



AMERICAS MONTHLY REPORT

© UNHCR/ Costa Rica. Persecuted Nicaraguans flee in search of international protection

This document provides an overview of key developments affecting the displacement situation in the Americas and some UNHCR response activities in line with the 2020 strategic objectives for the region.

THE AMERICAS: PRIORITIES FOR 2020

In 2020, the Americas will continue experiencing **large scale forced displacements**, with some 18.7 million of people of concern across the continent, of which almost 5 million Venezuelans who have fled their country, a number that is expected to grow during the year. In addition, brutal gang violence has forced nearly 800,000 people to flee internally and across borders from the North of Central America (NCA). With a monthly average of 4,000 people fleeing Nicaragua, refugee outflows from that country are expected to surpass the 100,000 in 2020. Internal displacement in Colombia is expected to rise. The numbers will continue putting pressure on the host communities who have been welcoming people in need of protection.

In this context, UNHCR aims to provide a **comprehensive and predictable response** in support to national efforts to meet the needs of a growing displaced population. Across the region, UNHCR field operations will deliver humanitarian assistance and multi-purpose cash transfers targeting the most vulnerable, as well as a wide range of programs to strengthen communities' resilience and response capacity. UNHCR's will continue its longstanding collaboration with national and local authorities to strengthen national asylum systems in the region. Prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in coordination with States, civil society, faith-based organisations and human rights networks will remain a top priority.

Durable solutions remain the cornerstone of UNHCR's

18,7 MILLION
PERSONS OF CONCERN TO UNHCR
in Americas

566,845 REFUGEES
2,7 MILLION ASYLUM SEEKERS
8,5 MILLION IDP
500,000 RETURNEES
99,144 STATELESS
6,2 MILLION OTHERS OF CONCERN
167,000 REFUGEE-LIKE

2020 strategy, with a strong component of advocacy of inclusion and social cohesion, resettlement and the promotion of complementary pathways for admission at the forefront of UNHCR's work in the Americas. Initiatives such as the Cities of Solidarity—a model for refugee integration in urban areas aimed at recognizing local governments efforts to provide protection and enhance the integration of UNHCR's people of concern—will be expanded.

With an estimated 8.5 million **internally displaced persons** in the region in 2020, UNHCR will respond to the immediate protection needs of those internally displaced while strengthening the resilience of affected communities with solutions-oriented programming.

In a ‘whole-of-society’ approach, **building partnerships** with non-traditional actors, including the private sector, will be central to mobilizing long-term support for host communities, preventing xenophobia and promoting social and economic inclusion.

In line with the roadmap established by the 2014 Brazil Plan of Action, and commitments made during the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, strong **regional and multilateral approaches** and responses to displacement remain essential.

UNHCR will continue to support regional processes, in particular the **Quito Process** —an initiative of several Latin American countries that seeks to harmonize domestic policies in receiving countries-, the Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela ([R4V](#)), as well as the implementation of the regional **Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework to respond to forced displacement in and from Central America – MIRPS**. UNHCR will also foster regional cooperation around the **Towards Zero Statelessness** mechanism, to make the Americas the first continent to eradicate statelessness by 2024.

VENEZUELA SITUATION



4.8 MILLION
REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS
from Venezuela living abroad
(as of 5 February 2020)



4 MILLION
in Latin America and the Caribbean states
(as of 5 February 2020)



OVER 2.1 MILLION VENEZUELANAS WITH
REGULAR STATUS including resident permits
(as of 5 February 2020)

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

By the end of January, **Brazil** was the Latin American country hosting the largest number of recognized refugees from Venezuela. As reported last December, the National Refugee Commission approved a procedure to recognize Venezuelans as refugees through an individual *prima facie* mechanism. Those benefited by the measure account 37,467. [Read more here](#) [EN].

