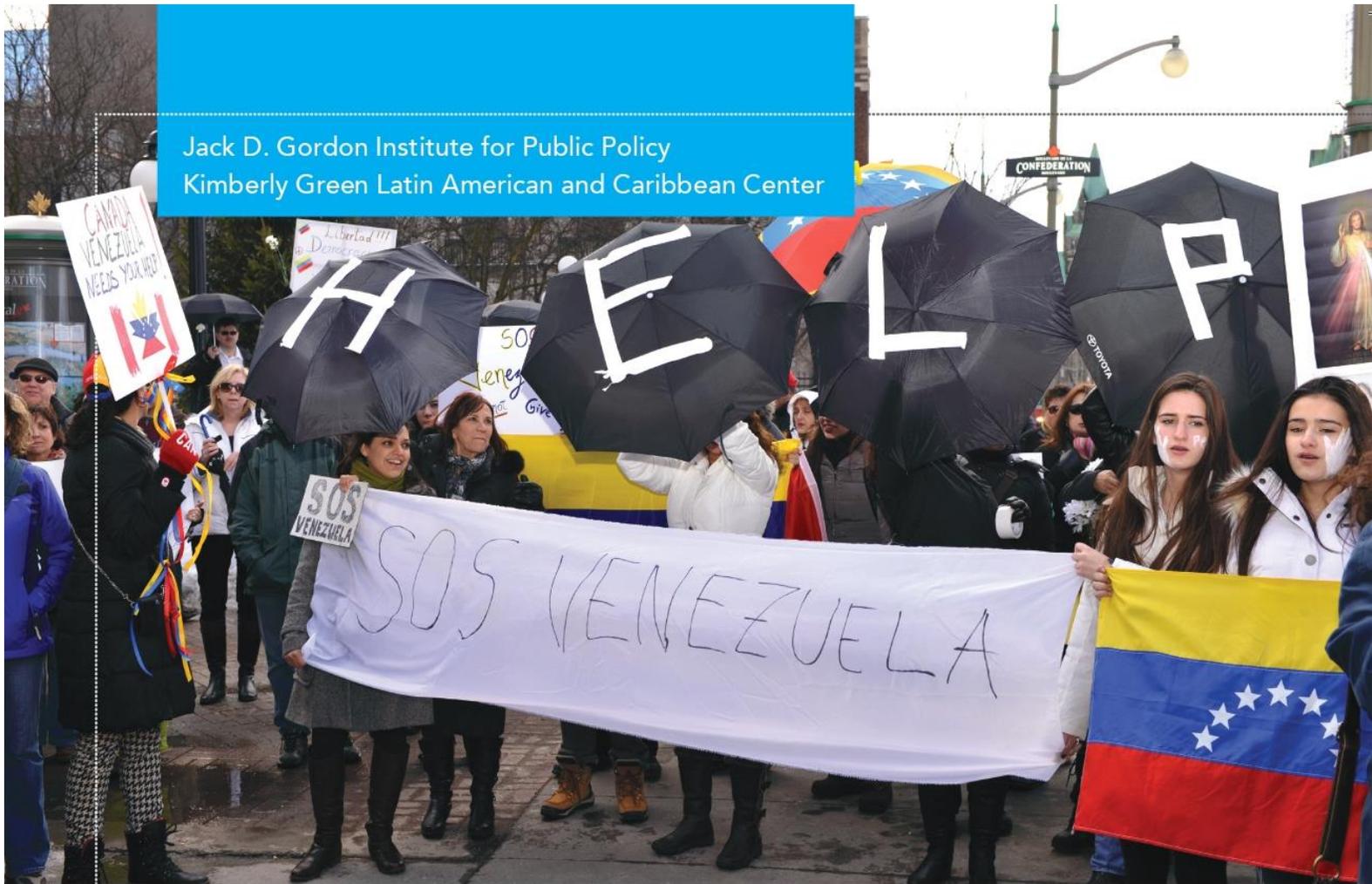


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VENEZUELAN MIGRATION CRISIS: MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM IMPACTS

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
The Economic Challenges and Opportunities of the Venezuelan Migrant and Refugee Community	6
Protection of Venezuelan Migrants and Refugees: Responses and Gaps	11
Security Challenges: Gaps in the Policy Discussion and Responses	16
A Note on Xenophobia	20
Political Effects of a Growing Diaspora in Receiving Countries and Venezuelan Politics in the Future	21
Conclusions	25
Bibliography	27

Executive Summary

The recent debate on Venezuela has primarily focused on the promotion of a political transition to reestablish a functioning democracy, respect for human rights, and restore a viable economy. However, the discussion and resulting actions should also focus on the need to address the medium to long term regional effects of the Venezuelan migration crisis. The human dimensions of the country's protracted political, economic, and humanitarian crisis have been daunting, with 4.5 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees having fled their homeland between 2015 and 2019. This massive exodus is having the greatest impact on Latin American and Caribbean countries. The burden appears likely to intensify, moreover, as the number of displaced Venezuelans is projected to reach 6.5 million Venezuelans by the end of 2020. This would represent the largest displaced population the region has ever experienced and one of the most dire displacement crisis in the world.¹ Some sources estimate that the numbers could reach much higher levels. This unprecedented demographic upheaval already poses serious challenges to one or more countries in the region.

While recent analysis of these developments has focused on determining numbers and profiles of Venezuelan migrants, and identifying short-term challenges, the objective of this study is to assess the medium- to long-term effects of the migration crisis on regional stability. About 3.2 million, or 80 percent, of displaced Venezuelans, have settled in Latin American and Caribbean countries. The remaining eight hundred thousand are scattered throughout the world, reversing previous Venezuelan migration dynamics that took them to countries including the United States, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, where familial links facilitated the migration process.² This study focuses on how the exodus will impact the economic, social, security, and political standing of countries with the highest concentration of Venezuelan migrants—namely Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru.³

This paper seeks to provide an overview of the current status of the Venezuelan migration crisis, while also mapping out challenges and opportunities for the region that result from this exodus. The following key questions are addressed:

- What are some of the protections available for Venezuelan migrants and the key characteristics of the largest displacement of people the region has ever had?
- What are the economic impacts – in terms of both costs and potential contributions – of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in receiving countries?
- What impact will their presence have on national and regional economic stability?
- What measures have been implemented by receiving countries to protect migrants, and what challenges have emerged?
- What are the main security challenges faced by receiving countries, and how are they likely to be exacerbated as the number of displaced Venezuelan migrants increases?

¹ “Venezuelan Outflow Continues Unabated, Stands Now at 3.4 Million,” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and International Organization for Migration, press release, February 22, 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/2/5c6fb2d04/venezuelan-outflow-continues-unabated-stands-34-million.html>.

² “Report of the OAS Working Group to Address the Regional Crisis Caused by Venezuela’s Migrant and Refugee Flows,” Organization of American States, June 2019, <http://www.oas.org/documents/eng/press/OAS-Report-to-Address-the-regional-crisis-caused-by-Venezuelas-migrant-lowres.pdf>.

³ “Venezuelan Outflow Continues Unabated, Stands Now at 3.4 Million,” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and International Organization for Migration, press release, February 22, 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/2/5c6fb2d04/venezuelan-outflow-continues-unabated-stands-34-million.html>.

- What impact will the exodus have in national and regional politics?
- Lastly, what impact will the migration crisis have on regional political stability?

Receiving countries need to prepare for likely mounting challenges to regional stability and ensure that domestic policy responses will be adequate and enable them to make the most of this migratory trend. Pressures are increasing as the collective socio-economic profile of fleeing Venezuelans deteriorates. Earlier Venezuelan migration waves (e.g., in the early 2000s, and in 2014 after mass protests were violently repressed) included people with greater economic resources and higher levels of educational attainment. They also included Venezuelans who could facilitate their residence in other countries as a result of personal, business, or family ties. The more recent wave of migrants consists primarily of more vulnerable populations. It has included women traveling alone or with minors, unaccompanied minors, indigenous populations, a struggling middle class, and the poor, who lack the necessary resources to facilitate their settlement in host countries.⁴

The conditions affecting the displaced, and the determinants of the exodus, call into question traditional definitions of a “migrant” or “refugee”, as well as the mandate of UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concerning the protection of this population. A recent Organization of American States (OAS) report documents that the main determinants for the forced displacement are: “the humanitarian crisis, reflected in the shortage of food and medicines; the economic collapse, reflected in a hyperinflation of 10,000,000 percent; the systematic and generalized violation of human rights, through persecution, repression, social control, and crimes against humanity; the repeated failures in the supply of basic services, such as electricity, water, and gas; and widespread violence, with a homicide rate of 81 people per 100,000 inhabitants.”⁵

The distinction between “migrants” and “refugees” is relevant in terms of the protections receiving countries are expected to extend, and the responses the international community can provide. International law distinguishes between the categories. It usually applies the term “migrant” to those who move voluntarily, and the term “refugee” to those who are involuntarily displaced, usually as a result of persecution. Building on the 1951 Refugee Convention,⁶ within the Inter-American system, the 1984 Cartagena Declaration expands the definition of a refugee to include “...people who have fled their country because their lives, security or freedom have been threatened by widespread violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed the public order.” Considering the precarious situation in Venezuela that compels people to flee, this framework could help protect this wave of migrants.

