UPDATE #10 ON UNHCR COVID-19 RESPONSE IN COLOMBIA

CURRENT CONTEXT

The Colombian Ministry of Health confirmed 433,805 cases of COVID-19 as of Thursday, 13 August, with Bogota concentrating the highest number (149,944 confirmed cases). A total of 14,145 individuals have died from COVID-19 and 250,494 cases have recovered.

According to Migración Colombia, between 14 March and 9 August, 96,317 Venezuelans have returned to Venezuela.

503 Venezuelans are currently staying at the Transitory Health Attention Center (CAST in Spanish) at the Tienditas International Bridge. Additionally, 47 people are staying at Hotel Villa Antigua, and 1,914 in a police compound in Cucuta in highly vulnerable conditions. 73 Venezuelans were stranded in the Biopark (Tame, Arauca) for several days due to lack of transportation and quarantine restrictions. 10 cases of Colombian returnees registered at the Paraguachón border were allowed by Migracion Colombia to enter the country after filling out a form.

As per GIFMM monitoring, between 12 June and 12 August, 257 eviction incidents were registered affecting 1,071 people, of which 51.8% were females, 43.9% were males and 0.7% others (with 3.6% of incidents lacking information disaggregated by gender). Additionally, 403 people were identified at risk of eviction.

The Governor of the indigenous Hitnu community in La Ilusión, Arauquita, Arauca department, was killed on 5 August, presumably by FARC-EP dissidents, following which local authorities are...
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evaluating displacement and protection risks for the community; in the municipality of Bolivar, in southern Cauca, ELN is imposing illegal checkpoints and its own strict quarantine measures, prohibiting citizens to leave their homes after 6pm and threatening with violence those who break the self-imposed rules. As a result of the ongoing violence between illegal armed groups in Tumaco and on Nariño’s pacific coast, 5 youths, including 2 minors, are reported to have been killed. There were five massacres with a total of 30 victims in Cucuta, Tibu and Puerto Santander municipalities between March and August.

Individual cases and families of Venezuelans are re-entering Colombia through trochas (irregular border crossing points), according to UNHCR monitoring. As per interviews conducted with 29 cases (86 persons) on the Cúcuta-Pamplona route, the main reasons for leaving Venezuela and re-entering Colombia are associated with: lack of access to food (28), lack of access to employment or income generation (28), lack of access to medical services (28), lack of access to education (17) and family reunification (1). Among those interviewed, 3 were returning to Ecuador, 1 to Chile and 1 to Perú. The Local Ombudsperson’s Office reported that out of 90 Venezuelans present in the Biopark in Tame, Arauca, last week, 15 stated that they had left Venezuela and were headed towards other Colombian cities.

On the southern border, according to municipal authorities of Carlosama, in Nariño, 36 informal crossing points are being used by refugees and migrants due to increased control of official borders. The National Police is currently carrying out an informal census of the Venezuelan refugee migrant population in order to determine the number of people in transit and those with intention to stay.

There are concerns about the protection needs of extra-continental migrants stranded at the Colombian-Panama border who are protesting against the mobility restrictions. UNHCR together with local authorities met with representatives of the refugee and migrant population in the temporary shelter in Necocli in order to identify their immediate and short-term needs.

UNHCR is also concerned about increased protection risks of displaced people in Chocó, where emergency cash transfers are difficult to implement due in part to the local market but also because of the scarcity of partners and humanitarian actors implementing cash transfers.

UNHCR’S RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN THE PAST 2 WEEKS

Health and hygiene/prevention measures
UNHCR provided two hospital tents with a capacity of 20 persons to the Governor’s Office of Norte de Santander as the Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) previously installed at the Erasmo Moez Hospital in Cucuta are operating at their maximum capacity. UNHCR has completed the construction of the Primary Care Centre, in the municipality of Puerto Santander where three GIFMM member organizations and the local hospital will provide health and social services. In Arauca, 21 cases received sexual and reproductive health services through UNHCR’s partner, Profamilia.

