

Women's, feminist and human rights organisations propose

#8ActionsForWomen

Caracas, 8 March 2022

This year, on the occasion of the International Women's Day, the United Nations has proposed the theme "*Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow*" to recognise the important and necessary contributions of women, adolescent girls and girls in building a more sustainable future for all people¹.

The 2030 Agenda for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals includes gender equality and the empowerment of all women, adolescents and girls as Goal 5. To achieve this, States must put an end to all forms of discrimination against women through the implementation of laws, public policies and actions based on the principles of equity and complementary initiatives that are socio-culturally and linguistically relevant and use an intercultural and intersectional gender approach. In the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the State enshrines equality as one of its highest values² and does not allow discrimination with the aim of achieving a democratic, participatory, multi-ethnic and multicultural society³. However, actions and political will are required to put this into practice.

Gender equality is today an ephemeral concept in Venezuela, a reality that is fading in the face of deepening gender gaps caused by the economic, social, political and humanitarian crisis that the country has been suffering for several years. This situation has been exacerbated by the impact of COVID 19, which exposes women, adolescents and girls to increased risk and discrimination.

It is impossible to speak of gender equality in Venezuela today, when:

- **2.52 million women, adolescents and girls are classified as vulnerable population⁴** who do not have the means to ensure their survival. They require a prompt institutional and community response to prevent, mitigate and respond to protection risks. Women, adolescent girls and girls represent 56% of the target population of the Humanitarian Response Plan by 2021⁵.
- **The number of femicides has more than doubled in the last 5 years, from 122 in 2016 to 290 in 2021⁶.** Femicides are the tip of the iceberg of violence against women that occurs in the country, not just in the form of domestic violence, but also in the context of violence at the community level, discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation, commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking and smuggling of women, adolescents and girls and different forms of sexual violence.
- **Human trafficking is the second cause of disappearances of girls, adolescents and women in Venezuela⁷** and represents an extreme form of gender-based violence that is invisible due to the very nature of the crime and that

¹UN Women. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/es/noticias/anuncio/2021/12/dia-internacional-de-la-mujer-2022-igualdad-de-genero-hoy-para-un-manana-sostenible>

²Article 2 of the CRBV, see: https://www.oas.org/dil/esp/constitucion_venezuela.pdf

³Preamble of the CRBV, see: https://www.oas.org/dil/esp/constitucion_venezuela.pdf

⁴Humanitarian Response Plan. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/venezuela_plan_de_respuesta_humanitaria_actualizacion_2021_junio2021.pdf

⁵Idem

⁶<https://cepaz.org/noticias/durante-el-mes-de-diciembre-hubo-34-femicidios-en-venezuela/> For other data collected by civil society organisations from 2020 and 2021 see Utopix, 2022, at:

<https://utopix.cc/pix/diciembre-de-2021-son-20-casos-de-femicidios-para-un-total-de-239-femicidios-este-ano/> and the latest data published by the Public Prosecutor's Office in 2016: Mujeres al Límite 2017, at:

<https://avesa.blog/informes-sobre-derechos-humanos-de-las-mujeres/mujeres-al-limite-2017/>

⁷Disappearances of girls, adolescents and women: a form of gender-based violence (2021). Available at: <https://exodo.org.ve/wo-content/uploads/2021/04/Desapariciones-de-niñas-adolescentes-y-mujeres-en-Venezuela.pdf>

disproportionately affects the female population⁸. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime confirms that there is a correlation between the contraction of the gross domestic product (GDP) and the increase in trafficking flows originating in Venezuela to countries in South America, Central America and Western, Southern, Central and South-eastern Europe. In the first half of 2021, only 147 Venezuelan women⁹ who were victims of trafficking were reported to have been rescued.