Until now, countries in the Western Hemisphere have not used the Cartagena Declaration to guarantee protection for Venezuelans. While they generally have responded with generosity, pragmatism, and creativity to the exodus of Venezuelan migrants, the rapid growth in the number of arrivals—and the corresponding strain placed on host-country communities—increasingly impact regularization processes. Earlier responses included offering temporary residence, as well

⁴ Betilde Muñoz-Pogossian, “Heading Out: A Tale of Three Migration Waves,” *Caracas Chronicles*, December 6, 2018, <https://www.caracaschronicles.com/2018/12/06/heading-out-a-tale-of-three-migration-waves/>.

⁵ “Report of the OAS Working Group to Address the Regional Crisis Caused by Venezuela’s Migrant and Refugee Flows.”

⁶ The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee “as a person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail him—or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution (*Article 1A(2)*).

as temporary protected status, with certain flexibility of entry requirements (use of *cédulas de identidad* or identification documentation, acceptance of expired passports, waiver of apostille in certain documents, etc.). However, as the number of arriving migrants continues to rise, the responses are becoming increasingly restrictive. These restrictions include the implementation of new visa requirements, forcing migrants to obtain a visa in Venezuela, or at specific consulates throughout the region, before reaching a port-of-entry in their destination countries. These measures have the potential unintended effect of promoting unsafe, disorderly, and irregular migration as Venezuelans continue to flee with or without regular status. As documented by a 2019 OAS-Migration Policy Institute report, approximately 60 percent of Venezuelans who have fled the country since 2015 are in irregular status.⁷ Restricting conditions for a safe, regular, and orderly arrival will inevitably generate more irregular migration. It will also render this population more vulnerable, negatively impacting economic, security, and social conditions in the receiving countries.⁸

The following section evaluates the weight of the Venezuelan exodus on the economies of receiving countries. It also assesses the opportunities arising from the inclusion of migrants and refugees in the formal labor markets of receiving economies. The third section provides a review of current gaps in the protection of this population. The fourth section covers the principal security challenges associated with the migration crisis. The fifth section looks at the potential impact of a growing Venezuelan diaspora on political dynamics in receiving countries, and in Venezuela itself. The final section summarizes the main conclusions and policy recommendations to respond to the medium- to long-term challenges resulting from the crisis.

The Economic Challenges and Opportunities of the Venezuelan Migrant and Refugee Community

In the context of the largest migration crisis in the Western Hemisphere's history, countries across the region demonstrated great generosity and compassion for the more than four million Venezuelans who have fled their country. Given the prolonged nature of the crisis—and projections that point to a total of more than 6.5 million migrants expected to have fled Venezuela by the end of 2020—countries across the region should focus on integrating existing migrants and new arrivals into the formal labor force. While many Venezuelans can be expected to return once the crisis ends, some undoubtedly will remain in receiving countries. This reality presents both short- and long-term challenges and opportunities for host countries as they take steps to help migrants become productive members of society.

Migration flows affect receiving countries' economies in several ways, including impacts on labor markets and social-security systems, price adjustments, economic growth, and fiscal balance. The flow of more than four million Venezuelan migrants undoubtedly places an economic

⁷ Andrew Seele, Jessica Bolter, Betilde Muñoz-Pogossian, and Miryam Hazan, "Creativity Amid Crisis: Legal Pathways for Venezuelan Migrants in Latin America," Migration Policy Institute, January 2019, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/legal-pathways-venezuelan-migrants-latin-america>.

⁸ Some migrants are obliged to employ dangerous forms of transport or to travel in hazardous conditions, even use smugglers and other types of facilitators, and being exposed to situations of exploitation or abuse. At the same time, this frequently results in crimes associated with the migration process, which tie to criminal networks and transnational crime and generate new security challenges for transit or destination countries. For more, see "Principles and Guidelines, Supported by Practical Guidance, on the Human Rights Protections of Migrants in Vulnerable Situations," Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Global Migration Group, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/PrinciplesAndGuidelines.pdf>.

strain on receiving and transit countries as they seek to address the migrants' immediate humanitarian needs. With respect to labor markets, according to the June 2019 Monetary Policy Report by the Chilean Central Bank, the impact of Venezuelan migration on the workforce of the leading destination countries was already being felt, with Venezuelan migrants representing 0.5 percent and 4.4 percent of the total workforce in Argentina and Colombia respectively.⁹

The report also quotes the “2018 Central Reserve Bank of Peru Annual Review,” which notes that Venezuelan migration “would have reduced salary costs, and potentially the prices of activities in the services sector.” One significant effect of Venezuelan arrivals that receiving countries need to address is the increase in labor supply. The availability of cheaper labor can lower costs for employers and raise profit margins, which could help lower costs for products and services in the receiving country and generate increases in consumer spending. However, it may also result, in the politically unpalatable displacement of the local population from jobs.

Increased demand for jobs has two additional unintended effects in the short-term. On the one hand, it impacts employment levels, quality of job opportunities, and salaries. On the other, tensions emerge between the local population and the new arrivals as they compete for already scarce resources. Thus, the ability of host countries to integrate Venezuelan migrants and refugees into formal labor markets is crucial for the successful management of the migration crisis at the local and national level. It is also critical that receiving countries seek to capitalize on the economic potential of these migrants, leading to net economic gains.

The fiscal impact of the migration crisis is being felt most acutely in Colombia and Peru, where the influx of Venezuelan migrants has been the largest. A 2019 IMF report on Colombia projects that, by the end of 2019, fiscal costs associated with flows from Venezuela will be around 0.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), and are contributing to Colombia's fiscal challenges.¹⁰ The report notes that a commitment to provide humanitarian support such as health care, housing, and education to migrants will result in additional near-term net fiscal costs for Colombia, which are expected to peak in 2020 as migrants integrate into the economy. The report also states that these costs will gradually decline to 0.1 percent of GDP by 2024, as migrants integrate into the economy, and associated growth increases.

The role played by local governments in absorbing the flows of migrants and refugees needs to be better understood. Indeed, subnational governments (departments and municipalities) bear most of these costs, as they typically provide most of the goods and services required to meet the immediate needs of migrants. In Colombia, a recent report points to how the differences in the distribution of the migrant population, both in size and in characteristics and abilities, generate variations in the costs that local government must assume.¹¹

⁹ “Informe de Política Monetaria,” Chilean Central Bank, June 2019, file:///C:/Users/bvmr/Downloads/ipm062019%20(1).pdf.

¹⁰ According to the Colombian Ministry of Finance, the short-term fiscal costs of the Venezuelan migration in Colombia range between 0.4–0.6 percent of GDP, whereas the Colombian Fedesarrollo and the World Bank put the number at 0.2–0.4 percent and 0.3–0.4 percent, respectively. “Nota de la OCDE Sobre el Shock Migratorio desde Venezuela hacia Colombia y sus Implicaciones fiscales,” Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2019, 4, <https://www.oecd.org/economy/surveys/Colombia-migration-shock-note-spanish-2019.pdf>.

¹¹ Reina, Mauricio, Carlos Antonio Mesa & Tomás Ramírez Tobón, “Elementos para una política pública frente a la crisis de Venezuela,” *Cuadernos Fedesarrollo* 69, Noviembre 2018, p. 98, https://www.repository.fedesarrollo.org.co/bitstream/handle/11445/3716/CDF_No_69_Noviembre_2018.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

Figure 1: Estimates of Net Fiscal Cost from Migrants from Venezuela (Percent of GDP)¹²

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Education	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1
Health	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1
Childhood	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0
Humanitarian	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Housing	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Water/Sanitation	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Inst. Strength	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Security	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Labor	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Expenditure	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3
Goods & Services	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1
PIT & CIT	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1
Total	-0.1	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2
Net effect	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1

Source: Colombia: IMF Country Report No. 19/106. International Monetary staff estimates.

In June 2019, Chile’s Central Bank released a higher than expected estimate for national economic growth in the medium term. The report notes that rapid immigration—mainly from Venezuela—boosted potential output while easing upward pressure on wages and prices, enabling the most significant interest-rate cut in a decade.¹³ Benefits would vary depending on the degree to which Chile can integrate migrants into the formal labor market. In the case of Peru, its central bank stated that immigration might have lowered inflation, as Venezuelans pushed down wages while consumption by Venezuelan migrants accounted for 0.33 percent of the total 4 percent of GDP growth in 2018.¹⁴ That figure will likely be closer to 1 percent based on the rapid growth in the number of Venezuelan migrants throughout 2018 and in the first half of 2019. However, their positive impact on the Peruvian economy is limited, given that an estimated seven of ten Venezuelan migrants work in the informal economy. While half of the country’s Venezuelan migrants have work permits, only some 5 percent were officially employed as of April 2019.¹⁵

A large number of Venezuelan migrants and refugees have arrived with depleted livelihoods, no assets, and minimal access to funding. However, a significant number of them also have an education or profession, better equipping them to contribute to their receiving countries. An April 2019 International Organization for Migration (IOM) survey of Venezuelan nationals in South America shows that 57 percent and 46 percent of respondents in Argentina and Chile, respectively, had completed a university degree. On average, 26 percent of Venezuelan respondents in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay had finished a degree. In Brazil, only 4 percent of those

¹² “Colombia: IMF Country Report No. 19/106,” International Monetary Fund, April 2019, <https://www.imf.org/~media/Files/Publications/CR/2019/1COLEA2019001.ashx>

¹³ Daniela Guzman and John Quigley, “Add a Million Venezuelans and Your Economy Looks Very Different,” *Bloomberg*, June 27, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-06-27/add-a-million-venezuelans-and-your-economy-looks-very-different>.

¹⁴ “Inmigración venezolana: Los beneficios y problemas que trae a la economía de Perú,” *BBC News Mundo*, June 2, 2019, <https://elcomercio.pe/economia/peru/inmigracion-venezolana-beneficios-problemas-trae-economia-peru-venezuela-noticia-640070>.

¹⁵ Guzman and Quigley, “Add a Million Venezuelans and Your Economy Looks Very Different.”

interviewed indicated that they had not completed any education. In other words, the majority had attained a certain level of education.¹⁶

Venezuelan migrants in Colombia conform to the same pattern. According to a recent report by the Brookings Institution, the Venezuelan migrant population there is predominately young, moderately educated, and ready to join the labor force. The study asserts that, of the million-plus Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, more than 75 percent are working age, and 83 percent have completed at least secondary education.¹⁷ These Venezuelans can potentially be a productive cohort, contributing to economic and productivity growth.

Colombia is working to identify and resolve legal restrictions that limit the integration of the Venezuelan migrants into the formal labor force. Some of these measures include moving to recognize migrants' work history and educational experience, as well as expanding access to programs that aim to promote entrepreneurship and provide technical, networking, and financial support, as well as training.

The response across the region is varied. While some countries are still deciding on mechanisms to integrate these populations, others have taken important steps to minimize barriers to access economic opportunities and to tap into the human capital of migrants. The sooner countries regularize migrants' legal status and grant work permits, the sooner migrants and refugees can contribute economically to both their host countries and their native Venezuela. Although a large influx of migrants and refugees can create short-term strains on public services, labor-market adjustments, social tensions, and other challenges, it can also provide positive contributions to host-country economies.

As the number of migrants increases, one area of growing concern is that the flow of migrants will exceed the ability of receiving countries to regularize new arrivals and integrate them into the formal labor force. This could result in large numbers of people operating in the shadows as part of the informal economy. Similarly, it may place migrants in vulnerable situations as they can be victims of employer abuse, forced labor, and discrimination, among other scourges. Venezuelan women face additional vulnerabilities, such as lack of access to fair and equal salaries, as well as gender discrimination and violence.

¹⁶ "South America — Analysis of Flows Monitoring Surveys Conducted with Venezuelan Nationals In South America," International Organization for Migration, May 22, 2019, <https://migration.iom.int/reports/south-america-%E2%80%94-analysis-flow-monitoring-surveys-conducted-venezuelan-nationals-south-0>.

¹⁷ Dany Bahar, Dany, Meagan Dooley, and Cindy Huang, "Integrating Venezuelans into the Colombian Labor Market: Mitigating Costs and Maximizing Benefits," Brookings, December 2018, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Venezuelan-Migrants_English.pdf.

Box 1: Benefits of Labor Inclusion of Migrants

A study of refugees around the world by the Center for Global Development notes that the benefits of labor inclusion for host communities include:

- less competition in the informal sector, as some refugees shift to formal work, potentially leading to employment opportunities for low-skilled hosts in the informal sector;
- more productive formal businesses, as refugees, could fill labor shortages and expand the labor supply;
- more formal employment opportunities resulting from the increase in productivity;
- the upgrading of local workers to higher-paying positions, as migrants and refugees take on more manual jobs;
- a fiscal stimulus, as refugees, earn more and spend more; and
- an increase in tax revenues, as refugees earn and spend more, and contribute to the tax base as they integrate into the formal economy.¹⁴

Venezuelan migrants and refugees likewise contribute to their home country through remittances, consistent with trends among diaspora populations globally. According to the World Bank, in Latin America, remittances flows increased by about 9.3 percent from 2017 to 2018 to reach \$87 billion overall, while independent experts estimate that displaced Venezuelans have been remitting about \$2 billion annually.¹⁸ Comparatively speaking, remittances to Venezuela lag well behind amounts sent to Mexico, Guatemala or El Salvador. This can be attributable to the precarious conditions Venezuelan migrants and refugees face. However, remittance levels will likely increase over time, as Venezuelan migrants integrate into receiving countries. Monitoring the flow of remittances will be crucial in planning medium- to long-term economic outcomes for Venezuela. As the number of Venezuelans living outside of the country grows, one area of concern that requires further analysis is how the inflow of these remittances can help sustain Nicolás Maduro’s regime.

Migrants and refugees can also contribute to Venezuela’s reconstruction through their human capital, as well as by leveraging diaspora networks and the know-how gained through the migration experience.¹⁹ Social remittances, or the sharing of “ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving to countries of origin,” are another positive way a diaspora can contribute.²⁰ Venezuelans who settle in their new countries have the potential to bring good ideas and behaviors to be brought to Venezuela in the form of policy reforms, projects, and proposals, and a re-institutionalized civic culture.

¹⁸ “Accelerated Remittances Growth to Low- and Middle-Income Countries in 2018,” World Bank, press release, December 8, 2018, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/12/08/accelerated-remittances-growth-to-low-and-middle-income-countries-in-2018>; “Fact Sheet: Family Remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean in 2018,” Inter- American Dialogue, February 8, 2019, <https://www.thedialogue.org/analysis/fact-sheet-family-remittances-to-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-in-2018/>.

¹⁹ Ricardo Hausmann, “The Diaspora Goldmine,” *Project Syndicate*, June 25, 2015, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/remittances-not-only-benefit-to-homeland-economies-by-ricardo-hausmann-2015-06?barrier=accesspaylog>.

²⁰ Peggy Levitt, “Social Remittances: Migration-Driven Local-Level Forms of Cultural Diffusion,” *International Migration Review* 32, 4 (1998), 926–948.

Protection of Venezuelan Migrants and Refugees: Responses and Gaps

Migration policy is always designed and implemented within a nation's sovereignty, and it usually responds to the tension between the needs to ensure a country's national security and to guarantee the human rights of migrants and refugees. In this framework, each nation has the right to find the appropriate balance for its own context, but not without assuming the global responsibility to protect those whose rights are not fully guaranteed in their country of origin. Indeed, when making decisions about what rights and support to afford them, countries should bear in mind the conditions displaced Venezuelans faced, as some of the responses can add layers of vulnerability to this already affected population.

Migration Policy Responses: Migrants' Legal Status

Each country of destination for Venezuelans has its way of processing their legal status, based on the options available in its migration regime.²¹ Colombia set a commendable example, offering a temporary protected status (the PEP, or *Permiso Especial de Permanencia*) and other measures aimed at regularizing this population. Ecuador used to allow Venezuelans to enter the country with an investment or a Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) credential. Peru adopted the *Permiso Temporal de Permanencia*, or PTP, to regularize Venezuelans. Recently, however, these countries changed these protection regimes as well as the conditions for entry.²² Following the example of Chile—where Venezuelans are required to acquire the *Visa de Responsabilidad Democrática* (Democratic Responsibility Visa) in two consulates in Venezuela, rather than upon arrival—Ecuador and Peru recently opted for a similar visa, the *Visa Humanitaria* (Humanitarian Visa).²³

Indeed, as required by a recent presidential decree in Ecuador, Venezuelans have been required to request a Humanitarian Visa for temporary residency since August, 2019.²⁴ The measure also orders the implementation of a voluntary administrative census of Venezuelan migrants, as part of a broader effort to regularize them, better integrate them into the formal economy, and expand their access to basic services.²⁵ The evolution of options for the regularization of Venezuelans shows a learning process, as both the Humanitarian Visa and the administrative census were already implemented by Chile and Colombia, respectively. Innovations brought about by the Ecuadorean measure include: the formal recognition of expired Venezuelan passports and *cédulas de identidad* (identity cards) for five years after expiration, provided the holder was in Ecuador before the approval of the measure; and, amnesty for all Venezuelans in an irregular situation, provided they did not enter via illegal pathways, but via formal ports-of-entry in Ecuador. Also, the decree stipulates that Venezuelan migrants will have access to employment

²¹ For a summary of legal responses by countries in the Americas, see Selee et al., "Creativity Amid Crisis: Legal Pathways for Venezuelan Migrants in Latin America," <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/legal-pathways-venezuelan-migrants-latin-america>.

²² Back in 2008, the Ecuadorian government eliminated visa requirements to enter the country for transit and tourism. Venezuelans had one hundred and eighty days to apply for visas under the 2017 Organic Law of Human Mobility. There are two specific visa categories that Venezuelan nationals can request: the 2011 Ecuadorian-Venezuelan Migration Statute, which grants temporary residence if economic solvency is demonstrated; and the UNASUR visa, through which nationals of the block can have access to temporary or permanent residence. However, this last visa will be rescinded, given President Lenin Moreno's denouncement of the UNASUR charter.

²³ Already in effect in the case of Peru, this visa is currently being analyzed in Ecuador.

²⁴ Juan Fernando Flores (@juanflores18), Tweet, July 26, 2019, <https://twitter.com/juanflores18/status/1154836219483820035/photo/1>. This visa would be available to Venezuelans wishing to enter the country in the future and those already in Ecuador who have not broken the law.

²⁵ For more information, see "Ecuador to Require Visas for Venezuelan Migrants: Moreno," Reuters, July 26, 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ecuador-venezuela-migration/ecuador-to-require-visas-for-venezuelan-migrants-moreno-idUSKCN1UL29T?utm_source=applenews.

opportunities, health care, and education.²⁶

Figure 2. Regularization Options for Venezuelans in Main Receiving Countries (as of July 2019)

	Regularization Options	Acceptance of Expired Passports /<i>Cédulas de Identidad</i>
Colombia	Permiso Especial de Permanencia (PEP); RAMV- PEP, Tarjeta de Movilidad Fronteriza; Permiso Especial de Tránsito	Yes
Peru	Humanitarian Visa (to be implemented)	Yes
Ecuador	Humanitarian Visa (starting August 25, 2019)	Yes
Argentina	Temporary Residency Permit and MERCOSUR Agreement	Yes
Chile	Humanitarian Visa	Yes (Starting in 2013, and only for two years starting April 28, 2019)
Brazil	Temporary Residency Permit	No passport required

Source: Prepared by the authors for this report.

Brazil and Argentina have less restrictive regimes for Venezuelans (and all migrants and refugees), allowing them temporary residency using the current migration regime and the MERCOSUR agreement as the frameworks for protection, respectively, and accepting *cédulas de identidad* as well as expired passports as valid forms of identification.

In the case of the United States, Republicans and Democrats in the United States Congress have proposed granting Venezuelans Temporary Protected Status (TPS) as a temporary protection measure. TPS grants legal stay to foreign nationals who are unable to return to their home countries due to an ongoing armed conflict, environmental disaster or epidemic, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions.²⁷ It has been granted to protect Salvadorans following two major earthquakes in 2001, as well as to Honduran and Nicaraguan, victims of Hurricane Mitch, and to Haitians displaced in 2010 after an earthquake. Although no natural disaster or ongoing armed conflict has affected Venezuela, the approval of TPS for Venezuelan nationals merits consideration given the protracted economic, humanitarian, and political calamity in their country. The depth and scale of the crisis has created extraordinary and temporary conditions that prevent Venezuelans from safely returning home, a critical factor in making the case for TPS designation.

In December 2018, Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ), ranking member of the Senate

²⁶ Ecuadorian Presidential Decree, <https://www.registroficial.gob.ec/index.php/registro-oficial- web/publicaciones/suplementos/item/11878-segundo-suplemento-registro-oficial-no-5>.

²⁷ Claire Felter and Amanda Shendruk, “What is Temporary Protected Status?” Council of Foreign Relations, May 8, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/article/what-temporary-protected-status; “Temporary Protected Status,” US Citizenship and Immigration Services, https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status>.

Foreign Relations Committee, joined by senators Marco Rubio (R-FL), Dick Durbin (D-IL), and Patrick Leahy (D-VT), introduced the Venezuela Temporary Protected Status and Asylum Assistance Act of 2018. This bipartisan legislation seeks to grant TPS for eligible Venezuelans and to provide support and technical assistance to help neighboring countries provide migration services and asylum.²⁸ The bill has yet to receive a vote in the Senate.

There is also significant support for TPS in the House of Representatives. On July 25, the House passed the Venezuela TPS Act of 2019 by simple majority with a vote of 272 –158.²⁹ However, Senate Republicans blocked a vote on the bill. Senator Mike Lee (R-UT) opposed a request to pass the House bill by unanimous consent, stating that fast-tracking it would not give Republicans enough time to consider it and make changes.³⁰ Furthermore, in March 2019, Senators Durbin and Rubio penned a bipartisan letter asking President Donald Trump to consider designating Venezuela for TPS.³¹ Twenty-four other members of Congress signed the letter, but the matter remains unresolved, reflecting the difficulties in balancing foreign policy interests with immigration policies in the United States.

Regularization Challenges

One of the most difficult challenges faced by receiving countries throughout the region is the regularization of Venezuelans' legal status; in particular, addressing their limited access to forms of identification and compliance with entry requirements. Venezuelans confront significant difficulties accessing personal-identification documents, especially passports. The official cost of a passport is set at \$120. A report by Bloomberg News indicated that, in October 2018, the going rate for a black-market passport was more than \$2,000, more than sixty-eight times the monthly minimum wage at the time.³² Apart from the cost, passport offices in Venezuela and in Venezuelan consulates have temporarily ceased providing services due to a lack of materials and the continued disruptions the country is experiencing. This is a growing problem, as more and more Venezuelans living outside the country either have, or will soon have, expired passports. Coupled with tightening passport requirements by several countries in the region, difficulties in renewing Venezuelan passports are further limiting migrants' mobility.

One concrete effect of this limited access to IDs is irregular migration. Venezuelans who travel to Colombia, and other countries in South America do so in an irregular manner (by *trochas*, or illegal passageways, sometimes, with help from *coyotes*), and sometimes on foot (*caminantes venezolanos*) to avoid official ports of entry where passports or visas are required. This type of irregular migration puts individuals at greater risk in both transit and destination countries.

This pattern also feeds criminal networks that traffic migrants and promotes corruption by officials who are bribed to allow the illegal entrance of migrants. In this regard, Colombia's

²⁸ For a copy of the draft law, Venezuela Temporary Protected Status and Asylum Assistance Act of 2018, see <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/MDM18B32.pdf>.

²⁹ Venezuela TPS Act of 2019, H.R. 549: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/549/all-info>.

³⁰ Carmen Sesin, "Senate Republican Blocks Vote on Protected Status for Venezuelans," NBC News, July 30, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/senate-republican-blocks-vote-tps-venezuelans-congressional-recess-n1036426>.

³¹ Richard Durbin, public letter to Donald Trump, March 7, 2019, <https://www.durbin.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/March7%20Venezuela%20TPS%20Letter%20FINAL%20SIGNED.pdf>.

³² Andrew Rosati, "Need to Flee Venezuela? Pay Huge Bribe or Stand in Line Forever," *Bloomberg*, October 8, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2018-10-08/need-to-flee-venezuela-pay-huge-bribe-or-stand-in-line-forever>.

decision in 2018 to regularize Venezuelan nationals, with or without a passport, reflected the recognition of Venezuelans limited access to passports. Other countries in the region could do the same, since Venezuelans will migrate with or without a passport, and irregular status adds to their vulnerability and the cost of integrating them.

Stateless Venezuelan infants, born of Venezuelan parents in Colombian territory, pose additional challenges related to migrants' access to identification. Although more than twenty-four thousand children were at risk of being stateless, on August 5, 2019 the Colombian government moved to grant them provisional Colombian citizenship. Children who were born in Colombia of Venezuelan parents since 2015 will be able to enjoy full Colombian citizenship, as will children born two years after the measure was put in place. This represents a clear rejection of xenophobia and shows the Colombian government's commitment to the protection of human rights over other considerations, including fiscal costs. More permanent measures to grant citizenship to these children will be needed if the Venezuelan crisis persists.

Venezuelans' right to identity documentation is also related to their right to freedom of movement across countries. Some Venezuelans obtained passports that are still valid before fleeing their home country. However, as time passes, migrants whose passports expired, or are soon to expire, and who do not have a second nationality, face additional challenges. Interim Venezuelan President Juan Guaidó recently approved a decree guaranteeing diaspora Venezuelans the right to identity.³³ As a result, the validity of Venezuelan passports has been extended for five years, and this extension has thus far been recognized by the governments of the United States, Spain, Canada, Colombia, Argentina, and a few others. Still, no systematic evidence demonstrates whether these updated passports are being honored at ports of entry in the countries that have recognized the extension. A recent Twitter survey focused on whether Venezuelan migrants with expired passports can move freely found that 63 percent of the 8,364 participants preferred not to travel for fear of being stranded or being unable to return to the United States.³⁴

However, there is still a need to find alternative ways to guarantee this fundamental right – the freedom of movement. Currently, Venezuelans with expired passports cannot demonstrate their identity by presenting a valid document, and thus are unable to visit countries that have not accepted Guaidó's passport extension. This creates an additional vulnerability for affected Venezuelan migrants and refugees.³⁵

Across the region, countries grapple with ways to ensure access to economic opportunities for Venezuelan migrants while managing the influx of skilled and unskilled workers into their labor markets. Some countries have imposed restrictions on the number of foreign workers companies can hire. In Peru, for instance, according to the Peruvian Economic Institute, about 43 percent of Peruvian companies struggle to fill job vacancies because, by law, no more than 20 percent of a company payroll can be foreign workers.³⁶

Although regularization regimes allow migrants to access work permits, in practice, there are

³³ For the full decree (in Spanish), see Juan Gerardo Guaidó Márquez, "Decreto No. 6," Presidencia (E) de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, May 21, 2019, <https://www.scribd.com/document/412691134/Presidente-E-de-la-Republica-jguaido-decreta-extension-de-los-pasaportes-por-cinco-anos-despues-de-su-vencimiento>

³⁴ Betilde Munoz-Pogossian, Free Movement of Venezuelans, [BeticaMunozPogo] [Twitter Moment], August 2019, <https://twitter.com/BeticaMunozPogo/status/1157696197051764736>.

³⁵ Protections include access to a regular status, health services, a work permit, schooling for migrant and refugee children, bank accounts, and housing.

³⁶ "Inmigración: una ayuda al sector laboral," Peruvian Economic Institute, November 19, 2018, <https://www.ipe.org.pe/portal/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2018-11-19-Inmigraci%C3%B3n-una-ayuda-al-sector-laboral-Informe-IPE-El-Comercio.pdf>

two types of challenges. On the one hand, the 40 percent or so of Venezuelan migrants and refugees who are regularized face difficulties in having prompt access to the necessary documents, due to the high volume of requests and the limited capacity of countries to process them. Similarly, migrants face employers who, as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) notes, do not accept these work permits.³⁷ On the other hand, the remaining 60 percent or so who have an irregular status do not have access to work permits, creating a situation of labor informality and overdependence on government support or charity. The measure adopted by Colombia in August 2018—which granted temporary protected status with a work permit for Venezuelans—and the most recent measure approved by Ecuador—granting amnesty and a work permit for irregular Venezuelans who entered via formal ports of entry—are effective ways to guarantee social protection. Likewise, if overcrowding or capacity limitations mean receiving countries cannot ensure that those arriving with children can enroll them in school, a whole generation of Venezuelan migrants could be left behind.

Figure 4. Access to Work Permits in Main Receiving Countries, as of July 2019.

	Work Permit provided
Colombia	Yes, for PEP, RAMV-PEP holders
Peru	Yes, for PTP holders and asylum-seekers
Ecuador	Yes, for UNASUR, and Humanitarian visa holders
Argentina	Yes, for MERCOSUR-Agreement beneficiaries
Chile	Yes, for Humanitarian visa holders
Brazil	Yes, for temporary residents, permanent residents and asylum seekers

Source: Prepared by the authors for this report.

To address these challenges, receiving countries could adopt more flexible requirements regarding passports and other forms of ID; they might even consider generating a regional form of identification for Venezuelans. Concerning regularization, adopting a regional temporary protected status for Venezuelans would be a move away from more restrictive policies, but that would require financial, technical, and political support to receiving countries. Such a coordinated response would ensure that countries across the region share the responsibility and that the displaced population does not end up being absorbed by those countries that opt to put in place more generous policies. Another option would be to apply the Cartagena Declaration to protect Venezuelans. Although readily available as a form of protection, the declaration would offer this population a wider framework for protection and would enable Venezuelans already displaced to have the same rights as nationals of the receiving country to health services, housing, employment, and other social protections. This demand for social services would represent additional economic pressures on these countries.

³⁷ “Registration Activities Peru,” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, November 2018, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/66941>.

The final important point is to reconcile the apparent contradiction between the policies of those countries favoring a democratic transition in Venezuela and their responses to the inflows of migrants and refugees across their borders. The lack of approval in the United States of a temporary protected measure, and the progressively more restrictive migration policies in countries in the region, illustrate the policy contradictions with which these countries are grappling. While Lima Group countries and the United States publicly support interim President Guaidó and the quest for a return to democracy in Venezuela, they are slowly adopting more restrictive migratory policies. Some countries have begun considering deporting those who violate immigration standards, namely due to a lack of a valid visa or other documentation. As restrictive migration policies spread in Latin America, the burden on countries that continue to lower the barriers to entry for Venezuelan migrants will increase. These policies will likely also lead more migrants into the shadows, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation and susceptibility to being recruited by illegal groups into illicit and destabilizing activities.

The tensions between support for a democratic transition, and the domestic political and fiscal realities faced by host governments will continue to grow until the political crisis in Venezuela is resolved. Likewise, as the burden on countries in the region rises in terms of economic costs, social tensions, and security challenges, domestic pressure against the growing presence of migrants is likely to intensify. Such pressures will likely be felt most acutely in the lead-up to sub-national and presidential campaigns in the region, as the issue of migrants is increasingly politicized and used as a wedge issue.

Security Challenges: Gaps in the Policy Discussion and Responses

The scale of the Venezuelan migration crisis presents diverse security challenges. They are primarily related to transnational criminal activities associated with migration processes, including human smuggling and trafficking; recruitment of young Venezuelans for illicit activities; and exploitation of migrants for sexual and labor purposes, as migrants who lack legal status retreat into the shadows. In addition, as the scale of the migration crisis continues to strain health and other basic services in receiving countries, the risk of a pandemic or the spread of communicable diseases is growing. Likewise, the longer the Venezuelan crisis and resulting exodus continues, and the more humanitarian conditions deteriorate, there is a risk that Venezuela will experience a famine that could lead to a dramatic increase in the number of migrants fleeing the country. That, of course, would further strain the ability of receiving countries to care for and to integrate new migrants. The pain would be felt most acutely in Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, and Brazil.

Transnational Criminal Activities

As noted earlier, as more Venezuelan migrants go into the shadows, lacking access to basic services and economic opportunities, many will face growing pressures to engage in illegal activities to make ends meet. The most vulnerable are the most susceptible to being recruited by narcotraffickers and other criminal elements. Migrants have been recruited by illegal armed groups operating along the border between Colombia and Venezuelan, including the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) the Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL), and dissident groups of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias

de Colombia (FARC).³⁸ Venezuelans have joined illegal armed groups—forcibly or voluntarily—as combatants, informants, and hitmen or women. Many also participate in illicit activities that help finance the operations of armed groups, such as drug production, as well as the smuggling of gasoline (used to produce cocaine from coca leaves), narcotics, and people.³⁹

Over the long term, as the number of undocumented Venezuelan migrants grows, so do questions regarding their treatment by emergency and health care services. Crimes committed against them, including domestic violence and other forms of abuse, are also less likely to be reported, and mistrust of the police likely to rise. One significant challenge, which will test the capacity of countries to ensure domestic security, concerns transnational crimes associated with the migration crisis—principally affecting migrant women and children (e.g., human smuggling and trafficking in persons).

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in 2014 (the last year for which data are available), women and children were the most frequent victims of human smuggling—representing approximately 71 percent. The proportion of boys and girls who are victims of this scourge has increased, from 13 percent in 2004 to 28 percent in 2014. Girls generally make up the majority of children who are victims of human smuggling. This crime, transnational in nature, makes women and girls the primary victims of sexual exploitation, forced labor, and other forms of modern slavery, forced marriages, organ extraction, pornography, illegal adoptions, and other crimes. A recent study by the Centro de Justicia y Paz (CEPAZ) in Venezuela argues that more attention needs to be paid to these crimes against women and girls and that the double and triple vulnerabilities Venezuelan women face in the process of migration must be better appreciated.⁴⁰

Similarly, evidence suggests that armed groups in Colombia and Venezuela prey on the hunger and desperation of Venezuelan migrants. According to National Public Radio (NPR) and Insight Crime, those recruited by armed groups receive up to 50,000 Venezuelan bolívares per month, the equivalent of approximately \$300 at the July 2019 exchange rate.⁴¹ At the time, that was the equivalent of more than twenty-seven monthly minimum wages in Venezuela (one month's minimum salary was approximately \$12 in July 2019).⁴² Faced with a choice between hunger or joining the ranks of organized crime groups, vulnerable Venezuelans are choosing to participate in illicit activities, thereby strengthening criminal organizations while contributing to the spread of criminal activities in the region.

Epidemics, Pandemics, Communicable Diseases, and Strained Health Care Systems

There is also a growing health risk to the region as a result of the ongoing Venezuelan migration crisis. The ongoing political, social, economic, and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela has caused a

³⁸ Juan C. Garzon, Andres Cajiao, Irina Cuesta, et al. "Inseguridad, violencia, y economías ilegales en las Fronteras," Fundación Ideas para la Paz, 2018.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ "Situación de la Movilidad Humana de Mujeres y Niñas Venezolanas," Centro de Justicia y Paz, Paz y Justicia, February 2019, <https://cepaz.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Informe-DEF-EDI.pdf>.

⁴¹ "Fleeing Crisis, Some Venezuelans Are Recruited By Rebel Forces Fighting in Colombia," NPR, January 18, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/01/18/685850399/fleeing-crisis-some-venezuelans-are-recruited-by-rebel-forces-fighting-in-colomb>.

⁴² "Colombia's ELN, Ex-FARC Mafia Recruiting Hungry Venezuela Migrants," InSight Crime, October 16, 2018, <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/brief/colombias-eln-ex-farc-mafia-recruiting-hungry-venezuela-migrants/>.

significant decline in the country's social and health indicators.⁴³ While retaining some capacity, Venezuela's health system is currently acutely stressed by shortages of medicines and health care supplies, as well as the migration of many health care workers. In addition, frequent disruptions of public services (electricity, water, communications, and transportation) hinder access to essential health services and limit the ability to respond to emergencies and disease outbreaks.

This deterioration in Venezuela is evident in the reemergence of previously controlled and eradicated diseases, including measles and diphtheria.⁴⁴ A measles outbreak that started in July 2017, with cases reported in all twenty-three states and the capital district in Venezuela, has been progressively controlled. Since 2018, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Canada, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, and the United States have also reported cases in which the measles genotype associated with the outbreak in Venezuela was identified.⁴⁵ Other public-health concerns in Venezuela include an increase in tuberculosis cases, as well as maternal and infant mortality, mental health, and violence prevention. A further concern is the limited access to medicines, adequate nutrition, and adequate care for people with life-threatening acute and chronic conditions, including people living with HIV and hemophilia.

Several efforts are underway to provide support in neighboring countries (Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago) to respond to the growing regional health risk caused by the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela and the resulting flow of migrants. Activities are aimed at strengthening health system responses in border areas, vaccination, and epidemiological surveillance at the local and national levels to detect and respond effectively to the needs of migrants and host populations.⁴⁶

Hunger and Malnutrition

Until recently, the Latin America and Caribbean region was a global leader in the fight against hunger and malnutrition, according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). It was the first region in the world to commit to eradicating hunger by 2025, and by 2015, had already cut hunger rates in half. However, hunger is now on the rise, and in 2018 affected 42.5 million people in the region (6.5 percent of the population), according to a UN report issued in 2019.⁴⁷ The increase in South America is primarily driven by the deterioration of food security in Venezuela, where malnutrition rates rose from 6.4 percent in 2012–2014 to 21.2 percent in 2016–2018.⁴⁸ A survey of Venezuelans' quality of life, conducted in 2018 by three Venezuelan universities found that 80 percent of homes were food insecure and more than 61 percent of respondents went to sleep hungry.⁴⁹

⁴³ "PAHO's Response to Maintaining an Effective Technical Cooperation Agenda in Venezuela and Neighboring Member States," Pan American Health Organization and World Health Organization, June 24–28, 2019, https://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&view=download&alias=49138-ce164-inf-9-e-paho-cooperation-venezuela&category_slug=164-executive-committee&Itemid=270&lang=en.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "2019 El Estado de la Seguridad Alimentaria y La Nutrición en el Mundo," Food and Agriculture Organization, 2019, <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5162es/ca5162es.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida (ENCOVI), <https://encovi.ucab.edu.ve/>; "Hacia una respuesta Regional Coordinada a los flujos de migrantes y refugiados venezolanos en las Américas," Organización de los Estados Americanos, September 5, 2018, http://www.oas.org/es/acerca/discursos_secretario_general.asp?sCodigo=18-0082.

The non-governmental organization Caritas reports particularly high levels of malnutrition among children and pregnant women.⁵⁰ This situation is more worrisome for younger children. November 2018 estimates by *Cáritas* suggest that up to 22.9 percent of all children under five years-old in Venezuela may be mildly or severely malnourished.”⁵¹ The Venezuelan Health Observatory (*Observatorio Venezolano de la Salud, OVS*) has reported that approximately 60 percent of children are malnourished. According to information provided to Human Rights Watch by Venezuelan health professionals, the number of acutely malnourished children admitted to hospitals is alarmingly high.⁵² Also, the FAO now places Venezuela behind only Yemen and Sudan on its list of countries at high risk of facing a severe deterioration in food security.⁵³

As the humanitarian crisis worsens, there is a growing risk of famine in Venezuela. As noted, with more than 4 million Venezuelans having already fled to neighboring countries, and millions more projected to flee by 2020, meeting the basic needs of migrants is one of the most pressing issues receiving countries must address. The challenge includes providing access to adequate nutrition for migrants who, in most cases, have experienced food insecurity or malnutrition for some time as a result of severe food shortages in Venezuela. As such, the impact of Venezuela’s food scarcity will potentially have lasting implications for several Latin American countries.

According to the FAO, children living in a situation of moderate to severe food insecurity are at elevated risk of suffering from stunting. Malnutrition suffered by migrant children will have lasting impacts on their ability to fully grow and develop, placing an even greater burden on receiving countries. The effects on the region will be devastating in terms of lost human capital, and the additional costs of supporting children with disabilities. This phenomenon is also likely to limit the positive economic contributions that Venezuelan migrants could make in host communities.

A nutritional needs assessment conducted in March 2019 by health partners in Peru within the framework of the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuelan, reported that 3 percent of children under five years-old who entered Peru through the binational centers for border health care services (*Centros Binacionales de Atención en Frontera—CEBAF*) were acutely malnourished, 18 percent had chronic malnutrition, and 25 percent had anemia.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ “Human Rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela,” Human Rights Council, July 5, 2019,

https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session41/Documents/A_HRC_41_18.docx and FAO, “Panorama de la Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional en América Latina y el Caribe”, 2018; Caritas Venezuela, “Monitoreo de la situación nutricional en niños menores de 5 años”, Bulletins of April-July 2018, July-September 2018 and October- December 2018.

⁵¹ Julett Pineda Sleinan, “Desnutrición Aguda en Niños Menores de Cinco Años Predomina en Zulia y Vargas, Reporta *Cáritas*,” *Efecto Cocuyo*, February 5, 2019, <http://efectococuyo.com/principales/desnutricion-aguda-en-ninos-menores-de-cinco-anos-predomina-en-zulia-y-vargas-reporta-caritas/>.

⁵² “Venezuela: Numbers Highlight Health Crisis,” Human Rights Watch, November 15, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/11/15/venezuela-numbers-highlight-health-crisis>.

⁵³ Juan Carlos Gabaldón “FAO Warns About a Real Possibility of Famine in Venezuela,” *Caracas Chronicles*, May 5, 2019, <https://www.caracaschronicles.com/2019/05/05/fao-warns-about-a-real-possibility-of-famine-in-venezuela/>.

⁵⁴ “PAHO’s Response to Maintaining an Effective Technical Cooperation Agenda in Venezuela and Neighboring Member States,” June 14, 2019, https://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&view=download&alias=49138-ce164-inf-9-e-paho-cooperation-venezuela&category_slug=164-executive-committee&Itemid=270&lang=en.

A Note on Xenophobia

As the number of Venezuelan migrants continues to rise, there has been a rise in xenophobia against them among local populations in receiving countries, and a corresponding increase in restrictive policies implemented by some countries in the region. While xenophobia is primarily driven by a perception that migrants are a drain on local resources and are taking jobs away from local workers, there is a growing narrative that migrants represent a security threat to receiving countries.

In August 2018, Venezuelans in Brazil experienced violent attacks and arson crimes against their houses. In November 2016, a public march protesting against the arrival of Venezuelan migrants was organized in Panama, raising the alarm about growing xenophobia.⁵⁵ More recently, in 2019, as a result of a domestic-violence incident in which a Venezuelan man murdered his Ecuadorean wife, locals in Ibarra, Ecuador attacked the houses of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, accusing them of being criminals. There are also passive-aggressive manifestations of this phenomenon, including discriminatory comments and other actions. Anecdotally, people have put their properties up for rent, while discriminating against Venezuelans. Likewise, employers in search of qualified workers often reject Venezuelan applicants with work permits. There are also reports of discrimination and xenophobia by immigration officers. Anti-immigrant rhetoric exists in other parts of Latin America as well. In the Dominican Republic, some hard-liners have described the influx of Haitians, caused by economic disparities between the two countries as a quiet invasion.⁵⁶

The media also play a role in stirring up discriminatory sentiments. Across the region, local media gave significant attention to isolated examples of individual crimes committed by Venezuelans in host countries. Though isolated cases, such examples feed the misperception that migrants represent a threat to citizen security. In April 2019, Peru's interior minister announced the deportation of more than forty Venezuelan migrants for concealing their criminal records or for residing illegally in the country, citing the need to protect the Peruvian people against the threat these migrants represented.⁵⁷ However, while there are examples across the region of individual Venezuelan migrants who committed crimes in the countries to which they fled, the available data do not support fears about Venezuelan migrants representing a widespread threat to citizen security.

In the case of Colombia, a Brookings report released in December 2018, found no evidence that Venezuelan migrants contribute to rising crime in Colombia. Using annual crime statistics collected by the National Colombian Police, it found Venezuelans committed only 0.4 percent of all crimes in Colombia in 2018.⁵⁸ The data also show that Venezuelans commit crimes at a much lower rate than their population share would predict. The report also cites studies from Italy, the

⁵⁵ Andrés Castellano, "Panamanian Xenophobia Against Venezuelans Intensifies," *Panamá Today*, August 30, 2017,

<https://www.panamatoday.com/panama/panamanian-xenophobia-against-venezuelans-intensifies-5084>; Elkis Bejarano Delgado, "Marcha en Panamá Contra Inmigrantes Venezolanos Genera Alarma" *Diario Las Américas*, November 20, 2016, <https://www.diariolasamericas.com/americas-latina/marcha-panama-contra-inmigrantes-venezolanos-genera-alarma-n4108217>.

⁵⁶ "How a Broken Migration Policy has Divided Haiti and the Dominican Republic," *World Politics Review*, March 23, 2018,

<https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/insights/24431/how-a-broken-migration-policy-has-divided-haiti-and-the-dominican-republic>.

⁵⁷ "Peru Departs First Large Group of Venezuelan Migrants," Reuters, April 29, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-migration-peru/peru-deports-first-large-group-of-venezuelan-migrants-idUSKCN1S51ZU>.

⁵⁸ Source for national crime data comes from "Estadística Delictiva," Policía Nacional de Colombia, <https://www.policia.gov.co/grupo-informaci%C3%B3n-criminalidad/estadistica-delictiva>.

United Kingdom, and Malaysia, which found that crime rates fell sharply after immigrants integrated into the workforce.⁵⁹ Receiving countries must do more to make these statistics known, to combat public misperceptions and to prevent the rise of xenophobia. Otherwise, more countries in the region might respond to growing domestic anti-migrant sentiment by tightening their migratory policies, further increasing the burden on those countries that are lowering the barriers to entry for Venezuelan migrants and contributing to the vulnerability of these populations.

The level of generosity of communities that willingly take in migrants tends to decrease as resources are strained, and as the influx of migrants affects the lives of local citizens, including their schools, access to services, and job opportunities. In Colombia, for example, citizens showed tremendous generosity—owing in no small part to the long history of Venezuelans taking in Colombians fleeing violence during the prolonged armed conflict at home. As the volume of Venezuelan migrants strained the system and migrants began sleeping in public spaces, many Colombians began expressing hesitation. The posture of Colombians appears to be that they want to be generous and help the migrants, but do not want to do so on their doorstep.

Political Effects of a Growing Diaspora in Receiving Countries and Venezuelan Politics in the Future

Diaspora refers to “the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland.”⁶⁰ Throughout history, diasporas have played a significant political role in promoting democratic, economic, cultural, and human development in their receiving countries, as well as in their countries of origin. This political importance is illustrated by the Jewish, Greek, Armenian, Cuban, and other diasporas in the United States, and the Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese diasporas in Latin America. With four million Venezuelan migrants scattered throughout the world, and most of them settled in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is critical to consider the political influence of this diaspora.

Politically, it has the potential to influence local, national, regional, and Venezuelan politics in various ways, especially if members of the diaspora organize themselves. Indeed, “different diaspora-based associations may lobby host countries (to shape policies in favor of a homeland or to challenge a homeland government), influence their homelands (through their support or opposition of governments), give financial and other support to political parties, social movements and civil society organizations, or sponsor terrorism or the perpetration of violent conflict in the homeland.”⁶¹

At the national and local levels, the presence of newcomers—who are settling with temporary residence status, or remain and acquire a second nationality—will alter local and national politics.⁶² Two crucial medium- to potential long-term impacts include the dynamics of

⁵⁹ Bahar, et al., “Integrating Venezuelans into the Colombian Labor Market: Mitigating Costs and Maximizing Benefits.”

⁶⁰ “Diaspora,” *Merriam-Webster*, accessed July 6, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diaspora>.

⁶¹ Steven Vertovec, “The Political Importance of Diasporas.” Migration Policy Institute, June 1, 2005, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/political-importance-diasporas>.

⁶² The Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in Chapter 2, Article 34 states that “the Venezuelan citizenship is not lost to a Venezuelan who acquires a second nationality.” Article 34 indicates that the “Venezuelan state will engage in international treaties on nationality, especially with neighboring countries.” In other words, a Venezuelan national has the right to acquire other nationalities without rescinding his/her right to be Venezuelan.

political-party competition—specifically, the discourse during campaigns—as well as the changing composition of the electorate as newcomers become nationals of the receiving countries and gain the ability to vote (and to be elected). The Venezuelan migration crisis will undoubtedly influence upcoming electoral campaigns in Colombia and Brazil. The migration crisis was highly politicized in Colombia’s October 2019 local elections given the Duque administration’s active engagement and generosity toward Venezuelan migrants who are taxing local resources. In particular, the economic costs and security concerns associated with the migrant flows, as well as the lack of a definite end to the protracted humanitarian crisis underway, are having a significant impact on President Duque’s approval ratings and are posing additional challenges to a country trying to achieve peace after a protracted armed conflict. In Chile, municipal elections will be held again in 2020, and the migration issue will surely be prominent in the electoral campaigns, as it will also be for the 2021 presidential elections.

It is also crucial to assess the apparent disconnect between the political views and demands of Venezuelan leaders and influencers in the diaspora, which tend to be much more hardline, and those of Venezuelans in their home country. This distinction is particularly notable when it comes to discussions about possible options to resolve the ongoing crisis and restore democracy in Venezuela the country, where Venezuelans in the diaspora seem to hold more extreme views. This is also the case regarding politics in the receiving countries. For example, in February 2019, a group of opposition Venezuelans who migrated to Chile denied and minimized the country’s history with the disappeared during the Pinochet dictatorship.⁶³ This caused outrage and public hostility because of perceived lack of respect for the dictatorship’s victims by migrant Venezuelans. Although there are important points of commonality regarding the need for a democratic transition, the two groups are not always aligned in terms of the best way to bring about that change, or about what other issues need to be part of the political discussion.

Peru might also hold a presidential election next year, as its president recently announced. Municipal elections were held in November 2018, in which some candidates promoted xenophobic and nationalistic views. One of the candidates for mayor of Lima spoke against Venezuelan migrants and used xenophobic language to win votes and popularity, attacking a competing party for facilitating Venezuelan migration.⁶⁴

Venezuelans abroad can also be a source of political influence in their native Venezuela. Some of the roles they can play include: being vocal about the current situation in Venezuela and the suffering endured by Venezuelans in host communities; influencing policymakers in receiving countries with regard to public policies that aim to restore the democratic order and promote free and fair elections in Venezuela; and mobilizing humanitarian support, both inside Venezuela and in receiving countries. Venezuelans in the diaspora have been organizing to provide support to fellow nationals at home. The NGO *Visión Democrática* has documented more than one hundred Venezuelan NGOs in the United States mobilizing to send humanitarian assistance to Venezuelans.⁶⁵ Finally, Venezuelans can take advantage of opportunities to peacefully and

⁶³ “Les mataron los parientes por hueones: venezolanos en Chile se burlan de ejecutados y desaparecidos Políticos,” *El Desconcierto*, February 24, 2019, <https://www.eldesconcierto.cl/2019/02/24/video-les-mataron-los-parientes-por-hueones-venezolanos-en-chile-se-burlan-de-ejecutados-y-desaparecidos-politicos/>.

⁶⁴ “Candidato a alcaldía de Lima hace campaña con discurso xenófobo contra venezolanos,” AFP, August 22, 2018, <http://elestimulo.com/blog/candidato-a-alcaldia-de-lima-hace-campana-con-discurso-xenofobo-contra-venezolanos/>.

⁶⁵ “Lo Que Hacemos,” Alianzas Para el Desarrollo,” <https://www.visiondemocraticafoundation.org/alianzas-para-el-desarrollo/>.

lawfully demonstrate on behalf of democracy and human rights in Venezuela.⁶⁶

According to the Pew Research Center, nearly two hundred thousand Venezuelan immigrants in the United States reside in Florida, a critically important electoral battleground state. Nearly forty-five thousand reside in Texas.⁶⁷ There is no up-to-date census count to denote the number of Venezuelan immigrants who have been naturalized and, therefore, have the right to vote. With no end in sight to the protracted crisis in Venezuela, many of these immigrants and their children are likely to stay in the United States if given a chance to do so legally, making them a potentially powerful political demographic in key battleground states in the future. Equally important is their ability to influence their host communities, even before acquiring the right to vote.

As Venezuela hopefully transitions out of a dictatorial regime via democratic elections complying with international standards, a critical issue that will need to be addressed is the electoral status of migrants. The 1999 Venezuela Constitution allows for nationals to vote abroad. However, the Law on Electoral Processes (or LOPRE Law) includes a clause stipulating that “*only* those voters abroad who have residency or any other regime that certifies regular status outside of Venezuela will be able to vote.”⁶⁸ Since about 60 percent of Venezuelans in the diaspora lack regular status, this clause would exclude approximately 2.4 million people from being eligible to vote. An additional aspect to consider is whether a new circumscription for Venezuelans abroad can be established. Countries around the world—including several in Latin America—allow their nationals not only to vote for president from abroad, but also to elect representatives to the national legislature in a special circumscription. Doing so could help establish a more deliberate link between Venezuela and Venezuelans abroad, allowing them to promote their agendas and to influence the political process. Also, should some of the four million Venezuelan migrants residing abroad decide to return home, specific policies would have to be developed.⁶⁹ Such policies must enable returning Venezuelans’ access to national identity documents, schools, health services, and employment opportunities, as well as meet other socio-emotional needs faced by returning migrants and refugees.⁷⁰

One largely unexplored aspect of these Venezuelan migrant and refugee flows is assessing who among them support Maduro, and what kind of impact their presence can have in the internal politics of receiving countries. Indeed, some pro-Maduro migrants and refugees arrive with limited material means, with no personal patrimony or jobs, dire economic conditions, and a need for international protection. However, others arrive with resources, open businesses, buy homes and properties in the receiving countries, and are engaging politically to destabilize the governments that took a stand against the Maduro regime, while amassing support for Maduro, and influencing campaigns and politics on the regime’s behalf.

⁶⁶ Betilde Muñoz-Pogossian, “As the Crisis Deepens: How Can the Diaspora Venezuelans Help?” *Caracas Chronicles*, January 25, 2019, <https://www.caracaschronicles.com/2019/01/25/as-the-crisis-deepens-how-can-the-diaspora-venezuelans-help/>.

⁶⁷ Tim Henderson, “Venezuelan Immigrants Get Trump Sympathy but Not Status,” Pew Research Center, October 2, 2018, <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2018/10/02/venezuelan-immigrants-get-trump-sympathy-but-not-status>.

⁶⁸ As the 2007 International IDEA manual “Voting from Abroad: The International IDEA Handbook” documents, more than one hundred countries allow voting abroad with few restrictions. This clause in the LOPRE law approved in the Chavista National Assembly seems to confirm the evidence. “If large groups of citizens have left the country for political reasons,” IDEA says, “it can be assumed that the ruling party will not favor extending voting rights to these groups.”

⁶⁹ This applies to whether the return is voluntary (for family reunification, employment, or other personal reasons) or involuntary (deportation from host countries).

⁷⁰ For a thorough explanation of the concepts and theory behind return migration, see Jáuregui Díaz, José Alfredo, and Joaquín Recaño Valverde, “Una Aproximación a las Definiciones, Tipologías, y Marcos Teóricos de la Migración de Retorno,” July 30, 2014, <http://www.ub.edu/geocrit/b3w-1084.htm>.

In response, countries in the region have taken measures to limit any potential destabilizing actions by Venezuelan migrants. In January 2019, for example, Colombia prohibited the entry of Nicolás Maduro and around two hundred people associated with his regime. In July, in response to a report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights—Chile announced that approximately one hundred Venezuelans would be expelled.⁷¹ Similar discussions have occurred in Peru. However, there is still no systematic policy to address the presence of pro-Maduro Venezuelans in receiving countries. This demonstrates the need for countries that have recognized Juan Guaidó as interim president to consider how to deal with and how to limit demonstrations of pro-Maduro influence in local politics. The practice of limiting foreign contributions to electoral campaigns is one example, but there may be a need to extend this to the regular financing of political parties, candidates, and advocacy groups.

According to the Pew Research Center, more Venezuelans have applied for asylum in the United States than nationals from any other country.⁷² However, the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, a data research organization at Syracuse University, found that nearly half the Venezuelan asylum applications that have come before immigration judges in the last five years have been denied.⁷³ By comparison, nearly 90 percent of claims from Haiti and Mexico are denied, while less than 20 percent of claims from Syria and about 10 percent from Belarus are denied. Recent data also suggests that Venezuelan nationals account for the highest overstay rate among Hispanic non-immigrants admitted to the United States.

Although there are concentrations of Venezuelan migrants in Houston, Boston, and Washington, DC, most of them — approximately two hundred thousand—have settled in South Florida. Their presence influences how US foreign policy toward Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua evolves. Similarly, it is expected that the political influence of the Venezuelan diaspora will also be seen in elections not just in Florida, but nationally.

Receiving countries may take steps to assess their double-nationality laws and prepare for the re-composition of their electorates given the continued flow of Venezuelan migrants. Equally important, countries may seek to regulate hate-speech campaigning in elections and launch social campaigns against xenophobia and discrimination. Countries may also need to develop policies to deal with migrants who support Maduro and have the intention and capacity to negatively influence local politics. Finally, further studies should address the electoral behavior of the Venezuelan diaspora in receiving countries (including especially the United States and Colombia).

The first step to prepare for elections in Venezuela should be to eliminate the restriction in the LOPRE law, rebuild the electoral registry abroad, and set up voting arrangements for the millions of Venezuelans living abroad. Furthermore, a future Venezuelan government could also consider creating a special circumscription for Venezuelans abroad, or a special ministry or secretariat to attend to the needs of the diaspora while developing a policy for return migration. Similarly, to attract the knowledge, experience, and capital of Venezuela's growing diaspora, Venezuela should consider passing legislation to promote incentives or bonds for expatriate investment, customs or import incentives, property rights, and other measures.

⁷¹ Migración Colombia, online video, accessed July 7, 2019, <https://www.pscp.tv/w/1DXGyaEZpaZGM>; “Human Rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela,” Human Rights Council, June 24–July 12, 2019, https://ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session41/Documents/A_HRC_41_18.docx.

⁷² Henderson, “Venezuelan Immigrants Get Trump Sympathy but Not Status.”

⁷³ Gisela Salomon, “Venezuelans find US asylum surprising elusive,” AP News, August 29, 2018, <https://www.apnews.com/6af09ae70e554cab8403c29012ad00b1>.

Conclusions

Neighboring countries have generously opened their arms to help those fleeing Venezuela in the context of the ongoing humanitarian, economic and political crisis. However, as the flow of migrants has increased, so too has the strain on local and national government resources and basic services, highlighting the destabilizing effect a prolonged crisis could have on the region. Understanding the key challenges facing host countries is the first step to ensuring that they, and the region, are prepared to tackle them, and to take precautionary measures to maintain regional stability. In this regard, several key conclusions stand out.

First, policy responses at every stage of the process matter greatly. Depending on the effectiveness of national and regional policy responses, the region could either experience increasing instability or reap benefits over the medium- to long-term from the largest displacement of people in the history of the Western Hemisphere. Policy responses need to promote a "safe, orderly, and regular" migration process.⁷⁴ The most efficient way to take advantage of the flow of more than four million Venezuelan migrants to date, and those expected to flee before the current crisis is resolved, is to regularize their status and provide them with work permits. One immediate measure host countries should consider is to conduct a census of Venezuelans living in their territories, to help ensure that everyone has access to basic services—including health care, education, and economic opportunities—while reducing the number of migrants living in the shadows. This would not only ensure that migrants' rights are protected, including against exploitation, but will also encourage them to become active participants in the formal economy of the host societies.

Second, countries across Latin America and the Caribbean, and the international community, must deliver on commitments pledged, as well as international obligations to support migrants and refugees. In various regional fora, including the OAS, the Lima Group, and the Quito process, host countries have committed to ensuring that Venezuelan migrants and refugees' rights are protected. This requires flexibility in terms of entry requirements for Venezuelans, and the consideration of more permanent, less restrictive migration regimes. It also requires that countries put in place policies that focus on the integration of Venezuelan migrants into the formal labor market. However, ambitious pledges are not enough. Receiving countries should be prepared to deliver on those commitments, which will require significant and sustained support from the donor and international community. In other words, additional efforts must be undertaken to close the gap between commitments and deliverables in the international response to the migration crisis.

Third, in addition to scaling efforts to address the short-term humanitarian needs of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, the international community should also focus on the middle- and long-term needs of receiving countries and that of the Venezuelan migrants they are hosting. The development needs of those countries that are bearing the largest share of the cost of accepting and integrating the Venezuelan migrants are significant and will be long-lasting. The international community has an important role to play in helping to ensure that this burden is shared, and not borne primarily by upper-middle-income countries in the region whose capacity is severely strained. The support of the international community is not just about solidarity. It is also critical to

⁷⁴ Global Compact on Migration, <https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration>.

preventing the deterioration of regional stability and security.

Fourth, the international community should develop a coordinated response to the health risks emanating from the migration crisis. The international community, and in particular countries in the region, should coordinate efforts so that technical knowledge and resources can be shared in addressing the epidemiological and health crisis facing Venezuela, as well as Venezuelan migrants, and the countries who are receiving them.

Finally, South American countries with limited resources are unable to manage the growing humanitarian crisis without the continued and expanded support of the international community. This is a global crisis, not just a regional one. Therefore, there is a need to quantify the estimated costs associated with the Venezuelan migration crisis—including those associated with short-term humanitarian and longer-term development needs. Accordingly, the international community should play a more substantial role in support of countries that are assuming the greatest share of the cost of receiving, caring for, and integrating the largest flow of migrants the region has seen in recent history. One compelling way to do so is by convening an International Solidarity Conference to raise critically needed financial commitments on the part of international donors, multilateral organizations, and the private sector.

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