



SOCIAL JUSTICE
DECENT WORK



Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean

ILO RESPONSE

NOVEMBER 2019

CURRENT SITUATION

The worsening social, economic, human rights and political situation in Venezuela began in 2015 and has generated a humanitarian emergency, resulting in an unprecedented outflow of refugees and migrants from the country into neighbouring states and beyond. With 4.6 million people having left their homes to date, this represents the largest displacement of a population in the modern history of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Neighbouring countries have so far shown great solidarity, providing over 2 million incoming Venezuelans with temporary residence permits and access to the labour market. However, their capacity to respond to such an inflow of people is limited, and both institutions and local communities are now under enormous strain. The governance structures for migratory and refugee flows have reached their limits, with critical challenges to the effective protection of basic labour rights (for both displaced Venezuelans and the local population) through social protection and labour market institutions and policies. As a result, many Venezuelan women, men and children find themselves in an irregular situation, which makes them vulnerable to various forms of exploitation, abuse, violence, and discrimination.

The continued entry of large numbers of Venezuelan refugees and migrants into the national labour market can exacerbate an already challenging situation of high regional levels of informality and decent work deficits, in some cases with the risk of slowing down economic growth.

Venezuelan Refugees & Migrants in the region



Source: R4V Maps and Geodata, November 2019

4,626,968

Venezuelan migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers

Source: R4V Operational Portal, November 2019

2,089,645

People with regular status including resident permits

Source: R4V Operational Portal, November 2019

THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

At the request of the UN Secretary General, the [Inter-Agency Regional Coordination Platform \(R4V\)](#) was established in April 2018, under the coordination of UNHCR and IOM. The ILO, through its Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in Lima, Peru, is working closely with both agencies, to coordinate UN interventions under the R4V Socio Economic and Cultural Integration pillar. Working together with key national and international actors, the ILO has developed an intervention model to address the socio-economic needs of both displaced Venezuelans and host communities.

The [regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan \(RMRP\) 2019](#) was developed by 95 organizations as a way of ensuring a region-wide response, as well as joint collaboration among governments in the region and the international community. Developed in line with governments' priorities, the plan addresses the protection, assistance and integration needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the affected states of Latin America and the Caribbean, by complementing and strengthening national and regional responses, in line with the principles refugees and migrants in the affected states of Latin America and the Caribbean, by complementing and strengthening national and regional governments' responses, in line with national strategies and with the principles of the [New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#). The RMRP for 2020 is currently being developed, and the ILO is actively participating in the process.

In addition, affected governments in the region issued the '[Declaration of Quito on human mobility of Venezuelan citizens in the region](#)' and its related [action plan](#). The Declaration recognizes the importance of ensuring Venezuelans' access to employment opportunities and the role of technical and financial cooperation of specialized international organizations to overcome this crisis. The ILO has been supporting the Quito Process and labour ministries, in collaboration with IOM and UNHCR to promote the implementation of the [Road Map](#) of the Quito Process.



ILO'S COORDINATED RESPONSE STRATEGY

Thanks to its experience in responding to large movements of Syrian refugees in the Middle East and Turkey, but also in Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean, the ILO has developed concrete tools and distilled emerging good practices that can help host countries to strengthen labour markets and respond appropriately to crisis situations. The ILO's adoption of the [Guiding principles on the access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour market in 2016](#) and of the [Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 \(No. 205\)](#) provides to the organization the mandate and the appropriate tools to promote resilience, peace, and social cohesion.

The ILO's approach is based on improvements in the labour market's functioning and the expansion of decent employment opportunities, as key enablers for the transition from humanitarian to development outcomes, especially in protracted crisis situations. The ILO's unique labour market systems assessments are helping inform new policies and programmes in 17 countries, including Mexico, Brazil, Costa Rica and Argentina, and are being deployed in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. In Central America, in cooperation with UNHCR, the ILO is promoting new employment and social protection programmes under the [Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework](#) in Costa Rica, Honduras and Mexico.

Across the region, the ILO is building the capacity of key stakeholders in destination countries (such as Ministries of Labour, employers and workers' organizations and businesses) to improve the governance and capacity of public policies to respond to the needs of both Venezuelans and host communities. This strategy considers the needs of host communities in all interventions undertaken in different areas of the world of work, based on tripartite social dialogue. It promotes the observance of the rights of working people and those seeking work, including their right to organize and defend those rights while guaranteeing access to justice system to claim them. Likewise, it includes a rights-based and gender-sensitive approach to address the socio-economic drivers that deepen inequalities between women and men.

The ILO's response strategy is articulated as follows:

CURRENT SITUATION*	STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS
MIGRATION AND LABOUR POLICIES FRAMEWORKS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The capacity of public institutions to provide effective protection of labour rights to refugee and migrant workers and guarantee social protection is under substantial strain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapt legislation, policies and regulations towards enabling the socio-economic integration of refugees and migrants to ensure alignment with international labour standards, guidance and good practices, including the ILO Guiding Principles on the access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour market. Strengthen the capacities of labour ministries, employers' and workers' organizations and other key institutions on the relevant international labour standards, guidance and good practices and reflected in responses to ensuring decent work for host communities and for refugees and migrants.

* IOM 2018 as of May 2018, 'Análisis: Flujos migratorios de venezolanos en Sudamérica', see: https://robuenosaires.iom.int/sites/default/files/Informes/FMS_VEN_jun15_sp.pdf (12.304 surveys were conducted in Brazil, Colombia and Peru).

