

# AMERICAS MONTHLY REPORT

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of key developments affecting the displacement situation in the Americas and some of UNHCR response activities in line with the 2019 strategic objectives for the region.



Colombia. A mother talks with a UNHCR protection officer after crossing the border. © UNHCR/Vincent Tremeau

## VENEZUELA SITUATION

### KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- 1 The political and security situation remains tense after demonstrations on the 30th of April, when opposition leader Mr Guaido called for a popular uprising against President Maduro including military to deflect and remove the current regime from power. Clashes left 200 people injured and 5 people dead. Since mid-May, Norway has hosted closed-door meetings including delegates from the government and opposition although no information has been made public concerning the specifics of the discussions.
- 2 The border between Venezuela and **Brazil** reopened on 10th May, after nearly three months of closure. Venezuela's border with Colombia remains closed with the exception of people crossing for humanitarian reasons, like children going to school, students and people with medical conditions. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the 5,000 Venezuelans arriving to Colombia per day continue to do so through irregular crossing points.
- 3 The [Inter-American Development Bank](#) (IADB) approved the use of its special grant to support countries hosting Venezuelans in Latin America and the Caribbean on May 7. It will provide \$100 million (non reimbursable) from its facility, with additional resources expected to be provided by the donor community. These grant funds will be combined with regular IDB loan operations of \$800 million.

In **Colombia**, the two year Special Stay Permit (Permiso Especial de Permanencia - PEP) validity was extended. This permit provides access to healthcare, education, work and care services for children and teenagers. By the end of April 2019, a total of 596,069 Venezuelans have obtained the PEP according to Migration Colombia.

**3.9 million**  
Venezuelans living abroad  
(as of May 2019)

**3.1 million**  
left the country to Latin America  
and the Caribbean (as of May 2019)

**464,229**  
registered asylum-seekers  
by the end of 2018

**227,325**      **81,001**  
in Peru              in Brazil

**81,800**      **31,620**  
in United States    in Spain  
of America

**3,041** in Mexico (as of December 2018)

**1.8 million** obtained some form  
of legal stay arrangement  
(as of May 2019)

The **Peruvian** Ministry of Education has increased school capacity by 10,000 units in 86 schools in Lima for pre-school and primary education. Upon the Ministry's request, UN Agencies, including UNHCR, will support communication efforts to ensure that refugee and migrant children have timely access to education.

The **Brazilian** Federal Response for Venezuelans (Operação Acolhida) expanded to Manaus to include a documentation centre, secured sleeping area with hygiene facilities, increased emphasis on internal relocation and a limited shelter response geared toward indigenous communities. Manaus is a primary point of arrival for Venezuelans and is home to an estimated 15,000 Venezuelan people, as it is the only city in Brazil that can be reached by land and offers good integration prospects. During their journey, many Venezuelan people face vulnerabilities and are forced to sleep in public places like bus stations or travel without documents.

There are over 168,400 Venezuelans in **Ecuador**, with more than 29,800 new arrivals since the beginning of 2019, and over 9,000 new Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the first half of May, according to data provided by the Ministry of Interior.

## UNHCR RESPONSE TO THE VENEZUELA SITUATION

UNHCR has opened its first support space for people in transit in Arauca, **Colombia** near the border with Venezuela, where orientation, first aid, potable water, hygiene and food kits will now be provided. Highly vulnerable people transit through this point, out of which children, pregnant women and the elderly are disproportionately affected. An estimated 150 Venezuelan displaced people are attended daily.

In the hospital unit in Manrique, Medellín, Colombia UNHCR provided obstetrical medical equipment and trained more than 40 staff members. 520 Venezuelan mothers gave birth in this hospital since the beginning of 2019, compared to 85 births in 2018.

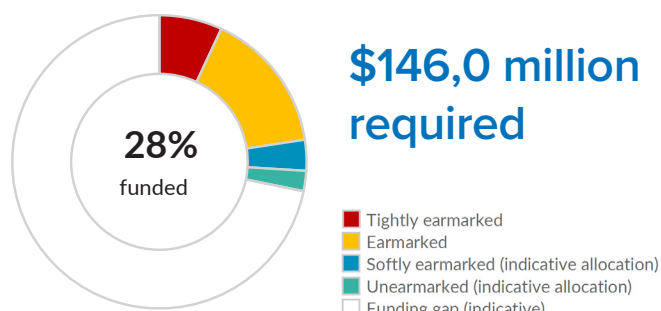
On 9 May, UNHCR inaugurated the canteen of the Indigenous School of Maimajasay in La Guajira, Colombia, where children from the indigenous community will receive daily meals. Since the beginning of the year, UNHCR Riohacha supported a total of 4,463 people to obtain the Border Mobility Cards (Tarjeta Migratoria Fronteriza – TMF) and 54 people to obtain the PEP.

