LABOR MARKET ACCESS AND INTEGRATION

A KEY ELEMENT FOR LIVELIHOODS AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION OF VENEZUELANS

Venezuelans arriving at Las Delicias. UNHCR/ Rolón,M.

Over **4 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela** are estimated to have fled their country, and approximately 1.7 million of them are estimated to be present in Colombia. The arrival of such large numbers of Venezuelans has presented many challenges for the host country, from meeting immediate, basic needs to determining appropriate legal status for those who wish to stay.

One additional key element is ensuring the right of Venezuelans to **work legally and be free from discrimination in Colombia**, as employees or entrepreneurs. Ensuring Venezuelans' effective right to work is essential so as to enable them to provide for themselves and become less dependent on direct humanitarian assistance. Beyond that, enabling Venezuelan refugees and migrants to access livelihoods will allow them to contribute to the Colombian economy, through paying taxes, to generate greater levels of demand and increased economic activity, possibly even creating additional employment opportunities for Colombians. Refugees and migrants generally represent a net benefit to the host country, contributing more money over time than they cost the host country. Additionally, if Venezuelans can access the labour market legally, this will **reduce incentives for them to work illegally** or in illicit activities. For instance, joining illegal armed groups, harvesting coca, child labour, forced labour, or engaging in sex work and human trafficking.

Given the current context of COVID-19, **income generation and the livelihoods of the Venezuelan population have been severely affected.** Most refugees and migrants are in an irregular situation, and their daily sustenance comes from informal activities such as street sales. Given the measures of compulsory preventive isolation taken by the National Government since March, many families have been exposed to the need to return to their country in unfavourable conditions, at the risk of remaining on the streets and not being able to cover their basic expenses to stay in Colombia.

KEY FIGURES

1.7 million

Venezuelan refugees and migrants are estimated to be in Colombia, of which a significant proportion are in need of international protection.

769.207

Venezuelans are regularly in the country, so they can work legally. Many face discrimination, xenophobia and exploitation in their workplaces.

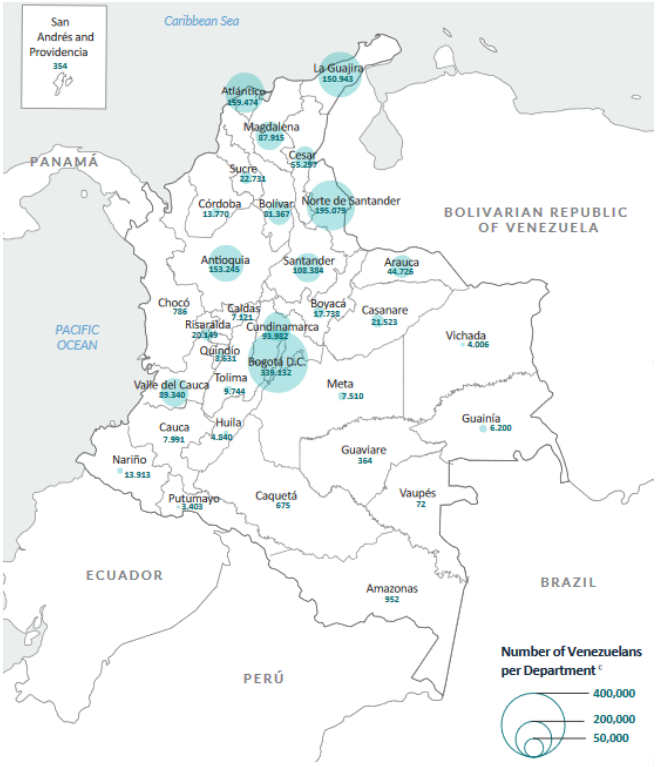
More than 106.000

Venezuelans have returned home in response to the needs and risks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNHCR RESPONSE

WORKING WITH PARTNERS TO PROMOTE VENEZUELANS' ACCESS TO DECENT WORK

UNHCR is establishing new alliances with key actors such as the Ministry of Labor, the Public Employment Service, the National Vocational Training Service (SENA in Spanish), Family Welfare Funds, employment agencies, banking and financial institutions, trade unions, and UN agencies such as ILO and IOM.



