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FUNDING SITUATION\*

**3%**FUNDED: **40.4 M**  
REQUIREMENTS: **1.3 BN**

## Situation

**A rise in the return of refugees and migrants to Venezuela is causing serious concern among R4V partners.** An increasing number of Venezuelans are left with no alternative but to consider returning to Venezuela in an unregulated and potentially dangerous manner that poses significant protection and health risks. The incentive to return is exacerbated by the desperate situation in which many refugees and migrants from Venezuela are finding themselves during the enforcement of isolation measures in host countries, and the consequent loss of jobs, increase in evictions and in xenophobia. R4V partners are mobilising all possible resources to respond to the deepening crisis, however the underfunding of the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) 2020 is threatening the effectiveness of the response.

**Many governments have announced the extension of isolation measures which, in the absence of specific safeguards, will lead to the worsening of conditions for refugees and migrants.** National and Sub-Regional Platforms are strongly advocating with governments to include refugees and migrants from Venezuela national health, protection and livelihood responses.

**Irregular movements of refugees and migrants continues to take place at border crossings.** Reports document the emergence of clandestine transport companies bringing Venezuelan refugees and migrants to unofficial crossing points, raising protection risks for refugees and migrants falling into the hands of traffickers and smugglers. In some countries refugees and migrants have been transferred to centers for compulsory isolation, while in others they remain in transit zones or unattended at border areas.

## Platforms' Response\*\*

**The Regional Platform is rapidly advancing with the review of the RMRP 2020, with R4V partners finalizing their submissions reflecting adjusted and new activities in a COVID-19 context.** In this framework, rapid needs assessments have been conducted in a number of countries in the context of COVID-19, confirming priority needs among refugees and migrants being food, shelter, employment, as well as access to health and hygiene services.

**In Colombia, the Inter-Agency Group for Mixed Migration Flows (GIFMM) is discouraging the return of refugees and migrants in line with the position of Colombian authorities and the established PAHO/WHO guidelines on the health emergency.** Local GIFMMs have conducted a prioritization exercise on the most urgent needs identified in the field, focusing on food security and nutrition, WASH, health, cash transfers and temporary isolation shelters. Also, local GIFMMs in nine departments published flyers to guide those attending hotlines for refugees and migrants.

**In Brazil, the Platform in coordination with *Operação Acolhida* developed an additional protocol for the handling of COVID-19 cases among the humanitarian community in Roraima and Amazonas,** as part of the contingency plan adopted in March. The health system in the Amazonas is facing critical challenges due to a shortage of doctors and beds in hospitals. The national Interiorization/Integration/Humanitarian Transportation Sector is targeting the most vulnerable refugees and migrants for support to apply for the Federal Government's emergency basic income. Throughout this week, this assistance reached 132 indigenous Warao families.

**In Ecuador, the Grupo de Trabajo para Refugiados y Migrantes (GTRM) conducted a rapid needs assessment with the participation of over 1,600 refugee, migrant and host community households.** Results showed that food, shelter, medicine and hygiene supplies are the priority needs. Gender-based violence is also of increasing concern during the isolation phase with GTRM partners providing specialised protection services to address incidents of GBV. On 22 April, Coordinators briefed donors on the RMRP review process and its linkages with the Global Humanitarian Response Plan - COVID-19.

**In Peru, partners of the GTRM call for a rapid resumption of the asylum system which has been suspended since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, and for the monitoring of refugees and migrants who seek to return to Venezuela** regardless of the closed borders and mobility restrictions. In coordination with the regional education authority of Lima, partners are identifying refugee and migrant children to enroll online in the *Lima Aprende* education programme.

**In Chile, the Platform has enhanced efforts to counter xenophobic sentiments and the spread of misinformation blaming refugees and migrants for the spread of the virus,** which are on the rise according to reports of recent attacks on refugees

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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](http://R4V.info).

and migrants. As regards the RMRP review process, twelve out of seventeen partners of the Platform have submitted new activities under this revision, and one new partner is joining the Platform.

