

Current situation of refugees and migrants coming from Venezuela to Colombia, Ecuador and Peru

August 2019



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This flash update provides a snapshot of the current situation of refugees and migrants coming from Venezuela to Colombia, Ecuador and Peru following the introduction of a humanitarian visa for Venezuelans put in place by the Ecuadorian Government. It includes updates on the regional movements observed and the preparedness and response put in place by the aforementioned countries. This flash update is produced by the technical team of the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela.

CONTEXT

On July 26, the Government of Ecuador publicly stated that it would be enforcing new entry requirements for Venezuelan citizens in its territory¹. The announced measure establishes the following procedures:

- The regularization of all Venezuelans that have entered Ecuador up to 26 July 2019. The regularization process will start in October and will benefit Venezuelans that have entered Ecuador through regular channels, carrying a valid passport and that do not have any criminal records.
- The requirement for a visa to enter Ecuador to all Venezuelans, to be enforced as of 26 August at midnight. As of this date, all Venezuelan citizens wishing to enter Ecuador will need an Exceptional Temporary Residence Visa on humanitarian grounds. Consulates in Caracas, Bogotá and Lima will be able to issue the document.

1. The measure was published as Executive Decree 826 and also appeared on the Ministerial Agreement 103/2019

The announcement of this new entry requirements was followed by an increased number of Venezuelans arriving at the Ecuadorian borders leading to congestions and long waits at the Colombian side of the Rumichaca and San Miguel border crossings. Figures from the Ecuadorian migration authorities showed that during weeks ahead of the implementation of the measure, arrivals increased to a daily average of 3,000 entries, with a peak of 6,000 arrivals on 24 August.

The number of arrivals in Peru also increased during the days prior to the implementation of the new measure reaching 800 daily arrivals, up from the 400 daily entries registered since the introduction of the humanitarian visa requirement in Peru on June 15.

Colombian and Ecuadorian authorities, together with the national coordination platforms for the response to refugees and migrants from Venezuela, implemented contingency plans to provide the necessary orientation and information to those arriving at the borders, identify cases in need of special assistance and ensure a comprehensive and coordinated response.

As of August 28, the number of entries to Ecuador from the northern borders has drastically decreased and there are small groups with Venezuelans who remain in the Colombian side of the border trying to plan the next steps of their journey. Individuals not carrying a visa to enter Ecuador are not being allowed to access the territory.

In this context, Eduardo Stein, Joint UNHCR-IOM Special Representative for Venezuelan refugees and migrants, through a statement published on August 29², exhorted countries in the region “to continue to articulate, coordinate and harmonize their policies and to exchange information and good practices through the Quito Process, which as a non-binding group has brought together Latin American and Caribbean countries affected by the outflow of Venezuelan refugees and migrants.”

COLOMBIA – ECUADOR BORDER



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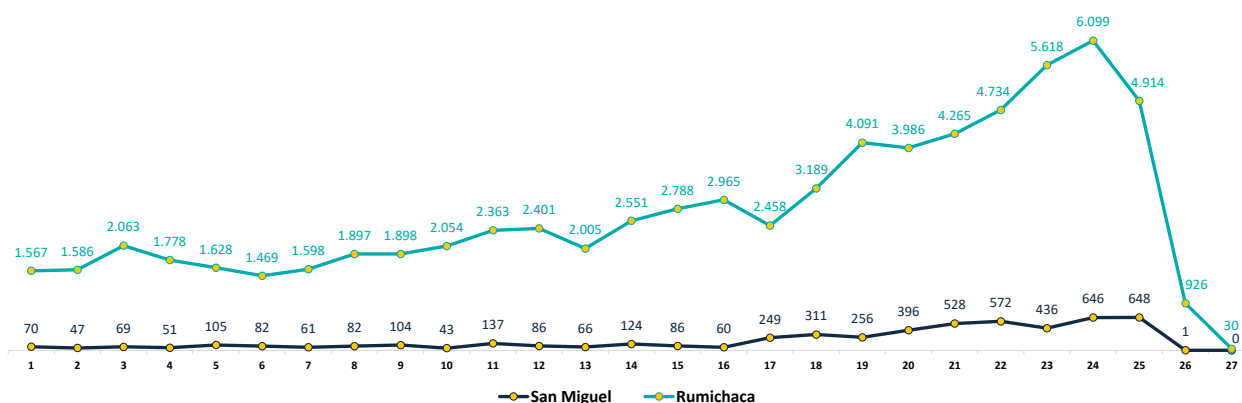
2. <https://reliefweb.int/report/venezuela-bolivarian-republic/situation-venezuelan-refugees-and-migrants-needs-greater-global>

POPULATION MOVEMENTS

Following the measures adopted by Ecuadorian authorities on July 26, the northern border of Colombia (North of Santander, Guajira and Arauca) has seen a gradual increase in the influx of refugees and migrants from Venezuela entering the country in anticipation of the measure’s enforcement.

In Ecuador, entries of refugees and migrants from Venezuela through the Rumichaca crossing points gradually increased, from a daily average of 2,000 in the first quarter of August to more than 4,500 daily entries on average until August 25 at 23h59, when the Ecuadorian decree entered into force. A peak was registered on August 24 at the northern border, with more than 6,500 arrivals officially registered at the border.

Arrivals through Ecuador northern borders - August 2019



Source: Ministerio de Gobierno, Ecuador.

PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

Member organizations of the National Platform in Ecuador (GTRM by its Spanish acronym) and Colombia (GIFMM by its Spanish acronym) as well as national and local authorities strengthened their capacities at the Ecuadorian borders to respond to these increases in arrivals. A coordinated contingency response was implemented on both sides of the border to provide general orientation and information, monitor rejected cases at the border and identify and refer cases in need of international protection.

