

REGIONAL

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS FROM VENEZUELA IN:  THE WORLD 4.9 M	LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN 4.1 M	NUMBER OF APPEALING ORGANISATIONS 137	COUNTRIES COVERED BY THE REFUGEE AND MIGRANT RESPONSE PLAN 17	FUNDING SITUATION*  3%	FUNDED: 40.4 M REQUIREMENTS: 1.3 BN
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Situation and COVID-19

In the first months of 2020, 137 appealing organization coordinated activities for refugees and migrants from Venezuela in 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. This situation report covers response activities and key developments in the region that took place between January and March 2020. Special attention is dedicated to the evolving COVID-19 situation.

On 11 March, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak a pandemic. This situation is heavily affecting refugees and migrants from Venezuela hosted in the region from health, protection and humanitarian standpoints. On 25 March, the UN Secretary-General launched the [COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan](#) (GHRP). The GHRP seeks 2 billion US\$ for humanitarian activities to address the impact of COVID-19 globally. The Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) is a distinct part of this global response and is noted as such in the GHRP. In the context of COVID-19, a review of the RMRP is now foreseen to be concluded in early May.

With the ongoing spread of COVID-19, countries have amplified their measures to contain the virus by limiting the movement of their populations. The impact on refugees and migrants is severe, as they may risk denial of regular access to countries without alternative protection safeguards in place. With irregular border crossings continuing, isolated humanitarian corridors have been kept open between Venezuela and Colombia for those suffering chronic or severe medical conditions. Movement restrictions have impacted the ability of R4V partners to maintain their operations, especially in the provision of shelter, NFIs, and services, including in Support Spaces and communal kitchens.

Many refugees and migrants from Venezuela had been working in the informal sector often without social protection, and have now lost their only sources of income, further weakening their ability to pay for food, medicines and rent, leading to evictions and increased numbers of homeless refugees and migrants. This has also impacted negatively on public perceptions of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, who are increasingly facing stigmatization. Those in irregular situations have during the monitoring period been at particular risk of trafficking, smuggling, exploitation and abuse and since the outbreak of COVID-19 at an additional risk of being left out of national responses to the pandemic.

Main developments

In Brazil, on 31 January, the General Coordinator of CONARE (National Committee for Refugees) announced the recognition of an additional 17,002 refugees, mostly Venezuelans, on a *prima facie* basis. To date, more than 37,000 Venezuelan nationals have been recognized as refugees in Brazil.

In Colombia, on 27 February, the President Ivan Duque published an opinion piece in *The Washington Post*, calling for additional support from the international community for the response for refugees and migrants from Venezuela in Colombia. In view of the largescale impact of COVID-19 a further request for scaled-up international support, especially as it concerns the response for refugees and migrants was issued by Colombian authorities.

Mounting social unrest and protests that unfolded in Chile in late- 2019 particularly affected the situation of refugees and migrants from Venezuela also in the first months of 2020. Owing to their financial vulnerability and reliance on steady income streams for survival the closure of businesses and service providers led to many losing their (largely informal) jobs. The gradual de-escalation of the situation in the first months of 2020 allowed partners to return to regain access to vulnerable refugees and migrants and pick-up their response activities, be it at a slow pace. A national plebiscite is planned for 25 October 2020, which will determine the future of the constitutional process in Chile.



PEOPLE REACHED**

										
Education	Food Security	Health	Hum. Transp.	Integration	NFI	Nutrition	Protection	Shelter	WASH	CBI
10,368	669,873	146,902	5,328	25,219	11,805	8,474	213,960	20,901	99,729	52,890

A new visa requirement for Venezuelans wishing to enter the Dominican Republic took effect in December 2019. With the new visa policy, Venezuelans are required to apply for a visa at the Dominican Embassy in Caracas, Venezuela. Concerns have been raised that this could increase the risks of Venezuelans seeking safety resorting to irregular means of entry and take on additional debts to pay for increased travel costs.

