



*International Medical Corps' team distributed household hygiene kits and provided COVID-19 prevention and awareness-raising sessions to community members in Caicaguana and other rural areas throughout Miranda state.*

As the daily number of COVID-19 cases reported in Venezuela continues to accelerate, reaching its quickest pace in recent weeks, concerns regarding the country's health system have continued to increase. The country's severe economic crisis has crippled the healthcare system, with many facilities lacking the basic supplies needed to prevent infection and treat illness, and continuing to suffer from constant blackouts, making it difficult to treat and care for patients. The economic crisis has also led to severe shortages of medicines, personal protective equipment (PPE), bleach, disinfectant and soap, leaving doctors, nurses, hospital and clinic workers at risk. According to local reports, 71 health workers died between July 1 and August 16 alone.<sup>1</sup> The country has also been facing a severe shortage of healthcare personnel due to the ongoing crisis. In recent years, many thousands of doctors and nurses are among the estimated 5 million Venezuelans who have migrated abroad, leaving the country with scarce human resources to face the pandemic.

Official figures of 68,453 confirmed cases and 564 deaths in Venezuela are relatively low compared with many of its South American neighbors—including Colombia, where 765,076 confirmed cases and 24,208 deaths have been recorded. After COVID-19 lockdowns in Colombia drove thousands of Venezuelan migrants to return to their country, Venezuela initially instituted an "open arms" policy and invited citizens to return freely. However, as infection rates have increased, the government decided to restrict the number of returnees permitted to enter the country, with only 200 to 300 Venezuelans currently allowed to return daily. This wave of returnees has overwhelmed the border region, meaning many Venezuelans may be stuck along the border for several days.

The pandemic has only further exacerbated the political and socio-economic crisis in Venezuela. Hyperinflation and increased prices have greatly reduced households' access to food, medicines and basic goods. The population has become increasingly poor, with more people falling below the poverty line. In 2020, the poverty rate has reached 76%.<sup>2</sup>

### **FAST FACTS**

- In Venezuela, there have been 68,453 confirmed cases of COVID-19 as of September 23, along with 564 deaths. Experts are concerned that this may be an underestimate, due to limited testing and reporting.
- More than 7 million people in the country need humanitarian assistance.

### **SITUATION AT A GLANCE**

- The most urgent needs include staffing, medical supplies and equipment for health facilities; WASH; and mental health and psychosocial support services.
- International Medical Corps is supporting six healthcare facilities. So far, our hospitals have screened more than 4,000 patients for COVID-19.
- International Medical Corps has distributed 5,309 pieces of personal protective equipment and infection prevention and control equipment to support healthcare facilities.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/08/venezuelan-authorities-are-repressing-and-failing-to-protect-health-workers-as-covid-19-gathers-force/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://assets.website-files.com/5d14c6a5c4ad42a4e794d0f7/5f03875cac6fc11b6d67a8a5\\_Presentaci%C3%B3n%20%20ENCOVI%202019-Pobreza\\_compressed.pdf](https://assets.website-files.com/5d14c6a5c4ad42a4e794d0f7/5f03875cac6fc11b6d67a8a5_Presentaci%C3%B3n%20%20ENCOVI%202019-Pobreza_compressed.pdf)

Food security and health are key priorities for the region. According to the World Food Program (WFP), one out of every three Venezuelans is food-insecure and in need of urgent assistance.<sup>3</sup>

## International Medical Corps Response

International Medical Corps is a registered non-profit in Venezuela and is authorized to provide humanitarian services. We have obtained permits from the Ministry of Health and are able to import items directly into the country. So far, we have imported medicines, medical supplies and equipment worth more than \$1.6 million, and additional procurements are ongoing. International Medical Corps is also supporting seven health facilities: three in Miranda, including Caracas; three in Zulia; and one community health center in Bolivar. As part of our efforts, we have provided facilities with pharmaceutical supplies, wound-care kits and PPE. To date, our activities have reached a total of 14,902 beneficiaries in these target areas. Moving forward, we will provide support to three additional health facilities in Falcon state.

Along with supporting health facilities, International Medical Corps—in collaboration with FUDEP, our local partner—will deploy a mobile medical team to provide health and hygiene services to indigenous populations in Bolivar state, which lack access to healthcare services and support. The mobile medical team not only will provide care to indigenous people; but will also build the capacity of the local community health center. The team, which will deploy at the end of September and start providing services in Maripa and Moitaco, aims to reach more than 2,200 residents of Bolivar. The mobile medical teams will consist of providers who are trusted within the indigenous community and are well-prepared to meet the community's specific needs.

In addition to providing healthcare services, International Medical Corps is working with local partners to provide mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) throughout Gran Caracas, Miranda, Capital District and La Guaria. Through our partnership with a local agency, International Medical Corps will access community-based mental health care centers, leveraging their robust network of social workers to increase the availability and quality of mental health care services at both the clinical and community level. This program builds on local capacity and significantly expands services at a time when there is a major gap in MHPSS services.

To meet the urgent needs related to COVID-19, International Medical Corps is prioritizing activities in states with the largest number of confirmed cases. Our health team is working closely with local authorities and directors of health facilities in Miranda, Bolivar and Zulia states, where critical needs related to surge capacity and PPE are most pressing.



*International Medical Corps deployed an emergency medical field unit to Hospital Dr. Domingo Luciani to provide surge capacity, as the number of COVID-19 cases has continued to increase in Miranda state.*

In Miranda state, International Medical Corps is supporting the response of Hospital Dr. Domingo Luciani (HDL) to COVID-19. HDL has more than 400 inpatient beds and regularly provides services for more than 600 patients per day. Given its central location, it is one of the most important hospitals east of Caracas. Its catchment area includes Petare, a low-income neighborhood of approximately 360,000 people—the largest in Venezuela. As of August 31, the hospital had treated more than 4,000 patients with COVID-19 symptoms, and performed more than 3,600 rapid diagnostic tests. The hospital's inpatient capacity, however, has been severely limited, with more than 300 COVID-19 patients admitted to the facility.



*International Medical Corps is supporting health facilities in Zulia, Falcon, Miranda and Bolivar states*

<sup>3</sup>[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Main%20Findings%20WFP%20Food%20Security%20Assessment%20in%20Venezuela\\_January%202020-2.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Main%20Findings%20WFP%20Food%20Security%20Assessment%20in%20Venezuela_January%202020-2.pdf)

To increase the hospital's capacity, International Medical Corps installed an emergency medical field unit on September 2. The field unit is used to support triage and patient-screening activities, providing a space where suspected COVID-19 patients can be isolated and assessed before entering the main facility. To further safeguard patients and healthcare workers, International Medical Corps also provided the hospital with PPE, including 500 face shields, 500 face masks, 1,500 gloves and 1,000 protective coveralls and jumpsuits. Moving forward, as case numbers continue to increase, our team will continue to collaborate with HDL to identify critical gaps and areas for further support.

In addition, International Medical Corps has also supported two sentinel hospitals in Zulia state. Our team has established two emergency medical field units in Maracaibo and San Francisco municipalities, and has distributed medical supplies and PPE to ensure that healthcare workers are able to perform their duties safely.

Along with working to increase hospital capacity, our team is also working with health facilities to strengthen prevention efforts throughout the targeted districts. Between August 20 and September 3, International Medical Corps distributed 250 household hygiene kits to vulnerable residents in largely rural, remote areas of Miranda and Zulia states, as well in temporary COVID-19 shelters. Along with providing household hygiene kits that include soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, aquatabs and water spigots, our medical officer also conducted COVID-19 awareness and prevention sessions with residents. So far, International Medical Corps' team has reached at least 100 residents with COVID-19 awareness sessions.



*International Medical Corps' team distributed household hygiene kits to Los Naranjos rural community in El Hatillo, Miranda state.*