UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

VENEZUELA SITUATION
FACT SHEET

NOVEMBER 2023

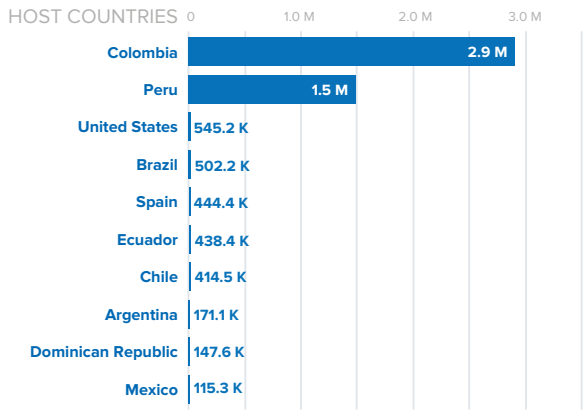
Ecuador. Maryángel Mundaray, Héctor Hernandez and their daughter Natalia proudly display the cocoa-derived products they sell through their small business called Terré, during a local fair in Cuenca, Ecuador. The family had their own cocoa museum in their native Valencia, Venezuela, but had to give it all up to leave for Ecuador in 2017. © UNHCR/Jaime Giménez

The most recent RMNA (Refugee and Migrants Needs Assessment) conducted by R4V reveals that nearly **70%** of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean (more than 4 million people) **struggle to access basic needs and rights** in the region.

71,100 Venezuelans were recognized as refugees worldwide in the first half of 2023, 57% in the Americas. In the same period, 163,700 Venezuelans filled new asylum applications worldwide, 76 % in the Americas.

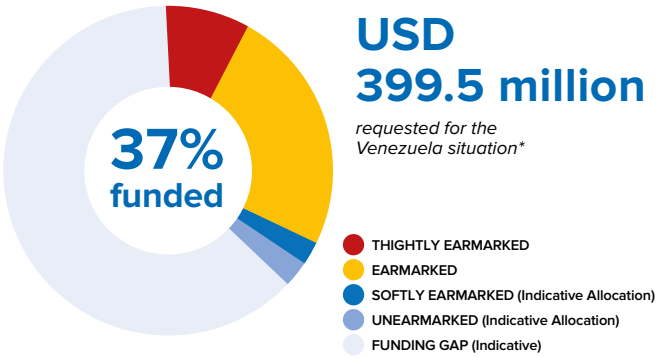
In support of countries of transit and destination, UNHCR improves **reception conditions**, promotes access to asylum, mitigates **protection** risks, provides **access to basic services**, and advocates for **legal stay arrangements and legal, socio-economic and cultural inclusion.**

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS FROM VENEZUELA



** Source: Regional Inter-agency Coordination Platform, August 2023*

FUNDING (AS OF 31 OCTOBER)



USD 399.5 million

*requested for the Venezuela situation**

**The The financial requirements of the Venezuela Situation include requirements in Aruba, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Haiti, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America and Venezuela.*

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

Cross-border displacement and mixed movements from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela continue to significantly outnumber return movements. According to the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V), co-led by UNHCR and IOM, as of September 2023, there were over 7.7 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants worldwide, of whom 84% (6.5 million) are in Latin America and the Caribbean. By mid-2023, there were over 300,000 recognized refugees from Venezuela, and almost 1.2 million asylum-seekers. UNHCR is planning to support some 6.5 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the region in 2024, both by providing direct assistance and coordination of the inter-agency response through its role in the R4V Regional Platform.

Pendular movements along border areas are expected to continue as Venezuelans seek to address basic needs temporarily in neighbouring countries. But a lack of viable options in some hosting countries drives many to move onward in search of a more stable future.

Movements of refugees and migrants between host countries, including northbound movements, have significantly increased in 2023 and are expected to continue as Venezuelans and other nationalities with heightened vulnerabilities seek sustainable protection and integration solutions. In the first ten months of 2023, over 458,000 people (64% of them Venezuelans) moved north through Panama's Darien jungle, an almost threefold increase compared to the same period in 2022. An increasing number of these are Venezuelans departing directly from Venezuela rather than onward movements from other host countries.

