



HIAS

2020

Annual Report

HIJAS

Acoger al extranjero.
Proteger al refugiado.



Dear Friends,

There have never been more people seeking safety and so few places willing to welcome them. In 2020, there were more than 82 million displaced people seeking protection from persecution and conflict. The global refugee crisis was further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic and political instability. We at HIAS, however, would not let this deter us from pursuing our vision of a world in which every displaced person finds welcome, safety, and opportunity.

In so many ways, 2020 was a year of extraordinary challenge and accomplishment at HIAS. In 2020, we expanded our presence in Latin America and the Caribbean from four to nine countries, earning widespread recognition as the leading agency for displaced people in the Americas. We also opened offices south of the U.S. border to offer legal aid and psychosocial services to the asylum seekers forced to “remain in Mexico” while their cases were pending. We built emergency response capacity, equipping our team with the flexibility to address unforeseen humanitarian crises affecting vulnerable displaced people.

Even as we continued to increase our reach, the pandemic made our work vastly more difficult. During the early months, we pivoted to serve clients remotely, which posed new challenges to our staff and even steeper challenges to the refugees and asylum seekers we serve. We introduced new measures to protect the forcibly displaced from COVID, though PPE was in short supply. We redoubled our efforts to ensure that every family we resettled had decent housing, access to communication and the internet, connection with their community, the job and cultural skills required for success in their new homes, mental and physical healthcare, and a sense of security and welcome.

In the U.S., a divisive election season, the urgent call to address racial injustice, and questions on the national commitment to refugee protection added further complexity. HIAS’ commitment to Diversity,

Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) positioned us to thrive as the most diverse and inclusive Jewish organization in history. With newly defined values rooted in Jewish history, text, and principles, we ended the year with a renewed commitment to ensure that what we do and how we do it reflects HIAS’ commitment to welcome, justice, empathy, partnership, courage, and resilience.

In the pages that follow, you’ll read more about HIAS’ impact in 2020. Whether connecting clients with legal aid, mental health services, protection from gender-based violence, or livelihood tools, we helped more than one million people rebuild their lives in safety and freedom. If 2020 tested HIAS in ways we never could have imagined, we reached the year’s end with a renewed commitment to upholding our legacy of providing welcome to the stranger and protection to the refugee.

This success was made possible by allies like you, giving generously of your time and resources. Through the support of our Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, network of partners, and thousands of generous donors, we entered the new year with renewed vitality. We look forward to growing from strength to strength in 2021 and beyond.

B'shalom (in peace),



A blue ink signature of Robert D. Aronson.

Robert D. Aronson
CHAIR OF THE BOARD



A blue ink signature of Mark Hetfield.

Mark Hetfield
PRESIDENT & CEO

SERVING REFUGEES DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

In 2020, the world went into lockdown as COVID-19 made its way across the globe. Everyone's life changed, but refugees faced particular challenges.

With borders closed, jobs disappearing, movement restricted, and asylum cases frozen, refugees around the world were at grave risk of disease, hunger, and homelessness. Immediately, HIAS went into action.

We galvanized our pro bono network of attorneys to deliver vital legal services to asylum seeker clients remotely. We added caseworkers so asylum seeker clients in the U.S., whose hearings were postponed, could get their medical, educational, and food needs met. With our extensive network of partner agencies, HIAS ensured that asylees and refugees were able to access and navigate technology, allowing them to stay connected in their new communities. We also helped entrepreneurial clients learn to market their businesses online.

In May 2020, with the pandemic wreaking havoc around the world, HIAS worked to ensure that the most vulnerable were protected. HIAS offices in Latin America, Africa, Israel, and Europe delivered innovative mental health support, gender-based violence (GBV) interventions, economic inclusion opportunities, and legal services; they did so remotely when

necessary, directly when it was safe to do so. HIAS partnered with banks to deliver cash-based vouchers into clients' hands, eliminating unnecessary travel during lockdowns. HIAS shifted much of our communication, including GBV and mental health support groups, to online platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp for seamless programming and to foster connectedness. In a time of isolation and economic uncertainty, HIAS' grassroots initiatives supported local community leaders to recognize and report domestic violence and build healthy norms around masculinity.

HIAS is motivated by the incredible strength and bravery we witness in our refugee clients every day. Our resolve to advocate for our clients was stronger than ever during this extraordinary year of unprecedented challenges for the people we serve.



HIAS

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OUR VISION

HIAS stands for a world in which refugees find welcome, safety, and opportunity.

OUR MISSION

Drawing on our Jewish values and history, HIAS provides vital services to refugees and asylum seekers around the world and advocates for their fundamental rights so they can rebuild their lives.

HOW WE OPERATE

HIAS is a learning community, committed to diversity and inclusion. We do our work with integrity, accountability, transparency, and a commitment to the highest ethical standards.

OUR HISTORY

Over one hundred years ago, the Jewish community founded HIAS (originally the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) in New York City, the immigrant gateway to America. Supporting Jews fleeing persecution and poverty in Eastern Europe, our founders were guided by the traditions, texts, and history of the Jewish people—a history of oppression, displacement, and diaspora. HIAS has since helped generations of Jews facing violence because of who they were, and HIAS remains committed to helping Jewish refugees anywhere in the world. Today, our clients and staff at HIAS come from diverse faiths, ethnicities, and backgrounds. We bring our experience, history, and values to our work across five continents, ensuring that refugees receive the vital services and opportunities they need to thrive.



OUR VALUES

Welcome • Acogimiento • Hospitalité • הכנסת אורחים (Hachnasat Orchim)

We Welcome the Stranger

“You shall love the stranger for you were strangers...”

(Deuteronomy 10:19). We are told 36 times in the Torah to love those who are strangers. For HIAS, welcome begins at our door and extends through our work with refugees, partners, and allies around the globe.

Justice • Justicia • Justice • צדק (Tzedek)

We Pursue Justice

“Justice, justice shall you pursue.” (Deuteronomy 16:20). At HIAS, we seek justice every day. Justice demands that we act for fairness and equity for all.

Empathy • Empatía • Empathie • חסד (Chesed)

We Approach our Clients with Empathy

At HIAS, our clients come from diverse faiths, ethnicities, and backgrounds, and we understand that their stories are our story. We see our past and our future in their search for safety and a future for generations to come. “The stranger who resides among you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love the stranger as yourself.” (Leviticus 19:33).

