

Venezuela Situation: Brazil, Colombia, Trinidad & Tobago

15 July 2017

The number of asylum applications by citizens of Venezuela has soared. The accumulative figure has reached around **50,000 worldwide**. The number of recognized asylum-seekers is growing.

The most recent profiling exercise shows that **43% of new arrivals from Venezuela to Colombia are Colombian nationals**, 24% are dual nationals and 33% are Venezuelans.

Considering the evolving situation in Venezuela, it is projected that the numbers of persons will **continue to grow**.

Protection Issues

As the political and economic situation in Venezuela continues to deteriorate, anti-government protests maintain their momentum and now exceed 100 consecutive days. As violence escalates and criminal activities increase, a failure to reach a political solution over the next month could likely aggravate the situation in the country and intensify the outflow of persons seeking protection and fulfilment of basic needs in neighbouring countries.

Brazil:

- The Federal Government is completing a multi-sectorial plan of action for the allocation of federal resources to State and Municipal counterparts. UNHCR helped to fine-tune the plan. The Government also agreed on the importance of a national contingency plan for different scenarios involving arrivals from Venezuela.

Colombia:

- According to Colombian immigration authorities, between 250,000 and 300,000 Venezuelans are residing in the country with an irregular status.
- A first profiling exercise by UNHCR showed that the main reasons for Venezuelans entering Colombia included being persecuted or finding the ongoing security situation intolerable; being forced to flee violence, including by armed groups; food insecurity and the need to access adequate healthcare.
- 520,000 Venezuelans have pre-registered for a Border Mobility Card, a document meant to help manage the number of people entering Colombia from border states in Venezuela. Pre-registered Venezuelans are allowed to enter Colombia on a temporary basis. Most applicants stated “grocery shopping” as their reason for registering.

Trinidad and Tobago:

- Over 40,000 Venezuelans are present in the country. The majority of those registered have Convention-related claims. Venezuela constitutes the second country of origin of persons in need of international protection.

Key Figures

- It is estimated that there are some 20,000-30,000 Venezuelans in Brazil, 40,000 in Trinidad and Tobago, and around 300,000 in Colombia. Numbers remain, however, provisional.

Operational Context

Brazil:

- Federal and local authorities remain responsible for delivering emergency preparedness and response actions for Venezuelans, with technical advice from UNHCR. Response efforts are coordinated by the Presidency through an Inter-Ministerial task force.
- Initial funds were allocated by the Ministry of Social Development to local authorities in receiving states to support the shelter response, while the Ministry of Health offered funds to strengthen services in Roraima and the Ministry of Defense prepositioned 75 military shelters.

Colombia:

- Presence of armed groups along the border continues to pose additional risks for arriving individuals. Several Venezuelans have been reported to have been killed and patterns suggest the involvement of illegal groups. The lack of legal alternatives increases the risk of forced recruitment, particularly of children and youth, by armed groups or drug traffickers.
- Data from Colombian immigration authorities indicates that attending medical emergency needs for Venezuelans is on the rise in some border departments since the end of June.

Operational issues:

- In **Brazil**, UNHCR continues to coordinate the inter-agency response. Also, two UNHCR staff have been deployed at the new Field Unit in Boa Vista (Roraima state) and one staff to Manaus (Amazonas state), to establish a more permanent presence.
- In **Colombia**, UNHCR continues to be the lead actor monitoring movement trends and creating or enhancing protection networks with leaders to foster a favorable protection environment. The Agency is also providing technical advice to authorities on issues such as legal status for arrivals, shelter, CBI, profiling and registration.
- In **Trinidad and Tobago**, UNHCR will submit a proposal that includes capacity development for immigration authorities; implementation of SOPs; promoting systematic identification persons in need of international protection; information campaigns about access to asylum.

