

COLOMBIA

Venezuelan migration in Colombia

Secondary data review

November 2019



Funded by
European Union
Civil Protection and
Humanitarian Aid

IMPACT Shaping practices
Influencing policies
Impacting lives

Cover photo: @Schneyder Mendoza / El País

Cúcuta, Colombia. “Colombia and Venezuela move closer to definitive reopening of border”, El País, 19 July 2016. Accessible [here](#).

About REACH

REACH facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT). For more information please visit our website: www.reach-initiative.org. You can contact us directly at: geneva@reach-initiative.org and follow us on Twitter @REACH_info.



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List of Acronyms

CONPES	National Council of Economic and Social Politics (<i>Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social</i> ; <i>CONPES</i> for its acronym in Spanish).
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FARC-EP	Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia – People's Army (<i>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo</i> ; <i>FARC</i> for its acronym in Spanish)
GIFMM	Interagency Group on Mixed Migration Flows
GoC	Government of Colombia
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JMMI	Joint Market Monitoring Initiative
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PiN	People in Need
R4V	Response for Venezuelans
RAMV	Administrative record of Venezuelan migrants (<i>Registro Administrativo de Migrantes Venezolanos</i> ; <i>RAMV</i> , for its acronym in Spanish)
RRMRP	Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan
SDR	Secondary Data Review
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNGRD	National Union for Disaster Risks Management (<i>Unidad Nacional para la Gestión del Riesgo de Desastres</i> ; <i>UNGRD</i> , for its acronym in Spanish)

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CONTEXT

From February to April 2019, REACH carried out a Secondary Data Review (SDR) to provide an analysis of the literature available in the context of and to inform multi-sectoral needs related to the migration crisis affecting Venezuelans in Colombia.

Over the past three years, Colombia has seen an unprecedented increase of its Venezuelan migrant and refugee populations. This migrant and refugee crisis is exacerbated by an internal armed conflict and socio-natural disasters leading to important institutional and economic challenges for the Government of Colombia (GoC). Regarding the internal armed conflict, despite bilateral ceasefire agreements between the GoC and the FARC-EP guerrillas¹ which culminated in the signature of Peace Accords in November 2016, there has been a new deterioration in the humanitarian situation after a brief drop in the victimization². Indeed, pre-existing challenges such as armed violence, conflict, natural or man-made disasters have been aggravated by new violence and conflict trends or the flow of Venezuelan migrants and refugees into Colombia, especially in border departments³ which have seen a deterioration in the humanitarian situation in 2018.

Since the collapse of the Venezuelan economy in 2014 and the subsequent fall of its currency, the Bolivar, millions of Venezuelans have become unable to afford basic necessities⁴, with nearly 90% of the country's population living below the poverty line and more than half of the families being unable to meet basic food needs⁵. This period of prolonged social, economic and political instability has resulted in the displacement of a significant proportion of its population. Push factors are diverse and include insecurity and violence, lack of food, medicine or access to essential social services, and loss of income⁶. Indeed, since 2014, Venezuela's health system has seen a progressive loss of its operational capacity which intensified from 2017 onwards and affected the free access to medicines and delivery of free health care with increasing numbers of malaria and tuberculosis cases as well as rising maternal and infant mortality rates, among other consequences⁷. Furthermore, shortages of food, malnutrition and hunger have become widespread and the majority of Venezuelan households are now considered food insecure⁸. In consequence and at the time of this review, estimates from the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RRMRP) indicate that ongoing political and socio-economic context in Venezuela have led 3 million Venezuelans to take refuge or migrate into neighbouring countries of Latin America, the Caribbean and beyond⁹. Among those and according to figures from the GoC, there were more than 1.1 million Venezuelans in Colombia as of January 2019 with 30% located in border areas which have become mass entry points¹⁰ and 23% in the capital, Bogotá¹¹ (see map in annex¹² for migratory routes, crossing points and refugee urban locations). As such, Colombia is the South American country hosting the largest number of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, followed by Peru and Chile (with 506,000 and 288,000 refugees and migrants respectively)¹³.