**The Sub-Regional Platform in the Caribbean is developing Standard Operation Procedures for food distribution for R4V partners in the subregion.** Movement restrictions have been extended throughout the Caribbean. The Platform is planning to step-up coordination with civil society organizations and governmental agencies which are assisting vulnerable communities but are currently not including refugees and migrants in their assistance.

**In Central America and Mexico, the Sub-Regional Platform has enhanced measures to facilitate communication and interaction with refugee and migrant populations.** This has included digital platforms for online trainings and psycho-social support in Panama, and the initiation of an inter-agency referral mechanism in Mexico. Meanwhile in Costa Rica, support to refugees and migrants continues, especially remotely via the hotline which is receiving more calls from Venezuelans.

**The Southern Cone Sub-Regional Platform reported xenophobic incidents,** including a report of expulsion of several Venezuelan families from a hotel in Bolivia due to the mistaken belief that COVID-19 was spread by Venezuelans. After Argentina and Bolivia introduced measures to remotely extend the validity of residence and asylum seeker documentation, the Government of Paraguay also extended the validity of documentation issued by the National Migration Authority (DGM). Also, Uruguay and Argentina adopted procedures to register asylum applications by e-mail regardless of the applicant's status.

## Regional Sectors\*\*

**The Regional Health Sector warns that the unregulated movement of refugees and migrants from Colombia and other countries back to Venezuela could increase the spread of COVID-19.** At the same time, movement restrictions across the continent continue to limit the delivery of public health programs. The Regional Sector aims to ensure access to health services particularly for the most vulnerable people and is working to reinforce measures to protect health staff working in community service and in hospitals.

**The Regional Integration Sector is aiming to make visible governments' social and economic measures to employ refugees and migrants from Venezuela in the national COVID-19 response,** for example in Argentina and Peru, and to provide monetary support for those who had been working in the informal sector. The sector has identified food delivery as one of the only jobs that is not affected by the restrictions, and has in fact been essential to many during the pandemic. In a number of countries, many Venezuelan refugees and migrants take on this work, however it exposes them to further risk of contagion.

**In response to the increasing number of homeless refugees and migrants, the Regional Shelter, NFI and Humanitarian Transportation Sectors continue to open new shelters and reactivate old ones.** A rapid needs assessment conducted by the GIFMM in Colombia confirmed that shelter was the second biggest need among refugees and migrants from Venezuela. Best practices and targeting methodologies in CBI are being shared across the region in order to strengthen cash interventions for rent and hotel accommodation.

**The Regional Protection Sector is monitoring the risks related to the situation of returns to Venezuela and is compiling available information on return movements.** Hotlines are receiving significantly increasing numbers of calls to request information on return processes and services available in Venezuela. With the partial suspension of activities of specialized actors who identify incidents of trafficking due to the pandemic, the **Human trafficking & smuggling** sub-sector is identifying and addressing protection needs of refugees and migrants entering states through irregular crossings, and is disseminating prevention materials on these risks.

**Remote food security and vulnerability assessments conducted by the Regional Food Security Sector are ongoing** to assess the state of migrants and refugees. Results of the most recent round of assessments, conducted in the first quarter of 2020 and just published, indicate 62 percent of refugees and migrants from Venezuela (in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) expressed a concern about not having enough food, compared to 44 percent of respondents in host communities.

**The Regional Education Sector is complementing the efforts of many national governments to provide alternative educational responses to ensure the continuity of learning,** including by identifying and disseminating good practices in psycho-social support to be included in educational interventions, for children, teachers and parents or caregivers.

**The Regional WASH Sector has prepared a tool for designing national WASH response plans.** This tool is recommended to be used by all R4V partners, and will enable the regional harmonization and standardization of WASH planning under the RMRP 2020. The sector also held a regional meeting in which Colombian authorities presented public WASH measures adopted in the COVID-19 response.