

# CHILE

## North of Chile

The closure of the land borders, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as visa requirements for people from Venezuela, and difficulties in their obtention have increased the protection risks faced by refugees and migrants coming to Chile (most of them Venezuelans), who enter the country through irregular border crossings. Filing asylum claims at the border has also become cumbersome due to restrictions, and no adequate procedures are in places such as **Colchane** (region of Tarapaca) and **Ollagüe** (region of Antofagasta), both bordering Bolivia. The Chilean northern border in the **Andean highlands face seasonal rains with hailstorms and low temperatures** from December until March, which has made journeys for those looking for protection even more vulnerable. The geography of the area is adverse and lacks basic services.

During 2021, 22 deaths were registered due to causes related to the risks of irregular border crossing, and 5 have already been registered during 2022 alone. **Throughout 2021, the Investigative Police (PDI) registered 56,586 self-reports from PoCs who entered through unauthorized border crossings**, which meant an increase of 236 per cent compared to the 16,848 cases in 2020. **Nearly 80 per cent of them are from Venezuela and most of them are family groups with children** who see Chile as country of destination. The increase in the flow of refugees and migrants in the area, as well as the lack of a more adequate border management, has generated constant conflicts with the host communities and the collapse of the basic services available in border areas. Since September 2021 at [least four demonstrations and strikes](#)

against irregular migration and crime in the northern region have taken place, with a fired up a discourse against the UN and its work. This has been paired with the omicron variant rise of COVID-19 cases in the northern region over the first months of the year.



*Refugees and migrants crossing in Colchane by irregular points. - Chilean border © Chilean Medias, 2022*

- The government in view of this humanitarian [crisis decreed a constitutional state of exception in the northern border provinces of Arica, Parinacota, Tamarugal and El Loa](#) on 15 February and strengthened the police and military presence in the area. Moreover, the new law on migration entered into force, that contemplates a push back procedure, worryingly establishes new procedures for immediate rejections at the border.
- Since the new migration law came into force, rejections at the borders and push backs have been regularly reported in Chacalluta (border with Peru) and Ollagüe, as well as in Colchane. there are no clear procedures to carry out what is established in the law, since there is no readmission agreement with other countries for non-nationals.

By the end of 2022, it is estimated that the number of the **Venezuelan population in Chile will amount to 561,876 people (INE 2020).**

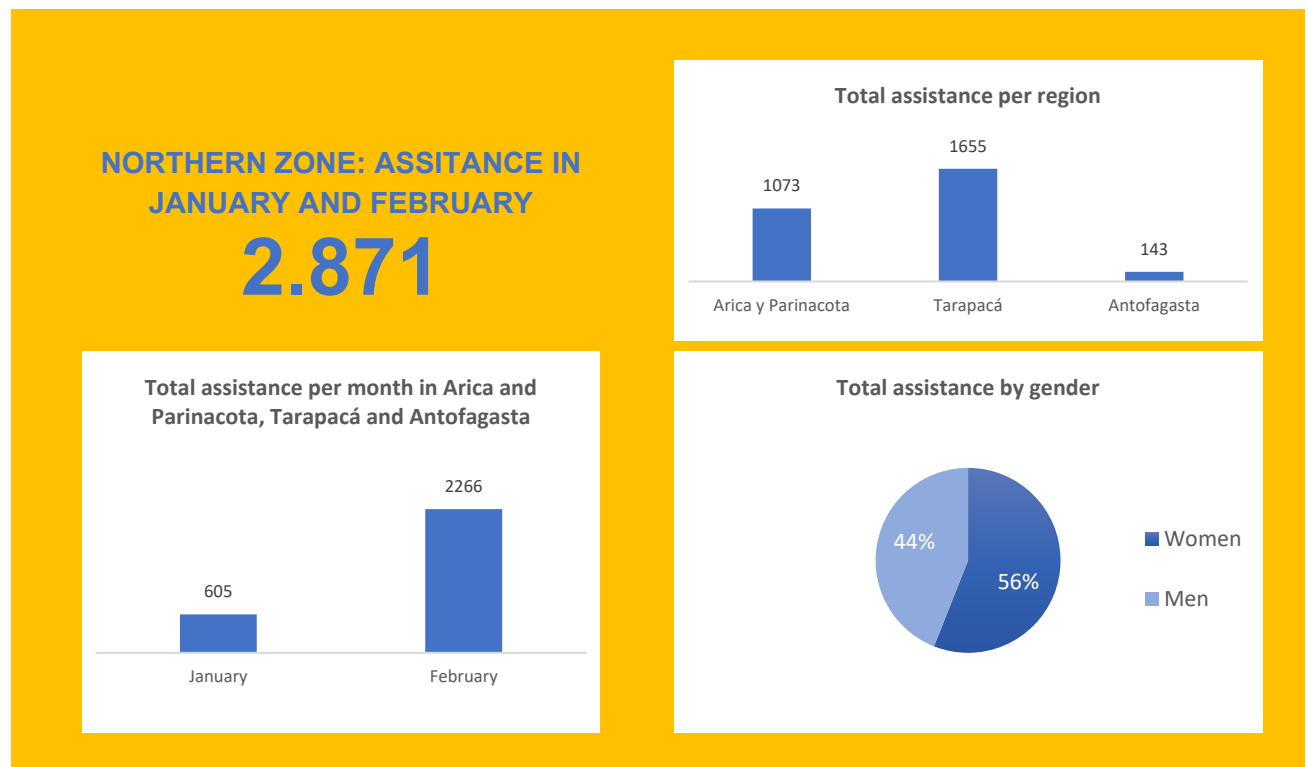
According to information provided by public authorities and the border monitoring carried out by the UNHCR and its partner organizations, **during January 2022 an average of 600 people a day have been observed irregularly entering Chile only through the Colchane sector.**



