

HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP)

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The activities proposed hereafter are still subject to the adoption of the financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2024/01000¹

AMOUNT: EUR 111 645 481

The present Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) was prepared based on financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2024/91000 (Worldwide Decision) and the related General Guidelines for Operational Priorities on Humanitarian Aid (Operational Priorities). The purpose of the HIP and its annexes² is to serve as a communication tool for DG ECHO³'s partners and to assist in the preparation of their proposals. The provisions of the Worldwide Decision and the General Conditions of the Agreement with the European Commission shall take precedence over the provisions in this document.

1. CONTEXT

The Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region presents several overlapping complex emergencies, including the internal and regional impact of the crisis in Venezuela, the humanitarian consequences of the non-international armed conflicts in Colombia, a multi-layered crisis in Haiti, as well as pervasive violence in Central America, Mexico, and Ecuador. In addition to this, the LAC region is exposed to natural hazards, whose frequency and intensity have increased in recent years due to the impact of climate change. The region is highly vulnerable to weather-related events such as hurricanes and storms, floods, droughts, heat and cold spells, as well as geological events such as earthquakes and volcano eruptions. With nearly 75% of its 654 million population living in high-risk areas, the region ranks second in the list of the most natural hazard-prone areas in the world.

In addition, the region has seen a significant displacement of more than 20 million people with different legal statuses, nationalities and vulnerabilities. People on the move are often obliged to cross borders through so called “hotspots” where conditions are terrible, exposing them to further risks. Since 2021, there has been a sharp increase every year in mixed mobility flows towards North America and in 2022, more than 250 000 people, mostly Venezuelans, Haitians, Colombians and Ecuadorians, transited via the dangerous Darien Gap at the Colombia-Panama border. The trends in 2023 are even worse, as between January and September 2023 alone, around 400 000 people were registered as passing through the Darien.

This instability has been additionally fuelled by an increase of violence, civil unrest and organised crime in different parts of the continent. Pervasive violence and armed conflicts are a major threat to populations in Colombia, Venezuela, Central America, Mexico, Ecuador, and Haiti.

¹ Conditionality clause to be inserted if the HIP is released before adoption of the Worldwide Decision. To be deleted after the formal adoption of the decision.

² Technical annex and thematic policies annex.

³ Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO).

Inflation has made many basic items unaffordable for the most vulnerable groups such as people on the move and ethnic minorities. Consequently, food insecurity and multi-dimensional poverty are reaching worrying levels and aggravate every aspect of the ongoing humanitarian crises in the region, causing instability and unrest. As of mid-2023, more than 12 million people are food insecure in the LAC region (not including insufficient data from Nicaragua, Cuba, Venezuela and El Salvador).

DG ECHO has identified high humanitarian needs in South America (notably in Colombia and Venezuela), Haiti, Central America, and the Caribbean, as well as amongst displaced people in at least 16 countries across the region⁴.

	Colombia	Venezuela	South America ⁵	Caribbean ⁶	Haiti	Central America & Mexico (CAM) ⁷
INFORM Risk Index⁸	5.4/10	5.1/10	4.5/10	4.03 / 10	6.4/10	4.6 / 10
Vulnerability Index	6.2/10	4.1/10	4.3/10	3.2 / 10	5.7/10	4.5 / 10
Hazard and Exposure	6.9/10	6.6/10	5	4.3 / 10	6.4/10	4.9 / 10
Lack of Coping Capacity	3.6/10	5.0/10	4.5/10	4.7 / 10	7.2/10	4.5 / 10
Projected conflict risk	9.4/10	5.9/10	-	0.1/10	8.3/10	3.9 / 10
Uprooted People Index	10/10	4.5/10	-	5/10	3.8/10	6.1/10-
Natural Disaster Index	6.7/10	6.2/10	6.5/10	5.2/10	7.0/10	6.4/10-
HDI Ranking⁹ (Value)	83 - (0.761)	120 - (0.691)	-	-	163 - (0.53)	0.71
Total Population ¹⁰	52.0 M	28.5 M	343.2 M	33.2 M	11.3 M	172.2 M
	Colombia internal conflict	Venezuela internal	Venezuela regional	Caribbean (excl. Haiti)	Haiti	CAM
Global Crisis Severity Index¹¹	4/5	4.7/5	3.8/5	2	4.2/5	3-4/5
Operating Environment	3/5	4/5	4.5/5	1-2.5/5	4/5	2.5/5

Venezuela

The humanitarian crisis in Venezuela remains unabated, with deepening needs in all the key sectors. The political, social and economic crisis is profound and living conditions are unlikely to improve in the short term - the economy is 75% smaller now than in 2013, and with an annual growth rate of 5% it would take another 15 years to be just half of what it was then. According to local data¹², 19.7 million people need humanitarian assistance (of a population of 28.7 million)¹³. The National Household Survey¹⁴ indicated for 2022 an extreme poverty rate of 67.7%, and a total poverty rate of 95.5%.

⁴ Colombia, Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Brazil, Bolivia, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago (TT), Aruba, Curaçao, Costa Rica, Argentina, Paraguay, Panama, Uruguay, Mexico.

⁵ Includes the following countries: Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Brazil.

⁶ [Excluding Haiti](#).

⁷ Includes the following countries: Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Mexico, Costa Rica and Panama.

⁸ INFORM is a global, open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters:

<https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Results-and-data/moduleId/1782/id/433/controller/Admin/action/Results>.

⁹ UNDP, Humanitarian Development Index (HDI).

¹⁰ World Data Atlas.

¹¹ <http://www.inform-index.org/Global-Crisis-Severity-Index-beta>.

¹² HumVenezuela, March 2022 (platform of Humanitarian Venezuelan Civil Society Organisations).

¹³ Venezuela Humanitarian Needs overview refer to 7 million people in need. [Venezuela | OCHA \(unocha.org\)](#)

¹⁴ ENCOVI, September 2022

Consumption fell between 25% and 30% during the first quarter of 2023¹⁵. By the end of 2023, a GDP growth of 3.4% is expected, a much slower rate than the almost 8% growth estimated for 2022. Moreover, annualized inflation stood at 429% in June 2023, which indicates that the inflationary process persists.¹⁶

In this context of a continued decline of basic services such as water, electricity, education and health care provision, gas and fuel shortages, combined with heightening levels of violence, lack of formal income-generating activities (85% of Venezuelans earn their income through informal activities), the most vulnerable populations increasingly resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as reducing the number and quality of meals or school drop-outs, and exposing themselves to exacerbated risks such as trafficking and forced recruitment. These negative reactions increase the impact of the crisis on health, nutrition, education and protection matters. Migration and internal displacement have been the main coping strategies of vulnerable people in order to access basic services, flee protection risks, as well as increase their family's income. From February 2018 to August 2023, around 7 710 000 Venezuelans emigrated from the country¹⁷.

Colombia

Since the Peace Agreement with the FARC was signed in 2016, and more acutely for the past four years, Colombia's humanitarian situation has steadily deteriorated. In 2023, 13.1 million people need humanitarian assistance and protection (7.7 million at risk from conflicts and disasters according to the 2023 HNO¹⁸, and 5.4 million refugees, migrants and returnees with humanitarian needs, according to the 2023 Colombia Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP)¹⁹).

Humanitarian needs in Colombia are caused by four drivers. Firstly, the humanitarian impacts of the armed conflicts persist despite the ongoing efforts of the government towards “Total Peace”. According to ICRC, there are currently seven non-international armed conflicts in Colombia, three of which involve the Colombian armed forces while four are among Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs). The number of conflicts classified by the ICRC and their humanitarian consequences have steadily increased in the past few years because of a fragmentation of the number of groups and intensified disputes for a growing share of the country's territory²⁰. Secondly, climate-related shocks and variability affected at least 550 000 people across the country in 2022²¹. The *El Niño* phenomenon is expected to have significant humanitarian impacts due to below-average rainfall²². Thirdly, the lingering economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the unprecedented 2022 inflation rates have plunged more than 16.8 million people in Colombia into food insecurity (WFP), including 15.5 million Colombians and 1.3 million Venezuelans²³. Finally, the situation of 2.5 million Venezuelans living in Colombia, along with the transit of hundreds of thousands of people, including through the Darien Gap, continue to generate serious protection risks²⁴.

