

Venezuela

November 2018

- The Government of Venezuela introduced a number of corrective measures to its Economic Recovery Plan, including a raise of the minimum wage from 1,800 to 4,500 Sovereign Bolivars, but current hyperinflation levels are expected to erode this 130% increase by the end of the year. The rise in prices continues to erode the already meagre purchasing power of most Venezuelan citizens, with the collateral damage of increased closures in the private commercial and services sectors.
- Labour-related protests in Caracas and other major cities have added fuel to a tense social climate that has seen many States in the county affected by demonstrations and roadblocks erected by citizens demanding basic public services and utilities ranging from gas, to electricity and running water. Protests and improvised roadblocks have affected UNHCR field operations.
- The increased presence of armed groups in the border areas with Colombia and Brazil and clashes between rival factions vying for control of mining and/or smuggling activities have impaired or curtailed UNHCR operations in the States of Amazonas, Apure, Bolivar, Táchira and Zulia.
- The launch of the first CERF for Venezuela is expected to lead to further enhanced cooperation between Caracas and UN agencies present in the country. The Government appears to have overcome some of its misgivings towards international relief activity on its territory and seems more open to actively collaborate with the UN and its agencies to alleviate some of the problems affecting the population of Venezuela.

HIGHLIGHTS

59,387 refugees, asylum-seekers and others of concern assisted by UNHCR.

640,425 total population of host communities.

GOVERNMENT FIGURES (PERSONS OF CONCERN)

Refugees 8,246

Asylum seekers 1,108

Source: CONARE Venezuela

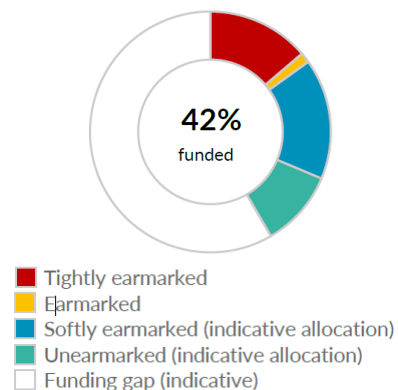
Persons in refugee-like situation: 117.653

Source: INE Venezuela

FUNDING (AS OF NOVEMBER 2018)

USD 15.5 million

requested for Venezuela



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

76 Personnel:

28 national staff (including TAs)

33 affiliate workforce

01 intern

12 international staff (including TAs)

02 Deployees

Offices:

1 Representation in Caracas

4 Field Offices in

San Cristóbal (Táchira), Guasualito (Apure), Maracaibo (Zulia) and Ciudad Guayana (Bolivar)

1 Field Unit in Caracas



Working with Partners

- UNHCR is implementing 382 community-based activities in 90 prioritised communities in 10 States of the country, primarily in the border areas with Colombia and Brazil. UNHCR is working with 12 implementing partners (Acción Solidaria, Aliadas en Cadena, AZUL Positivo, CARITAS, JRS, HIAS, RET, Venezuela Red Cross, Sociedad Wills Wilde, Vicariato de Derechos Humanos, Fe y Alegria and Luz y Vida) and many 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 UNCT and with specific UN agencies (e.g., UNICEF, UNFPA) to mainstream protection issues within the UNDAF, UPR and other shared mechanisms.
- UNHCR chairs the United Nations Emergency Management Team (UNETE), an inter-agency coordination system for emergencies that meets under the Secretariat of OCHA.
- UNHCR partners with relevant Government institutions, such as the National Commission for Refugees (CONARE), the Ombudsperson's Office and Child Protection Counsels, as well as community councils.

Main Activities

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 promotes the international refugee law and the refugee status determination procedure, encouraging the State institutions to identify and refer persons in need of international protection to the asylum procedure. So far in 2018, UNHCR and partners have held capacity building activities with 19 government authorities.
- UNHCR Venezuela conducts border monitoring and binational cooperation with UNHCR mirror offices in Colombia, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba and Curacao to strengthened communication with communities and dissemination of information related to rights, obligations and referral pathways for persons in transit.
- UNHCR coordinates the SGBV and Child Protection Safe Spaces networks for the identification, case management and referrals to specialized services. To strengthen Child Protection and prevention of SGBV at the community level, UNHCR and partners support 13 SGBV prevention and response committees and child protection committees. Also, in an effort to support school attendance as a means of risk prevention, UNHCR has distributed 5,000 school kits throughout 2018.

