

Venezuela

November – December 2020

The last two months of the year in Venezuela have been characterised by a marked decrease in returns and a gradual increase in outflows in response to economic pull factors, as neighbouring countries began to reopen their economies following a slowdown in the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of those who had returned home after having lost their precarious livelihoods during lockdowns once again have taken to leaving the country in the hope of better economic outcomes. However, many others who have started leaving had never done so before.

As a result of the decrease in returns, many border quarantine centres for refugees have been closed and UNHCR has begun to refocus its shelter and NFI strategies away from the immediate response to returns and towards strengthening local capacities in their response to the COVID-19 epidemic, environmental disasters and emergencies, as well as prioritised communities.

Economically, the situation in the country has continued on its steady path of decline, causing the population at large ever-increasing difficulties in accessing basic services (electricity, water, cooking gas and automotive fuel) and leading to widespread spontaneous protests.

Political polarisation continued as the Government held elections on 6 December for the renewal of the National Assembly that were boycotted by the opposition and not recognised by most of the international community. These yielded the result of creating a strongly pro-Government legislative branch that the executive will put to use to pursue its political and economic agenda and force the opposition and its international backers into a strategic rethink.

HIGHLIGHTS

ESTIMATED POPULATION OF CONCERN

620,000 (2020)

REFUGEES & ASYLUM SEEKERS

Refugees 9,111

Asylum seekers 49

Source: National Commission for Refugees Venezuela

Persons in refugee-like situation: 58,810

COVID-19 CASES

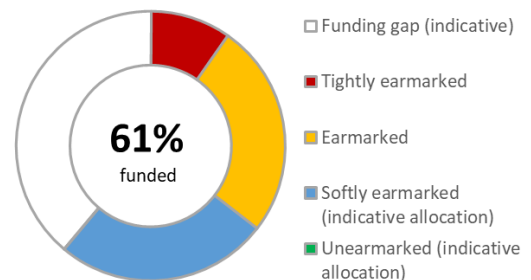
Reported in Venezuela 113,558 / 1,030 deaths

Affecting PoCs 13,040 among spontaneous returnees

FUNDING (AS OF DECEMBER 2020)

USD 53.7 million

requested for Venezuela



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

116 Personnel:

92 national staff

2 affiliate workforce deployees

0 national interns

22 international staff

Offices:

1 Representation in Caracas

4 Field Offices in

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

2 Field Units in Caracas and San Antonio (Táchira)



Working with Partners

- UNHCR is implementing activities in 67 prioritised communities in 10 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 19 implementing partners (AZUL Positivo, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Zulia Red Cross, Falcón Red Cross, Fundación Luz y Vida, Instituto Radiofónico Fe y Alegría (IRFA), Sociedad Wills Wilde, Fogones y Banderas, Fundación Casa Bonita, Fundación Soy un Guardian, Andrés Bello Catholic University (UCAB), UniAndes Acción Popular, Comitato Internazionale Per Lo Sviluppo Dei Popoli (CISP), Comisión para los Derechos Humanos y la Ciudadanía (CODEHCU), the Venezuelan Association of Health Services and Christian Orientation (AVESSOC) and Fundación Amigos del Niño que Amerita Protección (Fundana), as well as other local actors, including government institutions and NGOs.
- UNHCR leads the Protection and Shelter, Energy and NFI Clusters within the framework of the Venezuela Humanitarian Response Plan.
- UNHCR's main Government partners are the National Commission for Refugees (CONARE) and the Office of the Ombudsperson (DdP).

Main Activities

- UNHCR promotes and strengthens the protection and dignity of the most vulnerable population affected by the crisis in Venezuela, improving these persons' access to goods and services, mitigating the risks to which they are exposed and helping ensure their survival and well-being.
- UNHCR is working with community structures, including outreach volunteers, women's networks and youth networks, to engage communities 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 supporting the implementation of community projects related to nutrition, health, water and sanitation and education.
- UNHCR supports a national protection network that provides assistance and counselling to persons in transit and safe spaces for the attention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) survivors and children at risk. The safe spaces provide confidential case management, counselling, psychosocial support, medical aid and legal services.
- 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 248 persons of concern.
- Within the framework of the Humanitarian Response Plan and its leadership role in the Protection Cluster and the Shelter, Energy and NFI Cluster, UNHCR participates in the UN interagency response to the COVID-19 emergency in Venezuela.

