

Venezuela Situation

June 2018

Over **117,300 asylum claims** filed in the first six months of 2018, surpassing the 2017 year-end figure. Peru has become the first country of asylum for Venezuelans.

The **Colombian** Government's mass registration of Venezuelans in the country (RAMV), resulted in the **registration of 442,462 individuals** (253,575 families).

In June, the arrival of Venezuelans at the **Binational Centre of San Miguel** in Ecuador sharply increased from 500 people per week to **400-700 arrivals per day**.

Context

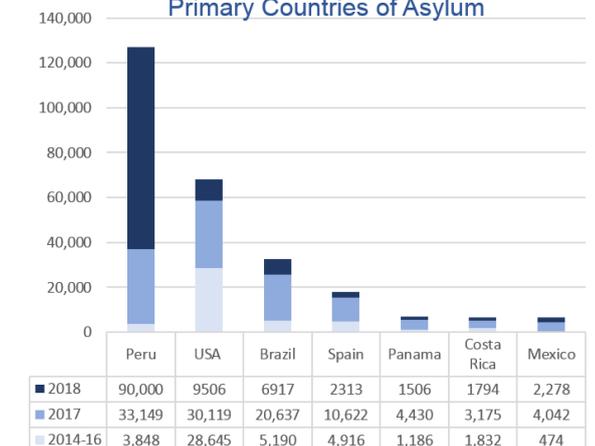
Growing numbers of people continue to leave Venezuela.

While Colombia receives the highest number of arrivals through its border, many Venezuelans are opting to continue their route further south in the continent, at times putting their lives at risk.

The majority of Venezuelans currently arriving to neighbouring countries are nuclear families with young boys and girls, pregnant women, elderly men and women and people with disabilities.



Asylum Applications 2014-18
Primary Countries of Asylum



Brazil

Operational Context

- According to recent figures provided by the Federal Police, about 50,000 Venezuelans are currently in Brazil. An average of 600-700 individuals enter the country every day through the city of Pacaraima, at the Brazil-Venezuela border.
- On June 21, Brazil's President Michel Temer visited the Nova Canaã temporary reception site in Boa Vista, where 403 Venezuelans are located – mostly families with children and single individuals with vulnerabilities. During the visit, President Temer reassured that the Brazilian borders with Venezuela will remain open and signed a law creating a federal committee to coordinate the humanitarian response to any influx of third country nationals, including Venezuelans.
- On June 27, USA Vice-president Mike Pence visited a UNHCR supported temporary shelter for Venezuelans in Manaus. During a public speech, Pence emphasized that the US Government will continue to support Venezuelans who left their country.
- On June 26th and 27th, a **delegation of members of the European Union Parliament** visited Boa Vista and Pacaraima aiming at better understanding the situation of Venezuelans currently living in Roraima. The delegation also visited several reception sites and the recently open screening centre at the border. A similar delegation visited the response provided to Venezuelans in the border of Colombia. As a result of the mission, the EU Parliament passed a resolution on the Venezuela Situation on Thursday 5 July calling the international community for a comprehensive regional response and acknowledging the generosity of the main receiving countries.

UNHCR's response and partnerships

- In order to respond to the increasing Venezuelan influx, a **Reception and Documentation Centre** started operating at the border location of Pacaraima on June 18th. UNHCR and IOM are working together to provide guidance and information to Venezuelans on asylum procedures and other legal forms of stay. UNHCR is carrying out biometric registration at the centre and identifying specific needs.
- From its opening to June 30th, 1,790 individuals (1,278 families) passed by the Centre in Pacaraima. Within this period, 57% of them claimed for asylum. The majority of the registered individuals are single (60%). Considering educational background, 50% had completed secondary school and 13% attended university. UNHCR has identified, registered and referred 141 individuals with specific needs, relocating the most vulnerable cases in available shelters.
- In order to **increase the capacity of the temporary shelters for Venezuelans**, UNHCR is working in the expansion of already available sites and setting up new shelters in Boa Vista. Currently Roraima provides accommodation to 4,071 Venezuelans in nine UNHCR supported shelters despite having a capacity for only 3,220 individuals.
- UNHCR and UNICEF are supporting **children** hosted in two of the UNHCR-supported shelters in Roraima to **enrol in schools**. Currently only 52 out of 160 school aged children are attending school as the education facilities in the area have not enough capacity to absorb Venezuelan students.
- UNHCR and UNFPA finalized a document establishing **referral pathways for cases of Sex and Gender Based Violence (SGBV)** identified at the reception sites welcoming Venezuelans. Information campaigns on sexual and reproductive health will be rolled out at the shelter sites.
- UNHCR led the 4th meeting of the **Indigenous Working Group**, attended by members of the civil society, international organizations and governmental entities. It was the first meeting attended by *aidamos* (indigenous leaders) from the Warao and the Enepa communities. The leaders brought to the group's attention the lack of Brazilian documentation of the Enepa community coming from Venezuela. As an outcome, an exercise to map undocumented members of the community will be rolled out.



