

The UNHCR Regional Office for Southern Latin America, covers **Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay** and offers humanitarian assistance, protection services, support to authorities and durable solutions and socio-economic inclusion to almost **700,000** asylum-seekers, refugees and Venezuelan refugees and migrants (persons of concern - PoCs). Already over a year, since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, the humanitarian impact of COVID-19 on PoCs continues to be disproportionate. Despite the deceleration in the increase of PoCs, since the border closure measures declared by national authorities, the **intensification of socio-economic crisis has increased the population in need of humanitarian support**, both population arriving and persons who were already residing in the country that have experienced an escalation in their basic needs. Most **borders in sub-region still remain closed**, bringing along heightened protection incidents such as **the increase of irregular movements at land borders** and new **barriers to claim asylum** at entry points. UNHCR is providing protection and assistance for the most pressing needs and **advocating for the equitable inclusion of all persons of concern in the Southern Cone countries for COVID-19 vaccination**, drives on par with nationals and in line with COVAX allocation principles.

**RESPONSE in HOSTING COUNTRIES**



**9,520** individuals received legal assistance & protection services



**7,819** people assisted with emergency and primary health



**7,268** people supported with unrestricted cash assistance



**6,354** people supported with food and non-food items in-kind



**2,864** refugees & migrants sheltered and supported with other solutions



**2,681** children provided with education support



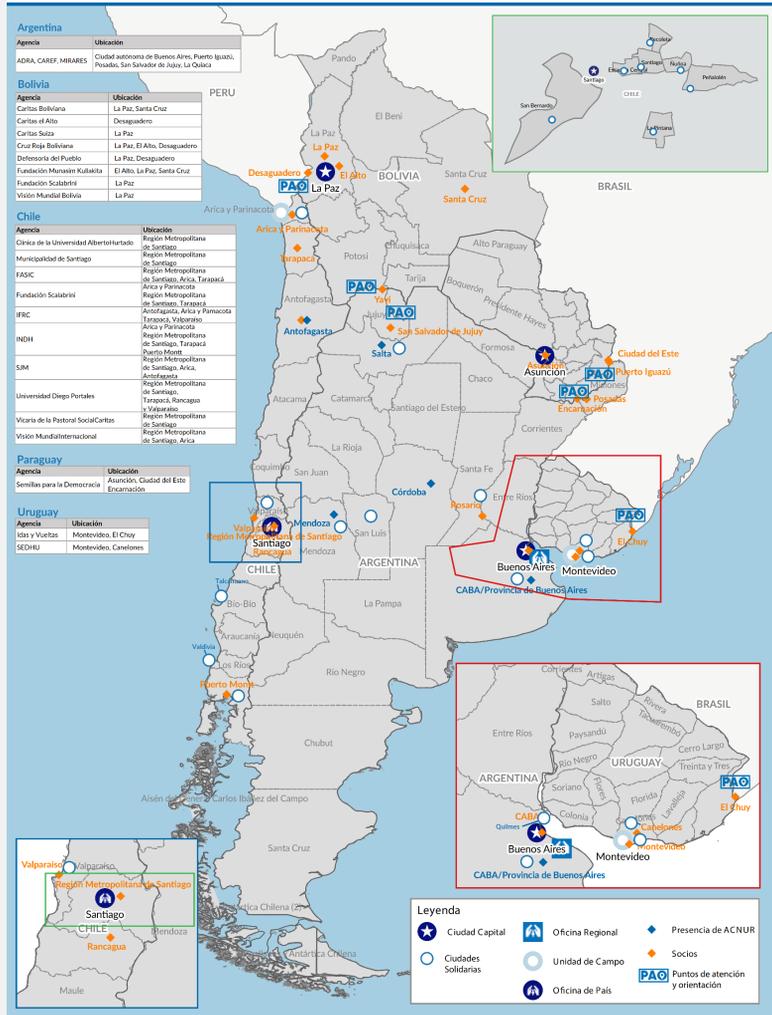
**1,178** persons provided with support for employment or self-employment



**173** people benefited from assistance for family reunifications or resettlement

**Needs**

Though the restrictive measures put in place by governments have considerably slowed down the increase pace of refugee population in the sub-region, the **growth rate of UNHCR's persons of concern is expected to rise during 2021/2022**, with the progressive normalization of the situation across the region. According to preliminary estimations, it is expected that **by the end of 2021 the region will host approximately 719,978 PoCs, and 754,189 by 2022**. UNHCR still needs some **USD 24.1 million** in 2021 to reach refugees in more strategic locations, provide more assistance, legal advice and referrals for those in need and provide additional support to local and border authorities in **strengthening protection responses to secure access to territory**, including USD 840,000 to implement **19 socio-economic recovery projects** for refugees.



