



AMERICAS MONTHLY REPORT

© UNHCR/Santiago Escobar-Jaramillo. Venezuelans Ricardo and Maria hold their one-month-old son at a shelter in Manaus, Brazil.

This document provides an overview of key developments affecting the displacement situation in the Americas and some UNHCR response activities in line with the 2019 strategic objectives for the region.

VENEZUELA SITUATION



4.8 MILLION
REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS
from Venezuela living abroad
(as of 5 December 2019)



3.9 MILLION
in Latin America and the Caribbean states
(as of 5 January 2020)



768,146 REGISTERED ASYLUM-SEEKERS (as of 5 January 2020)

377,047 IN PERU
105,421 IN U.S.A

135,033 IN BRAZIL
17,981 IN MEXICO

58,597 IN SPAIN



OVER 2,1 MILLION VENEZUELANES WITH
REGULAR STATUS including resident permits
(as of 5 January 2020)

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

On 5 December, **Brazil** recognized 21,432 Venezuelan asylum-seekers as refugees. The number of recognitions is almost twice as many as those granted since 1997. The decision was based on a presumption of inclusion resulting from the objective circumstances prevailing in Venezuela, which Brazil had characterized earlier in the year as “serious and generalized violations of human rights” (broader refugee criteria contained in the Brazilian Refugee Protection Act). You can read more [here](#).

In **Colombia**, 26,800 birth certificates have been marked (sometimes retroactively) with the sentence “valid to demonstrate nationality” since the start of the implementation in August 2019 of the Government’s measure granting nationality to children born in Colombia to Venezuelan parents, whose nationality was undetermined. See a video on this clicking [here](#).

In **Ecuador**, the Constitutional Court issued a decision which sets a legal precedent for non-detention of a person for his or her migratory situation, makes deportation a final resort and sets the circumstances under which a person cannot be deported (i.e. victims of trafficking, refugees, and people who have not been able to regularize their situation). The decision prohibits initiating deportation processes based on information obtained by public institutions that receive refugees and migrants, strengthens the principle of non-refoulement, non-detention for migratory status and recognizes the presence in the territory of people who cannot regularize their status for reasons beyond their control (included their economic situation).

On 27 December, **Paraguay** recognized 720 Venezuelans as refugees (including 112 children) using a *prima facie* approach. This comes as a result of an ordinary meeting of the CONARE after discussions on UNHCR Guidance Note in June, where the Commission

had debated its application and approved the use of a merged RSD.

UNHCR RESPONSE DURING THE PERIOD

In order to strengthen refugee status determination processes and the quality of registration in the region, UNHCR's Quality Assurance Initiative support to CONARE in **Brazil** included the recruitment of 11 positions.

Also in Brazil, as part of a support program of cash transfers to population of concern to UNHCR, some 1,636 people (547 households) received a total of USD 118,000. Of them, 94% of the beneficiaries receiving transfers were Venezuelan households, while 6% correspond to nationals from different countries.

In Santiago de **Chile**, UNHCR and its partner World Vision continued reinforcing child protection initiatives, and opened a second child-friendly space/ day-care centre, which will have the capacity to host some 25 children and parents. The centre will provide psychosocial support, orientation and integral support to Venezuelan families who have just arrived in the country.

Focused on children integration, in **Guyana**, UNHCR held graduation ceremonies for children who participated in its community-based English as a Second Language classes in Mabaruma (bordering Venezuela) in 2019. With some 450 persons attending the graduation ceremonies, these events demonstrated the communities' active support

of the classes as a means of local integration and social cohesion.

With regards inclusion of the refugee population, efforts in the region include a wide range of activities. Under the European Union DEVCO-funded 'Inclusive Cities, Communities of Solidarity' project, UNHCR and ILO facilitated a workshop for the Municipal Association of Great Santo Domingo (MGSD), in the **Dominican Republic**. Participants discussed the potential to integrate the Venezuelan population into their planning.

