

# A Study of Municipal Best Practices in Four Peruvian Cities

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DISCUSSION  
PAPER N°  
IDB-DP-829

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October 2020



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# **A Study of Municipal Best Practices in Four Peruvian Cities**

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**October 2020**

**Abstract:**

Peru currently hosts the second largest Venezuelan community in Latin America, with over a million registered migrants and refugees as of August 2020. This report discusses the challenges local governments in Peru faced, when addressing the Venezuelan immigration and their integration in four Peruvian cities, Cusco, Lima, Trujillo and Tumbes, during the period from August 2019 until February 2020. These challenges can be summarized in four broad categories: a) access to information and understanding immigration; b) access to financial resources and weak government structures; c) dependency on international organizations; d) integration of migrants in the local community. The report also identifies best practices found at the municipal level. These best practices can be categorized as: a) awareness-rising activities, b) projects directly targeting the Venezuelan population, and c) projects oriented towards the entire local population, including the participation of the Venezuelan population.

# Introduction

Since 2015, Latin America has experienced an unprecedented migration flow of Venezuelans settling throughout the region. The collapse of the economy and health care system in Venezuela, together with an increase in violence forced millions of people to leave the country and seek better opportunities elsewhere. As of September 2020, over 5 million people have left Venezuela, with 80% of them remaining in the region.<sup>1</sup> Over time, political responses that were exceptionally welcoming in the beginning, shifted towards more restrictive immigration policies (Freier and Parent, 2019). Countries also differed in their response towards the facilitation of migrants' integration. In times prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, some countries were working hard to facilitate integration and offer Venezuelans access to public services, while others were making little efforts to pursue policies that allowed for a better inclusion of migrants in their communities (R4V, 2020).

Peru—a country traditionally characterized as a migrant-sending state—now hosts the second largest Venezuelan community in the region, with over a million migrants and refugees registered as of August 2020.<sup>2</sup> While the country initially welcomed Venezuelan migrants and maintained open access policies (from 2017 until mid-2018), it since gradually implemented stricter entry requirements for Venezuelan migrants (CIUP, 2019a). For instance, in 2019, the implementation of the humanitarian visa, which requires a passport and needs to be granted by a Peruvian consulate outside of Peru, made legal entry for Venezuelans, very difficult in practice (Amnistia, 2020). Despite efforts to slow down immigration, Venezuelans continued to arrive to Peru and the ones residing in the country had long term plans to stay—95% of the people surveyed in the 2018 ENPOVE revealed such intention.<sup>3</sup> Beyond the context of border closures due to the pandemic, experts expect Venezuelan emigration to further accelerate. The phenomenon thus poses an important challenge for the national and local governments in Peru, which need to facilitate the integration of migrants to the host communities.

Despite the concentration of the Venezuelan population in Lima—86.6% live in the capital city (INEI, 2019)— a fair number of migrants have settled in other locations across Peru's 25 provinces and 196 regions. Therefore, any response to the Venezuelan migration in Peru needs to be framed not only at the national level but also at the local level. This report identifies the challenges and best practices that local governments in Peru have faced and implemented in the context of the Venezuelan migration. Through a series of qualitative interviews conducted in four selected cities mostly during the second half of 2019, the research team identified that a) lack of information, b) structural and budget constraints at the local level, c) negative public perception, and d) dependency on international organization; were the biggest

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<sup>1</sup> Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V) (<https://r4v.info/en/situations/platform>).

<sup>2</sup> The source of this number is also the Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V). According to the definition, this figure represents the sum of Venezuelan migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers as reported by host governments. It does not necessarily imply individual identification, nor registration of each individual, and may include a degree of estimation, as per each government's statistical data processing methodology. As it is in the case of Peru, given that government sources do not account for Venezuelans without a regular status, the total number of Venezuelans is likely to be higher.

<sup>3</sup> INEI (2019).

challenges that local governments faced when trying to foster the integration of the Venezuelan population. At the same time, our study also sheds light on successfully implemented programs resulting from partnerships between international organizations and the local governments, which improved the integration of Venezuelans to local communities.

## Methodology

This study followed a qualitative research methodology and its findings are based on interviews conducted with actors from local government, civil society, international organizations, and the private sector. These interviews followed a semi-structured design to understand different aspects of integration such as: how participants perceive Venezuelan immigration in their region/municipality; whether participants feel they have enough information on migrants and the phenomenon of immigration in their region/municipality; the programs that have been implemented for the migrant population in the region/municipality, by whom and how; the public perception towards migrants in the region/municipality; whether there has been a coordinated response between the local entities and the international organizations; the major challenges the interviewees faced when planning the implementation of projects; and what should change in order to improve the response by local actors to Venezuelan immigration.

We conducted 29 interviews in 4 key cities: Cusco, Lima, Trujillo and Tumbes. The cities were selected due to their high concentration of migrants and because of the different contexts they present. Lima, the capital city, is home to one third of the local population, and the first choice for Venezuelan migrants when they arrive in Peru. The city offers economic opportunities and a large informal market. Tumbes is another important case study due to its geographic location at the border with Ecuador, which makes it the more prominent entry point of Venezuelan migrants. Trujillo, a coastal city, is situated on the route that connects Tumbes to Lima, and some migrants settle there due to the city's openness to migration. Cusco, on the contrary, is in the southern highland of Peru, and is characterized by strong cultural traditions, standing out as a city rejecting Venezuelan immigration. The contrast between Trujillo and Cusco allowed us to compare two cities that differ in their response to the Venezuelan immigration.

