

CURRENT CONTEXT

After reporting no new cases of COVID-19 since April, Trinidad and Tobago reported new clusters of infection in July 2020. These occurred amid preparations for a general election carded for August 10, 2020. Local media reported on several irregular arrivals of Venezuelans during July, including a [report](#) on a [CARICOM study](#) which implicated T&T security officials in human trafficking activities.

Authorities responded by announcing measures aimed at further preventing unauthorized entry into the country while borders remain closed. Landlords, businesspersons and those operating sea and land transportation, were advised of the Government's intention to prosecute individuals found facilitating the irregular arrival and stay of refugees and migrants. Citizens were also encouraged to utilize a hotline for reporting persons they suspect may have entered the country illegally. Several detentions were noted, including persons intercepted at sea attempting to access territory and persons arrested on land during police operations. Deportations of detained persons were reported, including Venezuelans who had been registered with UNHCR and with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Instances of xenophobia and discrimination were reported to UNHCR and also seen in traditional and social media. Evictions of refugees and migrants were also reported.

Solutions and protection coordination efforts continue to be pursued between UNHCR and other partners on these matters.



*Figures are as at July 31st 2020. Registration at UNCHR premises had been temporarily suspended from March 13 to May 26 due to COVID-19. 3,402 individual records were inactivated in April due to registration documentation being expired for more than six months.

UPDATES

UNHCR COVID-19 PLATFORM. UNHCR has launched a temporary information platform – [COVID19: Temporary Measures and Impact on Protection](#). The platform is an evidence-based tool created to support Governments by informing on sound policy and decision-making amid the COVID-19 crisis, as it highlights many ways in which States have been effective in controlling their borders whilst also granting access to protection for refugees and asylum-seekers.

MOVE TO MCO-PANAMA. As of 2021, UNHCR T&T along with other operations in the 'Southern Caribbean' will move from under the jurisdiction of Multi-Country Office – Washington to Multi-Country Office – Panama. This was done as UNHCR operations in the Southern Caribbean are overwhelmingly associated with the Response for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V), and the R4V coordination platform is based in Panama.

INQUIRY INTO TREATMENT OF MIGRANTS. UNHCR contributed to the T&T Parliament's Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity [report](#) – *Inquiry into Treatment of Migrants with a focus on Education, Employment and Protection from Sexual Exploitation*. This was done in the form of a joint submission by the Protection Coordination Working Group, compiled with other UN submissions by the Office of the Resident Coordinator.

WORLD DAY AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS. UNHCR joined the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in observing the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons on July 30, 2020. In [a message](#) including statements from UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Gillian Triggs, UNHCR warned of increased COVID-19-related trafficking risks for refugees, displaced and stateless persons.

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS



COMMUNITY HOTLINE COMMUNICATION

The expanded hotline service continues to be heavily utilized by the population of concern for receiving information on assistance and referrals. For the month of July, queries to the UNHCR hotlines increased by 27%, with a noted increase recorded in the last week of July, following statements made by Authorities regarding the Government's approach to undocumented migrants. A 250% increase was seen in the number of queries relating to detention, with notable increases in queries relating to pre-registration (120% increase), renewal of documentation (44% increase), registration appointments and rescheduling (27% increase) and multi-purpose cash assistance (31% increase).



EMERGENCY FOOD AND CASH ASSISTANCE

Implementing partner [Living Water Community](#) (LWC), provided **446 beneficiaries** from 120 families with emergency food assistance in July. Beneficiaries apply for emergency food assistance remotely through an online form and once approved, receive QR coded e-vouchers that are redeemed at supermarkets in communities nationwide. More opportunities continue to be found for distribution via the voucher system including for books and over-the-counter medication. In addition, **50 multi-purpose cash grants were approved** in July, for individuals facing protection risks with very limited or no ability to achieve self-reliance. 83.3% of the approved beneficiaries faced serious threats of eviction and homelessness, the majority of whom were women.



EDUCATION ACCESS

Despite funding and connectivity challenges, **78 new beneficiaries** were able to access remote education services in July through [Equal Place](#), with a total of **950 students** accessing lessons for this month. Students receiving instruction in Spanish were also transitioned to a global platform which will allow graduates to earn a US-based high school diploma, which is likely to improve students' opportunities for upward mobility.



ACCESS TO MEDICAL HEALTH SERVICES

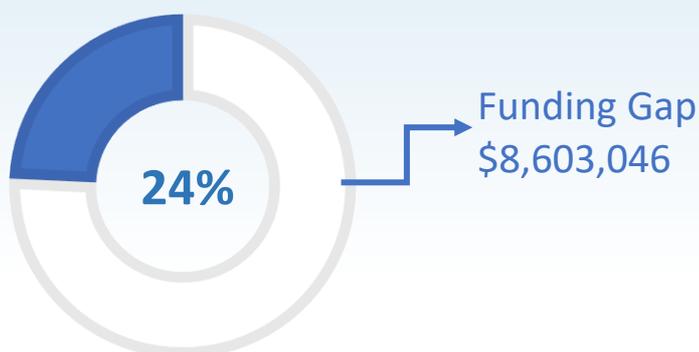
UNHCR implementing partner [Family Planning Association](#) (FPATT) conducted **176 consultations** on sexual and reproductive health for refugees and asylum-seekers during July in addition to **17 pediatric care consultations delivered**. Many of the children receiving medical support at an FPATT facility had not seen a doctor since birth and given the poor economic situation of their families, they have a higher likelihood of ill health. The partnership with UNHCR enables FPATT to provide comprehensive medical screenings to refugee and asylum-seeker children, including a nutritional analysis and follow-up consultations inclusive of referrals to specialists where required.



MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SERVICES

Implementing partner [Rape Crisis Society](#) continued to provide remote psychological services, via telephone and interactive videoconferencing, facilitating **93 counselling sessions** for refugees and asylum-seekers, including victims of sexual and gender-based violence. LWC also conducted psychosocial interventions for **40 individuals** in July, with sessions held for an additional **eight victims of trafficking** to help treat with the intense trauma of those experiences.

FUNDING



UNHCR is extremely grateful for the crucial support provided by donors to the Trinidad and Tobago Operation and more broadly, global UNHCR programmes. Our donors include:

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