Venezuela is currently facing economic collapse and political upheaval following years of economic mismanagement, corruption, and a disputed election. COVID-19 only exacerbates these challenges.

Country Context
Venezuela's humanitarian crisis is rooted in its economic collapse following the drop in global oil prices in 2014 and a lack of reforms to diversify the economy or reduce corruption. Following a disputed election in January 2019, Juan Guaidó, the National Assembly President, challenged President Nicolás Maduro’s legitimacy and declared himself acting President. Mediated talks with the Maduro regime failed to resolve the political crisis. Millions of Venezuelans have fled the country, and most remain in Latin America and the Caribbean, putting significant pressure on host countries. As COVID-19 spreads in Venezuela, a weak health system is collapsing, educational opportunities are disappearing, and food insecurity is on the rise.

How is the U.S. Involved?
The U.S. has allocated $12.3M in COVID-19 humanitarian assistance to the Venezuelan people to help surveil the spread of the virus, provide water and sanitation supplies, and manage COVID-19 cases. The U.S. has enforced sanctions on Venezuela, including freezing government assets in U.S. territories. In August 2019, the U.S. Treasury Department released guidance to ensure continued financial institution access to humanitarian organizations working inside the country.

On-the-Ground Perspective
- Even before the current COVID-19 crisis, Venezuela’s health system had nearly collapsed. 90% of hospitals face shortages of medicine and critical supplies, and 70% do not have regular access to water.
- The country has eight hospital beds per 10,000 people and only 84 ICU beds for a population of 32 million.
- 77% of hospitals lack even basic necessities like soap or personal protective equipment, and 90% of hospitals don’t have the protocols for respiratory care necessary to treat COVID-19.
- An increasing number of refugees and migrants are returning to Venezuela as quarantine measures in host countries leave people without assistance and at risk of being exposed to and spreading COVID-19.

Responses and Actions
- While humanitarian access in Venezuela has been difficult due to travel and visa restrictions, national and international organizations have been able to provide basic goods like food and water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities.
- Humanitarian actors have realigned current programming to meet new needs, including increasing remote mental health and psychosocial support and distributing necessary materials to prevent the spread of COVID-19.