- Access to justice for women who have suffered from violence is not guaranteed. **91.5% of complaints of violence against women in the country are archived or dismissed**¹⁰. The number of reports of violence against women has also decreased drastically in the last 6 years¹¹. This is due to failures with the reception of complaints and women's mistrust of the institutional justice system, which is incapable of providing security, protection, effective legal protection and reparation.
- Violence against women violates fundamental individual and collective rights. For example, **97.7% of women with disabilities have been victims of physical violence while 79.5% have suffered sexual violence**, generating negative consequences in their personal lives¹² and affecting their individual rights. Among indigenous communities, where women are the guarantors of life, existence and permanence of the original cultures, holders of ancestral knowledge and transmitters of values, principles and mother tongues, violence against this population affects them personally, represents a threat to their cultural continuity and hinders the conservation and protection of mother earth and life on the planet.
- Indigenous women in Venezuela do not have the special protection they require due to the intersectionality of different forms of vulnerability: because they are women; because they are indigenous; because they live in poverty; and because of their cosmovision. Their human rights are not guaranteed, specifically the right to a dignified life, to a life free of violence, to food and to health. **10 out of 100 indigenous women live with HIV and do not have medicines to care for endemic diseases and reduce mortality rate**¹³. Obstetric violence and spiritual violence are increasing among this population, which is losing its ancestral customs. Commercial sexual exploitation is a serious reality in the states of Bolívar, Amazonas and Delta Amacuro, where the stereotype of the sexual inferiority of women prevails. They also experience political violence.
- Venezuela does not have gender identity or sexual orientation laws that provide protection for LGBTIQ+ women, nor comprehensive laws that enable women survivors to defend themselves against discrimination or access justice for hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Venezuelan women's right to health is violated because they do not have access to information, prevention, diagnosis and timely treatment programs for chronic health conditions such as cancer, hypertension and HIV.
- **Women workers are often paid 17.7% less than men to the same job**. They face challenges with obtaining employment because of their status as women and possible motherhood and they do not enjoy harassment-free workplaces¹⁴.
- Women from low-income sectors and the most vulnerable populations suffer from time poverty in addition to economic poverty. **These women spend between 13 and 16 hours a day on care work and have no time for paid employment**¹⁵. The utility services, energy and transportation crises in the country make this burden of care even heavier. Women who accompany their children in public hospitals do unpaid work and cannot access any support from

⁸Public Prosecutor's Office, data provided by the General Directorate for Crime Prevention in: Recommendations for a public policy for the identification and accompaniment of victims (2019). available at:

<https://exodo.org.ve/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Desapariciones-de-ninas-adolescentes-y-mujeres-en-Venezuela.pdf>

⁹See: <https://rednaranja.com.ve/activismo/mulier-presenta-su-informe-libresyseguras-sobre-venezolanas-rescatadas-de-redes-de-trata-de-personas-en-el-2020/>

¹⁰According to data presented by the Attorney General of the Republic for 2020, of the total number of complaints received for violence against women (27,007) only 8.5% were brought before the courts (2,297). See: Report "Venezolanas en Emergencia". (2021). Available at: https://avesawordpress.files.wordpress.com/2021/12/venezolanas_emergencia_2021.pdf

¹¹In 2014, the number of complaints received by the Public Prosecutor's Office for violence against women was 70,812 (see Mujeres al Límite 2017, at:

<https://avesa.blog/informes-sobre-derechos-humanos-de-las-mujeres/mujeres-al-limite-2017/>) while in 2022, according to information from the Attorney General of the Republic, this figure was 27,007. See:

https://avesawordpress.files.wordpress.com/2021/12/venezolanas_emergencia_2021.pdf)

¹²See: <http://www.diarioeltiempo.com.ve/noticias/las-mujeres-con-discapacidad-son-mas-vulnerables-padecer-violencia-de-genero#>

¹³Based on data published by the Observatorio de Ecología Política de Venezuela.

¹⁴ENCOVI 2021. See <https://www.cinco8.com/perspectivas/como-la-brecha-salarial-de-genero-afecta-a-las-venezolanas/>

¹⁵Op. Cit.

the Venezuelan State¹⁶. They are not recognised for their work as non-professional carers, an activity that represents a significant saving for the health system. There are no public care policies in the country. Care work overload for women multiply the feminisation of poverty and makes them more vulnerable to violence.

