REGIONAL INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Understanding the information and communication needs of refugees and migrants in the Venezuela Situation

November 2019

R4V

RESPONSE FOR VENEZUELANS
Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela

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1 Organizations' names have not been translated and are left as originally included in the survey.

Cover page - Two Venezuelan women call for the first time their families after they left Venezuela. Photo: Red Cross Red Crescent Magazine / Erika Piñeros

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01 INTRODUCTION

Regional Context[2]

The current complex situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (hereinafter Venezuela) has led to the largest movement of persons in the recent history of Latin America and the Caribbean. As of October 2019, there are about 4.5 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela - 3.7 million in the region alone. In addition to the unprecedented number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela settling throughout the region, some countries in Central and South America also receive significant numbers of refugees and migrants from within the region as well as from extra-regional countries.

2 Information from different communication documents from the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants.

People crossing the border from Colombia into Ecuador. Photo: Netherlands Red Cross / Arie Kievit

In this context, a concerning number of people remain in undocumented situations due to various factors, including, administrative procedures and restrictions, long waiting periods and high application fees, among others. Refugees and migrants who are not able to access a regular status have become more vulnerable to all forms of exploitation and abuse, violence and discrimination, smuggling and trafficking and the adoption of negative coping mechanisms. People with specific needs, amongst others unaccompanied and separated children, older persons, persons with disabilities, single parents, pregnant women, survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), persons with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities, people living with serious medical conditions, including non-communicable and chronic diseases and HIV/AIDS, face heightened protection risks.

The types of needs of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, and from other contexts, in transit and destination countries can be considered as falling within the following areas:

- Emergency humanitarian needs, including access to basic services (shelter, water and sanitation, food, health, psychosocial support, non-food items, education).
- Protection needs, including predictable regular status, asylum, and documentation, information on access and availability of services and rights.
- Socio-economic integration needs, including access to the labour market and viable livelihoods, social and cultural integration and the recognition of academic degrees, titles, and skills in host countries.

**REGIONAL RMRP
AT A GLANCE**

Population projection 2020

Venezuelans in destination
5.54 M

Venezuelans pendular*
2.09 M

Returnees
0.68 M

People in need

Venezuelans in destination
3.82 M

Venezuelans pendular
0.50 M

Returnees
0.35 M

Host community
1.49 M

Partners
◯ >29
◯ 11-28
◦ <10

Target
■ >316.000
■ 145.000 - 316.300
■ 30.000 - 145.000
■ <30.000

*"Pendular movements: temporary and usually repeated population movements, which may represent a movement pattern between Venezuela and another country. RMRP 2020 https://r4v.info/es/documents/details/72254"

R4V – Regional Interagency Coordination Platform

The Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V) is a coordination structure convened by UNHCR and IOM to lead and coordinate the response to refugees and migrants from Venezuela. The Platform engages many international organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society, faith-based organizations, United Nations agencies, donors and financial institutions that are working together to strengthen the operational response in support of refugees and migrants from Venezuela who have left and continue to leave their country, seeking access to basic rights and services, protection, as well as self-reliance and socio-economic integration. This same structure is replicated at national and sub-regional levels, where coordination mechanisms (National and Sub-regional Platforms), in close collaboration with host governments, are implementing the activities. These interventions are incorporated into the Refugee and Migrants Response Plan (RMRP) which is intended to complement the interventions of national and local government authorities, supporting them to fulfil their responsibilities. The RMRP serves to collate the comprehensive response to refugees[3], migrants stateless persons, third-country nationals, and returnees from Venezuela, irrespective of their asylum or migratory status in the respective host country. As such, it addresses the needs of those engaged in pendular movements, those in transit, as well as those in a country of destination, without distinction and without discrimination. In addition, the RMRP addresses the needs of affected host populations in the relevant host countries.

To ensure that the humanitarian, protection and integration needs of refugees and migrants from Venezuela and of affected host communities are identified, planned for and met, the R4V Regional and National Platforms have established Working Groups[4] focusing on Education, Communication, Socio-economic Integration, Information Management, Support Spaces, Communicating with Communities/Communication for Development (CwC/C4D), and Gender-Based Violence (GBV), among others.

CWC/C4D Regional Working Group[5]

Created within the framework of the R4V, the CwC/C4D Working Group has been key in the roll-out of the Regional Information and Communication Needs Assessment. The interagency working group co-led by UNICEF and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), was created to provide regional coordination on communicating with communities, outreach and engagement initiatives to strengthen Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) practices at inter-agency level, in an effort to engage with affected populations at all stages of the program cycle, maximize resources across partners and avoid duplication.

The group also seeks coordination around the establishment of feedback mechanisms through common tools and channels so as to enhance community engagement and participation throughout the response and ensure refugees and migrants from Venezuela are consulted in the way assistance is shaped and access information that empowers them. Finally, where relevant, the group works with other sectoral groups to support their

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3 For the purposes of this document, any reference to "refugees" shall be read to include asylum-seekers.

4 In 2020 the R4V will be comprised of Sectoral Groups focusing on Education, Food Security, Health, Humanitarian Transport, Integration, Non-Food Items, Nutrition, Protection (including Child Protection, GBV and Human Trafficking and Smuggling), Shelter, WASH and thematic working groups on cash-based interventions (CBI), Support Spaces and on CWC/C4D.

5 Participating organizations of the working group are: CARE, IADB, IFRC, IOM, NRC, Plan International, RET, RIADIS, Save The Children, UN WOMEN, UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, World Vision.

activities and ensure the response is overall informed by community consultation and consider the needs, priorities, and preferences of refugees, migrants, and host communities.

Engaging with communities: Why does it matter?

The importance of establishing good communication channels with affected communities has been recognized as vital in order to ensure that communities are informed about their rights and available assistance and are engaged in shaping the assistance they receive according to their needs and preferences.

Implementing strong and inclusive communication mechanisms, including the establishment of feedback and accountability systems gives people the power to make their voices heard about their priorities, their information needs and ensure all voices are heard and taken into consideration when the response is planned and implemented.

Referred to as Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA), Communicating with Communities (CwC) and Communication for Development (C4D) by different organizations, the practice of establishing two-way communication is a form of service and empowerment as important as other sectoral interventions as it allows humanitarian organizations to establish a trusted relationship with affected populations. It puts people at the center of the response, empowering them to take a central role in the support they receive by communicating their needs, priorities, and preferences, and also shape the way they receive timely and potentially life-saving information through communication channels of choice in order to be able to make decisions at any stage of the journey. This is key in contributing to accountability and transparency.[6]

Challenges

As listed throughout this document, the constantly changing environment and legal requirements in the countries of the Venezuela Situation are often complex and have a direct impact in our communication within communities. It makes it very challenging to constantly update the information and make it accessible to all community groups with an age, gender and diversity approach. There are even more challenges to reach out to those in an irregular situation and/or survivors of exploitation and abuse. Lack of resources in terms of specialized staff in CwC/C4D and funds to implement the activities, at regional and national levels, contribute to the limited capacity to adequately respond to the emerging needs. Throughout the report we will observe detailed challenges in all sections and some recommendations to be considered to improve our interventions in the region.

About the Assessment

The objective of the Information and Communication Needs Assessment in the context of the Venezuela Situation was to create a common baseline to understand the information

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6 Some of the global and international framework and commitments embracing the principle of accountability from humanitarian organizations to affected populations and communities (including specific components on communication and community engagement) are: The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) Grand Bargain, Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) AAP Commitments, IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action, IASC EDG Preliminary Guidance Note – Protection and Accountability to Affected, Populations in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC), Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability, Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response, 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (Goals 5 and 16).

and communication needs of different population groups. The feedback gathered from refugees and migrants will guide and improve our strategies, interventions and tools for communicating with communities in 2020.

Several initiatives have been carried out in the region to collect information on the communication needs and information sources used by refugees and migrants, however they were not standalone exercises (i.e. part of general participatory assessments), coordinated among the actors on the ground and have not been carried out in a structured and systematized way in all countries. **The objective of this exercise is to carry out an evaluation with basic questions in countries involved in the Venezuela Situation response to be able to analyze the information, compare trends and measure the impact throughout the region.** It will serve to gather evidence-based data to help develop information-sharing tools, prevent creating and duplicating tools and enhance access to communication and information to refugees and migrants.

It was the first time that a simultaneous evaluation was carried out in the context of this emergency, or focusing on refugees and migrants' information and communication needs across the region. The questions cover the channels used, access to information, needs, preferences, reliable sources and how individuals would like to interact with humanitarian actors and how they receive information from community structures. This assessment allows us to see the different needs of refugees and migrants with a focus on age, gender and diversity[7]. The methodology and tools were developed and contextualized using various sources for the assessment of information and communication needs such as those from "Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC)"[8], UNHCR Communicating with Communities[9], Internews assessments, among others.

The "Regional Information and Communication Needs Assessment for the Venezuela Situation" was carried out in fifteen countries: Argentina, Aruba, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Curacao, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay. This exercise led by UNHCR and IFRC, was conducted within the framework of the interagency coordination, with the participation of refugees, migrants and host communities and different humanitarian actors, including national and international NGOs, United Nations agencies, National Red Cross Societies and the IFRC, church-based organizations, human rights committees, refugee organizations and state institutions, among others. It was a joint effort between the CwC/C4D Working Group of the Regional Platform and National Platforms, leading the implementation phase, coordinating efforts with the different members that integrate them. It was a positive interaction between the organizations engaged in the platform, with structured planning and joint complementary assessments.

The exercise was implemented in several stages, 1) conducting a desk review; 2) developing and testing the tools; 3) collecting data; 4) reviewing, analyzing and reporting the data. The targeted population were refugees and migrants from Venezuela and from other nationalities, in-destination (residing in host countries) or in transit in countries majorly affected by the Venezuelan situation, humanitarian actors, local authorities, and host communities. An online training with focal points was carried out by the regional CwC/C4D Working Group and others were organized at local level to review the tools and methodology with respondents before starting the process and carrying out the surveys and focus group discussions. Personnel with experience in data collection and protection

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7 Concept note "Information and Communication Needs Assessment – Venezuela Situation", R4V CwC/C4D Working Group, August 2019.
8 http://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources/i/20140721173332-ihw5g
9 UNHCR Communicating with Communities, Innovation Unit, https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/communicating-with-communities/

background were identified and prioritized to carry out this exercise. Observation was also an important aspect of assessment process.

The tools were developed in a consultative process, designed and reviewed with the regional and national actors. These included a 1) main survey conducted with enumerators (main survey); 2) online self-administered survey (online survey); 3) interviews with key informant people (KII); and 4) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). With the exception of focus group discussions, the tools were designed using Kobo Toolbox, using an internet browser on a mobile phone or tablet. The tools were also available offline.

A piloting exercise was conducted in Colombia before launching the assessment, this helped to adjust the tools and test them in real time with refugees and migrants. Feedback on the tools was also collected and integrated to reflect the different contexts and different profiles of the population interviewed. This was an important aspect of the assessment, as in the Venezuela context, people are very mobile so there was a need for different iterations of the tool and to change significantly the tools that were adopted from other contexts.

A detailed three-month planning with timeframes was established and implemented by regional and national actors. Guidance was provided on the minimum number of interviews and FGDs to be conducted in each country, however all were conducted according to their capacities and their existing resources. Not all locations within each country with presence of refugees and migrants were part of this assessment. In many of the countries the number of interviews conducted is not representative with the number of refugees and migrants. Therefore, it is important to note that the information collected serve as an indication and the results are not representative of the overall situation in each country.

You can find all the tools used in the assessment at:
https://r4v.info/en/working-group/236

> ⚒ **Assessment tools**
>
> - Main survey questionnaire
> - Online self-administered survey
> - Key Informant Interviews questionnaire
> - FGDs guidance
> - FGDs systematization form

UN Women/Tico Angulo

Venezuelan refugees and migrants cross the Simon Bolivar Bridge, one of seven regular entry points on the Colombia-Venezuela border.
Photo: UNHCR/Siegfried Modola

02 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V) in coordination with national and sub-regional platforms have carried out a **regional interagency Information and Communication Needs Assessment in the context of the Venezuela Situation.** This exercise was prioritized in order to understand the information and communication needs of different population groups of refugees, migrants and host communities. Having evidence-based data will help to develop better information-sharing tools, prevent duplicating initiatives and overall enhance access to communication and information for refugees and migrants.

This collaborative and multi-actor effort included consultations with targeted groups, direct interviews through enumerators, observation, focus group discussions, online self-administered survey, data and information review, **in fifteen countries affected by the Venezuela Situation. More than 3,400 refugees and migrants from Venezuela, refugees and migrants from other nationalities, host communities and key informants participated in the assessment.** There was an equal participation of women and men, 2.5% of whom are living with disabilities. Overall the population interviewed has high levels of literacy and mainly resides with their family members where they were interviewed.

