

BRIEF | **EMERGING TRENDS ON FORCED HUMAN MOBILITY AND
MIGRATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

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Brief – Emerging trends on forced human mobility and migration in Latin America and The Caribbean

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INTRODUCTION:

The Jesuit Refugee Service for Latin America and The Caribbean (JRS LAÇ1), on its mission to accompany, serve, and advocate; and with the aim to identifies humanitarian actions, political actions, and hospitality actions for the reception of migrants and refugees, that are closer to host communities and territorial contexts. This Brief document some of the emerging trends on forced human mobility that some of the JRS teams (with bureaus on the regional, national and local level) have identified during the permanent monitoring and accompaniment that we carry out.

Taking into consideration the different contexts of each country, the outlook presented in this document may change in different ways because it only reflects specific situations that the people that are being forced to migrate are living because they must leave their homes to create new life projects, seeking international protection and aid.

(1) JRS Colombia, JRS Ecuador, JRS Venezuela, JRS México and Regional Bureau for Latin America and The Caribbean.



EMERGING TRENDS TO UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT:

1. MIGRATION CRISES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN are almost forgotten in the global agenda.



4. RESTRICTIVE MIGRATION POLICIES are thriving in the region and tend to securitization.

7. THE GROWTH OF AN INDIVIDUALISTIC CULTURE lower participation rates in common causes, and the rise in xenophobic expressions and discrimination in the region's countries.

2. THE VULNERABILITY OF FORCED MIGRANTS IS INCREASING with the current exacerbation in structural violence, armed conflict, gender-based violence, and drug trafficking related violence.

5. THE WEAKENING OF THE STATE loss of credibility, and a poor ability to respond to migration crises created by forced migration.

8. HOSPITALITY AND RECONCILIATION EXPRESSIONS from different host communities towards forced migrants as a bet for local integration.

3. THE IMPACTS OF THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CRISIS are generating mass displacement in the region.

6. NEW REALITIES, DIVERSIFICATION, AND PROFILE PLURALITY: ¿WHO ARE THE PEOPLE MIGRATING TODAY?



A DEEPER LOOK:

1. MIGRATION CRISES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN ARE ALMOST FORGOTTEN IN THE GLOBAL AGENDA.

Migrating is a right, not a media phenomenon. As such, every person with a need for international protection also has the right to due process and to be hosted and protected by the States. Currently, the spotlight and the response to the different crises have been framed around the media's spectacularization in the global agenda, relegating and making various emergencies invisible in the region. This has been seen in different situations such as the one that Venezuelan people have been living, having to flee massively from their country and the little attention that crisis get, also, the internal forced displacement of people and the exacerbation of the internal armed conflict in Colombia that seems to be almost out of the discussions and finally the Haitian crisis that has never been a priority to the international community. **The gaps in the protection of forced migrants and the extreme vulnerability remain and require regional work and actions from the State entities considering the coordination and complementary principles that were meant for humanitarian organizations.**

Therefore, we must insist that life cannot be assorted or ranked by first, second, and third class or category; nationality, ethnicity, and gender cannot influence or determine the rights of refugees, migrants, or displaced people; their rights are human rights. We must then convene on every entity to help us make these situations visible, without biases, or sensationalism, to act according to humanitarian laws and the international cooperation principles.

2. THE VULNERABILITY OF FORCED MIGRANTS IS INCREASING, WITH THE CURRENT EXACERBATION IN STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE, ARMED CONFLICT, GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, AND DRUG TRAFFICKING-RELATED VIOLENCE:

The control by illegal armed groups in border areas places more and more risks on people forced to migrate. Given the lack of opportunities and resources for the necessary minimum, this population is at greater risk of being linked to irregular activities.

There is a trend toward an increase in violence that was not previously related to forced migratory flows in the region. An example of this is Colombia, where the internal armed conflict is exacerbating and has repercussions on the Venezuelan forced migrant population. Currently, the interference of other situations around migration, such as human trafficking, organ trafficking, extortion, drug trafficking, and prostitution, among others, is evident. Different types of violence, such as poverty and the one resulting from climate change, are also still present, but with greater intensity.