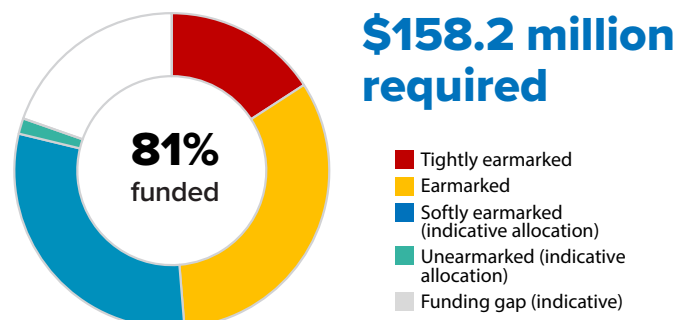
Also in this country, and aimed at fostering labour inclusion, UNHCR and ILO co-hosted a presentation on market assessment to the National Roundtable for Labour Migration presided by the Ministry of Labour. Recommendations were made on how to integrate Venezuelans into the formal labour markets.

In **Colombia**, UNHCR promoted the inclusion into the labour market of Venezuelans through activities in several regions. In Antioquia, UNHCR and partners held a job fair reaching 2,100 people (1,300 of whom were Venezuelans) with employment opportunities across different sectors. Additionally, in the city of Medellín, 249 participants of the "Graduation Model" pilot program completed certified vocational training. In Norte de Santander, UNHCR and government partners organized a breakfast for 15 companies that are members of the National Business Federation to disseminate information about the legal framework to employ Venezuelans as well as share good practices from the private sector.

To promote inclusion, community activities are also key. In Lima (**Peru**), more than 600 volunteers from various countries joined forces and cleaned three kilometres of the Rimac River, collecting two tons of waste. This [mega event](#) was led by the **Gracias Brigade**, a group of Venezuelan volunteers, within the framework of the #TuCausaEsMiCausa campaign co-led by UNHCR and OIM.

UNHCR Colombia's anti-xenophobia campaign *Somos Panas* partnered with UNICEF to produce a TV series titled **Friends Without Borders** aimed at children between 6-12 years-old. The series tells stories of friendships between Colombian and Venezuelan children, promoting tolerance regardless of nationality or country of origin.

UNHCR's financial requirements 2019 for the Venezuela Situation (7 January 2020)



INSIDE VENEZUELA

In order to support national institutions such as the Office of the Ombudsperson, the Prosecutor's Office, the Civil Registry or the Children Protection Council, UNHCR in Venezuela donated equipment and office supplies in several locations across the country during December.

Also, to support the provision of medical services, relief items as solar lamps or equipment were distributed to the Emergency Medical System of Amazonas (SIUMA) or the Machiques Hospital, among others.

Considering difficulties to access basic services, persons with special needs, as pregnant and breastfeeding women, older persons and persons with disabilities, require increased attention. As such, relief items as solar lamps are regularly distributed. During December, population in the indigenous community of El Tukuko, among others, received items.

In order to foster access to education, 600 desks and chairs were delivered to El Cruce Bolivarian High School, which has seen enrolment increase by 300% this year due to arrivals of internally displaced persons from Venezuela's inland regions. Others school have also been



assisted across the country.

To gain a better understanding of the situation of the population on concern to UNHCR, participatory assessments provide an opportunity to share with communities. During December, sessions were held in the indigenous community of Marewua. As identified, high risk of malnutrition among children, risks of gender based violence, lack of school teachers and lack of infrastructure are negatively affecting the population.

NORTH OF CENTRAL AMERICA SITUATION



 **386,480** REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS from North of Central America worldwide

 **53,810** NEW ASYLUM APPLICATIONS of NCA nationals in 2019

 **41,406** ASYLUM CLAIMS IN MEXICO from NCA Nationals received in 2019

601,585 APREHENSIONS OF NATIONALS FROM NORTH OF CENTRAL AMERICA in USA and Mexico between Jan-Aug 2019, a 149% increase compared to 2018

318,590 IDPS IN HONDURAS AND EL SALVADOR

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

During the first ever **World Refugee Forum** held in Geneva last December, a high-level event served to launch the support platform for the regional comprehensive framework to address forced displacement in **Central America**, called MIRPS. States, the private sector, civil society, and other actors gathered to express their support for those forced to flee from countries as Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua. The event, sponsored by the UN Refugee Agency, in coordination with the Mexican government as President Pro Tempore of the MIRPS, was aimed at raising awareness on the situation that has forced to flee some 800,000 people. Read more [here](#).

