

Argentina

June 2021

Hosting some **185,342 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, regularization and family reunification**, 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, and Puerto Iguazú,

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

185,342

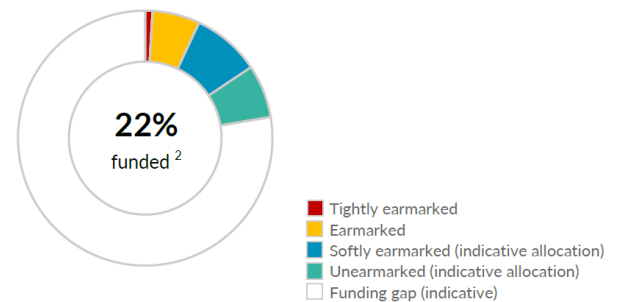
Refugees	3,988
Asylum-seekers	9,247
Others of concern*	448
Venezuelans displaced abroad	171,659

Source: Official information provided by the Government, as of December 2020
* Stateless status applicants

FUNDING

USD 38.9 million

requested for the **Regional Office including Argentina**



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:

42 National staff
11 International staff



Photo: UNHCR/Julián Escandarani. Colombian refugee, Rosa, prepares food to be delivered to soup kitchens in Buenos Aires, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results in 2021

- From January to April 2021, UNHCR through its partners provided support to **2,623** persons in vulnerable situations through **multi-purpose cash assistance** to cover their basic needs; **451** vulnerable individuals were provided with **temporary accommodation**; **2,320** individuals were provided with **free legal assistance, orientation, information** and referral to various service providers; **18 Gender-Based Violence survivors were supported by UNHCR** and/or implementing partners (with legal assistance, psychosocial counselling, or being provided a safe space).
- Within the framework of UNHCR's regional response for the **socio-economic recovery** of persons of concern (**PoCs**) in the COVID-19 crisis, **two projects that comprehensively address the labor inclusion of refugee women are under implementation**. Both projects have been presented by the **Government of the City of Buenos Aires (GCBA)** which is also part of the Solidarity Cities initiative and financed by the **L'Oreal Foundation**. The project "**Nosotras Conectadas**" aims at promoting the incorporation of young adult women (-40 years of age) in the technological-digital job market, through specific technical training and paid professional internships in companies in the IT sector. The project "**Experiencia Activa**" targets the stimulation of the labor insertion of adult women (+40 years of age) in the local labor environment, through training spaces, reconversion of professional profiles, accompaniment, and labor experience in the private sector. Likewise, **socio-economic recovery** projects are being designed with the two local governments, **Córdoba** and **Salta**, in order to promote the labor insertion of refugees and migrants.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR co-leads jointly with IOM the **National Response Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela where 18 partners –UN, CSOs, Refugee's and Migrants' organizations** implement the Response Plan 2021 for the **Southern Cone** complementing Governmental capacities in main urban and border areas of the region.
- ADRA** (Agencia Adventista de Desarrollo y Recursos Asistenciales), **CAREF** (Comisión Argentina para Refugiados y Migrantes) and **Fundación MIRARES** (Migrantes, Refugiados y Argentinos Emprendedores Sociales) are UNHCR's partners implementing projects aimed at providing counselling, legal orientation, basic humanitarian assistance 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 Ministry of Education, the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism, and the Secretariat of Childhood, Adolescence and Family.
- In order to foster the burden sharing in line with the **Global Compact on Refugees**, UNHCR enhanced the **Cities of Solidarities initiative**, increased involvement of the private sector and reinforced community-based solutions for inclusion. The national network of Cities of Solidarity aims to facilitate access to information, orientation and improve reception conditions as well as to better integrate refugees and migrants in their local communities, strengthening their access to rights. In Argentina some **19 local governments are linked** to the initiative: a mapping of ongoing actions and existing opportunities were undertaken; adoption of a common tool for the analysis of the institutional capacity of local governments has been adopted and a network has been established including the active participation of PoCs to UNHCR organizations.
- 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 (CRISP), and the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI). A new pilot resettlement program started to be implemented through community sponsorship with the support of the Fundación ACNUR Argentina.
- 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.