Partnership • Compañerismo • Coopération • חברותא (Chevruta)

We Believe in Changing the World through Partnership

“Two are better than one...For if one falls, the other will lift up their friend.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9). HIAS works humbly in partnership with others to create a more moral, ethical and just world for refugees. We collaborate with organizations and institutions that share our mission. We walk side by side with refugees and all those we serve, accompanying them in their journey towards safety and opportunity.

Courage • Coraje • Courage • אומץ (Ometz)

We Act with Courage to Build a Better World

At HIAS, we speak truth to power. We stand with courageous conviction for what is right and what will help the people we serve. The great sage Hillel challenged us to act for others and not wait a single moment to do what is right: “If not now, when?” (Pirkei Avot 1:14).

Resilience • Resiliencia • Résilience • רוח (Ruach)

We Adapt and Thrive, Continuously Demonstrating our Resilience

“A righteous person falls down seven times and gets up.” (Proverbs 24:16). We are inspired every day by the resilience of refugees, asylum seekers, and displaced people worldwide. HIAS has adapted and grown stronger as we have overcome many formidable challenges throughout our history.

HIAS' IMPACT AROUND THE WORLD

Over **132,000** people benefited from HIAS' mental health and psychosocial services programming

UNITED STATES

New York • Silver Spring (HQ) • Washington

332,000 forcibly displaced people and vulnerable Venezuelans received support in Venezuela

25,000 people benefited from HIAS Mexico's legal protection, GBV, and psychosocial services

MEXICO

Ciudad Juarez • Matamorros
Monterrey • Nuevo Laredo
Mexicali • Tijuana

VENEZUELA

Apure • Barinas • Caracas
Machiques • Maracaibo
Puerto Ayacucho • Puerto Ordaz
San Antonio • San Cristobal
Santa Elena de Uairen

ARUBA

Oranjestad

PANAMA

Panama City

COSTA RICA

San Jose • La Cruz • Los Chiles

GUYANA

Georgetown

194,000 people in Ecuador benefited from HIAS' economic inclusion programs

COLOMBIA

Barranquilla • Bogota

ECUADOR

Ambato • Cuenca • Esmeraldas
Guayaquil • Huaquillas • Ibarra
Lago Agrio • Machala • Manta
Quito • San Lorenzo
Santo Domingo • Tulcan

PERU

Lima

39,000 people in Peru received basic needs, GBV prevention and response, and psychosocial support

3,400 people received support via HIAS' new Guyana office for basic needs, legal protection, and GBV prevention and response

BELGIUM
Brussels

AUSTRIA
Vienna

UKRAINE
HIAS partner R2P
(Right to Protection)

16,800 people received legal protection support in Greece

HIAS' economic inclusion programs supported over **213,000** people worldwide.

HIAS' gender based violence prevention and response programs reached over **93,500** people.

GREECE
Athens • Lesbos

ISRAEL
Tel Aviv

2,700 displaced people in Israel received legal protection assistance and representation

16,000 asylum seekers in Israel were impacted indirectly through HIAS' strategic litigation work

Over **10,000** people in Chad participated in GBV awareness and sensitization programming

CHAD

N'Djamena and 12 Refugee camps along the eastern border with Sudan:
Djabal • Goz Amir • Treguine • Breidjing
Farchana • Gaga • Touloum • Mile • Kounoungou
Iridimi • Amnabak • Oure Cassoni • Kerfi Site

Over **2,300** people in Kenya received mental health support

KENYA

Nairobi:
Eastleigh • Kayole
Kawangware • Mimosa

HIAS' legal protection services provided direct support to over **93,000** individuals.

HIAS served approximately **569,000** women and girls directly.

HIAS UNITES JEWISH COMMUNITIES TO ADVOCATE FOR WELCOME

Even during the pandemic, and perhaps because of what the pandemic reminded us about the importance of home, the Jewish community stayed focused on advocating for refugees. HIAS worked with advocates in coalitions across the country to push back against efforts to dismantle the refugee program and the asylum system in the U.S.

In early February, before the shutdowns, Austin Jews for Refugees assembled more than 300 people at the Shalom Austin JCC. The program drew attention to the dangerous and chaotic situation faced by asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border and the Texas Governor's decision to stop refugees from resettling in the state.

When COVID-19 made the world go virtual, HIAS continued to solidify partnerships with activists nationwide and expanded our online programs. Under incredibly challenging circumstances, HIAS produced and presented 99 events, including briefings about refugees and asylum seekers, advocacy campaigns, and voter educational programs. HIAS' signature annual program, Refugee Shabbat, invites congregations, organizations, and individuals around the country to dedicate a Shabbat experience to refugees and asylum seekers. In 2020/5780, this special Shabbat moved online with a broad range of opportunities for remote learning, engagement, and volunteer service.

In May, HIAS joined 192 national, state, and local Jewish organizations to ask Congress to ensure that our country's COVID-19 emergency response measures included refugees and other vulnerable groups. HIAS advocated for stimulus payments and cash and medical assistance, as well as emergency food and housing. In addition, HIAS urged the government to take a humane approach and release people held in immigrant detention centers where they were at serious risk of contracting COVID-19.

Also in May, HIAS denounced the U.S. government for using the pandemic as an excuse to shut down the border and expel people without due process. These actions violated longstanding national immigration laws, which guarantee individuals the right to apply for asylum in the U.S. The U.S. refugee resettlement program was halted, with only a few emergency cases arriving. HIAS continued to urge the U.S. Departments of State and Homeland Security to resume refugee admissions while taking required safety precautions.

In July, the administration announced new asylum regulations to exclude asylum seekers who fled from or traveled through a country where highly contagious diseases are prevalent—which at the time was most countries. HIAS held a briefing attended by 400 advocates and helped generate nearly 200 opposing comments submitted to the federal government.

In 2020, the Trump administration set the refugee admissions cap at 15,000, an all-time historic low. In response to this attempt

to further weaken the U.S. refugee admissions program, HIAS jumped into action to advocate for an admissions cap of at least 95,000, the historic average. HIAS advocated with Congressional offices so that they could pressure the administration, and we galvanized our grassroots base through community briefing opportunities, op-eds, action alerts, and high profile speaking engagements, so that American Jews around the country could advocate directly with their elected officials to pressure the administration to raise the PD.

In December, HIAS celebrated Hanukkah with our first-ever National Jews for Refugees Assembly, bringing together 1,100 individuals, rabbis, congregations, and organizations committed to refugees and asylum seekers via Zoom and Facebook Live for an hour of learning, candlelighting, and action. Guest speakers included actors and activists Mandy Patinkin and Kathryn Grody, who shared their passion for refugee rights and lit their Hanukkah candles with us; refugee advocate Teklit Michael; and award-winning Jewish performance and ritual artist Shira Kline, who infused the evening with music.



