

Venezuela Situation

May 2018

More than **340,000 Venezuelans have entered** Ecuador since the beginning of 2018 (compared to 287,000 arrivals registered for the whole 2017).

In Brazil, **527 Venezuelan nationals had been relocated** from border regions to Brazilian cities in the country (Cuiabá, Manaus and São Paulo).

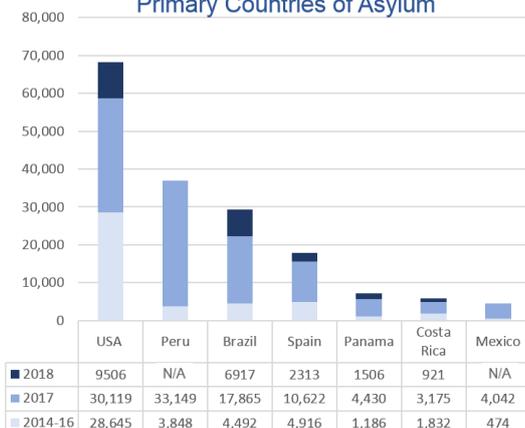
The number of **Venezuelans seeking asylum** has **risen yearly**. Between 2014 and 2018, some **185,783 asylum claims** have been lodged.

Context

More than 1.5 million Venezuelans have moved into neighbouring countries. While some of them have obtained documentation which allows them to stay legally, the majority of Venezuelans who have left their country have no regular status, and are therefore more vulnerable to any form of exploitation, abuse, violence, trafficking and discrimination. While the responses of States have been generous, local host communities are facing mounting pressure in responding to their needs.



Asylum Applications 2014-18
Primary Countries of Asylum



In Manaus, UNHCR staff receives Venezuelans coming from Boa Vista. Photo: UNHCR/João Paulo Machado

Colombia

Operational context

- **Preliminary results of the Registration of Venezuelans in Colombia (RAMV) were published** during the first week of May. So far, 203,989 individuals (106,476 families) have been registered. 23% of them are children with 49% of those in school-age currently studying. UNHCR is a key partner in the RAMV process and is accompanying registration efforts across the country. The RAMV will finalize on 8 June.
- In preparation for the first round of the presidential elections which took place on Sunday 27 May, the Colombian Government closed its border with Venezuela, between Thursday 24 and Monday 28. , Border with Ecuador was also closed between Saturday 26 and Sunday 27, and around 400 Venezuelans in transit were blocked. UNHCR provided hot meals through its partnership with Pastoral Social. Once the border opened, the authorities deployed additional personnel, resulting in all Venezuelans being able to cross without further delay.

UNHCR's response and partnerships

- **As part of UNHCR efforts to identify and register Venezuelans with right to Colombian nationality** – including returning Colombians, mixed families and descendants of Colombian nationals – UNHCR worked with the *Registrar's office* which 536 civil registries (for ages 0-6), 389 identity cards (for ages 7-17) and 179 citizenship cards (for ages 18 and up) for a total 1,104 Venezuelans who are now fully documented as Colombians and with full rights to healthcare, education and social services. UNHCR expects that a further 900 Venezuelan children and youths to be registered and enjoy Colombian nationality in the nearby regions of Loperena and Aguaclara in the next few weeks.
- The **indigenous Yukpa community** who had settled informally near the international Francisco de Paula Santander Bridge, which connects Cúcuta (Colombia) with Ureña (Venezuela), continues facing dire health and humanitarian risks. This month the community was victim of an attack by members of an unidentified armed group which lead to the forced displacement of most of the group. UNHCR continues advocating for the internal relocation of the Yukpa community to a safe and culturally-appropriate settlement, access to humanitarian assistance and non-return to Venezuela
- UNHCR, as part of its work with community organizations in the border town of Arauca launched **“Mi Viaje” (“My Trip”)**, an activity and coloring booklet designed for Venezuelan children so that they can better understand and express their views about their journey from Venezuela to Colombia.