Main Activities

Protection

- UNHCR **provides technical support and advice to national authorities involved in the implementation of relevant legislation** to promote efficient refugee status determination procedures (RSD). Capacity building activities are aimed at strengthening the **National Refugee Commission**, and its Technical Secretariat to ensure due process in admission, registration, eligibility interviews, RSD assessments and right to appeal. Because of borders' closure, many asylum seekers now file their asylum claim remotely.
- 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 **Protection Monitoring Tool (high frequency survey)**, while at the same time refers individual cases with specific needs to partner agencies.
- 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. The National Office of the Public Defender also provides legal aid is also provided to stateless persons.
- UNHCR is strengthening the **engagement with community-based organizations of refugees and migrants**. In that sense, 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. Due to the impact of COVID-19 the number of people in need remains on the rise. Food and access to shelter as well as to hygiene kits is provided in border areas. A winterization campaign has started in coordination with refugee and migrant organizations.
- UNHCR's **Durable Solutions Strategy aims to boost opportunities for self-reliance, integration and empowerment of people of concern** and to facilitate the development of a state-owned comprehensive solutions policy. Structured in five macro areas the strategy aims to: 1) advocate for the inclusion of strategic needs in public policies and social protection schemes; 2) create enabling conditions for decent work and wage earning; 3) enhance routes for access to financial services; 4) promote a conducive environment for business creation; and 5) support the execution of admission programs and complementary pathways.
- In the framework of the **Cities of Solidarity initiative** UNHCR has launched in 2020 the Argentine network of Cities of Solidarity in order to promote the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees and migrants. The **national network** is made up of 19 local governments: the **Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, the municipalities of Avellaneda, Córdoba, Esteban Echeverría, General Alvear, General Pueyrredón, General San Martín, Godoy Cruz, Guaymallén, La Matanza, Mendoza, Quilmes, Pilar, Rosario, Salta, Tandil and the provinces of Mendoza, San Luis and Salta**.
- In 2020, **sociodemographic studies were undertaken with six local governments**: the **city of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, La Plata, Mendoza, Rosario and Salta and the Center of Population Studies (CENEP)**, in coordination with the National Directorate of Migration and the CONARE. The results summarize the functions of municipal offices attending issues related to refugees and migrants, as well as the main problems detected in the processing of residence permits and asylum applications, regulatory or procedural barriers that hinder access to health, housing, education services or programs (including the revalidation or recognition of degrees) and the existing challenges for job placement and economic self-sufficiency. The studies are guiding UNHCR interventions in these cities. Work plans are being designed with these local governments based on the results of the sociodemographic studies and the 10 criteria of the **Cities of Solidarity initiative** aiming at structuring the socio-economic inclusion of PoCs in host communities.
- Also in 2020, **CENEP conducted a research to design plans to promote entrepreneurship and employability of refugees and migrants** identifying sectors of the economy demanding jobs and establishing alliances with entrepreneur incubators, institutions for the financing of seed capital and commercialization spaces. The foregoing has also been linked to the **Solidarity Cities initiative**, and based on it **plans have been structured with four local governments of the province of Buenos Aires**, namely, **La Matanza, Mar del Plata, Quilmes and Pilar**, where the majority of UNHCR's population of interest is concentrated.
- Under the tripartite agreement signed in 2020 between **UNHCR, CONARE** and the **Ministry of Social Development** aiming at promoting the access to socio-economic rights and enhance the inclusion of PoCs in national social protection programs, **UNHCR has identified priority programs to promote PoCs' self-sufficiency through the national programs "Potenciar" and "Economía del Cuidado"** under the portfolio of the Ministry and implemented these **two pilot projects targeting 354 direct beneficiaries**. The **Potenciar** program aimed at creating conditions for refugees and migrants' self-managed work in areas such **environmental recycling, construction, carpentry, clothing, textiles, gastronomy, services** (hairdressing, manicure, barbershop and others), technical services (gas, electrician, plumbing and others). The program **Economía del Cuidado** has been oriented to increase opportunities for economic insertion in the formal sector, access to decent work and social protection for refugees and migrants working in the **care economy sector** through the development of a professional certification by the **National University of San Martín (UNSAM)**.

- UNHCR works with financial service providers from the public and private sector to **facilitate access to bank accounts, credit cards and micro-credit** for refugees and migrants who previously were excluded from these services. Through a partnership with **Banco Ciudad**, City of Buenos Aires's public bank, implementation of activities includes financial inclusion and entrepreneurship workshops, financial literacy trainings, such as information sessions for PoCs. UNHCR also articulates with public services within local governments to promote inclusion in incubators, coaching and finance programs for small business startup.
- 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**.
- In the framework of the **Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Initiative (CRISP)**, 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.). A **pilot project on resettlement** through community sponsorship involving private mentors has been started in cooperation with the **Fundacion ACNUR Argentina**.
- 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.

Coordination

- UNHCR provides coordination, information management and reporting capacities to the **R4V National Platform** to assure a close coordination of the humanitarian response for Venezuelans and their host communities all along the program cycle and to increase the regional visibility of the situation in the **Southern Cone**.
- A Joint Needs Assessment co-lead by UNHCR and updated regularly provides key information about main challenges and gaps and thus orients the development of the Plan 2021 including the definition of persons in need, key activities and budget requirements. Exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19, the access to territory and to the RSD procedure, the strengthening of the humanitarian response (access to shelter, food, water, clothing and hygiene kits) in border and urban areas as well the implementation of socio-economic recovery projects remain as operational priorities for 2021 for UNHCR.
- UNHCR co-leads regular meetings of the National Platform and implements periodic capacity building activities for partners and sectorial co-leads.

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External Relations

CONTACTS

José Manuel Cáceres, Regional Reporting Officer, Regional Office for Southern Latin America, caceres@unhcr.org, Tel: +54 11 4815-7870

LINKS

- Website: <https://acnur.org/argentina>
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