Community-Based Protection

- UNHCR coordinates the work of four protection networks in the dissemination of information on the rights of persons in need of international protection, including those in transit to other countries, safe routes and referral pathways. A total of 273 community promoters have been trained thus far this year to provide information on protection mechanisms at community level and on main transit routes.
- UNHCR supports two community centres delivering multi-sectorial services from different actors to provide outreach, identification and referrals pathways to persons with specific needs.
- UNHCR conducts awareness campaigns on refugee rights, including women's and children's rights and anti-fraud messages.

Asylum and Durable Solutions

- UNHCR supports CONARE field missions to register new asylum applications and issue or renew asylum seekers certificates, with a total in the year of nine field missions and 260 certificates.
- 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 164 persons of concern.

Activities implemented in November 2018

Working with Partners

- UNHCR Regional Safe Spaces Network focal points in Venezuela and Colombia, along with main case management partners, took part in a binational workshop on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and child protection case management standards organized by the Regional Legal Unit in Cucuta. Participants discussed information management tool harmonisation, criteria and procedures for transnational referrals of SGBV survivors and children at risk. The workshop also provided an opportunity to clarify terminology and review global SGBV prevention and response and best interest determination guidelines.
- UNHCR met with UNICEF and IOM in Maracaibo to discuss the operational context in Zulia, programmes for 2019 and the establishment of IOM's and UNICEF's presence in Zulia (the latter's in a shared office with UNHCR). IOM's presence in Zulia is an opportunity to enhance the binational protection network.
- UNHCR supported the National Commission for Refugees (CONARE) in the organisation of events to commemorate its 15-year anniversary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Caracas. UNHCR sponsored a photo exhibition of CONARE activities and co-chaired a ceremony to deliver letters of refugee status recognition to 25 individuals. UNHCR is advocating with the Government of Venezuela to facilitate the issuance or renewal of temporary residency permits for refugees recognized by CONARE, so that they can access basic rights and services, and has offered financial support for the issuance of temporary residency permits for refugees.
- UNHCR held on 27-30 November in Caracas a training course on Protection-Focussed Data Management and Analysis that was attended by 28 staff members of the National Institute for Statistics (INE) and the National Commission for Refugees (CONARE).

Protection

- The UNHCR distributed Non-Food Item kits to 312 persons affected by floods in the communities of Guafita and Puente Páez, in Apure state, including persons of concern and members of host communities.
- UNHCR, HIAS, the Red Cross and other partners carried out a health task force in the prioritized community of Cachiri, Zulia State, to provide paediatric care and medicines to approximately 170 persons, including 109 children.
- The results of a nutritional assessments carried out in partnership between UNHCR and the Zulian Red Cross indicate that 55% of the 425 individuals assessed in nine communities in Zulia suffered from various levels of malnutrition – 18% severe malnutrition and 37% moderate or low malnutrition. The incidence rose to 69% in the indigenous Yupka communities assessed.
- UNHCR Caracas completed the training sessions for the Community Connectivity Fund, in which refugees and members of host communities followed an 8-week course in digital literacy, digital security and prevention of human trafficking as protection risk associated with the use of technologies. The project included the delivery of phones and tablets to be used by beneficiaries in the development and implementation of projects to improve community connectivity conditions.
- UNHCR in Bolivar state and the Office of Public Health carried out a health brigade (189 beneficiaries) in the community of Cano Amarillo providing vaccinations against Hepatitis B, Toxoid, Measles, Mumps and Rubella, paediatric and internal medicine visits and deworming, antibiotics anti-allergenic medicines as part of a WHO-supported national campaign.
- UNHCR in Táchira participated in the “Friendly spaces for children and teenagers” organised by UNICEF in San Cristobal, providing information on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and on methods to develop friendly spaces for children and teenagers and, in cooperation with local NGO “Fundación RHODA”, a training workshop on LGBTI rights. On 25 November, the Regional Safe Spaces Network launched the 16 Days of Activism on Gender Based Violence campaign with sports and livelihoods activities in a park in San Cristobal with the attendance of the local mayor and representatives of the regional government and other public institutions.
- UNHCR Field Unit Caracas carried out two rights promotion activities in the framework of World Children's Day, with the participation of 532 children and teenagers, parents and teachers,

providing educational spaces through puppetry and storytelling, as well as training on hygiene and the development of recreational spaces with the support of UNICEF.