- **Venezuelan public education is in crisis. There is a shortage of teachers - mostly women - estimated at 24.9%, and of this total, 40% is due to forced migration¹⁷.** Student dropout rates at elementary and middle school levels have reached 15% in the last three years¹⁸. In addition, there has been a generalised deterioration in services (water, electricity, internet) and infrastructure¹⁹, an increase in barriers in terms of obtaining educational materials and difficulties with accessing the schools themselves due to the transport crisis. The extreme poverty of the population²⁰ and the significant technological gaps limit access to e-learning²¹. All of these factors have negative consequences on the educational process, general wellbeing and mental health of children and adolescents. In the case of girls and adolescents, additional barriers exist related to care burdens and menstrual poverty.
- **Women's sexual and reproductive rights are violated in Venezuela. Less than half of women aged 15-49²² and just 37.9% of sexually active adolescents use contraceptive methods²³.** The low prevalence rate is due to lack of access to contraceptives as **more than 50% of women cannot afford to buy them due to their high cost**. This results in unwanted pregnancies, high-risk adolescent pregnancies, unsafe abortions and ultimately a loss of physical autonomy for women.

Given this critical situation, it is necessary to carry out #8ActionsForWomen in order to guarantee the human rights and comprehensive and effective protection of Venezuelan women, girls and adolescents. Specifically, we call for:

Donors, UN agencies and international humanitarian organisations:

1. Ensure that 100% of the actions of the humanitarian response and development programs use a **participatory and survivor-centred approach** in which women, girls and adolescents have leading roles to finding their own solutions to the situations of violence. They should lead their own integral development (economic, psychological, social and political participation) and that of their families and communities. This will help women access livelihoods and promote their economic independence and autonomy.
2. Ensure that there is adequate gender mainstreaming²⁴ in humanitarian responses; that all actions are aimed at **reducing gender gaps and do not reinforce gender or sexist stereotypes**. These measures will contribute to making gender equality possible.
3. Demand that all actions and programs use an **intersectional²⁵, culturally diverse and multi-ethnic approach to avoid generating intra-gender gaps** and guarantee a real and effective response to groups of women with different vulnerabilities including women from indigenous communities, women with disabilities, women with HIV, elderly women, lesbians, trans women, rural women, women caregivers, women who are deprived of their liberty and others.
4. Urge the Venezuelan State to **update, produce and publish statistics that facilitate the design of public policies for the eradication of violence** and promote the design of programs and systems for gathering, documenting and analysing data regarding the different realities and problems that affect girls, adolescents and women. In addition, demand that the Venezuelan State establish mechanisms or synergies for the integration, collaboration and active participation of women, feminist, social and community organisations and human rights defenders from Venezuelan civil society.

¹⁶More information at: <https://www.lavidadenos.com/lasvocesdeljm/category/madres/>

¹⁷Assessment of Basic Education in Venezuela: Final Report September 2021. See: https://eneed-venezuela.org/wp-content/uploads/VNZ_Education_Diagnostic_spanish.pdf

¹⁸DEV, CIED and UCAB, 2021, see: <https://elucabista.com/2021/11/10/la-escuela-venezolana-perdio-12-millones-de-alumnos-revela-nuevo-estudio-de-la-ucab/>

¹⁹Idem.

²⁰Based on information provided by the Unidad Democrática del Sector Educativo, (UDSE), which it described as an "educational catastrophe".

²¹Teaching strategy used as part of COVID-19 containment measures.

²²Study conducted among women in Caracas and the state of Miranda.

²³AVESA Note. Available at: <https://avesa.blog/2021/02/09/impacto-de-la-emergencia-por-covid-19-en-la-prestacion-y-acceso-a-los-servicios-de-salud-sexual-y-reproductiva-en-distrito-capital-y-estado-miranda/>

²⁴Gender mainstreaming is a strategy to ensure that women's concerns and experiences, as well as those of men, are an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and social spheres. This ensures that women and men can equally benefit and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality (ECOSOC, 1997).

²⁵Intersectionality is a tool for analysis, advocacy and policy making that addresses multiple forms of discrimination and helps us understand how different sets of identities influence a person's access to rights and opportunities (AWID, 2004).

5. **Strengthen women's, feminist, community and human rights organisations working on women's, girls' and adolescents' issues and protect the physical and personal safety of women defenders and feminists.** It is urgent to avoid using local organisations as sub-contractors. Women-led and/or women's rights organisations are among the most valuable resources of the humanitarian response that provide assistance to communities because: a) they are on the front line of the response; b) they have the best knowledge of women's needs and remain in the territory, even when international organisations move on to the next crisis; c) they often have a comprehensive and long-term approach that goes beyond the short-term humanitarian assistance model. We request that the Humanitarian Coordinator leads a contingency and risk mitigation plan for local organisations, specifically women's rights organisations. The detentions, abuses, raids and property seizures that different local organisations have experienced erode humanitarian spaces and put their work, freedom and personal safety at risk.
6. **Establish gender-responsive budgets that guarantee resources for women's and feminist organisations and establish effective mechanisms of transparency and accountability.** In accordance with the international commitments of "localisation" that have been signed by international organisations and UN agencies, such as the "Grand Bargain" and "Charter for Change", budgets should allocate 25% of funding directly to local organisations.

To Venezuelan institutions:

7. Ensure the **creation of a mechanism for the democratic participation of women's civil society organisations in the National Commission for the Fulfilment of Women's Right to a Life Free of Violence**, an institution that was recently created as part of the reform of the Organic Law on Women's Right to a Life Free of Violence in December 2021.
8. **Strengthen the capacities and tools of public servants and all of the institutions that are part of the Specialised System for the Administration of Justice of Crimes of Violence against Women** to guarantee effective access to justice for girls, adolescent girls and women in Venezuela, and to enable the monitoring and control of the protection and security measures decreed by the relevant authorities, thereby guaranteeing comprehensive reparations.

8 Actions For Women

- Academia de Solidaridad Lucelia.
- Acción Campesina
- Acción Solidaria
- ALAPLAF
- ALMA
- APFAS
- AsoVida - Asociación por la Vida Estado de Mérida.
- Ateneo Ecológico del Orinoco "Simón Bolívar"
- ATRAEM
- AVESA
- Azul Positivo
- Berenjena Empoderada
- CAIPI
- Casa del Nuevo Pueblo.
- Cátedra de la Paz y Derechos Humanos "Mons. Oscar A. Romero"
- CAUCE
- Centro de Derechos Humanos de la UCAB Guayana
- Centro de Educación Integral Asociación Civil Gurrufio Portuguesa.
- Centro de Estudios de la Mujer Universidad Central de Venezuela.
- Centro LGTIQ+
- CEPAZ
- CERLAS- Red Entrelazadas
- Club de Leones Internacional
- Club de Leones Lechería Mujeres e Innovación
- Codhez
- COFAVIC
- Comité de Derechos Humanos de la Guajira.
- Con Ellas
- Empre Mujeres Programa de Desarrollo Integral de la Mujer. Por la Fundación Soy Crear
- Éxodo
- Feminismo INC.
- FUNCAMAMA
- Fundación Mavid Carabobo
- Fundación para la Defensa Integral de los Derechos Humanos de los Pueblos y Comunidades Indígenas del Estado de Zulia.
- Fundación Parkinson Carabobo
- Fundación Váyalo
- Fundación Vida Jurídica
- FundaMujer
- Hombres por la Equidad e Igualdad.
- Juventud Preventiva
- Ladeshu -Laboratorio de Desarrollo Humano
- Médicos Unidos. Carabobo, Venezuela
- Mujeres para el Mundo.
- Mujeres sin Fronteras
- Mujeres Unidas por la Salud. (MUSAS)
- Mullier
- No Permitas Malos Tratos.
- Nuevo Amanecer
- Observatorio Guayanés de Violencia de Género.
- Observatorio Insular de Violencia de Género.
- Observatorio Venezolano de los Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres.
- Padres Organizados
- Para Salud de Todas - Alianza de organizaciones
- Parir con Placer
- Prepara Familia
- Red de Mujeres Portuguesa
- Red Mérida Feminista
- Red Naranja
- Red Sororidad - Pacto entre Ellas
- Red Venezolana de Gente Positiva
- Resonalia
- SOMOS
- Transparencia Venezuela.
- ULA, Comisión de la Mujer
- UNIANDES
- Unión Afirmativa
- Uqira
- Venezolanas GLOBALES
- Voces Vitales Venezuela
- Women Riots
- Women's Link Worldwide
- Red Rosa Venezuela