

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.



Honduras. In a capital city besieged by gangs, children's schooling suffers © UNHCR/Tito Herrera

VENEZUELA SITUATION

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

1 The number of asylum applications by Venezuelan citizens worldwide has increased exponentially. Since 2014, over 414,000 asylum claims have been lodged by Venezuelans, nearly 60 percent of them during 2018 alone.

In Venezuela, intermittent nation-wide power outages since 7 March severely hampered access to basic services, exacerbated humanitarian and security conditions and heightened tensions among the population.

2 To complement the Government's efforts to provide international protection and respond to the increasing humanitarian needs of the arrivals from Venezuela, on 8 March UNHCR opened a reception centre in Maicao, near the Venezuelan border with Colombia.

The borders with Colombia and Brazil remained closed on the Venezuelan side, with exceptions for children attending schools in Colombia, medical emergencies and funerary services. As a result, increasing numbers of Venezuelans are using informal pathways controlled by criminal groups to enter Colombia and Brazil, which worsens risk and vulnerabilities.

3 Ecuador will host the next Quito III meeting on 8-9 April. In preparation, a technical meeting was held in Quito on the 11 and 12 March to exchange practices concerning registration and documentation of arriving Venezuelans. The Quito Process is a regional effort aiming to harmonise regional policies and practices to respond to the humanitarian needs of refugees and migrants from Venezuela.

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

145,000
in Argentina

1.3 million with regular status in Latin America including residence permits

The Government of Ecuador announced a registration exercise for Venezuelans who remain undocumented in the country. This is a key step to better identify the protection and assistance needs of Venezuelans and other populations with the aim of better informing public policies and responses.

4 The Panamanian Government announced the validity of expired passports from Venezuelan citizens for the extension of regularization processes. According to National Immigration Statistics, Panama is home to over 70,000 Venezuelans.

In 2018, Venezuelans were the second largest asylum claimants in Mexico. In 2019, asylum claims lodged by venezuelan citizens in Mexico increased 70% compared to the same period in 2018. Most Venezuelan nationals arrive to Mexico through airports, where they face several obstacles to access the asylum procedure.

The Mexican Ministry of Interior announced that there will be a change in how migratory processes are conducted in all airports of the country to reduce bureaucracy.

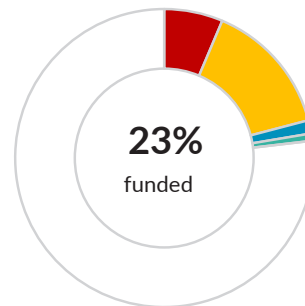
UNHCR RESPONSE IN LINE WITH 2019 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

UNHCR supports the efforts of host countries to provide international protection and respond to immediate humanitarian needs of the people from Venezuela, such as the need for shelter. In March, UNHCR opened a reception centre in Maicao and a temporary shelter in Riohacha, Colombia. UNHCR has provided Refugee Housing Units to more than 390 Venezuelans, at the border of Colombia with Ecuador.

In coordination with the Brazilian Armed Forces, UNHCR has established an Advanced Post to receive Venezuelans entering the country through unofficial crossing points. Persons of concern are transported to the Reception and Documentation Centre where they receive emergency medical attention and documentation can be processed to regularize their situation in Brazil.

In light of recent Pemón and Warao indigenous people arriving from Venezuela, UNHCR Brazil is refining and expanding its response for indigenous refugees and migrants, including the establishment of UNHCR presence in the city of Belem, a common destination for indigenous arrivals. During the last week of March, 300 hammocks were distributed to the Warao population as well as 300 kitchen kits, 500 hygiene kits, 280 mattresses and 100 cleaning kits in Manaus.

FUNDING (as of 2 April 2019) UNHCR's financial requirements 2019 for the Venezuela Situation



\$146,0 million required

- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
- Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
- Funding gap (indicative)

TOWARDS QUITO III

A Protection Dialogue was held in Buenos Aires on March 25-26. Mr. Volker Türk, the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, discussed good practices and challenges in the region ahead of the Quito III meeting.



