


 REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS
 IN THE REGION

265,000


 PEOPLE REACHED WITH SOME
 FORM OF ASSISTANCE*

2,975



FUNDING SITUATION**

%

REQUIREMENT: 24.1 M

Context

Panama

The number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela crossing through the Darien Gap saw a significant increase in January 2021 in comparison to December 2021. In fact, although the overall number of crossings of all nationalities through the Darien Gap decreased in January, 1,153 Venezuelans (out of 4,702 total persons) crossed the border between Colombia and Panama, while in December the number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela was 542. Venezuelans outnumbered any other nationality (including Haitians) of refugees and migrants crossing through the Darien in January. Many refugees and migrants who enter Panama by land via the “controlled flow process” cannot continue their transit towards Chiriquí (border with Costa Rica) because they cannot afford to pay for the bus ticket. R4V partners anticipate that the number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in transit through Darién will continue to increase in the coming months, and that as a result, situations of overcrowding might arise in the migratory reception centre at San Vicente, which has limited capacity.

In December 2021, Executive Decree No. 1316 of 10 December 2019¹ expired, and to date, the authorities had not announced the Decree’s extension, which has generated concern among Venezuelans who have not been able to renew their passports due to costs and process delays. The Decree had allowed Venezuelan passports with an original expiration date not more than three years prior to be used as a valid document for migratory and other administrative procedures.

R4V partners in Panama noticed that the main reasons that refugees and migrants from Venezuela requested psychosocial support were situations of violence in the household. Many women manifested symptoms related to depression, anxiety, stress, and significant discomfort generated by living and/or having contact with their aggressor. While some issues were present before, the situation worsened during the pandemic, mainly due to mobility restrictions imposed, as well as COVID-19 related impact on livelihoods.

In January, in response to the needs identified, R4V partners in Panama provided assistance and support to refugees and migrants from Venezuela, especially those facing vulnerabilities and lack of access to basic needs and services. Many reported that income generated from informal economic activities was not sufficient to cover basic needs, especially considering rises in consumer goods and the costs of the basic food basket. Additionally, the work permit renewal processes for Venezuelans admitted for processing and recognized refugees was experiencing delays, which limited formal employment opportunities.

¹ Find the comprehensive text of the Decree here: https://www.gacetaoficial.gob.pa/pdfTemp/28919/GacetaNo_28919_20191212.pdf

For more information, please contact: Livia Manente Imanente@iom.int |

* Accumulative number of beneficiaries from 01 -31 January 2022 calculated with an aggregation model to avoid double counting.

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Costa Rica

R4V partners advocated for a possible revision to extend the Complimentary Protection granted by the Migration Authority to Venezuelans whose asylum requests were denied between 1 January 2010 and 15 December 2021, which will expire on 28 February 2022. R4V partners received an increased number of information requests from Venezuelans looking at alternatives.

Media in Costa Rica drew attention to the situation of refugees and migrants from Venezuela by reporting on a group of seven Venezuelans who were sleeping in an open park after travelling from Panama through Darien and who had been unable to find assistance in Costa Rica other than receiving support from a local church.

Mexico

On 21 January, the visa requirement to enter Mexico for Venezuelan nationals came into force. The full impacts were yet to be seen, but the new policy will certainly reduce the arrivals of Venezuelan nationals with international protection needs via air, as immigration checks are conducted at the port of origin before boarding flights for Mexico. Further difficulties in family reunification processes were also expected. The arrival of Venezuelan nationals through Mexico's southern border also increased in comparison to past trends: while 12 asylum claims were filed in January 2021 by Venezuelan nationals at asylum offices along the southern border, 69 were filed in January 2022 (out of 403 claims total filed by Venezuelans in all of Mexico). Furthermore, an increased number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela and Colombia were detained after arriving to the Monterrey International Airport, even with official documents. The visa requirement was added to a series of measures to curb northward population movements through Mexico that, [according to statistics from the Migration Policy Unit of the Ministry of the Interior](#), has quintupled compared to last year's figure. [Immigration controls applied to the Venezuelan population increased notably in recent weeks under the premise that Venezuelans were using Mexico as a route to reach the United States \(U.S.\)](#). R4V partners were conducting a profiling exercise with Venezuelan refugees and migrants arriving at Mexico's Southern border to have an overview of profiles, routes travelled and intentions.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) registered 24,819 encounters with Venezuelan refugees and migrants across the U.S. Southwest land border in the month of December. This brought to 106,755 the total number of "encounters" with Venezuelan nationals attempting to cross into the United States from Mexico in 2021. These numbers include encounters between and at ports of entry. They also represent instances of attempted entry to the U.S., and not the number of individuals arriving, as it is possible that an individual may attempt to cross the border multiple times. Current recidivism rates are around 25 per cent.

Based on statistics from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) in 2021 the rate of Venezuelan asylum-seekers arriving in the United States increased by 2,170 per cent.