As part of the contingency response, blankets, gloves, hats, scarfs and pairs of socks were distributed to children on both sides of the border as Rumichaca registers very low temperatures, especially at night. Cold is still a challenge as many Venezuelans arrive in clothing that is not sufficient for such weather conditions.

Shelter continues to be provided on both sides of the border, especially to children and single mothers, as well as food assistance, emergency health response, humanitarian transportation and hygiene kits, depending on identified needs.

Protection monitoring activities are ongoing to better analyse the profile, needs and intentions of those arriving at the border. Information has been provided across Colombia over the weekend to ensure that refugees and migrants are informed about the entry requirements to Ecuador before making the journey to Rumichaca.

IN COLOMBIA



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Regarding protection, guidance was given to Venezuelans on documentation needed to enter Ecuador and Peru, and information on access to health services was also provided. In addition, vaccination campaigns were carried out for kids; toilet and clothes kits were delivered. Spaces for psychosocial care, play and recreational activities were set up for children to rest while their parents processed their requests to leave or enter Colombia and Ecuador.

Water, sanitary services, shelter and hygiene measures were implemented at Rumichaca Bridge. Key messages on hygiene, WASH and waste management were disseminated.

Humanitarian transportation, food and shelter services were provided to more than 600 Venezuelans. Priority population, such as families, children, pregnant and lactating women and elderly people, was identified. Approximately 1,200 blankets, 370 scarves, 500 gloves and 500 cold hats were delivered to people in transit at the Rumichaca International Bridge and in shelters.

In Norte de Santander department, Colombian border with Venezuela, Migración Colombia opened four new passport processing posts with extended schedules-including 24-hour shifts- and provided priority lines for women with children, elderly people and people with special needs. This was done with an aim to process the increased arrivals prior to the entry into force of the new measures. The Support Space remained open at night offering WASH services as per increased needs. The Colombian Civil Defense jointly with the GIFMM provided: ambulance services at night for medical emergencies; humanitarian transportation and; shelter assistance through Centro de Atención Transitorio al Migrante.



1,500

People assisted in temporary accommodation



1,010

Venezuelans were provided transportation



Guidance and information on humanitarian assistance and documentation

IN ECUADOR



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The GTRM and local authorities prepared a contingency plan anticipating unusual flows of Venezuelan refugees and migrants across the northern borders. Assistance was prepositioned in these areas to increase capacity of response.

The presence in the information/orientation points in Rumichaca was reinforced, extending opening hours from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm. Information was provided on migration processes and access to the asylum system. For people in need of international protection, identification and case receipt was carried out regularly. A basic life support ambulance for emergency cases was allocated to be in used at Rumichaca International Bridge for medical emergencies.

National Platform partners have been distributing blankets, baby kits and hygiene kits to the most vulnerable people. Food kits and hot meals distribution was also reinforced over the weekend at the borders providing more than 1,191 food kits for families travelling with children and pregnant women, according to the needs observed. To ensure the protection of the most vulnerable cases, additional funds were allocated to expand cash-based assistance.

Partners continue providing safe rest spaces in Refugee Housing Units (RHU) at the border, offering areas where people can sleep. Approximately 200 vulnerable families on daily basis use the facilities. Additionally, a tent was installed behind the border centre building (CENAF) to increase rest space capacity to meet the needs of Venezuelans processing their entry. The temporary accommodation capacity was increased to host 150 people, by relying on hotels in the city of Tulcán, to provide accommodation for Venezuelans with specific protection needs.

Venezuelans who meet the Government of Peru established priority criteria and whose cases are in line with regulations that impact onward movements, were provided with humanitarian transportation from the northern to the southern border. For Venezuelans, whose final destination was Ecuador, national transport support was also organized to reduce pressure caused by concentration of population in border cities and areas.

GTRM partners continue to: provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable; facilitate family contact restoration services; identification of cases in need of international protection; offer information services, transportation, advice and orientation.

ECUADOR - PERU BORDER



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POPULATION MOVEMENTS

Between August 1 and 25, 2019, more than 10,300 Venezuelans entered Peru through the border points with Ecuador. The average influx remained around 400 people a day. Ten days prior to entry into force of the visa requirements, it increased, averaging 800 people daily.

CEBAF Tumbes - Peru entries from August 1 to 25, 2019



Source: Superintendencia Nacional de Migraciones, Peru

PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

Prior to the introduction of the new entry measures in Ecuador, a coordination meeting was convened at the Binational Border Assistance Center (CEBAF) in the city of Tumbes to review the local contingency plan in the event of a possible massive increase in arrivals at that border point. In addition, a document was consolidated with key messages to be disseminated among the Venezuelan population to guide them on Government of Peru requirements, access mechanisms as well as on assistance available at the CEBAF.

Between July 26 and August 26, more than 13,000 persons arrived at the CEBAF. There, partners provided temporary shelter for mothers and babies through Refugee Housing Units (RHU) (almost 3,700 sleeping spaces occupied) and temporary shelter to almost 1,400 persons in Tumbes. Over 3,300 NFI kits and almost 4,500 food rations were distributed, and CBI assistance was provided to approximately 3,000 persons. Over 200 people received emergency medical assistance, including psychosocial support, and over 4,000 liters of water were distributed. In addition, families received support to make phone calls, recharge their phones and print copies of their documents.

National Platform members have continued providing transportation to over 2,600 persons from the CEBAF to the city of Tumbes and at to other provinces in the country.

