



“Particularly when **people** come from relatively **fragile countries** of origin or transit, with limited public health infrastructure, pushing anyone back at borders **may put them and others at risk** when **quarantine measures** are not applied and **health care** is insufficient.”

**Filippo Grandi**

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

The UNHCR Press Release “Beware long-term damage to human rights and refugee rights from the coronavirus pandemic” can be read [here](#).

## Situational Highlights

### Countries across Latin America are calling on refugee and migrant health workers to support their national responses to COVID-19.

Across the region, thousands are now working with national health systems responding to the pandemic while many more stand ready to support and give back to the communities sheltering them.

Several countries in the region have now put in place special measures. These authorize the hiring of foreign-qualified health

professionals and technicians, including those awaiting licensing or whose certification is yet to be validated by host countries.

Other states have adopted expedited recognition processes to fast-track their inclusion in national health responses. You can [read here more](#).

Positive cases of COVID-19 have already been reported among refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs and others of concern in ten

countries throughout the Americas.

In light of stay-at-home orders and other pandemic-related measures, hosting countries, such as **Panama** and **Paraguay**, have issued orders to extend the validity of documents, while **Curaçao** is avoiding penalizing undocumented individuals who approach health facilities.

**Uruguay** formally established a procedure for registering asylum applications via e-mail.



## Challenges



In the Americas, refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs and others of concern tend to be very mobile, with the majority of the population of concern to UNHCR concentrated in low-income communities, in large cities, or along border regions. The pandemic has led to a spike in the number of evictions from rental lodgings, as well as the forced closure of a number of UNHCR-sponsored shelters and hotels. With food running out and no money to buy more, many people of concern have had no choice but to break stay-at-home orders to beg or sell goods on the street—activities which put them at a higher risk of contagion. Fines have been levied against those forced to defy stay-at-home orders.

Domestic violence, extortion and pressure from gangs and criminal organizations have also spiked during the pandemic.

Within this context, the situation within deportation centers, migratory detention centers and informal settlements remains critical.

## UNHCR's response in the Americas

For refugees, IDPs and others of concern who have seen their earning potential plummet as a result of restrictions on mobility, accessing or holding onto accommodations remains a major challenge. Many have suffered evictions after losing their jobs or livelihoods, or as a result of discrimination stemming from their nationality or sexual orientation or gender identity. For survivors of gender-based violence, remaining at home can be a risk itself. With increasing numbers of people left homeless, and the capacity in numerous shelters capped in response to coronavirus-prevention measures, providing access to alternative accommodations is nothing short of lifesaving.

UNHCR, in cooperation with partners and States, is working to step up interventions that provide the population of concern with adequate shelter options, through various different mechanisms:



- **Support for public health responses.** UNHCR is working to support the national authorities of health in hosting countries, under their supervision and leadership. The agency has provided Refugee Housing Units, or RHUs for short, which have allowed health facilities to be expanded to include specific areas for triage, the storage of medical equipment or changing rooms for doctors. To date, more than 2,100 RHUs have been provided in 60 locations throughout the Americas. Plans are in the works to provide 1,000 additional units.



- **Adaptation of existing shelters to contain the spread.** UNHCR is adapting the way it works to ensure the continuity of services while reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Adaptive measures include the creation of reception and access control spaces; isolation areas; as well as steps to avoid overcrowding and allow for social distancing, among others.





• **Hotel and other alternate accommodation provided.** Hotels and rental apartments provide adequate spaces for temporary accommodation and also minimize the risks of contagion associated with COVID-19, while at the same time reducing the protection risks inherent to collective accommodations.





• **Emergency cash: Multipurpose CBI.** This modality is crucial for those who, due to restrictions on mobility, have lost ability to cover their basic needs, such as rent and food.





In most of the countries, UNHCR is undertaking concrete actions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.


(Please note the list is not exhaustive and mostly reflects the reporting period).


 **CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES**– UNHCR has procured 96 Refugee Housing Units for use in Caribbean countries as quarantine or storage areas.


