



CRISIS RESPONSE UPDATE: **VENEZUELA**



CRISIS CONTEXT

Since 2015, 3 million Venezuelans have left their country due to dire insecurity, instability and violence. In what was once of the wealthiest countries in Central America, food, medicine and other basic goods are now out of reach for many. At least 1 million people have crossed the border into Colombia in recent months in search of safety—and the number of refugees continues to rise. IRC teams on the ground in Colombia are seeing growing desperation among those fleeing—after years of hunger and inadequate medical care—and a marked increase in the number of women and girls at risk.

A COURAGEOUS MOTHER'S NEW START

Andrea, 29, is one mother who made the painful choice to leave Venezuela with her family to start a new life in Colombia. She, like many, did not want to leave home - but hunger and exorbitant costs of medicine forced her hand.

Andrea says, "Before we left, I sold everything we had: the stove, our washing machine, the refrigerator—everything. Of course the Bolívares [Venezuelan currency] we managed to get for them were almost worthless in Colombia. We managed to buy two floor mats and nothing else. The journey here was the worst trip of my life."

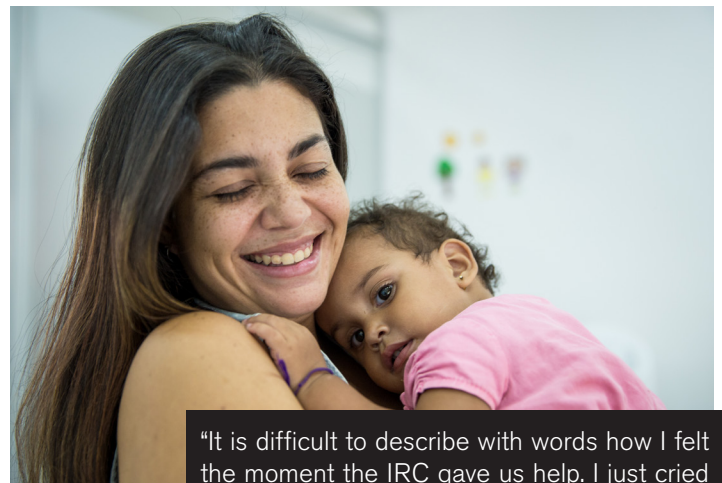
After 15 hours on a bus, her youngest child fever-ridden and ill, Andrea and her family arrived in Colombia with almost nothing. For the first few months they got by, working hard to earn money selling small items like breakfast cereal and jam door-to-door on the street.

"There were days when we went to bed with nothing in our stomachs. But we did not stop, because every day we had to keep fighting and fighting and fighting to survive," says Andrea.

YOUR PARTNER IN RESCUE

With your generous support, the IRC has reached more than 5,400 Venezuelan refugees with emergency cash, health care, and specialized protective services to help women and children.

In concert with local partners, our vital health aid includes telemedicine—to help remotely reach the most vulnerable with assistance—essential medicines, and delivery kits for expectant mothers.



"It is difficult to describe with words how I felt the moment the IRC gave us help. I just cried and cried and cried. I really hope that they can help many Venezuelans like me." - Andrea

Receiving support from the IRC was a turning point for Andrea and her family. Her husband has found a job and she and her daughters are able to attend IRC classes together at a center in Cúcuta, designed to create a welcoming and safe space for children to play and recover from trauma.