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and Cooperation SDC



**SWISS  
COOPERATION  
PROGRAMME IN  
VENEZUELA**  
2025-2028

**FOREIGN POLICY  
STRATEGY  
2024-2027**



**INTERNATIONAL  
COOPERATION  
STRATEGY  
2025-2028**



**SWISS  
COOPERATION  
PROGRAMME  
IN VENEZUELA  
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# Context

Venezuela has been enduring a severe political and economic crisis for years, and it is now one of the poorest countries in Latin America. The situation has worsened since 2016, triggering a massive wave of migration: around 7.9 million people – roughly one in four Venezuelans – have left the country. Since the end of 2024, however, restrictive US migration policies have forced increasing numbers of people to return.

Those who remain in mobility, particularly the three million people in the border region with Colombia, face enormous risks. The frequent reports of extortion, human trafficking, and gender-based violence are alarming. Meanwhile, inside Venezuela, the population continues to suffer from a profound economic and social crisis: over four million people are malnourished, and approximately 70% of the nation's roughly 28 million inhabitants live below the poverty line. These challenges have been exacerbated by the continual imposition

of governmental and institutional measures which place greater constraints on the exercise of citizens' rights. This has led to increasing limitations on civil liberties, political dissent and freedom of the press, further intensifying hardship among the population. These social and political vulnerabilities are compounded by frequent natural hazards including floods, landslides, storms, fires, and earthquakes – which are worsened by climate change, poor infrastructure maintenance and unregulated urban development. As a result, the population remains extremely vulnerable, with disasters magnifying the effects of economic collapse, political repression and migration pressures.

Due to these self-reinforcing challenges, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has progressively included the protracted crisis in Venezuela in the scope of its humanitarian engagement. Between 2016 and 2019, Switzerland's humanitarian

support, coordinated through the embassy in Colombia, focused on protecting Venezuelan refugees. This approach was subsequently extended to Venezuela itself, aiming to address the crisis at its source while promoting early protection and preventive measures. Since 2019, the Swiss embassy in Venezuela has been implementing humanitarian programmes directly in country, with a focus on saving lives, enhancing the resilience of local actors and providing support to local communities.



# Results and lessons learnt 2020–2024

## Support for migrants and displaced people

Millions of people in Venezuela have been forced to leave their homes in search of safety, food and basic services. Switzerland has therefore focused its humanitarian aid on refugees, internally displaced people and those returning to their communities. More than 220,000 people received direct support, including psychosocial care for those affected by violence and stress, legal assistance to help them understand their rights, access to reliable information, basic healthcare and safe spaces for women and children. Families who had been separated were also helped to reconnect with their relatives, restoring vital social ties.

## Improved nutrition, health and livelihoods

Children, adolescents and pregnant women are among the groups most affected by food shortages and limited access to healthcare. With Swiss support, more than 34,000

children received supplementary food and essential medical care. In addition, a Swiss contribution enabled 7,300 children to return to school, giving them not only a daily meal but also a safe learning environment. Beyond immediate assistance, Switzerland supported community-based projects that helped vulnerable families establish vegetable gardens and small livestock farming. These activities improved diets and allowed families to generate income by selling surplus products on local markets.

## Strengthening humanitarian action and institutions

Switzerland also contributed to improving how humanitarian aid is delivered in Venezuela. It provided experts from Swiss Humanitarian Aid, and helped finance a joint humanitarian fund that mainly supports local organisations and coordinated donors from more than ten countries. When the Venezuelan Red Cross faced government interference, Switzerland

intervened quickly through diplomatic and humanitarian channels. As a result, the organisation was stabilised and is once again active nationwide, with more than 2,500 volunteers supporting people in need.

## Outlook

Following the 2024 presidential elections, Venezuela's political and economic situation has further deteriorated. Many people continue to face repression, migration pressures, climate-related risks and failing infrastructure. Between 2025 and 2028, Switzerland will adopt a flexible approach, focusing on migration-related risks along the Colombia–Venezuela border. It will continue to provide urgent assistance while strengthening local capacities and resilience, supporting communities and organisations to develop longer-term, locally driven solutions. Switzerland will also place greater emphasis on prevention, especially disaster risk reduction, to help communities

# Switzerland's commitment – priority areas for 2025–2028

## Protection for migrants in the border region with Colombia

Migration to and from Venezuela is expected to continue in the coming years. Many people travel under extremely difficult and dangerous conditions, especially women, children and young people. The border regions with Colombia are of particular concern, as they are the main transit corridors for people moving onwards to other countries in the region. Along these routes, migrants are exposed to violence, exploitation, human trafficking and forced recruitment by non-state armed groups.

Switzerland therefore places strong emphasis on protecting people in mobility in these border areas. It works to strengthen the capacity of national and local authorities, humanitarian organisations and community groups so that they can better identify risks, prevent abuse

and provide protection services to those most in need. This includes access to legal assistance, safe spaces, psychosocial support and referral to essential services. Close cooperation with the Swiss team in Colombia ensures that activities on both sides of the border are well aligned and contribute to a coherent regional humanitarian response.

