



“States should overhaul their labour laws to give refugees the right to work at all times, not just in a crisis. Full participation in the lives of their host countries gives refugees self-reliance, increases the pool of consumers and taxpayers, promotes social cohesion and extends more helping hands to the vulnerable.”

Filippo Grandi

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Read the complete Op-Ed by the High Commissioner Filippo Grandi, published by the World Economic Forum on International Workers' Day.



## Situational Highlights

The global social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented. Economies are grinding to a halt, and jobs and livelihoods are being lost on a scale that has never before been seen. The situations in low and middle-income countries, which currently shelter more than 85 per cent of the world's refugees, are particularly worrisome.

In this context, on 7 May, the UN has issued a \$6.7 billion appeal to protect millions of lives and stem the spread of coronavirus in fragile countries. As stated, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock said: "This pandemic is unlike anything we have dealt with in our lifetime. Business as usual will not do. Extraordinary measures are needed. As we come together to combat this virus, I urge donors to act in both solidarity and in self-interest and make their response

proportionate to the scale of the problem we face."

[The COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan can be found here.](#)

Latin America is home to several of the world's largest displacement crises. More than five million Venezuelans have fled their country. Additionally, there are close to eight million internally displaced Colombians; 720,000 internally displaced people, refugees and asylum seekers from the North of Central America; as well as more than 115,000 Nicaraguan refugees and asylum-seekers.

With growing fear and social unrest, xenophobia and discrimination are also on the rise across the region. Some refugees who see no option but to defy quarantine orders and venture out onto the streets, in a desperate attempt to try to make ends meet, find themselves scapegoated, stigmatized or, in some

cases, at risk of detention.

In the North of Central America, internally displaced people and community leaders report that criminal groups have taken advantage of confinement measures to strengthen their control over certain areas, stepping up extortion, drug trafficking and sexual and gender-based violence, often using forced disappearances, murders, and death threats against those who do not comply. The communities in which many live have limited access to basic services like healthcare and running water. Faced with these dire circumstances, people are increasingly resorting to negative coping mechanisms – including sex work – that put them at further risk. Nicaraguans continue suffering a complex political and economic crisis, with human rights violations continuing unabated by the threat of COVID-19. The ongoing trend of 4,000 asylum seekers leaving Nicaragua per

month has significantly dropped in March, as Costa Rica has closed its borders, giving concerns on access to territory and procedures.

But despite the extremely challenging context, there is still some good news in the region. On 28 April, Brazil granted refugee status to an additional 722 Venezuelans, all of them children and adolescents whose parents or guardians had been recognized as refugees in an earlier decision. And in Chile, a campaign to enlist more medical professionals in the fight against the pandemic saw more than 600 Venezuelan refugees and migrants with medical experience sign up within the first four days.



## Challenges

Millions of people are forced to flee their homes each year because of conflict or violence. While some cross borders in search of safety, many seek refuge within their home countries. Internally displaced people, or IDPs, face many of the same challenges and vulnerabilities as refugees, including, of course, the added risks posed by COVID-19. In urban areas in Colombia, El Salvador or Honduras, many IDPs are also finding themselves suddenly destitute as jobs as day laborers and other work vanishes overnight. UNHCR continues supporting governments to ensure the provision of humanitarian or government assistance to reduce the vulnerability of IDPs in the context of the pandemic.

As reported this week by the [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre](#) (IDMC), the number of people fleeing conflict or violence within the borders of their home countries has reached an all-time high.

Adopted 22 years ago, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were the first international standards for the protection of internally displaced people. Based on international human rights and humanitarian law, these 30 standards outline the rights of IDPs, outlining how they should be protected and assisted during displacement, until lasting solutions can be found. The Guiding Principles remain extremely relevant today. As part of a global initiative called the [GP20](#), UNHCR has supported States' efforts to incorporate the Guiding Principles into their national legislations, including in countries like El Salvador and Honduras.

The updated Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement – issued in September 2019 – steps up [UNHCR's engagement in internal displacement](#) situations through the course of this year and in 2021. It focuses on nine countries: Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine and Colombia.



















## UNHCR's response in the Americas

Despite the pandemic-related restrictions, UNHCR continues to work to provide emergency assistance, including secure shelter spaces and cash-based assistance, as well as to ensure the inclusion of refugees in national public health responses, social safety nets and emergency assistance plans. Urgent action is required to help the most vulnerable refugees and IDPs, particularly in countries where they are unable to access state-run social protection schemes. With the coronavirus crisis exacerbating already dire humanitarian needs globally, timely and flexible support from governments, the private sector and individuals remain critical.



