

Venezuela

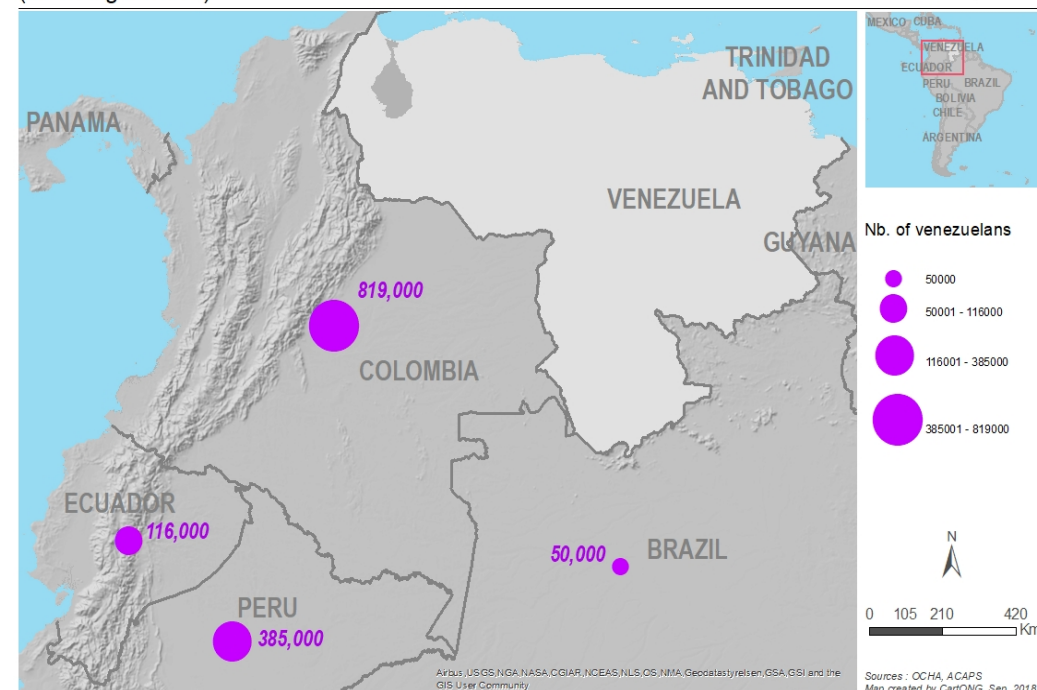
Regional update

The deepening political and socio-economic crisis in Venezuela has led to one of the biggest mass displacements in the history of South America. Although no consolidated figure for the region is available, all sources indicate that migration from Venezuela to neighbouring countries is drastically increasing. 117,300 Venezuelans filed asylum claims in the first half of 2018 alone, already more than the number of asylum claims reported at the end of 2017 (113,438).

Many Venezuelans in host countries are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. Food, nutrition, health and WASH needs have been identified. Protection assistance is also crucial, including legal help with documentation in order to access healthcare and employment. Venezuelan migrants also face growing xenophobia from host communities, and are at risk of exploitation, trafficking, and SGBV.

As the crisis inside Venezuela continues to deteriorate, host countries are increasingly struggling to respond to the influx of Venezuelans. The rising number of people entering neighbouring countries is putting a strain on basic services, especially in border areas. Recent measures in several countries deter Venezuelans from entering, such as limiting admission to people with a passport, or enforcing quotas at the border.

Venezuelans in neighbouring countries
(as of August 2018)



Key priorities



Increase in migration
in the region since 2017



Protection concerns
violence, separation, xenophobia



Disease outbreaks
at border areas

Legal assistance
required to access basic services

Humanitarian constraints



The Venezuelan government largely denies the scale of humanitarian needs and restricts access for international humanitarian organisations.

Overview of the current situation

In August 2018, as the influx of Venezuelans continued to increase, neighbouring countries began implementing stricter entry restrictions or making it harder to apply for legal status.

The regional response to the Venezuelan influx has, for the most part, been reactive rather than proactive, with countries applying unilateral strategies to deal with the migration from Venezuela. However, ambassadors from Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru met from 27 August to 4 September in Bogota to devise joint efforts to address the crisis. (EBC 28/08/2018) Representatives gave an overview of Venezuelan immigration in their country and the impact in terms of health, education, work, and protection. They reaffirmed the importance of cooperating to establish basic common principles. (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores Colombia 31/08/2018)

Recent developments

Colombia

Between **6 April and 8 June 2018**, the Colombian government carried out a mass registration of Venezuelans living in Colombia (the RAMV – Ejercicio masivo de registro para los venezolanos). 442,462 people were registered, more than 89% of whom stated their intention to stay in Colombia. 27% of registered Venezuelans were children, of whom only 49% were enrolled in Colombia's education system. Only 1% of all registered were enrolled in Colombia's health system. (UNHCR 03/08/2018; 16/07/2018) The report stated that registered Venezuelans would ultimately be regularised and be able to access basic services. (Government of Colombia 13/06/2018) However, there was no detailed plan or timeframe given for when this will happen.

