



Save the Children

VENEZUELA REGIONAL CRISIS Emergency Update

CONTEXT OVERVIEW

Since 2015, more than 5 million people have fled Venezuela's rapidly deteriorating economic and political situation, driven to leave by hyperinflation, widespread unemployment, food and medical shortages, and violence. While no country in the Latin America and Caribbean region has been left untouched by the migration crisis, Colombia and Peru are the two countries in the region that are most affected by the migration, hosting nearly 2 million and nearly 900,000 Venezuelan migrants and refugees, respectively. Hundreds of thousands of migrant children throughout the region are missing out on education as a result of the crisis. Children and their families are exposed to serious risks during their migration, including gender-based violence, exploitation, and trafficking.

Meanwhile, the political and socio-economic developments in Venezuela have left millions of families who remain at home vulnerable to hunger, sickness, and poverty. The UN estimates that 7 million people in the country are in need of assistance, with food, health, nutrition, protection, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) assistance among the priority needs.

Now, the global coronavirus pandemic has created a crisis within a crisis, further complicating an already-difficult situation for millions of families in Venezuela and throughout the region. The COVID-19 disease outbreak, as well as measures taken to contain it, presents new challenges and exacerbates pre-existing ones, both for families and relief actors alike. The humanitarian needs of children and families in Venezuela and throughout the region are vast and acute. Here's what Save the Children is doing about it.



REGIONAL ADVOCACY: KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Children's rights have no borders. At the regional level, Save the Children works with our Country Offices in Colombia and Peru to strongly advocate that decision-makers and authorities at the local, national, regional, and international levels guarantee the protection of all children and their rights, regardless of their nationality or migration status. Our advocacy work includes monitoring children's rights with children's ombudsmen, highlighting the needs and rights of migrant children before regional intergovernmental bodies, and ensuring that migrant children's voices are heard by policymakers.

We have also assumed a founding leadership role in the Civil Society Coalition for the Defense of the Rights of Refugees, Migrants, and Displaced People in Latin America and the Caribbean. Through the coalition, we actively participate in crucial coordination spaces – such as the UN-led R4V Coordination Platform – and engage with governments to ensure our participation and collaboration in the Quito Process. We also engage with international donors to advocate for increased funding for civil society organizations to carry out response activities within the region.



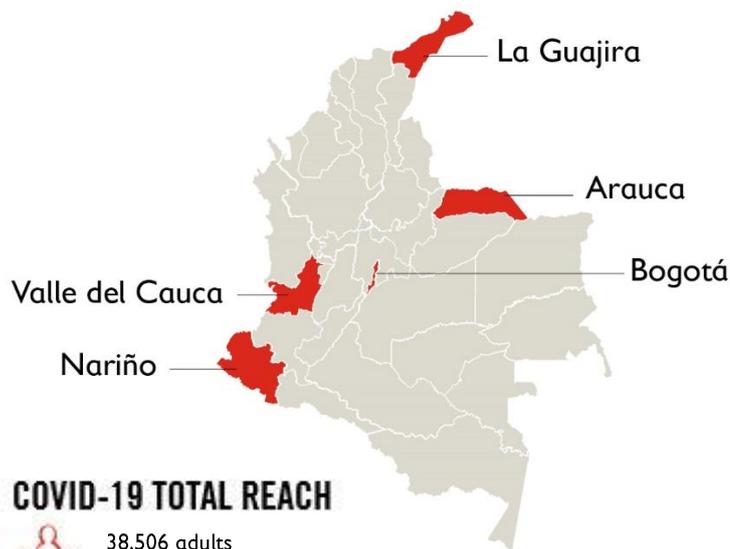
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COLOMBIA

In 2018, Save the Children began providing critical humanitarian assistance in Colombia's La Guajira and Arauca departments – located along the Colombia–Venezuela border – and later expanded to other affected areas of the country, like Nariño, Valle del Cauca, and the capital city of Bogotá. Our response is focused on providing multi-sector humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable children and families – including Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees, and host community members; as of March 2020, we reached nearly 230,000 people, including more than 135,000 children, through our emergency response.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have adapted our response to account for emerging needs and new infection prevention and control protocols to ensure that we can continue supporting children and families safely during these challenging times. Currently, we're responding in the following ways:



COVID-19 TOTAL REACH



38,506 adults
47,960 children

EDUCATION: Given the Ministry of Education's announcement that schools will not re-open until at least the end of the year, we're distributing education kits and strengthening digital education tools – like podcasts and radio broadcasts – so children can continue their learning safe at home to ensure they don't miss out on their education during the pandemic.

CHILD PROTECTION: We are distributing kits containing recreational materials to help children play and process their feelings at home, as well as disseminating key child protection messages to communities via radio. Our case management team continues to provide support to the most vulnerable families – including survivors of gender-based violence, which has increased during lockdown measures – via telephone to ensure children are protected.

HEALTH: Our sexual and reproductive health (SRH) static and mobile units in La Guajira remain operational, implementing all necessary bio-security protocols to ensure the health and safety of patients and staff. Our team continues to provide life-saving health care and psychosocial support to expectant mothers, infants under two months, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and other people in need. We are also working with health authorities and hospitals to build capacity and prevent further spread of COVID-19.

FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS: We continue to provide multipurpose cash assistance, enabling families to pay for essentials, such as food, shelter, and basic household items. Families also receive important messaging about nutrition topics, like infant and young child feeding best practices.

WASH: Given the importance of handwashing in preventing the spread of COVID-19, we continue to prioritize our WASH activities to ensure that vulnerable families have access to safe water and critical hygiene supplies, like soap and antibacterial gel. In addition to delivering hygiene and COVID-19 kits, we are also supporting the establishment of handwashing points and delivering safe drinking water to informal settlements.



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PERU



Patricia* (6) plays in one of our Child-Friendly Spaces in Peru before the pandemic required us to temporarily suspend activities. Photo credit: Hanna Adcock / Save the Children



In Peru, Save the Children aims to reach the most vulnerable people, including Venezuelan migrants and host communities, affected by the migration crisis with critical assistance, focusing on child protection, shelter, food security and livelihoods, and education.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic – which has been particularly alarming in Peru – required us to temporarily suspend in-person activities to ensure compliance with national quarantine and social distancing measures. Save the Children is adapting our response as the context continues to evolve, ensuring that we continue to address the needs of vulnerable children and families despite the new challenges presented by the pandemic.

CHILD PROTECTION: We have adapted our activities to virtual channels – like telephone and social media – to provide children and families

with key messages about child protection, as well as psychosocial and emotional support and other resources for children and families.

FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS: In response to new and increasing needs related to the pandemic, we virtually delivered additional cash transfers to 7,000 vulnerable families previously enrolled in the program, prioritizing those at the highest risk of experiencing food insecurity. We have recently launched a new multipurpose cash assistance project, through which we aim to reach more than 8,700 families. We are also using digital channels to reach families with information about child nutrition, as well as counselling services on breastfeeding and complementary feeding.



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VENEZUELA

While we have been working with local partners on the humanitarian response in Venezuela since 2018, Save the Children established a team in Venezuela in October 2019 after obtaining official registration from the government – making us one of the few international relief actors with the capacity and permission to work in the country. Based on assessments conducted in late 2019, we are expanding our response to include child protection, education, health, food security, and WASH interventions in eight priority locations, in addition to continued support to our partners.



Given the challenging situation in the country, the risks associated with the COVID-19 outbreak in Venezuela are extremely high. Save the Children – working with four local partners – conducted a rapid needs assessment to help us to better understand how COVID-19 is affecting children and families in the country. Some of the key findings include the following:



About 80% of families are concerned about being unable to meet their children's basic needs.



Nearly 90% of key informants reported that children were exposed to risks during confinement.



The majority of families cited lack of water and soap as a challenge for handwashing – a key COVID-19 prevention measure.



Nearly a third of key informants reported that the lack of digital resources is a barrier for accessing remote education.

Based on the assessment findings, Save the Children views increasing families' safe and reliable access to food, ensuring that children are protected, encouraging good hygiene practices in communities, supporting health care providers, strengthening capacities for remote learning, and ensuring children's voices are heard and considered in the response to this crisis within a crisis as among the most urgent next steps.

Our team in Venezuela is ramping up response activities and growing by the day. In mid-2020, we launched a small food security pilot program to support families, as well as community kitchens, in four states; we aim to expand our response in the coming weeks and months to include other interventions in our prioritized locations. As we launch our new programs, we are incorporating the findings and recommendations from our most recent assessments to ensure that our response is tailored to the COVID-19 context and that we are safely and effectively meeting the needs of the children and families in Venezuela who need it the most, in coordination with our partners and all relevant authorities.