



© UNHCR/ Austin Ramirez. Peacelab is a collaborative space where people from different sectors can bring innovative ideas to combat xenophobia.

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.

PARTNERSHIP IN THE AMERICAS



216 PARTNER AGREEMENTS
SIGNED IN 2020
in Americas

83 MILLION TO BE CHANNLED
through partners

3 in 4 partners are national

Working with partners provides an opportunity for synergies to be derived from two organizations with shared humanitarian principles and a commitment to a common objective of working together. In case of national partners and the civil society, they can offer local knowledge and access, while also helping to promote sustainability and the development of local capacity.

In the **Americas**, UNHCR has formalized strategic partnerships with some 216 partners, including 204 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 11 governmental institutions and 1 United Nations agency. In 2019, 29 per cent of our total expenditure was entrusted with

partners undertaking programmes or projects to provide protection and solutions to people forced to flee.

In line with its [Grand Bargain](#) commitments to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action, UNHCR aims to increasingly engage local and national partners in country operations. Illustrative of this, in 2016, about 20 per cent of the \$1.4 billion were disbursed by UNHCR to more than 900 local and national partners for programmes providing protection and solutions to refugees and other people of concern. In 2020, UNHCR aims to raise this globally to 25 per cent. In the Americas, 75 per cent of our partners are national or local organizations.

VENEZUELA SITUATION



4.9 MILLION
REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

from Venezuela living abroad

(as of 5 March 2020)



4.1 MILLION
in Latin America and the Caribbean states

(as of 5 March 2020)



OVER 2.5 MILLION VENEZUELANAS WITH
REGULAR STATUS including resident permits
(as of 5 March 2020)

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Colombia's [new official figures of Venezuelans](#) as of 31 December 2019 show a 10 per cent increase in comparison to October 2019, totalling 1,771,237 Venezuelans in Colombia - 57.5% in irregular situation-. By departments, Bogota D.C. tops with 352,431 Venezuelans, followed by Norte de Santander (202,727), Atlantico (167,604), La Guajira (165,475) and Antioquia (149,475). This large increase – 10% in three months – highlights the continuing needs in the country and the increasing concentration of population lacking options to move in other countries in the region.

The Colombian Government announced the creation of two [new Special Stay Permits \(PEP\)](#) that seek to benefit more than 100,000 Venezuelans, by allowing them to stay and work in the country. The two new Permits will benefit Venezuelans who entered Colombia before 29 November 2019 with stamped passports as well as those currently in an irregular situation but holding an offer of employment for a period of at least two months up to a maximum of two years.

Bolivia's newly appointed National Commission on Refugees recognized in February 2020 the first 56 Venezuelan refugees, based on the 1951 Refugee Convention and the UNHCR Guidance Note on the Outflow of Venezuelans (May 2019).

In Brazil, new documents to be issued to asylum seekers in all States of the federation were approved. The measure, which follows a two-year piloting process and will be applied in six-month time, represents a major achievement aimed at improving access to rights. The lack of national document was one of the reasons why some Venezuelans decided not to apply for asylum and to apply for temporary residence instead.

In Ecuador, some 28,000 Temporary Residence Visas for Humanitarian Reasons have been issued to Venezuelans so far within the Registration and Regularization process that will conclude on 31 March 2020.

During the month, expressions of xenophobia and increased security controls and protests were reported in Peru, Ecuador and Brazil against Venezuelans. This trend is of high concern to UNHCR as Venezuelans may be exposed to heightened risks of being stigmatized and used as a scapegoats.