The interviews were not voice recorded to create an atmosphere of trust. We conducted semi-structured interviews with government officials (regional and local), the private sector and international organizations (such as UNHCR, IOM and Save the Children). In total, we conducted a total of 29 interviews in Cusco, Lima, Trujillo and Tumbes, between August 2019 and February 2020.

Interviews	Cusco	Lima	Trujillo	Tumbes
Government Officials	3 interviews	5 interviews	5 interviews	4 interviews
Private Sector	1 interview		1 interview	
International Organizations	3 interviews	2 interviews	3 interviews	2 interviews

The list of interviews conducted is as follows:

a) Government Officials

Region	Number	Government Officials
Cusco	1	Women's Emergency Center ( <i>Centro de Emergencia Mujer , CEM</i> )
	1	Municipality of San Sebastian ( <i>Municipalidad de San Sebastián</i> )
	1	Ministry of Foreign Affairs ( <i>Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores</i> )
Lima	1	Municipality of La Victoria ( <i>Municipalidad de La Victoria</i> )
	1	Municipality of Lima ( <i>Municipalidad de Lima</i> )
	1	Ministry of Vulnerable Populations and Women ( <i>Ministerio de la Mujer y de Poblaciones Vulnerables</i> )
	1	Integration Team of the Migration Department ( <i>Equipo de Integración de la Superintendencia Nacional de Migraciones</i> )
	1	Ministry of Education ( <i>Ministerio de Educación – Lima Aprende</i> )
Trujillo	1	Municipality of Trujillo ( <i>Municipalidad de Trujillo - Dependencia de Desarrollo Económico</i> )
	1	Regional Government of Trujillo ( <i>Gobierno Regional de Trujillo - Defensa Civil</i> )
	1	Ministry of Health ( <i>Ministerio de Salud</i> )
	1	Regional Government of Trujillo ( <i>Gobierno Regional de Trujillo - Dependencia de Desarrollo Social</i> )
	1	Local Educational Management Unit ( <i>Unidad de Gestión Educativa Local</i> )
Tumbes	1	Regional Government of Tumbes ( <i>Gobierno Regional de Tumbes</i> )
	1	Women's Emergency Center ( <i>Centro de Emergencia Mujer , CEM</i> )
	1	Ministry of Health ( <i>Ministerio de Salud</i> )

		Meantal Health Community Center Centro Comunitario de Salud Mental
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b) International Organizations/NGO's

Region	Number	International Organizations / NGO's
Cusco	1	United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) - Cusco
	1	Plan International
	1	Caritas
Lima	1	International Organization for Migration (IOM)
	1	United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
Trujillo	1	Save the Children
	1	CARE
	1	Civil Society - Corazones Unidos
Tumbes	1	United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) - Tumbes
	1	International Organization for Migration (IOM) - Tumbes

c) Private Sector

Region	Number	Private Sector
Cusco	1	Rotary International - Cusco
Trujillo	1	Chamber of Commerce of Trujillo

Furthermore, we conducted one focus group with official actors in Cusco. This focus group helped us understand the characteristics, needs and multi-dimensional vulnerability of Venezuelan migrants, and multi-sector experiences.



## Context

According to the information reported by the Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants of Venezuela (R4V), as of August 2020, over a million Venezuelan registered migrants and refugees reside in Peru. This population is mainly concentrated in the departments of Lima, La Libertad and Arequipa (GTRM, 2020). The profile of the Venezuelan migrants arriving in Peru has changed over the years. Initially, mostly single, male adults came to Peru to work and send money back home to their families. Since 2018, more women and children looking to reunite with their families started arriving. At the same time, socio-economic levels decreased and levels of multi-dimensional vulnerability of Venezuelan migrants increased (CIUP, 2019b). We know that, once in Peru, the main challenge migrants faced in their local communities included regularization, i.e. receiving residence permits or refugee status, access to public services like healthcare and education services, as well as access to the formal labor market (Blouin & Freier 2019).

As we mentioned earlier, initially, the Peruvian Government welcomed Venezuelan migrants and made efforts in favor of their integration, for example by creating the *Permiso Temporal de Permanencia* (PTP for its Spanish acronym) in January 2017. This permit allowed Venezuelan immigrants (including those previously not registered) to stay legally in Peru for one year. After one year with the PTP, the Venezuelan population can access a Special Resident immigration status that grants an identification card (*carnet de extranjería*), needed to access many private and public services. Although the period for applying to the PTP was extended several times, this regularization program ended in October 2018.<sup>4</sup> Based on information from the *Superintendencia Nacional de Migraciones* (SNM for its Spanish acronym) in Peru, about 45% of the Venezuelan migrants with a registered entry have an approved PTP.<sup>5</sup> Besides the PTP, Venezuelan immigrants can also apply for asylum and in fact, by June 2020 there were close to 500,000 pending asylum claims by Venezuelan nationals.<sup>6</sup>

This situation combined with the high level of informality in the Peruvian economy, led Venezuelan migrants to predominantly take informal jobs, mostly in the commerce, services and customer service sectors performing tasks below their skill-level (Morales and Pierola, 2020), many times in precarious conditions, thus placing refugees and migrants at risk of exploitation and abuse (Blouin & Freier 2019). Furthermore, migrants have limited access to public services, as they are required to have an identification card (*carnet de extranjería*), or

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<sup>4</sup> In a favorable development for immigrants, the Peruvian Government—through Decree N° 010-2020-IN issued on October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020— just recently authorized the regularization of immigrants with an irregular migratory status—those whose permits had expired or those who entered the country through unregistered crossing points. This measure is intended to establish fundamental rights and obligations for immigrants, such as their ability to work legally, and to allow authorities to improve their registry of immigrants living in Peru, securing a safe and orderly migratory process. Its impact should be rigorously evaluated in the near future, but the expectation is that it should facilitate migrants' socioeconomic integration in Peru.

