

Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation

Humanitarian Strategy 2022 - 2023

Latin America and the Caribbean



Spanish
Cooperation

Overview of the humanitarian action of Spain

The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), under the aegis of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation (MAEUEC), is the principal management body of Spanish Cooperation. Humanitarian action is a major priority for this Agency in its efforts to combat poverty and promote sustainable development within the framework of the 2030 Agenda.

The AECID Humanitarian Action Office, created in 2007, is responsible for managing and implementing Spain's official humanitarian action, based on the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. The Office follows guidelines set out in the current Spanish Cooperation Master Plan and in the Spanish Cooperation Humanitarian Action Strategy for 2019-2026. This Strategy is the cornerstone of Spain's humanitarian action, following an approach based on the following priorities:

- rights, gender, age, and diversity
- disaster risk prevention, reduction, and reporting
- resilience, the do-no-harm principle, and conflict sensitivity
- concern for the environment

The Humanitarian Action Office also works within the framework of the National Strategy for Humanitarian Diplomacy, the guiding document for the principles and lines of action that govern Spanish humanitarian action at the national level.

Furthermore, AECID has undertaken different commitments regarding the quality of assistance, following the World Humanitarian Summit of 2016 and in accordance with the Grand Bargain adopted the same year.

Along these lines, to improve the effectiveness of the humanitarian response provided by AECID to major crises, humanitarian strategies have been established for priority geographical contexts, aligned with United Nations and European Union humanitarian response plans and complementary to the Country Partnership Frameworks in force, where appropriate.

Thus, this Humanitarian Action Strategy, which draws on the lessons learned from AECID humanitarian response planning in the 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 periods, seeks to address the main needs identified in this context by targeting specific sectors.

In addition, almost two years after Covid-19 was declared a global pandemic, and as we still find ourselves dealing with uncertainties that undoubtedly affect donors and recipients, it is clear that the effects of the pandemic have exacerbated global humanitarian needs while exponentially increasing the challenges that humanitarian actors must face in their daily work. The response to the pandemic and its impact on humanitarian contexts will undoubtedly continue to represent a significant proportion of the contributions channelled through international agencies and non-governmental organizations. In everything that we do, we will act in line with the Spanish Cooperation Joint Response Strategy for the Covid-19 Crisis, which is based on the following priorities, always placing people at the heart of our actions:

- saving lives and strengthening health systems
- protecting and recovering rights and livelihoods and engaging in capacity-building for vulnerable people

- preserving and transforming socio-economic systems, rebuilding the production system, and strengthening democratic governance

This increasingly troubling humanitarian landscape, with its ever-growing needs, is further complicated by the alarming impact of the war in Ukraine on other humanitarian situations, especially in the area of food security and nutrition, owing to rising fuel and food prices and to the trade restrictions of the world's two main cereal producers (Russia and Ukraine).

The gender-, age- and diversity-based approach adopted in the Humanitarian Action Strategy must be mainstreamed into AECID actions. Therefore, the Agency will strive to ensure that in the projects it supports, the assistance, resources and services provided reach the entire target population, according to their specific needs, roles and capacities, paying special attention to women and children. Another priority will be that of preventing and responding to gender-based violence during humanitarian crises.

In this regard, AECID will support projects tagged with the code 3 and code 4 gender markers of the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)¹ and mark 2 of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations of the European Commission (DG ECHO).²

As regards other horizontal priorities and approaches adopted by Spanish Cooperation, priority will be given to actions that feature an inclusive approach and results-based management, together with the effective mainstreaming of environmental sustainability, cultural diversity and human rights. The provision of cash assistance and vouchers will also be incorporated into humanitarian action as a key response element, and non-earmarked aid and support for local actors will be promoted as far as possible.

Impact of Covid-19 on the humanitarian situation in the region

The Covid-19 pandemic broke out when Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) was undergoing a certain degree of economic stagnation and political crisis. The pandemic has had a severe impact on health, but its effects are farther-reaching. According to World Health Organization (WHO) data, in July-December 2021 the region had 18% of the world's confirmed cases and 30% of the world's deaths.

The containment measures and other factors linked to the effects of the pandemic on the global economy have led to a 7.7% drop in the region's GDP as a whole, according to Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) estimates. The impact of this drop means that by 2021 the extreme poverty rate is estimated at 12.5% (78 million people) and the poverty rate at 33.7% (209 million people).

Thus, the Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to a profound humanitarian crisis with a significant impact on the most vulnerable populations. Control measures have led to an increase in cases of gender-based violence and greater protection risks, complicating the response by reducing access to affected people. Food insecurity and malnutrition have also increased and the effects on people's mental health are perceptible. Moreover, the impact of the pandemic on education has devastating consequences for the learning and well-being of millions of children and adolescents in the region.

¹ IASC, Gender with Age Marker Information Sheet. Available at: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/iasc-gam-information-sheet.pdf>.

² DG ECHO, Gender-Age Marker Toolkit. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/gender_age_marker_toolkit.pdf.

