

# QUITO III: WHAT REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS MUST DO TO HELP DISPLACED VENEZUELAN

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## INTRODUCTION

This stocktaking is meant to provide recommendations to states participating in the Quito III meeting on April 8 and 9, 2019. It revisits what was discussed in the first two meetings of the Quito Process, which was established to foster a regional response to the Venezuelan displacement crisis by harmonizing the policies of affected states.

The Venezuelan displacement crisis has continued to grow during the first months of 2019. Political developments both inside Venezuelan and in host countries have changed the situation considerably. For this reason, meetings like Quito III are even more important. They serve as platforms for discussion and debate, but also as places to mobilize support, strategy, and alignment.

Now in its fourth year, this is one of the largest displacement crises in the world—3.4

million have fled Venezuela, and the global community is watching to see how the region responds.<sup>1</sup> Quito III must be a call to additional action and a renewed commitment to past pledges.

## BACKGROUND ON THE QUITO PROCESS

In September 2018, the governments of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay met in Quito, Ecuador to exchange information and best practices regarding the crisis of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the region. The creation of the forum reflected these states' recognition that what they are facing is a regional crisis in need of regional solutions. Critically, it was designed to specifically address this humanitarian situation

1. UNHCR, "Venezuelan Outflow Continues Unabated, Stands Now at 3.4 Million," UNHCR-IOM Press Release, 22 February 2019. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/2/5c6fb2d04/venezuelan-outflow-continues-unabated-stands-34-million.html>

separate and apart from political questions about Venezuela's future.<sup>2</sup>

The meeting led to the adoption of the Declaration of Quito on Human Mobility of Venezuelan Citizens in the Region ("Quito I"), which laid the foundations for a more coordinated response. After a subsequent meeting on November 22 and 23, 2018 ("Quito II"), Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay adopted a regional Plan of Action. Among other things, signatories to the plan committed to facilitate the social and economic integration of Venezuelans into host states. Importantly, this included meaningful improvements in the process of granting legal status to Venezuelans in their respective countries.<sup>3</sup>

## EVENTS SINCE QUITO II

During 2018, an estimated 5,000 people per day fled Venezuela. These flows continued in 2019 as the deteriorating economic and social situation in Venezuela led to even greater suffering and the political situation became considerably more complicated. Indeed, the profile of those fleeing is increasingly desperate. The sick, elderly, and disabled, as well as lower-income individuals and families with small children are now a greater proportion of those leaving Venezuela. As of February 2019, a total of 3.4 million Venezuelans had sought refuge outside their country.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, neighboring countries have seen changes in their own domestic contexts. Unsurprisingly, receiving countries are facing

increased challenges. Local government officials in areas with large numbers of Venezuelans cite a strain on basic services, including hospitals and schools. Many border crossings are not well equipped to process or provide information to all Venezuelans that arrive.

Moreover, some countries that had mostly kept their borders open are introducing more stringent requirements for entry. This move has forced desperate people to rely on smugglers, traffickers, and criminal groups to move across borders. Indeed, the unexpected changes and resulting discrepancies among states run directly counter to pledges made at Quito to harmonize policies in order to facilitate movement. In addition, some communities that were initially welcoming to displaced Venezuelans are now showing growing resentment and tensions. Xenophobia is on the rise, and in some cases has resulted in acts of violence.

Quito III is a collective opportunity for states to take stock of these developments and reaffirm their commitment to a collective strategy for responding to Venezuelan displacement in a way that promotes human rights, humanitarian principles, cooperation, security, and dignity for all.

## BROADER CONTEXT

Compared to those in other refugee-hosting regions, Latin American countries responding to Venezuelan displacement have done relatively well. Recognizing that managing migration is both more effective and more realistic than attempting to prevent it, most have adopted policies that allow some degree

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2. A peaceful resolution of the political crisis in Venezuela is being addressed separately by the Lima Group, which was established following the Lima Declaration issued on August 8, 2017, and consists of many of the same states: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Saint Lucia.