Achievements and Impact - Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps



PROTECTION

BRAZIL

Achievements and Impact

- The Prosecutor's Office in Roraima and the Public Defender's Office filed a civil action to waive fees (100 USD per person) to regularize Venezuelans' legal status.
- UNHCR joined Manaus' Secretariat of Human Rights to support registration procedures of Warao indigenous populations living in the city.
- In Roraima, authorities now issue asylum seekers permits based on the declaration of the Warao tribal chief, thus enabling indigenous children to access social, health and education services. The Public Defender's Office reported that in Roraima, Venezuelan students will not need to present translated documents to enroll in Brazilian public schools. CR visited the shelter in Boa Vista to conduct a quick needs assessment and identify the most urgent issues. They were particularly concerned that there are no regular health interventions in the shelter. As a result of UNHCR advocacy, the Secretary of Labor and Social Welfare of Roraima reassigned three employees to work in the management of the shelter during working hours. Also, a health task force from the Federal University of Roraima provided basic health services at the shelter, including testing for sexually transmitted infections.
- UNHCR has prepared and submitted to the Government preliminary site layouts for the development and upgrade of three reception centres in Pacaraima, Boa Vista and Manaus.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- UNHCR will advocate for Standard Operational Procedures to identify and refer unaccompanied and separated children, based on the work with national institutions such as CNIG, CONARE and CONANDA¹.
- There is still limited information on Venezuelans' access to health services, which proves critical considering registered cases of tuberculosis, sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

¹ CNIG: National Center of Geographic Information; CONARE: National Committee for Refugees and CONANDA: National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents.

- According to the UNHCR shelter specialist report, there is a need to increase shelter capacity and availability, and prevent and respond adequately to SGBV.
- The number of female Venezuelans engaged in survival sex is increasing.
- UNHCR will conduct Participatory Assessments to better understand why most Warao children continue to be out of school. Moreover, UNHCR will conduct awareness actions, in partnership with local authorities, to reiterate the importance of enrolling Warao children in school.

COLOMBIA

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR has travelled to the Departments of La Guajira, Norte de Santander, Arauca, and Antioquia to obtain first-hand information on the needs of Colombian and Venezuelan mixed families as well as Venezuelans and Colombian returnees arriving. These joint activities with authorities and other partners are key for the development of coordinated response plans.
- UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of the Governor of La Guajira with the aim of establishing a UNHCR presence and consolidating its new continuing to strengthen ties with authorities in this department, with a considerable influx from Venezuelans, including indigenous populations
- UNHCR continues to co-lead inter-agency emergency preparedness efforts with IOM, and will provide support and protection input for Phase 2 of DTM, which has been requested by the Government.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- There is still a lack of data on arrivals. UNHCR will continue to undertake profiling efforts.
- There is a need to strengthen information on referral pathways for profiles with specific needs, including women at risk, SGBV survivors and indigenous people.

Working in partnership

Brazil:

- UNHCR and the Municipal Human Rights Secretary lead a joint task force related to the Manaus' shelter to identify undocumented children for future documentation actions.
- UNHCR and the Federal University of Roraima agreed to establish the Migrants and Refugees Reference Centre.
- A local NGO has been identified to assist with peaceful cohabitation projects between the indigenous groups from Brazil and the Waraos.

Colombia:

- UNHCR is strengthening ties with the Colombian Red Cross by providing training on refugee issues which will be formalized by the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding.
- UNHCR presented plans on profiling and case management of persons in need of international protection to the immigration authorities.
- At the local level, UNHCR is working with host communities to create or consolidate new protection networks to integrate new arrivals from Venezuela.

Trinidad and Tobago:

- UNHCR co-chaired the reactivation of the UN Emergency Technical Team Meeting. UN agencies expressed their interest in the Venezuela Situation, in supporting UNHCR and the Government, and their disposition to request capacity training on emergencies to UNOCHA.
- The MoU between UNHCR and CARICOM IMPACS, which is pending final approval by the CARICOM Council of Ministers, will allow the two organizations to collaborate more closely, including training of trainers' opportunities.

Financial Information

- Initial preparedness measures have been funded with UNHCR resources. Additional needs and a response in the event of a declared emergency would require strong donor support.