Outflow of refugees and migrants from Venezuela continues unabated, with around 2.7 million residing in Latin American and Caribbean countries. Partners start operationalizing the regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan, targeting 2.2 million Venezuelans and 500,000 host community members in 16 countries. Needs of persons from Venezuela across the Americas are high but funding remains low in the first two months of the year: only 5.3% of budget requirements have been met until February.

KEY FIGURES

Around 3.4 million
Venezuelans living outside their country

Around 2.7 million
Venezuelans left their country since 2015

Total Financial Requirements

Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela
Global cumulative trends

Issued residencies & other forms of regular status

1 Total population figures in this document represent the sum of Venezuelan migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers reported by host governments. It does not necessarily imply individual identification, nor registration of each individual, and may include a degree of estimation, as per each government’s statistical data processing methodology. As numerous government sources do not account for Venezuelans without a regular status, the total number of Venezuelans is likely to be higher. The figures of people with regular status do not include Venezuelans holding tourist visas, nor recognized refugees, or asylum seekers.
Amidst the political developments in Venezuela during the first two months of the year, **population movements into neighbouring countries remain stable in comparison to the last months of 2018**. Venezuelans cross the borders to Colombia and Brazil on a daily basis, where they access basic services (including medicines and food), with an average of 5,000 either staying or moving onwards to other Latin American or Caribbean states. The temporary closure of two official crossing points North of Santander and Arauca resulted in an increase in travel through irregular crossing points. The closure seriously affected children who attend school in Colombia. Of those who do not come back, the majority crossed the border into **Colombia**, which hosts around 1.1 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela. Many travel onwards to Ecuador, Peru, Chile, and other countries in the Southern Cone. A significant rise in the number of **caminantes** - Venezuelans walking large distances to transit to other countries - was observed. Partners in Colombia report increasingly urgent needs for both Venezuelans in transit and those remaining in country.

Trends in population movements in **Brazil** changed during the lasts weeks of February due to the rise of violence affecting indigenous (Pemon and Warao) communities in border areas of Venezuela. The number of indigenous people crossing through informal pathways has increased, including the 675 Pemons who arrived in Pacaraima, Roraima. Additionally, 591 Warao arrived this month in Belem and Santarem, Pará state. The Warao people often travel in “pendular” movements between Brazil and Venezuela. During an assessment mission to the area, partners identified among many protection risks, cases of SGBV and unaccompanied children at risk of human trafficking. Lack of access to health services, education and shelter for new arrivals remains an on-going challenge as public services in Roraima are over-burdened and shelters at capacity.

**Ecuador’s Ministerial Decision on new entry requirements** for Venezuelans, which came into force on 26 January had a significant impact on population movements across the region. Pursuant to this new measure, Venezuelans wishing to enter Ecuador are required to present an apostilled criminal record issued by Venezuelan authorities. Given the challenges in obtaining such official documents, the daily average of Venezuelans entering Ecuador reportedly dropped from almost 1,800 during the first 25 days of January, to just over 700 per day during the last week of January, and is believed to have resulted in an increase in irregular border crossings and subsequently exposure to a broad range of risks, including smuggling, trafficking, and other forms of exploitation some of them attributable to the presence of armed groups in the border areas between Ecuador and Colombia. After extensive dialogue with partners the government opened exceptions to cases of family reunification, severe medical conditions, and persons in need of international protection. In the wake of these events, the Government of Ecuador also announced the extension of the emergency declaration in the provinces of Carchi, Pichincha, and El Oro, which has been in force since August 2018.

In **Peru**, which is hosting the second largest population of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, around 35,000 Venezuelans have entered and stayed in the country so far in 2019. To support the registration effort of many among this population, the new online **registration system** by the Peruvian government (“Qoricancha II”) started partial operations. In the first week of February alone 441 Venezuelans were registered. This system will soon be operational nationwide.

