

27 MARCH 2020

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

4.9M 4.1M



FUNDING SITUATION\*

2%

FUNDED: 24.2 M  
REQUIREMENTS: 1.3 BN

## Situation

On 25 March, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres launched the [COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan \(GHRP\)](#). The GHRP seeks 2 billion US\$ for humanitarian activities to address the impact of COVID-19 globally. The Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) is a distinct part of this global response and is noted as such in the GHRP.

**With the ongoing spread of Covid-19, countries amplified their measures to contain the virus by limiting the movement of their populations.** The impact on refugees and migrants with most countries in the region having closed their borders is severe, as they may risk denial of access to territories without alternate protection safeguards in place, and potential *refoulement*. With irregular border crossings continuing, isolated humanitarian corridors have been kept open between Venezuela and Colombia for those suffering chronic or severe medical conditions. Movement restrictions intended to prevent the spread of COVID-19 also impact the ability of R4V partners to maintain their operations, especially in the provision of shelter, NFI distribution, provision of services, including in Support Spaces and access to communal kitchens.

**Many refugees and migrants from Venezuela face stigmatization and negative perceptions from host communities, associated with a fear of spreading the virus.** An increase in the prevalence of xenophobia and discrimination has been noticed. Refugees and migrants, particularly those in irregular situations, are at a continued high risk of being left out of national responses. Those relying on daily incomes and working in informal labour sectors, are increasingly unable to meet their basic needs (notably shelter, food and healthcare) as a consequence of movement restrictions in place.

## Platforms' Responses\*\*

**Through its Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform,** is coordinating the COVID-19 response for refugees and migrants from Venezuela in the region. Working with WHO/PAHO, Regional Sectors and members of the Regional Platform provide regional guidance on adapting modalities of work to ensure continuity of delivery of life-saving aid and cash assistance (available in a dedicated section of R4V.info), while identifying areas for priority interventions and providing crucial information to refugees and migrants from Venezuela.

**In Colombia, the Inter-Agency Group for Mixed Migration Flows (GIFMM), in coordination with PAHO/WHO, is providing flash updates, guidelines and other relevant information on COVID-19.** Partners are modifying critical services to continue the provision of life-saving activities, while following PAHO-WHO recommendations and movement restrictions by authorities. Exceptional arrangements were granted to humanitarian workers during the 19 days of quarantine. Coordination is ongoing to update changes in shelters and other services that have been closed or restricted, in order make them COVID-19 compliant.

**In Brazil, the COVID-19 contingency plan of the *Operação Acolhida* was finalized with the support of the Platform.** The plan foresees the establishment of a new field hospital in Boa Vista with a capacity to host up to 2,200 individuals suffering from the virus. The plan also foreseen an enhancement of WASH facilities in all shelters and other key locations.

**The Platform in Ecuador (*Grupo de Trabajo para Refugiados y Migrantes, GTRM*) is mapping partners' activities and capacities in response to the COVID-19 situation.** Coordination efforts are ongoing to focus activities on prioritized areas of the COVID-19 response. With borders closed, many refugees and migrants are now stranded in Ecuador and cannot continue their journey and therefore face higher risks of homelessness.

**In Peru, the Platform (GTRM) is supporting emergency preparedness efforts and reprioritization activities** for the COVID-19 situation. Prioritized activities are in the areas of protection, shelter, CBI, health, nutrition and food security. Partners are also identifying work opportunities for Venezuelans in the response, such as with health professionals, teleoperators, etc. Where shelters require urgent food provisions and WASH improvements to ensure compliance with emergency sanitary policies, partners are delivering food and hygiene kits, while providing COVID-19 orientations in Lima, Tumbes and Tacna.

**The Caribbean Sub-regional Platform is supporting preparedness plans and responses developed to contain the spread of the COVID-19.** R4V actors are adapting the delivery of assistance (prioritizing food and hygiene kits), while also providing much needed psychosocial support to refugees and migrants.

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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.