<sup>5</sup> This figure is based on information from February 2017 to December 2019. Superintendencia Nacional de Migraciones (2020). Características sociodemográficas de la migración venezolana en el Perú. Feb 2017 – Julio 2020. En: <https://www.migraciones.gob.pe/comunicaciones/publicaciones/Caracteristicas-sociodemograficas-de-ciudadanos-venezolanos-julio2020.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V) (<https://r4v.info/en/situations/platform>).

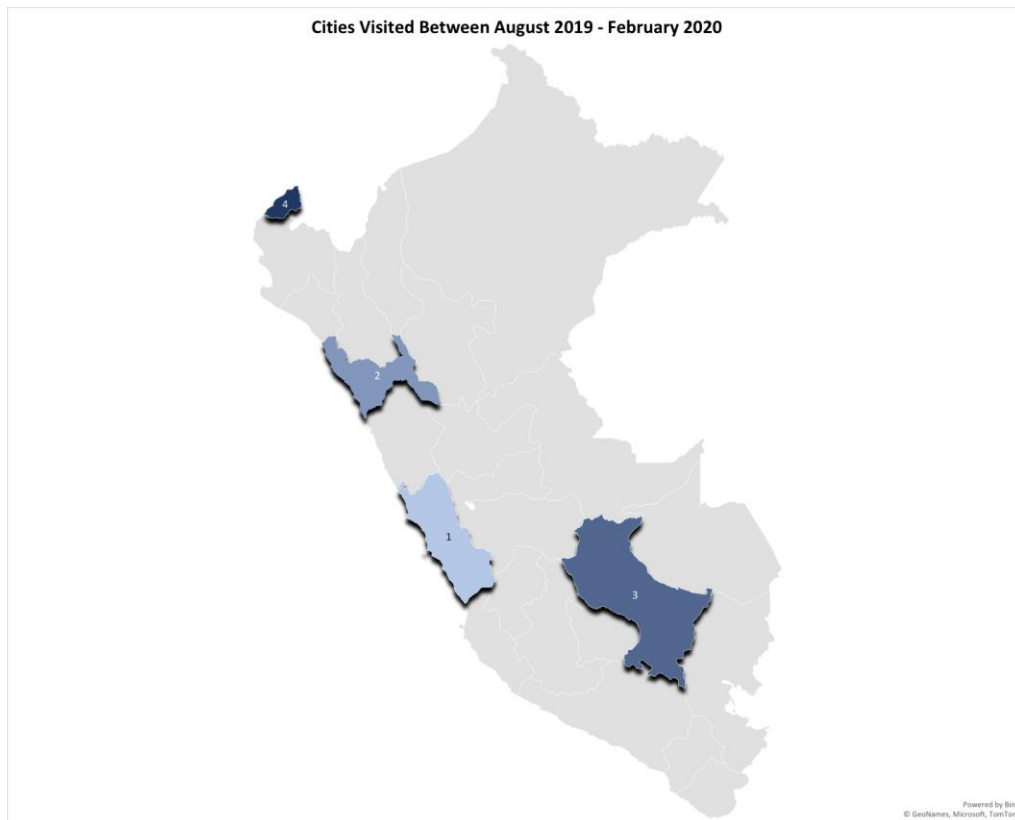
be in a special vulnerability category provided by migration authorities, in order to benefit from these services (World Bank, 2019; CIUP 2020). When it comes to access to public health, for those that do not hold an identification card, it is not possible to access the national public health system (SIS), with the exception of pregnant women, and children under the age of five (World Bank, 2019). Access to education is also limited. According to the 2018 ENPOVE, 60% of the surveyed population, between 12 and 16 years, did not attend school (INEI, 2019). Lack of civil documentation, limited school quotas, lack of means to pay for books and other school supplies are some of the main reasons behind of the high percentages of school absence among the migrant population.

As research shows, immigration can boost local economic activity by improving occupational mobility (Foged and Peri, 2016), filling labor shortages which may rise productivity (Clemens, 2013), increasing tax revenue and social security contributions (Liebig and Mo 2013; OECD/ILO 2018), increasing entrepreneurship (Andersson and Wadensjö, 2004; Schuetze and Antecol, 2006), etc. However, whether these potential benefits occur in practice depends in part on whether migrants are properly integrated economically and socially into their local host communities.

The high concentration of migrants in Lima means that existing integration programs by international organizations and local NGOs focus their response on the population residing in the capital. As cities across Peru were confronted with the phenomenon of Venezuelan immigration, some attempted to develop policies facilitating integration, while others were simply overwhelmed by the sudden nature and scale of the influx, given their lack of any former experience with immigration. One important step taken by the Government towards the coordination of local actors in different cities was the creation of decentralized inter-sectorial working groups *Mesas de Trabajo para la Gestión Intersectorial de Migrantes (MTGIM)* convened by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were nine working groups operating in different regions of Peru. This model of inter-institutional coordination on migration allowed local governments to meet with international organizations and discuss pressing needs and issues that related to migration in the region.

