

# FACTSHEET COLOMBIA

January - December 2020

More than **9 million people** registered as victims of the internal armed conflict. **70,865 new displacements** registered by the National Registry of Victims (RUV in Spanish) in 2020.

Over **135,000** people on average benefitted every month from one or more types of assistance by UNHCR and partners as part of the 2020 Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP).

More than **122,000** Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and populations at risk have benefitted from one or more UNHCR interventions as part of the **COVID-19 response** between March and December 2020.

Venezuelan refugees and migrants cross the Simon Bolivar Bridge, one of seven official entry points on the Colombia Venezuela border and the most prominent entry point in Colombia. Prior to the March 2020 border closure, 30,000 people crossed this bridge into Colombia on a daily basis.  
©UNHCR/Siegfried Modola

More than **1.72 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants** in Colombia as of 31 December 2020, according to the Colombia Migration Unit.

**665 recognized refugees** as of mid-2020, of which **67%** are Venezuelans, and more than **20,000 asylum claims pending** as of November 2020 (cumulative since 2017).



More than 7,400 activities were implemented by UNHCR between January and December, to meet the needs of Venezuelan refugee and migrants, colombian returnees and their host communities in 28 departments:



**3,840**

interventions related to protection (e.g. support to safe spaces for GBV survivors, protection monitoring and provision of legal aid)



**301**

activities that include the provision of multipurpose cash transfers to households or individuals.



**153**

related to access to education (e.g. providing education in emergency services, school kits, and access to distance learning activities)



**841**

related to health care (e.g. support to primary health care, COVID-19 prevention and support to public institutions, sexual and reproductive health care, psychosocial support and prenatal care)



**249**

in support of livelihoods (e.g. supporting the Graduation Model, assisting the government to promote inclusion of Venezuelans in the labour market and regularization)



**166**

shelter activities (e.g. construction and renovation of temporary shelters, including in Riohacha and Maicao)

# UNHCR Response

## Refugees, migrants and returnees from Venezuela

As part of the Interagency coordination platform (GIFMM), UNHCR supports the Government on a local and national level to ensure the response to the Venezuelan refugee and migrant crisis in Colombia integrates protection concerns. Through community outreach and engagement, an extensive field presence and collaboration with local and national actors, UNHCR monitors and analyzes the protection environment for Venezuelans, and identifies and ensures a targeted response to those with specific needs and those requiring international protection. By December, more than 340,700 Venezuelans and Colombians returning from Venezuela had benefitted from UNHCR's direct interventions in 2020.

UNHCR will play a key role in the implementation of Colombian Government's unprecedented and historic decision on 8 February 2021 to grant Temporary Protection Status (TPS) to more than 1.7 million Venezuelans, supporting Colombian authorities within the framework of the GIFMM interagency platform. At the same time, Colombia Migration estimates 80% of those who returned home during the COVID-19 crisis are expected to re-enter Colombia in the coming months, accompanied by one or more persons. UNHCR will take a targeted approach in strengthening its protection and assistance services, focusing on key locations and anticipated to receive the bulk of new arrivals, as well as more remote but severely underserved areas, and prioritizing sectors in which it can make the most substantive difference, in close coordination with national, regional and local authorities, as well as GIFMM members.



### Information and orientation

UNHCR operates 29 information and orientation centres (PAOs Spanish) across Colombia. During the COVID-19 crisis, PAOs continued to operate remotely via 59 telephone helplines and call centres.



### Access to asylum

As of 30 September 2020, 3,724 Venezuelans received legal assistance, including support in the refugee status determination process. As of this same date, 7,270 people, including public officials and other relevant professionals, were trained in international protection by universities in the Network of Legal Clinics supported by UNHCR.



### Registration

UNHCR registers people receiving orientation and assistance in its global registration software PRIMES and remote registration continued, despite the ongoing COVID-19 health emergency. In 2020, 42 implementing partners used PRIMES. Between January and December, over 53,000 receptions, covering 186,600 people, were recorded, while over 38,400 people were registered.



### Documentation

UNHCR supports the National Civil Registry with 7 mobile units, which registered and issued documentation to 19,570 Colombian returnees in 2020. The pandemic resulted in a temporary suspension of the mobile units, which resumed activities on 21 July in Arauca, La Guajira, Norte de Santander and Atlántico. Together with IOM and UNICEF, UNHCR also assists the National Civil Registry to issue birth certificates to children born in Colombia to Venezuelan parents, as part of the government's initiative to prevent statelessness. Since the issuance of the measure and until the end of 2020, over 50,000 birth certificates have been issued.



