



## VENEZUELA HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

CRS is responding across Venezuela and Latin America to support Caritas and local partners to assist thousands of Venezuelan families with emergency relief.



*Caritas Venezuela social services center for families in need. Photo courtesy of Caritas Venezuela*

### OVERVIEW

Venezuela's political crisis appears to be reaching a boiling point. On January 23, 2019, Juan Guaidó declared himself interim president in an effort by the opposition to unseat President Nicolás Maduro. Guaidó's declaration received support from neighboring countries and the United States. Since 2015, Venezuela has been reeling in an economic and social crisis. A drastic fall in the price of oil, the country's main export, led to a progressive decline in the capacity to produce locally, which resulted in food shortages, hyperinflation, the collapse of the health system and social unrest. Food shortages have had a devastating impact. Venezuelans have lost an average of 24 pounds per person since 2017. And, of 15,000 children under age 5 being monitored by Caritas Venezuela during the last year, 76 percent showed signs of a nutritional deficit, and another 13 percent are living with acute malnutrition.



The Venezuelan government has devalued its currency by 96 percent. This has extinguished the middle class, pushing 87 percent of the population below the poverty line, and had a significant impact on small and medium-sized businesses—which cannot afford to pay salaries. Nearly 40 percent of all Venezuelan stores are closing.

In this context of scarcity, millions of Venezuelans have felt no choice but to flee elsewhere to provide for their families. As of January 2019, at least 3.6 million Venezuelans have migrated to other Latin American countries, mainly Colombia and Peru. Among the more than 1 million Venezuelan migrants in Colombia alone, 55 percent have children. The number of people leaving Venezuela is projected to double in the coming year according to the Brookings Institution.

### CRS SUPPORT OF CARITAS AND PARTNERS Venezuela

Across 14 dioceses in 10 states, and in the capital of Caracas, Caritas Venezuela is supporting health and nutrition. As of early 2019, the following has been achieved:

- 20,625 children under age 5 and 1,192 pregnant women were screened.
- 12,120 malnourished children under age 5 and 369 pregnant women are receiving food and medicine.
- Specialized food supplements for the treatment of malnutrition in children have been imported.
- 382 clinics were organized, attended by 17,153 patients.
- 14 dioceses have a basic stock of medication.
- 1,379 community soup kitchens are operating and have served close to 131,078 meals.

Through an in-kind donation from Edesia Nutrition to CRS, Caritas Venezuela received nutritious food shipments to treat 1,800 children. Many volunteer doctors and nurses are donating their time to provide primary care. Other volunteers have scoured neighborhoods in search of children who need assistance, training community members to make low-cost water filters for drinking and inviting people to serve bowls of soup each week.



*Caritas Venezuela staff conduct nutrition screenings for children.  
Photo courtesy of Caritas Venezuela*

**Colombia:** CRS provides technical support and training to Caritas Colombia as it assists 9,000 Venezuelan migrants. With CRS capacity support, Caritas Colombia was awarded a U.S. State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration grant for these activities.

**Brazil:** Caritas Brazil has distributed prepaid cash cards to 600 Venezuelan families (2,500 people) to buy food, hygiene items and critical supplies. At Caritas Brazil’s Center of Assistance, 100 Venezuelans receive legal aid and psychosocial support per day. A U.S. Department of State-supported project of Caritas Brazil will complement the government’s relocation of Venezuelans, with reception support at Caritas sites across Brazil to support them with rental assistance, legal and psychosocial protection and job opportunities.

**Trinidad and Tobago:** CRS partner Living Water Community (LWC) in Trinidad attends to 960 Venezuelan migrants with food and cash assistance for diverse needs, including housing, medical or living expenses. CRS is supporting LWC with shelter support, specifically the upgrade of rentals and other host family arrangements to improve the housing conditions for refugees in the country.

**Peru:** CRS is supporting Caritas Peru to provide shelters, legal protection, hot meals, and cash assistance for living supplies across 4 dioceses, benefiting 14,140 Venezuelans.

**Ecuador:** CRS is supporting Caritas Ecuador to provide food and nutrition, shelter for migrants, cash assistance and livelihood support for 1,909 Venezuelans.

#### HOW TO HELP

To support the relief effort in Venezuela:

- Give online: <https://www.crs.org/venezuela-crisis>
- Give by phone: 1-877-HELP-CRS
- Give by check: Catholic Relief Services  
P.O. Box 17526 Baltimore, Maryland 21298-8180

