



© UNHCR Jaime Giménez. Eder, an Ecuadorian farmer, shows UNHCR staff his crops.

## In search of solutions: Integration in The Americas

The Americas hosts today **one in five** of all people of concern to UNHCR in the world. The region is facing an unprecedented forced displacement crisis, largely as the result of the deteriorating situation in **Venezuela**, violence and persecution, compounded by extreme poverty, extreme climate and the COVID-19 pandemic in parts of **Central America**, continuing violence and insecurity in parts of **Colombia** and a deteriorating human rights situation in **Nicaragua**.

Millions of refugees around the world live year after year with little hope of ever returning home, resulting in protracted displacement. As [slots for resettlement are limited](#), integrating into the local community offers a chance to build a new life.

However, the pandemic has worsened the already dire situation of refugees and others forcibly displaced populations in the Americas, a studies by the [World Bank](#), [ILO](#) as well as [UNHCR](#) highlight. The economic contraction in 2020 increased poverty and exacerbated income inequality. A [March 2021 ECLAC report](#) found that 22 million people in Latin America fell into poverty in 2020. The pandemic has led to increased deprivation among vulnerable populations, as refugees, including a higher risk of food insecurity.

For refugees and displaced populations, closed borders leave little option to move safely. When they reach a host country irregularly, it is harder to find a stable job, send children to school or access necessary healthcare.

Gender-based violence grew exponentially. In Colombia violence against women rose 250% and femicides in Argentina increased by 25% during confinement.



18,4M

people of concern to UNHCR by end 2020 is in the Americas.

5.4M

refugees and migrants from Venezuela globally

550,000

people from **El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras** sought international protection



110,000

**Nicaraguans** seek asylum globally

8.6M

IDPs living throughout the region

Refugees and migrants are even more exposed to suffer violence at home, assaults, sexual exploitation or the need to resort to survival sex, often linked to trafficking. Other groups, such as indigenous people, unaccompanied children, elderly persons (go to page 5 for more on the [Ageing on the move](#) report), or LGBTIQ+ communities are more exposed to exploitation, violence and exclusion. The pandemic has also exacerbated social tension and xenophobia.

More than ever, **integration efforts became urgent in 2021**. As the High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, [highlighted](#) after a week-long visit to Panama, Colombia and Ecuador, **“Inclusion is one of the most practical and concrete forms of protection. It helps children to get an education, people to receive the medical treatment they need, prevents exploitation and abuse and supports people to acquire the dignity of self-sustaining work,”**

explained Grandi. **“Inclusion is the new protection.”**

To provide opportunities for refugees to integrate in the Americas, UNHCR works with local authorities, the private sector, and displaced communities. As such, UNHCR fosters regularization in **Dominican Republic, Colombia and Peru**. A regional initiative boosting Cities of Solidarity has ongoing activities in **Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala or El Salvador**, among others. Internal relocation programmes, such as those in [Mexico](#) and [Brazil](#), help refugees and asylum-seekers reaching host communities better prepared to receive them. In cooperation with the private sector, there are actions to broaden access to jobs opportunities in **Colombia, Ecuador, Panama or Peru**. Along with displaced and receiving populations, UNHCR builds peaceful coexistence and combats xenophobia across the region.

## VENEZUELA SITUATION

### Key developments in host countries

Movements across the region persisted despite continued mobility restrictions in much of Latin America to contain the latest wave of COVID-19. The number of Venezuelan refugees and migrants moving mostly through irregular crossings remains high, and risks reported included robberies, assaults, threats, and extortion. For those living in countries facing new quarantines, daily survival remains challenging particularly in case of lack of regular status.

Clashes between the military and irregular armed groups in Apure (western **Venezuela**) forced thousands to flee to neighbouring **Colombia**. A persistent volatile security environment is still affecting the humanitarian operations in Apure. Most of the population initially displaced to Colombia have returned.

Internal protests in **Colombia** caused distress and fear among Venezuelans on the move or settled in the country. Many decided to travel to **Ecuador** or **Peru**, where reinstated lockdowns triggered also reverse movements in search of opportunities and security. Risky journeys to the southern **Caribbean** islands resulted in a deadly [shipwreck en route to Trinidad and Tobago](#).