3. See Appendix 1 for the text of the Declaration.

4. UNHCR, "Venezuelan Outflow Continues Unabated, Stands Now at 3.4 Million," UNHCR-IOM Press Release, February 22, 2019. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/2/5c6fb2d04/venezuelan-outflow-continues-unabated-stands-34-million.html>

of freedom of movement, regularization, and right to work. While many Venezuelans do not see themselves as refugees, a small number of host states should also be applauded for applying the Cartagena Declaration's broader definition of a refugee to some Venezuelans.<sup>5</sup>

However, rights and opportunities for Venezuelans sometimes exist only on paper—not in practice. Recent developments reveal the fragility of states' generous responses. The region as a whole must reaffirm—and realize—commitments to ease entry requirements for Venezuelans, develop regularization procedures, create opportunities for economic and social integration, and guarantee full access to rights and social services. Coordinated efforts to stop trafficking and develop campaigns that combat gender-based violence and xenophobia will be important for this. At the same time, states must strengthen their asylum systems and agree to apply the Cartagena Declaration, in line with regional and national law.<sup>6</sup>

Quito III participants should also think critically about the broader context. Venezuelan displacement is increasingly protracted and is largely urban in nature.<sup>7</sup> Most Venezuelans are not waiting in border areas to return home. Rather, they are moving onward to cities where they hope to find work. Enabling

displaced persons' access to the formal labor market will reduce their reliance on aid, foster fuller integration into host communities, and boost local economies.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, host countries must also consider that the Venezuelans now fleeing their country have more acute needs. As noted above, they are typically poorer and less educated, and many are disabled, chronically ill, or elderly. Shelter and means of transportation for the many *caminantes* traveling on foot are urgently needed.

As a result, in order to respond effectively, governments in host countries must introduce immediate, intermediate, and long-term solutions simultaneously. This will require more resources. Therefore, Quito participants should also put larger donor countries on notice. They should pressure the international community to keep its word enshrined in the Global Compacts on Refugees and Migrants to share the responsibility for displacement crises. This is a prime opportunity for other states to step up and assist the region with generous financial support.

Finally, states must follow through on the priorities that they themselves identified and committed to in the Declaration signed at Quito I and the regional Plan of Action

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5. The 1984 Cartagena Declaration goes beyond the 1951 UN Refugee Convention in recognizing as refugees those individuals who "have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order." ["Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama," adopted November 22, 1984, [https://www.oas.org/dil/1984\\_cartagena\\_declaration\\_on\\_refugees.pdf](https://www.oas.org/dil/1984_cartagena_declaration_on_refugees.pdf).]

6. Fifteen countries have incorporated the Cartagena definition into national laws or practices. They include Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. However, not all countries are currently basing refugee status determinations on this definition. For more, see UNHCR, "Guidance Note on the Outflow of Venezuelans," March 2018, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5a9ff3cc4.pdf>

7. Provash Budden, "It's Time to Treat Venezuela Like a Protracted Refugee Crisis," *Refugees Deeply* February 28, 2019, <https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/community/2019/02/28/its-time-to-treat-venezuela-like-a-protracted-refugee-crisis>

8. See, for example, Karen Jacobsen, "The Forgotten Solution: Local Integration for Refugees in Developing Countries," Working Paper No. 45, New Issues in Refugee Research, UNHCR, 2001. <https://www.unhcr.org/research/working/3b7d24059/forgotten-solution-local-integration-refugees-developing-countries-karen.html>

See also Roger Zetter and Heloise Ruadel, "Refugees' Right to Work and Access to Labor Markets-An Assessment," 2016. <https://www.knomad.org/publication/refugees-right-work-and-access-labor-markets-assessment-country-case-studies-part-2>

Philippe LeGrain, "Refugees Work: A Humanitarian Investment that Yields Economic Dividends," May 2016, Tent Foundation, [http://www.opennetwork.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Tent-Open-Refugees-Work\\_V13.pdf](http://www.opennetwork.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Tent-Open-Refugees-Work_V13.pdf)

Alexander Betts, Louise Bloom, Josiah Kaplan, and Naohiko Omata, "Refugee Economies: Rethinking Popular Assumptions," Oxford University Refugee Studies Centre 2014, <https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/files/files-1/refugee-economies-2014.pdf>

developed at Quito II. Those states that have yet to adopt the Plan of Action must do so, to ensure that a truly harmonized regional response can take shape.

