

## UPDATE ON UNHCR COVID-19 RESPONSE IN COLOMBIA - #7



*The Embera Dóvída indigenous community in Quibdó are survivors of the armed conflict and are currently facing food insecurity due to COVID-19 and related restrictions. UNHCR is providing food vouchers so that they can fulfill their basic needs at a local grocery store. ©UNHCR/Gamboá, Y.*

### CURRENT CONTEXT

The Colombian Ministry of Health confirmed **30,493 cases of COVID-19** as of Monday, 1 June, in all of the country's 32 departments, with Bogota concentrating the highest number of people infected (7,386 confirmed cases). In Colombia, a total of **969** individuals have died from COVID-19 and **9,661** cases have recovered. So far, **86** confirmed cases, which resulted in **5** deaths, were reported among Venezuelan refugees and migrants. In addition, as of 27 May, 30 of Colombia's more than 80 indigenous groups have been affected by COVID-19 (517 confirmed cases and 19 deaths).

On 28 May, Decree 749 was issued, mandating obligatory preventive isolation from 1 June to 1 July 2020. Furthermore, the decree stipulates the continued closure of all sea, land and river border

crossings until 1 July 2020. Exceptions include humanitarian emergencies, the transportation of cargo and merchandise, and cases of force majeure. International and national flights (except for humanitarian reasons) are suspended through 31 August.

Between 4 April and 28 May, according to Migración Colombia, a total of 38,157 Venezuelans returned to their country via official Colombian border crossings in Arauca, Norte de Santander and La Guajira.

The flow of people walking to the Venezuelan border intensifies, including from the Caribbean coast and the south of the country. The military checkpoint at the border between the departments of Arauca and Casanare has been removed due to

pressure from Casanare authorities, and as of this week, *caminantes* are continuing on foot towards the border, exposed to a variety of protection risks.

Continued displacements and confinements: New confrontations between FARC-EP dissidents generated another large-group displacement in Roberto Payán affecting 473 persons. On 27 May, the national army rescued 10 people from the rural area of the municipality of Suarez in Cauca who were being threatened by the illegal armed group Columna Movil Jaime Martinez and who were later assisted through the special protection route for displaced persons.

*Fundación de Ideas para la Paz* reported a 53% increase in killings of community leaders and FARC-EP ex-combatants in the first quarter of 2020 as compared to the same period in 2019, as well as an increase of 5% in forced displacement. The departments most affected are Cauca, Putumayo, Nariño and Antioquia.

Vulnerable persons are disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including LGBTI, indigenous, children and elderly populations. The National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences reported a 67% percent increase of killings of LGBTI individuals in Colombia during the period of mandatory isolation as compared to the same period in 2019, while the Ombudsperson's Office reported 15 cases of sexual violence against trans women, 10 against lesbian women and 9 against bisexual women. UNHCR has knowledge of several cases of violence against the LGBTI population being a motivation for their return to Venezuela.

The Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) has reported a 43% increase in calls received during the mandatory isolation compared to the same period in 2019. Out of the 15,369 calls, 79% were related to physical/psychological violence or neglect; 19% to sexual violence and 2% to homeless children or adolescents.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE IN NUMBERS

From 15 March to 22 May, UNHCR Colombia has:

- Donated **187 Refugee Housing Units (RHUs)** and **113 tents** to hospitals, clinics, UNHCR-run shelters, and local health authorities.
- Activated **47 telephone reception points** nationwide to provide information and

orientation services, and **remotely registered 10,030 families (39,077 individuals, 73% female)** in PRIMES. The locations with the highest number of calls were Bogota (24%), La Guajira (17%), Norte de Santander (16%), and Antioquia (11%). 51% of calls were related to legal and physical protection needs including access to assistance, followed by issues of children at risk (13%), serious medical conditions (12%) single parents (9%); women at risk (7%).

- Provided life-saving assistance to **137 cases of SGBV** in the framework of the RSSN (Regional Safe Spaces Network) in Cucuta, Riohacha and Arauca, and oriented and registered **94 cases of SGBV over the phone**.
- Provided emergency cash assistance to **over 1,500 families (benefitting over 6,000 individuals)** across the country through nine different implementing partners.



*José is a community leader who works with youth from displaced families in Quibdó. The livelihoods of many Afro-Colombian families have been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. UNHCR and the Mayor's Office are supporting with different types of cash transfers. ©UNHCR/Gamboia, Y.*

## UNHCR'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN THE PAST 2 WEEKS

### Health and hygiene/prevention measures

UNHCR donated 23 Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) and 6 tents in Soacha, 10 RHUs and 2 tents in Vichada department, as well as 3 family tents in Puerto Inirida (Guainia) in coordination with local authorities and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). Figures are included in the totals reported in the previous section.

UNHCR finalized the renovations of the third floor



of the San Vicente Hospital of Arauca, providing 21 more hospital rooms for up to 40 patients.

In Riohacha, UNHCR donated Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to San Juan and Riohacha Hospitals.



UNHCR donated Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to hospitals in La Guajira. ©UNHCR/Pineda, C.