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894,787 REGISTERED ASYLUM-CLAIMS
(as of 5 March 2020)

482,571 IN PERU

129,988 IN BRAZIL

108,942 IN U.S.A

18,500 IN MEXICO

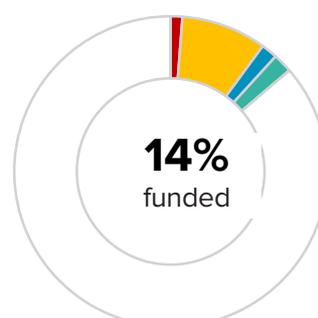
76,401 IN SPAIN

UNHCR RESPONSE IN 2020

Provision of lifesaving assistance and reception conditions – In the indigenous Wayuu community of Maimajasay in the rural area of Maicao, (La Guajira, **Colombia**), 300 Colombian and Venezuelan children, improved access to food thanks to a UNHCR-WFP soup kitchen inaugurated in February. Besides, women, men and children in transit in the cities of Arauca (Arauca), Cucuta (Norte de Santander), Bucaramanga (Santander) and Barranquilla (Atlántico) will be receiving basic items as soap, sanitary towels or diapers thanks to the delivery of 4,370 core relief items UNHCR transferred to partners as the Red Cross. In border **Peruvian** area of Tumbes, some 600 people per week access a safe space to rest and protect from intense heat and received medical support thanks to UNHCR and partners. Aiming to reduce risks faced on the route, at least 320 people weekly received information on rights and services in Tumbes and Tacna, Peruvian border with Chile, by partners and outreach volunteers.

Seventy-five Venezuelan children and 104 women in Arica and Antofagasta (in **Chile**) were hosted in

UNHCR's financial requirements 2020 for the Venezuela Situation (19 March 2020)



\$258.1 million
required

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

INSIDE VENEZUELA

During February, localised situations increased difficulties to implement programs in support of 54 communities, as clashes continue between armed groups and security forces along the border with Colombia in the state of Táchira. In Amazonas and Zulia states, operations of armed actors were reported. An outbreak of tuberculosis in Petare, Greater Caracas, increased the difficulties and risks to access the most vulnerable population.

In border areas with Colombia, UNHCR focuses on actions to improve the living conditions of a population affected by blackouts, lack of basic services and goods. In San Cristóbal, UNHCR delivered 46 solar streetlights to be installed in strategic locations such as health centres or schools, to reduce protection risks at night. In Guasdalito, 44 families received hygiene kits to improve their health conditions, but also to avoid security risks during border crossings to acquire essential goods as medicines or soap. In La Victoria, Apure, 35 portable cooking appliances will support 200 residents to improve the quality of food.

To strengthen community structures and their capacity to impulse protective environments, UNHCR in Maracaibo accompanied the local youth network of Gran Sabana as they hosted a cultural activity for 190 persons about services provided by UNHCR and partners.

UNHCR supported shelters. Other 117 people received information on services and rights. Some 14 vulnerable women received cash transfers to cover accommodation expenses and other basic needs.

Ensuring access to protection – To identify persons of concern to UNHCR in vulnerable situations, and to facilitate the delivery of assistance, services and protection, UNHCR set up the PRIMES tool (Population Registration and Identity Management EcoSystem). In **Colombia**, by the end of February, some 18,824 persons (8,699 cases) were already registered. In **Guyana**, where PRIMES was rolled out during 2019, national authorities and UNHCR conducted the first registration mission to the remote southwest area where 45 Venezuelans were registered and documented with Government Registration Certificates and stay permits.

As a result of joint efforts of **Brazil's** national authorities and UNHCR, 106 Venezuelan indigenous Warao people were registered as asylum seekers. Many of them had been undocumented since they arrived in Belem do Pará back in 2017. Challenges to register the remaining 400 persist due to language limitations issues and the constant mobility of this indigenous population. Read more [here](#).

In Norte de Santander (**Colombia**), survivors of sexual and gender-based violence can now access a safe house, run by a local UNHCR partner. Up to 25 people will receive shelter, psychosocial and therapeutic care, legal assistance and health services.

Considering the risks faced by the displaced population

living with HIV, support to access health services is being provided in border areas. In Tumbes (**Peru**), 60 Venezuelans living with HIV were provided with psychosocial support and accompaniment to public health services by UNHCR and partner PROSA. 85 people could also benefit with rapid detection tests.

