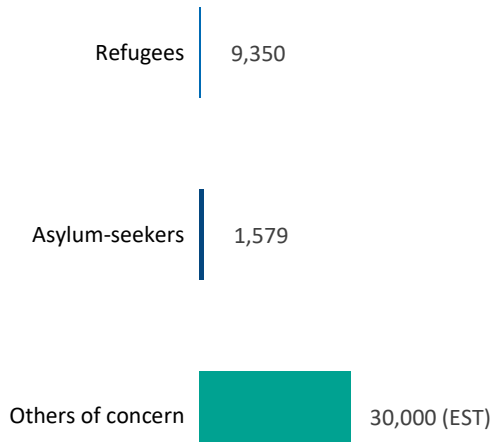
FACT SHEET

VENEZUELA

September 2023

Almost one in four Venezuelans are in need of humanitarian assistance, according to the most recent Humanitarian Response Plan estimates. As leader of the Protection and the Shelter, Energy and NFIs Clusters, UNHCR **is targeting in 2023 some 4.8 million vulnerable Venezuelans** affected by the country's protracted crisis. UNHCR also leads the response to mixed movements between Venezuela and its neighbours, including **returns** and **displacement** within the country, as well as to the protection needs of **refugees, asylum-seekers and persons at risk of statelessness**.

CORE MANDATE POPULATION OF CONCERN (END 2022)

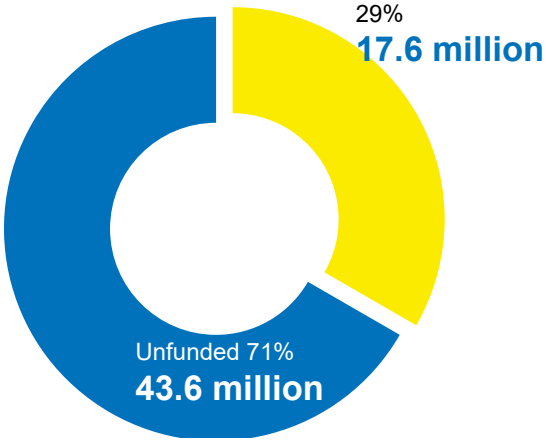


Venezuelans in need of humanitarian assistance 7,759,961 (Humanitarian Response Plan 2022-23 estimate), of whom over 4.8M targeted by UNHCR-led Clusters.

FUNDING (AS OF 18 SEPTEMBER 2023)

USD 61.2 million

requested for the Venezuela in 2023



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff: 135 Personnel

113 national staff
22 international staff

Offices:

1 Representation in Caracas
4 Field Offices in San Cristóbal (Táchira), Guasdualito (Apure), Maracaibo (Zulia) and Ciudad Guayana (Bolívar)
2 Field Units in Caracas, Santa Elena de Uairén (Bolívar) and Puerto Ayacucho (Amazonas)

UNHCR delivers NFIs to vulnerable communities.
© UNHCR Venezuela, 2022.

Operational context

The first three quarters of 2023 have been characterised by complex mixed movements along the border with Colombia, with trends identified across UNHCR-supported waystations for people in mobility pointing to a ratio of roughly 7 exits from the country for every three returns. These mobility trends continue to swing from week to week, at times changing in direct response to announcements of variations in US migration policies, but many of those crossing the border remain engaged in circular movements between the two countries, seeking vaccines, medical and other services and goods for consumption or commerce.

On the other hand, the border with Brazil continues to register a strong prevalence of exits over entries, with ratios of up to 10 to 1. Many Venezuelans, including members of indigenous communities, continue to leave hoping to gain access to employment opportunities and basic services offered in the southern neighbour, some to seek medical attention that is unavailable at home. Repatriation flights organized by the Government airlift scheme Plan Vuelta a la Patria have continued sporadically, bringing back hundreds of Venezuelans from Peru and Ecuador, and flights chartered by the Government have repatriated Venezuelans who had been left stranded across Central America and Mexico by the introduction of the new restrictive U.S. border policies regarding Venezuelans. According to unverified Government statements, between 400,000 and one million Venezuelans have returned home over the past few years.

On the economic front, despite a continued macroeconomic recovery estimated at around 4-5 percent of GDP, increasing inflationary pressures have been affecting the purchasing power and food security of a large part of the population, leading to growing social discontent, especially among public sector workers and pensioners who have no access to foreign currency. Politically, the country has entered a polarizing electoral process in the lead-up to presidential elections slated for 2024, and the opposition has gained significant political space through the organisation of primaries for the selection of its presidential candidate. There is also a general expectation that international pressure will lead to a resumption of negotiations between government and opposition, which have been interrupted since November 2022, with the ambitious goal of reaching a compromise between the opposition demand for a free and fair electoral process and the Government's reiterated call for the lifting of the sanctions imposed against Venezuela.