1. BACKGROUND

How is it possible that Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), a region of mostly middle-income countries with democratic systems and the closest cultural proximity to Europe in the Global South, is today the scene of some of the world's most serious humanitarian crises?³

There is no easy answer, but the main reasons include people's decisions and actions. In other words, the situation not only stems from disasters caused by natural phenomena/events, including human-caused climatic events, but is also, to a great extent, the result of the ineffectiveness of States—some of which are becoming increasingly authoritarian—to respond to the needs and fully promote the rights of their people, as well as to reduce structural inequality between those living in LAC countries and to prevent the recurrent disaster risks in this region, which seriously aggravate the living conditions of millions of people in a situation of vulnerability. This limited capacity has been very clearly reflected in the fact that Latin America has been one of the regions with the highest number of cases and deaths (in relation to its population) caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

One of the elements that currently characterize the region is the large number of displaced populations caused by the different crises, whether sudden or protracted. Of particular note are the more than 6 million people who have fled Venezuela and the various types of migratory movements in Central America that require humanitarian responses throughout the region, including the Caribbean.

Four major humanitarian crisis hotspots can be identified in LAC: Colombia, Venezuela, northern Central America, and Haiti, but there are also other troubling situations throughout the Central American Isthmus, between the Darien (Panama) and the Rio Grande (Mexico) which form a kind of “migratory corridor”. All of this constitutes the map of fragility affecting this region and obliges the international community to strengthen its humanitarian action in close connection with development and peace efforts in a Nexus approach.

As seen in Table 1 below, an analysis of risks and risk severity (measuring the likelihood of risks turning into a severe crisis) reveals that two countries in the region (Haiti and Colombia) have high risk and severity indices. Honduras, which also has a high risk index, is considered of medium severity. It must be highlighted that international evidence shows that many crises arise from medium-risk countries; therefore, it is important to keep an eye on contexts such as Venezuela, which has the highest severity index in the region, as well as Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Peru and Mexico, which have medium severity indexes.

³ <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/feature/2021/12/29/ten-humanitarian-crises-trends-to-watch>

Table 1. Risk and severity in the major LAC countries

SEVERITY INDEX (2019-2021)	Very high		Venezuela (4.7)	
	High			Colombia (5.4) Haiti (6.2)
	Medium		Ecuador (4.6) El Salvador (4.6) Nicaragua (4.7)	Honduras (5.3)
	Low		Brazil (4.9) Peru (4.8)	
	Very low		Panama (3.8) Mexico* (4.9)	
		<i>Very low/Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>
INFORM RISK INDEX (2020)				

Source: Prepared by the authors using data taken on 16/11/2021 from <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index>

Note: The risk index presents structural risks and their evolution, while the severity index indicates how these risks may develop into a real crisis. The numbers in brackets are the 2020 risk indices.

*Mexico is not included in the Severity Index.

The situation in the region has been worsening in recent years, as evidenced by the fact that until 2019 the United Nations only considered it necessary to develop Humanitarian Response Plans for Colombia and Haiti. In 2019, reflecting the scale and severity of the Venezuelan Crisis, the Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V) led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) presented the first Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP), and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) published the first Humanitarian Response Plan for Venezuela. In 2021, OCHA produced the first regional Humanitarian Response Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

While the humanitarian situation has become more complex in the region, with the aggravation of certain existing crises and the emergence of new ones, in addition to the impacts of climate shocks and recurrent natural events and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, at the same time humanitarian diplomacy efforts have intensified to raise the profile of the crises in the area. Indeed, two International Donor Conferences, co-organized by Spain and the European Union, were held in solidarity with the Venezuelan refugee and migrant population in 2020 and 2021, and Spain co-led the Solidarity Event for forcibly displaced persons and host communities in Central America and Mexico in June 2021.

Several UN agencies and international NGOs have also strengthened their presence in the region in recent years, reflecting the growing scale of the humanitarian situation. And donors such as the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) have increased their deployment in Latin America since 2019.

AECID itself has also substantially increased its humanitarian action in this area, from just EUR 4 million in 2015 to more than EUR 27 million in 2020.⁴

⁴ <https://www.aecid.es/Centro-Documentacion/Documentos/Acción%20Humanitaria/210923%20Panorama%20Humanitaria%20ALC%202020-21%20con%20NIPO.pdf>

In 2022-2023, LAC remains a priority for Spain's Humanitarian Action. The focus remains on the contexts of the previous strategy in the Venezuelan Crisis (both within the country and the regional response to mixed flows), the internal humanitarian situation in Colombia, and northern Central America and Mexico. Haiti is added as a priority, because its situation has worsened significantly in recent years. Attention will continue to be paid to other contexts such as Nicaragua and the Darien in Panama, which has become a critical location on many people's journey north.