According to the **Refugee and Migrant Needs Analysis (RMNA)** for 2023, more than 4.4 million Venezuelans still face difficulties accessing food, shelter, healthcare, education and formal employment, despite efforts by host countries to regularize and integrate them. In Colombia, for example, although more than 1.9 million Venezuelans have received Temporary Protection Permits (TPP) an estimated 32 per cent of Venezuelans surveyed in Colombia in 2023 remained in an irregular situation: meanwhile, among all Venezuelan households in Colombia, 43% are moderately food insecure, 11% have no access to water, and 30% live in overcrowded conditions. According to the RMNA, at the regional level, more than 36% of Venezuelans are without a regular status in their respective host countries; almost 1 in 5 refugee and migrant children are out of school; and unemployment rates of economically active refugees and migrants ranged from 38% in Panama to 2% in Peru.

In the context of dynamic population movements (outflows, returns, deportations, cross-border pendular and onward movements), UNHCR works across the region to support Venezuelan refugees and migrants, focusing on protection, socioeconomic integration, and multisectoral assistance, including education, health, shelter and water, sanitation, and hygiene. UNHCR provides overall operational coordination, planning, communication, and information management services for the entire response. Inside Venezuela, UNHCR supports all population groups with humanitarian needs – refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people, people at risk of displacement, returnees and deportees with protection needs – as well as communities in prioritized locations to build resilience.

Solidarity from hosting countries and communities has helped the inclusion of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, including through the granting of asylum and other legal stay arrangements – such as residence permits – that facilitate access to documentation and basic socioeconomic rights. At the same time, nearly 70% of Venezuelan refugees and migrants struggle to access basic needs and rights across Latin America and the Caribbean. Amidst a global cost-of-living crisis, they are at greater risk of being victims of human trafficking, forced recruitment, and gender-based violence. The Solidarity Conference for Venezuelan refugees and migrants and their host communities held in March 2023 resulted in pledges of $1.6 billion ($542 million in grants and $1.13 billion in loans). Member States of the Quito Process signed a joint declaration that highlighted the importance of sustained international cooperation.

More investments from the international community, the private sector, and international development and financial institutions in longer-term solutions – also to benefit host communities – are key for refugees and migrants from Venezuela to achieve self-reliance and inclusion.

Chile. Venezuelan refugees and migrants make harrowing journeys, often treking overland for hundreds or even thousands of kilometers, to seek safety and stability. © UNHCR/Nicolo Filippo Rosso

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

- UNHCR co-leads with IOM the regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V), coordinating with 228 organizations who are implementing the 2023-2024 Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) across 17 countries. The RMRP response priorities are based on findings of the Regional Refugee and Migrant Needs Analysis (RMNA), which, for 2023, highlighted ongoing humanitarian and integration needs of about 4.4 million (70 per cent) of the 6.5 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela in the region, in addition to the humanitarian needs of some 85 per cent of Venezuelans engaging in transit movements, 86 per cent of other nationals in transit, and 53 per cent of affected host community members. Across the region, integration, protection and food security were identified as top priority needs. Both agencies also provide technical support to the regional intergovernmental coordination forum, the Quito Process, an initiative including several Latin American countries that seeks to harmonize domestic policies and responses to displacement in receiving countries.

- To promote comprehensive, coherent, and coordinated regional responses, UNHCR also engages with governments and other stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, and financial institutions, in the implementation of the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection. The declaration aims to bolster pledges that enhance protection-sensitive entry systems; ensure access to asylum and other protection-oriented legal stay arrangements; stabilize populations in communities of destination, origin, and return; and expand legal pathways for regular migration and access to international protection, including strengthening national asylum systems and resettlement.

- Inside Venezuela, UNHCR operates within the interagency framework of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) to assist the most vulnerable population groups inside the country. In addition to activities under the WASH and Education clusters, UNHCR also contributes operationally and as the lead of the Protection Cluster and the Shelter, Energy, and non-food items (NFI) Cluster. In prioritized communities, particularly in border areas, UNHCR assistance helps address basic needs for vulnerable individuals through core relief items. This assistance runs in parallel with support to waystations and reception capacities for people in mobility, inter-agency returnee reintegration efforts, and medical and temporary shelter facilities.

- UNHCR is also focusing on providing solutions for returnees and has taken a lead role in the creation of an inter-agency Technical Working Group on Human Mobility and Reintegration and in the launch of reintegration pilot projects in Greater Caracas and in the western border state of Tachira, in the context of a wider operational effort that aims to provide vulnerable Venezuelans with an array of reasons and options to stay in their country.