The Government of **Colombia** recently announced the creation of two new Special Stay Permits (PEP) that are expected to benefit more than 100,000 Venezuelans, allowing them to work and access social services in the country. Considering Colombia hosts some 1.7 million Venezuelans, including almost 60 per cent with no regular legal status, the measure represents a positive step towards facilitating access to basic rights for the most vulnerable.. UNHCR’s briefing note on the measure is accessible [here](#) [EN]

Since **Ecuador** implemented a visa requirement for Venezuelans entering the country -last August 2019-



805,099 REGISTERED ASYLUM-CLAIMS
(as of 5 February 2020)

394,195 IN PERU	129,988 IN BRAZIL
108,942 IN U.S.A	18,500 IN MEXICO
76,401 IN SPAIN	

more than 10,000 applications for the **Exceptional Visa for Humanitarian Reasons** have been received in Ecuador’s Consulates in Caracas, Lima and Bogota, while an additional 11,000 have been requested in Ecuador. In total, some 13,000 have been already granted.

In **Trinidad and Tobago**, the Government announced an automatic six-month extension of right to stay for registered Venezuelans. So far, T&T has been issuing registration cards on an ongoing basis to the 16,000 Venezuelans who were registered during the government’s exercise in June 2019. As announced the Minister of National Security, the six-month extension will be automatic for individuals who have already been granted the registration card.

UNHCR RESPONSE IN 2020

Reception and orientation. – During the reporting period, UNHCR provided information and orientation to some 3,000 people weekly at the Support Space in Cucuta, Norte de Santander, the main entry point from Venezuela to Colombia. UNHCR in other border areas and main receiving cities provided direct guidance to about 500 cases every week on asylum procedures, humanitarian assistance, documentation, and other issues.

By the end of January, some 547 beneficiaries (63% children) were hosted in UNHCR's Integrated Assistance Centre in Maicao (La Guajira, Colombia). Of them, some 105 (20%) belong to the Wayuu ethnic group. During their one month stay in the center, individuals benefit from cash for work opportunities, medical, psycho-social and legal assistance, along with core relief items.

In the Ecuadorian-Peruvian border area of Tumbes, some 500 Venezuelan refugees and migrants are supported while in transit with core-relief-item kits and shelter support to spend the night in the refugee housing units (RHU).

Ensuring access to protection.- UNHCR in the Americas closely works with States to strengthen national asylum systems. In **Peru**, a Partnership Agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was signed in January to enhance the capacity of the Special Commission for Refugees to register asylum seekers and process asylum claims of some 250,000 pending cases.

Pursuing durable solutions.- In **Brazil**, a UNHCR-commissioned report on the impact of Venezuelan refugees on local economy published in January confirms the positive economic impact of the presence of refugees and migrants in the border region of Roraima. [The Economy of Roraima State in Brazil and the Venezuelan flow: evidence and subsidies for public policies](#), published by UNHCR in partnership with Brazil's Superior School of the Federal Prosecution Service (ESMPU), shows improved indicators of economic activity in Roraima State during the period of large-scale arrivals of Venezuelan in the area, with an increase in retail trade and exports and an 8 per cent increase in the diversification of economic activities.

Also in Brazil, UNHCR and its partners helped to relocate 175 Venezuelans away from the border to cities in need of additional workforce in an effort to foster local integration.

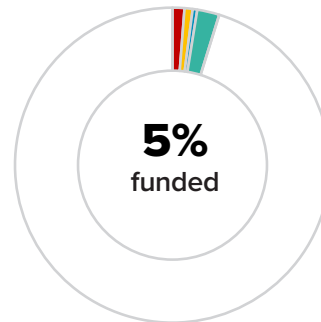
UNHCR and partners are implementing livelihoods and self-reliance programmes in several countries. In **Guyana**, since the end of 2019 UNHCR is piloting a small-scale grants programme targeting 18 women at risk of sexual exploitation and violence.

In order to help improve food security among the indigenous refugee hosting community of Tarau Paru Pemons Pacaraima in Brazil - 1,200 people hosting 500 Venezuelans- a project aimed at promoting environmentally sustainable agricultural techniques has started.

Enhancing regional cooperation. - The second workshop of the Regional Network for the Protection of LGBTI+ refugees, asylum seekers and migrants took place last week in Ecuador. The meeting of this UNHCR supported

Network - which includes 15 LGBTI+ civil society organizations in nine countries under the [Regional Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela](#)-, resulted in a joint working agenda to protect and promote the rights of LGBTI+ population.