¹⁵ HUM Venezuela June 2023 "Colapso y brechas de privación social en comunidades"

¹⁶ Observatorio Venezolano de Finanzas (OVF)

¹⁷ <https://www.r4v.info/es/refugiadosymigrantes>

¹⁸ <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/colombia/document/colombia-hnopanorama-de-necesidades-humanitarias-2023-13-mar-2023>

¹⁹ <https://www.r4v.info/es/rmrp23-pager-colombia>

²⁰ <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/colombia-humanitarian-challenges-2023>

²¹ <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/colombia/document/colombia-hnopanorama-de-necesidades-humanitarias-2023-13-mar-2023>

²² https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20230725_ACAPS_Thematic_report_El_Nino_overview_anticipated_humanitarian_impact_in_2023.pdf

²³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/emergency-food-security-and-nutrition-assessment-migrant-populations-and-host-communities-brief>

²⁴ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/99649>

Humanitarian needs stemming from natural hazards often intersect with and are compounded by other vulnerabilities such as those created by the armed conflict or mixed migration flows. At least 30% of current climatic emergencies take place in municipalities with a strong presence of armed groups and/or large concentration of migrant and refugee populations. In addition, humanitarian impacts further deepen structural inequalities, with ethnic minorities - both indigenous and Afro-Colombian – and underserved rural communities disproportionately affected. Despite increasing needs, humanitarian access barriers and restrictions have increased in 2022, adversely affecting the work of humanitarian partners, and requiring robust access strategies.

South America

Forced displacement continues to be a major humanitarian issue in the subregion, with people fleeing Venezuela, Colombia and now also Ecuador, due to violence and the socio-economic crisis. The deterioration of the situation in different host countries of South America also fuels secondary flows of migrants and refugees, either between different countries or towards the north of the continent.

In addition to the displacement and the high exposure to natural hazards, the recent large-scale loss of livelihoods and global inflation has led to an unprecedented and critical situation, with more than five million people severely food insecure in Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia alone²⁵. This context contributes to social unrest in several countries of the region, which often translates into widespread violence, causing additional humanitarian needs, especially related to protection.

In Amazonia²⁶, indigenous and afro-descendant communities are witnessing an increase in the degradation of their natural and social environment. Fostered by a favourable political conjuncture, organised crime allied with local elites and extractive companies or groups has become a main threat for these populations. The destruction of their habitat and livelihoods is often accompanied by indiscriminate violence, murders, sexual exploitation and other forms of violence, in addition to alarming percentages of malnutrition, malaria infection, and the discontinuation of health services. In the indigenous region of the Gran Chaco, between Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay, the protracted droughts continue to affect the precarious situation of indigenous populations. Moreover, the expected impact of the *El Niño* phenomenon during the last quarter of 2023 and the first quarter of 2024 will pose an additional burden on the national response capacities in the region.

Central America and Mexico (CAM)

The region combines a high exposure to natural hazards and epidemics, with chronic poverty, vast inequality, rapid uncontrolled urbanisation and socio-political tensions, causing violence. The impact of recent crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, tropical storms, the war in Ukraine, in a context of climate change and protracted drought, is further eroding coping capacities, resulting in more displacement, food insecurity and protection risks. The chronic violence in CAM generates humanitarian consequences identical, in nature and scale, to those identified in armed conflicts.

At the same time, several multi-directional simultaneous flows of forcibly displaced persons (including IDPs) originate in CAM, much of which are now circular as a rising number of people are forcibly returned from both the US and Mexico, often to re-migrate subsequently or to become internally displaced again. While Nicaragua has become a major country of origin of refugees, with

²⁵ WFP estimations November 2022.

²⁶ The Amazonia occupies the Amazonas River shed, including territories in Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela among others.

5% of its population abroad in 2022, Costa Rica and Mexico are now the third and fifth countries with the world's highest number of new individual asylum applications. The region is also a significant transit and destination area for people on the move, crossing into Panama via the dangerous Darien Gap, on their way to the US border. Nicaragua, marked since 2018 by intensified repression and a continuous decrease of the humanitarian space, denies and underreports the existing food and internal displacement crises or the violence against indigenous communities. In the Dry Corridor, undeserved rural communities, often inhabited by ethnic minorities, bear the humanitarian consequences of successive climate shocks, causing severe droughts, further exacerbated by this year's *El Niño* phenomenon. More than 8 million people are now food insecure²⁷.

Haiti and the Caribbean

Haiti is an extremely fragile state, highly vulnerable to natural and man-made hazards. Haiti's humanitarian crisis has resulted from a political and economic implosion, compounded by natural shocks with consequences similar to those of major armed conflicts – including severe constraints to humanitarian access. The situation remains extremely volatile as gangs (transformed into well-organised and heavily armed organisations) now control 80% of the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area and continue to drive a multifaceted crisis that has displaced 220 000 people, including 60 000 children, with very limited capacities of state actors to face the security situation. People living in gang-controlled areas are subject to kidnappings, murders, sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation and abuse, and their access to basic services such as health, drinking water and education is increasingly hampered. Three consecutive years of economic recession and an inflation rate of 48% have added to the misery of the population, with nearly 90% of Haitians living below the poverty line and close to a third in extreme poverty²⁸. Some 4.3 million people experience high levels of acute food insecurity. More than 115 600 children are expected to suffer from severe wasting²⁹ in 2023. Basic public services like health and education have become dependent on aid groups to fund and run. In recent years, many of them, including medical facilities, have been forced to shut down due to deteriorating security conditions. This contributed to a resurgence of cholera at the end of 2022, which has claimed hundreds of lives, many of them children. Desperation is driving more and more Haitians to leave the country. The UN Security Council has extended the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) until 15/07/2024.

The **Caribbean** islands and territories present many characteristics that put their populations at risk and further increase their vulnerability to natural hazards, with a location already prone to natural hazards. Most of the islands are exposed to hurricanes and associated hazards (rainfall, winds, and storm surges) from June to November. Floods and landslides are also frequent. The tectonic setting of the region results in exposure to earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcano eruptions. Geographic isolation, small size, limited natural resources, large exposed coastal zones, and high susceptibility to the potential effects of climate change and its associated rise in sea levels also influence the region's vulnerability to natural hazards and put their populations and ecosystems at risk. The increased flow of people, migration, high levels of urbanisation and population densities, increasing food insecurity, and environmental changes amplify the vulnerability in the region. Long term migration patterns (emigration out of the region as well as intraregional migration) have become more prominent in

²⁷ According to the 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overviews for El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras

²⁸ World Bank (2023). The World Bank in Haiti. Overview. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/haiti/overview>

²⁹ Wasting is defined as low weight-for-height. It often indicates recent and severe weight loss, although it can also persist for a long time. [Malnutrition \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/)

recent years. The arrival of Venezuelan refugees and an increasing number of Haitian and Cuban migrants have added to complex migration dynamics, particularly in the Dominican Republic as well as in islands and countries in the southern Caribbean close to Venezuela, including Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Aruba and Curaçao. As the pandemic triggered a significant spike in poverty, exacerbating food insecurity, more than 5 million people in the Caribbean are food insecure (3.7 million people out of 7.1 million (52%) in the English-speaking Caribbean³⁰ and more than 1.2 million in the Dominican Republic³¹ .

2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

2.1 People in need of humanitarian assistance

The sub-sections below do not entirely correspond to the figures included in the table, but rather complement it.