On 21 January, the National Institute of Migration (INM) in Mexico announced that [it had dispersed a group of refugees and migrants who left Tapachula, Chiapas the previous day and were destined for the border with the United States](#). In a press release, INM explained that 319 people, including Venezuelans, traveling in groups on secondary roads were intercepted by immigration agents and the National Guard. It is understood that those intercepted were then detained

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by INM pending deportation procedures. This was the first large group of refugees and migrants attempting to transit through Mexico in 2022 and the Mexican Government anticipates these types of movements to continue.

Reports of refugees and migrants being detained while in transit across the country are increasingly regular. On 26 January, for example, media outlets reported two operations led by federal agents and the National Guard, where a total of 164 refugees and migrants, including Venezuelans, [were detained in the southern state of Chiapas](#). A large group of refugees and migrants was abandoned on the side of the road by the drivers of the six vehicles in which they were being transported. Authorities found the abandoned refugees and migrants a few meters from a migration checkpoint near Tapachula, on the border with Guatemala. Of those detained, 12 people were from Venezuela and in an irregular situation in the country. The INM reported that they would be deported.

Response

Health. Panama: In January, 39 individual and group psychosocial support activities (remote and/or face-to-face) were carried out for refugees and migrants, seeking to reduce anxiety and stress levels. A total of 248 people participated, 78 of whom were refugees and migrants from Venezuela (26 men, 52 women) – 39 in transit (at the migratory reception centre in Gualaca, Chiriquí) and 39 in destination, in Panama, West Panama, San Miguelito, and David. During the sessions, psychological first aid and psychological orientation were provided, as well as crisis intervention and promotion of mental health through various workshops on self-care, self-discovery, and self-esteem, managing anxiety, and assertive communication. **Costa Rica:** 1,185 Venezuelans received medical insurance in January under a special agreement with the Costa Rican social security entity. 82 Venezuelans received psychosocial assistance. Of these, 38 Venezuelans attended group workshops on emotional wellbeing. 6 Venezuelans received psychiatric care.

Integration. Panama: In January 2022, through the Inclusive Cities, Communities of Solidarity project, 240 people were reached with integration messages and instruments to promote refugees and migrants' inclusion. Moreover, the *Somos Lo Mismo* campaign launched four antixenophobia online kits for targeted audiences, including for journalists (focusing on how to produce ethical media content that avoids stereotyping or promoting xenophobia), the private sector (seeking to promote safer spaces for peaceful coexistence at work), and for refugees and migrants who have been subject to or witnesses to

situations of discrimination. **Costa Rica:** 24 Venezuelans received assistance to identify their occupational profiles and information on the process for the recognition of their degrees. 12 Venezuelans received training in soft skills development, legal empowerment and financial education. **Mexico:** As of January 2022, the naturalization procedure was reopened after being suspended for almost two years. R4V partners assisted 14 beneficiaries to submit their naturalization requests to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the new procedure. 500 Venezuelans have been identified as eligible and interested in submitting their naturalization process.

Protection. Panama: 16 Venezuelans were provided with information, orientation, and legal assistance services to access the refugee status determination (RSD) procedure and other essential rights. **Costa Rica:** 117 Venezuelans received information and legal assistance. One Venezuelan was assessed for protection needs.

GBV. Panama: Seeking to reduce the risks of gender-based violence (GBV) and enhance protection for women, girls, adolescents, and other groups at risk of GBV, 10 training sessions were held in community safe spaces in the migratory reception centres in San Vicente (Darién) and Gualaca (Chiriquí). The sessions addressed topics such as self-care, menstrual hygiene, violence prevention, leadership skills, and pathways for comprehensive care for survivors. A total of 59 refugees and migrants from Venezuela (6 men, 53 women)

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participated. **Costa Rica:** 2 survivors of gender-based violence were referred for access to justice and support networks.

CVA. Panama: 29 Venezuelans received multipurpose cash (MPC) for enhanced access to essential rights, including RSD procedures, and basic needs, including food and healthcare.

Costa Rica: 26 Venezuelans in vulnerable conditions received CVA interventions to meet basic needs. **Mexico:** 17 asylum-seekers from Venezuela received MPC during the month of January to meet their basic needs, such as food, household and domestic products, as well as to use as a contribution towards housing and utility bills. An additional 19 Venezuelan refugees

and migrants received sectoral CVA addressing protection-related risks identified, including due to vulnerabilities related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Food Security. Costa Rica: 9 Venezuelans received food assistance in the form of prepaid cards.

Shelter. Costa Rica: 1 Venezuelan was supported with emergency shelter.

WASH. Costa Rica: 9 Venezuelans received basic hygiene kits and 1 child received diapers.



PEOPLE REACHED*

Education	Food Security	Health	Hum. Transp.	Integration	Nutrition	Protection	Shelter	WASH	CVA	GBV
88	65	266	0	151	0	420	61	62	110	5

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