A young boy from Venezuela holds an issue of “Mi Viaje”, a booklet to help young Venezuelans through their journey © UNHCR/ Johanna Reina

Brazil

Operational Context

- According to the Federal Police, 32,859 Venezuelans have formally applied for asylum in Brazil.96% of those applications been filed since 2016 (4,087 applications in 2016; 20,637 applications in 2017; and 6,917 applications in 2018).

UNHCR's response and partnerships

- **Protection monitoring continues** taking place in Boa vista and Manaus. So far, over 1,200 interviews have been conducted. The main reasons identified for leaving Venezuela: lack of food (95%), insecurity (83%), declined access to food, work and other essential services (52%) and generalized violence (52%).

- By the end of May, **527 Venezuelan nationals had been relocated from Boa Vista to other Brazilian cities** (Cuiabá, Manaus and São Paulo). Under the coordination of the Presidency, UNHCR and other UN agencies are supporting the voluntary relocation of Venezuelans from border regions to the interior of the country. UNHCR is supporting the renovation of temporary shelters, the provision of orientation and the referral to professional training and job opportunities for all Venezuelans participating in the relocation initiative.
- The **first Reference Center for Refugees and Migrants in Boa Vista** was inaugurated on April 20th and since its opening, an average of 200 people go to the center daily to receive guidance, protection and integration counselling. UNHCR is responsible for coordinating the Center and is providing pre-registration services and information on how to request for asylum, guidance on rights and duties, procedures for documentation and works on identification of vulnerabilities for specific referrals.
- In Roraima state, **more than 4,000 people are accommodated in nine temporary shelters managed by UNHCR** and/or partners, in coordination with the Brazilian Army. According to recent figures provided by the Federal Police to UNHCR, the border between Brazil and Venezuela (by the city of Pacaraima) is registering an average of 600-700 entries per day. Up to 7,000 people in Roraima are currently in need of emergency shelter assistance.
- On 6 May, with the support of UNHCR, the Municipality of Boa Vista, and civil society organizations the Brazilian Army carried out the **voluntary relocation of Venezuelans** living at the Simon Bolivar square to temporary shelters in Boa Vista. UNHCR identified, registered and provided ID cards to 877 people (173 women, 686 man and 18 children), and allocated shelters according to the profiles, specific needs and vulnerabilities. UNHCR also supported the distribution of hygiene kits, and drinking fountains.
- In Roraima, six Venezuelans were rescued by the Ministry of Labour and the Prosecutor's Office for Labour from a "slave-like-situation". UNHCR provided support through emergency shelter and is enhancing the information and awareness activities concerning exploitation risks and prevention in Boa Vista.
- The **UN interagency group**, led by UNHCR and IOM, is coordinating the UN emergency response to ensure there is no duplication of interventions and the new arrivals and the most vulnerable Venezuelans living in Roraima have the access to basic needs. A task force was created within the UN Brazil Communications Group to implement a common public information strategy, including awareness campaigns and content production under a "One UN" approach.



Venezuelan woman receives guidance from UNHCR on asylum claim procedures at the Reference Center for Refugees and Migrants, in Boa Vista. © UNHCR/Luiz Fernando Godinho

Ecuador

Operational Context

- In 2018, Ecuador has increasingly become a country of transit and destination for Venezuelans. According to the information released by the Ecuadorian Migration Service, the arrival of **343.305 Venezuelans has been registered since the start of 2018** (compare to 287,000 arrivals registered for the whole 2017). Ninety per cent of Venezuelan arrivals entered Ecuador through the land border with Colombia at the Rumichaca International Bridge in Tulcan. There are also increasing arrivals through the Colombia-Ecuador Border at San Miguel International Bridge in Sucumbíos. In May, Venezuelans arrivals in Ecuador experienced record peaks of 4,500-5,000 per day.

UNHCR response and partnerships

- UNHCR maintains a **regular presence at the border**, monitoring access to the territory, providing legal advice and information to Venezuelans and profiling vulnerable cases to ensure adequate assistance. A cash base intervention initiative has been implemented to assist extremely vulnerable cases stranded at the border.