2. POPULATIONS IN A SITUATION OF VULNERABILITY

Noteworthy among the groups of people in a situation of vulnerability are:

- people at high risk, exposed to multiple threats and/or affected by disasters caused by natural phenomena, human-caused climatic phenomena, and epidemics, paying special attention to women, children and adolescents (especially if they are not in school), Afro-descendants, and indigenous people
- people affected by food insecurity and malnutrition, especially children under 5 years of age in the Central American Dry Corridor, and children and adolescents among the migrant and refugee population throughout the region, as well as in Venezuela and Haiti
- people affected by physical and socio-economic insecurity in situations of forced displacement, and victims and survivors of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, especially women, migrants and refugees; asylum seekers, migrants in transit and returnees; LGBTI people; children and adolescents; and other vulnerable groups, including people affected by the socio-economic effects of the pandemic
- older adults and people with disabilities, who require specific approaches

In all cases, when prioritizing actions, the existence of several interrelated vulnerability factors will be taken into particular account, using a gender-, age- and diversity-based and feminist approach, from the perspective of intersectionality.

3. MAIN HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

In addition to focusing on the different contexts in LAC, it is essential to address the regional level, where needs are centred on two challenges: disaster risk reduction and preparedness, including epidemics (using an anticipatory approach), and humanitarian coordination.

In the case of disaster response, despite advances in the regional response system, the lack of stable resources, the limited capacities or geographical difficulties—especially in the event of a large-scale disaster or several simultaneous minor disasters—call for a complementary international response. This has been substantially aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has put all LAC institutions to the test like no previous disaster, especially those in the health sector but also the education system and the bodies responsible for rights protection, employment and housing, among others.

In recent years, AECID has continuously supported the processes and actions of different specialized organizations in their efforts to strengthen disaster prevention, preparedness and response capacities. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), a leading international organization in this field, supports the capacity-building of National Societies, key entities in the first response. The importance of sustained support over the past few years for the

Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Emergency Medical Teams (EMT) initiative has been key in the health response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Thanks in part to the work done previously on generating mechanisms and the assistance provided to countries during the pandemic in the framework of the EMT initiative through support and advice, the development of technical guidelines, guidance for adapting existing resources, and weekly training webinars, active support has been provided for the expansion of clinical care capacities in these countries.

Conferences in Solidarity with the Venezuelan migration crisis

On 26 May 2020—in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic—Spain and the EU, with the support of UNHCR and IOM, organized the “Donors’ Conference in Solidarity with Migrants and Refugees from Venezuela”, with the triple objective of mobilizing resources, improving coordination and raising awareness of the situation of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the region’s host countries. The Conference succeeded in achieving commitments totalling USD 2.76 billion.

Another conference was held in June 2021, this time hosted by Canada.

Between the two conferences, Spain pledged to contribute EUR 100 million in 2020-2024, of which AECID contributed EUR 23 million in 2020 alone, including EUR 16 million for the humanitarian response.

Lastly, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) is working to strengthen regional and national coordination mechanisms to monitor and accelerate the implementation of the Sendai Framework.

Various bodies promote coordination at the regional level (such as the OCHA-led Regional Working Group on Risks, Emergencies and Disasters for Latin America and the Caribbean [REDLAC]), the sub-regional and the national/local levels (Civil Protection entities, IFRC/Red Cross National Societies, etc.). The EU, through DG ECHO, one of the few donors with a region-wide commitment (EUR 115 million disbursed for LAC in 2020), also plays a significant coordination role with its Member States, which has been particularly important in the construction of a humanitarian system in Venezuela and in raising the profile of different crises in the area. Lastly, it is important to support the identification and prioritization of needs in each context, through active participation in coordination bodies.

Aware of the worsening of the situation in Venezuela and the region, the international community has been expanding its response to this humanitarian crisis with two focuses: the mixed flows of refugees and migrants in the region, and the situation within Venezuela. The Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V) has intensified its work, under the leadership of UNHCR and IOM, and with the invaluable support pledged at donor conferences in 2020 and

2021 (see box). The R4V Platform estimates, based on official figures reported by host governments, that there are more than six million Venezuelan refugees and migrants around the world, of which almost five million are in countries in the region. The RMRP 2022 aims to provide care for 3.8 million people (of whom 35.2% are women, 31.2% men, 16.2% girls and 17.1% boys), at an estimated cost of USD 1.79 billion.

Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the region, especially the most vulnerable (women, children and adolescents, but also men and ethnic minorities, people suffering from acute and chronic diseases and LGBTI people) face multiple needs, most noteworthy of which are protection needs. Other needs are access to food and water in sufficient quantity and quality, access to shelter, and access to basic services and humanitarian assistance, especially in border and urban areas. Moreover, basic humanitarian assistance has to be combined with capacity-building at the regional, national and local levels and with support for authorities to ensure a rights-based approach—especially as regards protection, health, sexual and reproductive rights, education, and livelihoods—in their management of the displacement crisis, as is the case with Colombia’s Temporary Protection Statute

and other initiatives by countries in the region. Along these lines, it is necessary to ensure socio-economic and cultural integration and long-term initiatives to increase the resilience of refugees, migrants and returnees.

