

www.ifrc.org
Saving lives,
changing minds.

Information bulletin no. 2 Americas: Population Movement

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

MDR42004 Americas Population Movement MDRCO014 Colombia Population Movement	Date of issue: 4 December 2020
Date of disaster: Since 2018	Point of contact: Focal points in Colombia: Juana Giraldo: Migration Operations Manager for Colombia, IFRC; email: juana.giraldo@ifrc.org Focal point in the Regional Office: Santiago Luengo - Regional Operation Manager, IFRC; santiago.luengo@ifrc.org
Host National Society: Argentine Red Cross, Brazilian Red Cross, Bolivian Red Cross, Chilean Red Cross, Ecuadorian Red Cross, Red Cross Society of Panama, Peruvian Red Cross and Uruguayan Red Cross	
Number of people affected: 5.5 Million	Number of people to be assisted through the Appeals: Americas Population Movement: 883,900 people Colombia Population Movement: 645,000 people
N° of National Societies currently involved in the operation: Argentine Red Cross, Brazilian Red Cross, Bolivian Red Cross, Chilean Red Cross, Colombian Red Cross, Ecuadorian Red Cross, Red Cross Society of Panama, Peruvian Red Cross and Uruguayan Red Cross, German Red Cross, American Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross, International Committee of the Red Cross and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	
N° of other partner organizations involved in the operation: Coordinating the response for refugees and migrants from Venezuela and the host communities, which brings together 151 response actors at the regional and national level, is carried out through the Regional Platform Interagency Coordination (R4V). This response is complemented by eight national and subregional platforms in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, at the national level, and at the subregional level in the Caribbean, Central America and Mexico and the Southern Cone.	

The IFRC Regional Office for the Americas is publishing this report to inform on the new impact and the change in population movement dynamics. Moreover, the bulletin reflects the coordination and efforts of National Societies and the IFRC in addressing the needs of migrants affected by COVID-19 and the consequent border closures and movement restrictions, which considerably limited refugees' regular flow migrants increase flow in irregular entry points in the region.

This bulletin is issued for information purposes and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The National Societies, supported by emergency appeals launched by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), are seeking funding and other assistance from donors. For more information, please see

[24-month report on the Colombia Operation](#) and the [24-month report on the Regional Operation](#).

The situation

As highlighted with the bulletin issued in the previous month¹, as the COVID-19 pandemic spreads in the region and as countries started to relax restrictions, different changes have been observed in migration flows of Venezuelan nationals in the region.

Given this situation, the IFRC, and the National Societies involved in the process, including the ICRC, continue to support and monitor the situation, especially in border areas, and to take measures to respond to these changes because of possible greater flows as the COVID-19 situation stabilizes, and changes compared to the volatile context inside Venezuela.

With this objective, all National Societies have continued to collect different primary and secondary data at the several Humanitarian Service Points², by interviewing migrants and different strategic stakeholders in the territory during November.

PANAMA

As highlighted in the last bulletin, according to official Migration data, although the land borders remain closed, the flow of migrants in Darien continues to increase. According to SENAFRONT (State Border Service), it highlights an increase in the number of Venezuelan people and Cuban people, something that had not been observed in 2018 and 2019. Also, the IFRC and CRP have underlined the increase in sexual and physical violence and assaults on the migratory route. Those who have reported have been accompanied in the process of protection.

COLOMBIA

According to Migración Colombia, between 14 March to 22 October 2020 116,000 Venezuelans returned to their country through official border crossings (including some pendular movements during the first days of the COVID-19 preventative isolation measures)³. However, since mid-October, a massive influx of Venezuelans had started to return from Venezuela to Colombia in caravans through irregular pathways. The borders will remain closed until the 1 December. Nevertheless, there is no official figure for the number of people that have entered the country in this recent inflow.