CONNECTIONS VIA TECHNOLOGY: KEY TO RESETTLEMENT IN THE U.S.

Despite a national moratorium on immigration in March which lasted several months, HIAS and partner affiliates managed to meet the needs of refugees who were disproportionately affected by the pandemic, offering emergency assistance and services in the face of profoundly difficult circumstances.

HIAS pays close attention to addressing the social isolation and potential deterioration of the mental health of resettled refugees. The 2020 shutdowns and shelter in place policies in the U.S. made it necessary to address how best to keep newly resettled refugees psychologically and physically healthy. This meant that connecting refugees to the world electronically became the center of HIAS' resettlement efforts. Digital communication was essential to acclimating resettled refugees to their new lives, alleviating the social isolation created by the pandemic, and delivering necessary information and COVID-19 updates directly to them in their native languages.

In order to receive health and safety messages during the pandemic and access to our services—including help in applying for benefits, delivering psychosocial services, and meetings with case managers—refugees needed personal devices that many did not have. Recognizing this gap, HIAS distributed hundreds of Chromebooks to affiliates nationwide,

which were provided to clients and fostered a connection to crucial information for those who needed it most.

Our affiliates sought to identify and provide clients with the support they needed to make the best use of their new devices. Newcomers to the world of technology experienced a steep learning curve, as many had limited experience with computers and were learning English at the same time. To this end, HIAS developed a simple set of training videos to explain how to turn on and navigate the devices provided. Once online, clients could attend Zoom meetings with community outreach leaders, receive support or instructions for applying for benefits, and learn about other ways HIAS was available to help them.

Entrepreneurs in HIAS' Microenterprise Development (MED) program, many of whom were just starting to get their businesses up and running, encountered significant setbacks as a result of the pandemic. Given the uncertainty around the economic climate, some entrepreneurs who were actively seeking business or credit-building loans, or in the process of applying for a loan, had to put their business aspirations on hold to address more urgent and basic needs.

Because of COVID-19-related restrictions, MED entrepreneurs also found it harder to access traditional markets. With the rapid

HIAS helped resettle
1,273 individuals in
the U.S.

growth in e-commerce as shoppers stayed home, the new reality required vendors to shift quickly to digital marketing through social media, websites, and other online platforms to sell their products. Recognizing this growing area of need for our clients, HIAS developed a partnership with Wix, a website development company, to launch a new workshop series on digital marketing. These workshops helped refugee entrepreneurs establish and expand their online presence and reach more customers through e-commerce.

Keeping newly arrived families connected to their communities was essential to clients' mental health and resilience. In July, when it was clear there would be no summer camp for children, Jewish Family Services (JFS) of Western Massachusetts developed "Camp in a Box," putting together 150 boxes for refugee families holding dozens of activities — tailored for each child in the household. The boxes contained planting activities, STEM games, scavenger hunts, and sports equipment. HIAS helped JFS curate each of the 150 boxes to fit the families' socioeconomic realities and housing situations. For some families, weekly Zoom parties allowed translators to explain the activities and maintain an extra point of connection.

HIAS and our partner affiliates ensured that newly arrived clients were connected to each other and to their communities via digital platforms. These new skills and tools will help with social integration into life in the U.S. long after the pandemic ends.

Afghan Entrepreneurs Bring Traditional Asian and African Goods to Cleveland

Laid off from their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, two entrepreneurs from Afghanistan, Abdul and Bibi*, started their own business. With a loan from HIAS and support from our partner US Together, Abdul and Bibi launched Asia Star Clothing & Houseware. Both owners earned bachelors degrees in business and owned their own stores in Afghanistan before being resettled in northeast Ohio. Asia Star Clothing & Houseware serves the Asian and African immigrant and refugee communities as well as other globally-minded residents in the greater Cleveland area by providing vibrant traditional Asian and African clothing and unique housewares. Many members of their customer base had previously driven hours to find similar products because there was no local supplier. Abdul and Bibi's store addressed a real community need and made shopping for these treasured items more convenient and meaningful for all.


**Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*



Refugee Entrepreneurs Go from Farmers Market to Restaurant Ownership

With support from HIAS' MED program and US Together, *Habesha Ethiopian and Eritrean Restaurant* opened in Cleveland. *Habesha* is co-owned by Kia, Dani, and Zala,* three refugee entrepreneurs from Ethiopia who first sought a loan from HIAS to establish a booth at a local farmers market. The owners increased their revenue every week by testing out different price points and incorporating customer feedback into their menu offerings. Through HIAS' market access project, Kia, Dani, and Zala used the farmers market to conduct research in preparation for opening their restaurant, which began as a pop-up. Building on their momentum, and undaunted by the challenges of working in food service during the pandemic, they decided it was time to launch a permanent brick-and-mortar restaurant in October. Two months later, on Christmas Day, employees of *Habesha* offered free meals to refugees and the homeless, giving back to the community that had nurtured their dream and supported their success.

**Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*



Asylee Finds Work During Pandemic After Sixteen Job Interviews

For four months during the COVID-19 crisis, Mohamed*, an asylee from Mali, struggled to find stable work. HIAS facilitated 16 in-person and telephone job interviews for him at warehouses, pharmacies, and restaurants. Facing unstable housing, HIAS provided Mohamed with emergency cash assistance through private funding, but he was forced to leave most of his belongings in storage and move in with friends until he found work. In September, HIAS connected Mohamed with a new opportunity, and he is now working full-time in a warehouse in New York earning \$15 per hour.

**Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*

RESETTLEMENT PARTNERS

CALIFORNIA

Jewish Family Service of San Diego
Jewish Family & Community Services East Bay, Concord
Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley, Los Gatos

DELAWARE

Jewish Family Services of Delaware, Wilmington

FLORIDA

Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services, Clearwater

MASSACHUSETTS

Jewish Family Service of Metrowest, Framingham
Jewish Family Service of Western Massachusetts, Springfield

MICHIGAN

Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County, Ann Arbor

NEW YORK

Jewish Family Services of Western New York, Buffalo
HIAS New York, New York City and Westchester

NORTH CAROLINA

Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency

OHIO

US Together, Inc., Columbus, Cleveland, and Toledo

PENNSYLVANIA

HIAS Pennsylvania, Philadelphia
Jewish Family and Community Services,
Pittsburgh

WASHINGTON

Jewish Family Service of Greater Seattle, Kent

WISCONSIN

Jewish Social Services of Madison



HIAS PROVIDES CRITICAL LEGAL SUPPORT

In the face of a global pandemic, HIAS' legal teams in Silver Spring and New York City never stopped working to meet clients' needs. We continued providing legal services to as many clients as we could, given limited in-person access and the need to rely on technology that was new to many of our clients.