CURRENT SITUATION

STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

EMPLOYMENT PERSPECTIVE

- Employment prospects are uncertain among people over 25 years of age, even though 41% have higher education and 90% have secondary education.
 - Unemployment is estimated to be 42%
 - Among those who work, 20% have received lower salaries than initially agreed or have not received any payment.
 - The rate of unemployment for Venezuelan women is 47% compared to 38% for men, despite women having the highest percentage of tertiary education (32% versus 27% of men).
 - The majority of work is in the informal economy, which is characterised by its unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, without access to basic labour rights and minimum wage regulations. The risk of child and forced labour also increases considerably.
- Strengthen public employment services in the areas of employment services, orientation and intermediation and to facilitate the access of refugees and migrants to the programs and available services.
 - Collection and systematization of data on demand for labour and existing skills to facilitate integration in the labour market.
 - Promotion of soft-skills training, vocational training programs and trainings in areas of greater demand in the labour market.
 - Support the response of institutions to reduce the risk of child labour, based on the ILO Regional Initiative “[Latin America and Caribbean Free of Child Labour](#)”.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND VALUE CHAINS

- Access to loans, as well as programs and business advisory services and entrepreneurship promotion programs is limited for refugees and migrants.
 - Available information is insufficient to establish productive chains with larger companies, in order to safeguard a small and incipient company.
- Identify productive sectors and value chains to target with pilot interventions.
 - Enhance business development and financial advisory services for the creation and consolidation of companies that allow access for refugees and migrants.
 - Strengthen policies promoting micro, small and Medium Enterprises.
 - Implement ILO business methodologies such as [Start your Own Business \(SYB\)](#) and [GET AHEAD](#).

RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION OF PREVIOUS LEARNING

- The majority of Venezuelan refugees and migrants with secondary and university education do not work in jobs related to their specialisation.
 - The certification of prior learning is expensive and its administrative procedures are long.
- Simplify procedures and requirements for the recognition of prior learning for refugees and migrants.
 - Establish a regional framework of qualifications based on existing regional agreements.

CURRENT SITUATION

STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

SOCIAL PROTECTION

- Women work less hours due to lack or difficulty in accessing care services for their children.
 - There are barriers to access social protection and health services.
 - Due to the interruption of their contributing history, there is a risk of losing the right to social security benefits.
- Promote social protection for refugee and migrant workers and their families, based on ILO International Standards on social protection and other relevant social security standards promoting equality of treatment.
 - Support social protection institutions to analyse barriers of access and adopt measures and processes to overcome them.
 - Support stakeholders of the social protection system to extend coverage in a socially and financially sustainable fashion.
 - Promote the negotiation and signing of agreements to coordinate social security regimes between countries in order to foster more resilient and crisis responsive systems.

SOCIAL COHESION AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

- Large numbers of refugees and migrants have fuelled xenophobic attitudes and the proliferation of hostile news articles. These behaviours have increased the risk of social tensions between host and displaced populations and led to several security incidents.
- Reinforce conflict prevention and social cohesion through social dialogue platforms and communication channels, raising awareness on the importance of decent work for refugees, migrants and host communities.
 - Equip refugees, migrants and host communities with conflict management skills.
 - Deploy ILO's [Jobs for Peace and Resilience \(JPR\)](#) programme to sustain social cohesion through the creation of businesses and cooperatives, particularly joint ventures between host communities, refugees and migrants among other job creation interventions.
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A MULTI-PHASED APPROACH

Anticipating that the crisis is becoming protracted, the intervention strategy foresees a multi-phased approach. The ILO's mandate, positioned at the core of the humanitarian-development nexus, is consistent with the provision of both immediate livelihood solutions for the affected population and longer-term institutional solutions to ensure sustainable and rights-based public policies.



In the **short term**, it is vital to get a clearer picture of the work and skills profiles of refugees and migrants in destination countries. Therefore, data on existing skills will be collected to create work profiles of displaced Venezuelans to facilitate labour market inclusion, and delineate employment generation strategies in both urban and rural areas. Alliances will be established with the private sector and workers' organizations, to align supply and demand for employment. Studies of productive sectors and value chains will be developed for the promotion of entrepreneurship as will studies on simplifying the procedures for the recognition of previous learning. Short-term activities will also aim to uphold labour and social protection rights.



In the **medium term**, it is necessary to strengthen institutional mechanisms, practices and services offered by labour market actors (public and private) to refugees and migrants, both in urban and rural areas without displacing local workers. This includes technical assistance to National Employment Systems to update their services, make them more inclusive, with new procedures and guidelines.



In the **long term**, intervention strategies should enhance the national and regional normative frameworks and governance mechanisms on labour migration and forced displacement, while developing institutional capacities of central and local municipal governments to expand labour market access for refugees and migrants and for the communities hosting them under decent working conditions.

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

In order to ensure a response in the shortest time possible, **the ILO committed US\$ 2 million** from its un-earmarked voluntary funds ([Regular Budget Supplementary Account](#)) in 2018 to kick-start seed interventions in Ecuador (Quito and Guayaquil), Colombia (Barranquilla and Cali) and Peru (North of Lima) in 2019. **With an additional US\$ 2 million** in support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the ILO is further expanding support for the economic integration and decent work of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Ecuador (Cuenca, Manta and Santo Domingo) and Peru (Lima, Piura, Arequipa and Trujillo).

Beyond this, the ILO estimates a **funding gap of US\$ 10.6 million in voluntary resources** to cover the implementation of its strategy on the socio-economic integration of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Curaçao, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.