Colombia is host to 1.7 million Venezuelans, which represent more than 37 percent of the estimated 4.6 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean. Colombia shares a 2,200-kilometer border, seven formal border crossings, and hundreds of informal crossings with Venezuela. HIAS supports refugees to build new lives and reunite with family members in safety and freedom. HIAS Colombia focuses on single women, women-headed households, survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), survivors of torture, older people, people with disabilities and serious medical conditions, and LGBTQ refugees.

COVID-19 has destabilized the lives of refugees and migrants across Latin America and the Caribbean, cutting off access to income and increasing vulnerability to violence. To respond to their heightened needs, HIAS Colombia has modified its service by implementing remote support and developing other innovative solutions.

HIAS Programs and Focus
HIAS Colombia focuses on the prevention and response to GBV, community-based mental health, and economic inclusion, including temporary housing and supplementary food support. Working closely with government institutions, partner organizations, the private sector, and refugee communities, HIAS Colombia promotes local integration and access to rights and services.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention and Response
Women, girls, and LGBTQ individuals are disproportionately affected by forced displacement. HIAS’ GBV services are driven by the needs and the voices of survivors, and our GBV programming helps forcibly displaced women, girls, and LGBTQ individuals to pursue their potential, free from violence and gender-related oppression. In addition to providing GBV case management, HIAS staff work at the community level to identify, train, and support community members who work with and advocate for survivors of GBV, while adhering to international humanitarian principles.
Community-Based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (CB-MHPSS)
Refugees and forcibly displaced people face adversity and extreme stressors, including loss of loved ones, violence, and disruptions to daily life. HIAS’ mental health programs train key community members to recognize acute emotional distress in children and adults as a result of crisis, and how to respond with empathy and respect. HIAS Colombia provides Venezuelans culturally appropriate support through psychological first aid training; identifying and assisting isolated and stigmatized individuals; and helping those who require specialized mental health services. Other activities include safe spaces for groups of women, children, youth, and other vulnerable individuals to share challenges related to integration, work, and education.

Economic Inclusion
Access to dignified, sustainable, and safe livelihoods are at the core of HIAS’ economic inclusion work. Our methodology enables refugees, vulnerable migrants, and host communities to find opportunities to increase resilience, regain dignity, and provide opportunities to build independent and meaningful futures. HIAS Colombia’s programs include cash and voucher assistance; accelerated business incubation through HIAS’ Entrepreneurship School with a Gender Lens; financial literacy; vocational training; asset seed capital support; and private sector job referrals. HIAS Colombia also provides temporary housing through our partnership with Airbnb Open Homes, and has developed The Employers’ Guide to Hiring Refugees and Venezuelan Migrants in Colombia, in partnership with Tent, the Colombia Ministry of Labor, and UNHCR.

HIAS in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)
HIAS advocates for the protection of refugees, other forcibly displaced populations, and local host communities throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. As part of a comprehensive regional response to meet the urgent needs of these populations, including the millions of displaced Venezuelans, HIAS participates in several regional coordination platforms and partnerships which focus on protection, food security, GBV, and Cash and Voucher Assistance, including: REDLAC (IASC Regional Work Group Risk, Emergencies and Disasters) UNHCR/IOM Regional Platform for the Venezuela Situation Response (R4V) Interagency Group on Mixed Migration Flows (GIFMM) in Colombia Working Group for Refugees and Migrants (GTRM) in Ecuador and Peru

HIAS currently has programs in nine countries in LAC (Aruba, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela) and partners with a wide range of government agencies, UN entities (UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA, UNVFVT), the private sector (Airbnb, TATA Consultancy Services, and Manpower), and other NGOs and consortia, including Jesuit Refugee Service, Save the Children, Norwegian Refugee Council, Plan International, and Girls not Brides.

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