In order to grant better access to services and rights for Venezuelans and support their inclusion in the country, **Colombia** launched an unprecedented [regularization programme](#) to issue ten-year stay permits for Venezuelans, with over 1 million pre-registrations completed by June. It aims at offering around two million Venezuelans documentation that will ease access to employment, regular health and education, also boosting local economy with refugees and migrant's economic activity.

In **Dominican Republic**, around 42,000 Venezuelans, 3,600 of them children, applied in the first phase of a plan that will grant them stay visas.

In **Brazil**, [more than 50,000 Venezuelans have been relocated](#) from northern state of Roraima to 675 Brazilian cities, thanks to a national relocation strategy to boost long-term solutions.

High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, chose to mark World Refugee Day in Latin America as a recognition of the advances made by the region in the protection and inclusion of refugees and other displaced people. "Countries like **Colombia and Ecuador** are taking brave and bold steps to leverage the full potential of refugees and others displaced. Latin American countries are an example to the world on how to protect people," said Grandi.

Some refugees and migrants have also been [vaccinated under national plans](#), despite progress remaining slow.



4.6M

refugees and migrants from **Venezuela** in Latin America

850,000

registered **asylum claims**

171,000

recognized **refugees**

+2.5M

**permits, and other stay visas** issued to Venezuelans

### UNHCR RESPONSE

Regular stay and documentation are key in allowing refugees and migrants to overcome the displacement cycle. Registration and issuance of recognised documents allow people on the move to effectively and safely access services. To that end, UNHCR supports the Government of **Colombia** to implement their plan to grant temporary protection to Venezuelans in the country. Also, with other actors, a comprehensive information strategy is ongoing to ensure Venezuelans are aware of this initiative and how to access it. In **Dominican Republic**, UNHCR is widely spreading information on the ongoing process to provide Venezuelans with stay permits.

Access to education and school allows children in host countries to fully integrate among peers. With that in mind, UNHCR supports a programme called Equal Place in **Trinidad and Tobago**, which helps 1,361 individuals to access school, now remotely.

Cooperation with national authorities also allow for inclusion of refugees in national specialized programmes, as **Uruguay's Crece Contigo** that provides for enhanced attention to children needs. Many Venezuelan health professionals were also included in national responses, as in **Peru**.

To boost integration opportunities, more than 8,000 people in the Americas were relocated in 2021. In **Brazil**, UNHCR supports a national programme that already helped 50,000 refugees and migrants from **Venezuela** to move into 675 cities, where they are better able to integrate and find steady employment. Read also [Brazil's policies boost inclusion of Venezuelans, but challenges remain](#).

In a bid to foster inclusion thanks to livelihoods opportunities, UNHCR helps provide refugees and migrants in **Latin America** access to vocational training and employment, many of them organized in conjunction with authorities or the private sector. So far 2021, over 23,000 people received training to run a business or find a job. In **Ecuador**, with UNHCR support, almost 300 people completed a process to get official certification for professional competencies recognition, which may increase their possibilities of finding a job.

International donors pledged US\$ 1.5 billion during the [International Donors' Conference in Solidarity with Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants held on 17 June](#). The financial support will allow States and humanitarian organizations to provide immediate assistance to Venezuelans and their host communities, and work towards long-term solutions. Before the conference, sectoral events were organized by the [Inter-agency Coordination Platform \(R4V\)](#).

## VENEZUELA SITUATION

**Peaceful coexistence is key to allow for durable integration.** In **Peru**, UNHCR works in a comprehensive strategy to implement cultural activities with both locals and the refugee and migrant community. Since March 2021, over 10,000 people in **Peru** attended salsa and breakdancing sessions via Facebook Live with the Venezuelan group *Inyectando Cultura*.

The **Cities of Solidarity** regional initiative provides a framework to work with local governments. In **Chile**, along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNHCR met with 20 municipalities to jointly identify priorities and action lines towards inclusion of

refugees and migrants in national and local programmes.

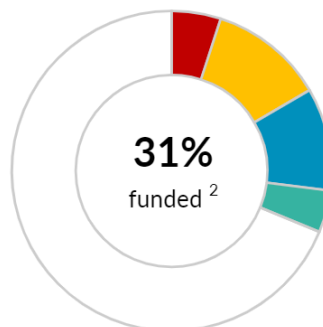
The **Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform (R4V)**, co-led by UNHCR and IOM, fosters solidarity and empathy with refugees and migrants through a regional campaign [#OneStepCloser](#) which launched [a social experiment video on the experiences of refugee and migrant children](#) in their host countries.