Regarding the humanitarian situation in Venezuela, the international community already has an increasingly robust humanitarian system in place and several response plans have been approved. The 2021 update of the Humanitarian Response Plan estimates that 7 million people inside the country have humanitarian needs. The Plan aims to address the needs of 4.5 million who are in a particularly vulnerable situation, with a financial requirement of USD 708.1 million. The 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan (the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan has not yet been published) details needs in the sectors of protection (due to the increase in violence, forced displacement, gender-based violence, human trafficking, and labour and sexual exploitation, with a significant impact on children), food security and nutrition, health (due to the response to Covid-19, the health system's overload and loss of operational capacity, the increase in infectious diseases, and the importance of mental health), education, and access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

The response to this situation is coordinated by OCHA, supported by the Humanitarian Country Team. The main agencies are the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNHCR, IOM and PAHO, in addition to the World Food Programme, which started operations in 2021. It should be noted that both the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and IFRC have significantly increased their operations in Venezuela since 2018. Through DG ECHO, the EU is the leading contributor among the donor community. Local organizations and international NGOs active in this context also play a very significant role, although they face serious difficulties of access, problems with their legal status, and obstacles or prohibitions to use key modalities such as cash transfers.

In the case of Colombia, there are still many people in humanitarian need: 6.7 million, according to the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan (up from 5.9 in 2019). Despite this, it must be noted that Colombia is considered a forgotten crisis. The main drivers of humanitarian needs continue to be conflict and the new dynamics of armed violence, in which women, children and adolescents, as well as social leaders, are in a particularly dire situation.

Protection is the area with the greatest need for funding, and vulnerable groups include internally displaced persons (more than 400,000 people since the 2016 Peace Agreement), migrants and returnees. According to the ICRC, there has been a deterioration of the situation on the Pacific coast and in large parts of the east and south of the country. In addition to the needs associated with violence, it should be borne in mind that Colombia is highly vulnerable to disasters; in the first 11 months of 2021, 541,749 people were affected by natural disasters.

Coordination is a challenge because the Humanitarian Country Team system, led by OCHA, and the Interagency Group for Mixed Migration Flows, co-led by UNHCR and IOM, overlap. Moreover, since 2019, response plans dedicate a chapter to the Humanitarian-Development Nexus, recognizing the need to seek coordinated responses.

As regards the humanitarian response for Colombia, DG ECHO's 2022 Humanitarian Implementation Plan will allocate EUR 11.5 million to this context. Colombia is one of the ICRC's main operations in the region; its 2021 appeal amounts to CHF 39.1 million for the provision of assistance to the most vulnerable population affected by violence. It should be noted that the Humanitarian Response Plan also advocates a humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach as particularly significant to address this context, taking into account the internal conflict and the migration crisis.

The context of northern Central America (NCA) and Mexico has growing humanitarian needs due to three main interrelated factors aggravated by Covid-19: (1) the large number of people affected by other forms of violence, which is related to structural factors such as poverty and inequality and lack of opportunities (education, decent jobs, etc.); (2) food and nutrition insecurity in the Dry Corridor; and (3) recurrent climatic shocks in this area, especially drought as a key factor in the continued loss of livelihoods in the Dry Corridor; (2) food and nutrition insecurity in the Dry Corridor; and (3) recurrent climatic shocks in this area, with drought being a key factor in the continued loss of agricultural livelihoods in recent years, together with the impact of hurricanes Eta and Iota in late 2020. Such factors contribute to different types of vulnerability that often lead people to move internally or to third countries. Migration, and increasingly how it is being managed through border and migration policies and Asylum Cooperative Agreements (or "safe third country" agreements), increase vulnerabilities and risks and needs for protection and humanitarian assistance, as well as jeopardizing the enjoyment of basic rights such as education, especially for children, adolescents, women, older people and LGBTI people.

For all these reasons, and in view of the continued increase in humanitarian and protection needs in recent years, in 2021 the UN, for the first time, prepared a regional Humanitarian Response Plan that estimates that 4.3 million people have humanitarian needs, for whose response the humanitarian community requires USD 588 million for the period from August 2021 to December 2022. According to UNHCR, close to 500,000 people have been displaced by violence in NCA countries. Children, adolescents and women are particularly vulnerable. In this regard, UNICEF reports that 4.4 million children and adolescents in the region need educational support.

In terms of international response, the EU/ECHO will allocate EUR 11 million to this sub-region in 2022, prioritizing food security, care for people affected by other forms of violence, people in situations of forced displacement and in transit, and disaster preparedness and response. The ICRC is working to mitigate the humanitarian consequences of violence, while the World Food Programme is expanding its food security efforts in the area.

UNHCR plays an active role in addressing the issue of forced displacement in the region. To this end, it supports the Regional Integrated Framework for Protection and Solutions (MIRPS), which promotes regional commitments and responsibility-sharing mechanisms. In this regard, it is worth noting that in June 2021, in its role as Chair of the MIRPS support platform, Spain organized the Solidarity Event for forcibly displaced persons and host communities in Central America and Mexico, announcing a commitment of EUR 6.3 million in 2021-2022, as direct support for the MIRPS countries' action plans.

