



Mixed
Migration
Centre

Waning welcome: the growing challenges facing mixed migration flows from Venezuela

A field assessment study in Colombia and Peru

Main report

MMC Research Report, September 2019



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Since 2017, the number of Venezuelan migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Brazil has increased a lot. Every day about 600 people cross the border into the northern Brazilian state of Roraima, the main gateway for migrants and asylum seekers into Brazil. They are fleeing the economic and social crisis in Venezuela and seeking better living conditions. MSF is providing care and support in four shelters in Roraima, both in the state's capital, Boa Vista and in the town of Pacaraima. Two of these shelters host exclusively Venezuelans from indigenous communities. MSF teams are also helping with technical support to improve sanitation and water supply in these facilities, providing mental healthcare services and running health promotion and community engagement activities for people living both inside and around the official shelters. Outside the shelters, MSF is also providing medical consultations to assist the most vulnerable people, including those sleeping on the street or in abandoned buildings, who are forced to live in unacceptable conditions.

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List of acronyms

3W	Who does What Where - comprehensive mapping of actors and their activities in humanitarian response situations.
CEBAF	Centro Binacional de Atención en Frontera (Binational Border Service Centres)
CLAP	Comité Local de Abastecimiento y Producción (Local Committees for Supply and Production)
CEPR	Comisión Especial para los Refugiados (Special Commission for Refugees)
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces)
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)
EPL	Ejercito Popular de Liberación (Popular Liberation Army)
GIFMM	Grupo Interagencial sobre Flujos Migratorios Mixtos (Inter-agency Group for Mixed Migration Flows)
GTRM	Grupo de Trabajo sobre Refugiados y Migrantes (Working Group on Refugees and Migrants)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PEP	Permiso Especial de Permanencia (Special Stay Permit)
PECP	Permiso Especial Complementario de Permanencia (Special Complementary Stay Permit)
R4V	Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela
RRMRP	Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan
UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency (full name: office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

1. Introduction

This report describes the findings of an assessment of mixed migration out of Venezuela towards Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, with the aim of identifying risks and current gaps in the protection of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, and to inform more effective protection-based programming in the region.

The report begins by assessing available information on the situation in Venezuela and the elements that are triggering the exodus of refugees and migrants out of the country, before developing an overview of the response provided to the Venezuelan migration crisis at the international, regional, and national levels.

The report then describes the main characteristics of Venezuelan mixed migration flows, with profiles those leaving Venezuela and overviews of key migration drivers. It then analyses the dynamics of their movement in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, highlighting the protection risks they face in different parts of their journey, and the living conditions they encounter at their destinations. The changing dynamics of migrant smuggling are also described, in conjunction with the increasing restrictions on regular migration that have been introduced in the region.

The report concludes by identifying knowledge gaps and outlining potential areas for further research to improve the capacity of relevant stakeholders to develop adequate protection responses for people on the move.

Key findings

- Venezuelans feel compelled to leave their country mostly due to a widespread lack of access to basic services such as food and healthcare and the grim future they see for themselves and their families in Venezuela. Loss of purchasing power and the collapse of public services are commonly identified as the main source of this feeling of frustration and helplessness.
- Most Venezuelan refugees and migrants have very limited financial resources, and travel in precarious conditions, which puts them at risk of protection incidents during their journeys, including robberies, physical assault and sexual gender-based violence (SGBV).
- As the number of refugees and migrants arriving in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru – as well as their humanitarian needs – grew exponentially since 2017/2018, perceptions of and attitudes towards Venezuelans in transit and destination countries have hardened. Increasing racism and xenophobia have triggered discrimination, hostility, and, in some occasions, physical violence.
- After initially adopting an open-door policy towards refugees and migrants, in something of a domino effect, countries in South America began successively to introduce stricter immigration measures, establishing requirements that are often impossible to meet for most Venezuelans. As a result, more Venezuelans resorted to either applying for asylum or entering irregularly.
- One of the consequences of closing borders has been an increase in the demand for and supply of migrant smuggling services. Smuggling dynamics are, in general, not as structured as in some other regions of the world, where highly organized and sophisticated transnational networks organize all aspects of irregular movement across countries. In Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, smuggling services mostly focus on facilitating irregular border crossings. Private companies presenting themselves as travel agencies are also involved in facilitating movement out of Venezuela and across the region, providing services that often seem to constitute migrant smuggling rather than legitimate travel services.
- More restrictive immigration policies limit access to regular immigration status for Venezuelan refugees and migrants. Irregular immigration status obstructs access to many kinds of services and exposes Venezuelans to an increased risk of exploitation.
- There is currently no sign that mixed migration out of Venezuela will stop or even decrease soon. This implies a need for long-term planning by the countries of destination of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, with a focus on local integration.

A note on terminology

Mixed migration refers to cross-border movements of people including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking and people seeking better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people in mixed flows have different legal statuses as well as a variety of vulnerabilities. Although entitled to protection under international human rights law, they are exposed to multiple rights violations along their journey. Those in mixed migration flows travel along similar routes, using similar means of travel – often travelling irregularly and wholly or partially assisted by migrant smugglers.

MMC uses “refugees and migrants” when referring to all those in mixed migration flows, unless referring to a particular group of people with a defined status within these flows.

2. Methodology

The assessment was conducted by an external consultant between May and July 2019. It consisted of desk research and field visits to Colombia (Cúcuta, Riohacha, Maicao, Barranquilla, and Bogotá) and Peru (Tumbes and Lima), to meet relevant international and national actors involved in mixed migration from Venezuela, as well as people on the move themselves. In total, 33 key informants from 27 organizations and public institutions, and 38 refugees and migrants from Venezuela (20 individual interviews and one focus group discussion with 18 participants) were interviewed.¹ Annex 1 includes an overview of all stakeholders interviewed and their organizational affiliation.

The assessment employed qualitative research methods and is based on a limited number of interviews. As such, findings are meant to provide indicative trends that should not be generalized to the entire population of Venezuelan refugees and migrants on the move. This report focuses on Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru as countries of transit and destination and does not cover mixed migration flows of Venezuelan nationals heading towards other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean.

1 32 Venezuelan people on the move were interviewed in Colombia and six in Peru. As for key informants, 23 were interviewed in Colombia and 10 in Peru.

3. Background

3.1 The Venezuelan crisis

Socio-economic situation

Venezuela's economy has been suffering continuous contractions over the last six years: most private companies have either closed or left the country, and oil revenues – which used to provide the bulk of the state budget – have strongly decreased.² According to official figures published by the Central Bank of Venezuela in May 2019, the country's GDP shrank by 52.3% since 2013 while inflation topped 130% in 2018.³

In its 2019 Overview of Priority Humanitarian Needs, the United Nations described how continuous GDP contractions since 2013, coupled with hyperinflation, have caused citizens' purchasing power to drastically drop: while in 2017 some 89% of respondents in a survey said they earned too little to afford food, in 2018 more than 94% of the population was living in poverty and more than 60% living in extreme poverty.⁴

The response of the Venezuelan government has so far been unable to solve the crisis: a report published by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in July 2019, for instance, notes that the government has repeatedly increased the minimum wage in an attempt to keep up with rising prices; in April 2019, however, this wage only covered 4.7% of the basic food basket.⁵

Welfare programmes and public subsidies also proved insufficient to guarantee citizens an adequate standard of living. Such programmes include the distribution of food boxes containing basic foodstuff at subsidized prices: the co-called *cajas CLAP* or CLAP boxes, named after the

Comités Locales de Abastecimiento y Producción (Local Committees for Supply and Production) that distribute them.⁶ CLAP boxes were introduced by the Venezuelan government in 2016, with the aim of limiting the impact of food shortages. The government also distributes food through *casas de alimentación* (food houses) and a school food programme.⁷ In 2018, it expanded the subsidies that are granted to families based on their size.⁸

A 2018 national survey highlighted how Venezuelan families have increasingly relied on CLAP boxes and other "social missions" over the last five years.⁹ OHCHR's recent report notes that "[t]he main food assistance programme known as CLAP boxes does not meet basic nutritional needs" and that "[n]otwithstanding some general government subsidies, people interviewed by OHCHR consistently stressed that their monthly family income was insufficient to meet their basic needs, covering approximately four days of food per month".¹⁰ As a consequence of this combination of elements, access to food in the country decreased and malnutrition grew.¹¹

Healthcare infrastructure has deteriorated due to a lack of medical supplies, including drugs and machinery, as well as to a dearth of health professionals, many of whom have left the country.¹² As several media sources have reported, the healthcare system is so dilapidated that patients (or their families) have to provide everything they need for treatment themselves, including surgical instruments, medicines, sterilizing solution, etc.¹³ This has had a severe impact on the health of Venezuelans, including an increase in maternal and child mortality.¹⁴ Human Rights Watch reported in November 2018 that "Venezuela is now routinely experiencing outbreaks of diseases that are preventable through vaccination and had been previously been eliminated in the country", including measles.¹⁵ People living with HIV registered

2 Reuters (2017) [Venezuela crude output hits 28-year low: OPEC](#); O'Grady, S. (2019) [Venezuela's crisis in 5 charts](#) The Washington Post.

3 Singer, F. (2019) [El Banco Central de Venezuela admite que el PIB se ha hundido un 52% con Maduro](#) El País.

4 United Nations (2019) Venezuela: Panorama de las Necesidades Humanitarias Prioritarias – Borrador para uso interno, not available online (hereinafter: UN, Panorama de Necesidades), pp. 7-8 and 10.

5 OHCHR (2019) [Human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela](#) (hereinafter: OHCHR, Human Rights in Venezuela), para. 11.

6 For more details on CLAP boxes, see: Reuters (2018) [For poor Venezuelans, a box of food may sway vote for Maduro](#)

7 UN, Panorama de Necesidades, Op. Cit., p. 11; La Vanguardia (2018) [Abren 3.000 casas de alimentación en Venezuela ante "guerra económica"](#).

8 Agencia EFE (2018) [Maduro aumenta 56 % el subsidio a las familias que reciben "bonos de protección"](#).

9 The "Misiones Bolivarianas" (Bolivarian missions) were first introduced by former Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez in the early 2000s with the aim of alleviating poverty and guaranteeing access to services for low-income citizens. For more information on these programmes, see Fernandes, S. (2008) [Social Policy in Chávez's Venezuela](#), ReVista; with regard to the connection between oil revenues and the Bolivarian Missions, see Rajagopal, D. (2017) [The legacy of Hugo Chavez and a failing Venezuela](#) Wharton Public Policy Initiative. See also: Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Universidad Central de Venezuela and Universidad Simón Bolívar (2018) [Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de 2018 – Avances de Resultados](#)

10 OHCHR, Human Rights in Venezuela, Op. Cit., paras 13 & 11.

11 UN, Panorama de Necesidades, Op. Cit., p. 11; OHCHR, Human Rights in Venezuela, Op. Cit., para. 15; Human Rights Watch (2018) [Venezuela: Numbers Highlight Health Crisis](#).

12 UN, Panorama de Necesidades, Op. Cit., p. 12.

13 See Puglie, F. (2019), [Venezuela crisis hits health care, kills patients](#) AP; The Lancet (2018) [The collapse of the Venezuelan health system](#)

14 Human Rights Watch (2019) [Venezuela's Humanitarian Emergency](#).

15 Human Rights Watch (2018) [The Exiles – A Trip to the Border Highlights Venezuela's Devastating Humanitarian Crisis](#)

to receive antiretroviral drugs have been forced to discontinue treatment for lack of supplies.¹⁶ As of March 2018 Venezuela was reportedly experiencing an 80-90% medicines shortage.¹⁷

Some media sources and civil society organizations argue that access to food aid and services in Venezuela is not impartial and described the committees that distribute CLAP boxes, for instance, as potential “instruments of the revolution”¹⁸ created by the Venezuelan ruling party to “counter the economic war”.¹⁹ As a result, Venezuelans who do not support the government may not get access to CLAP boxes, regardless of their needs.²⁰ Venezuelans can now only access subsidized goods and receiving ad hoc state bonus complementing their salaries upon using the *carné de la patria* (homeland card), an identity document introduced by the government in 2017 that citizens are supposed to acquire voluntarily and which, according to opposition leaders, would allow users’ access to state services and their political affiliation to be monitored.²¹

Political developments

Political tensions in Venezuela have heightened over recent years. OHCHR’s report highlights how “the Government and government-controlled institutions enforced laws and policies that have accelerated the erosion of the rule of law and the dismantlement of democratic institutions”²² and have adopted measures “aimed at neutralizing, repressing and criminalizing political opponents and people critical of the Government”²³.

Political protests have proliferated since 2017 and have often resulted in violent confrontation with state authorities.²⁴ According to the Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict, 12,715 anti-government protests were held in 2018, representing a 30% increase compared

to 2017.²⁵ Protests covered a range of issues, including: access to services such as water, gas and electricity; the right to a fair wage for public sector workers; rising food prices; shortcomings in the education system; and human rights violations against political opponents.²⁶

Venezuela has been repeatedly identified as Latin America’s most violent country by several sources. According to Insight Crime, Venezuela had the highest homicide rate in the region in 2018, with 81.4 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, a slight reduction from 89 in 2017.²⁷ El Salvador took a distant second place in the region, with 51 homicides per 100,000 people. Gallup’s Law and Order Index designated Venezuela as one of the least secure countries in the world in the last two years, ranking slightly worse than Afghanistan based on its citizens’ sense of personal security and their personal experiences with crime and law enforcement.²⁸ According to the 2018 index 42% of Venezuelans reported having had property or money stolen the previous year.²⁹

3.2 Scale of the migration crisis and response

This situation has triggered what has been described by the UN as the largest exodus in the modern history of Latin America and the Caribbean.³⁰ According to the latest UN figures, 4,054,870 people had left Venezuela as of July 5, 2019.³¹ Approximately 3.3 million Venezuelans are now in other Latin American countries, up from 700,000 in 2015.³² According to the UN Refugee Agency’s (UNHCR) 2018 Global Trends on Forced Displacement “Venezuelans accounted for the second largest flow of new international displacements” worldwide last year, outnumbered only by Syria.³³ The UN expects the number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in Latin America and the Caribbean to exceed five million by December 2019.³⁴

16 Human Rights Watch, Venezuela’s Humanitarian Emergency, Op.Cit.

17 Amnesty International (2018) [Venezuela: Unattended health rights crisis is forcing thousands to flee](#) .

18 Aponte, A. & Martinez A.I., (2018) [For poor Venezuelans, a box of food may sway vote for Maduro](#) Reuters.

19 See CNN (2016) [Qué son las cajas CLAP y cómo funcionan en Venezuela](#); Human Rights Watch (2016) [Venezuela’s Humanitarian Crisis - Severe Medical and Food Shortages, Inadequate and Repressive Government Response](#) (hereinafter: HRW, Venezuela’s Humanitarian Crisis).

20 OHCHR, Human Rights in Venezuela, Op. Cit., para. 22; CNN, Qué son las cajas CLAP, Op. Cit.; HRW, Venezuela’s Humanitarian Crisis, Op. Cit.; Zuñiga, M. (2016) [How Food Apartheid is Punishing Some Venezuelans](#) The Huffington Post.

21 Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2018) [Venezuela: The homeland card \(carnet de la patria\), including issuance procedures, usage, and physical characteristics: extent to which homeland cards have been distributed \(2016-May 2018\)](#) ; BBC (2018) [Qué es y cómo funciona el carnet de la patria que permitirá seguir comprando gasolina a precio subsidiado en Venezuela](#) .

22 OHCHR, Human Rights in Venezuela, Op. Cit., para. 30.

23 Ibid.

24 Human Rights Watch (2019) [World Report 2018: Venezuela](#); Amnesty International (2019) [Venezuela: Hunger, punishment and fear, the formula for repression used by authorities under Nicolás Maduro](#) .

25 Observatorio Venezolano de Conflictividad Social (2019) [Conflictividad social en Venezuela 2018](#) .

26 Ibid.

27 Dalby, C. & Carranza, C. (2019) [2018 Homicide Round-Up](#) InSight Crime.

28 Gallup (2018) [2018 Global Law and Order](#), as well as [2017 Global Law and Order](#). See also Ray, J. (2018) [Peace, Security Still Out of Reach for Many Worldwide](#) Gallup.

29 Gallup, 2018 Global Law and Order, Op. Cit., p. 3.

30 R4V (2018) [Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela](#) (hereinafter: R4V RMRP), p. 11.

31 See R4V, <https://r4v.info/en/situations/platform> . For more information concerning the R4V Platform, see footnote 44.

32 R4V, RMRP, Op. Cit., p. 11.

33 UNHCR (2019) [Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2018](#) , p. 6.

34 R4V, RMRP, Op. Cit., p. 8.

Most Venezuelan refugees and migrants head to Colombia and then either settle there or continue their journey south towards Ecuador, Peru and Chile. However, virtually every country in Latin America and the Caribbean is witnessing the arrival of Venezuelan people on the move. Brazil hosts the fourth highest number of Venezuelans: 178,575 as of August 2019.³⁵ They mostly arrive through the state of Roraima, which borders Venezuela.³⁶ Small Caribbean islands such as Aruba, Curaçao and Trinidad and Tobago – which are very close to Venezuela – are also receiving a large influx of refugees and migrants, especially if compared to the size of their territory and population.³⁷

These migration routes have different dynamics and present distinct and specific challenges and protection concerns.³⁸

International responses

Recognizing that the flow of people leaving Venezuela included both refugees and migrants, in May 2018 UNHCR and the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) created a **Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform** to better organize the humanitarian response and, in September of the same year, the sister agencies appointed a **Joint Special Representative for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela**.³⁹ On December 14th 2018, the platform adopted a **Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RRMRP)**, aimed at “provid[ing] a holistic, integrated, and comprehensive response to the needs of refugees and migrants” from Venezuela, while supporting and complementing the efforts of national governments in the region.⁴⁰

Inter-agency coordination platforms were also created at the national level in the countries that received the largest influx of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, such as Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. The national platforms are tasked with coordinating the implementation of the RRMRP national chapters.

In Colombia, the **Interagency Group for Mixed Migration Flows** (GIFMM in its Spanish acronym) has 53 members in its national chapter, including international and local NGOs, UN agencies and members of the Red Cross movement. Eight local GIFMM branches have also been created in the Colombian departments with the largest presence of Venezuelan refugees and migrants.⁴¹ Similar platforms have been set up in Ecuador and Peru under the name of **Refugees and Migrants Working Group** (GTRM in its Spanish acronym).

Regional response

Quito process

On September 3-4, 2018, representatives of 13 Latin American countries met in Quito to coordinate the regional response to the Venezuelan mixed migration flow, recognizing that it was a regional crisis in need of a regional solution.⁴² In the **Declaration of Quito on Human Mobility of Venezuelan Citizens in the Region**, adopted at the end of the meeting, 11 out of 13 participating States agreed, among other things, to:

- accept expired travel documents as valid documentation for Venezuelan people on the move;
- give Venezuelan refugees and migrants – to the extent possible and depending on their financial resources – access to healthcare and education services, as well as employment opportunities;
- fight against discrimination and xenophobia;
- and strengthen their legal frameworks with the aim of promoting and respecting the rights of Venezuelan refugees and migrants.⁴³

During a second regional meeting held in Quito on November 23, 2018, states adopted the **Quito Action Plan on Human Mobility of Venezuelan Citizens in the Region**. The plan covers three main thematic areas: 1) regularization of Venezuelan nationals in the region; 2) regional cooperation with Venezuela; and 3) international cooperation with states in the region.⁴⁴ More specifically, the plan commits states to adopt measures giving Venezuelan citizens access to regular immigration status and the refugee status determination

35 See R4V, <https://r4v.info/en/situations/platform>.

36 R4V, RRMRP, Op. Cit., p. 27.

37 Ibid. p. 79.

38 As previously mentioned, this assessment only covers the migration route(s) from Venezuela to Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, and does not analyze the dynamics of other routes.

39 The platform aims to address “the protection, assistance and integration needs of both refugees and migrants through accompanying, complementing and strengthening national and regional responses of governments, international organisations and civil society”. Jointly led by UNHCR and IOM, it also includes 41 participants including 17 UN agencies, 15 NGOs, five donors, two international financial institutions and the Red Cross Movement. See R4V (2018) [Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela](#); UNHCR and IOM (2018) [Joint statement by UNHCR and IOM on the appointment of Mr. Eduardo Stein, as a Joint Special Representative for Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the region](#).

40 R4V, RRMRP, Op. Cit., p. 12.

41 For more information concerning the GIFMM, see GIFMM Colombia, [Fact Sheet](#).

42 Participants in the first meeting of the Quito Process included Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

43 Bolivia and the Dominican Republic did not sign the Declaration. See: El Nacional (2018) [11 países de América acordaron aceptar documentos vencidos a venezolanos](#). The text of the declaration can be found [here](#)

44 [Plan de Acción sobre Movilidad humana de ciudadanos venezolanos en la region \(Plan de Acción de Quito\)](#) (2018).

system;⁴⁵ evaluating possible actions aimed at providing humanitarian assistance to Venezuelan citizens in their country of origin, to increase their access to food and healthcare;⁴⁶ requesting technical and financial cooperation from the international community; and maintaining regional coordination to monitor Venezuelan mixed migration flows. Eight out of the 13 countries participating in the process signed the action plan.⁴⁷

At the **Third Technical Meeting on Human Mobility of Venezuelan Citizens in the Region**, held in Quito on April 8-9, 2019, participant states provided progress updates on the Quito Action Plan's objectives and shared their experiences and good practices in managing Venezuelan mixed migration flows. They also appealed to the international community again to increase financial support to the regional response to the crisis.⁴⁸

The fourth meeting of the Quito Process (the most recent at the time of writing this report) took place in Buenos Aires on July 4-5, 2019.⁴⁹ In the declaration adopted at the end of the meeting, states agreed to strengthen cooperation between transit and destination countries, combat transnational crime and adopt measures to facilitate migrants' and refugees' local integration, and once again urged the international community to allocate more funding to the implementation of the Quito Action Plan.⁵⁰

Closing borders

The Quito Process is highly political. Many of its adopted commitments to open borders and regional cooperation remain unimplemented, as some Latin American countries have unilaterally imposed obstacles to Venezuelan refugees and migrants entering their territory.

In August 2018 Peru began requiring Venezuelans to present a valid passport before entering its territory.⁵¹ Ecuador progressively announced a series of entry

hurdles between August 2018 and February 2019, from the presentation of a valid passport,⁵² to a, apostilled (certified) national identity document,⁵³ to certified criminal records, and a visa for Peru or Chile.⁵⁴ All such measures were blocked by the Ecuadorian Constitutional Court, which considered them unconstitutional and suspended their application.⁵⁵

In June 2019, Peru and Chile introduced new entry requirements for Venezuelans. On June 15, Peru insisted they obtain a humanitarian visa through one of its consulates.⁵⁶ On June 22, Santiago announced that Venezuelans lacking a "democratic responsibility visa" had to obtain a tourist visa before entering Chile.⁵⁷ Following the decisions of the two countries further south, Ecuador in turn required Venezuelans to obtain a visa to enter its territory.⁵⁸

The new stipulations make it almost impossible for most Venezuelan on the move to enter a country regularly; most of the documents now required for visas are extremely difficult to obtain. Since the Venezuelan government started creating obstacles for citizens wanting to leave the country, obtaining a passport can entail not only an extremely lengthy procedure, but also a high financial cost – from a few hundred to several thousand US dollars – in bribes to public officials.⁵⁹

This series of restrictions to the movement of Venezuelan refugees and migrants risks having one, or both, of the following consequences: an increase in irregular migration, if people on the move decide to head to these countries regardless of their entry requirements; and/or Colombia – which cannot effectively close its border with Venezuela – will continue to be left carrying the biggest burden of this migration crisis.

45 Ibid., commitment n. 1.1.1-b.

46 Ibid., commitment n. 2.2.1-a.

47 The eight countries were Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. See Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana del Gobierno de Ecuador (2018) [The II International Meeting of Quito concludes with the signing of the Action Plan on Human Mobility of Venezuelan citizens in the region](#).

48 [Declaración Conjunta de la III Reunión técnica internacional sobre movilidad humana de ciudadanos venezolanos en la región](#) (2019).

49 Representatives of Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Brasil, Costa Rica, República Dominicana, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Perú, Venezuela participated in this meeting.

50 UNHCR and IOM (2019) [Países latinoamericanos acuerdan hoja de ruta para la integración de venezolanos](#); ANSA Latina (2019) [Emigrantes, una hoja de ruta Latinoamericana](#).

51 See Fowks, J. (2018) [Los venezolanos solo podrán ingresar a Perú con pasaporte](#), El País.

52 Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana de la República del Ecuador (2018) [Acuerdo Ministerial No. 000242/18](#).

53 Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana de la República del Ecuador (2018) [Acuerdo Ministerial No. 000244/18](#). Apostille is a certification of authenticity for foreign documents. It authenticates the seals and signatures of officials on public documents such as birth certificates, criminal records or any other document issued by a public authority so that they can be recognized in foreign countries that are members of the 1961 Hague Convention Treaty.

54 República del Ecuador (2019) [Acuerdo Interministerial No. 000001/19](#) and [Acuerdo Interministerial No. 000002/19](#).

55 El Comercio (2019) [Corte Constitucional de Ecuador suspende restricciones migratorias a ciudadanos de Venezuela](#); Corte Constitucional del Ecuador, Sala de Admisión (2019) [Caso N. 004-19-IN](#).

56 Agencia EFE (2019) [Perú exigirá visado a los venezolanos a partir del 15 de junio](#).

57 Reuters (2019) [Chile exigirá visa de turistas a venezolanos, aumenta lugares para otorgar visa especial](#).

58 Aristia, S. (2019) [Ecuador aplicará sistema de visas para migrantes venezolanos](#) France 24.

59 See El Espectador (2018) [¿Por qué es tan difícil sacar el pasaporte en Venezuela?](#); Olmo, G. (2018) [Por qué es tan difícil conseguir un pasaporte para salir de Venezuela](#) BBC.

National response from states in the region

a. Colombia

Colombia has so far received the highest number of Venezuelan refugees and migrants. Several thousand Venezuelans enter Colombia every day, with around half staying there and the others travelling on to towards Ecuador, Peru and/or the Southern Cone (Chile, Argentina and Uruguay).⁶⁰

According to official figures, as of March 31, 2019 Colombia was hosting 1,298,300 refugees and migrants from Venezuela.⁶¹ But because many Venezuelans travel along *trochas* (informal trails that bypass regular border crossings) – especially following the closure of the border between Venezuelan and Colombia in February 2019⁶² – the actual number is likely to be much higher. Even using conservative government figures as a basis, the RRMRP foresees this number will reach 2.2 million by December 2019.⁶³

Colombia also has to respond to the needs of Venezuelan nationals who transit its territory in their journey south: according to the Colombian authorities, 511,001 Venezuelan refugees and migrants crossed the border between Colombia and Ecuador in 2018,⁶⁴ and their number had already reached 242,025 in the first three months of 2019.⁶⁵

An average of 30,000 people travel back and forth between Venezuela and Colombia every day.⁶⁶ In both Maicao and Cúcuta, key informants reported that significant numbers do so to buy products in Colombia and sell them in Venezuela, due to the scarcity of goods there. (This report will not cover such circular migration, but rather focus on those who leave Venezuela for longer periods.)

National immigration policies

Such flows of refugees and migrants into Colombia are unprecedented in their scale and the country was unprepared for the massive influx of Venezuelans it has witnessed over recent years. Still, it has taken several steps to respond to the situation.

In 2017, the government created a special residence permit, the **Permiso Especial de Permanencia** (PEP),⁶⁷ specifically aimed at providing Venezuelan refugees and migrants the chance to regularize their immigration status. The first rounds of applications for the PEP were only open to Venezuelan citizens who had entered Colombia with their passport through a regular border crossing. Following a registration effort known as **Registro Administrativo de Migrantes Venezolanos** (RAMV)⁶⁸ carried out from April to June 2018, the government then extended PEP eligibility Venezuelan refugees and migrants who had entered the country irregularly but had registered through RAMV.⁶⁹

The PEP allows Venezuelans to remain in Colombia for up to two years with access to basic rights, including employment, health, and education. Those who did not register through the RAMV or entered the country irregularly after the RAMV closed in June 2018 did not qualify for the PEP. According to the Colombian authorities, 535,650 Venezuelan refugees and migrants had obtained the PEP by the end of 2018 – roughly half of the Venezuelans nationals in the country.⁷⁰

Although Venezuelans have the right to seek asylum in Colombia, only a very small percentage applies: the Regional Inter-Agency Platform reports that, as of May 8, 2019, only 5,303 Venezuelans had done so in the country.⁷¹ One of the main reasons for the low number is that, until July 2019, asylum seekers did not have the right to work during their refugee determination process.⁷² On July 12, 2019, the Colombian government created a new type of permit, the **Permiso Especial Complementario de Permanencia** (PECP - Special Complementary Stay Permit), which will be issued to asylum seekers and give

60 Migración Colombia (2018) *Dinámica Migratoria Colombia – Venezuela – 1er Trimestre 2018*, p. 5.

61 GIFMM (2019) *Colombia - Situational Report May 2019* (hereinafter: GIFMM, SitRep May 2019), p. 1.

62 The border between Colombia and Venezuela was closed on 22 February 2019 due to political tensions between the two countries, as the Venezuelan opposition – headed by Juan Guaidó, President of the National Assembly – planned to forcefully bring humanitarian assistance into Venezuela the following day, despite the refusal of the Venezuelan government to let it through. The efforts of the Venezuelan opposition had the support of the governments of the US and Colombia, among others. The border was reopened on 7 June 2019. For more information, see El Heraldo (2019) *Maduro ordena la reapertura de pasos fronterizos con Colombia*; Proyecto Migración Venezuela (2019) *Nicolás Maduro ordena reabrir pasos fronterizos con Colombia* Revista Semana.

63 R4V, RRMRP, Op. Cit., p. 38.

64 Migración Colombia (2018) *Todo lo que quiere saber sobre la migración venezolana y no se lo han contado* (hereinafter: Migración Colombia, Todo lo que quiere saber), p. 20.

65 GIFMM, SitRep May 2019, Op. Cit., p. 1.

66 Migración Colombia, Todo lo que quiere saber, Op. Cit., p. 17.

67 Migración Colombia *Todo lo que quiere saber sobre el PEP (Permiso Especial de Permanencia)*.

68 Unidad Nacional para la Gestión del Riesgo de Desastres (2018) *Registro Administrativo de Migrantes Venezolanos – RAMV*.

69 Migración Colombia *Todo lo que quiere saber sobre el PEP-RAMV*.

70 Migración Colombia (2019) *Venezolanos en Colombia – Radiografía de venezolanos en Colombia al 31 de diciembre de 2018* (henceforth: Migración Colombia, Radiografía de venezolanos).

71 See <https://r4v.info/en/situations/platform>.

72 Henao Cardozo, D. (2019) *Prohibición de trabajar se eliminará de salvoconductos que solicitan migrantes*, RCN Radio. More detail on this issue will be provided in the section including the primary data collected during field work in Colombia, below.

them the right to work while they wait for a decision on their application.⁷³ As the new measure had just been adopted, it has not been possible to evaluate its impact in this assessment.

In November 2018, the government of Colombia adopted a **Strategy for the Response to Migration from Venezuela**.⁷⁴ The document, however, focuses much more on the current shortcomings in the management of the mixed migration flow out of Venezuela than it does on concrete actions to overcome such shortcomings. The Strategy seems to have had very little impact in the first half of 2019. One relevant step taken by the Colombian Government for the protection of migrant children has been the decision taken in August 2019 to recognize the Colombian nationality to children born in the country from Venezuelan parents from August 2015 onwards. The policy protects migrant children from statelessness and grants them access to rights and services in Colombia.⁷⁵

b. Ecuador

Ecuador has been mostly a transit country for people moving south, towards Peru and Chile, rather than a final destination. The RRM RP reported that, “[a]mong those who entered the country regularly in 2018, an estimated 83 per cent (671,000) were in transit to Peru and other destinations, while 17 per cent (135,000) remained in Ecuador”.⁷⁶ According to more recent government figures reported in the press, at the beginning of May 2019, the number of Venezuelan refugees and migrants who had entered Ecuador had reached 1.3 million, of whom only 250,000 remained in the country.⁷⁷

At its peak, Ecuador has witnessed several thousand Venezuelans entering its territory every day, mainly through the Rumichaca bridge, at the border with the Colombian department of Nariño. This led Ecuador to declare a state of emergency in August 2018 and then repeatedly extend it in order to better respond to the needs of such a big number of new arrivals.⁷⁸

Venezuelan refugees and migrants who transit through Ecuador commonly leave the country through its southern border crossing into Peru, in the Huaquillas-Tumbes area.

National immigration policies

Ecuador's **Comprehensive Law on Human Mobility** establishes that citizens of other South American countries can enter its territory with just a national ID document.⁷⁹ Under the same law, citizens of Union of South American Nations (UNASUR)⁸⁰ countries – which include Venezuela – can stay in the Ecuador as tourists for up to 180 days.⁸¹ These two provisions are part of the legal basis for the Constitutional Court's above-mentioned decision to suspend the application of additional entry requirements to Venezuelan citizens, as it would be discriminatory in comparison with the treatment of other Latin American citizens.⁸²

Being primarily a transit country and with the aim of facilitating Venezuelan migrants' and refugees' passage through its territory towards Peru, as of August 2018 the government of Ecuador started issuing the **Tarjeta de Migración Andina** (Andean Migration Card) to Venezuelans, aiming at “facilitating the arrivals of Venezuelans to other countries”.⁸³ The document is essentially a tourist visa valid for 90 days, renewable for a further 90 days. Ecuador also created a humanitarian corridor providing transportation to Venezuelan citizens in transit towards Peru.⁸⁴

As Chile and Peru started imposing additional entry requirements for Venezuelan refugees and migrants in June 2019, the Ecuadoran government began worrying that people on the move would get stuck in its territory and that it would soon become a destination rather than a transit country. This has led the government to announce, in parallel with the regularization of those Venezuelans who are already irregularly residing in the country and have not committed crimes, the introduction of a visa requirement for Venezuelan citizens in order to be allowed entry into Ecuadorian territory.⁸⁵

73 Morales C. (2019) [Así funciona el nuevo permiso para solicitantes de refugio venezolanos](#), El Tiempo.

74 Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social (CONPES), República de Colombia, Departamento Nacional de Planeación (2018) [Documento CONPES 3950 – Estrategia para la atención de la migración desde Venezuela](#).

75 Presidencia de la República de Colombia (2019) [Estado colombiano concede la nacionalidad a niños nacidos en Colombia, hijos de migrantes venezolanos, para proteger sus derechos](#); Naciones Unidas Colombia (2019) [Colombia ha tomado una decisión fundamental para prevenir el riesgo de apatridia de miles de niñas y niños nacidos en Colombia hijos de padres venezolanos](#).

76 R4V, RRM RP, Op. Cit., p. 53.

77 El Comercio (2019) [Ecuador extiende al 31 de mayo de 2019 emergencia por flujo migratorio de venezolanos](#).

78 España, S. (2018) [Ecuador declara la emergencia migratoria por la llegada de 4.200 venezolanos al día](#), El País; Benalcázar, W. (2018) [La emergencia migratoria en Ecuador se extiende hasta el 31 de diciembre del 2018](#) El Comercio; Velez, R. (2019) [Ecuador amplía a marzo la emergencia migratoria en tres provincias](#) El Comercio; Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana (2019) [Ecuador extiende declaratoria de emergencia en movilidad humana hasta el 31 de julio](#).

79 República del Ecuador (2017) [Ley Orgánica de Movilidad Humana](#) Art. 84.

80 See UNASUR, [Who are we?](#)

81 República del Ecuador, Ley Orgánica de Movilidad Humana, supra note 74, Art. 56.

82 Corte Constitucional del Ecuador, Sala de Admisión (2019) [Caso N. 004-19-IN](#).

83 See El Nacional (2018) [Ecuador emitió Tarjeta de Migración Andina a venezolanos con destino a Perú](#).

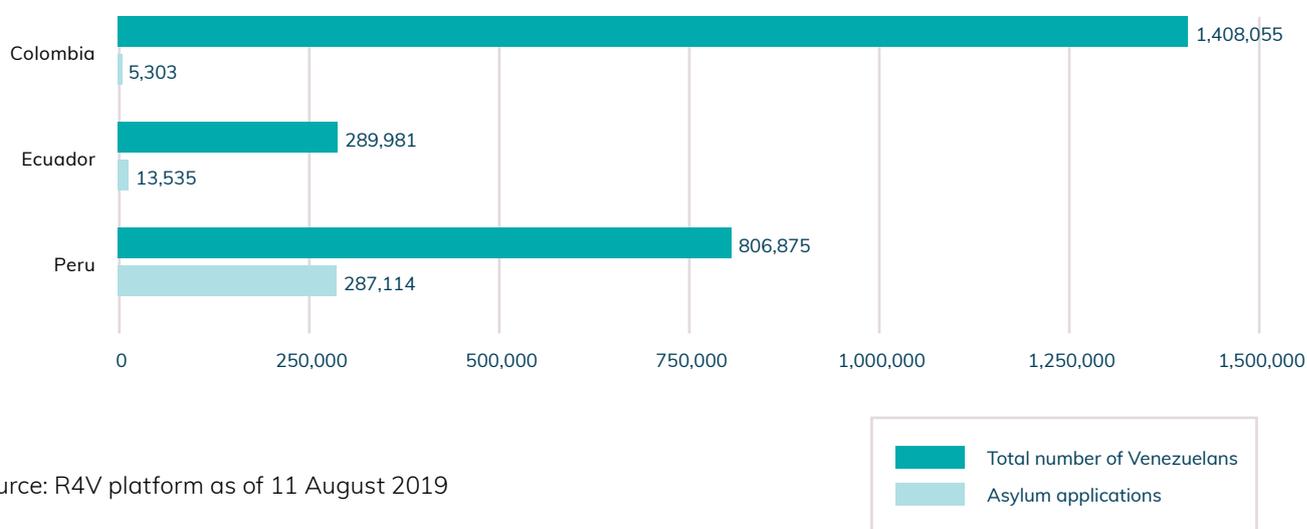
84 See El Comercio (2018) [Ecuador crea un corredor humanitario para paso de ciudadanos venezolanos](#).

85 El Comercio (2019) [Decreto 826 fija visa para ciudadanos de Venezuela y amnistía para inmigrantes que no han violado la ley en Ecuador](#); El Universo (2019) [Lenín Moreno anuncia dos tipos de visa para los venezolanos, en sesión solemne por Guayaquil](#).

Venezuelan citizens who choose Ecuador as a destination do not have many regularization options in the country.⁸⁶ According to UNHCR data from May 2019, 40% of 4,586 Venezuelans interviewed in a protection monitoring survey had an irregular immigration status, while 38% had a tourist visa or an Andean Migration Card, two documents that only allow for temporary stay in the country.⁸⁷ As of August 2019, the great majority of temporary residency permits granted to Venezuelans were UNASUR visas but, with Ecuador's imminent departure from the regional organization, this will no longer be an option.⁸⁸

As for the possibility of applying for international protection, the Ecuadorian asylum system is much more developed than Colombia's due to its history of receiving Colombian refugees fleeing armed conflict. The number of Venezuelans applying for asylum are however very low, in comparison with the number in the country: 13,535 as of 31 December 2018.⁸⁹

Total number of Venezuelans in selected hosting countries compared to the number of asylum applications



c. Peru

As of mid-August 2019, Peru is the country with the second highest number of Venezuelan migrants and refugees who decided to settle in its territory. The RRMRP was already indicating Peru as the second main destination country for mixed migration movement out of Venezuela in December 2018, with 600,000 people.⁹⁰ According to the RRMRP, "[t]hroughout 2018, a monthly average of 60,000 refugees and migrants from Venezuela entered Peru through official entry points. Almost 90 per cent arrived through the northern border entry point of Tumbes".⁹¹ A minority of the Venezuelans who entered Peru then continued their journey south and crossed into Chile – around 151,000 over the course of 2018.⁹²

As of August 2019, UN data reported that the number of Venezuelan refugees and migrants who settled in Peru had risen to more than 800,000 and this is expected to exceed one million by the end of 2019.⁹³

National immigration policies

Before the beginning of the Venezuelan crisis, Peru did not have a tradition of receiving large numbers of refugees and migrants.

At the onset of the crisis, the country adopted a very open stance to the arrival of Venezuelan refugees and migrants and their local integration. Just as Colombia

86 R4V, RRMRP, Op. Cit., p. 53.

87 UNHCR (2019) [Protection Monitoring UNHCR - MIES \(May 2019\) - Ecuador Overview](#).

88 Velez, R. and Romero, D. (2019) [200 000 migrantes de Venezuela, sin visa para estadía en el Ecuador](#) El Comercio.

89 R4V Platform, [Total asylum claims per country](#).

90 R4V, RRMRP, Op. Cit., p. 67.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid., p. 68.

93 R4V (2019) [R4V América Latina y el Caribe, refugiados y migrantes venezolanos en la región - Agosto 2019](#); R4V, RRMRP, Op. Cit., p. 66.

did, in January 2017 the Peruvian government created the **Permiso Temporal de Permanencia** (Temporary Permanence Permit, PTP) specifically aimed at providing Venezuelan citizens with a way to regularize their immigration status.⁹⁴ The PTP was valid for one year and was theoretically renewable until the adoption of a new immigration law.⁹⁵ In August 2018, however, due to the sharp increase in the number of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the country, the government changed its position and decided to stop issuing the PTP after December 31, 2018, establishing that only Venezuelan people who had entered Peru by October 31 could apply.⁹⁶

This left Venezuelan refugees and migrants with few options to access regular immigration status. In August 2018, Peru also started requiring Venezuelan citizens to present a valid passport to be allowed into the country with the exception of certain vulnerable categories.⁹⁷ As a consequence of these two decisions, an increasing number of Venezuelans started applying for asylum, to enter the country, and to regularize their status.⁹⁸ According to UN figures, 287,114 Venezuelan citizens had applied for asylum in Peru as of March 31, 2019, the highest number of asylum applications submitted by Venezuelans in any Latin American country.⁹⁹

Only a very small proportion of asylum applicants end up being recognized as refugees. According to UN figures, as of April 2019, only 1,000 Venezuelans had been recognized as refugees in Peru, while more than 230,000 were waiting for a decision on their application.¹⁰⁰ Of these, 227,325 were already pending at the end of 2018.¹⁰¹ As Peru does not apply the broader definition of a refugee included in the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees,¹⁰² the vast majority of asylum seekers would be rejected because they do not meet the requirements of the 1951 Refugee Convention.¹⁰³ However, according to several key informants these people will most likely not receive a decision on their application any time soon, maintaining the status of asylum seekers for years.

Citing security concerns, in June 2019 the government of Peru announced that, starting on June 15, Venezuelan citizens would have to obtain a humanitarian visa before being allowed into Peru.¹⁰⁴ This caused a sudden, sharp increase in the number of entries, as people on the move rushed to enter the country before the requirement entered into force.¹⁰⁵

Following the introduction of the humanitarian visa requirement, Venezuelans once again increasingly turned to applying for asylum as a last resort to enter Peru. This led the Peruvian government to implement a “pre-eligibility” screening – in practice a preliminary refugee status determination assessment – at the border, purportedly with the aim of preventing people presenting ill-founded applications from entering the country.

As a consequence of the adoption of these measures, as of June 2019, there has been a major drop in the number of Venezuelan refugees and migrants being able to enter Peruvian territory – at least regularly.¹⁰⁶ One month after the introduction of these changes, key informants in Tumbes reported both a sharp decrease in asylum applications and, in parallel, an increase in people entering the country irregularly.

94 Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (2017) [CIDH saluda medidas para brindar protección a personas migrantes venezolanas en Perú y llama a Estados de la región a implementar medidas para su protección](#).

95 República del Perú (2017) [Decreto Supremo N° 002-2017-IN](#) Art. 11.

96 Morales Tovar, M. (2018) [PTP entra en cuenta regresiva para venezolanos en Perú](#) El Comercio; República del Perú (2018) [Decreto Supremo N° 007-2018-IN](#).

97 El Tiempo (2018) [Venezolanos deberán presentar pasaporte para ingresar a Perú](#).

98 See R4V, RRRMP, Op. Cit., p. 68.

99 R4V Platform, [Total asylum claims per country](#).

100 UNHCR and IOM (2019) [Refugiados y migrantes venezolanos en el Perú](#), not available online.

101 UNHCR [Population Statistics](#).

102 The Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, a regional non-binding document including commitments for the protection of refugees in Latin America adopted in 1984, recognizes as refugees “people who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order”. The text of the declaration is available [here](#).

103 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951, available [here](#), Art. 1A(2).

104 See El Espectador (2019) [¿Por qué Perú les va a pedir visa humanitaria a los venezolanos a partir del 15 de junio?](#); France 24 (2019) [Perú solicitará pasaporte y visa humanitaria a venezolanos](#).

105 See R4V (2019) [Flash Update 18 June 2019 – Population Movements in the Andean Region](#); El Universo (2019) [Más de 4.000 venezolanos copan control en frontera norte de Ecuador](#).

106 See El Comercio (2019) [El flujo de venezolanos por la frontera norte tuvo una pausa](#).

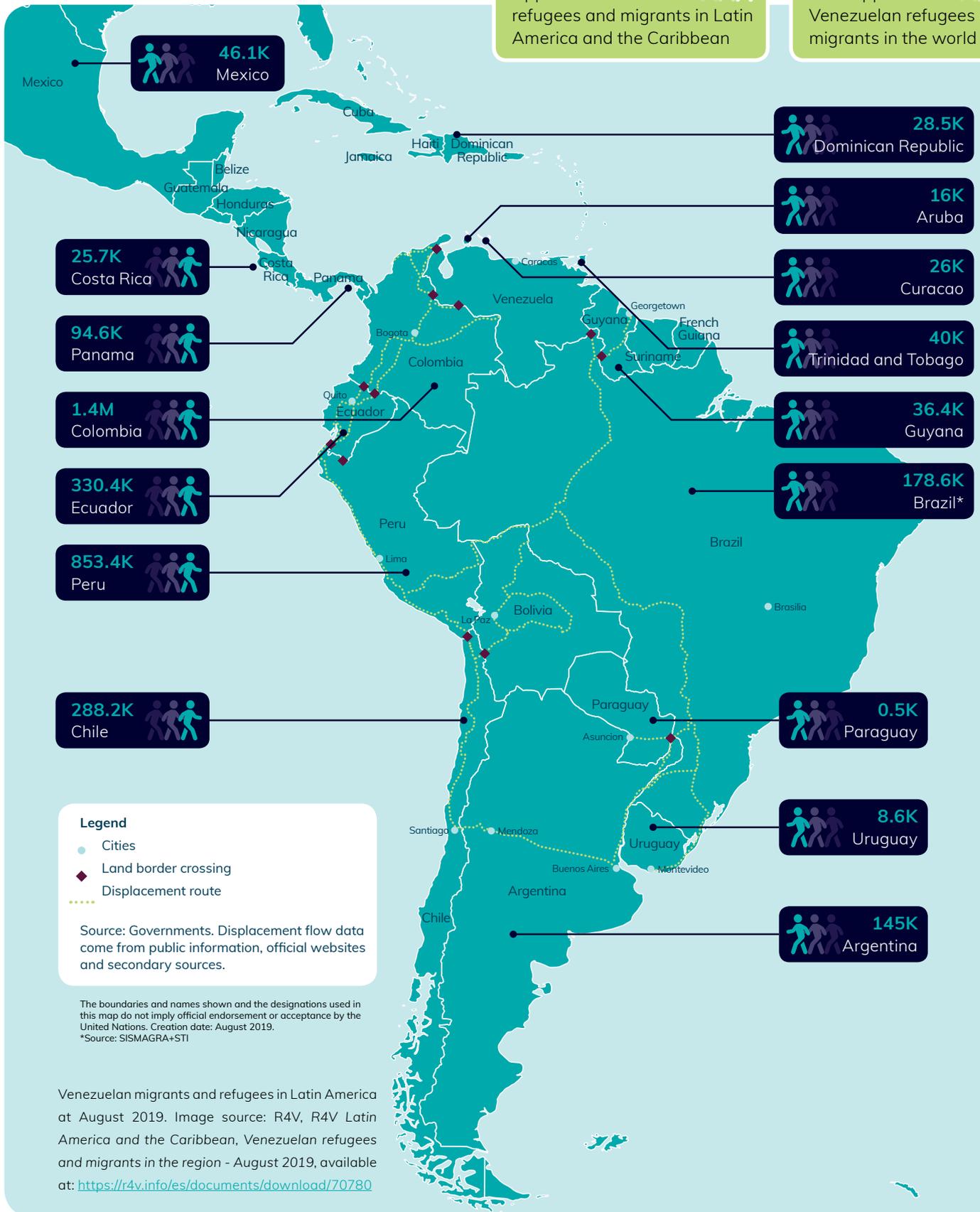
4. Mixed migration flows out of Venezuela

Latin America and the Caribbean

Venezuelan refugees & migrants in the region

3.5M
Approx. Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean

4.3M
Total approx. Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the world



Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Latin America at August 2019. Image source: R4V, R4V Latin America and the Caribbean, Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the region - August 2019, available at: <https://r4v.info/es/documents/download/70780>

4.1 Profiles

Socio-economic profiles: three migration phases

Key informants interviewed for this assessment, both in Colombia and Peru, were unanimous in identifying three phases in movements out of Venezuela:

- 1. First phase.** The first to start leaving Venezuela, already as of 2005-2006 were business-people and professionals – people with a high education level, strong professional qualifications and ample financial resources. They started worrying about the looming political and economic situation in the country, the potential negative impact on their businesses and careers, and decided to leave the country before things worsened. Some had already secured a job in the country of destination before their arrival. Those who had not, generally managed to find a good job in their professional area shortly after their arrival in the host country.
- 2. Second phase.** Starting around 2016/2017, the middle class started leaving Venezuela. Mostly people with technical degrees and young people with a university education but no professional experience, they left the country once the economic crisis started affecting them, in order to look for better employment opportunities abroad. Most of them still managed to migrate regularly, but obtaining a job in their professional field started to become more and more difficult. Many ended up accepting formal but unskilled jobs, for instance as waiters and waitresses in restaurants and bars. This phase also included several political opponents and human rights activists who, persecuted by the Venezuelan government, fled the country and applied for asylum elsewhere.
- 3. Third phase.** Since the Venezuelan economy completely collapsed between 2017 and 2018, most people leaving Venezuela belong to the lower economic classes. Most have achieved a low level of education, have few professional skills and no financial resources. The numbers leaving the country have increased exponentially in this phase.

The differences between the socio-economic profiles of refugees and migrants in the three migration phases has had a considerable impact on the way they organized their movement and on their perspectives for local integration. Those who left Venezuela during the first two phases had the logistical and financial means to migrate regularly, either by plane or by direct bus. Venezuelans who left the country over the last year and a half have had to face more challenge. Many of them never had a passport as they had never left Venezuela before, and lack the financial resources to obtain one now.¹⁰⁷ Border closures and additional requirements have also limited their capacity to migrate regularly.

At the same time, lack of resources has obliged Venezuelan refugees and migrants leaving the country during the third phase to travel in more precarious and more dangerous ways, having to split their journeys into several legs, in many cases covering at least part of it on foot. The conditions in which people move obviously influence their exposure to protection risks en route. Their lower education and professional skills levels – together with an irregular status – also limits their ability to adequately integrate in their destination country.

Individuals vs families

According to the key informants interviewed for this study, another important change that has occurred since the second half of 2018 is the increased prevalence of families (often single-headed households, consisting of a mother and several young children) leaving Venezuela, compared to before when flows consisted primarily of adult men travelling alone or of adult couples.

One of the reasons behind this change is that many of those who are leaving Venezuela now are travelling to reunite with a relative who had already migrated over previous years: many women are on the move with their children to join their partner, the children's father. In other cases, grandparents and uncles/aunts are traveling with their nieces and nephews to join the children's parents. The choice to leave children behind in Venezuela is usually based on one or both of the following reasons:

- the intention to settle at destination first, and bring the children once the conditions of the parent(s) are more favourable;
- the fact that the parents prefer not to have their children interrupt the school year or cycle to migrate.

¹⁰⁷ Both refugees and migrants and key informants confirmed that, as mentioned above, due to the widespread corruption and the scarcity of goods in Venezuela, Venezuelans have to pay large sums – ranging from a few hundred to thousands of dollars – in order to obtain a passport, allegedly to pay for passport paper and other material. Those who do not pay never receive the document and the same happened to some who did pay but were cheated by government officials.

Specific needs and vulnerabilities

Key informants reported another difference in the profiles of refugees and migrants they assist: a much greater number of people with both acute and chronic illnesses, pregnant women and, to a lesser extent, elderly people. One humanitarian worker in Riohacha described such people as “those people who did not plan or did not want to leave the country, but in the end saw no other option”.

More specifically people living with HIV, cancer and other chronic illnesses are leaving the country due to the lack of access to treatment in Venezuela; in a country with hyperinflation and where patients themselves have to provide all medicines and medical supplies, chemotherapy and HIV treatment are unaffordable. As for pregnant women, all interviewees referred to very limited access to or availability of prenatal care, health checks, and food supplements in Venezuela. In addition, due to the precarious situation of the healthcare system in general, many women fear giving birth in unsanitary conditions and in facilities where childbirth complications may prove fatal.

These profiles clearly present specific needs – especially with regard to healthcare – and, during the journey, a higher exposure to increased health risks.

Areas of origin

According to the primary data collected during this assessment, refugees and migrants have been leaving from all over Venezuela, although those who head towards Colombia, Ecuador and Peru mostly seem to come from the central-western part of the country, which is also the most densely populated.

People from the north-western Zulia State, in general, decide to remain in the neighbouring Colombian departments of La Guajira and Atlántico. In the rest of Colombia and in Peru, there is a wider variety of areas of origin including the Caracas Capital District, Aragua, Carabobo, Lara, Táchira, Trujillo, Mérida, etc.¹⁰⁸

There seems to be very limited information available concerning Venezuelan refugees and migrants originating from rural areas.

4.2 Migration drivers

Lack of access to economic and social rights

When asked why they left their country, most Venezuelans interviewed for this study referred to “the situation” or “the crisis” at home. If asked to explain further, they mostly focussed on the lack of access to essential goods and services. They mentioned a grave lack of purchasing power, stating that their salaries were insufficient to make ends meet. Most of them affirmed having had to choose between buying food or medicines, or between food and clothes.

Many refugees and migrants interviewed for this assessment consistently described how food was either unavailable or unaffordable in their country of origin. One indigenous woman coming from a rural area interviewed in Barranquilla, for instance, explained that she had decided to leave Venezuela with her children after several people in her village died as a consequence of severe malnutrition. According to the woman, even farmers struggle to get adequate access to food in Venezuela because other people, out of hunger, steal their crops before they are ripe.

Refugees and migrants interviewed for this assessment who used to receive CLAP boxes affirmed that they were not distributed regularly and that their content – which has become more and more limited over time – was not sufficient to guarantee a healthy and balanced diet. They said the boxes would generally contain rice, pasta, flour, oil and nothing more. One woman interviewed in Tumbes stated that “now people in Venezuela only eat rice and Chinese beans”.

Several respondents also referred to the lack of access to healthcare as a reason for leaving Venezuela. Sometimes migration was linked to existing health concerns they or their family members had, while in other occasions it was seen as a preventative measure to avoid future risks. In particular, respondents cited the precarious hygiene and infrastructure conditions in hospitals, and described how the obligation to purchase medical equipment and medicines for surgery and treatment becomes impossible in a country where hyperinflation is making even the most basic things unaffordable. Refugees and migrants described how nothing is available inside hospitals but, just outside the healthcare facilities, one finds plenty of people offering to sell medicines and medical equipment (gloves, syringes, etc.) at inflated prices.

108 IOM (2019) [Monitoreo de Flujo de Población Venezolana en el Perú - DTM Ronda 5](#) (hereinafter: IOM, DTM 5), p. 15.

Persecution based on political opinion

Reliable statistics are difficult to obtain, but according to OHCHR “persecution on political grounds is also forcing many Venezuelans to seek asylum”.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, according to the key informants interviewed for this study, a minority of those who are leaving Venezuela do so due to either past persecution based on their political opinion, or to fear of future reprisals due to the fact that they do not support the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). According to key informants, people fearing political persecution mainly belong to one of the following profiles:

- Human rights and opposition activists who participated in protests against the government and/or publicly denounced corruption and human rights violations.
- Public sector workers who expressed disagreement with government policies or refused to attend PSUV political rallies or demonstrations in support of the government.
- Former military officers who deserted as they do not support the current government.

Three of the Venezuelan respondents interviewed for this assessment fit these profiles.

The first was a human rights activist who had to leave Venezuela after reportedly having been variously: shot in the stomach during a protest; beaten up by the police; undergone prolonged harassment, including constant surveillance by state vehicles; received death threats; and targeted in a kidnapping attempt.

The second was a former military officer who left Venezuela following the failure of the civil and military uprising called for by National Assembly President Juan Guaidó. Following his flight, he says all his assets were frozen and possessions seized by the government and the Bolivarian National Guard has been harassing his parents to obtain information about his whereabouts.

The third was another human rights activist who decided to leave Venezuela fearing that something bad could happen to him, following a series of extrajudicial executions by the police in his area, as the NGO he was working with was receiving threats.

Other factors

As explained above, many of those leaving Venezuela over the course of late 2018 and in 2019 do so to reunite with relatives who had already left the country. In many of these cases, family reunification combines with socio-economic factors as migration drivers: people leave Venezuela because they want to stay with their relatives, but also because the situation in their country of origin had become unbearable, and remittances were not enough to improve their daily life.

Some of the respondents also cited general insecurity as one of the reasons that led them to leave their country. A woman interviewed in Riohacha, for instance, recounted: “The security situation was terrible, people would steal to then sell the stolen goods and buy food. They would do it out of necessity. Crime was out of control, people were desperate. You would walk on the street and people would even try to steal your shoes.”

Key informants also reported that the progressively restrictive immigration policies adopted in the region had lately led more people to leave Venezuela preemptively, as witnessed in the days before to the introduction of the humanitarian visa in Peru. Some Venezuelan citizens, doubting that the situation in their country will improve anytime soon, and fearing that destination countries will seal their borders completely, preventing them from being able to migrate in the future, have an attitude of “let’s leave now, while we still can” – a dynamic sociologist Hein de Haas terms “now or never” migration.¹¹⁰

109 OHCHR (2019), Op Cit., para 70.

110 De Haas, H. (2011) [The determinants of international migration - Conceptualising policy, origin and destination effects](#) International Migration Institute, University of Oxford, p. 27.

5. Mixed migration flows to Colombia

5.1 Main entry points, routes and destination cities

Routes



Entry points

Most Venezuelan refugees and migrants enter Colombian territory through one of two locations: the area near the town of Maicao, in the La Guajira department, or the city of Cúcuta, in the Santander North department.

A third border crossing area is the Arauca department. According to the key informants interviewed, this region is used much less frequently than La Guajira or Santander North. With fewer people transiting through Arauca, the area receives less attention than the other two entry regions and has a more limited presence of humanitarian actors.

Destinations

According to interviews with key informants and people on the move, the two main factors behind choice of destination are a) family reunification or the existence of a support network (friends) and b) the perception of the economic opportunities and living conditions they would find on arrival.

Bogotá has traditionally been the main destination of Venezuelan refugees and migrants heading for Colombia: according to government data, at the end of 2018 the city was hosting 31.9% of Venezuelans in the country.¹¹¹ Based on the interviews with both key informants and people on the move, the main reasons behind migrants' and refugees' of Bogotá include the existence of economic opportunities and the fact that the capital has a broader availability of public services than other areas.

Key informants however highlighted how, with the passing of time, Venezuelans have increasingly started travelling to other destinations for several reasons: Bogotá is an expensive place to live, and as the number of refugees and migrants in the city increased exponentially, it became harder and harder for Venezuelans to find livelihood opportunities there. More and more Venezuelans therefore started to move towards other major cities, such as Medellín, Cali and Barranquilla.

As of the end of June 2019, Barranquilla was the city with the country's third highest population of Venezuelan refugees and migrants.¹¹² Several factors that explain this. First, it is the largest city close to the border crossings in La Guajira and it is relatively easy and cheap to reach from the border. Second, as Colombia's main port on the Atlantic coast, Barranquilla's economy is thriving and provides more opportunities than other cities. Third, people coming from Zulia State in Venezuela find a close cultural and climatic affinity to their place of origin. Fourth, Barranquilla is the place of origin of many Colombians who migrated to Venezuela decades ago,

mostly looking for better economic opportunities. Many of these Colombian citizens – who in many cases married in Venezuela and have binational families – have returned to Colombia as a consequence of the Venezuelan crisis and are now receiving members of their extended Venezuelan family. Almost all 18 participants in a focus group discussion held in Barranquilla, for instance, stated having headed towards this city as they had relatives or contacts living there.

From transit to destination

Some cities that used to be transit points are increasingly becoming final destinations for people in Venezuelan mixed migration flows, in particular the border cities of Maicao, Riohacha and Cúcuta. Due to the limited economic opportunities they offer, these cities were not popular destination choices before. This change is linked to the lower socio-economic profile of those who left Venezuela during the third and current migration phase mentioned above, as well as to the increasing insecurity in border crossings between Venezuela and Colombia: according to several key informants, due to both their lack of resources and the robberies that they fall victim to, many on the move simply lack the money they would need to travel further. (This is explored in more detail below in the discussion of protection concerns).

Another reason frequently cited by refugees and migrants for choosing to settle in Maicao, Riohacha and Cúcuta is their closeness to the border, which means that it would be easier for them to go back and visit their families, either during the holidays or in case of necessity. In addition to this, the fact that people on the move tend to build a basic support network upon their arrival in these cities, and the availability of humanitarian assistance at the border, also seem to have contributed to this trend.

5.2 The journey

Venezuelan refugees and migrants usually travel by bus or by shared private transport from their place of origin to the Colombian border.

They enter Colombian territory through both regular crossings and trochas. Modes of travel vary by region: those who enter Colombia through Maicao cross the border either by car or truck, as La Guajira is a desert region; those who enter through Cúcuta mostly walk, either regularly across the Simón Bolívar International Bridge or irregularly along trochas; lastly, most of those who enter the country through Arauca cross the border by boat, over the Arauca river.

Once in Colombia, Venezuelan refugees and migrants

111 Migración Colombia, Radiografía de venezolanos, Op. Cit.

112 Migración Colombia (2019) [Venezolanos en Colombia – Corte a 30 de Junio de 2019](#).

choose one of two means of transportation, mainly depending on their financial resources: those who can afford it, travel by bus; while those with no financial resources continue their journey on foot (the so-called *caminantes*, or walkers) or hitchhike. *Caminantes* are mostly found on the road heading south from Cúcuta, while one barely sees any in La Guajira, not least because there are several cheap transportation options leaving from Maicao and Riohacha, especially heading to Barranquilla.

The issue of access to territory does not seem to be a significant one in Colombia, possibly due to its very long (2,219 km) and porous border with Venezuela. There have been some cases of expulsions reported by the media, usually linked to crimes committed in Colombia. There have also been some press reports of deportations.¹¹³

5.3 Protection concerns

Bribes, extortion and physical abuses at the border

People on the move face several protection risks when crossing the border between Venezuela and Colombia.

Those interviewed for this assessment consistently reported having had to stop at checkpoints manned by the Bolivarian National Guard along the route from their place of origin to the Venezuelan side of the border, and having been either extorted or robbed by Guard officers as a condition of passage.

Border areas between Venezuela and Colombia have historically been unsafe due to the presence of a range of armed actors, such as criminal groups involved in smuggling. In both La Guajira and the Cúcuta area – although to different extents – the smuggling of goods such as gasoline has long constituted an important part of the local economy, which is largely informal.¹¹⁴ In areas near Cúcuta and Arauca, moreover, there is still a considerable presence of armed groups involved in the internal armed conflict in Colombia, such as Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army, ELN) and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces, FARC) dissidents.¹¹⁵

Some Venezuelans in mixed migration flows were already entering Colombia through *trochas* before the closure of the official border crossings in February 2019, as they did not have the documents needed to migrate

regularly. Following the border closure, however, the use of irregular border crossings by Venezuelan refugees and migrants increased exponentially and became a source of revenue for criminal and armed groups.

In La Guajira, refugees and migrants have to pay transportation fees to the owner of the car or truck they use to cross the border through the *trocha*, vehicles that are usually overcrowded and carry smuggled gasoline and other goods. Respondents who entered Colombia through La Guajira also reported having had to pay small amounts of money at several irregular checkpoints manned by indigenous Wayuu people along the trail. People on the move were not able to clearly identify the type of any connection between the drivers of the vehicles they used and the people operating the checkpoints. Key informants working in the area, however, agreed that there must be, at the very least, some sort of agreement between the two actors, as nobody crosses Wayuu territory without their authorization.

The refugees and migrants interviewed for this assessment stated not having personally faced specific risks along the *trocha* in La Guajira – reckless driving aside. Several clarified that the risks are limited as long as one is able to pay the extortion fees at the checkpoints. Most had however heard stories of fellow Venezuelans who were robbed, threatened, beaten and – in the case of women and girls – subject to sexual harassment and abuse if unable to pay.

A young woman interviewed in Riohacha, for instance, described how another woman who was traveling in the same truck as her had no money to pay at a checkpoint, so the people operating it took away her four-year-old daughter and refused to let the child return to her mother unless she paid the fee. According to the interviewee, other passengers eventually took pity on the mother and daughter and offered enough money to cover their checkpoint fees.

In the Cúcuta area, interviews with refugees and migrants indicated that extortion at the border has been somehow normalized. When describing border crossings, respondents referred to “normal fees” – for bribes of 5,000 Colombian pesos per person (about \$1.5) – and “excessive fees” for those who were requested to pay more.

Venezuelan refugees and migrants cross the border on the same trails used criminal groups and armed actors involved in the Colombian armed conflict for other purposes, including the smuggling of goods, which can create additional risks. Several respondents described

113 See LatinAmerican Post (2018) [Thousands of Venezuelans are deported from these Latin American countries](#)

114 See El País (2015) [Contrabando en la frontera con Venezuela, el otro dolor de cabeza de la crisis](#); Revista Semana (2015) [La turbia ruta del contrabando en La Guajira](#); InSight Crime (2014) [Cúcuta: La ciudad del contrabando de Colombia](#).

115 Following the 2016 peace agreement, FARC no longer exists as an armed group. However, groups of former FARC members who refuse to demobilize still exist and are commonly referred to in Colombia as “FARC dissidents”. On the situation in Arauca, see for instance Verdad Abierta (2018) [Arauca, asediado por la inseguridad y la disidencia de las Farc](#)

how their “guide” on the trail told them to keep their eyes down as they walked, not to listen to what was going on and not to say anything, if they did not want to get in trouble.

Key informants in Cúcuta explained that the different armed actors present in the border area are now fighting for territorial control – which would allow them to profit from irregular migration. On several occasions over the first six months of 2019 violent confrontations between these groups have occurred, including several shootings and the launch of a hand grenade on May 30 which left several Venezuelans wounded.¹¹⁶

Migration and armed conflict

The presence of armed groups and its impact on Venezuelan mixed migration flows is not limited to crossing the border in the Cúcuta area. Venezuelan refugees and migrants transiting Colombian territory to reach either another destination in Colombia or its southern border with Ecuador, often traveling on foot, have to pass through areas with a presence of armed actors involved in the Colombian conflict, which increases the protection risks they face.

Most border departments have historically been of interest to the armed groups involved in the Colombian armed conflict. Also due to the absence of the state in these areas, many of these departments became coca harvesting havens which makes them important corridors for drug trafficking. A 2018 report published by the local NGO Fundación Ideas para la Paz whose title translates as Insecurity, Violence and Illegal Economies at the Borders – The Challenges for the New Government goes into great detail in describing the presence and activities of armed groups in each border department, and touches upon the risks that these represent for refugees and migrants from Venezuela.¹¹⁷

Several key informants mentioned the case of Catatumbo region in Santander Norte department, an area rich in natural resources and coca plantations. It is the starting point of one of the main drug trafficking routes towards Venezuela and has historically faced a strong presence of armed groups, some of which – mainly the ELN and EPL

– are violently fighting for control over the territory.¹¹⁸ According to humanitarian workers interviewed in Cúcuta and Bogotá, refugees and migrants crossing the area – especially children and adolescents – are exposed to a number of protection risks, including enforced disappearances, sexual exploitation and sexual violence against women and girls, and recruitment for illegal activities related to coca harvesting, which provide a relatively high income and allows them to send money back home.¹¹⁹

Another area with an enduring presence of armed groups is, as previously mentioned, the border department of Arauca.¹²⁰ There is limited data on the impact of the conflict on Venezuelan mixed migration flows in this department and this assessment did not include a field visit to the area, but one of the two Venezuelans interviewed who entered Colombia through the Arauca department – a former military officer who had deserted – stated having had to flee the area and move to Cúcuta together with several fellow officers due to the fact that, in Arauca, the ELN had managed to identify them as former military officers and was calling for their assassination.

Finally, the departments of Nariño and Putumayo – where the two main crossing points from Colombia to Ecuador are located – have a strong presence of several armed groups.¹²¹ They constitute strategic areas for drug trafficking: Nariño, for instance, was identified as the department with the highest amount of coca crops in the country in 2017.¹²² Reported protection risks for the local population in the two departments include extortion, forced recruitment, targeted killings, sexual violence, trafficking and sexual exploitation.¹²³ Little information is available on how this situation impacts on refugees and migrants transiting through these departments with the aim of crossing into Ecuador through Ipiales or San Miguel.

Robberies

Robberies against people on the move are extremely common in certain areas. In Maicao and Riohacha, for instance, refugees and migrants are often robbed, either while crossing the border or shortly after entering Colombia as they walk to the city or sleep on its streets. Two young brothers traveling together described how,

116 For reports of shootings, see: See El Nacional (2019) [Un muerto en tiroteo en una trocha cerca del puente Simón Bolívar](#); El Espectador (2019) [Mujer resultó herida tras tiroteo en el Puente Simón Bolívar](#); Portafolio (2019) [Así se vivió balacera en el Puente Internacional Simón Bolívar](#). On the grenade, see El Nacional, [Ocho venezolanos heridos al estallar una granada en Cúcuta](#)

117 Fundación Ideas para la Paz (2018) [Inseguridad, violencia y economías ilegales en las fronteras - Los desafíos del nuevo Gobierno](#) (hereinafter: FIP, Fronteras).

118 Fundación Ideas para la Paz (2013) [Dinámicas del conflicto armado en el Catatumbo y su impacto humanitario](#); El Tiempo (2018) [¿Por qué la región del Catatumbo es tan susceptible a la violencia?](#); Brand, C. (2018) [Catatumbo: todos los actores del conflicto y un solo territorio](#) RCN Radio; LAFM (2018) [El Catatumbo, una zona atrapada por el narcotráfico y conflicto armado](#).

119 For further details, see: El Tiempo (2018) [Fiscalía busca a 10 venezolanos desaparecidos en el Catatumbo](#); UN OCHA (2018) [Doble afectación en la subregión del Catatumbo \(Norte de Santander\) \(conflicto armado y Flujos Migratorios Mixtos\)](#); and La Opinión (2019), [Narcocultivos en Tibú, el imprevisto destino de migrantes venezolanos](#).

120 See El Espectador (2017) [Arauca y la estela del conflicto armado](#).

121 See FIP, Fronteras, Op. Cit., pp. 25 and 27.

122 UNODC (2018) [Informe de UNODC reporta alza histórica en los cultivos de coca en Colombia](#).

123 See FIP, Fronteras, Op. Cit., pp. 25-30.

as they were walking into Riohacha after crossing the border, they were surrounded by a group of six people who pointed a gun at them and stole everything they had – money, shoes, clothes, IDs – right after they entered the country.

Key informants interviewed in La Guajira also reported that almost all Venezuelan refugees and migrants they assist mention having been robbed and left with nothing, not even their IDs. These robberies, combined with the extortion by the Bolivarian National Guard that respondents reported to have suffered in Venezuela while trying to reach the border, compound migrants' and refugees' vulnerability, as they are left without their IDs and the very few resources they had managed to put together for their journey and are not in a position to raise more money. As a result, many Venezuelan refugees and migrants are now stranded in border cities, especially in La Guajira.

Two Venezuelan young men interviewed in Peru also reported having been robbed, but in a completely different context. One of them, interviewed in Tumbes, described how, while he was travelling on the back of a truck with several other refugees and migrants near the city of Cali, a group of hinchas (hooligans, or violent football fans) jumped on the truck in the middle of the night, woke the entire group – which included women and children – and robbed them all. According to the respondent, when one young man tried to resist, the attackers proceeded to cut off one of his arms with a machete and threw him off the vehicle. Another young man interviewed in Lima described a similar experience, also near Cali. A key informant interviewed in Tumbes confirmed having heard of many similar cases from Venezuelan refugees and migrants who arrived in Peru after transiting through Colombia.

Trafficking and sexual exploitation

Recurrent reference was made to the fact that many Venezuelan women engage in prostitution – an issue that has been repeatedly reported by the national press since at least 2017.¹²⁴ No clear information exists regarding the extent to which migrant and refugee women resort to uncoerced survival sex due to the lack of access to financial resources or other livelihood options, nor about how many of them are either victims of sexual exploitation and/or have fallen prey to human trafficking networks.

Several humanitarian actors, both in border areas and destination cities, affirmed being sure that there must be cases of exploitation and trafficking, based on the

dynamics they had seen and on the existence of criminal networks in the area. No official data is available on the topic, and key respondents offered anecdotal reports, rather than first-hand accounts of cases that they worked on themselves. These reports included a group of young girls locked up for prostitution in Cúcuta; a landlord in Riohacha renting rooms to many women in his building and offering their “services” to people passing by; a transgender woman in Maicao allegedly recruited in Venezuela for a job in a beauty salon and tricked into prostitution upon arrival in Colombia; and people approaching women as they arrive at the bus station in Bogotá offering them to start work as a waitress in a bar – a job that then turns out to be prostitution.

According to one key informant interviewed in Riohacha, the Anti-Trafficking Committee in La Guajira had not identified any cases of trafficking as of June 2019. Key informants in Bogotá stated that this gap in identification and response in cases of human trafficking is linked, among other things, to the fact that Colombia has historically been a country of origin of human trafficking victims rather than a destination, meaning that neither its legal framework nor its response mechanisms are tailored for a situation of potential trafficking within the framework of a migration flow. Local actors also seem not to fully understand the difference between the concepts of survival sex, exploitation, and trafficking, for instance conflating prostitution with trafficking, or assuming that all women who engage in sex work must be forced by a third person to do it.

In most cases, the line between survival sex and exploitation for Venezuelan women in Colombia is somewhat blurred: there is no coercion, but a third person takes advantage of a woman's desperation and/or somehow profits from it, as in the case of the many bars where waitresses end up doing sex work. In any case, even where there is no third party involvement or exploitation, resorting to survival sex is in itself a protection concern and an indicator of potential vulnerability to trafficking.¹²⁵ Those considered to be most at risk are women on the move traveling with several children but without their partner or other adults, because, regardless of what happens during their journey, they need to feed their children somehow.

SGBV

All key informants in Colombia mentioned sexual and gender-based violence as a major protection concern for people on the move. However, survivors of SGBV do not easily disclose what happened to them, often out of shame. Nor do they want to report to the authorities,

124 See for instance: Infobae (2017) [Cada vez más venezolanas desesperadas recurren a la prostitución en Colombia](#); Ruiz Parra, C. [Alarma por aumento de venezolanas prostituyéndose en Bogotá: algunas cobran \\$3](#), El Nuevo Herald; Benezra, J. (2019) [Las venezolanas desbordan los burdeles de Cúcuta para sobrevivir](#), ABC.

125 Refugees International (2019) [Searching for Safety Confronting Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Venezuelan Women and Girls](#).

mainly for fear of deportation due to their irregular immigration status. The few Venezuelans who did try to report faced multiple barriers, including the fact that the General Prosecutor's Office does not allow them to file complaints without a valid Colombian ID or does not follow up on complaints of sexual violence in the *trochas* as it does not consider the crime to fall within its jurisdiction.

Sexual violence, often takes place during border crossings when female refugees and migrants are unable to pay crossing fees. Humanitarian workers in border areas also mentioned domestic violence as a serious concern: in some cases, migrant and refugee women travel with their abusive partner; in others, it is the trauma of the migration itself as well as the harsh conditions that people on the move face that alters relationship dynamics and leads to domestic violence.

Caminantes

A significant number of refugees and migrants transiting through Colombian territory – either heading to a Colombian city or to another country – travel on foot. This exposes them to more protection concerns than those who can afford to travel by bus.

Such *caminantes* are exposed to serious health risks, including dehydration, lack of access to food and hygienic facilities, and exposure to freezing temperatures. Between the cities of Cúcuta and Bucaramanga they have to walk, often with no warm clothes or shoes, through one of the highest *paramos* (mountain ecosystems) in the country, where night temperatures can fall to zero degrees centigrade.¹²⁶ They often have to sleep in rough conditions, as there are no official shelters along the way. As one key informant explained, the very few shelters available along the route are all private or religious facilities and have a very limited capacity, which is by no means enough for the number of people on the move.

Media sources have reported that several Venezuelans, including at least one baby, died from hypothermia along this route.¹²⁷

5.4 Racism and xenophobia

The perception that Colombians had of the mixed migration flows out of Venezuela was largely positive during the first two migration phases: after all, people on the move at the time were bringing money and skills to the country, they were relatively few in number and could easily integrate into society. As the number of refugees and migrants arriving in the country – as well as their humanitarian needs – grew exponentially, Colombians' perception of and attitude towards Venezuelans seems to have soured.

All key informants interviewed in Colombia said that xenophobia against refugees and migrants has increased. Humanitarian actors reported widespread negative stereotypes about Venezuelans, including the idea that many of them are criminals, that they are stealing jobs from Colombians and that all Venezuelan women are prostitutes. Interviews with refugees and migrants confirmed this trend: most of them affirmed having either directly suffered, or having witnessed or heard from friends, episodes of xenophobia along those lines.

One Venezuelan woman in Riohacha, for instance, stated having stopped selling coffee on the street – which once was her source of livelihood – because Colombian men would constantly assume she was a sex worker and would approach her for sex. Another Venezuelan woman in Cúcuta described how strangers on the street or on the bus insulted her when they heard her Venezuelan accent.

Media and news outlets have contributed to this shift, providing disproportionate coverage to negative incidents involving Venezuelan refugees and migrants, such as violent crimes (robberies, murders).¹²⁸ In Cúcuta, several respondents interviewed in June 2019 reported having recently suffered or witnessed racism based on the murder committed by Venezuelan citizens in July 2018 – almost one year earlier – of the man who was giving them temporary shelter.¹²⁹ Other refugees and migrants expressed their frustration with this perception, with one stating that “it is unfair that we all have to pay for the mistakes of a few.”

126 Ospina-Valencia, J. (2018) [El Páramo de Berlín: el desafío para los venezolanos migrantes en Colombia](#), DW; La Opinión (2018) [El frío de los caminantes venezolanos](#).

127 Diario Las Américas (2018) [Al menos 17 migrantes venezolanos mueren al intentar cruzar páramo colombiano](#); EP Mundo (2018) [Bebé de migrante venezolana muere en Páramo de Berlín](#).

128 PubliMetro (2019) [Las noticias negativas sobre los venezolanos generan xenofobia](#).

129 Caracol Radio (2018) [Tendero fue asesinado por venezolanos](#).

5.5 Living conditions

Immigration status

Living conditions for Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Colombia can vary greatly due to several factors, the first being their immigration status. As of mid-August 2019, most Venezuelans lacked access to regular immigration status in Colombia. According to official GIFMM data, as of March 2019, 515,286 out of 1,298,300 Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Colombia were in the country irregularly.¹³⁰

The options available for Venezuelans to regularize their immigration status are currently limited, as the PEP is not available anymore. Very few Venezuelans apply for asylum in Colombia for a number of reasons, including the low recognition rate and the fact that, at least until July 2019, the temporary document they used to receive during the application process – the *salvoconducto* – explicitly prohibited them from working.¹³¹

Although the PEP did have a positive impact – most Venezuelan nationals with a regular immigration status in Colombia hold this type of permit¹³² – both the key informants and the very few Venezuelans with PEP interviewed for this assessment highlighted relevant shortcomings regarding its effectiveness. Venezuelan nationals holding a PEP face a range of obstacles in accessing healthcare, education and housing, as well as employment.

Irregular migrants

According to the key informants as well as the refugees and migrants interviewed, Venezuelans with an irregular immigration status face especially precarious living conditions in Colombia. Their access to healthcare – a widespread need among Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the third migration phase – is limited to emergency care and excludes access to medical evaluation, specialized medical care, therapies and medicines. People with chronic diseases such as cancer or HIV thus do not have access to adequate treatment.

Venezuelan children with an irregular immigration status are supposed to get access to education based on the best interest of the child principle. In practice, however, key informants reported that they face several obstacles, starting from the fact that while they can attend class they are not able to graduate. Moreover, their parents are

supposed to submit their previous school certificates and regularize their immigration status as soon as possible – something that, in most cases, the parents are not in a position to do.¹³³

People with an irregular immigration status do not have access to formal jobs – yet access to a livelihood is indicated by most Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the country as their main need.¹³⁴ Some employers decide not to hire people with an irregular immigration status even in areas where the economy is largely informal, out of fear of immigration inspections. At the same time, both key informants and people on the move described how most employers take advantage of people's irregular status in order to impose working conditions that amount to labour exploitation, such as salaries that are much lower than the minimum, excessively long working hours, etc.

Livelihoods

Access to employment for Venezuelan people remains limited even for those with a regular immigration status, for several reasons. First, the Colombian economy, especially in border areas, is largely informal and unemployment is high among citizens and foreigners alike. As one humanitarian worker in Cúcuta stated: "This is the most informal area of Colombia, so it would be difficult for a Venezuelan person to get easier access to a formal job than a Colombian citizen". Second, many employers have either a limited knowledge of the PEP or do not want to bother going through the bureaucracy of hiring – and the hassle of training – a person who holds a 90-day permit, even though it is renewable for two years. Third, the lack of recognition of refugees' and migrants' education and professional background without formal certificates and previous experience in Colombia is another major obstacle in acquiring qualified jobs. Fourth, as described above, xenophobia is on the rise in Colombia, and many of the people on the move interviewed for this assessment described how potential employers openly discriminated against them based on their nationality, saying that they would not hire Venezuelans because they steal or, in the case of women, because they are "husband-thieves". Consequently, many Venezuelans eke out a living as informal street vendors or garbage recyclers.

130 GIFMM, Colombia - Situational Report – May 2019, Op. Cit.

131 CODHES, SJR, Cáritas Colombiana, FUNDACOLVEN, Opción Legal, Universidad Externado de Colombia, Universidad Nacional de Colombia (2018) [Necesidades de protección de las personas venezolanas forzadas a migrar, refugiadas y en riesgo de apatridia en Colombia](#) (hereinafter: Several authors, Necesidades de protección).

132 Migración Colombia, Radiografía de Venezolanos, Op. Cit.

133 See also Several authors, Necesidades de protección, Op. Cit., pp. 15-16.

134 See R4V, RRRMP, Op. Cit., p. 42; UNHCR (2019) [Evaluación multisectorial de las necesidades de la población proveniente de Venezuela](#) (henceforth: UNHCR, Evaluación multisectorial).

One young man interviewed at the Peruvian border, who had left Venezuela in 2016 and had settled in Cali, described how he saw the situation in Colombia change over time. By his account, Colombians used to be welcoming towards Venezuelan refugees and migrants when he arrived in the country. As the number of people on the move arriving increased and their socio-economic profile lowered, however, he witnessed a change in attitude until when, in 2019, it had become impossible for him to find an employer willing to hire a Venezuelan citizen like him, despite his professional qualifications and experience and his regular immigration status (PEP). After being unemployed for several months, he had consumed all his savings. This led him to decide to leave Colombia three years after his arrival and head to Peru, where two university friends had settled and were telling him that Venezuelan refugees and migrants still had better opportunities than in Colombia.

Fifth, even if they do manage to find an employer who is willing to hire them, Venezuelan refugees and migrants still face additional practical challenges in opening a bank account, as many financial institutions do not accept the PEP as a valid form of ID. One respondent interviewed in Bogotá, for instance, explained how he had managed to find a construction company willing to hire him with a formal and stable contract but had to renounce the offer due to the fact that the company policy is to pay salaries only to accounts at Bancolombia, which would not let him open an account with his PEP. He now makes a living recycling garbage on the streets of Bogotá.

Living conditions also change from one part of the country to another, with border areas offering more precarious conditions than major cities. Border cities usually have a weaker economy, a more limited state presence, and higher insecurity rates. Evaluations and protection monitoring activities carried out by UN agencies and NGOs highlight precarious living conditions as well as extensive exposure to protection concerns in both La Guajira and Santander North.¹³⁵ On the other hand, a city with 10 million inhabitants like Bogotá, in addition to being expensive, also has its challenges.

Some Venezuelan refugees and migrants decide to settle in Colombia regardless of all these difficulties. Others, as detailed below, seek opportunities elsewhere.

5.6 Onward movement to other countries

Some Venezuelan refugees and migrants arrive in Colombia with the idea of settling but cannot find protection and stability, so they decide to move onwards. Others enter Colombia already knowing that they will only be in transit, as they already have plans to reach another destination. This mainly happens because relatives or friends are already living in another country (Ecuador, Peru or Chile) and are waiting for them, or because they heard from other refugees and migrants that the situation there is better.

According to the key informants interviewed in Colombia, the main destination for onward movement mentioned by Venezuelans is Peru, followed by Ecuador.

They do not always find what they were looking for: the situation in Ecuador or Peru may turn out to be less favourable than they had hoped, or they may not receive the expected support upon arrival. In some cases, this leads them to travel back to Colombia; if they have to put up with difficulties, they prefer to do it closer to home.

135 UNHCR, Evaluación multisectorial, Op. Cit; Terre des Hommes (2018) [Informe externo de evaluación rápida, Norte de Santander](#).

6. Mixed migration flows to Ecuador

This assessment did not include field missions to Ecuador, but some data was collected through a literature review and through the interviews conducted with Venezuelan refugees and migrants, and with key informants in Peru.

6.1 Main entry points, routes and destination cities

Venezuelan refugees and migrants mainly enter Ecuador across the Rumichaca International Bridge to the Nariño department in Colombia: 85% of the total, according to GTRM estimates from November 2018¹³⁶ The remaining 15% enter through: San Miguel, bordering the Colombian department of Putumayo; Huaquillas, on the southern border, near Tumbes (Peru); and the international airports of Quito and Guayaquil.

From both official border crossings in the north, Venezuelan refugees and migrants travel to Ecuador's capital, Quito, where some attempt to settle. Others, who also plan to remain in Ecuador, head to cities such as Guayaquil or Cuenca. Most Venezuelans, however, continue their journey south towards the border with Peru in Huaquillas.

6.2 The journey

According to information shared by IOM in Tumbes, the means of transportation used – and thus the duration and hardship of the journey – varies according to the profile of the people on the move: adults traveling alone or in groups walk throughout Ecuadorian territory; families with the father travel either walking, hitchhiking, or with IOM's humanitarian transportation programme, which is also used by people with vulnerable profiles or clear international protection needs; single-parent families with a female head of household and young children often travel by bus, either with their own resources or because they receive support from somebody.

6.3 Access to territory

Several instances of lack of access to Ecuadorian territory and cases of possible refoulement – including collective expulsions – of Venezuelans have been identified by the GTRM, especially in the aftermath of the introduction of the criminal records requirement in February 2019.¹³⁷

6.4 Protection concerns

It has been challenging for Ecuador to respond to the arrival of large numbers of Venezuelan refugees and migrants at its northern border, especially during peak times, when the country would see more than 5,000 Venezuelans crossing into its territory every day.

Gaps remain, for instance, as regards the security and physical safety of refugees and migrants. According to UNHCR, robberies and physical assault are the type of protection incidents most frequently affecting Venezuelans in Ecuador.¹³⁸ These incidents have a very adverse impact on the situation of refugees and migrants, including their physical and mental wellbeing but also on the conditions of their onward movement and their future living conditions. Robberies, in particular, leave people on the move even more vulnerable, as they lose the few resources they had to cover their basic needs during the journey and start settling upon arrival.

Several of the respondents in Peru reported having been robbed while crossing the border between Colombia and Ecuador. In one case, a woman who was traveling alone, by bus and with a travel agency, had all her luggage stolen while she was waiting to have her passport stamped at immigration control. Another woman, traveling with her partner and her two young nephews, was robbed at knifepoint while crossing the Rumichaca International Bridge: she described how, while she was walking on the bridge holding her youngest nephew in her arms, a woman approached her, pointed a knife at her ribs and told them to give her the dollars she was carrying. Out of fear, she surrendered all the money she had for the journey – \$300 – and was then left with no resources to pay for food or transportation for her family.

136 GTRM Ecuador (2018) [Reporte respuesta operacional #1 \(hasta noviembre 2018\)](#) p. 1.

137 See R4V, Reporte Operacional Marzo 2019, Op. Cit.

138 UNHCR (2019) [Protection Monitoring Venezuela Situation – Update #1: January – June 2019](#).

6.5 Racism and xenophobia

As in Colombia, xenophobia has also increased in Ecuador, partially due to the media coverage of criminal acts committed by Venezuelan refugees and migrants. A particularly strong reaction was caused by the murder of a woman in January 2019 in Ibarra, near Ecuador's northern border: a young Venezuelan man stabbed and killed his Ecuadorian partner, who was 22 years old and four months pregnant, in the centre of the city, after holding her hostage for more than an hour.¹³⁹ Amid the outrage generated by the murder of a pregnant young woman, a series of violent attacks against Venezuelans refugees and migrants took place in the city of Ibarra and in other parts of the country. Threats, forced evictions, and physical aggression has led Venezuelan refugees and migrants to leave the city where they had settled and, in some cases, the country.¹⁴⁰

Respondents in Peru reported having perceived the hostility of the local population while in Ecuador. The same woman traveling with her partner and her two young nephews cited above stated that, following the robbery, she had been left with nothing but that nobody would help her, not even by offering some money so that the children could eat. A young Venezuelan man, interviewed in Lima, said: "I thought I was not going to make it alive out of Ecuador. Nobody would give me a ride, nobody. It's not like in Colombia. I spent an entire week walking, I even walked during the night." Among the reasons indicated by the Venezuelan refugees and migrants not to remain in Ecuador, in addition to the lack of regularization options, the factor most frequently mentioned was the xenophobia of Ecuadorian citizens.

139 El Universo (2019) [Diana Carolina, asesinada en Ibarra, había reportado la violencia de su pareja](#); Excelsior (2019) [Asesinato de mujer embarazada desata indignación en Ecuador](#).

140 See León Cabrera, J. (2019) [La xenofobia en Ecuador empuja a migrantes venezolanos a salir del país](#) The New York Times; Rojas, I. (2019) [¿Qué está pasando con los venezolanos en Ecuador?](#) Prodavinci.

7. Mixed migration flows to Peru

7.1 Main entry points, routes and destination cities

Entry points

The vast majority of Venezuelan refugees and migrants enter Peruvian territory through the northern border crossing near Tumbes; according to the RRM RP, almost 90% do so. A key informant interviewed in Lima indicated a secondary point of entry into the country in the Madre de Dios region, used by Venezuelans who transited through Brazil.¹⁴¹ Little to no information is available concerning the numbers and dynamics of mixed migration movement through this area, due in part to a limited presence of humanitarian actors: the 3W (Who, what, where) exercise carried out in March 2019 indicated that only the International Federation of the Red Cross and IOM were present in the area.¹⁴²

Destinations

As in the case of Colombia, the two main factors behind destination choice in Peru are family reunification or the existence of another type of support network, as well as the perception that refugees and migrants have of the economic opportunities and living conditions they would find in a given place.

The RRM RP reported in December 2018 that “[t]he great majority of Venezuelan citizens settle in the metropolitan areas of Lima and Callao – more than one third of the total population in 2018”.¹⁴³ The final destination of most Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the country continues to be Lima. According to the displacement tracking matrix (DTM) exercise carried out by IOM in April 2019, 59% of the Venezuelans interviewed in Tumbes indicated Lima as their final destination in the country.¹⁴⁴ A humanitarian worker based in Lima listed the main reasons behind this choice as: first, most administrative procedures are carried out in the capital, including access to regular immigration status; second, refugees and migrants believe there are more economic opportunities in the capital; and third, many of those who arrive already have relatives or friends in the city.

Several key informants mentioned that refugees and migrants are increasingly choosing to head to provincial capitals – such as Piura, Trujillo, Chiclayo, Arequipa,

Cuzco – instead, as Lima is already “saturated”. As mentioned by the Jesuit Refugee Service legal clinic in Lima: “at the beginning, in 2016-2017, Venezuelans were very well received in Peru. Upon settling, they called their relatives and friends and gave them a positive description of the situation in Peru that does not match with reality anymore. They told them that there were employment options, which don't exist anymore”.

A key informant working with refugees and migrants in Lima reported less clarity about destinations amongst more recent arrivals. According to him, those assisted in 2018 would have a good idea of where they planned to go. Since the beginning of 2019, however, many refugees and migrants, especially the *caminantes*, are no longer set on any particular destination and simply try their luck where they hear there are opportunities.

The southern border city of Tacna is also increasingly becoming an unplanned destination city for many Venezuelans who heading south. The DTM exercise reported that, in April 2019, 14.8% of the people interviewed at the border crossing in Tumbes indicated Chile, not Peru, as their final destination.¹⁴⁵ Entering the Chile has however become increasingly difficult and, with the recent tourist visa requirement, all but impossible for most Venezuelan refugees and migrants. As a consequence, many of them see no option but to settle in Tacna, at least while they wait for a response to their visa application.¹⁴⁶

7.2 The journey

At the border between Huaquillas (Ecuador) and Aguas Verdes (Peru), Venezuelan refugees and migrants have to go through a Centro Binacional de Atención en Frontera (Binational Border Service Centre, CEBAF).¹⁴⁷ Once they exit the Ecuadorian side of the CEBAF, Venezuelan refugees and migrants either walk or take a taxi to the Peruvian side of the centre, where they have to pass immigration controls in order to be granted entry into Peru.

Until June 2019, almost all those on the move would enter Peru in this way. Since the introduction of the humanitarian visa requirement and the pre-eligibility screening at the border for asylum seekers, however,

141 La República (2018) [Madre de Dios: la otra puerta de acceso de los venezolanos al Perú](#).

142 3W is an exercise that the UN conducts in order to map the presence and activities of organizations – including both UN agencies and NGOs – responding to a humanitarian situation; R4V (2019) [Resultados del Ejercicio 3W Perú - Marzo 2019](#).

143 Ibid. p. 67.

144 IOM, DTM 5, Op. Cit. p. 15.

145 IOM, DTM 5, Op. Cit., p. 15.

146 Diario Correo (2019) [Tacna se ha convertido en el último refugio de los venezolanos](#).

147 CEBAFs are located at the borders between Andean Community member states and are where immigration and customs checks are carried out.

Venezuelan refugees and migrants started using another route – the commercial bridge in Aguas Verdes – to enter the country irregularly.

After crossing the border – either regularly or irregularly – and arriving in Tumbes, people move south either by bus, hitchhiking or walking. People with vulnerable profiles receive support with transportation from NGOs and UN agencies. One key informant based in Lima noticed a change in the means of transportation mostly used by Venezuelans: while until 2018 most would travel from Tumbes to Lima by bus, now the majority moves on foot as they do not have the financial resources to pay for transportation.

After leaving Tumbes, some refugees and migrants stop along the way in the cities of Piura, Trujillo or Chiclayo, while most head to Lima. It takes 20 hours to go straight from Tumbes to Lima by bus; if a person had to cover the same route walking for the entire journey, it would take around 15 days.

Of those who arrive in Lima, most stay and try to settle; others rest for a few days before heading toward Chile.

7.3 Access to territory

Until mid-June 2019, access to Peruvian territory for Venezuelans was essentially automatic. According to some key informants interviewed in Peru, even though the Peruvian government had, in August 2018, officially begun restricting entry to holders of a valid passport, in practice refugees and migrants could find ways to avoid the requirement. For example, “vulnerable profiles” were exempt, and the application of this exemption was quite generous. One key informant stated: “Although they had already put limitations in place, they were respecting the non-refoulement principle and literally everyone was entering the country, with or without documents. Publicly, the state was affirming that it would request passport and visa, but in practice it wasn’t true”.

Another way to avoid the passport requirement was to apply for asylum. Under the procedure in place until June 22, 2019, Venezuelan citizens would file their asylum application at the border and be allowed entry into the country. They would then have to re-register their application at one of the main offices of the Comisión Especial para los Refugiados (Special Refugee Commission, CEPR), the national authority tasked with refugee status determination, either in Lima or another destination city, and wait for their eligibility interview there.

With the introduction of the humanitarian visa requirement on June 15, 2019, the Peruvian authorities adopted a much stricter stance to immigration control: only five specific profiles would be allowed into the country without the visa: children (whether unaccompanied or traveling with their family); pregnant women; people over 60 years of age; adult people with “extreme vulnerabilities”, meaning serious health concerns; and people with a close relative residing regularly in Peru. Realizing this would lead all other Venezuelans wishing to enter Peru to apply for asylum, the following week the Peruvian government introduced “pre-eligibility screening” at the border for asylum seekers; those who passed the screening would be allowed into Peru to continue with their applications, while the others would be denied entry.

A field visit to Tumbes and the CEBAF for this assessment was carried out in the days immediately after these changes took place, during the week of June 24-28. Many people were stranded at the CEBAF, waiting to be allowed entry into Peru. Some had applied for asylum and had been waiting for a couple of days for a decision by the CEPR border delegation; others, who did not qualify for asylum nor for any of the five exemptions to the humanitarian visa requirement, were hoping Peruvian authorities would let them pass anyway.

One woman interviewed for this assessment was traveling with her family and was stuck at the CEBAF because the Peruvian authorities would allow her and the children entry into the country, but not her partner. The woman’s daughter – the mother of the two children – was already living in Peru and had a regular immigration status; the woman and the children were thus allowed to enter the country for family reunification, as they had a direct vertical family tie with her. The woman’s partner, however, was excluded from the family reunification because they were not legally married and he was not her daughter’s father. After traveling with him all the way from Venezuela to the Peruvian border, the woman was however not willing to abandon him at the border.

As a consequence, seeing no other solution, some people started entering the country irregularly.

7.4 Protection concerns

More than a quarter (28%) of the Venezuelan refugees and migrants interviewed during three protection monitoring exercises carried out by UNHCR in the first half of 2019 reported having been victim or having witnessed a protection incident along their journey, with the majority of incidents having occurred in Peruvian territory.¹⁴⁸ A variation in the type of reported incidents was identified in the latest exercise, implemented in June 2019: while in the two previous surveys the protection incidents most frequently reported were robberies (52% in January, 35% in March), followed by physical assault (12% and 17% respectively),¹⁴⁹ in June the most frequently reported incident was refusal of admission into the country – still followed by robberies and physical assault.¹⁵⁰

Survival sex seems to be less prevalent among Venezuelan women in Peru than it is in Colombia, as key stakeholders did not focus on it, nor has the national press given it much attention. Humanitarian workers did mention some specific cases of trafficking that they either identified in their activities or had heard about in the news, including the case of 18 Venezuelan girls that were rescued from a bar at the border between Ecuador and Peru where they were forced to engage in sex work.¹⁵¹ Key informants also cited the unsubstantiated rumour that Venezuelan women were being trafficked for sexual exploitation towards an illegal mining area near Cuzco, known as La Pampa.¹⁵²

7.5 Racism and xenophobia

Several of the key informants interviewed both in Lima and in Tumbes indicated one specific reason for the sudden shift in the Peruvian government's approach to the Venezuelan mixed migration flow: public opinion. Just as in Colombia and Ecuador, Peruvian people's attitude to Venezuelan refugees and migrants had hardened.

As explained by a humanitarian worker based in Lima: "until a few months ago, there was a lot of solidarity among Peruvians towards the situation of Venezuelan refugees and migrants. Nowadays it's very different, we are beyond the breaking point of xenophobia. We must also say that the Peruvian economy is not doing so well anymore, there are many factors at play". Another key

informant mainly attributes the change in the perception of people on the move to the media: "The media highlighted the crimes committed by Venezuelans. I believe this has been the root cause of the critiques made in public opinion".

A survey carried out in Lima in April 2019 found that 67% of the city's inhabitants had a negative opinion on the Venezuelan mixed migration flow, compared to 43% in a similar survey carried out in February 2018.¹⁵³ The survey cited two main perceptions behind the change: that the arrival of refugees and migrants would increase crime, and that Venezuelan citizens were ready to work for less pay and/or steal jobs from Peruvians. In another national survey carried out in February 2019, 53.7% of respondents said they hoped the government would impose strict limits on the number of Venezuelan refugees and migrants allowed into the country; 24.2% believed the government should prohibit the entry of Venezuelans altogether.¹⁵⁴

As a consequence, according to a survey conducted by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (National Statistical Institute), 35.6% of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the country has suffered discrimination.¹⁵⁵

7.6 Living conditions

Until June 2019, most Venezuelan refugees and migrants would have had a good chance of obtaining regular immigration status in Peru. According to official data, as reported by UNHCR and IOM, as of April 2019 more than 300,000 Venezuelan citizens had obtained the PTP, and a further 180,000 had applied for it and were waiting to receive the permit.¹⁵⁶ In addition to this, 287,114 people had applied for asylum as of end of March 2019. The temporary permit that asylum seekers receive while waiting for the CEPR to rule on their application gives them the right to work in Peru.

Although they have a regular immigration status, Venezuelan refugees and migrants often face barriers to local integration. With regard to access to employment, the RRMRP was already noting in December 2018 that "[m]any Venezuelan professionals face difficulties in accessing the formal labour market and validating their professional and academic titles in a country with predominantly informal sector employment. In this

148 UNHCR (2019) [Informe semestral de Monitoreo de Protección](#), p. 2.

149 UNHCR (2019) [Monitoreo de protección - Enero 2019](#) p. 8; UNHCR (2019) [Monitoreo de protección - Marzo 2019](#), (hereinafter: UNHCR, Monitoreo de protección marzo), p. 8.

150 UNHCR (2019) [Monitoreo de protección - Mayo-Junio de 2019](#), p. 9.

151 El Nacional (2018) [Rescataron en Perú a 18 venezolanas por "explotación laboral y sexual"](#).

152 García Delgado, F. (2019) [¿Qué es La Pampa y por qué era tan peligrosa esta zona de Madre de Dios?](#) El Comercio; Carranza, C. (2019) [Perú sin ideas para frenar minería ilegal en Madre de Dios](#) InSight Crime.

153 Alayo Orbeagozo, F. (2019) [El 67% de limeños no está de acuerdo con la inmigración venezolana al Perú](#) El Comercio.

154 See CPAL Social (2019) [Creencias y actitudes hacia los inmigrantes venezolanos en el Perú](#).

155 Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI) (2019) [Condiciones de Vida de la Población Venezolana que reside en Perú. Resultados de la Encuesta dirigida a la población venezolana que reside en el país, ENPOVE 2018](#).

156 UNHCR and IOM, [Refugiados y migrantes venezolanos en el Perú - Abril 2019](#), Op. Cit.

context, many refugees and migrants from Venezuela resort to non-formal jobs, where they are exposed to labour exploitation and abuse.”¹⁵⁷

The situation did not improve during the first months of 2019. According to the findings of the protection monitoring exercise carried out by UNHCR in March 2019, 48% of respondents reported being informally employed, with 34% saying they earned a living as street sellers.¹⁵⁸ One key informant interviewed in Lima stated: “People with PTP have some hope of getting access to work. If you are an asylum seeker, you’re supposed to have a right to work, but in practice many employers don’t recognize their status. Most people, regardless of their immigration status, work in the informal economy as street vendors. More and more people are unable to access any job.” Another key informant added that “the job market [in Peru] is informal, but now every employer requests the PTP or passport with visa as a condition for hiring someone, in order to avoid legal issues and sanctions”.

Key informants also reported that, just as in Colombia, Venezuelan refugees and migrants are also paid less than Peruvians, often less than the minimum wage – one of the factors that caused the negative perceptions highlighted in the above-mentioned surveys. What they earn is barely enough to cover their basic needs and send remittances back to family members in Venezuela.

Moreover, according to the information shared by key informants, refugees and migrants do not get access to the public healthcare system unless they have a *carne de extranjería* (immigration card) as neither the PTP nor the asylum seekers’ permit is fit for that purpose. Those who do get access to healthcare services then face economic barriers, as they are required to pay even if they are using the public healthcare system. Access is only partial also with regard to education, for legal, practical and financial reasons: first, children who do not have a *carne de extranjería* are allowed to attend class but are not able to move up to the following class nor graduate; second, as in Colombia, Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Peru also face a shortage of available spots in classrooms; third, many struggle to find the resources to pay for school uniforms and materials.

As for accommodation, the situation is also like Colombia’s: most refugees and migrants in Peru (94% according to UNHCR’s protection monitoring exercise¹⁵⁹) rent their accommodation and live in overcrowded conditions. Key informants reported that refugees and migrants usually rent rooms occupied by four or five people, with access to a bathroom shared with other rooms. Several humanitarian workers interviewed reported that it has become particularly difficult to find housing for those with children, as many landlords no longer want to rent to families.

7.7 Onward movement to other countries

The main destination for onward movement from Peru used to be Chile, but entering this country became much more difficult since June 22, 2019 due to the visa requirement. Since that date, Venezuelan refugees and migrants trying to enter Chile are camping in front of the Chilean consulate in Tacna, either waiting for a response on their visa application or hoping to be allowed into the country despite already having been denied a visa.¹⁶⁰ As of August 2019, there are no changes in sight as regards the Chilean visa requirements policy.

157 RMRP, Op. Cit., p. 70.

158 UNHCR, Monitoreo de protección marzo, Op. Cit., p. 10.

159 UNHCR, Monitoreo de protección marzo, Op. Cit. p. 11.

160 Suárez, E. (2019) [Instalan rejas frente a consulado de Chile en Tacna](#) El Comercio; Ferrer Rivera, L. (2019) [Se instalaron 120 carpas fuera del consulado chileno en Tacna](#) La República; Newman, L. (2019) [Venezuelan migrants risk discrimination for new life in Chile](#) Al Jazeera.

8. Organization of migration journeys

8.1 Self-organized movement

The Venezuelan mixed migration flow has been characterized to a large extent by self-organized movement. With borders in the region relatively easy to cross, Venezuelan nationals would simply look up some basic information on the internet, get together the little money they could, and leave.

According to the key informants interviewed for this study, social media has played a fundamental role in this: Venezuelans planning to leave the country mostly obtain information regarding the migration route and the conditions at destination from fellow nationals who have already left the country, mainly through Facebook or WhatsApp groups.¹⁶¹ In the case of those moving for family reunification with a relative who already lives in another country, the main source of information is the person they are planning to join. These trends are in line with the findings of UNHCR protection monitoring exercises in Peru: 34% of respondents indicated “talking to fellow nationals” as source of information, while 24% and 21% mentioned WhatsApp and Facebook, respectively.¹⁶² Most people interviewed between Colombia and Peru stated having searched and obtained information in this way. Information – including misinformation – is thus passed on among people on the move mostly through word of mouth.

Many Venezuelans sell their possessions to pay for their migration.¹⁶³ The vast majority of the people on the move interviewed for this assessment declared having had to sell some of their belongings – houseware, work tools, children’s toys – as it is practically impossible to save money in Venezuela. A minority also borrowed small amounts of money from relatives, either before leaving Venezuela or along the journey after being robbed or running out of money.

8.2 “Travel agencies”

Key informants in both Colombia and Peru stated that people with financial resources and families with small children opt, where feasible, for what they consider a safer method: in their place of origin in Venezuela, they hire the services of private companies presenting themselves as “travel agencies” selling “tourism packages”. These packages include transportation to one’s chosen destination, which can be the Colombian border, a Colombian city, the border between Colombia and Ecuador, or all the way down to Lima. In some cases, the service also includes meals during the journey.

According to the interviews conducted at the Colombian border in Santander North, one can also hire this kind of services after crossing the border into Colombia, especially in Villa del Rosario and Cúcuta. Key informants in Cúcuta recounted how, in the last few years, they noticed the sudden opening of many “travel agencies” offering transportation from Villa del Rosario or Cúcuta to other Colombian cities, or all the way down to the border with Ecuador. As explained by a humanitarian worker in Cúcuta: “At the border, it’s very common to hear people offering ‘touristic packages’ to Ipiales. In Villa del Rosario, behind the customs office, now it’s somehow full of ‘travel agencies’”.

8.3 Travel agencies or smuggling services?

According to several key informants interviewed for this assessment, the line between offering legitimate travel services and profiting from irregular migration is rather blurred in the case of these “travel agencies”, which provide transportation to people who are clearly not traveling for tourism but rather migrating to another country. Moreover, their “VIP packages” appear to entail bribing corrupt border officials to evade established administrative procedures. Often, some of the passengers the agencies transport are irregularly present in the country (or countries) they cross. In some instances, travel agencies even seem to be coordinating the irregular border crossings for their passengers.

161 Janetsky, M. (2019) [For migrants fleeing Venezuela, social media plays key role in surviving life-or-death situations](#) ThinkProgress.

162 UNHCR, Monitoreo de protección marzo, Op. Cit., p. 7.

163 Bonilla, L. (2019), [As Venezuela Migration Crisis Worsens, Regional Goodwill and Resources Running Out](#) Voa News.

In the case of the “travel agencies” operating at the border near Cúcuta, local authorities have been warning about irregularities in their activities at least since mid-2018. The mayor of the border town Villa del Rosario, for example, publicly requested the Attorney General’s Office and the National Police in to investigate the agencies in August 2018.¹⁶⁴ Based on the information collected during the

field visit to Cúcuta conducted for this assessment, no action seems to have been taken since then.

Venezuelans interviewed in Peru reported cases of scams perpetrated by these travel agencies, especially those hired from Venezuela.

A woman interviewed in Lima recounted having paid \$360 to a “travel agency” for a package that was supposed to include transportation from Caracas to Peru, plus three meals a day along the journey. According to the woman, shortly after leaving Caracas, the travel agency staged what she considered to be a fake extortion attempt aimed at obtaining more money from passengers: the bus stopped to allow the driver to eat, and then, after an armed man in plain clothes approached them, the passengers were told they would each have to pay an extra \$300 to prevent authorities inspecting all the luggage. This would have slowed down the bus considerably, meaning passengers might not arrive at the Peruvian border before the introduction of the humanitarian visa on June 15. Then, upon arrival at the Colombian border in Cúcuta, the agency offered the passengers a “VIP package”: there was a line of more than 3,000 people waiting to cross, but for an additional \$60 the agency would take care of getting the passengers’ passports stamped and obtain Andean Migration Cards. The woman, like many of her fellow passengers, decided to pay to speed things up. When they arrived at the border with Ecuador, however, two of the passengers who, like the woman, had purchased the “VIP package” were stopped and detained by Colombian immigration officers, as the stamps they had got on their passports in Cúcuta were fake. The woman was lucky enough not to face the same experience, but decided not to buy another “VIP package” and queued instead for two days and one night, along with 7,000 other people, to get through immigration control. Once she made it to the Ecuadorian side of the border, her luggage – that was supposed to have been carried by the travel agency – had disappeared with all her belongings. The agency promised to refund her for the lost luggage and the \$300 extorted in Venezuela, but never did.

Key informants in Tumbes and Lima reported similar cases, together with other types of scams: bus drivers abandoning passengers along the way, sometimes stealing their luggage; travel agencies not providing the meals that were supposed to be included in the package; and agents inventing administrative obstacles or new rules to convince passengers to pay extra money.

8.4 Border closures, restrictive immigration policies and smuggling economy

In all parts of the world, the smuggling economy profits from closed borders and restrictive immigration policies: where a demand for migration meets obstacles, smugglers step in to provide the service and allow migrants to achieve the goal that they are not able to attain on their own.¹⁶⁵ The mixed migration flow out of Venezuela is no exception.

In the case of Colombia, in particular, there was an expectation that the range of criminal and armed groups already present in the territory would be quick finds ways to profit from the migration crisis, including by smuggling people into the country when they could not enter regularly.¹⁶⁶

In La Guajira, migrants, refugees and indigenous communities have traditionally crossed the border irregularly: not least because both the Colombian and the Venezuelan sides of the peninsula constitute indigenous territory inhabited by the binational Wayuu people, who do not recognize the concept of national borders.¹⁶⁷ For this reason, the closure and reopening of the official border crossing in Paraguachón has had a limited impact on local border crossing dynamics.

In Cúcuta, however, the border closure meant that mixed migration flows that previously crossed the border regularly using the Simón Bolívar International Bridge, would, after February 23, do so irregularly via a

164 La Opinión (2018) [La Parada: alertan sobre tráfico de inmigrantes](#).

165 Sanchez, G. (2017) [Critical Perspectives on Clandestine Migration Facilitation: An Overview of Migrant Smuggling Research](#) Journal on Migration and Human Security, p. 11.

166 Rísquez, R. & Salomón, J. (2019) [GameChangers 2018: Venezuelan Migration a New Gold Mine for Organized Crime](#) InSight Crime.

167 El Heraldo (2015) [Las fronteras no existen para la Gran Nación Wayuu](#).

trocha. People on the move contributed to the smuggling economy at least by paying the extortion fee to be able to cross the border. The smuggling business was so profitable that the criminal and armed groups present near the border started fighting for its control, causing an increase in violence in the area.¹⁶⁸

After the border reopened on June 8, Colombian authorities noted a sharp decrease in the number of people crossing the border by trocha, while more than 30,000 Venezuelan citizens crossed the border regularly via the Simón Bolívar International Bridge on that day alone.¹⁶⁹ Although the smuggling of goods will continue to be a part of the local economy managed by criminal groups, with the reopening of the border these actors have lost a relevant source of income previously derived from smuggling people.¹⁷⁰

A sudden increase in the smuggling economy also occurred in Peru following the introduction of the humanitarian visa and the implementation of asylum seekers' pre-screening at the border. IOM warned of this risk, stating that "[m]easures like these may generate an increase in human trafficking, trafficking of migrants, and illicit border crossings".¹⁷¹

At the end of the field visit carried out for this assessment, people started showing up at the CEBAF gates offering to help Venezuelans who had become stuck to cross the border irregularly. The week following the field visit, one key informant reported having noticed people offering such services both outside and even inside the CEBAF premises.

A young Venezuelan man, who was waiting for a decision on his asylum application, while observing this dynamic commented: "Peru introduced this visa thinking that people would stop coming only because they don't comply with the requirements, but hunger knows no bureaucracy".

For mixed migration movements out of Venezuela, as of August 2019, there was little evidence of structured and hierarchical smuggling dynamics, as found in some other regions of the world, nor of highly organized and sophisticated transnational networks that manage all aspects of irregular movement across countries, nor of the recklessness, risk and the violence that often leads people on the move to meet violent death or to suffer other serious human rights violations.

In the case of Colombia, for instance, notwithstanding the above-mentioned link between smuggling and armed groups, smuggling networks remain quite informal, and sometimes (as is common in many parts of the world) smugglers are migrants themselves. This is the case in the Cúcuta area, with the "guides" that refugees and migrants usually hire to show them the safest way across the border or to help them carry luggage. According to Insight Crime, "[i]n many cases, these individuals are young Venezuelans who themselves are in need and seeking some form of income".¹⁷² The involvement of armed groups and/or organized crime in migrant smuggling is however potentially extremely dangerous for people on the move.

168 Venezuela Investigative Unit (2019) [Trails Along Colombia-Venezuela Border Are Criminal Enclaves](#) InSight Crime (hereinafter: InSight Crime, Trails Along Colombia-Venezuela Border); Venezuela Investigative Unit (2019) ['La Línea' Gang Takes Deadly Hold on Colombia-Venezuela Border](#) InSight Crime; Vargas, N. (2019) [La guerra en la frontera entre Colombia y Venezuela](#) El Espectador.

169 Migración Colombia (2019) [Apertura de frontera por parte de Venezuela reduce el paso por las trochas de Norte de Santander](#).

170 Venezuela Investigative Unit (2019) [Colombia-Venezuela Border Reopens, But Hidden Trails Still Hotspots](#) InSight Crime.

171 Dupraz-Dobias, P. (2019) [In Peru, tougher rules set to push Venezuelan migration underground](#) The New Humanitarian.

172 Venezuela Investigative Unit (2019) [Trails Along Colombia-Venezuela Border Are Criminal Enclaves](#) InSight Crime.

9. Outlook

9.1 Expectations

All the key informants, as well as the Venezuelan refugees and migrants, interviewed for this assessment agreed that it is highly unlikely that the Venezuelan crisis will be solved in the short term. According to Venezuelan respondents, while a political change is not on the horizon but could still suddenly happen, a more structural national recovery would certainly take much longer. It would take a long time – at least a few years – for the country to rebuild its economy, infrastructure and institutions.

According to most of respondents, this implies that, most probably, mixed migration flows out of the country will neither stop nor decrease in the short or medium term.

Several refugees and migrants interviewed for this assessment stated having family members in Venezuela who are already planning to leave the country soon.

One Venezuelan woman interviewed in Tumbes said that “Venezuela will become a country of old people: they are the only ones who won’t leave because they don’t want to, or they physically cannot”.

9.2 Future intentions

All refugees and migrants interviewed for this assessment stated they planned to either settle where they were, or continue their movement toward their chosen final destination and settle there, with the main obstacles they faced in achieving their aims being access to legal status and livelihoods.

None of the refugees and migrants interviewed said they had considered the possibility of returning to Venezuela in the short term. However, intentions of return to Venezuela seem to fluctuate with regional developments. UNHCR’s report on protection monitoring of the Venezuelan situation between January and June 2019 noted that 19% of respondents expressed a wish to return to Venezuela, especially with a more hopeful view of the situation in the country following February 2019, with the planned delivery of humanitarian assistance from Colombia and an upcoming solidarity concert.¹⁷³ However, in April, people’s opinions were much less optimistic, and while several Venezuelans express a wish to return home, this did not imply a plan to do so in the current situation. Further, some Venezuelans are indeed involved in temporary movement between Colombia and Venezuela to visit family members, which does not mean they intend to return permanently.¹⁷⁴

The two main elements cited as fundamental preconditions for going back to Venezuela are, in general, a change of government and the re-establishment of the country’s economic and social infrastructure. Specific responses vary depending on the profile of the respondent: people who fled political persecution are much more emphatic about the need for political change, without which they risked arbitrary detention and other human rights violations. Those who left for economic or health reasons focus more on the need for an improvement of the national economy and health infrastructure, regardless of who might be in power.

Future intentions also vary depending on the socio-economic profile of refugees and migrants. People from the lower echelons would be more eager to return in the short term, as soon as the situation in their country of origin improved. Professionals and people with a high education level, on the other hand, take a more cautious stance: they will carefully consider which future perspectives Venezuela offers for their personal and professional life, before deciding to abandon the stability and integration that they hope to achieve in their country of destination.

173 UNHCR (2019) [Protection Monitoring Venezuela Situation – Update #1: January – June 2019](#), p. 25

174 UNHCR, [Protection Monitoring Venezuela Situation – Update #1: January – June 2019](#), Op. Cit.

10. Existing knowledge gaps

This assessment identified several areas that are currently not adequately covered and would benefit from additional data collection and analysis. Knowledge gaps vary from country to country and from one region to another: some geographical areas receive more attention than others, and the sensitivity of some information can influence the decision by certain actors on whether to make it publicly available. In addition to this, many of the documents that do get published focus on reporting activities, rather than sharing research results.

10.1 Thematic gaps

Protection concerns at border crossings and along the route

Humanitarian actors interviewed during field visits, especially in border areas, expressed having a general knowledge of what is happening in the border crossings. For instance, they know that people have to pay to travel along the trochas and are sometimes robbed, but do not have much information about perpetrators and locations of such crimes, or of the detailed dynamics of the protection risks.

As previously mentioned, few actors focus on data collection, including at the border. At the same time, several key informants interviewed for this study mentioned that refugees and migrants are reluctant to report to the police, either due to a lack of trust in the authorities or out of fear that they could be deported because of their irregular immigration status.¹⁷⁵ As a consequence, knowledge is often anecdotal and superficial, limited to what the few people on the move who decide to share their story say is relevant for humanitarian responses.

The same applies for the rest of the route. Humanitarian actors do know that people on the move are vulnerable to robberies and recruitment by armed groups, but do not know the details of these dynamics as, once again, research is not the primary focus of their activities.

SGBV, trafficking for sexual exploitation and LGBTI people

SGBV and trafficking for sexual exploitation are two thematic areas where information gaps were reported by the majority of the key informants interviewed. Survivors of SGBV tend to be reluctant to report in general, out of

shame. They very rarely admit resorting to survival sex, for instance. Humanitarian workers base their knowledge and understanding of the situation largely on what they directly witness – for instance, the strong presence of Venezuelan women engaging in sex work on the street – and on rumours they hear from other people, rather than on systematic and detailed data collection.

Trafficking and exploitation are even more difficult to research, as victims are even less eager to report when a third party – who is controlling and exploiting them – is involved. As an example, as mentioned previously in this report, some key informants stated being sure that, among the Venezuelan women engaging in prostitution, there must be cases of people who are duped or forced into doing so individuals and criminal networks who profit from their exploitation. Nobody seems to know, however, how this exploitation dynamic functions and who is behind it.

Another major thematic information gap is the situation of LGBTI refugees and migrants: the vast majority of the key informants interviewed do not focus on the situation and needs of this population, while the very few who try to cover the issue reportedly struggle to get adequate access to them and their experiences. A report published by the local NGO Caribe Afirmativo in June 2019 has been the first structured attempt to highlight the specific protection risks that LGBTI refugees and migrants face during their journey.¹⁷⁶ Additional protection gaps were mentioned in the testimonies of LGBTI people on the move during the First Regional Meeting on the Protection of LGBTI+ People in Situations of Human Mobility, held in Ecuador in March 2019.¹⁷⁷ There is, however, a need for more detailed and comprehensive information on this topic.

Smuggling economy

None of the humanitarian organizations involved in the response to the Venezuelan mixed migration flow focuses on investigating smuggling dynamics, although other actors have started covering the topic in their work. A body of research on the issue is taking shape, but more data collection with people on the move is needed to better understand the complex smuggling dynamics in the region.

175 UNHCR, Informe semestral de Monitoreo de Protección, Op. Cit., p. 2.

176 Caribe Afirmativo (2019) [Situación de las personas LGBT migrantes de Origen Venezolano en Territorios Fronterizos de Colombia](#).

177 Trujillo, Y. (2019) [Ser venezolano y ser Lgbti, doble vulnerabilidad](#) El Comercio.

Regular vs irregular status

Several humanitarian actors said they would benefit from more detailed information about the differences in terms of access to rights between people with a regular immigration status and those who are irregularly present in a country, including about how obtaining a regular immigration status affects the lives of refugees and migrants, and about the shortcomings that current regularization options present.

Refugees and migrants from rural areas

The dynamics of the migration of people from rural contexts are not clear and would benefit from further research.

11. Annex 1 – List of stakeholders interviewed

Location	Organization	Key informant - position
Cúcuta	UNHCR	Elena Boffelli, Protection Officer
	Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	Yadira Galeano, Area Manager
	International Rescue Committee (IRC)	Milena Guerrero, Area Manager
	Independent consultant	Alejandro Castañeda
	International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	Vanessa Iaria, Head of Office
Riohacha	UNHCR	Alessandra Romano, Associate Protection Officer
	Local GIFMM	Marcela Álvarez, Co-leader, UNHCR
	Danish Refugee Council (DRC)	Joann Kingsley, Protection Manager
	Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	Estefania Maestre, ICLA Project Officer
	Pastoral Social	Astrid Ruiz, Shelter Coordinator (CARM Riohacha)
Maicao	Danish Refugee Council (DRC)	Sabrina Fruitig, CAI Manager
	PAO (Punto de Atención y Orientación) Paraguachón	Edwin Acuña, Coordinator
	Personería municipal	Breiner Osorio, Senior Lawyer
Barranquilla	IOM	Gerardo Vimos, Territorial Liaison
	UNHCR	Alba Marcellán, Head of Field Office
	Fundación Panamericana para el Desarrollo (FUPAD)	Carlos Alberto Parra, Economic Inclusion Specialist
	Pastoral Social	Livia Cano, Venezuelan Migration Crisis Multisectoral Response Project Coordinator

Location	Organization	Key informant - position
Bogotá	National GIFMM	Catalina Pinzón, GIFMM Coordination Monitor, IOM
		Johanna Reina, Protection Group Coordinator, UNHCR
	UNHCR	Jaime Castañeda, Head of Bogotá Field Unit
	Jesuit Refugee Service	Juana Esperanza Potes, Programmes and Projects Professional
		Silvia Carolina Leal Guerrero, Advocacy Coordinator
		Gina Paola Sánchez González, Soacha Local Office Coordinator
Defensoría del Pueblo	Defensoría Delegada para Derechos de la Población en Movilidad Humana	
Tumbes	IOM	Lucía Salinas, Field Protection Coordinator
	UNHCR	Erika D'Agostini, Associate Field Officer (Protection)
	International Federation of the Red Cross	Esteban Fernández, Local Coordinator
Lima	UNHCR	Juliette Murekeyisoni, Senior Field Coordinator
		Wendy Zillich, Protection Officer
		Natalia AlBani, Protection Officer (CBP)
	Encuentros	Analí Briceño, Legal Clinic Coordinator
	Scalabrinianos	José Pineda, Shelter Coordinator
	Humanity and Inclusion	Amélie Teisserenc, Regional Project Coordinator, Andean Countries Program

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Hundreds of Venezuelans wait in the customs line in Colombia to stamp their passports and continue their journey. In August 2018, between 3,000 and 7,000 Venezuelans entered Ecuador daily, most of them in transit to Peru. Some families must spend the night at the Rumichaca Bridge, border between Colombia and Ecuador, where temperatures drop to 3 degrees Celsius.



The Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) is a global network consisting of six regional hubs (Asia, East Africa and Yemen, Europe, Middle East, North Africa & West Africa) and a central unit in Geneva. The MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise on mixed migration. The MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. The MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

The MMC is part of, and governed by, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). While its institutional link to DRC ensures MMC's work is grounded in operational reality, it acts as an independent source of data, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration for policy makers, practitioners, journalists, and the broader humanitarian sector. The position of the MMC does not necessarily reflect the position of DRC.

For more information visit:
mixedmigration.org