More than 60% of Venezuelans in Colombia are in an irregular situation, which not only prevents them from accessing basic services, but also prevents them from working in the country. (UNHCR 03/08/2018). In June 2018, 376,572 Venezuelans had a regular status in Colombia, and only 181,472 of them had a PEP (Permiso Especial de Permanencia) a permit granting them the rights to reside and work in Colombia for two years. (Government of Colombia 13/06/2018) On **2 August**, only a few days before his mandate ended, President Juan Manuel Santos granted PEPs to more than 442,000 additional Venezuelans. (Al Jazeera 09/08/2018, UNHCR 03/08/2018)

Colombia's new president, Iván Duque, took office on **7 August**. It is unclear what his plans are to address the situation. In April 2018, he suggested that Colombia should take steps to recognise Venezuelan university degrees and offer temporary work permits without

undermining Colombians. He also proposed that funds dedicated to the implementation of the peace accords could be reallocated towards assisting Venezuelans in Colombia. (El Nacional 25/04/2018, WOLA 07/2018)

Brazil

On **6 August**, admission in Roraima state, where most Venezuelan migrants in Brazil have been arriving, was suspended and the border with Venezuela closed, due to lack of resources to respond to the influx. The federal decision was overturned a few hours later, but as a result of the brief closure, more than 200 Venezuelans were unable to finalise their immigration registration, leaving them in a vulnerable position as their departure was delayed. (USAID 10/08/2018, UN News 07/08/2018)

Violent protests by Brazilian residents in Pacaraima on **18 August** drove some 1,200 Venezuelans out of the country and back into Venezuela, after their tents and belonging were set on fire. The protests were sparked by an attack on a Brazilian shop owner allegedly perpetrated by Venezuelan migrants. (Reuters 19/08/2018, DW 27/08/2018) A few days after the incident, the number of daily crossings at the border dropped from 800 to 400. The government also sent 300 soldiers (in addition to the 270 already present) to the border to reinforce security. (The Guardian 02/09/2018)

In the aftermath of this incident, on **30 August**, the Brazilian government announced that it was considering restricting the influx of Venezuelans. Between 700 and 800 people now cross the border daily, and the new regulation would limit this number to between 100 and 200 people per day. (Thomson Reuters Foundation 29/08/2018) The influx of Venezuelans into other neighbouring countries might increase if this regulation were implemented.

The population influx into Brazil raises public health concerns. Between February and mid-July 2018, almost 680 confirmed measles cases including three deaths were reported in border states Amazonas and Roraima. The outbreak is expected to worsen, with some 2,700 additional suspected cases currently being laboratory tested. (USAID 10/08/2018) Venezuelan indigenous people are reportedly experiencing food shortages, and some 750 are forced to live in hammocks and tents at the Pintolandia shelter in Boa Vista. (UN News 07/08/2018, UNHCR 07/08/2018)

Ecuador

About 20% of Venezuelans arriving in Ecuador stay in the country, with the remainder transiting to other countries, Peru and Chile in particular. (UNHCR 10/08/2018) An increase in the number of Venezuelans leaving Colombia to Ecuador has been observed since the beginning of 2018, with over 315,000 crossing the Rumichaca border from January to June 2018, at a rate of 2,500 people per day on average, more than twice exceeding the current capacity of the border centres. This is a significant increase from the 230,000

recorded for the entire year in 2017. (UNHCR 10/08/2018, UNHCR 16/07/2018) This number rose dramatically in early August, when an average of 4,200 people crossed the border every day. In the first week of August alone, 30,000 Venezuelans entered Ecuador. (USAID 10/08/2018, Reuters 09/08/2018)

In response, a state of emergency for the whole month of August was declared on **8 August** in Carchi, El Oro, and Pichincha provinces. The state of emergency allows the Ecuadorian government to expand its response capacity by increasing the number of doctors, social workers, immigration workers, and police deployed to assist Venezuelans. (USAID 10/08/2018, Reuters 09/08/2018)

