

LABOR MARKET ACCESS AND INTEGRATION

A KEY ELEMENT FOR LIVELIHOODS AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS AND POPULATIONS COMING FROM VENEZUELA

The dynamics of the armed conflict in Colombia have left around **9 million** victims since 1985, of which around 7 million are considered to be subject to attention and reparation for the victimising acts contemplated by law. This includes cases of forced displacement, homicide, forced disappearance, crimes against sexual freedom, torture, kidnapping, illegal recruitment of minors, among others. Since 2016, following the signing of the peace agreement with the FARC, 652,141 victims of internal displacement have been identified. In addition to the above, it is estimated that more than **4 million Venezuelans** have fled their country, of which 1.742.927 are in Colombian territory. The arrival of such a large number of Venezuelans in Colombia, together with the commitments made by the national government in the peace agreements, has posed multiple challenges for the country.

In this regard, a key element in strengthening the livelihoods of UNHCR's persons of concern is to ensure **the right to work legally and free from any kind of labor discrimination**, whether as formal employees or as entrepreneurs. On the one hand, guaranteeing the Venezuelan population their right to work is essential; if they can work legally, they will be able to provide for themselves and the need for direct humanitarian assistance will be reduced. In addition, they will be able to contribute to the Colombian economy through tax payments, generate higher levels of demand and an increase in economic productivity. On the other hand, if internally displaced persons have greater job opportunities, this will not only **reduce the high rates of informality, but also reduce incentives to engage in work that increases their protection risks**, for example, involuntary involvement in illegal armed groups, child exploitation, survival sex and/or human trafficking, among others.

In the current context of COVID-19, **the income generation and livelihoods of displaced persons, as well as refugees and migrants coming from Venezuela, have been severely affected**. Against this backdrop, UNHCR is working with partners and government entities to improve the response to the pandemic and ensure the safety of all workers.



Venezuelans arriving at Las Delicias. UNHCR/ Rolón,M

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KEY FIGURES

690.998

Victims of forced displacement between 2016 and 2020 recognized by the National Registry of Victims (RUV in Spanish)

1.7 million

Of Venezuelan refugees and migrants estimated to be present in Colombia, the majority of whom are in need of international protection.

759.584

Venezuelans are in the country on a regular basis, so they can work legally. Many face discrimination, xenophobia and exploitation in their workplaces.

UNHCR RESPONSE

WORKING WITH PARTNERS TO PROMOTE ACCESS TO DECENT WORK

UNHCR builds partnerships with key actors such as the Ministry of Labor, the Public Employment Service (PES), the National Apprenticeship Service (SENA), Family Compensation Funds, employment agencies, banks, employers and industries, trade union groups and UN agencies.

- UNHCR supports and works with the Ministry of Labor in Colombia to promote the inclusion of Venezuelan nationals in the labor market and their regularization through the Special Permit to Stay for the Promotion of Formalization (PEPFF).
- UNHCR leads the Financial Inclusion Working Group of the Socioeconomic and Cultural Integration Subgroup of the GIFMM, where it coordinates with allies and partners in the sector concrete actions to promote and facilitate the financial inclusion of the Venezuelan population.
- UNHCR together with IOM and ILO are conducting a labor market study on the labor demand and educational offer available for refugees and migrants from Venezuela in the following cities: Medellín, Barranquilla, Bogotá, Cucuta, Cali and Bucaramanga.

Reaching out to the private sector to promote employment of refugees and migrants coming from Venezuela.

- UNHCR Colombia has established a working relationship with several companies such as Sierra Nevada, Sunshine Bouquets, Hoteles Estelar, Red Cotelco Bogotá-Cundinamarca, Teleperformance and WeWork, as part of their commitment to hire and include our persons of concern.
- UNHCR in collaboration with the Foundation of the National Association of Colombian Businessmen (ANDI in Spanish) launched the white pages directory "Se le Tiene Refugiados y Migrantes", which compiles information on refugee and migrant entrepreneurship throughout the country with the purpose of disseminating it among affiliated companies.

Incorporating workplace themes in UNHCR's anti-xenophobia campaign 'Somos Panas Colombia'

- UNHCR is developing videos and other tools for the #WorkingTogether sub-campaign to promote labour and economic integration of the Venezuelan population:
<https://somospanascolegia.com/trabajando-juntos/>

CIFRAS CLAVES

29.095 employees in RUTEC

Venezuelans have a work contract and are registered on the platform of the Single Registry of Foreign Workers in Colombia set up by the Ministry of Labor.

85.797 in PILA

Venezuelans registered in the PILA social security contributions system.

969 trained employers

Belonging to the corporate sector and the financial and banking sector.

147 supported entrepreneurships

Of internally displaced populations in the framework of international cooperation projects.



UNHCR staff visiting income generation projects and entrepreneurship initiatives in the Villa Rosas community, Mocoa (Putumayo). UNHCR/Lina Guarnizo.

Raising awareness of the right of Venezuelans to work formally

- UNHCR, together with the Tent Partnership for Refugees, HIAS and the Ministry of Labor, launched the first guide for the recruitment of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, with the aim of orienting employers in all recruitment and employment processes.
- UNHCR, ILO, Ministry of Labor, Public Employment Service, SENA, PADF, Compensar and Fundación Corona launched the orientation guide for refugees and migrants from Venezuela, with the aim of guiding them in their search for employment in the country.



Livelihoods in the field

'I am no longer worried about money because the money from my entrepreneurship has even allowed me to study'. This is the story of Marlid Meléndez Holanda, a 52-year-old victim of forced displacement who has been living in the department of Putumayo for 24 years and is part of the project "Consolidating peace in Colombia by supporting lasting solutions for victims of forced displacement in informal settlements". She left her house because of an imminent risk of landslide, so she and her family had to be relocated in order to guarantee them access to the rights of victims of forced displacement.



'I was relocated seven years ago, when El Paraíso neighborhood was in a risk zone in Villa Rosa, and in 2014 they moved us here'. Meléndez says that it was difficult for her to have to leave her home, one day pack all her belongings and, together with her children, move to this new place in order to preserve her life. This is how in 2018, thanks to the project developed between KOICA and UNHCR, her livelihoods were strengthened through the activation of entrepreneurship and strengthening of productive activities. **'I started the project with 100 chickens, 50 that I had initially and another 50 that were given to me within the project with other implements for chicken feed'**.

In Marlid's case, the project's support allowed her to provide economic stability to her household, giving her children the opportunity to enter higher education. **'Before, if I had enough for rent, I didn't have enough for food'** she says, **'now I have finished high school and I am going to study social work'**. Marlid's testimony adds to those stories of economic inclusion among communities prioritized in solutions, promoting independence, self-sufficiency, recognition, and effective enjoyment of rights of UNHCR's people of interest.

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