UNHCR's financial requirements 2020 for the Venezuela Situation (6 February 2020)



\$258.1 million required

- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
- Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
- Funding gap (indicative)

INSIDE VENEZUELA

The 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) identified over 7 million people in need of humanitarian aid inside Venezuela. UNHCR leads two clusters in Venezuela, protection and Shelter/Energy/Core Relief Items and participates in four other clusters. In the framework of the HRP, UNHCR provides guidance to populations on the move and works to mitigate protection risks and to support the resilience of 74 affected communities, despite considerable logistical and security challenges.

UNHCR worked on several fronts in January to improve access to health services for populations on the move inside Venezuela. In San José del Amparo (Apure), UNHCR and its partner HIAS rehabilitated the health centre's in-patients building and installed solar panels capable of providing a 14-hour uninterrupted supply of electricity. In La Victoria (Apure) some 250-400 people in benefited from the rehabilitation of the health centre. In Guafita (Apure), 45 hygiene kits were provided in an effort to reduce risks incurred by women crossing the border to buy sanitary products.

UNHCR continued working with a wide range of partners to strengthen community networks. Members of the youth networks in Bolívar were trained on international refugee law and especial needs identification.



NORTH OF CENTRAL AMERICA SITUATION

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

In **Guatemala**, movements across and along the borders had stabilised by the end of January after a significant peak in mixed movement earlier in the month. According to the Guatemalan Migration Institute, 4,108 people, the majority from Honduras, entered Guatemala hoping to move northward. As the crisis unfolded, UNHCR was present at the borders, providing information about the asylum system in Guatemala and identifying cases with specific needs or in need of international protection. Extraordinary meetings with UN Agencies, partners and authorities were held to coordinate the humanitarian response.

In **El Salvador**, the National Assembly passed a special law to address internal forced displacement by a resounding majority on 9 January. The new legislation opens the door for tens of thousands of victims of forced displacement in the country to gain access to life-saving humanitarian assistance, and to have their basic rights restored, including through effective access to justice. Read here [UNHCR statement](#).

In **Honduras**, the overall environment continues to be difficult, with ongoing social instability and as reflected in the termination of the mandate of the anti-corruption body backed by the Organization of American States(OAS)

At the one-year mark of the **Migrant Protection Protocols** (MPP, now applied across the full southern U.S. border mainly to nationals of predominantly Spanish-speaking countries), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officially announced it would add Brazilians to the list of nationalities falling under the scope of the MPP.

UNHCR RESPONSE IN 2020

Provision of lifesaving assistance. - Since UNHCR launched its targeted cash-based assistance program in 2019, 42,931 new individuals across **Mexico** benefitted from multi-purpose cash transfers to meet their basic needs such as: food, household and domestic products, and a contribution towards housing and utility bills. During 2020, UNHCR continue enhancing the process with a new “targeting scorecard” used for beneficiary selection and strengthening the capacities of field teams in the various areas covered. UNHCR in **Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador** are building up their cash response and plan to assist at least 5,000 people. Cash-based interventions are also provided across the region for targeted cases in Belize and Panama. The Mexican Refugee Commission registered 5,936 asylum seekers in January, 60 per cent in Tapachula. An increase in the flow of people seeking for assistance was perceived in Tapachula. A total of 960 heads of household received some kind of assistance and support provided by RET and UNHCR.

Ensuring access to protection.- UNHCR is present in strategic locations across the region to provide

400,261 REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS from North of Central America worldwide by the end of 2019

70,371 ASYLUM CLAIMS IN MEXICO received in 2019. Almost 80% of the applications were covered by nationals of Honduras (43%), El Salvador (13%), Cuba (12%) and Venezuela (11%).

321,900 ASYLUM CLAIMS of people from NCA between 2014 and 2019 (+632%)

318,590 IDPS IN HONDURAS AND EL SALVADOR

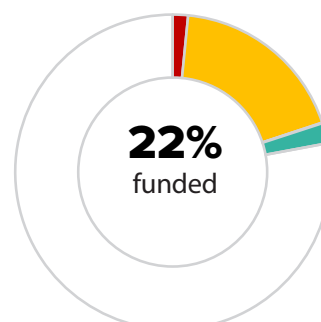
information on access to asylum procedures. As part of the regional protection and safe spaces network, UNHCR and partners provide support to a monthly average of 6,500 people. Further, in Mexico, UNHCR cooperates with the National Migration Institute and other relevant actors to foster alternatives to detention (ATDs) for those refugees and migrants found in an irregular migratory situation in the country. Under this scheme, 9,888 people were released from detention in 2019 (178 per cent increase when compared to 2018). So far this year, 237 people of concern to UNHCR have been released in Chiapas. UNHCR provides support to local clinics in border areas in **Guatemala**. In Petén, the UNHCR-supported clinic in Las Cruces (border with Mexico) provided attention to nearly 10,000 people – including the local population and people among mixed movements - in the last six months.