Most of the people that participated, access information and communicate through mobile phones, the majority owning a smartphone (76%), using mainly messaging apps and social media like WhatsApp and Facebook. Despite this finding, it was also observed through focus group discussions and when triangulating the information regarding internet access, that a considerable number of people do not have access to a mobile phone, with differences across the countries and depending on whether they are in transit or in-destination. People mainly use their mobile phone to communicate with family and friends, and access information on the internet. Refugees and migrants experience challenges accessing data plan packages due to various factors including lack or expired documentation, lack of a regular status in the country, and financial constraints.

Most of the respondents in-destination have access to the internet, however there is still a gap for many, especially for those in transit despite efforts having been put in place by different organizations in order to ensure that hotspots and free Wi-Fi connections are accessible to those most in need. There is still limited access in some spots along the routes. Efforts to enhance connectivity and quality of the service is being prioritized in key areas in transit zones and locations with high concentrations of Venezuelans, however more resources are needed. Most of the people interviewed do not have access to the radio, television or printed press, however they list some of them as their preferred information channels.

People prioritize different communication/information means depending on the information required. While face-to-face communication with family and friends and humanitarian actors is among the most trusted source of information, especially for those in transit, generally the main communication channels and sources of information are social media and WhatsApp - to keep in touch with family and friends, and to search for information. The internet and TV follow as main sources of information. This differs from the most trusted communication sources and channels, as many participants highlighted the misinformation and false information shared through Facebook and WhatsApp groups as a concern.

Information needs remain considerable and they revolve around access to rights and legal procedures, where to find assistance, access to jobs and livelihoods opportunities, health and education, among many others. Most respondents feel uninformed, despite numerous efforts and initiatives implemented by humanitarian actors and governments to enhance access to and quality of the information.

Most of the respondents in the main survey had contact with humanitarian actors. However not all the people participating in the overall assessment know who to contact and where to get information and assistance. This limits the interaction and trust towards humanitarian actors as some mentioned that they lack information about their mandates and services provided. Complaints and feedback mechanisms are not in place in most of the locations where the assessment took place (i.e. transit areas, places of assistance), limiting accountability to affected populations, their participation in the programming cycle and the two way communication.

Communication within communities is also limited in most of the countries. Social media are the main channels where people can find virtual protection networks that help address urgent protection needs. The Venezuelan community is characterized by having strong social networks who most of the times are perceived by Venezuelans themselves for operating at a faster speed than institutions and humanitarian actors on the ground.

Efforts at regional, national and local levels should focus on:

- The need for increased community engagement and participation of refugees, migrants and host communities throughout all the interventions that affect their lives.
- Promotion and expansion of joint interagency initiatives to avoid duplication.
- Increased provision of updated and reliable information and materials, using adequate channels in relation to the profile of the population and information needs, enabling access through the communication channels of their choice (WhatsApp and Facebook). This should be coordinated as part of a CwC strategy.
- Use of popular used channels, and reducing top-down approaches from humanitarian organizations for information sharing initiatives.
- Creating and strengthening existing community-based complaint and feedback mechanisms, including Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and fraud allegations.
- Continuous capacity building and advocacy efforts need to be strengthened regarding access to communication within communities and connectivity.
- Sustained investment and funding in community engagement to ensure recommendations are adopted and to provide communities with a chance to determine what assistance they receive, making the response relevant and efficient.

Details and more information can be found in the assessment dashboard:
https://r4v.info/en/working-group/236

70%
of people interviewed have access to a mobile phone

79%
of people* have access to internet

Only
29%
of people in transit have access to Wi-Fi

WhatsApp, Facebook, Television
are the main sources of information
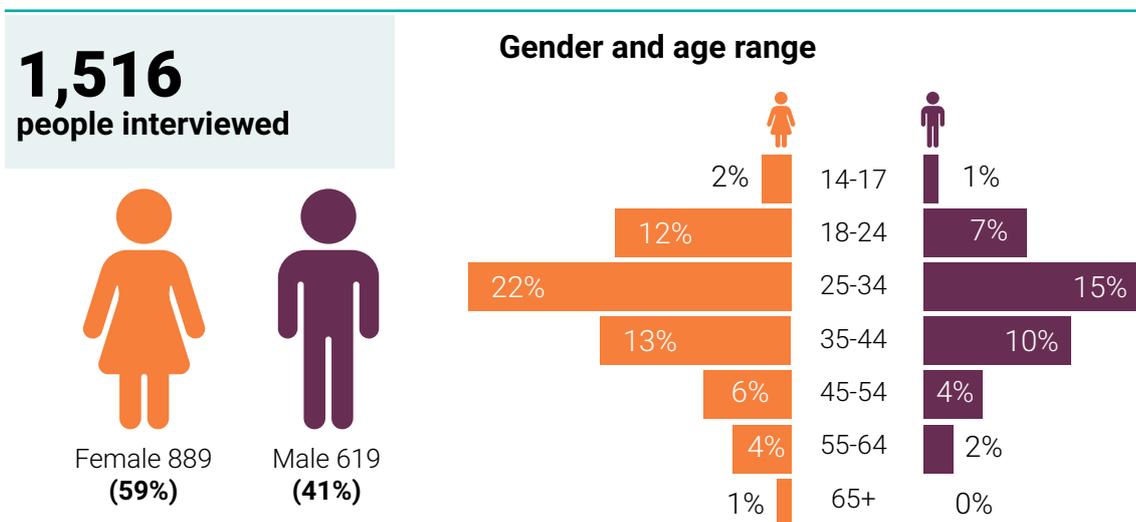
Only
1
person out of 2 feels informed**

* people established in the country where they were interviewed
** 51% of people feel they are informed about their rights and available assistance, 42% do not feel informed, 6% does not know if they are informed, 1% preferred not to answer this question.
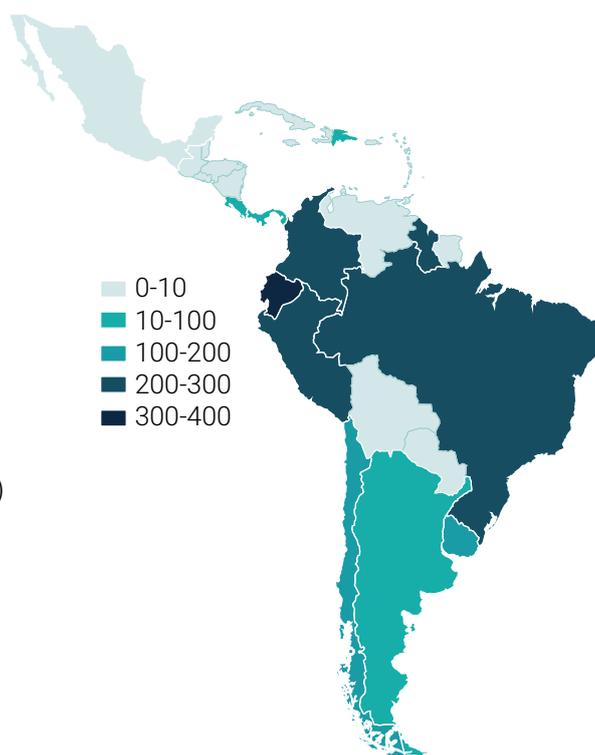
Photo: UN Women/Tico Angulo

03 KEY FINDINGS

Demographics

During the period between 5 August 2019 and 15 September 2019, a total of **3,085 people were interviewed across 15 countries in the region – 1,516 people were interviewed through a main survey conducted with enumerators (main survey), 1,492 people interviewed through an online self-administered survey (online survey) and 77 interviews with key informant people (KII). Additionally, more than 30 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with over 330 refugees, migrants and host communities** were conducted with different population groups in these countries.

1,516
people interviewed

Female 889
(59%)

Male 619
(41%)

Gender and age range

Female	Age range	Male
2%	14-17	1%
12%	18-24	7%
22%	25-34	15%
13%	35-44	10%
6%	45-54	4%
4%	55-64	2%
1%	65+	0%

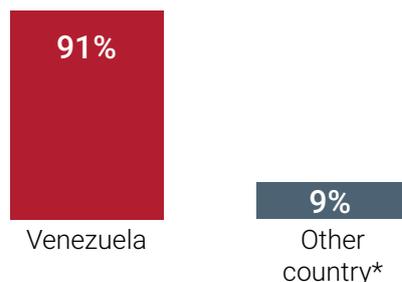**Countries**

Brazil: 243

Colombia: 241

Ecuador: 336

Peru: 216

Southern Cone: 109
Argentina: (87), Uruguay (14), Chile (8)

Central and North America:135
Costa Rica: (61), Panama (21), Mexico (4)

Caribbean region: 236
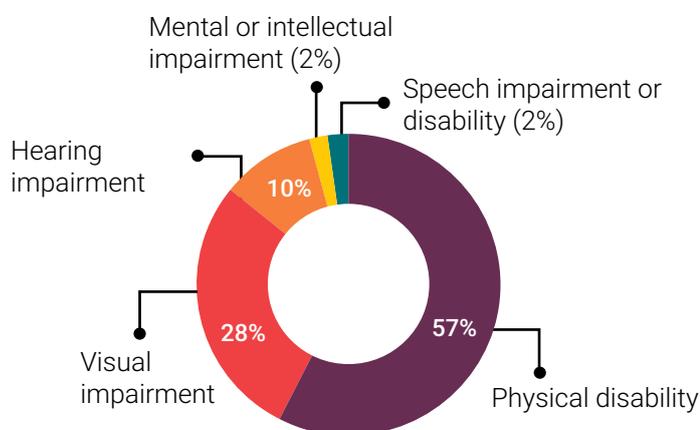Guyana (228), Dominican Republic (49),
Trinidad and Tobago (5), Aruba (3)

Map legend:
- 0-10
- 10-100
- 100-200
- 200-300
- 300-400

Country of origin
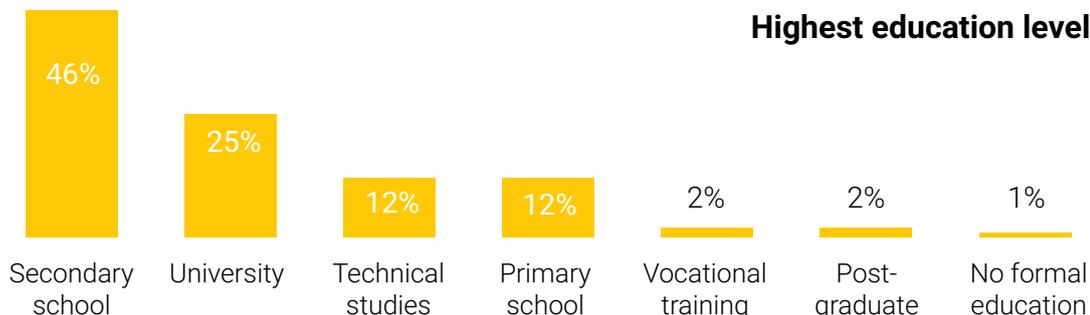
91%
Venezuela

9%
Other country*

The majority of interviewed people (91%) indicated **Venezuela as their country of origin.** The remaining 9% of the population includes both people belonging to the host community of each country, refugees from other nationalities and people who are transiting by other countries to the different countries surveyed.

People living with disabilities

People with disabilities:

78

Mental or intellectual impairment (2%)

Speech impairment or disability (2%)

Hearing impairment

10%

Visual impairment

28%

57%

Physical disability

2.5% of the interviewed people (78 people in total) have indicated that they are living with disabilities, with the majority of these (57%) reporting physical disabilities. 35% of people living with disabilities indicate they have a visual or hearing impairment.

Highest education level

46%
Secondary school

25%
University

12%
Technical studies

12%
Primary school

2%
Vocational training

2%
Post-graduate

1%
No formal education

The majority of people interviewed have high levels of literacy. 46% of the people interviewed through the main survey have completed secondary school and 27% have a university degree. In the online survey, 39% of people indicated they have a university degree and 22% have completed secondary school studies. 12% and 16% of people respectively report they have completed technical studies. Across the region, only 14 people interviewed reported they cannot read or write, 11 women and 3 men.

Movements

Are you in transit at this moment?

|					
70%	9%	7%	5%	5%	3%
No, I am settled here	Yes, to another city in this country	I don't know	Yes, to another country	Yes, to my country of origin / pendular movement	I prefer not to answer
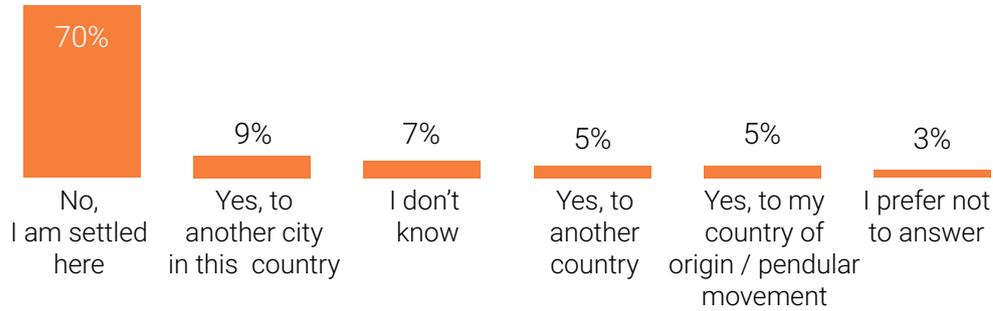
The **majority of the people interviewed (70% or 1084 people) indicated they are in-destination in the country where they were interviewed.** This result is mirrored in the online survey where an even higher percentage (78%) report to have established in the country where they were interviewed. Of those in transit (31% or 454 people in total) the majority of people have been in transit for less than three months, which means they are still in the process of reaching their destination country or city.