The Government of Guyana, with the support of R4V partners, introduced a digitalized system for biometric registration and documentation of new arrivals from Venezuela who are issued a free-of-charge Household Registration Certificate including a provision against forced return and a renewable three-month stay permit.

Response**

In late March, the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform initiated the planning of the review of the 2020 RMRP. During the review, appealing organisations will be able to revise their targets and re-prioritize activities considering the new COVID-19-related needs. In addition, new organisations may submit activities for inclusion under the RMRP. The overall review process is expected to be finalized by early May. Following consultations with key stakeholders (donors, governments and partners), a guidance note on the review process was shared with partners and the national Platforms in the region.

In Colombia, partners of the Inter-Agency Group for Mixed Migration Flows (GIFMM), are modifying services to continue the provision of life-saving activities in the context of the COVID-19, while following WHO recommendations and governmental movement restrictions. During February alone, partners delivered assistance to 355,000 refugees and migrants. Currently, it is estimated that there are over 1.8 million Venezuelans in Colombia, including 1 million that entered irregularly.

In Brazil, the Platform collaborated with the government's *Operação Acolhida* on its emergency plan for a COVID-19 response for refugees and migrants. This plan foresees the establishment of a new field hospital in Boa Vista with a capacity to treat 2,200 individuals suffering from the virus. The plan also foresees an enhancement of WASH facilities in all shelters and other key locations. During January and February, over 6,000 refugees and migrants were internally relocated in Brazil.

The Platform in Ecuador mapped partners' activities and capacities in response to the COVID-19 situation. In March, around 30 per cent of activities that remained active changed their modality of intervention to remote mechanisms, whereas another 30 per cent of activities, notably in food security and shelter had to be suspended. There are over 366,500 refugees and migrants from Venezuela in Ecuador, and R4V partners assisted over 42,000 of them in January and February.

In Peru, there are over 860,000 refugees and migrants from Venezuela; R4V partners assisted over 180,000 of them with assistance under the RMRP. In March, partners supported the emergency preparedness efforts and reprioritization activities for the COVID-19 situation. Prioritized activities are in the areas of protection, shelter, CBI, health, nutrition and food security. Partners also identify work opportunities for Venezuelans, especially for health professionals, teleoperators, and others with professional skills that can be integrated in the current response.

The COVID-19 pandemic reached the Caribbean in March 2020, and the outbreak is expected to increase further over the coming months, with refugees and migrants and host communities at heightened risk. The Caribbean Sub-regional Platform and partners are supporting preparedness plans and responses developed to contain the spread of the COVID-19. R4V actors are adapting the delivery of assistance (prioritizing food and hygiene kits) due to increased needs for such items, while also providing much needed psychosocial support to refugees and migrants.

In Central America, partners are supporting refugees and migrants from Venezuela with various forms of assistance in Panama, Mexico and Costa Rica. In January and February partners delivered assistance to over 3,000 refugees and migrants. In addition, in March, partners commenced modifying the delivery of assistance, prioritizing cash and NFIs, to respond to the COVID-19 situation. Activities supporting livelihoods, registration, counselling and cash distribution in the sub-region are adjusted and conducted in alignment with WHO recommendations.

Assessments of needs and capacities of partners in the context of COVID-19 took place in the Southern Cone. Based thereon R4V partners have prioritized shelter solutions, NFIs, food assistance and cash-based interventions to the most vulnerable refugees and migrants in border areas and in urban centres, where the majority of them are located.

In Chile, R4V partners are prioritizing humanitarian assistance (shelter, food, NFI) that can be distributed to those in need in order to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The R4V response during the first two months of the year focused on the provision of key protection services, shelter, food and distribution of non-food items to address vulnerable refugees' and migrants' needs, including children under the age of three and the elderly, as well as women and girls.

**These are examples of activities carried out by National/Sub-Regional Platforms and/or Sectors. For further details, please see R4V.info. Numbers concerning people reached in this section are partials as data were collected in January and February 2020 and analyzed by the Regional Platform