In Washington (**United States**), the third Annual High-

Level Dialogue (HLD) on Forced Displacement in the Western Hemisphere was held on 3 and 4 December. The two-day event focused on the situation in Central America, the U.S. southern border, U.S. domestic asylum and protection issues, and the Venezuela situation. Participants from all government agencies that UNHCR works with attended. The Dialogue provided an effective platform for strengthening relationships between UNHCR and United States partners on the issues discussed.

As has been known in December, from January to 31 December 2019, some 70,302 people applied for asylum in **Mexico** (137% increase when compared to 2018). There was an average of 5,900 applications per month, July being the highest (8,685) and December the lowest (3,346). Almost 80% of the applications were covered by nationals of Honduras (43%), El Salvador (13%), Cuba (12%) and Venezuela (11%).

UNHCR RESPONSE DURING THE PERIOD

People from the North of Central America continue to leave their countries, fleeing violence, persecution and insecurity, as well as deteriorating economic conditions.

Through extensive field presence and in collaboration with a wide range of civil society partners, UNHCR provides responses to protect the rights of internally displaced people, refugees, asylum seekers and others of concern to UNHCR in the region, strengthening the protection systems, reception conditions and ramping up assistance capacity, while facilitating durable solutions

During December, UNHCR and partners continued undertaking monitoring missions to the borders, including with Honduras and Mexico, in order to evaluate trends of displacement. The office has established presence in key border locations where information on the right to seek asylum for people forced to flee.

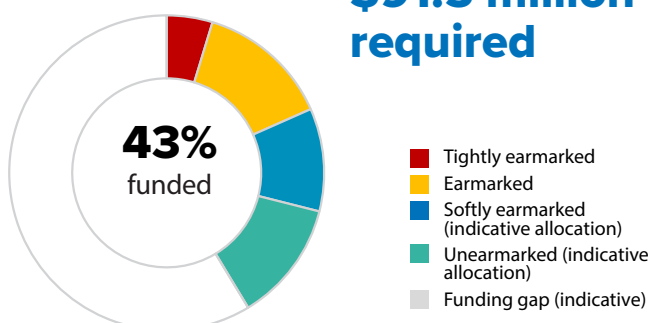
UNHCR in El Salvador and the Ombudsperson's Office implemented the first of a series of protection monitoring exercises in the municipality of Moncagua, in the San Miguel Department. It is expected that additional exercises will be organized in 2020.

As reported with the updated profiling study on internal displacement in Honduras released in December, during the period from 2004 to 2018, at least 247,000 people were displaced by violence in the country. According to the findings, there was a higher incidence in households headed by women and with a greater number of children in them. Direct threats, homicides and mobility restrictions are the main triggers of displacement according to the report. In 48% of cases, displaced people identify gangs as main perpetrators. The report [ES] can be found [here](#).

UNHCR staff working in the new registration centre in Tapachula (Mexico) have reached out to all asylum-seekers waiting for a registration appointment and have been able to close the backlog. Asylum-seekers are now waiting on average two weeks to undergo a full registration interview. During December, on average 1,000 people were registered every week.

Aimed at improving access to safe water for population on the move and local communities, hydration stations were delivered to 20 health services in the Municipality of Tecún Umán, Guatemala. Information materials on the right to seek asylum were handed over as well.


UNHCR's financial requirements 2019 for NORTH OF CENTRAL AMERICA Situation (7 January 2020)



Since the beginning of 2019, more than 5,188 people have been relocated to central and northern cities in Mexico under the Relocation, Job Placement and Local Integration Programme. 5,856 people have been relocated since the program started in 2016.

