



NEWS RELEASE

MERCY CORPS PREPARES EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO ASSIST VENEZUELAN FLEEING TO COLOMBIA

Global organization will assist new arrivals in La Guajira as exodus from Venezuela continues

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ABOUT MERCY CORPS

- Leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible
- Empowering people to survive through crisis, build better lives and transform their communities for good
- Meeting the urgent needs of today through emergency response and disaster preparedness
- Building a stronger tomorrow by connecting people to the resources they need to strengthen their community from within
- About 5,000 team members reaching nearly 22 million people
- \$436.6 million total operating revenue in FY2017; 87% channeled directly into programs in more than 40 countries

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RIOHACHA, COLOMBIA – The global organization [Mercy Corps](http://mercy Corps.org) is expanding its Colombia operations to meet the urgent needs of Venezuelans seeking refuge and opportunity in Colombia, which is hosting more than 600,000 Venezuelan refugees and migrants. The organization will initially provide vouchers to Venezuelans who have arrived in the department of La Guajira so that they can purchase food, medicine and other essential supplies.

“Tens of thousands of people are leaving their families behind out of desperation, just on the hope of a shred of opportunity in Colombia,” says Provash Budden, Americas Regional Director for Mercy Corps. “Once they get to Colombia, most people can’t afford food or medicine. They have to beg until they have enough money to buy coffee, candies and other small items to sell on the street. If they’re lucky, they might earn between \$2 and \$5 a day to scrape by or send money back to Venezuela.”

In [recent assessments](#) in two border areas, Mercy Corps found that most Venezuelans arrive with little more than the clothes on their back after walking for hours on dangerous routes plagued by robberies and violence. By the time they arrive in Colombia, they have been robbed or extorted of most, if not all, of their money and belongings. Many arrivals are young women at high risk of exploitation, harassment and sexual violence, and some women have resorted to sex work for survival.

More than 1.5 million Venezuelans are displaced in the region. Almost 90 percent of Venezuela’s population has dropped below the poverty line and more than half of families are unable to meet basic food needs. Local organizations have warned that 300,000 Venezuelan children are at risk of dying from malnutrition.

“While Venezuela has been hurtling toward economic, social and institutional collapse for several years, the region now faces a full-blown humanitarian crisis,” says Budden. “Regional governments and international and local organizations responding to this crisis need funding and a coordinated response to continue meeting urgent needs and scale up in preparation for a continued exodus from Venezuela.”

Since 2005, Mercy Corps has worked in Colombia to connect people affected by armed conflict with the resources they need to rebuild their lives. The organization provides humanitarian assistance to vulnerable and marginalized people displaced by conflict; works in schools to educate young people and



protect them from violence; and supports land titling, agricultural value chains and natural resource management to help farmers lift themselves out of poverty.

Join us and [support Mercy Corps' work](#) in Colombia and elsewhere in the world.