

Venezuela

April 2019

- The closure of borders, recurrent power and telecommunications blackouts and water and fuel service shortages have continued to affect operations and day to day life in Field Offices and have hampered interaction with partners and communities. Nonetheless, UNHCR Field Offices have returned to conducting field missions to prioritised communities. The return of UNHCR staff in the communities has been welcomed, but the urgency of needs that have emerged requires a quick response, also in terms of direct implementation. There have been no changes in the security context, with military authorities still not forthcoming in their response to UNHCR calls for discussions on opening up humanitarian access. This problem has been brought to the attention of the Humanitarian Country Team known in Venezuela as ECCA (by its Spanish acronym) requesting the UN Resident Coordinator to advocate with the Government to facilitate access to the communities by the UN and NGOs involved in the delivery of humanitarian assistance in priority sectors and areas within the country.
- The power struggle between government and opposition continued with nation-wide demonstrations on 6 April, to which the government responded with a heavy hand in Maracaibo, and seems to have entered a stalemate phase that is not conducive to the opening of humanitarian spaces.
- On 30 April, Caracas was the scene of an aborted military rebellion against the government and in support of the opposition. Thousands of people took to the streets in the capital and other cities in Venezuela in support of the rebellion and clashes ensued and continued the following day, leading to the deaths of five protesters, three of them minors.
- On the borders, the last week of the month was marked by significant increases of outflows into Colombia and Brazil, notwithstanding the ongoing closure of the official border crossings.

HIGHLIGHTS

TOTAL ESTIMATED HOST COMMUNITIES
BENEFICIARIES

+ 270,000

PERSONS OF CONCERN (GOVERNMENT FIGURES)

Refugees 8,464

Asylum seekers 142

Source: National Refugee Commission Venezuela

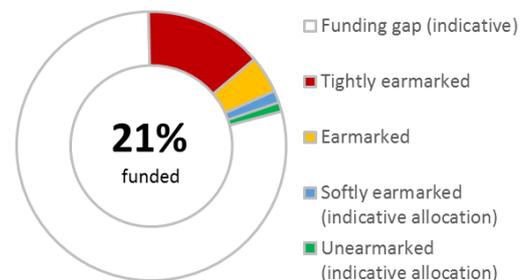
Persons in refugee-like situation: 117,653

Source: INE Venezuela

FUNDING (AS OF APRIL 2019)

USD 12.9 million

requested for Venezuela



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

79 Personnel:

62 national staff

2 affiliate workforce/employees

1 national intern

14 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

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Working with Partners

- UNHCR is implementing community-based activities in 54 prioritised communities in eight states, primarily in the border areas with Colombia, Brazil and Trinidad and Tobago, but also in Greater Caracas and the nearby Miranda state. UNHCR is working with 15 implementing partners (Aliadas en Cadena, AZUL Positivo, Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), Refugee Education Trust (RET), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Red Cross Zulia, Luz y Vida, Fe y Alegría, Sociedad Wills Wilde, Fogones y Banderas, Fundación Innocens, Fundación Casa Bonita and Fundación Soy un Guardian), as well as other local actors, including government institutions and NGOs.
- UNHCR holds regular coordination meetings with humanitarian and development actors to discuss the design, coordination and implementation of the protection response for persons of concern and host communities, including identification, provision of humanitarian assistance, monitoring of refugee rights and promotion of durable solutions.
- UNHCR liaises within the United Nations Country Team and with specific United Nations agencies to mainstream protection issues within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, and other shared mechanisms.
- UNHCR chairs the Protection Working Group, an inter-agency space for joint analysis of protection gaps and coordination of protection response and advocacy.
- UNHCR's main Government partners are the National Commission for Refugees (CONARE), the Ombudsperson's Office and Child Protection Councils, as well as community councils.

Main Activities

Community-based Protection

- UNHCR promotes an innovative community-based approach to assess and respond to the protection needs and risks of persons of concern in Venezuela.
- UNHCR is strengthening communication with communities and organizing trainings for outreach volunteers and youth networks to enhance the identification and referrals of persons with specific needs.
- UNHCR is working with community structures such as community groups, women and youth networks to engage the community in the implementation of **projects** identified by the communities themselves, seeking to improve community response and ensuring the sustainability of projects and community processes. Since 2018, UNHCR and its partners have been implementing community projects on nutrition, health, water and sanitation and education.
- UNHCR is supporting a national protection network providing assistance and counselling to persons in transit, and safe spaces for the attention of sexual and gender-based survivors and children at risk. The safe spaces provide confidential case management, counselling, psychosocial support, medical aid and legal services.
- UNHCR supports a community centre in Caracas delivering multi-sectorial services from different actors to provide legal counselling, group information sessions on different topics such as rights and referral pathways, hygiene promotion, HIC prevention, as well as catch-up classes for children out of school and material assistance for persons with specific needs, among others.