Do you travel alone?

66% NO | 34% YES

Who are you traveling with?

My children	38%
My partner	25%
Other relatives	18%
Friends	10%
Parent	7%
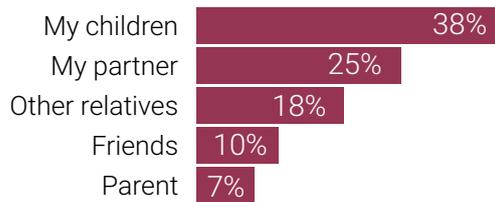
454 interviewed who reported they are in a transit situation

When did you leave your country of origin or residence?

42%	27%	11%	10%	8%	2%
Less than a month	1 to 3 months	1 to 3 years	3 to 6 months	6 to 12 months	More than 3 years
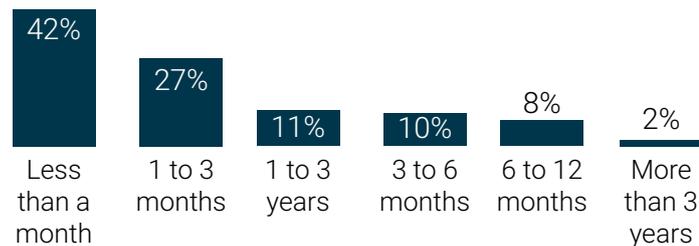
1,062 people interviewed who reported they are in-destination

How long have you been here?

28%	18%	18%	15%	14%	4%	3%
1 to 3 years	1 to 3 months	6 to 12 months	Less than a month	3 to 6 months	all my life	more than 3 years
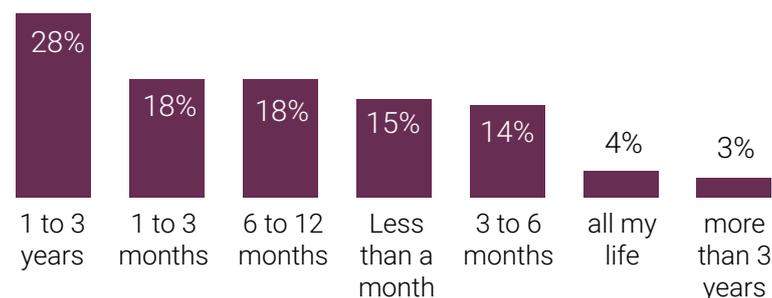
81% of in-destination population and 66% of people in transit are not alone but **either living or traveling with family members - the majority traveling with members of their nuclear family.** The majority of people in transit have recently started their journey, with over 40% of the people who indicated they are in a transit situation having left their country of origin for less than a month. Of those people in-destination, the majority 33% have been in the survey country for less than 3 months, while another large part 32% for less than a year.

Below a representation of movement flows across the region.

158
people indicated they are in transit
to another country

ARGENTINA

COLOMBIA

COSTA RICA

ECUADOR

PANAMA

PERU
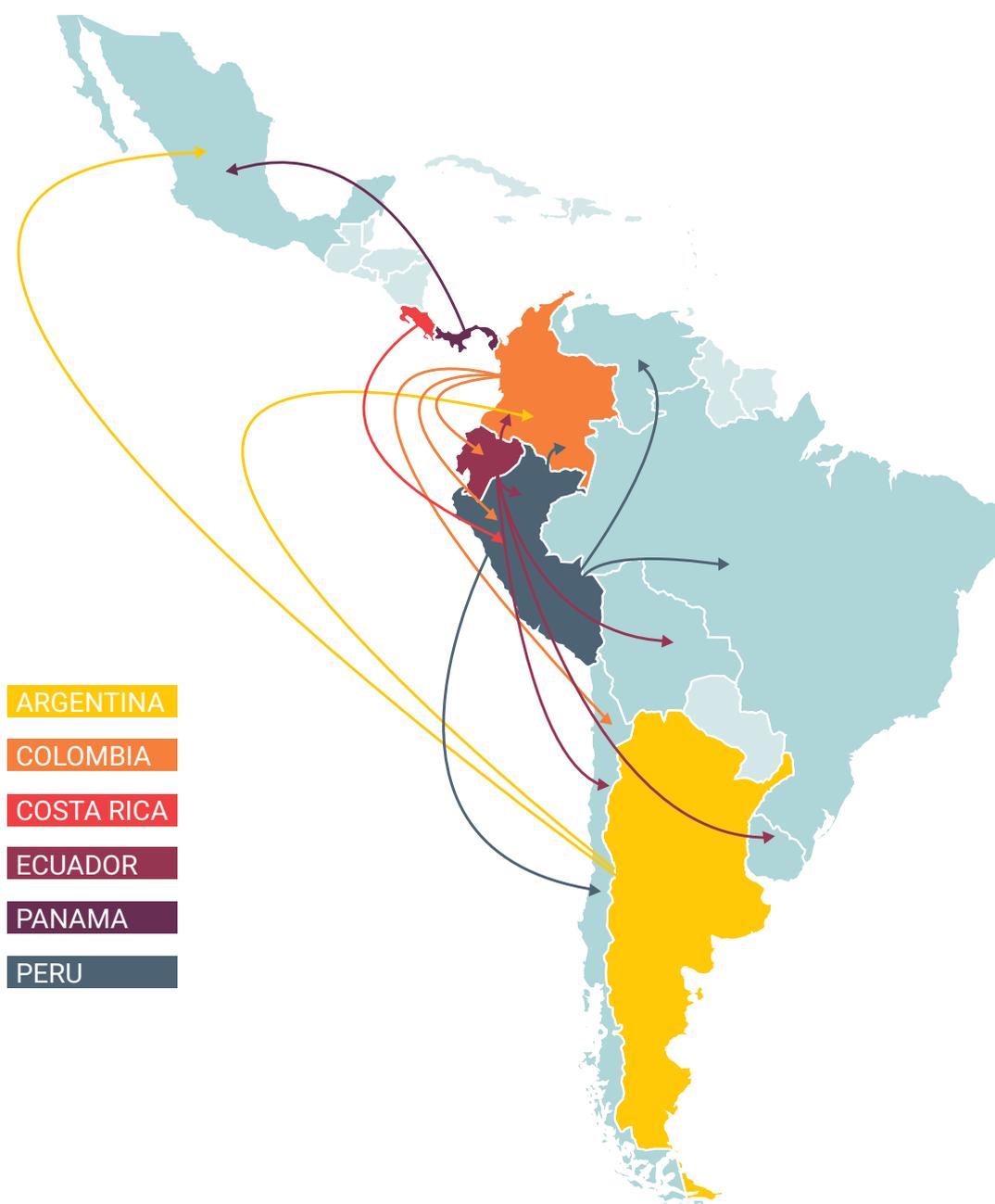
Access to communication

In this assessment, access to communication was focused on the use of the internet, mobile phones, radio, TV, and press. This is based on an understanding of the preferred channels following initial assessments, the testing of the tool, among others. Inputs were gathered through the main survey, online survey, KII, and FGDs.

A child video chats with her father who is in Ecuador working, while her and her mother charge their phone at a charging station along their journey. Photo: UNICEF

Most of the people interviewed access information and communicate through mobile phones, using mainly social media like WhatsApp and Facebook. Different population groups appear to prioritize different communication/information means depending on the information required. For example, some adults prefer face-to-face communication, younger generations, regardless of their gender, use more mobile phones, adolescent girls and boys highlighted music and art as a way to communicate and receive information, among others.
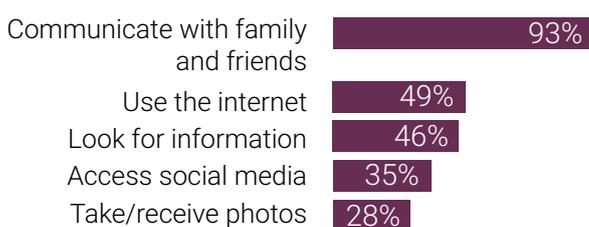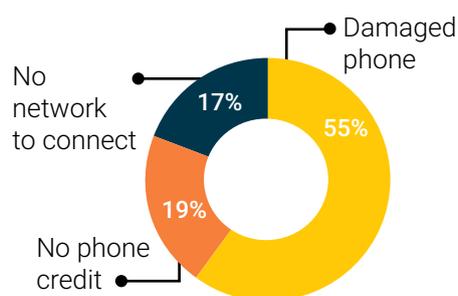
Access to mobile phones

One of the results of the main survey shows that **70% of respondents have access to a mobile phone** and, from that total, the majority own a device (personal phone 88.4%), the rest share a device with family or friends. **The majority of the interviewees have access to a smartphone (76%)** or to a phone with internet connectivity but with limited use of online applications (16%). In the online survey, from a total of 1,492 surveys, respondents answered that 91% have a personal mobile phone.

People who do/do not not have access to a mobile phone

Do you have access to a mobile phone?

70% Yes   30% No

Does this phone belong to you?

10% NO   90% YES

What type of mobile phone do you have access to?

76% — **Smartphone:** internet access, large touchscreen display, operating systems such as Android or Apple iOS.

16% — **Feature phone:** limited internet access, tends to have small screen and basic keypad.

8% — **Basic phone:** no internet access, small screen, basic keypad.

Did you have any problem with this mobile phone?

82% NO   18% YES

What problem did you have with this phone? (top 3)*

- Damaged phone 55%
- No network to connect 17%
- No phone credit 19%

What do you use the phone the most for?*

Communicate with family and friends	93%
Use the internet	49%
Look for information	46%
Access social media	35%
Take/receive photos	28%

* Multiple-choice question

Number of people who have no access to a phone

Why do you not have access to a phone?*

| 65%			
	12%	9%	8%
I don't have money for a device	My phone was stolen	I have sold my phone	I have lost my phone
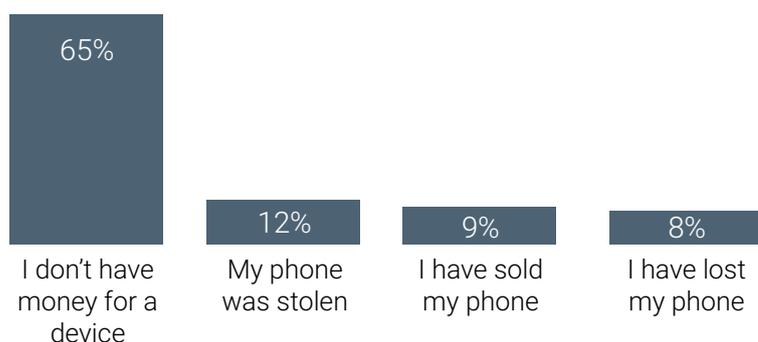
* Multiple-choice question

Mobile phones are mainly used for: 1) Communicating with family and friends (37%); 2) Accessing and searching for information on the internet (i.e. work, studies and money transfers) (37%); 3) Accessing social media such as WhatsApp/Facebook/Twitter (14%); and 4) Taking pictures, watching/posting videos on YouTube, taking/sending videos, playing games, listening to music (11%).

Venezuelans participating in FGDs in the Dominican Republic mentioned that **WhatsApp helps them to access information,** it is a preferred way of reaching out to many people who have questions and replicate them. However, **not everyone has a cellphone to access social media**; 1 out of 10 people do not have a mobile phone. The ones using Instagram, find it useful since it is more visual and information remains easily accessible, however not all organizations post their information on it.