PRIORITIES IN 2023

In close collaboration with host governments, partner organizations, civil society, faith-based organizations, and UN Agencies, UNHCR is undertaking the following activities:

PROTECT

- **Safe and dignified reception conditions:** UNHCR stepped-up its presence in border areas across the region to contribute to expanding reception conditions, responding to the basic needs of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, while ensuring access to territories and upholding non-refoulement and refugee laws and practices. UNHCR field presence along border areas is also aimed at providing legal aid and counselling on access to asylum and other forms of legal stay; assisting in effective coordination and preparing a local response and contingency plans; and providing support for the internal relocation of those who would like to be reunited with their families or may access job opportunities elsewhere.

- **Support government registration, protection monitoring and other legal stay arrangements:** UNHCR works in close partnership with governments across the region to strengthen registration systems and national asylum systems. An analysis of the data collected from all countries hosting Venezuelans allows for enhanced protection monitoring, as well as effective advocacy for solutions promoting socio-economic inclusion and enabling local integration. UNHCR supports countries hosting Venezuelan refugees and migrants, including Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Peru, with the planning and implementation of temporary protection and other legal stay arrangements, including regularization schemes, by providing technical and material support and sharing information with Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

RESPOND

- **Providing access to shelter and settlement:** UNHCR country operations continue supporting access to temporary collective shelters through infrastructure works and the development of shelter management capacities, with a focus on consolidating a regional response emergency accommodation network. Access to individual shelters through rental programmes has been strengthened, while settlement and community infrastructure interventions have been prioritized in hosting territories.

- **Cash for basic needs:** Venezuelanrefugees and migrants continue to face entry restrictions in border areas, which creates heightened risks – including refoulement and those associated with human trafficking and smuggling - as they enter countries irregularly to seek protection and assistance. UNHCR has seen an increase in the number of Venezuelans unable to meet basic needs, as well as an increasing number of requests for assistance. UNHCR uses unconditional cash transfers to help them temporarily meet their needs, providing assistance for rent, food, and utilities. UNHCR provides cash assistance so that Venezuelans become contributing members of the local economy, by purchasing their goods in neighbourhood markets and paying rent to local landlords. Since 2019 until October 2023, UNHCR delivered cash assistance to over 700,000 Venezuelans across Latin America and the Caribbean.

EMPOWER

- Campaigns against xenophobia: In an effort to curb growing discrimination and xenophobia against Venezuelans and promote respect and solidarity in the host communities, the Regional R4V Platform launched a digital campaign Acortemos Distancias in August 2020. The campaign reached over 18 million internet users across the region, using social media to generate positive dialogue. Campaigns such as "Somos Panas" in Colombia reached more than 113,000 followers on social media and more than 190,000 people have participated in the campaign's face-to-face events. As part of the campaign, more than one thousand journalists have been trained. In Chile, "La Camiseta por Chile" was launched, a campaign on the sidelines of the 2023 Pan American Games. In Peru, in 2022 the campaign "Tu Causa Es Mi Causa" reached over 3 million people through digital channels. Also, as part of the campaign "Solidaridad Azul" in partnership with local football team Club Alianza Lima, during World Refugee Day messages of solidarity and inclusion of refugees and migrants from Venezuela were communicated at a football match, reaching more than 30,000 fans at the stadium and other thousands on the national TV. The campaign "Gracias Dominicana" reached more than 2 million people on digital media since it was launched.

- **Communications**. In October 2023, R4V together with SER in Spain produced and distributed the "Crossing Borders" (or "Cruzando Fronteras") podcast, which follows the journeys of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in their own words and first-person narratives. The first story is told by Hugo Boscán, a 22-year-old Venezuelan, who describes some of the risks and frustrations he faced during his journey and shares the sounds and images that are forever stuck in his mind. Four episodes are available so far on several platforms.

