



**COVID
-19**

Key Messages and Frequent Asked Questions on COVID-19

R4V
**RESPONSE FOR
VENEZUELANOS**
Coordination Platform for
Refugees and Migrants
from Venezuela

Key Messages

- International support to the Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) needs to continue and be strengthened. In particular, interventions to save lives of refugees and migrants from Venezuela and alleviate suffering remain more necessary than ever.
- The regional, sub-regional and national R4V Coordination Platforms are working closely with partners and national authorities to include refugees and migrants in national and local public health response arrangements, including prevention, testing and treatment, ensuring protection considerations in the implementation of new measures, and complementing state efforts.
- Women, children, as well as people living with disabilities and LGBTI people, among other refugees and migrants with specific protection needs, require a response that considers gender, age and diversity dimensions.
- Mitigation and prevention measures taken by countries, such as movement restrictions and closures of borders should not undermine the right to seek asylum, regularization processes and ensure access to protection mechanisms for those in need.
- Prevention and communication messages need to engage all communities and be available in languages and media formats that are understandable and accessible by all, including children and people living with disabilities.
- The anxiety and fear of the impact of COVID-19 should not generate situations of discrimination and xenophobia against refugees and migrants.
- Coordinated measures (such as “*salvaconductos*” and similar exemptions from applicable movement restrictions for R4V response actors) are necessary to mitigate the impact on life-saving activities, initiatives as well as integration processes of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in the host communities.

Frequent Asked Questions

What are some of the key COVID-19 prevention measures taken for people on the move?

Communication and information on hygiene and available services is being disseminated through existing trustworthy communication channels by all partners for people on the move. Ensuring adequate access to clean water, soap, alcohol gel and waste disposals in strategic points are some of the prevention measures. Additionally, the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V) is collaborating with national and local authorities to address the new challenges and to ensure refugees and migrants have access to health services.

How is the COVID-19 pandemic impacting on refugees and migrants from Venezuela?

Most countries in the region have entirely or partially closed their borders. Protection monitoring in border areas and, specially, irregular access points remains a challenge with potential increase of impacts linked to child protection, gender-based violence, discrimination, human trafficking and smuggling. Restrictions on mobility have also had an impact on concrete access to protection mechanisms specially in border areas and for high-risk cases. Consequently, family separation including unaccompanied and separated children remains a significant challenge with diminished capacities to implement coordination and tracking mechanisms. It is vital that any tightening of border controls, travel restrictions or limitations on freedom of movement do not prevent people from accessing safety and protection.

The Regional Protection Sector is monitoring protection incidents linked to the implementation of the COVID-19-related measures identifying more representative challenges related to border monitoring, family separation, access to protection mechanisms, identification and corresponding reference of high-risk cases. Working groups on these issues have been constituted to develop specific measures/tools for risk mitigation and regional coordination. The current COVID-19 pandemic has exposed refugees and migrants to even greater vulnerabilities and diminished their economic capacity to guarantee their daily subsistence. Evictions are currently one of the most worrisome impacts. The Protection Sector is activating coordination mechanisms with relevant Sectors/Groups to address the situation. Good practices from governments from the region within all normative measures launched have also been identified and will be monitored on a regular basis for advocacy and coordination purposes.

Will Support Spaces continue to operate?

Advocacy efforts are ongoing to ensure continuity of operational assistance of Support Spaces. Assistance to refugees and migrants from Venezuela at Support Spaces will continue as long as national authorities allow it. Furthermore, the Support Spaces Working Group is currently working on updating information about available services which can be consulted through the R4V mapping tool: <https://espacios.r4v.info/es/map>. The tool identifies services that are available despite the current situation and the ones that have migrated to virtual channels.

How are livelihoods of refugees and migrants from Venezuela being affected?

The Regional Integration Sector is analyzing the impact on labor inclusion of refugees and migrants as a result of the current situation. The impact of the reduction of commercial activities due to the pandemic particularly affects refugees and migrants who usually rely on low-wage work in the informal sector, in precarious or temporary jobs and lack access to social protection, paid sick leave, and have no social network to rely on for last resort support.

The Regional Working Group on Cash-Based Interventions is taking this economic impact into account and deliberating special measures that can be adopted during this crisis, such as potentially amended vulnerability criteria and targeting approaches.

Have community kitchens been closed?

Due to the quarantine measures implemented by governments, only a limited number of community kitchens remain open with contingent access to limit the gathering of people and with

increased hygiene measures, including the use of soap and antibacterial gel. Food assistance through kits to “*caminantes*” is fully suspended to comply with governments’ measures to constrain the mobility of people.

How are refugees and migrants accessing food and covering their nutritional needs?

To ensure access to food by the most vulnerable refugees and migrants, either the existing assistance modalities are expanded, such cash-based interventions, or alternative solutions are being implemented, including in-kind basic food baskets, which are delivered to shelters or other locations. The humanitarian partners also support governments’ efforts to include refugees and migrants into their national social protection programmes to cover basic needs, including food and nutrition.

School feeding programmes have been suspended due to partial or country-wide closure of schools, which also affects refugees and migrants’ households. Alternative options are being implemented including supply of take-home rations in lieu of the meals, home delivery of food and provision of cash or vouchers.

Could the Coronavirus contribute to additional discrimination and xenophobia against refugees and migrants from Venezuela?

Unfortunately, when fear and uncertainty are on the rise, the urge to identify simple solutions, e.g. using scapegoats to blame for the spread of Covid-19, may soon extend to all refugees and migrants, regardless their nationalities. Solidarity and empathy are needed now more than ever before.

How is the World Health Organization (WHO) involved in activities of the R4V Coordination Platform?

The coordination of the response for refugees and migrants is conducted through the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform (R4V), complemented by eight National/Sub-Regional Platforms. Platforms are operating through a sector approach with the participation of 137 partners. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) are key members of these regional, sub-regional and national coordination efforts. For the COVID-19 situation in particular, the WHO, jointly with PAHO, leads the health-related aspects of the response and its guidance and expertise is being followed and incorporated in guidance materials to refugees and migrants, as well as to R4V response actors.

Is the R4V Coordination Platform aware of any cases of refugees and migrants from Venezuela that tested positive for Coronavirus?

So far only eight cases have been reported. While the number of cases remains low, refugees and migrants from Venezuela are at a high risk of contracting and transmitting the virus, owed to their inability to stay at home or to practice social distancing in the same effective manner as local populations. Any suspected cases among the refugee and migrant populations will be responded to in the same manner as any other confirmed or suspected case among the host communities, in accordance with the national policies in place.

Where can I find updated information on COVID-19 specific responses by the R4V Coordination Platform?

[A dedicated page](#) has been created within the r4v.info website to compile all the documents, guidance and information material for the Regional Response to Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela in the current COVID-19 situation.