In **Central America and Mexico**, partners are **modifying the delivery of assistance (e.g. prioritizing cash and NFIs) to respond to the COVID-19 situation**. Activities supporting livelihoods or registration, counselling and cash distribution in the sub-region are adjusted and conducted in alignment with WHO/PAHO recommendations.

The **Sub-regional Platform in the Southern Cone** is **conducting assessments of needs and capacities of partners**. Based thereon R4V partners have prioritized shelter solutions, NFIs, food assistance and cash-based interventions to the most vulnerable refugees and migrants in border areas and in urban centres, where the majority of them are located.

In **Chile**, partners of the Platform are **prioritizing humanitarian assistance (shelter, food, NFI) that can be distributed to those in need**. The Platform is also enhancing access to relevant medical services for refugees, migrants and vulnerable Chileans. Efforts are ongoing to directly support authorities in the response, with a view to containing the spread of the virus amongst refugee and migrant communities in Chile.

## Regional Sectors\*\*

The Regional **Health Sector** developed **key recommendations on the COVID-19 response for refugees and migrants that were distributed to regional and national sectors**. The Sector is prioritizing its assistance to national levels, so that national and international organizations continue to maintain health needs atop their priorities.

The Regional **Shelter/NFI and Humanitarian Transportation Sectors** are **prioritizing guidance on distributions and market-based interventions for NFIs, as well as measures to implement isolation and enhancing WASH facilities within shelters**, using CBIs for temporary accommodation solutions, e.g. in hotels. For transportation, where operations are still running, the Sectors are advising on enhanced WASH measures prior to and during journeys. The Sectors are also developing and disseminating sector-specific messages to platforms for use in camp-like settings, distribution sites and transport terminals.

The Regional **Food Security Sector** is **advising on adapted response modalities** for partners to ensure vulnerable populations continue receiving assistance. Some partners are considering take-home rations instead of school meals, or cash instead of in-kind modalities. The Sector is also monitoring food prices to assess the impact on food security and adapt transfer values where needed. Advocacy with authorities and technical assistance are also ongoing to include vulnerable Venezuelans in national social protection systems. Levels of food insecurity are expected to increase due to the lack of income impacting disproportionately refugees and migrants.

The Regional **WASH Sector** is **prioritizing the communication of risks of COVID-19 and the promotion of hygiene practices among refugees and migrants**. Having observed an increased need for cleaning and hygiene products as well handwashing facilities in shelters and receiving hubs, the Sector is also coordinating the provision of hand sanitizers to households, communal spaces and handwashing facilities in public spaces. Access to water and hygiene supplies continues to be a critical gap for people on the move.

The Regional **Education Sector** is **developing guidance to maintain continuity of education services** for refugees and migrants through alternative non-formal education programmes. As of 26 March, schools were closed in 32 countries in the region with over 159 million children in the region affected. The Sector is compiling good practices concerning flexible home-based learning delivered through on-line platforms, radio and TV.

The Regional **Protection Sector** is **working to activate virtual channels and hotlines to maintain assistance and legal orientation to refugees and migrants**. The Sector is developing a factsheet concerning the impact of the COVID-19 situation and related changes of activities, highlighting disruption of services and potential threats to the safety and dignity of refugees and migrants. Key protection messages and a collection of good institutional practices towards refugees and migrants have been produced and will be disseminated. The **GBV** and **Child Protection** Sub-Sectors are also monitoring the situation as many women are now confined with abusive partners, vulnerable to sexual exploitation, assault and to other forms of GBV, with a direct impact on children. Negative coping mechanisms are rising due to social distancing and lack of income generating activities leading to increased homelessness. **Human trafficking & smuggling** is expected to increase as borders are closed and organized crime networks may take advantage of the situation. The Sub-Sector is preparing key messages for authorities and stakeholders about trafficking & smuggling risks linked to the implementation of COVID-19 measures.

**Employment opportunities for refugees and migrants, in both formal and informal sectors, are reducing due to movement restrictions**. The **Integration** Sector developed key messages on workers' rights in the current context and is promoting good practices adopted by authorities in the region to facilitate the integration of foreign health professionals in the response.