The protection of women along migration routes is a central priority. Many women face unsafe living conditions and are often forced to make extremely difficult choices to survive. Swiss-supported projects promote gender equality and the protection of women, while also supporting border communities in meeting basic needs such as food, water, healthcare and income. By strengthening local livelihoods and income opportunities, these initiatives help communities reduce their dependence on

external aid and create safer environments for both residents and people in mobility.

## From emergency relief to prevention

The situation in Venezuela shows little sign of rapid improvement, underlining the limits of short-term humanitarian response alone. To achieve more lasting results, Switzerland is increasingly focusing on medium-term strategies that prioritise prevention, preparedness and resilience. A key element of this approach is the localisation of cooperation. Switzerland aims to empower national and local organisations and institutions to take the lead in designing and implementing activities that respond to real needs on the ground.

To support this shift, Switzerland works with umbrella organisations that provide coordination, training and technical support to local actors. This helps strengthen their

structures, improve management capacities and expand their reach. By moving beyond immediate relief towards prevention and local empowerment, Switzerland seeks to address the underlying causes of vulnerability and support sustainable improvements in communities across Venezuela.

### **Reducing the risk of natural disasters**

Due to its geographical location and climatic conditions, Venezuela is highly exposed to natural hazards such as floods, landslides, forest fires and droughts. However, disaster preparedness and prevention have long been neglected. As a result, tens of thousands of people are affected by natural disasters every year, often with little warning and limited protection.

Building on more than 25 years of Swiss engagement in Latin America and the Caribbean, Switzerland is committed to

strengthening disaster risk reduction at both national and local levels. A particular focus lies on assisting vulnerable communities in better understanding risks and preparing for emergencies. This includes training, early warning systems, clearly defined response plans, nature-based solutions and measures to strengthen cooperation within communities. Through partnerships with national research institutes and universities, Switzerland also supports the training of specialists and the development of long-term institutional knowledge needed to reduce disaster risks sustainably.

### **Cross-cutting themes**

The principles of 'leave no one behind', gender equality and good governance are core elements of the Swiss programme in Venezuela. Particular attention is given to the most vulnerable groups, including women, children, migrants and

marginalised communities. Governance is addressed by strengthening local organisations and, where possible, supporting local authorities so they can better plan, manage and deliver services. Conflict-sensitive management, regular analysis and staff training help ensure that activities avoid harm and contribute to social cohesion, violence reduction and conflict prevention.

## Disaster risk reduction



## Humanitarian assistance and local resilience building to crises



## Protection of vulnerable migrants







# Approach and partners

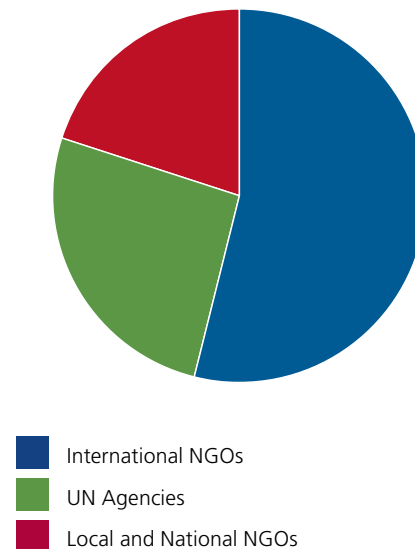
Switzerland collaborates with a wide network of partners, including UN agencies such as OCHA, UNHCR, IOM and WFP, the Red Cross Movement, as well as national and international NGOs and civil society organisations. It also maintains close dialogue with government authorities, particularly in the field of disaster risk reduction, with the aim of reducing vulnerabilities and strengthening local response capacities.

Given the protracted nature of the crisis, Switzerland seeks to use its humanitarian funds in the most efficient and sustainable way possible. Its approach focuses on strengthening the resilience of vulnerable populations and increasingly localising aid by supporting national and community-based actors, thereby fostering ownership and lasting results. To maximise its overall impact, Switzerland leverages its different instruments – humanitarian aid, peace building and diplomatic dialogue – in a complementary manner.

Switzerland also works closely with its embassy in Colombia to ensure a coherent regional approach to displacement and mobility. In addition, Switzerland plays an active role in UN reform efforts in Venezuela, promoting stronger coordination among agencies and contributing to donor coordination to ensure that international funding is used as effectively as possible. Finally, the Swiss embassy in Caracas is part of the decentralised regional rapid response network managed from Lima, enabling swift reactions to emerging humanitarian needs after natural hazards.

For the period 2025–28, Switzerland foresees an estimated allocation of CHF 16.6 million to its humanitarian programme in Venezuela. The programme is reviewed annually and adjusted to evolving needs, based on regular context analyses, yearly planning and careful management of resources to ensure effectiveness and relevance.

## Swiss Engagement in Venezuela



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### Indicative humanitarian funds

CHF 16.6 million for the period 2025–28\*

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### Intervention zones

Cf. the map to the right; the priority regions are hatched.

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### Priority Areas

Protection of vulnerable migrants

Humanitarian assistance and local resilience building to crises

Disaster risk reduction

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\* The information relating to the financial framework is indicative. It serves solely as a basis for the provisional expenditure plans, which are reviewed each year by the Federal Council and Parliament.





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