

Colombia

March 2021

On 1 March 2021, President Iván Duque signed a decree creating the **Temporary Protection Status (TPS)** for Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Colombia.

Over a period of two years, Venezuelans in Colombia can apply for the TPS to **regularize** their stay in the country for a period of 10 years.

Venezuelans with a **Temporary Protection Permit** will be able to access a full range of rights, including health care, and the national **COVID-19 vaccination** plan.

VENEZUELAN REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

1,742,927

Source: Colombian Migration, as of 31 Jan 2021

RESIDENCE PERMITS AND REGULAR STAY GRANTED

759,584

Source: Government of Colombia, as of 31 Jan 2021

TOTAL NEW INTERNAL DISPLACEMENTS SINCE THE 2016 PEACE AGREEMENT

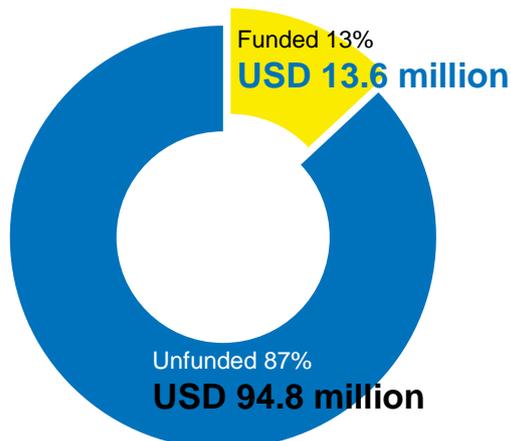
516,363

Source: Government of Colombia, as of 28 Feb 2021

FUNDING (AS OF 30 MARCH 2021)

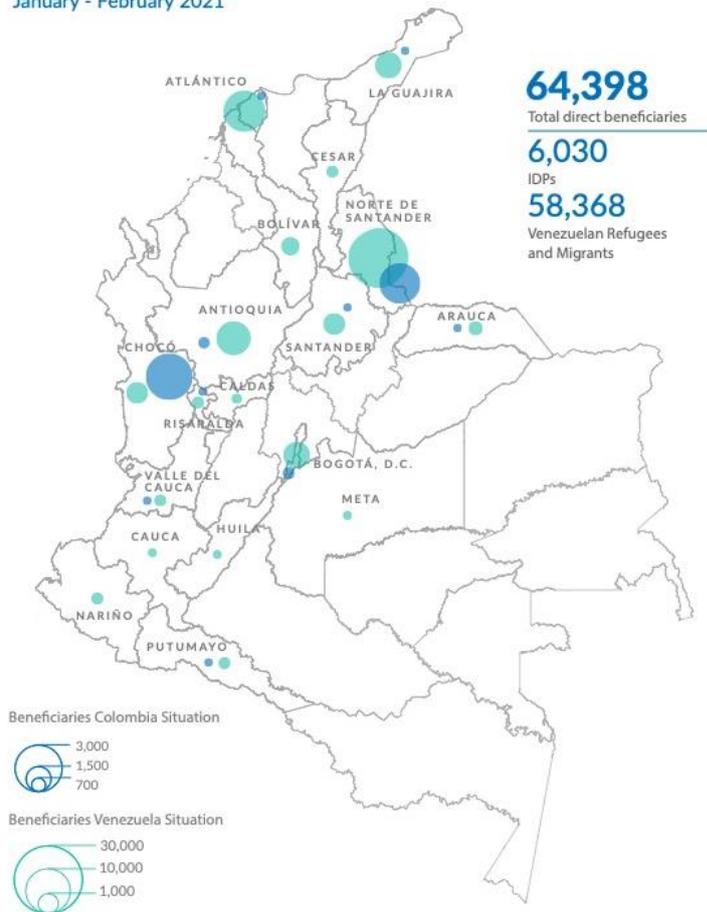
USD 108.4 million

requested for Colombia



UNHCR Colombia response

January - February 2021



Operational Context

On 8 February, President Iván Duque announced a ten-year Temporary Protection Status (TPS) for Venezuelans in Colombia. Over a period of two years, Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Colombia can apply for the TPS to regularize their stay and access essential services, including the COVID-19 vaccination. Working alongside partners in the national interagency platform (GIFFM by its Spanish acronym), UNHCR will support the government's successful implementation of the TPS, including by raising awareness and assisting Venezuelans – especially the most vulnerable – to access the TPS.