Responses to the needs of person from Venezuela across **Central America** varied. In order to address gaps in response capacity in **Mexico**, partners are mapping local actors and building local support networks in cities with high concentrations of Venezuelan population. In **Panama**, the lack of formal documentation both for migrants and asylum seekers compounds the challenges of identifying livelihoods opportunities, given the impossibility of accessing formal employment. In **Costa Rica**, partners have been able to increasingly foster interest among the private sector to offer training and support for the socio-economic integration of Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

To address the critical lack of information on in-depth **multi-sectoral needs** that is hindering the definition of specific needs based response in the **Caribbean**, needs assessments and surveys have been conducted. In **Guyana**, a WASH situation assessment showed that WASH services will need to address the needs of 6,000 people in the next five months, while in education, only about 17% of the children registered are attending school. In **Trinidad and Tobago**, a survey showed the Venezuela population is composed of 64% men and 36% women; 87% has completed secondary school, and left Venezuela while pursing tertiary education. Income generation or employment and legal assistance are among the top needs highlighted in the survey. In the Dominican Republic, the pilot phase of Protection Monitoring (PTM) was rolled out and community meetings were held in five provinces across the country.

In the **Southern Cone**, the National Migration Directorate in **Argentina** put in place a more flexible entry requirement for Venezuelans, while the **Paraguayan** National Migration Directorate introduced a temporary residence scheme for
Venezuelan nationals. In Chile, the Migration Department of the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security (DEM) and the National Institute of Statistics (INE) published a report called “Estimation of foreign residents in Chile” 2018 showing that it is estimated that around 288,000 Venezuelan citizens live in this country, which represents 23% of the total foreign population in Chile.

RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

These response highlights do not provide an exhaustive overview of all response activities by partners under the regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP), but rather highlight some key activities implemented during January 2019. The RMRP launched by the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform in December 2019, aims to support and complement national authorities’ efforts across Latin America and the Caribbean, consistent with the principles outlined in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. The plan is structured around four key areas of intervention, as outlined below. More detailed information on the response and funding per country/sub-region, will become available as of the February reporting cycle.

Area of Intervention 1: Direct emergency assistance

Direct emergency assistance continues to be provided by partners throughout the region, in border locations and in areas where large numbers of refugees and migrants are located. This includes emergency shelter, food, water, sanitation and hygiene, transportation, non-food items, primary health care, and vaccinations. In Colombia, the increasing number of cominantes benefitted from various forms of direct emergency assistance at attention points in Norte de Santander, which receives an average of 200 people per day. Furthermore, over 110,000 hot meals were served in community kitchens in the departments of La Guajira, Nariño, Norte de Santander and Arauca. In Ecuador, partners continue to support temporary resting spaces on the border with Colombia, where more than 2,500 people were assisted, and at the border with Peru, where over 350 people were assisted. In Curacao, 450 non-food item kits containing hygiene products and household items were distributed to vulnerable Venezuelans. In Chile, the distribution of 2,430 litres of water, 737 non-food products and 893 food products reached around 1,200 affected people — many of them Venezuelans — by the floods in the Altiplano in Arica.

In terms of education, partners have been working closely with government in the Caribbean. In Guyana, partners are collaborating with the Ministry of Education by addressing the immediate needs of schools and by rolling out a safe-school initiative. In Trinidad and Tobago, an innovative e-learning programme is being established that will be linked to this country’s curriculum and the Caribbean Examination Council, the regional examining body.

Emergency support also included the provision of multi-purpose cash assistance, particularly to the most vulnerable refugees and migrants. In Argentina, Chile, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Paraguay, partners made progress in harmonizing the targeting approach of multi-purpose cash assistance, including through piloting and/or revising common vulnerability assessment tools. In Mexico, e-wallets are used to deliver food assistance and in February around 230 people received this benefit. In Brazil, over 950 people received rental assistance for a total period of three months and around 1,700 received food vouchers. In addition, in 12 municipalities in Roraima border state, over 2,900 refugees and migrants received food assistance through cash transfers for the same period.

