

## OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (USAID/OFDA)

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA



USAID is working with partners in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru to support health, food, protection, livelihoods, and WASH activities for vulnerable Venezuelans and members of host communities. *Photo courtesy of ADRA Brazil*

### USAID Continues to Assist Vulnerable Venezuelans Throughout South America

Desperate for medical care, adequate food, basic goods, and essential social services, thousands of Venezuelans continue to flee tenuous living conditions in their country, which a couple of decades ago had one of the wealthiest economies in Latin America. As of September 2018, nearly 2 million people had migrated from Venezuela to other countries in the region, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

As this exodus continues to trigger growing humanitarian needs, strain public services, and increase public health concerns in neighboring countries, USAID, in coordination with national governments, other U.S. Government offices, and UN agencies, continues to work with relief partners to provide critical aid for vulnerable Venezuelans and host communities in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru.

“We are looking at the most effective ways to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to Venezuelans and host communities, including food, medical care, protection, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services, while also supporting livelihoods programs

and strengthening local organizations’ capacity to cope with the influx of Venezuelans over the long-term,” said USAID Venezuela Regional Crisis Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) Leader Tim Callaghan.

In response to food needs among people affected by the Venezuela regional crisis in Colombia, USAID’s Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) has contributed \$13 million to the UN World Food Program (WFP) and nearly \$3 million to an implementing non-governmental organization (NGO) partner in fiscal year (FY) 2018 to provide emergency food assistance to Venezuelans, Colombian returnees, and host community members. This assistance includes hot meals in transit centers and food vouchers. In addition, USAID/FFP has provided \$7 million in FY 2018 funding to WFP to provide emergency food assistance to Venezuelans, Colombians, and vulnerable host community members in Ecuador and \$2 million to the Adventist Disaster Relief Agency (ADRA) in Brazil to provide six months of food vouchers—designed to meet approximately 75 percent of monthly food needs—to 6,600 vulnerable Venezuelans in Roraima State.

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### USAID/FFP Provides Emergency Food Assistance to Venezuelans in Ecuador

Approximately 250,000 Venezuelans have migrated to Ecuador, seeking the food and medical attention that they can no longer obtain in Venezuela. Many of them arrive hungry and dehydrated after having traveled for many days—often on foot—with only the clothes on their backs.

In response to food needs, USAID/FFP partnered with WFP to provide emergency food vouchers to vulnerable Venezuelans and host communities in Ecuador. These vouchers function like prepaid debit cards, allowing beneficiaries to buy nutritious food of their choice from local grocery stores.

Venezuelans who have fled to Ecuador are not living in tent camps. Instead, families are spread across towns and cities, in some cases sharing small rooms with others to split rent costs. USAID/FFP-supported food vouchers not only help migrants feed their families but also have a positive economic impact on local businesses in Ecuador.

To learn more about this food assistance program, please see the recently published USAID Exposure Photo Story titled: [“Venezuelan Voices—A Spiraling Regional Crisis Hits Ecuador.”](#)



USAID/FFP, through WFP, is providing food vouchers to Venezuelans and members of host communities in Ecuador. *Photo by Julian Wyss, USAID/FFP*



USAID/OFDA partner ADRA Brazil provided relief supplies—including hygiene kits and clothing items—to vulnerable Venezuelans at Tancredo Neves Emergency Shelter in Boa Vista city. *Photo courtesy of ADRA Brazil*

## USAID/OFDA Partner ADRA Provides Relief Supplies to Venezuelans in Brazil

Sofia is a Venezuelan woman who left her country in search of better living conditions in Brazil. Upon arrival, she was forced to live on the street with her teenage daughter, vulnerable to hunger and insecurity, before she found accommodations in an emergency shelter. She never imagined that it would be so difficult for her and her daughter to get personal hygiene products, purchase basic necessities, or even be able to take a shower. Sofia is one of hundreds of Venezuelans arriving every day to Brazil’s northern border state of Roraima—one of the poorest regions in the country—in search of food, medical care, and livelihood opportunities.

With support from USAID/OFDA, ADRA Brazil is helping improve the lives of nearly 4,600 Venezuelans like Sofia who are now residing in Roraima emergency shelters by providing them with essential supplies, including hygiene items, clothing, bedding, and cooking sets.

“In moments of crisis, hygiene kits, which contain non-food-items like soap, shampoo, towels, feminine hygiene products, toothbrushes, and toothpaste, have much more value than most people think, as they allow people to maintain personal cleanliness and preserve their dignity,” said Sidney Velado, USAID DART Program Coordinator for Brazil.

A key innovation of ADRA’s humanitarian activities in Roraima was to set up a display with sandals organized by color and size so that beneficiaries have the opportunity to choose shoes that suit themselves and their children. Presenting options to the beneficiaries increased the quality of assistance provided.

“To see beneficiaries’ faces full of joy and satisfaction while they were choosing their pair of flip-flops was priceless. We highly appreciate ADRA’s efforts to provide outstanding aid to vulnerable Venezuelans in Brazil,” Velado emphasized.

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USAID/OFDA is working with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and several NGO implementing partners to support health-related activities in Colombia, including providing training sessions to help increase health actors’ response capacity and strengthen data collection and epidemiological surveillance, as well as providing tents and supplies to support vaccination posts and deploying nurses to conduct health awareness and hygiene promotion sessions. USAID/OFDA is also supporting the establishment of health care units to provide comprehensive primary health, prenatal, and psychosocial care, as well as cash assistance programs to help vulnerable people throughout Colombia affected by the Venezuela regional crisis to gain access to health care, shelter, and WASH services. As of September 26, USAID/OFDA had contributed more than \$23 million in humanitarian funding to support relief organizations in Colombia to implement WASH, shelter, protection, livelihoods, and health interventions for vulnerable Venezuelans, Colombian returnees, and members of host communities.

To help vulnerable Venezuelans in Peru, USAID/OFDA recently announced it will provide \$500,000 to PAHO to support critical health care services, including vaccinations, and to strengthen the local health care network’s capacity to better monitor, detect, and respond to outbreaks of infectious diseases.

USAID/OFDA is also supporting shelter and WASH activities, as well as the provision of non-food items for vulnerable Venezuelans and host community members in Brazil.

“Hyperinflation of the economy, hospitals without supplies, and widespread hunger continue to increase the number of Venezuelans moving into neighboring countries. The vast majority of newcomers are traveling by foot and arriving with more precarious conditions than those who came last year or a few months ago,” said USAID DART Deputy Team Leader Sarah McNiece.

“We plan to continue expanding our humanitarian interventions throughout the LAC region and adapt them to the changing needs of migrants and host communities, as well as to the context and regulations of each country. We will also continue to deploy USAID humanitarian specialists throughout the region to assess priority needs and coordinate closely with relief organizations and national and local authorities,” McNiece noted.

In total, the U.S. Government has provided nearly \$95 million in humanitarian assistance to meet the most urgent needs of people affected by the crisis in Venezuela as of September 26.



Members of a Wayuu indigenous community near the Colombian border with Venezuela welcomed USAID DART staff. *Photo by Bob Fagen, USAID/OFDA*

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