Migration is a multi-level process that may involve local, regional and central governments. Indeed, local governments play a key role in the integration of migrants in host communities. According to the United Nations Development Programs (UNDP), cities should be at the forefront of integration measures (UNDP, 2017). In Peru, however, national migration policy is mostly unknown at the local level and, thus, implementation gaps tend to be wide. At the local level, the response to Venezuelan immigration should be one of socio-economic integration. This is aligned with the needs identified by international organizations and the Response 4 Venezuela platform (R4V), and Peru's National Migration Policy 2017-2025 (DECRETO SUPREMO N° 015-2017-RE). Social cohesion and livelihood opportunities for refugees and migrants are needed to ensure the socio-economic integration of Venezuelans and to countervail rising xenophobia.

# Local Context



1 - Lima; 2 - Trujillo; 3 - Cusco; 4 - Tumbes

This section explores the local context of each city studied, based on both general information and our research.

## Tumbes

Tumbes lies on the northern border of Peru with Ecuador and is the main entry point of Venezuelans into the country. According to the 2018 ENPOVE, 90% of Venezuelan migrants cross into Peru through Tumbes (INEI, 2019). Before the closing of national borders due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Tumbes was a temporary destination for many migrants that arrived in increasingly vulnerable conditions with scarce economic resources. This context called for a humanitarian response at the border and for integration efforts in adjacent cities, such as Tumbes and Zarumilla.

Being a border city, Tumbes has more experience with immigration flows, which is not the case in other cities in the country. However, the scale and steep increase of Venezuelan immigration was a new experience. Between January and September 2017, over 77,000 Venezuelan migrants passed through Tumbes (IOM, 2017). By the end of 2018, the number of migrants arriving in the city had increased significantly, reaching over 5,000 a day during certain periods. International organizations started to play an important role in the humanitarian response to Venezuelan immigration. The close contact with the international organizations since the beginning of the influx gave the actors in the region a better understanding of Venezuelan immigration and allowed them to see migration as an

opportunity. Additionally, the humanitarian crisis at the border forced many state and non-state actors to have a presence at the *Centro Binacional de Atención en Frontera* (CEBAF). Overall, in Tumbes the response to Venezuelan immigration was more immediate than in other regions studied. However, the local efforts conducted by authorities and NGO's at the border region were mainly directed towards humanitarian assistance, rather than activities that focused on long-term integration in the local community.

Before the current pandemic, Tumbes used to host a regional inter-sectorial working group (MTGIM), conformed by actors representing government, international organizations and civil society that usually met monthly or bimonthly and was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There was a high adherence to the MTGIM, with the participation of the regional government, different sectorial actors, and international organizations.

## Cusco

Cusco is located in Peru's southern Andes and despite the small number of migrants residing in the city (approx. 10,000), the political stance adopted by the regional government towards Venezuelan immigration was not welcoming and in partly exclusionary. For instance, in July 2019, the Regional Government of Cusco passed a decree stipulating that it was illegal to sign a Peruvian worker off, to hire a foreign one.<sup>7</sup> The decree specifically mentioned the PTP, the document given solely to Venezuelan nationals.

This exclusionary approach was a significant challenge to international organizations that worked with Venezuelan migrants in the Cusco region before the COVID-19 pandemic. The UNHCR opened an office in Cusco at the beginning of 2019, but it faced difficulties coordinating activities with the local authorities that mostly mirrored the regional government's approach to Venezuelan immigration. According to the head of the UNHCR Office in Cusco, most local mayors were not able to meet the UNHCR's representative. Some interviewees felt that the response from state authorities to Venezuelan immigration legitimized the increase in negative perceptions about immigrants throughout the city. A study conducted by UNHCR in July 2019 found that 62% of the population surveyed had felt discriminated against in Cusco, levels that were high in comparison to other regions (UNHCR, 2019).

Cusco also had an inter-sectorial working group (MTGIM), with actors from the local government, international organizations, and civil society. However, the round table did not meet as frequently as in Tumbes, and the public sector agencies tended not to be present at these meetings. Additionally, there were few international organizations present in Cusco. At the time of the study we identified three organizations working in the city: UNHCR, PLAN International and Caritas. Their response in Cusco was mainly directed towards socio-economic integration and protection mechanisms. After being in hiatus due to the pandemic, the working group recently resumed activities.

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<sup>7</sup> According to this Decree, a "foreigner" was specifically identified as a Venezuelan citizen--Regional Ordinance N° 163-2019.

## Trujillo

Trujillo—capital of La Libertad region—is the third most populated city in the country, with nearly 1 million residents, and the second biggest destination for Venezuelan immigrants after Lima. It is estimated that the region of La Libertad together with Piura hold around 10% of the Venezuelan migrant population in Peru (GTRM, 2020). The city represents an interesting case study for this project since it lies on route from Tumbes to Lima, making it not only a settlement but also a of transit city. Trujillo is appealing to migrants as it offers them work opportunities in different industries. Additionally, we found that, what was perceived as the generally more open culture of Trujillo was one of the reasons mentioned for why migrants decided to stay in the city.

In our interviews with local government actors, the willingness and openness to talk about the subject of migration was consistent at all levels. The overall openness to migration expressed by the local government reflected a positive perception of migrants at the local level. “There is a general openness at a state level towards talking and joining efforts towards a better response to migration”, mentioned a coordinator at one of the NGO’s interviewed.

As Tumbes and Cusco, Trujillo also had an inter-sectorial working groups (MTGIM), conformed by actors of the government, international organizations and civil society who usually met monthly or bimonthly, organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. What stood out in the Trujillo inter-sectorial working groups was the participation of Venezuelan migrants at these meetings. There was a strong organization of the Venezuelan community in Trujillo that led to the creation of a couple of civil organizations focused on the integration of the Venezuelan population in the city. The representation of migrants’ organizations led to a close relationship between these collectives and different instances of local and regional government. This granted migrants a platform to express their concerns and needs, and to ask for help or collaboration for activities when needed.