Pursuing durable solutions – In order to promote local integration, the Colombian Local Ombudsman's Office and UNHCR launched a joint publication on the situation in Bogotá of people arriving from Venezuela. As the report highlights, streamlining attention services and foster joint initiatives to prevent xenophobia require increased cooperation of authorities and other service providers. The report is available [here](#).

As a result of the Sunshine Bouquet project supported by UNHCR and flower companies in Colombia, some 677 Venezuelan refugees and migrants and Colombian returnees had a seasonal employment to harvest and pack flowers ahead of Valentine's Day.

Continuing with a sustained strategy in **Ecuador** to foster inclusive education environments, 12 additional schools were trained on the Respiramos Inclusion ("We Breathe Inclusion") anti-discrimination methodology during February. By the end of 2020, with UNHCR support, some 174 schools will be using the methodology promoting inclusion and diversity within the school system, which has been recognized by the Ministry of Education as a best practice.

In **Peru**, UNHCR supported financial inclusion and entrepreneurship workshops organized by partner Encuentros for some 45 refugees and migrants to strengthen the access to livelihoods and labour opportunities.

Enhancing regional cooperation – As a result of the cooperation of the Colombian National Platform on mixed migration flow, the Inter Agency Group on Mixed Movements (GIFMM), -which UNHCR co-leads with IOM- and the Ministry of Labour, 200 representatives of more than 150 governmental and non-governmental entities in the employment sector were trained on the new labour permit for Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

Inter Agency Cooperation

On 20 February, the 10th Regional Platform Meeting took place in Panama. The event served to discuss priorities and response strategies of the regional Sectors established under the 2020 Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP).

Opening remarks were made by the Joint Special Representative, Eduardo Stein, representatives of UNHCR and IOM and by the Resident Coordinator in Ecuador, Arnaud Peral. Specific sessions were dedicated to the end of year report of the RMRP 2019, the launch of the monitoring framework, the financial tracking system of the response plan and the soon to be launched regional anti-xenophobia campaign.

NORTH OF CENTRAL AMERICA SITUATION

318,590 IDPS IN HONDURAS AND EL SALVADOR

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

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

The **Inter-American Commission on Human Rights** (IACHR) urged **El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico** to guarantee the rights of asylum seekers and migrants at all stages of their displacement route, and expressed concern after incidents between the population attempting to enter Mexico and the National Guard were reported last month.

Guatemala's president, Alejandro Giammattei, presented the Integrated Development Plan aiming to prevent illegal migration and promote prosperity in the country. The plan received the support of the Economic Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (ECLAC).

The Supreme Court of **Belize** ruled in favour of asylum seekers whose claims did not meet the 14-day limitation to apply for refugee status in the country.

Once again, **Honduras** is recognized as the most dangerous country in Central America, with 3,996 homicides officially recorded in 2019 (7.1 per cent increase over 2018).

As human rights organization IDHUCA reports, young people (18 – 30 y/o) in **El Salvador** are one of the most vulnerable profiles in the country, representing 58 per cent of police detentions, 69.7 per cent of victims of sexual violence or 57 per cent of unemployed people. In her recent visit to this country, **Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees** she heard testimonies of victims of forced internal displacement, and advocated for further support them.

UNHCR RESPONSE IN 2020

Provision of lifesaving assistance - In **Mexico**, the cash transfer programme that assisted 42,931 new individuals in 2019 to meet basic needs as food, household or domestic products, was rolled out across all locations covered by UNHCR during the month. In January, 2,596 people were supported as part of this initiative.

Ensuring access to protection - The rollout of the registration system PRIMES began during February in **Panama**. In Gracias a Dios (Huehuetenango) border community of **Guatemala**, a recently inaugurated clinic will allow the local community and refugees and migrants in transit to access health services.

In **Honduras**, young adults and adolescents are at particular risk of recruitment and forced displacement due to gang violence and a lack of protection. Considering this, UNHCR and partner Youth Against Violence

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%).

undertook a joint assessment mission to Nueva Capital aimed at expanding community activities targeting the youth.