Venezuelan refugees and migrants lining up for medical checks in northern Chile © UNHCR

## PROTECTION ACTIONS

Despite border closures and people being stranded in border areas, more than **900 persons applied for asylum in Argentina** (more than 500 in La Quiaca alone and some 100 in Puerto Iguazu), plus **600 in Uruguay**, and **1,000 in Paraguay**. Humanitarian assistance in Northern Argentina (La Quiaca and Puerto Iguazu) has represented for UNHCR a cost of US\$ 1.2 million over the first four months of the year, and humanitarian assistance has had to be reinforced due to the said movements in **Uruguay** (some **300 persons**) and in **Bolivia** (**2,000 people**). It is worth noting that **Uruguay** is the only country in the subregion that contemplates an exception to the closure of borders for the entry of people with manifest international protection needs and, for this, **UNHCR has provided technical assistance to guarantee their access to the territory**. UNHCR partners has been able to sustain the existing “**Assistance and Orientation Points**” (PAOs) located at key entry border points along the main corridors used by PoCs in Argentina (La Quiaca, San Salvador de Jujuy, Puerto Iguazu and Posadas) and Bolivia (Desaguadero). Moreover, the opening of a PAO in Chuy, Uruguay by the end of 2020 strengthened border monitoring capacities and guaranteed legal assistance for refugees and migrants in Uruguay. The work carried out by the teams working in the PAOs was essential to identify cases, provide support and intervene with authorities aiming to guarantee access to territory and to determination procedures. The opening of a PAO in Rivera, Uruguay is expected in the third quarter of the year.



Venezuelan man in Colchane, Chile after crossing the border © UNHCR

In Argentina UNHCR continues working closely with the **National Refugee Commission (CONARE)**, ensuring the reinforcement of its capacities (including training sessions on refugee law standards and RSD procedures) and it has supported the refurbishing of its premises for US\$ 1.3 M. Through UNHCR advocacy and support to Venezuelan grassroot organizations, the National Directorate for Migrations in Argentina announced the **adoption of the Resolution for the regularization that will allow more than 6,800 Venezuelan children** who entered the country without proving identity and in a situation of extreme vulnerability, **to access a provisional ID**, thus enabling the full exercise of their rights. In the whole sub-region, some **161 persons have benefited from assistance for family reunifications or resettlement** under different protection arrangements.

In **Chile**, in a context of continuous irregular arrivals via **Bolivia** in extreme vulnerability with the harsh climatic conditions of the northern part of the country (**more than 6,000 persons up to April**), UNHCR has been providing legal assistance to Venezuelan refugees and migrants and conducting frequent border monitoring.

## PROMOTING REFUGEES' INTEGRATION

In all 5 countries of the sub-region **UNHCR is advocating for the inclusion of refugees'** strategic needs in public policies and social protection schemes; creating enabling conditions for decent work and wage earning; enhancing routes for access to financial services; and promoting a conducive environment for business creation. **Some 15 socio-economic recovery projects are in place in active sectors of the economy** (6 in Argentina, 1 in Bolivia, 6 in Chile, 1 in Paraguay and 1 in Uruguay), being 4 of them executed in coordination with the national governments, 4 executed with local governments and linked to the Cities of Solidarity Programme, 1 directly executed by organizations led by refugees and migrants themselves, and 3 executed by civil society partners with almost **USD 1 million funding**. In **Argentina**, some **354 persons** are benefiting from the Ministry of Social Development led programmes which aim to create conditions for refugees and migrants' self-managed work and insertion in the care economy sector. In **Paraguay** a project for the development of entrepreneurship skills for **40 refugees and migrants** recently began. In **Chile**, along with the municipality of Santiago UNHCR is supporting already **24 refugee and migrant gastronomic entrepreneurs** putting at their disposal a community kitchen for those interested in cooking their dishes and sell them. In **Argentina**, with the support of UNHCR, the Secretariat for Human Rights and the National Directorate of Migration opened **3 integration centers for refugees and migrants** (Buenos Aires, Rosario, La Plata), where people will receive guidance and support to file migration procedures, ad also spaces for the roll out of courses and workshops aiming to their socio-economic integration, Spanish language classes and cultural activities.

