



The 12th Regional Platform Meeting was organized virtually on the 21st July 2020. The meeting had the participation of more than 200 people who connected remotely, and the various sessions were organized in collaboration with various R4V partners.

Current Response Panorama

The meeting opened with the intervention of Diego Beltrand, Special Envoy to the Director General of IOM for the Regional Response to the situation of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, and Renata Dubini, Director of the UNHCR Bureau for the Americas, who moderated the session. In this part, the work carried out in the last months by the Regional Platform was briefly recalled such as: i) the revision of the Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) 2020, which incorporates needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic and ii) the International Donors' Conference held in May 2020. In this session presentations were made by Eduardo Stein, the Joint Special Representative of UNHCR and IOM for Venezuelan refugees and migrants, Niky Fabiancic, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations of Brazil, Maria Noel Vaeza, Regional Director of UN Women, and Alvaro De Vicente, Chief of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO).

In his intervention, Eduardo Stein, the Joint Special Representative of UNHCR and IOM for Venezuelan refugees and migrants explained the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the region and the effects that the pandemic has had over refugees and migrants from Venezuela. The Joint Special Representative delineated the main consequences of the closures of borders and the measures which were adopted to contain the pandemic. Many refugees and migrants are currently in an irregular situation and the majority do not have the possibility to work nor any form of livelihood. In the last months this situation has encouraged returns to Venezuela given that many do not have the means to survive and are objects of discrimination and xenophobia. Eduardo Stein recalled that in April and May, the Regional Platform worked on the revision of the RMRP. Also, in May 2020, with the support of the European Union and Spain a International Donors Conference was held. In order to monitor the activities and the financial contributions towards the RMRP, two visualizations were produced which are in the webpage r4v.info. Finally, in the last few days the Regional Platform has initiated the planning for the development of the RMRP 2021.

Maria Noel Vaeza, Regional Director of UN Women, in her intervention recalled the importance of the disaggregation of data which is collected and provided through the RMRP. In this sense the disaggregation should demonstrate the needs of women and girls in the response. Gender-based violence has been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic given that the measures have sometimes impeded the ability to receive relevant services to support victims. The response in the region is focusing on projects for assistance to protect women and girls facing gender-based violence or sexual exploitation. Maria Noel Vaeza recalled that the integration of a gender focus is a task and responsibility of all the 151 partners of the R4V. In this sense it is very important to integrate a gender focus in all the activities of the response. Finally, it is important that women and girls are involved with the work of the planning of the RMRP 2021.

Niky Fabiancic, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations of Brazil, recalled the great work that the Regional Platform is carrying out in Brazil. The Resident Coordinator recalled the situation of Brazil and the challenges which are developing during the pandemic. The emergency has put all the hospitals in the country under pressure. The Resident Coordinator mentioned that the impacts of the pandemic will develop very intense effects in Brazil, whether in the realm of health or related to the socioeconomic situation of the country. In face of the health emergency, the UN system is working together with the Brazilian government with the *Operacao Acolhida* to help with the arrival of and assistance to refugees and migrants from Venezuela. The military of Brazil is also helping to limit the transmission of COVID-19 among refugees and migrants, given that COVID-19 cases and deaths were identified among the Venezuelan population. The UN system, with the support of the



Platform in Brazil, already established a hospital with 254 beds available for refugees and migrants and host communities. The government continues to bring financial support to refugees and migrants and the UN system is supporting so that all refugees and migrants can receive this assistance.

In his intervention, Alvaro De Vicente, Chief of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), recalled the work carried out for the virtual International Donors Conference of the 26th May. In this event US\$ 2.7 billion, including US\$ 632 million in grants, was pledged. The organizers of the International Conference are currently following up on the support which has been granted for the Venezuela situation and the activities in the region. Also, Alvaro De Vicente mentioned that it will be required to present this follow up in the next Quito Process meeting which will be held in Chile. The European Union and Spain with the support of IOM and UNHCR are working to pass all the work carried out to Canada, who will support the organization of the next Donor Conference.

Outlook for 2021 - RMRP Planning Scenarios

The second session, moderated by Diego Beltrand, brought together four distinguished panelists: Ana Duran and Jozef Merckx, Co-Leads of the National Platform in Colombia (GIFMM); Jorge Freye, representing the NGO Coalition LAC RMD; and Rebecca Alvarado, Team Lead for the Venezuela Response, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM), US State Department. The panel discussed the regional scenarios in the context of planning the RMRP for 2021.