According to the UN's humanitarian needs assessment, Haiti's humanitarian needs are due to a significant development deficit. Progress in addressing structural problems is continually threatened by limited progress in the areas of governance, justice, impunity, peace and economic transformation. Both in rural and in urban communities, the steady increase in violence, social tensions and insecurity is rooted in the lack of lasting solutions to the country's problems.

This situation has led to an increase in acute vulnerabilities across the country. In early 2021, 4.4 million Haitians faced humanitarian needs. However, throughout the year the situation has worsened due to the earthquake in the south-west of the island and the violence that has led to the forced displacement of thousands of people with protection needs and access difficulties, specifically girls, adolescents and women. Hence, DG ECHO estimates that 5.15 million people are currently in humanitarian need, with 4.4 million in a situation of food insecurity and half a million people potentially affected by natural hazards. Therefore, the initial Humanitarian Implementation Plan 2022 earmarks EUR 8 million for this context.

As regards the humanitarian emergency caused by the impact of violence in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area, since June 2021, territorial disputes between armed gangs have increased significantly, and rapes, murders, robberies, armed attacks and kidnappings are being committed on a daily basis, although the difficulty of access means that we are far from knowing and measuring the extent of these offences. An estimated 19,000 people were displaced in 2021 by these conflicts, which have also had a very negative impact on the mobility of humanitarian material and personnel, as evidenced by the earthquake of 14 August 2021, when armed gangs controlled the only road linking Port-au-Prince to the country's southern departments.

Lastly, it is important to refer to other contexts in the region, such as Nicaragua, which is undergoing a human rights and protection crisis (with refugees in other countries, the number of which could reach 100,000 in Costa Rica alone) that could turn into a humanitarian crisis. This country also has high rates of vulnerability to disasters, so there is a great need to support its preparedness and response capacity.

Likewise, the Darien area in Panama (bordering with Colombia) has witnessed a growing flow of migrants towards North America in recent years, becoming one of the points along the migration route with the greatest threats and risks for the population in transit. This has led, especially in the last year, to an exponential increase in the need for humanitarian assistance and protection in a context of scarce presence of State and humanitarian actors, and great difficulties in designing a comprehensive and coordinated response.

4. STRATEGIC POSITIONING

For Spanish Cooperation, Latin America and the Caribbean is a clear example of a middle-income region with many capacities, but which suffers from growing fragility—including structural inequality that affects the population's possibilities to face a crisis and recover (resilience) and fully exercise their rights. Therefore, it continues to need support in the form of cooperation for sustainable development and, in certain contexts such as those derived from migration movements, international humanitarian action. Spanish Cooperation's commitment has been strengthened by the aggravation of LAC's risk situation stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic, among other factors.

Therefore, in line with Spanish Development Cooperation's 2019-2026 Humanitarian Action Strategy, it is essential for AECID to continue to focus its efforts in the region, to raise the profile of existing humanitarian needs and to strengthen the preparedness and response capacities of the countries themselves. Moreover, given the region's middle-income profile and the fact that there are development and peace interventions in the prioritized humanitarian contexts, it makes increasing sense to strengthen the nexus between development cooperation efforts and humanitarian action in this area, since it is a way to address existing vulnerabilities while contributing to building more resilient communities. To this end, analysis and capacities at headquarters and in the region need to be strengthened, to take advantage of the opportunities that arise from implementing interventions with a nexus approach.

AECID's response to the humanitarian situation in the region is not limited to channelling funds, but also consists in **active humanitarian diplomacy**, because Spanish Development Cooperation enjoys renowned leadership in the region, enabling it to influence many processes that can contribute to improving the humanitarian space.

In this regard, within the framework of Spain's feminist foreign policy, the humanitarian diplomacy effort will work to strengthen feminist leadership, involving local women's organizations that have

considerable capacity in this region. In all cases, the gender approach will be incorporated into operations, with the inclusion of instruments with specific approaches for the protection of women and girls and paying specific attention to gender-based violence.

The response is organized on two levels. The first is the regional level, and the second refers to specific geographical contexts.

With regard to the regional level, our humanitarian response focuses on disaster preparedness and response, a traditional—and the most permanent—line of our foreign action. It covers the entire region, but has its main focus on the Caribbean basin, where many risks and most hurricanes, earthquakes and other disasters caused by natural events occur. In addition, it will support all humanitarian coordination efforts in each context and at the regional level.

The second level includes four contexts that require approaches adapted to the specific and changing realities of each (see key data in Appendix 1). Firstly, there is the Venezuelan crisis, including the situation within Venezuela and its regional repercussions through mixed flows of refugees and migrants. As evidenced in successive UN response plans, conditions in Venezuela have worsened significantly and humanitarian needs have increased. Although a minimal humanitarian architecture has been created—towards which Spain has worked actively—humanitarian access remains difficult, especially for civil society organizations and international NGOs. International assistance has increased, but is far from sufficient given the scale of the needs and challenges.

