



**REPORT**  
**JANUARY 2023**

# HUMAN RIGHTS AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN VENEZUELA:

HISTORY OF SILENCES, OBLIVION AND OMISSIONS



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**CLIMA21. CARACAS**

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# Resumen ejecutivo

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The Venezuelan population is exposed to the threat of being affected by socio-natural meteorological and climatic events, a condition that can be aggravated by the effects of climate change. For this reason, thousands of people lose their lives and livelihoods every year or are forced to leave their homes or usual places of residence.

This report aims to contribute to the understanding of socio-natural disasters in Venezuela caused by hydrometeorological phenomena with a human rights-based approach. This will enable a contribution to the construction of new frameworks aimed at acting effectively on these phenomena in the context of climate change.



Our findings show that almost 100 people lost their lives and 14,000 homes were affected in Venezuela in 2022 alone, which allows us to estimate that at least 70,000 people were affected by a disaster that year.

Even though no information is available regarding the differentiated impact on different vulnerable groups, it is clear that these situations disproportionately affect people living in poverty and indigenous peoples. Likewise, floods and other events can force the internal displacement of thousands of people every year.

The national government has promoted the development of an institutional framework for Disaster Risk Management, but at the same time, this process has been hampered by several problems that prevent the implementation of effective responses to existing situations.

On the other hand, the country has made little progress in terms of an institutional framework for climate action, being the only country in South America that does not have a National Plan for Climate Change Adaptation or any similar instrument.

This situation is being concealed by the government, which seems to aim at establishing a pattern of systematic institutional oblivion that has been permeating public opinion.

Venezuela also lacks a human

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climate action**

rights-based framework to guide the actions aimed at complying with the national and international legal obligations of the State in terms of Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management (DRM).

All these circumstances constitute a pattern of systematic violation of the human rights of the population. Likewise, international commitments are being breached given that Venezuela will not be able to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals or the targets of the Sendai Framework related to DRM.

Based on these results, a series of recommendations are proposed to the Venezuela State. The proposal includes the establishment of integrated national policies for DRM and Climate Change Adaptation; the reinstitutionalization and technical strengthening of competent institutions; the design of policies for access to information and participation; the creation of a culture of prevention through the implementation of educational programs on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management at all levels and educational modalities, and the effective incorporation of a rights-based approach to all processes and activities carried out in the field of DRM and Climate Change Adaptation.

#### **L I S T   O F   A C R O N Y M S   A N D   A B B R E V I A T I O N S**

<b>CCA</b>	<b>Climate Change Adaptation</b>
<b>CHE</b>	<b>Complex Humanitarian Emergency</b>
<b>DRM</b>	<b>Disaster Risk Management</b>
<b>DRR</b>	<b>Disaster Risk Reduction</b>
<b>ENCOVI</b>	<b>National Survey on Living Conditions</b>
<b>EM-DAT</b>	<b>The International Disaster Database (The International disaster database of the Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium)</b>
<b>IASC</b>	<b>Inter-Agency Standing Committee</b>
<b>IDB</b>	<b>Inter-American Development Bank</b>
<b>IDMC</b>	<b>Internal Displacement Monitoring Center</b>
<b>IOM</b>	<b>International Organization for Migration</b>
<b>IPCC</b>	<b>Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change</b>
<b>MPPRIJP</b>	<b>Ministry of People's Power for the Interior, Justice and Peace</b>
<b>R4V</b>	<b>Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela</b>
<b>UNDRR</b>	<b>United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction</b>
<b>UNFCCC</b>	<b>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</b>
<b>UNHCR</b>	<b>United Nations Refugee Agency</b>
<b>UNHRC</b>	<b>United Nations Human Rights Council</b>



# Introducción

The global situation of disasters related to climate and meteorological phenomena and their consequences has become increasingly serious. In the last ten years, 83% of all disasters triggered by natural hazards responded to extreme weather and climate events such as floods, storms, and heatwaves<sup>1</sup>.

For its part, the frequency of disasters of socio-natural origin has increased in recent years in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), especially with regard to extreme climate, hydrological and meteorological phenomena.<sup>2 3 4</sup> Likewise, the IPCC considers Northern South America the second most vulnerable area to the effects of climate change in the entire region.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (2020). Come heat or high water. Tackling the humanitarian impacts of the climate crisis together. [https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/20201116\\_WorldDisasters\\_Full.pdf](https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/20201116_WorldDisasters_Full.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Castellanos, E., MF Lemos, L. Astigarraga, N. Chacón, N. Cuví, C. Huggel, L. Miranda, M. Moncassim Vale, JP Ometto, PL Peri, JC Postigo, L. Ramajo, L. Roco, and M. Rusticucci. (2022). Central and South America. In: Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [H.-O. Pörtner, DC Roberts, M. Tignor, ES Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Joy, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, p. 1689–1816, [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC\\_AR6\\_WGII\\_Chapter12.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_Chapter12.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Inter-American Development Bank. (2014). Climate Change and IDB: Building Resilience and Reducing Emissions. Sector Study: Disaster Risk Reduction. <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Background-Paper-Disaster-Risk-Reduction.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Nagy, GJ, Filho, WL, Azeiteiro, UM, Heimfarth, J., Verocai, JE, & Li, C. (2018). An Assessment of the Relationships between Extreme Weather Events, Vulnerability, and the Impacts on Human Wellbeing in Latin America. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15(9), 1802.

<sup>5</sup> Castellanos, E., et al. (2022). Op. cit.

Many of these events are having profound impacts on the food security, health, livelihoods and well-being of people in the region.<sup>6 7</sup> Likewise, there is growing evidence that climate change is causing changes in hydrological systems, which in turn will result in a greater frequency and impact of such events.<sup>8</sup>

Venezuela is no exception to this reality. This year, in the context of a harsh rainy season heightened by the La Niña phenomenon and a series of tropical storms that affected the northern coastal zone of the country<sup>9 10</sup>, a series of emergencies and disasters occurred throughout the year, including floods, landslides and other events in different parts of the national territory. According to official figures, the events affected 14 of the 23 states of the country and caused the death of 82 people in only two months (October-November), as well as nearly 26,000 families and 14,000 homes affected.<sup>11 12</sup>

It is evident that these situations have serious impacts on the Venezuelan population, both in terms of their human rights and their ability to overcome the current humanitarian crisis that the country is experiencing.<sup>13 14 15</sup>

Despite the seriousness of the situation, there is not adequate public information or sufficient data on its causes and consequences on people, communities and primary infrastructures, as well as on the actions undertaken by the government aimed at protecting citizens from these situations.

It is clear that this context can worsen, hindering the economic recovery of the country and giving rise to further violations of the human rights of the population.

For this reason, there is a need to advance towards the development of a human rights-based approach that guarantees the protection of the population and promotes compliance with the obligations of the State in the face of the challenges that an increase in the risks of socio-natural disasters poses to the population.

<sup>6</sup> World Meteorological Organization. (2022). State of climate in Latin America and the Caribbean 2021. [https://library.wmo.int/doc\\_num.php?explnum\\_id=11270](https://library.wmo.int/doc_num.php?explnum_id=11270)

<sup>7</sup> Nagy, GJ, Filho, WL, Azeiteiro, UM, Heimfarth, J., Verocai, JE, & Li, C. (2018). An Assessment of the Relationships between Extreme Weather Events, Vulnerability, and the Impacts on Human Wellbeing in Latin America. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15(9), 1802.

<sup>8</sup> IPCC. (2022). Climate change 2022: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>

<sup>9</sup> Runrunes. (2022). Inameh: "La Niña" está causando lluvias por encima de lo normal en Venezuela [Inameh: La Niña is causing above average rains in Venezuela]. <https://runrun.es/noticias/484880/inameh-la-nina-esta-causando-lluvias-por-encima-de-lo-normal-en-venezuela/>

<sup>10</sup> El Universal. (2022). Se prevé que otras 20 ondas tropicales pasen por Venezuela hasta noviembre [20 more tropical waves forecasted to pass through Venezuela by November]. <https://www.eluniversal.com/venezuela/140891/se-prevé-que-otras-20-ondas-tropicales-pasen-por-venezuela-hasta-noviembre>

<sup>11</sup> El Pitazo. (2022). 14.000 viviendas han sufrido daños durante 7 meses de lluvias en Venezuela [14,000 homes have sustained damages during 7 months of rains in Venezuela]. <https://elpitazo.net/gran-caracas/lluvias-en-venezuela-han-causado-danos-en-14-000-viviendas-en-sietes-meses/>

<sup>12</sup> Runrunes. (2022). Lluvias en el país dejan cerca de 26.000 familias damnificadas [Rains leave around 26,000 families homeless across the country]. <https://runrun.es/noticias/487235/lluvias-en-el-pais-dejan-cerca-de-26-000-familias-damnificadas/>

<sup>13</sup> HumVenezuela. (2022). Follow-up report on the impacts of the Complex Humanitarian Emergency in Venezuela following the confinement due to the covid pandemic. Updated as of March 2022 and evolution compared to March 2020 and June 2021. <https://humvenezuela.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/HumVenezuela-2022-Report.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Cartaya, V., Reyna, F. and Ramsey, G. (2020). Venezuela's Complex Humanitarian Crisis, Responses, and Challenges for Civil Society. <https://www.wola.org/analysis/venezuelas-complex-humanitarian-crisis/>

<sup>15</sup> Transparencia Venezuela. (2017). ¿Crisis humanitaria o emergencia compleja en Venezuela? [Venezuela: A humanitarian crisis or a Complex Emergency?] <https://transparenciave.org/project/crisis-humanitaria-emergencia-compleja-venezuela/>



Based on these circumstances, this report aims to contribute to the understanding of socio-natural disasters caused by hydrometeorological phenomena in Venezuela under a human rights-based approach. This will enable a contribution to the construction of new frameworks aimed at acting effectively on these phenomena in the context of climate change.

To this end, a preliminary conceptual human rights framework will be developed to guide the policies and actions on the issues of DRM and climate change management, as well as their articulation. An assessment of the effects of extreme weather events on the rights of people -and vulnerable groups in particular- will be conducted alongside a preliminary evaluation of the actions of the national government during these situations.

## Sources of Information

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The following sources of information were collected for the preparation of this report:

- Documents, reports and academic articles that sustain the construction of a human rights-based approach to risk management and climate change in Venezuela.
- Scientific and technical reports and articles that present information on the situation of DRM and climate change in Venezuela.
- News published by national and international media on the topics of emergencies and socio-natural disasters generated by extreme weather, hydrological and meteorological phenomena that occurred in the country from 2018 to 2022. This interval represents the period in which the Complex Humanitarian Emergency deepened in the country.
- Consultation with specialists on specific topics.

# Results and findings

## 1.- Bases for a human rights framework for risk and climate change management in Venezuela

Venezuela lacks a human rights framework that guides the actions aimed at complying with the national and international legal obligations of the State in terms of risk and climate change management.

For this reason, a documentary investigation was carried out to define a preliminary framework on the obligations and approaches in terms of human rights applicable to climate change and disaster risk management in Venezuela, as well as the interconnections between both areas of action.

A document with the comprehensive results of this work is available on the website of Clima21 under the name **Bases para un marco de derechos humanos para la gestión de riesgos de desastres sconaturales y el cambio climático en Venezuela** (Bases for a human rights framework for socio-natural disaster risk management and climate change in Venezuela) at [www.clima21.net](http://www.clima21.net)

Below are the key messages emerging from this analysis:

- Meteorological events can cause serious human rights violations. For this reason, disaster risk management has been defined as a human right and therefore the need arises for a rights-based approach to act on these events.
- This framework establishes the obligation of States to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of their citizens and all other persons on their territory.
- The rights-based approach enables making visible the situation of vulnerable groups such as women, boys and girls, people living in poverty, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples, among others. These groups have specific needs that are different from the non-affected population, and must therefore be addressed through differentiated protection and assistance activities.



- The obligations derived from the human rights framework include guaranteeing full reparation, restitution and indemnification in the case harm has been inflicted on people and their property, as well as actions to prevent the causes of the disaster from continuing.
- On the other hand, scientific evidence shows that climate change will have as a possible consequence an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events.
- For these reasons, there is the need for both frameworks (Risk Management and Climate Change Management) to be systematically articulated within climate change adaptation plans; as well as the incorporation into their development of key elements of environmental management such as spatial planning and ecosystem conservation plans based on the search for solutions in nature.

## 2.- Effects of socio-natural events on the Venezuelan territory and population

### **General aspects**

Different studies indicate that hydrometeorological phenomena (storms, extreme rains, floods, etc.) and mass movements (slumps, rockslides, landslides, etc.) have been responsible for the greatest number of disasters in Venezuela.<sup>16 17</sup>

Likewise, the Capital District and the states of Miranda, Zulia, Aragua, Carabobo, Mérida, La Guaira (previously called Vargas), Anzoátegui, Apure and Lara have been identified as the most affected by floods and mass movements.

On the other hand, 28% of the national territory is exposed to a high flood potential. Also, 52.33% of the Venezuelan population is exposed to torrential flooding and mass movements.<sup>18</sup>

Regarding the impacts suffered by the population, a review of the main socio-natural disasters with an origin in extreme climatological, hydrological and meteorological events that occurred in Venezuela between 1967 and 2021 reveals their enormous damage in terms of human lives lost or affected (widespread damage to people, property and agricultural and livestock production areas; see Table 1).

<sup>16</sup> MPPRIJP / VGRPC. (2014). Avances de la gestión de riesgo en Venezuela y su prospectiva [Advances and prospective of risk management in Venezuela]. <https://dipecholac.net/docs/files/790-dp-version-del-30-10-14-final.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Inter-American Development Bank. (2015). Perfil de Riesgo de Desastres para Venezuela [Disaster Risk Profile for Venezuela]. <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/spanish/viewer/Perfil-de-riesgo-de-desastres-para-Venezuela.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> De Freitas, J. (2022). El Estado venezolano tenía documentos que alertaban los desastres en la Cordillera de la Costa [The Venezuelan State had access to documents alerting of disasters in the coastal range]. <https://runrun.es/inicio/488153/estado-venezolano-tenia-documentos-que-alertaban-los-desastres-en-la-cordillera-de-la-costa/>

On the other hand, the number of registered events seems to have increased at least in the period between 1960 and 2009,<sup>19</sup> a trend that is also reported for the interval 1970-2011 due to both flooding and mass movements<sup>20</sup>.

**Table 1. Main Socio-natural Disasters that occurred in Venezuela between 1967 and 2021**

Year	Disaster Type	deaths	Total Affected Population
1967	Flood	-	23,000
1993	Tropical storm	100	5,900
1999 (AUG)	Flood	-	483,635
1999 (DEC)	Flood	30,000	59,368
2002	Flood	-	55,376
2005	Flood	76	25,042
2010	Flood	41	94,800
2011	Flood	8	2,000
2012	Flood	-	11,000
2015	Flood	-	45,297
2018	Flood	2	10,700
2019	Flood	6	2,000
2020	Flood	3	3,690
2021	Flood	12	1,400,100

Sources: EM-DAT, the OFDA/CRED international disaster database – [www.emdat.be](http://www.emdat.be) Université Catholique de Louvain, Brussels, Belgium.<sup>21 22</sup>

Among the recent events, it is important to mention the 2018 floods in the Orinoco basin. That year the river reached its second highest level after the one registered in 1892.<sup>23</sup> At least seven states of the country and an estimated 60,000 people were affected as a consequence of the floods in Amazonas, Apure, Bolívar, Delta Amacuro

19 Campos, J. M. and Bravo de Guenni, L. (2011). Eventos catastróficos por inundaciones y deslaves en Venezuela [Catastrophic events due to floods and landslides in Venezuela]. Presented at: Universidades y Riesgo Urbano. Una vitrina desde la UCV. [http://portal.ucv.ve/fileadmin/user\\_upload/comir/documentos/I1\\_EVENTOS\\_CATASTROFICOS\\_JM\\_CAMPOS\\_USB.pdf](http://portal.ucv.ve/fileadmin/user_upload/comir/documentos/I1_EVENTOS_CATASTROFICOS_JM_CAMPOS_USB.pdf)

20 Perfil de País Venezuela [Venezuela country profile]. DesInventar <https://db.desinventar.org/DesInventar/profletab.jsp>

21 MPPRIJP / VGRPC. (2014). Citado previamente.

22 Rangel Sánchez, A. (2016). La Vulnerabilidad Ciudadana ante las Amenazas Naturales en Venezuela. Pp. 162-178. En: Venezuela: Vivir a Medias. Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida 2015 (ENCVI) ENCOVI 2015. UCAB. [https://assets.website-files.com/5d922e4172a61a7f328d4b43/5ec2efd10c29df5e9cf50ae\\_encovi-2015-venezuela-vivir-a-medias.pdf](https://assets.website-files.com/5d922e4172a61a7f328d4b43/5ec2efd10c29df5e9cf50ae_encovi-2015-venezuela-vivir-a-medias.pdf)

23 López, J.L., Córdova, J.R., Castellanos, B., Yépez, S. Laraque, A. (2019). The extraordinary flood of the Orinoco river in 2018. 8ta HYBAM Scientific Meeting 02 al 06/09/2019 Toulouse, France. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335753689\\_THE\\_EXTRAORDINARY\\_FLOOD\\_OF\\_THE\\_ORINOCO\\_RIVER\\_IN\\_2018](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335753689_THE_EXTRAORDINARY_FLOOD_OF_THE_ORINOCO_RIVER_IN_2018)



## In these events, almost a hundred people lost their lives and 14,000 homes were affected



Anzoátegui, Monagas and Guárico.<sup>24 25</sup>

Likewise, a series of floods and mass movements affected the Venezuelan territory in 2022. In a review of news published by the media, 50 events were recorded affecting 17 of the 23 Federal entities of the country. The events with the greatest impact occurred in the city of Las Tejerías and the El Castaño neighborhood, both in the state of Aragua.

In these events, almost a hundred people lost their lives and 14,000 homes were affected<sup>26</sup>, which allows the estimation of a number close to 70,000 people affected by these situations.

According to the latest available official report, at least 54 people died in the Las Tejerías floods and mass movements alone.<sup>27</sup> In addition, 765 homes,

<sup>24</sup> Gutiérrez Rosas, J., Rodríguez Rozas, R. (2018). Inundaciones en Venezuela: más de 60 mil damnificados tras el desborde del río Orinoco [Venezuela floods: More than 60,000 people affected following the overflow of the Orinoco river].

<sup>25</sup> Tal Cual. (2018). Denuncian que hay más de 60 mil afectados por inundaciones en Amazonas [More than 60 thousand people allegedly affected by floods in Amazonas]. <https://talcualdigital.com/denuncia-mas-de-60-mil-afectados-por-inundaciones-en-amazonas/>

<sup>26</sup> Castro, B. (2022). Casi un centenar de muertos en Venezuela por las fuertes precipitaciones [Almost a hundred dead in Venezuela due to heavy rains]. <https://es.euronews.com/2022/11/16/casi-un-centenar-de-muertos-en-venezuela-por-las-fuertes-precipitaciones>

