

Venezuela Situation

March 2023

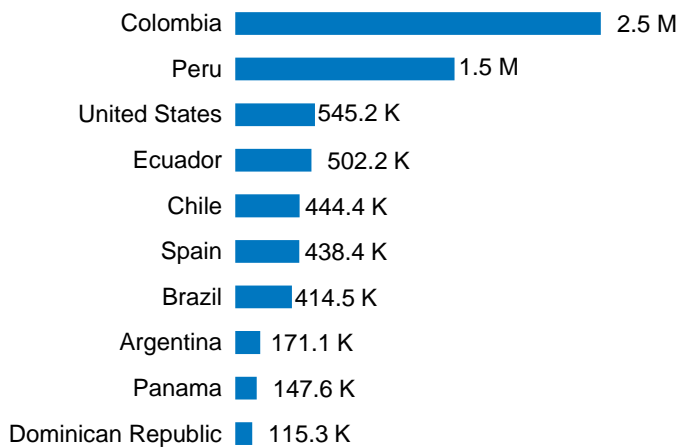
The situation of refugees and migrants from Venezuela remains **one of the largest displacements in the world**. To date, over **7.1 million** have left their homes, of which more than 6 million are in the Americas, according to R4V.

Over **211,000** have been recognized as refugees, and over a million have submitted asylum claims worldwide. About **4.2 million residence and legal stay permits** have been granted to Venezuelans since 2014.

In support of receiving States, UNHCR improves **reception conditions**, promotes access to asylum, mitigates **protection risks**, provides **access to basic services**, and advocates for **legal stay and inclusion**.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS FROM VENEZUELA

Host Countries

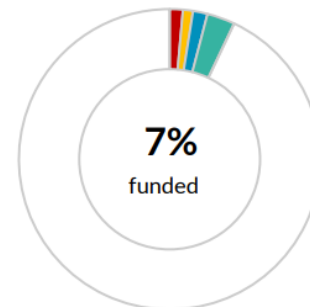


* Source: Regional Inter-agency Coordination Platform, January 2023

FUNDING (AS OF 7 MARCH 2023)

USD 392.01 million

requested for the Venezuela situation*



OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

Venezuelans continue to depart from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (hereafter Venezuela), with persistent situations of cross-border displacement now aggravated by onward movements from host countries, often in an irregular manner and through perilous journeys.

Many Venezuelan refugees and migrants are at risk of arbitrary evictions, homelessness or having to resort to negative coping mechanisms, including survival sex.

Many Venezuelans who may need international protection have not had access to fair and efficient asylum procedures. This situation continues to prevent their access to socio-economic rights, including formal employment and social inclusion programmes, further exposing them to labour exploitation and abuse, in addition to arbitrary detention, deportation and other protection risks.



Ecuador. Venezuelan family walked for more than a month to reach Cuenca, where stayed in an emergency shelter supported by UNHCR.
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*The financial requirements of the Venezuela Situation include requirements in Argentina, Aruba, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Curaçao, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela, Regional Activities for the Americas and Other Operations in the Americas (Coordination).

UNHCR applauds the efforts of governments from the region to strengthen their asylum systems and implement complementary regular stay arrangements for Venezuelan refugees and migrants. These interventions are essential to a conducive environment for protection and to achieve socioeconomic inclusion. While the local integration of Venezuelans is a priority in host countries, there are still challenges in the capacity of the public services to deliver on these objectives, especially employment opportunities, in economies badly affected by the pandemic and the consequences of the war in Ukraine.

Therefore, host countries require increased political and financial support to ensure that Venezuelan refugees and migrants have access to documentation, protection services, healthcare, education, formal employment, and financial inclusion. International financial institutions, including the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, have stepped up their support through dedicated financing, resources, and analytics. These interventions, also supported by UNHCR and other R4V partners, development actors and others, will reduce people's dependence on humanitarian assistance, facilitate their inclusion and increase their contributions to local economies.