Ana Duran and **Josef Merckx** discussed four main planning scenarios which have been developed in Colombia, being the primary border with Venezuela in terms of the numbers of refugees and migrants crossing. The four scenarios presented as follows: (1) new pendular movements between Colombia and Venezuela which will have a particular impact in border zones and on basic services in both countries; (2) the constant return movements to Venezuela and then reentering into Colombia, which will increase needs, lead more refugees and migrants to stay in informal settlements, overwhelm the response capacity, and increase protection risks; (3) massive flow of *caminantes* with multisectoral needs in Colombian territory with more vulnerable profiles of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, caused by the opening of borders and the flexibilization of movement restrictions, which will increase protection risks and especially human trafficking and smuggling along the routes; (4) and the increased mobility of refugees and migrants across the entire region and a greater control over infection hotspots, the reopening of economies and border crossing points, increasing protection risks.

Panelists highlighted that the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic will be greater for the Venezuelan population due to their loss of livelihoods of which the majority have been within the informal economy. Over 1 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela do not have a regular status in Colombia and therefore are unable to access social services provided to Colombian citizens. Food insecurity, xenophobia and gender-based violence are all on the rise, as well as evictions. Many are in a state of triple affectation, being affected by the refugee and migrant crisis, the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the internal violence and the potential for natural disasters in Colombia.

The GIFMM of Colombia notes the success gained from “interinstitutional unity” and having built strong coordination and articulation when working with the Government of Colombia and several levels. The Platform also hopes to coordinate more with other national platforms for better planning, especially bordering countries, which will help to identify changing movements in the region and plan a collective response based on this information.

Secondly, **Jorge Freye** from the NGO Coalition for the defense of the rights of refugees, migrants and displaced persons in Latin America and the Caribbean “Coalition LAC RMD”, presented the coalition’s



objectives, primarily to complement the response of governments and the Regional Platform in the response for refugees and migrants from Venezuela. It was noted that the effect of the increasing returns to Venezuela will place this population at greater risk, including the risk of the spread of the COVID-19 virus among this vulnerable population. He highlighted that it will be necessary to tailor specific methods at the host community level given the multiple vulnerabilities faced by this population as well as the refugee and migrant population. The NGO Coalition, composed of many grassroots as well as larger organizations, is present in almost all RMRP countries and therefore it is in very close proximity to the reality of the situation on the ground. This proves the importance of the role of civil society in the regional response and the NGO Coalition is willing to continue generating dialogue with the various actors and stakeholders who form part of the response. In this same thread, for 2021 planning it will be crucial to guarantee the participation of civil society to ensure an integral response, to guarantee the quick assignation and transfer of resources to civil society organizations who are the first line of the response.

Finally, **Rebekka Alvarado** from BPRM reiterated the value of the RMRP and the cruciality of mitigating the effect of the pandemic on refugees and migrants, who are disproportionately vulnerable, particularly groups such as women and children, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples. Rebekka Alvarado analysed the crucial importance of protection activities in the coming year and the need for regularization for refugees and migrants to be able to access their rights and basic services. She noted that the next Quito Process meeting will be an opportunity to highlight the importance of registration and regularization and to continue advocating with governments. Other topics were discussed including the impending economic situation with the loss of jobs among refugee, migrant and host community populations alike - for which cash-based interventions will be vital to ensure self-sufficiency of these groups - and increased incidents and sentiments of xenophobia, for which it will be important to continue supporting interventions producing messages of solidarity and anti-xenophobia. The issue of returns will also be an important factor to consider for the 2021 planning process. The United States of America do not consider the conditions within Venezuela to be conducive to guarantee and safe and dignified return, whether it be voluntary or involuntary. BPRM supports the development of the Returns Framework currently under construction by the Regional Platform as an example of a creative solution to returns. BPRM commits to continue doing their part to mitigate the impacts of the current crises.

2021 RMRP Planning Process

The third session, moderated by Tim Howe and Philippe Sacher, Coordinators of the Regional Platform, focused on the technical aspects of the [RMRP 2021 Planning Process](#). To begin with, the initial steps of the planning process were presented, including the survey on lessons learnt which was distributed to all national platforms and regional sectors to provide feedback on the planning process for the RMRP 2020 and to suggest how this could be improved for 2021. Some of the highlights include the need for more detail in needs assessments, greater coordination between national and regional levels, particularly in the development of sectoral indicators, and a greater focus on cross-cutting themes of gender, environment and PSEA. In particular, Regional Sector leads wish to lead regional strategies more in coordination with national sectors going forward. The next step involved a series of sessions specific to several technical aspects of the planning process, including the joint needs assessment, monitoring framework and indicators, among others. This series culminated in a final overall planning session led by the Regional IM team, which then informed the production of the Planning Instructions for this year's process, released on 14 July.