Following the introduction of new entry requirements in Ecuador, partners opened a new Orientation and Information Point at the Colombian side of the Rumichaca Bridge. Together with the national coordination platform in Ecuador, the first bi-national coordination meeting was organized in January, with around 50 participants from either side of the Rumichaca International Bridge. The national platform in Colombia worked closely with the Government on contingency planning and deployment of advanced preparedness measures at both the national and local level. As a result of the developments in Ecuador, the national platform in Colombia implemented a contingency plan, making available up to 500 temporary shelter places.

In Colombia, partners installed five containers for the provision of health services near the Simón Bolívar International Bridge, at the border with Venezuela. In Nariño, where in January some 55,000 Venezuelans left Colombia to travel onwards to Ecuador, R4V partners and the municipality renovated and expanded a primary health care centre. In Brazil, around 2,100 people were reached with messages on life saving skills and protective practices in hygiene, health, and nutrition. Over 200 children between 6 and 59 months received supplements to prevent malnutrition, and over 2,000
were vaccinated. In Tumbes, Tacna, and Tambopata border locations in Peru, partners organized jornadas de salud integral for both Venezuelans and host communities, which included medical and psychological attention, as well as disease prevention activities.

In the Brazilian border state of Roraima, over 6,500 refugees and migrants from Venezuela are living in temporary emergency shelter sites, supported by partners in coordination with the armed forces and the Ministry of Citizenship. In 2019, over 950 new beneficiaries accessed shelter and over 5,100 benefitted from improved access to safe water. In addition to the provision of emergency shelter, the refurbishment of shelter facilities took place, benefiting over 800 Venezuelans in Panama, close to 200 in Mexico, and over 150 in Costa Rica. Most of the assistance was delivered in the main cities where refugees and migrants from Venezuela are concentrated, sometimes with the support of Venezuelan community organizations and in support centres such as the Migrant Support Center (MSC) in Costa Rica. Additionally, interventions focused on highly vulnerable individuals staying in more remote areas, such as at the Temporary Humanitarian Assistance Station in Peñita, Darien province, Panama. In Argentina, temporary accommodation was provided to 14 Venezuelans, in two shelters (remodeled and conditioned), and in Ecuador, partners provided material support to several shelters, including various tools, internet installation, and household appliances.

**Area of Intervention 2: Protection**

**Strategic outcome:** Refugees and migrants enjoy rights and protection.

Partners in all countries continued to work together with authorities to guarantee and facilitate access to information on rights, goods and services for refugees and migrants from Venezuela. Information provision on access to asylum and regular status was carried out through various means, including information sessions, the provision of leaflets at border points, the internet, and information hotlines. In Brazil alone, over 21,000 Venezuelan refugees and migrants received support in processing asylum and residency applications in the two documentation centres in Boa Vista and Pacaraima, and at the Reference Centre at the Federal University of Roraima. In Colombia, partners provided information and orientation to an average of 1,900 persons per month, and provided legal orientation to 6,600 various cases of access to rights, regularization process, documentation, and asylum. In Peru, legal support was provided to over 300 newly-arrived and most vulnerable Venezuelans. In countries in Central America, partners maintained regular presence at the government’s asylum offices in order to provide information and guidance to persons with international protection needs on the asylum process. As such, in Mexico and Panama, over 290 Venezuelans benefitted from legal support, through information, counselling, or legal assistance. An online information campaign in Mexico, known as El Jaguar, received an unprecedented number of hits in January 2019, 7% of which came from within Venezuela. In Costa Rica, the migrants support centres and the 800-Venezuela hotline supported Venezuelans providing them with information related to immigration requirements, job permission, including potential regularization options based on valid laws and regulations, as well as refers those requiring asylum information to the competent partners.

Partners completed the first round of the Protection Monitoring for the Venezuela Situation in the South Cone. It was jointly carried out in Chile, Argentina and Uruguay and involved 1,031 interviews with key family members representing around 2,600 people, out of which 24.6% were minors. 60.6% of the interviewees declared their family size has reduced after the displacement. In total, 726 incidents both in the country of origin and in transit/destination countries were reported by the interviewees relating primarily to robbery, physical assaults, threats and kidnapping. Partners also offered training to the local organisations which are expected to continue to use this tool every three months in different parts of Argentina and Uruguay.

