

Venezuela

Multi-year Strategy 2023 – 2025



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1.1 Executive Summary

UNHCR's Multiyear Strategy aims to help break the cycle of human mobility and displacement impacting households and communities. UNHCR will work on multiple fronts to advance the triple nexus (humanitarian-development-peace) for enhanced protection and solutions for prioritized population groups.

Population trends in Venezuela are dynamic, and include ongoing outflows from the country, an increase in returns to Venezuela, both spontaneous and under adverse circumstances, cross-border pendular movements, and displacement due to climate-related disasters as well as localized violence and insecurity. Additionally, Venezuela hosts foreign nationals in need of international protection.

In response to these dynamics, UNHCR will work closely with key stakeholders towards preventing and mitigating the risks and vulnerabilities associated with human mobility and displacement, strengthening response capacities for people in situation of human mobility or displaced (and other situations of heightened protection risk), supporting efforts for durable solutions in all their forms, and leading multi-stakeholder efforts in climate change and environmental disaster preparedness and response.

Prioritized population groups will include refugees and asylum seekers, Venezuelan returnees, displaced people and others in situation of human mobility, and people at heightened risk of human mobility or displacement. Across these population groups, UNHCR will pay special attention to women, children and adolescents, youth, indigenous populations, and others residing in marginalized areas or communities affected by violence and insecurity.

In this context, UNHCR seeks to impact the lives of people by:

- i) reducing exposure to risks and addressing emergency and other basic needs;
- ii) increasing access to, and enjoyment of, fundamental rights; and
- iii) enhancing perspectives for durable solutions

To achieve these impacts, UNHCR will prioritize collaboration and coordination across the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) coordination spaces, including leadership and co-leadership roles as they relate to the Protection and Shelter/Energy/NFI clusters, as well as working groups on Human Mobility and Reintegration, Disaster Risk Reduction, Partnerships and

Financing, Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, as well as the Interagency Programme Group (UNSDCF equivalent of the HRP Inter-Cluster). With regards to returnees, UNHCR will continue to build on the reintegration intervention it implemented in the state of Miranda, the IOM-led project in the state of Táchira, along the border with Colombia and the nexus project launched with FAO and UNDP in the states of Bolívar, Miranda and Zulia. Enhanced engagement with development actors, civil society, key line ministries and institutions as well as academic and private sectors, will be key to advancing on the intended impacts.

UNHCR's strategy is closely aligned with other strategic and response frameworks, such as Objectives 1-3 of the HRP, Strategic Priorities 1-3 of the UNSDCF which itself is aligned to the National Development Plan (Plan de la Patria), and Objectives 1, 2 and 4 of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).

1.2 Situation Analysis

Inside Venezuela, there are challenges related to the prevention or mitigation of risks and vulnerabilities, access to rights, and prospects for solutions. According to the HRP, 7.6 million people inside the country are in need of humanitarian assistance, almost half of whom are children and adolescents.

Food and nutrition, health services, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) are among the priority needs. Access to personal documentation is an additional gap which features prominently in consultations with the population. Protection Monitoring conducted by UNHCR identifies GBV, children exposed to violence, and family separation as further risks. The Government explains the existence of these needs and vulnerabilities on the unilateral coercive measures that have been put in place against it.

These needs and risks are factors that feed into the fluidity and dynamics of population movement trends. According to figures reported by host countries, more than 7 million Venezuelans have moved abroad in recent years. Over the past few years, population movements have become more complex, resulting in a combination of continued outflows, pendular movements along border areas, secondary and onward movements between host countries in the region and northbound, as well as returns to Venezuela.

Precise figures are difficult to come by due to multiple reasons, including the high numbers of *caminantes* who use informal crossing points despite the reopening of borders with neighbouring countries. Despite the challenges, UNHCR monitoring provides several insights into population trends. Firstly, population outflows continue and remain the predominant tendency. In 2023, more than 64 per cent of people in transit interviewed were leaving the country, with approximately 65 per cent stating their

intention to leave definitively, regardless of destination. Secondly, spontaneous returns accounted for 36 percent of cross-border movements in 2023, with approximately 59 per cent expressing their intention to remain in Venezuela. It is important to note as well that 52 percent of people departing had already left Venezuela in the past, and that 50 per cent of those returning to Venezuela had returned previously. The primary given reasons for both leaving and returning to Venezuela, were access to livelihoods opportunities and family reunification. This dynamic points to a cycle of human mobility in which a significant part of the population is unable to find some measure of stability, or a definitive solution.