On **18 August**, Ecuadorian authorities introduced a new regulation requiring all Venezuelans entering the country to have a valid passport rather than an identity card. (Al Jazeera 20/08/2018) The minister of interior declared that the new requirement was intended to limit human trafficking. (CNN 19/08/2018) Venezuela has stopped issuing passports because of shortages of ink and paper, as well as a malfunctioning bureaucracy. As a result, the only way to obtain a passport is to pay a lot of money, which is not an option for a lot of people. Many Venezuelans have no passport. (Al Jazeera 20/08/2018) The Quito court overturned the decision on **24 August**. However, it remains unclear whether the decision to overturn is permanent or subject to the contingency plan the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is supposed to present in October. (El Comercio 25/08/2018)

As a result of this passport regulation, the number of Venezuelans entering Ecuador dropped significantly, with an average of 1,200 people crossing the border every day from **9-31 August**. (El Comercio 31/08/2018) It is unclear whether the people who were unable to cross the border without a passport returned to Venezuela, were left stranded at the border, or transited to other destination countries such as Colombia.

Over the last few months, a growing number of xenophobic acts against Venezuelan migrants in Ecuador have been reported. (The Guardian 19/08/2018, UNHCR 10/08/2018)

Peru

The number of arrivals in Peru has increased compared to the beginning of May, when about 1,000 crossed the border every day. Between 1,500 and 2,000 people now enter Peru per day, for the most part through the northern border in Tumbes, after having crossed Colombia and Ecuador. In June, this number rose to almost 3,000 per day, and increased again in August, with a daily average of 4,200 arrivals. At the border, reception centres are stretched, as national capacity to respond to the influx of refugees is limited. (El Universo 18/08/2018, El Nuevo Siglo 13/08/2018, UNHCR 16/07/2018, USAID 10/08/2018, EVTV 08/06/2018, IOM 14/05/2018)

On **25 August**, the government of Peru announced that all Venezuelans entering Peru would have to show a passport. Very few Venezuelans have a passport, and obtaining

one is often a long and expensive process. (CNN 19/08/2018) A significant decrease in the number of people crossing the border was observed over the next few days. On 27 August, 1,630 Venezuelans arrived in Tumbes, 60% fewer than before the new requirement was implemented. (Andina 27/08/2018) As is the case in Ecuador, it is unclear where those who are unable to cross the border have gone.

A state of emergency was declared on **28 August** in Aguas Verdes and Zarumilla districts, Zarumilla province, and Tumbes district, Tumbes province. The Peruvian government cited an “imminent danger to health and sanitation” in these three districts because of a sudden increase in the number of arrivals, 4,200 per day in August. The measure will be implemented for 60 days. (Andina 28/08/2018, El Universo 18/08/2018)

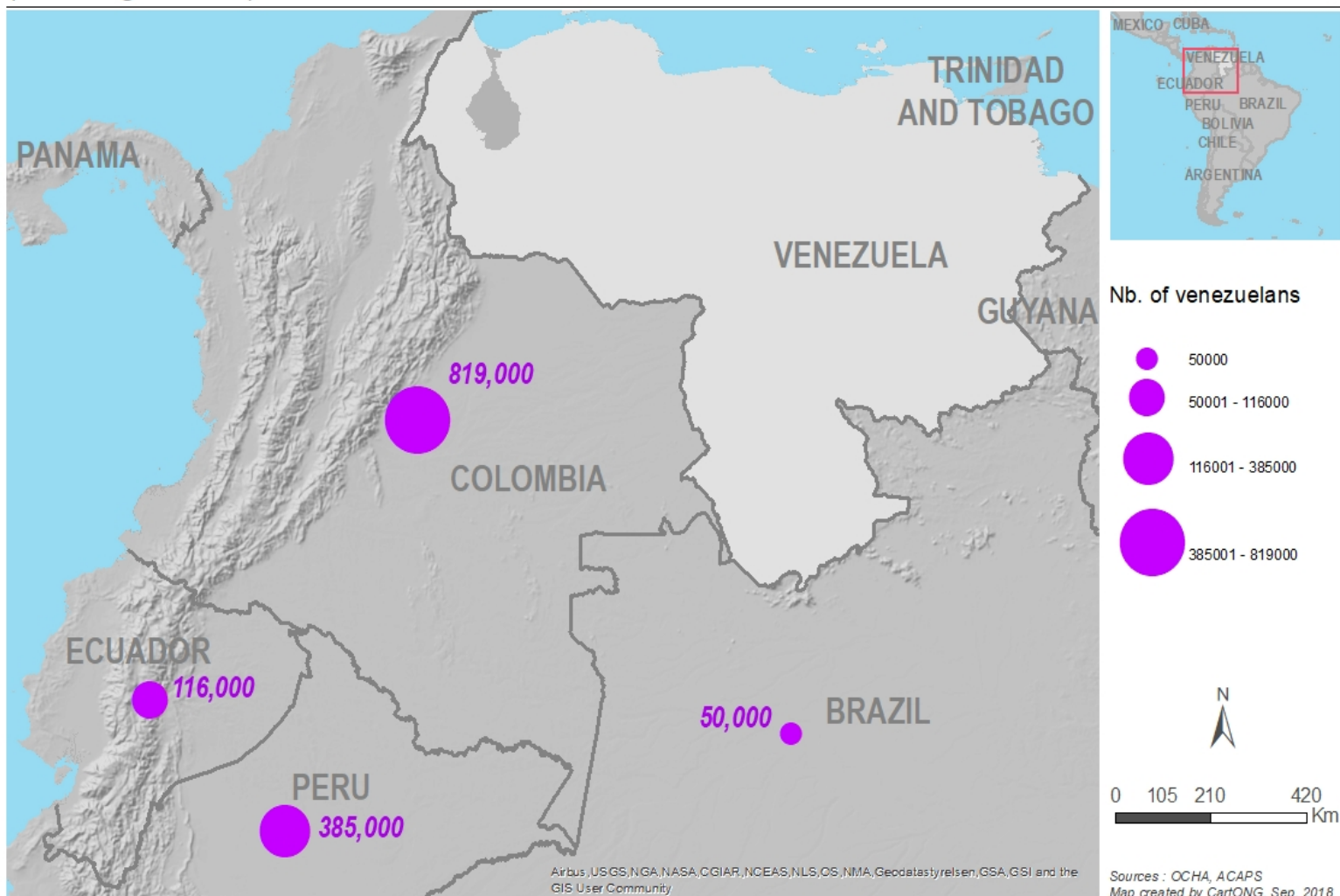
Anticipated scope and scale

There is no indication that the influx of Venezuelans will slow in the near future. Meanwhile, the regional response to the displacement crisis is showing its limitations. This is in part due to the limited local and national capacities of host countries that can no longer cope with the population influx. The lack of a harmonised regional framework is also hampering the response.

Recent policies implemented in neighbouring countries, such as restricting the number of entries and passport requirements, are likely to worsen the situation for thousands of Venezuelans trying to flee the country. As a growing number of xenophobic and discriminatory practices against Venezuelans in neighbouring countries are being reported, protection concerns are likely to increase (especially for vulnerable groups such as people without documentation or indigenous people) without any legal mechanisms put in place to protect them.

As countries begin to apply stricter entry requirements, there is a risk of an increasing number of migrants being stranded at borders areas. A long-term situation of protracted displacement could develop if no efforts are made towards a harmonised regional framework. (Centre for Global Development 06/08/2018)

Venezuelans in neighbouring countries (as of August 2018)



Estimates of migrants from Venezuela per country vary slightly according to the source, and no common consolidated figure for the region is available. Nevertheless, all sources clearly indicate that migration from Venezuela to countries in the region is drastically increasing.

Following the registration exercise carried out by the Colombian government (with support from UNHCR and IOM) from 6 April to 8 June 2018, the new official estimate of the total of **Venezuelans in Colombia is 819,000 people**. This is almost a 50% increase from the 550,000 at the beginning of 2018, and a 173% increase from the 300,000 in June 2017. (UNHCR 16/07/2018, WOLA 07/2018)

There are **over 50,000 Venezuelans in Brazil**, half of whom have work and residency permits allowing them to legally stay in the country. Most are located in the north of the country, in Roraima state. (UN News 07/08/2018, USAID 10/08/2018, UNHCR 16/07/2018)

Around 20% (**about 116,000**) of **Venezuelans arriving in Ecuador** stay in the country, with the remainder transiting to other countries, Peru and Chile in particular. (UNHCR 10/08/2018) More than 5,000 Venezuelans have sought asylum in Ecuador since 2016, with the majority of asylum claims (4,003) filed in the first half of 2018. 1,000 claims were filed in June 2018 alone. (UNHCR 16/07/2018)

According to the Peruvian government, there are **385,000 Venezuelans in Peru**, 30,000 of whom arrived between July and August 2018. (UNHCR 16/07/2018, USAID 10/08/2018)

Timeline of developments in the region (August 2018)

