

The Emergency Response Fund



Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.

The Emergency Response Fund (ERF) is managed by the Emergency Department (ED) and allows for quick, flexible, unrestricted funding that can be used during emergencies¹. The fund was initially approved by HIAS Board of Directors in 2018. Since that time, ED has utilized this fund for establishing a foundation for emergency response capacity during times of displacement and, more recently, for actively responding in a variety of contexts including critical emergency needs assessments as well as urgent basic needs for individuals and communities affected by emergencies.

Funding an emergency assessment in Panama – Oct 2021

ERF funds supported an emergency assessment in the Darien Gap that included cash transfers and distribution of non-food items. The Darien Gap is one of the most dangerous places for migrants attempting to travel north. Over 1,000 migrants are expected to pass through daily when the rains end in the coming months, and 1 in 5 migrants crossing this border between Colombia and Panama are children. Those crossing are at risk of violence, sexual abuse, trafficking and extortion from criminal gangs, and serious illness.

Funding emergency logistics on Honduras/Guatemala border – Sept 2021

In response to a request from a donor coalition led by USAID, ED supported logistical and transport to a rapidly deteriorating situation on the Guatemala-Honduras border involving returns of migrants associated with Title 42. ED issued a grant to FUNADEH, a local Honduran NGO, which allows them to distribute food and dignity kits for women, offer phone calls to migrants, set-up psychological first-aid tents, and fund vital logistical support. This allocation bolsters the visibility of HIAS to donors as a Jewish humanitarian organization engaged with emergency response in the region.



Funding dignity kits for Haitian migrants in Mexico – Sept 2021

Due to the current situation at the US-Mexico border, many Haitians attempting to reach North America were prevented from traveling north, and are currently in Monterrey, Mexico. HIAS currently supports 2,000 recent arrivals and carries out daily visits to orient migrants on legal issues and to provide mental health support. Menstruating individuals also need additional support in the form of dignity kits. ERF funds were used for the purchase and distribution of 400 dignity kits which help women and girls maintain proper hygiene during their displacement, positively impacting their physical and mental health outcomes.

Grant to support Haitians during the border crisis in Mexico – Sept 2021

In September, the Emergency Department issued a grant to the Haitian Bridge Alliance (HBA), a Haitian and woman-led organization fighting the deportations and inhumane treatment of Haitians seeking asylum at the US border. This grant covers expenses for travel and humanitarian assistance to asylum seekers in the US, with

¹ HIAS defines emergencies as any event that disrupts a community and exceeds the local capacity (government or non-governmental) to respond.

a focus on families with children. It also supports salary and expenses for policy advocacy with the White House and Congress to stop deportations and expulsions of asylum seekers.

Funding emergency relief during the Guyana floods – July 2021

In July, ED allocated its first tranche of funding from the ERF for flood affected communities in Guyana. These funds were used to conduct a rapid needs assessment, conduct post-flood outreach and provide solar lamps, COVID-19 vaccines and malaria testing and treatment to over a hundred households in nine villages. The assessment resulted in the provision of emergency psychosocial support and the distribution of critical relief items including food and potable water, hygiene items such as soap and sanitary pads, and tarpaulins for shelter.



Funding a humanitarian assessment in the Northern Triangle – July 2021

The Emergency Department used ERF resources to fund multiple assessments in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador in order to position HIAS to apply for emergency funding with large institutional donors including USAID, PRM and UNHCR. This region is plagued by chronic displacement, high poverty, recurrent climatic crises, violence, and limited access to health and other basic services. Outcomes of the trip included networking opportunities with large institutional donors and other non-government organizations operating in the region.