	Venezuela	Colombia	South America ³²	Caribbean ³³	Haiti	Central America & Mexico (CAM)
Total People in Need	19,700,000³⁴ Trend: ↗	13,100,000 (7,700,000 as per the HRP 2023 and 5,400,000 as per the RMRP 2023) Trend: ↗	4,200,000 (RMRP 2024) Trend: ↗	1,600,000 Trend: ↗	5,200,000 Trend: ↗	9,300,000³⁵ (HNO 2023) Trend: ↗
Food insecure people	18,700,000 (HumVenezuela ³⁶) Trend: ↗	16,800,000 Acute food insecurity, Colombians 15.5M, Venezuelans in Colombia 1.3M (WFP EFSA, October 2022 + March 2023) Trend: ↗	Severely food insecure: 5,036,113 Moderately food insecure: 23,409,428 (WFP, May 2022) ³⁷ Trend: ↗	4,900,000 food insecure people (WFP/CARICOM) Trend: ↗	1,401,000 in IPC 4 and 2,945,000 in IPC 3 (September 2023) Trend: ↘	8,000,000 (HNO, FS) Trend: ↗
People affected by natural hazards	> 2,000,000 people potentially affected	794,000 (HRP 2023)	> 2,000,000 people potentially affected	> 2,000,000 people potentially affected	> 2,000,000 people potentially affected	> 2,000,000 people potentially affected
Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers	12,375 returnees and 28,256 migrants between January and June 2023; ³⁸	5,400,000 people in need (2,390,000 settled in Colombia, 1,240,000 pendular migrants; 541,600 Colombian returnees, 349,600 in transit and 885,300 affected host communities)	4,200,000 people in need (RMRP 2024) 3,185,600 Venezuelan migrants and refugees (R4V June 2023) 112,846 Colombians in Ecuador	217,000 migrants, asylum seekers, refugees from Venezuela 135,000 stateless and 1 million Haitian migrants	100,000 deported from January to August 2023	1,103,446 asylum seekers and refugees worldwide from CAM and around 772,536 asylum seekers and refugees hosted in CAM (UNHCR) ³⁹ Trend: ↗

³⁰ 6th CARICOM Caribbean Food Security and Livelihoods Survey Summary Report

³¹ https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_DominicanRepublic_AcuteFoodInsecurity_Oct2022June2023_Report_Spanish.pdf

³² Excluding Colombia and Venezuela.

³³ Excluding Haiti.

³⁴ Source: HumVenezuela. 2020 HNO refers to 7,000,000 people.

³⁵ Note that the HNO 2023 only covers El Salvador, Guatemala & Honduras :<https://humanitarianaction.info/>, while there are people in need in Mexico, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama.

³⁶ 9,300,000 people according to WFP 2019.

³⁷ To this we have to add the last Oxfam estimation on food insecurity in Brazil: According to Oxfam, in Brazil there are 33.1 million people severely food insecure and 32.5 million moderately food insecure.

³⁸ IOM. Flujos de movilidad, enero-junio 2023

³⁹ <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=8EI9xe> <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=6Ot7sU>

	Trend: ➡	(RMRP 2023) Trend: ↗	Trend: ↗	Trend: ↗	Trend: ↗	
IDPs	Recurrent displacements to border and mining areas. Trend: ↗	4,800,000 (IDMC, September 2022) Trend: ↗	Unknown	Unknown	220,000 IDPs (September 2023) Trend: ↗	1,406,060 ⁴⁰ (IDMC) Trend: ↗

2.1.1 Displaced and confined populations

According to UNHCR, in 2022 there were more than 21.5 million⁴¹ forcibly displaced people in the Americas, including populations fleeing from pervasive violence, armed conflicts, socio-economic crises and impacts of climate change. The current complex international context with the critical worsening of living conditions and increased levels of organised crime in most Latin-American countries, triggers a massive increase of forced displacement in all the region. The main refugee and migrant flows remain those of Venezuelans. The latest figures (August 2023)⁴² indicate that more than 7.71 million Venezuelans have left the country, of which 6.52 million are in LAC countries.

With 2.5 million Venezuelan refugees and other people in need of international protection, **Colombia** entered the global top three of hosting countries according to UNHCR's 2022 report, behind Türkiye and Iran⁴³. It also registers new internal displacements, with an estimated 214 700 according to UNHCR and 339 000 according to IDMC's GRID 2023, bringing the total of IDPs since the conflicts started, and as of the end of 2022, up to 4.8 million⁴⁴. Venezuela's exodus affects all **South American** countries with millions crossing the border with Colombia every month to access life-saving services, commuting and/or in transit throughout the country. The humanitarian needs of people on the move are similarly acute, with 4.2 million people in need in Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Brazil and the Southern Cone. These countries are also host and transit countries for a significant number of Venezuelans and people of other nationalities, with around half of them in an irregular situation. Ecuador has also increasingly become a country of origin of many forced displaced people, who are fleeing due to exacerbated violence and the deterioration in living conditions. In many cases they try to take the perilous route towards North America through the Darien Gap between Colombia and Panama. This forced displacement has left behind in **Venezuela** significant numbers of very vulnerable people, many of whom are children, people with disabilities and elderly. Others seek access to basic services and alternative livelihoods by commuting to Colombia, which entails increased protection risks.

The humanitarian situation in **CAM** causes spirals of multi-directional forced displacement. Several countries are at the same time the country of origin, transit and destination. There is a continuous mixed migration flow from Panama to northern Mexico. Also, to be added are the forced displacement of Nicaraguans (to the US and Costa Rica) and the on-going displacement of Hondurans, Salvadorians and Guatemalans to the US, of which many are being forcibly returned. More families and children transit compared to previous years, including unaccompanied children⁴⁵. In addition, IDMC documents 1 406 060 IDPs, with one on three being a child according to UNICEF. Costa Rica and

⁴⁰ IDMC, Displacement data per country: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/>

⁴¹ UNHCR 2023.

⁴² Home | R4V

⁴³ <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2022>

⁴⁴ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/colombia>

⁴⁵ 20% of the 250 000 people who crossed the Darien in 2022 were children.

Mexico host large numbers of asylum seekers, even if in the sub-region it becomes increasingly difficult to obtain international protection due to restrictive asylum policies, lack of access to the procedures and misinformation. The number of returnees has increased, and they struggle to re-integrate in their communities, as they often face violence, retaliation, discrimination, debts and exclusion. Forced displacement also contributes to weaken the social structure by tearing apart families and households, leaving behind the most vulnerable who can become victims of or be recruited by gangs and organised crime.

In **Haiti**, out of the 220 000 internally displaced in Port-au-Prince (as of September 2023), about 40% have sought refuge in informal spontaneous sites across the capital, lacking basic services. Children, elderly, women and single-headed households are particularly exposed to abuse, exploitation and violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. IDPs' vulnerability increases while facing exposure to violence between gangs and epidemics.

The sudden sharpening of the crisis has induced a mass exodus, rapidly turning Haiti into a humanitarian crisis of regional proportions. In 2022, over 154 000 people were repatriated from the Dominican Republic, (a 600% increase compared to 2021) and 22 444 people were repatriated from other countries in the region, including 15 065 from the United States.

In the **Caribbean**, nearly half a million stateless and asylum-seeking people, as well as one million displaced Haitians, live in extremely vulnerable conditions, the majority in the Dominican Republic. With the impacts of the pandemic as well as the deterioration of purchasing power, the most vulnerable in the Caribbean are at higher risk, including migrants and asylum seekers who continue to experience discrimination, isolation, and difficulty accessing services in the host countries. With the increase in numbers of people fleeing primarily due to the deepening humanitarian crisis in Haiti and the incrementally precarious conditions in Cuba, added to the risks posed by some of the receiving countries like the Dominican Republic, protection issues are on the rise. Based on available data, there has been a 170% increase in the number of Haitians requesting humanitarian and protection assistance in the Dominican Republic, due to the recent deterioration of the context and the heightened protection threats posed by the restrictive political environment. The R4V⁴⁶ platform reports that 217 000 Venezuelan refugees and asylum seekers are living in the region, including in the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana⁴⁷. Venezuelans continue to face integration and regularization barriers, lack of access to social basic services and exposure to human rights violations, trafficking, exploitation and abuse.