An attorney is often an asylum seeker's first source of support and basic information for navigating American life. In 2020, HIAS New York and Silver Spring added two case manager positions per office, each of whom manages between 12 and 30 cases at any given time. Case managers provide wrap-around services to clients that ensure their integration into their new lives. These services include researching benefits and accessing insurance.

Refugees are required to apply for permanent legal status ("green cards") a year after their arrival in the U.S. This is a complicated process that involves many forms and declarations.

The pandemic required the HIAS legal team to provide services remotely, which was considerably more time

consuming than working with clients in person. HIAS provided clients with free access to DocuSign, an online document review and signing tool. When in certain circumstances DocuSign was not allowed, attorneys went in person to help clients complete the necessary documentation. By meeting clients where they were, HIAS was able to get hundreds of documents signed and helped nearly 100 refugees apply for green cards—a critical step toward citizenship.

During the pandemic, HIAS broadened our robust pro bono networks, providing 26 training webinars to attorneys all over the country and hosting green card clinics for refugees. To build on this foundation, we hosted two informal "Coffee Talk with the Lawyers" sessions for our pro bono network, providing up-to-the-minute information about emerging issues in immigration law.

Our pro bono program enables HIAS to build our internal mentoring skills and develop, assess, and fine-tune our trainings, resources, and toolkits. By maintaining a pro bono program that supports and is supported by our legal teams in New York City and Silver Spring, MD, we can build and launch new pilot projects, which can eventually be replicated by affiliates. HIAS' pro bono program also has a national component, which utilizes pro bono attorneys across the country who can work remotely to support HIAS' work along the U.S.-Mexico border. Through this national

program, we trained and mentored pro bono attorneys who represented 11 asylum seekers in detention centers along the U.S.-Mexico border who were appealing the denial of their claims to the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA).

In the spring, the immigration courts closed and hearings were postponed, which created an enormous backlog of cases. HIAS launched a pilot project to train and mentor attorneys who kept the cases of clients up-to-date until such time that they would be called for an interview.

Whether finding ways to keep a complicated process in motion by integrating online and in-person connections with clients, keeping casework current when the legal world grinds to a halt, or supporting clients as they make their initial forays into American life, HIAS recognizes the tremendous potential of each one of our clients to enrich their new home community.

In 2020, HIAS' legal work in the US prevented asylum seekers and victims of torture from being deported to countries where they would face harm.

Ana* and her 8-year-old son, Santos,* escaped **Honduras** because Ana's violent and abusive ex-partner was stalking her. Ana was also a political activist who spoke out against the government. As a result, the police would not help her, even after she reported her ex-partner's abuse. They arrived at the U.S.-Mexico border in June 2018 and were separated by U.S. immigration officers. Santos was placed in foster care, separated from his mother for a month. After they were reunited, HIAS took their case as part of a pro bono partnership, with HIAS mentoring the volunteer attorney on their asylum case. The HIAS pro bono attorney won the case. Ana is now enrolled in a women's support group through HIAS' Silver Spring office. They are grateful for the full array of services they have received and for the safety and freedom they enjoy in Maryland.

**Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*



HIAS INNOVATES ACROSS THE BORDER FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

HIAS' presence along both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border and strong organizational partnerships effectively met the needs of asylum seekers during an extremely challenging time for people seeking asylum in the U.S.

Under the previous administration's Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), also known as "Remain in Mexico," the government returned asylum seekers at the southern border to Mexico to wait for their cases to move forward. Since the start of MPP in 2017, over 70,000 asylum seekers have been sent back to Mexico under this program. People returned to Mexico, where they waited in cities along the border, and faced serious safety risks. Government humanitarian aid was scarce, shelters were overwhelmed, and the prospect of a long, complicated bureaucratic process left many in precarious physical, mental, and legal situations.

To educate asylum seekers on their rights as they faced the challenges of MPP and other barriers to asylum, HIAS collaborated with the Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC) and the Feerick Center for Social Justice at Fordham University to create an easy to understand, animated, "Know Your Rights" video. The informational video was translated into four languages, including two indigenous Guatemalan languages. It was disseminated widely through shared video links and WhatsApp.

In early 2020, HIAS joined a pilot program called "Puentes Libres" (Bridges of Freedom), a partnership with El Paso State Senator José Rodríguez, the Hispanic Federation, Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services, and the Municipal Government of Ciudad. Through this partnership, refugees and asylum seekers who had been returned to Mexico were given access to a secure and reliable channel of communication with legal counsel in the United States, helping to secure their fundamental right to fair representation. To further enhance communication, The Hispanic Federation donated 50 laptop computers that included video technology, making it possible for asylum seekers and attorneys to communicate remotely via secure internet connection.

An asylum seeker with legal representation is five times more likely to win asylum than one without an attorney's help. Pre-pandemic, HIAS provided legal representation to asylees through our Pro Bono program, with clients coming before the four MPP tent courts where a judge heard cases. In March 2020, in response to COVID-19, the courts were closed, and all pending MPP hearings were suspended.

When the courts closed, HIAS shifted to a remote model, connecting pro bono attorneys with asylum seekers. Volunteers translated documents, and pro bono attorneys completed applications and supported asylum seekers representing themselves.

In 2020, HIAS doubled the number of our Border Fellows, attorneys placed in non-profit legal organizations along the U.S. southern border, in order to increase our capacity for legal representation of asylum seekers in and out of detention and to strengthen the cross-border pathway of referrals. Fellows were placed in San Diego, California with Jewish Family Services; in El Paso, Texas with Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services, and El Paso Immigration Collaborative (EPIC); and in Brownsville, Texas with South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project (ProBAR).

“As a Jewish person who has sometimes struggled connecting to my background, I feel deeply proud to be working on a project that embodies the true spirit of ‘never again’ and ‘tikkun olam.’ I am grateful to be part of a Jewish community that is fighting for the entire human family.”

—Max Brooks, HIAS Border Fellow at El Paso Immigration Collaborative (EPIC)



Cross-Border Referral Brings Sexual Assault Survivor to Safety

HIAS' Border Fellow at Las Americas represented Alicia* a 41-year-old woman from Guatemala and her 11 year-old daughter, Cristina*. Alicia was the victim of a chemical acid attack by kidnapers in Juarez who held her hostage for several days and sexually assaulted her in front of her daughter. After escaping her kidnapers, Alicia was found unconscious by the police with her legs covered in second-degree burns. When she went to the Port of Entry and explained to U.S. Customs and Border Protection that she could not return to the country where she had been tortured, the U.S. authorities sent her back to Mexico. Through a partnership with Families Belong Together, HIAS' Border Fellow was able to obtain an expert opinion of her burn wounds and establish the urgent need for specialized medical attention that she could not receive in Juarez. Eventually, Alicia and Cristina were successfully removed from MPP, and Alicia received the treatment that she needed. Both are working to rebuild their lives and grateful that they are together in safety.

**Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*

Focusing on legal protection assistance supported by GBV and MHPSS services, HIAS Mexico served over **25,000** people *directly*.

Globally, HIAS' legal protection services (including border monitoring, legal information and know-your-rights sessions, legal assistance and representation, and strategic litigation) provided **direct support to over 93,000 individuals**.



BORDER FELLOWS BOLSTER PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

“The support we’ve received from the HIAS Border Fellowship has truly transformed the work of Las Americas and our work on the border. It has raised the caliber of the legal work we can and should be providing to asylum seekers. HIAS has truly strengthened Las Americas and our border region in so many positive ways. We are hopeful for continued partnership to serve immigrants and refugees.”

—Linda Rivas, Executive Director of Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center

“The HIAS Border Fellow has had a very positive impact on our organization. The Fellow has increased our capacity to provide pro bono legal assistance to the most vulnerable migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border, including migrants who were victims of severe crimes while forced to wait in Mexico under the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), and helping to reunify families separated due to harmful immigration policies implemented by the former administration. It would be difficult to keep up with the demand for legal assistance from migrants who cannot afford an attorney without the HIAS Border Fellow.”

—Luis Gonzalez, Supervising Immigration Attorney at Jewish Family Service of San Diego

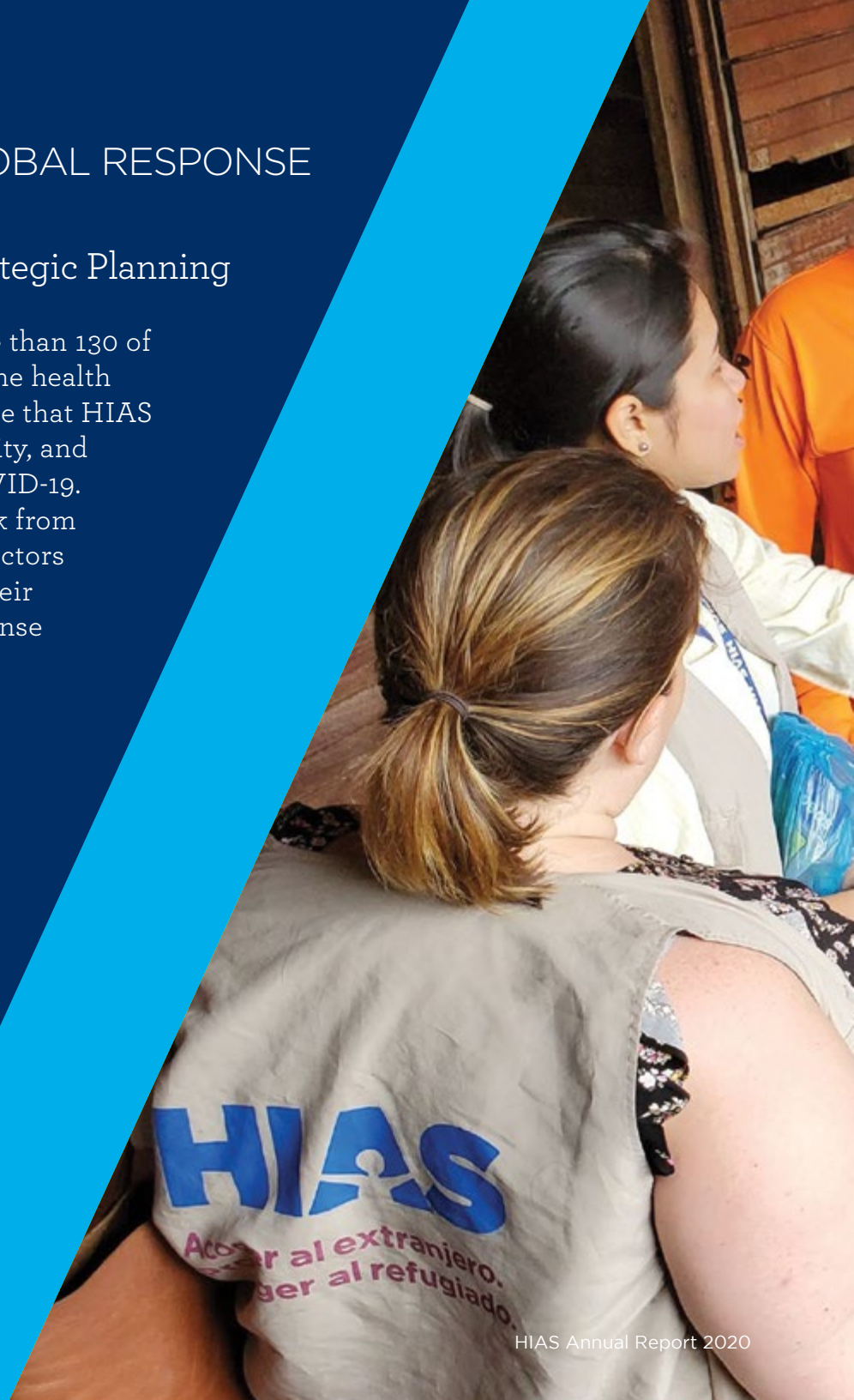
“Without the support of the HIAS Border Fellows grant, Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services (DMRS) would not have been able to serve individuals stuck in Mexico due to the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP). Current funding restricts DMRS attorneys to serving individuals detained in Texas and Southern New Mexico. When the MPP program suddenly affected tens of thousands of individuals outside our area, we attempted to pivot services but could not due to funding restrictions. The HIAS Border Fellows program was the answer to our prayers. We have been able to serve hundreds of families through this funding and ensure that we did our small part.”

—Melissa Lopez, Executive Director of Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services (DMRS)

THE PROTECTION CRISIS: HIAS INITIATES GLOBAL RESPONSE

Responding Nimble to a Global Crisis With Early Strategic Planning

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected at least 200 countries—more than 130 of which host significant refugee populations. Almost immediately, the health crisis of COVID-19 became a critical protection crisis for the people that HIAS serves. Responding to the crisis became a top organizational priority, and in May HIAS launched our Global Programmatic Strategy for COVID-19. After performing a rapid needs assessment to ensure that feedback from displaced and vulnerable populations was incorporated, HIAS directors worked closely with our country office teams to support them in their response planning and implementation. The comprehensive response focused on impact in our four core programmatic areas of mental health, gender based violence prevention and care, economic inclusion, and legal services.