## INSIDE VENEZUELA

In the context of the UN-wide scale-up of operations underway in Venezuela to support some 7 million people in urgent need of humanitarian aid in Venezuela, UNHCR is leading the coordination of the Protection Sector, which includes the humanitarian response in the areas of shelter, core relief items and energy.

UNHCR Venezuela applies a community-based approach, among which health interventions are regularly taken into place to assess and respond to the protection needs and risks of people of concern. As part of this, during April, UNHCR supported Safe Spaces Network in Zulia, organized three awareness raising activities providing 103 participants with rapid HIV tests and information on HIV prevention, sexual diversity, protection of LGBTI people and psychosocial first aid for SGVB survivors. Additionally, UNHCR in Apure conducted HIV and syphilis screenings, distributed condoms and delivered an informative session on sexual and reproductive health.

## FUNDING (as of 4 June 2019) UNHCR's financial requirements 2019 for the Venezuela Situation



Since January 2019, 3,041 Venezuelans have claimed asylum in Mexico according to Government figures. This represents an increase of 45% when compared to the same period in 2018.

UNHCR **Brazil**, the Brazilian Government, Federal police, Ministry of Labour and Municipal Government of Manaus conducted a documentation taskforce for more than 1000 Venezuelan refugees and migrants. During the exercise, they were able to process asylum claims and temporary residency permits which grants access to work permits, social protection schemes, and healthcare.

In **Mexico**, until the end of April, a total of 584 Venezuelans have benefitted from Multi-Purpose Cash Grants (MPG) to meet their basic needs such as: food, household and domestic products, and a contribution towards housing and utility bills. UNHCR also supports Venezuelan refugees through its local integration programme. From 21-23 May, in the framework of the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform, UNHCR and IOM conducted a mission to Quintana Roo, in the South of Mexico, to address protection and integration needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

In **Costa Rica**, UNHCR has provided assistance for 2,221 Venezuelans in the last year, in areas of psychosocial support, legal assistance and livelihoods.



## NORTH OF CENTRAL AMERICA SITUATION

### KEY DEVELOPMENTS

At the border between **Guatemala and Mexico** there has been a change in profiles, with a visible registry of family units from Honduras, Cubans and people from Asia and Africa. Most are crossing irregularly through the Suchiate River, while a few hundred remained in Tecún Umán while processing the Regional Visitor's Permit in Mexico.

**4** The government of **El Salvador**, tabled a bill addressing internal displacement. UNHCR is providing technical support including facilitating consultations and workshops.

In 2019, 24,424 people applied for asylum in **Mexico**, with a monthly average rising from some 4,000 in January to approximately 6,000 in May. The majority of asylum seekers come from Honduras (53%), El Salvador (15%), Venezuela (13%), Cuba (7%), Guatemala (5%) and Nicaragua (4%).

Detention facilities in Mexico continue to be overcrowded and overall detention numbers have increased dramatically since January. 31,675 people have been detained from January till March. At the beginning of May, 2,463 people, mainly from Honduras and El Salvador, have been released from detention. Most people released were in family groups and 61% are between 18-45 years old. Released asylum-seekers are transferred to civil society open-door shelters, received legal, health and psychosocial services, are screened for specific protection needs and registered for CBI. However, tensions and frustration in individual facilities are rising and security incidents in detention facilities continued in May.

Since the beginning of the year to the end of April, a total of 7,724 people have entered **Panama** through the Darien gap, according to official figures provided by the Panamanian authorities. This movement - facilitated by smugglers - is comprised of people from different countries in Africa (Cameroon, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Congo and Angola) and South Asia (Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and India). 100 of them have requested asylum.

### UNHCR RESPONSE TO LARGE GROUPS IN LINE WITH 2019 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Across the region, UNHCR partners with faith based organizations continue to provide safe spaces, shelter and basic humanitarian assistance to people moving in mixed movements, including those in need of international protection. To date, more than 80 safe spaces and shelters are available along the main routes.

UNHCR **El Salvador** and its partners have inaugurated two safe spaces in the municipality of Quezaltepeque, La Unión, to strengthen the identification and referral of Internally Displaced People and returned people with protection needs. In Veracruz, **Mexico**, a shelter called Casa Catalina, which receives people with HIV, cancer, terminal illnesses, single and homeless women, opened its doors for the first time to people released from detention. In **Guatemala**, these safe spaces have been key to provide people with information on asylum procedures, medical and psychological assistance, phone calls, food and shelter.