Pursuing durable solutions. - In 2020, 544 people were relocated from the south of **Mexico** to central and northern cities since 1 January. 6,400 people have been relocated since the relocation, job placement and local integration programme initiated in 2016. In **Panama**, it is expected that 100 per cent of refugees and asylum seekers participating in the private sector initiative Talent without Borders have obtained formal jobs.

Enhancing regional cooperation. - In El Salvador, UNHCR continues to support efforts under the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS). During January, discussions were held with the Presidential Commissioner for Strategic Projects on initiatives for protection of internally displaced people and durable solutions for them.


UNHCR's financial requirements 2020 for NORTH OF CENTRAL AMERICA Situation (6 February 2020)

\$92.8 million required



- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
- Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
- Funding gap (indicative)

NICARAGUA SITUATION

 **97,896** NICARAGUANS FORCED TO FLEE SINCE APRIL 2018 (includes registered asylum-seekers and those waiting to formalize their claim)



Instability persists in **Nicaragua**, with continued persecution against various sectors of society, ranging from attacks against the Catholic church and its clergy, to the detention of protesters or people seemingly supporting them, and the difference in positions among the factions.

Costa Rica hosts the largest number of asylum seekers, with around 74,000 asylum seekers (including those who have yet to file their claim), followed by 8,067 in Panama as of end 2019. In Mexico, 2,227 Nicaraguans applied for asylum during 2019, (3% of total asylum-claims), representing a 75% increase when compared to 2018.

As part of efforts to respond to the most pressing needs of the population of concern, both in Costa Rica and Mexico UNHCR has implemented a multipurpose cash-based intervention, which in 2019 reached some 2,000 vulnerable households in Costa Rica and some 1,456 Nicaraguans across **Mexico**. In 2020 UNHCR continues providing this support. Through the partnership between UNHCR and the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS), 6,000 persons of concern to UNHCR will receive health insurance in 2020. In Panama, a monthly average of 300 Nicaraguans are supported with humanitarian assistance, shelter, psychological support and legal counselling. In addition, throughout January, UNHCR delivered school kits to more than 900 boys and girls both in need of international protection and the host communities in Upala and Los Chiles cantons, in northern Costa Rica. Additionally, some 1,780 requests of information were responded through the information service.

Inside **Nicaragua**, the unstable situation within the country continues to exert pressure over refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR's partner the Council of Protestant Churches of Nicaragua (CEPAD) continues providing humanitarian assistance to address urgent and immediate needs such as rent, food and transportation, considering cases of greater vulnerability (serious health situations, elderly people, women victims of violence, unaccompanied children). Psychosocial support and legal counselling, along with livelihoods-oriented assistance is also available to foster their local integration.


COLOMBIA SITUATION

 **8.8** MILLION VICTIMS OF CONFLICT

 **7.9** MILLION INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE since 1985

 **51,775** PEOPLE DISPLACED IN INDIVIDUAL DISPLACEMENTS IN 2019

 **20,463** DISPLACED PEOPLE AFFECTED BY GROUP DISPLACEMENTS in 2019

 **66,742** COLOMBIAN REFUGEES IN ECUADOR by the end of October 2019

The reconfiguration of illegal armed groups and their clashes over territory and resources in border regions with Venezuela (particularly in Norte de Santander), the Pacific Coast and the Bajo Cauca (Antioquia) continue to directly impact the local population leading to continued group displacements, confinements, killings of community leaders and increased humanitarian needs. During 2019 more than 23,000 people were affected by 66 group displacements, the situation deteriorating further in January when more than 3,200 people were forcibly displaced. Particularly concerning is the recent displacement of 120 families from Espacio Territorial de Concentración (ETCR) in Ituango (Antioquia) following the killing of two former FARC members who were in the process of rehabilitation.

A similar ascending trend has been recorded with confinements, which affected over 17,000 people in 2019 and spiking in January when approximately 6,000 people were confined in their communities in Bojaya, Choco department, as a result of the activities of illegal armed groups. There is increasing concern over the impact of the ongoing violence and displacement on Venezuelans arriving in impacted areas. A group of 65 Venezuelans refugees and migrants were forced to displace in the municipality of Olaya Herrera (Tumaco) following the murder of two Venezuelans by members of an illegal armed group.

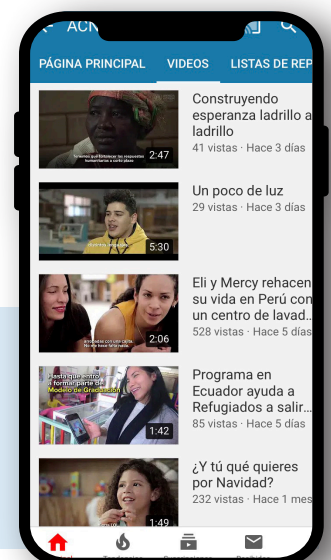
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FEATURED STORIES



[UNHCR and Santos FC start partnership on behalf of refugees in Brazil \[PT\]](#)

Refugee children entered the field at Vila Belmiro, alongside Santos players, as the first step in a partnership that expands the local integration of refugee people across Brazil.



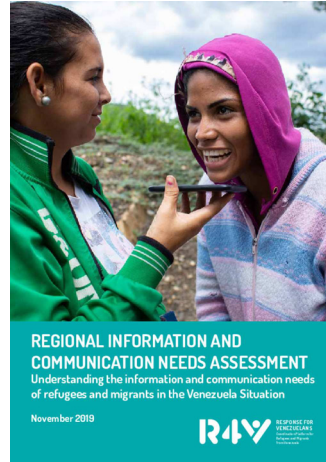
[Innovative programme helps lift Venezuelan refugees out of poverty in Ecuador](#)

Training, mentorship in entrepreneurship and seed money help Venezuelans who lost everything start over in Ecuador.



[Neighbours from a neighbourhood in Santiago, Chile, share their favorite recipes to celebrate diversity \[ES\]](#)

The “La Mesa Latina” initiative promoted the meeting of cultures and helped create new bonds of friendship between Chilean and foreign neighbours.



REGIONAL INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Understanding the information and communication needs of refugees and migrants in the Venezuela Situation

November 2019

R4V

[Did you know that...?](#)

A regional survey on the information and communication needs of refugees and migrants from Venezuela found that half of them feel that they don't have enough information on their rights and where to obtain assistance. The study was carried out by over 30 organizations across Latin America and the Caribbean, included the UN Refugee Agency, under the framework of the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V). Read the report [here](#)

FUNDING THE RESPONSE

UNHCR's overall requirements for its **comprehensive response in the Americas currently totals \$505.5 million.**

UNHCR's overall requirements by the end of 2019 was 69 per cent funded, meaning the response faced considerable constraints to meet even the most basic survival needs of those affected by the complex displacement situation across the region.

During 2020, lack of enough funds may jeopardize critical activities as the provision of core relief items or shelters. The exercise of rights of those forced to flee could be diminished, affecting their access to territory, to strengthened asylum systems and adequate mechanisms to prevent gender-based violence. Besides, lack of funding can hamper the opportunities of refugees to integrate and earn a dignified living in their hosting communities; while efforts to tackle xenophobia and discrimination would be affected across the region.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FLEXIBLE FUNDING FOR UNHCR'S

Flexible financial support allows UNHCR to place funds anywhere within a given situation, in line with the Office's priorities, from where people in need are forced to flee, to where they find refuge. Flexible funding needs to be timely for UNHCR to plan in the most efficient manner, allocating to priorities first.

UNHCR's humanitarian response in the Americas is made possible thanks to the generous support of major donors who have contributed unrestricted funding to UNHCR's global operations, and to donors who have generously contributed directly to UNHCR Americas operations.

Special thanks to our donors during 2019:



And to our Private Donors

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