UNHCR staff provides orientation to recent arrived Venezuelans in the newly open Screening Centre in the border city of Pacaraima, Brazil.
 © UNHCR/ Revnesson Damasceno

Colombia

Operational context

- **The Colombian Government's mass registration of Venezuelans irregularly present in Colombia (RAMV)** carried out from 6 April to 8 June with joint UNHCR and IOM support, resulted in the registration of 442,462 individuals (253,575 families). Key results show that 27% of the registered Venezuelans are children with 49% of school-age currently enrolled in Colombia's education system. Only 1.1% of all registered Venezuelans are enrolled in the national health system, and 89.40% of all individuals registered expressed their willingness to remain in Colombia. The Colombian authorities have confirmed that all individuals registered will be regularized.
- The results of the registration exercise have led to a new official estimate of the total **number of Venezuelans in Colombia of 819,000 individuals**, which almost triples the 2017 figure (300,000).



UNHCR staff supports the mass registration exercise of Venezuelans in irregular situation conducted by the Colombian Government
 © UNHCR/ Johanna Reina

UNHCR's response and partnerships

- As a result of the registration, the **Colombian Government is establishing sectoral roundtables to address specific needs**. The first one is focusing on children and is already consolidating a network of seven child-friendly spaces across the country; these will be supported by the Mixed Migration Working Group co-led by UNHCR and IOM.
- Two additional **mobile registration units** supported by UNHCR have been put in place in Arauca and La Guajira to ensure access to birth registration and Colombian nationality to individuals born in Venezuela to Colombian parents.
- UNHCR continues supporting the **relocation of the remaining 55 indigenous Yukpa** to a safe and culturally-appropriate settlement. Last month, the community was victim of an attack by members of an unidentified armed group in Colombia which led to the forced displacement of most of the group. Over 350 individuals have been prompted to return to Venezuela.
- UNHCR is coordinating the response of the **Argentinean White Helmets deployed** to deliver basic health assistance at the Simón Bolívar Bridge, the main border crossing point with Venezuela.. UNHCR has provided operational and financial support for the commencement of their actions to ensure a quick response.
- The **number of Venezuelans leaving to Ecuador has increased significantly since the start of the year** with over 315,000 Venezuelans leaving Colombia through the Rumichaca border crossing in the first half of 2018, compared to 230,000 in the whole of 2017. A daily average of 2,500 individuals cross every day, while the current capacity of the border centre was only meant for 800 to 1,200 individuals crossing per day. UNHCR is working on both sides of the border with the authorities and key partners to ensure availability of basic services and the development of infrastructure to ensure safe transit for Venezuelans, including healthcare, protection, WASH facilities, safe spaces for children and speedier case to processing.

Ecuador

Operational Context

- Venezuelans now constitute the first national group seeking asylum in Ecuador with over 5,129 Venezuelans who have sought asylum since 2016. Between January and June of 2018, 4,003 asylum claims have been registered, with 1,000 claims lodged in June alone.

