



Supporting host communities for refugees and migrants in the border regions of Colombia, Ecuador and Peru (SI FRONTERA)

Context

As a result of the humanitarian, political, social and economic crisis in Venezuela, **more than 5 million people** (approximately 16% of the population in 2016) left the country between 2017 and February 2021, and around 4 million of them went to other South American countries. No other region in the world has received so many refugees and migrants in such a short space of time, and this massive influx of people is having far-reaching effects in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, the main destinations for refugees and migrants from Venezuela.

The host communities are located in disadvantaged areas where a large proportion of the population are vulnerable, and many people are unable to meet their basic needs. **Economic insecurity**, coupled with the **lack of access to social services, education and health care** and limited access to other rights and protection mechanisms, increases the risk of social insecurity for local people living in areas receiving refugees and migrants.

In the regions that border Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, there are criminal groups that engage in illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, people smuggling, human trafficking or illegal mining, which puts both refugees and migrants from Venezuela and the local population in those host communities at risk.

Migrant women and girls, indigenous people and people of African descent on both sides of the borders between Colombia, Ecuador and Peru are especially at risk of becoming victims of physical and sexual violence, human trafficking and people smuggling.

Situation in Colombia

According to official figures, in Colombia, there are around **1.73 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela** (additionally 600,000 Colombians returning home as a result of the crisis in Venezuela). Around 44% of these refugees and migrants have a temporary residence permit. Before the COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure of the borders in March 2020, an average of 45,000 people a day were crossing the border between Venezuela and Colombia. Many of them did so illegally in search of services and protection, putting them at risk of being subjected to extortion, violence, exploitation (sexual and labour), human trafficking and people smuggling.

Situation in Ecuador

Arrivals from Venezuela are not the only migration flows seen in Ecuador; the country has a long track record as a host country, with **more than 70,000 officially recognised refugees** (the highest figure in Latin America) and **more than 240,000 Colombians in need of international protection**. According to official figures there are **around 420,000 refugees and migrants from Venezuela** in Ecuador, many of them in irregular situations. Since Ecuador made it compulsory for people entering the country from Venezuela to have a humanitarian visa, there has been a considerable rise in the use of illegal crossing points, increasing the risks for refugees and migrants.

Situation in Peru

The official number for **Venezuelan refugees and migrants** in Peru is **around 1.04 million**, although there is a constant influx of irregular entries across the country's northern border. Venezuelan refugees and migrants are now at greater risk as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, with growing food insecurity and unemployment and a lack of access to health services and education. In addition, the **number of asylum claims has risen to more than 496,095**, of which less than 1% have been granted.



Refugees and migrants waiting to register in Lima, Peru

Outlook

The COVID-19 pandemic is worsening the humanitarian crisis. The experience of other countries in similar circumstances suggests that the difficulties facing host communities are likely to continue. In the coming years, there is expected to be an increased **demand** both from the local host communities and from Venezuelans in the region.

to regularise their situation and have access to basic services, employment, the means of generating an income and protection spaces.

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has therefore commissioned the implementation of the ‘Supporting host communities for refugees and migrants in the border regions of Colombia, Ecuador and Peru (SI FRONTERA)’ project, as part of BMZ’s special initiative: ‘Tackling the root causes of displacement – reintegrating refugees’.

SI FRONTERA operates at the interface between **humanitarian aid** (in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, direct emergency response activities to address the crisis were incorporated into some areas of action) and long-term development cooperation; that is, it provides **transitional assistance with a focus on socio-economic inclusion, access to rights and protection mechanisms**.



Delivering humanitarian aid in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Objective

State and civil society stakeholders in the border regions and along the migration routes of Colombia, Ecuador and **Peru are better able to manage integration of the large numbers of refugees and migrants** from Venezuela and Colombia – including with regard to labour market integration and income generation.

The project is co-financed by the European Union (EU) Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), which has allocated EUR 10,000,000 (EUR 5,100,000 for Colombia, EUR 2,200,000 for Ecuador, EUR 2,700,000 for Peru), as part of the European regional migration and asylum project (ProMiRe). In Ecuador SI FRONTERA is implementing the ‘Peace and Development Project for the Northern Border’ project with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and the United Nations, which has been co-financed by the European Union with additional 10.000.000 EUR.

Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Financial contribution from Germany (+ EU cofinancing)	Total: EUR 41,100,000 (including EUR 6,100,000 COVID-19 special funds and EUR 20,000,000 from EU) Colombia: EUR 12,200,000 (including EUR 3,200,000 COVID-19 special funds) (+ EUR 5,100,000 from EU) Ecuador: EUR 6,100,000 (including EUR 1,100,000 COVID-19 special funds) (+ EUR 12,200,000 from EU) Peru: EUR 2,800,000 (including EUR 1,800,000 COVID-19 special funds) (+ EUR 2,700,000 from EU)
Lead executing agencies	Presidential Agency of International Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Colombia) Vice-Ministry of Human Mobility of the, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility (Ecuador) Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate General for Economic Affairs (Peru)
Overall term	October 2018 to September 2023

In Colombia

Context

Until December 2020, Colombia received about 1.73 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela. Most of them (94%) entered the country via the department of Norte de Santander, which remains one of the main areas of illicit drug crop cultivation in Colombia. The region therefore also has a **large number of internally displaced Colombians** living in precarious conditions. **Norte de Santander hosts the second largest number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela (11% of the total)** after Bogotá (20%). In **Cúcuta**, the department’s capital, **refugees and migrants make up 14% of the population**. This puts a considerable strain on local education, health and initial reception facilities. Xenophobic sentiment is now on the rise, and the situation has been further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Roadmap

The SI FRONTERA project supports Colombian host communities to facilitate the integration of refugees and migrants from Venezuela. According to the ‘do no harm’ principle, there is no distinction made between support provided to Venezuelan refugees and migrants, Colombian nationals returning from Venezuela or vulnerable people from the host communities.

1. Migration governance

The aim is to implement innovative and socially responsible solutions to improve the management of the large number of refugees and migrants at the local level.

2. Socio-economic inclusion

This includes the promotion of formal employment in cooperation with the private sector and income-generating activities (including support to mitigate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic), initial reception services, health care (including assistance to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic), psychosocial support, education in emergencies and guidance on regularising immigration status.

3. Promoting peaceful coexistence

This involves joint activities in host communities to promote peaceful coexistence and conflict transformation, support for families that take in refugees and migrants and campaigns to promote tolerance and non-violence and to raise the visibility of the potential contribution that refugees and migrants can make.

4. Protecting the victims of violence, human trafficking and exploitation

This includes activities to improve the protection offered by government and civil society: provision of the necessary facilities at protection and violence prevention centres, legal advice, and campaigns against violence, human trafficking, people smuggling and (sexual) exploitation.

In Ecuador

Context

In Ecuador, refugees and migrants are exposed to marginalisation, health risks and violations of their rights. Integration in Ecuadorian society depends, to a large extent, on whether they are able to regularise their immigration status and so access basic services and the job market.

In many of the host communities, particularly those near the border with Colombia and along the migration route towards the south, poverty rates are high and the basic necessities of the local population are not being met. The alarming number of incidents of violence against women, children and young people for reasons unrelated to human mobility has heightened tensions in these places. Rising xenophobia and everyday racism against indigenous people and people of African descent also undermines peaceful coexistence in these regions. The Human Mobility Act establishes new responsibilities for decentralised autonomous governments, and the assistance provided focuses on integration, the protection of rights and peaceful coexistence.

Roadmap

The project SI FRONTERA seeks to support host communities in Ecuador's northern border area and along the transit route towards Peru, focusing on the following areas of action:

1. Protecting human rights

This involves strengthening local systems designed to protect human rights and consolidating the institutional response to alerts on human rights violations generated by the early warning system.

2. Flight and migration

The aim is to achieve peaceful coexistence and ensure the economic, social and cultural integration of refugees and migrants, mainly from Venezuela and Colombia, in the host communities.

3. Local governance

This involves promoting the inclusion of rights in local public policy, improving protection and prevention services, and implementing the human rights of priority groups as well as strengthening civil society involvement and coordination mechanisms.

4. Young people and a culture of peace

This focuses on creating new and innovative ways to help young people get into employment or self-employment and to empower them to build a culture of peace in the country.



Border between Colombia and Ecuador
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In Peru

Context

Officially, there are around 1,04 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela living in Peru. For the most part, they enter the country through the northern border with Ecuador and stop off in cities such as Tumbes, Chiclayo and Trujillo before continuing on to Lima and the port of Callao, where more than 80% of refugees and migrants from Venezuela live. **Communities where Venezuelans settle are already suffering from precarious conditions where a high percentage of the local population is in a vulnerable situation. Often this include overstretched health and education services** which add to the poor living conditions and pose obstacles for peaceful coexistence. The project SI FRONTERA contributes to the integration refugees and migrants from Venezuela by supporting government institutions to speed up the registration process. It also cooperates with civil society organisations to provide protection, assistance, guidance for people along the migration route and legal advice, where required. All these activities are accompanied by campaigns promoting peaceful coexistence.

Roadmap

1. Migration governance

The aim is to provide information, advice and assistance to refugees and migrants from Venezuela by implementing and improving the regularisation and registration processes.

2. Socio-economic inclusion

This involves ensuring that refugees and migrants from Venezuela have access to the formal job market and job creation schemes. To achieve this, the project has established strategic partnerships for professional technical certification and a qualification recognition process. It also provides technical support for cooperation on promoting integration into the job market and job creation, with a focus on women.

3. Promoting peaceful coexistence

Communication activities to strengthen solidarity and counter xenophobia and discrimination against refugees and migrants from Venezuela, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Protecting victims of violence, human trafficking and exploitation

This area of action seeks to strengthen protection for the most vulnerable refugees and migrants from gender-based violence, human trafficking, people smuggling and sexual exploitation. This includes providing the necessary facilities for shelters, capacity building for judicial employees, and conducting information campaigns on the radio and social media.

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