

UPDATE #15 ON UNHCR COVID-19 RESPONSE IN COLOMBIA



In Maicao, La Guajira department, UNHCR admitted a second group of families to the Integrated Assistance Centre (CAI), after they received a negative COVID-19 test result and complied with all biosecurity measures. Currently, more than 250 people are receiving shelter and assistance at the CAI. ©UNHCR/Rosso,N.F.

CURRENT CONTEXT

The Colombian Ministry of Health confirmed 1,149,063 cases of COVID-19 as of Monday, 9 November, with Bogotá concentrating the highest number (336,585 confirmed cases). A total of 32,974 individuals have died from COVID-19 and 1,047,017 cases have recovered.

According to Migración Colombia, 118,495 Venezuelans have returned to Venezuela from or through Colombia as of Thursday, 1 November.

Following the mobilization of 900 military and police forces to exercise control over the 17 unofficial border points with Venezuela (*trochas* in Spanish), UNHCR notes a decrease in the number of Venezuelan entries to approximately 150 daily in Norte de Santander.

In La Guajira, an estimated 70 people are crossing daily through the well-known informal La Cortica crossing point, with a resurgence of pendular flows.

The general profile of Venezuelans exiting Colombia has changed in the past two months. Most people hosted temporarily in the Transitory Health Attention Center (CAST in Spanish) at the Tienditas International Bridge near Cúcuta are entering with goods, which could indicate that they are engaging in pendular movements. The overall numbers of Venezuelans seeking to enter Venezuela is decreasing, although there are still on average 800 Venezuelans waiting to enter each day.

In addition, during the reporting period, 1,794 individuals (768 cases) returning to Venezuela were registered at the CAST, of which 1,335 received information and orientation from UNHCR.

As per GIFMM monitoring, between 12 June and 19 October, 466 cases of evictions (1,909 individuals) were registered among the Venezuelan population, as per the following breakdown: 53.8 percent females, 43.2 percent males and 0.4 percent others (2.6 percent not disaggregated by gender). Additionally, 424 cases (2,109 individuals) have identified themselves as being at risk of eviction.

Between October 16 and 31, four massacres were reported by external sources: in Planadas (Tolima), 3 people were killed in a rural area of the municipality. In San Marcos (Sucre), 5 people were killed in events related to land disputes; among the victims and survivors are members of the Zenú indigenous people. In Mercaderes (Cauca), 3 relatives of a community leader, murdered in April of this year in the same municipality, were assassinated. In Nechí (Antioquia), 4 people were murdered in the village (corregimiento) of Bijagual, in a zone of dispute between illegal armed actors. There is concern about the increased risk of forced displacements as a result of these events.

There were also two large-group displacements originating in the department of Chocó:

On 23 October, 11 families declared before the municipal authorities of Medellín that they had been displaced from the municipality of Alto Baudó as a result of hostilities between illegal armed groups. The Victims' Unit of the Medellín Mayor's Office interviewed the affected families and provided them with food items. These families stated that they did not want to return to their place of origin. The authorities are awaiting the arrival of three more families (10 people) as a result of this event.

On 26 October, after several murders and threats against indigenous leaders in the municipality of Bajo Baudó, 14 families from the Purricha River Indigenous Community moved to the municipal seat (Pizarro) and warned of the possible displacement of another 18 families and the confinement of 16 communities (471 families – 2,346 people). In an extraordinary session of the Committee for Transitional Justice, it was agreed to carry out a verification mission, possibly during the first week of November. UNHCR attended this meeting and will support the participation in the mission of an official from the Office of the Inspector General of Colombia (Procuraduría General de la Nación), as part of the national project in place between this entity and UNHCR.

There are persistent reports of illegal armed groups in Buenaventura offering Venezuelan

refugees and migrants access to housing left behind by displaced people in exchange for money or illegal labour, as well as reports concerning risks of forced recruitment, human trafficking and SGBV in the southern pacific and Catatumbo regions.

UNHCR'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN THE PAST 2 WEEKS

Health and hygiene/prevention measures

In Arauca, 3 cases received sexual and reproductive health services through UNHCR's partner Profamilia. In Chocó, in association with Profamilia and the local authorities, UNHCR provided health services for Venezuelan refugees and migrants and host communities in the municipality of Carmen de Atrato.

Protection

The mobile unit of the National Civil Registry Office (UDAPV in Spanish) started its registration exercise in Maicao where on the first day it assisted 30 people with access to documentation such as birth certificates for the Venezuela-born children of Colombian returnees and Colombia-born children of Venezuelan citizens. The UDAPV mobile unit is expected to remain in Maicao until 20 December.

A total of 744 cases (476 Venezuelans and 268 Colombian) in Arauca and 1,834 in Cúcuta were supported and oriented through the 12 Local Ombudsperson's Offices and legal counsels. UNHCR referred cases to the Legal Clinics for legal assistance with the asylum-seeking process in Arauca (10), in Cúcuta (37). In Arauca, 28 legal actions were filed (20 regarding guardianships, 5 rights petitions and 4 motions citing contempt for non-compliance with guardianships).

In Barranquilla, UNHCR provided training to 104 staff from the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) Regional Units in Bolívar, Magdalena and Atlántico on prevention of statelessness and on regularization of legal status.

In Medellín, UNHCR provided training to 70 public servants from the Childhood Unit in the Mayor's Office and to 42 public servants from the Municipality of Rionegro on the international protection legal framework. The Office also provided training for 7 law students at the

University of Antioquia on mixed migration movements and on international protection needs. 8 public officials from Comisarías and ICBF in the Antioquia Urabá region (Apartadó, Carepa, Chigorodó, Turbo and San Pedro de Urabá) were trained on international protection. In Apartadó, UNHCR held a meeting on Inclusion and Equity with the participation of 88 teachers from various educational institutions in Urabá.

UNHCR advocated with the Mayor's Office for the inclusion of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the local development plans of Cúcuta and Villa del Rosario in the context of the inter-agency project Inclusive Cities with UN Habitat and IOM. In Cúcuta, UNHCR trained Mayor's Office staff and community leaders on how to conduct household surveys in the five communities of the Inclusive Cities project.

In Arauca, 16 separated youth (11 girls and five boys) and 9 unaccompanied children (four girls and five boys) were identified and assisted by UNHCR partner Apoyar, in close coordination with the ICBF. One separated girl was reunited with her mother with the help of a UNHCR partner.

UNHCR facilitated in-person meetings between the Nansen Refugee Award Winner, Ms. Mayerlín Vergara and the Advisor to the President of Colombia for the Colombia-Venezuela Border and Venezuelan migration as well as Migración Colombia. The Nansen laureate championed with other governmental institutions, such as the ministries of Education, Labour, the Attorney General's Office the rights of victims of sexual exploitation affecting refugee, migrant, and Colombian returnees' children in La Guajira and advocated for targeted public policies.

In Cúcuta, UNHCR and partners celebrated the two-year anniversary of the Margarita Health Centre, covered by local newspaper [La Opinión](#) and [estoyenlafrontera.com](#).

The Somos Panas Colombia platform continues to disseminate informative materials such as: i) the extension of the border closure beyond 1 November; ii) [Information and Orientation Helplines](#); iii) information on the National Registry for Colombian Returnees; iv) ICBF care routes for Venezuelan refugee and migrant children; v) On

Día de la Raza, on the ethnic and cultural differences; vi) countering misinformation and reminding all services provided by UNHCR are free and any irregularities should be reported; vii) the use of the hashtag [#ConLaCamisetaDelOtro](#) during the Colombia-Venezuela match, part of the World Cup qualifiers by different international and national organizations joined by influencers in prevention of manifestations of xenophobia during the game; viii) The [Amigos Sin Fronteras](#) series continues to be broadcasted on the Señal Colombia channel featuring messages of unity between Venezuelan and Colombian children.