Following this, the Sector structure was presented, including the names of the lead organizations at regional level, and which now includes an additional working group focused on Fundraising, and the Roadmap for the planning of the RMRP 2021 was introduced. The Regional Platform has aimed to hold various consultations to develop this [Roadmap](#). The National and Sub-regional platforms have



already begun their consultations with their respective governments, which is an essential part of the process, including in order to define the scenarios.

The integrated needs and response planning process was presented, outlining the four main stages of Joint Needs Assessments, the definition of People in Need disaggregated by location, sector and age and gender, then the definition of the Target, and finally the monitoring of activities. Regarding the definition of population projections for 2021, it will be important to consider the COVID-19 dimension, consultations with host governments, the ongoing return movements and gender and age disaggregation. The RMRP will have general transversal strategic objectives, the drafts of which were presented, focusing on providing access to essential goods and services, the prevention and mitigation of protection risks, and resilience and integration.

Transversal themes

The theme of the **Environment** in the RMRP was discussed by Dan Stothart, UNEP, focal point for the thematic area, who highlighted that the aim of the theme is not only to mitigate the environmental impact of partners through their response but also to recognize how environmental factors can accelerate humanitarian need. There are guidance notes available for Project design and needs assessments. There is an Environment Marker which should be treated equally to the Gender Marker while also using it as a tool to return to and to use to improve analysis throughout the implementation of the RMRP. This analysis can also be used to benefit partners' individual proposals and communications. Partners can request support for their joint needs assessments, data collection and review, integrating environmental considerations in the establishment of sector objectives, country chapter development and on the completion of the Environment Marker.

The theme of **Gender** was discussed by Dana Romero from UN Women. Gender will be considered throughout all stages of the development of the RMRP and there are tools within the Planning Instructions on how to incorporate a gender focus, including the disaggregation of data by gender and age. It is recommended that partners ensure the participation of women and LGBTQ individuals, as well as those living in rural areas and indigenous peoples in the needs analyses. For population projections, when a disaggregation of data is not available, it was recommended that estimates are used instead. At the submission stage, there will be a gender and age marker (GAM), for which there are instructions available for partners.

Monica Noriega presented the **PSEA (Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse)** initiative of the RMRP. One point to highlight is that we cannot allow the vulnerable people we serve to be exploited. The focus of PSEA is the promotion of good programming. This means the assurance that interventions are designed with significant participation of affected populations, that their security, dignity rights and wellbeing are promoted, in accordance with the "do no harm" principle. PSEA will be adapting and incorporating global PSEA priorities into the RMRP through the capacitation of response personnel, activities for the prevention and mitigation of risks associated with sexual exploitation and abuse through sectoral actions, strengthening feedback mechanisms, establishing links with gender-based violence and child protection, and establishing lines of communication through a "community of practice".

Refugee, migrant and returnee women from Venezuela: presentation of the UNDP report on their experiences, needs and access to livelihoods in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru

In the final session **Guillermina Martínez**, Gender Policy Specialist of the Gender Area of the UNDP Regional Centre, **Ana Carcedo**, Violence against Women and Migration Expert and author of the study, **Tatiana Bertolucci**, Regional Director of CARE International for Latin America and the



Caribbean, **Maria Elena Valenzuela**, Gender Expert, Migration and Employment, CEPAL, **Maria Ariza** from UNFPA and who coordinates the Gender Based Violence Subsector together with **Monica Noriega** from IOM, presented. The Gender Based Violence Subsector at the regional level supported the co-organization of the regional meeting. In the session, elements to help design more effective interventions were presented, more inclusive and safer in the face of the RMRP 2021. The UNDP study presented in this session helps to understand the relationship of labour, the disqualification which refugee and migrant women from Venezuela experience, their roles as caregivers and especially gender based violence, which has brought us to prioritize the collaboration with the Integration sector in the revision of the RMRP.

a. Introduction (UNDP)

The UNDP study is based particularly on important research whose objective is to understand the livelihoods of refugee and migrant women from Venezuela and in what displacement situation they found themselves in the different transit countries, as well as destination countries and the role which gender based violence plays in those moments of displacement. The exodus of the Venezuelan population is the greatest in the recent history of Latin America, the sense of the movements and particularly those of refugee and migrant women from Venezuela are in greater vulnerability in contrast to their male peers, because there are specific situations of labour exploitation, human trafficking and sexual violence which make this population displacement much more complex.