Asylum and Durable Solutions

- UNHCR promotes international refugee law and refugee status determination procedures, encouraging State institutions to identify and refer persons in need of international protection to the asylum procedure. UNHCR and partners conduct capacity building activities with government institutions.
- In close coordination with UNHCR in Colombia, UNHCR Venezuela facilitates and supports the voluntary repatriation of refugees, ensuring that they are enabled to take well-informed and voluntary decisions and are repatriated in conditions of safety and dignity. Since 2015, UNHCR has supported the voluntary repatriation to Colombia of 194 persons of concern.

Activities implemented in April 2019

Community-based Protection

- UNHCR in the state of Bolívar UNHCR and the regional Office of the Ombudsman visited the Morichalito, Pijiguaos and Turiba prioritised communities in the Municipality of Cedeño, providing guidance on access to rights to 34 individuals. Field Office Ciudad Guayana also carried out a monitoring exercise in the Terminal community in San Felix following reports by local education authorities regarding the presence in the area of persons of interest to UNHCR and supported partner Red Cross in a nutritional assessment of 187 residents of the Guanamo community in Padre Pedro Chien municipality, 14 percent of whom were diagnosed with malnutrition.
- Within the context of the Regional Safe Spaces Network and in co-leadership with UNFPA, UNHCR in San Cristobal held training workshops with 78 medical staff from the regional health service CORPOSALUD on SGBV and sexual and reproductive health and 26 representatives of members and allies of the RSSN on SGBV and new masculinities.
- UNHCR in San Cristobal visited five communities in Táchira -La Tendida, Mi Pequeña Barinas, Llano de Jorge Bolívar, Laguna de García and Mata de Curo- to assess local attitudes towards UNHCR's future activities in the same communities. The Field Office also delivered gardening boots and a water tank for the community garden in Mi Pequeña Barinas and another water tank for the local youth network. This, along with the water purification tablets delivered earlier, will help prevent the spread of water-borne diseases within the community
- UNHCR in Zulia resumed field missions and conducted protection and border monitoring in three prioritized communities – Flor Parra, Simon Bolivar I and Shirapta. Although UNHCR's return was warmly welcomed by all communities, it was noted that UNHCR's and partners' long absence, coupled with the electricity crisis and further deterioration of the socio-economic situation, has led members of community networks to either disengage from them or leave the country.
- UNHCR and partner Red Cross in Zulia carried out 776 nutritional evaluations under the CERF programme, mostly in the indigenous Yupka community of Shirapta and the prioritised community of El Carmen. UNHCR and the Red Cross also delivered supplies to the feeding houses of Shirapta and Flor Parra. The latter serves 200 children but has not received supplies from the State in the past month. UNHCR and the Red Cross in Zulia have to date conducted 1,055 nutritional evaluations in four prioritized communities, reaching 52% of the target set for Zulia
- UNHCR Field Unit Caracas formally handed over the renovated community spaces in the Hipolito Cisneros School of the community of El Cafetal, in El Junquito, with rehabilitated electric, water and sanitary facilities and improved sports area and library.
- Two cases of SGBV were identified and referred to the Safe Spaces Network by the UNHCR-supported Youth Network in the Simon Bolivar I community in Zulia. The Safe Spaces Network in Zulia organized two activities on Psychosocial First Aid and hygiene care with 40 participants in the Gran Sabana and Simon Bolivar I communities in preparation for the delivery of the CERF dignity kits through UNFPA.
- UNHCR Field Office San Cristobal supported a nutritional brigade in the prioritized border community of Mi Pequeña Barinas, in the Bolívar municipality of Táchira, during which staff from the regional National Institute for Nutrition (INN) office evaluated 179 persons, 16 of whom (among them some minors) were diagnosed with nutritional deficit. To date, within the CERF framework, eight nutritional brigades have been carried out in 7 of UNHCR's 11 prioritized communities, with 705 persons assessed by the INN and 83 of them diagnosed with nutritional deficits.
- The UNHCR-supported Safe Spaces Network in Zulia organized three awareness raising activities in the prioritized communities of Villa Bolivariana I, Simon Bolivar I and Gran Sabana, providing a total of 103 participants with rapid HIV tests and information on HIV prevention, sexual diversity, protection of LGBTI persons and psychosocial first aid for SGBV survivors.
- UNHCR in the state of Bolívar held a workshop on the Organic Law of Children and Adolescents (LOPNNA) in the prioritized community of Guanamo that was attended by 31 residents, including community health promoters. On the occasion, the local Office of the Ombudsperson reviewed 20 complaints filed by residents, including three alleged cases of sexual and gender-based violence.
- UNHCR in the state of Apure Rural delivered and supervised the installation of 14 LED lamps in the San José del Amparo ambulatory, which assists 350 to 400 patients per month, including

