (line ministries at national, provincial and local level) including the participation of UNHCR, IOM and civil society.
- **As part of the World Refugee Day, UNHCR partnered with 12 gastronomic businesses in Buenos Aires to prepare meals to be distributed to community food services for destitute refugees, migrants and host communities**. These solidarity actions form part of the campaign: **Everyone can make a difference. Every action counts**.
- **Information material regarding the constantly evolving national response and restrictions and quarantine has been made available for refugees**, and organizations requesting UNHCR advice and assistance, on UNHCR's website unhcr.help.org.

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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