



# Measures to address the Venezuelan humanitarian crisis

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## ABSTRACT

Venezuela is currently undergoing a severe economic crisis and consequently significant humanitarian suffering. Much of the population has inadequate access to electricity, food and water. In light of the COVID-19 crisis, Venezuela's weak healthcare system is particularly concerning. Venezuela's problems have affected the whole region; more than five million Venezuelans have fled abroad, in particular to Colombia. Although host countries have often gone to admirable lengths to accommodate Venezuelan arrivals, they are struggling with the magnitude of the influx. This has led to humanitarian problems in these countries and could cause them to turn away Venezuelans in the future. This paper, therefore, suggests measures that could be taken to improve humanitarian conditions, both in Venezuela and in other Latin American countries. The paper also considers how the Venezuelan economy could be strengthened, addressing the root cause of these problems.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The paper highlights three problems that have hindered efforts to address the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela and other Latin American countries. These are:

1. **Maduro's hostility to aid.** Nicolás Maduro has previously rejected American aid shipments to Venezuela, deploying the army to ensure that they cannot enter the country. Public comments, suggesting that Venezuela does not need aid, might imply that Maduro either does not understand or care about the gravity of the humanitarian situation. In fact, it should be noted that political incentives make it difficult for Maduro to accept this aid; the USA and Juan Guaidó, Maduro's political rival, have been explicit that it is part of an effort to remove him from power. Maduro's distrust of the USA may also make him fear that American aid shipments contain weapons to be used to overthrow him.
2. **The underfunding of humanitarian aid in Venezuela.** Contrary to claims that Maduro is blocking relief, he has allowed numerous aid organisations, such as the Red Cross, into the country. However, insufficient funding from the international community reduces the ability of these organisations to deliver aid. The scale of the shortfall is evident when international funding relief for Venezuela is compared with that of Syria. Venezuela also receives bilateral aid, where resources are given directly to either Maduro or Guaidó, though this aid does not seem particularly effective at improving the humanitarian situation.
3. **Resource constraints in other Latin American countries.** Although Colombia and other countries have been generous towards the millions of Venezuelans whom they are hosting, Latin American governments are often unable to properly support so many Venezuelans in addition to their own citizens. Although these countries have received some international support, it is insufficient given the scale of the influx. If support continues to be limited, the humanitarian situation may further deteriorate, and Venezuelans may face greater hostility from local people in these countries. This could reduce the ability of Venezuelans to improve their lives by going abroad.

The paper provides four sets of recommendations, each identifying ways of improving the humanitarian situation in Venezuela and other Latin American countries.

1. **Increasing aid to Venezuela.** Given that many aid organisations are already able to act effectively within Venezuela, wealthy governments and philanthropists could improve the situation in the country simply by donating more to these organisations, increasing their capacity to provide relief. Additionally, an aid verification mechanism, run by a reasonably neutral actor, such as the United Nations, could address any doubts about the contents of American aid shipments. This may make Maduro more likely to accept them in the future.
2. **Increasing support for host countries.** Governments and aid organisations are already carrying out several effective programmes to help Venezuelans currently living outside of Venezuela. These include specialist health clinics and direct cash transfers. A range of actors could provide greater support for these programmes, enabling them to help more people and placing them on a more sustainable footing.

3. **Enhanced collaboration between host countries.** Latin American governments are already coordinating to improve their response to the emigration of five million Venezuelans. This coordination should be scaled up. Improved coordination would allow for the sharing of best practices and better enable governments to tackle transnational issues, such as people smuggling. Additionally, the harmonisation of immigration systems could reduce incentives for Venezuelans to go to some countries rather than others. This could reduce the extent to which Venezuelans are currently incentivised to cluster in a small number of countries, imposing disproportionate pressure upon them.
4. **Improving Venezuela's economic situation.** Improving Venezuela's economy could address the root cause of the humanitarian crisis. A simple measure to help the economy would be to roll back broad American sanctions, which have restricted Venezuela's access to foreign currency. In the long term, significant investment will be needed. Development banks are likely to be particularly well-suited to this task. Given the key role that oil has previously had in Venezuela's economy, the energy sector is an obvious candidate for investment. It is important, however, to ensure a diverse economy, given that overreliance on oil was one of the causes of Venezuela's economic decline.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Venezuela is undergoing one of the most severe economic crises in modern history.<sup>1</sup> GDP has fallen by around 50% since 2013 and the Bolívar has suffered from hyperinflation in the region of 10 million percent, prompting much of the population to switch to American Dollars.<sup>2</sup>

Several factors have contributed to the economic crisis, which occurred even though Venezuela has the largest proven oil reserves in the world.<sup>3</sup> In 2003, in response to a strike, Venezuela's president at the time, Hugo Chávez, fired almost half of the workforce of the state oil company, *Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA)*.<sup>4</sup> Skilled technicians and managers were replaced with large numbers of unskilled partisan supporters.<sup>5</sup> The ensuing corruption, which reduced investment as well as technical expertise, meant that oil production slightly decreased over the next decade and plummeted thereafter.<sup>6</sup> Production in other sectors of the economy was hindered by currency and price controls, which caused major economic distortions and incentivised corruption.<sup>7</sup> During his time in power, Chávez also borrowed heavily to fund ambitious social programmes.<sup>8</sup> Although the programmes cut Venezuela's poverty rates, they meant that Nicolás Maduro faced a severe debt burden when taking power in 2013.<sup>9</sup> The government had also become incredibly reliant on oil revenue, with no 'rainy day fund' set aside, unlike Chile or some other countries.<sup>10</sup> Venezuela was therefore severely exposed to the 2014 decrease in oil prices.<sup>11</sup> Maduro tried to meet the high debt burden, despite having limited revenue from oil or other economic activity, by printing money, triggering hyperinflation.<sup>12</sup> Since

<sup>1</sup> Steve Johnson, 'Venezuela's Collapse Eclipses Post-Soviet Crash' *Financial Times* (14 February 2019) <<https://www.ft.com/content/66caf594-2f7f-11e9-8744-e7016697f225>> accessed 9 May 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Valentina Sanchez, 'Venezuela Hyperinflation Hits 10 Million Percent. "Shock Therapy" May Be Only Chance to Undo the Economic Damage' (*CNBC*, 3 August 2019) <<https://www.cnbc.com/2019/08/02/venezuela-inflation-at-10-million-percent-its-time-for-shock-therapy.html>> accessed 23 March 2020; 'More Dollars and Fewer Protests in Venezuela' *The Economist* (18 December 2019) <<https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2019/12/18/more-dollars-and-fewer-protests-in-venezuela>> accessed 25 July 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Max Fisher and Amanda Taub, 'How Venezuela Stumbled to the Brink of Collapse' *The New York Times* (14 May 2017) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/14/world/americas/venezuela-collapse-analysis-interpret.html>> accessed 23 March 2020.

<sup>4</sup> 'Venezuela's Oil Diaspora - Brain Haemorrhage' *The Economist* (19 July 2014) <<https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2014/07/19/brain-haemorrhage>> accessed 16 May 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Fisher and Taub (n 3).

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*; Moises Rendon, 'Are Sanctions Working in Venezuela?' (*Center for Strategic & International Studies*, 3 September 2019) <<https://www.csis.org/analysis/are-sanctions-working-venezuela>> accessed 23 March 2020; Moises Rendon and Claudia Fernandez, 'Corruption in Venezuela: The Alex Saab Case' (*Center for Strategic & International Studies*, 24 June 2020) <<https://www.csis.org/analysis/corruption-venezuela-alex-saab-case>> accessed 24 July 2020; 'Venezuela's Oil Diaspora - Brain Haemorrhage' (n 4).

<sup>7</sup> Andres Schipani, 'Venezuela's FX Changes: Is That It?' *Financial Times* (6 January 2015) <<https://www.ft.com/content/4fa46d61-0e9b-305a-9c97-41ed193b5b04>> accessed 16 May 2020; Rendon and Fernandez (n 6); 'What's behind Venezuela's Political Crisis?' (*BBC News*, 13 January 2020) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-36319877>> accessed 23 March 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Tepperman and Dany Bahar, 'How to Repair Venezuela's Shattered Economy' (*Foreign Policy*, 21 October 2019) <<https://foreignpolicy.com/podcasts/and-now-the-hard-part/how-to-repair-venezuelas-shattered-economy/>> accessed 10 May 2020.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*; Fisher and Taub (n 3).

<sup>10</sup> Michael Fox, 'The Human Cost of the US Sanctions on Venezuela' (*Deutsche Welle*, 1 October 2019) <<https://www.dw.com/en/the-human-cost-of-the-us-sanctions-on-venezuela/a-50647399>> accessed 23 March 2020; Tepperman and Bahar (n 8).

<sup>11</sup> Gideon Long, 'Hollowed-out Venezuela Counts the Cost of Crisis' *Financial Times* (4 September 2018) <<https://www.ft.com/content/55bd21a8-b02e-11e8-8d14-6f049d06439c>> accessed 23 March 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Fisher and Taub (n 3).



2014, the USA, alongside the EU and other actors, have placed sanctions upon specific Venezuelan officials, in response to corruption and other crimes.<sup>13</sup> From 2017, however, in an apparent attempt to bring about regime change, the Trump administration has also imposed broader sanctions, including ones which severely restricts PDVSA's ability to sell oil.<sup>14</sup> This deprives the Maduro government of its main source of revenue and foreign currency.<sup>15</sup> The COVID-19 crisis adds additional economic pressure. For instance, the associated global economic downturn has harmed the earning power of Venezuelans abroad, reducing the scale of remittances into the country.<sup>16</sup> The global downturn has also reduced oil demand, suppressing prices and combining with American sanctions to further hinder Venezuela's ability to profit from oil sales.<sup>17</sup> Broad American sanctions have continued despite the additional economic pressures caused by COVID-19.<sup>18</sup>

This economic crisis has caused profound suffering among the Venezuelan population. For example, more than 90% of the population was thought to be living below the poverty line in 2018.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, power cuts have been a problem in Venezuela since 2017 and became more severe in 2019; there were more than 20,000 power failures across the country between January and May 2019.<sup>20</sup> Medical supplies are scarce, with the Venezuelan Pharmaceutical Federation reporting in October 2018 that 85% of essential medicines were scarce.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the Norwegian Refugee Council has suggested that Venezuela's ability to deal with COVID-19 is comparable to that of war-torn Syrian and Yemen.<sup>22</sup> Even access to necessities such as water and food has become increasingly limited. More than 1.7 million people faced water rationing during 2016 and 2017, having access to water only two days a week on average. Water rationing is an ongoing problem.<sup>23</sup> Around 80% of households were food-insecure in 2017, largely as a result of a disconnect between wages and food prices.<sup>24</sup>

The Maduro government is unlikely to be using its limited resources to help citizens in the most effective way possible. For instance, the *Comité Local de Abastecimiento y Producción* (CLAP) food distribution programme has been reported to be used less as a way to alleviate humanitarian hardship than to take "advantage of the population's hardship to strengthen [the government's]

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<sup>13</sup> Rendon (n 6).

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Marianna Parraga and Roslan Khasawneh, 'Exclusive: Oil Tankers Carrying Two Months of Venezuelan Output Stuck at Sea' (*Reuters*, 24 June 2020) <<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-oil-sanctions-tankers-exclusive/UKKBN23V0KK>> accessed 22 July 2020; Mark Weisbrot and Jeffrey Sachs, 'Economic Sanctions as Collective Punishment: The Case of Venezuela' (*Center for Economic and Policy Research*, April 2019) <<https://cepr.net/report/economic-sanctions-as-collective-punishment-the-case-of-venezuela/>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Gideon Long, 'Venezuela Faces Threat of Coronavirus Catastrophe' *Financial Times* (29 March 2020) <<https://www.ft.com/content/0e4ac921-e4ba-4098-a80a-63a0ce803f65>> accessed 11 April 2020.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Julian Borger, 'US Ignores Calls to Suspend Venezuela and Iran Sanctions amid Coronavirus Pandemic' *The Guardian* (Washington DC, 31 March 2020) <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/31/us-ignores-global-appeals-suspend-sanctions-coronavirus-pandemic-iran-venezuela>> accessed 22 July 2020.

<sup>19</sup> Oriana Van Praag, 'Understanding the Venezuelan Refugee Crisis' (*Wilson Center*, 13 September 2019) <<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/understanding-the-venezuelan-refugee-crisis>> accessed 23 March 2020.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> 'IMF Rejects Crisis-Hit Venezuela's Request for \$5 Bn Virus Aid' (*France 24*, 18 March 2020) <<https://www.france24.com/en/20200318-imf-rejects-crisis-hit-venezuela-s-request-for-5-bn-virus-aid>> accessed 9 May 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Van Praag (n 19).

