



European
Commission



© COOPI

Last updated 17/03/2023

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

South America

Introduction

South America is exposed to multiple, often combined, natural hazards. Climate change has increased the frequency and intensity of weather-related disasters, hampering the resilience of the most vulnerable communities.

The region is also confronted with one of the largest population displacement movements of its history: more than 6 million Venezuelans have sought refuge in neighbouring South American countries (of which almost 2.5 million are in Colombia, around 1.5 million in Peru, 500,000 in Ecuador, and over 400,000 respectively in Chile and Brazil).

What are the needs?

The socio-economic crisis in Venezuela generated an exodus of over 7.1 million people. They are exposed to protection risks and have limited access to basic services due to the overstretched capacities of public services and host communities.

In addition, Latin America has been one of the epicentres of the COVID-19 pandemic, with staggering numbers of infections and deaths.

The most vulnerable parts of the region have been hit hard by the pandemic, threatening particularly remote indigenous communities in the rainforest. Before COVID-19, they already needed access to basic services, living resources and poor sanitary conditions.

Local health facilities have become quickly overwhelmed, particularly in Venezuela, the Amazonian borders of Colombia, Peru, Brazil and the Pacific coast of Colombia.

Besides the spread of COVID-19, the consequences of climate change and the unpredictability of weather-related events also harm the most vulnerable populations.

When disasters strike, the biggest needs are (i) shelter, (ii) food and relief items, (iii) access to safe water and proper sanitation, and (iv) primary healthcare.

Helping affected populations recover their livelihoods is also essential. After emergencies, we also prioritise protection needs of the most vulnerable groups.

How are we helping?

Since 2016, the EU has allocated €390 million in humanitarian assistance to vulnerable Venezuelans in and outside the country. The funding helps provide emergency healthcare, food assistance and protection, as well as support for the host communities.

This support also helped to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, the EU mobilised €43.5 million as a response to the emergency, including €14.5 million allocated for Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Brazil and the redirection of resources from more than 60 projects.

All EU-funded humanitarian projects aim at guaranteeing access to water, conducting awareness campaigns, distributing hygiene kits and providing medical care, among other actions. We give particular attention to the impact of the pandemic on the indigenous populations in the region.

In addition, as part of the EU global response to COVID-19, a Humanitarian Air Bridge operation consisting of 3 flights delivered life-saving material to Peru in 2020.

Between 2021 and 2022, the EU allocated €34.5 million to disaster preparedness projects in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela, as well as to strengthen regional DP strategies in South America.

The EU's annual disaster preparedness fund supports preparation initiatives of institutions and communities to disasters, violence and crises.

The EU also support further disaster preparedness actions in South America:

- supporting local disaster response committees in drafting emergency plans
- setting up early warning systems, developing information and education campaigns
- reinforcing vital infrastructure (shelters, schools and hospitals)
- protecting livelihoods
- promoting coordination among those responsible for anticipating or reacting to disasters.

South America has also received immediate support in the aftermath of disasters via the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism. Following the deadly earthquake that hit Ecuador in 2016 and claimed more than 650 lives, the EU coordinated relief efforts and provided €5 million in emergency response.

In 2017, 2019 and 2023, the EU also deployed experts and firefighters under the Mechanism to help Chile and Bolivia fight some of the worst forest fires recorded on the continent.

The Mechanism was also activated to address Bolivia's drought in October 2016, the worst floods in 30 years in Peru during March 2017, and to provide expertise in environmental risks related to oil spill, dam integrity and stability in Colombia in 2018.

In January 2019, an environmental expert was deployed through the Mechanism to support the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI) in Bolivia.

To respond to the severe nutritional crisis affecting the Yanomami indigenous population in Brazil in 2023, the EU has allocated an emergency humanitarian funding of €500,000 to address their most urgent needs.

Facts & figures

Over **6 million** Venezuelan refugees and migrants across the region to date (R4V)

EU humanitarian aid in South America:

€808.5 million since 1994

