

# NRC's operations in Venezuela

## Humanitarian overview

Venezuela's protracted economic, social and political crisis has led to a severe humanitarian and protection crisis. Millions of people have fled the country, many others have been internally displaced, and at least 7.7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance or protection.

Consecutive years of economic contraction, socio-political tensions, informal dollarisation and hyperinflation mean most families are unable to afford food. Long-term state underfunding of facilities and neglect of public infrastructures affect electricity and water distribution. At least 1.5 million children are out of school. Lack of documentation – birth certificates and identity cards – concerns 50 per cent of Venezuelans, hindering people's ability to access basic rights and services. Venezuela has also seen an increase of violence due to the extended presence of irregular groups. Venezuelans on the move are furthermore at higher risk of exploitation and abuse.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Venezuelan humanitarian crisis was funded only 31 per cent in 2023, and is still one of the most underfunded crises around the world.

## NRC's operation

NRC has been active in Venezuela since 2005. In 2019 we established an independent country office in light of the deteriorating humanitarian crisis.

NRC is one of the largest NGOs in Venezuela, with an annual budget of USD 10 million. Our work includes water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education, livelihoods and food security, information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA) and protection from violence. In addition to direct implementation and capacity building of local communities, NRC also plays a critical role in coordination at multiple levels.

### NRC in Venezuela

Established	2005
International staff	13
National staff	97



## NRC in Venezuela

### Country office

Caracas

### Areas of operation

Táchira, Zulia, Bolívar, Apure



## NRC in Venezuela

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### Education

NRC empowers children and families affected by displacement through educational access, wellbeing and retention, supported by rights promotion and community participation in the midst of crisis.

NRC works with teachers, parents, school authorities, local and national education authorities and community leaders. Our assessments highlight the main reasons for school drop-out as: insufficient teaching materials and school feeding programmes, damaged facilities, inability of parents to afford school materials, and child labour for families. The rates of out-of-school children are higher in border areas and mining areas from where teachers have often migrated and abandoned their functions.

NRC's education programme includes:

- identification of out-of-school children and enrolment in the bridging programme to support return to school, through community outreach and in support of local education authorities

- capacity building of teachers to deliver remedial classes and support return to school, as well as to provide psychosocial support in recognition of the trauma caused by the humanitarian crisis and long-term displacement
- school infrastructure upgrades to improve accessibility and access to water, sanitation and hygiene, and to reduce overcrowding
- educational materials provision to students, teachers and institutions in order to facilitate learning
- technical support to local education authorities and continuous advocacy to reduce dropout and absenteeism of children and teachers, plus the development of extracurricular activities for children at risk of dropout
- support to the Ministry of Education in the revision of the education strategy for primary schools to ensure displacement-related challenges are addressed

### Information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA)

NRC established an office in Venezuela in 2005 with the primary focus on providing support to Colombian refugees seeking safety and services on the other side of the border. However, these dynamics have changed significantly, and NRC includes today mainly Venezuelans facing protection risks, often due to a lack of documentation.

NRC provides information, counselling and direct assistance for people seeking legal services usually focused on civil documentation essential for employment, entitlement to government benefits, school enrolment and property ownership.

NRC's ICLA services assist:

- displacement-affected individuals in Venezuela in need of legal identity assistance
- people planning to leave Venezuela who lack information on safe migration
- individuals affected by conflict or violence and in risk of displacement who lack legal identity documentation
- returned Venezuelans and their children born abroad who lack identity documentation
- children left in the care of others without formally established legal guardianship
- people in need of international protection, mainly Colombians who do not have access to legal stay and their children born in Venezuela who have difficulties accessing birth registration and Venezuelan citizenship

### 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 management items. Health centre facilities are in a seriously degraded condition and personnel lack the knowledge and equipment needed to ensure prevention and control of infection. NRC provides the following services:

- in schools, mainly primary, in coordination with the Education core competency:
  - targeting children, teachers, parents, school workers
  - installation, maintenance or rehabilitation of WASH infrastructure based on the 3-star scale
  - cleaning and disinfection, solid waste management and hygiene items provision to ensure the functioning of services
  - support to existing governance structures or creation
- in health centre facilities:
  - targeting patients and personnel
  - infection prevention and control (IPC) – “WASH-Fit”
  - installation, maintenance, or rehabilitation of WASH infrastructure
  - cleaning and disinfection, solid waste management and hygiene items provision, to ensure the functioning of services
  - capacity building and governance: support to existing governance structures or creation
- in the community and families:
  - targeting vulnerable households
  - support to water, wastewater and solid waste management
  - hygiene behaviour change

### Livelihoods and food security

The loss of income opportunities, hyperinflation, lack of imports, stalled agricultural production, and subsequent market volatility have left millions of Venezuelans food insecure. Our livelihoods and food security

activities are designed to address the immediate needs of people affected by the social-economic crisis, while looking for sustainable solutions to increase food security and resilience. NRC provides:

- immediate assistance through food distributions, using vulnerability assessments to ensure that services reach those most in need
- tools, seeds and training to cultivate community and family gardens
- information and awareness-raising campaigns on food production, hygiene, preparation, and nutrition
- enhancing agro-based local markets through technical support for food production and processing practices that increase profitability
- technical training to farmers
- school feeding programmes to encourage student and teacher retention, as well as improving food security levels
- provision or facilitation through market systems development of inputs for start-up and expansion of businesses for households to improve their purchasing power

#### Protection from violence

Due to the proximity of the Colombian conflict and mining exploitation, armed groups, criminal gangs and organised crime are present in Venezuela and

have important economic activities that attract vulnerable people seeking better access to livelihood opportunities. Frequent clashes between groups or with the state authorities have resulted in an increase of violence and displacement, as well as child labour, allegations of disappearance and regular sexual exploitation and trafficking. NRC provides:

- Individual protection services. People who experience violence are supported to recover and have their safety improved, through:
  - general protection case management – comprehensive risk assessment, facilitating a multi-sectoral case planning and review process, and providing practical support (including psychosocial) to ensure that services are accessed and that the threat is sufficiently mitigated
  - individual protection assistance – a one-time assistance to people with specific protection needs in order to prevent their exposure to further risks
- Advocacy. Policy, standards and investments in protection reflect what communities need to prevent and mitigate violence at scale. This area includes:
  - protection from violence monitoring
  - protection advocacy

#### We are grateful for the generous support from our donors:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway (NMFA)
- European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO)
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)
- Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA-USAID)
- NRC Sweden