With the preceding, it is identified that migrants, displaced people, and refugees are in a context of multiple affectations that increase their vulnerability in the territories they transit, which requires a flexible response capacity and a complex view of their reality to provide appropriate responses.

3. THE IMPACTS OF THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CRISIS ARE GENERATING MASS DISPLACEMENT IN THE REGION.

Climate change represents one of the most significant challenges for Latin America and the Caribbean. According to the 2020 report of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), this region is one of the most affected, and natural disasters "compromise the health and safety of the people, threaten food, water, and energy security, and endangers the environment." This scenario has led to an increase in mass displacement in countries such as Brazil, Guatemala, and Bolivia, among others, in the first quarter of 2022.

Accompanying people forced to migrate due to climatic factors is a regional challenge since there are no specific protection systems to respond to their needs. In addition, the cases of victims of forced migrations due to climatic

factors are most likely victims of multiple structural types of violence such as economic inequality, unemployment, and the impossibility to access decent housing.

4. RESTRICTIVE MIGRATION POLICIES ARE THRIVING IN THE REGION AND TEND TO SECURITIZATION.

The creation of migratory regulations with a securitization perspective has increased, which means that migration in transit or with a permanence vocation is seen as a threat to national security and not as a right. This argument has even been used to justify individual or mass deportations, "hot returns," and sometimes disregard of due process in some countries.

On the occasion of the COVID 19 pandemic, it was possible to observe how the States of the region opted for the closure of their borders, the creation of "vaccine visas," and with it came the exacerbation of fear of the other and an increase in the use of irregular passes by the migrant, displaced and refugee population, exposing them to more significant threats along the way.

From a critical theory of migration, it is easily identifiable, that the regulations and policies generate conditions of migratory irregularity since they do not contemplate the complex realities in which documentation becomes another barrier to access rights and international protection.

This can be seen in: the increase in migrant detention centers in countries such as Mexico and the United States; in the political speeches that point to migrants as "illegal" or "undocumented"; the dilatation of refugee applications of the population of Senegal in Argentina; the creation of humanitarian visas to enter Ecuador; the requirement to apply for a tourist, work or residence visa to enter Chile; the new visa for the Venezuelan population to enter Mexico. These actions are considered a clear example of the increase in securitization policies.



5. THE WEAKENING OF THE STATES, LOSS OF CREDIBILITY, AND A POOR ABILITY TO RESPOND TO MIGRATION CRISES CREATED BY FORCED MIGRATION.

In recent years there has been a notorious decrease in the application of international treaties by the region's States, especially agreements to provide international protection to those who have had to migrate in a forced manner.

By not providing such protection, contexts of greater vulnerability are being generated for migrants, displaced people, and refugees.

An illustration of this is that, in countries like Colombia, temporary regularization mechanisms have been prioritized for the migratory flow from Venezuela, the most recent being the Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Migrants. Despite the advances in regularization, it is essential to point out that the State's obligation to provide international protection to all those who have had to migrate from their country by force is neglected.

Worrying situations like this occur in many Latin American and Caribbean countries, which shows the negligence of state commitments that do not allow the Refugee System to guarantee accurate and concrete protection for people who need it.

Added to this is the low credibility of state entities and the low response capacity when a humanitarian crisis arises, causing humanitarian organizations sometimes to replace the functions and responsibilities of public and state entities.