- Between 15 and 17 May, when daily arrivals at the borders peaked at 4,500-5,000 persons, UNHCR procured 4,000 water bottles, 4,000 biscuits, 300 toiletry kits, 200 baby diapers, 100 sanitary pads, 100 antiseptic towels, 60 baby food jars and spoons and 50 blankets.
- Venezuelans arriving in Ecuador continue receiving support and orientation from UNHCR and its partners. From 26 April to 10 May 2018, 269 new Venezuelan families comprising 589 individuals received legal orientation and psychological assistance. Fifty-seven asylum seeking families in vulnerable situation were provided cash for emergency shelter and installation.

Peru

Operational Context

- As of 21 May, Peru migration authorities are granting free work permits to Venezuelans who have a pending Temporary Permanence Permit (PTP) application.
- To respond to the high number of Venezuelan arrivals, the main migration office in Lima, Peru, is opened 24/7.
- According to official figures, over 300,000 Venezuelan nationals have entered Peru and the inflow remains significant. The outflow through the southern border has suffered a critical drop: from 10,215 in April to 1,960 in May. It reiterates the trend identified through Protection Monitoring that a large majority of the Venezuelan nationals coming to Peru are willing to stay in the country.

UNHCR response and partnership

- UNHCR is **enhancing humanitarian assistance at the border with Ecuador** where an average of 2,000 Venezuelans arrive daily at the Binational Border Assistance Center (CEBAF) in Tumbes. UNHCR and its partner Encuentros-SJS established a core relief items (CRI) distribution point, where dignity kits for women, babies' kits and recreational kits for young children are distributed. A hydration point has also been set up to respond to the significant number of dehydration cases.
- UNHCR and the International Federation of the Red Cross, have opened a health center to provide medical care for people in need. On 27 May, UNHCR trained 50 Red Cross Volunteers on International Refugee Law and the vulnerability criteria for core items delivery.
- UNHCR, Encuentros-SJS and IOM have also established an **information centre**, where legal counselling is being provided to support access to documentation and protection.
- UNHCR has established **referral pathways with 12 hospitals in Lima** and trained 30 State social workers on how to identify people who might be in need of international protection, recognize specific vulnerabilities and refer them accordingly, enabling Venezuelan asylum seekers and Temporary Permanence Permit (PTP) holders to have their health care fees waived based on their vulnerability.
- On 10 May, UNHCR organized in Lima the **first workshop on the Protection of Refugees and Migrants**. Nearly 60 members of civil society, governmental institutions and international agencies participated, including UNICEF, UNFPA and IOM. One of the main objectives was to present the Regional Safe Spaces Network initiative and to strengthen coordination in the response.



Hundreds of Venezuelans queue at the Binational Border Assistance Center (CEBAF by its Spanish acronym) waiting to enter Peru © UNHCR/Sebastian Castañeda

Mexico

Operational Context

- As per official figures, between January and April 2018, 29,768 Venezuelans have entered Mexico and 68 have been in detention. Further four Venezuelans were released this month and transferred to a UNHCR-supported shelter. UNHCR continues to advocate for the release of the 8 Venezuelans currently in detention.

UNHCR's response and partnerships

- In 2018, over 250 Venezuelans have been assisted by UNHCR and its partner Programa Casa Refugiados (PCR) in Mexico City, of which 117 have received cash-based assistance.
- On 3 May, UNHCR conducted the first **Participatory Assessment** (PA) of 2018 with Venezuelans. Key findings indicated that violence, unemployment and lack of food and health services were the main reasons for leaving Venezuela. The majority of participants said that their lives would be in danger if they are returned to Venezuela due to insecurity, violence, and lack of food and health services.
- Venezuelan asylum-seekers continue to be enrolled in the **national health system** which provides health coverage for three months. However, as a result of the significant backlog in the processing of the claims by COMAR, the duration of the RSD procedure often exceeds three months leaving Venezuelan asylum-seekers without health coverage. This time limitation also applies to migrants and asylum-seekers from other countries.
- From January to May 2018, at least 69 Venezuelans have attended **job placement workshops**, where information is provided on job opportunities. This resulted in 24 Venezuelans employed. In addition, 45 Venezuelans have received support to start self-employment initiatives through the program "Miércoles Solidario". Some of these initiatives include yoga and language classes, food, and technical services (e.g. electricians).