There were not a lot of international organizations and local NGOs working in Trujillo (we identified Save the Children, CARE, World Vision, *Defensoría del Pueblo*, and various religious organizations). Projects that focused on migration and that were operated by the international organizations started to operate during the second half of 2019 (Save the Children started operating in Trujillo in July 2019 and CARE in December 2019) and were focused on protection efforts—mainly financial assistance, food and shelter—in coordination with local government instances or actors.

## Lima

Lima is the center of Venezuelan immigration in Peru, hosting about 86.6% of this population (INEI, 2019). In the past years, many local NGOs and international organizations have started to support Venezuelan immigrants in Lima. In 2019, the capital hosted more than 30 organizations with programs directed at Venezuelan population (including humanitarian assistance, protection, integration and strengthening government capacity). With most migrants settling in the city’s peripheral districts, local governments have played a crucial role in the reception and integration of Venezuelans before the pandemic. International organizations also partnered with local governments to conduct programs and local fairs at

their headquarters, and this collaboration led to interesting good practices in several districts in Lima.

As with other cities, Lima had a regional MTGIM that brought together government actors, international organizations and civil society. These meetings happened monthly or bimonthly and were organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The interdisciplinary roundtable in Lima gathered more actors than in other cities and at the time of this study, played a key role in determining national public policy.

## Challenges

All the cities studied faced similar challenges when it came to Venezuelan immigration. These can be summarized into four categories: a) access to information and understanding immigration; b) access to financial resources and poor government structure; c) dependency on international organizations; d) integration of migrants in the local community.

### Access to information and understanding immigration

One of the most important challenges faced by most actors in this study was the lack of information about the migrant community in their cities. Most local officials did not have information about the number of immigrants living in their region or district, nor their characteristics and needs. This posed challenges for planning and developing budget strategies, especially in the health and education sector. Without information on how many migrants reside in each locality, it is difficult to predict the demand for public services. The lack of data at a regional and local level, and the increase in irregular migration, poses one of the greatest challenges for local authorities in different regions of Peru.

The interviews carried out with local officials and international organizations showed that this problem existed across the four cities studied. The available information on Venezuelan immigrants focuses on Lima and has been produced by organizations or centers in the capital. However, more often than not, these studies exclude information at the local level, and existing information was not always accessible (or known) to local authorities. In one district in Lima, the officials expressed the lack of information about the Venezuelan population residing and working in their district as follows: “The lack of information does not let us plan what social services they [the immigrants] will need” (January 2020).

In addition to the demographic information, officials also mentioned their lack of knowledge about legal documents needed to access services, or migrant’s specific needs in terms of health and education. “We do not know their needs. There is a lot of false information”, mentioned an officer at a Lima Municipality (January 2020). The lack of information, misinformation and prevalent negative perceptions towards migrants amongst many officials, highlighted the need for training and awareness campaigns for local actors. According to the same officer “(...) it would be very important to conduct awareness campaigns with local actors such as the police forces. We know other districts have had these (trainings), but we need them here”.

In Trujillo, neither the international organizations nor the public officials interviewed had data on how many people lived in the region of La Libertad or Trujillo. According to the local actors,

there were attempts by some municipalities to conduct a census—one of them financed by World Vision, which identified 8,000 Venezuelan migrants in one district. However, there was no accurate count on the number of total migrants that lived in the different districts, their characteristics and where exactly they were located.

This is especially important in Trujillo due to its geographical situation, considered to be a “high risk” region for natural disasters purposes (landslides and floods). Due to the vulnerability of the migrant population, and the places they had settled in the city, migrants were amongst the population most at risk in the event a natural disaster. This was a concern expressed frequently by the Civil Defense actors and other local authorities as it increased the difficulty of protecting the population should this type of disaster strike. Officials expressed the need to gather data and understand where vulnerable migrants lived to mitigate risks.

In Cusco, local officials shared the same concern. “We do not know how many Venezuelan women we have in Cusco, it is very hard to plan ahead in terms of neonatal infrastructure at the hospital”, mentioned the Director of a public hospital in Cusco (October, 2019). The international organizations working in the city had data on how many regular migrants lived in Cusco, data shared by the SNM, but did not know what the rate of arrival and departure of these migrants (migratory movement) was, or where they were located. Nor did they have any information on irregular migration.

The presence of international organizations in Tumbes and the humanitarian activities they conducted at the border generated various types of information about Venezuelan immigration in Tumbes. However, amongst some government officials there was little knowledge about how migration policies had evolved in Peru. For example, at the local Ministry of Health dependency, actors interviewed had little knowledge about the legal requirements asked of Venezuelan migrants to enter Peru. “Any migration related issue concerns only to the migration entities” (local actor from MINSA, August 2019)

The MTGIMs, in which public officials and other local actors participated regularly, offered a space to discuss challenges and best practices in response to Venezuelan immigration. In Tumbes, this group was an important source of information for all participants involved. However, in other cities, especially in Cusco and Trujillo, these spaces were not as important as in Lima or Tumbes, mainly because of their limited capacity to congregate all relevant actors.

## Access to financial resources and weak government structure

Another transversal theme in the interviews conducted was the lack of financial resources to attend to Venezuelan immigration at the local level. Due to the dependence of local governments on the central government for their budgetary needs, and the time gap between asking for funds and being able to spend them<sup>8</sup>, at the time of the interviews, the local governments had not receive special funds to attend to the migrant population in their regions.

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<sup>8</sup> In Peru, local governments must report their financial needs to the central government one year before the money is received and spent.

This was a problem for municipalities and especially for the education and health sectors, as the demand for services had increased, but the allocated budget had stayed the same.

In Tumbes, government officials stressed the lack of financial support from the central government. Insufficient financial resources to support Venezuelan immigration had created strains on the local capacity of hospitals and social programs and had not allowed the implementation of special assistance programs by local governments. In the health sector, there were not enough doctors and nurses to assist the increase in patients at the border and hospitals. “If it weren’t for the international organizations present in Tumbes, we would not have the resources to face this immigration” (local actor from MINSA, August 2019)

This perception was shared by most of the local actors we talked to. The Mental Health Community Centre in Tumbes also stressed the lack of human resources to meet the demand at the center. “We should be 22 employees working here to meet the workload, but we are currently only 14. We have asked the regional government for more people, but they do not have the funds”, said the center’s coordinator (August 2019). At the vice governor’s office in Tumbes, we were told that: “There is a huge deficiency in personnel. There are not enough people working at hospitals to care for the increase in patients due to Venezuelan immigration”. Prior to the migration, there already was a gap of 500 health professionals in the region of Tumbes, in addition to degraded equipment and infrastructure” said the vice governor (August 2019).

Shortcomings in the public health system, and more generally, the state structure, made the local response to Venezuelan immigration very difficult and insufficient. At the same time, we identified a strong dependence on international organizations, to solve day-to-day challenges, and to help cover the additional costs created by immigration. In Trujillo, the local Civil Defense office and the local government were expecting external funds from the European Union to finance programs with a special focus on the vulnerable migrant population. In Cusco, local governments had no assigned any budget to support the Venezuelan population, and despite the existence of some activities in one of the local municipalities we studied, these were fully financed by international organizations.

In addition, the frequent change of central and local government authorities imposed further challenges. At the time of writing, a couple of months after we conducted interviews in Cusco, about half the local mayors had left their positions. The unstable nature of authorities in office makes it hard for good practices to persist over time, as projects or policies that were considered good practice for one administration, are at risk of not being continued under the next. As one official from the Ministry of Women interviewed in Lima in February 2020 explained: “There is a loss of good practices with every change in government. The new local government never wants to do the same as the previous government did. This is where you lose good projects”.

## Dependency on international organizations

As mentioned earlier, Peru has traditionally been a migrant sending state, without recent experience on how to deal with the challenges imposed by mass immigration, and without experience on how to develop integration programs, or strengthen institutions to attend to the



new foreign population at the local government level. Before the COVID-19 crisis, the presence of international organizations in the country such as UNHCR and IOM, allowed central and local government actors to rely on the experience of these organizations. This dependency was not only financial, but also technical, especially regarding integration and humanitarian assistance. In some instances, this led to dependence and over-reliance on international organizations for financial or technical assistance.

For instance, in Tumbes, interviewees expressed that there was significant dependence on the work and funding of international organizations in sectors such as health, education and humanitarian assistance at the border.

In Cusco, the UNHCR had become the most important actor in the local context. Financially and structurally, UNHCR supported other organizations traditionally present in the region, but which had not worked with migrant populations before. The UNHCR had also been on the forefront of trying to establish contact with the local and regional government in Cusco. However, Cusco was a special case study, where international organizations tried to implement integration and humanitarian activities with no response or participation from the local authorities.

In Trujillo, we did not find significant dependence on international organizations, mainly because there were not many present. There was, however, a strong coordination with the civil society organizations of Venezuelan migrants living in Trujillo. This had allowed immigrants to have a voice at the inter-sectorial working group, and had allowed planning and integration activities to occur in different municipalities.

In Lima, international organizations working with the migrant population had a strong presence at all government levels and participated actively at the inter-sectorial working group (MTIGM). At the local level, organizations often set up offices in the municipalities to support the local government in the efforts to integrate the migrant population.

The presence of international organizations at the local level allowed municipalities to rely on their technical and financial support. At one of the municipalities interviewed, local actors shared that all the projects that they had implemented depended on IOM. The know-how of the organization allowed the municipality to conduct training sessions and awareness campaigns with business owners, while also covering the implementation costs.

## Integration of migrants in the local community

The implementation of programs that focused on the integration of migrants in their communities was a particularly challenging endeavor for local governments, as the local population was often not keen on receiving immigrants. Perceptions about the Venezuelan population have been deteriorating in Peru since 2018, and they were especially negative in provinces outside Lima. From 2018 to 2019, Peruvians' perceptions of the Venezuelan population and migration worsened considerably, and these perceptions were especially negative in the interior of the country (IOP, 2020; IOP, 2019).

Our interviews conducted in Cusco showed how cultural shocks and negative attitudes towards migrants affected the local response. In most interviews, both with NGO's and with public officials, one thing that stood out was the mention of the cultural differences between

Cusco natives and Venezuelans. “*Cusqueñian* identity is very strong and there is not a willingness of the Venezuelan population to understand and adjust to it. (..) It’s a stronger cultural shock than other regions in Peru”, as one employee of Caritas explained (October 2019).

Actors perceived a clear connection between public opinion in Cusco and the negative attitudes of the regional government towards the Venezuelan population. This came out frequently in the interviews conducted. “It’s not a popular measure to defend Venezuelans”, explained a local mayor of one of the districts with the highest number of Venezuelans in Cusco. According to our interviews, this “unpopularity” led other districts in Cusco to ignore the subject altogether. At UNHCR we were told that neither the regional government, nor municipal mayors, agreed to be present at the opening ceremony of the local office in Cusco.