Adolescents in Medellin, Colombia, shared during FGDs that they all have access to a mobile phone, 3 out of 14 share a device with their family members, and 11 out of 14 have access to the internet. On a daily basis, they use WhatsApp (100%), Facebook (78%), Instagram (50%) and Twitter (28%). They all have an email address, all have access to a TV and half of them have access to the radio. Most of these adolescents use social media to communicate with friends and family members abroad and in Colombia. Venezuelan women in Peru reported in the main survey that they use their phones to access the internet, which helps them to stay informed.
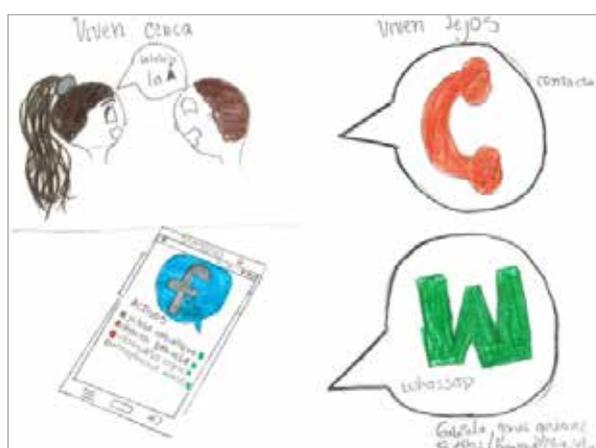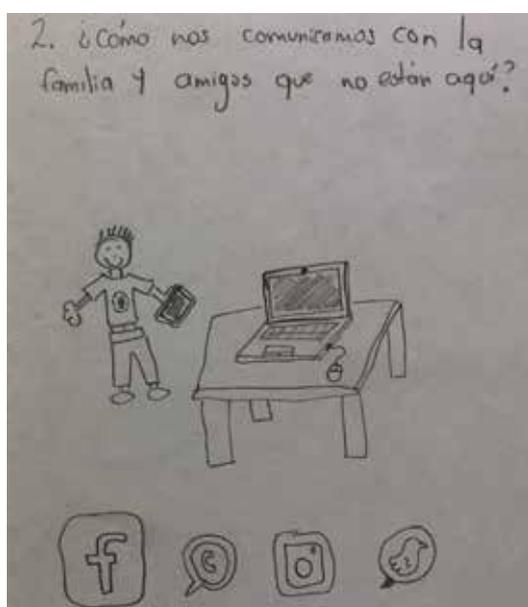
Drawings collected in FGDs in Colombia. Photo: UNHCR

During various FGDs conducted in August and September 2019 in Arequipa, Cusco, Lima, Tacna and Tumbes (Peru) where 80+ Venezuelans participated, the following key findings were outlined:

- **Most of the Venezuelans** who arrived in 2018 and early 2019 **own smartphones** (while around 10% of the refugees and migrants consulted, share devices among family members and compatriots).
- The **capacity** of these smartphones is quite **limited**, so constant clean-up of apps and pictures is required to keep devices operational;
- Due to economic reasons, some of the Venezuelans in Peru were **required to sell their personal devices** either inside Venezuela or at border areas in Colombia (Cucuta) to fund their journey;
- Refugees and migrants in Peru are generally **purchasing second-hand mobile phones** without any type of guarantee. In line with this, many Venezuelans reported that they found out that used devices were on a blacklist of stolen devices and, therefore, blocked. Affordability of devices and device blacklisting are impacting negatively the digital inclusion of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in Peru.
- Men and women between 18 and 29 years old shared that they use their mobile phones to access YouTube to watch videos of compatriots who left their country before them and explain legal procedures to access a regular status, others use it for entertainment and for education purposes (study a language for example). They also mentioned that, through Facebook, they are members of Facebook groups such as *Venezolanos en Peru* and other such groups.

Calling and **receiving calls** from friends and family, receive news and information and **access to social media** channels are the **main uses** of the mobile phones by the Venezuelan community in Peru.

All the Venezuelans consulted with access to connectivity services mentioned that **WhatsApp** and **Facebook Messenger,** to a lesser extent, are the main channels of information and communication.

- Recent arrivals of Venezuelans to Tumbes represent a change in the socioeconomic profile of the refugees and migrants that Peru has been receiving during late 2018 and 2019. Less educated and financially secure, **only 20% of the newly-arrived refugees and migrants consulted in Tumbes had access to a personal or shared mobile devices.**

In the case of people who do not own a cellphone, it is due to lack of resources to buy one (69%), they were robbed and lost their phones (12%, 9%), or have been forced to sell their phones in order to use the money to cover basic services and family needs (10%). Focus group discussions show that people who do not own a cellphone, have access to the device through a family member, friend or member from his/her community.

In terms of the functionality of the device, most of the interviewees stated that they do not have problems with their devices (82%). Others cannot access the internet due to lack of free/open networks and have no resources to buy phone credit, or they have no chargers and cannot afford to buy one, and others have no access to electricity to charge their phones (40%).

Registering SIM cards

For those who own a personal mobile phone, **61% have a registered SIM card under their name in the country where they are residing or transiting through.** This percentage is

very similar to the online survey where respondents stated that the majority (57%) have a SIM card registered under their name. While this is the majority of people, the remaining 43% are at risk of not being able to access mobile communication, and in particular data connection. During an FGD in Peru a Venezuelan man said that he sometimes helps friends and family in the country getting SIM cards, as often they do not have the right documents or enough financial resources. It is important to note that according to the telecommunications regulation in Peru, a passport, foreigner residence ID or any document issued by the Migration authority can be accepted by mobile network operators (MNOs) to register SIM cards under foreigners' names. However, MNOs were accepting Venezuelan national IDs to complete the registration process. When the refugees and migrants were entering into contact with the MNOs, they realized that those SIM cards have been registered under Peruvians' names, limiting their ability to make changes in their lines and file complaints.

Data Packages

From the people that have a SIM card, 65% are able to access a data plan registered under their name. This gives them the opportunity to access 3G internet, LTE. However, the majority of people (54%) are not able to have a plan registered under their name and they resort to nationals of the country to get this plan (i.e. Colombia). In the case of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in Peru, the 5-soles plan (USD 1.5) for monthly unlimited use of WhatsApp offered by the various service providers is the most popular plan among. The standard monthly data and minutes plans (29 soles, USD 9) represent a financial burden to the majority of Venezuelans in Peru.

During FGDs in Dominican Republic, Venezuelan men and women mentioned that they all have mobile phones with a local number and use pre-paid phone packages. Six out of eighteen have data plans. Lack of financial resources is what makes it hard to access those packages or keep those phone plans active. As well, they confirm that Venezuelans can only access data plans when they have a regular migratory status; with a passport you can only access pre-paid data. Another challenge people encounter, is when they want to buy lines with expired passports.

People try to call family to give them news on their journey. Photo: Red Cross Red Crescent Magazine / Erika Piñeros
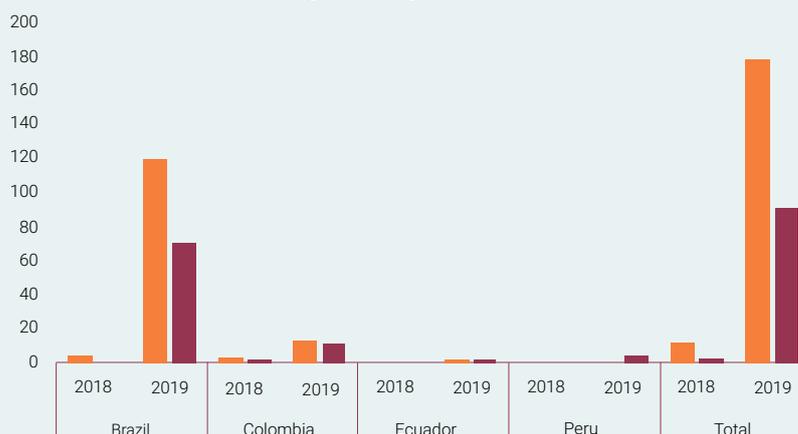
These charts show the number of telephone calls that ICRC helped people make to their family as part of their Restoring Family Links services. This service aims at helping people who do not have a device or phone credit to talk to their family members through free phone calls.

Total number of calls by month
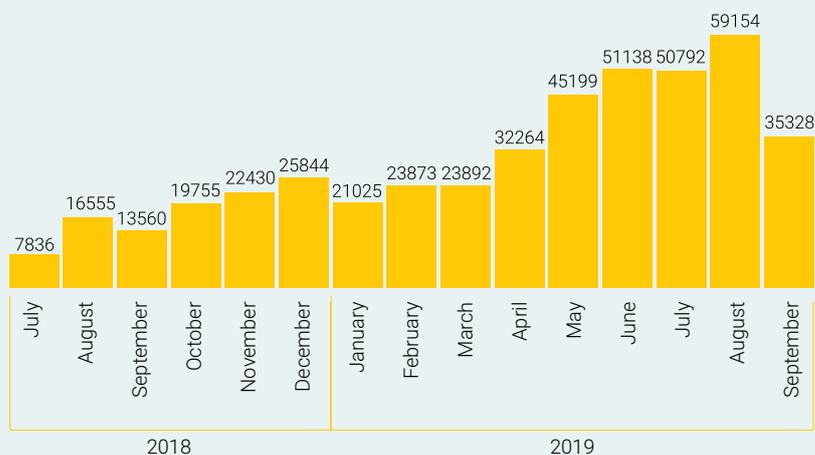
Restoring Family Links services

Source: ICRC data for RFL services in the region: https://familylinks.icrc.org/en/Pages/home.aspx

Over the past month the number of phone calls has steadily increased. The sudden decrease of services provided in September is due to a change in the conditions of access to Ecuador which caused considerable changes in fluxes across the region over the last month.

Access to the Internet

For those refugees and migrants who are in-destination, 79% have access to the internet, most of them on a daily basis (75%), once a week (17%) and others have limited accessibility (17%). Results are consistent across genders. In a FGD in Colombia, adolescents mentioned that despite their access to the internet, there is still a gap for many Venezuelans. Some are excluded from information and several do not have access since they do not have an internet connection. Others have difficulty communicating with their families and friends due to electricity cuts in Venezuela and in the Caribbean.
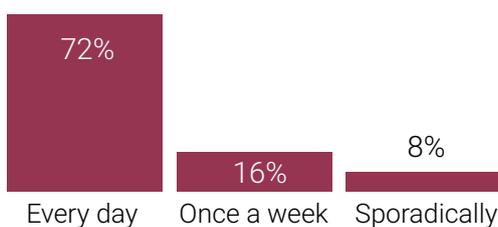
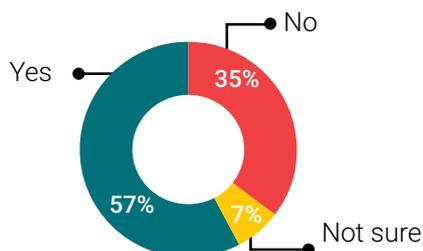**Number of people who use the internet.**

Do you use the internet?

79% YES
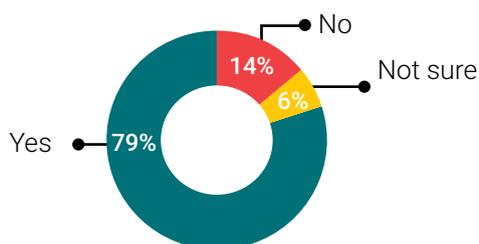
21% NO

From which places do you access to Wi-Fi?*

36% At a friend's/ family member's house

21% Public Wi-Fi spots

19% Other

How frequently do you use the internet?

72% Every day

16% Once a week

8% Sporadically

Has it been difficult to find public Wi-Fi hotspots?

No 35%

Yes 57%

Not sure 7%

Do you feel safe to access information online?

No 14%

Not sure 6%

Yes 79%

Main reason for insecurity

I fear someone could access my personal information — 55%

I fear someone could use the information wrongly — 19%

I fear someone could identify my location — 9%
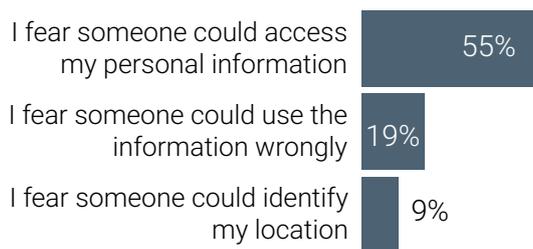
Number of people who do not use the internet.

Why do you not use the internet?*

30% I don't have a phone

24% Cannot afford it

16% No computer
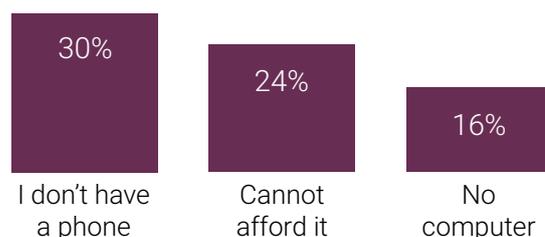
* Multiple-choice question

People interviewed stated that they have internet access mainly in the places where they are residing (39%), public spaces such as public squares, governmental buildings, restaurants, libraries (23%), humanitarian organizations and churches (10%) and others. Sometimes access to the internet is included in their rent, or people living in the same room or residence organize themselves to have one contract and share the cost (FGD in Colombia). Others have access to the internet on their mobile phones and share it with their family members. In Colombia in some neighborhoods of Medellin, many refugees and migrants mentioned that they have access to free hotspots at public spaces such as public squares, offices and libraries, all provided by the Municipality. In Costa Rica, some of the respondents mentioned that the only free Wi-Fi spot available is in fast food chains. In the Caribbean, people try to find free Wi-Fi hotspots or use the company VIVA as it is the cheapest. In rural areas in the Caribbean Wi-Fi access is limited, however similar situations

are encountered in other areas in the region. Refugees and migrants from Venezuela in Peru expressed difficulties in finding free Wi-Fi hotspots in public places, limiting their ability to access reliable and vital information.