In Honduras, 180 young participants successfully graduated from a nine-month artistic communitarian initiative 'Arte Comunitario', which targets youth from two high-risk neighbourhoods in San Pedro Sula. The initiative jointly designed and implemented by the San Pedro Sula Municipality, UNHCR and Children International, seeks to mitigate youth-related risks identified at the community level, i.e. recruitment by gangs and gender-based violence.

NICARAGUA SITUATION

 **92,745 NICARAGUANS FORCED TO FLEE SINCE APRIL 2018** (includes registered asylum-seekers and those waiting to formalize their claim)

In Nicaragua, a general environment of threat and insecurity continues to be reported. Due to controls carried out by the national police and pro-government groups, interrogations of people convening in groups larger than three individuals have increased. The escalation of violence against the Catholic Church has targeted priests and parishioners with attacks by government supporters. Entrepreneurs and private sector are beginning to be singled out through political pressure.

Since the onset of the crisis in April 2018, thousands have fled the country seeking safety in neighbouring countries as well as in the U.S. and Spain. While the majority have settled in Costa Rica, resulting in an overstretched legal system, the impact of the crisis is also affecting the limited asylum capacity in other countries.

UNHCR Costa Rica continued cooperating with the Government in its process of streamlining the refugee status determination procedure. UNHCR has helped to review a total of 542 cases, the majority of which fall within the profiles of "persons who participated in protests" or "students." By the end of 2020, some 74,555 Nicaraguans had claimed asylum in Costa Rica.

In the northern region of Costa Rica, UNHCR and implementing partners have strengthened community initiatives, as information sessions and counselling provided in Upala with the participation of 137 persons of concern to UNHCR. The first intercommunity meetup for children was also held with some 48 attendants.

To respond to the health needs of population of concern, UNHCR and the Costa Rican Social Security Fund signed an agreement last December to provide health insurance to 6,000 people for a period of one year beginning in January 2020; many of the recipients are expected to be individuals from Nicaragua.

In San Jose and in Costa Rica's northern region, a total of 893 households received the final payment of the three-month multipurpose cash assistance, 79% Nicaraguan.


COLOMBIA SITUATION

 **8.8** MILLION VICTIMS OF CONFLICT

 **7.9** MILLION INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE since 1985

 **51,775** PEOPLE DISPLACED IN INDIVIDUAL DISPLACEMENTS IN 2019

 **20,463** DISPLACED PEOPLE AFFECTED BY LARGE GROUP DISPLACEMENTS in 2019

 **66,742** COLOMBIAN REFUGEES IN ECUADOR by the end of October 2019

Armed clashes and presence of combatants in indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities during

December continued to increase the number of confined and displaced communities in the municipality of Alto Baudó, Chocó. UNHCR, NRC and WFP coordinated the emergency response with the Victims Unit.

In Tumaco, Nariño, a protection cluster group (GTP) session was organized to analyze the response to the recent massive displacements in the Department, which raised to 22 by December.

As part of efforts to continue supporting responses to internally displaced populations (IDP), UNHCR in Nariño organized a session on institutional assistance with several public institutions, including a local hospital, providing mental health services. A total of 219 IDPs were assisted, mainly from the village of Guachal, from which a large number of people have recently been displaced.

Under the land legalization project, during the year 2019, nine settlements in Bogotá (Cundinamarca) were formalized and two obtained property title benefiting 12.571 people. In 2020, UNHCR expects to continue with 15 urban legalization cases, and nine rural formalization processes.

FEATURED STORIES



[IOM, UNHCR support strengthening Caribbean dialogues on refugees, migrants](#)

Caribbean nations met to strengthen and harmonize their region's response to growing migration and refugee protection challenges.



[Hanna Gabriels: A call to solidarity with those who flee](#)

Public statement by World Boxing Champion and UNHCR High Profile Collaborator with World Refugee Forum.



[At a Christmas concert in Panama, refugees are the guests of honour](#)

As the founder and director of the Panama Philharmonic Orchestra, Víctor Mata knows the power of music to soothe spirits and open hearts.

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