Coordination and Partnerships

- UNHCR is implementing activities in 75 prioritised communities in 13 states, primarily in the border areas with Colombia, Brazil and Trinidad and Tobago, but also in Greater Caracas and the nearby Miranda state. UNHCR is working with 12 implementing partners -Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), Zulia Red Cross, Fundación Luz y Vida, Fundación Vivienda Popular, Instituto Radiofónico Fe y Alegría (IRFA), Sociedad Wills Wilde, Comitato Internazionale Per Lo Sviluppo Dei Popoli (CISP), TECHO, Azul Positivo, Caritas Carupano and Fundación Amigos del Niño que Amerita Protección (Fundana)- as well as other local actors, including government institutions and NGOs.
- UNHCR leads the Protection and the Shelter, Energy and NFI Clusters within the framework of the Venezuela Humanitarian Response Plan.
- UNHCR's main institutional counterparts are the National Commission for Refugees (CONARE) and the Office of the Ombudsperson (DdP).
- UNHCR promotes and strengthens the protection and dignity of the most vulnerable population affected by the crisis in Venezuela, improving these persons' access to

goods and services, mitigating the risks to which they are exposed and helping ensure their survival and well-being.

- UNHCR is working with community structures, including outreach volunteers, women's networks and youth networks, to engage communities in the implementation of projects identified by the communities themselves, seeking to improve community response and ensuring the sustainability of projects and community processes. UNHCR and its partners have also been supporting the implementation of community projects related to nutrition, health, water and sanitation and education.
- UNHCR supports a national protection network that provides assistance and counselling to persons in transit and safe spaces for the attention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) survivors and children at risk. The safe spaces provide confidential case management, counselling, psychosocial support, medical aid and legal services.
- UNHCR promotes international refugee law and refugee status determination procedures, encouraging State institutions to identify and refer persons in need of international protection to the asylum procedure. UNHCR and partners conduct capacity building activities with government institutions.
- In close coordination with UNHCR in Colombia, UNHCR Venezuela facilitates and supports the voluntary repatriation of refugees, ensuring that they are enabled to take well-informed and voluntary decisions and are repatriated in conditions of safety and dignity.
- Within the framework of the Humanitarian Response Plan and its leadership role in the Protection Cluster and the Shelter, Energy and NFI Cluster, UNHCR participates in the UN interagency response to climate change related emergencies in Venezuela.
- In coordination with IOM and OCHA, UNHCR has set up a Working Group on Human Mobility and Reintegration tasked with providing assistance to Venezuelan returnees.

Strategy

Protect

Assert the centrality of protection in response to displacement

- UNHCR works with States to strengthen **asylum capacities and digitalize its systems** and promote protection-sensitive alternative arrangements through training and capacity-building of government officials.
- UNHCR supports States in terms of assistance to persons with specific needs, **registration,** and links with the national protection services, which also help UNHCR identify and assist the most vulnerable.
- Investing in **protection monitoring**, evidence-based programming and analysis is at the core of regional strategies oriented by age, gender, and diversity considerations, ensuring protection from exploitation and abuse.
- Through a strengthened network of **support spaces**, the provision of information and orientation, identification and secure reference, helps to prevent displacement.

Assist

Ensure operational response capacities and life-saving aid for the most vulnerable during emergencies

- Across the region, UNHCR responds to the **immediate needs** of increasing numbers of persons that UNHCR serves. Because of the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic, rising poverty and inequality triggered unprecedented levels of need for **basic relief items, emergency shelter, food, safe water, and sanitation supplies.**
- As severe **climate events** further aggravate the situation of displaced populations and communities at risk of displacement, UNHCR responds with **emergency relief items** to support authorities' response to these situations.

Empower	**Empower communities and achieve gender equality** ■ To prevent displacement, mitigate protection risks and build on the resilience of affected communities, operations will prioritise **community-centred interventions**, including supporting volunteer networks in prioritised communities. UNHCR promotes communication and integration, identification, and referral of cases with specific needs, as well as enhanced access to information and complaint mechanisms. ■ UNHCR will boost feedback and complaint mechanisms, allowing for **constant communication with the affected population and** strengthening two-way communication, to ensure the response adapts to their needs, particularly in increasingly risky environments such as borders.
Solve	**Include persons we serve in national/local services with development support** ■ Through a whole-of-society approach, UNHCR fosters **partnerships to mobilise support** for the inclusion of Venezuelans in the labour market. ■ UNHCR actively advocates for enhanced national efforts to provide **regular stay for refugees and asylum seekers** (such as temporary or permanent schemes, professional or work-related permits, education programmes, etc.) allowing for full enjoyment of rights and integration.