 **BRAZIL**– Following the set-up of a temporary health center in Boa Vista to treat and isolate suspected and confirmed cases among Venezuelans and their hosts, UNHCR and partners continue working to strengthen preventive measures in reception centers and other collective spaces. In the Manaus Interiorization and Documentation Center—known by its Portuguese-language acronym, PITRIG—rooms are being converted into isolation areas using RHUs. (Twenty RHUs have been donated to the Brazilian Armed Forces). Four new RHUs are also being used to expand the isolation area in the border town of Pacaraima, where two RHUs were already in use. The gradual relocation of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the northern city of Boa Vista to safe shelters continues, with some 400 people moved. Thirty-three indigenous families have been given rental assistance.


 **COLOMBIA**– UNHCR and its partners are working to support Colombia's national health response to the pandemic and also to adapt reception centers in the northern border region of La Guajira to the current situation. During this period, the agency assisted more than 100 Venezuelans through its network of hotels in the northern towns of Riohacha and Maicao, both in La Guajira region. This initiative is part of an inter-agency effort made up of WFP (food), Malteser International (health screening), Save the Children (CBI) and UNHCR (shelter and registration). In the southwestern community of Ipiales, on the border with Ecuador, an RHU was set up, with the assistance of the local fire brigade, in the Nubes Verdes shelter. In Medellin, UNHCR donated 10 family tents to support the institutional response that includes vulnerable Venezuelans. UNHCR Cúcuta, in cooperation with COPRODINCO, is ready to open a temporary shelter in the eastern city of Bucaramanga, with the capacity to house up to 100 Venezuelans who have suffered eviction. It is expected that residents will cycle out of the shelter as cash assistance is provided. Integrated services continue to be delivered by UNHCR and partners at CAI in La Guajira.


 **ECUADOR**– UNHCR Ecuador is working to reopen a local shelter in the northern border community of Tulcán and providing technical support to public shelters in the central towns of Cuenca and Loja. In Lago Agrio, on the northern border with Colombia, two apartments were readied to house newly arrived asylum seekers during the period of mandatory self-isolation. UNHCR Ecuador opened a room for lactating mothers and their children at the Rumichaca International border crossing. In El Oro, UNHCR provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Health for the installation of 20 RHUs. This infrastructure will help the Ministry conduct triage of symptomatic respiratory patients.

 **GUATEMALA**– UNHCR will support the Government of Guatemala by providing foldable beds, mattresses, diapers, and other items to reception centers for deportees and returnees, upon their arrival in Guatemala. The agency will also provide 98 RHUs, which are highly prized in the context of such shelters for their adaptability.

 **HONDURAS**– In coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNHCR is monitoring the situation within an isolation center for returnees under quarantine in the capital, Tegucigalpa, in a bid to identify the population's needs. The center includes children and adolescents, who at this time are being processed alongside the adults.

 **PANAMA**– UNHCR and OIM are distributing cleaning and hygiene supplies to the Peñitas Migrant Reception Center in the remote Darien region, on the country's southern border with Colombia. Overcrowding has led to a critical situation in the shelter. In response UNHCR is providing 48 RHUs aimed at boosting reception capacity.

 **PERU**– In response to a request from Peru's National Institute of Civil Defense, UNHCR coordinated the delivery of 5,000 food kits to vulnerable families in Lima with the Office of the Resident Coordinator, IOM, WFP and OCHA. The kits benefited an estimated 15,000 people of concern. Venezuelan volunteers, faith-based organizations and local NGOs helped distribute private donations. UNHCR installed three modules, each consisting of six RHUs, within Lima's Hipolito Unanue Hospital, which is currently focusing on COVID-19 cases. The modules will serve as a rapid-testing area, oxygen storage and changing rooms for health personnel. [Check this tweet](#)

 **EI SALVADOR**– Under the protection cluster led by UNHCR, organizations have been monitoring the quarantine centers hosting deported persons, as well as the situation in communities across El Salvador. UNHCR is finalizing support for two safe houses, administered by the Directorate of Attention to Victims and Forced Migration, that will shelter deported people with protection needs after they leave the quarantine centers. In coordination with partners, UNHCR is providing humanitarian assistance to 325 families in communities affected by violence and displacement.