In Trujillo, integration seemed smoother. During the interviews, local actors were eager to show their openness and support for the integration of Venezuelan migrants. International organizations in the region expressed that the local government had been very open and receptive to the prospect of training officials in different areas related to migration. However, despite the official welcoming stance of the municipality, prejudiced comments about the Venezuelan population were shared casually.

Importantly, most interviewees agreed that xenophobia against Venezuelans had increased due to the portrayal of the Venezuelan population in the media. According to our interviewees, both local and national media had influenced perceptions on migrants’ in a negative manner and spread misperceptions, such as linking immigration to crime and violence. This context made it more difficult for international organizations to conduct projects directed at the migrant population. In all four cities, international organizations expressed they were very careful when they advertised activities or interventions targeting migrants, reframing project titles and not including the word “migrant”. This led to the problem that immigrants often did not know they were eligible for such programs.

## Best practices at the local level

Despite the challenges discussed previously, at the time of our study and prior to the current crisis due to the pandemic, we also identified best practices at the local level in all four cities. Best practices can be split into three categories: a) awareness activities, b) projects that directly targeted the Venezuelan population, and c) projects that were oriented towards the entire local population, including the participation of the Venezuelan population.

### Cusco

In Cusco, at the time of our interviews, there were no public entities supporting or engaging with Venezuelan immigration. The existing local interventions were conducted and financed by the international organizations.

#### Local Government

- **Awareness Activities:** The local mayor interviewed shared that his district was collaborating with international organizations to conduct anti-xenophobia awareness activities. Examples were the screening of movies, theater plays about migration, and talks about the subject.

#### International Organizations and Civil Society

- **Awareness Campaigns:** International organizations conducted awareness campaigns in schools, calling attention to the situations that migrants experience. Often, (teenage) migrants conducted these talks themselves.
- **Cash Assistance Programs:** Caritas Peru was coordinating a cash assistance program in Cusco at the moment we interviewed them. The same program offered training courses on labor integration in the tourism industry.
- **Integration Activities:** At the time of the interview, UNHCR was conducting activities that promoted integration between the local and the migrant population. These were mainly volunteer activities such as the distribution of clothes to both Peruvians and Venezuelans during the colder months.

## Trujillo

At the time of the interviews, different organizations in Trujillo were conducting projects targeting Venezuelan immigrants, or to which the Venezuelan migrants had access:

#### Local Government

- **Campaigns Against Trafficking:** The Regional Agency for Development and Social Inclusion, part of the regional government of Trujillo, had conducted campaigns against trafficking in persons, with a special focus on migrants. These campaigns were conducted in collaboration with local authorities, in the context of a bigger awareness campaign about trafficking in persons in the region and aimed to raise awareness about the specific vulnerability of the Venezuelan population.
- **Solidarity Fairs:** The local government participated in solidarity fairs organized by migrants in different districts, in which migrants themselves provided health services to the population.
- **Disaster Preparedness Program (DIPECHO):** Some local government agencies in Trujillo and Peru's Civil Defense participated in a program conducted by the European Union and UN agencies, in northern regions of Peru that are more often affected by natural disasters due to their geographic location. The program, DIPECHO, had a special focus on migrants and vulnerable populations living in areas of risk, and aimed to improve government efforts regarding prevention, protection and integration.

#### International Organizations and Civil Society

- **Cash Assistance Programs:** Save the Children carried out a cash transfer program to Venezuelan families and, at the moment of the interview, covered 2,000 beneficiaries.
- **Food Shelters:** Some organizations in Trujillo organized food shelters that distributed meals to vulnerable population in the city, including migrants.
- **Integration Activities:** Civil society and international organizations co-organized volunteering activities, in which Venezuelan migrants participated, with the aim of strengthening integration. Examples were the distribution of presents to Peruvian children before Christmas; health fairs in which Venezuelan professionals offered their services to Peruvians; activities in Peruvian schools. These activities tended to be organized in partnerships with local governments or local organizations.
- **Protection Programs:** Alma Llanera was a program coordinated by CARE, focused on protection. The project had 3 different axes: protection, mental health and support of livelihoods. The program coordinated with the regional government and the Emergency Center for Women to hold training sessions that raised awareness on the subject of migration and integration. Additionally, the program intended to identify 100 Venezuelan beneficiaries that would receive training sessions in employability skills and entrepreneurship.
- **Migrant Population Census:** International organizations in Trujillo had conducted a migrant population census in one of the city's districts. This allowed the municipality to know how many people resided in their community, and to understand its population's needs and characteristics, in order to better adjust their policy response.

## Tumbes

In Tumbes, several interventions and programs were carried out at the time of the interview. This support can be split into two categories: a) humanitarian support at the border and b) integration programs or immediate support to needs in the city of Tumbes.

### Local Government

- **Health Support at the Border:** One of the areas where the regional government was most active was health. From the Ministry of Health, there was significant commitment towards obligatory immunization for all migrants. For instance, at the time of conducting interviews, the Ministry of Health was present at the border, collaborating with international organizations to vaccinate migrants, to hand out IHV testing kits, contraceptive methods and to give attention to pregnant women. Additionally, the ministry had set up a vaccination tent at Águas Verdes, one of the most common irregular border crossings. This facilitated vaccination of groups of migrants who cross irregularly. In Tumbes, the Ministry of Health also provided support to migrants at hospitals or organized home visits when needed, in coordination with international organizations.