This internal situation is the main factor that has forced more than 6 million people (Venezuelans and Colombians who emigrated to Venezuela) to leave the country in search of better living conditions. The bulk of this movement has been concentrated in the region, especially Colombia (1.8 million), Ecuador (508,000) and Peru (1.3 million), with significant groups in Brazil, Chile and the Dominican Republic. The countries in the region have shown a generally supportive response by providing access to their territory and to certain services, but the dimensions of the problem have exceeded the response capacities of national and local institutions, as well as those of the host communities. It must be noted that the outbreak of the pandemic and the containment measures applied have significantly complicated responding to the people affected, who also face new difficulties in generating and maintaining livelihoods (which largely affects women), shelter and access to basic services.

The Central American migration corridor to the United States

In the past five years, and particularly in 2021, the emergence of a migration corridor in the Central American region has become evident. This migration route originates in what is known as the Darien Gap in the far eastern part of Panama on the border with Colombia, and runs through Central America and Mexico to the southern border of the United States. The migration flows that go through it mainly include people from Cuba, Venezuela and Haiti. In the latter case, and also in the case of Venezuelans, these are often secondary movements of people who first moved to a country in the region and who now, due to certain circumstances, have decided to move again from those original host countries to the USA. Likewise, there is a growing presence of migrants from Asia and Africa who cross the region with the ultimate goal of reaching the USA in search of better living conditions.

The large increase in displaced populations along the migration corridor poses a great challenge for the provision of services, humanitarian assistance and protection along the entire route, especially at certain points such as the Darien and the northern Central American countries. It is therefore important, in addition to supporting efforts to respond to the needs of these populations, to incorporate elements of analysis, coordination and response with a regional migration corridor approach.

Secondly, **Colombia** continues to be a focus of attention for the humanitarian community because violence persists in several areas, there is still forced internal displacement and lockdown, which leaves vulnerable groups unprotected (especially women, children and adolescents and LGBTI people), and vulnerability to natural and human-caused disasters continues. Furthermore, the focus of international attention on the Venezuelan migration crisis runs the risk of overshadowing the domestic humanitarian situation.

The third context refers to **northern Central America: El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras**, together with neighbouring Mexico. There are two priorities in this area. One is to support assistance and rehabilitation efforts related to the hurricanes and storms of late 2020. The other is the humanitarian and protection response to people affected by other situations of violence committed by gangs (with special attention to women, children and adolescents), drug trafficking rings and other actors, forcing them to move within their own country, to a neighbouring country or beyond. As part of the protection offered to these people, AECID includes activities related to psychosocial and legal services, as well as ensuring that they can enjoy fundamental rights such as education.

Another humanitarian priority for AECID is food insecurity, acute malnutrition and malnourishment. In this regard, the Central American Dry Corridor, which stretches from Chiapas (southern Mexico) to Costa Rica, is the scene of recurrent food crises. Since 2009, this region has experienced below-average rainfall, resulting in the partial or total loss of staple grain harvests for tens of thousands of families.

Lastly, this strategy introduces an additional context, **Haiti**. AECID's response will focus on reducing the vulnerability of the Haitian population to the impact of all types of disasters, especially natural disasters, increasing their resilience, and addressing the needs of victims of such disasters and people in particularly vulnerable situations affected by the growing violence and insecurity, and with little and/or difficult access to humanitarian assistance and protection measures. Assistance to food insecure people is also essential given the country's chronic food crisis, which has worsened in recent years.

Furthermore, **throughout the region**, in the event of possible emergency and disaster situations in which the national authorities see their response capacities exceeded and proceed to make appeals for assistance to the international community, Spanish Cooperation will activate the appropriate response mechanisms and instruments at its disposal to guarantee assistance based on the needs of the affected population.

4.1. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Strategic objectives have been set to guide action in 2022-2023:

- SO 1 Improve regional, national and local institutional capacities for disaster preparedness and response throughout the region, with approaches based on risk management, gender and inclusion, resilience and sustainability that prioritize the active participation of communities.
- SO 2 Provide humanitarian assistance to people affected by disasters and crises, violence, or other factors.
- SO 3 Increase the protection of populations affected by forced displacement or mobility, with comprehensive responses and special attention to women, children, and groups in vulnerable situations due to discrimination based on gender and age, ethnicity or race,

sexual orientation or gender identity, economic status, religious beliefs, disability or place of origin.

- SO 4 Raise the profile of and focus on humanitarian needs and on promoting and guaranteeing respect for international humanitarian law in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially in the case of forgotten crises, in European and multilateral forums.

