



HIAS

Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.

2022-2023 Overview HIAS VENEZUELA

HIAS Venezuela

Overview 2022-2023



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Protect the refugee.**

HIAS Venezuela 2022

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Our History

From our beginnings in the 1880s in a storefront on the Lower East Side of Manhattan providing food and shelter to Jews fleeing antisemitism in Eastern Europe, to our work nearly 140 years later providing social, emotional, legal, and advocacy support to those in need around the world, HIAS has served as a pivotal force for displaced people for generations. Indeed, HIAS began its work even before the world had a legal concept of a “refugee.”

Having helped more than 4.5 million refugees and immigrants escape persecution, HIAS is uniquely qualified to address the modern refugee situation, which has become a global humanitarian crisis. After over 100 years of serving Jews fleeing persecution around the globe, HIAS, starting in the 2000s, expanded its work in the U.S. to include assistance to non-Jewish refugees devastated by the aftermath of conflicts in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, Haiti, Hungary, Iran, Morocco, Poland, Romania, Tunisia, Vietnam, and the successor states to the former Soviet Union.

HIAS began a new chapter in 2002 when it established operations in Kenya to provide protection to refugees from African countries plagued by conflict, to advocate on their behalf, and to resettle the most vulnerable. Soon after, we began work in Latin America, serving people displaced by conflict in several countries. Currently HIAS works in 16 countries including Aruba, Austria, Belgium, Chad, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Greece, Guyana, Israel, Kenya, Mexico, Panama, Peru, United States, and Venezuela. As the only global Jewish organization whose mission is to assist refugees wherever they are, HIAS continues to protect, empower, and resettle refugees of all faiths and ethnicities from around the world.



Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision

HIAS stands for a world in which refugees find welcome, safety, and opportunity.

Mission

Drawing on our Jewish values and history, HIAS provides vital services to refugees and asylum seekers around the world and advocates for their fundamental rights so they can rebuild their lives.

Values

Impassioned by our mission, we bring the lessons of HIAS' history and Jewish ethics and experience to our commitment to serve refugees and other displaced persons of concern around the world through the following values:

Welcome • Acogimiento • Hospitalité • הכנסת אורחים (Hachnasat Orchim)

We **Welcome** the Stranger

Justice • Justicia • Justice • צדק (Tzedek)

We Pursue **Justice**

Empathy • Empatía • Empathie • חסד (Chesed)

We Approach our Clients with **Empathy**

Partnership • Compañerismo • Coopération • חברותא (Chevruta)

We Believe in Changing the World through **Partnership**

Courage • Coraje • Courage • אומץ (Ometz)

We Act with **Courage** to Build a Better World

Resilience • Resiliencia • Résilience • רוח (Ruach)

We Adapt and Thrive, Continuously Demonstrating our **Resilience**



Photos: Glenna Gordon; Michael Datikash

Our Impact

Around the world, HIAS makes tangible changes in the lives of refugees and other forcibly displaced people, advancing their legal, social, and economic rights. Our experience and technical expertise, as well as our integration of international best practices, allows for our work to have real and sustained impact. We partner with government agencies and other humanitarian organizations to reach the greatest number of those in need. The core areas where we work include:

1. Legal Protection
2. Gender-Based Violence Response and Risk Reduction
3. Community-based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
4. Economic Inclusion

Legal Protection

Refugees and other people forcibly displaced from home are fleeing persecution and violence. They need to be able to safely cross borders into countries where their lives are not at risk. Once over the border, they need information and legal representation to secure legal status and access their rights. Without that status, refugees are forced to live on the margins of society, sometimes for generations, without access to healthcare, education, dignified work, or safe shelter. HIAS begins by educating refugees about their rights, then secures protection by engaging in advocacy, legal representation, and strategic litigation, and working with government authorities.

Gender-Based Violence Response and Risk Reduction

Compounded by rampant gender inequality, forced migration and displacement quickly erode the limited protections women, girls, and LGBTQ populations have, even in times of stability. HIAS is driven by their voices and needs, working to empower them and engage the whole community to reduce the risk of gender-based violence. We raise awareness so survivors know where and how to get help after experiencing violence. We train advocates and support existing services so that no survivor—regardless of age, sexual orientation, or gender identity—suffers alone. We help communities begin the kind of transformative work

that leads to longer-term change. We stay connected to and raise our collective voice alongside those of displaced women, girls, and LGBTQ populations globally.

Community-Based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Violence, conflict, and displacement disrupt relationships and daily life, break down existing support systems, and have a devastating impact on mental health, overall wellbeing, and recovery. A supportive environment is essential to healing and recovery for refugees and other people forcibly displaced from their homes. One of the best ways to build a supportive environment is to strengthen existing relationships, networks, and practices which promote mental health and well-being and allow communities to cope and heal. We facilitate community support groups and psychological support from both lay and professional providers and ensure access to services for more intensive mental health support. Crucially, we sustain our efforts by building the psychosocial competence of HIAS personnel and stakeholders to respond to the acute distress of forcibly displaced persons.

Economic Inclusion

When refugees and forcibly displaced people arrive in countries of asylum, they often need to adapt their skills to earn sustainable and safe livelihoods. HIAS supports refugees on their road to self-reliance, helping them to find programs focused on poverty eradication, employment, entrepreneurship, and financial services. We advocate for the rights of both refugees and local host communities to access dignified, sustainable, and safe work, alongside economic development.

Emergency Response

In 2021, with the support of a transformational grant from MacKenzie Scott, HIAS embarked on an exciting new initiative to strengthen our global capacity to respond quickly to new humanitarian emergencies. HIAS' Emergency Department will work closely with country offices to create emergency preparedness plans and provide guidance to adapt core programs to emergency contexts. HIAS will also train a cadre of staff with specialized skills able to deploy quickly during emergencies for assessments, response activities, donor engagement, external communication, and advocacy. Through this multiyear initiative, HIAS will build the skills, systems, and organizational culture needed for effective coordination and response to emergencies.

Accountability to Affected Populations

HIAS' Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Framework ensures the inclusion of refugees, other forcibly displaced people, and vulnerable host communities throughout the program cycle. Informed by the Core Humanitarian Standards and the principle of "Do No Harm," the framework pillars are: communication and transparency; feedback and response; participation and inclusion; and learning and adaptation.

HIAS ensures that program design is based on evidence from needs assessments, including the annual UNHCR participatory needs assessment, and consultation with affected communities. HIAS shares information about its accountability commitments and available

services in all country offices. HIAS proactively invites affected people to provide feedback on planned and ongoing activities through context-appropriate, accessible channels, ensuring that all affected people can voice feedback, recommendations, and concerns safely and equitably. HIAS uses feedback received to adapt ongoing programs and shape the design and implementation of future programming.

Governance, Structure, and Policies

Globally, HIAS employs more than 1,300 staff in 16 countries, with headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland (U.S.).

HIAS' Board of Directors is made up of 22 members, including 10 women. It meets at least four times a year. The Board has three officers and operates with six active committees that meet regularly. Board members bring a wide range of professional and business experience to their service, including law, finance, education, and non-profit and refugee advocacy leadership.

HIAS staff are subject to a robust Code of Conduct and set of internal policies, including PSEA, Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment, Conflict of Interest, Privacy, Whistleblowing, Security and Emergency Preparedness, Information Security, Data Breach, Finance and Accounting, as well as others relating to procurement, travel, and reimbursements.

Context for Vulnerable Refugees and Migrants in Venezuela



The Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Region continues to face intersecting forced displacement crises, including Venezuela, Colombia, Northern Central America, and Nicaragua. The COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened the economic and social hardships faced by both displaced populations and those hosting them. The more than 18 million people displaced in the region have fled violence, insecurity, persecution, and human rights violations. This number accounts for 20% of all global displacement. HIAS' comprehensive regional response meets the urgent needs of refugees, asylum seekers, and

other forcibly displaced people in Aruba, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela.

Since 2014, more than six million Venezuelans have fled the country's ongoing political, economic, and security crisis—making it one of the largest displacement crises in the world. Hyperinflation, food shortages, insecurity, and collapsing health and sanitation systems all worsened significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Seven million people in Venezuela will need humanitarian assistance in 2022, according to the UN Global Humanitarian Overview. Malnutrition is a growing concern especially for children, and one in three Venezuelans needs

food assistance. The pandemic further weakened the distressed health system and continues to strain already strained social and community support structures. Limited capacity at civil registration offices is resulting in a decline in birth registration, creating additional protection challenges for women and children. Meanwhile, restrictions on humanitarian access and security constraints continue to make it difficult to reach those in need with basic assistance.