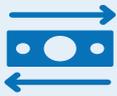
### Health

Between March and December 2020, UNHCR donated 716 Refugee Housing Units (RHUs), including 333 RHUs and 198 family tents to 15 departmental health authorities, primarily for the treatment and isolation of COVID-19 positive patients.



### Shelter and reception capacity

Together with other GIFMM partners, UNHCR has helped the government to reinforce reception capacity along the border and in major cities. Direct assistance is provided to shelters that offer accommodation to Venezuelans with specific needs. Some of these shelters were temporarily closed during the COVID-19 crisis and have recently re-opened. The Integrated Assistance Centre (CAI in Spanish) in Maicao (La Guajira) accommodated some 408 vulnerable Venezuelans in 2020, despite operating at reduced capacity with COVID-19. The CAI re-opened to new residents in September and the centre was enlarged to accommodate 1,400 persons. However, its capacity will remain restricted for the time being to comply with the government's biosecurity protocols.



### Cash based assistance

UNHCR stepped up its cash based assistance during the pandemic. Through 10 partnerships, UNHCR provided multipurpose cash to around 19,500 families across the country in 2020.



### GBV prevention and response

UNHCR has helped to set up and support a Regional Safe Spaces Network (RSSN) to provide survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) and children and adolescents at risk with comprehensive services. RSSN comprises 48 partner organizations and allies, including government institutions, NGOs and other UN agencies with a presence in key locations along the Venezuelan border. In 2020, the RSSN provided in-person and virtual services to 397 SGBV survivors and 762 children at risk. Legal and psychosocial professionals (duplas in Spanish) were supported to assist 1,617 women and individuals with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI).



### Child protection

UNHCR supports 13 safe spaces for children and the Ombudsperson Delegate for Children, Youth and Elderly, which assisted 50,791 children and adolescents in 2020. UNHCR also cooperates with the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF in Spanish) and civil society in promoting the rights of children, identifying gaps in their protection and mobilizing a response to the gaps. UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ICBF in March 2020, and agreed on an action plan to enhance case management, technical assistance, capacity building, infrastructure in child friendly spaces, income generation for families, prevention, anti-xenophobia campaigns, coordination mechanisms and strategic alliances in 14 departments.



