



**114,677**

BENEFICIARIES RECEIVING ASSISTANCE ONCE OR MORE FROM THE SECTOR, OF

WHICH **104,693** HAVE BEEN BENEFICIARIES UNDER THE RMRP 2021 PLAN



**20%**  
GIRLS



**32%**  
WOMEN



**20%**  
BOYS



**28%**  
MEN

**84,390** BENEFICIARIES OF THE RESPONSE DUE TO THE COVID-19 HEALTH EMERGENCY

**22** DEPARTAMENTOS

**26** ORGANIZATIONS WHICH REPORTED

-- BENEFICIARIES OF THE RESPONSE THROUGH CASH TRANSFERS

**96** MUNICIPALITIES REACHED

**12** IMPLEMENTORS

## SITUATION

- According to the **Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) 2021**, there are **2.82M people with WASH needs**, of which 17% are returnee Colombians, 17% are people from host communities, 39% comprise the in-destination population, 4% are those in transit and 22% consist of the pendular population. The sector intends to respond to the needs of 633 thousand people through action by WASH partner organizations.
- On March 1, 2021 the Government of Colombia launched the **Temporary Protection Status (TPS) initiative to regularize more than 1.8M Venezuelan refugees and migrants within the country**. Through the enacting and implementation of this statute, the refugee and migrant population will be able to access identification documents, opening up **access to goods and services, including WASH services**. This represents a **Significantly boost the efforts to improve the quality and access to the assistance offered in the Colombian regions**, predominantly communities settled in suburban areas. However, in light of the introduction of the TPS, a likely rise in the number of people entering Colombia has been identified, which will pose challenges to the WASH sector.  
As such, rapid action must be taken to ensure access to basic services backed up by other intersectoral initiatives, in order to promote integration and to establish the necessary conditions for the refugee, migrant and host populations.

## KEY FIGURES

**2.82 M** MIGRANT AND REFUGEE POPULATION WITH WASH NEEDS ACCORDING TO RMRP 2021

**633 K** TARGET POPULATION FOR WASH AS PART OF THE RMRP 2021

**\$17.9 M USD** FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR WASH AS PART OF THE RMRP 2021

**\$297 K USD\*** DIRECT FUNDING FOR WASH ACTIVITIES

- On March 27, an **Initial Joint Needs Assessment was conducted in Arauca** by organizations from the Local Coordination Team and the Local GIFMM. This was in response to a situation entailing the displacement of 4,501 people with international protection needs (1,127 families), of which **83% were identified as Venezuelans and 17% Colombians**. In terms of WASH, almost all key informants mentioned access to services and hygiene products as the most pressing issue, above all due to shortcomings in infrastructure, such as showers and sinks. In 42 out of the 50 discussion groups, 85% of the participants stated **access to sanitation and hygiene products as being the main priority for girls and women**. Likewise, the need for cleaning kits was prioritized (29 groups). Moreover, it was highlighted that access to drinking water was limited owing to a lack of plumbing and the poor condition of installed infrastructure. **Access to hygiene products has also been limited due to a lack of economic resources** and, in some cases, the distance of markets. Also, a lack of biosecurity equipment was highlighted, such as face-coverings, alcohol, gel, and soap.
- A joint response was conducted as part of the back-to-back strategy between the GIFMM and OCHA in light of the **emergency in Arauca**. This situation arose due to the arrival of Venezuelans with international protection needs and Colombians to the municipality of Arauca (Arauca) from the state of Apure (Venezuela) following clashes between the armed forces of Venezuela and armed groups. The **first report has already been published regarding the situation**. It was identified that the population required **assistance to their WASH needs**, particularly regarding **access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services, as well as the promotion of good hygiene and water care practices**.
- The ACAPS organization has provided vital information on important WASH aspects through a **thematic report** on the needs and vulnerabilities of Venezuelan refugees and migrants traveling by foot from January 2021.  
**Water:** Venezuelans traveling by foot, known as *caminantes*, **lack reliable access to drinking water**, as well as water for bathing and washing clothes. When traveling through rural zones in particular, the *caminantes* may depend on water from rivers and streams, which represents a health risk since the water may be contaminated and not suitable for human consumption.



**Sanitation:** Access to sanitation facilities during the trip is severely limited. Although the shelters for refugees and migrants or Support Spaces situated along key points throughout the main routes may offer some intermittent access, the *caminantes* often have to resort to defecating outdoors.

