

South Cone Situation Report

March 2019

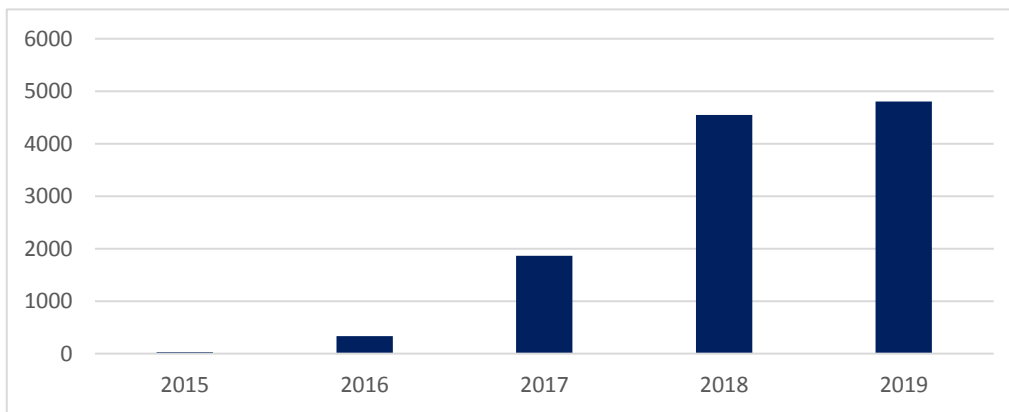
UNHCR/IOM Joint Special Representative, Eduardo Stein, visited **Argentina** where it was confirmed that the country will host and organize the **Quito IV meeting**.

The **Regional High-level meeting about migrant and refugee Venezuelan children** took place in Buenos Aires with the participation of 9 countries in the region.

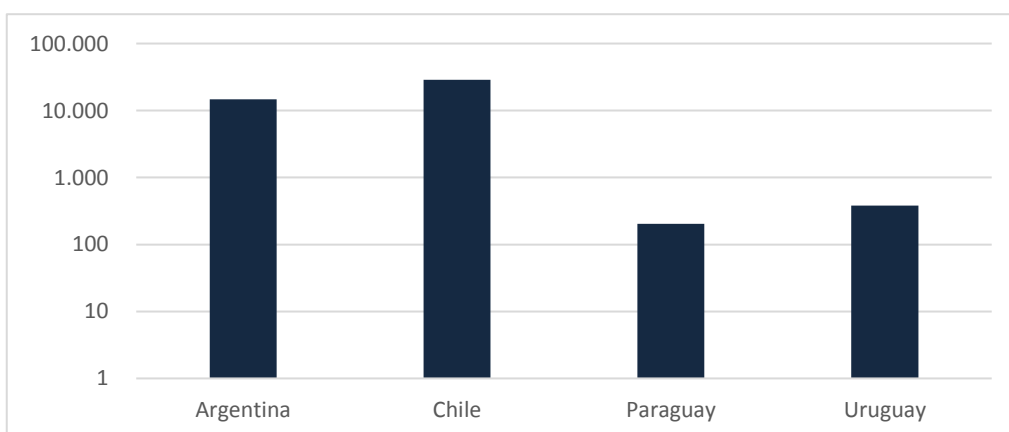
It led to the definition of action points, such as the strengthening of a coordinated regional operational response through trainings, articulation and advocacy spaces.

KEY FIGURES¹

Asylum seekers in the Southern Cone between 2016 and 2019 (cumulative trends)



Residence Permits issued in the Southern Cone between January and February 2019



¹ Total population figures in this document represent the sum of Venezuelan migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers reported by host governments. It does not necessarily imply individual identification, nor registration of each individual, and may include a degree of estimation, as per each government's statistical data processing methodology. As numerous government sources do not account for Venezuelans without a regular status, the total number of Venezuelans is likely to be higher. The figures of people with regular status do not include Venezuelans holding tourist visas, nor recognized refugees, or asylum seekers.

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

Countries in the Southern Cone have, generally, had open-arms policies towards the refugees and migrants of Venezuela. In Argentina, for example, this is reflected in the fact that it will preside the Quito Process, an intergovernmental regional forum that aims at finding joint solutions and exchange of best practices for the response of the Venezuelan flows in the Region, organizing its fourth meeting in Buenos Aires.

In this context, and during the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation hosted by Argentina during the month of March, representatives of the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants of Venezuela were invited to present the Quito Process as an example of South-South cooperation and as a regional cooperative model to respond to the flows of refugees and migrants from Venezuela.

The Southern Cone has seen an increase in the flows of refugees and migrants of Venezuela during the last months, requiring immediate actions from governments to respond to these new realities, during the reporting period, these were the main developments:

- In Argentina, the **Ministry of Interior** signed an agreement through the National Direction of Migrations (DNM) to exchange information across provinces on the demand for professionals trained in health services, to later match these demands with Venezuelans that could potentially occupy the vacant positions.
- In Paraguay, the Government established a series of mechanisms to make the requirements for obtaining a temporary residence more flexible for vulnerable Venezuelans, announcing the acceptance of expired passports in Paraguayan territory

Due to the above-mentioned increase in Venezuelan flows, platform partners in Argentina and Chile are noticing an **increased demand of consultations from Venezuelan nationals**, especially in topics related to access to asylum procedures, instruments for regular stay, housing/shelters, labour opportunities, food and clothing.