## UPDATES FROM COUNTRIES

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

-  **Argentina:** As of May, UNHCR has provided advice and referrals to some 305 cases, which represent 757 people, via telephone calls, emails and WhatsApp. Partner agency CAREF imparted a psycho-social workshop to 10 participants representing Venezuelan community organizations that are acting as first responders amid the crisis.
-  **Aruba:** UNHCR is supporting the government by translating and disseminating COVID-19 public advisories through its social media channels.
-  **Brazil:** UNHCR is helping Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the Amazonian city of Manaus obtain the Brazilian tax ID number that is required in order to apply for the government's Emergency Basic Income. Radio stations serving the temporary sites in the city that are hosting indigenous people from Venezuela have run information on virus prevention and response measures. A volunteer initiative with Venezuelan refugees and migrants in a shelter in the northern city of Boa Vista yielded 220 masks, with an additional 1,000 expected in a week's time. Nearly 300 families living in an informal shelter in Boa Vista, including some indigenous families, were provided mosquito nets, jerricans and combined solar lamps-phone chargers.
-  **Bolivia:** With winter on the way, UNHCR provided Venezuelans sheltered in a municipal public market facility with cold weather items, as well as hygiene kits. The agency is working with the National Banking Association to explore ways to provide refugees and asylum-seekers with much-needed cash assistance. A pilot program to operate mobile child friendly spaces within hotels where UNHCR is putting up Venezuelan families got underway.
-  **Chile:** UNHCR launched a cash assistance program with World Vision that is initially targeting some 560 households.
-  **Colombia:** UNHCR continued to support the health services in the southern Nariño and Putumayo departments by distributing medical supplies and hygiene items. In the northern border city of Arauca, the local hospital was fitted with 21 additional rooms, providing capacity for 40 additional patients. In another border city, Villa del Rosario, a recently reopened health center provided 374 refugees, migrants, IDPs and local residents with reproductive health and psychosocial services. Some 330 households in Arauca, as well as in Cucuta, Bucaramanga and Medellin received cash transfers through UNHCR partner organizations, and 119 families received emergency cash assistance.
-  **Costa Rica:** UNHCR and its partner organizations are offering online training sessions aimed at helping asylum seekers, refugees and other peoples of concern develop new skills and boost their employability. Around 155 people of concern have registered for online training in business English, business retail administration and other areas. To facilitate registration, an online platform it is now available on the [UNHCR Costa Rica website](#). Further, CBI and registration in the social security programme has been extended, and carries on despite mobility restrictions.
-  **Curaçao:** A cooperative effort with R4V partners helped identify 960 households, or 2,300 individuals, in need of food assistance. Some 254 households, or 700 people, were already receiving assistance.
-  **Dominican Republic:** Four virtual sessions provided 182 participants from the public and private health sectors training on COVID-19 prevention and response, as well as psychosocial support for the elderly and children. The sessions were conducted as part of a program led by UNHCR and the National Migration Institute (INM), in collaboration with WHO/PAHO, the National Health Service and the Ministry of Public Health.
-  **Ecuador:** The criteria for receiving cash assistance have again been broadened to help reach a greater number of vulnerable persons of concern. A total of 16,252 people – 77 percent of them Venezuelans, and 20 percent Colombians – received assistance from 18 March to 28 April. A shelter in Tulcán, on the northern border with Colombia, reopened to host families previously being put up in hotels. In Huaquillas, on the southern border with Peru, a new shelter was opened by ADRA, UNHCR, IOM and JRS, in cooperation with national authorities.
-  **El Salvador:** Humanitarian assistance vouchers helped 400 people cover their basic needs. Humanitarian organizations led by UNHCR, under the Protection Cluster coordination, provided 2,389 persons in 31 communities with assistance, including information, food, hygiene products, and case referrals.
-  **Guatemala:** UNHCR was able to resume border monitoring activities and has begun CBI and eligibility screenings. Some 295 refugees and asylum seekers have received hygiene prevention kits, food items and child-friendly material since 30 April.
-  **Honduras:** In the capital, Tegucigalpa, UNHCR opened an isolation center with capacity for 150 deportees. The CCCM Cluster supplied the shelter with relief items and personal protective equipment. UNHCR established a communication line to provide guidance and assistance to people in isolation centers with protection needs. UNHCR and PAHO/WHO assessed the municipal response capacity in San Pedro Sula, Honduras' second city. Partner Warriors Zulu Nations Honduras held a Facebook Live to debut a short hip-hop song promoting COVID-19 prevention and raising awareness about gender-based violence during the pandemic.
-  **Mexico:** The 90 shelters that are still operational were provided with antibacterial gel, hand-washing stations and dignity kits to help support their remaining 5,000 residents. UNHCR has also launched a joint project with Casa Monarca Shelter and the Labor Ministry of the northeastern Nuevo Leon state to produce protective masks.
-  **Panama:** 134 people were supported with legal advice on housing, rent payment and food assistance, 563 persons received CBI to cover basic needs (food and medicine) during the last two weeks. UNHCR provided 600 face masks to the Panamanian Red Cross.
-  **Peru:** The installation of Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) in Lima's Maria Auxiliadora Hospital boosted its capacity by an additional 200 patients. Additional RHUs are on the way, to be installed in Lima and Loreto, two of the region's most affected by the coronavirus. Hygiene-promotion activities are being carried out in all shelters, and some 630 people of concern per day are being fed in shelters and collective accommodations in Lima, Tacna and Tumbes. UNHCR and partner hotlines have fielded 11,000 calls requesting orientation and support. The agency has provided 3,300 remote orientations on protection topics, as well as remote socio-emotional support to 1,000 people since the start of the crisis.
-  **Trinidad and Tobago:** UNHCR identified 20 persons of concern with experience working as health professionals to respond to the Caribbean Public Health Agency's call for experts to assist in the pandemic response.
-  **Venezuela:** UNHCR missions partially resumed, in coordination with government counterparts. UNHCR delivered 1,000 sleeping mats to quarantine centers in the western region of Apure. In the northern region of Bolívar, UNHCR delivered bunk beds, bed linen, personal hygiene products and disinfectant supplies to support those who are returning to the country amid the pandemic.

