

**Update on the Venezuela situation**  
**COVID-19 emergency**  
**18 March 2020**

Since 16 March 2020 the Government has declared social quarantine and suspension for all activities in Caracas and *Distrito Capital*, Vargas, Miranda, Táchira, Apure and Cojedes, and announcing the national quarantine on 17 March 2020.

Overall, the country is suffering from a limited access to basic services, including fuel (very limited or completely restricted in some areas of the country), water, electricity and gas. The closure of gas stations, together with the movement restrictions, have been reported as key issues preventing humanitarian assistance from being delivered.

In Western areas of the country, and specially in *estado* Zulia, the main reported issue is the lack of electricity, including some communities that have been without access to the public grid for more than 30 hours and daily cuts in Maracaibo (capital of the *estado* Zulia). The situation is expected to be worse after the Governor's announcement asking the population to limit the use of electricity. Some local actors traditionally implementing activities in the area of Shelter, Energy and NFI (including Caritas, IOM and SJR) have stopped operations, including those activities at the temporary shelter arrangements with no plans to be reopened in the short term. In line with the Cluster's action points, there is a need to map, at a national level, the functioning temporary shelter arrangements to improve the coordination mechanism among actors to support the COVID-19 response.

In Southern areas of the country, and specially in *estado* Táchira, there are issues with the provision of basic services, including water, electricity and gas. It was reported that in *El Araguaney* and *La Tendida* communities, the ambulatory care center is not functioning, and most outpatient clinics are requesting facemask and protection gloves. On the other hand, the high cost to access food make unable the population to supply themselves. Movement restrictions are also affecting NGO work, with most of the partners working remotely or stopping operations. NGOs requested a *sauf-conduit* to keep on working on attending the most vulnerable populations. The access to *San Antonio* and *Ureña* border is heavily restricted with only seriously ill patients with a medical certificate being allowed to go through, only if having an additional authorization from the *Guardia Nacional Bolivariana* (GNB).

In Eastern areas of the country, and specially in *estado* Bolívar, the local population is still doing mining work, which may cause a rapid spread of COVID-19, apart from the other pre-existing conditions (e.g. malaria and dengue), which highlights a special need in WASH assistance, including the distribution of hygiene kits. The situation at the border crossing between Venezuela (*Santa Elena de Uairén*) and Brazil (*Pacaraima*) is constantly changing, introducing progressive movement restrictions. As of 18 March 2020, the border allows the crossing only to transport freight of supplies and food, and it is completely closed for people.