**Hygiene:** The *caminantes* lack access to personal hygiene products such as hand soaps and disinfectants, as well as access to handwash facilities, which is instrumental in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

- The humanitarian needs besetting La Guajira stem from being one of the departments suffering significant structural gaps at a national level, mainly due to inadequate access to basic services and their poor quality. This has led to the population suffering recurring emergency situations. As such, a [REACH market assessment](#) was conducted in seven of the department's municipalities, which integrated surveys from 202 consumers/households, 142 traders, and eight contractors. The households surveyed represented a total of 1,004 people, with each household having an average of 5 people, predominantly between the ages of 18 and 59. Of the information collected, 54% corresponded to urban areas, 38% to rural areas, and 8% to households located in settlements.

**Consumers/households:** refers to Venezuelan and Colombian households situated in urban areas. **Less than 50% of households claimed to have sinks inside the home**, a troubling figure given that the surveys were conducted in an urban setting, where such a significant gap would not have been expected regarding this provision. In addition to this, only a little more than 30% claimed to have a sewage system, whilst a high percentage of the households surveyed reported to having to defecate outside, occurring mainly in the municipality of Uribia 40%.

In terms of access to water, **more than 80% claimed to have storage tanks**; however, the means of coping identified entailed: using fridges laid on their side, plastic bowls, and improvised pools. In all seven municipalities, the population surveyed stated that the water quality was good on average. However, in terms of continuity of service, a large percentage of households surveyed in the municipality of San Juan del Cesar stated that they regularly receive a service two or three times a week. In Riohacha, some households expressed to have a weekly service, while in Dibulla 37% of the households surveyed stated that the service ran every 15 days. The vast majority of households do not use any water purification methods, and in terms of sanitation measures, wastewater goes untreated.

Another key finding revealed that **those surveyed experienced problems when trying to access the market due to a lack of financial resources and a rise in the prices of products**, particularly consumables such as alcohol and disposable face coverings. A fall in income represents one of the gravest impacts of the crisis, which stemmed from the COVID-19 health emergency. In terms of hygiene practices, the findings indicated that since the start of the pandemic, 88% have carried out disinfecting activities, mainly making use of alcohol, hand soap, chlorine, and detergent.

**Traders:** This population stated that they had not suffered problems of scarcity prior to the data collection period, meaning before November 13. However, they did report that the products which were hardest to come by were alcohol, face coverings, and antibacterial gel, which indicates that whilst the income of consumers has fallen, the difficulty of access was in part due to a scarcity of self-care products. One of the difficulties reported was related to replenishment, which has been linked to the transport times of providers.

- **Service providers:** They provided their services without any restrictions in urban areas, a converse situation to that in rural zones, since only 2 out of 8 providers surveyed stated to operating specifically in the area of cleaning.

## THE RESPONSE<sup>1</sup>

During the first quarter of 2021, **114,677** people have benefitted from WASH action through **26** main partners and **12** implementing partners. The people assisted are mainly found in La Guajira, Norte de Santander, Arauca and Bogotá, D.C.

Through the **provision of hygiene supplies and services, including menstrual hygiene needs**, a total of **60,702** migrants and refugees were assisted, mostly in February and March, in 22 departments. **91%** of the aid was focused on Norte de Santander, Arauca, La Guajira, Atlántico, Antioquia, Valle del Cauca, Nariño and Bogotá, D.C. Strategies were promoted for key practice regarding hygiene, cleaning, and disinfecting, including the appropriate handling of solid waste and preventative action against COVID-19, along with the delivery of critical articles and/or kits for hygiene, cleaning and disinfecting, personal protective equipment and elements for filtration and the safe storage of water.

In terms of **safe access to sufficient and drinkable water**, **46,178** people were assisted in 8 departments; of these, La Guajira, Norte de Santander, and Nariño host **94%** of the assisted migrant and refugee population. The activities were focused on building, refurbishing and/or improving systems for accessing water services.

In terms of **access to improved sanitation facilities**, **7,797** beneficiaries arrived during the first quarter of the year. The refugees and migrants benefitted from the building, refurbishment and/or improvement of systems for accessing sanitation services, such as latrines, sanitary batteries, septic tanks, sewage systems, and other systems for managing and treating wastewater. The activities carried out in Paraguachón (La Guajira) stand out for the sanitary units and hydration points, which continue to offer services in a dignified, safe, and accessible manner. Throughout the offering of services, emphasis has been placed on essential hygiene practices to nurture a behavior change and promote hygiene as a means of protection against transmitting COVID-19. More specifically, access to improved sanitation and lavatory facilities and hydration points in La Guajira has provided services in a dignified, safe and free manner for 20 uninterrupted months since opening in 2019, which has led to a reduction in the practice of defecating outside. In terms of operational matters, although it continues to be challenging, training processes have been strengthened for promoting hygiene practices, with these activities being undertaken in coordination with local institutions.

Moreover, activities were carried out related to WASH in the Support Spaces in the Y of Arauca, where sanitation infrastructure was organized, cleaned, and disinfected, and complemented by workshops on hygiene best practices for the population.