persons of concern to UNHCR. UNHCR also delivered supplies to the ambulatory clinics in the communities of Platanillal and Los Caobos, in the state of Amazonas.

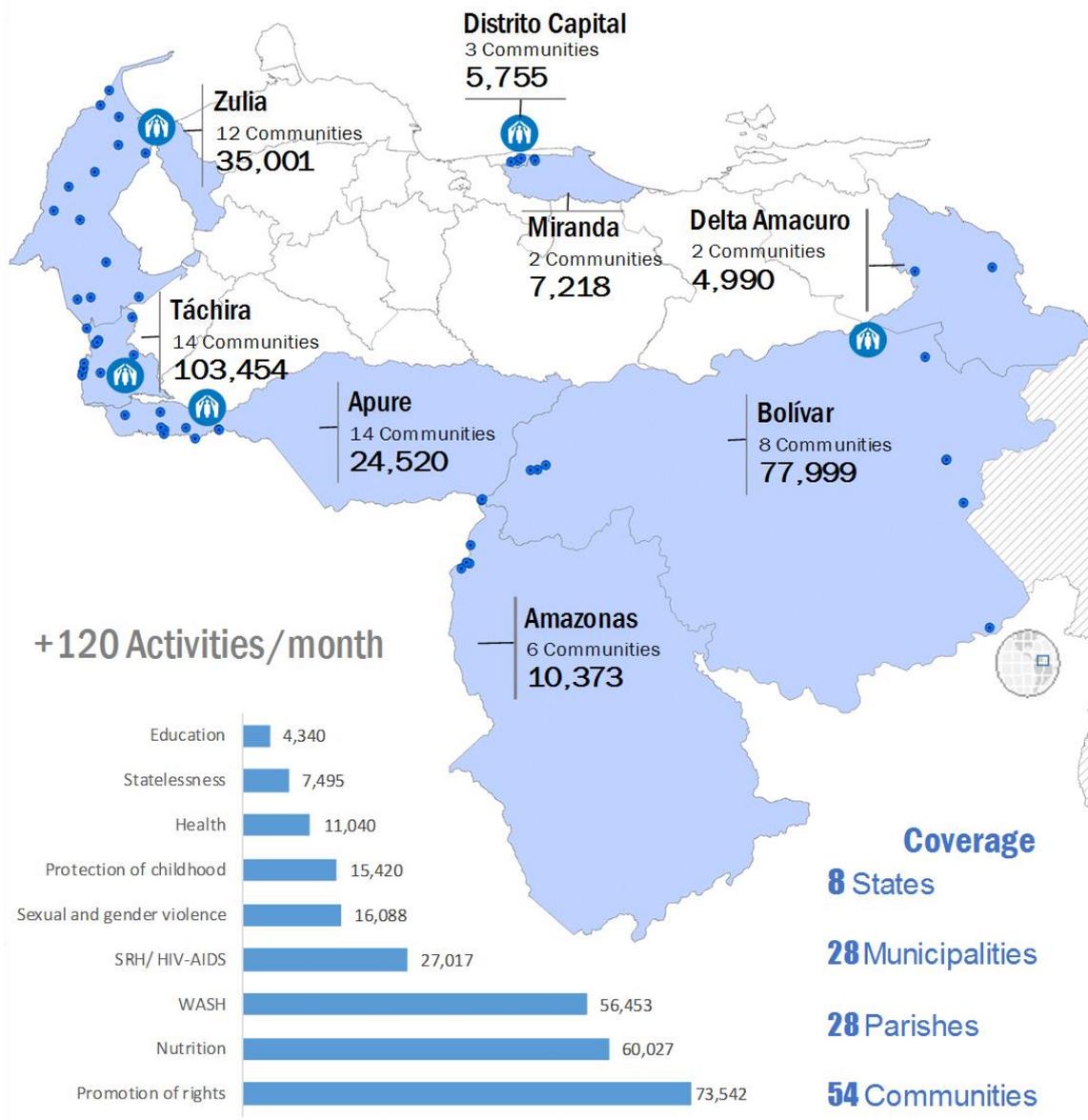
- UNHCR partner Azul Positivo carried out a second training session on sexual and reproductive health and contraception in the Simon Bolivar Community in the state of Zulia that was attended by 23 participants, including members of the local youth network and a larger than usual number of men. The main risk identified in the community was that of the increasing number of adolescents, mostly girls, engaging in gang-run prostitution rings to support their families.
- In the framework of the bilateral agreement struck with the local Office of the Ombudsperson, UNHCR in the state of Bolivar launched a Diploma on International Refugee Law for Refugees, with an introductory module on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law that was attended by 35 state, security, justice and education officials.
- UNHCR Field Unit Caracas launched a Diploma on International Refugee Law attended by some 30 participants, mostly civil servants employed by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice and the Office of the Ombudsperson.
- UNHCR in Apure and partner HIAS delivered and installed an elevated water tank in the Jiwi indigenous community of Guamalito. The structure will benefit the over 200 members of the community and the local primary school, which is attended by some 80 children.
- In the context of a joint UNAIDS-UNHCR project conducted with medical staff from the health centre in San José del Amparo, UNHCR in Apure conducted HIV and syphilis screenings, distributed condoms and delivered an informative session on sexual and reproductive health in the community of Las Monas.
- In the state of Bolivar, the Red Cross carried out a third field mission as UNHCR implementing partner, carrying out 514 anthropometric measurements in the community of El Dorado, reaching a 29% implementation rate of the CERF-funded project.
- UNHCR Field Unit Caracas organised a multi-service activity in the community of El Cafetal in El Junquito, Capital District, during which more than 330 residents received medical and nutritional attention, as well as legal advice. Sixty community volunteers and representatives of local NGOs and state institutions assisted 44 individuals with information on persons in transit, sexual and reproductive rights, humanized birth, HIV prevention, the Regional Safe Spaces Network and child protection. A mobile team was set up to provide home care to some 30 community members with disabilities or reduced mobility and 288 condoms were delivered to those who attended the informative sessions on sexual and reproductive Health and HIV prevention.
- UNHCR in the state of Táchira supported a training activity on the clinical management of rape within the framework of the SGB Regional Safe Spaces Network work plan that was attended by 32 members, allies and service providers of the RSSN. The training session –which was organized jointly by UNFPA and UNHCR and implemented by UNAIDS- was followed by the distribution of 26 PEP kits.

Borders, Asylum and Durable Solutions

- UNHCR and partner HIAS in the state of Apure supported ten cases (18 persons) of asylum-seekers from the state of Barinas and the city of Puerto Paez in their efforts to reach Guasdalito and be registered with the local branch of the National Commission for Refugees (CONARE).
- UNHCR Ciudad Guayana, Bolivar, held a binational coordination meeting with the UNHCR Field Unit in Pacaraima, Brazil, during which information was exchanged on, among other issues, the conditions of the indigenous Pemon, over 1,000 of whom are estimated to have fled to Brazil since 23 February. Leaders of another indigenous group, the Warao, have warned that cross border flows by their community members may increase this year on account of the significant deterioration of living conditions in their communities in the state of Delta Amacuro.
- UNHCR in Maracaibo provided individual counselling to nine cases (23 persons) of Venezuelans in need of international protection who intend to seek asylum in Chile, Colombia and Peru on account of the deterioration of the socio-economic context and the generalized violence and lawlessness in Zulia in the wake of the blackouts. To date, UNHCR has provided counselling to 62 cases (178 persons) of Venezuelans requiring international protection.
- UNHCR in San Cristobal completed a 32-hour training module on International Humanitarian Law and International Refugee Law included in the Postgraduate studies in Peace Culture and International Humanitarian Law organized by the Catholic University of Táchira (UCAT). The training was conducted jointly with the regional office of the ICRC and attended by 45 participants, including Venezuelan and Colombian civil servants, staff from NGOs and international organizations and the general public.

2019 Planned UNHCR Beneficiaries

 **+ 272,000** Estimated beneficiaries
  **12** Project Partnership Agreements
15 Partners



Donors

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