b. Presentation of Study

The study presents an innovative analysis which permits the understanding of who women from Venezuela were before leaving their country, what education they had, to what they dedicated themselves and how these dynamics changed after their journey, how family planning changed, how the responsibility of care falls on them and livelihoods they ended up losing, many pass from having businesses to having lower qualified jobs. Many women who work in the informal sector and in irregular situations are submitted to all kinds of labour exploitation, without access to means of social protection, without pay guarantees and even sexual violence. This phenomenon of gender-based violence is cemented in the unequal power relations between men and women. The Gender Based Violence Subsector is interested in jointly addressing these causes, those contributing factors that have made women vulnerable to violence in transit and at destination. This research was conducted in 2019 in the countries of Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, which constitute the main entrances of the largest exit flows from Venezuela. It is fed by secondary information, elaborated by governments of the three countries, the United Nations System and the organisms which form the Platform.

The study recommends improving the information on women to act on the evidence base with information disaggregated by sex, capture the conditions in which they mobilize and live, and conduct specific studies on women's access to livelihoods and the violence which they experience in concrete contexts. Likewise, it is recommended to revise the legal frameworks and public policies and render them adequate to international human rights instruments. Moreover, employability and entrepreneurship of refugees and migrants must be strengthened, particularly that of women through policies and concrete and sustainable actions, develop alliances with the private sector and local governments, link humanitarian aid with proposals to strengthen employability of the Venezuelan population and enable mechanisms which guarantee that the programmes are oriented towards socioeconomic integration of women.



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21 JULY 2020

REGIONAL PLATFORM MEETING

R4V
RESPONSE FOR
VENEZUELANAS
Coordination Platform for
Refugees and Migrants
from Venezuela

REMOTE MEETING
VIA WEBEX

c. Contributions to the study

The reflections are based on the results of the gender space analysis, which CARE developed in the three countries of the UNDP study and the analysis carried out within Venezuela. The gender analysis developed by CARE on the Venezuelan crisis, uses secondary data and primary data collection (2,750 individuals) and more than 35 focus groups in the different countries, which allows us to have a view of the reality. There are many points coinciding with the UNDP study, among them the normalization and presence of gender-based violence and sexual violence in this crisis. The volume of information and of occurrences is high, being an impediment to their integration into the labour force, but above all it is an affront to the rights of Venezuelan women.

In complementarity to the UNDP study, one can say that the transformation of roles and responsibilities of women in the process of leaving Venezuela, there is a change in the decision making by the family unit and in the areas of decision making. Previously they were strictly for women in the area of family feeding, towards wider decisions with the process of migration. Often, displacement happens in an unaccompanied manner, or in separate phases to men, or upon arrival in destination there is a demand for a change in roles, overloading the women with the different roles which before were shared. Regarding the issue of access to sexual and reproductive health, this becomes a priority in the response to this crisis. In many countries the resources destined for sexual and reproductive health are redirected towards the response to the COVID-19 pandemic health crisis. Lastly, it is stressed that the study conducted by CARE evidences a loading of labour hours for women and the increase in violence, which generates a reduction in their capacity to participate in decision making spaces which they had had in their home countries.

d. Final reflections

The UNDP study not only provides data, it provides hypothesis and recommendations, it presents an extremely grave panorama and the danger of enormous regression. There is an increase in gender-based violence, inequalities, a more precarious insertion of women in employment terms, for which institutional actions must be posed to allow for the reversal of this severe situation currently occurring in destination and transit countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected women from Venezuela health-wise; there is a greater risk of infection because the housing conditions and sanitary conditions are poor. By having less access to healthcare, infections pose a greater risk to lives. Many Venezuelan women have technical or university education in areas of health, and nowadays are working on the front line of health service provision in Colombia, Peru and Chile given that there are scarcities of local health workers. Also, they are working in care as domestic workers and in the care of elderly persons.

In the face of the crisis, there is an increase in manifestations of xenophobia, because the population wishes to identify a scapegoat for their own crisis, this should be considered together with gender-based violence. There is a reduction in food security due to the loss of livelihoods, for which it is necessary to reflect on which means of local government assistance and cash-based interventions are arriving to the Venezuelan population. It is very probable that it is not arriving to the entire population because they are not aware of how to posit themselves to these programmes, they are not subscribed in social projects, because they don't possess national identity documents or due to being in an irregular situation. If the situation was severe before the health emergency, the current situation is extremely severe, the gender discrimination and the gender inequalities are on the rise.