*Sanitation Units and hydration points in Paraguachón, La Guajira – UNICEF*

## GAPS IN THE RESPONSE

While the delivery of hygiene kits as part of the assistance provided to the migrant and refugee population to supply their needs stands out, **the accompanying activities for promoting good hygiene practices are not visible**. The promotion and shift in hygiene practices comprise the end goal of the strategy within the response, while the kits represent a means to reach this end. Therefore, this action should be strengthened in order to prevent illnesses and mortalities.

The sector should promote **a response that combines deliverables according to need, meaning through direct delivery or cash transfers**, to strengthen livelihoods, ensuring a more dignified response that aligns with the priorities and preferences of the population, and avoids undermining local markets.

<sup>1</sup> Observation: The total beneficiaries included in this section is not indicative of the final GIFMM figures. The total beneficiaries for Colombia correspond to a differential/sectoral calculation methodology, taking into account factors including temporality, partner presence in the same territory, and possible duplication of activities and/or the population assisted within the same sector but different activities.

Moreover, a **lack of specific knowledge on where the greatest needs lie, in what territory, community, municipality, etc.**, represents a considerable gap in the response. Other challenges include a reduced movement of resources and a limitation on the resources available. Lastly, action has been primarily focused on temporary solutions, whereas the sector has recognized the need to project and implement action orientated towards long-term solutions.

## ADVANCES IN COORDINATION

- The **WASH needs of migrants, refugees, returnees, and host communities have worsened due to the wet season in the Caribe and Andina regions, which had a substantial incidence** in November and December 2020, and January 2021. This mainly affected the population residing in informal settlements in La Guajira, Norte de Santander, and Arauca. As such, the regional working groups of these departments, together with their partners, led a response that was extended to January 2021. This entailed delivering **hygiene products, water storage and treatment, and appliances** such as generators for tackling standing water.
- The communities above have been impacted by two COVID-19 peaks (January and the end of March), which **still affect their livelihoods**. Also, **communities have faced growing barriers to hygiene products**, with a lack of WASH services increasing exposure to infection. Therefore, the sector has continued and strengthened the WASH response by delivering promotional messages regarding hygiene and supplying products and services to promote adequate handwashing using soap and water.
- The WASH working group in Norte de Santander helped support the **transfer of WASH services of the Transitory Health Attention Center** (CAST as per its Spanish acronym), which was situated in the Las Tienditas International Bridge, to its new location in the municipality of Los Patios (now called Health Attention Center Los Patios – CASLP as per its Spanish acronym). Moreover, the WASH working group in Arauca and the national sector coordinated a **response to the Venezuelans with international protection needs and Colombians who arrived in Arauquita** at the end of March.
- **There is still a persistent gap in the response in terms of sanitation**. It has not been possible to provide quality assistance focused on strategies for eliminating fecal contamination, which leads to a rise in morbidity. Also, the sector has highlighted the difficulty in implementing exit strategies at care points for WASH services, whereby the care points become administered by local authorities once they have been put into operation, as in the case of Paraguachón in La Guajira, the “Y” of Antioqueña in Arauca, and in the CAST (CASLP hence), Puerto Santander, El Escobal and Centro Nacional de Atención Fronteriza (National Border Attention Center in English) in Norte de Santander.



## SECTORAL MEMBERS(\*)

Action Against Hunger\* | UNHCR\* (Action Against Hunger, Comfenalco, Corporación Scalabrini, CORPRODINCO, DRC, FAMICOVE, NRC, Opción Legal, Pastoral Social, SNCRC) | ACTED\* | Aldeas Infantiles\* | Ayuda en Acción\* | Bethany\* | Capellanía OFICA\* (ONG OCIPI) | Caritas Germany\* (Pastoral Social, SJR Col) | Caritas Suiza\* (FAMIG) | CISP\* | Compassion International\* | Fundación Baylor\* (International Medical Corps) | Heartland Alliance\* | Hias\* | NRC\* (Action Against Hunger) | OIM\* | OXFAM\* (APOYAR) | Pastoral Social\* | PLAN\* | Samaritan's Purse\* | Save the Children\* | SJR Col\* | SNCRC\* | UNICEF\* (Action Against Hunger, Halü) | World Vision\* | World Lutheran Federation | PAHO/WHO | ZOA | Tearfund | Colombian Red Cross Society | Malteser International | IRC | TTdH | Alianza por la solidaridad | ADRA | CESVI | Med Global | Premiere Urgence International | SOLIDARITÉS International

An (\*) denotes the partners involved in activities this quarter, those in brackets () are their implementing partners, if applicable.

For more information please contact: Valentín Estrada [wash@colombiassh.org](mailto:wash@colombiassh.org) | Katerine Zapata - [kreazo@immap.org](mailto:kreazo@immap.org)