- **Protection interventions in main hosting areas**: The Regional Safe Spaces Network provides specialized services to gender-based violence survivors and children at risk inside Venezuela and in host countries. UNHCR, as co-lead of the R4V Platform, implements the **regional** Support Spaces Network, providing information, orientation and basic services to refugees and migrants from Venezuela through a coordinated network of 211 spaces in 9 countries in the region. The Regional Protection Sector of the R4V Platform, co-led by UNHCR and NRC, focuses on access to territory; legal protection, including asylum, temporary protection and other legal stay arrangements for Venezuelans; access to rights and national protection systems; and prevention, mitigation and improved protection responses, particularly to disproportionately affected population groups, from an age, gender and diversity perspective. As part of its community-based protection strategy, UNHCR works with community-based organizations and other key actors, including refugee persons to improve the protection environment and ensure two-way communication and accountability. Information materials on the prevention and mitigation of gender-based violence, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), among others, have been developed and disseminated through different communication channels. Across the region, many of the refugee-and migrant-led organizations are represented by an umbrella organization called "Coalición por Venezuela", which is an important stakeholder for R4V. Through this coalition, these actors are part of the RMRP's programme cycle, both at regional and national levels, providing valued contributions in the development of the planning assumptions and strategy, as well as operational inputs.

SOLVE

- **Livelihoods and economic inclusion:** To support support Venezuelans facing challenges related to low employment and income, UNHCR is strengthening ties with the private sector through initiatives like **Local Integration Programme** in Mexico, **Empresas com Refugiados** in Brazil and Ecuador, Living the Integration in Costa Rica, Talent without borders in Panama, and **Inclusive Market** in Chile, focusing on enhancing employability, facilitating labour insertion and strengthening entrepreneurial skills of Venezuelans while sensitizing and informing private sector actors. In cooperation with Peru's Ministry of Health, UNHCR facilitated the inclusion of Venezuelan doctors in clinics operating in underserved areas, so contributing to expanding access to health care for nationals and non-nationals. In the framework of the **Cities of Solidarity** initiative, UNHCR continues to foster local authorities' response capacities and inclusive planning to reduce the vulnerabilities of refugees and migrants from Venezuela. In 2023 more municipalities joined the initiative, among them Medellin and Pereira in Colombia and San Cristobal in Venezuela. A total of 75 local governments/cities are part of the Cities of Solidarity initiative in Latin America and the Caribbean. UNHCR is promoting the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in the programming of financial institutions. Working with UNHCR, the **Inter-American Development Bank has targeted projects to advance labour market integration** of displaced populations across Latin America and the Caribbean. UNHCR has also strengthened ties with the **International Financial Corporation (CAF)** to expand financial inclusion and job opportunities for the people UNHCR serves in the region.

CLIMATE ACTION

Countries in the Americas continue to be prone to severe effects of climate change and natural hazards, aggravating the situation of displaced populations and communities at risk of displacement, exacerbating their vulnerability, and accelerating mobility.

UNHCR is advancing with the implementation of the UNHCR Strategic Framework for Climate Action, as well as follow-up to the UN Climate Conferences and frameworks and its implementation in the Americas.

Guided by its Strategic Framework for Climate Action and related guidance on Climate Action, UNHCR will increase its effort to mitigate the impact of Climate Change on forcibly displaced and stateless persons and to engage more predictably in preparing and responding to climate-related disasters, as well as conducting evidence-based advocacy. UNHCR will continue to work with Governments and partners to strengthen national legislation, policies and protection systems related to climate induced displacement. Through innovation, partnerships and engagement with organizations and communities, UNHCR will upscale its effort to mitigate climate risks through enhancing the response capacities and resilience of displaced populations and host communities, and ensure the recognition and inclusion of displaced people, their needs and contributions in sustainable development, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction policy, plans and programmes.

To contribute to the fulfilment of UNHCR's commitments and strategy, the Innovation Service's Environment and Climate Action Innovation Programme was designed to provide the space and support for testing early-stage innovations in this field. In its first year, the Americas region not only demonstrated a strong interest in addressing a variety of climate and environment-related challenges but also showcased significant creativity and determination in testing solutions. Currently, 5 out of the total 10 endorsed projects are being implemented in the region. These projects encompass a wide range of areas, including sustainable shelter solutions in Brazil, environmental health, and sustainable supply chains in Chile, sustainable agriculture and social cohesion in Colombia, fog nets for improved water security in Peru, and community-based environmental management in Ecuador.

TIMELY FUNDING

UNHCR's humanitarian response in the Americas is made possible thanks to the generous support of major donors who have contributed with unrestricted funding to UNHCR's global operations, and to donors who have generously contributed to operations responding to the Venezuela situation.

SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL OUR DONORS IN 2023 (as of 31 October)

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