COLOMBIA OPERATIONAL UPDATE

Colombia

January-February 2022

Colombia’s Migration Authority provided more than 500,000 Temporary Protection Permits (TPPs) to Venezuelan refugees and migrants since January 2022.

UNHCR donated biometric equipment to the 15 mobile units (4x4 cars) previously handed over to Colombia’s Migration Authority to promote access to the Temporary Protection Status (TPS).

UNHCR launched the “Financial inclusion handbook for refugees and migrants”, an inter-agency initiative in the framework of the “Somos Panas Colombia” anti-xenophobia campaign.

FIGURES

2,013,333
Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants in Colombia in process of regularization

147,564
Persons affected by new internal displacements in 2021

24,686
Persons affected by confinements in 2021

709,211
Persons affected by internal displacements since the 2016 Peace Agreement

Source: Government of Colombia

Operational Context

Colombia’s Migration Authority (Migración Colombia) – the main implementing body of the Temporary Protection Status (TPS) for Venezuelans (TPS) – delivered during the months of January and February 2022 Temporary Protection Permits (TPPs) to over 500,000 Venezuelan refugees and migrants. These permits give Venezuelans a 10-year protection status and enable them to access basic rights, education, health services, labour market, as well as socio-economic policies that pave the way for a sustainable integration.

Moreover, more than 1,300,000 Venezuelan refugees and migrants conducted their bio-metric registration to access the TPS and over 2 million people already registered to access the TPS, surpassing the initial target of 1.8 million refugees and migrants – as of March 2022.

UNHCR and partners, in close coordination with the local GIFMMs (Inter-Agency Mixed Migration Flows Group), supported Migración Colombia in setting-up registration points (“Puntos Visibles”), particularly in urban centers of rural municipalities throughout the country to foster the registration of the hard-to-reach population. Massive registration days were organized to facilitate a broader access to the TPS, resulting in an exponential increase of bio-metric registrations and permits handed-out.

In parallel, UNHCR continues to work with the Government to strengthen the asylum system both with human resources and equipment with the aim of processing the caseload of 29,000 asylum claims.

Temporary Protection Permits for Venezuelans (TPPs) "March 15", 2022.

2 million
Pre-registrations in RUMV

1,388,614
Bio-metrics registrations (69%)

553,567
Permits issued (plastic cards) (27.6%)

Source: Visibles - Migración Colombia (migracioncolombia.gov.co)
POPULATION TRENDS

Border population movements between Colombia and Venezuela continued with entries slightly decreasing; most formal entries in La Guajira, Norte de Santander and Arauca represent pendular and trade related movements but there are also irregular daily entries, which generally are higher than the regular movements registered. The GFMN registered less people on the road (“caminantes”) due to the “paro armado” or armed strike announced by the ELN-National Liberation Army; their main destination is Ipiales (44%) followed by three major Colombian cities: Bogotá, Medellín and Cali, as well as Florida Blanca in Santander.

The border between Colombia and Ecuador was re-opened on December 15th, 2021 and all people transiting need to show their COVID-19 vaccination card. However, as Venezuelans are required a visa to enter Ecuadorian territory, most opt to cross through informal border points (“trochas”). As there are more than 47 trochas guided by smugglers (“coyotes”), individuals crossing are exposed to significant protection risks.

UNHCR continued to monitor the mixed movements of population between Colombia and Panama. According to the Panamanian authorities, a total of 8,456 people transited the Darian region irregularly in January and February the main nationalities being Venezuelans (2,497 or 29%), followed by Haitians (13%), Senegalese and Cubans.

According to UNHCR monitoring, as of February 28th, 11,099 people, or 3,639 families, have been uprooted since the start of 2022 by 28 large-group displacement events due to confrontations between illegal armed groups. The Afro-Colombian population was the most affected population group; the departments concerned were Nariño (8), Chocó (7), Valle del Cauca (4), Norte de Santander (2), Putumayo (2), Cauca (2), Arauca (2), and Antioquia (1).

In addition, during the same period, more than 35,715 people, or 8,399 families, have been confined in 11 events, the great majority in Chocó, affecting both indigenous people and Afro-Colombians, but also in Valle del Cauca and Arauca.

UNHCR Response

MAIN ACTIVITIES

COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITIES

Together with the Norwegian Refugee Council, UNHCR in August 2021 rolled-out a single toll-free call centre – Línea de Atención Nacional-LAN (#675) – with countrywide coverage to increase access to trustworthy information about rights and services for refugees, particularly access to the TPS, and internally displaced persons. Tasked with 42 agents, the LAN is also a means to identify persons with specific needs and refer them to adequate and specialized services.
UNHCR with the support of UNDP, IOM and ILO launched the “Financial inclusion handbook for refugees and migrants”, an inter-agency initiative in the framework of the “Somos Pana Colombid” anti-xenophobia campaign. This handbook is meant to provide basic financial education to Venezuelan refugees and migrants and promote effective access to financial institutions and products, such as banks and credits.

Additionally, UNHCR and partners continue with the orientation, registration and identification of vulnerable profiles in PRIMES through the LAN and Information and Orientation Centers (PAOs) (more than 100 registration points) registering a total of 48,489 people during the months of January and February. The total number of people registered since 2018 is 555,558, 91% of whom are Venezuelan refugees and migrants. The great majority of people identify legal protection as their main protection need, and almost a third express having unmet basic needs; 20% do not possess adequate legal documentation.

UNHCR together with IOM, co-leads the Inter-Agency Mixed Migration Flows Group (GIFMM in Spanish), which includes 75 members, UN agencies, international and local NGOs and members of the Red Cross movement. Its main objective is to coordinate the response to the needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, Colombian returnees, and the host population in a complementary manner with the Government.

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