Apart from personal situations, there are some economic factors that are impacting population trends in the country, influencing the perceptions and perspectives of those considering leaving or returning. Venezuela has left hyperinflation behind, dollarized its economy and registered in 2022 and 2023 two consecutive years of economic growth for the first time in over a decade. But inflation is still affecting the purchasing power of large segments of the population, especially public employees and pensioners paid in the national currency, who often depend on remittances from relatives abroad to access the most basic goods and services.

Population movements are also the result of climate-related disasters, exacerbated by climate change, as well as localized violence and insecurity. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Venezuela has the second-highest rate of disaster displacement in Latin America and the Caribbean. Additionally, the presence of illegal armed groups and criminal networks present displacement risks for the population, especially in border and rural areas, as well as marginalized urban communities. These factors feed into further departures from the country and internal displacement.

For foreign nationals in need of international protection, Venezuela's legal framework is formally very open. However, there are practical barriers for admission to territory, access to RSD procedures, a backlog of refugee status determination (RSD) decisions and documentation, and prohibitive fees of residency permits.

In consideration of the above, and in line with both the HRP and the UNSDCF, UNHCR will prioritize the following population groups impacted across the spectrum of human mobility and displacement:

- Refugees and asylum seekers,
- Venezuelan returnees,
- Displaced people and others in situation of human mobility, and,
- People at heightened risk of human mobility or displacement

Across these population groups, UNHCR will prioritize support to specific segments of the population, including: i) women; ii) children and adolescents; iii) youth; iv)

indigenous people; v) isolated and marginalized communities, especially those affected by illegal armed groups and organized crime; vi) people in situation of human mobility (including foreign nationals in need of international protection); and vii) returnees, a demographics that has been prioritized by the UNCT as part of a UN Common Pledge. Protection and solutions interventions will also strengthen institutional capacities to mitigate the risks of displacement in the most vulnerable communities and risks associated with displacement for people in mobility, through multi-sector actions coordinated with other rent stakeholders to achieve durable solutions. Priority will be given to actions aimed at strengthening and supporting community-level capacities to respond to the needs of these population groups.

1.3 Vision and Strategic Orientation

Developments in the operational context have led UNHCR to reorient its 2023-2025 Multiyear Strategy and focus on breaking the cycle of human mobility or displacement through effective access to rights and meaningful life options across all prioritized population groups.

To achieve this, UNHCR will pursue a holistic and collaborative approach, interconnected across Impact and Outcome areas, with a focus on advancing the triple nexus in favour of at-risk and affected populations. This approach will require UNHCR to work directly with, and strengthen the capacities of, key institutional counterparts and communities. Furthermore, the strategy requires close coordination with other humanitarian and development stakeholders across the UN System, NGOs and civil society, as well as academic and private sectors. UNHCR will also leverage its coordination leadership and co-leadership roles – such as the Protection and Shelter/Energy/NFI clusters, as well as working groups related to Human Mobility and Reintegration, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Partnerships and Financing – while actively participating in the coordination spaces led by other actors.

Within and across each component of the results framework, the revised strategy pursues simultaneous and complementary advances to: i) prevent or mitigate risks and vulnerabilities associated with human mobility and displacement; ii) strengthen the protection environment and response capacity for displaced people and other population groups at heightened risk; and iii) prepare the groundwork, or advance on existing opportunities, for durable solutions amid a fluid and dynamic context.

Based on the above, the intended impacts of the revised strategy and results framework include:

1) People with and for whom UNHCR works meet their basic needs while their exposure to protection risks is reduced. Through awareness-raising, as well as technical support for preparedness and mitigation, it is intended that risks can be reduced, if not

prevented. The development and implementation of contingency and response protocols will have the specific objective of maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness of response when emergencies or other situations requiring immediate assistance occur. To that end, UNHCR will invest in institutional and community capacity-building opportunities as well as stakeholder coordination and complementarity.