These intensifying concurrent dynamics led to an increased vulnerability of both migrant and host communities whose needs, especially in relation to livelihood, protection, shelter or food security, among others, are not met. As mentioned above, the humanitarian situation has worsened in border departments, each with their own particularities. For instance, the combination of flooding in 2018 and the mass arrival of Venezuelan migrants has led to an increase in the cases of malaria in Norte de Santander, Arauca, Guanía, Vichada and La Guajira (states

¹ The Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia – People's Army (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo*; FARC for its acronym in Spanish) is a guerrilla groups which was historically part of the armed conflict in Colombia since the 1940s.

² "Victimization" covers mass displacement, confinement, restrictions on humanitarian access, antipersonnel mines and unexploded ordnance accidents and presence, deaths and injuries due to armed actions, as well as threats, aggression and homicides of social community leaders, Human Rights works and FARC-EP ex-combatants.

³ La Guajira, Cesar, Norte de Santander, Arauca, Vichada and Guainía

⁴ International Rescue Committee, "Why are Venezuelans leaving their country?", January 2019. Accessible [here](#).

⁵ Mercy Corps, "Quick facts: Venezuela's humanitarian crisis", August 2019. Accessible [here](#).

⁶ Human Rights Watch. Venezuela's Humanitarian Emergency, April 2019. Accessible [here](#).

⁷ Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), World Health Organization (WHO), "Response for Effective Technical Coordination in Venezuela and Neighboring Countries", 162nd Session of the Executive Committee, June 18-22, 2018, Washington DC. Accessible [here](#).

⁸ Human Rights Watch. Venezuela's Humanitarian Emergency, April 2019. Accessible [here](#).

⁹ R4V, Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela, December 2018. Accessible [here](#).

¹⁰ La Guajira, Cesar, Norte de Santander, Arauca, Vichada and Guainía.

¹¹ R4V, Situation Report, January 2019. Accessible [here](#).

¹² Médecins Sans Frontières, Colombia – Migration from Venezuela – Migratory routes, crossing points and refugee urban locations, 28th February 2019. Accessible [here](#).

¹³ R4V, Latin America and the Caribbean, Refugees and migrants from Venezuela, 15th February 2019. Accessible [here](#).

bordering Venezuela)¹⁴. In addition, other climate factors such as droughts compounded with the migratory flows from Venezuela have limited the access and availability of food in border areas leading to difficulties in income generation and livelihoods for already vulnerable and poor communities. Regarding protection, women, adolescents and girls are increasingly at risk of sexual and commercial exploitation in connection to the strengthening of armed groups¹⁵ and heightening levels of xenophobia have also been reported in parallel to massive arrivals of migrants from Venezuela. Indeed, migrants and refugees are perceived as replacing Colombians in the labour market, as well as a cause of increased criminality, prostitution and drug sales. With regards to health, Colombia's Epidemiological Surveillance System reported a threefold increase in the number of public health events in the border department of North Santander from January to August 2018, with 2,398 cases affecting foreign patients. The events reported included malaria (36.8%), gender-based violence (12.6%) and tuberculosis (4%)¹⁶.

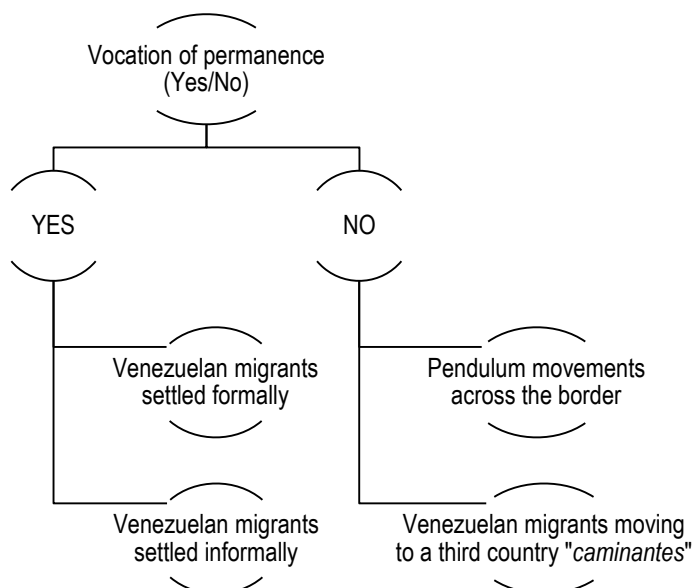


Figure I. Diagram showing population groups (only Venezuelan migrants).

In addition to Venezuelan migrants, there are population members returning to different places in Colombia or returning from Venezuela (i.e. Colombian returnees) as well as groups that cross back and forth across the border on a daily basis –pendulum movements– selling goods and services to take Colombian pesos back to Venezuela to convert and purchase scarce resources for their families. *Migración Colombia*, the Governmental customs agency responsible for monitoring and carrying out migratory control, is registering 30,000 entries and 27,000 exits a day¹⁷. Some groups migrate to Colombia in search of long-term employment and others transit through Colombia to Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, and elsewhere in the region.

As identified in the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) in 2019¹⁸, the situation is shifting from a development to a humanitarian response with 5.1 million People in Need (PiN) identified across the country. An additional 1.9 million PiN were identified in the 2019 HNO and correspond to the refugee and migrant populations. Among those, it is estimated that 913,000 intend to stay permanently, 446,000 are in transit and 108,000 are pendular migrants¹⁹. Refugees and migrants from Venezuela have concentrated both in marginalized areas around major cities and in border areas: 330,000 in Bogotá, 316,000 in Norte de Santander and 166,000 in La Guajira²⁰. The needs of this population varying enormously depending on their profile, legal status and if they are transiting or settling in

¹⁴ 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview, Colombia, January 2019, p.32. Accessible here.

¹⁵ 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview, Colombia, January 2019, p.19. Accessible here.

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch. Venezuela's Humanitarian Emergency, April 2019. Accessible [here](#).

¹⁷ Migración Colombia, Ministry of Foreign Relations. Todo lo que quieres saber sobre la migración venezolana y no se ha contado. 1 November 2018. Accessible [here](#).

¹⁸ 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview, Colombia, January 2019. Accessible here.

¹⁹ 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview, Colombia, January 2019, p.45. Accessible here.

²⁰ 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview, Colombia, January 2019, p.49. Accessible here.

Colombia, the different population groups of Venezuelan migrants and refugees can be grouped according to their intentions:

Population group	
<i>Venezuelan migrants with vocation of permanence: settled formally and settled informally</i>	Population whose objective is to stay in Colombia, either in the departments bordering Venezuela or in a large urban area (e.g. Bogotá, Cali, Medellín...) looking for an improvement of quality of life in the short, medium or long term. They are either settled formally (e.g. renting an apartment) or informally (e.g. informal settlements in Bogotá).
<i>Venezuelan migrants with no vocation of permanence: caminantes and pendulum movements</i>	Population with no vocation of permanence, with a majority transiting to a southern country (e.g. Peru, Ecuador...), and most of them aiming to meet with family and relatives already settled in these countries. On the other hand, pendulum migration is characterized by the continuous entry and exit of travelers throughout the day, even registering several migratory movements of a single person during the course of the day.
<i>Colombian returnees</i>	Mostly Colombians (i.e. they have the Colombian nationality) who left the country a couple of decades ago due to the Colombian internal armed conflict and are returning to the country due to the Venezuela crisis.
<i>Host community members</i>	Host community members, living in Colombia.

Table I. Identified population groups. Both Venezuelans migrants and Colombians.

