

CONCRETE ACTIONS TO SUPPORT MORE THAN 7 MILLION VENEZUELAN REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED

Médecins du Monde express concern about the lack of concrete actions to support Venezuelan refugees and migrants, despite promises made by donor countries during the 2020 and 2021 international conferences.

As the Fourth International Conference in Solidarity with Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants, co-hosted by the government of Canada and the EU is closing today, we call on the international community to open its eyes on the dramatic reality of the situation of Venezuelan exiles in the Americas, and act accordingly.

Donor countries and the European Commission have renewed their financial commitments for the response to the Venezuelan crisis and its consequences on the lives of millions of people, but this will not be sufficient to address the many issues faced by Venezuelan migrants and refugees.

The loss of funding and the persistent funding gap over the years, raise questions about the extent to which donor countries have followed through on their promises.

The situation of Venezuelan refugees and migrants continues to worsen, and yet the crisis seems to have lost the attention of Western media and donors. The Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan estimates that 8.5 million US dollars are needed to respond to basic health needs between 2023 and 2024. These estimates do not include the needs of those Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Central America.

The ongoing vulnerability and lack of protection for Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the region has resulted in increased exploitation, including forced labour and sex trafficking. Venezuelan migrants and refugees are also subject to stigmatization and discrimination in the region.

Moreover, the crisis has exceeded the capacity of neighbouring countries to provide aid and support, with increasing numbers of refugees and migrants stranded in the Tapón de Darién in Panama, as well as in Central and North America, on their way to North America through Mexico.

To ensure the inclusion and access to healthcare for Venezuelan migrants and refugees, we call for a stronger public investment in healthcare systems and reforms to guarantee the right to health for everyone in host countries, as well as support for civil society organizations working in the field. Finally, we recommend improving access to legal and asylum pathways for Venezuelan migrants, particularly in North America.

Médecins du Monde recommends the implementation of mechanisms to better assess the needs of migrant populations and monitor their movements throughout their journey, while providing guarantees to safeguard the confidentiality of their personal information, as well as the development of cross-border coordination mechanisms to improve medical attention and prevent violence against Venezuelan migrants.

Finally, we also urge the creation of common protocols for victims of violence, including sexual violence, which address the provision of medical care, psychosocial support, and financial empowerment.

The Regional Conference called for by the governments of Mexico and Colombia should make sure that the implementation of these solutions to the issues currently faced by Venezuelan migrants and refugees and their host communities are their priority.

Médecins du Monde believe that only through concerted and sustained action, can we address the needs and challenges faced by Venezuelan refugees and migrants, and uphold the dignity and rights of those affected by this crisis.

Médecins du Monde is responding, with the help of its partners, to the needs of Venezuelan migrants and refugees along the migration routes in Latin American, from Colombia to Central and North America.