As part of [Somos Panas Colombia](#) campaign, [UnidxsSoñamos](#) is a new initiative that uses music and arts to foster inclusion among the youth.

### UNHCR urgently needs in 2021

USD **299.2 million** to save lives and protect the most vulnerable **Venezuelans in the Americas**

Funding Update: 22/06/2021



■ Tightly earmarked  
■ Earmarked  
■ Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)  
■ Unearmarked (indicative allocation)  
□ Funding gap (indicative)

### INSIDE VENEZUELA

The needs in **Venezuela** are growing and the humanitarian response architecture is facing constant challenges. As part of the collective response inside **Venezuela**, UNHCR leads and works with more than 100 partners in the Protection Cluster, which under the renewed HRP for 2021, aims to reach 2.6 million people. UNHCR also leads the Shelter, NFI and Energy Cluster alongside 46 partner organizations.

By the end of April, UNHCR worked alongside 14 partners in 71 prioritized communities, mostly in border areas. The operation on the ground expanded its activities to Sucre state, where it made its first distribution of relief items. Despite logistical challenges, it also was able to conduct a monitoring mission to remote Santa Elena de Uarién (Bolívar), at the border with Brazil. So far this year, over 300,000 people have been supported by the UNHCR response. Some 33 health centres, sport fields and community centres were rehabilitated or improved. Distributions of relief items remained crucial for people at heightened risk, including the indigenous community of Shirapta in Machique de Perija, where 681 persons have been assisted.

**What you need to know?** The UNHCR-led Protection Cluster launched its new online updated protection services mapping tool, which details all the 575 services provided throughout **Venezuela**- [http://bit.ly/ClusterProteccion\\_mapeoservicios](http://bit.ly/ClusterProteccion_mapeoservicios)

## COLOMBIA SITUATION

The dynamics of the armed conflict in **Colombia** have affected around **9 million people since 1985**, of which around 7 million of whom are considered eligible to receive support and reparations in the framework of the Victims Law. This includes cases of forced displacement, homicide, forced disappearance, crimes against sexual freedom, torture, kidnapping, illegal recruitment of minors, among other types of human rights abuses.

Since late April 2021, protest against tax reforms and in demand of socio-economic national programmes escalated in **Colombia**. Roadblocks, supply shortages and nationwide demonstrations constrained the institutional response to situations of displacement and confinement.

Irregular armed groups took advantage of protests to exert control over population in certain areas historically affected by the conflict. [The UN System in Colombia](#) called for the guarantee of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and protest and insisted that any action by the security forces must fully observe the protection and respect for human rights.



8.2M

IDPs since 1985\*

30,700

people **displaced in 2021** (Jan- May)

579,000

people affected by forced displacement since 2016



68,368

Colombian refugees in **Ecuador** by March 2021

According to UNHCR, as of 31 May, 30,700 people (9,369 families) have been uprooted since the start of 2021 in 64 large-group displacement events. This represents an increase of 128% compared to the same period in 2020. Five other departments (Chocó, Nariño, Antioquia, Cauca, and Valle del Cauca) have recorded confinements affecting 26,913 people (6,860 families).

In 2021, UNHCR is supporting the Analysis and Investigations Group of the Special Peace Jurisdiction (JEP in Spanish) to strengthen the investigation on internal displacements.

**Want to know more?** Please, visit UNHCR's data portal\*: [Country - Colombia \(unhcr.org\)](#)



## Central America and Mexico

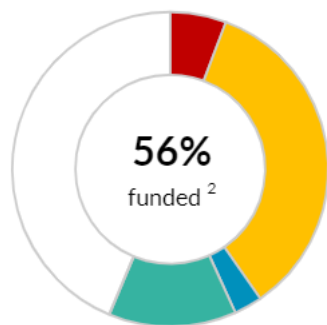
### Key developments

In **El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras** violence, instability and the aftermath of natural disasters further increase internal displacement and outflows. With the root causes of displacement still unaddressed, and despite mobility constraints, the first “caravan” of the year in **Guatemala** recorded unprecedented numbers last January.