Along with information provision, partners also carried out protection monitoring and supported the identification and referral of cases with specific protection needs throughout the region, leading to child protection cases, elderly persons, survivors of GBV, and others being referred to specialized services and/or temporary shelters. For example in Peru, protection monitoring revealed that out of some 700 persons interviewed in Lima, Tumbes, and Tacna, around 13% had a critical or chronic medical condition. Out of the adults, 35% are considered at risk, related to specific medical and/or psychosocial needs and the lack of support networks. Also, several awareness-raising sessions and workshops were organized to inform refugees and migrants on the protection and SGBV system in this country. In Mexico, cases with special protection needs were identified, assisted and referred throughout the country, particularly in Aguascalientes, Cancún, Mexico City, Puebla, San Luis Potosi and Tijuana.

In Guyana, where serious GBV risks were observed, particularly for women travelling alone, in January and February, an average of 374 Venezuelans received counselling on access to regular status, food support, and information and
counselling on trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual abuse. Other GBV prevention activities included the provision of information materials on GBV, risks of trafficking, health services, social assistance, security services, and other rights to over 1,000 people in the Reception and Documentation Centre in Pacaraima, Brazil, along with the distribution of condoms and multipurpose cash assistance. Partners in various countries continue to observe gaps in the availability and provision of specialized services for GBV survivors.

In various border and other locations in Colombia, children and adolescents benefitted from child friendly spaces and received psychosocial support. In the child friendly spaces in Cucuta, Guajira, and Arauca combined, over 6,000 children received assistance and protection. In Brazil, an average of 4,600 children received protection support including access to child friendly spaces and an average of 2,700 children, including adolescents, accessed non-formal learning activities. Around 620 children benefited from early childhood development activities. In Piura, in northern Peru, partners are establishing child friendly spaces for socio-emotional support to children, also offering families information on protection, health, education and legal procedures. Also, in Trinidad and Tobago, 218 children were provided with psychosocial support including access to child-friendly spaces.

At a regional level, the Support Spaces Working Group concluded inter-agency missions in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, with the aim to map and assess 40 support spaces, provided through a regional network of 17 partners. The Support Spaces network aims to provide standardized services in key locations, in communities, and along transit routes. The “one stop-shop” Support Spaces ensure the provision of integrated and integral services, with a minimum package including orientation and information provision, safe identification and referrals, psychological first aid and other immediate services, restoration of family links, free phone calls and internet connectivity, and child friendly spaces. A toolkit has been developed, including standard operating procedures and a guide for setting up support spaces. An online tool is being piloted to visualize the services available for refugees and migrants in transit or arriving in country, with the aim to transform this into a mobile phone application, to serve as an important communication with communities mechanism.

Area of Intervention 3: Socio-economic and cultural integration

Strategic outcome: Refugees and migrants are socially, economically and culturally integrated in empowered communities.

In Brazil, partners continue to support the government’s voluntary relocation programme for refugees and migrants from Venezuela. Around 633 Venezuelans were relocated as part of the overall target of 8,000 relocations for 2019. The relocation programme offers shelter support for up to three months in collaboration with municipalities, increased access to labour markets, improved public services, social assistance, and integration services. Integration initiatives include labour market insertion, entrepreneurship training, diploma validations, technical training and Portuguese language courses, as well as a substantial cash transfer component, both for rental support and income-generating activities.