Protection
5 cases of children born in Colombia lacking civil registration were identified at the CAST and offered assistance through a UNHCR partner to obtain birth certificates before returning to Venezuela. Additionally, 111 at-risk children were identified in Cucuta, of which 58 correspond to children at risk of not attending school, 1 child spouse, 1 child in conflict with the law, 41 separated children and 10 unaccompanied children. The cases of unaccompanied children identified at the CAST during the registration process received psychosocial support by UNHCR partner Corprodinco and were referred to the authorities to activate the protection response.

A total of 1,193 cases were supported and oriented through the 12 Local Ombudsperson’s Offices (Personerías) in Norte de Santander and Arauca; UNHCR continues to refer cases to the University Legal Clinics for legal assistance on the asylum-seeking process: in Barranquilla (1), in Arauca (10), in Cucuta (199).

In Cucuta, 7 SGBV survivors and 22 women at risk were identified and referred for assistance, including 3 cases referred to the UNHCR safe houses. 52 individual cases (including people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity as well as women engaged in survival sex) received psychosocial assistance, legal advice and support in the activation of complementary protection routes through the La Casa que Abraza safe space.

UNHCR’s Guide for Asylum Seekers in Colombia was widely circulated on social media; the magazine of the Somos Panas Colombia campaign was launched on the YouTube channel.
of the communication strategy Unidos Pa’Lante with the participation of influencers such as Roberto Cardona and Natalia Reyes sharing life stories of Venezuelans in search of better opportunities.

CBI
UNHCR and WFP finalized an agreement for a joint cash distribution in Bogotá where UNHCR will top up WFP’s cash transfer for food and hygiene items to some 2,000 households. 53 cases were assisted with CBI in Barranquilla through partner Danish Refugee Council, and 154 families in Cali through Save the Children.

Livelihoods
UNHCR co-hosted the webinar "Enterprises supporting Venezuelans in Colombia" organized by the Tent Partnership for Refugees and the UN Global Compact with the participation of a total of 84 entrepreneurs (33 men and 51 women).

Shelter, NFIs and WASH
UNHCR donated 4 Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) to the Divino Niño Hospital in Tumaco and two to the Nuestra Señora del Carmen Hospital in La Tola, Nariño. Six RHUs were installed in Yopal, Casanare at the Fire Department, hospital and Red Cross facilities; 3 more RHUs were donated to a children’s centre run by Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) in Norte de Santander and designated to be used as isolation spaces. UNHCR Pasto distributed 150 kitchen sets through Colombia Nos Une to IDPs, returnees and mixed families in Ipiales and another 150 kitchen kits to the Olaya Herrera community greatly affected by displacement; 150 Core Relief Items (CRIs), including kitchen kits, jerry cans, mosquito nets and solar lamps were donated to 150 Afro-descendant families (700 persons) in Roberto Páyan.

UNHCR in coordination with the Secretary of Social Inclusion of the Apartadó Mayor’s Office distributed 30 kitchen sets, 100 mosquito nets, 20 plastic buckets and 100 solar lamps to the Embera indigenous communities of La Palma and Las Playas.

In Chocó, UNHCR donated 100 N95 masks, 400 gloves, 11 gallons of hypochlorite, 310 litres of alcohol, 55 litres of liquid soap and 105 bottles of antibacterial gel to the municipality of Condoto; and delivered 130 surgical gowns and 35 face masks to indigenous communities in Nuquí municipality. In addition, in the Coffee Region 30 bottles of antibacterial soap, 30 bottles of alcohol gel, 60 anti-fluid gowns, 150 surgical masks, 33 face masks, 60 units of N95 masks were donated to two Venezuelan organizations to ensure protection of their volunteers.

**FUNDING NEEDS**

Under its revised Coronavirus Emergency Appeal, UNHCR is appealing for USD 745 million globally, including USD 17.3 million in Colombia. UNHCR’s Global Appeal is now funded at 56%, with USD 413 million contribution received. Overall, UNHCR Colombia is currently funded at 46%.

**UNHCR’s response in Colombia is possible thanks to the contribution of private donors and:**

Austria, Canada, Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Chanel Foundation, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, KOICA, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Oro Molido Foundation, Sweden, Switzerland, UN Human Security Trust Fund (UN HSTF), UN Peacebuilding Fund, United Kingdom, United States of America, and USA for UNHCR.

**$96.7 million**
UNHCR’s financial requirements 2020

![46% funded](image)

Bogota, 14 August 2020