Furthermore, in October, the national interagency group “Grupos Interagencial sobre flujos migratorios mixtos” (GIFMM), conducted a [Joint Characterization of Flows of refugees and migrants](#) in seven departments in Colombia, with a total of 742 interviews, representing 1,921 people in-transit. According to their results: *“82 per cent of refugees and migrants reported that they had entered Colombia through irregular border crossings, with 87 per cent reported having an irregular status as they do not have valid documentation, or the documentation expired. In addition, some 39 per cent of the refugees and migrants had spent the last two years in Venezuela, confirming that most new arrivals in Venezuelans in Colombia resemble re-entries (more than 60 per cent). The main reasons to leave Venezuela included the lack of access to livelihoods or low incomes (91 per cent) and insufficient access to food (78 per cent), medical services (54 per cent) and education (26 per cent). In addition, 57 per cent report Colombia as their place of destination, followed by Peru and Ecuador (19 per cent each), Chile (4 per cent) and other destinations (1 per cent).”* (R4V Monitoring of Movements. October 2020).

Additionally, the recent Hurricane Iota along with La Niña season have severely impacted Colombia, mostly in the regions with a high presence of migrants like La Guajira, Magdalena, Bolívar, Atlántico, and Arauca. According to the [rainy season Flash Update #1 of OCHA](#) from 15 November 2020, more than 224,000 people have been affected in

¹ <https://www.ifrc.org/docs/Appeals/20/IB26102020.pdf>

² <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/document/humanitarian-service-points/>

³ Source: Migración Colombia: <https://www.migracioncolombia.gov.co/venezuela>

the country, mainly by landslides and floods, mostly in cities like Cucuta, Norte de Santander, and Cartagena, Bolivar, with high presence of migrants, affecting both host communities and people coming from Venezuela

| **ECUADOR**

Since the declaration of the national state of emergency, due to the pandemic, on 16 March 2020, migrants and refugees are in a very vulnerable situation by the Ecuadorian state. They have been subjected to discrimination, xenophobia, evictions, their means of subsistence have disappeared, they have not been able to access the health system or medical treatment. According to the National Society, the host population continues to perceive them as a factor of contagion of the COVID-19. During the first months of the crisis, many Venezuelans have returned to Venezuela, while since September and October, due to the countries' economic recovery measures, Ecuador is one of the main countries of transit and destination in the region.

| **PERU**

Since 16 March 2020 to date, the border between Peru and Ecuador has been closed, and this situation is expected to continue until the end of the year. Due to this context, only companies that export and import basic needs can enter and leave Peru. According to media reports cited by the Peruvian police, organized groups on the border charge migrants to let them cross the border irregularly.

There is no official figure for the number of people entering the country. In both Tumbes and Tacna, people are still transiting to cross Peruvian borders on their way in or out of the country. It is estimated that approximately 100 people a day walk south along the Pan-American Highway to various cities in Peru, and some say that their destination is Chile.

| **BOLIVIA**

Since 2019, the migratory flow of Venezuelan people who cross through Bolivia to the south of the continent and enter the country through the Desaguadero border has been growing since the third migratory wave began to be registered, having as a main characteristic the marked need of these people in health issues, requests for refuge (legal support), economic support and access to transitory shelters.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, both land and air borders were closed, only allowing the passage of humanitarian aid with prior coordination with the federal government. The land borders were opened only for the return of Bolivian citizens with strict control of isolation for 15 days in camps managed by the civil defense with the support of IOM and the Bolivian Red Cross.

However, the measures taken during the emergency have been decreasing. The air borders are already open, and the land borders are still closed, which has increased the passage of migrants through irregular crossings. Due to this situation, the Bolivian government opened the border and allowed entry for 5 days to people who declare that they will only transit through the country with a different destination than Bolivia, so the transit within the territory has increased. Approximately 200 Venezuelan people per day pass through the border at Desaguadero in groups of few people, although there are days when groups of up to 100 people have been observed.

| **CHILE**

On 23 November, Chile has opened its international border for air traffic, and it is expected that the migration flows through this border might increase. However, there is evidence that during the pandemic, the migration flows did not cease and in the past months has increased significantly, especially through the border with Bolivia. According to a filed assessment held by the IFRC and the Chilean Red Cross, approximately 150 people cross this border daily. According to the local authorities, these people have made a voluntary self-report to the police authorities to continue their journey. Some people are entering without doing self-reports due to different reasons. The self-report gives migrants a document that allows them to continue their journey; however, this document eventually leads them to an expulsion order. All these points are irregular entries as Chile has not opened all their borders yet. According to the authorities, approximately 30% of the people crossing are children. But in the last field visit made by the team, approximately 50% were children, more than usual. Pregnant women and older adults are crossing as well.

The geographical conditions and the harsh weather in that border are hazardous for people who come with no sun protection, heat, low temperatures during the night, and a lack of information. There is no potable water, no local

health capacities to assist the needs of migrants. Many migrants entering through this border are expecting to restore their family links, which is why many children are entering. There are high risks of protection to this population not only for the conditions related to the weather but the evidence of human trafficking as “coyotes” are taking the opportunity to take advantage of the lack of presence of police authorities in the irregular pathways as the borders are too vast to control. All this information has been confirmed in the field visits to the border, interviewing migrants and local authorities. Few organizations have a presence on the border with Bolivia to assist this population.

It is expected that the flows from the border with Peru might also increase due to Peru's political and social conditions. All these flows are being monitored by the team constantly.

ARGENTINA

Argentina's borders remain closed. Only a few migrant families have regularly entered the country with international agencies' support. There have been some cases of irregular entries both in Misiones (border with Brazil) and in Jujuy (border with Bolivia), in which the Argentine Red Cross has intervened.

There are reports of people stranded on the borders with Peru and Brazil, who intend to mobilize to Argentina when the pandemic's situation improves. The National Society reports people at the border with Brazil, including single women with small children. Some people were stranded at other borders, and others have already intended to reach Argentina.

BRAZIL

In Brazil, the border with Venezuela remains closed at least until December. However, the number of unassisted migrants in Roraima living outside official shelters in spontaneous occupations and at the city's bus station (PRA) continues to increase. On average, 20 people continue to leave Venezuela for Brazil every day, which sums up to at least 4'000 migrants crossing into Brazil since the border was closed (Source: IOM).

Any entry into Brazil now is through irregular pathways that cross the border between both countries. This situation increases migrants' vulnerabilities and prevents them from going through the proper documentation process, which would allow them access to some public services and employment opportunities. Simultaneously, official shelters have been closed due to low occupancy. Operation Acolhida continues its interiorization (relocation) program, trying to persuade migrants living in the spontaneous occupations to be brought to other parts of Brazil.

URUGUAY

The migratory flow in Uruguay continues to grow exponentially along the dry borders with Brazil, mainly through Rivera and Chuy's cities. According to the Migration Department statistics, the largest influx of migrants is of Cuban, Venezuelan, and Colombian nationality.

Red Cross and Red Crescent actions



Panamanian Red Cross

As a response to the protection issues mentioned in the context section, the IFRC and the Panamanian Red Cross are still working in the field. In particular, a PGI officer has been hired. An interagency committee of protection cases was also promoted to systematize the information received when providing services to the population. The purpose is to activate the routes and mechanisms of action in coordination with the responsible government actors, identify challenges, and propose joint solutions.

Compared to the previous month, the following activities continue to take place:

For shelter, in coordination with UNICEF, the Panamanian Red Cross is purchasing canvases and tents to expand emergency shelters. Existing shelters will be renewed, and areas of the intervention will be expanded if necessary; Health: There are plans to extend the contracts of health personnel with a focus on maternal, childcare, and first aid; WASH: the National Society is working on the extension of the technical staff in water, and the community promoters in La Peñita and Bajo Chiquito is foreseen, the provision of chemical supplies for the two water systems has been scheduled, the distribution network of potable water in La Peñita was expanded by 50%, the distribution network of potable water in Bajo Chiquito was expanded by 25%, Hygiene kits for 4000 people and coordinated with UNICEF the purchase of supplies such as mosquito nets, buckets, and drums for distribution in ERM. As part of psychosocial support, the field team was strengthened by hiring a psychologist and a social worker to implement community actions. As part of the migration activities, a work plan was made for the next few months to give continuity and coverage to the 4 ERM in Darien for Restoring Family Links (RFL).



Colombian Red Cross

The team of the Colombian National Red Cross Society, in coordination with the Colombia Population Movement of IFRC, has worked on preparing a response to the impacts of the current winter wave and hurricane season (lota in particular), which add to the migration phenomenon that the country has experienced since 2018 and previous years. In principle, five affected territories have been identified, in which people live affected by both these climatic phenomena and migration events: Arauca, La Guajira, Magdalena, Bolívar, and Norte de Santander.

In this sense, the initial purchase of 1,250 units of food and family hygiene kits, 50 individual hygiene kits, 350 layers and blankets, 1,700 mouth caps, and 150-night kits has been projected, additionally, to 695 prepaid cash cards, that will be distributed in the next few weeks in the identified Departments. Further purchases will be evaluated in the future, once a new needs and availability assessment is carried out in coordination with other humanitarian partners and the National Government.

To attend or assist the current inflow of migrants, the Colombian Red Cross in coordination with IFRC is distributing 3,400 travel hygiene and food kits, 2,000 travel shelter kits (adapted to the needs of people in transit) plus 11,500 masks to prevent the transmission of COVID-19, in the departments of Norte de Santander, Santander and Nariño, which have been the most impacted by this current flow.



Ecuadorian Red Cross

During the last two months, the National Society has been continued to provide attention to the migrant population in a permanently changing scenario. This has been reflected in the increase in activities that have been gradual since 13 September, with the country's economic reactivation. The main activities implemented are Restoring Family Links (RFL) through the provincial referents, delivery of food kits to shelters hosting families and migrants, delivery of nutritional snacks to "caminantes" and psychosocial support.

The informative-guidance pocket brochure for migrants has been updated, and it will be distributed in the different Humanitarian Service Points in the country. Also, a new national mapping of services for migrants has been completed. Moreover, the workshop on Protection, Gender, and Inclusion in the context of migration was held with the support of

the IFRC, in which staff from the Ecuadorian Red Cross and other key actors participated. The aim was to generate spaces to raise awareness on this issue. This workshop and the one on Community Engagement and Accountability held in September are fundamental for planning and communication strategy and products available by December.



Peruvian Red Cross

The IFRC and the Peruvian Red Cross (PRC) work together with field organizations such as UNHCR. All together are carrying out regular field assessments to identify the needs of walking migrant entering or leaving Peru via Tumbes. Based on these assessments, the PRC has started actions such as providing RFL services and distributing water to walking migrants. The IFRC will also soon start distributing hygiene kits and COVID kits, which include prevention items such as masks, alcohol gels, face shields, and others.

At the same time, attention has resumed at the fixed post in Lima. The community medical days in 4 host cities (Tumbes, Lima, Tacna, and Puerto Maldonado) are expected to resume in Arequipa and Ica during the first week of December. Due to the pandemic context, the community medical days' intervention strategy has been adapted on a smaller scale and preferably using an appointment system to avoid conglomeration. Medical days are also used to disseminate prevention messages for COVID-19 and other diseases according to the local context.

On the other hand, the cash transfer activities continue to be implemented with programmatic funds and the regional migration appeal. The selection of households is made through the criterion of health vulnerability, for which there is a medical and social assistance staff.

Finally, the Red Cross' WhatsApp® line has been operational since the end of March, through which information is disseminated among migrants and the host community for the prevention of diseases such as COVID-19, access to Red Cross humanitarian services, identification of cases of vulnerability and scheduling of appointments for medical days and PSS services.



Bolivian Red Cross

Bolivian Red Cross continues to provide health care, WASH, and RFL in the Desaguadero border, in Guayaramerin health care and RFL. Moreover, the NS is constantly monitoring the different routes throughout the country.



Chilean Red Cross

The Chilean Red Cross (CRCh) branch in Arica, at the border with Peru, provides primary health care to migrants in vulnerable health conditions and satisfies basic needs through a cash-based intervention programme.

The CRCh also provides safe water, food boxes, winter kits, and hygiene kits for adults and children. Moreover, they provide psychological support and information about self-care, health promotion, and prevention to COVID-19.

IFRC and the CRCh are continuing to monitor the migratory situation, and people needs with several field visits, especially in the towns of Huara and Colchane, belonging to the Tarapacá region. Due to these extreme needs and

vulnerabilities and, considering the limited capacities of local authorities and the lack of other organisations in this area, the CRCh and IFRC have elaborated a specific Plan of Action to respond to those needs.



Argentine Red Cross

The Argentine Red Cross constantly monitors the borders (at Puerto Iguazú and La Quiaca) through its two border coordinators. The National Society provides shelter, food, psychosocial support, RFL, and information services to migrants entering the country through its northern borders.

A mobile humanitarian service point will soon be deployed to the border area in the province of Jujuy. The mobile unit will assess people's needs, provide RFL services, kit distribution, access to documentation, safe spaces for children, and psychosocial support.



Brazilian Red Cross

The Brazilian Red Cross is continuing to monitor the situation in the northern states of Roraima and Amazonas. The BRC branch in Amazonas provides humanitarian assistance to vulnerable migrants, with IFRC technical and financial support, in close coordination with the Operacao Acolhida.

Since July 2018, the ICRC has provided more than 450,000 connectivity services through its Restoring Family Links Program (RFL): 357,000 phone calls, 68,000 internet accesses, and 25,000 battery charges were provided in 29 RFL stations in the states of Roraima and Amazonas. Moreover, schools, shelters, and indigenous communities in Pacaraima and the state prison (PAMC) in Boa Vista are being assisted by the ICRC with water and habitation (WatHab) projects, such as the construction of bathrooms, boreholes, and solar pumps.

ICRC has also been supporting the Brazilian Red Cross in developing RFL in four states of Brazil and first aid interventions for vulnerable migrants.



Uruguayan Red Cross

The Uruguayan Red Cross, in close coordination with public authorities, is continuing to manage a contingency center for migrants in the northern city of Rivera with a capacity for 12 people. Migrants are requested to stay at this center for up to 48 hours while waiting for the COVID-19 test results to enter the country. The National Society is developing a cash-based programme to support the livelihoods of vulnerable migrants.

Contact information

For further information, specifically related to this operation please contact:

In the National Societies:

- **Argentine Red Cross:** info@cuzroja.org.ar
- **Chilean Red Cross:** director.ejecutivo@cuzroja.cl
- **Colombia Red Cross:** Diego Piñeros; diego.pineros@cuzrojacolombiana.org
- **Brazilian Red Cross:** gabinete@cvb.org.br
- **Bolivian Red Cross:** secretaria@cuzrojaboliviana.org
- **Ecuadorian Red Cross:** presidencia@cuzroja.org.ec
- **Guyana Red Cross:** guyanaredross@yahoo.com
- **Red Cross Society of Panama:** crppresidencia@cuzrojapanamama.org
- **Peruvian Red Cross:** director.ejecutivo@cuzroja.org.pe
- **Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross Society:** admin@ttrcs.org
- **Uruguayan Red Cross:** presidencia@cuzroja.org.uy

In the IFRC regional office for the Americas:

- Felipe Del Cid, Continental Operations Coordinator: felipe.delcid@ifrc.org
- Santiago Luengo, Regional Migration Operations Manager: santiago.luengo@ifrc.org
- Juana Giraldo, Colombia Migration Operation Coordinator; juana.giraldo@ifrc.org
- José Félix Rodríguez, Migration Regional Coordinator: josefelix.rodriguez@ifrc.org
- Mauricio Bustamante, Head of Regional Logistics Unit Americas Region, mauricio.bustamante@ifrc.org
- Susana Arroyo, Communication Manager: Susana.arroyo@ifrc.org.

For Resource Mobilization and Pledges:

- Marion Andrivet, Emergency Appeals and Marketing Senior Officer: marion.andrivet@ifrc.org

For Performance and Accountability:

- Maria Larios, Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Manager: maria.larios@ifrc.org

In IFRC HQ in Geneva:

- Antoine Belair, Operations Coordination Senior Officer for Disaster and Crisis (Prevention, Response and Recovery): antoine.belair@ifrc.org

**How we work**

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.