

10 AUG 2020



Situation

The COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictive measures in place to combat it have continued to exacerbate the already vulnerable situation of refugees and migrants from Venezuela. In **Brazil**, entry restrictions were extended until the end of August and the restrictions on the entrance of Venezuelans remain, meaning that they will be at risk of deportation or repatriation and will not have access to documentation issued to regularly entered Venezuelans. In **Colombia** the national mandatory preventive isolation has been extended twice during the month. There is an increase of COVID-19 cases throughout **Ecuador**, where several cantons have returned to high alert status, and Quito is dealing with shortages of beds in the hospitals' intensive care units. In **Peru**, increased cases of human trafficking for sexual exploitation were identified in several cities in the country, increasing concerns over protection risks. In the Dominican Republic, heightened numbers of infections prompted a 45-day curfew and closure of land borders with Haiti. While **Uruguay** and **Paraguay** have managed to keep contagion at bay, **Argentina** and **Bolivia** continued to see an increase in COVID-19 cases, with public health facilities close to exceeding their capacities.

The situation of thousands of people living in remote areas along the Amazon river, between **Colombia, Brazil and Peru**, rises serious concerns about their access to prevention and health services, affecting especially Venezuelan indigenous peoples in those areas. Increasingly high COVID-19 mortality rates, chronic child malnutrition, high maternal mortality rates, malaria, dengue and a lack of support pose severe risks to this population. With most borders being closed, facilities to lodge asylum applications or other migration procedures are elusive (some services are being processed through on-line platforms). Prolonged confinement measures in some countries are causing an increase in gender-based violence (GBV) and abuse.

Platforms' Response**

In **Brazil**, on 21 July, R4V partners collected information on needs in two communities in the municipality of **Amajari, Roraima**. The visits served to understand Venezuelans' situation, especially in the indigenous community *3 Corações*, where some 80 Venezuelans currently reside. During the month, R4V partners supported Brazilian authorities with the enrolment of refugees and migrants in the *Sistema Acolhedor*, with 214 new entries and 351 updates for different interiorization modalities. The activity aims at registering all refugees and migrants living in Boa Vista into the governmental database, while also identifying potential family groups that meet the criteria for other types of internal relocation within Brazil.

R4V partners in **Chile** conducted needs assessments of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, including on emergency and mid- to long-term needs and perspectives, as well as on possible return intentions. Partners continued providing assistance such as NFIs, food and hygiene items to refugees and migrants from Venezuela in Santiago.

In **Colombia**, the *Grupo Interagencial para Flujos Migratorios Mixtos'* (GIFMM) priority was to guarantee preventative isolation of refugees and migrants through in-kind and multipurpose cash response for NFI, food, WASH and infrastructure. The GIFMM also continued supporting the government-run Center for Sanitary Care (*Centro de Atención Sanitaria Transitoria* – CAST, in Spanish), which is located at the Tienditas International Bridge in Norte de Santander, through the provision of temporary shelters, WASH, health and protection services to the refugee and migrant population awaiting to return to Venezuela. In addition, R4V partners monitored refugees and migrants at risk of eviction and prioritized assistance to those already evicted.

The *Grupo de Trabajo para Refugiados y Migrantes (GTRM)* in **Ecuador** throughout July increased its delivery of food assistance, NFIs, hygiene kits and COVID-19 protection kits, cash transfers for basic needs and protection interventions. A rise in informal border crossings to Colombia was reported, exposing Venezuelans to increasing protection risks. R4V partners supported Venezuelans with the humanitarian visa registration process which has been extended to mid-August.

In **Peru**, the GTRM has been prioritizing the shelter response by supporting communal shelters throughout the country, hosting refugees and migrants since before the pandemic, as well as providing temporary accommodation for those who have been evicted. The heightened risk of Venezuelan women and girls falling victim to human trafficking for sexual exploitation has led the GTRM to work with regional authorities to develop the capacities of local key actors to identify, refer

For more information, please contact: Philippe Sacher: sacher@unhcr.org | Tim Howe: thowe@iom.int

* 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.

and protect victims and potential victims of human trafficking. Furthermore, the GTRM supported the registration of births among refugee and migrants from Venezuela where the birth registration service only recognizes nationals.