Loss of jobs and restrictions on mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic caused approximately 130,000 Venezuelan refugees to return to Venezuela by the end of 2021 where they have faced quarantines and extreme difficulties reintegrating safely. Venezuela also hosts nearly 10,000 recognized refugees, mainly from Colombia, and over 500 recognized asylum seekers. The Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process is beset by delays and access challenges. Internal displacement also occurs frequently in Venezuela. With land and sea borders closed during the pandemic, refugees, migrants, and Venezuelans seeking to enter or leave were forced to cross through informal routes where they were exposed to exploitation and other protection threats.

The impact of COVID-19 has also driven up rates of gender-based violence (GBV) in Venezuela and across Latin America and the Caribbean. The sheer scale of GBV has outpaced the availability of services across the region, particularly in border areas and for populations in transit. In Venezuela, there are insufficient numbers of trained staff, language barriers for indigenous survivors, and xenophobic and anti-LGBTQ attitudes that impact how survivors are treated when they present for services. Adolescent girls, especially those who are in early or forced marriages, are particularly at risk and have limited options for safe disclosure of any incidents of gender-based violence or access to support services. Economic deprivation and food insecurity in Venezuela have created heightened vulnerabilities leading to increased risk of exploitation, particularly for women and children as well as other marginalized groups. Venezuelan women and girls as well as Colombian refugees and migrants often engage in survival sex work in illegal mining sites and are at risk of labor and sex trafficking. Regional humanitarian coordination platforms all highlight the need for significant scaling of GBV resources including cross-border approaches.

HIAS Programs in Venezuela

Operational since 2007 with 13 offices across the country, HIAS Venezuela provides comprehensive interventions serving vulnerable refugees and Venezuelans. HIAS Venezuela has adapted these programs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and continually addresses new needs and service gaps as they arise. HIAS realizes people carry a diversity of experiences and intersecting identities requiring unique support and solutions. As such, HIAS takes a holistic approach to its interventions and offers integrated programming in GBV prevention and response, community-based mental health and psychosocial support, economic inclusion, and legal protection. In 2021, HIAS Venezuela served over 130,000 individuals with a range of critical services.

HIAS Venezuela's **legal protection** program provides legal assistance to Colombians seeking protection and Venezuelans in need of identity documents or at risk of statelessness. The legal program focuses on access to information about documentation, rights, and available services, and refers program participants to other social and legal assistance as needed.

HIAS Venezuela also trains community leaders on how to identify, prevent, and respond to specific protection needs, including through workshops on refugee protection, voluntary repatriation, mobility, and access to birth registration and documentation.

HIAS Venezuela's **GBV prevention and response** programs provide case management services and life-saving support to survivors. HIAS Venezuela provides psychosocial assistance, health and hygiene kits, legal protection, trainings on working with local organizations, and referrals for other services as needed where HIAS assists with access to transportation and shelter. HIAS Venezuela also collaborates with survivors of GBV to design and implement cultural and recreational activities, creating safe, welcoming spaces that engage existing support systems in their communities. In addition, HIAS Venezuela works across different program areas with women and adolescents to support their empowerment and mitigate risks of GBV. HIAS Venezuela also works with men to involve them as key partners in GBV prevention and risk reduction.



A group of adolescent girls participated in an interactive session together with HIAS case workers and training facilitators in February 2021. **Photo:** HIAS Venezuela

Venezuela's deteriorating infrastructure has led to insufficient access to clean water and adequate sanitation systems across the country. To mitigate these disruptions, HIAS and its partners have designed and implemented **water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)** programs in eight states in Venezuela. Activities include providing communities with access to clean water through rehabilitation of access sources, education on good hygiene, dignity kits containing menstrual hygiene products and other products for women and girls, and

delivery of sanitation supplies. In addition to hygiene and maternity kits, HIAS Venezuela also provides household and emergency kits.

HIAS Venezuela's **mental health and psychosocial support** (MHPSS) programs train community members and staff of local public institutions to recognize acute emotional distress as a result of crisis and respond with empathy and respect through Psychological First Aid and the implementation of scalable, low-intensity methodologies. HIAS Venezuela provides direct mental health and psychosocial support through individual and group modalities of intervention, and also supports caregivers to cope with heightened stress and helps local community leaders to better understand and respond to these challenges.



Participants in the Empowerment Curriculum Model for Girls and Adolescents discussed and learned about menstruation and menstrual hygiene and received menstrual cups, a method of menstrual hygiene that is environmentally friendly and helps to minimize costs. **Photo:** HIAS Venezuela

HIAS Venezuela's **economic inclusion** programs provide opportunities for refugees and host communities to build independent and meaningful futures that allow them to enhance their self-reliance and increase their resilience, including training to improve their nutrition, budget planning, and safe use of electronic payment mechanisms. In addition, HIAS is strengthening the resilience and livelihoods under a focus on protection of some indigenous populations inside Venezuela, through providing technical assistance, training, advice and delivery of basic supplies and materials for production, as well as supplies to meet the immediate needs of the most vulnerable indigenous populations, increasing the resilience and quality of life of these communities. These activities are coordinated with respect as

well as a desire to strengthen the capabilities, traditions, and ways of life of each community.

HIAS Venezuela implements HIAS' global **Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Framework** and staff are trained on AAP principles and standard operating procedures. HIAS shares information about its accountability commitments and available services in all office locations through both written and verbal channels, for example, printed and/or digital flyers and social media posts, and home visits as appropriate and safe. HIAS displays the Code of Conduct clearly in each office location and uses visual aids to convey information to affected populations who may not be able to access information in printed format. HIAS Venezuela uses feedback and response mechanisms that are accessible and context appropriate, including suggestion boxes in each site office and portable suggestion boxes for field activities as well as direct email and a dedicated national phone line. HIAS invites key community members in each project location to serve as reference groups for project activity implementation, creating a link to the community and ensuring that all affected populations can access services.



A HIAS community worker, conducts a baseline assessment to identify the needs of the target population in the Zulia State, in September 2021. **Photo:** HIAS Venezuela

Looking ahead with programs, HIAS Venezuela will continue to expand efforts to reach more refugees and vulnerable Venezuelans as needs increase. HIAS Venezuela will look for opportunities to integrate protection, shelter, and livelihood approaches that will allow a more comprehensive intervention. HIAS Venezuela will continue to mainstream protection into all WASH programming, as well as strengthen work on menstrual hygiene and hygiene promotion methodologies. Recognizing increasing GBV needs, HIAS plans to expand its

work around its curricular models for masculinities and adolescent girls as well as to establish a single hotline that can provide free and remote services and information for survivors and those at risk. HIAS Venezuela will also work in collaboration with the headquarters-based emergency department and the LAC regional office to strengthen the capacity to respond to new emergencies in the future.

Coordination: Partners and Peer Networks

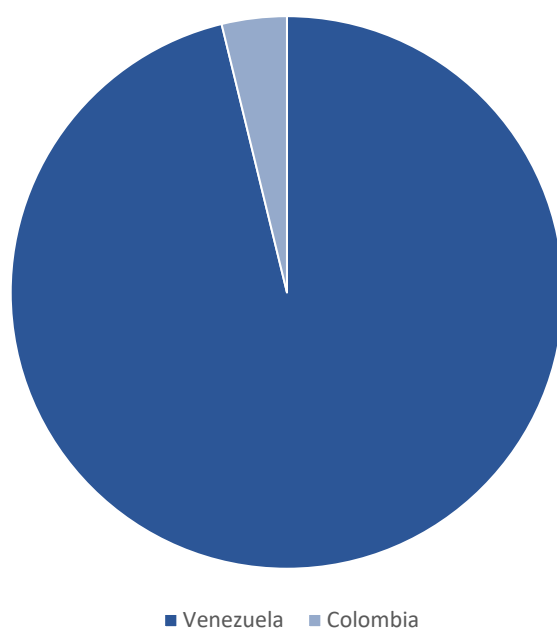
HIAS Venezuela works closely with UNCHR and its partners and will continue to collaborate with international NGOs, local organizations, the private sector, and other key stakeholders supporting refugees and asylum seekers. HIAS Venezuela participates in national and regional humanitarian coordination working groups, shares programming data and assessments, and coordinates responses to gaps and emerging needs. At the national level, HIAS Venezuela participates in all the clusters established through the Humanitarian Response Plan as well as coordination spaces led by OCHA and the Forum of International Humanitarian Organizations in Venezuela. HIAS Venezuela also works closely with the National Commission for Refugees (CONARE) in Venezuela. HIAS Venezuela will continue to strengthen partnerships with local organizations including women-led groups to deepen and sustain impact.



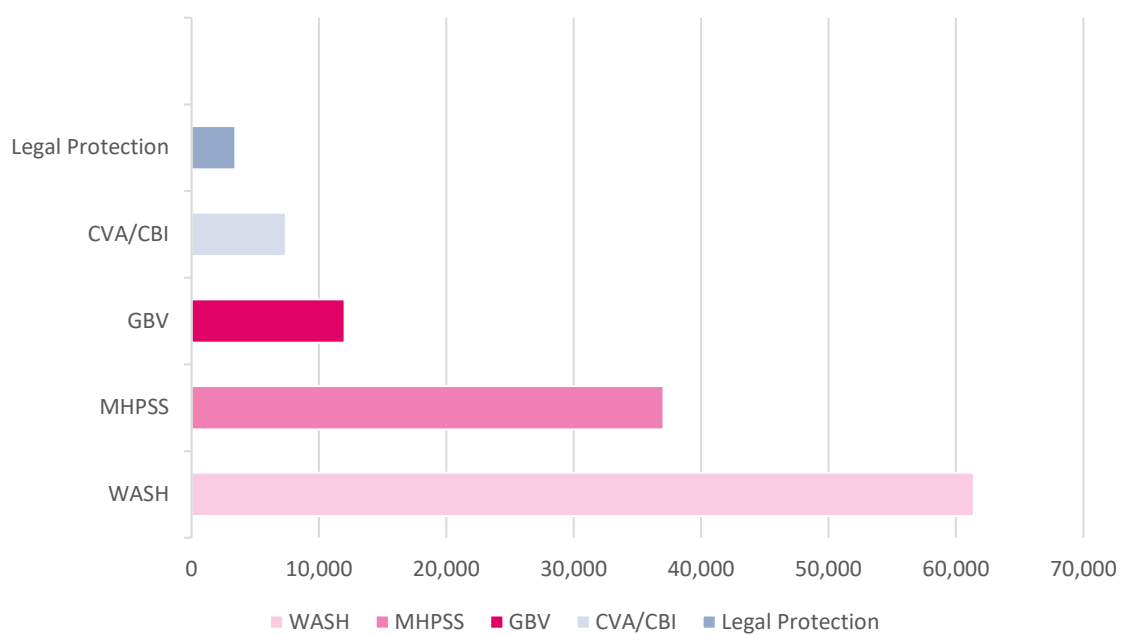
HIAS case workers in the Zulia state deliver food assistance to a survivor of GBV in November 2020.

Photo: HIAS Venezuela

Graph 1: Populations Served in 2021



Graph 2: People Reached by Program Area in 2021



Operational Support for Programs

As HIAS' programs expand to meet new global needs, HIAS remains committed to delivering the highest quality of services to those it seeks to support and empower. To enable country teams to succeed and thrive, HIAS will invest new operational resources in our programs, processes, and people.

The HIAS Venezuela team is comprised of expert staff working across different locations. The Country Director leads a Senior Management Team made up of key senior staff. Each HIAS Venezuela staff member abides by HIAS' Code of Conduct and other policies and procedures in line with global best practices. All staff members have completed trainings on **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)**. These trainings are updated and repeated regularly to ensure both prevention and response to any reported incidents of SEA. HIAS applies a gender lens when analyzing, planning, and making decisions across all its operations, to ensure the safety, security, and wellbeing of the entire organization's staff.



HIAS staff delivering Refugee Status Determination documents to participants in May 2021. **Photo:** HIAS Venezuela

HIAS invests in the skills and capacity of staff worldwide, supporting a wide range of local, national, regional, and international trainings for staff. HIAS ensures that international staff have diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) training. In 2021, HIAS Venezuela assessed its staff training and capacity building needs against programmatic objectives and will also strengthen performance management tools and processes. HIAS Venezuela will continue to build and strengthen multidisciplinary teams. To promote **staff wellbeing**, HIAS has a global contract with the Konterra Group, which provides support both for work-related issues and for personal reasons. HIAS Venezuela is also supporting various self-care activities. The goal of these efforts is to enhance program outcomes as well as improve staff satisfaction, retention, and wellbeing across the country team.