Activities implemented November – December 2020

Operational highlights

- UNHCR, together with partner HIAS, delivered **863** habitat kits, **721** school kits, **542** NFI kits, **263** assistance kits, **260** agricultural tool kits, **228** habitat kits, **15** WASH kits, **14** hygiene kits and **30** water filters to benefit some **7,047** persons with specific needs in prioritised communities in Bolívar (including **36** indigenous persons in human mobility in El Terminal).
- UNHCR delivered **1,394** mosquito nets, **1,222** mattress sets, **694** mosquito nets, **698** jerry cans, **602** hygiene kits, **422** habitat kits, **400** sleeping mats, **358** kitchen sets, **49** buckets and **49** packets of water purification tablets to benefit some **5,000** persons with specific needs in Táchira.
- UNHCR and Falcón Red Cross delivered **264** habitat kits to benefit **728** persons with specific needs affected by heavy rains and flooding in Falcón.
- UNHCR and partners IRFA and Zulia Red Cross delivered **253** hygiene kits, **198** habitat kits, **144** mosquito nets, **133** buckets and **58** bed sheets to benefit **693** spontaneous returnees and **254** persons at heightened risk (total **789**) in Guana and at PASI temporary shelters in Guajira, Zulia.
- UNHCR delivered **374** buckets, **355** mosquito nets, **197** jerry cans, **190** solar lamps, **189** kitchen sets, **188** blankets and **172** hygiene kits to benefit **427** persons with specific needs in Zulia.
- UNHCR delivered **122** habitat kits to **122** families with specific needs in Llano Alto, Apure.
- Partner Vivienda Popular delivered **150** habitat kits and **82** kitchen sets (including electric stoves and Eco-Filters) to benefit **232** persons with specific needs in prioritised communities in Petare (Miranda) and El Junquito (Capital District), Greater Caracas.
- UNHCR delivered **38** habitat kits to persons with specific needs, completing also the installation of **1** 7,500-liter water tank and **2 ½** HP well pumps at the medical clinic and health centre serving La Banera, Carabobo, benefitting some **4,000** persons with specific needs each month.
- UNHCR delivered **2** water tanks to Boca del Grita High School in García de Hevia, Táchira, benefitting some **300** persons a month, as well as **300** jerry cans and **300** water purification tablets to the Office of the Mayor of San Cristóbal, to support persons in mobility in vulnerable situations.
- UNHCR and partner Vivienda Popular carried out **12** rehabilitation works in health centres, schools and community centres in Greater Caracas, strengthening the capacity of response of each of these institutions in benefitting some **8,071** persons with specific needs. In addition, UNHCR donated **2** 2,100-liter tanks with **½** HP pumps to the outpatient clinic in El Ingenio and the local school, serving over **1,000** persons per year in the clinic and over **80** students and teachers at the school.
- UNHCR local institutional counterpart VEN 911 inaugurated UNHCR-supported **CASF** (the Centre of Social Attention for Families), a space where NGOs and institutions can provide assistance amidst the COVID-19 emergency and natural disasters, while also providing free educational, cultural and sports activities for communities in vulnerable situations in Bolívar. UNHCR set up **9** Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) and **41** solar streetlights to strengthen the centre's response capacity, and also renovated and rehabilitated the premises itself.
- UNHCR supported the installation of **8** RHUs for the Omaira Rodríguez Hospital in Ciudad Bolívar and **2** RHUs for the Red Cross in Bolívar, strengthening their capacity in the prevention of and response to COVID-19.
- UNHCR donated and installed **15** RHUs in Táchira: **5** to be used for respiratory triage/COVID-19 testing at local health centres and **10** to be used for triage at the social security hospital once partners finalise the installation of sanitary facilities.
- UNHCR delivered **5,000** surgical masks and **50** gallons of hand sanitizer for use in the San Cristóbal passenger terminal in Táchira that serves some **45,000** persons a month. UNHCR also delivered biosecurity gear and **175** gallons of hand sanitizer to other local institutions, strengthening local capacity of response to the COVID-19 resurgence in Táchira, benefitting an estimated **20,000** persons.
- UNHCR completed the installation of a water extraction and distribution system in Shirapta, Machiques de Perijá, Zulia, benefitting some **1,500** indigenous persons each month.
- UNHCR donated **107** solar lamps, **10** blankets, **10** rain ponchos and **3** kitchen sets to strengthen the response of local institutions in Mérida (Civil Defence, fire department and social protection corporation CorpoMérida).