UNHCR response and partnerships

- The arrival of Venezuelan nationals at the **Binational Centre of San Miguel** in Sucumbíos sharply increased from 500 people per week to 400-700 arrivals per day, some 12% being children. As a result of the influx, migration controls might take up to 48 hours forcing hundreds of people to sleep outside near the centre on a daily basis. UNHCR and partners are providing basic assistance including drinking water, food, non-food items and relevant information on site. In addition, persons with specific needs, mainly lactating and pregnant women, are transferred to UNHCR supported shelters in Lago Agrio and Guayaquil.
- At the **Rumichaca International Bridge**, the influx remains relatively stable with an average of 2,500 entries daily. Six buses with around 250 people are leaving daily to Huaquillas, at the southern border with Peru and one bus departs every ten or twenty minutes towards Quito. Provision of information is being reinforced through the Human Mobility Roundtable, led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in coordination with UN agencies and NGOs. The use of information tools such as visual display units and guidelines is being implemented, especially in regards to travel routes, costs, and information on the asylum procedure and other legal stay arrangements. With the support of UNHCR, the Pastoral Social is providing free daily lunch to approximately 200 persons.
- Venezuelans arriving in Ecuador continue receiving assistance from UNHCR and its partners through cash based interventions to cover food, emergency shelter, medicine and transportation needs.
- A **US BPRM delegation** led by Mrs. Nancy Jackson, Deputy Assistant Secretary, visited UNHCR operations in Peru and Ecuador. BPRM representatives expressed appreciation for the positive work done and praised UNHCR's collaboration with governmental stakeholders, operational partners and IOM.

Peru

Operational Context

- According to official figures, over 350,000 Venezuelan nationals have entered Peru to date. The majority of Venezuelans enter through the northern border with Ecuador with an average of 1,500 daily entries during June.
- Peru has become the first country of asylum for Venezuelans in the region with 126,997 claims filed since 2014. As of May 2018, 292 Venezuelans had been recognized as refugees.
- In addition, some 46,000 Venezuelans have obtained the PTP Special Stay Permit (PTP).

UNHCR response and partnership

- The **protection monitoring exercise** of Venezuelans in Lima (1,115 surveys) showed that 40% of the respondents have applied for asylum and 17% have a legal form of stay (*Permiso Temporal de Permanencia*; PTP). 46% of the respondents indicated that they are travelling with their family and 96% intend to stay in Peru. 90% arrived through land, 60% of which travelled directly to Peru, while 40% stayed at least a month in Colombia and/or Ecuador. When asked about the reasons for departure, 56% insecurity in their home town.
- At the **Binational Border Assistance Centre in Tumbes**, UNHCR and partners continue to deliver humanitarian assistance to persons with specific needs, including drinking water, hygiene kits, recreational kits for children, and babies' kits, as well as legal orientation and health assistance.
- 16 organizations including civil society and government institutions committed to join the **Regional Safe Spaces Network** led by UNHCR.
- As part of the efforts to **provide livelihood opportunities** to Venezuelans in Peru and following UNHCR's advocacy, the Regional Director of Education in Tumbes agreed to promote access of Venezuelans to vocational training and alternative education programmes regardless of their legal status.
- Within the **World Refugee Day** activities, UNHCR and its partner organized a fair in a district in Lima with dense Venezuelan population, offering legal orientation and inviting local institutions to provide basic services. Refugee entrepreneurs had the opportunity to sell their products. In Tumbes, a community integration event took place, where Venezuelans and Peruvians played sports and games and in Tacna, children led a parade to call attention to the rights of refugees.

- UNHCR co-leads the **Refugees and Migrants Working Group** (GTRM by its Spanish acronym), comprised by UN Agencies, international and national NGOs, to strengthen the coordination of the national response for the Venezuelan population in Peru. Within the efforts to harmonize a comprehensive strategy, 40 representatives from UN Agencies, NGOs and governmental institutions participated in the contingency planning exercise organised by UNHCR and IOM. UNHCR and IOM have also been supporting the first **Multi-sectorial Working Group in Tumbes** led by the regional government to promote an effective coordination and prepare a local contingency plan. Existing services and protection gaps were identified, and the first response mapping exercise has taken place.



