The ambitious Plan for Economic Recovery and Prosperity launched in August by the Government of Venezuela has yet to make a visible impact on the economy and the well-being of the population. The intensity of outflow of Venezuelans to neighbouring countries appears to have slowed down and stabilized in some border areas, whilst the Government continues to return Venezuelans under the programme named “return to the homeland”, with a few hundred citizens reportedly returned to Venezuela. On the other hand, significant numbers of new arrivals are being reported in neighbouring countries. Socio-economic conditions in the country remain precarious, impairing access to basic goods and services for refugees, asylum-seekers, other groups of persons of concern to UNHCR and the population at large. In prioritized communities hosting refugees and asylum-seekers, women and girls are increasingly exposed to sexual and gender-based violence -including trafficking, especially in border areas- and children are often subjected to separation from parents, child labour and domestic abuse. Further increase in social tension may happen should conditions not improve, resulting in continued outflow of Venezuelans abroad.

HIGHLIGHTS

21,816 refugees, asylum-seekers and others of concern assisted by UNHCR.
640,425 total population of host communities.

GOVERNMENT FIGURES (PERSONS OF CONCERN)
Refugees 8,246
Asylum seekers 1,108
Persons in refugee-like situation: 117,653

Source: CONARE Venezuela
Source: INE Venezuela

FUNDING (AS OF SEPTEMBER 2018)
USD 8,847,252
requested for Venezuela

UNHCR PRESENCE
Staff:
76 Personnel:
28 national staff (including TAs)
33 affiliate workforce (AWF including interns)
12 international staff (including TAs)
03 Deployees

Offices:
1 Representation in Caracas
4 Field Offices in
San Cristóbal (Táchira), Guasdualito (Apure), Maracaibo (Zulia) and Ciudad Guayana (Bolivar)
1 Field Unit in Caracas
Working with Partners

- UNHCR is implementing 382 community-based projects in 96 prioritised communities in 10 States of the country, primarily in the border areas with Colombia and Brazil. UNHCR is working with 12 implementing partners (Acción Solidaria, Aliadas en Cadena, AZUL positivo, CARITAS, JRS, HIAS, RET, Venezuela Red Cross, Sociedad Wills Wilde, Vicariato de Derechos Humanos, Fe y Alegria and Luz y Vida) and many other local actors, including government institutions and NGOs.

- UNHCR holds regular coordination meetings with humanitarian and development actors to discuss the design, coordination and implementation of the protection response for persons of concern and host communities, including identification, provision of humanitarian assistance, monitoring of refugee rights and promotion of durable solutions.

- UNHCR liaises within the UNCT and with specific UN agencies (e.g., UNICEF, UNFPA) to mainstream protection issues within the UNDAF, UPR and other shared mechanisms.

- UNHCR chairs the United Nations Emergency Management Team (UNETE), an inter-agency coordination system for emergencies that meets under the Secretariat of OCHA.

- UNHCR partners with relevant Government institutions, such as the National Commission for Refugees (CONARE), the Ombudsperson’s Office and Child Protection Counsels, as well as community councils.

Main Activities

Protection

- UNHCR promotes an innovative community-based approach to assess and respond to the protection needs and risks of persons of concern in Venezuela.

- UNHCR supports individual refugee status determination through provision of technical advice to the National Commission for Refugees, the digitalization of files, the creation up of a refugee database and the promotion of legal counselling.

- UNHCR Venezuela conducts border monitoring and binational cooperation with UNHCR mirror offices in Colombia, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba and Curacao to strengthened communication with communities and dissemination of information related to rights, obligations and referral pathways for persons with international protection needs who are engaging in transit across borders.

- UNHCR coordinates the SGBV and Child Protection Safe Spaces networks for the identification, case management, referrals to specialized services and holistic prevention and response mechanisms.

Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

- UNHCR liaises with protection networks for the dissemination of information on the rights of persons in need of international protection, including those in transit to other countries, safe routes and referral pathways.

- UNHCR establishes community centres delivering multi-sectorial services from different actors, in order to provide outreach, identification and referrals pathways to persons with specific needs.

- UNHCR conducts awareness campaigns on refugee rights, including women’s and children’s rights and anti-fraud messages.

Durable Solutions

- UNHCR promotes the timely issuance of documents for recognised refugees and facilitates information on legal residency and migration procedures for refugees.