Recent fighting in the Venezuelan State of Apure has forced at least 5,737 people inside Venezuela to flee across the border to the Colombian town of Arauquita, as of 6 April 2021. Many more Venezuelans and returning Colombians are thought to be seeking refuge in rural areas of Colombia. Clashes erupted when the Venezuelan Army launched an offensive against a dissident faction of the FARC-EP Colombia guerrilla movement on 21 March. Amid ongoing fighting, civilians continue to flee the area, with many crossing the border into Colombia.

POPULATION TRENDS

- According to UNHCR monitoring as of 11 March 2021, 15,331 people (5,324 families) have been uprooted by 33 large-group displacement events inside Colombia since the start of the year. The majority (84%) of these IDPs belong to communities in the Colombian Pacific region. Five other departments (Antioquia, Chocó, Cauca, Nariño and Valle del Cauca) have recorded confinements affecting 16,851 people (4,327 families).
- According to Migración Colombia, over 130,000 refugees and migrants returned to Venezuela from or through Colombia since the border closure one year ago, on 14 March 2020.
- In Arauquita, Arauca, the GIFFM and Local Coordination Teams, together with the Mayor's office, carried out a profiling exercise in 19 locations of 5,552 individuals (1,747 families) fleeing fighting in Venezuela. An additional 1,200 people are believed to be scattered in rural areas. According to the profiling, there are at least 684 children under 5 years old, 1,704 children between 5 and 18 years, 489 elderly adults, 227 pregnant or lactating women, and 38 people self-identifying as being part of an indigenous group. Seventy-one percent of the identified population is of Venezuelan nationality, while the remainder are Colombians or bi-nationals.
- Reportedly, the ELN is recruiting children over the age of 10 in the Venezuelan sector of Guarero. As a result, a rising number of indigenous Wayúu families are fleeing to Colombia via Uribia to escape the forced recruitment of their children.
- In Necoclí, Antioquia, UNHCR continues to monitor mixed movements through the Colombia-Panama border with at least 200 people reported to have reached the Bajo Chiquito area in Panama. The authorities in Necoclí have reinforced strict COVID-19 preventive measures and a curfew until 11 April.
- UNHCR was informed of a group of approximately 50 Haitians in Orellana, Ecuador intending to cross into Colombia through the San Miguel border en route to the United States. This group is reported to be part of a larger group arriving from Brazil.

Achievements

PROTECTION

- UNHCR facilitated a training on international protection at Bogota's airport and in Tunja between 22 to 26 March. These workshops targeted migratory officers and members of the National Police as part of the Special Migratory Group (44 persons).

- In Timbuqui, Cauca, confinements resulting from clashes between FARC dissidents and the marine guard affected more than 6,000 people. UNHCR participated in the municipal transitional justice committee to activate a response plan for this population.
- In Pasto, Nariño, ongoing conflict between illegal armed groups in the Tapaje River region in the el Charco Municipality has affected between 600 to 1,800 people in the villages of Santa Catalina, Las Mercedes, Mata and Palo, generating confinement risks and large group displacements. As leader of the local protection working group, UNHCR continues to monitor the situation and to activate protection routes with governmental actors.
- In Argelia, Cauca, at least 400 Venezuelans returned to El Plateado in unsafe conditions given continuous ELN threats. Regional and local institutions, with the support of international cooperation and the Public Ministry, delivered humanitarian assistance.
- In Mocoa, Putumayo, UNHCR carried out two participatory assessments with pregnant Venezuelan refugee and migrant women from the municipalities of Valle del Guamuez, and San Miguel and distributed 35 hygiene kits, 150 hygienic towels, 124 hygiene kits for children, 15 Kitchen sets and 1 Baby Carrier.

