

3 APRIL 2020



REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS FROM VENEZUELA IN:

THE WORLD LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

4.9M 4.1M



FUNDING SITUATION*

3%

FUNDED: 40.3 M
REQUIREMENTS: 1.3 BN

Situation

As of 1 April, the borders of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and many countries of the Southern Cone and the Caribbean have been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Various R4V partners report an increase in irregular movements which raises serious protection concerns associated to the increased vulnerability of refugees and migrants to trafficking, smuggling, exploitation and abuse as well as serious health considerations.

Many refugees and migrants from Venezuela had been working in the informal sector often without social protection. As a result, they are among those most affected by the movement restrictions imposed in most countries. Many are losing their sources of income, further weakening their ability to pay for rent, food and medicines. Additionally, it has been reported that increasing numbers of Venezuelans are homeless following evictions and closures of shelters, which is further impacting negatively on public perceptions of these refugees and migrants.

R4V partners have reported incidents of interruptions of healthcare provision for refugees and migrants from Venezuela. These incidents highlight the need to enhance advocacy for the inclusion of refugees and migrants in national COVID-19 response plans.

Platforms' Response**

The **Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform** is embarking on a revision of the **Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP)** to ensure that its scope reflects developments at the global level, namely the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, and to ensure that the RMRP includes activities to cater to refugees, migrants and affected host communities impacted by COVID-19, as well as for corresponding financial needs by R4V response actors. The **Regional Communications Working Group** is adapting the regional anti-xenophobia campaign to the pandemic context. Some of the content that is being created for social media channels includes GIFs, social cards and a planned digital concert played by Venezuelan musicians in the region. The products aim to link health advice on social distancing with messages on promoting solidarity.

In **Colombia**, the **Inter-Agency Group for Mixed Migration Flows (GIFMM)** has created a **directory of hotlines** for refugees and migrants for access to information and services, including remotely. The number of Venezuelans living on the streets has tripled in some areas due to eviction as a result of individuals being unable to pay rent in the wake of the movement restrictions. Local GIFMMs are coordinating with authorities to develop joint response strategies for the dissemination of COVID-19-related information, and to address response gaps. Additionally, the government is taking measures to facilitate mobility for GIFMM partners during quarantine and is creating legal provisions to avoid further evictions.

In **Brazil**, while most restrictions remain in place, in **Roraima** some restrictions have been loosened, allowing some non-essential businesses to open. The containment of COVID-19 remains a challenge in overcrowded indigenous shelters and informal shelters in the north of Brazil. The National Platform has produced 15 posters and banners for communications with Venezuelans as well as host communities on health recommendations and solidarity. Technical support was provided to the Government to create a monitoring system to track cases of COVID-19 among the Venezuelan population in Roraima and Amazonas, and is now being used by all members of *Operação Acolhida* and the National Platform.

In **Ecuador**, the **Grupo de Trabajo para Refugiados y Migrantes (GTRM)** is conducting a survey to support national sectors with the identification of needs in Shelter, NFIs and WASH. Around 30% of activities that remain active have changed their modality of intervention to virtual mechanisms, whereas another 30% of activities in food security and shelter have had to be suspended. Isolation measures throughout the country have been extended until 12 April.

In **Peru**, GTRM partners have established hotlines to assist refugees and migrants in need of immediate psychological and psychiatric support. Protection interventions for victims of human trafficking at risk of further exploitation and abuse during the COVID-19 emergency are being developed by R4V partners.

In **Chile**, over 2,500 tests are being conducted every day, one of the highest rates in Latin America, however they remain expensive for most vulnerable refugees and migrants from Venezuela. The government has extended the validity of identity cards of the Venezuelan population. R4V partners have conducted training for implementing specific measures to prevent COVID-19 in shelters and at distributions. The Platform is working with the Ministry of Education to reinforce access to

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* Source: <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/944/summary>

**These are examples of activities carried out by National/Sub-Regional Platforms and/or Regional Sectors. For further details, please see R4V.info.

alternative education for refugees and migrants unable to access online options. It is also identifying ways to directly support the Government's response, particularly with health infrastructure which would also benefit the host population.