# Stories from the field

As a doctor working as part of an ambulance team in the Peruvian capital, Lima, Carmen Parra is on the front lines of her host country's response to the coronavirus pandemic. The 35-year-old asylum seeker from Venezuela works 24-hour-long shifts, responding to emergency calls and transporting ailing patients to local hospitals—despite the risk that the work poses to her and her three children. Carmen arrived in Peru in 2018 and spent her first two years in the Andean nation working as a waitress, a receptionist and a salesperson because she couldn't afford to pay for her medical degree to be validated. With the help of UNHCR and a grassroots NGO serving the Venezuelan community, Carmen was finally able to get her credentials validated and resume her medical career. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Peru has streamlined the process for foreign-trained health professionals to work in the country, and an additional 100 Venezuelan doctors have joined Carmen and other Venezuelan health professionals on the front lines of Peru's fight against the coronavirus. You can read the story [HERE](#).



# Coordination and Response to date



## RMRP

The revised Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) for Venezuelans displaced abroad will be launched next week. This revision will outline new pandemic-related priorities. Planning continues for a virtual pledging conference, convened by Spain and the EU and slated to be held in the second half of May.

The Platform produced its weekly [flash update](#) (1 May), as well thematic guidance for the inter-agency response, all available at [R4V.info](#).



R4V - COVID-19 Flash Update - 01 May 2020

## MIRPS

The seven members of the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework (MIRPS), have set up a series of bilateral consultations with the Presidency in order to proceed with national plans to address forced displacement in Central America. The MIRPS support platform is set to begin its work on 1 June, with a dedicated Secretariat on Washington D.C.

## Don't miss out

### UN issues US\$6.7 billion appeal to protect millions of lives and stem the spread of coronavirus in fragile countries

COVID-19 has now reached every country, with nearly 3,596,000 confirmed cases and over 247,650 deaths worldwide. The peak of the disease in the world's poorest countries is not expected until some point over the next three to six months. However, there is already evidence of incomes plummeting and jobs disappearing, food supplies falling and prices soaring, and children missing vaccinations and meals. [Click here](#) for more.



### UNHCRs Global Focus COVID-19 Situation Site

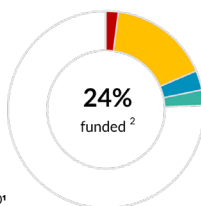


For more information, [click here](#)

# Funding the response

## Financial Information

### UNHCR Americas - Funding Update



### THE AMERICAS

as of 29 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:

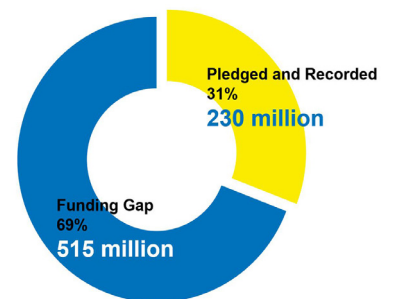
### USD 230M

Including:

United States of America	\$64.0M
Germany	\$38.0M
European Union	\$31.8M
United Kingdom	\$24.8M
Japan	\$23.9M
Denmark	\$14.6M
CERF	\$6.9M
Canada	\$6.4M
Ireland	\$3.3M
Sweden	\$3.0M
Sony Corporation	\$3.0M
Finland	\$2.4M
Education Cannot Wait	\$1.8M
Private Donors	\$1.7M
Qatar Charity	\$1.5M
Australia	\$0.8M
Monaco	\$0.2M
Iceland	\$0.1M
Portugal	\$0.1M
Liechtenstein	\$0.1M
Slovakia	\$0.1M

### FUNDING (AS OF 07 MAY) USD 745 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:

