

Definition of Humanitarian Transportation assistance, and its intervention modalities, for refugees and migrants in transit or destination countries of the Response for Venezuelans in Latin America and the Caribbean

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What is described here responds to the lessons learned between 2018-2021 in the Response to refugees and migrants from Venezuela supported by good practices developed by the partners of the regional Humanitarian Transport sector.

Importance of Humanitarian Transportation in the Response to Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela

Despite significant efforts of the 17 countries, that are part of the RMRP¹ and host refugees and migrants from Venezuela in transit or with a vocation to stay, on regularization strategies within the territory, major impediments continue to be observed for the refugee and migrant population from Venezuela in terms of access to basic services such as humanitarian transportation such as, the case of Colombia with "The Temporary Protection Statute-Venezuelan Migrants"² or the "*Operação Acolhida*" (Operation Welcome) promoted by the Brazilian government³. This is particularly true for those migrants in an irregular status⁴ who are stranded or in transit, who do not have the financial capacity to continue the route, and - and who do not know how to access basic services that is not dependent on their migratory status. In turn, most migrants in precarious situations end up having to prioritize access to shelter or food before transportation, which has high costs. In this way, the population -on the move finds it necessary to continue their journey by foot, the so-called *Caminantes*, and they turn to coping mechanisms such as paying smugglers, among others.

The response in Humanitarian Transportation is key to preventing situations of risk associated with walking on the side of the roads or the use of unofficial means of transportation. Such risks include Gender Based Violence (GBV), human trafficking, forced recruitment, use and involvement of boys and girls, health risks, thefts, and physical violence, among others⁵. Within the dynamics of comprehensive protection, Humanitarian Transportation plays a fundamental role in conjunction with other services. Transportation protects refugees and migrants from dangerous roads, and high risks to health, life, and human dignity. Protection is profoundly diminished when there is a focus on the delivery of goods without Humanitarian transportation.

The main purpose of this document is to establish a clear and common definition at the regional level about what can be considered Humanitarian Transport and what should not. The document also provides humanitarian organizations working in countries hosting Venezuelan refugees and migrants and member of the Inter-Agency Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V, for its acronym in English), with tools and recommendations to adjust their activities to the context in which they are located, provided that the host countries request and/or allow it, and always considering existing rules and regulations and legal requirements that allow for the proper execution of activities.

¹Argentina, Aruba, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Curaçao, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay.

²More information about The Statutes [here](#).

³More information about Operation Welcome [here](#).

⁴Here in after irregular migrants.

⁵"Humanitarian Transportation. Current situation. October 2021". Multisector Sector and GTR (Group of Monetary Transfers) – GIFMM Colombia

Definition and Basic Characteristics of Humanitarian Transportation

It is common to associate Humanitarian Transportation exclusively with logistics activities (mobilization of buses and trucks, purchase of plane tickets, escorts, etc.), and not -consider the full spectrum of a job that seeks to guarantee dignified and safe mobility that promotes physical and emotional well-being, based on minimum standards, as well as access to basic services and emergency humanitarian assistance. Respecting these standards contributes to the prevention and mitigation of risks, and supports protection strategies adopted by people in transit.

The definition of the Multisector in Colombia under the GIFMM⁶, accepted at the regional level underscores that: *“Humanitarian transportation is the procedure and/or process that allows us to guarantee that refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations are transferred in an orderly, dignified, and safe manner, to a place of transit or destination within the nation’s borders. Properly managed and in coordination with the authorities and other partners, it is a protection tool to ensure the life and integrity of this population and to reduce pressure on the communities surrounding the roads.”*⁷

Important Considerations

- Humanitarian Transportation is a service provided **free of charge** to refugees and migrants by humanitarian organizations and/or government agencies.
 - It should not be exchanged for work, food, documentation, money, sex, or favorable treatment. The exchange of sex for humanitarian assistance is an act of exploitation, it is strictly prohibited, and it is a crime.
- Humanitarian Transportation is **voluntary**, meaning that people in mobility can take it or reject it if it is not convenient for them at any stage of their journey.
- It must ensure that the person or group (may be family, couples, companions) receiving assistance **are informed of their duties and rights**, potential risks that they may face along the route, as well as the **basic services available** by both humanitarian organizations and by the national social system in the country.
- Humanitarian Transportation is considered a **fundamental factor for the protection** of refugees and migrants from Venezuela.

Objectives, Activities, and Modalities of Humanitarian Transportation

Humanitarian Transportation activities respond to the need of those refugees and migrants in precarious situations who either lack the necessary documentation to access formal transportation within the country or who do not have the financial means to cover costs to continue the route until they reach their destination where they wish to stay for reasons of

⁶Inter-agency Group on Mixed Migratory Flows, GIFMM

⁷GIFMM Colombia - Guidelines for inter-municipal ground transportation of refugees and migrants. Published on March 6, 2020. Complete reading of the document [here](#). (Document under review, pending publication)

family reunification, access to employment, proximity to support networks, access basic goods and services or regularization and documentation⁸. These activities focus on people in vulnerable conditions whose situations could be aggravated⁹ given the impossibility of accessing services, which further exposing them to health and protection risks¹⁰. The identification of persons with special and specific needs, in particular individuals with disabilities who require special inclusion in Humanitarian Transportation activities, crucial.

As mentioned later in this document, when describing the activities, Humanitarian Transportation is carried out with **humanity, safety, and dignity, always within the borders of a country, and Aligned with the laws of said country. The activities are carried out in coordination and with the consent¹¹ of the States**, which helps to increase the security of the process by accompanying protective guide, in operations against organized crime, trafficking, and gender-based violence (GBV), as well as the protection of children, since it -mitigates the risk of family separation at borders or in transit.

Objectives

The importance of Humanitarian Transport lies in its three main objectives:

1. Ensure the **protection of refugees and migrants**. It is vitally important to highlight the prevention and mitigation of risks of human trafficking and smuggling and GBV, particularly of women, girls, and people with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations; maintain physical integrity and prevent the separation of children and adolescents from their families. Transportation is key to facilitating access to protection services, mainly in individualized cases, since Humanitarian Transportation activities allow the identification of cases, as well as their registration, accompaniment and monitoring, and referral to national protection mechanisms, and guarantees safe travel in adequate health conditions, complying with the current regulations for the prevention of Covid-19.
2. Facilitate access to **emergency goods and basic services** by providing transportation assistance to those who cannot otherwise physically access it. For example, to access food, essential household and hygiene items, health care, including first aid, and mental and psychosocial health care throughout the journey.
3. **Access migratory regularization, and, by extension rights and services**, by supporting refugees and migrants in facilitating access to social, educational, and justice services, among others.

All this occurs within the framework of the comprehensive response, and in coordination with the other thematic sectors which can help achieve the **socioeconomic integration** of the

⁸In the case of Brazil with the Operation Welcome, there is the exception of relocation between collective temporary accommodations according to shelter capacities.

⁹ Referred to situation: physical, mental, economic, social...

¹⁰ The groups of: Single women with children, Single men with children, Pregnant women, Breastfeeding women, Single women, elderly, HH with children, People with disabilities, Survivors of gender-based violence, victims of human trafficking, people with medical problems, cases of family reunification, LGTBQ+ people in vulnerable conditions, unaccompanied adolescents, people with international protection needs. Outside the established criteria, assistance can be provided to Venezuelans who are referred by government institutions and humanitarian agencies and who are in a situation of vulnerability.

¹¹States can both request support from humanitarian organizations to carry out Humanitarian Transport, as well as approve it after highlighting by them the importance of said activity.

Venezuelan population within host countries, thereby reducing the impact of the migratory flow on the host communities in border regions and favoring access to the labor market.

Activities

Humanitarian Transportation encompasses three areas of development in the context of the response to people from Venezuela, depending on the context of each country:

- **Border-to-border transportation**¹²: This is only provided to people in transit with the intention of reaching the next country on the migratory route, only if they have the pertinent migratory documentation or any other legal requirements requested by both countries that allow the crossing of borders and the justification of the trip. For example, for family reunification, the existence of support networks or employment contracts, and cases of special protection; always following the “Do No Harm” principles¹³, making sure that the situation at the destination country does not worsen living conditions at origin or place of transit. These activities are carried out from one border post to another within the same country, or from a main city to the closest border point to the next country of transit or destination. It is essential to carry out the corresponding coordination between countries of transit and destination, ensuring that there are agreements for legal crossing at the border.
- **Internal transportation**: With the intention of remaining in the country, internal transportation is provided to Venezuelan refugees and migrants between localities or municipalities within the borders of the country. It is carried out mainly under the assumptions of family reunification, the existence of support networks, and/or employment contracts. It includes round trip transportation in the case of access to basic services, in particular, health, regularization, and documentation when it is not possible in the town of origin or from a small town to the capital or a medium or large-scale city.
- **Local Daily transportation**: This is focused on supporting access to economic integration and to basic services. This type of transport is provided within a locality or between nearby localities to facilitate round-trip mobility, generally from the periphery to urban centers. This transportation focuses on the search for livelihood opportunities, and on access to basic services and administrative issues, including regularization. It seeks to minimize transportation costs for refugee and migrant families to allow prioritization of food and other essential expenses. As a rule, it is the modality with the least restrictions.