These strategic objectives will be complemented by a number of cross-cutting lines:

- Work on humanitarian action with a humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach, in line with the DAC Recommendation,⁵ where relevant and in full respect of humanitarian principles (including more coordinated action between departments, units and instruments of AECID in particular and of Spanish Cooperation in general).
- Increase collaboration with national and local actors in the region, especially civil society organizations, in order to fulfil the commitment of localization, which is particularly relevant in this region.
- Strengthen cash transfer and voucher mechanisms in interventions with the aim of ultimately favouring social protection systems.
- Advance effective mainstreaming of gender, age and diversity, and of environment and climate change adaptation,⁶ starting with a formulation that is sensitive to these vectors.
- Seek opportunities for innovative approaches to types of intervention and partners and encourage the sharing of experiences between actors in the humanitarian system.
- Become more actively involved in the entire intervention management cycle, while respecting the partners' autonomy.

4.2. INTERVENTION SECTORS AND INSTRUMENTS

AECID's humanitarian work in this region continues to focus on two main sectors: disaster and crisis preparedness and response, which is addressed at the regional level, and protection, which is addressed in accordance with the conditions in each context. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, two complementary sectors, education and health, have been added.

As regards the **preparedness and response** sector, in addition to working at the regional level with specialized partners and the possibility of activating the Agreements on Emergencies of the Spanish NGOs that have them, the Humanitarian Action Office has a variety of resources and tools to support the emergency response. These include the Spanish Technical Aid Response Team (START); a level 2 field hospital with coordination, logistical and WASH capacities in emergencies; the possibility of sending response material and equipment from the storehouses in Panama and Torrejón de Ardoz; and the decentralized response through the Technical Cooperation Offices in the countries by allocating resources for local purchases.

However, in each specific context of this strategy, preference will be given to other significant sectors. This is particularly evident in **northern Central America**, because in addition to the needs associated with other situations of violence, a large number of people are facing periodic droughts that cause malnutrition and put their traditional livelihoods at risk, aggravating poverty and the possibilities of embarking on the migration route. In this area, food security and nutrition is a complementary humanitarian sector, and in relation to protection, the aim is to support various spheres such as education, because the current protection crisis has a high impact on universal access to quality education and often makes schools insecure, and access to sustainable livelihoods.

⁵ Available at: <http://www.aecid.es/Centro-Documentacion/Documentos/Acci%C3%B3n%20Humanitaria/190705%20CAD%20Recomendacion%20NEXO%20AcidHumanitDesarrolloPaz-Esp.pdf>

⁶ In line with the *Guía para incorporar el Medioambiente en la Acción y las Emergencias Humanitarias [Guidelines for Mainstreaming Environment in Humanitarian Action and Emergencies]* <https://www.aecid.es/Centro-Documentacion/Documentos/Acción%20Humanitaria/Guia%20Medioambiente.pdf>

As for action **within Venezuela**, a multi-sectoral approach is required. In this context, the Agency will focus its resources on health, education, food security, nutrition and WASH interventions, with a special focus on gender-based violence, children and older people. Localization will also be supported through a contribution to the Humanitarian Country Fund. As for **migrants and refugees in other countries in the region**, the focus will be on general humanitarian assistance and on supporting measures that can eventually facilitate their integration in host communities. Finally, it must be noted that humanitarian-development-peace nexus initiatives will be promoted where appropriate and in line with humanitarian priorities.

In **Colombia**, the focus on protection will be maintained, complementing this sector with interventions that enable the affected population to enter into medium- and long-term development dynamics. In addition, support for the humanitarian system's important coordination efforts will also be maintained.

AECID's response in **Haiti** focuses on the protection of vulnerable groups and affected people and on meeting the basic needs of the population in greatest need in the WASH and food security and nutrition sectors. However, there may be interventions in other areas such as education in emergencies or health, depending on the needs that may exist at a given time. It will also facilitate the access of national and international humanitarian actors so that they can assist the most vulnerable populations. Where possible, this response will have a humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach and resources will be allocated to improve community preparedness for natural hazards and other shocks.

Moreover, AECID has other instruments that can complement those normally used by humanitarian action. As regards preparedness, it has technical cooperation instruments (the Latin American Technical Cooperation Programme, or COOTEC) and knowledge management instruments (the Knowledge Transfer, Exchange and Management Plan for the Development of Spanish Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean, or INTERCOONECTA) with a humanitarian-development nexus orientation.

4.3. INTERVENTION COUNTRIES

The priority intervention countries will be Colombia, Venezuela and the countries receiving mixed flows from Venezuela (Colombia, Ecuador and Peru), and those in northern Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras), as well as Mexico (due to the displaced population present in this country and the deportations it carries out) and Haiti. In addition, AECID will monitor developments in other contexts, especially Nicaragua and its neighbouring countries and the Darien area in Panama, in order to coordinate an appropriate response in accordance with the resources available.

4.4. MAIN PARTNERS

AECID will carry out its humanitarian action in Latin America and the Caribbean through different collaboration mechanisms with a small number of actors, mainly the International Red Cross Movement, multilateral organizations, and Spanish and Latin American NGOs. In addition to the channelling of grants, the aim is to expand collaboration with these partners through joint analysis and a more active role in raising the profile of the regional humanitarian situation. NGOs play a key role because of their in-depth knowledge of local contexts, their response capacity and their advocacy work. Within the framework of the commitment to the Grand Bargain principles, specifically the principle of localization, efforts will be made to strengthen collaboration with local entities and regional organizations in LAC, from a humanitarian-development nexus perspective.

