

# Situation Report March/April 2019

As an achievement of the **Quito process**, countries across the region have announced measures to allow entrance in these countries with expired documents or other forms of documentation. This is expected to benefit approx. **500,000 Venezuelans**, travelling on passports that have expired, or are about to expire.

Entry into **Colombia** via informal crossings (trochas) continued in March and April. At the opened crossing points at La Guajira average weekly entries increased from 2,830 in March to 4,600 in April on all entry points. The border in Paraguachon alone had an average of 2,070 weekly entries with stamped passports.

Opinion polls in **Chile** and **Argentina** have shown that discriminatory views and incidents of **discrimination and xenophobia** continue in, especially among middle-aged low-income persons.

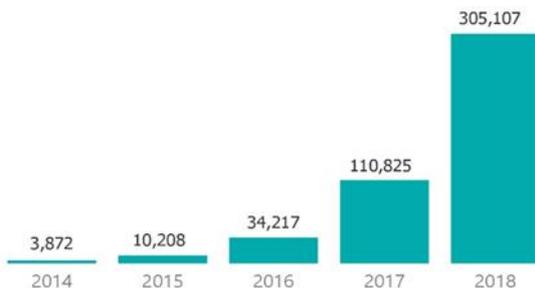
## KEY FIGURES<sup>1</sup>

As of May 2019

### Key Population Figures in the Region

**464,229**

Asylum claims have been lodged by Venezuelans  
2014 - 2018

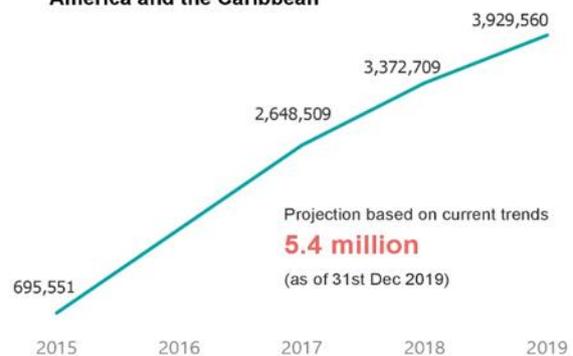


**3.9 million**

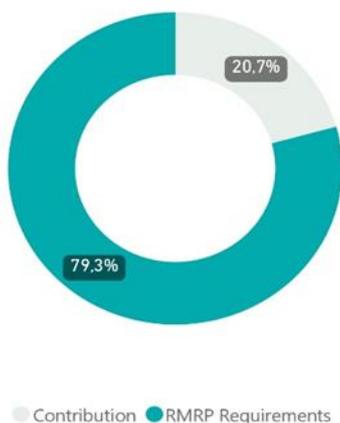
Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the world

**3.1 million**

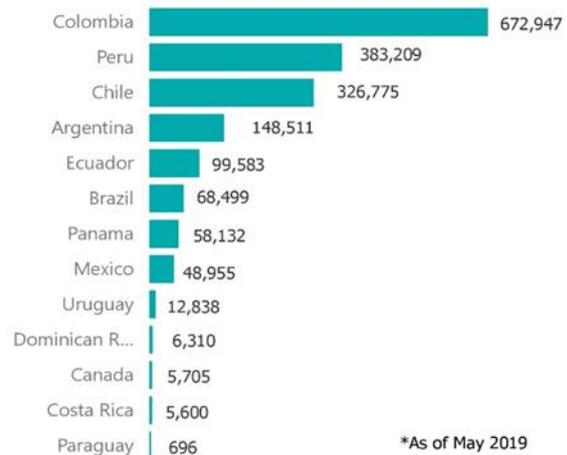
Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean



### Total Financial Requirements



### People with regular status including issued residencies\*



<sup>1</sup> 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. The figure of issued residencies and other form of regular status includes expired and valid residence permits, do not include tourist visas, and, in selected countries, do not necessarily account for the number of individuals but the number of administrative procedures.

## OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

- Increasing numbers of Venezuelans are traveling through unofficial crossings (or *trochas*) to enter **Colombia** and **Brazil** due to official border closures. In Cucuta, Norte de Santander, heavy rains in late March caused the swelling of the Táchira River making this crossing more dangerous. However, humanitarian corridors remain open for those with special needs or vulnerabilities, including children in school age, pregnant women, the ill and the elderly. *Migración Colombia* reported that around 5,000 Venezuelans (3,300 school-aged children and 1,800 adults with medical needs) were permitted to cross the border via the humanitarian corridor. In Brazil, these increased from 50 people daily to an average of 350, reaching a peak of 480 persons by late March.
- Across the region, authorities in **Peru**, **Canada**, **Paraguay** and **Colombia** announced the flexibilization of documentation requirements for the entry or regularization of Venezuelans in these countries. According to the Migration Authority in Colombia, the measure is expected to benefit some **500,000 Venezuelans** and is intended to encourage regular entries and to reduce the risk of exposure to bribery, trafficking and exploitation linked to irregular entries<sup>2</sup>. In Paraguay, for example, **expired Venezuelan passports will be recognized**.
- Flows of Venezuelan refugees and migrants to **Ecuador** were unusually low in March due to the Inter-Ministerial Agreements 0001/2019 and 0002/2019, as well as protests and roadblocks by indigenous groups in Colombia. Monitoring exercises developed during this period showed that 87% of the non-admissions to the territory of the adult refugees and migrants from Venezuela interviewed, was due to them not being in possession of a certified criminal record. Due to the provisional suspension of this requirement at the end of March, admissions increased to 2,000 a day in April, while authorities are still denying entrance to persons carrying only expired travel documentation.
- The Special Representative for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants, Mr. Eduardo Stein, visited **Argentina** and **Brazil** in March. He met with high ranking government officials, donors, Platform members and embassies to brief them on the latest developments in the region and emphasize in the importance of participating in the **Quito Process**, which held its third meeting in early April. At this occasion, a note was issued emphasizing the importance of increasing communication and coordination among transit and host countries to guarantee the protection of rights of people coming from Venezuela. The **Quito IV** meeting (4-5 July) to be held in Argentina, is expected to focus on the promotion of international cooperation, common documentation for Venezuelans, anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling strategies and best practices on local integration.
- Against the background of possible **policy changes with regards to Venezuelans** by the **Peruvian** government, its Ministry of Interior and the National Superintendence of Migration have initiated operations to deport Venezuelans with criminal records and those who provided incorrect information in the processing of their Temporary Stay Permits (PTP). So far, some 50 Venezuelans have been deported.
- The Government of **Trinidad and Tobago** announced the launch of a registration process to allow Venezuelans in the country to regularize their status to be able to live and work in Trinidad and Tobago for up to one year.<sup>3</sup> In **Guyana**, the Government is working with partners to digitalize the current system for the registration and documentation of Venezuelans. However, recent arrivals to the capital, Georgetown, showed the city's limited capacity to provide basic services, such as food and water, prompting the Government to announce that internal movement from border areas to the capital will be discouraged.
- Partners in **Mexico**, together with the National Migration Authority (INM) agreed to prepare a pilot proposal to grant access to asylum procedures at Mexican border entry points, especially at airports, and avoid detention. This would allow vulnerable groups to initiate their asylum process on arrival, be transferred to safe shelters and avoid the risk of detention. According to the Mexican Refugee Commission (COMAR), by the end of April, 2,440 Venezuelans have applied for asylum in Mexico in 2019, an increase of 71% compared to the same period in 2018.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.migracioncolombia.gov.co/index.php/es/prensa/comunicados/comunicados-2019/marzo-2019/10302-mas-de-500-mil-venezolanos-con-pasaportes-venecidos-podrian-ingresar-y-transitar-por-colombia>

<sup>3</sup> For more details please see: <https://www.opm.gov.tt/venezuelan-registration-policy-gets-green-light/>

## 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 the month. The R4V 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.*

### Area of Intervention 1: Direct emergency assistance

***Strategic outcome:*** Refugees and migrants are provided with life-saving goods and services.

#### Needs Assessment and Registration

R4V partners are conducting needs assessments and registering Venezuelans as the situation maintains its rhythm. These assessments are conducted by international and national organizations in partnership with national authorities. In March, such activities took place in **Brazil**, **Guyana**, **Mexico**, and **Peru** where almost 900 persons were reached. In Brazil, the results showed that among a group of Pemons, a Venezuelan indigenous group living near the border with Brazil, 459 children (302 in school age) lack access to basic services, while their community is in need of food, shelter and regular status. As a result of this assessment, partners and national authorities created a local coordination group to ensure a prompt and effective response to the needs of the indigenous community. The results of the assessments made in Guyana allowed partners to register a slight increase of men and children arriving compared to February. The registration activities in Mexico City, in turn, showed that the average age of new asylum applicants is 40 years, with most of them possessing high school degrees. On the other hand, a nutritional assessment of Venezuelan children under five years old who entered Peru through the CEBAF in March found that 3 per cent of children were acutely malnourished, 18 per cent had chronic malnutrition and 25 per cent had anaemia.

#### Basic Needs and Essential Services

The type of items or services provided to vulnerable persons vary depending on local contexts and the local actors' capacity to provide such items. In **Brazil**, for example, partners supported around 500 Pemon-Taurepan indigenous community members who were forcibly displaced in March with non-food items (NFI) kits and carried out a health campaign to offer services by a general practitioner, paediatrician, psychologist and dentist, benefitting 217 Venezuelans and host community members. Another 16,000 Venezuelans received hot meals in Boa Vista in April. In **Costa Rica**, 452 food kits and 59 non-food items kits were delivered to vulnerable Venezuelans; and, in **Colombia**, in departments along the borders with Venezuela and Ecuador, around 243,000 people received a host of basic services including healthcare and medical referrals, temporary accommodation, food, water and sanitation. In **Guyana**, as almost 830 Venezuelans and returning Guyanese arrived at the border area, food, water, NFI kits, and classroom sets containing furniture, white boards and lighting fixtures were distributed to address immediate needs. In **Ecuador**, 74% of the population of persons coming from Venezuela that receive assistance from the GTRM benefits from basic needs assistance. The main areas of assistance reported by the partners include food security (around 48,000 beneficiaries in March and April received food kits, food vouchers and food assistance provided in shelters and kitchens), temporary shelter, provision of hygiene kits, humanitarian transport and multi-purpose cash transfer interventions.