UNHCR and IOM signed an agreement to provide joint humanitarian assistance to Venezuelans in Peru.
 © UNHCR/ Regina de la Portilla

Mexico

Operational Context

- On 20 June, in the context of World Refugee Day, the Mexican Secretary of Interior, Alfonso Navarrete, announced the issuance of a provisional National Population registration Number (CURP) to asylum seekers. This is expected to widen access to health care, education, other public programmes and employment opportunities.
- Recent official figures indicate that at least **784 Venezuelans were denied entry at Mexican airports during January-March 2018**. This reflects a significant increase of 86 per cent compared to the 421 Venezuelans who were reportedly denied entry during the same time period of time in 2017.
- UNHCR welcomed the flexible approach adopted by the Mexican authorities who processed the release from detention of 16 Venezuelans this month some without having their asylum-seeker certificates beforehand, a mandatory requirement.

UNHCR's response and partnerships

- In 2018, over 280 Venezuelans have been assisted by UNHCR and its partner Programa Casa Refugiados (PCR) in Mexico City, of which 272 have received **cash-based assistance**. In addition, UNHCR continues providing legal assistance to Venezuelans arriving in Mexico.
- UNHCR continues delivering **training to immigration officials on international protection needs**, focusing on the procedures to allow access to territory to people arriving at airports and expressing fear of return to their country of origin. Trainings also explained the duty to provide information on asylum and to refer asylum seekers to the Mexican Refugee Commission (COMAR by its Spanish acronym) in order to prevent *refoulement*.

Costa Rica

Operational Context

- From 1 January to 4 July a total of 1,975 new asylum claims have been lodged by Venezuelan nationals. The exponential increase of Nicaraguan nationals filing their asylum claims in June has led to longer waiting times to present asylum claims.

UNHCR's response and partnerships

- The preliminary findings from a **monitoring survey** conducted from April to June 2018 indicate that 82% of the respondents arrived to Costa Rica through an international airport and 99% expressed their willingness to stay in the country. When asked about the access to services, 63% of the respondents consider access to education good, 71% consider access to health good or acceptable and 24% find access to work challenging with only 24% describing it as good.

Panama

Operational Context

- According to the figures published by the National Migration Service (SNM), 9,850 Venezuelans entered the country during the month of June. During the same period, 19,723 Venezuelans left Panama; amount that doubles the previous months (9,330 – monthly average).
- The SNM informed that, as of June 4, a pre appointment system was made available at the Panamanian Consulate in Venezuela for those seeking a tourist visa. After registering personal information, the system will notify if the appointment is granted or not, as well as the date of the appointment at the Consulate. According to the SNM, the system will provide an estimate of the number of Venezuelans that are willing to travel to Panama.
- In April, over 500 residency permits were cancelled due to the forged documentation submitted as a result of a fraud scheme. 90% of those affected are Venezuelans. The SNM announced that foreigners that had their permits cancelled can re-apply for a temporary permit.

UNHCR's response and partnerships

- IPSOS has been selected to conduct **the joint UNHCR-IOM profiling**. The data collection will take place from mid-July to mid-August and the questionnaire will be based on IOM's DTM form and include protection questions.
- UNHCR and its legal partner, the Norwegian Refugee Council, held a **training workshop for the lawyers of the Panamanian Office for the Attention of Refugees** (ONPAR by its Spanish acronym) on how to obtain and analyse country of origin information. The objective of this workshop was to strengthen the knowledge of the ONPAR lawyers on how to assess and analyse information about the situation in Venezuela and its application for refugee status determination cases.

