

The Venezuelan Faith Community as Regional and Local Humanitarian Aid Responders

Outreach Aid to the Americas

Humanitarian Aid from Catholic and Protestant Groups

According to a recent study by the World Church Services (WCS), Protestant faith communities are aiding Venezuelans mainly during their migration journeys and at their final destinations. This aid includes goods and services such as shelter, food, clothing, education, health care, and transportation. Aid from religious groups goes beyond attending to physical needs: they also offer psychosocial assistance, worship space, and pastoral support, according to the WCS study.

These humanitarian efforts are often local, volunteer-driven, short-term solutions; they are complementary to larger initiatives from NGOs and the UN. The conclusions drawn from the WCS's study are true for the Catholic Church's response to the crisis too.

Local faith communities are not always funded by international religious organizations, nor are they completely dependent on external donations. They fund themselves in creative ways, allowing them to operate despite the government's impediments and restrictions, which discourage foreign humanitarian efforts in the country. Local faith communities also often face their



Source: Human Rights Watch

own challenges, including political repression, which limits their reach and potential impact.



Cáritas is a Catholic aid organization, which has a significant presence in Venezuela and has been active in addressing the humanitarian crisis through work such as running food programs and providing health and nutrition services inside the country and for Venezuelan refugees outside the country. Despite its growth in the past five years, during which it expanded from 40 to 500 field offices in the country, it is operating at limited capacity due to government restrictions.



Source: Cáritas

Government-imposed Limitations on Aid

The Maduro regime's hostility towards the international humanitarian community and local NGOs, including local faith organizations, severely restricts these actors' ability to provide aid to Venezuelans inside the country, and makes this work dangerous. Many groups likely rely on cash donations and use non-traditional channels to send food and goods to avoid reporting donations out of fear of government reprisals. Also because of these restrictions, most humanitarian aid currently targets refugees and migrants. Only about 10 percent of external funding is directed to the 24 million Venezuelans living in extreme poverty inside the country, further worsening the national crisis.