**WORLD REFUGEE DAY**

Under the regional **JAM Festival**, UNHCR presented an immersive sound artwork experience composed by the Argentinean musician Santiago Vázquez, which is based on the daily lives' sound registrations of refugees, PoCs and communities in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay. It has also been translated in International Sign Language. This piece marked the launching of the project **"Inmersiva. Escuchar puede cambiar el mundo"** that will continue during 2021/22.



UNHCR in Chile carried out different community activities to promote integration and non-discrimination of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in the country. Jointly with Fundación Gastronomía Social and the Network Comida para Todos UNHCR launched the **cookbook "Mi Mesa es tu Mesa"**, in which six renowned refugee, migrants and Chilean chefs, created low-cost fusion recipes that mix Chilean traditional foods with other typical dishes from Venezuela, Colombia, Peru and Palestine. The WRD activities, including the 2020 Global Trends report, the Regional Representative's Op-Ed, and his video to mark the WRD, gave the refugee crisis and UNHCR a high visibility through media in the 5 countries. Over 250 news pieces mentioning UNHCR were published on TV, newspapers, radio, online media and news agencies.



**Winter campaign**

Within the World Refugee Day commemoration, the Office launched a **solidarity campaign for Venezuelan population in Argentina during winter**. The first stage of this activity was carried out on 26 and 27 June and reached over 700 people, delivering **1,300 jackets and 900 blankets** through 15 delivery points in Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area and the city of La Plata. Around 100 volunteers made this initiative possible, led by seven refugee and migrant community organizations. The campaign will reach some **2,500 people** between July and August.

**Other relevant actions**

Over the first half of the year UNHCR has directly supported different organizations and governments, i.e. providing for the rental of portable toilets to place at border points in **Uruguay** (Rivera), as well as jackets, padding and bedding for the winter for **500 people**. In **Argentina**, UNHCR supported the Argentine National Directorate of Migration with the purchase of 2 trailers to be used as mobile offices, purchase of bio-protection supplies for the Hospital de La Quiaca, Puerto Iguazú, and the Province of Buenos Aires, as well as with the food delivery for community-based organizations that provide **300 lunches** a day to Venezuelan families.



Delivery of bio-protection supplies for a hospital in Puerto Iguazu © UNHCR

## CITIES OF SOLIDARITY

During the first half of 2021, the Cities of Solidarity programme in the sub-region has been reinforced with the joining of the local governments of **Salta** and **San Luis** in **Argentina**, and also **Concepción, Talcahuano and Peñaloén** in **Chile**. In the sub-region UNHCR has now signed **31 agreements with different local governments**. "Cities of Solidarity" is a recognition initiative for communities that work for the integration of refugees in host communities around the world. Its objective is to develop a cooperation framework through which local and provincial governments provide refugees a level of protection, enjoyment of rights and access to services that favor their inclusion. With the **City of Buenos Aires**, for instance, two projects funded by the L'Óreal Foundation addressing the labour inclusion of refugee women are being executed: "Nosotras Conectadas" promoting the incorporation of young adult women in the technological-digital job market and "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. In **Chile**, within this framework, UNHCR with the Municipalities of **Concepción, Talcahuano and Temuco**, delivered 110 boxes of food that benefit more than **400** people; in **Estación Central** municipality, UNHCR established a training plan for the Education Department professionals in intercultural integration so their skills in the daily treatment with refugees is enhanced.

## R4V – Response for Venezuelans

R4V coordination platforms both in the **Southern Cone and Chile** has allowed for enhanced response for the needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants (*caminantes*) that are making all the way to the sub-region. Under UNHCR co-leadership with IOM, sector leads in **Bolivia** have been established and reinforced in **Argentina** and **Uruguay**. R4V partners complementary actions in urban and border areas have allowed to answer to the needs of **more than 60,000 refugees and migrants** from Venezuela up to May 2021. Preparations are underway with partners for **joint needs assessment** to lay the foundations for the 2022 response planning.

## Resettlement and complementary pathways – CRISP

COVID-19 pandemic has been halting most of resettlement efforts worldwide. In spite of this, in **Argentina**, a **mentorship pilot** that would strengthen the reception and integration of resettled refugees by engaging local volunteer mentors and with the sponsoring raised through crowdfunding facilitated in cooperation with UNHCR private sector partner (Fundación ACNUR Argentina) is underway. In **Uruguay**, UNHCR has agreed a **new national resettlement plan** with the government and labour insertion schemes as complementary pathways are being designed.



Signature of Cities of Solidarity agreement with San Luis city © UNHCR

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