The adoption of **cash** and/or **vouchers** as part of the emergency response is gaining ground among R4V partners. In **Brazil**, for example, partners distributed cash assistance to 133 migrant, asylum seeker and refugee women in extremely vulnerable conditions, most of them living on the streets, with no access to food or water. A similar aid modality was also employed in **Costa Rica**, **Dominican Republic**, **Panama** and **Mexico** where 168, 43, 221, and 188 (respectively) very vulnerable Venezuelan nationals, received this kind of support. In the case of **Peru** and in countries in the **Southern Cone**, the distribution of multipurpose prepaid cash cards was done in conjunction with in-kind assistance, such as the provision of shelter and transportation inside the country for newly arrivals. In **Argentina** and **Uruguay**, 76 Venezuelans received psychosocial support, health assistance and medicines. In **Trinidad and Tobago**, between March and April, an average of 430 vulnerable Venezuelans who reported not having enough food to eat every day, received multi-purpose cash grants. In **Colombia**, 8,200 people received multipurpose cash assistance.

Along their respective routes, large numbers of so-called *caminantes* (populations 'on the move') as well as those 'at destination' benefitted from temporary shelters. In **Costa Rica**, for example, temporary accommodation was provided to 196 Venezuelans, and, in **Guyana**, to 340 people. Shelter assistance is offered as a housing solution or through rental

support. This is the case in **Roraima, Amazonas**, and **São Paulo** states in **Brazil**, where partners are currently providing around 7,100 Venezuelans with physical shelter and another 1,000 with rental support. In some cases, these beneficiaries had been living on the streets or in similarly precarious conditions. With beneficiaries living in better conditions, partners then can more easily provide daily meals, medical care, and refer persons with more complex needs to specialised services, such as legal support and social services. A similar response has been offered to 904 persons from Venezuela in the cities of **Arica, Talca, Santiago, Prado**, and **Antofagasta, Chile**, and in the city of **Mendoza, Argentina**. Additionally, the National Secretary of Childhood, Adolescents and Families in **Buenos Aires** received support to enhance the capacity of its shelters in order to provide local integration support to Venezuelans, including guidance for socio-economic inclusion. In **Colombia**, a needs assessment<sup>4</sup> showed that more than 81% of Venezuelans had an urgent need for shelter, and in March an Integrated Assistance Centre was inaugurated by the local government in Maicao, La Guajira, with a capacity to host up to 350 people. In the following month, 2,800 persons in these locations received shelter.

The arrival of large number of families has an impact on the communities where they stay, especially with the provision of water, and access and quality of sanitation. To mitigate such issues, partners engage in assessments and revisions of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (**WASH**) conditions in affected locations. At the Binational Border Centre (CEBAF), between **Tumbes** and **Huaquillas**, on the Peruvian side, for example, partners and local authorities are evaluating the construction of additional sanitation facilities to address recurrent scarcity of water. In **Brazil**, partners improved access to safe water in shelters in Roraima for over 6,700 persons until April, and also provided them with information on life-saving skills and protective practices with water, sanitation and hygiene.

### Orientation and Information

Partners are developing channels to offer information and demonstrate how to access rights and benefits to persons coming from Venezuela. In **Costa Rica**, for example, the Migrant Support Centre and the 800-Venezuela hotline provided information to 388 persons on immigration requirements, work permits and regularization options based on applicable laws and regulations. Venezuelans seeking asylum information, were referred to the appropriate actors. In the **Dominican Republic**, partners were able to provide this service to 144 people and in **Panama**, to 127. More than 54,000 persons accessed similar sources of information and counselling in **Ecuador** during March and April.

## Area of Intervention 2: Protection

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

### Community Based Protection and Legal Support

There are several ways in which partners harness the capacity and willingness of local communities, converting them into activities and responses to the needs of the persons coming from Venezuela. In the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean, where communication is a challenge for the Spanish-speaking Venezuelans, in the border district of Region 1 of **Guyana**, for example, partners brought together local teachers and students with Venezuelan students to identify general education gaps and English language training needs, both in terms of access and quality. This group of 187 people will continue to work together throughout April and will inform the design of a project for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). In **Trinidad and Tobago**, similarly, community members taught English to 61 Venezuelans.

Community members have also volunteered their professional skills and time to assist the persons coming from Venezuela, joining the R4V partners as Outreach Volunteers. In several countries these volunteers are receiving training in protection monitoring, identification of needs and how to refer them to proper care, provision of information on asylum applications/processes, residency matters, and other ways to regularize their stay in their current country, as well as information on the availability of services such as health, education, shelter, and, in the case of Brazil, internal relocation (interiorization). In **Arauca** and **Nariño, Colombia**, partners are working with 656 members of community organizations and networks to deliver these services. In **Boa Vista, Brazil**, there are 19 outreach volunteers working in 18 different neighbourhoods; and, in the **Dominican Republic** the program has started with 5 volunteers, who have supported community planning meetings in five prioritized provinces involving 119 Venezuelans. The outreach volunteers spend most of their time with the communities with which they work, both from Venezuela and locals. In turn, they then inform partners on the situation of affected Venezuelans and thereby improve the dialogue and understanding of Venezuelans' and host communities' needs, and corresponding response programming. As a result, for example, in **Colombia**, almost

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<sup>4</sup> <https://data2.unhcr.org/es/documents/download/69708>

18,500 people received legal assistance guidance on rights, regularization of stay processes and documentation.

### Access to Information, Referrals and Legal Support

Platform partners also provide information, guidance, and refer persons in need of support from specific organizations by establishing a physical presence in places where persons from Venezuela transit or stay. Partners in **Arica, Chile**, agreed to support an information stand in the city distributing information brochures. In **Argentina**, partners established a part time social worker in **Posada**, after observing an increased demand by Venezuelans in the provinces of **Jujuy and Misiones** for information on asylum application procedures, as well as on housing/shelters, labour opportunities, food and clothing. In **Costa Rica**, the 800-Venezuela and 800-Refugio hotlines have served more than 120 Venezuelans. Callers also inquired on access to asylum and status regularization. In **Colombia**, information regarding status regularization processes and similar issues was offered to 14,700 people. In **Boa Vista** and **Pacaraima, Brazil**, in March and April, over 14,000 Venezuelans sought and received benefits such as information materials on prevention of human trafficking and labour exploitation, referrals for health issues, and support in processing residency and asylum applications in two Documentation Centres and the Reference Centre at the Federal University of Roraima. In **Costa Rica**, 77 persons were referred in March to the Welfare Institute (IMAS), Ministry of Education (MEP), Social Security System (CCSS), and medical centres. In **Mexico**, partners are producing a service map of the cities with the highest concentration of persons coming from Venezuela. As the process unfolds, they identify protection needs, provide information, and refer people to local services. During March, this process benefitted 186 persons. In April the newly inaugurated joint Orientation Centre in Lima, **Peru**, officially started operations, and an average of 150 people are receiving support daily. As important as guaranteeing access to such information is to ensure that these rights are secured by the legal practice in these countries. To achieve this objective in **Aruba** and **Curaçao**, partners organised a workshop on Protection of Asylum-Seekers and Refugees under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) to 18 lawyers from those two countries. Although the EU *acquis* and many other Council of Europe and EU legal instruments do not apply in these countries, both constituent countries of the Netherlands are bound by the ECHR; especially its Article 3 (protection against non-*refoulement*) and Article 5 (protection against unlawful detention) are applicable to the situations of refugees and migrants from Venezuela.

### GBV and Human Trafficking prevention and response

Among the protection risks faced by people arriving from Venezuela, gender-based violence (GBV) and human trafficking are among the most prevalent. To provide a complete response to such incidents, partners engage national authorities and local organizations and provide them with technical support. The Public Prosecutor in **Arequipa, Peru**, called R4V partners for a meeting to express concerns of possible human trafficking and sexual exploitation of Venezuelans in the region. As a result, partners started a structured process of technical support and information sharing with local organizations on the prevention of violence against women.

In **Ecuador**, partners are strengthening the protection system for women survivors of gender-based violence in Rumichaca, San Miguel, and Quito. The activities involve capacity-building of humanitarian responders and Ministry of Health personnel, the establishment of a protocol for the reporting of cases and their referrals to the appropriate response institutions, including medical response to sexual violence. Overall, 7,700 persons received attention on issues related to gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health.

Other activities to prevent incidents of GBV and human trafficking involve the distribution of information materials on HIV/AIDS, preservatives, and information booklets explaining how to avoid and how to proceed after experiencing such crimes. For example, in **Colombia** and **Costa Rica**, prevention and response services were provided to 1,000 and 106 Venezuelans, respectively. In **Pacaraima, Brazil**, around 800 persons benefitted from such services. Partners are also supporting a safe house for people living with HIV that currently benefits 12 people with daily meals, social assistance and follow-up to Antiretroviral (ARV) treatment and psychosocial support (PSS). In **Trinidad and Tobago**, these specialized services also involved PSS and counselling to 112 Venezuelans, including women and children. PSS is an important component of the protection response as it addresses the non-visible, and often overlooked, consequences of the trauma of survivors of GBV or human trafficking. Partners provided emergency PSS in **Boa Vista, Brazil** to 99 Venezuelan women in vulnerable conditions. Since 1 January, 441 women in Brazil have received this kind of support.