- UNHCR coordinates with partners to provide transport for Persons of Concern (POCs) to local National Identification and Immigration Service (SAIME) offices or SAIME headquarters in Caracas.
In close coordination with UNHCR in Colombia, UNHCR Venezuela facilitates and supports the voluntary repatriation of PoCs, ensuring that they are enabled to take well-informed and voluntary decisions and are repatriated in conditions of safety and dignity.

Activities implemented in September 2018

Working with Partners
- UNHCR organised awareness raising activities in the main bus stations of Ciudad Bolivar and Ciudad Guayana during which the Red Cross carried out HIV-AIDS awareness activities, handed out condoms and provided blood pressure testing to members of the public circulating in both terminals as part of an awareness raising campaign on healthy lifestyles. UNHCR provided information to a total of 95 people traveling to or arranging paperwork to travel to other countries, most of whom declared to have acquaintances at their final destinations and to be informed on migration alternatives.
- UNHCR organized monthly coordination meetings with its partners and other humanitarian actors in Bolivar, Tachira, Zulia, Apure states and the Capital District (Caracas) to discuss aspects related to community-based interventions and coordinate joint activities in prioritised communities where persons of concern and members of host communities live together.

Protection
- The Municipal Child Protection Council in Caracas organised a training session on child protection legal frameworks and protocols for the members of the Safe Spaces Network in Libertador municipality (Capital District) to strengthen their capacity in the identification of child rights violations and referrals of children at risk to appropriate services.
- UNHCR organized a training on statelessness for CONARE officials to sensitize the Government on UNHCR’s mandate on prevention of statelessness and advocate for the development of national legislation on the prevention and reduction of statelessness.
- UNHCR held a seminar on the asylum-trafficking nexus jointly with officials of the Ombudsperson’s Office and the Ministry of Justice in Caracas which was attended by 246 public administration trainees. The seminar was aimed at increasing awareness on the issue and enhance identification and referrals to UNHCR and CONARE of victims of trafficking in need of international protection.
- UNHCR, along with implementing partner HIAS and the Ombudsperson’s Office, organised a joint informative session on SGBV prevention and response and child protection for 350 community members in Apure state. The event was attended by representatives of key bodies involved in women and child protection and provided information on legal frameworks and referral pathways.
- UNHCR Field offices held the monthly meeting of the Safe Spaces Networks (SSN) to discuss Trends on SGBV and child rights violations and confirm the mapping of services. SSN members also designed a joint outreach plan to visit the communities and conduct joint information sessions with SGBV survivors and children at risk on identification and referrals protocols.
- Border movements have dropped slightly since the conversion of the Venezuelan currency, due to a significant hike in the prices of goods and transportation.
- The Youth Network “Friendship Ties”, supported by UNHCR’s Youth Initiative Fund, promoted educational and cultural activities attended by 50 children and 10 parents in the community of Gran Sabana, in Zulia state. The activities included reading sessions and parenting courses on domestic violence and the promotion of ethical values.

Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance
- A UNHCR WASH expert conducted several field missions to visit communities in Tachira, Zulia, Apure, Amazonas and Bolivar states. The expert met with local actors and NGOs to collect information on WASH conditions in the main population centres and prioritised communities in the covered states and provide recommendations on the design of future local WASH interventions.
- UNHCR field offices conducted several field missions with Ombudsperson’s Office field delegates to conduct joint sessions on the rights of refugees and host communities and provide individual counselling to persons with specific needs. The main needs observed were related to access to food, health, lack of documentation, in particular the legal residency for recognised refugees, and
the lack of care arrangements for unaccompanied and separated children left behind by the emigration of their parents.

- UNHCR and partners carried several health brigades in prioritized communities in the country jointly with national Health authorities in which services of gynaecology, HIV and syphilis testing, sexual and reproductive health information and vaccinations against measles and tetanus were provided to hundreds of beneficiaries.

**Durable Solutions**

- Field Unit Caracas enabled the voluntary repatriation of a Congolese citizen with 14 years as a recognised refugee in Venezuela. Along with local partners, UNHCR provided follow up on the case and verified the voluntariness and safe and dignified conditions of the repatriation.

- Field Office San Cristobal examined during the month two cases of voluntary repatriation. One has already received the country of origin information and will progress to the voluntary repatriation stage next month, while the other case is still pending for further analysis.
External / Donors Relations

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CONTACTS
Luca Nicosia, Reporting Officer
nicos@unhcr.org
Giovanni Monge, Programme Officer
monge@unhcr.org