GIFMM Report of Venezuelans in Colombia, report as of 30 September 2020.

- UNHCR supports and works with the Ministry of Labor in Colombia to promote the inclusion of Venezuelans in the labor market and their regularization through the Employment-Based Special Stay Permit (known by the Spanish acronym PEPFF).
- UNHCR supports the organization of job fairs for Venezuelans in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor, the Public Employment Service, the National Vocational Training Service (SENA), and other municipal economic development agencies.
- Due to the effects of the economic crisis related to COVID-19, UNHCR together with other members of the GIFMM, is identifying and supporting small entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial initiatives of the Venezuelan population that contribute to the local market and the economic reactivation post-pandemic.
- UNHCR together with IOM and ILO are conducting a labor market study on the demand for labor and the educational offer for refugees and migrants coming from Venezuela in the following cities: Medellín, Barranquilla, Bogotá, Cúcuta, Cali and Bucaramanga.

KEY FIGURES

23.875 employees in RUTEC

Venezuelans with PEP that have engaged in a formal work contract, are already registered in the Registry of Foreign Workers (known by its Spanish acronym RUTEC), a platform enabled by the Ministry of Labor.

70.464 in PILA

Venezuelans registered in PILA, Colombia's social security contribution system.

969 trained employers

Through advocacy breakfasts specifically oriented to the private and financial sector in Colombia.

33.458

Refugees and migrants have been accompanied within the framework of the GIFMM to access employment and self-employment opportunities in the face of the COVID-19 contingency.

UNHCR staff visiting income generation projects and entrepreneurship initiatives in the Villa Rosas community, Mocoa (Putumayo). UNHCR/Lina Guarnizo.

Reaching out to the private sector to promote employment of refugees and migrants coming from Venezuela.

Representatives of UNHCR, WeWork, Government and Venezuelan organisations discussing about the challenges of labour market access. UNHCR/Castañeda,R.

- UNHCR Colombia has established a working relationship with diverse companies such as Sierra Nevada, Sunshine Bouquet, Hoteles Estelar, Red Cotelco Bogotá-Cundinamarca, and WeWork, as part of their commitment to recruit and include Venezuelan population in employment.
- UNHCR in collaboration with the Foundation of the National Association of Entrepreneurs of Colombia (known by the Spanish acronym ANDI) launched the white pages directory "Se le Tiene Refugiados y Migrantes", which compiles information on refugee and migrant enterprises throughout the country for the purpose of disseminating it to affiliated companies.

Awareness-raising on Venezuelans' rights to work formally

- UNHCR Colombia, together with the Tent Partnership for Refugees, HIAS and the Ministry of Labor, launched a first recruitment guide for refugees and migrants from Venezuela, with the aim of guiding the employer in all hiring and employment processes. The second version was launched this year including information for employers on COVID-19.
- UNHCR, ILO, the Ministry of Labor, the Public Employment Service, SENA, PADF, Compensar, and the Corona Foundation launched the first orientation guide for refugees and migrants from Venezuela, with the aim of guiding them in their search for employment in Colombia.

Incorporating workplace themes in UNHCR's anti-xenophobia campaign 'Somos Panas Colombia'

- UNHCR is developing videos and other tools for the sub-campaign **#Working Together**, to promote the labor and economic integration of the Venezuelan population: https://somospanascolombia.com/juntos-somos-mejores/

UNHCR works with the Colombian government, civil society and private companies to promote decent work opportunities for refugees and migrants from Venezuela.

UNHCR Response in the field

- The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on current livelihood interventions and programs are being assessed. Priority has been given to emergency programs and cash deliveries.
- Rapid Livelihood Assessments are being conducted to initiate the development of early recovery strategies in each of the territories.

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