**367,000** people of concern in Central America by the end of 2018

**353,200** refugees and asylum seekers from North of Central America worldwide

**245,500** IDPs in Honduras and El Salvador by the end of 2018

**24,424** asylum claims in Mexico since January 2019 (193% increase over the same period of 2018)

### KEY DEVELOPMENTS





The second High Level Dialogue on Protection between the Mexican authorities and UNHCR took place in Mexico City on 22nd May. The discussion was focused on the promotion of a more efficient and fair asylum system, the establishment of alternatives to detention and the identification and referral of vulnerable persons, particularly children at risk. Several policy changes and commitments were reached during the dialogue, including the application of the Cartagena refugee definition to some groups displaced from North and Central America, the enhancement of screening measures and interview techniques to identify and refer individuals with protection needs, the establishment of a Working Group to promote simplified or accelerated procedures for certain nationalities, and the active dissemination of information on asylum in all ports of entry.

Across the UNHCR Mexico Operation, immediate assistance was provided by means of cash based interventions. Up to the end of April, a total of 10,587 people have benefitted from Multi-Purpose Cash Grants to meet their basic needs such as: food, household and domestic products, and a contribution towards housing and utility bills.

UNHCR continued to cater for refugees from the Southern part of Mexico to northern industrial cities where they have far better employment prospects, better education facilities and access to public services. By the end of May, 1,366 people have been relocated since the beginning of the year.

In line with the efforts to provide reliable information, UNHCR Tenosique, at the border with Guatemala, will benefit from the Connectivity for Protection project, an intervention to provide people in transit with access to internet at border areas.

As part of the local integration programme in Mexico, the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA) and UNHCR will join efforts to facilitate education services for asylum-seekers, with special programmes for children between the ages of

## OTHER SITUATIONS

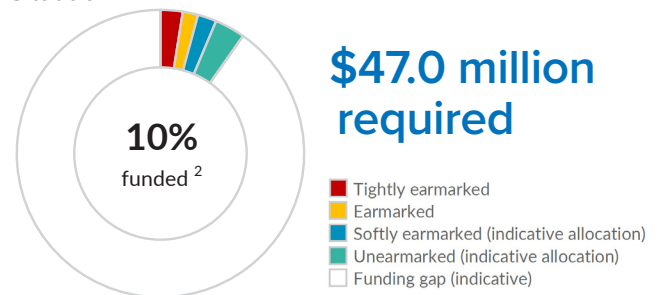
### NICARAGUA SITUATION

As the political and social crisis continues, 70,000 Nicaraguans have sought asylum in neighbouring countries since the beginning of the crisis in April 2018, with the vast majority, some 55,500, seeking asylum in Costa Rica. The influx of Nicaraguans is expected to continue and UNHCR foresees that Costa Rica will host up to 100,000 asylum seekers from Nicaragua by the end of 2019.

In light of the escalating situation, UN agencies, under the coordination of the UN Resident Coordinator and led by UNHCR, have developed an **Interagency Rapid Response Plan** in collaboration with the Costa Rican Government, which will provide an immediate and timely response to the most vulnerable people amongst those seeking international protection. 10,000 people will benefit from these interventions responding to the key humanitarian needs: protection, health and other basic needs, all of it funded by the USD 5 million requested in the plan.

In **Panama**, the National Office for Refugee Assistance received approximately 4,300 claims from Nicaraguans as of 20 May 2019. UNHCR continues to provide humanitarian aid consisting mainly of cash based interventions for food, medical expenses and education and access to shelter.

### FUNDING (as of 4 June 2019) UNHCR's financial requirements 2019 for the North Central America Situation



10 and 14, as well as access to the accelerated programme for certification of primary and secondary education, and technological literacy programmes.

Additionally, the organization Young Coach Education of the Football Club Social Alliance (FSCA) and the Swiss-based Scort Foundation is training 43 young coaches (28 women and 15 men) from different Mexican cities gathered in Tapachula, Mexico. These trainings target refugees and host communities using football and teamwork to build social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

