

AMERICAS MONTHLY REPORT

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of key developments affecting the displacement situation in the Americas and some of UNHCR response activities in line with the 2019 strategic objectives for the region.



Peru. Venezuelans receive a warm Peruvian welcome in Tumbes © UNHCR/Sebastian Castañeda

VENEZUELA SITUATION

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

1 The President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, declared to assumed power as “President in Charge” of Venezuela, on 23 January, at a rally held in Caracas in front of tens of thousands of supporters. His self-proclamation as interim head of state was recognised by the US President, the Secretary General of the Organisation of American States (OAS), Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, among other countries.

2 Venezuelan opposition and its international backers made an attempt to bring humanitarian aid into the country on 23 February. Venezuelan armed forces blocked the way and closed the borders with Colombia and Brazil. Clashes with the Government resulted with at least five confirmed dead, over 50 injured by bullet wounds and several arrests. Military defectors have been confirmed to be in neighboring countries by authorities.

3 On 18 January, a 22-year old pregnant Ecuadorian woman was killed by her Venezuelan partner in Ibarra, near the border with Colombia. The incident ignited a public outcry, stoked xenophobic sentiments and violent episodes against Venezuelans. Following the incident, Ecuador introduced an additional entry requirement of an apostilled criminal record from all Venezuelan nationals wishing to enter the country.

3.4 million

Venezuelans living abroad

2.7 million

have left the country since 2015
(90% to South America)

1,100,000
in Colombia

255,000
in Spain

96,000
in Brazil

506,000
in Peru

288,000
in Chile

221,000
in Ecuador

130K
in Argentina

1.34 million with regular status
including residence permits

UNHCR RESPONSE IN LINE WITH 2019 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

UNHCR has joined efforts with over 90 partners to establish a Regional Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants (RMRP), which serves as a strategic and operational blueprint, a coordination model, and a funding mechanism. Its ultimate goal is to provide protection and assistance to Venezuelans in need, irrespective of status.

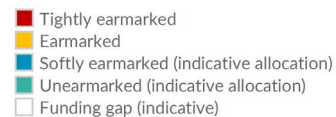
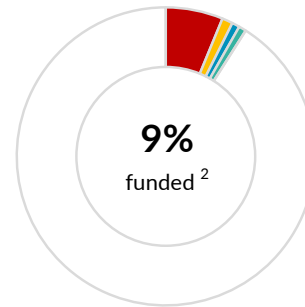
In border areas, UNHCR has stepped up its presence across the region to improve reception conditions and respond to the basic needs of refugees and migrants from Venezuela. In February, UNHCR assembled Refugee Housing Units at the Colombian-Ecuadorian border, providing temporary shelter to 80-100 people every night—many of whom are women and children.

In Peru, an online government registration tool for asylum seekers, developed with UNHCR support, began operating to strengthen the capacity of the host government in registration and documentation processes for asylum seekers. The online tool has reduced waiting times for provisional documents from six months to issuance on the same day. Additionally, UNHCR has established a presence in Arequipa, in the South of the country, on 1 February to strengthen direct emergency assistance and protection to persons of concern.

In Ecuador, UNHCR contributed to the Ministerial Resolution which created exceptions to the criminal record requirement for cases of vulnerability and with protection needs. As a consequence, the registered arrivals of Venezuelans increased to an average of 1,800 per day compared to the daily average of 1,092 arrival the time restrictions were in place for all Venezuelan nationals.

FUNDING (as of 6 March 2019) requested for the Venezuela Situation

\$146,0 million required



To provide social, economical and cultural integration, the Cash Based programme was launched in Trinidad and Tobago through the issuance of bank cards. The assistance committee deciding on eligibility received some 350 applications.

The innovative internal relocation programme in Brazil continues enhancing local integration prospects. On 2 February, 100 Venezuelans were relocated after being recruited in Roraima by a food-manufacturing company. Each received a one-off cash grant from UNHCR as support while settling in the new city and receiving their first salary.

INSIDE VENEZUELA

UNHCR implements community-based projects in health, education, protection, water and sanitation in 54 prioritized communities where refugees live with host communities nearly 775,000 people including Colombian refugees. The Venezuelan host population has also benefited from these projects, primarily in the border areas with Colombia and Brazil. UNHCR is also a key actor in the scale-up strategy developed by the UN System in Venezuela which was endorsed in November 2018 to meet the country's humanitarian needs.

REGIONAL REFUGEE AND MIGRANT RESPONSE PLAN

In 2019, 95 partners need \$738 million to assist 2.2 million refugees and migrants from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and 500,000 members of host communities across 16 countries. UNHCR's requirements in the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan are \$134 million.