### Child Protection

The response to children's needs in displacement situations encompasses a range of dedicated activities such as specialised PSS, access to paediatricians, vaccination, nutrition, remedial or catch-up classes, and early childhood development activities. Many of these services are offered inside Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) that are set up by partners

in locations hosting persons from Venezuela. In **Brazil**, for example, around 2,300 girls and boys received this cross-functional attention inside CFS, around 200 were vaccinated and almost 1,000 children who are expected to continue their journey with their families within the country, attended informal learning activities. In **Colombia**, more than 6,200 children and adolescents in March, and 5,700 in April, benefited from protective environments, in which they could receive basic care and educational activities. In **Guyana**'s Region 9, partners conducted training on Early Childhood Development (ECD) for 27 locally-based education, public health and social protection professionals aiming to improve access to ECD services. Training sessions focused on understanding the importance of the first 1,000 days of life, infant feeding, nutrition in emergencies, and childhood illnesses. In addition, basic training on the use of ECD kits was provided to each community.

### Area of Intervention 3: Socio-economic and cultural integration

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

#### Voluntary relocation programme

Authorities in **Brazil** are conducting a voluntary relocation program (*interiorization*) in which persons coming from Venezuela who seek shelter in the northern states are relocated to other states. The *interiorization* process has several work streams: (i) Shelter-to-Shelter, (ii) Family Unification; (iii) Social Reunions; (iv) Labour Relocation (where individual skills are matched with an economic activity); and (v) Charity-based Interiorization. In March and April, 330 persons accepted relocation to be with their families in other states (family unification), whereas during the same period, 321 persons were relocated under the labour relocation scheme and 339 chose to be transferred under the shelter-to-shelter scheme in March. In cases where the Brazilian Air Force does not have the capacity to transport people, partners support this relocation through organising charter flights or purchasing tickets on commercial flights. Prior to their departure, partners also provide one-off cash grants and NFIs, including cooking gas for the first month in the new city. Over 6,000 Venezuelans have been relocated since the beginning of Brazil's interiorization strategy in January 2018.

#### Socio-economic inclusion

In supporting the socio-economic integration of Venezuelans in their host communities, partners conduct a range of activities such as advocating with authorities for the granting of work permits and providing technical support to authorities to handle the cases within a reasonable timeframe, as currently being done in **Argentina**, **Brazil**, and **Guyana**. In the first case, partners are elaborating a joint strategy with the National Secretariat for Labour and Employment of the Ministry of Production and Employment and other authorities to promote access to social protection schemes and improve access to the labour market, currently limited by both legal or administrative restrictions and xenophobic attitudes. In the second case, partners' advocacy allowed for 19 Venezuelans to have their diploma validated by the State University of Amazonas. There is currently no systematic process available for asylum-seekers, migrants and refugees at a national level to validate foreign diplomas in Brazil. In the third case, partners' advocacy for access to formal work also included consultations on the possibility of including Venezuelans in ongoing public livelihood programs. In March and April, 575 and 414 persons (respectively), Venezuelans and members of the host community, benefitted from accompanied visits to government service providers.

Another activity often implemented is advocacy with education authorities and professional associations for recognition procedures of foreign diplomas or certificates. In **Chile**, this has resulted in 40 Venezuelans receiving official recognition of their competencies as retailers, allowing them to access private sector employment opportunities. In **Trinidad and Tobago**, partners offered temporary learning spaces to 286 Venezuelan boys and girls and are currently developing an online accreditation program for primary- and secondary-age children to be rolled-out in the second half of 2019. In **Ecuador**, recognition of professional titles of refugees and migrants from Venezuela continues to be a challenge, due to the impossibility of obtaining apostilled documents from Venezuelan public institutions, as required for such procedures in Ecuador.

Support to education, vocational training and language classes is provided by partners in **Brazil**, together with the State University of Amazonas, where free Portuguese courses are being offered to 60 Venezuelans, and in Boa Vista, where, in March, 236 participants received handicraft training. In **Costa Rica**, in March, 56 persons received training in food handling, ethics, basic computing, customer service, brand registration, basic accounting, and food hygiene principles; and in April, 104 people received training in entrepreneurship. In **Colombia**, partners coordinated the first working session

for the Socio-economic and Cultural Inclusion Sub-Group of the Mixed Migratory Flows Group (GIFMM; national coordination platform) in March, and in April over 26 families who received training in entrepreneurship received financial support to run small businesses.

