

Venezuelan children raise their voices and challenges to the United Nations

- *20 percent of migrant children travel unaccompanied as one in four are separated from their parents¹*
- *Report reveals an increase in child marriages during the economic crisis, strained by the COVID-19 pandemic.²*

As of October 2020, over 5.5 million Venezuelans have been forced to leave their country due to political unrest and economic difficulty, now intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. The growing need for basic resources and the impact of displacement has been especially difficult for children.

Despite of the unprecedented magnitude of the Venezuelan crisis, humanitarian organisations lack 70 percent of the required resources to help more than 12 million affected people. Plan International and World Vision, two organisations that promote the wellbeing of children, are collaborating in this emergency response to unite their efforts and raise the voice of children, adolescents and women before international decision-makers.

Four adolescent girls will present the risks that children and young Venezuelan women face daily in and out of the country to the members of the Security Council of the United Nations and other governments. The virtual event will take place on Monday, 2 November at 09.00 am (EST). The girls are engaged in projects promoted by international NGOs, Plan International and World Vision.

The event will bring forward the increased protection risks Venezuelan children and adolescents cope with during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will also identify opportunities to support the growing humanitarian needs of vulnerable children. In less than five years, the situation in Venezuela has deteriorated so steeply, that the once wealthiest country in the Americas is now one of the poorest, with the majority of the migrants going to neighbouring Latin America countries. It is estimated that 25 percent of the Venezuelans on the move are children, according to the UN³.

“The survival and opportunities of Venezuelan children, adolescents and youth are severely compromised. Their access to basic needs such as education, nutrition and protection is precarious, if not absent at all. The deterioration of livelihoods for households increases the exposure of children to abuse, child labour and sexual exploitation. Indifference is not an option. However, the response of the international community to the Venezuelan crisis is painfully timid. We are on the verge of witnessing the sad omen of a lost generation, as it happened in the eighties,” explains Carmen Aurora Garcia, Country Manager of World Vision Venezuela who will participate as a member of civil society at Monday’s event.

Veronique Henry, Country Director of Plan International in Peru, who will also participate as a representative of civil society on Monday, states: “We are in the face of an unprecedented crisis that could have grave repercussions for the region in the short and long term if we don’t implement an immediate response to address it, tailored to the needs of children and with their active participation.”

Migración y COVID-19: Niñez venezolana, entre la espada y la pared – junio 2020, World Vision <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/77210>

² Espada de Doble Filo: Situación de la Niñez Venezolana, Setiembre 2020 –World Vision

³ Children in Armed Conflict, Security Council of the United Nations, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N2000035.pdf>



During the event, World Vision will present its new report, *Double-Edged Sword: the situation of Venezuelan children during COVID-19*, which indicates 49% of respondents in Venezuela noted an increase in child marriage since March 2020 as the effects of the pandemic intensified the economic crisis. One of five respondents also indicated that they have witnessed the increased separation of children from their parents due to worsened economic conditions.

The economic and social crisis is impacting the lives of Venezuelan children. However, children without nationality and registration, especially girls, are increasingly becoming victims of violence, child labour, child marriage, sexual exploitation and adolescent pregnancy.

Julieth, a 17-year-old adolescent mother says, “almost no one congratulated me when I graduated from high school and they constantly tell me that the worst I could do was becoming pregnant so young. The hardest for me is not having enough food on our table, not having enough (money) to provide for my baby’s needs.”

Migrant Danila shares her own story of being separated from her younger brother and now living in Colombia with her mother, “I didn’t want to go because I didn’t want to leave the people I love the most; my grandmother, my sisters and my uncles,” explains Daniela. She has not seen her father for three years, since he migrated to Peru.

The situation for Venezuelan children who have left their country is also complicated. Child labour and the harassment and recruitment of children by organised crime and armed groups are additional risks these children face.

More than 20 percent of Venezuelan children travel unaccompanied by parents or relatives. Discrimination against migrant and refugee populations is increasing and, generally, they are subject to stigma if they contract the virus. House evictions and labour exploitation are common consequences. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to exacerbate the impacts of these circumstances that are quickly worsening over a very short time.

The event will be streamed live via Facebook on @WorldVisionLAC and @PlanAmericas you can also register and participate here: https://worldvision.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUvcOyqgTkoGtJfA21lx4AosctqTv8_ipjH

KEY FIGURES OF THE VENEZUELAN MIGRANT AND REFUGEE CRISIS

5.5 million people have left Venezuela. Approximately 25 per cent are girls, boys and adolescents. ([R4V](#))

7 million people require humanitarian assistance inside Venezuela ([OCHA](#))

In 2019, the fertility rate among adolescents aged 15 to 19 reached 85 births for every 1,000, almost double the regional rate of 48.3 ([PAHO](#))

91 percent of boys and girls in Bogota, Colombia’s capital, don’t have a regular migratory status ([Plan International](#))

73 percent of Venezuelan households with children do not have enough food ([World Vision](#)) A third of surveyed households say they know at least a child engaged in child labor and begging. 49 percent says child marriage is increasing ([World Vision](#)).

More than 130,000 Venezuelan refugees and migrants returned to their country amid the pandemic (Human Rights Watch)

Before the pandemic, 13 per cent of boys, girls and adolescents did not attend school in Venezuela, and 40 per cent goes, but not regularly. The key reasons to leave school are lack of access to water (23%), power shortages (17%), lack of food at home (16%), absence of teachers (18%) and lack of transportation means (7%) ([Encovi](#))

56 percent of Venezuelan children and adolescents are not registered in schools ([Banco Mundial](#)) Fewer than 15 per cent of Venezuelan migrants in Ecuador has a regular migratory status. ([World Bank](#))

1 out of 4 households in Venezuela lack access to clean water ([Encovi](#))

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