### Protection

UNHCR has been following up on unaccompanied Venezuelan children in Cucuta and among the *caminantes* at the Arauca/Casanare border in coordination with partners and the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF).

Together with the University of Cartagena Legal Clinic, UNHCR held 3 virtual training workshops for civil servants on International Refugee Law, referral pathways and support spaces.

In Cucuta, 149 cases were attended by the Local Ombudsperson's Office (*Personería*) with UNHCR's support. The most common consultation was regarding assistance programs for IDPs, Colombian returnees, refugees and migrants.

In Cucuta, 142 Venezuelan cases were referred to the Universities Legal Offices for support in accessing national asylum procedures.

UNHCR is providing 300 SIM cards with internet and airtime for community leaders of Venezuelan organizations to enhance community outreach.

### Food Security and Nutrition

UNHCR continues to support the government and local authorities with the distribution of government-purchased food kits in various locations throughout the country. Around 3,400 food packages were distributed to vulnerable Colombian and Venezuelan families in the municipalities of Sabanalarga and Repelon and the District of Barranquilla, and 4,702 in Medellín. In Quibdó, Chocó Department, UNHCR distributed

360 food vouchers to indigenous, displaced, and Venezuelan families.



An indigenous leader from the Embera Doviida displays a food voucher from UNHCR. ©UNHCR/Gamboá, Y.

Somos Panas Colombia, together with Chocquibtown, a hip hop music group, launched an appeal to solidarity [#NosDamosLaMano](#) with multiple social media influencers like [Poncho Herrera](#), [Natalia Reyes](#), [Yesenia Valencia](#) joining the call; content showcasing Venezuelan individuals contributing to the Colombian society continues to be published on [social media](#).

### Livelihoods

UNHCR and implementing partner Corporacion Ayuda Humanitaria carried out virtual counseling and team building sessions with 132 households participating in the Graduation Model programme, to provide small businesses with advice on early recovery economic strategies.

UNHCR also contributed to a UNDP-led study on the social and economic impact of COVID-19 in Colombia, which will include recommendations by UN agencies to the Government of Colombia and other stakeholders.

UNHCR has also been working closely with the Ministry of Labor, the Office of the Presidency and other governmental allies such as the Public Employment Service and the National Training Service (SENA), to adjust planned activities for labor market integration of Venezuelans in light of the challenges posed by the pandemic.

### Shelter, NFIs and WASH

UNHCR is currently providing shelter to 98 persons in Bogotá and plans to increase its shelter capacity to 300 people with a new Scalabrini shelter opening in the first week of June and 6 hotels identified as temporary shelters.

A new temporary shelter for Venezuelan refugees and migrants (Villa Asunción) operated by UNHCR partner Corprodinco in Bucaramanga has so far benefited 13 vulnerable families (55 persons) out of a total of 80 persons expected to be supported through this GIFMM coordinated response. The hotel network in Riohacha and Maicao continues to provide shelter to 312 Venezuelans since the start of this health emergency. This inter-agency initiative includes WFP (food), Malteser International (health screening) and Save the Children (CBI) assisting vulnerable cases – 55% of whom are children, 89% evicted families and 11% GBV survivors – referred by government authorities and partners.

UNHCR in Ipiales and Pasto are distributing 1,000 blankets and sleeping mats to Venezuelans without shelter and 20 habitat kits to the municipality of Cumbal which is setting-up a temporary shelter.

UNHCR also donated 6,000 hygiene items (hygiene kits for infants, sanitary napkins and diapers) to GIFMM partners in Arauca (CISP, APOYAR, Americares, Pastoral Social and UNICEF) for their further distribution to Venezuelan refugee and migrant women affected by the quarantine.

## FUNDING NEEDS

On 11 May, UNHCR published its [revised Coronavirus Emergency Appeal](#). Globally, UNHCR is now appealing for USD 745 million, including USD 17.3 million in Colombia. UNHCR Global Appeal is now funded at 32%, with USD 246 million contribution received.

## GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT

On 26 May, a [virtual International Donors Conference](#) for refugees and migrants from Venezuela convened by the European Union and Spain with the support of Canada, Norway, UNHCR and IOM took place raising USD 2.79 billion, including loans and grants (USD 653 million in grants). Donor countries were represented at Ministerial level and the Presidents of Colombia, Ecuador and Spain intervened during the high-level section of the conference. The Canadian Government announced its commitment to host and organize the next meeting to follow-up to this conference.



Adults staying at the Assistance Centre for Refugees and Migrants (CARM) temporary shelter in Maicao participate in a virtual training on soft skills and adaptation to change in coordination with the National Training Service (SENA) ©Pastoral Social.

### UNHCR's response in Colombia is possible thanks to the contribution of private donors and:

Austria, Canada, Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Chanel Foundation, Denmark, European Union, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Republic of Korea, KOICA, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UN Human Security Trust Fund (UN HSTF), UN Peacebuilding Fund, United Kingdom, United States of America, and USA for UNHCR.

**\$83.9 million**  
 UNHCR's financial requirements 2020

