

Venezuela

January 2020

- Operational and security conditions in Field Offices continue to be affected by power blackouts, telecommunications problems, intermittent access to water, worsening gasoline shortages and irregular armed group activity in the southern states of Amazonas and Apure, the eastern state of Bolívar and the western state of Táchira. An outbreak of tuberculosis has hit prioritised communities in Petare, Greater Caracas, and a worrying increase in the number of malaria cases has been registered in communities in the western state of Zulia. Increased militarisation across the Orinoco Mining Arc has continued to negatively affect indigenous communities in the state of Bolívar. Violent security forces operations have been carried out in Greater Caracas and in the nearby state of Carabobo. School absenteeism has increased in the eastern state of Delta Amacuro, the states of Zulia and Apure, as well as Greater Caracas. Growing numbers of indigenous Warao families are fleeing to Trinidad and Tobago on account of armed confrontations and food shortages in the eastern state of Delta Amacuro, while an increasing number of families in the northern state of Falcón have been leaving by boat for Curaçao. In a reverse trend, a growing number of Venezuelans who had previously left for Colombia have returned to Venezuela and have settled in the border municipality of San Antonio in the state of Táchira.
- On 5 January, the opposition-led National Assembly met to renew its leadership amid a security force blockade of Parliament, a failed attempt by opposition lawmakers to storm the building and a procedurally controversial election of MP Luis Parra to the presidency of the Assembly by pro-government lawmakers. Opposition lawmakers later congregated in other premises to elect a new leadership, headed by incumbent National Assembly President Juan Guaidó, who was then recognised by the over 50 countries that also recognise him as Interim President of Venezuela. The following day, opposition MPs led by Guaidó broke through a security cordon to inaugurate the parliamentary year in the National Assembly.

HIGHLIGHTS

ESTIMATED POPULATION OF CONCERN

494,000 (2019)

REFUGEES & ASYLUM SEEKERS

Refugees 8,892

Asylum seekers 49

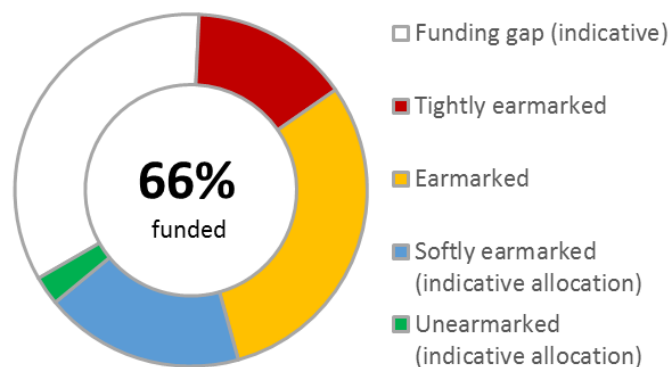
Source: National Commission for Refugees Venezuela

Persons in refugee-like situation: 58,826

FUNDING (AS OF JANUARY 2020)

USD 29.5 million

requested for Venezuela



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

109 Personnel:

86 national staff

2 affiliate workforce/employees

1 national intern

20 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 69 prioritised communities in 11 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 20 implementing partners (AZUL Positivo, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), Refugee Education Trust (RET), 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 247 persons of concern.

Activities implemented in January 2020

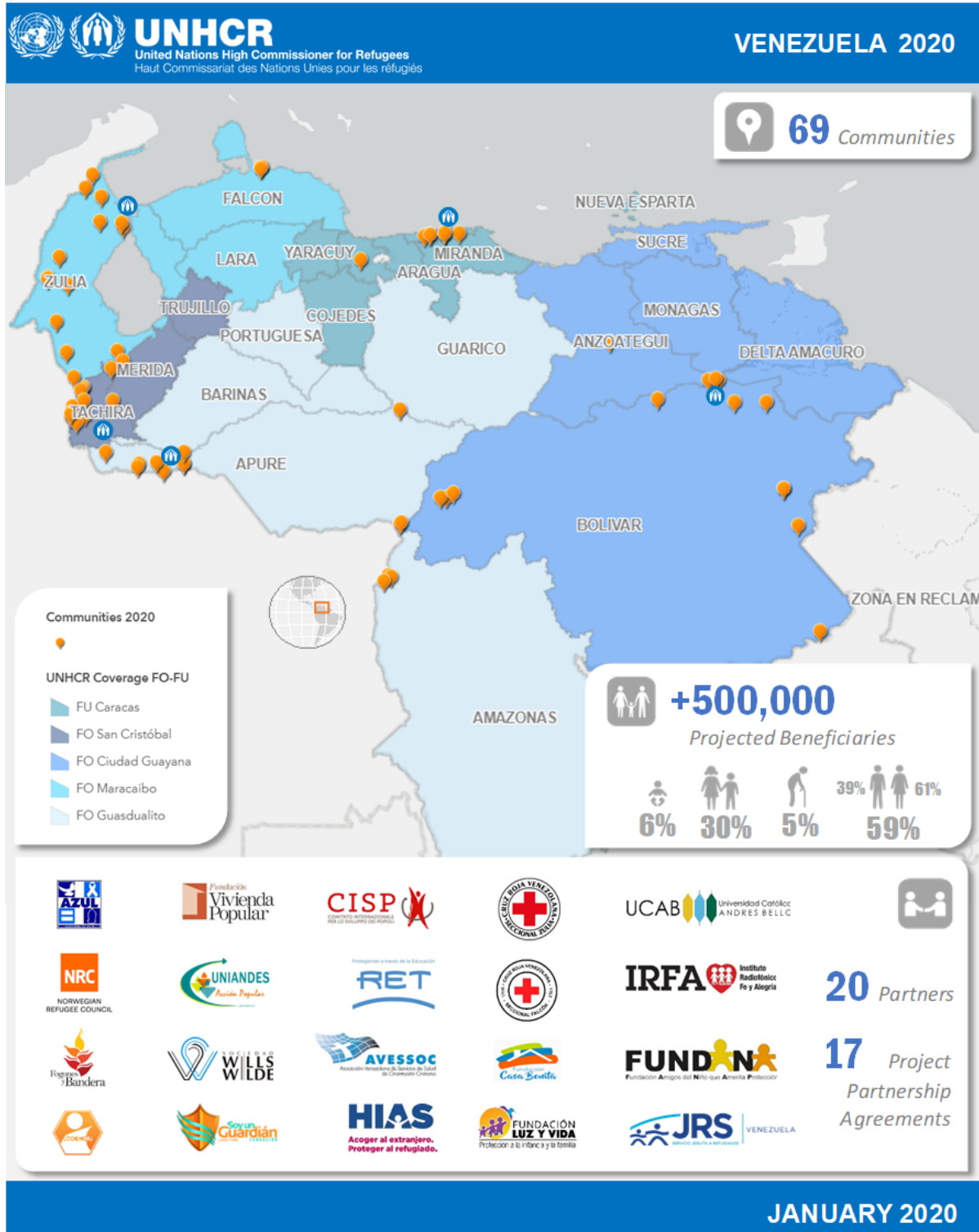
Prevention of Displacement and Mitigation of Risks

- UNHCR San Cristóbal delivered a first batch of 10 solar streetlights to the municipality of García de Hevia to help improve security conditions in prioritised communities.
- UNHCR Guasualito delivered solar lamps, jerry cans and a laptop computer to the Acacio Blandria special education school, benefitting 26 persons with disabilities directly and a total of 52 students indirectly. The laptops will allow the institution to track students' attendance amidst increasing absenteeism/dropout rates nationwide.
- UNHCR Guasualito delivered 52 hygiene kits, 45 solar lamps and 38 jerry cans to persons with specific needs (older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, displaced persons), in coordination with the local church and partner Caritas. UNHCR also delivered 46 hygiene kits to persons with specific needs in La Victoria.
- UNHCR Guasualito delivered 45 hygiene kits to the prioritised community of Guafita, in an effort to mitigate exposure to risks involved in travelling across the border to acquire sanitary products and reduce the spread of disease within the community.
- UNHCR Guasualito delivered 25 solar lamps and 25 jerry cans to staff from the local Public Defence office to help mitigate hardships associated with access to water and electricity.
- UNHCR Ciudad Guayana delivered laptop computers to the safe shelter for SGBV survivors Casa de la Mujer Caroní to support their data collection. UNHCR also delivered air conditioning units to Caroní Red Cross and Ciudad Bolívar Red Cross.
- UNHCR San Cristóbal completed the renovation work of a local women's shelter, managed by institutional ally INTAMUJER, which provides safe care for women SGBV survivors.
- UNHCR San Cristóbal delivered five fence rolls to enclose the community garden in Mi Pequeña Barinas, a space that promotes local integration, peaceful coexistence and the prevention of recruitment.
- UNHCR San Cristóbal delivered 41 wheelchairs to health centres in La Fria and Boca del Grita, the community of Mata de Curo, the Samuel Darío Maldonado Hospital, the San Antonio community centre, the municipality of San Antonio and a military-run health facility to the mobility of persons with disabilities and their access to medical services.
- UNHCR Guasualito delivered wheelchairs and operating tables to the local UNHCR-supported health centre, which is located in an important transit area: 450-500 persons per month are expected to benefit from this donation (community members and persons in mobility).
- UNHCR Guasualito, together with partner HIAS, rehabilitated the hospitalisation area of the health centre in San José del Amparo. Solar panels capable of providing an uninterrupted supply of electricity for 14 hours were installed as a contingency measure in case of an emergency. UNHCR also completed the rehabilitation of the health centre serving the border community of La Victoria, including repairs for electrical and water and sanitation systems and donations of stretchers, mattresses, beds, refrigerators, water filters and a generator. The centre is expected to serve some 250 to 400 persons in transit and displaced persons.
- UNHCR Guasualito delivered stationery and office supplies to the National Nutrition Institute headquarters, located within the San José del Amparo health centre, to improve the nutritional screening of children and adults in the community.
- UNHCR Guasualito completed the rehabilitation of sanitary facilities at the Benedicto Cuy school in La Osa, where it also delivered water filters and solar lamps to local teaching staff. The school is attended by 120 children who live in an area that is badly affected by power cuts and lack of safe drinking water.
- UNHCR Guasualito and its Shelter Unit delivered a domestic gas generator to the indigenous community of Guamalito. The biodigester system processes daily waste, creating a methane-rich biogas that can be used for cooking.
- UNHCR Guasualito delivered computers, office furniture and stationery to the Civil Registry headquarters in El Amparo, which carries out birth registration with the aim of certifying the nationality of persons at risk of statelessness. UNHCR also donated a 30-kW electric generator and two motorcycles to Guasualito Red Cross, which has mobile units in Guasualito and Guamalito that provide assistance to some 600 to 1,000 persons per month.

- UNHCR Guasualito completed rehabilitation work for the shelter of La Victoria, including repairs to the roof and floors and the provision of emergency lights and an electric generator. The shelter, managed by partner JRS, will be able to temporarily host up to 50 persons along the border between La Victoria (Venezuela) and Arauquita (Colombia).
- UNHCR San Cristóbal visited the temporary shelter for persons in transit in La Tendida, verifying the successful completion of renovation work. UNHCR also reported that, as a result of the WASH project in La Tendida, basic living conditions in the area have drastically improved.
- UNHCR Ciudad Guayana visited the new prioritised community of El Terminal, an urban settlement of some 16 uprooted indigenous Warao families, as well as the new prioritised community of Cambalache, to meet with respective community leaders and begin developing protection-related activities together.
- UNHCR Maracaibo and OCHA held a workshop for NGOs in Zulia on humanitarian coordination, the Centrality of Protection and SGBV. Forty-two persons from 35 civil society organisations and UN agencies participated.
- UNHCR Maracaibo and UNFPA held a joint training for 20 officials from the Ministry for Women and Gender Equality and 60 officers of the Investigative Criminal Police (CICPC) on protection against SGBV.

Borders, Asylum and Durable Solutions

- UNHCR Ciudad Guayana and partner IRFA held a training on International Refugee Law and a workshop on the identification of specific needs and criteria for the provision of assistance with 32 members of youth networks from the prioritised communities in the municipalities of Cedeño and Padre Pedro Chien.
- UNHCR Maracaibo held two graduation ceremonies for the Diplomas on International Refugee Law conducted jointly with the National Experimental Security University (UNES) in the state of Zulia. 56 students—primarily officials and NGO staff—completed the diploma and graduated.
- UNHCR Maracaibo delivered supplies to the regional office of CONARE, including posters on PSEA, the prevention of discrimination and fraud.
- UNHCR Maracaibo and the National Anti-Drug Office (ONA) organised two trainings for 100 security and military officers in Zulia, including sessions on protection, persons with specific needs and displacement.



Donors

UNHCR Venezuela wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors—United States of America, European Union, Switzerland, Italy, France, Luxemburg and the UN Program on HIV/AIDS—and the following donors of non-earmarked funds: Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Switzerland and private donors in Spain, Republic of Korea, Japan and Italy.

Contacts

Luca Nicosia, 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