Inside Venezuela, despite prevailing conditions, there has been a significant and sustained increase in the number of people coming back from host countries. These returns are mainly motivated by push factors such as the lack of livelihoods, episodes of discrimination and xenophobia, as well as pull factors like the desire for family reunification and the perception of an improving economic outlook for the country. But returnees often face challenges back home, ranging from difficulties in accessing jobs, social services, and housing to a certain degree of hostility from neighbours who remained in Venezuela.

Working with Partners

- The Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V), co-led by UNHCR and IOM, launched its 2023-2024 Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) contributing to address the growing needs of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, other refugees, and migrants in-transit (in addition to Venezuelan nationals) and affected host communities in 2023 throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. This new multi-year plan brings together 228 partners that implement humanitarian, protection, and socio-economic integration activities to assist 3.4 million refugees and migrants and affected host community members in 2023 alone.
- 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 pathways for regular migration and access to international protection, including strengthening national asylum systems.
- 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 helping to provide 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: Venezuelan refugees 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, UNHCR delivered cash assistance to over 620,000 Venezuelans across Latin America and the Caribbean.

Empower

Campaigns against xenophobia: In an effort to curb growing xenophobia and discrimination against Venezuelans and promote 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. Inter-Agency national initiatives accompany these efforts in Panama (Somos lo Mismo), Peru (Tu Causa Es Mi Causa), Colombia (Somos Panas Colombia and Juntos más Grandes), Ecuador (Humano y Somos Inclusión), Dominican Republic (Gracias Dominicana), Argentina (Acá Somos), Chile (Somos Encuentro) and Uruguay (Uruguay Para Todo el Mundo).

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 210 spaces in eight countries in the region. The **Regional Protection Sector** of the R4V Platform, co-led by UNHCR, focuses on access to territory, asylum, temporary protection and other legal stay arrangements for Venezuelans, access to national social protection systems and improved protection responses to disproportionately affected population groups, from an age, gender and diversity perspective. As part of its community-based protection strategy, UNHCR works with outreach volunteers 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.

Solve

Livelihoods and economic inclusion: To 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, **Talento sin Fronteras** in Argentina, Panama, and Uruguay, **Living the Integration** in Costa Rica 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 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. The initiative will expand in 2023 with the support of the **Mercociudades** network with which UNHCR signed an **agreement** in December 2022. Moreover, UNHCR is promoting the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in the programming of financial institutions. In 2022, UNHCR signed an agreement with the **Inter-American Development Bank** to address the situations of forced displacement and foster solutions to promote the inclusion of displaced populations in host communities and has also strengthened ties with the **International Financial Corporation** which will lead to the roll-out of a joint event in 2023 aiming at generating interest in the banking sector towards the people UNHCR serves in the region.

Climate-induced risks

Countries in the Americas continue to be susceptible to the effects of climate change, aggravating the situation of displaced populations and communities at risk of displacement, exacerbating their vulnerability, and accelerating human mobility. Numerous displaced people settle in risk zones, often due to a lack of knowledge of their new environment and its potential threats, especially in urban areas.

The situation is aggravated by the fact that Latin America and the Caribbean are one of the worst affected regions by the COVID-19 pandemic in the world, which could push more than 45 million people into poverty. In addition to the direct impact of more frequent and intense disasters on forced movements, climate change is aggravating other drivers of displacement, worsening poverty, food insecurity, water shortages and access to other natural resources that communities rely on for survival. While climate change does not cause conflict in and of itself, it can be an underlying factor that compounds core risks triggering conflict and exacerbating existing vulnerabilities (violence, persecution, discrimination, etc.).

UNHCR is strengthening its operations to meet the humanitarian and protection needs exacerbated by the climate emergency, ranging from preparedness and response to disaster-related displacement, to the implementation of environmentally friendly programmes that protect people and the environment, to enhancing the resilience of both displaced and host communities to climate shocks. In 2023, UNHCR engages more predictably in preparing and responding to climate-related disasters, including countries in the Americas where it is present or is asked to take action.

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 \(as of 7 March\)](#)

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