

Uruguay

March 2022

Hosting some **29,441 refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants, most of them from Venezuela**, UNHCR works with the Uruguayan government and partners to **provide information on access to territory, asylum and regularization**, while providing with its partners support for **basic goods and services** such as psycho-social support, health, education, both in cash and in-kind. UNHCR with its partners also facilitate the **socio-economic**

integration of refugees and migrants in the local labour market. Moreover, UNHCR supports the design of a new resettlement programme and a labour mobility pilot, in the framework of the **Sustainable Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Initiative (CRISP)**, a multi-stakeholder and global mechanism which aims to support States and other stakeholders to grow resettlement programmes and advance complementary pathway.

Despite the closure of borders during the COVID-19 pandemic, Uruguay has granted access to its territory and the refugee status determination procedure for people in need of international protection. The impact of COVID-19 has required the strengthening of the humanitarian response in terms of **access to shelters, food, clothing and hygiene kits** for an increasing number of people in need.

POPULATION OF CONCERN (PoC)

29,441

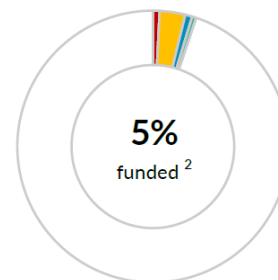
Refugees	892
Asylum-seekers	13,551
Others of concern*	6
Venezuelans displaced abroad	14,995

Source: Official information provided by the Government, as of December 2021
* Stateless status applicants

FUNDING

USD 49.2 MILLION

requested for the **Multi-Country Office including Uruguay**



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

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, Chile and Uruguay:

- 63** National staff and affiliated workforce
- 11** International staff
- 1** field presence in Rivera



Photo: UNHCR/ Luis Enrique Durante. UNCHR and partner agency Idas y Vueltas deliver coats to refugee and migrant families entering Uruguayan territory in the PAO of Chuy.

Results in 2021

- In 2021, UNHCR through its partner provided support to **867** persons in vulnerable situations through **multi-purpose cash assistance** to cover their basic needs; **654** vulnerable individuals were provided with **temporary accommodation**; **415** individuals were provided with **free legal assistance, orientation, information** and referral to various service providers; **404 people received psychological support by UNHCR** and/or implementing partners; while some **503** people received **livelihoods training or support**.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR works in close coordination with Government counterparts, namely with the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, the Ministry of Interior, and the **Refugee Commission (CORE)**, as well as with other UN agencies to provide protection and seek durable solutions for refugees. UNHCR is a member of the CORE.
- UNHCR cooperates with the **local Government of the City of Montevideo and the Department of Canelones**, where most refugees and migrants reside. A cooperation agreement under the framework of cities of solidarity has been signed with the **City of Rivera**.
- **SEDHU (Servicio EcuMénico para la Dignidad Humana)** is UNHCR's partner for providing counselling, basic humanitarian assistance, and support for self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods to refugees and asylum-seekers. SEDHU also provides comprehensive accompaniment of resettled refugees in their integration process in Uruguay. Further, within SEDHU's participation in the Permanent Secretariat of the CORE, the organization registers asylum application and carries out eligibility activities.
- UNHCR also works with **Idas y Vueltas**, both in **Montevideo** and in **Chuy**. Through the presence in Chuy (PAO for its acronym in Spanish – Punto de Atención y Orientación), the partner provides legal assistance to persons of concern (PoCs), guarantees border monitoring; trains migratory officials in direct border service posts; coordinates with SEDHU to ensure humanitarian assistance to respond to urgent needs from persons of concern.
- UNHCR works closely with **Manos Veneguayas**, a PoC-led organization that provides counselling and support to refugees and migrants. Though small-scale project, UNHCR has provided it with support to equip the connectivity services of its offices, that will allow refugees and migrants to contact their families abroad and carry out activities related to the socio-economic integration of PoCs, such as prepare their CVs, apply to job vacancies and participate in professional trainings.
- **UNHCR, together with UNICEF and IOM**, undertook the commitment to **establish a joint office in the city of Rivera** with the desire to enhance inter-agency cooperation in the assistance and orientation of PoC. Since January 2022 UNHCR is present in the city carrying out inter-institutional coordination with local actors. With this presence, in addition to monitoring the situation in this border region, UNHCR aims to contribute to strengthening the State's response capacity and facilitate a better approach to the needs and challenges of working with this population.
- UNHCR is promoting a new strategy with the **private sector** in order to generate awareness and facilitate the insertion of refugees and migrants in the local labour market. A memorandum of understanding was signed with **DERES**, a network of more than 100 private enterprises, with the mission of contributing to a sustainable human development and social growth with equality. DERES will promote UNHCR's program Talent without Borders in Uruguay and will pilot a job-matching database during 2022, that will allow refugees and migrants to apply to vacancies in companies within its network.
- UNHCR co-leads jointly with IOM the **National Response Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela where 12 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.