HEALTH

- Colombia is the third most affected country by COVID-19 in the Americas region. The pandemic is challenging Colombia's health and social welfare systems, with Venezuelan refugees and migrants among the most vulnerable.
- Colombia reported 2,446,219 cases of COVID-19 and 64,094 deaths, as of 4 April. This includes 24,621 cases of Venezuelans in Colombia (including 346 deaths).
- As of 27 March, 1,726,924 doses of COVID-19 vaccines (176,068 second doses) have been administered within the first stage of Colombia's National Vaccination Plan. This represents 51% of over 3.36 million doses in Colombia. The number of Venezuelan beneficiaries is unknown at this moment. Staff of UNHCR health implementing partners have already been vaccinated in various regions such as La Guajira and Antioquia.

EDUCATION

- In Medellín, as GIFMM co-leader, UNHCR distributed 100 school kits to refugee and IDP children. In Mocoa, UNHCR delivered 309 school kits to four educational institutions (Pío XII, Ciudad Mocoa, Fray Plácido and San Agustín). With support of ICBF, the local education secretariat and the Red Cross, UNHCR conducted three participatory assessments in Valle del Guamuez with 28 Venezuelan children between the ages of 6 and 14. In a parallel exercise, 29 parents received information on how to access asylum procedures in Colombia.



In la Guajira, Colombian and Venezuelan refugee students smile in front of their classroom in their school in Paraguachon. ©UNHCR/Vicent Tremeau

- In Ipiales, Nariño, UNHCR met with the Secretariat for Education to review challenges related to the inclusion of Venezuelan refugee and migrant students in local schools. As of now, 820 Venezuelan students are enrolled in the public schools of Ipiales.

SHELTER AND NFIS

- Responding to the humanitarian needs of Venezuelans and Colombians forced to flee Venezuela, UNHCR has provided 85 family tents and 10 Refugee Housing Units, 1,000

mattresses, 290 blankets, 115 litres of sanitary gel, 9,000 facemasks and 3,851 hygiene items/kits for women, children, men, lactating and pregnant women in Arauquita. For the purpose of case management and protection analysis, UNHCR is registering new arrivals in Arauquita, providing them with orientation and information, and is distributing plastic covers, rain jackets and lanterns with an interagency response. Special attention is given to identifying and referring cases with specific needs to targeted services, conducting community mediation and providing psychosocial care and legal assistance.

- In Arauquita, UNHCR further installed 84 tents in the Alcides Ceballos soccer field and is currently strengthening the shelter capacity of Gabriel Garcia Marquez School. A third location is being considered for a joint initiative with IOM. The GIFMM is conducting various orientation and protection services in coordination with local authorities.
- In Barranquilla, 10 cases were referred for cash-based assistance to Pastoral Social, 17 cases to the legal clinics, and 3 cases for shelter with HIAS Airbnb program.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SELF RELIANCE

- In Medellin, UNHCR delivered a training on international protection to Venezuelan volunteers in the Juan XXIII, La Divisa, La Pradera and La Quiebra neighborhoods, covering response routes and the TPS. Communication activities were conducted in Comuna 13.

LOGISTICS

- In Cúcuta on 26 March, 69 asylum seekers out of a total of 141 at the Transitory Health Assistance Centre (CAST in Spanish) in Tienditas were supported by the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) with humanitarian transportation to their cities of destination where JRS will ensure follow-up on the cases. Once local GIFMM actors confirm arrangements, the remaining individuals will receive transportation.

Working in partnership

- UNHCR, together with IOM, co-leads the Inter-Agency Mixed Migration Flows Group (GIFFM), which includes 73 members, UN agencies, international and local NGOs and members of the Red Cross movement. Its main objective is to coordinate the response to the needs of refugees, migrants, Colombian returnees, and the host population in a complementary manner with the Government.
- In Arauquita, GIFFM supported the interagency response with a profiling tool and a [Joint Needs Assessment](#) with 50 focus groups discussions (reaching some 900 people). The profiling involved 13 partners and identified immediate needs in relation to protection, food, medical attention, water, sanitation, hygiene and shelter. The assessment furthermore revealed that relations between new arrivals from Venezuela and the host communities in Arauquita are positive. People fleeing the armed clashes in Venezuela expressed the intention to stay in Arauquita for the short term, until the situation improves in Venezuela. Please also refer to the GIFFM published [Flash Update](#) and [Situational report](#).

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