The Caribbean Sub-Regional Platform is prioritizing meeting the basic needs of refugees and migrants, distributing scarce hygiene items and cash for food and shelter. While many physical outreach activities have been postponed, some partners are still able to spread health messages through Communication with Communities, including on hygiene measures to follow at home. The continued arrival of Venezuelans with irregular status by boat poses increasingly severe protection risks.

In Central America and Mexico, the Sub-regional platform is prioritizing access to food and medicines for Venezuelans and other refugees and migrants, as well as vulnerable households of the host community. Partners and governments in all three countries are providing capacity building courses, legal assistance and registration services remotely. As refugees and vulnerable migrants in Mexico and Panama are exposed to movement restrictions, targeting criteria for cash-based interventions (CBI) are being expanded to include more vulnerable asylum-seekers.

The Southern Cone Sub-Regional Platform is prioritizing the provision of shelter, hygiene and food, mostly through CBI. Evictions have been reported as well as the refusal to accept refugees and migrants in various accommodations due to fear of contagion. Governments in all four countries of the sub-region are implementing measures to support the most vulnerable through support hotlines, extensions of permits and documentation, and remote registration. Advocacy efforts are ongoing with Governments for the inclusion of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in their social protection systems.

Regional Sectors**

The Regional Health Sector is working to ensure the incorporation of the refugee and migrant population into comprehensive care measures. There is rising transmission of COVID-19 among refugees and migrants in the region, yet a persistent lack of data proves to be a challenge for the response. The Sector is prioritizing the continuity of the work of organizations who are attending the health needs of the refugee and migrant population.

The Integration Sector is focusing on promoting, disseminating and compiling good practices of socioeconomic policies that guarantee access to livelihoods to support refugee and migrant workers and their families in substituting their income. The Sector will prioritize finding innovative online solutions for business owners and is promoting the employment of trained Venezuelan healthcare workers throughout the region.

The Regional Shelter, NFI and Humanitarian Transportation Sectors have produced technical guidelines for National Sectors to support the continuity of shelter interventions and to distribute much needed household items. Activities are being adapted to ensure isolation measures are in place, and to prevent evictions of refugees and migrants unable to afford rent, or the provision of alternative accommodation. While many transport services are on hold due to movement restrictions, some national sectors, for example in Colombia, are working with governments to reopen shelters.

The Regional Protection Sector reports a rise in Human trafficking & Smuggling due to the rise of irregular entries and the consequent reinforcement of human trafficking and smuggling nets. In addition, there is an increasing risk of Gender-Based Violence due to prolonged confinement of women with their aggressors, also creating a greater need for psychosocial services. The sector is consolidating key messages to address governments, services providers, humanitarian and healthcare workers regarding this, and is developing communication materials, videos on child protection, and interactive mapping tools of best institutional practices to support practitioners.

The Regional Education Sector is conducting regional campaigns such as #learningathome for preschool children, helping parents to provide remote learning opportunities through recreational and pedagogical activities. The Sector is also identifying good practices in psycho-social support which can be included in interventions for children, teachers and parents/caregivers.

The Regional Food Security Sector is continuing to assess the food security situation in the region and has identified an urgent need to redesign food assistance programmes to comply with lockdown measures. Concerns are increasing for those who were already vulnerable, including malnourished persons, those living with HIV and other chronic diseases, and those living on the streets.

The Regional WASH Sector is prioritizing risk communication and hygiene promotion, as well as the distribution of soap or hand sanitizers among refugees and migrants from Venezuela, in communal spaces and to households. The need for improved handwashing facilities in public spaces is also being addressed to benefit both people on the move as well as host communities.