- **Mental Health Support:** The Ministry of Health (MINSA) ran a mental health community center that supported Venezuelan migrants and families. At the time of our interview, in August 2019, the center received approximately 30 patients a day, about three of which were Venezuelans. The center mainly provided support to women and children suffering from mental health problems. It also offered assistance in cases of domestic violence. The center was also active at the border, with a tent that provided mental health support to migrants crossing the border.
- **Support for Unaccompanied Minors:** In the cities of Tumbes and Zarumilla, the government established children's homes that accepted and cared for unaccompanied Venezuelan children. At the time of the interview, some of these children's homes were exclusively hosting migrant youths.
- **Intimate Partner Violence Prevention:** The Ministry of Women (MIMP), together with other international organizations, were present at the border handing emergency sexual attention toolkits to women in need.

## Lima

As discussed, Lima has the strongest presence of international organizations in the country. This has contributed to a lot of synergies between the local government and international organizations, resulting in different interventions and good practices.

### Local Government

- **Presence of International Organizations at the Local Government:** Interviews conducted in Lima found that different international organizations had set up small offices or desks at some municipalities to improve the local response to Venezuelan immigration. These organizations conducted meetings with the different areas of the municipalities, mainly the Social Development Areas, and tried to raise awareness about immigration and migrants' needs and organized integration activities and events.
- **Awareness Campaigns at Public Hospitals:** The integration team at the SNM conducted awareness campaigns at 15 local public hospitals. These interventions aimed at offering information about access to healthcare for migrants, such as access to public health insurance. During the interviews, public actors in Lima expressed that these campaigns had been very effective in improving perceptions about migrants and increasing knowledge on processes and documentation needed to ensure their access to health services. Actors expressed that such activities should be expanded to more hospitals in Lima.
- **Awareness Campaigns with the Private Sector:** In one of the municipalities studied, actors shared that together with international organizations, the municipality had organized a Business Breakfast, in which agents from the municipality and business owners came together to brainstorm on how to best incorporate vulnerable populations

(including migrants) in the formal sector. After this meeting, participants signed a formal agreement to conduct trainings and activities with vulnerable populations. This intervention showed the importance of including the private sector in initiatives to promote labor integration of the migrant population.

- **Service Fairs:** Some local governments had resorted to conduct service fairs in the municipality to bring together migrants and local population. In most cases Venezuelan professionals offered their services to the local population (for example: health fairs in which Venezuelan doctors offered free consultations). Some areas of the ministries also participated in these fairs with thematic stalls (an example of this is the participation of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations).
- **Volunteering Activities:** In different municipalities in Lima, local actors and local community included Venezuelan migrants in volunteering activities. One example was a local group called “Brigade Against Violence”, a group of local women that organized door-to-door campaigns against gender violence. In one of the municipalities, the migrant population was invited to participate, as a way of creating spaces in which migrants interacted with the local population on subjects that mattered to both. In this specific initiative, 60 Venezuelan women participated alongside 500 Peruvian women.
- **Public Service Mapping:** One municipality in Lima shared that they had conducted a service mapping to understand the participation and demand of the Venezuelan population regarding local services by including “nationality” as required information to access all municipal services. This was a first step to start generating information on the migrant population living in the district and understanding the impact of immigration on the increased demand of local services.

## Conclusions/Recommendations

This report discusses the challenges local governments in Peru faced when addressing Venezuelan immigration and their integration before the current crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It also identifies the best practices found at the municipal level. The need for integration measures to be adopted at the local level has proven to be extremely significant given the under-development, lack of decentralization and lack of implementation of national integration policies. Migrants share their daily lives with the Peruvian population in cities, they visit local services whenever they need help, and they are a part of communities at schools, at work, and in times of need. The importance of the local government level has become especially evident during the COVID-19 context. There is an immediate need to adopt measures at the local level, and some of the best practices identified in this report could be extremely useful for other cities and regions in Peru and across neighboring countries.

One of the biggest challenges identified in this report is the lack of information available to local governments on the migrant population residing in each city. This is especially challenging when local governments need to plan the demand for public services such as education and healthcare. In addition, more information on the migrant population could help local governments apply more successfully for funding, whether from domestic or international

sources. In some municipalities in Lima and Trujillo, we identified some best practices to improve data collection on the migrant population, such as implementing measures to register the nationality of people accessing services at the local level, or conducting proactive data collection on the migrant population residing in the local community. These best practices should be adopted more widely across local governments in the country.

There is a need to strengthen the coordination within and across municipalities working with vulnerable population, including the migrant population. Our findings highlight the need to generate more institutional spaces to discuss challenges and best practices linked to immigration. Even though, the existent MTIGM regional meetings are a step in the right direction, new ways that commit more public local actors are needed. It would also be beneficial if these spaces could be created at the municipal level.

A final aspect that needs to be considered when thinking about the best way to create pathways for integration, is how to frame migrants' participation and where to position such initiatives. The public perceptions of immigrants, usually not positive, and the refusal of some local authorities to address the issue of immigrant integration, bring attention to the importance of working on the framing of these activities. The good practice adopted by some municipalities presented in this study has been to include the migrant population in pre-existing initiatives that focus on vulnerable populations. Such a strategy not only avoids generating parallel processes inside municipalities, but, more importantly, such programs do not propel xenophobic sentiment. Actors must be careful about how to frame initiatives to avoid public rebuff by the local population, while still ensuring that the Venezuelan population know about these programs. At the same time, there is need for municipalities to conduct campaigns against discrimination and in favor of social inclusion.

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