Climate Action

The effects of climate change, compounded with poor hydrogeological management, have contributed to making the rainy season in Venezuela a time of natural disasters and emergencies, with increased needs for collective temporary shelters to house and protect the affected population in conditions of dignity and safety, and avoid displacement. Public institutions are often unable to respond effectively to the protection needs of affected populations because of logistical and budgetary limitations. This is where UNHCR steps in to support the provision of core relief items and other supplies needed by affected families and first responders, supporting authorities in dealing with emergencies that strike vulnerable communities impacted by the effects of climate change in Venezuela.

Emergency response in Chichiriviche de la Costa, La Guaira, Venezuela. © UNHCR Venezuela 2023.

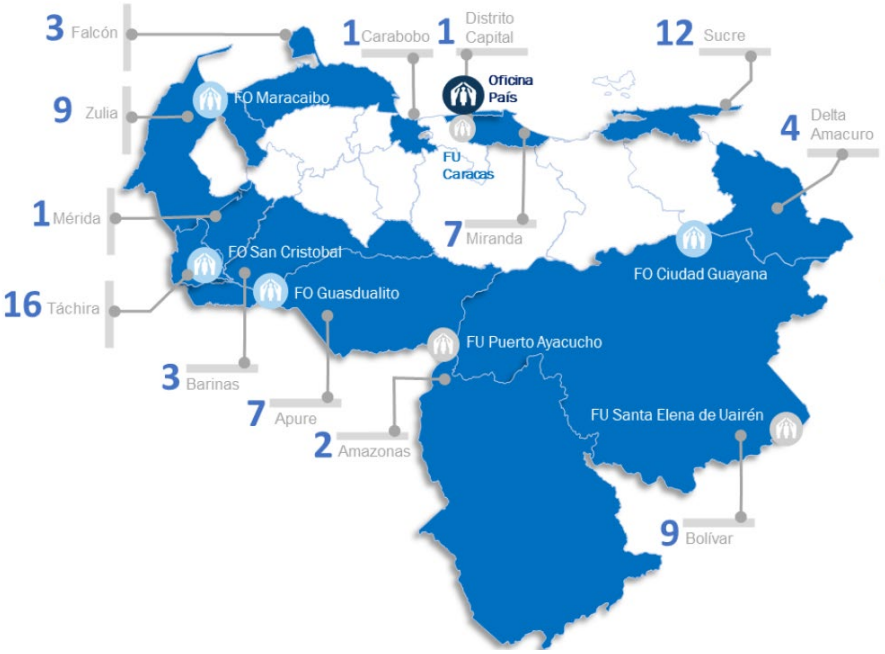
Emergency response in Las Tejerias, Aragua, Venezuela. © UNHCR Venezuela 2023.

Returnee reintegration

Jointly with other UN agencies and partners, UNHCR is implementing area-based spontaneous returnee reintegration pilots in the central state of Miranda, near the capital Caracas, and in the western border state of Tachira, in the city of San Cristobal and the rural municipality of Junín. The pilots aim to support returnees in making their return to Venezuela sustainable through the provision of protection, education, shelter and health services, material and psycho-social support, as well as vocational and livelihoods training, to help them to successfully reintegrate in their communities.

Bakery Business Workshop in Fernández Feo, Táchira, Venezuela. © UNHCR Venezuela 2023.

UNHCR presence and scope



+188K PROTECTION

+241K WASH

+259K SHELTER

+693K BENEFICIARIES

Timely funding

In **2023**, UNHCR in Venezuela requires $61.2 million to respond to the needs of hundreds of refugees and millions of Venezuelans seeking safety and dignified lives. **Timely funding** is urgent to ensure the continuity **protection oriented activities** in the country: distribution of **core and hygiene items**; provision of **emergency and temporary shelter** in border areas and for people in mobility, rehabilitation of **Public Health Centres** and support to States for **regularisation** and documentation.

UNHCR's humanitarian and longer-term response in the Americas is made possible thanks to the **generous support** of major donors who have contributed unrestricted funding to UNHCR's global operations, and to donors who have generously contributed directly to UNHCR operations in Venezuela.

We wish to express our heartfelt thank you to **our donors in 2023:**

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