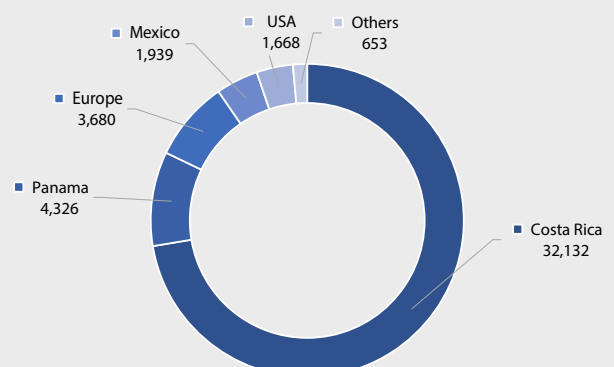
A group of 11 refugees from El Salvador and Honduras landed in Brazil on 30 May constituting the first movement under the country's State-Funded Resettlement Program for people fleeing persecution and life threatening situations in the North of Central America. Brazil is providing much needed support to the Protection Transfer Agreement, launched in 2016, this innovative life-saving programme aims at providing safe and legal access to protection and permanent solutions to individuals facing imminent threats in their country of origin. To date, 383 refugees from El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala have been resettled to the United States, Canada, Australia and Uruguay.

### 70,000 Nicaraguan asylum applications in neighbouring countries since April 2018

### 55,500 Nicaraguan asylum applications in Costa Rica

Since the beginning of the year 780 Nicaraguans have applied for asylum in **Mexico** and 537 have received multipurpose cash grants to meet their basic needs. UNHCR's relocation programme has relocated 81 Nicaraguans since the beginning of the year until 11 May, which represents a sharp increase compared to the six Nicaraguans relocated in 2018.

### Registered Asylum Applications from Nicaraguans since April



<sup>2</sup>Does not include around 26,000 people waiting to formalize their claim in Costa Rica

## COLOMBIA SITUATION

Forced displacement continues to affect the population several regions of Colombia. This year, at least 29 large group displacements were recorded, affecting 8.016 people in the country, particularly in the Pacific Coast, where at least 17.244 people were reported in confinement due to confrontations between illegal armed groups.

In May UNHCR, the Municipality of Mocoa and partner Corporación Opción Legal culminated the land titling process of an informal settlement for internally displaced people in Nueva Esperanza, Putumayo. After years of institutional and community work, its inhabitants are now owners of their plot of land.

UNHCR in Colombia works to promote local integration of internally displaced people and Venezuelan refugees and migrants. In the Colombian-Venezuelan border, Interactive

**8.8 million**  
victims of armed  
conflict

**7.8 million**  
internally displaced persons

**7,521** displaced people  
in large group displacements  
in 2019

**50,532**  
Colombian refugees  
in Ecuador by the  
end of 2018

**10,029**  
Colombian asylum  
seekers in Ecuador  
by the end of 2018

psychosocial tools like “Mi Viaje” are being distributed in elementary schools in Arauca, where refugees and internally displaced people between 5 and 11 years old make up half of the classrooms. This intervention will allow displaced and host community children to share their experiences in a new country or city, with the aim of building understanding among the children.

## MAY FEATURED STORIES

### Majority fleeing Venezuela in need of refugee protection – UNHCR Guidance note

In an updated guidance note issued on the 21 May 2019, UNHCR reiterates its call to States to allow Venezuelans access to their territory and provide them with proper protection and standards of treatment, highlighting the critical need for safety for people forced to flee for their lives and freedoms.



### Death threats and disease drive more Venezuelans to flee

José and Yurmi hurriedly gathered up their seven-month-old baby, packed some clothes and walked the few kilometres that separate Venezuela from Colombia. José, a doctor who volunteered with local communities near the Venezuelan city of Barquisimeto, had just been warned of a threat to his life.

### Venezuelans on the run find respite in Ecuador hostel

It is noon and the heat is stifling in El Juncal, a small town located in the mountainous province of Imbabura in northern Ecuador. With the help of two Venezuelan women, Carmen Cercelén washes the kitchenware in her hostel. In the backyard, about 20 other Venezuelans talk and eat plantains. Some are just passing through. Others, encouraged by Carmen’s generosity, have opted to stay in town.



### UNHCR Ambassador Ben Stiller tells U.S. Congress: Syrian refugees still need support

When renowned actor and UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Ben Stiller left the packed hearing room in the Dirksen Senate Office Building in the United States capital of Washington, D.C., he left no one in doubt about the message he had come to deliver: Syrian refugees still need the world’s help.

### Special thanks to our donors:

Austria | Brazil | Canada | CERF | Colombia | Denmark | European Union | Germany | Iceland | Ireland | Italy | Liechtenstein | Netherlands | Norway | Republic of Korea | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United States of America

For more information :

[Elisabet Diaz San Martin](mailto:diazsanm@unhcr.org) - External Relations Officer - diazsanm@unhcr.org

[Marina Villuendas](mailto:villuend@unhcr.org) - External Communications Assistant - villuend@unhcr.org