SUSTAINING ECONOMIC INCLUSION WHILE THE WORLD SHUTS DOWN

The COVID-19 shutdowns immediately and disproportionately affected displaced people around the world who are too often the first to lose their jobs. Many refugees work in the informal economy which in many places shut down seemingly overnight.

Our first response was to address the challenge of access to food, medicine, and other basic needs, all due to a sudden loss of income. HIAS quickly delivered cash and voucher assistance (CVA) which provided emergency funds to clients without the need for face-to-face contact. In Latin America, HIAS partnered with Banco Pichincha to create a product which delivered CVA codes directly into mobile phones and email. In just one month, HIAS **Ecuador** delivered multipurpose cash assistance and food vouchers to more than 3,000 families. We also created a hotline to give clients the ability to easily communicate with HIAS staff.

In **Israel**, nearly 80% of asylum seekers lost their livelihood because of shutdowns. The HIAS team mobilized quickly and, after only two weeks, made CVA aid available—the majority of which was used to pay rent and avoid eviction. In **Kenya**,

HIAS provided financial assistance through mobile money transfers—funds which are downloaded directly to a SIM card.

With long-term financial independence as our overarching goal, HIAS provides financial education and job training in addition to emergency cash. Our **Guyana** office offered Facebook Live sessions to guide refugees in making sound, forward-thinking spending and saving choices. Weekly topics included, “Financial Health” and “What is a Budget?”, which reached almost 1,500 people. For clients who needed to adapt their business in the context of the pandemic and move to a virtual platform, HIAS created an Entrepreneurship School 2.0 to provide educational programming about digital marketing and management of social media.

Globally, HIAS’ economic inclusion programs supported over 213,000 people directly and indirectly.

In **Panama, Peru, and Ecuador**, HIAS also used technology to assist our clients in achieving independence and stability. We partnered with a startup called SkillLab to use SkillMap, a skill-assessment app that provides a way

for refugees to identify and document their professional skills in their native languages and explore career paths in their host countries. The SkillMap app generates and translates comprehensive skill profiles, mapping refugees’ skill sets to nearly 3,000 occupations.

In response to the global crisis created by the pandemic, HIAS' response teams quickly mobilized technology, private sector partnerships, and cash and voucher assistance programs to meet the needs of thousands of refugees and displaced persons.

In Ecuador, HIAS' economic inclusion programs helped an **estimated 194,000** people directly and indirectly.

SkillMap App is an Effective Tool in Securing Employment

In Ecuador, René* is currently working for a car parts company as a warehouse assistant after using SkillMap to develop a CV that highlighted his math and administrative skills.

Anderson* used SkillMap to identify and enhance technical skills that helped him prepare for hiring interviews, and ultimately secured a job working in sales of electrical equipment and materials.

Overall, nearly a quarter of participants who were referred to a job opportunity with the assistance of SkillMap were formally hired after one month.



HIAS implements mental health and psychosocial services programming worldwide, benefiting a total of over **132,000** people.

Emergency Funds Have an Immediate Positive Impact on Refugees

Daniela,* a Venezuelan single mother of three, came to Guayaquil, **Ecuador** because her children did not have enough to eat. She contacted HIAS and met remotely with a caseworker who provided Daniela with a CVA bank code so that she could quickly secure cash from an ATM. The immediate cash allowed her to buy food, pay some of her rent, and purchase masks that she needed to help protect her family. Daniela told HIAS that the process was easy and made her feel safe.

**Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*

PROTECTING MENTAL HEALTH BY REACHING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

A core part of HIAS' work includes community-based mental health services, empowering communities, groups, families, and individuals to care for themselves and one another. Our programming enables refugees to address the grief, fear, isolation, and distress that can result from forced flight, surviving or witnessing violence, loss or separation from family, and the daily stress of living on the margins of foreign cities or in refugee camps.

In 2020, HIAS' country offices developed and implemented a variety of virtual responses to ensure that clients received education, information, and mental health support during the pandemic's restrictions. HIAS found ways to connect with local communities to deliver services and support, primarily through Facebook and Instagram, while finding ways to protect confidentiality.

HIAS' **Panama** office launched an Instagram account in March early in the pandemic, and within two weeks had close to 3,000 followers; we began posting daily messages that gave an already at-risk population tips on how best to stay safe and manage the mental health stressors of lockdown. In **Peru**, staff conducted targeted outreach to clients through social media

and provided Facebook Live sessions on positive parenting skills while under stress.

In **Kenya**, HIAS conducted over 675 assessments on the phone and provided children and adults with ongoing virtual counseling. For victims of domestic violence without access to their own phones, we found ways to meet the ongoing challenge of communicating with clients and finding privacy to provide support.

In **Chad**, the majority of refugees are in camps, with little to no access to devices. While this limited HIAS' ability to communicate electronically, support groups met outside in person. Support teams increased the frequency of outside meetings and decreased the number of people in each session to ensure safe and reliable services.

In **Venezuela**, HIAS communicated with clients via WhatsApp and texts with informative brochures and information about positive mental health habits and virtual mental health workshops.

The social media and technological adaptations made during the pandemic will have lasting positive impacts on mental health services going forward. These adaptive changes will remain as an alternative or complement to face-to-face interventions whenever difficulties related to physical access arise or even by choice, according to each case's preferences.



HIAS served over **2,300** people in Kenya with community-based individual and group MHPSS support.

A New Partnership for Integrated Psychosocial Interventions

In partnership with Columbia University and University of Copenhagen, HIAS launched a study to evaluate integrated psychosocial interventions to reduce psychological distress and intimate partner violence among refugees and other displaced people in **Ecuador** and **Panama**. The project is led by teams across four sites in those two countries. Researchers will explore the intersections of protection and health priorities such as economic livelihood, gender norms, and existing community-based support mechanisms.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: KEEPING WOMEN AND GIRLS SAFE DURING A PANDEMIC

Throughout the year, HIAS increased our support for survivors of GBV, and built strong partnerships with women-led organizations that promote and protect the rights of women and girls. HIAS is committed to ending what has been called the “shadow pandemic” of gender-based violence.

HIAS’ GBV Prevention and Response Programs reached over **93,500** people.

restricted movement and social isolation measures meant to contain the virus also fueled an exponential rise in gender-based violence (GBV). Many women were forced into “lockdown” at home with their abusers, with limited options for seeking safety elsewhere.

HIAS staff faced significant challenges providing remote counseling to women survivors who still lived with their abusers, given the dearth of privacy to discuss what was happening to them. Because the healthcare system was overburdened by COVID-19 cases, it was even more difficult to support women who suffered from violence.

COVID-19 had a particularly devastating effect on at-risk women and girls. The

HIAS expanded its hotline services in **Kenya** to meet the increased needs of survivors of sexual and domestic violence. HIAS **Panama** created virtual support groups as a way to combat the isolation that comes with abuse. In **Peru**, HIAS used its public-private partnership with Airbnb to provide emergency housing for survivors. HIAS **Chad** engaged refugee girls in life skills education and retreats where they learned about reproductive health, children’s rights, and human rights.

Throughout Latin America, HIAS partnered with UNICEF to develop a psychosocial support model specifically intended for refugee and migrant girls and adolescent survivors of GBV. The model includes developing best advocacy and communication mechanisms that amplify these young voices to make their particular situation more visible.

Access to shelter is generally limited for people who are displaced throughout Latin America, and lack of housing was exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the Open Homes Project, in partnership with Airbnb, HIAS met refugees’ urgent shelter needs in **Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru**. By giving refugee families a safe and reliable place to stay for a few weeks, the Open Homes Project allows HIAS to closely follow refugee families and to ensure that they can receive the holistic support services that HIAS offers. These services include support for survivors of gender-based violence, legal information and protection, access to employment and mental health services, and support for basic needs such as food, medicine and clothing.

On November 25, in observance of the UN's international 16 Days of Activism, calling for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls, HIAS launched a global 16 Days social media campaign to increase awareness of people affected by GBV, child marriage, and sex trafficking. HIAS embedded team members in communities to train community leaders on how to recognize signs of GBV and to determine appropriate services for assuring the quality of response for GBV survivors.

Airbnb Accommodation Provides Shelter for GBV Survivor

Edglymar* is a 26 years old Venezuelan refugee who survived gender-based violence. She was brutally beaten and mistreated by her attacker. When she arrived at her Airbnb accommodation she was physically sick and emotionally devastated. After several weeks of assistance from the HIAS team and the Open Homes Program, she started healing from her trauma. When she left the Airbnb accommodation, she was stronger and optimistic, and planned to start a small business on her own.

**Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*

In Chad, HIAS staff conducted **GBV awareness and sensitization activities** reaching over **10,000** people in displaced communities.



GBV Survivor Finds Support in LGBTQI Kenyan Community

Jane*, a 47-year-old refugee from **Uganda**, fled to Kenya with her two daughters to escape an abusive husband who would rape, beat, and verbally abuse her. Jane was a lesbian who had been forcibly married. HIAS collaborated with the Women's Refugee Commission on a project designed to increase solidarity between the LGBTQI host community and LGBTQI refugees in Nairobi. The project brought members of the LGBTQI Kenyan and refugee communities together for conversations to share and understand challenges and reduce misperceptions. The collaboration included financial support that helped 130 LGBTQI individuals access food and medication, pay rent, and purchase Personal Protective Equipment. Through this collaboration, Jane connected to the community and received the support she needed to keep safe and healthy and feel less isolated.

**Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*

ADVOCATING FOR THE LEGAL RIGHTS OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

COVID-19 lockdowns, coupled with strict regulations put in place to reduce immigration, created challenges to the basic protections of refugees and asylum seekers all over the world. Despite these challenges, HIAS' legal protection services—including border monitoring, legal information and know-your-rights sessions, legal assistance and representation, and strategic litigation—provided support to over 93,000 people around the globe.

In **Israel**, many asylum seekers lost their jobs during COVID-19 lockdowns. But even before the lockdown, they had been experiencing pressure from reduced income due to Israel's Deposit Law that required companies that employed asylum seekers to withhold 20% of their wages—to be returned only upon leaving the country. The Tel Aviv University (TAU) Clinic and other NGOs filed a petition challenging the constitutionality of the law and brought the matter to Israel's Supreme Court. HIAS joined the petition, representing 11 Israeli women's rights organizations that argued that the law would specifically and additionally harm women and children. In 2020, the court

struck down the law, finding it unconstitutional and ruling that it caused “clear, tangible and significant harm to the property rights of workers.”

After the court's decision, asylum seekers partnered with HIAS and other aid agencies to lobby the Israeli government to release the wages withheld by the Deposit Law. HIAS recruited eight pro bono attorneys who specialize in labor law to represent several cases of asylum seekers whose deposits were deducted by their employers but never transferred to their deposit account. HIAS has helped asylum seekers claim over \$65,000 in deposit funds.

In **Greece**, thousands of refugees were in overcrowded camps offering little in the way of even basic services and posing a high risk of COVID-19 transmission. In March, the Greek government placed the camps on the Greek islands on lockdown, trapping more than 37,000 people while denying them access to the aid groups that were working to keep them safe. That same month, HIAS, a leading legal aid provider in

In 2020, HIAS legal protection programs in Israel served over **2,700** displaced people through legal assistance and representation, and impacted another **16,000** asylum seekers through work on strategic litigation successfully challenging Israel's Deposit Law.

Greece, joined 20 other humanitarian organizations to demand that Greece ease crowding in the refugee camps and provide refugees access to basic health and safety measures. In October, Moria, a refugee camp on the island of Lesbos, caught fire and many inhabitants lost all of their belongings, including their documentation. HIAS Greece stepped in quickly, sending lawyers, social workers, and translators to determine needs and to identify the most vulnerable asylum seekers who needed to be relocated from Lesbos for their safety.

In April, the Greek government published a Joint Ministerial Decision that changed regulations for nonprofits working to help refugees in Greece. The decision put into effect onerous requirements for the registration and certification of organizations doing migration work—all part of a broader effort to reduce support for asylum seekers in the country. HIAS Greece published a legal analysis of the decision, concluding the decision gave excessive discretionary powers to government authorities that would likely have a chilling

In 2020, HIAS legal protection programs in Greece served over **1,800** people through legal protection support and reached an additional **15,000** people through informational and outreach materials.

effect on civil society. The Expert Council on NGO Law of the Council of Europe affirmed HIAS Greece's observations and recommended that the Joint Ministerial Decision be substantially revised in order to bring the legal framework in line with the European standards.

HIAS Europe Engages Jewish Students

Just before the pandemic, the European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS) and HIAS Europe brought together 25 Jewish youth activists from across Europe to learn about the plight of refugees and challenges to the right to international protection. The young leaders came to Brussels for a seminar where they received training on advocacy and met with NGOs, European Commission officials, and members of the European Parliament. They considered ways that they could get involved in refugee causes, such as serving as mentors to refugee students or facilitating their integration on university campuses. "We reflected on the responsibility we hold, as young Jews, to bring help and relief to those who need it," said Elias Dray, an EUJS member.

RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES AROUND THE WORLD

Throughout 2020 HIAS continued to respond to emergencies and crises around the world—helping the most vulnerable forcibly displaced populations and host communities access critical, lifesaving services and supporting their recovery.

During influxes of Sudanese refugees into **Chad**, HIAS' team on the ground mobilized quickly to provide hot meals to those fleeing from conflict and provided transport, relocation, and registration of refugees into the Kouchaguine Moura camp. HIAS' team also continuously monitored border areas and consulted with newly arriving groups, watching for critical protection risks to their safety, security, and dignity. The team worked to ensure that the most vulnerable and at-risk people had services and support systems in place—including women, girls, and other survivors of gender-based violence.

After fires destroyed the Moria Reception and Identification Center in Lesbos, **Greece**—the largest refugee camp in Europe—HIAS quickly activated its team to reach out to existing clients. The fire left approximately 12,000 people without safe shelter and access to critical services. HIAS, which had already been providing free legal assistance to asylum-seekers in Greece and advocating for human rights in the country, conducted a rapid assessment and mobilized its lawyers, social workers, and translators to locate their clients and find out what they most needed.

Meanwhile, HIAS also continued to serve vulnerable communities impacted by long-standing, protracted crises—such as in **Venezuela**. HIAS helped individuals both within Venezuela and regionally gain access to emergency psychosocial support, provided services to women, girls, and others affected by gender-based violence, and increased access to safe and clean water and critically needed hygiene items—all the more important amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, HIAS also re-committed to proactively responding to more emergencies around the world, and commenced a five-year strategic process to enable the organization to quickly mobilize when disaster strikes and better prepare communities for these events. Indeed, over the years, HIAS has evolved from a refugee resettlement agency to a humanitarian organization that provides comprehensive protection to refugees and forcibly displaced people—and the decision to strengthen emergency response capacity is a natural outgrowth of this evolution. This builds upon HIAS' long history of responding to crises, including the Hungarian uprising and refugee crisis, the Cuban Revolution in the mid-1950s, and more recent actions like the humanitarian evacuation of Kosovar refugees in 1999 and the emergency resettlement of Yemeni Jews in 2010.

To lead this effort, in 2020, HIAS established its Emergency Department, a team bringing over 25 years of experience in global emergency response expertise to the organization. This department has launched a comprehensive process to integrate emergency preparedness and response capacity throughout the organization. With the expertise of this new department, HIAS will better meet the needs of the most vulnerable forcibly displaced persons and host communities around the world during times of emergency.



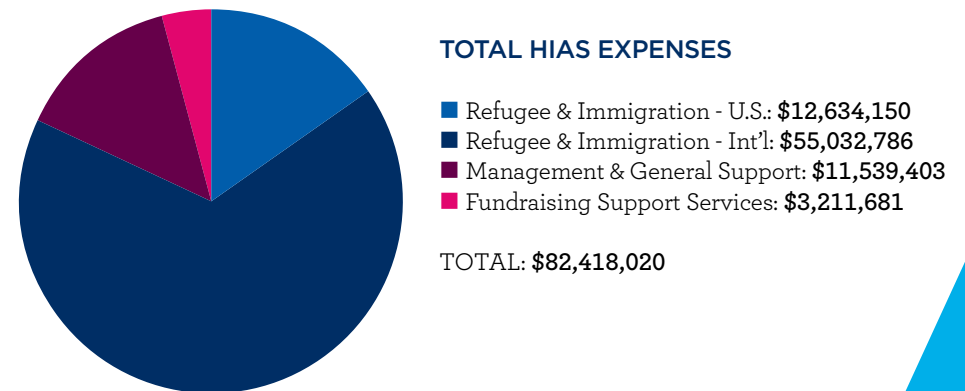
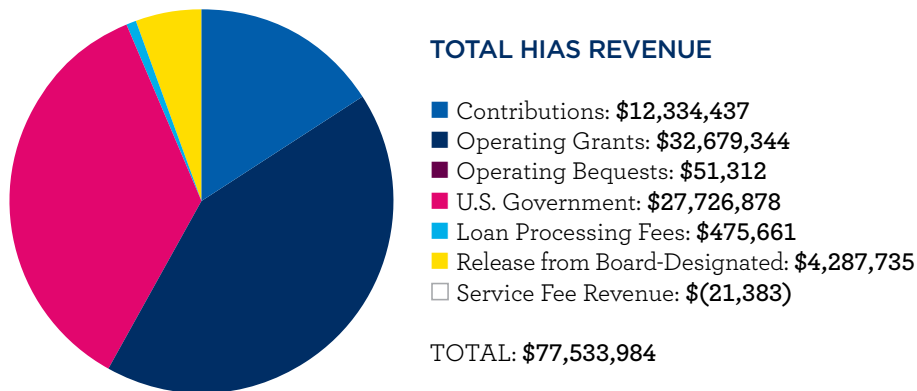


REMAINING RESILIENT IN 2020

Despite the global challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, HIAS experienced continued growth in 2020, with an emphasis on International Programs in the Latin America region.

Our main sources of funding were grants from the U.S. government, United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), and allied agencies; contributions from individuals and foundations; and funds released from board-designated endowments to support operations. HIAS remained on an upward financial trajectory throughout the fiscal year, with a 31% increase in overall operating revenue. Operating grants increased by 61%, primarily in response to the Latin American refugee crisis, as HIAS continued to invest in the region, having established new offices in Aruba, Guyana, Mexico, and Peru in the prior year. With this expansion and the addition of an office in Belgium, program expenses increased by 39% in 2020 over the prior year.

Throughout 2020, HIAS kept a persistent focus on broadening our revenue base, retaining our valued supporters, and promoting operational efficiencies. This pattern of growth was projected to continue in 2021 as the world gradually began to adjust to the pandemic and its attendant economic stressors. Thanks to the generosity of stakeholders like you, HIAS was positioned to enter a more hopeful year with a clear vision, enduring partnerships, growing expertise in emergency response, and the resources to succeed. We thank you for sustaining our strength and for standing with the displaced people we serve.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Your support drives change in the struggle for justice and freedom for displaced persons around the world. Thank you for your partnership.

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