In Mexico, UNHCR carries out regular missions to Quintana Roo, where most of Venezuelan asylum-seekers arrive, to register and provide assistance and support for local integration. Between October 2018 and March 2019, UNHCR provided assistance and local integration support to approximately 798 Venezuelans. 18 Venezuelans have been relocated to Saltillo and Guadalajara, where UNHCR implements its job placement and local integration programs.

UNHCR provides direct emergency assistance for refugees and migrants by delivering multipurpose cash grants. In Tumbes, Peru, over 1700 pre-paid cards were delivered to cover basic humanitarian needs for vulnerable refugees.

INSIDE VENEZUELA

In Venezuela, UNHCR applies a community-based approach for 54 prioritized communities, along with 15 implementing partners. As such, UNHCR coordinates the Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) and child protection Safe Spaces Networks, that provide identification, case management and referrals to specialized services at community level.

UNHCR and its partners support 13 SGBV prevention and response committees and child protection committees. Furthermore, in an effort to support school attendance as a means of risk prevention, UNHCR has distributed school kits throughout its prioritized communities. UNHCR has also distributed 10,000 solar lamps and 15,000 jerry cans to communities, partners and offices affected by the blackouts.



NORTH OF CENTRAL AMERICA SITUATION

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

A new large group of people travelling North, with an estimated size of 800-1,200 people, was formed in Tapachula, Mexico on 22 March. Referred to as the “Caravan of Central America and the Caribbean”, the group is comprised of people from El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Cuba. They are mainly female-headed households and single men and approximately 30% are children.

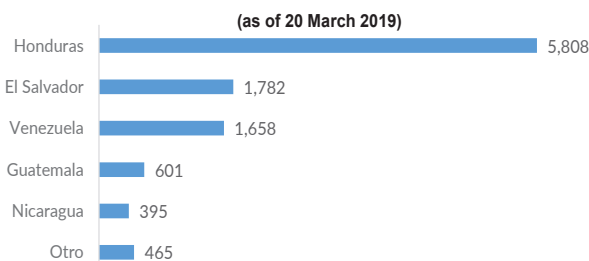
5 In 2019, asylum claims in Mexico increased 185% compared to 2018, according to official figures.

Mexico hosted its first meeting as the Pro-Tempore President of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (MIRPS in Spanish acronyms) to formally establish the 2019 priorities work plan.

367,000 people of concern in Central America by the end of 2018

324,000 refugees and asylum seekers from North of Central America worldwide

Asylum-Seekers in Mexico in 2019 per nationality



* Preliminary figures according to COMAR (subject to change).