In FGDs with adolescents in Colombia, participants mentioned that they go to cyber cafes to access the internet and be able to do their homework. In semi-urban neighborhoods in the North of Santander, community members of displaced Colombians and Venezuelans refugees and migrants mentioned that their children are exposed to many risks by going to nearby cafes in order to do research for their homework since they do not have access to the internet in the neighborhood due to lack of networks in the area.

The main barrier for accessing the internet is that not all Venezuelans have a device to do so (55%). Other people interviewed have no resources to buy data or internet service, and others have no access to electricity (45%). Most of the interviewees have difficulties accessing public Wi-Fi networks (58%) and those who are able to access them do feel safe when navigating online (79%). The main reason for feeling insecure is the risk of exposure to their personal information (65%), misuse of their personal information (22%) or that someone will find their location (13%), though overall people feel secure when communicating online (79%).

Access to the internet is a barrier for many, however through surveys and FGDs respondents also mentioned that the quality of the information found or received is questionable.

> *"There is a lot of information on Facebook but it is incorrect or inaccurate. We would like to receive information through social networks but from trusted sources; true and accurate information."*
> (Main survey, Venezuelan woman in Peru).

With the **increasing digitalization of services for refugees and migrants in the region,** specifically in Peru and Chile, several processes can be initiated/completed online, such as asylum seeker application, work permit renewal, travel authorization (once recognized as a refugee). Most of the refugees and migrants consulted during the FGDs in the countries, do not feel comfortable using connectivity services to complete regularization procedures due to a **lack of digital skills**, which includes not even having an email account created. In addition, refugees and migrants have to monitor constantly their applications in case any communications from the authorities are received. There have been reported cases of refugees and migrants missing appointments due to the lack of access and/or confidence to safely use connectivity services. As a result, they are forced to turn to third parties (cyber-cafes) to complete their processes at high prices, posing a financial burden on them.

Additionally, to ensure that refugees and migrants stay in contact with their loved ones, IFRC, ICRC, and National Red Cross Societies have established connectivity points along the route under their Restoring Family Links initiative. At these points, international and national calling services are offered, as well as Wi-Fi hotspots and power services to charge their personal devices.[10] Some of these services are also placed within the Support Spaces or linked to them.

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10 https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1F88RUoGLQ5_p0o7jOnJ4cJEFvEFvyn5K&ll=4.61968 358500208%2C-74.1690103915073&z=14

Example of existing connectivity-related initiatives in the region

The Support Spaces (in Spanish: *Espacios de Apoyo*) is a regional initiative developed within the R4V, which seeks to promote in a coordinated and joint manner, a network of spaces where people receive information, orientation, and basic services that respond to their urgent needs. More than 90 Support Spaces have been identified in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Brazil, with more than 1,000 services mapped displayed in a regional service mapping. As part of this integral provision of protection services to refugees and migrants from Venezuela, connectivity has been identified as one key enabler of the Support Spaces initiative. In line with UNHCR's commitment to enhance access to vital information to facilitate refugees and migrant's digital inclusion, UNHCR is piloting the provision of connectivity to refugees and migrants from Venezuela – through Wi-Fi hotspots - at 12 pivotal Support Spaces in Colombia and Peru in 2019, totaling an estimated demand of over 1,600 users daily, in view of scaling up this intervention in 2020.

COLOMBIA

PERU

Connectivity services for refugees and migrants from Venezuela in key 12 Support Spaces: 9 in Colombia and 3 in Perú in 2019.

The technology-driven NGO consortium NetHope, continues to connect local government offices, local humanitarian organizations, and affected communities across Colombia. To date, the team has provided free Wi-Fi connectivity to over 34 organizations with a total of 95 locations across the country. NetHope's connectivity efforts have connected over 150,000 unique devices since the beginning of its response operations in December 2018. Usage statistics from these 95 sites indicate that Facebook is the most accessed platform, followed by YouTube and WhatsApp.[11] Other initiatives like this are found in the region supported by IOM, among others.
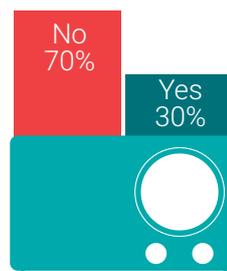
For refugees and migrants in transit, access to the internet is more limited, corresponding to 71% of migrants and refugees who said they do not have access to it. As expressed by refugees and migrants from Venezuela in Peru during FGDs, connectivity services, not always reliable, are available aboard most of the buses from Colombia to Peru. As mentioned by refugees and migrants, in Ecuador, bus terminals are covered with free internet connectivity services provided by local authorities. For those able to access the internet, the main places are at family members' or friend's houses (31%), cyber cafes or others (28%), public spaces (24%), organizations (16%). Moreover, children and older persons are highlighted as those with limited access to the internet. From the main survey it emerges that 88% of children in a transit situation, aged between 14 and 17 do not have access to Wi-Fi, while among older people (over 55) only 15% have accessed Wi-Fi when in a transit situation. During FGDs with Venezuelan men and women in Aruba, it was shared that free internet/Wi-Fi is not always accessible to communicate with families, friends, or obtain information, especially when they are on the road or in case of an emergency. Participants recommended to identify reliable sources, create Wi-Fi hotspots in different public spaces to facilitate communication, and create physical spaces that are safe and that provide reliable information.

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11 Although WhatsApp traffic is lower than other platforms, it is important to note that this application has a lower data consumption. Therefore, it would be assumed that WhatsApp is equality or more used than Facebook across Colombia.
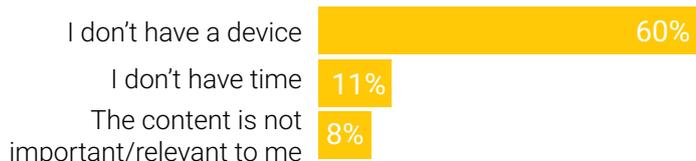
Access to Radio

Most of the people interviewed do not listen to the radio (70%), mainly since they do not have a device (60%). For those who have access to the radio (30%), they listen to it during different times of the day and mainly for news and debates (51%), music and entertainment (41%). The radio is mainly accessed in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Venezuelans in Panama mentioned that they listen to the radio program of *Caracol Internacional: Venezuela Sin Fronteras.* As for other communication channels, these results are homogeneous among genders. With regards to age, older age groups, especially above 45 years old tend to listen to the radio more with 40% stating they listen to the radio.

Do you listen to the radio?

No
70%

Yes
30%

People who do not listen do the radio.

Reasons to not listen to the radio*

I don't have a device	60%
I don't have time	11%
The content is not important/relevant to me	8%

* Multiple-choice question

People who listen to the radio

What do you listen to the most on the radio?

44%	📢	News
40%	🎵	Music and entertainment
6%		Talk/debate shows (including dial-in)
5%		Sports
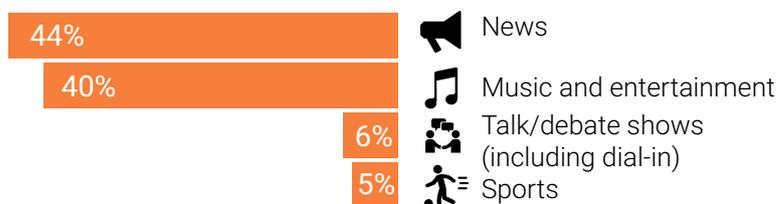
What time of the day do you listen to the radio?

25%	23%	22%
Before 8h00	8h00-11h00	Anytime
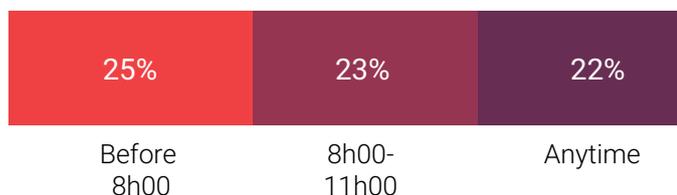
In FGD in the Dominican Republic, Venezuelan men and women mentioned that they barely listen to the radio or watch TV.

In the online surveys, the data is very similar, with 57% of respondents not listening to the radio.

Access to television[12]

The majority of the people interviewed (55%) do not watch TV. For those not accessing it, it is due to lacking the device (82%). In Panama, youth groups mentioned that they watch TV news stations like *Telemetro, TVN* and *Canal 2*.

Do you watch TV?

Yes 45% — No 55%

People who do not watch TV	**Reasons to not watch TV***

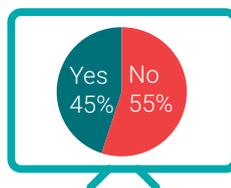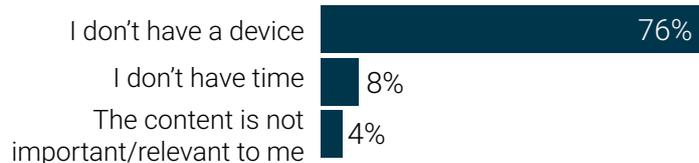| I don't have a device | 76% |
| I don't have time | 8% |
| The content is not important/relevant to me | 4% |

People who watch TV	**Where do you watch TV mostly?***

At home	75%
At friends' or neighbours' houses	10%
Humanitarian organization	6%
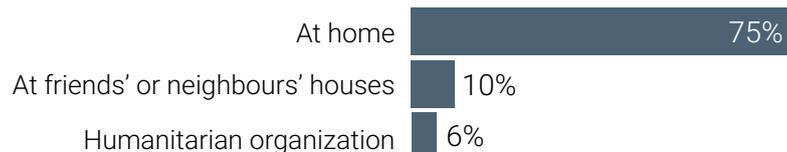
* Multiple-choice question

What do you watch on TV?*

39% News	22% Music and entertainment	11% Sports

A different result was observed from respondents of the online survey, who indicated that the majority of them have access to the TV (59%). They believe the TV is useful to know what is happening in their country of origin (Online survey, Venezuelan women in Arauca, Colombia).

Online survey

People who were interviewed	**Do you watch TV?**	Yes 59% — No 41%
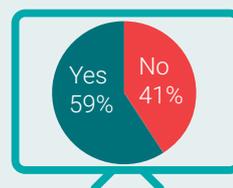
For those who have access to a TV, they watch from the place where they are residing at corresponding to 75%. They mainly watch news and debates, music and entertainment (cartoons, movies), soap operas and sports. These results do not show notable variances when disaggregated by gender or age groups.

12 This question was only asked to people who indicated they were established in the country where they were interviewed.

Access to press[13]

A total of 64% of the people interviewed do not have access or read the press, very similar to the online survey (60%). This is mainly due to a lack of resources to buy it (40%), they do not believe it is relevant to them (33%) or it is not available in their language (26%). From those who have access to th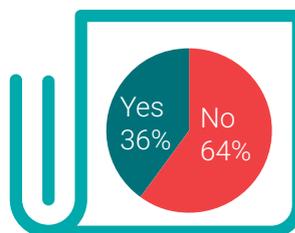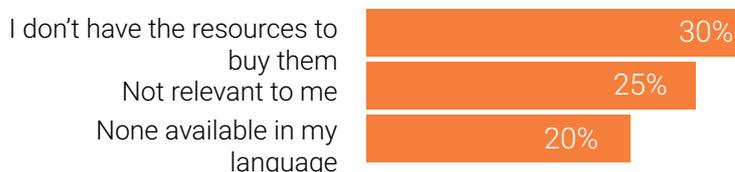e press, they read mainly printed newspapers (62%), online newspapers or magazines (31%), printed magazines or brochures (7%).

Do you read printed media?

Yes 36%
No 64%

People who do not read printed media	**Reasons to not read the press***
	I don't have the resources to buy them — 30%
	Not relevant to me — 25%
	None available in my language — 20%

* Multiple-choice question

People who read printed media.	**People read mostly**
	Printed newspapers — 60%
	Digital newspapers/magazines — 30%
	Printed magazines — 4%

During the interviews, some respondents shared that "they mainly use social media and read the newspapers, but knowing that the latter take ideological positions which generate mistrust" (Main survey, Venezuelan men in Argentina).

In FGDs in the Dominican Republic, Venezuelans mentioned that they have access to digital press, such as *"Listín Diario"* and *Caraota*. In Panama, adolescents mentioned that they read newspapers like *La Prensa*.

It was observed during visits to different countries, that most of the organizations have flyers, posters, and other printed material for dissemination to refugees and migrants, however sometimes these are duplicated, creating more confusion than guidance to the population. There is not enough coordination yet in all locations to jointly elaborate printed material.

13 This question was only asked to people who indicated they were established in the country where they were interviewed.