Main Activities

Protection & Durable Solutions

- Provide technical support and advice to national authorities involved in the implementation of fair and efficient **Refugee Status Determination (RSD)** procedure. Capacity building activities are implemented to strengthen the CORE, and its Permanent Secretariat to ensure access to territory, due process in admission, registration, eligibility interviews, RSD assessments and right to appeal. UNHCR also provides **capacity building and training** to other relevant counterparts.
- Provide **technical support for the implementation of Stateless Status Determination (SSD) procedure** since the establishment of the legal framework for the recognition and protection of stateless persons through Law N° 19,682.
- Advocate for the facilitation of the **obtention of the Uruguayan legal citizenship for refugees and stateless persons** and provide the necessary information to ensure they can make an informed decision on this option.
- Support the Uruguayan government to buttress its capacities to better **respond to continuous arrival of Venezuelans** and to **promote durable solutions for them**, while providing **emergency humanitarian assistance** and ensuring protection

support for vulnerable cases.

- Provide technical and financial support to the government and civil society to consolidate **sustainable resettlement programs and complementary pathways for admission** under the leadership of the CORE. This involves close collaboration with SEDHU and international partners in order to promote a stronger community and private sector participation in the co-sponsorship of refugees, in line with the **Sustainable Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Initiative (CRISP)** priorities.
- Support the government which is progressively assuming the leadership of **local integration strategies**, inter alia, through the promotion of policies and the allocation of public funding for refugees.
- As part of its initiative **“Cities of Solidarity”**, UNHCR works with two local governments in Montevideo and Canelones to facilitate access to information, orientation and improve reception conditions as well as to better integrate refugees and migrants in their local communities, strengthening access to rights, employment, as well as social protection and employment promotion schemes. Under the framework of the agreement signed with the City of Rivera, support has been provided to strengthening the admission capacity for persons in need of international protection.
- Promote actions addressed to prevent, identify and respond to situations of **Sexual Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)** and Child Protection (CP) affecting refugee women and children through regular protection dialogues, Communication with Communities (CwC) strategies, empowerment activities with refugee women and girls and proper referral to national protection mechanisms.
- Support **family reunifications** to guarantee persons of concern’s family unity, coordinating the strategy both with national authorities and partner agencies.
- Enhance two-way communication through **communicating with communities’** strategy, producing informative material about access to RSD and SSD procedures, migratory regularization, documentation and rights available on Help website.
- Strengthen accountability to affected population, through the establishment of feedback and response mechanisms, adopted by UNHCR and both partner agencies in Uruguay. PoCs are able to deliver their complaints and suggestions, including a special procedure for protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA).

Humanitarian Assistance, Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

- UNHCR through its partners provides **humanitarian assistance** to vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees with special needs. The assistance consists of financial support as well as counselling. Its partners also assist on legal issues and access to documentation.
- UNHCR also works for the improvement of **self-reliance and livelihoods** of refugees and migrants, include vocational training activities organized through the **National Institute for Employment and Labour Training (INEFOP), and Human Resources institutions**, and the inclusion of CVs in a database after the training sessions for a possible job matching.
- UNHCR **aims to boost opportunities for self-reliance, integration and empowerment of PoC** and to facilitate the development of a state-owned comprehensive solutions policy, advocating for the inclusion of PoCs’ 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; and support the execution of admission programs and complementary pathways.

Community-based approach in practice: participatory assessments 2021

Participatory assessments in 2021 carried out by UNHCR and partners involved **8 focus groups where 84 refugees and migrants from Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador and Venezuela** – living in Montevideo, Canelones and Rocha – shared their views on current **protection risks and barriers to rights access**, as well as proposals on how to face them. Three main topics were addressed in depth during this exercise: **socioeconomic inclusion, housing, and youth issues**.

All focus groups explained how the **COVID-19 pandemic impacted negatively in their incomes**, as structural **difficulties to access formal employment** related to their profession were deepened and information on job opportunities became scarcer. Proposals to address this problematic included the development of accessible information materials on protection mechanisms against labour exploitation, support to cover costs of foreign degrees recognition and skills certification, as well as programs for labour reconversion. As in previous opportunities, **lack of accessible childcare** continues to differentially affect women's labour inclusion.

Access to shelter and housing was also among top priorities for participants, especially families including children, who stressed the challenges of finding secure and affordable shelter upon arrival. In this regard, they mentioned the need to expand available information on reception mechanisms. Regarding housing, rent requirements and costs constitute a barrier for most PoC who resort to other more informal lodging alternatives, where several protection risks are present, such as insecurity and discrimination.

Youth groups emphasized **positive experiences in terms of integration with host communities** as well as regarding **access to health**. However, they highlighted challenges in terms of **remote schooling** during quarantine due to lack of connectivity and devices together with the need to enhance contents in terms of integral sexual education. Adolescents also expressed concern regarding how **high living costs** in the country affect their households and stressed the need to have more opportunities to gather to encourage interaction among them.

Special thanks to major donors who have provided funds for the Regional Office and at the regional and global level in 2022:

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