Costa Rica

Operational Context

- During May 2018, 423 Venezuelan nationals sought asylum in Costa Rica, for a total of 1,790 claims presented from January to May 2018.
- During the first five months of 2018, 507 Venezuelan nationals entered Costa Rica's territory through the southern border, thus confirming that airport arrivals continue to be the preferred entrance for Venezuelan nationals.

Panama

Operational Context

- On May 30th, Panama's National Migration Service (SNM) initiated a census for migrants in irregular situation, which will provide clarity on the actual number of Venezuelans in the country. Following the results, SNM will decide if an extraordinary regularization process is necessary.

UNHCR's response and partnerships

- A border monitoring mission was conducted to Darien province, border with Colombia. During 2018, 13 Venezuelans have entered Panama through this land border.

Southern Caribbean

Guyana

Operational Context

- According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Carl Greenidge 's announcement on 24 May, Venezuelans who enter Guyana illegally are required to register at a port of entry, and upon doing so, sanctions associated with illegal entry will not be enforced. Venezuelans would then receive a stay permit for a renewable period to be determined.

UNHCR's response and partnerships

- The joint UNHCR-IOM Fact-Finding and Border-Monitoring mission report with consolidated findings, identified population groups, humanitarian needs, and recommendations for response to the Venezuela situation, was shared with the Government of Guyana in May 2018.

- Civil society and faith-based organizations, with the support of UNHCR, established a Venezuela Support Group (VG) to provide information and assistance in accessing refugee procedures or alternative legal status. Civil society organizations have played a key role in advocating for a humanitarian response to Venezuelans in the country. UNHCR is working closely with these civil society organizations whose efforts are creating a nascent protection network in the country.

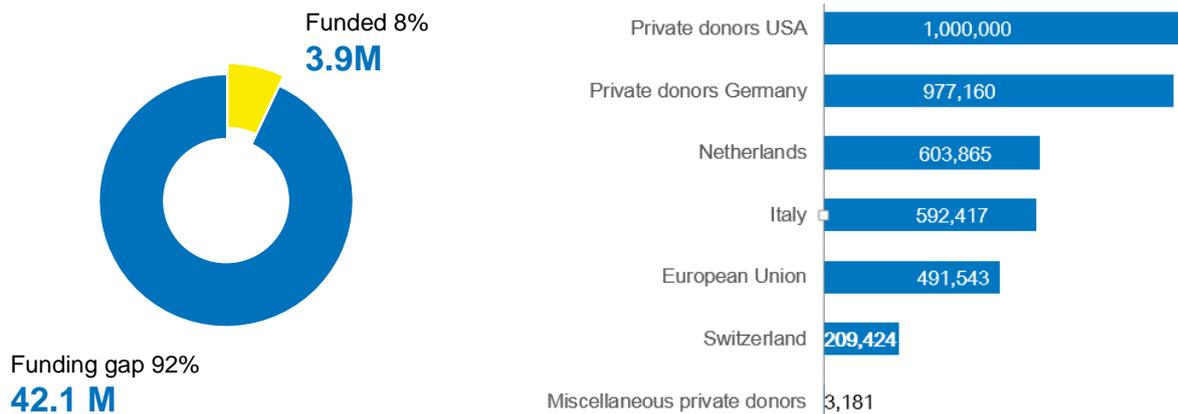
Aruba

UNHCR's response and partnerships

- UNHCR, in coordination with the government, began a mapping exercise of available resources and services (health, SGBV, livelihoods, education, psychological support and legal services).

Funding Update

Total recorded contributions for the operation amount to **US\$ 3.9 million** as of 30 May 2018, covering **8%** of overall needs for Venezuelans in the region. A total of **US\$ 46 M** requested for the Venezuela situation.



UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to the Venezuela Situation Supplementary Appeal as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds.

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