Access to employment and other income generating opportunities also involve continued interaction with the private sector. In this sense, in **Argentina**, partners are articulating two important partnerships with key organizations. The first one is with the Tent Foundation, a non-profit organization, aiming at bringing together private sector and NGOs to address labour insertion, entrepreneurship and self-employment. The second one is with WeWork, an American company that provides shared workspaces for technology start-ups and services for entrepreneurs, freelancers, start-ups, small businesses and large enterprises, which has shown interest in reaching out to refugees and migrants, offering job opportunities not only at their affiliate offices in Argentina but also in **Chile**. In **Ecuador**, several trainings and outreach workshops with the private sector to connect professional practices were organized, reaching 160 people in April, and 1,026 since the beginning of the year. Similarly, financial inclusion workshops were held with private institutions, with the objective of seeking access to financial services, including microcredits for Venezuelan enterprises and strengthening of enterprises at a production and commercial level.

In **Brazil**, partners organised lectures, courses and other activities to the benefit of approximately 550 women and men through the Women's Empowerment HUB (WEB) in partnership with the private sector and industry associations. These activities included financial education, small business entrepreneurship, cooking classes, courses on product development, pricing, entrepreneurship and basic concepts of economics. Mediation courses were organized in partnership with the Office of the State Public Defender, which aimed at providing strategies to improve cohabitation in shelters and to promoting women's solidarity. Other initiatives in the country include the program "Building Networks" in which the Superior School of the Public Prosecutor's Office aims at building local responses to the integration of refugees and migrants in different cities of Brazil. Two workshops were offered in Recife, Pernambuco State, on April 11, and in João Pessoa, Paraíba State, on April 12, bringing together multiple stakeholders - public servants, civil society, students, refugees and migrants to reinforce the capacity building for stakeholders involved in the reception, integration and "interiorization" of refugees and migrants in Brazil.

Partners are promoting in **Panama** the implementation of the Executive Decree 1225 (October 2015) which establishes that the lack of documentation does not impede access to the education system. In recent months, partners have provided direct training to 31 teachers and principals, and during April meetings were held with the Ministry of Education to validate a curriculum so that teachers and principals are aware of and implement the decree.

### Promote access to basic rights and services

In the context of the "*Programa de Asistencia a migrantes venezolanos*" established by the National Direction of Migration of **Argentina**, a workshop on social integration, work, education and health was conducted in Buenos Aires with the assistance of RMRP partners. The event, that took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of March, was attended by **523 persons** who used this space for consultations and dialogues on various topics of interest. They were provided with **information on service pathways** for the validation of university degrees, access to health, durable solutions, legal assistance and job training. The workshop was also a platform to discuss different strategies to eradicate discrimination towards refugees and migrants, as well as their integration in the community. Partners in **Costa Rica** promoted access to education and human rights for refugees and migrants through a workshop on human rights, soft skills, legal empowerment and finances. In addition, 31 Venezuelan women received information on access to rights and another 20 Venezuelans were trained on access to education procedures. In **Peru**, the Ministry of Education launched the campaign "*Lima learns, not a child without studying*" in April, which will register children and adolescents outside of school and provide an opportunity for refugees and migrants to register as an initial step for their enrolment in formal education.

### Combat xenophobia

Partners in **Peru** are engaged in addressing the issue of labour exploitation of the Venezuelan population. The Regional Office of the Director of Employment met with partners and expressed concern with abuses committed by local employers towards Venezuelans. Workshops and other information sessions will be held to provide information to organizations hiring refugees and migrants and to Venezuelans themselves. The "*Mi Causa Es Tu Causa*" campaign continues to encourage the integration and social cohesion between Peruvian and Venezuelan communities. On March 31<sup>st</sup>, the first "*Gracias Causa*" brigade was launched, with over 100 Venezuelan volunteers repairing a school in a low-income

neighbourhood in Lima and offering free activities for 500 school-aged children. The activity received important media coverage at local and national level.

In **Chile** and **Uruguay**, platform partners have developed a survey to determine the best approach to an anti-xenophobia and anti-discrimination campaign. In **Chile**, 1,000 people from Santiago, Arica, Antofagasta and Talca took part in the survey regarding the presence of persons coming from Venezuela in their country. The survey showed that low-income Chileans over the age of 50 express a high degree of discriminatory attitudes against Venezuelans. It also showed that in Antofagasta, in northern Chile, there is an increasing number of Venezuelans who claim to be victims of discrimination. These results will serve as a basis for the preparation of a public campaign that aims to promote non-discrimination in host communities. In **Argentina**, a similar poll highlighted a positive attitude and predisposition towards Venezuelans. However, 38% of the interviewees had witnessed discriminatory behaviour towards Venezuelans, while also showed younger people generally being more receptive towards refugees and migrants. The survey also showed that the focus of mass media communication, when touching upon immigration, is on life stories and most often about insecurity, crimes and the government's immigration policy management.

In **Trinidad and Tobago**, partners organized a model UN event for over 100 students to stimulate debates on themes related to asylum and migration. Partners also produced a short film on the impact of the Venezuelan crisis, showcasing instances of solidarity with the host community. The short film was promoted at the Caribbean film festivals in Guadeloupe and New York City.

