

10 SEPTEMBER 2020

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS FROM VENEZUELA IN:
THE WORLD LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

5.2 M 4.3 M



FUNDING SITUATION*

21%

FUNDED: USD 297.3 M
REQUIREMENTS: USD 1.41 BN

Situation

The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to exacerbate the vulnerable situation of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in the region. Since April 2020, the increasingly precarious situation and the loss of livelihoods of refugees and migrants have forced over 100,000 persons to return to their country of origin, which is of great concern to R4V partners. In July, lower numbers of returns were observed by partners, compared to previous months, including as it is reported that restrictions to enter Venezuela have limited the number of weekly border crossings. This situation affects both Venezuelan returnees who have to seek accommodation and food while waiting to cross to Venezuela, as well as the local host community. 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 these return movements.

On 24 August, the Regional Platform launched its regional anti-xenophobia campaign “**Acortemos Distancias**” (One Step Closer in English). The campaign is the result of the joint efforts of R4V partners and aims to promote messages of empathy, solidarity and tolerance towards refugees and migrants throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, which are particularly important looking at the impact that COVID-19 has had on refugees, migrants and host communities. Following the launch of the campaign and within less than a month since its launch the campaign has generated over 13 million reactions on social media.

Platforms’ Response**

In **Brazil**, the Documentation and Interiorization Centre (PITRIG) in Manaus has resumed its activities and is processing a reduced number of 100 individuals per day in order to follow preventive measures related to COVID-19. R4V partners have ensured that at least ten appointments per day are given to assess asylum claims and process residency permits for migrants, while during the month of August, Brazil recognized 7,787 refugees on a *prima facie* basis pursuant to the expanded refugee definition of the Cartagena Declaration. In addition, R4V partners supported the most vulnerable refugees and migrants with priority screenings at the Support Space at the bus station of Manaus. Approximately 180 individuals per day sought assistance there with their documentation in order to access health services, work opportunities, and access the emergency subsidies under Brazil’s national COVID-19 measures.

R4V partners in **Chile** supported the dissemination of information concerning quarantine measures in Chile and the special sanitary residences to newly arriving refugees and migrants. As a result of having observed increased irregular arrivals (130 individuals during August) the authorities reinforced border controls with Peru. In addition, during August, R4V partners supported refugees and migrants with cash assistance and through the provision of food and NFIs in order to withstand the winter climate as well as lockdown measures.

In **Colombia**, the Grupo Interagencial para Flujos Migratorios Mixtos (GIFMM) continued to support local COVID-19 priority responses. Local GIFMMs supported national authorities with strategies to support preventative isolation of refugees and migrants, cash distribution, food security, and other interventions targeting specific profiles (e.g. refugees and migrants in informal settlements and at risk of eviction). In addition, local GIFMMs supported the design and building of shelters, WASH and health assistance, as well as communication with communities, education initiatives, orientation through hotlines and monitoring of protection-related risks and incidents.

The Grupo de Trabajo para Refugiados y Migrantes (GTRM) in **Ecuador** concluded its second Joint Needs Assessment on 8 August, involving 14 GTRM partners and some 70 dedicated staff for data collection. A total of 3,613 interviews were conducted, covering 23 provinces and 104 cities. This assessment was crucial for the GTRM to establish the needs of the Venezuelan population during the pandemic, as well as to observe changes that occurred since the previous exercise conducted in April. In addition, GTRM partners provided direct assistance and information to refugees and migrants accessing the Migratory Registration and Regularization Process in Ecuador.