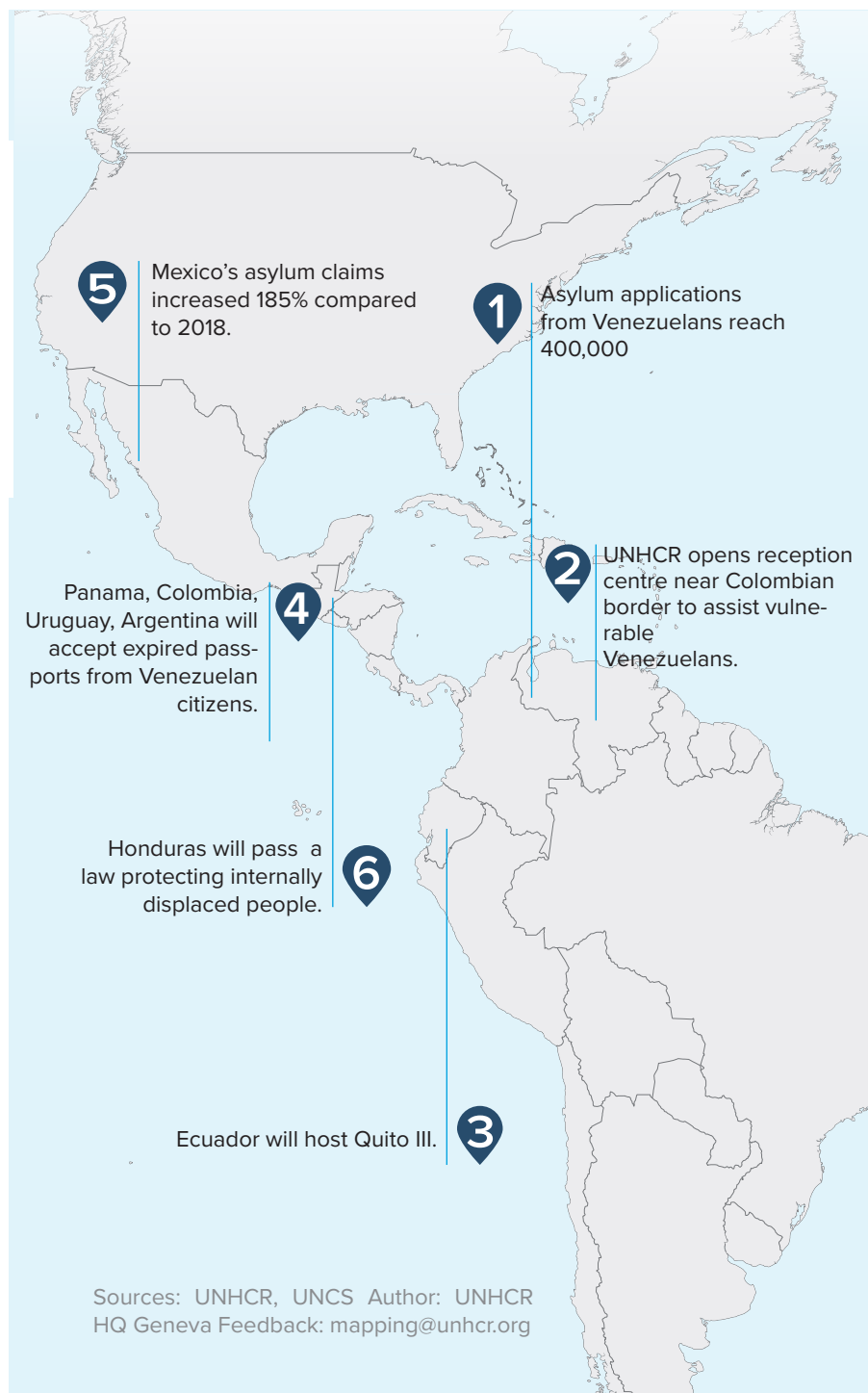
6 In late March, the Interinstitutional Commission for the Protection of Internally displaced persons in Honduras officially handed over the draft law on internal displacement to the Congress.

This is a key step in the delivery of protection and prevention mechanisms for the at least 245,000 internally displaced persons in the country. It is expected that the entry into force of the law will facilitate the coordinated action of the state institutions in mitigating the likelihood and impact of forced displacement.

UNHCR RESPONSE IN LINE WITH 2019 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

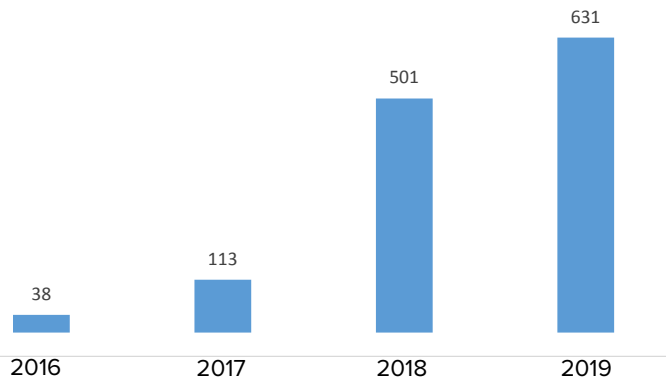
As a response to the new displacement movements inside Mexico, UNHCR is in close contact with the Mexican National Commission for Refugees to continue monitoring the situation, informing about implications of abandoning asylum procedures and stands ready to provide assistance to those who are willing to continue their asylum procedure in Tapachula, where most of asylum seekers lodge their claims.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS



In the framework of Mexico's relocation plan, job placement and local integration programme, 631 people have been relocated so far in 2019. 1,283 people have been relocated since the relocation, job placement and local integration programme started in 2016.