2) Affected populations have increased access to, and enjoyment of, fundamental rights. UNHCR aims to improve access to rights through awareness-raising, information and orientation, capacity-building, as well as the direct provision of complementary services in coordination with key stakeholders. Intended impacts include increased access to documentation, improved prevention and response to gender-based violence, as well as strengthened protective environments for children and adolescents.

3) Affected populations become self-reliant and reintegrate, and those with international protection needs access local integration, voluntary repatriation and resettlement. Intended impacts related to solutions will be pursued on multiple fronts, including: i) facilitating meaningful life options for people returning to, or at risk of, departing from Venezuela; ii) removing barriers to local integration for asylum-seekers and refugees as well as; iii) supporting voluntary repatriation for refugees who voluntarily opt to leave the country.

UNHCR's strategy is aligned with other strategic and response frameworks, such as Objectives 1-3 of the HRP, Strategic Priorities 1-3 of the UNSDCF which itself is aligned to the National Development Plan (Plan de la Patria), and Objectives 1, 2 and 4 of the GCR.

1.4 Fair Access and Representation

The age, gender and diversity (AGD) policy is mainstreamed into all intervention areas and guides community engagement activities with the people with and for whom UNHCR works. Participatory assessments, surveys, needs assessments, and all interventions are conducted equitably for the participation of all population groups, including children, gender-based violence survivors, LGBTIQ+ people, indigenous people, people with disabilities, and elderly people. The results of these assessments are used in the design of UNHCR's differentiated programs and they are conveyed in a timely manner to the participants.

UNHCR actively participates in inter-agency forums to ensure protection mainstreaming and that humanitarian assistance is delivered with full adherence to the age, gender, and diversity approach, and in accordance with inter-agency guidelines for accountability to affected people.

Together with other governmental and humanitarian actors, UNHCR will conduct awareness-raising, information and orientation activities with and AGD approach, as well as support the strengthening of community networks. This will support inclusive and integral identification of protection risks and needs followed by the design of interventions by community members with an intersectionality focus, thus leaving no one behind.

UNHCR will also consolidate its shelter-as-a-protection-tool strategy (PROSH) to address the needs of the people with and for whom UNHCR works through key impact community/institutional interventions such as rehabilitation of safe shelters for gender-based violence and trafficking survivors; rehabilitation of schools as to increase capacity for the inclusion of returnee children; rehabilitation of community spaces for the promotion of peaceful coexistence activities such as Sport for Protection, among others jointly identified with communities and other local actors.

UNHCR will support the National Commission for Refugees (CONARE) in the maintenance of a disaggregated data system for registering and documenting asylum-seekers and refugees, including those who reach through the family unity principle. UNHCR will also promote CONARE's engagement with other governmental actors for the proper referral of asylum-seekers and refugees to access rights and services as per their AGD characteristics.

2. Impact Statements

Impact statement

Affected populations have increased access to, and enjoyment of, fundamental rights.

Impact area: Attaining favourable protection environments

Outcome statements

Affected populations have access to documentation and protection redress

Outcome area: Access to territory, registration and documentation

GBV survivors have adequate and timely access to quality services and stakeholders are actively engaged in GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response

Outcome area: Gender-based violence

Children at risk are included in national child protection systems and have access to child friendly procedures and services

Outcome area: Child protection

Impact statement

People with and for whom UNHCR works meet their basic needs while their exposure to protection risks is reduced.

Impact area: Realizing rights in safe environments

Outcome statements

Affected populations have access to assistance and services for basic and emergency needs based on their socioeconomic vulnerabilities and capacities

Outcome area: Well-being and basic needs

Impact statement

Affected populations become self-reliant and reintegrate, and those with international protection needs access local integration, voluntary repatriation and resettlement.

Impact area: Securing solutions

Outcome statements

Communities support returnees to reintegrate and peacefully coexist

Outcome area: Community engagement and women's empowerment

Affected populations have access to decent employment and self-employment opportunities

Outcome area: Self-reliance, economic inclusion and livelihoods

People with and for whom UNHCR works have effective access to local services in Venezuela, including via voluntary repatriation and reintegration

Outcome area: Voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration