

# Briefing Note June 2019

## THE REGIONAL SAFE SPACES NETWORK (RSSN)

*An Interagency Protection Coordination Mechanism in the Americas*



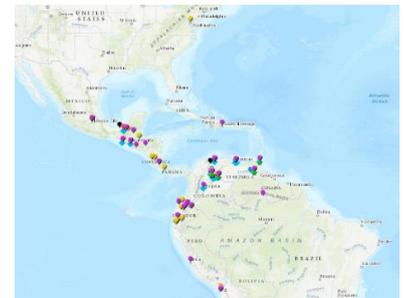
Zulia, Venezuela: Youth Mural Project "Niño Autor"  
La Red Hilos de Esperanza & RSSN members (April 2019)

The Regional Safe Spaces Network (RSSN) was established in the Americas in 2016 to provide protection to vulnerable individuals along the displacement cycle. To date 110 UN agencies, NGOs, government institutions, faith-based organizations and community volunteers work together to reach out to survivors of SGBV, children at risk, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons, victims of trafficking and other individuals with specific needs across countries, ensuring their access to information, protection and a package of essential services. The Network launched the RSSN Toolkit<sup>1</sup> in 2018.

This report highlights the main achievements and gaps identified by the RSSN in the first half of the year and the priorities for the second half.

### Key Achievements:

- The RSSN produced its **first quarterly Activity Indicators Report**: eight key members reported having provided direct support **to 4919 individuals: 4022 vulnerable persons (2412 women & girls, 1490 men & boys, & 115 LGBTI persons), 837 protection & aid workers, and 22 community volunteer organizations.**
- The RSSN's expansion: **Ecuador, Trinidad & Tobago, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, & U.S.** joined the Network. Over **30 new organizations** were added to the RSSN service map, including HIAS Ecuador, World Vision & SENAME in Chile, LWC in Trinidad & Tobago, and KIND in the US. More can be found on the RSSN map.
- UNHCR organized an **interagency workshop (May, Lima, Peru)** on the implementation of the **RSSN toolkit and Best Interests Procedures Guidelines<sup>2</sup>**, including information management and ProGres V4 SGBV/CP modules. Thirty RSSN partners, focal points and government institutions participated in the event.
- **Cross-border Referral and Transfer SOPs**: RSSN focal points from Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru initiated the development of a **sub-regional SOPs for facilitating cross-border referral and transfers** of protection cases.
- The design of the **Regional Safe Spaces Network Webpage** was initiated.
- In Venezuela, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM, HIAS and civil society organizations disseminated Safe Spaces awareness material. It was included in 10,000 UNFPA dignity kits and distributed **at border areas as a SGBV prevention initiative<sup>3</sup>.**
- **PSEA/SH/AAP<sup>4</sup>**: following the RSSN annual workshop<sup>5</sup> in December 2018, UNHCR conducted a regional PSEA Survey in 16 countries in the Americas to inform the development the **Regional PSEA/SH toolkit.**
- **The RSSN was identified as Key Action number seven** in the UNHCR's Regional Action Plan for the rollout of the **Age, Gender, Diversity Policy**, for SGBV prevention and response and Child Protection.
- **The High Level Technical Meeting on Protection of Refugee and Migrant Children from Venezuela<sup>6</sup>** (Argentina) requested support to strengthen coordination between the RSSN and the child protection institutions in South America.



Available at: [RSSN Online Map](#)

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR: *The Regional Safe Spaces Network in the Americas: Lessons learned and toolkit*, 2018, available at:

<https://www.refworld.org/es/docid/5c50c4b54.html>

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR: *Guidelines on Assessing and Determining the Best Interests of the Child*, November 2018, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5c18d7254.html>

<sup>3</sup> [Venezuela UNFPA web page](#)

<sup>4</sup> Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse/Sexual Harassment/Accountability to Affected People.

<sup>5</sup> [RSSN Briefing Note 2018](#)

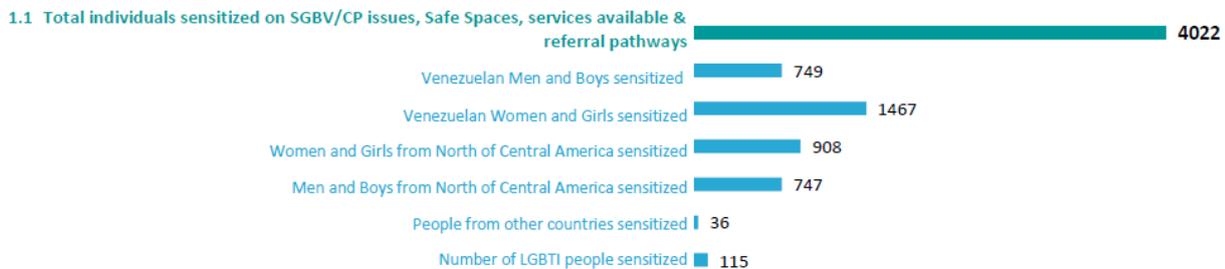
<sup>6</sup> [High Level Technical on Protection of Refugee and Migrant Children from Venezuela](#)

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## RSSN First Quarterly Activity Indicators Report (Jan-March 2019)

**Total people directly impacted** 4919

### 1. Community Awareness



**1.2 Number of Community Organizations Supported** 22

### 2. Capacity Building



### 3. Advocacy Interventions



## Challenges:

- Increasing vulnerability of moving populations due to the prolonged situation and the limited resources to address the needs along the displacement cycle. **SGBV, Child Protection and Trafficking related risks are on the rise.**
- Maintaining updated inter-agency referral pathways** remains a challenge due to the turnover of staff and the increasing needs for training on SGBV/CP case and information management.
- Limited capacity on SGBV/CP information management due to a multiplicity of systems and language barriers when applying **ProGres V4 modules.**
- SGBV and child protection risks are not sufficiently prioritized** in the response to displacement in the Americas.
- The involvement of a significant number of new actors requires additional efforts to share information in a systematic manner and achieve a **consistent integration of the Regional Safe Spaces Network** with the different coordination fora.
- The rapid integration of new teams to emergency responses, including **new shelters and reception centres and the increased vulnerability of the population** heighten the risks of **sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).**
- Limited capacity on the implementation of **sensitive communication** techniques hampers **disclosure of SGBV, child protection risks, trafficking** and other violations of human rights.
- The diversity of profiles of displaced population pose a challenge to ensure accessibility of protection and assistance for all individuals in need, particularly people with **functional diversity, indigenous populations, and LGBTI people.**
- Lack of **documentation** and sometimes complex bureaucratic processes hinder access to the essential package of services for refugees and other people on the move, including **clinical management of rape, family reunification or education.**

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## Priorities:

- Continue to strengthen SGBV/Child case and information management through the implementation of the Regional Safe Spaces Network and *Regional Information Sharing Protocol* in the region along with **ProGres V4** and **KoBo** tools.
- Continue supporting and evaluating the implementation of **cross-border referrals and transfers SOPs**.
- Roll out the recently developed **RSSN Safety Audit tools** to continue to strengthen services to meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities, indigenous population, LGBTI persons, and groups with specific needs (e.g. pregnant women and girls, victims of trafficking, sex workers).
- Complete the design and launch the **Regional Safe Spaces Network Webpage**.
- PSEA/SH/AAP** – Complete the development of the Regional PSEA/SH & community based complaint mechanisms toolkit and support its implementation throughout the region. Launch the toolkit and conduct a **Regional PSEA Workshop**.
- Strengthen the response rate to filling out the **quarterly RSSN activity indicators**. Second reporting period is for 01 April to 30 June 2019.
- Enhance the implementation of the **SGBV disclosure tool**, conducting workshops with partners and evaluating its impact.
- Birth Registration and Child Protection – following the survey launched by the UNHCR’s legal unit in the Americas, the RSSN will be key to support in the development and implementation of a **regional strategy to promote birth registration and prevent child protection and statelessness related risks**.
- Continue supporting the rollout of the revised **UNHCR Guidelines for Best Interests Procedures in the region**, which will include **Sub-Regional Workshops con RSSN, case and information management** for governments and RSSN partners. The next one will take place in **Guatemala 19-23 August**, with participants from El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, US, Cuba and Nicaragua.
- Regional Safe Spaces Network Workshop (3Q 2019)** –The RSSN workshop will review achievements and gaps in the implementation of existing newly developed tools.
- Sexual and Gender-Based Violence TOT Americas - 2-6 September, San Jose**, for focal points in coordination with UNHCR’s Division of International Protection (DIP) and Global Learning and Development Center (GLDC).
- Support the Implementation of the Regional Action Plan for the AGD Policy**. RSSN coordinators are planned to conduct missions to Honduras and Colombia in September 2019.



## For more information, you can visit the following web pages:

- UNHCR/ACNUR ([English](#), [Spanish](#))
- RSSN Americas Online Map ([English](#), [Spanish](#))
- The Regional Safe Spaces Network in the Americas: Lessons learned and Toolkit*, 2018 ([English](#), [Spanish](#))
- Berkeley University/ UNHCR *The Silence I carry: Disclosing gender-based violence in forced displacement*, 2018 ([English](#), [Spanish](#))
- UNHCR *Guidelines on Assessing and Determining the Best Interests of the Child*, 2018 Provisional Release ([English](#))
- PSEA Task Force ([English](#), [Spanish](#))
- IOM/UNHCR LGBTI Training Package, 2017 ([English](#))
- Child Protection Issue Briefs ([English](#), [Spanish](#))
- IAWG UASC Toolkit on UASC, 2016 ([English](#))
- Brazil Plan of Action, 2014 ([English](#), [Spanish](#))
- UNICEF/IRC *Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse*, ([English](#))
- IASC *Guidelines on GBV in humanitarian settings*, 2015 ([English](#), [Spanish](#))