Communication channels, sources and information needs

In addition to understanding more about access to channels and information, the assessment aimed at creating a better understanding of what channels people prefer and what channels are the best to engage them in conversation in order to ensure they have a chance to participate in the assistance they receive. To this purpose, the assessment also focused on understanding which are the most and least trusted communication channels and sources.

A woman holding her baby receives a leaflet and information about the journey from Cúcuta to Bucaramanga at an assistance point on the outskirts of Cúcuta. Photo: Red Cross Red Crescent Magazine / Erika Piñeros

Communication channels and information sources[14]

The refugee and migrant population across the region is a connected one and uses social media and messaging apps as the main channels of communication to both keep in touch with family and friends but also to access information. WhatsApp (36%) and Facebook (32%) were identified as two of the three overall main sources of information. The Internet, in general, is also mentioned in the top five sources of information (25%). Television is the third most important source of information (32%), particularly for people already established in the country.

Variation of these preferences are not observed across genders, but differences can be found across age groups. While younger generations' results are in line with the overall trends, people over 45 do not indicate WhatsApp in the preferred top 5 sources of information. For people over 45, the main channels to get information are: television (32%), face-to-face communication (26%), internet (24%), Facebook (19%) and for the first time in the top 5, radio (19%).

What are your main channels to obtain information in this country?

36%	WhatsApp
32%	Facebook
32%	TV
25%	Talking with people face to face
25%	Internet
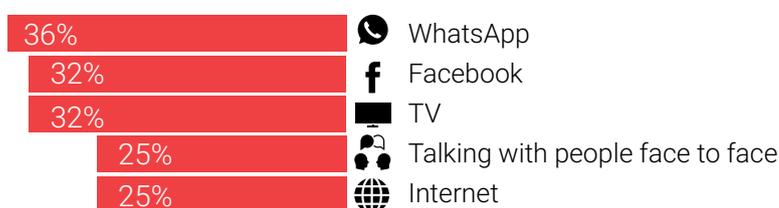
In an evaluation conducted by UNICEF in 2018 in Tumbes, Peru[15], with 160 refugees and migrants from Venezuela who were in transit, they mentioned through surveys that the main channels of information are social media, mainly Facebook and WhatsApp (99%). In 2018 in Trinidad and Tobago, FGD participants mentioned as well that they use social media as means of communication, mainly WhatsApp and suggested this channel for rapid updates. In Colombia, youth in FGD mentioned that they use WhatsApp and Facebook. The communication is not always easy as there are difficulties with the electricity and internet connection. Additionally, they believe that sometimes Colombians are the ones sharing more information than the Venezuelans. In Aruba, Venezuelan men and women mentioned as well that the main channels and sources of information are social media (i.e. WhatsApp) and news channels, however, they noted that the information received via these sources is not all the time accurate and should be verified before sharing it further.

Exchange of information face-to-face is overall one of the top 5 sources of information (25%). While it is very important for people in a transit situation, where it ranks as the second most important source of information (31%)[16], it becomes less relevant as people establish in a country (23%), where it ranks as the fifth most popular source of information.

This data is reinforced by the online survey results. The majority of the respondents of the online survey, who are established in the country where they were surveyed, have identified four online (WhatsApp, Facebook, Internet and Instagram) preferred sources of information as well as television.

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14 Data about preferred communication channels and sources were assessed through multiple-choice questions with a maximum of 3 answers. Results are calculated based on the total number of respondents. Totals might not add up to 100%.
15 Profile of the Venezuelan Population that enters Peru with Emphasis on Access to Information and Protective Practices.
16 31% of people in a transit situation said they get information from talking directly to people.

Trusted information sources and channels[17]

While social media and television seem to be predominantly used to find information, refugees and migrants interviewed reported that when it comes to trusting the information received, **a preference goes for family members or friends** (68%) and humanitarian organizations (34%). **Social media or messaging app peer groups are ranked lower**, this is also confirmed through the focus groups conducted, where many participants talked about the misinformation and false job advertisements circulating on Facebook and WhatsApp groups.

Who brings you the most trusted information?

Family and Friends	68%
Humanitarian organizations	34%
Online groups of compatriots	24%
Government and institutions	18%
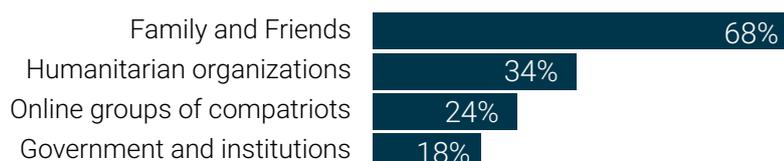
What are the communication channels you trust the least when receiving information?

32%	Facebook
23%	TV
20%	WhatsApp

A similar result was obtained when asking people about trusted communication channels. Facebook, WhatsApp, the internet and other main social media platforms (as well as television) all appear among the least trusted information channels. **There is a general sentiment of mistrust,** regardless of nationality and legal status in the country, and people prefer direct contact (face-to-face) and to verify the information received and shared (main survey, Ecuadorian woman from the host community). Some Venezuelans prefer to use Facebook groups, although it is considered the least trusted source in some countries, where they find greater misinformation (or "fake news").

In Colombia, youth in FGDs shared that the best communication channel among the Venezuelan population is word-of-mouth. In particular, in the experience of Casa Loma, a safe space where adolescents and young men and women get together and learn through art, they prefer to use dialogue and communicate through their bodies, with theatre, dance, graffiti, music and sign language. Although many do not have access to the traditional means of communication, they find other alternative ways of communication that link them to the host communities but allow them to bring something from their place of origin.[18]

Venezuelans in Costa Rica mentioned that for the majority of the people the most trusted way of receiving information is from other Venezuelans. They usually share information before their departure and about the procedures in Costa Rica. In Venezuela they used Instagram and in Costa Rica, they see that people use more Facebook (Main survey, Venezuelan woman in Costa Rica). Adolescents, however, mentioned that they do not

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17 Data about trusted information sources and channels were assessed through multiple-choice questions with a maximum of 3 answers. Results are calculated based on the total number of respondents. Totals might not add up to 100%.
18 Casa Loma is comprised of different youth groups that conduct prevention activities through arts. It is located in Medellin, Colombia and one of its programs is funded by UNHCR Innovation Unit.

want to receive information since the Venezuela crisis has caused them emotional tiredness, they can see the tension that it produces to their families. In the Dominican Republic, Venezuelans highlight that having focal points in their communities helps them to verify if the information is trustworthy. They do trust information that has been shared by the international organizations, NGOs and public institutions, those shared on TV news channels (i.e. *Noticia al dia, El Nacional, Caraota digital, La Patilla*), and by their friends and family members in Venezuela. They also follow Venezuelan journalists that are outside Venezuela. The least trusted sources are those shared by word-of-mouth without a source, or massively on WhatsApp or Facebook.

During a FGD in Lima, Venezuelan refugees and migrants aged 18 to 29 years old said that they would welcome and trust information from humanitarian organizations, but they do not know how to access it. They would trust official channels provided by the Red Cross for example, that provide information on where to find medical help, on safe routes and where to find shelter and internet (Woman, FGD in Lima, Peru).

The online survey confirmed the above results. The most trusted communication sources appear once again to be family members and friends (62%) and humanitarian organizations (41%). Television, Facebook and WhatsApp are further identified as the least trusted communication channels, despite being the three main channels identified to receive information.

Even though these are the most common channels for communication, youth from the host community in Medellin, Colombia, mentioned during FGDs that they do not trust these channels, in particular the TV and Facebook. They do trust WhatsApp to communicate with the Venezuelan community, which they believe is reliable. Youth believe that it is important to read the comments in social media and to corroborate the information with other people. They do not trust social media when it relates to work opportunities. Some of them have more than ten groups on WhatsApp. They mentioned that sometimes there are groups that share threats through pamphlets on WhatsApp, so it is widely disseminated. There are also images of murders and violence in their neighborhoods shared through social media.
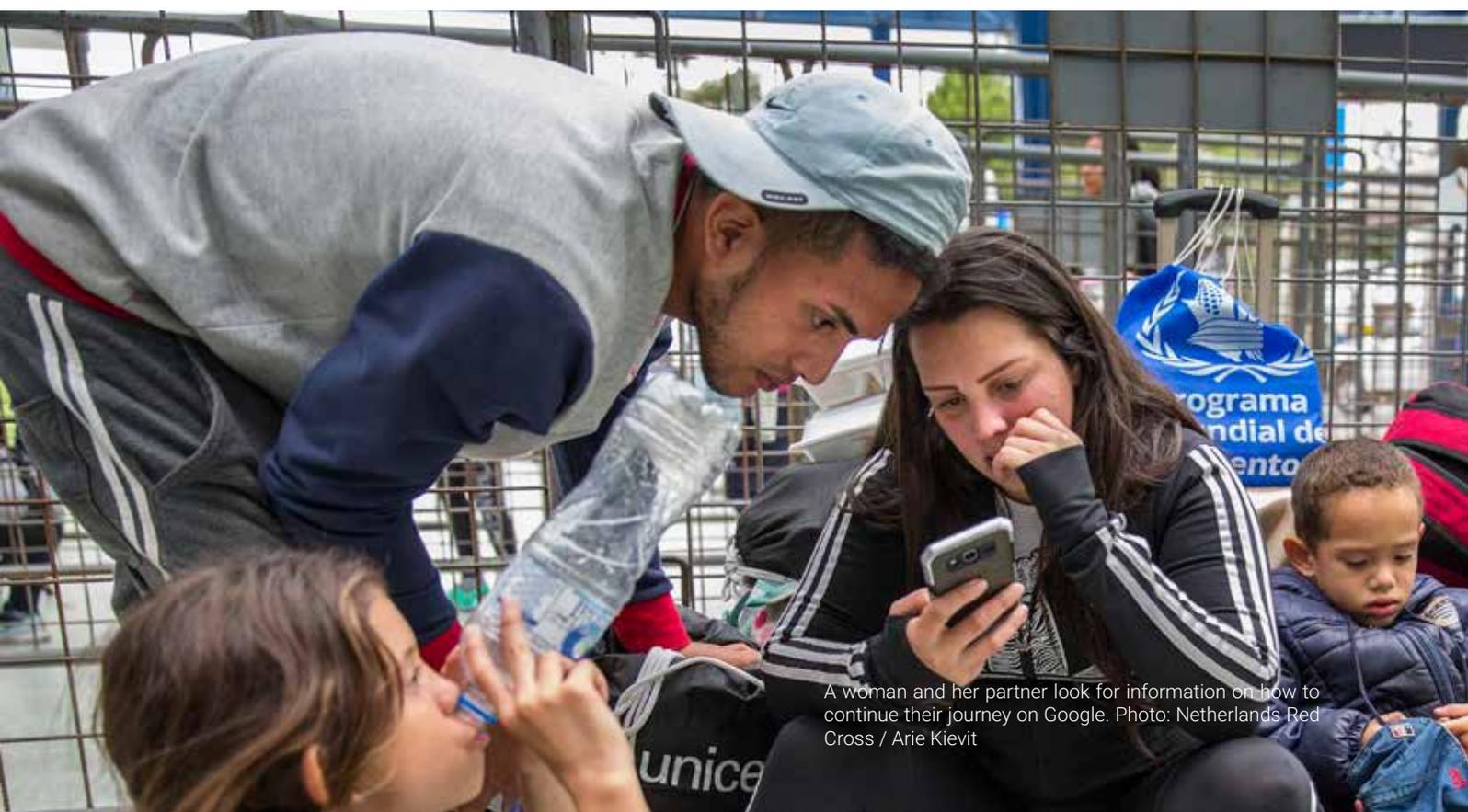
A woman and her partner look for information on how to continue their journey on Google. Photo: Netherlands Red Cross / Arie Kievit
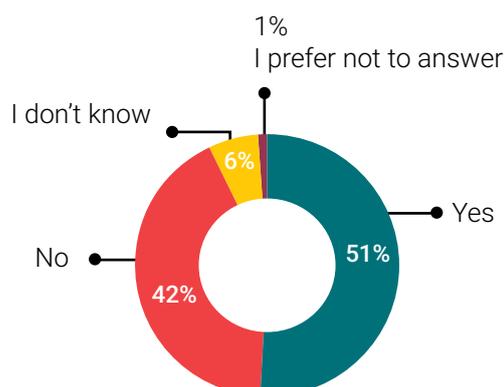
Information needs

42% of the people interviewed in the region said that they lack information about their rights or where to find assistance (or are unsure about whether they feel informed), which shows that the information gap to be filled is still considerable. These results are further confirmed by the online survey where the percentage of people that report a lack of information, or is unsure about whether they feel informed rises to 56% of the interviewed people.
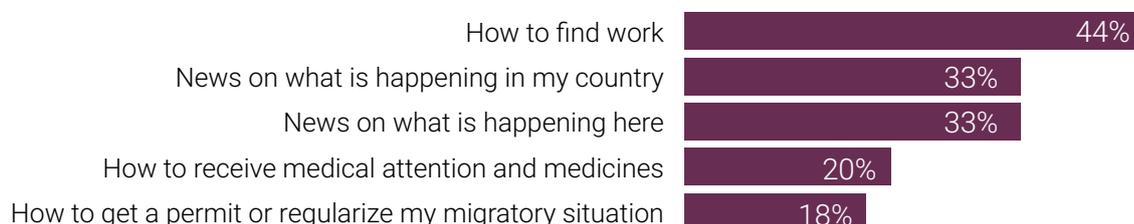
Despite the efforts of humanitarian organizations and government institutions in disseminating relevant information, **about 70% of the refugees and migrants from Venezuela participating in FGDs in Peru did not feel fully informed about their rights in the country, services available and migration procedures.**

Refugees and migrants would like more information[19] about how to find employment (44%) followed by a need for information about news from their country of origin and of the country where they are (both 33%). Information on where to find medical attention (20%) and how to regularize their status (18%) are also identified as main needs.

