



Fact Sheet Social Missions in Venezuela

Facing a political and economic crisis in the wake of the 2002 coup and sabotage of the oil industry, in 2003 President Hugo Chávez called for the creation of special social programs that could address long overdue basic needs such as health, education, housing, food security and job training that were not being dealt with rapidly enough through traditional government mechanisms.

These programs came to be known as *misiones* – “missions” – and were crafted to serve particularly Venezuela’s poorest areas and encourage participation from members of the communities in which they were present.

What started as a small number of missions in 2003 has grown to 26 missions today covering a large number of social needs. **Studies have shown that the missions have contributed to a dramatic decrease of poverty and expanded the availability of vital social services to parts of the Venezuelan population that did not have them in the past.**

Below is a description of some of the social missions that exist in Venezuela today:

HEALTH

The general objective of *Misión Barrio Adentro* (Mission Inside the Neighborhood) is to guarantee the population access to health services. Through its different phases, the mission looks to create a network of functional primary-care givers and allow the construction and rehabilitation of popular clinics and public hospitals.

The mission in its first phase (*Barrio Adentro I*) was launched in April 2003 with a goal of developing a system of primary attention – centered around curative and preventive medicine – and establishing a system that guarantees a doctor for every 250 families throughout the country. Also through this mission,

Social Advances in Venezuela

↓ Extreme poverty has fallen from 20.2% in 1999 to 7.6% in 2008

↓ Household poverty has fallen from 49% in 1999 to 26.4% in 2009

↑ Between 1988 and 1998, social spending averaged 9.5% of GDP. Since then, social spending has averaged 17.5%.

↑ By 2008, Venezuela’s investment in health was 18.8% of GDP.

↑ Enrollment in higher education in Venezuela has exploded since 1998, increasing from less than 700,000 to over two million – a 338% increase.

medicines for clinical use are offered free, as well as dental and vision services.

The mission’s second phase (*Barrio Adentro II*) was launched in June 2005. Its goal was to offer, at no cost, services like advanced medical exams, treatment for medical emergencies of great severity and physical rehabilitation through the Centers of High Technology (CAT), Centers of Integral Diagnosis (CID) and Rooms of Integral Rehabilitation (RIR).

The third phase of the mission (*Barrio Adentro III*) consisted of the modernization of the country’s hospital network. Unlike the first two phases, the third phase of Mission Inside the Neighborhood uses the traditional network of hospitals as a means to re-structure the National Public System of Health. It includes the modernization of medical equipment and the restructuring, enlargement and improvement of the hospital infrastructure.

The fourth phase was formally launched in October 2006. (*Barrio Adentro IV*) The goal of this mission was to build 16 new, highly specialized hospitals in several parts of the country, continuing the example of the Latin American Children’s Cardiac Hospital, located in Caracas.

VISION

Similar to the Inside the Neighborhood Mission, *Misión Milagro* (Mission Miracle) seeks to help thousands of people in the poorest sectors of the country to overcome vision problems like cataracts. Started in 2004 as part of an agreement signed between Cuba and Venezuela, the mission seeks to cure these afflictions, at no cost, for Venezuelans with limited resources. From 2006 until 2008, a total of 587,685 surgeries were performed in Venezuela. With the Sandino Agreement signed July



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2005 between Venezuela and Cuba, the mission was extended to citizens of every country in Latin America.

ORAL HEALTH

Misión Sonrisa (Mission Smile) was announced in 2006 and aims to address the oral health of Venezuelans, especially the most economically disadvantaged.

EDUCATION

Misión Robinson, *Misión Ribas*, and *Misión Sucre* (Mission Robinson, Mission Ribas and Mission Sucre) were launched in 2003 as a means to allow Venezuelans that have not been able to access the traditional educational system to complete their educations. Mission Robinson is divided into two phases, the first (Robinson I) aimed at the elimination of illiteracy and the second (Robinson II) at allowing the completion of a primary education. Due to the achievements of Mission Robinson I, Venezuela is now considered a country free of illiteracy. Additionally, millions have completed their primary education through Mission Robinson II. Mission Ribas allows Venezuelans to complete their high school degrees. *Misión Sucre* (Mission Sucre), also launched in 2003, allows for the completion of university-level educations.

FOOD SECURITY

Misión MERCAL (Mission MERCAL) was announced in April 2003. Supported by Article 305 of the 1999 Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, its main goal is to ensure that the Venezuelan people have easy and reliable access to basic food products. Additionally, the mission promotes the production of these goods and products in a way that preserves quality while offering low prices. With this mission, the government seeks to guarantee the nutritional security of all Venezuelans. The mission includes additional initiatives focusing on children, the elderly and those living in poverty.

EMPLOYMENT

Originally known as *Misión Vuelvan Caras* (Mission Return Faces), which was initiated in 2004, the Mission Ché Guevara was created June 2007. This mission seeks to offer job training to poor sectors to help integrate them into the development of a harmonious economic system according to the social and political development plans of the nation.

HOUSING

Misión Habitat (Mission Habitat), started in 2004, aims to help the Venezuelan people secure housing by offering credits and relief for the purchase of homes. The mission also aids in the creation of integrated communities where residents have access to all necessary services, from education to health.

LEGAL IDENTITY

Misión Identidad (Mission Identity) started in 2003 as a massive program to grant legal identification and electoral registration to those Venezuelans who had never received it. Due to the program's success, millions of Venezuelans have obtained certified legal documents that allow them to exercise the rights of their citizenship, from voting to accessing social services.

In the first phase of the program, from October 2003 to December 2004, more than eight million people received their identity cards for the first time or had outdated identity documents renewed. From July 2006 onwards, around 430,000 immigrants were naturalized and nearly 270,000 indigenous people obtained their identity cards for the first time. Between 2005 and 2006, more than five million Venezuelans were registered and were able to exercise their right to vote for the first time in their lives.

WOMEN

Inspired by articles 75, 76 and 86 of the constitution, *Misión Madres del Barrio* (Mission Mothers of the Neighborhood) was created in 2006 in order to support housewives that found themselves in need, so they would be able to, along with their families, overcome situations of extreme poverty. This mission foresees an allocation of 60% to 80% of the minimum wage for housewives that are found to be in a state of poverty, which could be temporary or permanent. Likewise, it looks to incorporate the housewife in community and social programs.

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

Misión Guaicaipuro (Mission Guaicaipuro) was inaugurated in 2003 as a means to restore communal land titles and human rights to Venezuela's numerous indigenous communities.



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ENVIRONMENT

Based on Article 127 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, *Misión Arbol* (Tree Mission) came about in June 2006 with the purpose of recovering the wooded and green areas of the country, offering refuge to animal species and conserving land. With this in mind, the Tree Mission promotes the leading participation of communities in the construction of a new model of development that itself focuses mainly on the recovery, conservation and sustainable use of forests for the improvement of the quality of life. At the same time, this mission has an ambitious plan of reforestation that requires the joint action of the public institutions and its citizens.

LAND

Misión Zamora (Mission Zamora) was created in 2005 as a means to reclaim, recover and convert idle lands for small-scale agricultural production. It follows all legal procedures established in the Constitution and Venezuelan laws. To achieve its objective, the mission combines the distribution of lands with a series of initiatives that support small farmers, including credits for the purchase of equipment, technical guidance, inclusion in the food distribution network and commercialization of the products in the network of state-run markets.

SCIENCE

Announced in February 2006, *Misión Ciencia* (Mission Science) seeks to promote the indigenous creation of scientific knowledge for the purposes of the country's development and integration with the region. This program encourages the interaction of the productive sectors of the country to stimulate the socialization of knowledge and to unify efforts and consolidate strategic features for the creation of a new productive and economic system.

CULTURE

Misión Cultura (Mission Culture) was launched in 2005 and seeks to guarantee and promote Venezuela's culture and national identity in accordance with Article 99 of the constitution. It is a program that involves education, cultural programming and cultural development.

HOMELESSNESS

Kicked off in 2006, *Misión Negra Hipólita* (Black Hippolyta) addresses the situation of those Venezuelans – children, teenagers, adults, the elderly – who find themselves homeless and living on the street.

ENERGY

Misión Revolución Energética (Mission Energy Revolution) was set in motion in 2006 in order to promote the rational use of energy through the replacement of incandescent light bulbs with environmentally efficient alternatives. The goal is to substitute, for free, 52 million incandescent light bulbs. As of April 2007, 3,058,000 light bulbs in 485,000 homes in the city of Caracas were substituted. The mission also seeks to rationalize the consumption of energy in the industrial sector and promote the production of energy through alternative means, including gas, solar and water.

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November 12, 2009.