As it concerns supporting access to employment and livelihoods for refugees and migrants from Venezuela, various programmes are being carried out across the region, in close partnership with private sector entities. For example, partners in Central American countries are investing considerable efforts in offering capacity building opportunities in soft skills, such as drafting of CVs, cover letters, and business plans, as well as basic skills such as food handling, computers usage, and customer service. Similarly, in Ecuador, 50 interventions in the field of livelihoods and access to labour and entrepreneurship were conducted, much like in Costa Rica where over 60 Venezuelan asylum-seekers received individual work profiling assessments and were included in a work exchange programme that already provides support to over 400 Venezuelans. In Panama, partners conducted an “Intelligent Migration” workshop for 39 Venezuelans, which addressed effective ways to manage migratory grief and key aspects to consider for a successful integration in the country.
Livelihoods initiatives in Colombia included technical support on the rapid recovery of food production, including the delivery of tools, equipment, and a training plan to strengthen capacities in food production and nutritional education. Around 490 people and members of civil society organisations also took part on working sessions to develop mechanisms and strategies aimed at income generation. In Brazil, civil society organisations promoted lectures, courses and other activities to strengthen women’s economic empowerment, resilience and peaceful coexistence with host communities, reaching around 500 women and men. In Trinidad and Tobago, 10 beneficiaries who are artists became part of a cash for work programme in association with the University of Trinidad and Tobago’s (UTT) Academy of Performing Arts.

Partners are promoting meetings with different stakeholders from national and local governments, civil society, academia, and Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the South Cone region. These meetings aim to promote the socio-economic inclusion of Venezuelans, and map existing programmes and services with integration potential but still require support for scale up, and discuss possible new and targeted initiatives for refugees and migrants from Venezuela to strengthen their livelihoods, access training and university studies, and improve housing conditions.

Partners also continued to promote access to basic rights, particularly education, health, and dignified housing for refugees and migrants, through continuous support and close collaboration with national authorities. For example, in Costa Rica, a joint work plan with the Ministry of Education was designed to inform education centres about the right of refugee and migrant students to access the national education system. In Guyana, partners continuously advocate for vulnerable persons from Venezuela to have access to existing public services. So far, 111 Venezuelans being accompanied in visits to government service providers. At a local level, in Panama, Venezuelan children/adolescents were supported in the pre-registration process for accessing the school system. In Brazil, the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), issued a call for applications for the first time for admission with a quota for refugees and 24 refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants have successfully enrolled. Partners provide technical support to the university to ensure that all refugees and asylum seekers are able to sign up in cases of lack of country of origin documentation.

Efforts to combat xenophobia towards Venezuelans continued across the region. In the wake of incidents in Ecuador, partners launched the first phase of the social media campaign Abrazos que Uni. Also in Colombia, more than 1,000 new followers joined the already 40,000 people following the anti-xenophobia campaign Somos Panas Colombia, which aims to promote solidarity and peaceful coexistence. In Peru, partners continued the #TuCausaEsMiCausa campaign that has reached over 1 million persons via social media so far, with 90 per cent positive reactions. Partners launched similar new campaigns, namely Países Hermanos in Costa Rica, and #SomosLoMismo in Panama. These campaigns had a significant impact in social media, with some videos – portraying life stories of refugees and migrants and their contribution to the local economy and culture – viewed 150,000 times and receiving more than 2,000 reactions and comments. Further efforts took place at local levels in Central America, mostly in cities, through meetings and workshops with members of the communities and in schools with a high presence of Venezuelan nationals. In Panama, in commemoration of the Friendship Day, an event was organized on 14 February in which Venezuelans, Salvadorians, Nicaraguans, and Colombians refugees give away roses and a message of gratitude to Panamanians at metro exits. In Trinidad and Tobago, partners conducted public awareness interventions, including a media workshop in which communication professionals were introduced to key principles related to protection and given an overview of the Venezuela Situation.

Area of Intervention 4: Strengthening capacities of the host government
Strategic outcome: Government institutions’ capacity to manage situations of refugees and migrants from Venezuela is strengthened.