- Following UNHCR advocacy, CONARE has agreed to liaise with the Secretary of Health in Zulia State regarding UNHCR's offer to donate supplies for the issuance of 50,000 birth certificates, which are not being produced because of lack of paper. The Secretary has previously declined UNHCR's offer due to political sensitivities on assistance from humanitarian agencies.
- UNHCR and the Red Cross delivered medical supplies to the local clinic at the Yukpa community El Tokuko in Zulia State, which has been affected by malaria and malnutrition that have reportedly led to some deaths. UNHCR and the Red Cross have launched a nutritional programme in the community. An assessment in the community of El Carmen (Zulia), found 7 of 40 children to be suffering from severe levels of malnutrition.
- UNHCR partner Vicariato de Derechos Humanos reported the internal forced displacement of indigenous people of the Jivi ethnic group from the community Quebrada Seca to Puerto Ayacucho, in Amazonas state, on account of fears of forced recruitment by armed groups.

Borders, Asylum and Durable Solutions

- With the support of UNHCR, the Red Cross in Guasdalito, Apure state, has set up a post in Caucaguita, 10 kilometres from the border with Colombia, to provide basic medical check-ups for persons in transit, as well as information on risks at the border. The population in transit is in its majority made up of young males, between 20-35 years old, many of whom showing signs of weight loss (3 to 10 kilos).
- UNHCR observed during a border visit in Táchira on 16 November a large queue of people waiting to stamp their passports to leave the country. Once across the border, the Migration offices in Colombia were however found to be almost empty. It appears that many migrants do not bother to register as they cross the border, as the mirror office in Colombia reports a significant decrease of regular entries, coinciding with an increase of beneficiaries of services by UNHCR and partners.
- UNHCR Ciudad Guayana supported the first mission of the Red Cross Caroni to the Santa Elena de Uairen border with Brazil, carrying out HIV-AIDS awareness activities, distributing condoms, providing blood pressure checks, energy bars, mineral water and information on routes and migration alternatives to 205 people heading for Brazil, Argentina and Chile.
- In the context of the binational protection strategy, UNHCR has provided support to the Red Cross Guasdalito to activate a border health post to provide medical services and information to people traveling to Arauca, in Colombia, from the states of Apure, Barinas, Táchira, Aragua, Anzoátegui, Bolívar, Mérida and Vargas.
- Lack of public transportation in Maracaibo has forced public institutions to end work days at 1PM, so UNHCR has agreed to provide transportation to CONARE staff for a 3-week period so that they can work on reducing the backlog of pending cases and the on the registration of new asylum claims.
- UNHCR and partner HIAS held training sessions on International Refugee Law and national procedures with 16 officers of the GNB in Ciudad Bolívar. The GNB in Bolívar state has asked UNHCR to provide monthly trainings to the force, which plays a crucial role in national asylum procedures.
- With support from UNHCR, CONARE in Caracas is moving forward to decide on 1,108 cases before the end of 2018. In the last week alone, CONARE held two meetings in which 235 cases were decided, with 80 cases (240 persons) recognized as refugees in Venezuela. In the year to November 15, CONARE has held 9 refugee status determination sessions, deciding on 619 cases and recognising 216.
- UNHCR provided logistical and technical support to CONARE in carrying out a field mission to Bolívar state during which 21 individuals acceded to refugee status determination procedures in Ciudad Guayana and the towns of Upata and La Paragua and 70 asylum-seeker certificates were renewed.
- UNHCR and the National Commission for Refugees (CONARE) launched a joint capacity building programme for Police officers in Maracaibo. A total of 64 officers attended the first session on international refugee law. UNHCR and CONARE also provided training on asylum, statelessness and birth registration to 30 child protection and civil registry authority representatives in Zulia state.