Refugees & migrants from Venezuela imploring for their rights to be respected at the Chilean border © UNHCR/ Chilean media, 2022

# RESPONSE

Against this backdrop, UNHCR has been providing protection and assistance for the most pressing needs of refugees and migrants, while promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence with their Chilean host communities.



## TARAPACÁ



Once refugees and migrants enter Chile, they mostly continue moving towards the south of the country. But due to the precarious conditions in which they arrive, they are staying longer in main urban centers in the north of the country until they are able to earn enough money to pay for the mobilization that allows them to move south. Hundreds of them remain homeless in the meantime, including children and women. Most partner housing programs operate between March and December, so there have been more refugees and migrants occupying public spaces during the southern summer months.

In response to the high number of homeless refugees and migrants in Iquique, the government set up a temporary shelter with capacity for 300 people in the Playa Lobito sector (25 kilometers south of Iquique), which is operating at maximum capacity. On the outskirts of this shelter there have been more than 100 people from camping in makeshift huts, waiting for opportunities to be transferred southwards.

Trying to palliate the shelter situation of refugees and migrants in the Tarapacá region, **UNHCR donated 48 Refugee Housing Units (RHUs)** along with equipment and chemical toilets to the Government. Moreover, UNHCR provided **housing items for the direct benefit of people (100 sleeping bags, 400 mattresses, 100 floor protectors and 100 blankets)**, and seven cellphone recharging totems and 28 chemical toilets were installed by UNHCR in places with a high influx of refugees and migrants, and donated furniture for the migrant assistance office of the municipality of Iquique.

In the region as well, **UNHCR provided for 49 days 200 daily lunches and dinners at the government-run temporary quarantine shelter in Colchane.** In order to foster social cohesion, UNHCR donated **3,300 humanitarian hygiene and food kits, bulk food for 18 community kitchens in Alto Hospicio, and 7,800 masks** were provided.

Through partner organizations, **15,597 people benefited from humanitarian kits, multipurpose cash transfers, emergency accommodation, rental subsidies, legal protection and advice, psychosocial care, educational support, and primary, secondary, and tertiary health care.**

## ARICA Y PARINACOTA

In this region, during the last three months the UNHCR delivered **475 hygiene and food kits, 100 winter kits, 300 boxes with supplies for the preparation of lunches and dinners, and 602 diapers** for the direct benefit of the refugee and migrant population. In addition, supplies for the preparation of breakfasts were donated to five shelters, benefiting 150 people. Through partners in the region, **648 blankets, 100 gift cards (with a reach of 400 people), medical attention to 1,000 people** (60 per cent children), and **rental subsidies and emergency accommodation to 200 people** were provided.



