

COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY IN VENEZUELA

**Distrito
Capital**

Report 2019/2021

Located in the Cordillera de la Costa area, in the Center-North of the country, the Capital District is part of the city of Caracas, the capital of Venezuela, where the National Public Powers are based. Libertador is its only municipality, with 22 towns. Its population of 1,830,142¹ makes it the fifth most populous territorial entity in Venezuela, after Zulia, Miranda, Bolívar, and Carabobo, although it remains one of the highest levels of demographic density.

Civil society organizations² and specialists from the GIEH of the Capital District - Interdisciplinary Group to address the Complex Humanitarian Emergency - who participated in preparing this report found the multidimensional impacts of the emergency. For example, school dropout, unemployment, hunger, and the lack of essential services, such as drinking water and electricity, deepened by confinement and immobility due to the COVID pandemic. Which also brought severe consequences to the lives of families, ranging from domestic violence to the incorporation of young people into criminal activities, the increase in drug use, and early teenage pregnancies. Added to these problems are the malfunctioning of the health system and the increase in people with psychiatric conditions resulting from the pandemic and poor nutrition.

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Increase in school dropouts due to the temporary closure of schools in the pandemic, and no seen changes with the return to classes

1. Between 2019 and 2021, school dropouts increased due to the temporary closure of schools by the COVID pandemic and have not improved with the measures to return to classes with presential and semi-presential learning. In the poorest households where there are several children and teenagers, can find that only one goes to school, often the youngest in preschool or first grade, and teenagers in secondary education who has left their studies to be able to eat and bring money home. Some work in casual jobs, such as motorcycle taxi drivers or food sales; there are even cases of these people collecting waste or debris in exchange for payment.
2. On the other hand, parents are afraid to take their children to school because they are alone, mainly due to the absence of teachers, so sometimes they decide not to send their children to study. Also, due to the poor quality of education, the lack of teachers, equipment, and school supplies, and the difficulties of regular access to the School Feeding Program (SFP), it has become more urgent to have an economic income than to study.
3. Domestic violence also increased³. The confinement by COVID forced families to coexist in the worst economic conditions. In the Capital District, 14 deaths of women at the hands of their partners were registered, and the number of women injured and their babies increased because their partners did not have money to consume liquor⁴. The case of a seven-month-old boy who was severely punished for not stopping crying and who arrived at the Children's Hospital with pleural effusion was recorded. In addition, the case of a two-bedroom house in which 17 people live, of which 11 are children, was known.

Domestic violence has been greater with confinement, affecting coexistence in the face of worse economic difficulties.

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Unemployment and problems of cohabitation increase the risk of children becoming involved in delinquency

4. Many people lost their jobs during confinement, promoting violence due to a sudden break in daily life. Added to this are problems of access to food, education, lack of transportation, and electricity and water failures. Unemployment and difficulties of coexistence have led to increased incorporation of children and adolescents into delinquency and drug use. The high cost of cable television service has meant that many families can no longer afford it. Children and adolescents spend more time away from their homes, which increases the risk of joining criminal activities and being the object of acts of prostitution and pedophilia.

The lack of essential services of water, electricity, urban sanitation, and the internet reduced living conditions to unacceptable levels

5. The lack of access to essential services such as water, electricity, urban sanitation, and the internet has deteriorated living conditions⁵. The piped water supply almost does not arrive and is of poor quality⁶. There are areas of the Capital District, specifically in Catia, where garbage trucks pass every 15 days. Due to the lack of fuel and spare parts, the transport service capacities are down in the communities at the inter-municipal and national levels⁷. The Metro also presents delays of up to an hour. The temporary closure of stations is relatively frequent and increasingly dangerous because it stopped being an automatic service to become a manual system⁸.

6. Due to the economic poverty that families experience, 13 or 14-year-old girls have been registered outside the educational system as pregnant or with babies in their arms, prostituting themselves, even consuming drugs⁹. A case was recorded of a girl who gave birth two days before her 10th birthday, and it is known about mothers who send their daughters to prostitute themselves so that they can bring money home to eat. There is also evidence of high rates of liquor consumption in minors. As a

Pregnancies in girls under 15 years of age, child malnutrition, and in older people due to acute economic poverty

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result of hunger, malnutrition increased in children under one year of age and the elderly¹⁰, cared for by families who do not have the income to cover their food needs. Psychiatric disorders have also skyrocketed, and people are seen wandering the streets aimlessly¹¹.

Public health no longer has care capacity due to the withdrawal of health personnel and the lack of supplies

7. There is very little specialist medical staff in public hospitals because they have retired, they do not have essential supplies to care for people, or they cannot get to the hospital¹². Access limitations and poor functioning of public transport and the high cost of fuel delay staff or prevent them from meeting their work schedules.

8. The surveillance carried out by the State security forces in the communities stopped working due to the COVID pandemic. Nor is there enough urban lighting on main avenues, contributing to insecurity. People no longer trust police forces for their abuse of power practices and criminal activities, such as toll collection and extortion. There is no longer a difference between being a police officer and a criminal for many people.

Abuses and crimes committed by the security forces themselves contribute to the insecurity in the communities

9. The weakening of efforts to work together to effectively solve pressing day-to-day social and economic problems in the communities is notorious. It is essential to create spaces for the joint construction of proposals to counteract the impact on quality of life, which is why it is necessary to strengthen participation spaces with training activities aimed at the structure of agendas to solve problems.

Weakening of citizen participation in joint efforts to solve pressing social problems

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