INDIVIDUALS ASSISTED BY UNHCR

As of November 2018

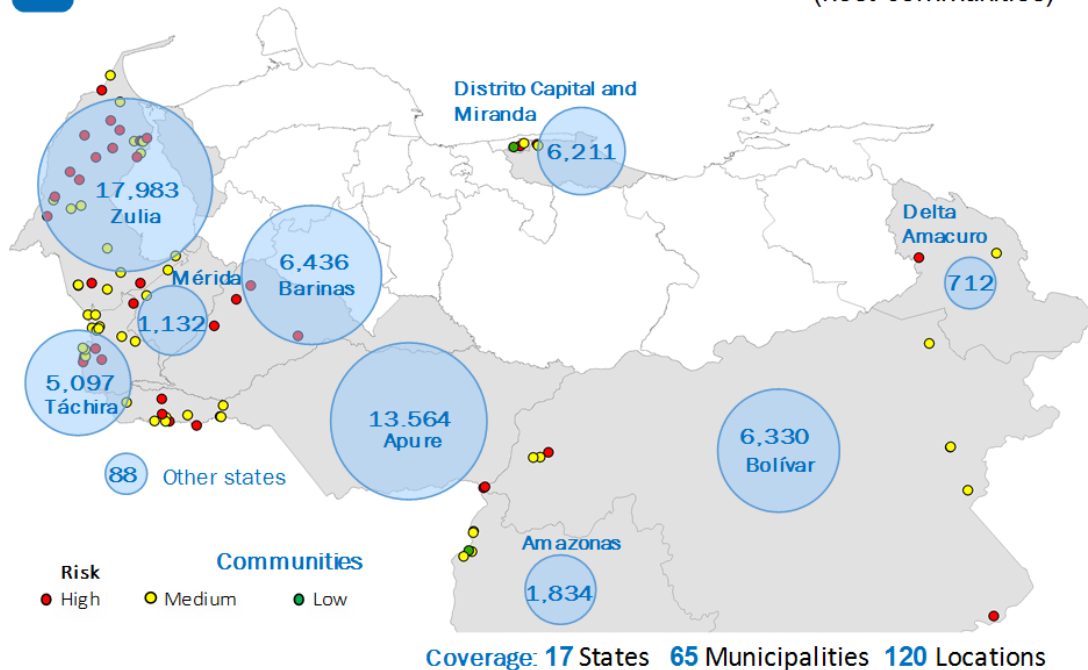

59,387 Persons assisted


90 Communities


58 Actors

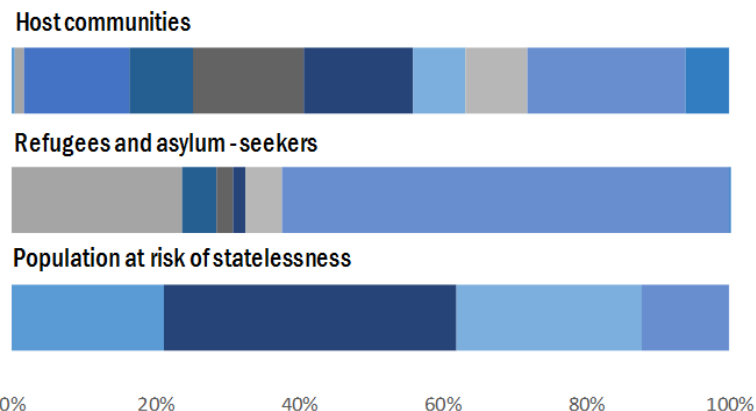

14 PPA - SSA

2,665 persons of concern
 (refugees and asylum seekers)

56,722 others of concern
 (host communities)


Thematic area

- Statelessness
- RSD
- Education
- Nutrition
- Protection of childhood
- Health
- Sexual and Reproductive Health / HIV-AIDS
- Sexual and gender violence
- Promotion of Rights
- WASH



Donors

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