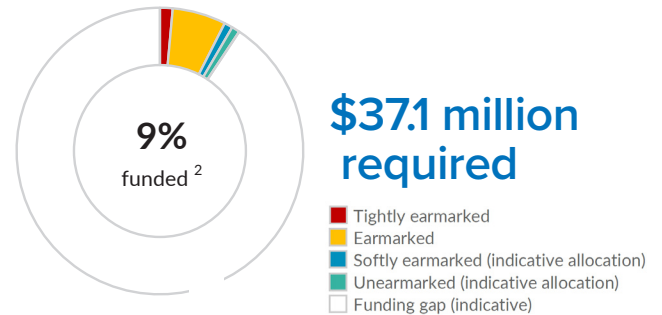
People Relocated under Mexico's Relocation Programme



UNHCR continues advocating for alternatives to detention. In In 2018, UNHCR Mexico supported the creation of 270 shelter spaces for asylum-seekers in Mexico. In January and February, 1,054 people were released from detention. Of these, 687 were from Honduras (65%).

In El Salvador, at the border with Honduras, UNHCR and Caritas opened a safe space that provides access to

FUNDING (as of 2 April 2019) UNHCR's financial requirements 2019 for the North Central America Situation



humanitarian assistance, including temporary shelter and psychosocial support for forcibly displaced people and returnees with protection needs.

In Honduras, 200 young people of concern to UNHCR have benefitted from the "Community Art" interventions, an initiative led by the Municipality of San Pedro Sula and implemented in coordination with UNHCR and Children International mitigating risks faced by youth that intends to bring state institutions closer to marginalised communities fostering communities empowerment and social inclusion.

These interventions are part of the larger Protection Network consolidated through The Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS, for its acronym in Spanish) across the region.

OTHER SITUATIONS

NICARAGUA SITUATION

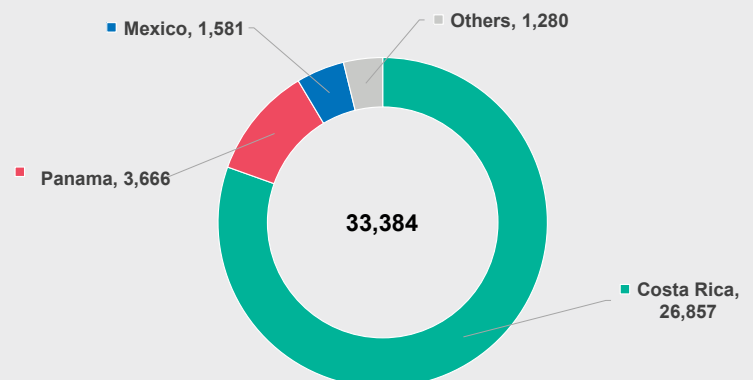
Since April 2018, the region has experienced an increase in the number of asylum claims from Nicaraguans, mainly in North and Central America, where asylum applications have reached 33,400 by February 2019.

Along with the regional response plan for the Nicaragua Situation, in Costa Rica, the main host country, UNHCR has provided furniture and school supplies for primary schools that have recently received a large number of Nicaraguan children, particularly asylum seekers. Primary education remains available to all children in Costa Rica, regardless of their legal status.

The numbers of Nicaraguan asylum-seekers continue to rise in Panama. UNHCR and its partners provide humanitarian aid, mainly Cash Based Interventions (food, rent, medical expenses and educational bonus as the school is about to start). Legal assistance has been provided to around 70 people and local integration induction and counselling for economic inclusion was provided to 47 asylum-seekers.



Asylum applications from Nicaraguans in North and Central America (Jan-2018 and Feb-2019)



COLOMBIA SITUATION

Forced displacement, restricted movement of increasingly vulnerable populations and attacks against community leaders persist as a result from the continuous confrontations between armed groups.

During 2019, 2,197 people were displaced in the Departments of Norte de Santander, Nariño, Cauca and Antioquia. The main humanitarian needs are shelter, food, education in emergencies and access to safe water resources.

Additionally, during the last week of February, more than 5,000 people were caught in the middle of clashes between criminal groups. Nine children died due to shortage of food and lack of medical services in the south west of the country.

