



Situation

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, movements of refugees and migrants from Venezuela continued to take place in the region. Since April 2020, it is estimated that over 135,000 refugees and migrants from Venezuela have returned to their place of origin due to their precarious situations and the loss of livelihoods caused by restrictions adopted by states to counter the spread of the COVID-19. The large majority of those returned to Venezuela through Colombia. Recent estimates from the Government of Colombia, however, state that some 200,000 Venezuelans may re-enter the country in the coming months. In addition, according to Colombian authorities, approximately 300 people enter the country daily through non-formal border crossings (*also known as "trochas"*) in the Department of Norte de Santander. The Regional Platform, together with national/sub-regional Platforms, Sectors and R4V partners, is monitoring the situation and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on movements of refugees and migrants from Venezuela.

The Regional Platform, together with all national/sub-regional Platforms, Sectors and R4V partners, worked on the new Regional [Refugee and Migrant Response Plan \(RMRP\) for 2021](#). The plan builds on the Review of the RMRP 2020 (COVID-19) that was developed in May 2020 and mainstreams COVID-19-related needs and response strategies in 17 countries of the region. So far in 2020, R4V partners assisted some 2.2 million refugees, migrants and host community members with assistance, including activities that mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Platforms' Response**

In **Brazil**, R4V partners released a [Monitoring of Returns of Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants Report](#), highlighting the preliminary results (as of August 2020) of R4V partners' joint border monitoring. The assessment provides an overview of the profiles and intentions of refugees and migrants returning from Brazil to Venezuela, as well as the main causes of these flows which are linked to the measures adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic. R4V partners offered a fundraising training for small-scale organizations. The capacity building initiative is part of an effort to strengthen the institutional capacities, autonomy and sustainability of civil society partners that work in response to refugees and migrants from Venezuela, including the COVID-19 response.

R4V partners in **Chile** continued to deliver humanitarian assistance to refugees and migrants from Venezuela and assessed the situation of "*caminantes*" in the northern regions, delivering humanitarian assistance and providing orientation. A ministerial meeting with the participation of the Group of Friends of the Quito Process was organized by Chile as Presidency *pro tempore* on 19 October to discuss the main agreements of the technical meeting held in Santiago on 24-25 September.

In **Colombia**, the local GIFMMs (**Grupos Interagenciales sobre Flujos Migratorios Mixtos**) are adapting operations in preparation for an eventual, gradual re-opening of borders after the temporary closure during the COVID-19 pandemic and in anticipation of greater outflows from Venezuela over the coming weeks and months. Local GIFMMs collected local inputs for contingency plans and coordinated inter-sectoral assistance in WASH, shelter, food security (including food rations and vouchers), nutrition recovery strategies for children under 5 and pregnant/lactating women, hygiene promotion activities, COVID-19-prevention-related activities (including WASH adaptations), delivery of NFIs, delivery of school kits and pedagogic guides, income generation workshops and support, and cash assistance for rent, targeting vulnerable refugees and migrants.

In **Ecuador**, the *Grupo de Trabajo sobre Personas Refugiadas y Migrantes (GTRM)* prioritized access to public education and school permanence as many Venezuelan families noted not being able to keep their children in school due to a lack of resources for educational materials or equipment. In addition, R4V partners prioritized the delivery of multipurpose cash transfers as one of the main strategies of GTRM partners in order to assist refugees and migrants to meet some of their basic needs. While some COVID-19 related restrictions were gradually lifted, with borders to Colombia and Peru remaining closed, many to continue crossing through informal points. The GTRM worked on increasing the possibilities for refugees and migrants to access the formal labour market, migratory regularization and credit options, and partners at the northern border coordinated with local governments to reinforce the provision of shelter and WASH.

For more information, please contact: Philippe Sacher: sacher@unhcr.org | Tim Howe: thowe@iom.int

* 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.

In Peru, the GTRM continued activities to prevent and mitigate protection risks amid the emergency through trainings tailored to the COVID-19 context on gender-based violence (GBV), child protection and human trafficking and smuggling. These trainings were directed at authorities, health professionals and humanitarian frontline workers. The GTRM supported access to birth registration procedures for refugee and migrant parents with babies born during the COVID-19 emergency, including through capacity-support to relevant authorities. Moreover, R4V partners continued supporting food security through food kits distributions and different modalities of CBI. Interventions on Shelter and to cover other basic needs also remained a priority, particularly to those arriving in Tumbes in vulnerable conditions.

In the Caribbean sub-region, R4V partners in all countries continued identifying shelter options, and provided rent subsidies or direct shelter to migrant and refugee families facing evictions or in highly vulnerable situations. R4V partners also continued distributing food items, vouchers and NFIs, including hygiene and sanitation kits to persons in need. The “Orange the World 2020” 16 Days of Activism campaign against GBV was launched in Aruba and included the distribution of informational materials, hygiene kits and panel discussions. In addition, anti-xenophobia campaigns against discrimination and trafficking were launched in Guyana. The Government of Aruba began COVID-19 testing one day per week for unregistered refugees and migrants with referrals from an R4V partner.

In Central America and Mexico, R4V partners supported refugees and migrants from Venezuela in Mexico and Panama with CBI and food vouchers in order to support themselves during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, partners in the sub-region supported Venezuelans with legal guidance in order to regularize their status in the country. In Panama, 20,000 soap bars were donated by an R4V partner for COVID-19 prevention in remote localities where refugees and migrants from Venezuela are living. In addition, 237 Venezuelan families received CVA based on COVID-19 vulnerability criteria and socio-economic criteria in Costa Rica.

In the Southern Cone sub-region, R4V partners continued with the provision of shelter solutions, NFIs, food assistance and cash. All partners reinforced messages about the risks of returning to Venezuela under current conditions, as well as on the risks of continuing journeys further south within the Southern Cone towards Argentina considering the current border closures. Increasing numbers of refugee and migrant families from Venezuela were observed by partners arriving in Desaguadero, Bolivia, from Peru, through unauthorized border crossing points, despite land borders remaining closed. Partners in the sub-region continued with the provision of shelter solutions, NFIs, food assistance and CBI. On 20 November, the “U-Report - Uniendo Voces” was launched in La Paz, Bolivia, with a soccer tournament organized by R4V partners. The contents include general information on Bolivia, access to territory and how to apply for asylum, and are accessed by refugees and migrants who interact with the tool.

Regional Sectors**

The Regional Education Sector continued its weekly information sessions on “[Leaving no one behind in times of the COVID-19 pandemic](#)”. To date, 24 sessions have been implemented, with a more than 108,820 attendees during the last six months. Several sessions were targeted towards refugee and migrant children, i.e. the session on “Availability of information on students in situations of mobility in information systems”. In addition, during the reporting period, the Sector supported the creation of an online training “*Creando Aula*” (creating classrooms) - a practical educational tool for teachers in the current emergency context.

The Regional Food Security Sector has been defining its strategy for 2021, which focuses on modalities adapted to population flows and COVID-related restrictions to ensure people are assisted in a safe manner; prioritizing cash and voucher assistance, improving livelihoods by increasing farming capacities, supporting women’s agricultural productivity and marketing, and facilitating the inclusion of refugees and migrants into national social protection programmes. The latest assessments show that as for the three main host countries: 1.3 million refugees and migrants are food insecure in Colombia, 600,000 in Peru and 300,000 in Ecuador.

The Regional Health Sector noted that the number of consultations at different health levels has increased due the reopening of the primary health facilities and the lifting of restrictions. The Sector supported the preparedness actions anticipation of a second wave of COVID-19, worked to promote the inclusion of refugees and migrants in national health programmes, and continued to monitor the health impact of the recommencing of social and economic activities.

COVID-19 UPDATE

The Regional Integration Sector began an initiative to analyze the socio-economic measures that nine governments in the region adopted to support refugees and migrants from Venezuela within their emergency responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative will also analyse the barriers to the implementation of these policies and develop recommendations for governments, as well as for partners working in the Integration Sector. Currently, interviews are conducted with national platform Integration focal points, civil society, labour ministries, employers and workers. The Sector also carried out an end-of-year survey to learn about the opinions of the national Integration sectors on its role and the support it provides. This information will contribute to improving and adapting the support provided by the Sector at regional level.

The Regional Protection Sector along with IM Working Group developed the [border mapping and monitoring](#) tool. To date, 54 border crossings have been mapped in nine countries. Most of them are still closed, as are the immigration offices, due to ongoing COVID-19 measures. The Sector will map the main risk areas for refugees and migrants and will define the criteria for activation of early warnings regarding largescale flows at the borders. The tool aims to strengthen the preparedness capacities of national platforms and sectors to respond to contingency situations, articulated in national emergency plans. **The Sector also entered into a strategic alliance with the Organization of American States in order to increase the visibility of groups with special protection needs as a result of COVID-19 measures in the region,** especially among refugee and migrant sex workers, indigenous groups and evicted persons. The results of a series of interviews and focus group discussions with these groups will serve to inform specific advocacy approaches. The Sector conducted a session to present initial findings of its regional survey on evictions applied in seven countries. 41.5 per cent of people interviewed said they were evicted and 41.8 per cent declared they are at risk of eviction. Considering the discussions on contingency plans, the Sector conducted a survey of member organizations to identify the capacities before an increased arrival of refugees and migrants from Venezuela. MHPSS, humanitarian assistance, and legal counseling were the main areas prioritized by organizations within their contingency plans.

The Regional Human trafficking & smuggling Sub-sector and its partners continued to prioritize the provision of direct assistance to victims of trafficking. The training of stakeholders, as well as sensitization and information campaigns remained a key priority for the Sub-sector.

The Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Sub-sector prepared a regional campaign for GBV prevention among Venezuelans and host communities. The Sub-sector designed messages to stimulate dialogues on harmful gender roles and to encourage men to display positive and equitable expressions of masculinity. In addition, the Sub-sector finalized an inter-agency remote psychosocial support guide for GBV survivors. The guidance provides case workers, psychologists and GBV practitioners tools to support GBV survivors emotionally in their process of coping, healing and empowerment amidst COVID-19-related risks. The Sub-sector is assessing threats to the safety and dignity endured by Venezuelan women engaged in sex work or subject to sexual exploitation and their access to protection systems in Peru, Ecuador and the Caribbean.

The Regional WASH Sector assessed the capacity and vulnerability of countries' WASH responses through the vulnerability and capacity matrix. The regional Sector also supported the development of country roadmaps for achieving universal hand hygiene and curbing the spread of COVID-19.

The Regional Nutrition Sector held a meeting to understand the context, challenges and needs of sectoral coordination at country levels in order to support and strengthen country nutrition sectors. In addition, a webinar was organized on simplified approaches for the management of acute malnutrition among children under the age of 5. It included guidance to adapt activities related to prevention, early detection and treatment of acute malnutrition to the COVID-19 context.