These areas of work are not just supported by transport logistics, but also by the identification and referencing of protection cases, the distribution of essential items for security and personal use, information and prevention campaigns, monitoring of migratory flows and means of transportation, as well as covering the basic needs of refugees and migrants during the entire process that the trip entails. This requires constant coordination with the areas of protection, and their sub-themes of GBV, child protection, and human trafficking and smuggling; border management and information management, in particular employing tools such as the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) of IOM.

¹²Border-to-border transportation is on pause due to the widespread closure of borders in Latin America since March 2020 due to the global health situation due to Covid-19. There are exceptional cases with the delivery of humanitarian visas. Up to the date of writing this document, countries with border opening plans have been identified, as well as others that already allow daily crossings by quotas.

¹³Do no harm, in English.

Regardless of the scope of development of the activity, it is important to highlight that two different scenarios can exist: firstly, the mobilization of large groups of the population in a situation of vulnerability; and then the much more detailed work with individualized cases, in particular those of special protection (Management and/or referral of cases).

Intervention modalities

Likewise, Humanitarian Transportation is carried out via two modalities:

- **Cash and Vouchers Assistance (CVA)**¹⁴ This is generally restricted through vouchers with direct delivery to the person benefiting from the service of travel tickets. In some instances, for example, when there is the absence of formal transport companies in some intervention areas, some organizations make direct delivery of cash; which poses a risk in the field of trafficking and smuggling and allows abuse by traffickers and/or unregistered transport companies. The use of restricted cash transfers through vouchers is recommended, whenever possible, or when accompanied by risk mitigation measures. The existence of programs that combine both modalities has been observed¹⁵.
- **Direct provision of transport in kind, thanks to the availability (or subcontracting) of a fleet of vehicles.** The vehicle fleet can be provided by the organization itself, or by the government, as well as by the private sector. It is the least frequent mode used due to its high financial and human resource costs for the escort, and it is carried out mainly in protection cases. Examples can be seen in Chile of internal transport, and in general, in border-to-border activities. Currently, this modality has been placed mostly on pause due to mobility restrictions imposed in countries to prevent contagion by Covid-19.
- **Mixed:** The combination of the two preceding ones.

¹⁴ Same as CBI, Cash-based interventions

¹⁵ This is the case of IOM in Brazil, as the sector leader in Operation Welcome [here](#); where assistance is also extended in, for example, protection cases, families are escorted, as well as assistance is combined with the delivery of essential items for the home or other non-food items.

Glossary

Irregular Income:

- a. Crossing borders in breach of the legal and administrative requirements necessary to enter the country Source: "[IOM Glossary on Migration](#)".
- b. It is considered regular entry to enter a country for: (1) a place not enabled, (2) a place enabled, but evading or omitting immigration control and / or (3) without the corresponding documentation or with false documentation. Source: Colombia - Decree 1067 of 2015 and in Resolution 3167 of 2019.

Migrant in an irregular situation: Person who moves or has moved across an international border and has not been authorized to enter or stay in a State in accordance with the laws of that State and the international agreements to which that State is a party. Source (adapted): International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (approved on December 18, 1990, and in force since July 1, 2003), art. 5.

Migrant smuggler: Person who commits or intends to commit the crime of smuggling (of migrants). Source: "[IOM Glossary on Migration](#)".

Smuggling of migrants: Facilitation of the irregular entry of a person into a State of which said person is neither a national nor a permanent resident to obtain, directly or indirectly, financial or other material benefit. Source (adaptation): Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (approved on November 15, 2000 and in force since January 28, 2004), art. 3a).

Formal commercial transport: In the case of this document, it refers to transport companies officially registered in the country that comply with current regulations, including accident insurance, among others. They can be both public and private companies.

Informal transport: Anything not considered as "Formal Transportation"

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