NORTH OF CENTRAL AMERICA SITUATION

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Since mid-October, over 30,000 people in large groups referred to as ‘caravans’ left the North of Central America with the hope of reaching Mexico and the United States of America. These groups are comprised of people with international protection needs as well as those seeking to escape poverty and economic hardship, although most often motives are mixed. While the majority are Hondurans, the number of people from El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua has been increasing.

4 Around 500 people departed from San Pedro Sula and crossed the border into Guatemala between the 16 and 17 February. Additionally, a group of 105 people departed from San Salvador between 16-18 February. This is the fourth group to depart from El Salvador in 2019. The trend shows that, in 2019, the size of the groups are reducing comparing to the previous year, which difficults UNHCR’s outreach until the groups are gathered at the Guatemalan border with Mexico.

5 On 6 February, Mexico assumed the Pro-Tempore Presidency of the Marco Integral Regional para la Proteccion y Soluciones, the regional application of the Global Compact on Refugees. It fosters regional cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination for greater responsibility sharing on prevention, protection and solutions.

UNHCR RESPONSE TO LARGE GROUPS IN LINE WITH 2019 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

In Guatemala, UNHCR has led the Protection Working Group, which established an early warning and response plan for these large mixed movements. Under the leadership of religious civil society organizations, the safe spaces and protection network has been providing assistance and support to the hundreds of people transiting through the country, or intending to seek asylum in Guatemala.

In Mexico City, a protection desk has been established at Palillo Stadium, which hosts people from these large groups on the move. Over 180 asylum-seekers have been relocated in other provinces within Mexico since January, with the aim of providing local integration and livelihood opportunities. A fast-track option for UNHCR Mexico’s relocation and local integration program has been added to UNHCR’s support programmes.

UNHCR staff informed over 6,500 people from these large groups about Mexican and Guatemalan asylum procedures since January, in line with the outreach and information efforts to provide access to fair and efficient refugee status determination procedures.

UNHCR supported the Mexican government at the Tijuana Job Fair last November in order to further its objective of providing livelihood interventions. The program allowed refugees and asylum-seekers to find safety and build a future in their host country.

396,300 people of concern in Central America by the end of 2018

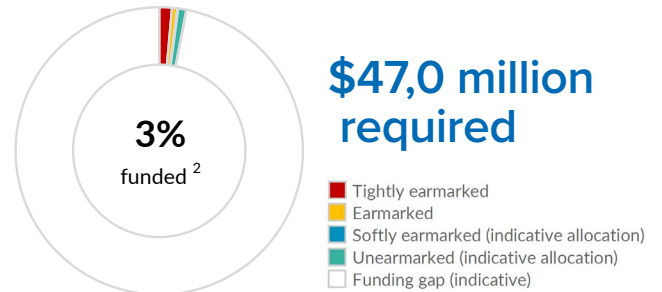
312,000 refugees and asylum seekers from North of Central America worldwide

KEY DEVELOPMENTS



As part of the efforts to enhance protection capacity in countries of origin, the local youth organization “Jóvenes Contra la Violencia –JCV” (Youth against Violence) was chosen as one of the 20 recipients of the 2019 UNHCR Youth Initiative Fund. This local organization has presence in 7 main cities in Honduras and offers innovative methodologies for engaging with young people, and their families, in high risk communities.

FUNDING (as of 6 March 2019) requested for the North Central America Situation



OTHER SITUATIONS

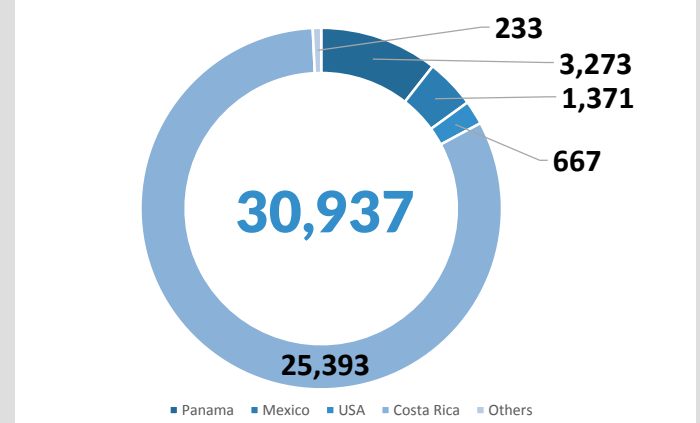
NICARAGUA SITUATION

The rapid deterioration of the situation in Nicaragua since April 2018 has led tens of thousands of Nicaraguans to flee violence and human rights violations. In neighboring countries, 30,937 Nicaraguans have claimed asylum.