In Chile, that has seen the largest increase in flows, platform partners with presence in **Arica**, held a meeting to coordinate a humanitarian response. The organizations agreed to set up an information stand in the city by providing staff for multiple shifts, as well as producing brochures to complement the service. The group is set to meet on a regular basis until further services are established.

RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

These response highlights do not provide an exhaustive overview of all response activities by partners under the regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP), but rather highlight some key activities implemented during the month. The R4V aims to support and complement national authorities' efforts across Latin America and the Caribbean, consistent with the principles outlined in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

Area of Intervention 1: Direct emergency assistance

Strategic outcome: *Refugees and migrants are provided with life-saving goods and services.*

Direct emergency assistance/Basic Needs Essential Services

Direct emergency assistance continues to be provided to the most vulnerable Venezuelans in various countries that conform the Southern Cone. Platform partners provided humanitarian assistance to **69 Venezuelans in Argentina** and **7 Venezuelans in Uruguay** during the month of March. Assistance included CBI and in kind-assistance for nutrition, accommodation, NFIs, transport, psychosocial support, health assistance and medicine.

Shelter

During the month of March, **temporary accommodation** was provided to **198 Venezuelans** in vulnerable conditions in **Argentina**, in the city of Mendoza; and **Chile**, in the cities of Arica, Santiago and Antofagasta. Additionally, the **SENNAF** (National Secretary of Childhood, Adolescents and families) received support in Buenos Aires to enhance the capacity of its shelters in order to provide humanitarian and local integration support for vulnerable Venezuelan refugees and migrants, including shelter, food, psycho-social assistance and guidance for socio-economic inclusion.

As part of the shelter mapping in Argentina, meetings have been coordinated with the civil society organization Manos Abiertas to assess the possibility of providing support to strengthen the operational capacity of the shelter Refugio de María, that specializes in providing assistance to single women.

Area of Intervention 2: Protection

***Strategic outcome:** Refugees and migrants enjoy rights and protection.*

Access to information

In **Chile**, a stand at the National Bus Terminal of Arica, at the border with Peru was opened with the objective of providing adequate reception conditions to refugees and migrants of Venezuela by providing **information on asylum seeking procedures and regularization mechanisms**, as well as identifying specific needs.

In **Argentina**, in the provinces of Jujuy and Misiones, partners are noticing an increased demand for information related to accessing asylum application procedures and regularization mechanisms, housing/shelters, labour opportunities, food and clothing options. Following a mission that partners made to Misiones, presence was established with a part time **social worker** in Posadas. Follow up missions and interinstitutional SOPs to operationalize the response will be coordinated.

On the same line, assessments to open up offices by partners in relevant urban areas outside of the capital (e.g. Cordoba, Mendoza) with the objective of facilitating the **identification** and **support** of vulnerable cases are on-going. Services will include orientation on asylum procedures and regularization mechanisms as well as targeted assistance to vulnerable cases upon arrival in coordination with local governments, to complement existing measures. Where feasible, humanitarian assistance will be delivered through multi-purpose cash grants to cover the most pressing needs identified by the persons of concern.

In the context of the “Programa de Asistencia a migrantes venezolanos” established by the National Direction of Migration of Argentina, a **workshop** on social integration, work, education and health was conducted in Buenos Aires with the assistance of partners. The event, that took place on 7-8 March, had the participation of **523 persons** who used this space for consultation and dialogue on various topics of interest. They were provided with **information on service pathways** for the validation of university degrees, access to health, durable solutions, legal assistance and job training. The workshop was also a platform to discuss different strategies to eradicate discrimination towards refugees and migrants, as well as their integration in the community.

Area of Intervention 3: Socio-economic and cultural integration

***Strategic outcome:** Refugees and migrants are socially, economically and culturally integrated in empowered communities.*

Access to employment and livelihoods

With a focus on the **development of strategies for the labour insertion of migrants and refugees** and how their skills and resilience can benefit the private sector, two meetings were organized with a representative of the Tent Partnership for Refugees, a foundation that aims at mobilizing the private sector to improve livelihoods, with a specific interest in supporting Venezuelan refugees and migrants. The first meeting, addressed at a group of key stakeholders in the labour insertion, entrepreneurship and self-employment areas, that showed their interest in a partnership platform to bring the private sector, NGO’s and refugees and migrants from Venezuela together. The second meeting was held at the WeWork offices, where the hosts expressed their interest in reaching out to the refugees and migrants, offering job opportunities not only at their affiliate offices in **Argentina** but also in **Chile**. **Good practices on financial inclusion** implemented by the Buenos Aires City Bank (Banco Ciudad) were shared with the “Banco de la Nación Argentina”, who demonstrated willingness on exploring options for allowing refugees and migrants of Venezuela to have access to the financial services they offer.