Cash-Based Assistance

To date, around 42,150 people (10,538 families) have received multipurpose cash, representing 84 percent of the total number of families planned. 1,361 surveys have been carried out as part of the post distribution monitoring process, representing 88 per cent of the target sample.

Livelihoods

The Livelihoods Unit presented to the Office of the President the second version of the Orientation Guide for Hiring Venezuelans designed in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Tent Partnerships for Refugees, which will be launched in November.

In Cali, 54 people were trained as part of the socio-economic inclusion initiative with CUSO Internacional, in kitchen, food distribution and general services, targeting those with international protection needs, Colombian returnees and host population.

In Medellín, UNHCR participated in a committee (Business Strengthening and family support for people in need of international protection in Urabá) run by Corporación Mundial de la Mujer which will benefit 35 Venezuelan and host community families in area of entrepreneurship in Apartadó and Carepa.

Shelter, NFIs and WASH

UNHCR admitted the second group of families to the Integrated Assistance Centre (CAI) in Maicao. Around 70 people (16 families) entered Phase 4 (the newly completed section of the Centre) after having received a negative COVID-19 test result and after having followed all biosecurity

measures. This brings the total number of people assisted at the CAI to over 250. Additionally, 53 people (nine families) were admitted into the Center for Refugees and Migrants (CARM) in Maicao, operated by Pastoral Social.

UNHCR donated a pressurized pumping system to the Social Health Centre in Maicao for strengthening COVID-19 biosecurity measures.

In Nariño, UNHCR donated 40 Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) and 13 family tents to the municipalities of Pasto, Ipiales, Tumaco, Barbacoas, Roberto Payán, Mallma, Pupiales, Cumbal, Carlosama, La Union, Ospina and San Pablo to support the local health infrastructure. Another RHU was installed at the Support Space in Catambuco to complement the local health response to some 25 *caminantes* accessing their services daily.

UNHCR donated 2,500 masks to the City Hall in Cartagena, 2,000 masks to the Departmental Health Secretary in Magdalena and 70 kitchen kits to the recently inaugurated safe space for SGBV survivors in Santa Marta.

In Barranquilla, in coordination with Pastoral Social, UNHCR delivered 30 school kits to Venezuelan children found on waiting lists for access to schools. In Chocó, 250 school kits were delivered to children and adolescents in the communities of Palestina and Chachajo del Litoral del San Juan, with partner Alianza por la Solidaridad (APS). 40 kitchen kits and water buckets were donated to the Embera Eyavida indigenous community in Ituango (Antioquia), heavily affected by the presence of illegal armed actors and minefields.

UNHCR donated non-sterile gloves, N95 face masks surgical masks, goggles and beds to health authorities in Buenaventura, Cali and Pasto. In Pasto, UNHCR donated 600 masks, 100 bottles of hypochlorite and 6 infrared thermometers to the municipality for the Catambuco Assistance Point assisting Venezuelan *caminantes*. In Maicao, 700 biosecurity and hygiene kits were donated as a GIFMM response to the Mayor's Office and to the Risk Management Unit (UMGRD) to be distributed to communities in Paraguachon and Carraipia.

FUNDING NEEDS

Under its revised Coronavirus Emergency Appeal, UNHCR is appealing for USD 745 million globally, including USD 17.3 million in Colombia. UNHCR's Global Appeal is now funded at 63%, with USD 468.4 million in contributions received. Overall, UNHCR Colombia is currently funded at 61%.

UNHCR's response in Colombia is possible thanks to the contribution of private donors and:

Austria, Canada, Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Chanel Foundation, Denmark, European Union, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, KOICA, Latter-day Saints Charities, Netherlands, Norway, Major League Baseball Players Trust (MLBPT), Spain, Spain for UNHCR, Sweden, Switzerland, UN Human Security Trust Fund (UN HSTF), UN Peacebuilding Fund, UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United Kingdom, United States of America and USA for UNHCR.

\$96.6 million

UNHCR's financial requirements 2020

