UNOG Bi-weekly press briefing: Refugee Health Workers COVID-19 Latin America - UNHCR

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Shotlist

1. Wide shot: exterior, Place des Nations, Geneva, with Geneva lake
2. SOUNDbite (EN) – Shabia Mantoo, Spokesperson for the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR): “Several countries in the region are now putting in place special measures. These authorize the hiring of foreign-qualified health professionals and technicians, including those who are awaiting licensing or whose certification is yet to be validated by host countries. Other states have adopted expedited recognition processes to fast-track their inclusion in national health responses”.
3. Wide shot: UN Geneva
4. SOUNDbite (EN) - Shabia Mantoo, Spokesperson for the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR): “With a number of refugees studying medicine on government-supported scholarships in Cuba, refugee students in their third year of medical school or above are now also able to join the emergency response. In Brazil, Cuban doctors have also been exceptionally authorized to work on national health responses across the country”.
5. Wide shot: UN Place de Nations with broken chair
6. **SOUNDBITE (EN) - Shabia Mantoo, Spokesperson for the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR):** “Networks of foreign health professionals are also being formed across the region to offer their knowledge and support and experience for their host countries. Through its contact with refugee and asylum seeker communities, UNHCR is aware of thousands of forcibly displaced health workers who are expressing their willingness to work alongside their peers in the COVID-19 response”.

7. Zoom out: UN building, Entrance Pregny

8. **SOUNDBITE (EN) - Shabia Mantoo, Spokesperson for the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR):** “Latin America has shown deep generosity in the face of an unprecedented forced displacement crisis in Venezuela that has impacted nearly every country in the region. The coronavirus pandemic is now compounding an already desperate situation for many refugees and their hosts”.

9. Wide shot: UN Place de Nations with broken chair

10. Wide shot: UN Place de Nations with broken chair
Refugee health workers step up for coronavirus response in Latin America

As an increase COVID-19 cases mount pressure on already over-stretched health systems in Latin America, countries across the region are planning to rely on refugee and migrant health workers to support their national responses to COVID-19.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is supporting efforts that tap into the skills and resources that refugee medics can provide.

“Several countries in the region are now putting in place special measures. These authorize the hiring of foreign-qualified health professionals and technicians, including those awaiting licensing or whose certification is yet to be validated by host countries,” said Shabia Mantoo, spokesperson for the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) at a press briefing in Geneva. “Other states have adopted expedited recognition processes to fast-track their inclusion in national health responses”.

Across Latin America, thousands of refugees are already working with national health systems in the pandemic response, while many more stand ready to give back to the communities sheltering them.

Peru has now authorized the hiring of foreign certified health professionals -- of any nationality -- to support the COVID-19 response. Argentina and Chile have approved the hiring of health professionals whose qualifications have not yet been validated by national authorities.

“With a number of refugees studying medicine on government-supported scholarships in Cuba, refugee students in their third year of medical school or above are now also able to join the emergency response”, UNHCR’s Shabia Mantoo said. “In Brazil, Cuban doctors have also been exceptionally authorized to work on national health responses across the country”.

In Colombia, the Ministry of Health is collaborating with the Association of Health Professionals to draw in Venezuelan health workers.

“Networks of foreign health professionals are also being formed across the region to offer their knowledge and experience in support of their host countries,” Ms. Mantoo said. “Through its contact with refugee and asylum seeker communities, UNHCR is aware of thousands of forcibly displaced health workers who have expressed their willingness to work alongside their peers in the COVID-19 response” she added.

UNHCR has been supporting refugee inclusion efforts to help with the Covid-19 response in Latin America and around the world. In Mexico, UNHCR works with federal authorities to establish an expedited mechanism for the recognition of qualified and experienced refugee and asylum seeker health workers to join the country’s emergency recruitment pool.

“Latin America has shown deep generosity in the face of an unprecedented forced displacement crisis in Venezuela that has impacted nearly every country in the region”, UNHCR’s Shabia Mantoo said. “The coronavirus pandemic is now compounding an already desperate situation for many refugees and their hosts”.

The UN Refugee Agency continues to advocate for the inclusion of refugees in national health systems, in the belief that this will help not only to protect the rights of refugees but will also serve to protect public health by halting the global spread of COVID-19.