The aftermath of hurricanes ETA and IOTA, with their devastating impact in late 2020, aggravated the situation in areas significantly affected both by violence and the pandemic.

As a result of the complex situation, record numbers of new arrivals have been registered since end of 2020 in **Mexico**, where by the end of May already 41,197 people had applied for asylum.

Business leaders and private sector groups expressed a strong commitment to support the search for sustainable and durable solutions for **forcibly displaced people in Central America and Mexico** during a **MIRPS Business Roundtable** on April 27. At the event, entrepreneurs gave examples of the ways in which they contribute to responses to forced displacement in the countries participating in the **Regional Framework for Protection and Solutions (MIRPS)**, which includes six Central American countries and Mexico.



Funding Update: 22/06/2021

**UNHCR urgently needs in 2021**  
USD **173.5 million** to save lives and protect the most vulnerable **Venezuelans in the Americas**



The international community reaffirmed its **solidarity with forcibly displaced people in Central America and Mexico** and with the seven countries that make up the **Regional Integrated Framework for Protection and Solutions (MIRPS)** during an **international event** held on June 10.



833,000 people from **El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras** displaced worldwide

318,000 **IDPs in Honduras and El Salvador**

550,000 **asylum claims** by people from **El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras** between 2014 and 2020

### UNHCR RESPONSE

Regular stay and documentation are key to allow refugees and displaced population. As a first step in the integration process, registration of asylum claimants allows for access to basic services. In Tapachula (**Mexico**), a UNHCR [new registration centre processed](#) over 14,440 cases, including first-time registrations and evaluations, pre-registrations (appointments), in-person and remote verifications for cash assistance, cash card deliveries and in-person interviews. UNHCR is strengthening the centre’s capacity, potentially up to 4,400 family groups per month.

An innovative [integration programme](#) led by UNHCR, has helped more than 10,000 refugees relocate within **Mexico** and restart their lives in their new communities. The 10,000 mark was reached in late May, as UNHCR steps up its effort to assist the increasing number of refugees who find protection in the country.

In **Guatemala and Honduras**, UNHCR supports Municipalities and promotes “Cities and Borders of Solidarity”, with local authorities being the main entry point for refugees’ access to rights and social benefits. Joint work aims at building capacity, develop local public policies and help provide social services. Support to the development of Municipal plans for peaceful coexistence seeks to enhance protection, prevent violence and promotes solidarity amongst all segments of society in border areas, including the State, civil society, refugees, IDPs and host communities.

To boost access to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, UNHCR advocates in **Central America and Mexico** with national and local institutions, employers, unions, and civil society organizations towards the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in its programmes. In addition, guidance to employers and information campaigns are key to eradicate discrimination in access to employment and social protection of the population of concern.

In this context, over 2,000 asylum-seekers and refugees participated between January and May in **livelihoods and economic inclusion** promotion activities in **Central America and Mexico**, such as training for employment and self-employment, access to work permits and start-up of small businesses.

More than 175 participants are benefitting from livelihood courses in **Belize’s** Toledo district, including classes in furniture making /carpentry, cosmetology, welding, as well as music and yoga classes that promote mental health. Refugee and asylum-seeking women participated in restaurant table setting courses and cooking classes including a section on balanced nutrition.



In **El Salvador**, over 550 people of concern to UNHCR are receiving livelihoods support, 200 of which are following ongoing trainings to enhance technical and soft skills needed to secure either suitable job vacancies or run small businesses.

In **Honduras**, UNHCR enhanced self-reliance capacities of the affected population, focusing on those that have limited or no access to other livelihood opportunities, in particular the youth.

In **Mexico**, UNHCR is working with federal authorities to establish an expedited mechanism for the recognition of qualified and experienced refugee and asylum-seeker health workers to join the country's emergency recruitment pool.

With workforce expert corporation ManpowerGroup and HIAS, UNHCR in **Panama** launched the first 2021 generation of Talent

Without Borders employability programme (*Talento sin Fronteras*), that provides refugees, asylum-seekers, and the host community workshops to help them increase labour insertion opportunities

A Memorandum of Understanding between the **Costa Rica** Chamber of Commerce and UNHCR will seek to sensitize 700 affiliated companies on the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in the labour force and to seek opportunities of collaborative work.