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

political control”; distribution is directed largely towards supporters of Maduro.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, corruption decreases the amount of food that the programme can buy with its budget.<sup>26</sup>

Despite excitement about cryptocurrencies, such as Bitcoin, as a way of relieving the economic crisis, they are no solution.<sup>27</sup> Extensive use of cryptocurrency would place a significant strain on already crippled energy and data services.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, since the value of cryptocurrencies is often volatile, they are far from ideal as a store of value or medium of exchange.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, although the Maduro government claimed in 2018 to have launched its own cryptocurrency, the Petro, this is “nowhere to be found”, according to Reuters.<sup>30</sup> The Petro is not traded on online cryptocurrency markets, nor accepted in Venezuelan shops, and the crude reserves supposedly backing it up are in an area with little oil extraction.<sup>31</sup>

As well as an economic crisis, Venezuela faces a political crisis. In the wake of unfair elections, both Maduro and Juan Guaidó, the leader of the country’s National Assembly, claim to be Venezuela’s rightful leader. Maduro is recognised by China, Russia and the United Nations (UN), while Guaidó is recognised by the USA, the European Parliament and many European countries.<sup>32</sup> It is unclear how the deadlock will be broken. Maduro continues to have the support of the military.<sup>33</sup> He has also been effective at diverting attention away from problems in Venezuela by highlighting major protests in other Latin American countries.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, the opposition, led by Guaidó, is increasingly divided.<sup>35</sup> Its popularity has also started to wane since the beginning of 2019, following a corruption scandal and failed attempts to bring aid into the country.<sup>36</sup> Government interference in opposition parties may also reduce their effectiveness, but will not increase Maduro’s legitimacy.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Moises Rendon and Jacob Mendales, ‘The Maduro Diet: Food v. Freedom in Venezuela’ (*Center for Strategic & International Studies*, 9 July 2018) <<https://www.csis.org/analysis/maduro-diet-food-v-freedom-venezuela>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>26</sup> Rendon and Fernandez (n 6).

<sup>27</sup> Lautaro Grinspan, ‘Want to Help People in Venezuela? Your Best Bet Might Be Bitcoin.’ (*Vox*, 10 July 2019) <<https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2019/7/10/18700235/cryptocurrency-venezuela-humanitarian-aid-maduro-bitcoin>> accessed 25 April 2020.

<sup>28</sup> Mathew Di Salvo, ‘Why Are Venezuelans Seeking Refuge in Crypto-Currencies?’ (*BBC News*, 19 March 2019) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-47553048>> accessed 23 March 2020.

<sup>29</sup> Grinspan (n 27).

<sup>30</sup> Brian Ellsworth, ‘In Venezuela, New Cryptocurrency Is Nowhere to Be Found’ (*Reuters*, 30 August 2018) <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cryptocurrency-venezuela-specialreport-idUSKCN1LF15U>> accessed 4 May 2020.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Luc Cohen and Matt Spetalnick, ‘Venezuela’s Rival Factions Take Power Struggle to U.N. after Talks Fail’ (*Reuters*, 19 September 2019) <<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-venezuela-usa-un-idUKKBN1W41D3>> accessed 13 May 2020; ‘What’s behind Venezuela’s Political Crisis?’ (n 7); Sam Jones and Patrick Wintour, ‘EU Countries Recognise Juan Guaidó as Interim Venezuelan Leader’ *The Guardian* (London, 4 February 2019) <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/04/juan-guaido-interim-venezuela-leader-europe>> accessed 9 May 2020.

<sup>33</sup> Ryan Dube, ‘Venezuela’s Nicolás Maduro, Once Thought Ripe for Ouster, Looks Firmly in Place’ *Wall Street Journal* (8 December 2019) <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/venezuelas-nicolas-maduro-once-thought-ripe-for-ouster-looks-firmly-in-place-11575801000>> accessed 23 March 2020.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> ‘Venezuela Court Ousts Opposition Parties’ Leaders’ (*BBC News*, 17 June 2020) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-53080659>> accessed 22 July 2020; Alex Vasquez, ‘Maduro Orders Takeover of Guaidó’s Party Ahead of Venezuela Vote’ (*Bloomberg.com*, 7 July 2020) <<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-07-07/maduro-orders-takeover-of-guaido-s-party-ahead-of-venezuela-vote>> accessed 22 July 2020.

In response to the harsh conditions, many Venezuelans have emigrated: more than 5 million, according to the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform, a confederation of groups that help Venezuelans in other Latin American countries.<sup>38</sup> These people have mostly stayed in Latin America, with Colombia being by far the most affected; around 1.8 million Venezuelans have gone to this country, according to the Regional Platform.<sup>39</sup> For comparison, the Syrian conflict has led to around 6.7 million people fleeing Syria, and the Rohingya crisis has caused 1.2 million people to flee Myanmar.<sup>40</sup> As this paper highlights, the influx of Venezuelans into other Latin American countries has caused significant pressures.

Given the magnitude and long-term nature of the humanitarian crisis, which has been exacerbated by COVID-19, an effective humanitarian response is vital. As the first part of this paper aims to show, however, several factors are currently hindering an adequate aid response, both in Venezuela and in other Latin American countries. The second part of this paper considers measures that could be taken to address these issues.

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<sup>38</sup> 'Response for Venezuelans' (*Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela*, 5 May 2020) <<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/platform>> accessed 15 May 2020.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Dany Bahar and Meagan Dooley, 'Venezuela Refugee Crisis to Become the Largest and Most Underfunded in Modern History' (*Brookings*, 9 December 2019) <<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2019/12/09/venezuela-refugee-crisis-to-become-the-largest-and-most-underfunded-in-modern-history/>> accessed 23 March 2020.

## II. MADURO'S HOSTILITY TO SOME AID

One barrier to improving Venezuela's humanitarian situation is the reluctance of the Maduro administration to permit certain aid. This reluctance could stem from a fear that accepting aid would simultaneously delegitimise the administration and bolster political opponents, such as Guaidó at home or the USA internationally. As a result, some aid has been prevented from entering Venezuela and the distribution of resources already within Venezuela has been impeded.

### II.I. IMPACTS OF MADURO'S HOSTILITY TO AID

#### i Restricted entry of aid

In February 2019, Maduro deployed the army to ensure that aid convoys organised by Guaidó and the USA could not enter the country.<sup>41</sup> Shipping containers were used to obstruct the Tienditas Bridge, which links Venezuela to Colombia, and Maduro declared that Venezuela was not a country of beggars and did not need aid.<sup>42</sup> As a result, tonnes of aid that had been destined for Venezuela could not be delivered there and was eventually distributed in Colombia instead.<sup>43</sup>

This measure withheld aid from Venezuelans and even caused violence. Efforts by the army to enforce the blockade led to clashes, as other groups tried to ensure that aid could enter. One such incident occurred at Kumarakapay, a village of the indigenous Pemon group. The villagers wanted to keep a road open to allow aid through. Since the Pemon have constitutional autonomy over their territory, they were theoretically allowed to do so. Nevertheless, an army convoy drove through to the border, prompting Pemon villagers to stop one of the army vehicles and detain the officers inside.<sup>45</sup> This caused other soldiers to fire at the village, leaving three civilians dead and many injured.<sup>46</sup>

#### ii Hindered distribution

Government hostility to aid has also increased the risks for some aid workers on the ground in Venezuela. This makes the distribution of the aid that does reach Venezuela more difficult. For instance, the president of the Samaritan Foundation, a medical charity in the country, said that Venezuela's secret police began monitoring the organisation after it offered to help opposition leaders distribute aid in poor neighbourhoods.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, food kitchens claim to have been

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<sup>41</sup> Nicholas Casey, Albinson Linares and Anatoly Kurmanaev, 'Some Aid from Brazil Pierces Venezuela's Blockade, but Deadly Violence Erupts' *The New York Times* (23 February 2019) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/23/world/americas/venezuela-aid-border-maduro.html>> accessed 1 April 2020; Nicholas Casey and Albinson Linares, 'With Aid Blocked at Border, What's Next Move for Venezuela's Opposition?' *The New York Times* (24 February 2019) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/24/world/americas/venezuela-aid-maduro-guaido.html>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>42</sup> Casey and Linares (n 41).

<sup>43</sup> 'US Emergency Aid for Venezuela to Be Distributed in Colombia' (*VOA News*, 30 May 2019) <<https://www.voanews.com/us-emergency-aid-venezuela-be-distributed-colombia>> accessed 1 April 2020.

<sup>45</sup> Maria Ramirez, 'Soldiers Held Hostage, Villagers Killed: The Untold Story of Venezuelan Aid Violence' (*Reuters*, 21 May 2019) <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-pemon-insight-idUSKCN1SR1L0>> accessed 23 March 2020.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> John Otis, "Lives Are At Risk": Venezuelan Charities Struggle Under Shortages And Intimidation' (*NPR*, 11 June 2019) <<https://www.npr.org/2019/06/11/731648645/lives-are-at-risk-venezuelan-charities-struggle-under-shortages-and-intimidation>> accessed 23 March 2020.

accused by local bureaucrats of serving food in unsanitary conditions and participating in anti-government activities as part of a campaign against them.<sup>48</sup> These government measures could hinder aid efforts by forcing aid organisations to cease operations. The measures might also discourage people from choosing to help in the future.

## II.II. REASONS FOR MADURO'S HOSTILITY TO AID

At least two reasons could explain the reluctance of the Maduro government to permit some aid.

### i Politicisation of aid

Allowing American aid convoys into the country would be politically damaging for Maduro. In accepting aid, Maduro might be seen to concede that his economic policies, and those of Chávez before him, have led to a crisis, reducing his political capital.<sup>49</sup> Conversely, Guaidó has attempted to use aid to boost his legitimacy; for example, he took credit for Washington sending the February 2019 aid convoys.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, Guaidó intended for aid to be brought over the border by his supporters, ending Maduro's control of Venezuela's frontiers.<sup>51</sup> In increasing Guaidó legitimacy compared to Maduro, the aid convoys might therefore have broken the political stalemate in Guaidó's favour. Indeed, both Guaidó and the USA were explicit that the aid had political goals, not just humanitarian ones. Guaidó framed the convoys as a way for Venezuelans to "defy" Maduro.<sup>52</sup> USAID, America's aid agency, stated that it would "continue to take concrete action against those who oppose the peaceful restoration of democracy in Venezuela" and Senator Marco Rubio gave a speech on the border, referring to the removal of "tyrants".<sup>53</sup> Indeed, through funding opposition groups within Venezuela, USAID has been trying for decades to remove Chávez and Maduro.<sup>54</sup> Given that it could have contributed to his removal from power, it is therefore unsurprising that Maduro was hostile to this aid.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, non-governmental aid organisations were generally critical of the politicisation of this aid, noting that it would make humanitarian goals harder to achieve.<sup>56</sup>

### ii Possible fears of aid as a 'Trojan Horse'

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Jeremy Konyndyk, 'The Most Effective Way to Help Venezuelans: Stop Politicizing Aid' *Washington Post* (1 March 2019) <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/03/01/most-effective-way-help-venezuelans-stop-politicizing-aid/>> accessed 23 March 2020.

<sup>50</sup> Dylan Baddour, 'When Humanitarian Aid Is Used as a Weapon to Bring Down Regimes' (*The Atlantic*, 21 February 2019) <<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/02/venezuela-humanitarian-aid-weapon-regimes/583309/>> accessed 23 March 2020.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*; Casey and Linares (n 41).

<sup>52</sup> Casey and Linares (n 41).

<sup>53</sup> Baddour (n 50).

<sup>54</sup> Timothy Gill, 'The U.S. Has Quietly Supported the Venezuelan Opposition for Years' *Washington Post* (Washington DC, 19 February 2019) <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2019/02/19/the-u-s-has-covertly-supported-the-venezuelan-opposition-for-years/>> accessed 16 May 2020.

<sup>55</sup> Konyndyk (n 49).

<sup>56</sup> Baddour (n 50); Paula Dupraz-Dobias, 'International Politics and Humanitarian Aid Collide in Venezuela' (*The New Humanitarian*, 12 February 2019) <<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2019/02/12/briefing-international-politics-and-humanitarian-aid-collide-venezuela>> accessed 15 May 2020; 'Red Cross Slams "unacceptable" Politicisation of Venezuela Aid' (*France 24*, 2 December 2019) <<https://www.france24.com/en/20191202-red-cross-slams-unacceptable-politicisation-of-venezuela-aid>> accessed 23 March 2020.

Maduro and others in his circle have previously voiced fears that planned ‘aid’ shipments from the USA contain weapons.<sup>57</sup> The Maduro government may therefore be opposed to American aid shipments because of a fear that they are a channel through which arms can be funnelled into the country, potentially making it easier for Maduro to be overthrown. Independent outlets do not support the claims of Maduro and others.<sup>58</sup> It is also hard to know whether Maduro’s camp is sincere in expressing this fear; given the political dynamic outlined above, Maduro has a strong incentive to discredit American aid. If the USA did intend to use aid as a ‘Trojan Horse’ in this way, however, it would not be unprecedented. There would be a parallel with the American aid provided to Nicaragua in the 1980s, which was used to provide \$27 million to right-wing groups to combat the reigning left-wing government.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, this policy involved Elliot Abrams, who is now the American special envoy for Venezuela.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> ‘Delcy Rodríguez, vicepresidenta de Venezuela, afirma que ayuda humanitaria está contaminada’ (*CNN*, 13 February 2019) <<https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2019/02/13/delcy-rodriguez-vicepresidenta-de-venezuela-afirma-que-ayuda-humanitaria-esta-contaminada/>> accessed 23 March 2020.

<sup>58</sup> John Paul Rathbone and Gideon Long, ‘Aid Convoys for Venezuela Risk Becoming Flashpoint’ *Financial Times* (5 February 2019) <<https://www.ft.com/content/33a0281c-28cf-11e9-a5ab-f8ef2b976c7>> accessed 9 May 2020; Joe Parkin Daniels and Patrick Wintour, ‘Venezuela: First US Aid Trucks Arrive at Border Blockaded by Maduro’ *The Guardian* (London, 7 February 2019) <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/07/venezuela-maduro-us-aid-trucks-arrive-colombia-border>> accessed 9 May 2020.

<sup>59</sup> Baddour (n 50).

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*



### III. THE UNDERFUNDING OF HUMANITARIAN AID IN VENEZUELA

Reports of Maduro blocking aid from entering Venezuela are striking, particularly when they are sometimes combined with memorable images of shipping containers being used to block border roads.<sup>61</sup> It seems unlikely, however, that Maduro's refusal to allow some American aid is the main obstacle to people within Venezuela being helped; the Maduro government actually permits aid from several actors. This aid predates Maduro's strong rejection of the February 2019 aid convoys.<sup>62</sup> Aid coming into Venezuela includes both multilateral aid, where resources are distributed by international organisations, including the UN, and bilateral aid, where resources are given by foreign governments to the government that they recognise, so either Guaidó's camp or Maduro's.<sup>63</sup> Maduro has also proactively sought out additional help, requesting a \$5 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to improve the country's ability to deal with COVID-19.<sup>64</sup> Regrettably, however, current relief efforts appear wholly insufficient, especially when compared to the international response to the Syria crisis. This suggests that the international community bears a significant amount of responsibility for the limited aid being provided within Venezuela.

#### III.I. MULTILATERAL AID

##### i Amounts of multilateral aid to Venezuela

The United Nations is taking a leading role in providing aid within Venezuela. The UN began sending emergency aid in November 2018 and The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) scaled-up Venezuelan aid in August of that year.<sup>65</sup> The UN had over \$155 million of funding in 2019 to help Venezuela.<sup>66</sup> The money was used for programmes such as vaccinating 8.5 million children, providing medicine to 975,000 people and distributing food to 50,000 people.<sup>67</sup> However, Mark Lowcock, who leads the UN's humanitarian response to emergencies, noted that the UN's aid in Venezuela "remains under-resourced and the biggest constraint to delivering humanitarian assistance remains funding".<sup>68</sup>

The Red Cross has been allowed to bring aid into Venezuela since April 2019.<sup>69</sup> In that year the organisation distributed 320 tonnes of medical supplies within the country and implemented

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<sup>61</sup> Tom Phillis and Joe Parkin Daniels, 'Venezuelan Troops Blockade Bridge to Stop Aid from Colombia' *The Guardian* (6 February 2019) <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/06/venezuelan-troops-blockade-bridge-to-stop-aid-from-colombia>> accessed 9 May 2020.

<sup>62</sup> Baddour (n 50).

<sup>63</sup> Alisdair Rogers, Noel Castree and Rob Kitchin, 'Aid', *A Dictionary of Human Geography* (Oxford University Press 2013) <<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199599868.001.0001/acref-9780199599868-e-42>> accessed 4 April 2020.

<sup>64</sup> 'IMF Rejects Crisis-Hit Venezuela's Request for \$5 Bn Virus Aid' (n 22).

<sup>65</sup> 'UN Releases Emergency Aid to Venezuela' (*Deutsche Welle*, 27 November 2018) <<https://www.dw.com/en/un-releases-emergency-aid-to-venezuela/a-46463279>> accessed 9 May 2020.

<sup>66</sup> Mark Lowcock, 'Statement on the Humanitarian Situation in Venezuela' (*OCHA*, 6 November 2019) <<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/venezuela/document/statement-humanitarian-situation-venezuela>> accessed 24 July 2020.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Gideon Long, 'Venezuela Receives First Delivery of Red Cross Emergency Aid' *Financial Times* (17 April 2019) <<https://www.ft.com/content/41f7f828-60aa-11e9-b285-3acd5d43599e>> accessed 10 May 2020.

various other humanitarian programmes, such as improving water supplies.<sup>70</sup> The organisation spent around 24 million Swiss Francs on aid for Venezuela in 2019.<sup>71</sup> Like the UN, the Red Cross has been constrained by funding. Francesco Rocca, its president, claimed for instance (prior to the disruption brought by COVID-19) that the key impediment to an adequate humanitarian response was not restrictions from the Maduro government, but rather that there is little aid to deliver.<sup>72</sup>

Several other non-governmental aid organisations, such as the Norwegian Refugee Council, are also working in Venezuela.<sup>73</sup> Such organisations make up a comparatively small part of the response; none of these organisations was responsible for more than 5% of the total spending on aid for Venezuela in 2019.<sup>74</sup>

In response to COVID-19, the Red Cross, UN and other non-governmental aid organisations have all increased their activity in Venezuela, such as through chartering flights to deliver protective equipment.<sup>75</sup>

## ii Comparison to the crisis in Syria

The constrained funding for humanitarian aid in Venezuela becomes even more striking when compared to funding for other crises, such as the one in Syria. For example, the UN's aid programmes within Syria receive far more funding: around \$2.2 billion in 2018, with a further \$3.3 billion pledged in 2019.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, Red Cross funding for programmes in Syria is much greater than for Venezuela: 174 million Swiss Francs in 2019, compared to 24 million in Venezuela.<sup>77</sup>

It is understandable that the international community would allocate more money to the crisis in Syria than to Venezuela; although some have argued that Venezuela is a failed state, it is, unlike Syria, not a warzone.<sup>78</sup> Programmes in Syria do seem disproportionately better funded than programmes in Venezuela, however. Whereas he noted that “everybody needs to do more” for

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<sup>70</sup> ‘Activity Report 2019’ (*International Committee of the Red Cross*)

<<https://www.icrc.org/en/document/venezuela-supporting-most-violence-affected-population-2019>> accessed 24 June 2020.

<sup>71</sup> ‘Annual Report 2019’ (*International Committee of the Red Cross*, 29 June 2020) 272

<<https://www.icrc.org/en/document/annual-report-2019>> accessed 24 June 2020.

<sup>72</sup> ‘Red Cross Slams “unacceptable” Politicisation of Venezuela Aid’ (n 56).

<sup>73</sup> ‘Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic Of’ (*Financial Tracking Service*)

<<https://fts.unocha.org/countries/242/summary/2019>> accessed 4 May 2020.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> ‘ICRC’s Operational Response to COVID-19: We’re All in This Together’ (*International Committee of the Red Cross*, 30 March 2020) <<https://www.icrc.org/en/document/icrc-operational-response-covid-19>> accessed 24 July 2020; ‘Switzerland Organises Relief Flight to Venezuela - Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic Of)’ (*ReliefWeb*, 19 June 2020) <<https://reliefweb.int/report/venezuela-bolivarian-republic/switzerland-organises-relief-flight-venezuela>> accessed 24 July 2020; ‘Venezuela: Plan Intersectorial de Preparación y Atención COVID-19 (Segunda Edición: 10 de Abril 2020) - Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic Of)’ (*ReliefWeb*, 11 April 2020) <<https://reliefweb.int/report/venezuela-bolivarian-republic/venezuela-plan-intersectorial-de-preparaci-n-y-atenci-n-covid>> accessed 24 July 2020.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Syria: A Record US\$7 Billion Pledged for One of the Great Crises of Our Time’ (*OCHA*, 14 March 2019) <<https://www.unocha.org/story/syria-record-us7-billion-pledged-one-great-crises-our-time>> accessed 23 March 2020.

<sup>77</sup> ‘Annual Report 2019’ (n 71) 272, 479.

<sup>78</sup> Bahar and Dooley (n 40); ‘Syria: A Record US\$7 Billion Pledged for One of the Great Crises of Our Time’ (n 76).



Venezuela, for instance, Lowcock called 2018 contributions for Syria “generous”.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, Rocca has said that “the paradox is that for us it is easier to receive funds for Syria [than for Venezuela]”, despite the tendency for drawn-out conflicts such as the Syrian Civil War to lead to donor fatigue.<sup>80</sup>

### iii Explaining the disparity in funding for Venezuela

#### *American desire to increase pressure on Maduro*

For the USA, the humanitarian crisis may actually be an intended outcome of the economic sanctions. The Trump administration has been explicit that the goal of the sanctions is regime change.<sup>81</sup> The administration’s reasoning for the sanctions being broadened beyond officials seems to be that a worse economic situation will cause greater opposition to the Maduro government from the army or general population.<sup>82</sup> If this is the case, then the USA, normally a major donor, would be unlikely to contribute significantly to humanitarian efforts within Venezuela; in mitigating the humanitarian crisis, such donations would be contrary to the American strategy for removing Maduro.

#### *Salience for European policymakers*

A further cause of the disparity between funding for Syria and Venezuela may be the different locations of the crises; Syria is much closer to Europe than Venezuela. This might make European countries, many of which are major aid donors, particularly focused on that crisis.<sup>83</sup> The crisis in Syria may also be particularly salient to European policymakers because of the large numbers of Syrian refugees who seek asylum in Europe, in contrast to Venezuelans, who generally remain in Latin America.<sup>84</sup> Although this phenomenon is understandable, the correspondingly low amounts of money being given to organisations that do helpful work in Venezuela is regrettable.

## III.II. BILATERAL AID

Alongside multilateral aid, resources enter Venezuela via bilateral aid, where individual governments donate directly to the group that they view as the legitimate government of Venezuela. This is the Guaidó camp in the case of the USA and the Maduro camp in the case of Russia, and, to some extent, China.<sup>85</sup> Although bilateral aid may improve the humanitarian situation, humanitarian objectives are generally not the priority, likely making bilateral aid less

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<sup>79</sup> Lowcock (n 66); Mark Lowcock, ‘Opening Remarks at the 2019 Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region’ (*ReliefWeb*, 14 March 2019) <<https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/under-secretary-general-humanitarian-affairs-and-emergency-relief-89>> accessed 4 April 2020.

<sup>80</sup> ‘Red Cross Slams “unacceptable” Politicisation of Venezuela Aid’ (n 56).

<sup>81</sup> Fox (n 10).

<sup>82</sup> Borger (n 18); Weisbrot and Sachs (n 15).

<sup>83</sup> ‘Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2018’ (*Development Initiatives*, 2018)

<<https://devinit.org/publications/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2018/>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>84</sup> Zoe Todd, ‘By the Numbers: Syrian Refugees Around the World’ (*PBS Frontline*, 19 November 2019) <<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/numbers-syrian-refugees-around-world/>> accessed 24 March 2020;

Javier Corrales, ‘Responses to the Venezuelan Migration Crisis: A Scorecard’ (*Americas Quarterly*, 11 July 2019) <<https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/responses-venezuelan-migration-crisis-scorecard>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>85</sup> Rogers, Castree and Kitchin (n 63).

effective in this regard. The two more significant objectives of bilateral aid to Venezuela are outlined below.

### i Political objectives

Both Russia and the USA use bilateral aid to support their preferred leader in Venezuela. Although it includes money for restoring the health sector, the primary objective of USAID's \$52 million donation to "Guaidó and his government" in September 2019 was to help "restore [...] democratic governance" in the country.<sup>86</sup> Conversely, Russia wants to limit American influence in the region, vowing support for its "friend" Maduro, explicitly in response to American attempts to bring Guaidó to power.<sup>87</sup> Russia has sent food as well as military aid to support Maduro.<sup>88</sup>

It is unclear how helpful such bilateral aid is at improving the humanitarian situation. This partly results from the lack of clarity about exactly what bilateral aid is being given, particularly in the case of Russia.<sup>89</sup> Given that this aid is often not targeted at the humanitarian situation, it is likely less beneficial than the work of multilateral organisations for improving the humanitarian situation in the country. Indeed, particularly politicised bilateral aid might make the humanitarian situation worse; Maduro could be even less likely to allow American aid into Venezuela in the future, as the result of the USA further increasing support for his rival. Even to the extent that bilateral aid to Venezuela does take the form of humanitarian supplies, it is not clear how helpful this will be; both the Guaidó and Maduro camps have been implicated in corruption cases that involve aid, suggesting that donated resources going through these channels may end up benefiting officials, rather than the people who most need them.<sup>90</sup>

### ii Economic objectives

China and (to a lesser degree) Russia are also supporting Maduro through arrangements that directly benefit them economically. Indeed, these arrangements are so transactional that they resemble trade more than aid. For example, China has loaned around \$70 billion to Caracas

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<sup>86</sup> 'USAID Announces \$52 Million in Development Assistance for Programs Inside Venezuela' (24 September 2019) <<https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/sep-24-2019-usaid-announces-52-million-development-assistance-programs-inside>> accessed 4 April 2020.

<sup>87</sup> Anatoly Kurmanaev, 'Why Is Russia Helping Venezuela?' *The New York Times* (8 March 2019) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/08/world/americas/russia-venezuela-maduro-putin.html>> accessed 13 May 2020; 'Russia Vows More Support for "Friend" Maduro, Including Aid' *South China Morning Post* (1 March 2019) <<https://www.scmp.com/news/world/russia-central-asia/article/2188315/russia-vows-more-support-venezuelan-friend-president>> accessed 23 March 2020.

<sup>88</sup> 'Russia Vows More Support for "Friend" Maduro, Including Aid' (n 87); Thomas Grove, 'In a Blow to Maduro, Russia Withdraws Key Defense Support to Venezuela' *Wall Street Journal* (2 June 2019) <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/in-a-blow-to-maduro-russia-withdraws-key-defense-support-to-venezuela-11559486826>> accessed 13 May 2020.

<sup>89</sup> Jack Goodman, 'How Much Aid Is Getting into Venezuela?' (*BBC News*, 28 February 2019) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-47369768>> accessed 13 May 2020.

<sup>90</sup> Joe Parkin Daniels, 'Aid Workers Toil amid Crisis and Corruption to Give Venezuelans the Drugs They Need' *The Guardian* (London, 9 January 2020) <<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jan/09/venezuela-aid-drugs-healthcare-aid-maduro>> accessed 4 April 2020; Alessandro Rampiotti, 'Venezuela Crisis: Guaidó's Envoys Accused of Embezzling Aid Funds' (20 June 2019) <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/venezuela-crisis-guaidos-envoys-accused-embezzling-aid-funds-190620121258559.html>> accessed 4 April 2020; Rendon and Fernandez (n 6); Rendon and Mendales (n 25).

over the past decade, in exchange for future oil shipments.<sup>91</sup> The fact that China has opened communication channels with the Guaidó camp suggests that it is particularly concerned about being repaid, rather than supporting Maduro.<sup>92</sup> Additionally, in exchange for future oil shipments, Rosneft, Russia's partly state-owned oil company, lent the Maduro government around \$6.5 billion between 2014 and 2018.<sup>93</sup> In 2020, the remainder of this debt was transferred directly to the Russian state.<sup>94</sup> Although such arrangements may support the Maduro government in the short term, it is unclear how helpful they are for addressing the humanitarian crisis; resources go to the Maduro government, rather than to the people who need them, and have to be repaid in oil shipments. This would make it harder for Venezuela to gain foreign currency through oil sales, even without the American sanctions on PDVSA.

### III.III. BRETTON WOODS INSTITUTIONS

Despite COVID-19, Venezuela's complicated political situation has prevented Maduro from obtaining help from the IMF and the World Bank. In March 2020, Maduro requested a \$5 billion loan from the IMF to prepare for the pandemic by strengthening Venezuela's beleaguered health system.<sup>95</sup> The IMF had previously set aside \$50 billion, later rising to \$100 billion, for emergency financing in response to COVID-19.<sup>96</sup> Yet the lack of consensus among the IMF's members as to Venezuela's rightful leader means that it is unable to lend to the country.<sup>97</sup> The same reason would likely also prevent the World Bank from providing any financing, despite the World Bank responding to the pandemic in other countries by lending \$12 billion for public health measures.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Rocio Cara Labrador, 'Maduro's Allies: Who Backs the Venezuelan Regime?' (*Council on Foreign Relations*, 5 February 2019) <<https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/maduros-allies-who-backs-venezuelan-regime>> accessed 23 March 2020.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> 'Why Putin's Favourite Oil Firm Dumped Its Venezuelan Assets' *The Economist* (2 April 2020) <<https://www.economist.com/leaders/2020/04/02/why-putins-favourite-oil-firm-dumped-its-venezuelan-assets>> accessed 13 May 2020.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Patricia Laya and Alex Vasquez, 'IMF Won't Lend to Venezuela Because Maduro Lacks Recognition' (*Bloomberg*, 17 March 2020) <<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-03-17/venezuela-requests-5-billion-from-imf-to-fight-coronavirus>> accessed 10 May 2020.

<sup>96</sup> James Politi, 'IMF Sets aside \$50bn for Coronavirus-Hit Countries' *Financial Times* (4 March 2020) <<https://www.ft.com/content/83c07594-5e3a-11ea-b0ab-339c2307bcd4>> accessed 10 May 2020; James Politi, 'IMF Boosts Emergency Lending Capacity to \$100bn' *Financial Times* (9 April 2020) <<https://www.ft.com/content/e46faadc-456b-4cf8-a2fd-2017702747ab>> accessed 10 May 2020.

<sup>97</sup> Laya and Vasquez (n 95).

<sup>98</sup> Rodrigo Campos and David Lawder, 'Venezuela Leadership Issue Still Blocking IMF, World Bank Aid' (*Reuters*, 12 April 2019) <<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-imf-worldbank-venezuela-idUKKCN1RN1TH>> accessed 10 May 2020; James Politi, 'World Bank to Provide up to \$12bn to Boost Countries' Virus Response' *Financial Times* (3 March 2020) <<https://www.ft.com/content/6a7a009c-5d8f-11ea-b0ab-339c2307bcd4>> accessed 10 May 2020.

## IV. RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS IN OTHER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

The Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform estimates that more than 5 million people have left Venezuela since 2015.<sup>99</sup> These Venezuelans have generally remained in Latin America; 1.8 million are in Colombia, 860,000 in Peru, 455,000 in Chile, 360,000 in Ecuador and 250,000 in Brazil.<sup>100</sup> Smaller numbers have gone to other Latin American countries.<sup>101</sup> As a result, the crisis has quickly developed into a regional issue, with many of the affected countries never having experienced such a large influx of new arrivals.<sup>102</sup> COVID-19 has slowed the arrival of Venezuelans, as countries close their borders, and work opportunities dry up, causing some Venezuelans already abroad to return home.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, more Venezuelans continue to leave their country than re-enter it.<sup>104</sup> Although some Venezuelans apply for refugee status, many do not, partly to avoid work restrictions.<sup>105</sup> This paper, therefore, avoids referring to all Venezuelans in other Latin American countries as refugees.

Despite the unprecedented challenge, host countries have made significant efforts to accommodate Venezuelans and ensure that they have access to basic services. Steps have been taken to regularise Venezuelans' immigration status, including specially designed permits, providing many Venezuelans with work authorisation.<sup>106</sup> Colombia has done this to the greatest extent, granting around 800,000 permits.<sup>107</sup> Peru has granted around 630,000, and several countries in Latin America have granted more than 100,000.<sup>108</sup> Additionally, Latin American countries generally guarantee healthcare, consisting at least of vaccinations and emergency treatment, as well as primary and secondary education.<sup>109</sup>

The affected countries have also taken some steps to coordinate their response. For example, they established the Quito Process, a multilateral initiative that aims to harmonise domestic

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<sup>99</sup> 'Response for Venezuelans' (n 38).

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Corrales (n 84).

<sup>103</sup> 'Colombia Cools on Venezuelan Refugees' *The Economist* (30 April 2020) <<https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2020/04/30/colombia-cools-on-venezuelan-refugees>> accessed 13 May 2020; 'Coronavirus: Travel Restrictions, Border Shutdowns by Country' (*Al Jazeera*, 13 May 2020) <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/coronavirus-travel-restrictions-border-shutdowns-country-200318091505922.html>> accessed 13 May 2020; Bram Ebus, 'COVID-19 Lockdown Means Tough Choices for Venezuelan Migrants in Colombia' (*The New Humanitarian*, 22 April 2020) <<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/feature/2020/04/22/Venezuela-Colombia-migrants-coronavirus>> accessed 15 May 2020.

<sup>104</sup> 'Colombia Cools on Venezuelan Refugees' (n 103).

<sup>105</sup> Rocio Cara Labrador, 'The Venezuelan Exodus' (*Council on Foreign Relations*, 8 July 2019) <<https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/venezuelan-exodus>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>106</sup> Andrew Selee, 'Latin America's Migration Lesson for the World' (*Americas Quarterly*, 18 March 2019) <<https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/latin-americas-migration-lesson-world>> accessed 26 March 2020.

<sup>107</sup> 'Response for Venezuelans' (n 38).

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Andrew Selee and Jessica Bolter, 'An Uneven Welcome: Latin American and Caribbean Responses to Venezuelan and Nicaraguan Migration' (*Migration Policy Institute*, February 2020) 28-29 <<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/latam-caribbean-responses-venezuelan-nicaraguan-migration>> accessed 24 June 2020.

policies and facilitate the integration of Venezuelans.<sup>110</sup> Coordination is imperfect; for example, measures to tighten entry requirements in some participant states were carried out unilaterally.<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, participants have agreed to various measures, including information sharing to tackle human trafficking and joint efforts to tackle xenophobia.<sup>112</sup> Another example of coordination is a new system to reduce the duplication of vaccinations as Venezuelans pass through multiple countries.<sup>113</sup>

Although Latin American governments have shown themselves willing to welcome fleeing Venezuelans, this section highlights that they often do not have the capacity to properly cope with the needs of new arrivals. As the financial pressure has increased, host governments have also had to manage domestic social and political challenges, often resulting directly from the many new arrivals. The difficulties are compounded by the affected governments currently receiving comparatively limited international support.

#### IV.I. HIGH DEMAND FOR SERVICES

The Venezuelans who arrive in other Latin American countries often require significant support. Their most pressing needs are generally access to food, healthcare, shelter and the labour market.<sup>114</sup> These needs are made more pronounced by several factors. Firstly, as a result of Venezuela's hyperinflation, the people who flee often have very limited resources, having seen any savings destroyed by hyperinflation, making them more dependent upon support from others.<sup>115</sup> Secondly, in some cases, people flee Venezuela specifically to seek medical treatment that is unavailable there.<sup>116</sup> This could mean that the Venezuelans who go to other countries are disproportionately likely to need assistance. Thirdly, the journey itself to other Latin American countries can cause medical problems that will require treatment; many Venezuelans are "caminantes", travelling very long distances by foot across hostile terrain, risking hypothermia.<sup>117</sup>

As a result of the demand from Venezuelans, public services in other Latin American countries, particularly in border regions, where Venezuelans are particularly numerous, are facing much greater demand.<sup>118</sup> Before COVID-19, which has closed Colombian schools, around 8% of

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<sup>110</sup> Jessica Ramirez, 'The Quito Process and the Urgency to Address the Right to a Nationality and Statelessness in the Americas - World' (*ReliefWeb*, 4 July 2019) <<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/quito-process-and-urgency-address-right-nationality-and-statelessness-americas>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>111</sup> 'Millions of Refugees from Venezuela Are Straining Neighbours' Hospitality' *The Economist* (12 September 2019) <<https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2019/09/12/millions-of-refugees-from-venezuela-are-straining-neighbours-hospitality>> accessed 26 April 2020.

<sup>112</sup> 'Latin American Countries Agree Road Map for Integration of Venezuelans' (*UNHCR*, 8 July 2019) <<https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/7/5d230a254/latin-american-countries-agree-road-map-integration-venezuelans.html>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>113</sup> Selee and Bolter (n 109) 37.

<sup>114</sup> Selee (n 106).

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Jorge Castañeda, 'Colombia Is Dealing with a Terrifying Refugee Crisis. Will Wealthy Nations Step Up to Help?' *The New York Times* (10 March 2020) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/10/opinion/international-world/venezuela-colombia-refugees-crisis.html>> accessed 26 April 2020; Ari Shapiro, 'A Path No One Would Choose To Walk: 350 Miles With The Caminantes' (*NPR*, 29 March 2019) <<https://www.npr.org/2019/03/29/708170911/a-path-no-one-would-choose-to-walk-350-miles-with-the-caminantes>> accessed 26 April 2020.

<sup>117</sup> Matt Ozug, Christina Cala and Ari Shapiro, 'Chronicles Of A Venezuelan Exodus: More Families Flee The Crisis On Foot Every Day' (*NPR*, 4 April 2019) <<https://www.npr.org/2019/04/04/709193469/chronicles-of-a-venezuelan-exodus-more-families-flee-the-crisis-on-foot-every-da>> accessed 26 April 2020.

<sup>118</sup> Selee (n 106).



students in Colombian schools close to the border were Venezuelan.<sup>119</sup> This included both students who live in Colombia and students who live in Venezuela but commuted across the border.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, in August 2019, some 40% of patients in hospitals, and 80% of women giving birth, in some border of Brazil were from Venezuela.<sup>121</sup>

## IV.II. INABILITY TO MEET THE DEMAND FOR SERVICES

Latin American countries are often not in a good position to provide services to new arrivals. The region as a whole has the world's slowest economic growth.<sup>122</sup> Colombia, which has welcomed the most Venezuelans, faces significant additional problems; these included drug trafficking, paramilitary groups and millions of internally displaced citizens.<sup>123</sup>

This combination of limited state capacity and high demand has led to some services being overwhelmed. For instance, the Norwegian Refugee Council found that in late 2018 around one in five Venezuelan children in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador or Panama were not in education because there was no space for them.<sup>125</sup> There was also evidence, even before COVID-19, that countries are struggling to manage public health, with rates of malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/Aids and hepatitis all increasingly rapidly in areas where there are large numbers of new arrivals.<sup>126</sup> Indeed, Brazil has been forced to deploy the military to assist in providing primary healthcare in border regions, after civilian services became unable to meet demand.<sup>127</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic is further stretching state capacity. Latin America has particularly high rates of the disease, partly as the result of slow initial responses to the virus and the high levels of urbanisation.<sup>128</sup> Latin America is also being particularly affected by the related economic downturn, which is impacting key economic drivers such as commodities, tourism and remittances.<sup>129</sup> Consequently, Latin American governments face a greater need to act, to protect public health and economies, but have a more precarious tax base to finance such measures as a result of the downturn. This may exacerbate their existing difficulties in adequately meeting the needs of both Venezuelans and their own citizens.

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<sup>119</sup> Steven Grattan, 'Colombia's Border Schools Strained by New Arrivals' (*The New Humanitarian*, 21 February 2019) <<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/feature/2019/02/21/colombia-s-border-schools-strained-new-arrivals>> accessed 26 April 2020; 'Monitoring School Closures' (*Unesco*, 14 July 2020)

<<https://en.unesco.org/fieldoffice/santiago/covid-19-education-alc/monitoring>> accessed 24 July 2020.

<sup>120</sup> Grattan (n 119).

<sup>121</sup> Gideon Long, 'Venezuelan Refugee Exodus Intensifies' *Financial Times* (24 August 2019) <<https://www.ft.com/content/fe0291a2-c5ab-11e9-a8e9-296ca66511c9>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>122</sup> 'Virus Lays Bare Latin America's Many Woes' *Financial Times* (19 May 2020) <<https://www.ft.com/content/cff7d54c-98fa-11ea-8b5b-63f7c5c86bef>> accessed 25 July 2020.

<sup>123</sup> Vali Nasr, 'Don't Let Venezuela's Crisis Take Down Colombia Too' (*Foreign Policy*, 25 October 2019) <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/25/dont-let-venezuelas-crisis-take-down-colombia-too-refugees/>> accessed 24 March 2020; Michael Stott and Gideon Long, 'Venezuela: Refugee Crisis Tests Colombia's Stability' *Financial Times* (19 February 2020) <<https://www.ft.com/content/bfede7a4-4f44-11ea-95a0-43d18ec715f5>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>125</sup> Selee and Bolter (n 109) 32.

<sup>126</sup> Michael Stott, 'Host Countries Struggle to Cope with Venezuela Refugee Crisis' *Financial Times* (20 September 2019) <<https://www.ft.com/content/17ab72ec-db94-11e9-8f9b-77216ebef1f7>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>127</sup> Shannon Doocy and others, 'Venezuelan Migration and the Border Health Crisis in Colombia and Brazil' [2019] *Journal on Migration and Human Security* <<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2331502419860138>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>128</sup> 'Virus Lays Bare Latin America's Many Woes' (n 122).

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*

### IV.III. BACKLASH IN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

In some Latin American countries, difficulties faced by host governments even before COVID-19 led to instability and backlash against Venezuelans. This backlash has made it more difficult for countries to continue to welcome arrivals. A particularly notable example is Brazil's Roraima state, where the surge in population, and resultant overwhelming of public services, has been accompanied by increasing instability in the region.<sup>130</sup> Despite government efforts, there has been an increase in xenophobia and violent attacks against Venezuelans in the area.<sup>131</sup> Migrants are blamed for increasing crime rates and in August 2019, a mob of Brazilians attacked a group of Venezuelans after a business owner reported a robbery by a group of migrants.<sup>132</sup> Following the attack, around 1,200 Venezuelans fled back over the border and the Brazilian government was forced to send troops to "guarantee law and order" and protect migrants from violence initiated by Brazilian citizens.<sup>133</sup> Other examples of discontentment can be found throughout the region. In Colombia, 38% of survey respondents had witnessed discriminatory behaviour towards Venezuelans.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, an adviser to the Colombian president gave in an interview in April 2020, where he fretted about a decline in public support for the welcoming policies.<sup>135</sup> A survey of Chileans found that 75% of respondents thought the number of immigrants was excessive.<sup>136</sup> In Peru, concerns about unemployment and rising crime have led to protests and policies that are more hostile to Venezuelans.<sup>137</sup> For example, the Mayor of Lima's most populous district has made xenophobic statements regarding Venezuelan migrants and the Mayor of Chiclayo, a northern town, has introduced police operations targeting undocumented migrants and called on migration authorities to deport Venezuelan street hawkers.<sup>138</sup> The views of local Peruvian officials appear to reflect popular sentiment; a June 2019 poll indicated that 73% of Peruvians are opposed to Venezuelans entering Peru.<sup>139</sup>

Host governments are responding to pressure from their citizens to cool their initially warm welcome. In response to COVID-19, governments have understandably tightened their borders.<sup>140</sup> Even before this, however, governments in Peru, Chile, Panama and Ecuador had already started to impose entry restrictions on Venezuelan arrivals.<sup>141</sup> In particular, Peru and Chile had tightened documentation requirements, insisting that Venezuelans have a passport and visa to cross their borders. This presents a significant hurdle to many Venezuelans; the cost of obtaining a passport in Venezuela is roughly \$300, yet 90% of the population lives on a minimum

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<sup>130</sup> Corrales (n 84).

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> Euan McKirdy and Flora Charner, 'Brazil Sends Troops to Venezuela Border as Migrant Crisis Worsens' (*CNN*, 29 August 2018) <<https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/29/americas/venezuela-migrants-brazil-peru-colombia-int/index.html>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Corrales (n 84).

<sup>135</sup> Cecilia Tomaghi, 'Colombia's Migration Czar: The Goal Is "Total Inclusion" for Venezuelans' (*Americas Quarterly*, 20 April 2020) <<https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/colombias-migration-czar-the-goal-is-total-inclusion-for-venezuelans/>> accessed 4 May 2020.

<sup>136</sup> Corrales (n 84).

<sup>137</sup> Megan Janetsky, 'Fears Stoke Backlash against Venezuelans in Peru' (*BBC News*, 1 August 2019) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-49156814>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> 'Coronavirus: Travel Restrictions, Border Shutdowns by Country' (n 103).

<sup>141</sup> Selee (n 106).

wage of \$6 per month.<sup>142</sup> In Ecuador, the requirements were particularly strict, with some people having to pass a background check before being allowed into the country.<sup>143</sup>

#### IV.IV. LACK OF INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

Latin American governments have received limited international support, despite the significant pressures identified above. This is particularly evident when comparing the resources provided for the Venezuelan crisis to resources made available for other recent crises. Analyses by the Brookings Institution and the Organization of American States both found that international donations per Syrian refugee were around ten times greater than donations per Venezuelan.<sup>144</sup> This disparity can be seen in UN fundraising efforts. In November 2019 the UN launched a \$1.35 billion appeal to help Venezuelans outside of Venezuela.<sup>145</sup> It is unclear whether this target will be met; the UN's previous Venezuela appeal only reached 52% of its target.<sup>146</sup> Even if the target is reached, however, total UN funding for Venezuelan refugees and migrants would only be at a similar level to UN funding for the Rohingya crisis, despite the Venezuelan crisis affecting four times as many people.<sup>147</sup> Individual countries have also allocated comparatively few resources to the Venezuelan crisis. The UK, for instance, contributed £226 million between 2017 and 2019 to help with the Rohingya crisis and seconded medical staff to provide further support.<sup>148</sup> In contrast, as of September 2019, the UK's total response to the Venezuelan crisis was £44.5 million (going to organisations both in and outside Venezuela), though some additional money also goes indirectly towards aid in Venezuela, through the UK's funding of multilateral organisations.<sup>149</sup>

If the influx of Venezuelans into other Latin American countries increases, but international support remains limited, host countries will struggle to provide support for individuals fleeing Venezuela. This could intensify poor conditions within these countries, driving them to impose additional measures to prevent Venezuelans from entering. This would deprive Venezuelans of the ability to improve their lives by leaving Venezuela. It might also increase the extent to which the crisis is concentrated in Colombia, which would struggle to prevent Venezuelans from entering; the remote and 1,400-mile-long border with Venezuela is difficult to police.<sup>150</sup> This would lead to particularly poor outcomes in this country.

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<sup>142</sup> Joshua Collins, 'Mapped: The Venezuelan Diaspora and Growing Emigration Challenges' (*The New Humanitarian*, 21 November 2019) <<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2019/11/21/Venezuela-migrants-visa-restrictions-Colombia>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Bahar and Dooley (n 40); 'OAS Report on Venezuelan Migrants and Refugees: "An Unprecedented Crisis in the Region"' (*OAS*, 8 March 2019) <[https://www.oas.org/en/media\\_center/press\\_release.asp?sCodigo=E-009/19](https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-009/19)> accessed 11 April 2020.

<sup>145</sup> 'US\$1.35 Billion Needed to Help Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants and Host Countries: Joint UNHCR-IOM Press Release' (*UNHCR*, 13 November 2019) <<https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/11/5dcbd7284/us135-billion-needed-help-venezuelan-refugees-migrants-host-countries.html>> accessed 5 April 2020.

<sup>146</sup> Bahar and Dooley (n 40).

<sup>147</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> 'UK Announces Extra £87 Million Funding for Rohingya Crisis in Bangladesh' (*GOV.UK*, 22 September 2019) <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-announces-extra-87-million-funding-for-rohingya-crisis-in-bangladesh>> accessed 23 March 2020; Penny Mordaunt MP, 'British Medical Heroes Deploying to Combat Deadly Diphtheria Outbreak in Bangladesh' (*GOV.UK*, 28 December 2017) <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/british-medical-heroes-deploying-to-combat-deadly-diphtheria-outbreak-in-bangladesh>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>149</sup> Alok Sharma, 'New UK Aid Support for Venezuelans in Desperate Need' (*GOV.UK*, 24 September 2019) <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-uk-aid-support-for-venezuelans-in-desperate-need>> accessed 23 March 2020.

<sup>150</sup> 'Millions of Refugees from Venezuela Are Straining Neighbours' Hospitality' (n 111).





## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section identifies steps that could be taken to address the issues outlined above. The first set of recommendations identifies what the international community can do to help in Venezuela itself. The second set of recommendations considers what the international community can do to assist in other Latin American countries. The third set of recommendations considers what steps Latin American countries can take to better help Venezuelans abroad, even without significantly more support from the international community. The final set of recommendations takes a different approach and considers how to address the fundamental cause of the crisis, by improving Venezuela's economic situation.

Some of these recommendations are not consistent with the current foreign policy of the Trump administration. As noted above, the Trump administration may be using economic sanctions to put pressure on Maduro with the ultimate goal of enacting a regime change, as a by-product of the intensified humanitarian crisis. If this is the case, then the first and fourth sets of recommendations, which aim to address the humanitarian crisis within Venezuela, would be at odds with current American policy.

Yet this paper is still relevant to American policymakers, even if the Trump administration is unwilling to reverse its policy of applying "maximum pressure" to Venezuela.<sup>151</sup> The second and third sets of recommendations aim to improve the situation in Latin American countries other than Venezuela. It is unlikely that they will therefore influence the decision of people still in Venezuela about whether or not to oust Maduro. On the contrary, increasing support for these countries would be consistent with the administration's current policy; in many cases, these countries already back the American position that Maduro is illegitimate.<sup>152</sup> Furthermore, the 2020 American presidential election could increase the relevance of the recommendations that aim to help Venezuela itself. Although Joe Biden wants regime change, Democrats in the USA do not generally support harsh measures against the general Venezuelan population.<sup>153</sup> These recommendations would therefore become more politically realistic, should Biden win the election.

### V.I. INCREASING AID TO VENEZUELA

As the first part of the paper identified, attempts to help people inside Venezuela are currently limited by two factors: aid from certain groups is prohibited from entering the country, and those aid groups that are allowed to operate within Venezuela face chronic underfunding. The following recommendations, therefore, aim to tackle both these constraints.

#### i Greater funding from wealthy governments

Despite the attention that has been paid to instances of the Maduro government blocking humanitarian aid from entering Venezuela, both the United Nations and the Red Cross, among

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<sup>151</sup> 'More Dollars and Fewer Protests in Venezuela' (n 2).

<sup>152</sup> Jones and Wintour (n 32).

<sup>153</sup> David Smiley, 'Biden Says Trump's Florida Trip a "Distraction from His Failures" on COVID, Venezuela' *Miami Herald* (10 July 2020) <<https://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics-government/article244129082.html>> accessed 25 July 2020; 'Tracking the 2020 Candidates on Venezuela and Latin America' (*Council on Foreign Relations*, 24 October 2019) <<https://www.cfr.org/election2020/candidate-tracker/venezuela-and-latin-america>> accessed 25 July 2020.

others, are permitted to bring aid into the country. An obvious way to improve the humanitarian situation is therefore to ensure that these organisations have as much funding as they are capable of using effectively. Wealthy governments, such as that of the UK, are comparatively well-placed to be able to decrease this shortfall, as seen by their generosity for other crises, such as the Rohingya crisis.

## ii Greater funding from private philanthropy

As well as governments, major philanthropists could contribute more funding to organisations working on the ground in Venezuela, such as the United Nations and Red Cross. They should aim to do so in a way that is consistent with the non-partisan missions of these organisations. For example, although the February 2019 “Venezuela Aid Live” concert in Colombia, which was sponsored by Richard Branson, was successful in that it claims to have raised \$2.3 million, it could have caused other harms.<sup>154</sup> Similarly to aid from the USA, the event was very politicised; it was attended by Guaidó and aimed not just to raise money, but also to pressure Maduro to allow more aid into the country.<sup>155</sup> This led to a “proxy war”, where the Maduro government held a rival concert just over the border, in Venezuela.<sup>156</sup> In increasing the extent to which Venezuelan aid is politicised, the concert could have led to Maduro taking further steps to prevent aid entering Venezuela. This politicisation was particularly disappointing given that philanthropists have the potential to bring less ‘political baggage’ to aid provision than rival nation-states. Whereas state actors generally have to take a position on the legitimacy of a particular government, a contentious question with regards to Venezuela, philanthropists have no such obligation.<sup>157</sup> Philanthropists have the potential to be non-partisan, reducing the risk of creating an incentive to reject aid.

## iii Introduction of an aid verification mechanism

Maduro has rejected American aid on the grounds that it could be a ‘Trojan Horse’ designed to bring weapons into the country to enact regime change. One way to assuage this concern, making Maduro more likely to accept this aid, would be for the UN to offer to verify that aid does actually contain humanitarian supplies. This could be based on the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen (UNVIM), where UN staff check that shipments coming into that country are not being used to smuggle weapons.<sup>158</sup> Although UNVIM applies to ports, a

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<sup>154</sup> Casey, Linares and Kurmanaev (n 41); ‘Venezuela Aid Live’ <<https://venezuelaaidlive.com/>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>155</sup> ‘Richard Branson Plans Live Aid-Style Concert on Venezuela’s Border’ *The Straits Times* (15 February 2019) <<https://www.straitstimes.com/world/americas/richard-branson-plans-live-aid-style-concert-on-venezuelas-border>> accessed 5 April 2020; Christine Armario and Luis Henao, ‘Juan Guaido Makes Appearance at Venezuela Aid Concert’ (*Global News*, 22 February 2019) <<https://globalnews.ca/news/4988071/venezuela-aid-concerts/>> accessed 5 April 2020.

<sup>156</sup> Luke Taylor, ‘Venezuela Aid Live Is Playing out an International Proxy War on the Border’ *The Independent* (22 February 2019) <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/venezuela-aid-live-concert-colombia-lineup-music-festival-maduro-richard-branson-guaido-a8792711.html>> accessed 5 April 2020.

<sup>157</sup> Jonathan Law (ed), ‘Recognition’, *A Dictionary of Law* (Oxford University Press 2018) <<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198802525.001.0001/acref-9780198802525-e-3255>> accessed 21 April 2020; Jamie Doward, ‘US Asks World to “Pick a Side” on Venezuela as UK Calls for Fair Elections’ *The Observer* (London, 26 January 2019) <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/26/european-leaders-ready-to-recognise-guaido-as-venezuelan-president>> accessed 21 April 2020.

<sup>158</sup> ‘In Hindsight: The Story of the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism in Yemen’ (*Security Council Report*, 1 September 2016) <[https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2016-09/the\\_story\\_of\\_the\\_un\\_verification\\_and\\_inspection\\_mechanism\\_in\\_yemen.php](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2016-09/the_story_of_the_un_verification_and_inspection_mechanism_in_yemen.php)> accessed 5 April 2020.

similar process could also be imagined for shipments arriving overland or by air.<sup>159</sup> Although the UN is not necessarily completely impartial, it seems unlikely that politicisation would give Maduro an incentive to reject such a measure from the UN. The UN continues to recognise him as Venezuela's leader, and he continued to allow UN agencies into the country.<sup>160</sup> The process would not necessarily risk slowing down current aid shipments from groups such as the Red Cross; multilateral organisations could be exempted from the checks, as they are in Yemen.<sup>161</sup> If, of course, Maduro's actual objection to American aid is not a fear of weapons shipments, but rather that it is American, then this offer is unlikely to make much difference. Given the low costs of making the offer, however, this policy could still be worth attempting.

## V.II. INCREASING SUPPORT FOR HOST COUNTRIES

Although Latin American governments have gone to great lengths to welcome fleeing Venezuelans, they have limited capacity to respond to the crisis, particularly given the added pressures from COVID-19. As a result, the international community has an opportunity to help by contributing to the efforts of these governments. In many cases, including some listed below, there are already examples of promising programmes being implemented in Latin American countries to help Venezuelans outside of Venezuela. It could be helpful for the international community to contribute towards the delivery of these programmes, or even help to expand them.

Such efforts are likely to have several positive effects. Firstly, increased support could ensure that the basic needs of Venezuelans abroad, such as in healthcare and education, are met. Secondly, they could help prevent the deterioration of pre-existing services being offered in Latin American countries, services which are being made vulnerable due to a reallocation of resources towards Venezuelans. This would help ensure decent living standards for the citizens of other Latin American countries and reduce the risk of a backlash against the generous policies towards Venezuelans. Indeed, with this greater support, countries that previously felt it necessary to restrict access to Venezuelans would have less of an incentive to continue such policies.

### i Examples of programmes to support

#### *Education*

Education should be a priority in order to limit the effect that the crisis has on young people who have fled. COVID-19 makes this objective particularly difficult because it has led to the temporary closure of many Latin American schools.<sup>162</sup> Governments in the region have adopted innovative ways of facilitating learning from home. Colombia, for instance, has made educational resources available online and is sending offline resources to students who do not have internet access.<sup>163</sup> Greater funding for such measures could potentially make them more effective, including for Venezuelan children in these education systems.

<sup>159</sup> 'UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen - About' <<https://www.vimye.org/about>> accessed 5 April 2020.

<sup>160</sup> Cohen and Spetalnick (n 32).

<sup>161</sup> 'UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen - General Information' (*UNVIM*) <<https://www.vimye.org/geninfo>> accessed 5 April 2020.

<sup>162</sup> 'Monitoring School Closures' (n 119).

<sup>163</sup> Cristobal Cobo, Robert Hawkins and Helena Rovner, 'How Countries across Latin America Use Technology during COVID19-Driven School Closures' (*World Bank*, 31 March 2020) <<https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/how-countries-across-latin-america-use-technology-during-covid19-driven-school-closures>> accessed 24 July 2020.

Yet providing education to Venezuelan children will be difficult, even when schools reopen. As noted earlier, schools often do not have enough capacity for new Venezuelan arrivals. Other actors, such as wealthy governments, should therefore aim to increase school capacity by providing funding. Significant amounts of money are likely to be needed to make up the shortfall; before COVID-19, Colombia was spending around \$160 million each year on educating Venezuelan children. Additional funding may not solve the capacity issues immediately: for instance, it will take time to build new classrooms if these are needed. Policymakers can look towards Peru for several examples of approaches that could be taken to increase capacity in the short term. Peruvian officials extended some school opening hours so that the same facilities could be used for more classes, refurbished existing rooms and provided new prefabricated classrooms.<sup>164</sup>

### *Health*

Financial support for health systems would also be valuable, particularly in light of the additional health challenges posed by COVID-19. The international community should also offer seconded medical staff. This has occurred in previous crises, such as when British medics travelled to Bangladesh in 2017 to combat a serious outbreak of diphtheria as part of the Rohingya crisis.<sup>165</sup> This policy would complement the efforts of charities. For example, *Médecins Sans Frontières* has set up several clinics in border areas of Colombia.<sup>166</sup>

### *Labour mobility*

Problems such as high unemployment and overstretched services are disproportionately prevalent in border regions, which have a higher concentration of Venezuelans. Promoting a more even distribution of Venezuelans throughout their host countries could alleviate the pressure on border 'hot spots' by spreading the burden and preventing services from being overwhelmed. One example of such a measure is Brazil's *Operação Acolhida*, which gives Venezuelans the right to work and helps them to move to regions of the country that have a proven need for labour.<sup>167</sup> Under this initiative, the Brazilian army, working with the UN, helped around 30,000 Venezuelans to relocate between April 2019 and January 2020.<sup>168</sup> Across the Atlantic, Switzerland and Turkey have had some success with policies to move refugees to areas of the country where their labour is in demand.<sup>169</sup> The introduction of such a policy is dependent on the trajectory of

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<sup>164</sup> 'Una Oportunidad Para Todos : Los Migrantes y Refugiados Venezolanos y El Desarrollo Del Perú' (*World Bank*, November 2019) 26 <<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/107621574372585665/Una-Oportunidad-para-Todos-Los-Migrantes-y-Refugiados-Venezolanos-y-el-Desarrollo-del-Perú>> accessed 24 June 2020.

<sup>165</sup> Mordaunt MP (n 148).

<sup>166</sup> Luisa Torres, 'Colombia Kindly Offers Free Health Care To Venezuelans – Up To A Point' (*NPR*, 20 August 2019) <<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2019/08/20/751192495/free-health-care-for-venezuelans-in-colombia-isn-t-always-free>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>167</sup> Paula Dupraz-Dobias, 'Q&A: How to Stem the Fastest-Growing Refugee Crisis in Latin American History' (*The New Humanitarian*, 29 October 2019) <<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/interview/2019/10/29/Venezuela-exodus-fastest-growing-refugee-crisis-Latin-American-history>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>168</sup> Anthony Boadle, 'U.S. Backs Program to Settle Venezuelan Migrants in Brazil' (*Reuters*, 29 January 2020) <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-brazil-usa-idUSKBN1ZR2I8>> accessed 26 April 2020; Rupa Shenoy, 'Brazil Resettles Venezuelan Refugees – with US Help' (*Public Radio International*, 15 July 2019) <<https://www.pri.org/stories/2019-07-15/brazil-resettles-venezuelan-refugees-us-help>> accessed 26 April 2020.

<sup>169</sup> Dany Bahar, Meagan Dooley and Cindy Huang, 'Integrating Venezuelans into the Colombian Labor Market: Mitigating Costs and Maximizing Benefits' (*Brookings*, December 2018) 10-11

the COVID-19 pandemic, as it could promote the spread of infections from one area to another. However, it is worth considering in a longer-term context.

### *Cash transfers*

Several aid organisations are transferring money directly to Venezuelans living in Colombia.<sup>170</sup> This has several advantages over traditional forms of aid. It gives recipients more agency than conventional forms of aid, supports local economies by giving Venezuelans money to spend in shops and can provide the capital needed to start businesses.<sup>171</sup> In light of COVID-19, the intervention is particularly advantageous. The money is generally delivered by phone and so distribution does not risk infections.<sup>172</sup> Additionally, providing income is particularly important during the pandemic. Lockdown measures have caused many Venezuelans to lose their jobs, pushing them towards homelessness or returning to their homes in Venezuela.<sup>173</sup>

### *Campaigns to combat xenophobia*

Programmes to limit the rise of anti-Venezuelan sentiment would reduce the risk of any backlash against Venezuelan arrivals. The UN has already run several campaigns with this goal.<sup>174</sup> For example, the “*Somos panas*” (“We’re mates”) campaign reminded Colombians that they were helped by Venezuelans when thousands of them fled the other way across the border during Colombia’s 50-year civil war.<sup>175</sup> Both the Colombian and Ecuadorian governments are also working on a series of initiatives to combat xenophobia, including the screening of films about the difficulties faced by Venezuelans.<sup>176</sup>

## ii Types of supporters from the international community

Various interested parties could help promote and even bolster programmes like those mentioned above. Multilateral organisations and NGOs could take a greater role in delivering some of these programmes, such as by running health clinics. They could be supported by increased donations from philanthropists and foreign governments. Greater financial aid from foreign governments, multilateral organisations, NGOs and philanthropists could also be given directly to Latin American governments to support the delivery of services that are generally provided by governments, such as education.

Additionally, various actors could help Latin American governments to get access to affordable credit. This would increase general state capacity in the short term, better equipping these governments to help Venezuelans. Before COVID-19, the IMF had already extended a flexible credit line to Colombia, providing short-term funding without the IMF’s usual conditions of

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<<https://www.brookings.edu/research/integrating-venezuelans-into-the-colombian-labor-market/>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>170</sup> Ebus (n 103).

<sup>171</sup> Adele Peters, ‘For Refugees, the Best Solution Is Often Just Cash’ *Fast Company* (27 September 2018)

<<https://www.fastcompany.com/90239264/for-refugees-the-best-solution-is-often-just-cash>> accessed 15 May 2020.

<sup>172</sup> Ebus (n 103).

<sup>173</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Steven Grattan, ‘Venezuelan Migrants Face Rising Xenophobia in Latin America’ (*The New Humanitarian*, 13 February 2020) <<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/02/13/Venezuelan-migrants-xenophobia-Latin-America>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>175</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> *ibid.*



financial reforms.<sup>177</sup> It would be a positive step if similar arrangements were offered to other Latin American countries that host Venezuelans. Additionally, the World Bank can determine whether countries are eligible for a concessional funding mechanism, enabling them to receive loans at below-market rates.<sup>178</sup> At the moment, nationwide studies have been conducted in Colombia and Peru, and another is about to be finished in Ecuador.<sup>179</sup> As a result of the completion of a nationwide study for Colombia, Canada has agreed on a loan to Colombia on generous terms.<sup>180</sup> It would be beneficial for more below-market-rate loans to be made available to Latin American countries. Development banks, several of which are identified in the final set of recommendations, may similarly be able to provide credit to increase state capacity in the short term.

Since this recommendation envisages the involvement of a range of actors, coordination is crucial to minimise duplication of effort. As already noted, the Quito Process is a good example of coordination to support Venezuelans in other Latin American countries. This may therefore be a helpful platform for coordinating the scaling-up and sustaining of promising programmes.

### V.III. ENHANCED COLLABORATION BETWEEN HOST COUNTRIES

Even if they do not receive significantly more support from the international community, enhanced collaboration between the countries affected by the influx of Venezuelans is still important. Through working together, these countries could ensure that no particular state is overburdened by the crisis. Two specific forms of collaboration are identified below.

#### i Reopening borders

As discussed earlier in this paper, several Latin American countries, including Peru, Ecuador and Chile partially closed their borders and tightened entry requirements following domestic protests, partly against Venezuelan arrivals. Although these measures may reduce the pressure on the countries that take them, they may have two harmful effects. Firstly, such measures limit opportunities for Venezuelans to leave their own country in pursuit of a better life. Secondly, these measures have a knock-on effect, increasing the pressure on countries, such as Colombia, which remain comparatively open. These measures essentially funnel Venezuelans who do leave their country towards countries which have laxer border controls, threatening to create an unsustainable situation which will negatively impact the host countries as well as the Venezuelans who go there. As an infection control measure, steps to open borders may, however, need to be delayed until after the COVID-19 pandemic has somewhat subsided.

#### ii Standardisation of entry policies

In addition to reopening their borders, host countries should work together to standardise, as much as possible, entry requirements for Venezuelans. Even when all their borders were open,

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<sup>177</sup> 'IMF Flexible Credit Line (FCL)' (*IMF*, 12 February 2020)

<<https://www.imf.org/en/About/Factsheets/Sheets/2016/08/01/20/40/Flexible-Credit-Line>> accessed 24 March 2020; 'Colombia: Review Under the Flexible Credit Line Arrangement' (*IMF*, 22 May 2019)

<<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2019/05/21/Colombia-Review-Under-the-Flexible-Credit-Line-Arrangement-Press-Release-and-Staff-Report-46917>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>178</sup> Dupraz-Dobias (n 167).

<sup>179</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> *ibid.*

there were significant differences in requirements which encouraged migrants to go predominantly to countries with more favourable entry policies, in particular Colombia.<sup>181</sup> Host countries have already committed to sharing best practices through the Quito Process. Given its experience working with migrants and refugees throughout the region and elsewhere, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) may be able to advise on best practices.

## V.IV.IMPROVING VENEZUELA'S ECONOMIC SITUATION

The recommendations presented up until this point have focused on the short term, aiming to address the immediate humanitarian issues in Venezuela and other Latin American countries. They do not deal with the root causes of the crisis, Venezuela's poor economic position. This final set of recommendations takes a long-term view, identifying how Venezuela's economy can be strengthened.

### i Targeting of American sanctions

The Trump administration has dramatically increased the sanctions upon Venezuela, moving from targeting individuals closely associated with Maduro to targeting the economy more broadly. This has caused significant economic harm to the country. For example, it is has made it more difficult to generate foreign currency from oil sales. Returning to sanctions that target only specific officials could therefore benefit the economy.

American policymakers might even consider reducing even the sanctions on officials, in exchange for certain concessions that would improve the humanitarian situation. Such concessions could include distribution of CLAP boxes in a way that truly aims to address hunger in the country, rather than just rewarding supporters of the Maduro government. This distribution could be carried out by a reasonably impartial body, such as a UN agency. Although helpful in addressing the humanitarian crisis, this kind of deal would be difficult to reach, given the hostility between the American and Maduro camps, and Maduro's suspicion of American "imperialism".<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Collins (n 142).

<sup>182</sup> Jeremy Hobson, 'In Venezuela, Maduro Accuses U.S. Of Imperialism. History Says He's Not Wrong.' (*WBUR*, 12 February 2019) <<https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2019/02/12/venezuela-history-us-interventions-latin-america>> accessed 9 May 2020.



## ii New investment

Rebuilding infrastructure, such as electricity and water networks, that Venezuela's economy and people require is likely to cost billions of dollars in investment.<sup>183</sup> Starting or expanding businesses within the country may also necessitate significant amounts of capital. Despite Venezuela's huge reserves, oil revenues would not be able to provide these funds in the short term, even if American sanctions on PDVSA were removed. This is because the oil industry itself has suffered from severe underinvestment and so would require large capital infusions to be able to return to high levels of production.<sup>184</sup> Financing is therefore likely to be needed from elsewhere. Several potential sources are considered below.

Since Venezuela has huge oil reserves, the energy sector may seem like a natural focus of any investment. It would, however, be sensible to invest in other areas of the economy as well. One reason for this is that PDVSA suffers from systemic issues of corruption and lack of expertise.<sup>185</sup> Even if it were possible to increase output quickly, the current low oil prices would limit the level of revenue that could be generated. Additionally, having an oil-centric economy would leave Venezuela vulnerable to further fluctuations in oil prices, should the price decrease again. Although this paper does not attempt to specify in detail which other economic sectors should be prioritised, they should be diverse. Indeed, some have suggested that a key driver of Venezuela's economic revival could be businesses started by Venezuelans who return home from other Latin American countries, where many have acquired new skills.<sup>186</sup>

The Venezuelan government, under any leader, would struggle to raise money on public markets in the short term. The government, and state-owned PDVSA, are in default on debt totalling well over \$100 billion.<sup>187</sup> Restructuring this debt is likely to be a difficult task, given the complex structure of the debt and the wide range of actors that are owed money.<sup>188</sup> Profit-motivated lenders are therefore likely to be wary of lending to the country, out of concern that they will not be repaid.

Lenders would need to be motivated by considerations other than profit. This could include governments, motivated by altruism or the desire to turn the country into an ally or trading partner.<sup>189</sup> Multilateral development banks and multilateral finance institutions, which aim to

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<sup>183</sup> Ricardo Hausmann, Miguel Ángel Santos and Douglas Barrios, 'Cómo salvar a Venezuela' *The New York Times* (9 July 2018) <<https://www.nytimes.com/es/2018/07/09/espanol/opinion/opinion-salvar-venezuela-crisis-economica.html>> accessed 15 May 2020.

<sup>184</sup> Amy Jaffe, 'No Easy Path for Venezuela's Oil in the Struggle for a Transition in Power' (*Council on Foreign Relations*, 28 January 2019) <<https://www.cfr.org/blog/no-easy-path-venezuelas-oil-struggle-transition-power>> accessed 15 May 2020.

<sup>185</sup> *ibid*; Moises Rendon, 'Can Venezuela's Oil Pay the Day After Bill?' (*Center for Strategic & International Studies*, 2 April 2019) <<https://www.csis.org/analysis/can-venezuelas-oil-pay-day-after-bill>> accessed 15 May 2020.

<sup>186</sup> Tepperman and Bahar (n 8).

<sup>187</sup> Colby Smith, 'Venezuela's Long and Winding Road to Debt Restructuring' *Financial Times* (6 March 2019) <<http://ftalphaville.ft.com/2019/03/06/155184840000/Venezuela-s-long-and-winding-road-to-debt-restructuring/>> accessed 15 May 2020.

<sup>188</sup> Uwe Hessler, 'How to Resolve the Venezuelan Debt Conundrum' (*Deutsche Welle*, 13 February 2019) <<https://www.dw.com/en/how-to-resolve-the-venezuelan-debt-conundrum/a-47483575>> accessed 15 May 2020; Smith (n 187).

<sup>189</sup> Rendon (n 185).

promote economic and social development in developing countries, could also play a role.<sup>190</sup> An overview of several relevant financing institutions is presented below.

### ***World Bank***

The World Bank aims to “promote economic and social progress in developing countries by helping to raise productivity so that their people may live a better and fuller life”.<sup>191</sup> It has previously been active in Venezuela and has expressed a desire to support the country again.<sup>192</sup> This would require a change of policy in Venezuela, away from Chávez’s decision to sever ties with the institution.<sup>193</sup> Additionally, as the refusal of COVID-19-related funding demonstrates, the Bank currently claims to be unable to act in Venezuela, as a result of the uncertainty about the country’s rightful leader.<sup>194</sup>

### ***European Investment Bank***

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is the lending arm of the EU and currently has a remit to lend up to €2.3 billion to Latin America and Venezuela is currently eligible.<sup>196</sup> The EIB can help in the development of social and economic infrastructure, including water and sanitation; given the poor state of Venezuelan infrastructure, this would be very helpful.<sup>197</sup> It is also able to provide credit to local financial institutions, empowering them to lend to small businesses.<sup>198</sup> In political terms, this could distance any funds from the European Union, whose parliament, alongside many EU member states, recognises Guaidó as Venezuela’s leader.<sup>199</sup> This would help avoid the politicisation of support and therefore reduce the likelihood that funds are rejected, even if Maduro remained in power in Venezuela.

### ***Inter-American Development Bank***

The Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) is the largest source of multilateral financing to Latin America.<sup>200</sup> It is mandated to devote at least 40% of its resources to

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<sup>190</sup> Jonathan Law, ‘Multilateral Development Bank’, *A Dictionary of Finance and Banking* (Oxford University Press 2018) <<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198789741.001.0001/acref-9780198789741-e-2409>> accessed 15 May 2020.

<sup>191</sup> David Driscoll, ‘The IMF and the World Bank: How Do They Differ?’ (*IMF*, August 1996) <<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/exrp/differ/differ.htm>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>192</sup> Mark Tran, ‘Venezuela Quits IMF and World Bank’ *The Guardian* (1 May 2007) <<http://www.theguardian.com/business/2007/may/01/venezuela.imf>> accessed 15 May 2020; Dawn Kissi, ‘World Bank Preparing to Become “deeply Involved” in Venezuela’ (12 April 2019) <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/world-bank-preparing-deeply-involved-venezuela-190411195030646.html>> accessed 15 May 2020.

<sup>193</sup> Tran (n 192).

<sup>194</sup> Campos and Lawder (n 98).

<sup>196</sup> ‘Asia and Latin America’ (*European Investment Bank*) <<https://www.eib.org/projects/regions/ala/index.htm>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>197</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> Robin Emmott and Alissa de Carbonnel, ‘EU Parliament Recognizes Guaido as Venezuelan Interim President’ (*Reuters*, 31 January 2019) <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-eu-idUSKCN1PPI1HQ>> accessed 9 May 2020; Jones and Wintour (n 32).

<sup>200</sup> ‘Public Sector Financing’ (*Inter-American Development Bank*) <<https://www.iadb.org/en/about-us/idb-financing/public-sector-financing>> accessed 24 March 2020.

programmes that promote social equity and reduce poverty.<sup>201</sup> It could be useful in helping to reduce poverty through social programmes. The IADB's Social Entrepreneurship Program provides grants to private, non-profit community-based organisations and public local development institutions.<sup>202</sup> With regards to Venezuela, this program could help those who have seen their occupations and standards of living decline due to economic hardship. The Bank's favouring of Guaidó could prevent it from acting while Maduro is in power.<sup>203</sup> This would be the case if the American candidate for IADB president is selected; Mauricio Claver-Carone is closely involved in the Trump administration's tough stance towards Venezuela.<sup>204</sup>

### *CAF Development Bank of Latin America*

The *Corporacion Andina de Fomento* (CAF) Development Bank of Latin America is the international institution that has had the most traction, if controversy, with regards to alleviating the current economic problems in Venezuela. CAF is a development bank owned by Latin American and Spanish governments and commercial banks, including the government of Venezuela, where CAF is headquartered.<sup>205</sup> The ethos of CAF is “a mutual wish of achieving the economic integration of their countries as quickly as possible [...]”.<sup>206</sup> This is well-suited to Venezuela's needs. On the other hand, CAF has relatively small amounts of capital to lend.<sup>208</sup> Moreover, there have been significant political tensions surrounding the plans that CAF has for Venezuela. This tension began when Guaidó claimed that CAF had proposed a \$400 million line of credit to the country, but that the bank would not provide the funds to be administered by President Maduro's government.<sup>209</sup> This was followed by CAF denying that it had ever been considering a loan.<sup>210</sup> CAF subsequently showed interest in improving Venezuela's electricity supply in the face of recurring blackouts.<sup>211</sup> More recently, Guaidó stated that lawmakers have “abandoned a proposal to finance electricity infrastructure for the blackout stricken nation

<sup>201</sup> ‘Borrowing Member Countries - Groups I and II’ (*Inter-American Development Bank*)

<<https://www.iadb.org/en/about-us/borrowing-member-countries-groups-i-and-ii>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>202</sup> ‘Grants’ (*Inter-American Development Bank*) <<https://www.iadb.org/en/about-us/grants>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>203</sup> Lelsley Wroughton, ‘Latam Lender Replaces Venezuela's Maduro Representative with Guaido Economist’ (*Reuters*, 15 March 2019) <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-idUSKCN1QW29J>> accessed 13 May 2020; Rafael Moro Martins and Ryan Grim, ‘Secret IDB Proposal Would Give \$48 Billion Infusion to Boost Venezuela's Economy – but Only After Regime Change’ (*The Intercept*, 18 April 2019) <<https://theintercept.com/2019/04/18/venezuela-idb-maduro-guaido/>> accessed 13 May 2020.

<sup>204</sup> ‘A Gringo Takeover Bid for the Inter-American Development Bank’ *The Economist* (18 June 2020) <<https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2020/06/18/a-gringo-takeover-bid-for-the-inter-american-development-bank>> accessed 24 July 2020.

<sup>205</sup> Jonathan Law, ‘Development Bank of Latin America’, *A Dictionary of Finance and Banking* (Oxford University Press 2018) <<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198789741.001.0001/acref-9780198789741-e-5881>> accessed 13 May 2020.

<sup>206</sup> ‘CAF Agreement Establishing’ (*CAF*, March 2015) <<https://www.caf.com/media/29934/caf-agreement-establishing-10032015.pdf>> accessed 24 June 2020.

<sup>208</sup> Lars Engen and Annalisa Prizzon, ‘A Guide to Multilateral Development Banks’ (*Overseas Development Institute*, April 2018) 28 <<https://www.odi.org/publications/11149-guide-multilateral-development-banks>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>209</sup> Mayela Armas and Vivian Sequera, ‘Lender CAF Proposes \$400-Million Venezuela Credit: Guaido’ (*Reuters*, 9 October 2019) <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-caf-idUSKBN1WO024>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>210</sup> Mayela Armas, Corina Pons and Will Dunham, ‘Lender CAF Not Currently Considering a Loan to Venezuela -Statement’ (*Reuters*, 9 October 2019) <<https://www.reuters.com/article/venezuela-caf-idUSL2N26U0YA>> accessed 24 March 2020.

<sup>211</sup> Brian Ellsworth, Corina Pons and Mayela Armas, ‘U.N., Lender CAF Seek \$350 Million Loan Deal for Government of Venezuela's Maduro’ (*Reuters*, 4 December 2019) <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-loan-idUSKBN1Y82K9>> accessed 24 March 2020.

through a loan from regional lender CAF”.<sup>212</sup> CAF should ensure that its efforts to prevent blackouts and restore electricity, among other measures, help people across the country regardless of political affiliation. One way in which it could do this is by having impartial observers ensure that the funds provided by CAF are used in a non-partisan way.

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<sup>212</sup> ‘Venezuela Lawmakers Scrap CAF Electricity Financing Plan: Guaidó’ (*Reuters*, 9 January 2020) <<https://www.reuters.com/article/venezuela-politics-caf-idUSL1N29E15G>> accessed 26 March 2020.

## VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The political divide between Maduro on the one side and Guaidó and USA on the other is deep and entrenched. It is, therefore, unclear how the political stalemate in Venezuela will be resolved. Despite the deadlock, there are ways to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela and other Latin American countries. A complete list of the recommendations is provided here:

1. Increasing aid to Venezuela
  - i. Wealthy governments should contribute more funding, particularly to multilateral institutions, such as the UNHCR.
  - ii. Private philanthropy should also provide more resources, ideally to multilateral institutions, taking advantage of philanthropy's potential to be particularly non-partisan and so help in ways that nation-states cannot.
  - iii. The UN should aim to work with the Maduro government and donors to implement an aid verification mechanism to provide confidence that aid entering Venezuela is legitimate.
2. Increasing support for other Latin American countries
  - i. NGOs and foreign governments should support programmes being run by countries that are experiencing an influx of people from Venezuela, providing both funding and practical support.
  - ii. Multilateral institutions, such as the IMF, and individual countries, should provide credit to the affected countries on generous terms to help them respond to the influx.
3. Enhanced collaboration between host countries
  - i. Measures that make it harder for Venezuelans to enter other Latin American countries should be rolled back to make it easier for Venezuelans to move to countries with higher standards of living.
  - ii. Host countries should standardise their policies to a greater extent, to allow best practices to be shared, and to remove incentives for Venezuelans to gravitate towards any one individual country, potentially overwhelming it.
4. Improving Venezuela's economic situation in the long term
  - i. American sanctions should be modified so that they return to targeting specific officials, rather than the economy more broadly.
  - ii. Capital should be made available by development banks to provide the infrastructure required for the economy to grow.

The humanitarian case for helping to relieve the crisis in Venezuela and other Latin American countries is overwhelming. Policymakers may however be reluctant to commit the significant resources required to implement many of the above measures. This is particularly the case for policymakers outside Latin America, who may feel isolated from the crisis; there are few refugees on Europe's borders, for instance. COVID-19 will also increase this reluctance, since the pandemic is already forcing policymakers to commit to other expensive policies, such as paying people to stay home. Regrettably, therefore, policymakers may feel unable to implement these policies purely for humanitarian reasons.

There are, however, reasons for wealthy governments outside Latin America to help even if they are entirely self-interested. Firstly, the COVID-19 pandemic more tightly links the fates of all countries. As several experts have noted, it would be difficult for wealthy countries to lift lockdowns and keep death tolls low while the disease raged out of control elsewhere; there would

be a high likelihood of infections spreading back from the heavily affected countries to the lightly affected ones.<sup>213</sup> Since many of the recommendations would support health systems in Venezuela and other Latin American countries, they could help tackle the pandemic, therefore benefitting all countries. Secondly, and benefitting the USA in particular, improved conditions in Venezuela and other Latin American countries would give less of an incentive for Venezuelans to flee north to the USA. This would be a political success for both Donald Trump and Joe Biden, should he win the presidential election. Trump, who has consistently pushed for reduced asylum numbers, would therefore be keen to see fewer asylum claims from Venezuelans, especially when they make a third of all such claims.<sup>214</sup> For Biden, supporting countries so that their inhabitants do not have such strong incentives to journey north would be consistent with his earlier policy as Vice President towards Central America.<sup>215</sup> Thirdly, better supporting Latin American countries could prevent them from reorienting towards perceived rivals, such as China. During the pandemic, China has helped the region with medical supplies and debt relief, whereas the USA has been comparatively absent.<sup>216</sup> Increasing support to these countries, and thus strengthening them as allies, could be in the strategic interests of western countries.<sup>217</sup> Although humanitarianism is the focus of this paper, there are also pragmatic reasons why policymakers should consider these recommendations seriously.

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<sup>213</sup> Tedros Adhanom and Mark Lowcock, 'Rich Governments Must Help Poorer Nations about to Be Hit by the Coronavirus' *The Telegraph* (London, 24 March 2020) <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/science-and-disease/rich-governments-must-help-poorer-nations-hit-coronavirus/>> accessed 24 July 2020; Amber Milne, 'Rich Countries Urged to Do More as COVID-19 Hits Poor, War-Torn Nations' (*Reuters*, 30 March 2020) <<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-aid-idUSL8N2BK3QC>> accessed 24 July 2020.

<sup>214</sup> Molly O'Toole, 'Venezuela, Now a Top Source of U.S. Asylum Claims, Poses a Challenge for Trump' *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 5 June 2019) <<https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-trump-venezuela-asylum-immigration-20190605-story.html>> accessed 24 July 2020.

<sup>215</sup> Joe Biden, 'The Border Won't Be Secure until Central America Is' *Washington Post* (25 June 2018) <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-border-wont-be-secure-until-central-america-is/2018/06/25/5e891566-78a8-11e8-aece-4d04c8ac6158\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-border-wont-be-secure-until-central-america-is/2018/06/25/5e891566-78a8-11e8-aece-4d04c8ac6158_story.html)> accessed 24 July 2020.

<sup>216</sup> Paul Angelo and Rebecca Bill Chavez, "Gracias China!!!" *The New York Times* (21 April 2020) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/21/opinion/china-latin-america-covid.html>> accessed 24 July 2020; Mac Margolis, 'China Laps U.S. in Latin America With Covid-19 Diplomacy' (*Bloomberg*, 24 June 2020) <<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-06-24/china-laps-u-s-in-latin-america-with-covid-19-diplomacy>> accessed 24 July 2020.

<sup>217</sup> Rendon (n 185).



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