Socio-economic inclusion

Partners are planning to elaborate a **joint strategy for addressing the difficulties in the access to basic social rights and social protection schemes** for refugees and migrants of Venezuela in Buenos Aires, in coordination with the National Secretariat for Labour and Employment of the Ministry of Production and Employment, the Human Rights Secretary of the city of Buenos Aires, the Ministry of Social Development and the Secretariat for Childhood, Adolescence and Family. The main objective is to promote their access to social protection schemes to address their vulnerabilities caused by involuntary displacement, loss of human and social capital, limited access to the labour market (both due to legal or administrative restrictions and xenophobia), and lack of access to support networks.

Assistance for socio-economic integration has been provided in **Chile** where **40 Venezuelans** received the government's recognition of their competencies as retailers, which has allowed them to access a job-hunting platform for their placement in different enterprises. This process was achieved in partnership with government officials through an evaluation of skills (technical and soft) and knowledge that the beneficiaries have of the local labour market and laws.

Combat xenophobia

Platform Partners carried out an anti-xenophobia opinion survey in Chile and Argentina.

In **Chile**, 1,000 people from Santiago, Arica, Antofagasta and Talca replied to the survey. Among the main findings the survey identified a perception that low income Chileans over 50 years of age express discriminatory opinions about foreigners. It also showed a situation in Antofagasta, in northern Chile, where the number of Venezuelans who claim to be victims of discrimination increases considerably. These results will serve as a basis for the preparation of a public campaign that aims to promote **non-discrimination in host communities**.

In **Argentina**, the results highlighted a generally positive attitude and predisposition towards Venezuelans. However, 38% of the interviewees reported to have witnessed discriminatory behaviour towards Venezuelans. Younger people are the ones who are more receptive towards migrants in general. Additionally, the social listening study showed that the focus of mass media communication, when referring to immigration, is on life stories and most often about insecurity, crimes and the government's immigration policy management. The survey also found that social media are very polarized when the topic is associated to migration.

Area of Intervention 4: Strengthening capacities of the host government

***Strategic outcome:** Government institutions' capacity to manage situations of refugees and migrants from Venezuela is strengthened.*

Capacity building

Partners continue to provide host governments with **technical and material support** to strengthen their capacities in response to the influx of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, including the areas of regularization, response to trafficking in persons and exchange of information.

In **Argentina**, five studies aimed at improving the capacities of the State to respond to the needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants have been developed. Their publication is expected in April. Three of these studies focus on socio-economic and cultural integration of Venezuelans in their host communities, specifically through **labour insertion** (and relocation), and **access to social services** (education, health, housing, etc.). The fourth study is a training guide on **migration management** from a human rights, gender and intercultural perspective, and the fifth publication consists in a socio-anthropological investigation of Venezuelans that arrived in Argentina in the last four years.

In line with the objective of **strengthening local capacities**, computer equipment was delivered to the National Refugee Commission (CONARE). Additionally, support through remodelling and furnishing (fridge, kitchen and other items) were provided to the Centre for Orientation to Migrant Population in Buenos Aires which is the result of the joint efforts of the national government (National Direction for Migrations and Direction for Intercultural Diversity), the government of the City of Buenos Aires, the private sector and platform partners. According to the information provided to CONARE last November by the Centre itself, **60% of the population are Venezuelans** seeking for advice/orientation/referral services to facilitate their integration in Buenos Aires. Services provided include referrals to social public services, labour training, financial inclusion, access to justice, recreational activities, among others.

Various trainings on Trafficking in Persons took place in **Chile** during the month of March, reaching **290 officials** from local and national governments in the cities of Antofagasta, Santiago and Talca.

In terms of strengthening processing capacities for regularization, human resources were provided to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of **Uruguay**. As a result, **419 Venezuelan** nationals began the residency process during the month of March.

REGIONAL COORDINATION

Coordination for the development of National Platforms in the Southern Cone has remained a challenge in the March. No National Platforms have been officially constituted yet and inputs have been given by very few partners. In Uruguay, the second meeting of the National Platform has been set for 13 May, this will be the space in which official Platform resources will be discussed with partners.

CONTRIBUTIONS

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United States of America | United Kingdom

RMRP PARTNERS

ADRA | Asociación Inmigrante Feliz | CAREF | Clínica Jurídica Migrantes y Refugiados – UDP | FAO | FASIC | International Rescue Committee | ILO | IOM | Jesuit Refugee Service | Misión Scalabriniana | MIRARES | Pastoral Service of Migrants | Plan International | Red Cross | Semillas para la Democracia | UBA | UNAIDS | UNDP | UNEP | UNESCO | UNFPA | UNHABITAT | UNHCR | UNICEF | UNOCHA | UNOHCHR | UNODC | UNWOMEN | Vicaría Pastoral Social Caritas | World Vision | WFP | WHO

For more information, please contact:

Juliana Quintero, Media and Communications Officer, **IOM**, robuepress@iom.int, +54 11 5219 2033

Analia Kim, Public Information, **UNHCR**, kiman@unhcr.org, +54 11 4815 7870