In **Peru**, the GTRM and partners assisted refugee and migrant women and adolescent survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) with counselling, case management to ensure access to state services, and psychosocial support. Partners worked on developing the capacities of public officials working in relevant institutions on protection, human trafficking and smuggling

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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.

to build knowledge of protection needs and the support services available. In addition, partners trained humanitarian and state actors on assistance to and identification of refugees and migrants at risk of eviction and homelessness resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the Caribbean sub-region, R4V partners continued the distribution of food items and sanitary products including hygiene kits and temporary shelter solutions to persons in need as countries in the sub-region experienced a second wave of the pandemic. The distribution of cash-based assistance (CBI) was enhanced, allowing for a more flexible response to the needs of affected refugees and migrants. COVID-19 testing increased throughout the sub-region, while enhanced containment measures for COVID-19 were expanded, and physical distancing, sanitation measures and closure of borders remained in place.

In Central America and Mexico, R4V partners, in collaboration with national institutions, provided ventilators to national health facilities in Mexico as well as direct medical assistance to refugees and migrants, complementing the national health response in Panama. R4V partners in Costa Rica, Panama and Mexico also supported refugees and migrants from Venezuela with cash assistance to cover their most urgent needs in addition to psychosocial support.

In the Southern Cone, R4V partners continued with the provision of shelter solutions, NFIs (especially winter clothes), food assistance and cash to the most vulnerable refugees and migrants from Venezuela, especially at border and urban areas. Messages reinforcing information on the risks of returning to Venezuela under the current conditions were reinforced by all partners. In Uruguay, partners opened a Support Space in Chuy (border between Uruguay and Brazil) where partners have referred persons in need to emergency assistance for shelter and food, provided by local authorities and organizations. In Uruguay, 30 Venezuelans were recognized as refugees. In Argentina, partners organized a virtual workshop on financial education for refugee and migrant community leaders. This initiative aimed to promote local integration, addressing information gaps and other obstacles in accessing banking and financial services.

Regional Sectors**

The Regional Education Sector and partners produced two guidance notes to facilitate the reopening of schools in the context of COVID-19, based on the global framework for school reopening. In addition, the Sector has been developing an online teachers' course to respond to the educational needs that emerge during and after the emergency of COVID-19. The Sector is also monitoring the re-opening of schools in the region. Many countries have not set a date for reopening while a few have decided to continue the entire school year through distance learning, such as Peru and Paraguay. Others, including Ecuador or Colombia, are preparing to reopen by offering different modalities such as face to face and distance learning

The Regional Health Sector reported that the circulation of the COVID-19 virus continued in communities where refugees and migrants are living. At country-levels, the Sector confirms that national health providers are supporting vulnerable refugees and migrants, while the Sector is supporting the reopening of health services to provide public health programmes with additional services that had been deprioritized during the pandemic (e.g. regular vaccination campaigns).

The Regional Integration Sector and the Caribbean Sub-regional Platform delivered a workshop for government partners on the issue of integration of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in the Caribbean. Partners of the Integration Sector finalized the Regional Strategy for the Socio-Economic Integration of Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela and Host Communities, which will be presented to partners and the Regional Platform at large.

The Regional Protection Sector continued supporting national sectors in Brazil, Colombia and Guyana to promote access to national protection mechanisms and services for indigenous populations from Venezuela, mainly Warao, Pemon, and Wayuu, in the context of COVID-19. As COVID-19 cases among indigenous people increased (including an above-average mortality rate), the Sector also strengthened its relations with Venezuelan organizations representing indigenous populations, aiming to facilitate information-sharing and coordination spaces amongst local organizations. This situation also affected Venezuelan indigenous population's access to life-saving services and protection mechanisms.

The Regional Shelter, NFI and Humanitarian Transportation Sectors continued providing financial support to help refugees and migrants avoid evictions as COVID-19 measures impaired their ability to make ends meet. Harsh winter conditions in the Southern Cone and Chile made the need for shelter solutions and NFIs more critical in order to avoid additional exposure following evictions and homelessness. In this context, partners trained frontline humanitarian and state actors on how to assist and identify refugees and migrants at risk of eviction and homelessness. While other countries remained in lockdown, Brazil was the only country where transportation activities were maintained through the national interiorization programme.