

## NRC's operations in **Venezuela**

### Humanitarian overview

Venezuela is experiencing a progressively worsening humanitarian crisis, with the collapse of basic services. The deteriorating situation has led to a displacement crisis second only to Syria in quantitative terms, with internal displacement, pendular migration, the outflow of almost five million Venezuelans into neighbouring countries and - since the outbreak of Covid-19 - increasing numbers of returnees from neighbouring states. The use of illegal and often dangerous border crossings is commonplace.

Negative coping mechanisms are widespread and rising, with reliance on exploitative informal employment including smuggling, recruitment to armed groups, illegal mining, and transactional sex work. Children frequently drop out of school to work in or outside the home, and a large proportion of households go without basic goods. The outbreak of Covid-19 has dramatically exacerbated the pre-existing humanitarian crisis in Venezuela.

The scale of the current response is not sufficient to respond to critical needs across the country. Seven million people - more than 25 per cent of the population - require humanitarian assistance in Venezuela. However, it is likely that this figure is a drastic underestimate.

### NRC's operation

NRC has been active in Venezuela since 2005 and in 2019 became an independent country office in light of the deteriorating humanitarian crisis. NRC is the largest NGO in Venezuela with an annual budget of 8 million USD spanning four programme streams – WASH, Education, LFS and ICLA – and extensive MPCA activities. The country office is located in Caracas with two area offices and two field offices managing operations across multiple states.

In addition to direct implementation and capacity building of local organisations, NRC also plays a critical role in coordination at multiple levels.

#### NRC Venezuela

Established	2005/2019
International staff	14
National staff	100



## NRC Venezuela

### Country office

Caracas

### Areas of operation

Caracas (Distrito Federal); Puerto Ordaz (Bolívar), Ciudad Bolívar (Bolívar); San Cristóbal, García de Hevia, Fernández Feo, Cárdenas, Torbes, Guásimo, Junín, Bolívar, Capacho (Táchira); San Francisco, Maracaibo, Jesus Enrique Losada, Jesus María Semprún (Zulia)



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### Education

We help vulnerable families to keep their children in school despite the challenges of displacement and poverty, and work with teachers, parents, education authorities and community leaders to identify solutions to educational challenges. Displacement and financial desperation often result in children dropping out of school either to support their families through informal employment, or because they are not enrolled in schools in areas of displacement. For this reason, our education teams work closely with our ICLA teams and the cash distribution sector to enable access to education. Additionally, the national economic crisis has caused many teachers to abandon their posts and has also resulted in a lack of school supplies along with dilapidated infrastructure. The Covid outbreak has required a transition to remote teaching methods, as well as the upgrading of infrastructure through our WASH/shelter teams in order to reduce the risk of transmission when schools reopen. Our teams:

- work with the Education Ministry to identify children at risk of desertion, and teachers most likely to bene-

fit from training and support

- provide technical support to educational authorities to design remote education models during Covid closure and also general curricula development
- offer school feeding programmes to encourage student and teacher retention, as well as improving food security levels
- provide cash distributions to vulnerable families to reduce the risk of student drop-out and assist in meeting basic needs
- distribute education materials to students, teachers and institutions in order to facilitate learning
- upgrade school infrastructure to improve hygiene, accessibility and reduce overcrowding
- train teachers in how best to support students – with a focus on those returning to education after a period of absence, and also on psycho-social support in recognition of the trauma caused by the humanitarian crisis

Information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA)

When NRC's Venezuela office was established in 2005, the primary focus was on supporting Colombian refugees seeking safety and services within Venezuela. This dynamic has changed significantly and the ICLA team has shifted their focus to include Venezuelans seeking to exit the country and find economic opportunities and legal status in neighbouring states. Our ICLA teams provide support to:

- Venezuelans seeking permanent or long-term residence in neighbouring states
- Venezuelans engaged in pendular migration, often through illegal and dangerous border crossings
- internally displaced people moving between different sites within Venezuela due to security concerns and social factors
- economic migrants seeking income opportunities in areas including major cities as well as border locations and the mining zone within Venezuela
- returnees from neighbouring states hoping to reintegrate within Venezuela temporarily or permanently

Our teams provide information, counselling and direct accompaniment/referrals for people seeking to access legal services, usually focused on civil documentation which is essential for employment, entitlement to state benefits, school enrolment and property ownership. Because general protection information is limited in Venezuela, our teams have tailored their awareness raising activities to include information on essential service availability and referrals to external service providers.

#### Water, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WASH)

The humanitarian crisis in Venezuela has resulted in the collapse of water and waste management systems, creating profound gaps in essential WASH services at household, community and institutional levels. Homes, schools and hospitals lack running water, sewage and disposal systems. Additionally, hyperinflation and the loss of income opportunities have left populations unable to purchase basic hygiene goods such as soap or menstrual

products. The Covid-19 pandemic has heightened the health risks associated with these service gaps. Our teams provide services including:

- construction of potable water points, handwashing stations, toilets and showers for people in transit, host communities, health centres, schools, markets, transport hubs and quarantine centres
- provision of safe water at a household level through cash assistance, water trucking and water treatment supplies
- training and awareness raising on construction, maintenance, water quality testing etc.
- construction and rehabilitation of culturally appropriate gender-disaggregated toilets and showers
- provision of collective/community waste management supplies and trainings (maintenance, cleaning, desludging, labour)
- provision of dignity kits to women and girls, along with training on appropriate use and disposal of menstrual products
- provision of hygiene kits to people in transit and vulnerable host community members
- provision of targeted awareness-raising campaigns (prevention of disease transmission, menstrual hygiene and protection messaging)

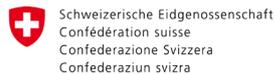
#### Livelihoods and food security

The loss of income opportunities, hyperinflation, a lack of imports, stalled agricultural production and subsequent market volatility has left millions of Venezuelans food insecure. Our LFS activities are designed to address both the immediate needs of people affected by the crisis, and also the need for sustainable interventions that increase food security and resilience. Our teams provide:

- immediate assistance through both cash transfers and food distributions, using vulnerability assessments to ensure that services reach those most in need
- cash, coupons, tools, seeds and trainings to cultivate community and family gardens

- information and awareness raising campaigns on food production, preparation, hygiene and nutrition
- enhancing agro-based local markets through technical support in food production and processing practices that increase profitability
- soft skills training, entrepreneurship mentoring and seed capital funding to both food and non-food market sectors
- school feeding of both children and teachers, both to improve food security and also to encourage retention

NRC Venezuela is grateful for the generous support from our donors:



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