- UNHCR delivered **600** hygiene kits, **200** mattresses, **200** solar lamps, **200** jerry cans, **78** kitchen sets and biosecurity gear to the service point managed by Caritas, which provides assistance to an increasing number of persons in mobility (**1,190** each week).
- UNHCR delivered **1,001** school desks to schools in Guasdualito that had been used as PASI returnee shelters, strengthening the quality of education. UNHCR completed the rehabilitation work of the Campo Escuela facility, a former PASI currently used by the Guasdualito Boy Scouts, where the local community also organized regular recreational activities for children.
- UNHCR delivered solar lamps, stretchers, paediatric scales and biosecurity gear to the local Caritas centre in El Nula, Apure, which provides assistance to **80** children and adolescents each month.
- UNHCR delivered **17** hygiene kits, **2** solar lamps, **2** water tanks, **1** cell phone with expandable memory, **1** laptop computer, office supplies and biosecurity gear to the regional CONARE office, the local Commissioner in Páez, the Catholic Church, the local DdP, the Civil Registry Office in El Nula and the occupational training centre (CECAL) in Guasdualito, Apure, to strengthen the response and assistance provided by these local actors, benefitting over **1,200** persons with specific needs per month.
- UNHCR, together with CONARE, DdP and other local institutions, organised **2** registration and documentation brigades in Apure, guaranteeing effective access to birth registration for **39** indigenous Jivi children in La Victoria and **119** children in El Nula.
- UNHCR, together with CONARE and partner HIAS, organised brigades to facilitate access to RSD procedures for **115** PoCs in Zulia and held information sessions on asylum procedures in Venezuela for 48 persons.
- Partner FUNDANA is providing [material/transportation] assistance to **26** new SGBV survivors and provided contraceptive subdermal implants to **120** women with specific needs in Greater Caracas.
- Within the framework of the **16 Days of Activism against GBV**, UNHCR installed **4** RHUs at the San Fernando Red Cross in Apure to strengthen assistance provided to GBV survivors, delivered **50** menstrual cups to women in human mobility and provided **42** HIV and syphilis tests to indigenous Jivi persons in Palomeco. In Bolívar, UNHCR delivered **136** hygiene kits in Cambalache and Brisas del Sur, provided **135** HIV and syphilis tests (no positive results) and organized a workshop on GBV and SRH for **179** persons. In Carabobo, UNHCR and the University of Carabobo organized educational and recreational activities for children, delivering rain ponchos and story books to **118** children and raising awareness on the importance of education and the right to identity among the **58** parents present. In Táchira, UNHCR is conducting a virtual course on PSEA, GBV and AGD for staff members from NGO partner INTAMUJER. These activities have benefited an estimated total of **1,100** persons with specific needs in Apure, Bolívar, Carabobo and Táchira.



Donors

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Contacts

Luca Nicosia, Associate Reporting Officer & Head of Public Information, nicosi@unhcr.org
 John Jeffcoat Mészáros, Communications & Public Information Associate, jeffcoat@unhcr.org
 Claudia Uribe, Senior Communications & Public Information Assistant, uribeesp@unhcr.org