Pursuing durable solutions - **UNHCR, ILO and the European Union** launched in Mexico a [project to provide job opportunities](#) for internally displaced people, asylum seekers and refugees in Central America and Mexico.

By the end of February, 1,333 people were relocated from the south of **Mexico** to central and northern cities of Saltillo, Guadalajara, Monterrey, Aguascalientes, Puebla and Querétaro. Seven teams are also supporting the integration process of families living in Mexico City, Tapachula, Tenosique, Acayucan and Palenque. So far in 2020, a total of 777 households visits have been conducted to 1,605 individuals. UNHCR renewed its collaboration with the Training Center for Industrial Work (CECATI 86), which since 2018 has provided training to 391 asylum seekers, refugees and community members in automotive mechanics, electricity, computer or English.

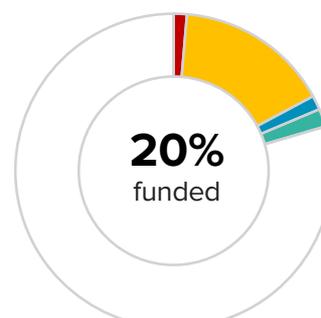
As part of a program to support the education system in **Guatemala**, UNHCR and partner Tierra Nueva renovated a primary and secondary school in Quetzaltenango.

In **Belize**, UNHCR and its partner Humana People supported 65 asylum seekers and refugees with English-as-a-Second Language classes to. In addition, a music programme with 38 primary school students was launched last month.

Enhancing regional cooperation - As part of the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS), supported by UNHCR, the new Pro-tempore Presidency, el Salvador, hosted the first online meeting where the annual work plan was approved by all members.

UNHCR's financial requirements 2020 for NORTH OF CENTRAL AMERICA Situation (19 March 2020)

\$92.8 million required



COLOMBIA SITUATION

 **8.9** MILLION VICTIMS OF CONFLICT

 **7.9** MILLION INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE since 1985

 **89,744** PEOPLE WERE FORCIBLY DISPLACED IN 2019

 **66,720** COLOMBIAN REFUGEES IN ECUADOR by the end of 2019.

The security situation affected various communities, mainly in border areas and the Pacific Coast. The ELN "armed" strike from 14-17 February led to mission restrictions in 12 departments, with over 50 incidents reported mostly in Norte de Santander, Arauca and Cesar. In Catatumbo (Norte de Santander) armed clashes have affected an estimated of 20,000 people by group displacement, confinement, selective killings and restricted access to education, health care and food, as assessed by a joint mission carried out by UNHCR, OHCHR, WFP and the UN Verification Mission in February. In Chocó, 220 people were displaced. Reports inform 54 social leaders have been assassinated by the end of February.

In cooperation with NRC and USAID, UNHCR organized

NICARAGUA SITUATION

103,657 NICARAGUANS FORCED TO FLEE SINCE APRIL 2018 (includes registered asylum-seekers and those waiting to formalize their claim)

As Instability persists in Nicaragua, displacement of population continue. In **Costa Rica**, a total of 3,260 Nicaraguans formally filed their asylum claims in February 2020, which represents a 24 per cent increase from the average monthly asylum claims filed by Nicaraguans in 2019 (2,635). During February, the Commission on Restricted Visas and Refugees (CVRR) in Costa Rica recognized 215 Nicaraguans as refugees and only denied 29 claims, reaching an unprecedented first instance recognition rate for Nicaraguans of 88 per cent.

In **Panama**, 50 new asylum applications by Nicaraguans were received, leaving 7,218 cases still pending. UNHCR and partners assisted 363 asylum seekers and refugees with shelter, psychosocial care, local integration, counselling and livelihoods support.