In the Caribbean sub-region, R4V partners enhanced food distribution and temporary shelter to support refugees and migrants. Enhanced containment measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, such as screening and temperature testing at entry points throughout the sub-region were also expanded. In Aruba, R4V partners monitored the situation of several refugees and migrants held in immigration detention for up to five months in overcrowded conditions, leading to several protests throughout the month of July.

In Central America and Mexico, R4V partners, in collaboration with the national health authorities, supported the access of refugees and migrants to national medical insurance, psychological assistance and food kits to Venezuelan refugees and migrants. In Costa Rica, during the month of July, COVID-19 contagion rates and hospitalization rates dramatically increased. In Mexico, the rollout of the universal health system (INSABI) significantly improved access to health services for refugees and migrants since the beginning of 2020. In parallel, an increase of requests for voluntary return has been observed during the reporting period. In Panama, the government requested the assistance of foreign doctors, to complement the national workforce in fighting the pandemic. As a result, refugees and migrants who meet the generally applicable requirements and who can authenticate their documents will be considered.

In the Southern Cone, R4V partners in Paraguay and Uruguay, where quarantine measures have been relaxed, engaged more actively in socio-economic integration activities for refugees and migrants from Venezuela, including micro-entrepreneurship support, workshops and dissemination of job vacancies.

Regional Sectors**

The Regional Education Sector advanced with the development of regional activities supporting regional and national actors to reestablish education services in the region. These include guidance to adapt the curriculum to the COVID-19 crisis and an online teachers' course to respond to educational needs arising during and post-pandemic.

Members of the Regional Health Sector continued the implementation of public health measures at the points of entry to prevent, detect and care cases of COVID-19 among returnees. In addition, Sector members ensured access to essential health services and resuming regular healthcare services for refugees and migrants through national public health programmes that were discontinued during the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Regional Integration Sector monitored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region's economies and employment situation. It is estimated that the pandemic will increase unemployment in Latin America and the Caribbean by up to 15 million individuals, in addition to the previously recorded 26 million unemployed. The most affected are those working in the informal economy, particularly refugees and migrants. The Sector is also holding consultations with the Integration focal points of the national and sub-regional platforms in order to understand the needs and priorities on the ground to develop the sector's regional objectives and indicators for the RMRP 2021.

The Regional Protection Sector supported national sectors in Brazil, Colombia and Guyana in drafting a roadmap to promote access to national protection mechanisms and services for indigenous populations from Venezuela, mainly Warao, Pemon, and Wayuu. The Sector gathered information on the situation at the borders within the region to assess the impacts of border closures, militarization, and requirements for regular entry and exit, as well as potential protection risks that the Venezuelan population in transit may suffer. Due to confinement measures in place to curb the pandemic, most countries in the region have witnessed increases in the number and severity of GBV incidents reported via government helplines. Most incidents reported related to intimate partner violence followed by sexual violence. The GBV sub-sector supported R4V partners in Paraguay and Bogota to draft GBV SOPs reflecting each GBV responders' roles and responsibilities to provide care to survivors, and is drafting a guide for the provision of remote psychosocial support to GBV refugee and migrant survivors.

The Regional Shelter, NFI and Humanitarian Transportation Sectors continue reconciling the need for physical distancing with the severe need for access to shelter and transit centers for refugees and migrants from Venezuela. More shelters are being established in the region and shelter partners continued providing infrastructure support to the health sector. The delivery of NFIs continued being a priority in all national and sub-regional platforms, whereas humanitarian transportation remains unviable in the current context of movement restrictions.

The regional WASH Sector held meetings to strengthen the quality of the WASH response related to market-based programming in collaboration with the Global WASH Cluster and the R4V CBI working group. Another webinar session was organized covering the management of water utilities and operators with examples of good practices from Peru.