HIAS is also committed to developing an effective, sustainable **safety and security** management system that is in line with its values, mission, and organizational Duty of Care. Given the dynamic security landscape in some locations of Venezuela, HIAS will continue to adapt and strengthen protocols and training to reduce risks for staff and program participants. HIAS Venezuela will continue to emphasize preventive security strategies and early detection of risk. HIAS Venezuela plans to strengthen existing tools and policies and continually update the overall Venezuela safety and security management plan. HIAS Venezuela's security focal point and the regional and headquarters-based Safety and Security Department work together with the Country Director and program teams to ensure that the measures in place enable programming while cultivating organization-wide compliance. HIAS Venezuela will continue to monitor the security climate in all high-risk locations and respond accordingly to changes in the security climate in areas where HIAS has operations and programming. For all new offices, a security assessment will be carried out to identify potential gaps and take measures to address them.

Globally, HIAS is rolling out a **Digital Transformation Strategy** to ensure that beneficiaries' personal information is digitally secured and protected. The strategy will also create one universal source of information and collaboration; ensure all organizational knowledge is standardized, digitized, organized, and discoverable; ensure data around inputs, outcomes, and impact is readily accessible; help employees collaborate on gathering and building resources on this information platform; and easily share and leverage data from partners and affiliates. HIAS will be providing annual refresher training to all country offices on IT tools and procedures.

With support from headquarters (including the regional office), HIAS Venezuela will also continue to review and strengthen procedures and tools related to data and reporting as well as finance and compliance, in line with donor requirements and international standards. HIAS Venezuela will work with headquarters to establish an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. The ERP will improve alignment of operations, finance, programs, and human resources, allowing for more efficient and cost-effective country operations.

Donors and Development

HIAS is committed to growing and diversifying its donor base in each country of operation. With support from the LAC regional office and headquarters, HIAS Venezuela is developing a resource mobilization strategy to sustain, increase, and diversify funding sources, building on its longstanding reputation for comprehensive and flexible programming in a challenging operating environment. HIAS Venezuela gratefully acknowledges support from UNHCR, OCHA, the U.S. State Department/PRM, and USAID. Given its years-long presence in the country and partnerships with key stakeholders as well as support from affected communities, HIAS is uniquely positioned to serve increasing needs in Venezuela.

To reach more communities, HIAS Venezuela will build partnerships with new institutional donors and strengthen ongoing partnerships. HIAS Venezuela also looks forward to the opportunity to join consortia with other NGOs to reach even more refugees and displaced

people as well as vulnerable Venezuelans in new locations with comprehensive, integrated services. Going forward, HIAS Venezuela hopes to establish new partnerships to better address protection concerns including increased rates of GBV, particularly among adolescent girls.

Communications, Policy, and Advocacy

HIAS Venezuela's advocacy targets decisionmakers across the country and region to advance protection and rights for refugees and asylum seekers in Venezuela and vulnerable and displaced Venezuelans. Current advocacy priorities include expanding access to the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process and reducing the financial barriers to regularizing status for refugees and migrants. HIAS Venezuela has also played a key role in maintaining humanitarian space and enabling the delivery of critical services throughout the country. HIAS Venezuela will continue to press for access to vulnerable populations, not only for HIAS staff and programs but for other partners across the humanitarian response. HIAS Venezuela has signed to a national NGOs government's registry as part of the joint efforts with other international NGOs in the country to advocate for maintaining humanitarian access in the country; likewise, HIAS will continue to work closely with humanitarian coordination groups, public institutions, and other stakeholders at the local level to identify protection gaps and ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches those in need. HIAS Venezuela will also build on its working relationship with CONARE at the national level to strengthen the RSD process in locations where access remains limited. HIAS Venezuela will also continue to collaborate with international NGOs and the UN to bolster collective advocacy on these issues.

Going forward, HIAS Venezuela will strengthen its approach to strategic communications to better meet advocacy and programmatic objectives. Given ongoing challenges around internet access and other social media tools in Venezuela, HIAS will refine strategies to reach program participants and other key audiences with information about rights and available services, including through WhatsApp. HIAS Venezuela will bolster capacity across its team on audiovisual storytelling and also help refugees and host community members share their own stories and advocate for their rights. Regionally, HIAS will work to ensure that people traveling across Latin America are aware of HIAS services and locations and other available resources across different countries through digital and other information tools.

Cover Photo: Diego Armando Marín Gómez for HIAS Venezuela
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