## COUNTRY-SPECIFIC HIGHLIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This brief stocktaking report highlights key issue areas and recommendations relating to Venezuelan displacement for states participating in the Quito Process. The first section focuses on countries that are hosting the largest number of Venezuelans; the second section provides additional comments on other host countries.

**In focus: Colombia, Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Argentina, and Brazil**

### COLOMBIA

Colombia deserves credit for its response to displaced Venezuelans. It hosts the largest number of Venezuelans by far: over 1.1 million.<sup>9</sup> In 2017, the government introduced a two-year residency permit (Permiso Especial de Permanencia, or PEP in Spanish) for Venezuelans that technically allows them to work and access health care and education.<sup>10</sup> A mass registration effort in April to June of 2018 and a government decree in December 2018 extended opportunities for more Venezuelans to regularize their status and acquire a PEP. However, the time-bound nature of these efforts, lack of clear

information to Venezuelans, and complicated procedures involved in actually accessing the PEP and benefits it affords, have limited the policies' actual impact.

In March 2019, Colombia fulfilled one of its commitments made at Quito II in announcing that it would begin allowing Venezuelans to enter the country with expired passports.<sup>11</sup> For those already in the country, the government has emphasized a focus on socioeconomic inclusion and integration. It is exploring additional ways to promote access to formal work for Venezuelans and has sought ways for them to open bank accounts, an important step in self-reliance.

Colombia's positive response may come under threat as its resources are increasingly stretched. Hospitals and schools are overwhelmed along the border and local governments are desperate for more assistance. Reports of discrimination, as well as difficulty accessing documentation and regularization channels, are common. The country also still struggles to address its own internal displacement challenges and the fragility of the peace process. A large number of Colombians who had sought refuge in Venezuela in recent decades are also now returning.

**Recommendation:** Continue to play a leading role in coordinating a truly regional response to the crisis. Open a continuous registration and regularization process for Venezuelans. Apply the Cartagena Declaration to Venezuelans seeking asylum.

9. UNHCR, "Venezuelan outflow continues unabated, stands now at 3.4 million," February 22, 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/2/5c6fb2d04/venezuelan-outflow-continues-unabated-stands-34-million.html>

10. Sara Staedicke, "As Venezuelan Crisis Deepens, South America Braces for More Arrivals and Indefinite Stays," Migration Policy Institute, 2018. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/top-10-2018-issue-1-venezuelan-crisis-deepens-south-america-braces-more-arrivals-and>

11. Reuters, "Colombia to Allow Venezuelans to Enter on Expired Passports," March 9, 2019, <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/03/09/colombia-to-allow-venezuelans-to-enter-on-expired-passports.html>

## PERU

Peru hosts the second largest population of refugees and migrants from Venezuela: some 506,000.<sup>12</sup> At first it was one of the most desirable locations for Venezuelans, as it was seen to have work opportunities and easily available Temporary Stay Permits. The latter granted the right to work in Peru and access to health and education services. Indeed, some 100,000 Temporary Stay Permits have been issued thus far, and approximately 495,000 special work permits were issued between February 2017 and December 2018.

However, these Temporary Stay Permits are not renewable and only available to those who arrived legally before October 31, 2018.<sup>13</sup> That decision caused a rush of Venezuelans to arrive before the deadline.<sup>14</sup> Peru has developed a new registration system to improve the process, but it has also implemented new entry restrictions for those not holding a passport.<sup>15</sup>

The situation is becoming more tense, as resentment among some Peruvians is on the rise. A small number have even resorted to violence, discrimination, and xenophobia. In some cases, Venezuelans who went to Peru have opted to return to Ecuador or Colombia (or even Venezuela) upon finding difficult conditions. Women and girls face harassment and sexual exploitation, particularly at the

border, and thus need better protections for their safety.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, many Venezuelans arriving at Peru's borders are increasingly desperate, some having walked over 15 days, unable to travel by bus or other safer means.<sup>17</sup>

**Recommendation:** Ensure that Venezuelans can renew their Temporary Stay Permits and resume issuing these permits to those who arrived after October 31, 2018. Improve protection and anti-trafficking measures for Venezuelan women and girls and increase assistance for *caminantes* arriving at the border.

## CHILE

Chile now hosts approximately 288,000 Venezuelan refugees and migrants.<sup>18</sup> Originally, Venezuelans could enter without a passport. However, in April 2018, Chile began requiring Venezuelans to apply for a new Visa of Democratic Responsibility in order to stay and work.<sup>19</sup> It is valid for one year and extendable once. However, it is very difficult to obtain—applicants must apply at a Chilean embassy in Caracas or Puerto Ordaz with a valid passport and apostilled criminal background certificate, which very few Venezuelans can do.<sup>20</sup> This essentially means a closed door to most Venezuelans. Public opinion in Chile has also taken on some anti-migrant tones, and discrimination has been reported.

12. UNHCR, "Venezuelan outflow continues unabated, stands now at 3.4 million," February 22, 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/2/5c6fb2d04/venezuelan-outflow-continues-unabated-stands-34-million.html>

13. Superintendencia Nacional de Migraciones, Ministerio del Interior, Perú, "Permiso Temporal de Permanencia para ciudadanos venezolanos," <https://www.migraciones.gob.pe/index.php/ptp-venezolanos-3/>

14. UNHCR, "UNHCR reinforces border response as Venezuelans rush to beat Peru deadline," 2 November 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2018/11/5bdc1b2d4/unhcr-reinforces-border-response-venezuelans-rush-beat-peru-deadline.html>

15. UNHCR, "Registration Activities Peru," November 2018, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/66965>

16. UNHCR, "Participatory Assessments: Lima," <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/66963>

17. UNHCR, "Factsheet: Tumbes, Peru," November 2018, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/66960>

18. UNHCR, "Venezuelan outflow continues unabated, stands now at 3.4 million," 22 February 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/2/5c6fb2d04/venezuelan-outflow-continues-unabated-stands-34-million.html>

19. Sara Staedicke, "As Venezuelan Crisis Deepens, South America Braces for More Arrivals and Indefinite Stays," Migration Policy Institute, 2018. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/top-10-2018-issue-1-venezuelan-crisis-deepens-south-america-braces-more-arrivals-and>

See also Human Rights Watch, "The Venezuelan Exodus: The Need for International Protection and the Region's Response," 2018. [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/venezuela0918\\_web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/venezuela0918_web.pdf)

20. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Gobierno de Chile, "Información sobre visa de responsabilidad democrática," <https://chile.gob.cl/chile/blog/venezuela/informacion-sobre-visa-de-responsabilidad-democratica>

**Recommendation:** Allow Venezuelan refugees and migrants who arrive without a passport to once again enter the country and apply for a visa.

## ECUADOR

As host of the Quito meetings, Ecuador is in a position to lead on the response to the crisis. The country has received some 221,000 Venezuelans in a short period of time. Until recently, Ecuador maintained relatively open borders and humane policies toward Venezuelans.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the country has strong human rights laws incorporated into its national legal framework. In 2017, Ecuador introduced the Human Mobility Law, which allows Venezuelans to enter with just a national ID card and obtain a tourist visa valid for up to 180 days.<sup>22</sup> They are also eligible to apply for other visas, valid for two years, but the required documentation and costs associated with these visas deters the vast majority of Venezuelans from applying.<sup>23</sup>

Ecuador is facing austerity measures that will soon strain social services for Ecuadorians and others alike. Tensions are rising, particularly in the wake of the high-profile murder committed by a Venezuelan man in Ibarra, which triggered xenophobic and discriminatory acts against Venezuelans. The government responded by requiring all newly arriving Venezuelans to present an official copy of their criminal records with their entry documents. Such records, like most

official documents, are almost impossible for average Venezuelans to obtain. This has led to greater irregular crossings, which have benefited traffickers, smugglers, and other criminals seeking to exploit desperate migrants. All this is happening at a time when many Venezuelans who entered Ecuador with the intention of transiting onward to Peru are having second thoughts. Indeed, an increasing number are choosing to stay, as settlement in Peru is increasingly difficult.

**Recommendation:** Rescind new and unrealistic entrance requirements for Venezuelan refugees and migrants and continue broad anti-xenophobia campaigns. Enable Venezuelans to access the formal labor market and livelihood opportunities.

## ARGENTINA

The number of Venezuelans in Argentina continues to rise.<sup>24</sup> Argentina has taken in some 130,000 Venezuelans<sup>25</sup> and assisted some with relocation inside of the country. According to immigration authorities, 70,351 Venezuelans sought official residency status last year—more than double that in 2017. Although Venezuela’s membership in the Mercosur trade bloc was suspended, Argentina offers Mercosur visas to Venezuelans, which are valid for 90 days.<sup>26</sup> In addition, Venezuelans can apply for a temporary residency permit, valid for two years.<sup>27</sup> They have access to education and health services, and the government has

21. UNHCR, “Venezuelan outflow continues unabated, stands now at 3.4 million,” February 22, 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/2/5c6fb2d04/venezuelan-outflow-continues-unabated-stands-34-million.html>

22. Reglamento a la Ley Orgánica de Movilidad Humana, Decreto Ejecutivo 111, Lenín Moreno Garcés, Presidente Constitucional de la Republica de Ecuador, 17 de abril de 2018, [https://www.cancilleria.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/reglamento\\_ley\\_de\\_movilidad\\_humana\\_reformado\\_abril\\_2018.pdf](https://www.cancilleria.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/reglamento_ley_de_movilidad_humana_reformado_abril_2018.pdf).

23. Human Rights Watch, “The Venezuelan Exodus: The Need for International Protection and the Region’s Response,” 2018. [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/venezuela0918\\_web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/venezuela0918_web.pdf)

24. Maximilian Heath and Miguel Lobianco, “Argentina eases residency application for Venezuelan immigrants,” Reuters, 22 February 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-argentina-venezuela-migrants/argentina-eases-residency-application-for-venezuelan-immigrants-idUSKCN1G62QJ>.

25. UNHCR, “Venezuelan outflow continues unabated, stands now at 3.4 million,” 22 February 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/2/5c6fb2d04/venezuelan-outflow-continues-unabated-stands-34-million.html>

26. Human Rights Watch, “The Venezuelan Exodus: The Need for International Protection and the Region’s Response,” 2018. [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/venezuela0918\\_web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/venezuela0918_web.pdf)

27. Government of Argentina, “Frequent Questions,” <http://www.migraciones.gov.ar/accesible/indexA.php?faq>

helped match some with job opportunities.

In January 2019, Argentina introduced more flexible entry requirements for Venezuelans.<sup>28</sup> In late February 2019, a special decree facilitated the visa application process for Venezuelans unable to secure all of the necessary documents in accordance with the usual deadlines.<sup>29</sup> Despite these policies, however, many Venezuelans still struggle in Argentina. Economic challenges and anti-migrant rhetoric have encouraged some to discriminate against Venezuelans.<sup>30</sup>

**Recommendation:** Take steps to combat anti-migrant rhetoric and discrimination against Venezuelans, while continuing to implement new measures designed to improve their access to residency permits.

## BRAZIL

Brazil currently hosts some 96,000 Venezuelans.<sup>31</sup> In particular, it received some of Venezuela's indigenous communities (Pemon and Warao) who were seeking refuge. While many of these indigenous peoples move often between Brazil and Venezuela, they are at high risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Unaccompanied children are at risk of human trafficking or fear being recruited by Venezuelan militias. The Roraima state in the north of Brazil has experienced a particular strain on its already poor health

system by taking in Venezuelan migrants.<sup>32</sup> The patient population has doubled in the general hospital of Boa Vista. In this area, many Venezuelans sleep on the street, and response actors are working to relocate people from shelters to other parts of Brazil in order to free up shelter space.<sup>33</sup>

While some displaced have received rental assistance and vouchers, many are still in desperate conditions. Indeed, displaced Venezuelans (indigenous and non-indigenous) continue to lack access to health services, education, and shelter, and face discrimination and xenophobia in Brazil.<sup>34</sup> In August 2018, troops were sent to the border city, Pacaraima, when residents attacked a camp and forced 1,200 Venezuelans to return.<sup>35</sup>

In 2017, Brazil created a two-year residency permit for Venezuelans who do not qualify for asylum.<sup>36</sup> However, new leadership in Brazil has led to a shift in policies toward Venezuelan migrants, which are now less welcoming. Brazil should therefore focus on renewing its commitments to human rights, access to asylum, and humanitarian priorities. It must continue to coordinate and channel assistance to border areas in partnership with other stakeholders, and work to combat xenophobia, discrimination, and anti-migrant rhetoric against Venezuelan migrant communities, and indigenous Venezuelan migrant communities in particular.

28. "Argentina loosens immigration requirements for Venezuelans," Buenos Aires Times, 30 January 2019, <http://www.batimes.com.ar/news/argentina/argentina-loosens-immigration-requirements-for-venezuelans.phtml>.

29. Chris Kraul, "As Venezuela Spirals downward, South America struggles to absorb its migrants and refugees," 18 February 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-venezuela-latin-america-exodus-20190218-story.html>

30. Bala Chambers, "Battling adversity: The Venezuelans living in Buenos Aires," Al Jazeera 3 May 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/180501190847389.html>

31. UNHCR, "Venezuelan outflow continues unabated, stands now at 3.4 million," 22 February 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/2/5c6fb2d04/venezuelan-outflow-continues-unabated-stands-34-million.html>

32. Jo Griffin, "'The strain is too much': Venezuelan exodus has Brazil at breaking point," The Guardian, 24 December 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/dec/24/venezuelan-exodus-brazil-at-breaking-point>.

33. UNHCR, "Brazil: Situation Report—February 2019," Response for Venezuelans, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/68564>

34. UNHCR, "Brazil: Situation Report—February 2019," Response for Venezuelans, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/68564>

35. Chris Kraul, "As Venezuela spirals downward, South America struggles to absorb its migrants and refugees," 18 February 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-venezuela-latin-america-exodus-20190218-story.html>.

36. Human Rights Watch, "The Venezuelan Exodus: The Need for International Protection and the Region's Response," 2018. [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/venezuela0918\\_web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/venezuela0918_web.pdf)

**Recommendation:** Take steps to strengthen protection for migrants and refugees, especially those from Venezuela’s indigenous communities and for unaccompanied children at risk of human trafficking. Improve shelter options along the border. Renew the country’s commitments to asylum and humanitarian priorities.

**Other host countries: Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay**

Other Quito countries host fewer displaced Venezuelans – under 100,000. However, these countries must consider the same questions and concerns in their responses and strategies, maintaining human dignity at the core.

**Costa Rica** should continue to foster private sector trainings, regularization, and support to help Venezuelans integrate economically. **Mexico** should continue building local support networks and providing assistance to Venezuelans who need it.<sup>37</sup> **Panama** must address the need for formal documentation and subsequent processing backlogs and reevaluate its restrictive measures on work permits.<sup>38</sup> **Paraguay** should continue to improve the temporary residence scheme it is implementing. **Uruguay** must continue to combat xenophobia and discrimination against foreigners, including Venezuelans, and continue to strengthen government capacity.<sup>39</sup> All must continue to focus on regularization and formal documentation, livelihoods and socioeconomic integration, and access to asylum proceedings.

## CONCLUSION

This brief stocktaking has highlighted key issue areas and recommendations for countries participating in Quito III and seeking to improve their response to Venezuelan displacement. Better data and information sharing will help to improve the coordination and response strategies. Likewise, states should continue to work closely with the UN’s Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela, run jointly by UNHCR and IOM, and other national and international actors to coordinate the response. Development actors should also take a greater role in supporting host states, further demonstrating that hosting displaced persons can promote a state’s economic and security interests. More importantly, the voices of displaced persons should be a critical part of the conversation and decision-making processes. Above all, the rights of displaced Venezuelans must take top priority if host countries are going to abide by their national and international obligations.

Thus far, countries in the region have been relatively open by comparison to others that are hosting displaced persons. They have taken an important step by recognizing the regional nature of the problem and coming together to coordinate a response. The world is now watching for this region to be an example.

37. UNHCR, “Central America and Mexico: Situation Report,” Response for Venezuelans, February 2019. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/68642>

38. UNHCR, “Central America and Mexico: Situation Report,” Response for Venezuelans, January 2019. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/68397>

39. UNHCR, Situation Report, January/February 2019,” Response for Venezuelans, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/68588>



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# ABOUT REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL

Refugees International advocates for lifesaving assistance and protection for displaced people and promotes solutions to displacement crises around the world. We are an independent organization and do not accept any government or UN funding.