

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

-From January to 30 September 2019, 54,377 applications for asylum were filed in Mexico (an increase of approx. 216% when compared to the same period of 2018). Of these, 25,265 are from Honduras, 7,371 from El Salvador, 6,100 from Cuba, 5,467 from Venezuela, 3,777 from Haiti, 2,733 from Guatemala, 1,899 from Nicaragua. 582 Venezuelans applied in September. Until the end of September, Venezuelan asylum-seekers represent 10% of the overall claimants in Mexico in 2019. The increase of Venezuelan claimants over the same period of 2018 is approximately 29%.

-The overall situation for people from Venezuela in Costa Rica has not changed in the month of September. Partners report that the vulnerability of people arriving from Venezuela is increasing primarily in the areas of integration, protection, and access to health services. For many Venezuelans in the country with a regularized status, expired passports prevent them from leaving the country. To address this, R4V partners in Costa Rica, together with the Migration Authority (DGME) agreed to cooperate in the issuance of a travel document that will be granted to Venezuelan citizens residing in Costa Rica who need to travel to another country and do not possess a valid travel document to do so.

-Migrant children entering Panama from Colombia through the Darién jungle decreased to 220 in September (-28% compared to August). While many of them are Haitians, according to UNICEF's local monitor, several were born in Venezuela, or Chile, or Brazil, or Peru, and possess the nationality of those countries. The exact numbers are unknown.

-There is a constant concern about possible changes to the national migration legislation in Panama; the proposed migratory reform includes a harsher environment and measures to foreigners, including the proposed suspension of the extraordinary regularization programme "Crisol de Razas". Furthermore, the Executive Decree (No. 123 of March 26, 2019) that allowed the use of expire Venezuelan passports in different processes ended on September 26, 2019, without been extended by the government nor has made no pronouncement whatsoever about that matter.

- Until September 30, 2019, over 3000 asylum claims from Venezuelans were still pending decision, constituting the second nationality waiting for a response from the government (first are Nicaraguans asylum seekers). Since asylum seekers are not allowed to work, the Venezuelans are dependent of the humanitarian assistance, especially large families, persons with chronic diseases and elders.

RESPONSE OVERVIEW AND FUNDING UPDATE

Area of Intervention 1: Direct Emergency Assistance

Basic Needs & Essential Services

- Until 19 September, partners in Mexico supported 1,450 Venezuelans with multipurpose cash grants (MPG) to meet their basic needs such as food, domestic products, and a contribution towards housing and utility bills. In September, partners provided humanitarian assistance to 144 asylum-seekers from Venezuela.
- In September, partners transferred more funds to the e-wallets of 109 vulnerable Venezuelan migrants in Mexico City, to provide some form of food assistance. Moreover, partners provided health care to 7 Venezuelans in Queretaro, Cancun and Mexico City.
- In Costa Rica, in terms of accommodation, six Venezuelans have benefited from temporary accommodation in a Hostel in San Jose.
- In Panama, one of the partners agencies implemented a cash transfer programme to cover basic needs (mainly food, health, education, and housing). 105 Venezuelans (60 adults and 45 children) benefitted from this intervention. Equally, during the reported period, another partner provided cash to vulnerable Venezuelan asylum seekers. A total of 80 persons were assisted through cash-based interventions and psychosocial support.

Area of Intervention 2: Protection

Legal Aid

- In September, partners conducted a participatory assessment in Puebla, 100 km east of Mexico DF, in which 13 men and women participated. Key findings show that asylum procedures are practically stalled in Puebla; the average time of waiting for a resolution from the *Comisión Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados* (COMAR) is more than one year; It takes more than three months for asylum-seekers to receive their asylum-seeker certificate; In general, Venezuelans said that they feel more secure in Puebla than in their country of origin, however, some women reported having been victims of sexual and gender-based violence incidents such as harassments in the streets. Local integration opportunities are not as promising as refugees and asylum-seekers' procedures move slowly. Lack of documentation is the key protection concern of Venezuelans in Puebla.
- From 18 to 20 September, partners delivered 3,210 maps containing the location of public institutions that are providing services to refugees and migrants in Queretaro and Puebla. They contain verified information regarding access to justice, migration procedures, refuge orientation, shelters as well as integration components such as local markets, cultural sites, and recreation.
- 10 Venezuelans in Costa Rica received individual legal aid on the asylum process and six Venezuelans were identified during monitoring on the northern and southern borders.
- From 7 to 9 September partners in Panama conducted an assessment aimed at determining the needs of the population Venezuelan (refugee and migrant). Three focus groups for discussions were organized. The outcome of this consultation was a great need for the population to have access to truthful information, as well as the lack of reliable communication mechanisms.

Partner in Panama provided legal support, regarding access to the asylum procedure and migratory regularization to 167 Venezuelans (81 male / 86 female).

GBV and Human Trafficking Prevention and Response

- Partners and the Migration Authority launched a campaign called #Puedesertrata (It can be human trafficking) to prevent human trafficking and to raise awareness among the Venezuelan population and host population about this crime in Costa Rica. The number of people reached by this campaign in the month of September was 2,766. Also, partners identified eight individuals with specific protection needs (LGTBIQ, serious medical needs, and victims of torture).

Psychosocial Support

- In Costa Rica, 140 Venezuelans received psychosocial support individually or in groups; these workshops focus on support for specific groups such as the elderly and, teenagers.
- In September, partners started implemented a Child-Friendly Space (CFS) in the Migratory Reception Station (ERM, in Spanish) in Los Planes de Gualaca, province of Chiriquí, Panama. This space aims to provide psycho-social support to children in transit from different nationalities (217 children were assisted in September), among which some from Venezuela.

Orientation & Information

- More than 720 Venezuelans in Costa Rica received information and/or legal assistance including documentation, access to asylum, access to rights, and legal residence in September. Some Venezuelans are referred to other Government institutions or partners to receive more targeted support.
- In Panama, partners provided information, counselling and legal assistance intervention for migrants and refugees 175 Venezuelans (69 children and 106 adults) were reached and benefitted in Panama's metropolitan area.
- In Panama, one partner visited the waiting room at the National Refugees Office (ONPAR) twice a week to provide legal orientation to refugees and asylum seekers. As part of this agreement between the partner and the ONPAR, information about asylum process was provided to 115 Venezuelans asylum seekers (56 women/ 59 women). This action is helping asylum seekers to better understand the asylum process and therefor, managing their expectations in that regard.

Area of Intervention 3: Socio-Economic and Cultural Integration

Socioeconomic Integration

- In September, partners in Mexico conducted one mission in Quintana Roo State to register and identify protection and integration of vulnerable persons: 41 persons were assisted. All of them had access to Multipurpose-Cash Grant and/or Integration Programs.
- In September, partners reached 123 migrants from Venezuela in Puebla through a Venezuelan Bazar, providing entrepreneurship support. Additionally, an intercultural event took place in the State of Mexico benefiting 50 Venezuelans. In this event, Mexican storytellers shared the stories of 4 Venezuelan women to the attendees to promote empathy across both cultures.
- Partners continue to provide support to the foment socioeconomic integration of the Venezuelan population in Costa Rica. Through programs that help develop entrepreneurial ideas and other skills, in September, eight individuals graduated from an English technical course, and another eight benefited from a seed funding course. Other courses provided in this area include soft skills training, rights, and duties of persons of interest. Of the individuals receiving basic trainings, 17 completed a basic financial education course. These courses are particularly useful to explain the national banking system and how individuals can access it.
- Through the Employment Center refugees have access to the necessary equipment (computers and laptops) to facilitate writing their resumes, accessing employment web platforms and courses through Coursera for Refugees (courses like my first job, accountability, finances, entrepreneurship, and 266 other options). In Panama, the program "Talents without Borders" supported by partners encouraged the participants to undertake the DISC tests (a behaviour assessment tool based on the DISC theory of psychologist William Moulton Marston, which centres on four different personality traits) and the AMITAI test (web-based pre-employment integrity test designed to be the first step in the screening process) at the Employment Center, to continue enhancing their capacities and interpersonal competencies for finding better jobs and for enhancing working environment. In September, five Venezuelans (two women and three men) were assisted through the Employment Center.
- One community-based activity to promote social cohesion between refugees, migrants and the host community was held by partners in Panama Este. During the event, cultural activities representative of the nationalities of the participants are developed with the aim of creating local integration mechanisms. Likewise, recreational activities are carried out among children, focused on anti-xenophobic campaigns to promote equality and peaceful coexistence.

Promote Access to rights and basic services

- Partners provided support to six individuals to secure access to rights, particularly related to validating diplomas and to obtain insurance coverage in Costa Rica.

Education

A total of nine Venezuelan children were identified to receive kits for school, as well as, information to access to the education system in Costa Rica.

Area of Intervention 4: Strengthening the Capacity of Host Government

- R4V partners in Costa Rica continue to support the Migration Authority with human resources and, technical support. During the reporting period, 318 individuals were regularized through this support.
- 21 officials from the Social Welfare Institute received training on refugee-related issues in Costa Rica. The objective of the training was to help officials to familiarize themselves with the various migration and asylum processes to allow people from Venezuela to access the various public services.
- 40 Costa Rican officials of the Judiciary, National System of Judicial Facilitators, the Bar Association and lawyers participated in a workshop in Upala and Liberia on the asylum process, child protection protocols, and on the rights and duties of refugees. Other topics included were border monitoring, refugee status determination, and migratory options.
- Between 23 and 27 September, a total of 250 migration staff (including staff from the international airport of Tocumen, Howard, and Albrook, as well as migration staff of the main national office), were trained on

international protection principles. During the training session, information about displacement context and regional trends were discussed. In order to facilitate a better understanding of the refugee eligibility process, a precise session for discussing Country of Origin Information (COI) of Venezuela and the protection profiles of Venezuelan asylum seekers in the country was held.

- As part of the Human Rights and International Protection Graduate Course organized by partners, 25 staff from different ministries and entities (including ONPAR, Migration Service, Police, Ministry of labour, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, National Secretariat for Children, Adolescent and Families, and Women National Institute) increased their knowledge on the specific situation in Venezuela and the displacement trends. Examples of individual case analyses were provided and questions regarding current trends and situations in Panama were extensively discussed.
- In Panama, a legal partner trained 99 staff from Migration Service, Ministry of labour and Procuraduría de la Administración (34 male / 65 female) on protection and local integration related issues.

Coordination

- Given the mixed nature of the movements and the complexity of the situation, partners coordinate the relief and resilience efforts with relevant government entities, other agencies inside and outside the UN system, civil society, faith-based organizations, the private sector, and others. This collaboration aims at a whole-of-government and whole-of-society response, achieved in line with the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) and based on the countries' commitments towards the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Migration. Particularly relevant to support the governments' responses are the work of the national refugee bodies and migration institutions; however, the response also stretches across line ministries, to facilitate local integration and solutions for Venezuelan refugees and migrants, including access to education, social services, health, and others.

- Partners in Panama continues supporting the Interinstitutional Migrant Child Protection Working Group in Darién. The Group aims to improve State coordination and response for the protection of migrant children and to strengthen all protocols concerning migrant children. Currently, the Group is coordinated by the National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and Families (SENNIAF) counts with the participation of the Ministry of Health, National Border Service (SENAFRONT), Office of the Ombudsman, the Public Prosecutors Office, the National Migration Service, and RMRP partners.

- To ensure information is available and to conduct protection monitoring, partners undertook monitoring visits to Chiriquí provinces in Panama. Another monitoring visit to temporary shelter locations Los Planes and Peñitas was conducted.

CONTRIBUTIONS

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PLATFORM PARTNERS

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