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VENEZUELA

FACTSHEET

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HIGHLIGHTS

Context Information

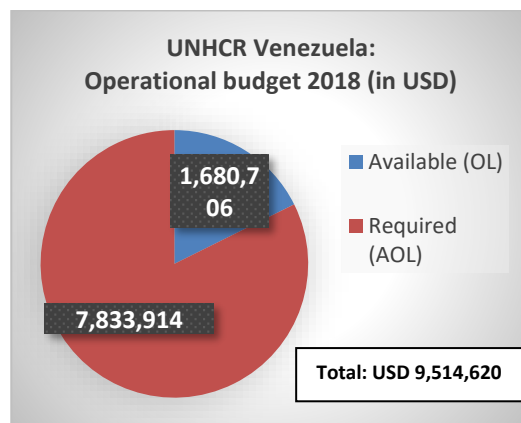
Venezuela hosts 7,861 recognized **refugees** and 904 **asylum-seekers**. Previous estimates of UNHCR calculated around 164,000 persons in need of international protection and who did not apply for asylum. Between October and December 2017, UNHCR conducted a profiling of **persons of concern** and identified 2843 persons who have not accessed the asylum procedure.

The deterioration of the political and socio-economic situation has continued to impact access to **basic goods and services** for nationals and refugees in the country. To step up the response to the ongoing influx of Venezuelans in neighboring countries, UNHCR has strengthened its presence in border areas to be able to better assess the protection risks and basic needs of mixed communities using **monitoring and risk analysis tools** that were developed in 2017.

The most common **basic needs** of the communities are related to nutrition, health, education and livelihoods. Communities have reported difficulties in accessing food due to the high prices, scarcity and lack of local production in the country. Partners have also reported an increase in children with weight below normal during nutritional assessments. Also, there is a lack of medicines and medical supplies, which affects in particular people with chronic medical conditions and people living with HIV/AIDS. Higher school dropout rates have also been reported.

Protection risks: As a result of displacement and precarious housing conditions and overcrowding, children and adolescents are exposed to risks of sexual violence, abuse, and forced marriages among others. There is also an increase in sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking of women and girls, particularly in border areas. Some indigenous populations are at risk of violence due to land disputes and land occupation following different agricultural projects. Likewise, some indigenous groups are affected by mining projects that negatively impact their places of settlement, health and general living conditions.

Funding requirements



UNHCR Presence

Staff:

- 24 national staff
- 28 affiliate workforce (AWF)
- 9 international staff

Offices:

- 1 Representation in Caracas
- 4 Field Offices in San Cristóbal (Táchira), Guasdalito (Apure), Maracaibo (Zulia) and Ciudad Guayana (Bolívar)
- 1 Field Unit in Caracas (Centre)

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

The Venezuelan Government has the primary responsibility to protect refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR maintains active cooperation with the National Commission for Refugees (CONARE) within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Service for Identification, Migration and Foreigners (SAIME) within the Ministry of Interior; the National Institute for Statistics (INE) within the Ministry of Planning; the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defense; the Ombudsperson's Office; the National Institute of Children's Rights (IDENNA); as well as other authorities playing a key role in local integration policies at the national, regional and municipality level.

Civil society remains a strategic partner in the design, coordination and implementation of the protection response for persons of concern, including identification, provision of humanitarian assistance, monitoring of refugee rights and promotion of durable solutions. Main partners include HIAS, RET, Venezuela Red Cross, CARITAS, Luz y Vida and JRS.

Alliances through the UNCT and specific UN agencies (e.g. UNICEF, FAO, WHO, UNFPA, UNDP) are essential to mainstream protection issues within the UNDAF, UPR and other shared mechanisms. Cooperation with the academia has allowed for strengthening local capacities and broadening research activities.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

UNHCR's protection strategy in Venezuela focuses on four areas: i) Border monitoring and binational coordination, ii) A community-based approach to assess and respond to the protection risks and basic needs of refugees and host communities, iii) Strengthening of the asylum system and iii) Promotion of solutions for refugees, in particular voluntary repatriation and legal integration of refugees through documentation and naturalization. The main activities of the protection strategy are the following:

- **Border cooperation:** Strengthen binational protection networks with each bordering country with the aim of identifying persons in need of international protection with specific needs, reinforce referral pathways and provide information to the communities so that people are informed and better protected on both sides of the border. In particular, UNHCR promotes regional safe space networks for the protection of survivors of sexual and gender-based and children at risk.
- **Community-Based Protection:** UNHCR implements directly or through partners community-based interventions, in particular in border areas and Caracas neighborhoods, where refugee and host populations live together. Community projects are identified through field assessments conducted in 60 prioritized communities and are linked to the following themes: education, health, nutrition, self-reliance, youth, women empowerment and child protection. During coordination meetings with humanitarian actors at field level, UNHCR shares data on the profiles, location and basic needs of refugee and host communities as a means to enhance coordination and maximize efforts through community interventions. UNHCR also promotes two-way communication between persons of concern and humanitarian actors through regular information sessions conducted in communities.
- **Asylum procedure:** UNHCR supports the individual refugee status determination and documentation processes through provision of technical advice to the CONARE, support for the issuance of individual asylum-seeker ID cards, the digitalization of files, setting up of a refugee database and promotion of legal aid.
- **Durable solutions:** UNHCR promotes timely issuance of documents for recognized refugees and facilitates information about the procedures of SAIME. UNHCR also coordinates with partners for possible transportation of individuals to the nearest SAIME office or the central office in Caracas. In close coordination with UNHCR in Colombia, UNHCR Venezuela facilitates and supports the voluntary repatriation of persons of concern by ensuring that persons of concern are in a position to take well-informed and voluntary decisions in conditions of safety and dignity.

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