2.1.2 Vulnerable indigenous people and ethnic minorities

Inequality and discrimination foster the vulnerability of more than 58 million people belonging to indigenous groups in LAC. At the same time, living in remote locations also exposes them to specific threats. Apart from the critical impact of climate change on these communities, these areas are often scenarios for illegal activities such as smuggling, human and drug trafficking as well as illegal over-extraction of natural resources due to the absence of the State and rule of law. As a result, these communities often suffer from confinement, gender-based violence, forced displacement,

⁴⁶ The Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V) is made up by over 200 organizations (including UN Agencies, civil society, faith-based organizations and NGOs, among others) that coordinate their efforts under Venezuela's Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) in 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

⁴⁷ This figure represents the number of Venezuelan asylum seekers, refugees and migrants reported by host governments with serious estimations as government sources do not account for people without a regular status. The total number of people in need of humanitarian and protection assistance is much higher.

psychosocial impact, deprivation of basic services, loss of livelihoods, contamination of water sources, increase of water and vector borne diseases and assassination of leaders. This is particularly the case of the Amazonian populations who are ravaged by exploitation and destruction of their environment. In Colombia, ethnic communities have been disproportionately affected by the armed conflicts. Despite representing 9.34% of the total population, afro-Colombians made up 45% and 37% of those affected by displacements and confinements respectively from January to June 2023. Indigenous communities represented 32% and 25% of all displaced and confined in the same period whilst only accounting for 4.4% of the total population⁴⁸.

In many cases, indigenous people are forced to move, inside or outside their home countries, often to urban areas where they usually settle in slums highly exposed to violence and natural hazards. This is the specific case of the 27 000 indigenous people belonging to 15 ethnic groups who fled Venezuela to other countries in South America and the Caribbean and found themselves in a situation of ill-adaptation and critical humanitarian needs, including death by undernutrition. All the legal/illegal mining takes place on their territories, causing numerous negative impacts on their economy and society.

There are countries such as Guatemala where nearly half of the population self-identify as indigenous, and they are victims of a deep and long-lasting social inequality and discrimination. In Nicaragua, indigenous groups endure different forms of violence, as well as displacement and the deprivation of their lands and resources. Several other indigenous groups experience deep humanitarian needs also in Honduras, El Salvador, Panama and Mexico.

2.2 Description of the most acute humanitarian needs

Over the past few years, the humanitarian landscape in LAC has undergone a critical transformation, with rising complex crises and forced displacement, resulting in greater humanitarian needs both quantitatively and qualitatively. The recent global crises have further aggravated the overall situation.

2.2.1 Protection

The vulnerability of people affected by crises in the LAC region remains critical. Their exposure to risks has significantly increased. The sharp rise in violence and insecurity, combined with rising social and political tensions, has led to unprecedented levels of forced displacement and mixed migration with multi-directional movements. This has further reduced access to basic services (including to civil documentation), exacerbated vulnerabilities, exclusion, and multiplied the threats. In addition, the high levels of irregularity, which affect more than a third of refugees and migrants, prevent them from accessing basic services and employment.

The mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of all population groups have been severely affected. Humanitarian crises are not gender or age neutral and have a different impact on women, girls, boys and men, including exposure to gender-based violence and trafficking. Children are increasingly exposed to family separation, violence, exploitation and abuse, including threat of forced recruitment and use of children perpetuated by armed groups and gangs. The coordination of regional and national protection information management systems throughout the humanitarian responses needs to be reinforced.

⁴⁸<https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/informe-tendencias-e-impacto-humanitario-en-colombia-2023-fecha-de-corte-enero-junio-de-2023-fecha-de-publicacion-21-de-julio-de-2023>

In mixed migration and forced displacement transit routes, refugees and vulnerable migrants are mostly using irregular channel. Legal migration pathways do not exist, or are not known, and are often within the willpower of traffickers. Along these routes, vulnerable people are exposed to extremely high protection risks, face administrative and bureaucratic barriers that hamper access to basic services, suffer from abuse, exploitation and (sexual) violence.

2.2.2 *Health*

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed pronounced healthcare disparities, and the severe health workforce shortages creating a bottleneck in healthcare services, further aggravated by the increased violence towards the healthcare staff and system, reducing access to care even further.

In addition, comprehensive sexual and reproductive healthcare was interrupted, resulting in a surge in unplanned pregnancies (especially among teenagers) and sexually transmitted infections as well as an increase of the maternal mortality in some vulnerable communities⁴⁹. According to UNFPA, sexual and reproductive health services in Latin America and the Caribbean regressed by some 30 years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is particularly concerning considering the increase of population exposed to gender-based violence and sexual abuse such as people on the move and communities with presence of armed groups or organised crime.⁵⁰ Mental health is also a growing concern for populations in humanitarian crises. These issues are often overlooked and stigmatised, leading to insufficient support and resources for those in need.

Refugees and migrants have two types of health-related needs: *ad hoc* on the way (in mobility) and a more consistent utilisation (settlers, circular or stranded migrants) of the healthcare services for preventive measures and ongoing monitoring of chronic or sub-chronic conditions. Different groups such as LGBTQI+, young boys and girls, elderly and people with disabilities also have varying demands and needs.

2.2.3 *Food security, livelihoods and nutrition*

According to WFP, the number of severely food insecure people, as a combined effect of the COVID-19 restrictions, climate shock and the impact of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, has grown from approximately 4.3 million in March 2020 to 10.6 million people in October 2022⁵¹.

According to the World Health Organization, in the coming months, the most severe health risks expected to arise from the ongoing *El Niño* will be linked to malnutrition caused by the ongoing food insecurity.

2.2.4 *Education in emergencies*

Following the devastating consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of which nearly two out of every five students in Latin America and the Caribbean were still out of school, the current crises in the region combined with pervasive violence and transcontinental mixed migration movements, affected the safety, physical and mental health and general well-being of students, teachers, and personnel. A large part of the student body has also lost access to meals and health services provided in educational facilities. Furthermore, according to UNICEF, an estimated 2.2 million students in Latin America and the Caribbean need access to school, facing often prolonged

⁴⁹ <https://doi.org/10.1787/532b0e2d-en>

⁵⁰ <https://doi.org/10.1787/532b0e2d-en>

⁵¹ These figures correspond only to the countries where WFP has access to data, which is not the case in countries severely affected by food insecurity as Venezuela and Cuba.

school closures, violence and threats to schools. Children on the move remain particularly vulnerable due to the non-existence of adequate and innovative education opportunities while in transit.

2.2.1 WASH

Access to safe drinking water is a main concern in some areas affected by climate change and specifically by recurrent droughts (e.g., Central America and Mexico, Haiti, Cuba, Gran Chaco). This is also relevant in cities where water systems are collapsing due to lack of maintenance as for example in Venezuela. Access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation also remains a challenge in areas and shelters hosting displaced people, which are often crowded and poorly served in WASH, but this is also the case of schools and health facilities. The area of Amazonia is particularly affected, where illegal mining has contaminated the main water sources of the ancestral communities with heavy metals, causing a significant increase in water borne diseases.

2.2.2 Vulnerability to natural hazards and Disaster Preparedness (DP)

The region continues to be characterised by a complex mixture of economic crisis and political fragility, conflict and social instability, environmental and climate change challenges, and ranks as the world's second most natural hazard-prone region in the world⁵².

The significant meteorological and epidemiological risks are aggravated by the impact of climate change, the intensification of the *La Niña* and/or *El Niño* phenomena, episodes of desertification, irregular rainfall and an increase in the intensity and frequency of floods, tropical storms and hurricanes. The region accounts for more than 53% of global economic losses from climate-related disasters over the last two decades and 46% of global disaster losses during the last decade.

The unstable context, where man-made risks interject with the existing vulnerabilities to climate-related disasters, adds an additional strain to the already limited response capacity. Vulnerable communities (such as marginalised communities, people on the move and ethnic and indigenous groups) and institutions struggle to reach acceptable levels of preparedness and to put national and regional strategies into actions. Furthermore, population movements continue to expel many people from the existing social protection, emergency preparedness and response mechanisms, thus deepening existing inequalities and precariousness of systems. This is particularly relevant considering that many of the areas hosting migrants and refugees are urban slums exposed to natural hazards, violence and marginalisation. Health and epidemiological hazards are also to be taken into account in preparedness projects. Finally, urban settings are vulnerable due to their dependency on complex interconnected systems of infrastructure, services, communications and social interactions.

3. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND COORDINATION

3.1 National / local response and involvement

Local and national capacities for disaster management and emergency response in the LAC region have developed over the past decades, inter alia with the support of ECHO's Disaster Preparedness funds, but have been generally affected by a decade of economic decline and specifically by the recent pandemic and inflation crises.

In **Venezuela**, the capacities of the authorities to provide assistance continued to deteriorate in 2023. The major national safety net providing food to millions of people (CLAP)⁵³ further declined in 2023,

⁵² [Latin America and the Caribbean | Humanitarian Action](#)

⁵³ Comités Locales de Abastecimiento y Producción (Local Committees for Supply and Production).

with less frequent distributions and smaller quantities (mainly rice, corn flour and pasta), with 71% of the population receiving it every two months or less.

Several **countries hosting the Venezuelan diaspora** have set up a roundtable (the ‘Quito Process’) aiming at coordinating their policies, working on joint initiatives and raising international funding to support the integration of Venezuelan migrants. Furthermore, several host governments have implemented regularisation programmes for Venezuelans, such as the Temporary Protection Status in Colombia, and other smaller scale similar initiatives from other countries such as Peru and Ecuador with the aim of supporting Venezuelans to integrate in host communities, gain access to social protection systems and earn an income⁵⁴. Otherwise, with some exceptions, humanitarian assistance as such to migrants and refugees is generally not provided by authorities.

Colombia has a well-established institutional and legal framework. Yet, key institutions in charge of assistance to conflict victims and disaster management have limited resources and capacity to operate, especially at local level. Despite the prevalence of overlapping vulnerabilities and the deepening of humanitarian needs in the country, the institutions in charge of assistance to victims of the armed conflict, people affected by natural hazards and to migrants and refugees continue to work in silos and coordination remains poor or implemented in an ad-hoc manner based on non-comprehensive and partial evidence.

In **South America**, even though national governments have increased their ability to respond to small and localised events, the quality and coverage of the humanitarian assistance is still far from satisfactory, and large events have recently exposed the difficulties that the authorities face to respond to humanitarian needs adequately and quickly. There is space to cooperate for the strengthening of the capacities of the two intergovernmental bodies for disaster risk management (CAPRADE and RMAGIR) in South America; this would improve the exchange/replication of good practices between countries.

In **CAM**, the institutional framework and capacity to respond to large natural hazards, displacement, violence and food insecurity varies and requires strengthening at local, national and regional level (CEPRENAC). Some states recognise the protection needs of victims of violence and IDPs, but their institutions often lack capacity, resources and/or political will to react. The Costa Rican and Mexican asylum systems cannot cope with the new arrivals and backlogs are increasing, hampering access to international protection.

In **Haiti**, national capacities to cope with shocks still show large gaps. The concurrent crises have further curtailed the government’s capacity to respond to the evolving and growing needs in the country. The police force is understaffed, underpaid, underequipped, and is becoming increasingly a target. The situation of IDPs needs a more systemic response to be led by the Government supported by humanitarian actors to ensure their protection and access to basic services and to reduce their exposure to life threatening diseases like cholera. In the **Caribbean**, despite significant investments to support the implementation of risk-informed strategies and plans, the preparedness and response capacities of some countries remain exposed to the unpredictability and intensification of natural events and the incremental humanitarian concerns, where changes in the population represent an additional challenge for inclusion. The support to the intergovernmental coordination through

⁵⁴ <https://www.r4v.info/en/document/rmna-2022-refugee-and-migrant-needs-analysis>

CDEMA (Caribbean Disaster Management Agency) is proving efficient, although further efforts are needed to strengthen the sub-regional emergency response across the many countries.

3.2 International Humanitarian Response

Country/crisis	Venezuela	Colombia	Rest of South America	Central America & Mexico	Haiti	Caribbean
Appeal	HRP June 2022 USD 795 M	HRP 2023 USD 283 M; RMRP Colombia 2023 USD 664.87M	RMRP 2024 USD 826.45 M	HNO / HRP 2023 USD 504..9 in total: fHonduras; USD 280.4 M El Salvador: USD 98.4 M Guatemala: USD 126.1	HRP 2023 USD 719.9 M	RMRP 2022 USD 68.4 M
Nb of people targeted	5.2 M	3.2 M Total: 1.6 M HRP 2023 1.6 M RMRP 2023	1.8 M	4.9 M	3.2 M	111,000 RMRP 2022
Funding level	31 % FTS November 2023	HRP 2023: 37.2% RMRP 2023: 36%	10.4% (July 2023)	Honduras: 14.9% El Salvador: 23.3% Guatemala: 21.6% FTS November 2023	32.6 % (FTS November 2023)	No data available
Donors	US, EU/ECHO, Spain, Sweden, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, Canada, France	US, EU/ECHO, CERF, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Canada	US, EU/ECHO, Canada, Japan, Spain, Germany, Sweden, Italy	US, EU/ECHO, Switzerland, Canada	US, EU/ECHO, CERF, Canada, France, Spain, Switzerland	No data available

There are six Humanitarian Response Plans and one Regional Plan (RMRP) for the main protracted crises in the region. The level of funding is critically low for 2023 for most of them, but mainly for the Venezuelan regional crisis (15.8%), Honduras (14.9%), Guatemala (21.6%), El Salvador (23.3%) or Haiti (32.6%) (November 2023 data). While there are effective coordination mechanisms in different countries affected by protracted crises, information management and coordination of the international response to forced displacement in the region, beyond the Venezuelan migrants and refugee crisis, is fragmented and unclear. Concerning the **Venezuelan migrant and refugee crisis**, R4V is co-led by UNHCR and IOM in Panama and supported by national platforms in the main host countries.

In **Venezuela**, the coordination is now better developed, with the cluster system in place only at central level in Caracas, as well as regular donor meetings and with both an international NGO forum and a national one. To enhance its support to localisation, DG ECHO has started supporting the Venezuela Humanitarian Fund in 2022. **Colombia** has been selected as one of the four pilot countries to roll out the ERC's Flagship Initiative. The objective is to develop coordination and response solutions that are centred around and accountable to affected people, driven by and responsive to their priority needs and protection risks, built upon affected populations' capacities and representation. The strength of the Colombian civil society and inefficiencies of the current coordination structure provide a clear rationale for the flagship in the country. In other countries of **South America**, the Humanitarian Country Team is active at the request of the governments, and with advocacy efforts usually required. The only active coordination platforms are the national R4V platforms led by UNHCR and IOM in the main countries hosting Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

In **CAM**, a regional Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP)⁵⁵ covering El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, was published by OCHA in February 2023. Of a total population of 33.2 million, 9.3 million persons need humanitarian assistance. These three HRPs require a funding level of USD 504.9 million.

In **Haiti**, on April 2023, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) decided to activate the IASC Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up for 3 months, and then extended until 14 October 2023, to respond to the unprecedented increase in humanitarian needs. Since then, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) has mobilized the operational capacities and the necessary resources to strengthen a multisectoral response to food insecurity, acute malnutrition, cholera, gender-based violence and child protection. OCHA has increased its presence, from 7 to more than 30 staff in country and established sub-offices.

3.3 Operational constraints

3.3.1 Access/humanitarian space

Humanitarian access has become a real constraint in many parts of the region, where either the presence and control of armed non state actors or organised crime, and/or restrictions imposed by authorities hamper the delivery of aid.

In **Venezuela**, the risk of instrumentalisation of humanitarian operations by different political actors remains high and will likely increase nearing the elections in 2024. Moreover, the lack of a conducive administrative framework and the pressure exerted against international NGOs (INGOs) and Venezuelan civil society have further hindered the capacity of humanitarian organisations to intervene. In this context, humanitarian diplomacy efforts remain crucial while trying to secure access and operating conditions for humanitarian organisations, notably INGOs. Moreover, security constraints and widespread violence also affect the delivery of assistance countrywide, and especially in border areas and mining zones. Supplies of items used for humanitarian interventions, especially imported ones, remain problematic, with access to quality medicines being of particular concern.