As part of efforts to respond to the most pressing needs of the population of concern, the **Costa Rica** operation distributed 70 prepaid cards to families who qualified for the cash-transfer program and will receive grants for three months. Families also received financial education training.

interventions in Ituango, Antioquia, guaranteeing integral assistance to 872 people who were forcefully displaced following threats from armed groups. In Nariño, 265 Habitat Kits were delivered to the displaced families of Roberto Payán, while 115 water filters reached displaced families of Magüí Payán. UNHCR took part in a joint mission monitoring the situation of the indigenous community from Riosucio, Chocó affected by the humanitarian crisis in 2019.

UNHCR is working with the newly elected local authorities in cities like Villagarzón, Puerto Asís, Valle del Guamuez and Leguízamo (Putumayo) to enhance contingency plans and policies improving the lives of the displaced population. .

The Colombian Civil Registry and UNHCR signed an agreement in February to enhance access to documentation for Colombian returnees and other people at risk of statelessness.

Within the framework of the cross-border **Peacebuilding Fund** in **Ecuador**, UNHCR and the Civil Registry launched the first mobile registration brigade San Lorenzo border canton (Esmeraldas), thanks to which 200 people received a national identification and 40 children and adolescents were registered. Some 3,100 individuals require registration and identification cards in this region, 62 per cent Awá and Chachi indigenous cross-border populations.

In **Panamá**, a joint mission with national authorities provided around 100 Colombian refugees living in isolated and remote areas of the Darien region with

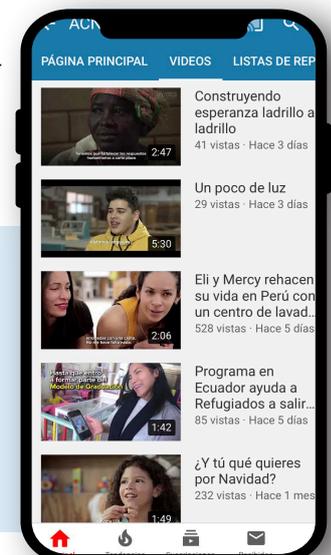
Through the partnership between UNHCR and the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS), 6,000 persons of concern to UNHCR will receive health insurance in 2020. Some 860 Nicaraguan individuals have already been identified to receive the insurance, 79% of the total cases submitted to the CCSS.

UNHCR delivered school kits to more than 300 boys and girls both in need of international protection and the host communities in San Ramon, Jomuzá, Villa Nueva, Villa Hermosa, Las Milpas, in northern Costa Rica. In San Jose and los Chiles, 206 school kits were delivered to provide support to families with school-aged children starting classes.

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STORIES OF THE MONTH



[Venezuelan artist contributes to the Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago \[ES\]](#)

Maria and her husband took the Venezuelan Burriquita to Trinidad and Tobago, where they participated in the Carnival together with a recognized group of stiltwalkers.



[Deputy High Commissioner visits Costa Rica and El Salvador \[ES\]](#)

During her visits, she met with victims of Violence in San Salvador, and Nicaraguan asylum seekers in Costa Rica.



[Guyana pioneers use of advanced technology to help Venezuelans \[EN\]](#)

Use of "PRIMES" system facilitates collection of data to assist Venezuelans and others in need of basic services.



[A Valentine's Day gift changed Danny Ocean's life, now he wants to give something back](#)

Venezuelan singer and Latino superstar Danny Ocean shared with unaccompanied children and adolescents at a shelter in Mexico City.

Did you know that...?

UNHCR, UNESCO and IOM co-organized in Costa Rica the international conference "The fight against xenophobia in the age of disinformation and artificial intelligence". With featured participants as the Facebook Regional Director for Public Policy, the President of the Mexico City Council to Prevent Discrimination, and a group of Youtubers, the event held on 26-27 February, was also an opportunity to present the UNHCR project PeaceLab, a social innovation lab aimed at combating disinformation and fake news in Costa Rica. If you missed the opportunity to attend, you can access the recordings [here](#).



FUNDING THE RESPONSE

UNHCR's overall requirements for its **comprehensive response in the Americas currently totals \$528.1 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 in 2020:



And the **Private Donors** that supported us.

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