**Want to know more?** Read also [UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees calls for urgent support for one million displaced Central Americans and action to address root causes](#)

## Nicaragua Situation

It has been three years since **Nicaragua** was shaken by socio-political unrest and violence. As instability persists, displacement across borders, mostly towards **Costa Rica**, is expected to remain steady or even increase if conditions continue to deteriorate ahead of the upcoming November elections.

Human rights organizations continue to report violence and persecution, including against the LGBTI community, women, indigenous communities, journalists, opposition leaders, among others. The recent murder of a 22-year-old transgender woman in the municipality of Somotillo has exposed the vulnerability, violence, and discrimination that the transgender community suffers daily in the country.

During COVID-19 border closures, official asylum arrivals decreased and reported use of irregular border crossings to seek protection increased risks of abuse. Once **Costa Rica** reopened land borders last 30 April, Nicaraguan tourists are requested visa to enter the country regularly.

Since December 2020, when the Migration Authority's Refugee Unit resumed in-person activities suspended due to the pandemic, new asylum claims have averaged 1,237 per month in **Costa Rica**. Most of these asylum-seekers had been waiting for about ten months to formalize their claims, receive documentation, and start the three-month wait period to receive work permits.



8,700

**Nicaraguans recognized as refugees worldwide by end 2020**

80,300

**Nicaraguans seek asylum in Costa Rica**

UNHCR supports the authorities to provide a quality and efficient asylum system, while ensuring that bio-safety measures and equipment are in place during registration and RSD activities.

For many of the Nicaraguans seeking asylum in **Costa Rica and Panama**, earning a living amidst the dual economic and health crises caused by the pandemic was even more challenging. For those living in some of the country's poorest neighbourhoods and regions, humanitarian assistance and integration support to reach economic independence are essential.

In **Costa Rica**, from 1 January to

31 May, assistance in cash benefitted 992 Nicaraguan households (2,700 individuals).

Also, in **Panama** 82 Nicaraguans receive livelihoods support including seed capital for entrepreneurs.

In **Guatemala**, 14 Nicaraguan refugees were included in programmes facilitating access to employment and skills developments.

**Also read...** [UNHCR - UNHCR calls for more support for Nicaraguans forced to flee](#)

**STORIES from to field**



[Global Trends. Forced displacement in 2020.](#) Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of forcibly displaced people in 2020 rose to nearly 82.4 million people.



[Global Report 2020.](#) Read about the work carried out by UNHCR in 2020 to protect and improve the lives of tens of million of people, all while dealing with the unprecedented challenge of COVID-19.



[Far-reaching regularization schemes in Colombia and Ecuador are providing a lifeline to Venezuelan refugees and migrants who long to become self-sufficient.](#)



See in pictures the “hidden voices” of refugees and migrants in Curacao [ACNUR - Hidden voices: Curaçaoan photographer shines a light on stories of refugees and migrants from Venezuela amid pandemic](#)



[UNHCR - Refugees find safety and a new life in Mexico.](#) Since 2016, more than 10,000 refugees have started over in Mexico as entrepreneurs, managers and factory workers through a UNHCR programme

Did you know that...? [A joint assessment by UNHCR and HelpAge International](#) in Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras and Peru has revealed that the pandemic is exacerbating pre-existing threats to the physical and mental health, nutrition, financial autonomy and legal status of older refugees and others on the move.



## The importance of flexible funding for UNHCR’s response

UNHCR’s overall requirements for its **comprehensive response in The Americas** currently totals **\$712.3 million**, of which **35% is already funded**. Funding shortcomings may jeopardize critical activities such as the provision of **lifesaving assistance** and emergency shelter; the provision of **unrestricted cash** to meet essential needs and to support **health responses**. This could have a direct effect on the ability of those who have fled to access host countries, asylum systems and mechanisms aimed at preventing gender-based violence. Also, funding shortcomings could hinder refugees’ efforts to integrate into their host communities and earn a dignified living and stymie efforts to tackle xenophobia and discrimination throughout the region.

UNHCR is grateful for the **critical and generous support** provided by donors to operations in **The AMERICAS**, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with **unearmarked funding**.

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