Do you feel informed about your rights, services and assistance available?

1%
I prefer not to answer

I don't know

6%

No

42%

51%

Yes

What would you like to have more information about?

How to find work	44%
News on what is happening in my country	33%
News on what is happening here	33%
How to receive medical attention and medicines	20%
How to get a permit or regularize my migratory situation	18%

19 Data about areas that people would like more information on were assessed through a multiple-choice question with a maximum of 3 answers. Results are calculated based on the total number of respondents. Totals might not add up to 100%.

Online survey

Do you feel informed about your rights, services and assistance available?

No **47%**

Yes **42%**

10%

1%
I prefer not
to answer

I don't know

What would you like to have more information about?

16% How to find work
13% News on what is happening in my country
11% News on what is happening here
11% How to receive medical attention and medicines
10% How to receive assistance (financial, material)
9% How to get a permit or regularize my migratory situation
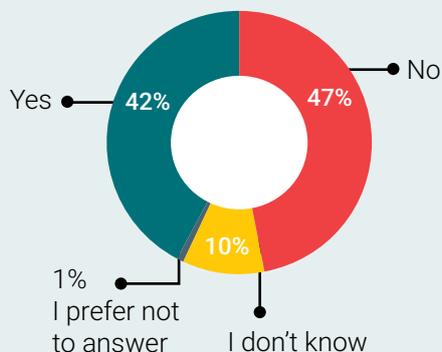
Photo: ADRA

Through FGDs and surveys, Venezuelans prioritized their information needs as:

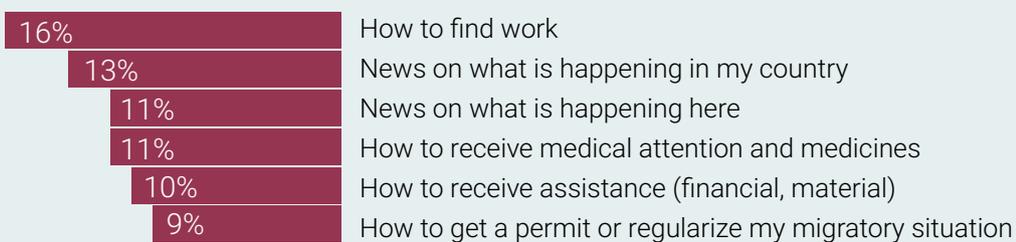**Legal assistance and information on legal status and regularization.** In Aruba, Venezuelan men and women prioritized through FGDs, the need of information on legal status (including asylum procedures), refugee's rights, where to find jobs, and how to receive support (i.e. long-term and during unemployment). In Dominican Republic, they would like to have information regarding deportation and detentions. Information sessions on how to regularize their status, more information about the asylum process (Online survey Venezuelan man in Ecuador, and online Venezuelan woman in Curacao), information about the asylum process at the airport (FGD Mexico) and migratory reforms under discussion in Panama. Some of the Venezuelans that participated in FGDs in Costa Rica feel that are in a legal limbo, since if they are rejected in their asylum requests they will not be able to return to their country since their passports are expired. Information in general on where to find legal assistance was also mentioned as important (Venezuelan man, FGD Peru).

Access to health, including psychological support for children. Stress and trauma are causing health problems among the population and they do not feel assisted. They would like to know what is the type of medical assistance that they could receive since many Venezuelans approach the health centers and are rejected, stating that they could only support them in some emergencies (Online survey, Venezuelan man in Trinidad and Tobago), Psychological support for adults as the displacement experience is a new and a difficult one for many people. (Venezuelan woman, FGD in Lima, Peru).

Videos and visual information about the route. Where to find food and clothes at key locations and where to access free medical care and where, for example, they can give birth (Venezuelan woman, FGD, Lima, Peru).

Access to integration, including how to access vocational training. Existing pages do not provide the information needed and are very confusing. How to open back accounts, this will provide more security and stability (Online survey, Venezuelan woman in Mexico).

Access to education and related topics such as, validation of university degrees or technical titles.

Information on basic assistance to understand the basic assistance they can receive and if they need to pay for it. Some people have been scammed and asked for money by fellow Venezuelans when they should have received assistance for free (Venezuelan man, FGD Peru).

Community support networks, outreach activities in their communities.

Information for newcomers is very important and also needed (Online survey, Venezuelan woman in Colombia and main survey, Cuban refugee in Panama). Venezuela men and women mentioned in FGDs that there is a lot of disinformation and some people take advantage of this to steal from them. Some of these cases regarding fraud in assistance have been identified.

In the same line in the evaluation conducted by UNICEF in Tumbes, refugees and migrants mentioned that their information needs are mainly regarding: 1) documentation and regularization, 2) requisites to access health and education, 3) requisites to access the labour market, 4) validation of university degrees, among others. Stating that most of the interviewees do not know where to get this information (97%).

On the channels to receive this information[20] people interviewed are mentioning online sources such as WhatsApp (39%), a combination of social media (31%), television (31%), face-to-face interaction (28%), and the internet (17%).

What would be the best way of receiving information?

39%	WhatsApp
31%	TV
28%	Talking to people directly
20%	Facebook
17%	Internet
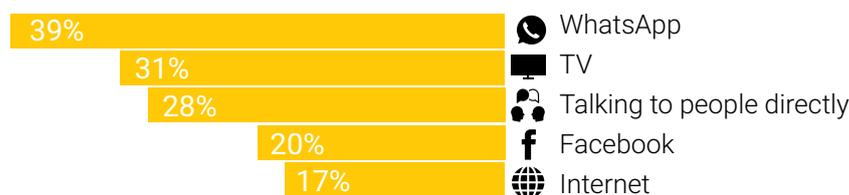
> *"Disseminate information in a broader way; make it reach everyone, through an entity that encompasses all information. In a physical space to access them, such as an embassy, for example"*
> (FGD, men in Lima, Peru)

During seven FGDs in Peru people were asked to mention if they knew any online information page/app/platform managed by a trusted humanitarian organization. Out of 100 people involved in the FGDs none mentioned that they knew or used any of the existing tools.

When asked about suggestions on how to promote such pages or to improve the overall access to information, especially for those recently arrived in the country, some FGD participants mentioned to look for followers through famous people (influencers), and through campaigns by Venezuelans. Some participants also said that they would welcome to become 'ambassadors' of such a project, and help share news and information in their own networks. In FGDs conducted in Colombia with Venezuelan men some participants mentioned the idea of women as catalyzers of information. Most of the men (married with a woman) said their partners were more well-connected than them, and shared and received information on services in the city or in other places of interest.

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20 Data about preferred communication channels to receive information were assessed through a multiple-choice question with a maximum of 3 answers. Results are calculated based on the total number of respondents. Totals might not add up to 100%.

Communication with humanitarian organizations[21]

An important part of the assessment was dedicated to understanding how communication flows between refugees and migrants and humanitarian workers.
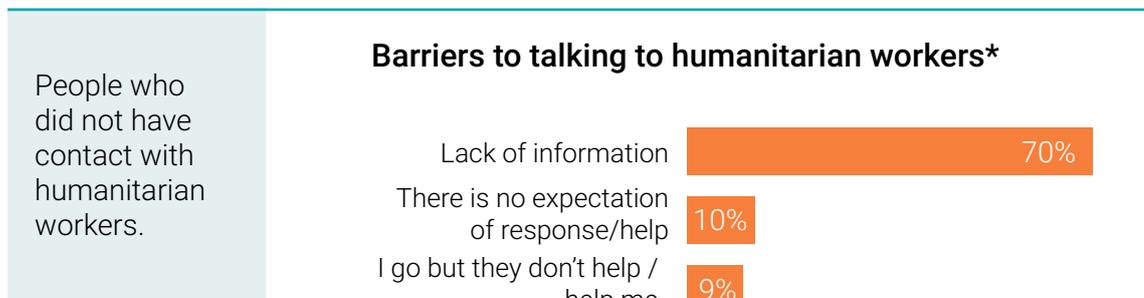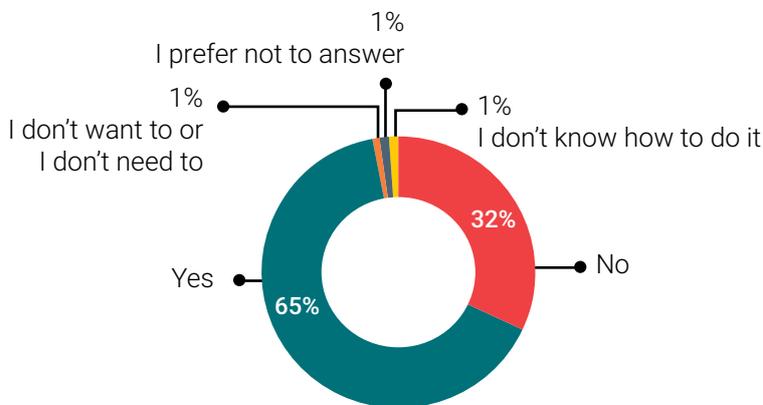
_____

21 The questions in this section of the survey were only asked to refugees and migrants.

An Ecuadorian Red Cross volunteer helps a woman to make a call to her family. Photo: Netherlands Red Cross / Arie Kievit

A total of 65% of refugees and migrants interviewed had the opportunity to talk to a humanitarian worker prior to the assessment.[22]

Of those interviewed 90% have had a satisfactory interaction with humanitarian workers which is a very positive result. Only 3% of those interviewed have been unsatisfied with the interaction with humanitarian workers. In Peru a participant of a FGD mentioned that he stopped believing in humanitarian organizations as they are perceived as political and they are not helping because they want, but for political interest (Venezuelan man, FGD Peru). In Mexico participants of FGDs mentioned that the Facebook page El Jaguar provides an opportunity to reach out to UNHCR.

A total of 70% of refugees and migrants without any prior contact with humanitarian organizations report that a **lack of information or knowledge about their work** is owed to such lack of interaction. Among other causes most commonly mentioned are the lack of presence of humanitarian actors in rural areas, lack of time and patience for refugees and migrants and lack of openness by humanitarian organizations to establish contact or receive suggestions, counseling and information provided in a different language (main survey, Venezuelan men in Brazil). The limited information about humanitarian organizations generates a lack of trust towards these actors and the assistance and services that they provide, including governmental institutions. It is important to notice that fear of not receiving a positive answer (10%), not receiving help when asked (9%) or fear of being excluded from services (6%) are also mentioned as barriers to engage with humanitarian organizations. For some of the participants, it was the first time to have access to a humanitarian actor (main survey, Venezuelan youth in Ecuador and Colombia).

Have you been able to speak with aid workers directly?

People who did not have contact with humanitarian workers.

Barriers to talking to humanitarian workers*

Lack of information — 70%
There is no expectation of response/help — 10%
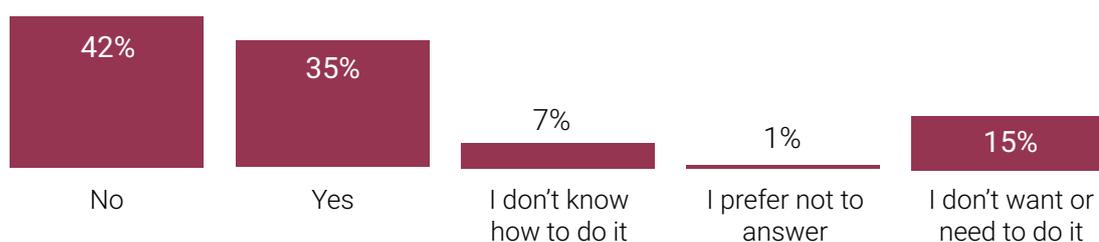I go but they don't help / help me — 9%

* Multiple-choice question

22 This topic was only investigated with refugees and migrants. Host communities were not asked this question.

Are you able to submit a complaint or a suggestion to humanitarian workers?

42%	35%	7%	1%	15%
No	Yes	I don't know how to do it	I prefer not to answer	I don't want or need to do it

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People who have had contact with humanitarian workers.