Partners continue to provide host governments in the region with technical and material support to strengthen their capacities in response to the influx of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, including in the areas of registration, documentation, access to asylum, regular status and rights, as well as the identification and response to protection needs. For example, in Panama, where there are up to 10,200 registered asylum-seekers from Venezuela, partners continue to strengthen the asylum body’s capacity to address the backlog of cases (mainly of Venezuelans), through the recruitment of lawyers and the provision of technical equipment. In Costa Rica, where there are up to 7,900 registered asylum-seekers from Venezuela, partners hired 45 adjudicators and 30 professionals to work on documentation and refugee determination procedures, to increase the processing capacity of asylum claims. The Ministry of Public Health in Trinidad and Tobago received material support from RMRP partners in the form of IT-equipment, vehicles, mosquito nets, and malaria test kits, to reinforce its capacity to address vector-borne diseases and conduct immunization programmes for both refugee and migrant as well as host communities. In Curacao partners have completed the mapping of the government’s response to identify gaps in services and contribute to the establishment of a functioning national information system addressing vulnerability and population dynamics. The mapping showed that more funds are needed for activities to support women who are victims of sexual and gender-based violence, increase the capacity of local schools also hosting Venezuelan youth, and provide medicines and other supplies to health clinics also treating Venezuelans. Partners have supported the government of Uruguay by strengthening the processing capacities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As a result, 368 permanent residencies for Venezuelans were processed during the month of February.

In Peru, partners are working closely with the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations to strengthen the Unidades de Protección Especial (special protection units for children) around the country, as well as their emergency centres for women. In order to strengthen analysis and information sharing capacities in Panama, partners engaged with authorities on how to best register and keep track of births and deaths of foreign individuals, especially Venezuelans. As a result, the competent entities are making adjustments in their tools to anchor specific data that will allow them to report these cases. In Colombia, partners worked with the Family Welfare Institute on a standardized referral form and a related guideline regarding Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC), which aims to improve referrals of UASC directly to the Family Welfare Institute. In Brazil, R4V partners delivered a training session to 53 service providers from the security, justice, social assistance and health sectors, as well as to civil society organizations on gender in the context of humanitarian action, preventing and confronting gender-based violence, women’s human rights and public policies for women.

Various trainings took place, including in Panama, where around 60 Ministry of Education staff were trained on access to education for refugees and migrants. The first session out of three, to train police officers in Trinidad and Tobago on protection principles was held, during which 105 members of the police force were trained. In the border area of Boa Vista, Brazil, over 410 army personnel and local officials received training on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (PSEA). In Guyana, 30 Ministry of Public Health staff benefitted from a training on nutrition surveillance, WASH, and reproductive health, and in Ecuador, 1,272 civil servants were capacitated in different topics, including health personnel. In Colombia, workshops on international protection mechanisms international and access to rights of refugees and migrants were also offered to public officials in Bogota.

REGIONAL COORDINATION

The Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform was established following the request by the UN Secretary-General to UNHCR and IOM on 12 April 2018, to lead and coordinate the response to refugees and migrants from Venezuela. The Regional Platform aims to address the coordination of response on needs as relate to protection, assistance, and integration of both refugees and migrants from Venezuela in affected Latin American and Caribbean states. This is complemented at country levels through the establishment and strengthening of local coordination mechanisms, in close collaboration with host governments. Dedicated national coordination platforms are already in place in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Costa Rica, and Panama, and inter-agency coordination is also ongoing in the Caribbean, Central America/Mexico, and Southern Cone sub-regions.
Currently the Regional Platform has 43 participants, including 17 UN agencies, 17 NGOs, five donors, two international financial institutions and the Red Cross Movement. Participants collaborate through several coordination support working groups (on information management, communication / fundraising) and other more product-oriented working groups (support spaces, GBV, communication with communities, and integration).

In line with the principles set out in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the RMRP seeks to complement and strengthen the national and regional responses of governments, in particular the Quito Plan of Action. The Quito Plan of Action, endorsed by eight countries in the region, outlines main priorities of regional collaboration and harmonization efforts in the areas of access to territory, regularization, documentation, data management and information exchange, access to rights and services, social protection, and labour integration.

The Platform and the Joint IOM-UNHCR Special Representative for Venezuelan refugees and migrants, Mr. Eduardo Stein, are expected to provide key contributions to the implementation of the Quito Plan of Action in terms of technical assistance, information management and exchange, resource mobilization, and humanitarian diplomacy. The next intergovernmental meeting on the Quito Plan of Action (‘Quito III’) is to take place on 7-8 April.

CONTRIBUTIONS

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