Southern Caribbean

Operational Context

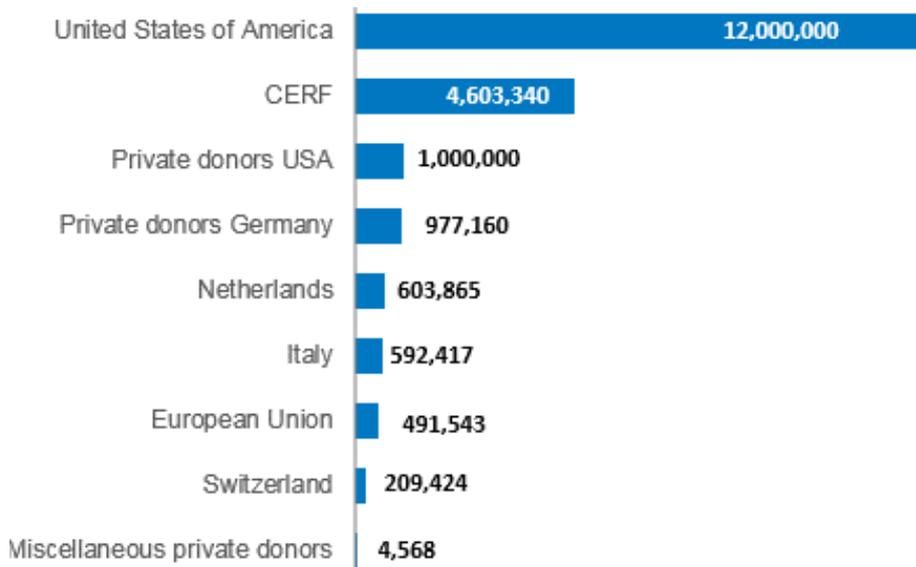
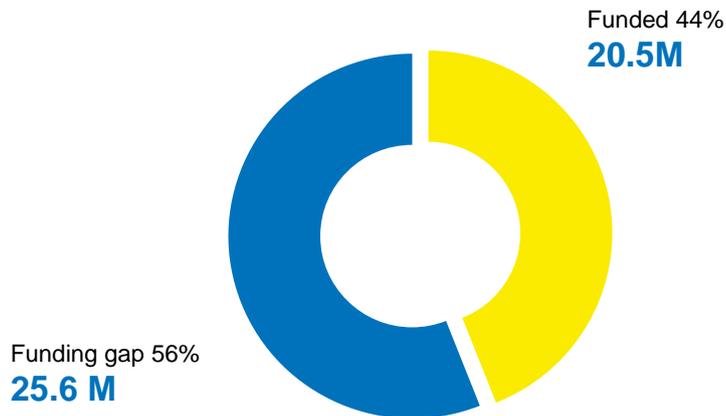
- Following negotiations between Aruban experts and the authorities of the Venezuelan Falcon state, the decision was taken to re-open the maritime border between Venezuela and Aruba, indicating that stricter controls will take place and all boats that import goods from Venezuela will need to receive approval from the Venezuelan authorities.

UNHCR's response and partnerships

- UNHCR continues to coordinate closely with Governments and partners in the region to provide technical support for the development or strengthening of asylum procedures, capacity-building and referral mechanisms for persons with specific protection needs.
- UNHCR and the Government of **Aruba** completed a joint mapping exercise on services and programs available related to employment and livelihoods, health, social and psychosocial support, legal services, education, SGBV prevention and response, and housing. The results of the mapping exercise will serve as a basis for community-based protection activities in Aruba, and will particularly inform the identification of gaps and obstacles to accessing services.
- UNHCR is working closely with its partner in **Guyana**, the Venezuela Support Group (VSG), which was established by civil society organizations in May 2018, by identifying a VSG staff to be stationed at one of the main border entry points in Region 2, Charity. This VSG staff will conduct outreach work and will keep arriving Venezuelans informed on their regularization options including the *Permiso Temporal de Permanencia* (PTP, a temporary residence permit), identify victims of human trafficking, and gather information on new arrivals and departures.
- As an integral part of its community-based protection strategy in **Trinidad and Tobago**, UNHCR is implementing the Community Outreach Members (COM) initiative to expand outreach to persons of concern and assist with identifying and delivering assistance to persons with specific needs. Since May 2018, UNHCR has conducted training and induction workshops for 19 POCs who serve as COMs.
- UNHCR and partners organized several events and awareness-raising activities in commemoration of World Refugee Day (20 June). In Trinidad and Tobago, activities included a Children's Activity Day, a screening of the documentary "Human Flow," a workshop for journalists, and a panel discussion on refugee rights chaired by the Law Faculty of the University of West Indies. In the Dominican Republic, UNHCR and partners held community events, awareness-raising activities, and academic presentations.

Funding Update

Total recorded contributions for the operation amount to **US\$ 20.5 million** as of 11 July 2018, covering **44%** of overall needs for Venezuelans in the region. A total of **US\$ 46 M** requested for the Venezuela situation.



UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to the Venezuela Situation Supplementary Appeal as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds.

For more information:

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