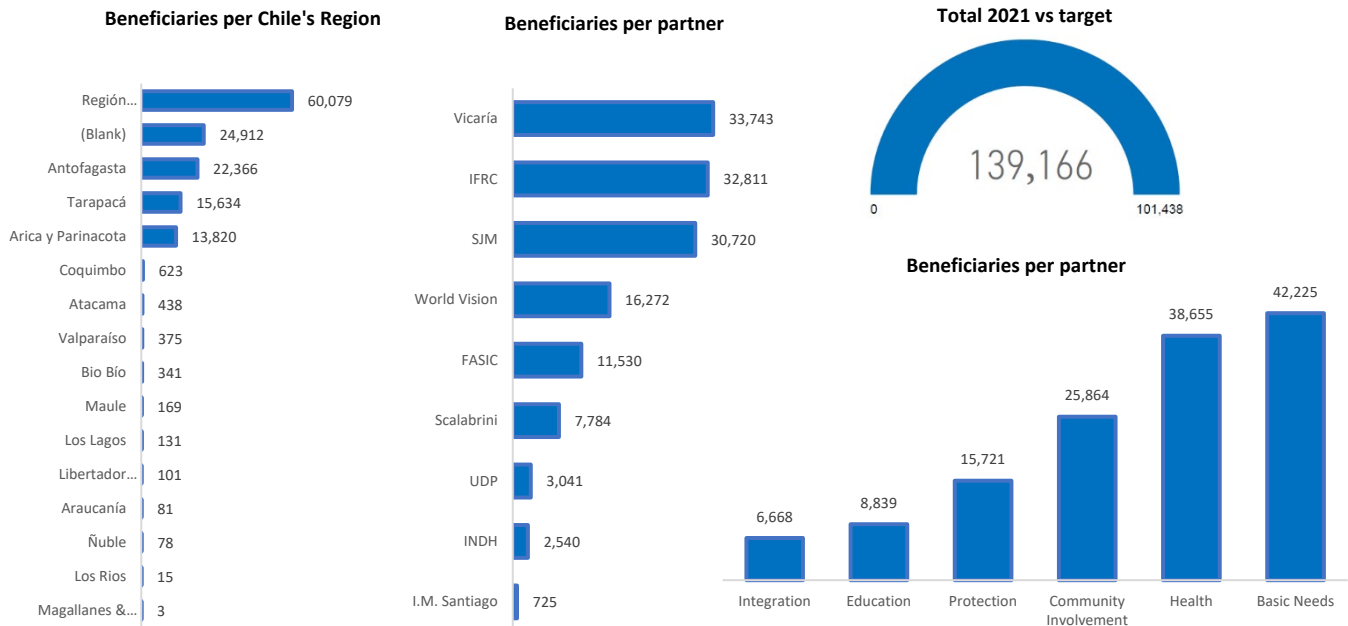


### ANTOFAGASTA

The Antofagasta region presents a border humanitarian emergency of lesser magnitude than that of Tarapacá. However, it has a high population of refugees and migrants who see this region as a fixed destination and lasting settlement. Here, UNHCR provided refugee and migrant families with **800 emergency kits were during February (400 for hygiene and 400 for food), supporting more than 2,400 people.** These were delivered through both public authorities and civil society organizations in both urban and border areas. Additionally, **40 packages of diapers and 48 family feeding kits designed to provide food for a period of two weeks were donated to refugees and migrants, benefiting approximately 240 people.** Likewise, five computers were provided with their equipment and furniture to facilitate communication and connectivity to the refugee and migrant population, in a project that helps approximately 100 refugees and migrants per month. Finally, through partner organizations, housing, cleaning and hygiene items and food kits for refugee and migrant travelers were donated and extensive psychosocial and legal assistance was provided.

## OUR WORK IN 2021

In addition, UNHCR and its partners attended needs of refugees and migrants who continued to transit towards the south of the country. The following figures show the assistance delivered thanks to the support of UNHCR donors.



### Emerging needs and new opportunities

The exponential increase in daily arrivals of refugees and migrants to the north of Chile during the last three months (December, January and February) has generated an urgent need to expand the humanitarian response and the UNHCR presence in the region.

The extreme altitude (4,000m) and weather conditions of the geographical area constitute additional risks for refugees and migrants that walk from Pisiga (Bolivia) to Colchane (Chile), facing temperatures that drop to minus 15 degrees Celsius at night and rise up to 35 degrees Celsius during the day.

Despite these risks, during the first two months of 2022 at least 500 Venezuelans per day have been detected irregularly entering the Chilean region of Tarapaca.

Immediate people's needs identified by UNHCR include:

**Protection:** The current context places refugees and migrants at high risk of protection incidents (human trafficking and smuggling, gender-based violence, increased xenophobic attitudes among host communities, among others). Refugees and migrants require information on the legal requirements and protection risks of travel routes, and vulnerable profiles should be identified and referred to specialized services.

**Community-based protection:** An adequate humanitarian response requires to necessarily consider and engage local communities in all phases of implementation. The impact that the humanitarian crisis linked to the migratory phenomenon has produced in the host communities has been of striking intensity in the cities of the north. In border communities as Colchane, at certain times of the year the migratory flow exceeds the number of inhabitants of the town, causing the collapse of the basic services of the commune. Therefore, the search for alternatives must go hand in hand with the identification and attention to their needs, incorporating a community-based approach before, during and after planning, thus considering the consequences that UNHCR's work implies for the lives of communities throughout the entire operational cycle through, e.g.,

ongoing consultation and participation, community impact assessments and integrative activities.

**Health:** In light of the number people who died transiting the northern region due to lack of treatment for altitude sickness, respiratory diseases and dehydration, improved access to health assistance is required. It is also important to support health centres with medicines, equipment and other essential supplies.

**Food security:** Access to food is one of the most urgent needs for refugees and migrants since they are highly exposed to malnutrition, especially pregnant and lactating women and young children.

**Shelter:** There is a need to review and improve standards of temporary emergency accommodation together with the new government, mainly in Tarapacá; as well as increasing shelter facilities considering the current limited shelter capacity in the north of the country.

**WASH:** Taking into account that refugees and migrants are crossing desert areas, access to expanded potable water, bathroom and shower facilities, chemical toilets and personal hygiene items and biosecurity kits to maintain COVID-19 protocols become fundamental.

**UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds in 2022**

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### CONTACTS

José Manuel Cáceres, Regional Reporting Officer, [CACERES@unhcr.org](mailto:CACERES@unhcr.org)

Carolina Fuentes, Snr Reporting Assistant, [FUENTESA@unhcr.org](mailto:FUENTESA@unhcr.org)

Rafael Numi, Snr Reporting Assistant, [NUMI@unhcr.org](mailto:NUMI@unhcr.org)

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