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Executive Summary

- Colombia is the main destination of Venezuelan migrants. In 2021, the Colombian government decided to regularize their immigration status through the Temporary Statute of Protection for Venezuelans (ETPV in Spanish).
- The regularization process has three steps: i) an identification and characterization of the migrant in the government's online Venezuelan Migrant Single Registry (RUMV in Spanish); ii) a face-to-face biometric registration; and iii) the issuance and delivery of the Temporary Protection Permit (PPT in Spanish).
- Finding and characterizing Venezuelan migrants is a major challenge. They are a population in constant movement, frequently lack access to the internet and mass media, and often distrust government authorities and other actors.
- Despite these challenges, the Colombian government has carried out the regularization process at a speed that is unique in the world.
- Innovations for Poverty Action/Colombia identified that community leaders have played a fundamental role in the regularization process. Their role has been so important that the regularization process seems to have advanced more quickly in those areas where the leaders have a stronger presence.
- Among the main tasks of community leaders are collecting, disseminating information, and providing technical assistance with the regularization process.
- Leaders have been able to take advantage of various communication channels, depending on the circumstances of each community and capitalize on other programs and resources for the well-being of migrants.

* We want to extend our gratitude to all the community leaders who carry out this role and intervention model for Venezuelan migrants and Colombian citizens. Thank you for your support in conducting this study and for allowing us to enter your communities.

SAMPLE

7 municipalities
March 2022
2021-2022

STUDY TYPE

Qualitative Research

RESEARCHER

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The role of community leaders in the regularization process of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia

In the last decade, more than 6 million Venezuelans have left their country. Around 1.85 million are currently in Colombia (GIFMM, 2021). The challenges to socioeconomically integrating this population into the country are innumerable. On February 8, 2021, the Colombian government decided to regularize their immigration status in Colombia and characterize them through the Estatuto Temporal de Protección para Venezolanos (ETPV).

According to Migración Colombia data, in less than a year, more than 1.74 million Venezuelan migrants in Colombia completed the pre-registration process (RUMV) and more than one million completed the biometric registration, necessary steps for the regularization process. The scale and speed of this regularization process are unique in the world, particularly considering that certain social groups, such as irregular migrants, are difficult to reach and characterize. For example, a study conducted by researchers at Yale University found that

the population of undocumented migrants living in the United States may be double what is estimated in the decade census (Fazel-Zarandi et al., 2018).

In Colombia, some of the main barriers to characterizing and regularizing the Venezuelan migrant population have been continuous geographic mobility, high levels of socioeconomic vulnerability, precarious access to the Internet and mobile devices, mistrust of the institutions in charge of the process of regularization, fear of arrest or deportation, among others. This policy note highlights the role of community leaders and the means they used in the regularization process.

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