#### 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.*

##### Technical and material support

In Tumbes, **Peru**, partners met with the new local head of the Superintendence of Labour Inspection (SUNAFIL), who agreed to lead the Regional Working Table for Security and Transportation. In Cusco, partners supported the Regional Directorate of Education to map public schools with available positions that could accept Venezuelans. The list was shared with the local office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Venezuelan community. Also, partners provided equipment and material aimed at strengthening the work of the Superintendence for Migration, in relation to the storage capacity of the data centre.

Partners also organised the first workshop on referral mechanisms against labour exploitation for professionals assisting the vulnerable migrant and refugee population living in Pacaraima, **Brazil**. A total of 31 attendees representing civil society organisations, international and national organizations received instructions on the roles and responsibilities of institutions involved in the identification and prosecution of cases of labour exploitation, and how to coordinate an adequate assistance.

In April, partners in **Mexico** and **Panama** also supported the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR) and the National Office for Refugee (ONPAR) to improve the capacities and efficiency when dealing with asylum procedures. In the first case, partners supported the recruitment of 105 contractors to guarantee staffing levels according to current operational needs. In the second case, partners donated seven new computers for registration activities. Partners also plan to support the hiring of four new attorneys to address ONPAR's existing backlog.

In April, in **Ecuador**, partners are working to improve the services to persons in transit and to that effect, they promoted capacity building activities to over 1,400 public servants. The trainings were offered based on the different circumstances to which these public officials are exposed. For example, security personnel of transport terminals were trained in humanitarian principles and support to refugees and migrants; staff of the Ministry of Socio-Economic Inclusion were trained in topics of human mobility, asylum, gender, and human rights; and health practitioners were trained on working with basic primary response to emergencies and sexual and reproductive health.

Additionally, in **Costa Rica**, partners trained 78 public officials in humanitarian shelter and psychological first aid. In **Aruba**, partners provided technical advice to the Government on the establishment and implementation of its asylum system through a collaborative exercise to map existing services and clarify the institutions involved, their roles, and interactions with one another when processing asylum cases. In **Guyana**, partners are in consultation with the government to explore opportunities to support the expansion of existing public legal aid services for children – currently

available only in Georgetown – to the regions of the country bordering Venezuela. The successful implementation of the plan would strengthen access to basic social and legal services for both Venezuelans and host communities living in those prioritized areas. In **Trinidad and Tobago**, sensitization activities on international refugee protection were conducted for 41 local police officers. Additionally, through the use of an online learning platform (Caribbean Basin Initiative), training was streamed to police academies in Guyana and Suriname, reaching an additional 29 officers. In **Costa Rica**, partners seconded officials to the Migration Authority to assist with the resolution of over 100 cases of Venezuelans.

### Capacity Building Support

In **Ecuador**, the Ombudsman's Office was trained on identification processes and on access to asylum mechanisms, as well as on migratory and protection alternatives for children and adolescents in a situation of human mobility. In **Argentina**, 5 studies aimed at improving the capacities of the State to respond to the needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants have been developed. Their publication is expected in April. Three of these studies focus on socio-economic and cultural integration of Venezuelans in their host communities, specifically through labour insertion (and internal relocation), and access to social services (education, health, housing, etc.). The fourth study is a training guide on migration management from a human rights, gender and intercultural perspective, and the fifth publication consists of a socio-anthropological investigation of Venezuelans that arrived in Argentina during the last four years.

In line with the objective of strengthening local capacities, ICT equipment was delivered to the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE) in **Argentina**. Additionally, support through remodelling and furnishing (fridge, kitchen among other items) was provided to the Centre for Orientation to Migrant Population in Buenos Aires which offers services such as referrals to social public services, labour training, financial inclusion, access to justice, recreational activities, among others, to many Venezuelans seeking advice/orientation/referral services to facilitate their integration in Buenos Aires.

Various trainings on Trafficking in Persons took place in **Chile** during the month of March, reaching 290 officials from local and national governments in the cities of Antofagasta, Santiago and Talca.

In terms of strengthening processing capacities for the regularization of Venezuelans, human resources were provided to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of **Uruguay**. As a result, 419 Venezuelan nationals began the residency process during the month of March. In **Colombia**, in April, partners supported the management capacity of *Migración Colombia* with equipment to conduct basic biometric registration at migration control posts in Villa del Rosario and Rumichaca with the objective of reducing the time persons in transit stay at these posts as they move on south.