UNHCR has devised a regional response plan for the Nicaragua situation, with particular emphasis on the main host country, Costa Rica. It aims to enhance the national capacity of the country for reception and admissions, as well as Refugee Status Determination processing and Cash Based Interventions.

UNHCR continues to strengthen its cooperation with the Council of Protestant Churches of Nicaragua (CEPAD), which assists over 800 Central American asylum seekers and refugees in the country, namely through increased Cash Based Interventions.

Asylum applications from Nicaraguans between April 2018 and January 2019



COLOMBIA SITUATION

Despite the implementation of the peace agreement, the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate in some parts of the country including increases in group displacements and attacks against community leaders. In 2018 alone, there were more than 430 homicides of human rights defenders.

Ongoing vulnerabilities and forced displacement were reported in various regions, particularly in Tumaco, on the Pacific Coast, the border territories with Ecuador, Catatumbo, on the border with Venezuela and Antioquia.

UNHCR continues to implement a community based approach supporting the Government as well as civil society organizations in their efforts to prevent displacement, protect and assist internally displaced people.

Since January 2019, UNHCR is working with the Truth Commission and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), institutions created under the Peace Agreement, with the objective of guaranteeing the right to truth and justice for victims in Colombia, the majority of whom are displaced.

8.8 million victims of armed conflict

7.8 million internally displaced people

2,200 displaced people in 2019

50,532 Colombian refugees in Ecuador by the end of 2018

10,029 Colombian asylum seekers in Ecuador by the end of 2018

In February, and with UNHCR’s support, 400 Internal Displacement families received land and property ownership legal documents in Quibdó, Chocó province. UNHCR is financing a team of lawyers and engineers working with the Mayor’s Office to deliver over 200 land titles in Mocoa this semester.

UNHCR continues calling on the international community to not lose attention for the plight of Internally displaced people in Colombia, which remains acute and in need of international support and resource mobilization.

2019 APPEAL FOR EXPANDING OPERATIONS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

In the North of Central America tens of thousands of people have been forced into displacement by a confluence of factors that have led to an escalating situation of chronic violence and insecurity. These factors range from the influence of organized crime such as drug cartels and urban gangs, to the limited national capacity—compounded by corruption, poverty and exclusion—of States to provide protection.

UNHCR produces regular operational and funding updates on the North of Central America situation.



FEATURED STORIES



[Central American women find safety and strength in mural painting](#)

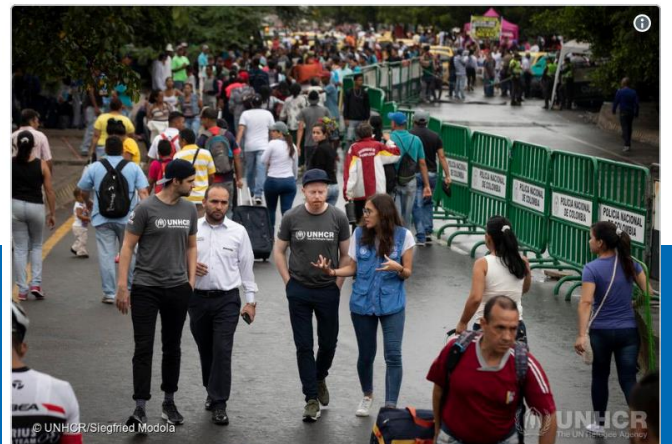
A new mural decorates the streets of Tapachula, the busiest town on the Mexican side of the border with Guatemala. In vivid earthy tones, it depicts a woman holding a baby in her arms, sprinkled with the names of the two dozen women from north Central America who painted it and profound words capturing their aspirations: love, trust, freedom, safety.

“This mural represents our daily fight to keep going, it tells our stories,” says Manuela*, a 48-year-old woman from El Salvador, pointing at the words she decided to paint on the mural: Let’s raise our voice.



[Venezuelan Outflow continues unabated, stands now at 3.4 million - UNHCR IOM joint press release](#)

According to data from national immigration authorities and other sources, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are hosting an estimated 2.7 million Venezuelans, while other regions account for the rest.



Jesse Tyler visits Colombia

Jesse Tyler, actor from the United States' show Modern Family visited the border between Colombia and Venezuela accompanied by UNHCR. He had the opportunity to chat with Venezuelan families and reported about his experience in social media.

See more at: @jessetyler



Jesse Tyler Ferguson ✓
@jessetyler

This past week, @JustinMikita and I joined @Refugees in Colombia. Over 3 million people have made this long journey to find a better life.

♡ 583 19:26 - 4 feb. 2019