6. NEW REALITIES, DIVERSIFICATION, AND PROFILE PLURALITY: ¿WHO ARE THE PEOPLE MIGRATING TODAY?

The demographics of the migrant and refugee population in the Latin American and Caribbean region have transformed. At the beginning of the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela (2016-2017) and during the first migrant caravans (2018) in Central America, the migration of single people for economic reasons was the most common and the most commonly identifiable. However, today there is evidence of the constant transit of:

- Multinational families, made up of Venezuelan or Haitian fathers/ mothers with Colombian children, Chilean children, or children of different nationalities.
- People with double and triple affectation: refugees, victims of armed conflicts, and, in turn, affected by natural disasters.
- Women in a state of pregnancy and lactation.
- Unaccompanied children and adolescents.
- Older adults
- LGBTBIQ+ population

There are legal loopholes for these profiles in various countries that leave them in legal limbo due to the lack of clear protection policies and regularization procedures.

This situation then implies the need for better regional articulation by state entities, humanitarian organizations, and civil society actors to establish flows of information, monitoring, and accompaniment of the populations on their migratory route, leading to a higher rate of recognition, attention, and protection.

7. THE GROWTH OF AN INDIVIDUALISTIC CULTURE, LOWER PARTICIPATION RATES IN COMMON CAUSES, AND THE RISE IN XENOPHOBIC EXPRESSIONS AND DISCRIMINATION IN THE REGION'S COUNTRIES.

The individualistic culture has increased; this has exacerbated society's lack of interest in working on common goals that can contribute to building a more inclusive and less violent society. In this sense, it is worrying that the fragmentation of communities in Latin America and The Caribbean is correlated with the increase in violence toward the "other" in speeches and behaviors, and toward migrants, refugees, and displaced people, the increase in economic and social inequalities caused by public policies, as well as the distrust of public entities that watch over the common good.

This means that displaced people, migrants, and refugees in the region find themselves within communities or countries that are less supportive or empathic in the face of the reality they live in. Countries where expressions of xenophobia and discrimination have increased drastically in recent years, as seen on social networks, in publications that call for the eviction of migrant families in Ecuador and Chile, among others. All the above has caused people who have migrated in a forced manner to reduce their participation in public spaces, seeking not to be visible to the host communities to avoid being vulnerable to damage or hurt in any way.

In the same way, those who rule and lead the States also focus their interests on benefiting the private sector more than the public sector by making the social and migratory crises in the territories invisible and directing public policy actions to specific populations and issues, enhancing the current economic system.

8. HOSPITALITY AND RECONCILIATION EXPRESSIONS FROM DIFFERENT HOST COMMUNITIES TOWARDS FORCED MIGRANTS AS A BET FOR LOCAL INTEGRATION.

Likewise, our local, national, bi-national, and regional JRS teams have recognized that reconciliation represents a journey towards hope. Today we can affirm that it is a necessary process so that the mission of JRS has a deep and transforming meaning, and perhaps the place where we can do a universal good in the apostolate of forced migrations.

To expand the information on the woven processes in terms of reconciliation and hospitality from JRS and the Jesuit Network with Migrants, we invite you to consult the following links:

<https://lac.jrs.net/reconciliaciones/>

<https://historiasdehospitalidad.com/>

Continuing to walk with hope is a task that cannot be neglected at the individual, interpersonal, organizational, and state levels. Here are some reflections that may be appropriate depending on the contexts, ways of life, and personal options to take the next possible step towards a reconciled region:

<https://lac.jrs.net/reconciliaciones/conectandonos/>

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Strengthen the international protection system in Latin America and the Caribbean with the legal tools of the region such as the Cartagena Declaration of 1984.
- Promote comprehensive, flexible, and pertinent migration policies that recognize and integrate the plurality of profiles of migrants, displaced people, and refugees.
- Promote more actions of hospitality and reconciliation based on those that some host communities have already begun to develop.
- Resume the multilateral regional coordination spaces for the regional response to the migratory crises that the region is experiencing, establishing commitments.
- Make visible the situations experienced by migrant, displaced, and refugee populations without bias, without sensationalism, acting based on humanitarian standards and the principles of international cooperation.
- Recognize the rights of people who are forced to flee their homes for the various reasons mentioned in this document.
- Ensure access to information. People who migrate forcibly have the right and the need to be informed clearly and transparently.





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