In **Colombia**, despite the worsening humanitarian needs, access limitations have increased significantly in recent years due to the fragmentation of Non-State armed groups (NSAGs) and subsequent disputes over territorial control, particularly in peripheral areas such as the Pacific Region, Catatumbo, Guaviare, Meta and Caquetá. According to OCHA, between January and July 2023, 100 humanitarian access restrictions were reported in the country, representing an increase of 20.4% compared to reports for the same period in 2022 (83 events).

In **Amazonia**, security risks posed by organised crime are high and logistic constraints are huge due to the long distances and lack of roads. **Ecuador** is the Latin American country where violence has increased the most during the last decade and the situation has become extremely critical in 2023 with an increase of 66.4% in violent crimes. The daily average is 17.4 deaths that, if maintained all year round, would mean a rate of 34 homicides per 100 000 inhabitants. The ongoing escalation of insecurity combined with the territorial control exerted by transnational organised criminal groups threaten local communities and affect the delivery of basic services such as health, protection, and education. Local response is extremely weak, the capacities of local governments, national police and the armed forces are limited. The humanitarian consequences of this wave of violence as forced

⁵⁵ UN OCHA: <https://humanitarianaction.info/>

displacement, recruitment, or lack of access to basic services as health or education have not yet been assessed or quantified, and it is difficult for partners and local civil society organisations to collect formal reports or data on these kinds of violations, since they fear retaliation.

In **CAM**, violence, political instability, and social unrest complicate access for humanitarian partners. Some violent neighbourhoods with a presence of armed groups and/or state enforcement bodies remain off-limits. In Nicaragua, humanitarian access is reduced as humanitarian stakeholders are under strict surveillance of national authorities and over 3 500 NGOs lost their legal status. Both Nicaragua and Guatemala approved a foreign agents' law, negatively affecting NGOs, while a similar draft law has been submitted with the National Congress of El Salvador.

In **Haiti**, constraints to humanitarian activities are mainly linked to gang-related violence, civil unrest and the expanding territorial control of gangs, which hamper humanitarian access to displaced population in urban areas of Port-au-Prince. Gangs' activity also hinders travel via the main national roads to the South and North of the country. Extended demonstrations, looting and violence can disrupt the implementation of operations and jeopardise international presence in the country. Disrupted logistic capacities during and in the immediate aftermath of disasters can make assessments and response difficult everywhere in the country.

3.3.2 Partners (presence, capacity), including absorption capacity on the ground

In **Venezuela**, the absorption capacity has significantly improved during the last years: both UN and international NGOs have managed to increase their technical humanitarian staff. In 2023, the pressure and harassment against INGOs and civil society organisations continued. In this context of shrinking humanitarian space, promoting further the importance of humanitarian principled actions amongst all actors remains essential. Over time, DG ECHO's support has contributed to build and strengthen the capacity of Venezuelan organisations. Partners are now more present around the country, but still face access challenges and administrative hurdles.

Colombia has a solid network of national and international partners with significant operational presence and capacities across the territory. The recurrent overlapping crises affecting specific communities and population groups require comprehensive and area-based approaches, a transition that some, but not all partners, have undertaken. Similarly, the deterioration of humanitarian access calls for a strengthening of analyses and strategies among all partners when it comes to this question. In **the rest of South America**, the presence of humanitarian stakeholders is limited out of the main migration routes, which means that the response to low visibility crises remains significantly uncovered. The absorption and operational capacities of DG ECHO partners are considered relevant in protracted situations such as **Haiti or CAM**. In **Haiti**, greater flexibility is required to adapt to the volatile situation. In the **Caribbean**, the absorption capacity of international partners, and their operational capabilities remain consistently higher than the funds available.

3.3.3 Other

In **Venezuela**, together with the hindrances in humanitarian space and the security-related constraints, humanitarian actors are affected by supply shortages, no formal billing, uncertain taxing and difficulties to import, which have a direct impact on the cost of operations. In **Colombia**, logistical constraints and remoteness of conflict-affected and rural areas increase the cost of operations, mainly in regions with no road access, as it is the case of the Amazonia. In **Cuba**, a number of stakeholders have been politicising humanitarian crises and assistance, while the government maintains a firm control over the implementation of humanitarian interventions. In **South America**, violent contexts

and social unrest hinder humanitarian access.

4. HUMANITARIAN – DEVELOPMENT – PEACE NEXUS

DG ECHO will continue to work on humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus opportunities and encourage partners to also consider this aspect with other institutions, both local and international. The recent EU-CELAC Summit held in Brussels in July 2023 was a milestone to start developing further collaboration between EU institutions and LAC intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) dealing with Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). This implies a joint effort by the different EU DGs dealing with DRR and Climate Change that has already started with a view to signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2024.

Otherwise, food security monitoring systems give a strong opportunity for nexus (joint assessment and coordinated response with development programmes) and synergies with environmental and climate change adaptation programmes in areas highly exposed to floods and droughts. In addition, as manifested during the last EU-LAC Partners in Change Civil Society Forum in July 2023, there are opportunities to increase synergies between the EU initiatives supporting the security agenda and the fight against organised crime in LAC and the humanitarian operations dealing with the victims of violence, trafficking and conflict.

In countries of the region hosting displaced populations, given the protractedness of the mixed mobility crisis in LAC, DG ECHO will welcome proposals linked with medium to long term development initiatives aiming at the sustainable integration of migrants and refugees. In the same vein, humanitarian actions responding to urgent needs while building resilience of local institutions, communities and civil society will also be prioritised.

Though long-term integration of refugees and migrants is outside of the scope of ECHO funding priorities, DG ECHO will seek complementarity with initiatives 1) supporting the institutions and advocating to guarantee the rights of people on the move in terms of regularisation, access to basic services and social protection; 2) contributing to social inclusion and reduction of xenophobia; 3) facilitating the economic and social integration of vulnerable migrants and refugees (budget support and blending under the Latin America Investment Facility are expected to contribute in this sense); 4) supporting the Quito Process.

Venezuela is a challenging context for pursuing traditional development cooperation. With State institutions in the process of collapsing and in view of the lack of bilateral framework, it is difficult to build national capacities and to invest in rehabilitation of infrastructure. Despite these challenges, DG INTPA and DG ECHO have been building a strong nexus approach based on complementarities and basic needs approach. DG INTPA has identified three priority areas (food security, WASH and support to human rights defenders) which can be complementary to DG ECHO humanitarian funding in the nutrition, food security, WASH and protection sectors.

In Colombia, collaboration with development donors focuses on building resilience for conflict-affected communities as well as migrant and refugee populations through durable solutions and socio-economic integration. Key Colombian institutions in charge of assistance to conflict victims, migrants and refugees and disaster management lack resources to operate. Joined-up EU efforts to strengthen their capacities can have a critical impact. The protection of conflict-affected populations, and particularly social leaders, is already a joint EU priority, and so are digitalisation, peace, and the environment. Synergies will be strengthened where possible to maximise impact. Joint advocacy on IHL is also a priority.

In **South America**, the programme Amazonia+ represents a good opportunity to ensure that the EU is tackling the root causes of the environmental and human rights crimes with humanitarian consequences. There are opportunities to start a nexus and look for synergies with the ongoing disaster preparedness actions funded by DG ECHO in the region, such as in Bolivia.

The humanitarian context in **CAM** allows for links with EU development cooperation. Complementary actions with different EU development programmes are already being promoted, notably in disaster preparedness. On displacement, further synergies are being sought at country level, namely in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Panama. Possibilities for further advocacy on the importance of preserving humanitarian space and independence should be explored. In **Panama**, various EU activities tie into a nexus approach, with the 2022 new EU stockpile regional hub being logically linked not only with DG ECHO's disaster preparedness work, but also with that of DG INTPA supported projects such as the upcoming regional Copernicus data centre. This is a project of strategic, political and humanitarian importance that aims to increase resilience and capacities for disaster and risk management of countries in the sub region and supports in turning early warning into early action. In **Nicaragua**, DG INTPA's NICALERT project will allow to scale-up and expand disaster preparedness actions initially funded by DG ECHO in indigenous communities of the Northern Caribbean Coast.