Partners conducted a series of workshops on sensitization against exploitation and sexual abuse, as well as on a code of conduct on the vulnerabilities of the population in need for technical teams from the Manaus Municipality and Amazonas State Government, **Brazil**. The workshop equips the partners, who will continue to work with Venezuelans inside shelters and in potential future allocation exercises, with knowledge on vulnerabilities, human rights and shelter management guidelines to better support refugees and migrants. Partners also organised a training for health professionals working with the public sector in the Roraima State. The training held in partnership with the Federal University of Roraima, the Secretary of Health of Roraima State, and the Municipal Health Department of Boa Vista strengthened the capacity of civil servants in identifying and supporting victims of human trafficking. In addition, a workshop on referral mechanisms for victims of labour exploitation was held in Boa Vista for civil society organisations and state bodies. The training improved the coordination between all the institutions involved in the identification and prosecution of labour exploitation cases and provided guidelines to ensure an adequate assistance of victims. In **Mexico**, activities also included training for two partner organizations who assist Venezuelan asylum-seekers on asylum access at airports in the country.

In **Aruba**, partners engaged with the local bar association and provided training on international refugee law to 35 lawyers and court officials to build capacity and establish pro bono legal aid in the country. In the **Dominican Republic**, partners supported the launching and facilitation of two diploma degrees on refugee law in close cooperation with the National School for Migration and the National School for the Judiciary. These initiatives targeted approximately 55 individuals from border, migration and asylum authorities, civil society, academia and the judiciary. In **Trinidad and Tobago**, sensitization activities on international refugee protection were conducted for 88 police officers from Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Vincent, through the use of an online learning platform (Caribbean Basin Initiative). In **Mexico**, partners co-facilitated the first session of the National Training Plan for personnel working with the Mexican Commission to Support Refugees (COMAR). The training included basic concepts of International Refugee Law, concept of age, gender and diversity mainstreaming, and child protection. Partners are also

supporting COMAR with human resources and office expansions to field locations in Palenque, in Southern Mexico, and Monterrey and Tijuana, in the North.

## REGIONAL COORDINATION

As the RMRP is organised around four thematic Areas of Intervention, all containing activities from various sectors, such as protection, health, or shelter, the identification of a leading actor, and the determination of its role and accountabilities are fairly new challenges. The approach currently in use is to imbue the co-leads of the thematic working groups with these responsibilities. The platform is encouraging members of civil society and NGOs to be co-leads of these WG, and bring their local knowledge, experience, and capacity to natively communicate with national partners.

These thematic groups discussed their implementation process, reviewed their work, and strengthened their interactions at its fifth meeting of the Regional Platform on 22 March, together with donors and national/sub-regional platform coordinators. The Support Spaces WG presented its project to pilot Support Spaces in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil. The Information Management WG explained its work on enhancing the Platform's regional reporting tool (ActivityInfo) and discussed monitoring and evaluation frameworks in the region; the GBV WG discussed its current structure and presented several tools that are being translated or prepared for actors in the region; the Communications WG presented the branding and visual identity guides for the Platform and offered an update on the status of the regional anti-xenophobia campaign; the CWC WG presented its current work with developing an application with useful information for persons on the move and how it is employing the U-report in the context of the Venezuelan flows; a draft structure and objectives were presented for the establishment of a CBI WG dealing with cash- and voucher-based initiatives in the region.

Recognisant of the significant needs and funding gaps in the field of education, during the months of March and April, the newly-established Education WG of the Regional Platform, in close collaboration with national and sub-regional platforms, engaged in a regional funding proposal with the Education Cannot Wait Fund. Following an inclusive and transparent selection process, four priority countries were identified (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) for which a detailed proposal will be finalized in May in order for RMRP actors to benefit from an initial financial support of ca. 7 million USD to address education needs of refugee and migrant children and adolescents from Venezuela.

Over the past two months, Eduardo Stein, the UNHCR-IOM Joint Special Representative for Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the region, continued activities in complementary support of the Regional Coordination Platform. In advance of the Quito III meeting of the Quito Process (8-9 April), the JSR assisted in the organization of technical support sessions for governments on issues related to documentation, registration and child protection. Additionally, the JSR mobilized broadened participation in the Quito Process through engagement with countries such as Brazil, Mexico and Panama. More broadly, the JSR continuously engaged high level authorities, public audiences and media to raise awareness and solidarity about the humanitarian needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants and the impact of the crisis on the region. In this sense, he participated in the Spring Meetings of the World Bank in Washington DC and engaged with organisations of civil society and key donors in Colombia to discuss resource mobilisation for the response to persons coming from Venezuela. Furthermore, the JSR was invited to participate in a Security Council session in which he presented an update on the Venezuelan flows and the arising vulnerabilities and needs of further cooperation.

Another element of the regional coordination are the country and sub-region platforms (also at times referred to as Refugee and Migrant Working Groups). They act as the first interlocutor for the regional coordination team and focus on the operational coordination of RMRP activities in each country/sub-region. These platforms are co-chaired by UNHCR and IOM and function as a coordination mechanism that brings together United Nations Country Team (UNCT) member organizations and various governmental, non-governmental, and international organizations, including civil society and/or other international cooperation bodies. They aim to ensure the recognition and protection of refugees and migrants, and an effective and efficient coordinated humanitarian response to their needs.

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