Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

HIGHLIGHTS

- The lives of children in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela continue to be buffeted by the impact of the country’s persistent economic crisis, a structural and situational crisis that has had a deep impact on society and especially on its most vulnerable people: children, those with disabilities and indigenous communities. Purchasing power is low, affecting access to health care, to food, to just about every service a child might need. Access to safe water and sanitation remains irregular and challenging. Immunization coverage is low, and the number of infants born with low birth weight has grown. Children and adolescents are at risk of violence. And an estimated 900,000 children are out of school.

- In 2024, UNICEF will increase the integration and quality of its programming for the most affected populations in the country’s most vulnerable regions, building on the geographic reach offered by its field offices. A key goal is addressing underlying risks and reducing humanitarian needs by enhancing access to critical services. This will be done through an integrated package of health, nutrition, education, child protection and WASH services.

- UNICEF requires $147 million to provide life-saving services for 3.1 million people, including 1.7 million children. Without it, UNICEF will be unable to provide life-saving services for children, protect their rights, and maintain their human dignity.

KEY PLANNED TARGETS

- **1.2 million**
  - children and women accessing primary health care

- **300,000**
  - children receiving micronutrient powder

- **516,500**
  - children receiving individual learning materials

- **2.2 million**
  - people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water

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Figures are provisional and subject to change upon finalization of the inter-agency planning documents.
HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS

Despite moderate signs of economic recovery, structural problems and a protracted crisis persist in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Chronic inflation undercuts households’ purchasing power, and the impact of all these factors on children’s lives is mounting.

The price of the basic food basket has increased steadily, reaching 112 minimum monthly salaries in June 2023. The difficulties this presents can be found in urban, peri-urban and rural settings; and children, pregnant or lactating women, adolescents and the indigenous population often feel it most acutely.

Economy and income challenges have eroded the country’s health infrastructure and essential services. Early pregnancies, irregular antenatal care, infectious diseases and childbirth complications threaten the survival of newborns and mothers, particularly among indigenous populations. The coverage of bacillus Calmette–Guérin vaccine is still 68 per cent, and that of the third dose of diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus vaccine is 56 per cent. Only 9 per cent of households are food secure, while 22 per cent are experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity. Around 18 per cent of the population is undernourished as a result of poor access to an affordable, safe and diversified diet. Additionally, 24.2 per cent of women aged 15–19 years are affected by anaemia, and 9.5 per cent of infants are born with low birth weight. The prevalence of stunting in children is 10.5 per cent.

With reduced learning schedules and disruptions, school infrastructure – including critical WASH facilities and services – remains a challenge. An estimated 900,000 children are out of school, and at least 1.3 million are at risk of dropping out, and 270,000 are in conditions of vulnerability. Accelerating the response to the cumulative effects of the learning crisis and leveraging educational quality is paramount.

Children and adolescents are also at risk of violence, exploitation and abuse, child labour and trafficking. Particularly for girls and women, the threat of gender-based violence is increasing. Access to safe water and sanitation remains a challenge for most vulnerable communities, with some 4.3 million people in need of safe water. Many households experience irregular access to water and sanitation services and engage in inadequate hygiene practices. The availability of water in health, education and protection facilities is at a critical state. The country is highly vulnerable to natural hazards, and disasters associated with heavy rains and floods threaten to aggravate the situation further.

SECTOR NEEDS

560,660 children in need of immunization services
1.1 million people in need of nutrition assistance
1.4 million children in need of protection services
2.5 million children in need of education support
4.3 million people lack access to safe water

STORY FROM THE FIELD

Luis Mario, 10, attends the life-skills training centre San Martín de Porres, in San Félix, Bolívar State. Together with other children and adolescents, he is part of a comprehensive care programme for academic leveling and socioemotional support that contributes to his reintegration in school.

“This is the homework I have done here at school: I have learned the (multiplication) tables, to write the numbers,” says Luis. “We were doing calligraphy, separating syllables, writing families of letters, and little things like that that put me here so I can learn,” he adds proudly, showing his notebook.

Read more about this story here
UNICEF, with a solid geographic footprint in the country in the form of numerous field offices, has refined its focus and defined its scope of action in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, prioritizing territories where it can have greater impact while optimizing resources. UNICEF will continue working to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of life-saving services for children and their families. Multisectoral programmes aims to strengthen these essential services and empower affected communities and families, adolescents and children with the capacity to prevent and respond to health, nutrition and child protection concerns.

UNICEF will continue to support national immunization, strengthen the cold chain capacity for vaccines at the national, regional and local levels, bolster outbreak response capacity and reinforce essential maternal, neonatal and child health services. Services strengthening includes providing equipment and medicines and enhancing the capacities of front-line workers and local health services to guarantee access, continuity and quality of care.

Through an integrated package of services, UNICEF will address acute and severe malnutrition through early detection of wasting and provide quality nutrition care to severely wasted children.

Improving child protection services remains a priority. UNICEF’s systemic approach include birth registration and identity; case management for at-risk and vulnerable children, including victims of violence and human trafficking and unaccompanied and separated children; and psychosocial support and mental health care for children and caregivers.

To tackle the learning gap, UNICEF will focus on the acquisition of foundational skills and teacher training for learning recovery, while strengthening the role of the school as a platform for other services, including protection, psychosocial support, health and nutrition. Access to education will be enhanced through distribution of learning kits and rehabilitation of school infrastructure.

UNICEF will provide life-saving WASH services in healthcare facilities and schools. This includes critical services and supplies as well as training in infection prevention and control. Recovering water access services in rural and urban communities is a focus. This will be combined with life-saving community-based interventions for hand hygiene and household water treatment and storage.

UNICEF will prioritize gender-transformative programming and community engagement to ensure the participation of women, girls and people with disabilities in decision-making and other processes linked to accountability to affected populations. UNICEF will also raise awareness among local humanitarian actors on protecting people from sexual exploitation and abuse, strengthening mechanisms for reporting such abuse and supporting survivors.

UNICEF will continue leading the Nutrition, Education and WASH Clusters and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility, and will continue actively participating in the Health Cluster and the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility.

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FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2024

To support humanitarian action in 2024, UNICEF requires $147 million to provide life-saving services for 3.1 million people, including 1.7 million children. Immediate, flexible and multi-year donor funding will be pivotal to ensure the continuity of critical services, including primary health care and treatment for severe wasting. It is also essential for providing access to safe water and sanitation for 2.2 million people, and to recovering WASH services in the most vulnerable communities, in urban and rural areas, and especially in indigenous communities, as a key enabler of minimal standard conditions for a clean and safe environment for children.

Furthermore, UNICEF will support the most vulnerable families to access inclusive education for out-of-school children and will work in collaboration with involved stakeholders to improve child protection services, emphasizing protection of the rights of indigenous children, children with disabilities and other vulnerable populations. Operating in such a complex context entails operational and logistics challenges, as well as costs related to the delivery of assistance.

UNICEF acknowledges and values the importance of working with communities, and their role in social behaviour change. The dissemination of life-saving information on how and where to access available services and facilitating mechanisms enabling people to share their concerns and ask questions through established feedback mechanisms are central to UNICEF interventions.

The overall funding requirement is lower than in 2023, reflecting a change in the education intervention approach. Funding needs for WASH are also reduced, because the plan for 2024 builds on previous results and UNICEF is able to optimize its 2024 interventions. Without the required funding, UNICEF’s capacity to support children and families in the most vulnerable areas will be hampered, and children will miss out on access to health and nutrition services, learning opportunities, safe water and critical child protection support.

Who to contact for further information:

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1. UNICEF is committed to needs-based targeting, which means covering the unmet needs of children; and will serve as the provider of last resort where it has cluster coordination responsibilities.

2. Ibid.

3. This figure was calculated based on the number of children and women accessing primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities (1,331,800); teachers and facilitators trained in basic pedagogy and/or mental health and psychosocial support (9,000); children, adolescents and caregivers accessing community-based mental health and psychosocial support (140,000); and people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water (2,200,000). The total figure includes 1,530,200 women/girls (50 per cent) and an estimated 367,250 people with disabilities (12 per cent). The number of people to be reached has decreased compared with 2023, because the school feeding component is no longer part of UNICEF’s planned interventions. UNICEF is committed to needs-based targeting, which means covering the unmet needs of children; and will serve as the provider of last resort where it has cluster coordination responsibilities.

4. This figure was calculated considering the various interventions planned for different age groups and locations, to avoid double counting beneficiaries. This includes children and women accessing primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities; children under 5 years of age screened for wasting; children receiving individual learning materials; and children receiving vaccines as of 2024. Also included are core case management. The total figure includes 835,915 girls and 200,620 children with disabilities. UNICEF is committed to needs-based targeting, which means covering the unmet needs of children; and will serve as the provider of last resort where it has cluster coordination responsibilities.

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11. The percentage of low-weight births (less than 2500 g) increased from 8.7 per cent to 9.5 per cent between 2003 and 2017. Source: Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) and WHO, Health in the Americas’, Country profile: Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), available at <https://hia.paho.org/en/countries-22/venezuela-country-profile>.


13. This indicator refers to people accessing and using new and existing drinking water sources as a result of resilient solutions such as chlorination and/or water systems’ repair/rehabilitation, rather than temporary access including water trucking or distribution of water purification tablets. UNICEF is directly targeting a total of 2.2 million people (51 per cent of people in need). The target is similar to 2023, considering that needs in water access are still critical for most vulnerable communities, mainly in urban and isolated rural areas. UNICEF continues to provide indirect support to government authorities in the form of capacity building and technical assistance for previously recovered water supply systems.

14. The total budget for the education sector has decreased compared with 2023, because the school feeding component is no longer part of the planned interventions.

15. In addition, UNICEF will improve the working conditions of 19,500 teachers by distributing individual classroom kits.

16. This indicator refers to children and adolescents receiving a package of integrated interventions under the integrated child-friendly schools model. This includes the distribution of learning materials to improve access to education and specific interventions to ensure equitable treatment for indigenous children, those with disabilities, young children and adolescents. The common denominator is addressing the learning losses due to school closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF has a particular focus on ensuring the reintegration of out-of-school children into the formal school system.

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