## Stories from the field

In recent years, the Mexican city of Tijuana, site of the world's busiest land border, has become home to hundreds of refugees. For them, the area's shelters and canteens represent a lifeline, particularly during their first weeks in city. In order to provide nearly two dozen shelters in Tijuana and the neighboring communities of San Luis Rio Colorado and Mexicali with hygiene products—which have taken on even greater importance among the coronavirus outbreak—UNHCR organized the delivery of 120,000 ecological soaps. To read more about the March 24 delivery to these shelters, which are on the front line of the ongoing humanitarian response, please click [HERE](#).





# Coordination and Response to date



The review of the **Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) 2020** is in its second week. The updated RMRP targets and financial requirements will be included in the second iteration of the **Global Humanitarian Response Plan - COVID-19 (GHRP)**, reflecting the alignment of the two response mechanisms.

The Platform continues to produce weekly **flash updates** and various thematic guidance for the inter-agency response, all available at **R4V.info**.

**R4V - COVID-19 Flash Update**  
- 27 March 2020



The **MIRPS Pro-tempore Presidency, OAS and UNHCR** are coordinating bi-lateral consultations with the seven states that are part of the **comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework for forced displacement**

in **Central America**. The consultations will include a focus on priorities within the annual work plan that also respond to the needs of displaced persons and host communities in the context of COVID-19. Consultations will

include the Asylum Capacity Support Group, Solidarity Cities, the alignment of national action plans to the UNDAF process, the private sector and the quantification exercise. The latest MIRPS quarterly update can be found **HERE**.

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## Don't miss out

### GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN COVID-19

UNITED NATIONS COORDINATED APPEAL  
APRIL – DECEMBER 2020

"I see three critical areas for action: First, tackling the health emergency. Second, we must focus on the social impact and the economic response and recovery. Third, and finally, we have a responsibility to recover better."

**António Guterres**  
Secretary-General, United Nations



For more, [click here](#)



### UNHCR's revised Coronavirus Emergency Appeal

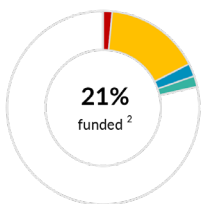


For more information, [click here](#)

# Funding the response

## Financial Information

### UNHCR Americas - Funding Update



### THE AMERICAS

as of 14 April 2020

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

**\$ 528.1 million**

UNHCR's financial requirements 2020<sup>1</sup>

Notes:  
1. The financial requirements for The Americas are for the operations in Belize, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America and Venezuela.

While seeking funds to carry out COVID-19 preventative measures and response activities, UNHCR stresses the need for support to be in addition to the existing critical funding requirements laid out in UNHCR's regular Global Appeal for 2020. It is vital that the

international community keeps supporting the millions of refugees and internally displaced people already living a precarious existence, for whom already limited self-reliance opportunities are likely to shrink further as a result of the economic impact of the crisis.

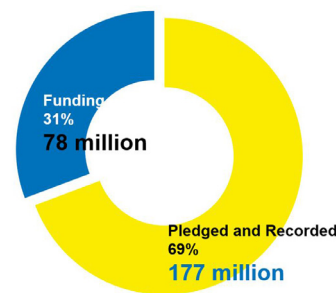
**Total contributed or pledged:**

**USD 177M**

Including:

United States of America	\$64.0M
United Kingdom	\$25.0M
Japan	\$23.9M
European Union	\$17.9M
Denmark	\$14.6M
CERF	\$6.9M
Canada	\$6.4M
Ireland	\$3.3M
Sweden	\$3.0M
Sony Corporation	\$3.0M
Education Cannot Wait	\$1.8M
Qatar Charity	\$1.5M
Australia	\$0.8M
Private donors	\$0.4M
Portugal	\$0.1M
Liechtenstein	\$0.1M

FUNDING (AS OF 16 APRIL)  
**USD 255 million**  
requested for UNHCR's COVID-19 response globally over the next nine months



UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have provided generous and timely support to the Coronavirus Emergency Situation globally, and to the Americas, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked funding.

### Thanks to donors in 2020:

