The disintegrating economic, social, and political situation facing Venezuela has led to a significant movement of people within the country, to neighboring countries, and beyond. To date, an estimated five million Venezuelans have left their country seeking a better life. Despite this dire context, the country still hosts approximately 8,500 Colombian refugees, many of whom had fled to Venezuela due to a decades-long armed conflict. HIAS Venezuela 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 these heightened needs, HIAS Venezuela has modified its services by implementing remote support and developing other innovative solutions.

**HIAS PROGRAMS AND FOCUS**

**Legal Protection**

Without legal status, refugees are forced to live on the margins of society, sometimes for generations, without access to healthcare, education, dignified work, or safe shelter. HIAS Venezuela provides access to necessary legal information, rights and services, and refers clients to other social and legal assistance, as needed. Staff train community leaders on how to identify, prevent, and respond to specific protection needs, offering workshops on women’s rights, refugee protection, parental responsibilities, mobility and displacement, comprehensive care, and how to manage in times of crisis.

**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 access human rights to pursue their potential, free from violence and gender-related oppression. HIAS Venezuela’s GBV prevention and response programs provide case management services and life-saving support.
to survivors. Services include psychosocial assistance, distribution of health and hygiene kits to women, legal protection, and trainings on working with local organizations. HIAS Venezuela also collaborates with survivors of GBV to design and implement cultural and recreational activities, creating safe, welcoming spaces that engage existing support systems in their communities.

**Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)**

A general lack of infrastructure has led to insufficient access to clean water and adequate sanitation systems across Venezuela. To mitigate the disruption of access to basic WASH services, HIAS and its partners have designed and implemented WASH activities in eight states across Venezuela. Activities include providing communities with access to clean water, education on good hygiene, dignity kits containing specific hygiene products for women and girls, and sanitation supply delivery.

**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 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 has psychologists on staff to provide mental health care, administer psychological first aid, and run support groups. Staff also support caregivers to cope with heightened stress and build capacity with local community leaders.

**Economic Inclusion**

Access to dignified, sustainable, and safe livelihoods are at the core of HIAS’ economic inclusion work. We help provide opportunities for refugees to build independent and meaningful futures that allow them to enhance their self-reliance and increase their resilience. HIAS Venezuela also provides cash and voucher assistance to beneficiaries who cannot afford the most basic needs. This year, hundreds of people received assistance to buy food, hygiene and maternity kits, household goods, as well as access to transportation and accommodation. HIAS also provides vocational training to pursue life-sustaining livelihoods projects, including urban agriculture and community gardens.

**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 with a focus on protection, food security, gender-based violence, 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), The Interagency Group on Mixed Migration Flows (GIFMM) in Colombia, the 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, UNVFT), 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.

**CONTACT**

Marcel Navas, Country Director • +58 (412) 255 51 10 • marcel.navas@hias.org

Find us on Facebook and Instagram at @HIASVenezuela