### Community engagement

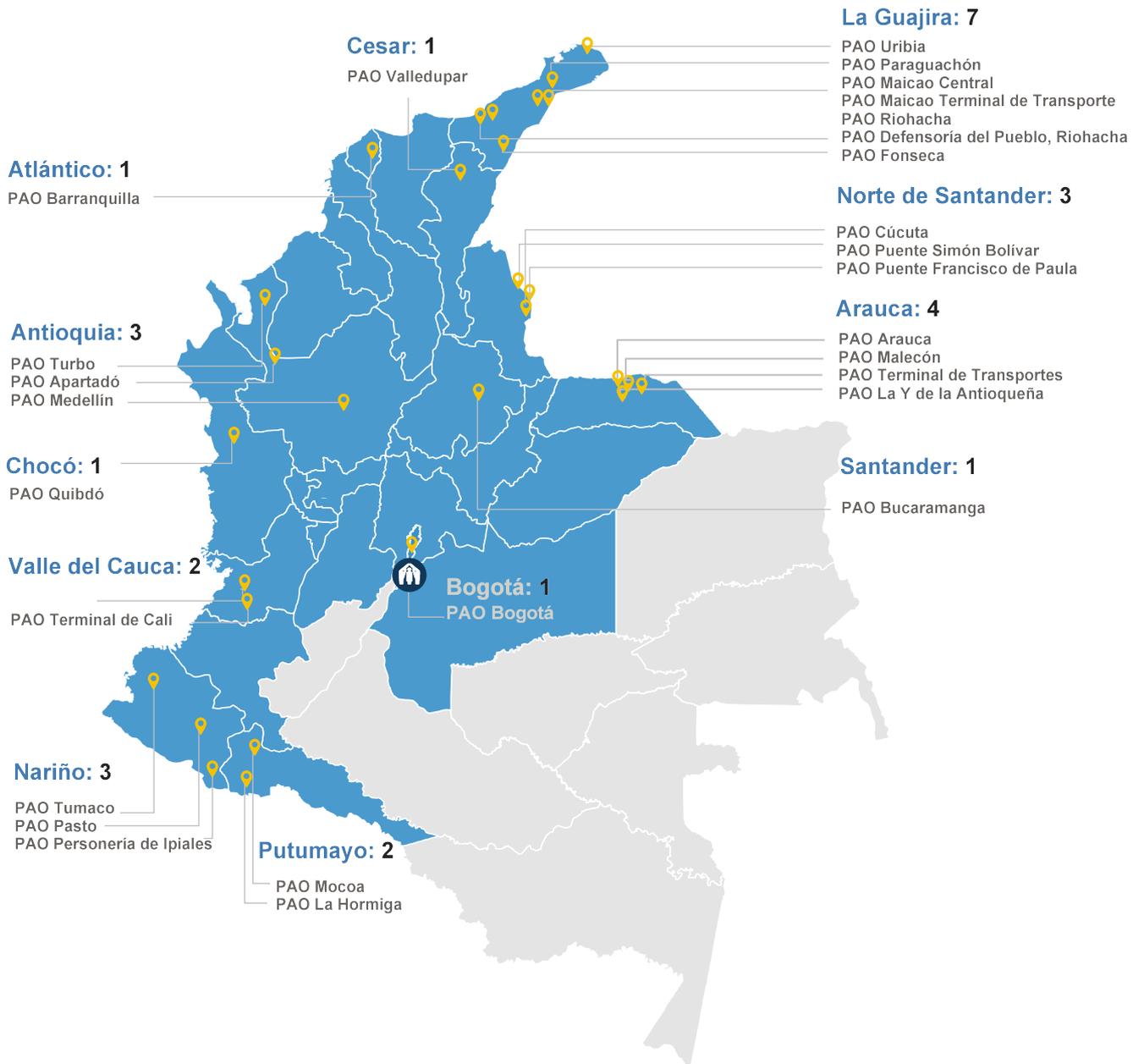
UNHCR provides technical assistance and support to 30 Venezuelan community-based organizations and 2 independent leaderships for community-based protection, outreach and integration with host communities. These actors increased communication and outreach efforts during the COVID-19 crisis, benefitting 589 persons directly and 167,473 indirectly.



### Combatting xenophobia

The anti-xenophobia campaign, Somos Panas Colombia, launched by UNHCR in December 2017, has reached millions of people through communication strategies to combat xenophobia and promote solidarity between Colombians and Venezuelans, as well as to provide information to the population on their rights and reinforce UNHCR Colombia's Communication with Communities strategy. In 2020, the campaign included specific components focused on promoting socioeconomic and cultural integration of refugees, migrants and host communities, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which incidents of xenophobia have increased. An example of the campaign's initiatives to break down stereotypes against the Venezuelan population is the publication entitled "Myths and Real People", which has reached more than 14 million people: <https://somospanascolombia.com/mitos-vs-personas-reales/>

**29** Information and Orientation  
Points or Centres  
(in Spanish PAO)



Branch Office



Coverage Telephone Helplines

## Conflict-affected populations

Colombia is included in the target countries of the High Commissioner's IDP Initiative to operationalize UNHCR's IDP policy.

The operation's mixed protection and solutions strategy ensures that IDP interventions are in line with this new policy, with priorities including:



UNHCR in coordination with its partner, Fundescodes, provides child-friendly spaces for boys, girls and adolescents in Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca department. ©UNHCR/ Laura Cruz Cañon.



### Advocacy

UNHCR advocates with a full range of stakeholders (local and national authorities, civil society, humanitarian, development and peace actors and donors) for measures and interventions that reduce the risk of displacement, ensure a timely and adequate response to displacement and drive solutions to displacement. Equally important is the inclusion of IDPs in national development plans.



Between August and September 2020, UNHCR and partners carried out 55 consultations with IDPs and host communities in 7 departments and 28 municipalities: Antioquia, Chocó, Norte Santander, Arauca, Nariño, Valle del Cauca, and Cauca. Focus groups were organized with women, children, adolescents, older people, indigenous people, Afro-Colombians, LGTBQ+ people and people with disabilities, including with help from community organizations. Focus groups raised concerns over the upsurge in violence, calling for increased institutional presence and coordination among actors (security, health, food security, education and development). They also asked for dialogue and participation in decision-making processes, including in response to displacement. The issue of a lack of trust emerged in the consultations due to flaws in the social protection system, especially acute during the COVID-19 crisis.

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