Lastly, with regard to risk reduction and disaster preparedness, collaboration with regional organizations in the field should be resumed.

5. INDICATORS. ACCOUNTABILITY MATRIX

GENERAL
Percentage of Spain's humanitarian assistance allocated to LAC
Number of beneficiaries per year in LAC and in each context
Percentage of non-earmarked funds and comparison with previous periods
Annual budget disbursed on interventions tagged with gender marker 3 and 4 (IASC) or 2 (DG ECHO)
Net annual budget allocated for cash and voucher transfers
Percentage of the annual budget to directly or indirectly support local actors
Percentage of interventions in contexts with Humanitarian Response Plans
No. of advocacy actions to raise the profile of humanitarian situations, including forgotten crises
SECTORAL
DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE
Annual budget spent on disaster preparedness and response in LAC
Budget for emergency operations in which the Humanitarian Action Office responds directly or indirectly in LAC
PROTECTION
Percentage of funds that include relevant protection components
Number of specific protection projects in relation to gender-based violence, psychosocial care
Number of displaced persons receiving protection assistance (by gender/age)
HEALTH
Number of beneficiaries in the health sector
Percentage of interventions incorporating relevant components (at least one outcome) aimed at mitigating the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic
FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION
Number of people receiving food security and nutrition support

APPENDIX 1. LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN. HUMANITARIAN AND GENERAL INFORMATION.

	All of LAC	Colombia	Venezuela	Haiti	Northern Central America and Mexico	
Population (millions, 2020) World Bank	652.3	50.9	28.4	11.4	El Salvador	6.4
					Guatemala	16.8
					Honduras	9.9
					Mexico	128.9
Poverty incidence rate, based on \$1.90 per day (2011 purchasing power parity) (percentage of population). World Bank	3.7% (2019)	4.9% (2019)	6.7% (2006)	24.5% (+2012)	El Salvador	1.3% (2019)
					Guatemala	8.8% (2014)
					Honduras	14.8% (2019)
					Mexico	1.7% (2018)
Human Development Index (2019) UNDP* .	0.766	0.767	0.711	0.510	El Salvador	0.673
					Guatemala	0.663
					Honduras	0.634
					Mexico	0.779
Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (2020) UNDP	0.596	0.595	0.588	0.303	El Salvador	0.529
					Guatemala	0.481
					Honduras	0.472
					Mexico	0.613
Gender Inequality Index (2020) UNDP*	0.389	0.428	0.479	0.636	El Salvador	0.383
					Guatemala	0.479
					Honduras	0.423
					Mexico	0.322
Population in humanitarian need (millions of people). OCHA	26.4	7.7	7.0	4.9	El Salvador	1.7
					Guatemala	3.8
					Honduras	2.8
					Mexico	-
Newly displaced people due to natural disasters (thousands of people), 2019 GRID	500	35	320	1.2	El Salvador	1.9
					Guatemala	21
					Honduras	390
					Mexico	16
Number of undernourished people (millions of people, annual average 2018-2020) FAO	45.9	4.4	7.8	5.3	El Salvador	0.5
					Guatemala	2.9
					Honduras	1.3
					Mexico	9.2
No. of homicides per 100,000 inhabitants Insight Crime, 2020	18.4	24.3	45.6	13	El Salvador	19.7
					Guatemala	15.3
					Honduras	37.6
					Mexico	27
Refugees by country of origin (thousands, 2020) World Bank (UNHCR data)	538.9	189.9	171.1	25.7	El Salvador	45.6
					Guatemala	24.6
					Honduras	34.5
					Mexico	15.4
Internally Displaced by Conflict (thousands, 2019) GRID		5.576	n/a	2.1	El Salvador	
					Guatemala	242
					Honduras	247
					Mexico	345
Losses in million USD according to Germanwatch Global Climate Risk Index 2021 (CRI) (annual average 2000-2019)	n/a	37	97	41	El Salvador	57
					Guatemala	45
					Honduras	78
					Mexico	9
Percentage of population with full vaccination schedule against Covid-19. ECLAC	n/a	57.3 %	44.4%	n/a	El Salvador	63.9%
					Guatemala	27%
					Honduras	43.2%

					Mexico	55.9%
Full/part-time closure of the face-to-face education system (primary, secondary and higher education), Weeks from 16 February 2020 to 31 May 2021 ECLAC	28 and 17 (LAC average)	23 and 29	47 and 0	18 and 13	El Salvador	46 and 8
					Guatemala	33 and 21
					Honduras	46 and 9
					Mexico	53 and 0
Household expenditure on health as a percentage of total health expenditure (percentages). ECLAC		15%	38%	44%	El Salvador	29%
					Guatemala	58%
					Honduras	51%
					Mexico	42%

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