The priorities for the response, as defined by the HNO, disaggregated by population group:

	First priority	Second priority	Third priority
<i>Venezuelans with intentions to remain permanently</i>	Livelihoods	Protection	Health
<i>Colombian returnees</i>	Protection	Livelihoods	Health
<i>Transit population</i>	Shelter	Protection	Health
<i>Pendular migration</i>	Protection	Livelihoods	Health
<i>Host communities</i>	Livelihoods	Education	Health

Table II. Priorities for the response. Reference: HNO 2019²¹.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Governments in the region are leading the humanitarian response and coordinating their efforts through different national and regional platforms. The Response for Venezuelans (R4V) Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform, established by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in April 2018, intends to lead and coordinate the response to migrants and refugees from Venezuela in affected Latin America and Caribbean states²². Therefore, this platform's objective is to strengthen and complement national and regional responses of the concerned governments. At national level, the Interagency Group on Mixed Migration Flows (GIFMM), also led by IOM and the UNHCR, given their role in the regional coordination of the response, coordinates the Venezuelan migration response of the UN and NGOs and supports the GoC²³.

²¹ 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview, Colombia, January 2019, p.51. Accessible here.

²² R4V website. Accessible [here](#).

²³ R4V, Situation Report, January 2019. Accessible here.

The Humanitarian Country Team (*Equipo Humanitario de País*, in Spanish) is the coordination space for the humanitarian community which supports and coordinates the humanitarian assistance in the national territory, with a specific emphasis on making sure the implementation of activities by the international community is coordinated and relevant. Formal civil society organizations (CSOs) have been developing in the last years with a strong presence in Bogotá, other large cities as well as border areas and provided with legal assistance and guidance both by IOM and the UNHCR. These CSOs have been providing assistance to the Venezuelan migrant community in the medium and longer term with an important number being affiliated with the Catholic Church.

At government level, the GoC is structuring its coordination mechanisms closely with the humanitarian community under the leadership of the presidency and supervises practices as well as the implementation of activities conducted by NGOs in country. For instance, the National Council of Economic and Social Politics (*Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social*; CONPES for its acronym in Spanish) is specifically dealing with the Venezuelan response and published an official government document outlining operational guidance for the response. The CONPES document was complemented by a report commissioned by the GoC to the World Bank which was presented early November: “Migration from Venezuela to Colombia: Short- and Medium-Term Impact and Response Strategy”²⁴.

INFORMATION GAPS

The adoption of an open data policy by the national government in 2014 obliges public entities to share open data with some exceptions²⁵. This has allowed greater and better access to a large amounts of data; however, there are weaknesses in the quality of information and especially in access to disaggregated data, which was highlighted in the HNO, including: (1) Limited data on available or planned emergency shelters; (2) Lack of data on the location of health posts and emergency teams; (3) Difficult access to data on the different forms of gender violence, especially sexual violence; (4) Lack of accurate data on dropouts and lack of school attendance for children; (5) Overall, lack of disaggregated information by sex, age and ethnic group for the different humanitarian indicators.²⁶

The GoC has implemented an administrative record of Venezuelan migrants (*Registro Administrativo de Migrantes Venezolanos*; RAMV, for its acronym in Spanish) as a process to register Venezuelan migrants with vocation of permanence in Colombia in different points located in the municipalities bordering Venezuela, especially those registering a higher number of entries. However, registering a representative number of Venezuelan migrants has proven to be a challenging exercise. At the same time there are multiple overlapping efforts in terms of registration by different actors. Although UNHCR is sharing its plans and responses with the broader humanitarian community and the GoC, overlapping efforts are evident in terms of case management and data collection (e.g. UNHCR's proGres to profile and inform interventions, storing individual's data, together with the governmental efforts, and the broader humanitarian community with its own systems). The variety of administrative profiles among Venezuelans, ranging from migrants or refugees without documentation or permission to remain, those facing obstacles to apply for asylum to those crossing the border illegally, there is an evident need for a registry system²⁷. The 2019 HNO recommends to avoid duplication as well as maintaining and developing the available information sources with more efforts needed in terms of systematizing the data.

Therefore, a key issue in addressing the humanitarian needs of the Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Colombia, is the lack of available assessment data, especially disaggregated information by sex, age and ethnic group. This gap represents an important challenge when trying to accurately assess or plan interventions.

²⁴ The World Bank (2018). Migration from Venezuela to Colombia: Short- and Medium-Term Impact and Response Strategy. Accessible [here](#).

²⁵ Colombian Ministry of Information Technology and Communications (*Ministerio de Tecnologías de la Información y las Comunicaciones*), “Guide for the use and exploitation of Open Data in Colombia (*Guía para el uso y aprovechamiento de Datos Abiertos en Colombia*; in its Spanish title)”, May 2019. Accessible in Spanish [here](#).

²⁶ Equipo Humanitario de País and OCHA (2018). Humanitarian Needs Overview. Accessible [here](#).

²⁷ UNHCR (2018). Venezuela Situation. Responding to the Needs of People Displaced from Venezuela. Supplementary Appeal. January – December 2018. Accessible [here](#).

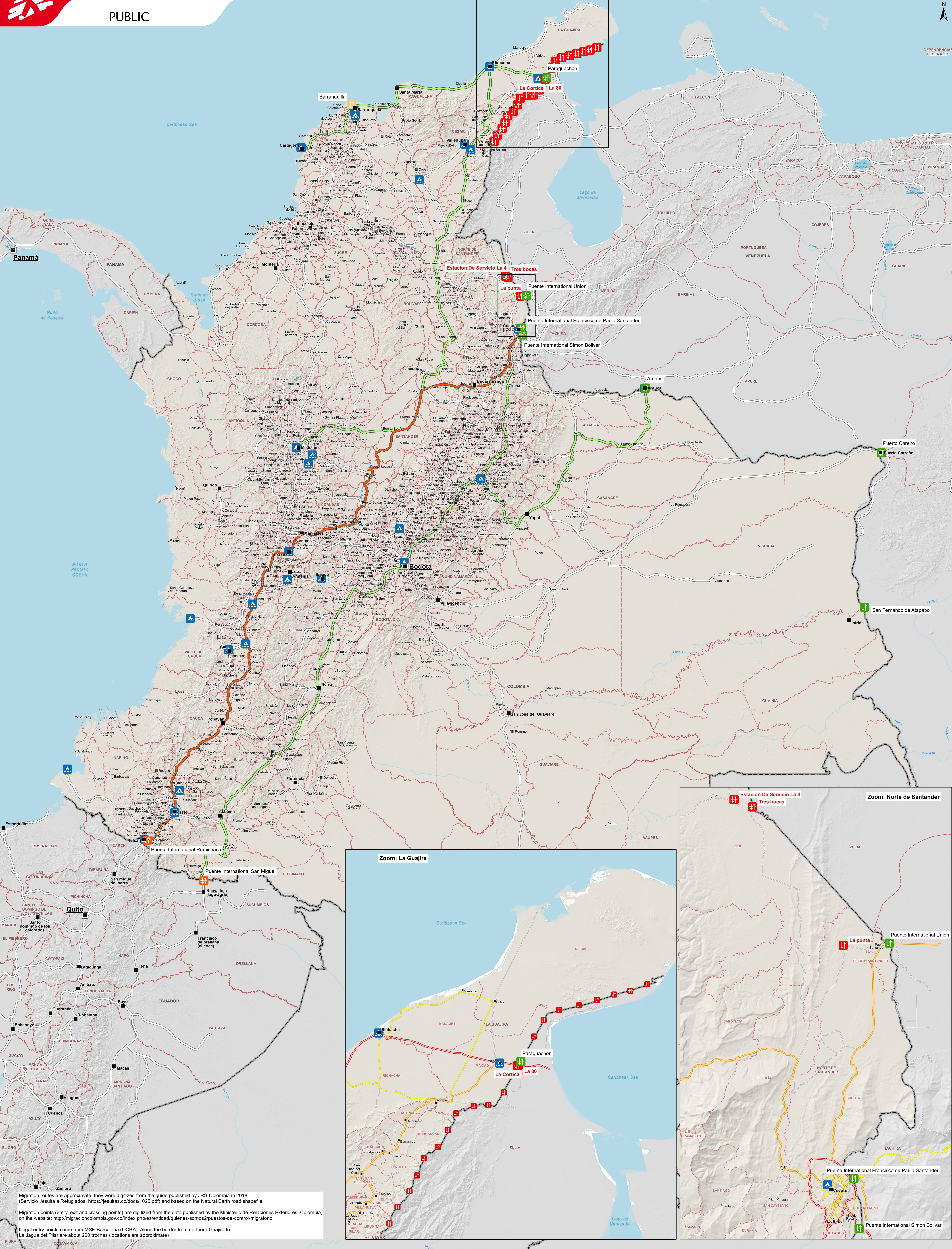
RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data available, REACH has designed several recommendations to better fill the information gaps detected throughout the available secondary sources:

- **Reliable multisectoral nationwide data: Multi-Sector Needs Assessments.** There is a need to gather first-hand information on critical needs and priorities of affected populations to inform actors supporting Venezuelan and vulnerable host community members, providing a longitudinal analysis of the humanitarian situation in Colombia.
- **Granularity of information in key out-of-camp urban and non-urban areas: Area-Based Assessments.** An area-based approach seeks to support populations in a specific location, aiming to provide quality data to inform planning and response in key urban or non-urban areas. An area-based assessment would allow to focus on a defined location and to have a multisectoral view of the needs of Venezuelan migrants as well as vulnerable host community members in the area of interest.

The available studies gathered show there are no rigorous **market monitoring studies** conducted in Colombia. Informing cash-based responses by providing information on market functionality and price trends in key areas is needed to get the Government buy-in (e.g. longitudinal analysis of price data and availability of food and non-food items sold in local shops) and being able to report on the price inflation and how it directly affects vulnerable households, reducing –if so– their purchasing power. Humanitarian actors engaged in cash-based interventions should then take price hikes into account when designing cash-based activities. Through a **Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI)**, REACH can provide evidence on market functionality and discuss price trends over time. With this, humanitarian organizations can better inform cash-based interventions and assist vulnerable households affected by the Venezuelan crisis.

COLOMBIA - Migration from Venezuela - Migratory routes, crossing points and refugee urban locations



Migration routes are approximate, they were digitized from the guide published by JRS-Colombia in 2018 (Servicio Jesuita a Refugiados, <https://jesuitas.co/docs/1025.pdf>) and based on the Natural Earth road shapefile.

Migration points (entry, exit and crossing points) are digitized from the data published by the Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Colombia, on the website: <http://migracioncolombia.gov.co/index.php/es/entidad/quienes-somos/2/puestos-de-control-migratorio>

Illegal entry points come from MSF-Barcelona (OCBA). Along the border from northern Guajira to La Jagua del Pilar are about 200 trochas (locations are approximate)



LEGEND

Populated places

- Capital international
- Capital admin 1
- Capital admin 2

Migration points

- Entry Point
- Exit Point
- Crossing Point
- Refugee Urban Location
- Illegal Entry Point

Migratory routes

- Alternative migratory routes
- Main migratory route
- Main road

Roads

- Trunk
- Primary road
- Secondary road
- Tertiary road

Boundary

- Coast line
- International boundary
- Department boundary
- Province boundary

Natural

- River
- Lake

SOURCES

Migration point : Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Colombia, UNHCR, MSF-OCBA
Migration route : Servicio Jesuita a Refugiados Colombia
Admin : ICRC, GADM, GAUL, OCHA FISS,
OCHA ROLAC, OSM
Places : Geonames, Instituto geografico militar de Ecuador,
Natural Earth
Transport : Natural earth, OSM
Natural : SRTM, Natural earth

PROPERTIES

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SCALE

1:1,800,000 1 cm = 18 km
0 15 30 60 90 Km



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