

Venezuela

March – July 2020

In mid-March, following the first reports of COVID-19 cases in the country, the Government of Venezuela declared a State of Emergency which is still in force across the country. This entailed the closure of land and air borders and the introduction of restrictions to internal travel and commercial activity. Throughout the reporting period, the GoV has adopted a unique “7+7” scheme, whereby quarantine restrictions to movement and business are imposed one week and lifted the next. The “7+7” scheme has been applied at different levels (total, moderate flexibility, restricted) to different parts of the country, depending on local levels of contagion. Generally, the border states have been kept under the most rigid restriction regime, purportedly to manage contagion from abroad, while the Capital District and its greater metropolitan area have been allowed a moderate degree of activity and rural states in the interior of the country have been left mostly free of restrictions in the allotted flexibiisation week.

The introduction of the State of Emergency and the closure of the country’s borders coincided with the beginning of significant inflows of Venezuelans returning from other countries in the region, mostly as a result of lost livelihoods on account of the impact of the pandemic on local economies. Among the tens of thousands of spontaneous returnees coming across the border there were some 27,000 persons engaged in cross-border activities who were allowed back into Venezuela after having been stuck in Colombia by the border closure. To respond to these inflows, the GoV has set up dozens of reception and quarantine centres at the border and UNHCR has been actively participating in the interagency response to returns and COVID-19 through distributions of hygiene kits and other NFIs to medical and reception centres, the setting up of triage structures and field hospitals along the border and the provision of modular Refugee Housing Units to medical, reception and quarantine facilities.

HIGHLIGHTS

ESTIMATED POPULATION OF CONCERN

494,000 (2019)

REFUGEES & ASYLUM SEEKERS

Refugees 8,892

Asylum seekers 49

Source: National Commission for Refugees Venezuela

Persons in refugee-like situation: 58,826

COVID-19 CASES

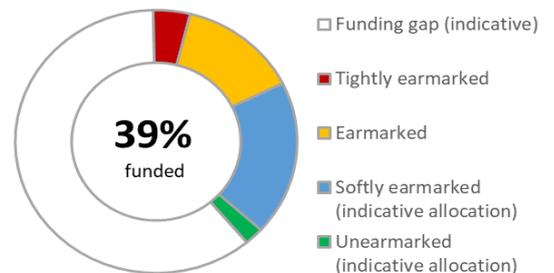
Reported in Venezuela 17,158 / 156 deaths

Affecting PoCs 5,460 among spontaneous returnees

FUNDING (AS OF JULY 2020)

USD 53.7 million

requested for Venezuela



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

109 Personnel:

89 national staff

0 affiliate workforce/employees

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)

1 Field Unit in Caracas



Working with Partners

- UNHCR is implementing activities in 68 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 (CODICIU), 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 March-July 2020

Operational highlights

- UNHCR delivered **2,534** bamboo mats, **2,451** mattresses, **1,197** jerry cans, **101** solar lamps and **12** water tanks to benefit a total of **14,356** spontaneous Venezuelan returnees put in quarantine at PASI quarantine centres in Apure, in coordination with the regional Office of the Ombudsperson. UNHCR also delivered **5,541** hygiene kits for **6,032** returnees at PASI in Apure.
- UNHCR delivered **6,100kg** of charcoal, **1,660** mosquito nets, **2,150** solar lamps, **536** blankets, **1,130** jerry cans, **205** buckets, **400** water purification tablets, **15** hygiene kits and **5** water filters to benefit some **46,710** returnees at PASI in Táchira, as well as **900** PASI staff workers.
- UNHCR delivered **1,960** mosquito nets, **1,600** buckets, **1,400** solar lamps and **860** mattresses to benefit **18,643** Venezuelan returnees in quarantine at PASI in Zulia. UNHCR also delivered **2,840** hygiene kits for **7,965** returnees at PASI in Zulia.
- UNHCR delivered **350** buckets, **350** jerry cans, **100** mattresses and **800** bars of soap to benefit **2,028** Venezuelan returnees in quarantine at PASI in Bolívar. UNHCR also delivered **171** hygiene kits for **340** returnees at PASI in Bolívar.
- UNHCR delivered **500** mosquito nets, **500** blankets, **400** buckets, **308** solar lamps, **6** water filters and **500** bars of soap to benefit **4,713** Venezuelan returnees and local COVID-19 patients in quarantine at the Los Caracas isolation centre in La Guaira. UNHCR also delivered **150** hygiene kits for **468** returnees at the centre.
- UNHCR donated and installed **12** RHUs at the Los Caracas isolation centre in La Guaira. These serve as triage centres for **600** returnees who can be accommodated at the centre.
- UNHCR donated and installed **13** RHUs at the La Periquera field hospital in Guasualito, Apure, which treats returnee COVID-19 patients, installing **1** 2,100-litre water tank as well.
- UNHCR donated and installed **8** RHUs and **1** Rubb Hall to support the epidemiological checkpoint for returnees at the Simón Bolívar International Bridge in Táchira, providing more dignified and safe reception conditions for returnees. UNHCR also donated **11** RHUs to the San Cristóbal Central Hospital, **4** RHUs to the health centre in San Antonio, **1** RHU for the PASIEMU (isolation centre for asymptomatic local persons who tested positive), **1** RHU for the San Antonio fire department (active in the COVID-19 response) and **1** Rubb Hall for the San Antonio bus terminal to isolate those who test positive. The **25** RHUs and **2** Rubb Halls have all been installed.
- UNHCR, in coordination with the Táchira Red Cross, delivered **275** hygiene kits, **50** blankets, **607** bars of soap and **10** water filters to **10** nursing homes in the state of Táchira, benefitting **467** older persons.
- UNHCR delivered **4,000kg** of charcoal, **390** jerry cans, **250** solar lamps, **200** buckets, **200** sleeping mats, **162** blankets, **150** mosquito nets, **130** hygiene kits and **30** water filters to benefit **721** persons with specific needs in the municipalities of Samuel Darío Maldonado, García de Hevia and Junín in Táchira, including persons in women's shelters and children's shelters and persons with disabilities.
- UNHCR delivered **168** solar lamps, **125** sleeping mats, **108** blankets, **100** mosquito nets, **65** buckets, **11** water filters, **2** solar streetlights, cleaning materials and biosecurity gear to national responders in Táchira (Táchira Red Cross, Civil Defence, Office of the Ombudsperson and children and women protection institutions) on the frontlines of the response, as well as **945** hygiene kits to community structures in Táchira, supporting their work in identifying and providing assistance to persons with specific needs.
- UNHCR delivered **1,304** habitat kits, **1,210** solar lamps, **1,205** jerry cans, **1,132** mosquito nets, **848** bars of soap, **644** buckets, **462** plastic sheets, **456** hygiene kits **151** mattresses, **51** blankets and **3,716** water purification tablets to benefit some **23,584** persons with specific needs (including indigenous persons) in prioritised communities in the state of Bolívar.
- UNHCR delivered **800** solar lamps, **800** buckets and **50** mattresses to the Falcón Red Cross, to strengthen their COVID-19 response in Falcón, as well as **330** hygiene kits for PASI in Falcón.
- UNHCR delivered **328** solar lamps, **148** jerry cans, **23** kitchen sets, **11** water filters, **10** buckets and **2** mattresses to **2,050** persons with specific needs in the communities of Guasualito, San José de El Amparo, Guafita, Victoria and El Nula, Apure.
- UNHCR, in coordination with the Office of the Ombudsperson and NGO partners IRFA and Fogones y Bandera, is broadcasting key messages on COVID-19 prevention in indigenous languages—Jivi, Wotuja, Warao, Yekuana, Wayuunaiki and Yukpa—on community radio stations and through instant messaging in the states of Apure, Amazonas, Bolívar and Zulia.

- UNHCR is coordinating a CwC (Communication with Communities) to reach vulnerable persons in Zulia with information on COVID-19 prevention, primarily through instant messaging and community radios. Eight phases have been launched as of July, reaching **32,913** persons.
 - Phase 1: Prevention, referral pathways and COVID-19 myths (AGD approach)
 - Phase 2: Focus on child and youth protection; pregnant and breastfeeding women
 - Phase 3: Risks for persons living with HIV; promoting solidarity and non-discrimination
 - Phase 4: Focus on persons at risk of gender-based violence in the context of COVID-19; package of available services and information on risks of gender-based violence
 - Phase 5: LGBTI persons at risk of gender-based violence; available services
 - Phase 6: Focus on older persons
 - Phase 7: Focus on indigenous child and youth protection
 - Phase 8: Focus on refugees and asylum-seekers
- UNHCR, together with UNFPA and NGO partner Azul Positivo, conducted information sessions on SRH and HIV Prevention for staff and spontaneous returnees at PASI in Zulia. Additional sessions on referral pathways in case of SGBV survivors were also shared with PASI staff.
- UNHCR has organised Camp Coordination and Camp Management workshops for local authorities and teams working at PASI and temporary shelters in Apure, La Guaira, Miranda, Táchira and Zulia, providing further trainings on fraud, PSEA, SGBV and other protection issues.
- In coordination with UNHCR, NGO partner Luz y Vida has developed a system of remote accompaniment with school activities for the **158** children served by the UNHCR-supported Colibrí Community Centre in San Isidro, Petare, Miranda.
- UNHCR delivered **78** blankets, **78** sleeping mats and **48** bars of soap to the Public Prosecutor's Office in Bolívar, to be sent to support the **80** Venezuelans who were on a vessel bound to Trinidad and Tobago that was intercepted by the Bolivarian National Guard and who were been put in quarantine in Tucupita, Delta Amacuro.
- The UNHCR-supported Caño Amarillo women's network in Bolívar has completed the logistics for food distribution, observing hygiene protocol and benefitting **130** persons in their community daily, particularly children and older persons. In addition to growing vegetables, the women's network uses both revenue from the sale of handmade hammocks and food supplies from the state-run Regional Child Foundation for these daily food distributions.
- UNHCR delivered **163** farming tools and equipment (wheelbarrows, brush cutters, manual sprayers) to the community of Guanamo in Bolívar, improving livelihood opportunities by promoting community farming as a solidarity initiative.
- UNHCR delivered biosecurity gear and cleaning supplies to support the work of local institutions (including health centres) in the states of Amazonas, Apure, Bolívar, Táchira and Zulia.
- Within the framework of IDAHOT, UNHCR and local NGO Orgullo Guayana conducted a virtual training on international protection, protection risks, terminology and safe spaces for regional SSN members in Bolívar. In Táchira, UNHCR and partner SWW organised a WhatsApp chat, discussing questions on what "breaking the silence" means and how it can be done. UNHCR also carried out a virtual training for partner staff in Greater Caracas on the basic concepts of diversity, homophobia and its manifestations and the international protection of LGBTI persons.



Donors

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