In **Haiti**, DG ECHO is working to achieve coherent and complementary planning, programming and financing with increased cooperation and coordination between humanitarian, development and peace actors. With the objective of achieving tangible results and reducing the risk of scattering limited resources, DGs ECHO and INTPA focus on specific areas, materialising the joint Humanitarian/Development/Peace nexus in key issues such as the geographical concentration in the sector of food security. In the field of education, the Team Europe Initiative addresses both immediate and structural challenges of the Haitian education system to create opportunities for youth, thereby pulling them out of gang recruitment and violence.

In the **Caribbean**, during new emergencies, DG ECHO focuses on emergency health, shelter, cash or food and water as well as protection needs. This assistance is usually enhanced gradually by development interventions, with DG INTPA focusing on housing reconstruction for low-income families, rehabilitation of infrastructures, livelihoods, basic services and State functions with budget support allocations and shock absorption mechanisms including Disaster Risk Insurances. Strong synergies between DG ECHO and other EU-supported actions allow the implementation of a comprehensive EU approach on Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA).

5. ENVISAGED DG ECHO RESPONSE AND EXPECTED RESULTS OF HUMANITARIAN AID INTERVENTIONS

5.1 Envisaged DG ECHO response

Actions supported by DG ECHO will be guided by the following priorities established in this HIP and its Technical Annex. In the case of sudden unforeseen emergencies or changes in the humanitarian context along the implementation year, the Emergency Toolbox can be activated (see 5.2 below), and the HIP may be amended or topped up.

5.1.1 Priorities

5.1.1.1 *Humanitarian protection*

Response to urgent and critical unmet protection needs of the most vulnerable populations exposed to violence and other risks is a priority. Actions must be based on a comprehensive, continuous and context-specific risk analysis, in which threats, vulnerabilities and capacities should be clearly identified. Structured prevention activities, in line with international standards and with clear intentional protection outcomes and linkages with responses, may also be considered. This refers to particularly holistic and quality case management for vulnerable people identified in need of urgent assistance and at immediate risk, according to their specific needs. Case management must be based on specific and context-based vulnerability criteria and the analysis of existing national systems. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) should be considered an integral part of the protection interventions, implemented with strong linkages to the other sectoral areas, particularly health. Comprehensive protection pathways and referral systems based on shared data protection protocols should be reinforced, in tight coordination with other sectoral actors and institutions. Legal assistance and access to documentation and regularisation pathways will be prioritised for the most vulnerable refugees and migrants, as the necessary first step for the integration and access to services and livelihoods.

Specific importance is given to the promotion of and compliance with IHL by all parties, Human Rights, and Refugee Law, as well as to the protection of civilians, including humanitarian workers, education and health personnel and infrastructure. Partners must ensure adequate technical expertise and competencies in-house, and structured level of supervision and staffing. Complementarity and coordination between partners' protection actions is encouraged to provide integral analysis and comprehensive responses to victims. For instance, collaborative information management solutions should be fostered to build evidence and conduct advocacy. The active integration of a specific and targeted protection component in disaster preparedness actions is recommended to ensure a comprehensive all-risk approach. The intersection between environmental degradation and protection risks should also be factored in.

5.1.1.2 *Education in Emergencies (EiE)*

The primary target for EiE projects are hard-to-reach, forcibly displaced, at-risk of dropout and out-of-school children, with a focus on addressing the barriers to quality learning and retention. Solid transition options from non-formal to formal education remains a priority, providing accelerated and catch-up classes to the most vulnerable. Tailored and collaborative responses for children on the move are crucial. The Safe School Declaration (SSD) or Comprehensive School Safety Framework (CSSF) should be systematically mainstreamed in Disaster Preparedness and EiE interventions, according to the identified needs. Cultural, age, and gender differentiated responses should be proposed, and ensure conflict sensitive framework. All EiE actions should be incorporated into integrated responses with a child-centred approach and a minimum package for the identification of children's needs, psycho-social support, as well as case referrals.

5.1.1.3 *Health*

Priority will be given to activities with the highest potential to save lives, prioritising support to existing health centres and including support to emergency services, comprehensive sexual and reproductive healthcare services (including family planning, prenatal care, skilled birth attendance,

emergency obstetric care and postnatal support is crucial), medical and mental attention to SGBV, scale-up of mental healthcare provision and the integration of nutrition into the primary healthcare programming. Emergency obstetric care is considered as one of the most important, immediate, life saving measures in any emergency. It is a vital component of comprehensive reproductive health services and should be incorporated into emergency responses whenever possible. This is especially true for adolescent girls knowing that they are particularly vulnerable and face higher risks of premature pregnancy and childbirth complications. Mental health and psychosocial support must be provided by qualified staff and in accordance with internationally recognised protocols, linking the response with protection-oriented interventions where possible.

Given the low vaccination rate and the climate change context, the risk of occurrence of epidemics in the region is high; therefore, emergency preparedness and response to outbreaks can be proposed, including Infection Prevention and Control (IPC), WASH and waste management standards in health services. Support for preventive activities such as routine vaccination will also be prioritised.

Mobile clinics should be a temporary activity and the choice of this modality to deliver care should be justified (e.g. no health facility available in a reasonable timeframe of reach). The frequency of visits of the mobile team in the same community should be consistent and the mobile clinics should be part of a strategy that includes a fixed point of reference offering full access to healthcare. Health interventions should systematically include appropriate medical and mental care for survivors of sexual violence as well as support to access safe deliveries performed by qualified staff according to the WHO definition.

Cash transfers in healthcare and nutrition programming will only be considered on a case-by-case basis and if justified by in-depth assessment and analysis of the availability of quality healthcare in the proposed area of intervention.

Proper medical waste management should be ensured.

5.1.1.4 Nutrition

DG ECHO will focus on monitoring, prevention and response to acute malnutrition in children under five (including under 6 months), pregnant and lactating women, and adolescent girls as part of a comprehensive response integrated with food assistance, WASH and health according to needs.

The intervention criteria to set up a stand-alone nutrition programme are based on the emergency thresholds for Global Acute Malnutrition set by the WHO (more than 15 %, or more than 10% where there are aggravating factors), otherwise acute undernutrition treatment must be integrated as much as possible into primary healthcare and the national healthcare systems (facility, staff, supplies, etc.) while ensuring free quality care for the beneficiaries. A referral route should be available for complicated or non-respondent cases and the referral system will be monitored regularly. The CMAM (Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition) is the preferred implementation strategy as well as the simplifications proposed in the recent WHO guidelines.

Nutritional support to people on the move (internally displaced or willing to migrate) can also be envisaged. If an up-to-date nutritional evaluation reveals the existence of acute and moderate malnutrition rates in regions not covered by the geographical priorities, DG ECHO might contemplate implementing a focused nutrition intervention.

In the context of climate change or foreseen climate events (e.g.: *El Niño*) exacerbating food insecurity, it is essential to integrate nutrition preparedness in all health or nutrition programming by, for example, empowering local actors (community health workers, qualified healthcare staff, district

officials, etc.) to identification, prevention and management of acute malnutrition and follow up strategies while responding to nutritional humanitarian needs.

5.1.1.5 Humanitarian Food Assistance, Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL)

Timely access to safe and well-balanced food, of sufficient quantity and quality is crucial for the most vulnerable households. The response is delivered mainly in areas with highest prevalence of phase 4 of IPC⁵⁶ and will support food assistance based on a sound risk analysis including protection and conflict sensitivity. Responding to food security within a basic needs approach, FSL activities should prioritise the use of cash as a modality where local markets are functional and basic commodities' prices are stable. Effectiveness of actions targeting the most vulnerable population, Multi-Purpose Cash (MPC) and cash for food impact on energy intake and diet diversity must be documented. Given the long-lasting economic impact of COVID-19 and the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, DG ECHO will promote advocacy and support to food security monitoring information systems for prioritisation of intervention areas. In the case of food distribution, attention should also be given to cooking energy needs to avoid contributing to deforestation.

5.1.1.6 Cash transfers

DG ECHO maintains its commitment to providing cash, even in contexts of high inflation, if programming can be adequately adapted, in line with the [Good Practice Review on cash in inflation/depreciation](#)⁵⁷.