8.8 million
victims of armed
conflict

7.8 million
internally displaced persons

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 Cuembí and San Miguel provinces, rural schools are being used like shelters for armed groups during the night. Kidnappings and forced recruitment were reported. UNHCR has started a project in rural schools to enhance child protection.

FEATURED STORIES



[UNHCR and the Colombian Government open a reception centre in Maicao, Guajira](#)

To complement the Government's efforts to provide international protection and respond to the increasing humanitarian needs of the arrivals from Venezuela, on March 8 UNHCR opened a reception centre in Maicao, near the Venezuelan border with Colombia. Since then, 220 Venezuelans with specific protection needs have been admitted and accessed temporary shelter. Out of these, some 37% are children.

Maicao is one of the cities in La Guajira with the highest concentration per capita of refugees and migrants from Venezuela. Hundreds of people, including children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and critical medical conditions, are forced to live on the streets, due to a lack of alternative shelter options. According to a recent UNHCR assessment, a significant number of Venezuelans in Maicao are living on the streets or in informal settlements and 81 per cent of those interviewed said that they required shelter.



[Refugees living in Argentina meet Pope Francis](#)

Four refugees - Okba, from Syria; Diana, from Colombia; Omar, from Venezuela; and Ndathie, from Senegal - took part in a public audience with the pontiff on the 20th February during his visit to Argentina, where they live.

They travelled to the Vatican as part of a committee of migrants and refugees, representatives from different immigrant communities that reside in Argentina, accompanied by the Argentine Human Rights and Cultural Pluralism Secretary Claudio Avruj, a group of government officials and UNHCR and IOM officers, with the mission of promoting dialogue, respect and diversity.

For Diana, greeting the Pope was also a unique experience: "He is one of the voices that, at a global level, has stood up to defend the human right to migrate and the right to international protection."



Over 5,000 Venezuelans find new homes through Brazil’s internal relocation programme

Over 5,000 Venezuelans have been relocated from Brazil’s northern state of Roraima to 17 other states in the country, thanks to an innovative internal relocation programme supported by UNHCR, the UN Refugee agency, civil society and other UN agencies such as IOM, UNFPA and UNDP.

According to official figures, Brazil has received more than 200,000 Venezuelans since 2017. Some 85,000 of them have lodged asylum claims, while some 40,000 have received temporary resident visas.

On Wednesday (March 13), an aircraft from the Brazilian Air Force (FAB) took off with 225 Venezuelans from Boa Vista (the capital of the State of Roraima, some 200 kilometres from the border with Venezuela). The refugees and migrants chose to go to 13 different cities in Brazil and air transport was organized accordingly. More flights are scheduled over the next weeks.

The voluntary relocation initiative began in April 2018 and now involves 50 different cities all over Brazil. It was designed to reduce the pressure on host communities in the north of Brazil, where refugees and migrants have been arriving from Venezuela, compelled to flee their country due the difficult socio-economic, human rights and political situation.

UNHCR plays a key role in the implementation and coordination of Brazil’s internal relocation programme notably by identifying eligible beneficiaries among the residents of temporary shelter sites in Boa Vista and ensuring that people have the required documentation for travel.



Venezuelan youth build self-confidence to reach the sky in Trinidad and Tobago

A short documentary follows the life of a Venezuelan refugee family as they get back on their – sky-high – feet learning how to stilt walk.

When he speaks of his home country, Carlos’ big, mahogany eyes well up. “It is too beautiful,” he says, “Venezuela has a variety of everything.” The 13-year-old has since moved with his family to Trinidad and Tobago – an island barely 11 kilometres away from Venezuela, yet a completely different world.



Asylum applications by Venezuelans soar to over 400,000 - PRESS RELEASE

UNHCR issued a press release on the increased number of asylum seekers from Venezuela, highlighting the responsibilities of States, explaining UNHCR’s role and reiterating the civilian and humanitarian nature of asylum.



Visit to Binational Border Centre in Peru



On 2 March, 24 members of the European Parliament visited the Binational Border Centre (CEBAF) at the Peruvian border with Ecuador. The mission was accompanied by Peruvian Congressmen, a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Superintendent of Migration, and the Superintendent of Customs (SUNAT).

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