What is your level of satisfaction with the information received?

52%	Satisfied
38%	Extremely satisfied
8%	Neutral
2%	Unsatified
1%	Extremely unsatisfied
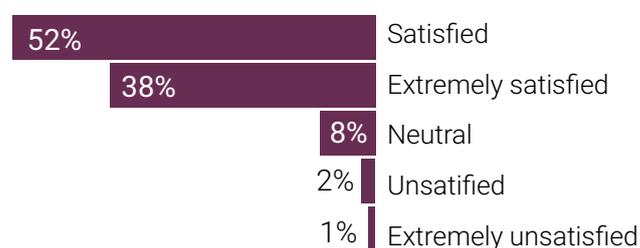
When asked about whether they have the possibility to complain to humanitarian organizations, only 35% of people said yes. 42% of those interviewed said they did not have the possibility to do it and 7% did not know how to do it. 15% of the people said they do not need to do it or they do not want to complain to humanitarian organizations. Data does not show notable variances across genders in this regard.

Some recommendations from the survey on how to improve the communication with humanitarian organizations are to have a friendlier access to information and more direct interaction (online survey, Venezuelan woman Arauca, Colombia). In Panama, some agencies and organizations are perceived by Venezuelans as not accessible to the communities. In Aruba, through FGDs, Venezuelan men and women highlighted that the communication with humanitarian workers is good and others that the organizations provide limited information and proper assistance/response (people are going back and forth between governmental departments and organizations). The situation could improve, if information could be given in the timeframe established by the worker and the beneficiary, and organizations could develop a weekly digital bulletin or newsletter with updated information. Along with events or information sessions informing people about legal procedures, employment opportunities, access to rights, among others.
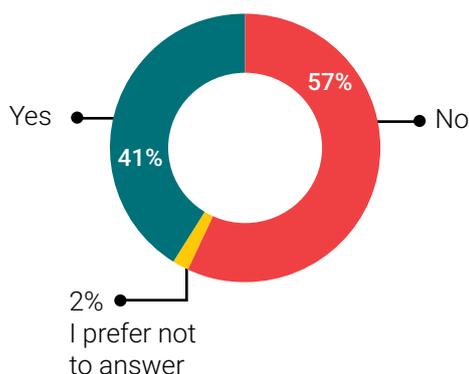
Community leaders in Dominican Republic, mentioned in FGDs that effective ways of communication in between them and humanitarian organizations exist through community chats that have been put in place by the organizations. In other FGDs with Venezuelan men and women, they recommend to have presence of organizations at entry points, including information points. For example, Sandra, a Venezuelan woman shared that "…they should increase the amount of information sharing, have a presence at entry points such as airports. It is important to multiply the information about humanitarian organizations, make them more visible".
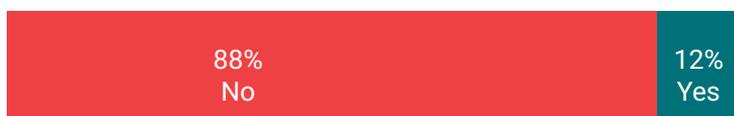
Communication within communities

The assessment aimed to also collect information about how people receive information from and communicate with the communities where they are established.

A woman drawing a mural. Photo: Plan International/Anika Büssemeier

Do you receive information from your community in this city /neighbourhood?

Yes — 41%
No — 57%
2% I prefer not to answer

Are you part of any community group in this city/neighbourhood?

88% No   12% Yes

How do you receive information from this group?

55% Face to face
42% WhatsApp
22% Facebook

Online survey

How do you receive information from this group?

WhatsApp — 57%
Face to face — 35%
Facebook — 28%
Online groups of compatriots — 26%
Instagram — 12%

The majority of people interviewed do not receive information from their community in the city or neighborhood they have settled[23] (57%). Those who have access through community structures receive this information mainly face-to-face (55%), through social media like WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook (70%), community events (11%) or from their conational on social media or community groups (9%).

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23 Communication within communities was only investigated with host communities or people in-destination in the country where they were surveyed.

In the online survey, most of the respondents mentioned that the main way of receiving information from their communities is through WhatsApp (57%), as well as in person (35%), Facebook (28%), from their conationals (26%) and Instagram (12%).

Most of the people interviewed, female and male, are not part of any community group or association in their neighborhood (88%). This result does is similar across gender, with women only slightly more connected to community structure (86% still say they are not part of any association in their neighborhood). Some believe that they are not taken into consideration, some since they are only renting a place and are not invited to community meetings. Others like in Aruba, believe that community structures do not provide a lot of information or guidance on how to live on the island (FGD with Venezuela men and women in Aruba). In Costa Rica, both Venezuelan men and women mentioned that there is a lack of defined community structures and that community networks would be very helpful to jointly find common answers to problems and guarantee access to rights. In other countries, Venezuelans are part of WhatsApp or Facebook groups in their communities or follow the Venezuelan diaspora in the different countries where they are hosted. A positive example is found in Mexico, where participants in FGDs mentioned that Venezuelans are part of support networks and community groups in cities like Querétaro, Aguascalientes, Cancún, Playa del Carmen, and Mexico City. Through these networks, there is a continuous flow of information for people that need to access public services in Mexico.

Most of the people interviewed do not know the mechanism or system in place to lodge a complaint or make a suggestion in their communities. According to the results from the FGDs conducted in Peru, refugee and migrant's ability to provide feedback and contribute actively in an inclusive programming approach is very restricted. In some countries, there are complaint boxes in community kitchens, shelters, community centers, and information and orientation points (i.e. UNHCR, Plan International, NRC, Americares, among others). Others have phone lines, helplines and email addresses available to receive suggestions and complaints (i.e. Colombia and Costa Rica). In most of the cases, auditing of complaint boxes is done by the organizations running the space. Pastoral Social in the north of Colombia, has in place a dedicated Committee responsible for monitoring the complaint boxes, following up on the situation and providing feedback to the affected population. In Peru, there is complaint box mechanism installed in shelters, orientation centres, CEBAF, and in UNHCR offices across-country (Lima, Tumbes, Tacna, Arequipa and Cusco). This process is fairly recent and is expanding. So far 14 complaint boxes have been installed and are completely functional. Some national and international organizations, have prioritized

Individual interviews with Venezuelan and Colombia youth in Medellin, Colombia. Photo: UNHCR/Katie Drew

putting in place a complaint mechanism and are working on establishing guidelines and procedures. Posters and banners are placed in strategic locations explaining the complaint mechanisms in place and ways to access them (i.e. WFP Colombia).

Venezuelans mentioned during FGDs in Colombia that most of the Venezuelan and host community members believe that complaint mechanisms are not known and available to the communities and the existing ones are not efficient. In Panama some Venezuelans received feedback to their verbal complaints and suggestions, and others did not but they are not aware of specific complaint systems in place. In other places like the Caribbean, Venezuelans expressed that they are not clear about community complaint mechanisms since it has only been shared with community leaders and it has not been socialized with the rest of the community members. They recommend to organize workshops on advocacy and communication channels with grassroots organizations, use spaces frequented by Venezuelans (i.e. churches) and identify new community leaders in areas not covered by the existing ones. Direct communication should be established with the communities, along with different types of mechanisms that are reliable, participatory and accessible to all. This should include options to access information considering not everyone has access to mobile phones or computers. Community-based mechanisms through community leaders and outreach volunteers, along with campaigns and different dissemination tools (including home visits), should be established and prioritized.

Additionally, through online surveys in Arauca Colombia, Venezuelan women suggested having mechanisms implemented jointly in their communities, between refugees, migrants and host communities.

From the feedback of KII in how they communicate with the communities, 53% of actors stated that they include refugees and migrants when designing messages, information material, messages and tools that will be shared with the community. To the question of whether the organization that they represent has a complaint mechanism system in place available to the people accessing their structures, 66% stated that yes there is a system in place. A total of 80% use face-to-face, 12% have a complaint box, 6% email, and 2% free phone line.

When designing and elaborating materials, it is observed that most of the times these materials are designed by the organizations without involving and consulting the communities. This is mainly conducted as one-way communication, without a participatory approach and putting in place a consultative process, nor collecting feedback from the communities. Some of the materials are not contextualized to the particular situation of the different communities and areas and are based on the needs of the organizations. Despite this general observation, some coordinated and joint initiatives are conducted through the interagency coordination structures in some of the countries, one example mentioned through KII is the Support Spaces in Arauca, Colombia.

KII mentioned that 47% of them coordinate with other actors the activities related to communicating with communities. However less than half of them coordinate the design of joint messages (48% only). Some good practices include messages from the Protection Working Groups (i.e. Somos lo Mismo campaign in social media Panama), information material and sessions (i.e. brochures), community events (i.e. World Refugee Day celebrations), joint messages, anti-xenophobic campaigns, among others.

One of the challenges identified by KII, is the lack of funding for CWC initiatives in their different organizations. It is important to consider the principle of "do no harm" when designing and implementing any of the activities, contextualizing it to the situation in each country.

A mother holding her child in Rumichaca, Ecuador. Photo: Netherlands Red Cross / Arie Kievit

04 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Need for increased community engagement and participation throughout the whole program cycle** was observed and highlighted by people interviewed in surveys and FGDs. Communities expressed that they should be taken into consideration in the design and development of interventions. Participation at all levels should be available and encouraged, engaging with refugees, migrants and host communities and working in partnership. **Implementation of initiatives with a community-based and Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approaches is key;** putting communities at the center of our interventions, considering their specific needs and enabling two-way communication will help reduce protection risks and ensure wellbeing. Joint community engagement initiatives should be promoted **to avoid duplication** in the interventions, coordinate actions, maximize resources and avoid fatigue of the communities. **Expand and implement regional interagency initiatives,** such as the Support Spaces initiative and including information centres at entry points, bus terminals and key locations along the routes.

2. Humanitarian organizations are a trusted source of information and, as a result, **should work on engaging more on the communication channels of choice, providing multiple channels for people to triangulate/corroborate the information. Initiatives should be better promoted** to try and bridge the popularity of some communication channels and platforms with making available trusted information to people. Increased promotion of existing information hubs such as WhatsApp and Facebook groups, online pages and other initiatives is also needed, **reducing top-down approaches from humanitarian organizations (i.e. development of apps).** It is important to assess how best preferred social media channels can be leveraged, as part of a wider communications eco-systems that enables people to verify through face-to-face and other channels. As well, determine if/how there are ways to build capacity for individuals to 'fact check' online – potentially through digital media literacy and the promotion of online trusted sources.

3. There is a need to have **updated and coordinated key messages and information materials** regarding access to rights and services, and other priority thematic areas, in all countries across the region, and to **make them available** to service providers, refugees and migrants and host communities **through WhatsApp, Facebook and other social media.**

4. There is a **need to create, or strengthen existing, open feedback mechanisms,** to ensure people can exercise their right to complain and make suggestions to humanitarian actors. Feedback mechanisms should be rolled out through face-to-face communication to ensure a safe space for sensitive matters, but also mix in digital communication, as social media and the internet are often rated among the preferred communication channels. There is a **need to establish and monitor community-based complaint and feedback mechanisms** in all countries, including Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and fraud allegations.

5. **A rumor tracking system to verify information should be developed** as problems with scam, misinformation and rumors have been observed. Such system should be run by an established and trusted and neutral humanitarian organization that people trust and do not see as political. All services are systematically provided free of charge by all humanitarian responders.

6. **Investing on building refugees and migrant's digital skills, increasing digital literacy rates.** Given the increasing digitalization of procedures, humanitarian partners should evaluate investing on such initiatives to increase their self-resilience and facilitate their digital inclusion.

7. **Continuous capacity building in community engagement and communication within communities is needed** across all sectors, not only for dedicated staff, but also for staff working in other sectors. Priority should be given for key locations in transit routes and in destination countries, and it should be ensured that every assistance point can count with at least a basic number of trained staff.

8. **Advocacy efforts need to be strengthened regarding access to communication and connectivity**, ensuring a more inclusive regulatory framework for example liaising with regulators to find solutions, SIM card access to ensure that data bundles/packages are available in all countries.

9. Where existing, **community communication structures run by host community institutions should be strengthened to ensure they include refugee and migrant populations.** Strengthening local actors should also be of pivotal importance to ensure capillary reach of information through trusted local institutions. Humanitarian organization should partner with local entities to strengthen capacities and identify areas of collaboration

10. **Continued investment and increased funding dedicated to community engagement is essential** to ensure activities are scaled up and communities are given increased opportunity for participation, so as to shape assistance and be empowered in determining their priorities in a way that not only makes the response relevant, but also **ensures resources are allocated where they are most needed.**

ANNEXES

All the documents listed below are available online.
Please visit: https://r4v.info/en/working-group/236

Main survey questionnaire

Online survey questionnaire

KII questionnaire

Focus group discussion guidance documents

RESPONSE FOR VENEZUELANS

Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela

r4v.info