According to the new DG ECHO Cash Transfers Thematic Policy⁵⁸, DG ECHO promotes a common programming approach to reduce fragmentation, duplication, and parallel ways of working. Attention should be paid to the sustainability of the interventions and, when possible, linkages to longer-term livelihood solutions.

5.1.1.7 WASH

While not the main sector of intervention, the integrity of the response requires that water, sanitation and hygiene minimum standards are considered in any activity supported by DG ECHO. Only with proper WASH facilities in shelters, reception centres, schools, health centres, etc. will it be possible to achieve results in other sectors as health, nutrition, food assistance, education or protection that are prioritised in the HIP. Any construction or rehabilitation of WASH infrastructure should be preceded by an environmental screening, in line with the minimum environmental requirements.

5.1.1.8 Disaster Preparedness

The focus remains on regional and national multi-hazard preparedness for response and early action, while exploring synergies with European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) and nexus opportunities with development actions and Team Europe Initiatives. The overall aim of Disaster Preparedness actions in the region is to create better prepared and more resilient communities and institutions to face natural and man-made hazards.

The strategy and vision are to uphold the interrelations between Disaster Preparedness, emergency and resilience actions with grass-root communities, civil society organisations as well as local,

⁵⁶ FAO's Integrated Food Security Phase Classification – IPC 4 = emergency

⁵⁷ [Good Practice Review on Cash Assistance in Contexts of High Inflation and Depreciation - The CALP Network](#)

⁵⁸ All cash interventions should comply with the new DG ECHO cash thematic policy, including the sector-specific considerations in Annex 3 of that document. https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/thematic_policy_document_no_3_cash_transfers_en.pdf

national and regional authorities and institutions. In this regard, Civil and Military coordination and a Civil Protection approach to State response will be promoted, including through possible increased technical support from the UCPM.

The Disaster Preparedness budget line of DG ECHO identifies 4 global priorities for targeted preparedness actions. All priorities are inter-connected and mutually reinforcing as activities implemented under one priority will benefit the other priorities: 1) strengthening risk and forecast-based and anticipatory action frameworks, Rapid Response Mechanisms, emergency logistics preparedness, social protection shock responsiveness, and use of Crisis Modifiers to allow shifting to “emergency-type” interventions if needed; 2) preparedness in conflict and fragile settings, implying the integration of victims of conflict in national preparedness and response protocols as well as displacement patterns, inclusiveness and protection issues; 3) climate and environmental resilience as outbreak preparedness, innovation and green technology for effective response; 4) urban preparedness to multiple hazards and resilience in larger cities.

To generate changes and achieve long lasting results, critical gaps must be addressed simultaneously, from supporting communities’ resilience and improving local response capacities to influencing policies and legal frameworks to include disaster preparedness. Similarly, improved coordination, including civil-military, evidence generation and information management, and south – south cooperation could greatly contribute to more efficient responses to disasters.

Links with EU funding will be promoted, particularly in the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding between the EU and the Inter-Governmental Organisations (IGOs) dealing with Disaster Risk Reduction and Management in LAC (CDEMA, CEPREDENAC, CAPRADE and RMAGIR) to be signed in 2024. This MoU will be an important opportunity to link Disaster Preparedness and UCPM actions under DG ECHO umbrella with resilience building, climate change adaptation, as well as disaster prevention and mitigation initiatives supported by other institutions of the EU.

DG ECHO will also look at supporting global campaigns such as Resilient Cities, Safe Schools Initiative and Comprehensive Safe Hospital Framework. The integration of the private sector and civil society-led initiatives in DP will be promoted. The environment and disasters are inherently linked, therefore integrating environmental considerations in the disaster risk reduction. Preparedness frameworks and response tools should be considered to improve their efficacy with the aim to minimise hazards and increase the resilience of local communities. Environmental degradation affects natural processes, increases vulnerability, lessens overall resilience, and challenges traditional coping strategies. The DP trainings, workshops and other tools should therefore integrate environmental screenings, risk mitigation exercises and/or environmental aspects relevant for a specific context and needs, especially the ones that directly aggravate disaster risk aspects (e.g., deforestation of slopes leading to an increased landslide hazard, removal of mangroves increasing the damage caused by storm surges, solid waste accumulation in drainage systems increasing flooding risks, etc.).

5.1.1.9 Environmental mainstreaming

Environmental considerations should include health and solid waste management, especially in contexts linked to refugee or migrant shelters, transit centres and in the temporary health posts as well as government-run clinics set up in informal settlements and along migrant routes. Other waste streams include waste linked to water distribution, distributions of packaged hygiene items, food and NFIs, distributed to people on the move along migratory routes. Coordination of waste management

efforts with local stakeholders and among humanitarian actors is fundamental to tackle waste management comprehensively.

Beyond waste management, the humanitarian response is likely to have direct and indirect environmental impacts, most of which will be unexpected and could be mitigated through careful planning for example in the case of Cash Based Interventions, therefore including potential environmental and climate impacts in the Cash and Vouchers Assistance programmatic tool is key to mitigate these risks.

5.1.1.10 Advocacy, coordination and information management

It is expected that all partners funded by DG ECHO participate actively and report to the established coordination mechanisms. At the same time, DG ECHO will support coordination and information management activities with the objective of improving efficiency and pertinence of the overall preparedness and response to ongoing and potential crises in the region. Supported mechanisms should be based on humanitarian principles, not differentiating between beneficiaries' nationalities or status. Coordination activities should aim at reducing the current fragmentation and multiplication of mechanisms, being inclusive for the participation of various organisations provided that they respect humanitarian principles. In this sense, DG ECHO supports an external review of the coordination mechanisms for the response to mixed migration and forced displacement in LAC. As stated in the European Humanitarian Forum in 2023, humanitarian access in LAC is a concern and DG ECHO will support initiatives to increase partners capacities as well as to advocate for the preservation of humanitarian space in the region. DG ECHO will not support isolated information management activities or those partners developing products for their own use and benefit, but those contributing to a coordinated and joint effort.

Given the protractedness of the mixed migration crisis in the region and the fact that the needs of migrants and refugees go beyond short-term humanitarian assistance, ECHO partners are also expected to engage in advocacy efforts to facilitate their integration and regularisation with governments and developments donors.

5.1.2 Programmatic Partnerships

Programmatic Partnerships are also to be considered for multiannual interventions tackling a regional problematic (e.g., preparedness and/or response to mixed migration or any other hazard/crisis affecting several countries), or country interventions. In any case programmatic partnerships should be in line with the priorities established in this HIP and demonstrate the added value of a long-term strategy for the proposed interventions.

5.1.3 Multi-Year Funding

DG ECHO will support multi-year funding projects (with an initial funding allocation of 24 months or more). Multi-year funding projects should be considered in the sectors of Education in Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness. Education in Emergencies actions do not need further justification and should have an initial duration of at least 24 months unless there is a needs- or context-based justification for a shorter duration.

5.2 Other DG ECHO interventions

In view of the importance of logistics for humanitarian operations, DG ECHO also remains committed to contributing to logistics operations, via funding or any other tool, such as the European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC), at its disposal. The EHRC aims at supporting the delivery

of humanitarian assistance, in a gap-filling approach. Under the EHRC, the European Commission offers several tools that can be activated in case of sudden onset disaster, e.g., a series of Common Logistics Services (including air operations, warehousing services, last-mile ground transportation, etc.), or a stockpile of emergency WASH and shelter items, pre-positioned in regional warehouses worldwide.

The Emergency Toolbox HIP may be drawn upon for the prevention of, and response to, outbreaks of Epidemics. Under the Emergency Toolbox HIP, the Small-Scale Response, Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT) and Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) instruments may also provide funding options, taking into consideration indications from Early Warning Systems and/or satellite-based observations.

There is also room for enhancing the awareness amongst LAC countries of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) and the areas of support it can offer. Additionally, in support of Government institutions, the EU Civil Protection Advisory Missions, have proven to be very important and useful in the region. They are tailored to respond to specific needs and could be considered as part of the potential areas of support to be provided by DG ECHO and UCPM.

The UCPM has been addressing the environmental dimensions of emergencies through the UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit. Since 2014, EU environmental experts have been deployed on 16 different missions to LAC countries as part of UN missions.