<sup>27</sup> González, Y. (2022.) Maduro visita nuevamente Las Tejerías: «Contabilizados 54 fallecidos y 8 desaparecidos» [Maduro visits Las Tejerías once again: "54 people dead and 8 missing have been registered"]. <https://elpitazo.net/politica/maduro-visita-nuevamente-las-tejerias-54-fallecidos-y-8-desaparecidos/>



access roads, and public services infrastructure (including water, electricity and telecommunications) were destroyed, as well as businesses and crops.<sup>28</sup>

Another significant circumstance is the flooding produced by the growth of Lake Valencia. In recent years, this rise in the water level has flooded urban areas and agricultural land south of Maracay. 4,000 families have been affected by this situation, while 9,000 ha of agricultural fields have been flooded.<sup>29 30</sup>

In contrast, some authors have considered droughts as the most important natural trigger of disasters in the country, due to their frequency and recurrence throughout the country's history and their effects on agricultural production, water supply and hydroelectric production.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the impact of droughts on the population and the possibility of seeing them increase in the future as a consequence of climate change, there is not

28 Caritas (2022). INFORME DE SITUACIÓN ESPECIAL Lluvias en Venezuela - Temporada 2022. Número SITREP-LLUVIAS 1 – 09/10/2022

29 Fundación Agua Clara, Fundación Aguas sin Fronteras (2021) El Derecho al agua, al saneamiento y al ambiente seguro sano y ecológicamente equilibrado en Venezuela [The right to water, sanitation and a safe, healthy and ecologically balanced environment in Venezuela]. Report presented on the occasion of the Third Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review of Venezuela. Typescript.

30 Córdoba, J.R. (2015). Eventos extremos: inundaciones, deslaves y sequías [Extreme events: Floods, landslides and droughts]. Chapter 8, p.287-358. In: Agua en Venezuela: Una riqueza escasa. Gabaldón, A., Rosales, A., Buroz, E. Córdoba, J.R., Uzcátegui, G., & Iskander, L. (editores) Fundación Empresas Polar.

31 Paredes-Trejo, F. and Orlando Olivares, B. Venezuela. (2018). Op. Cit.



an official and public operational drought monitoring system in use by government agencies to disseminate information about drought conditions in the country.<sup>32</sup>

## ***Situation of vulnerable groups***

In Venezuela, the information available on the impact of emergencies and disasters on the population is not disaggregated by different human groups. For this reason, it is difficult to ascertain the differentiated impact on these groups, particularly the most vulnerable.

This is particularly serious in the case of children, women and persons with disabilities for whom there is an almost complete lack of information.



Deslizamiento. Foto José Díaz, Tomado de Crónica Uno

32 Paredes-Trejo, F. and Orlando Olivares, B. Venezuela. (2018). Op. Cit..

In this context of lack of information, the media has reported in recent years that a significant but undetermined number of minors have died or experienced problems with food, healthcare or difficulties in returning to their school activities.

People living in poverty are another group that has been particularly affected.

In this sense, according to information collected from the news published in the media during 2022, the vast majority of the people who were affected by disasters suffered the loss of their homes and belongings or saw their livelihoods disrupted were individuals and communities in low-income segments.

In many cases, these damages are a heavy blow for low-income families given their lower ability to recover from the impacts caused by disasters.<sup>33</sup>

One aspect of this situation that needs to be emphasized is that poor people are often accused of being responsible for their own misfortune in settling in risky areas. But it is clear that most of them have not built their homes in these areas

33 Hallegatte, S., Vogt-Schilb, A., Rozenberg, J., Bangalore, M., & Beaudet, C. (2020). From Poverty to Disaster and Back: a Review of the Literature. EconDisCliCha 4, 223–247. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41885-020-00060-5>

just because they want to. This is mainly due to dynamics of urban dispossession, segregation and fragmentation, where low-income groups are displaced to land with use restrictions and lower value.

In the case of indigenous populations, information was obtained on seven flood events that affected different indigenous peoples and communities along the rivers where they live. The states where most of these events occurred were Amazonas, Anzoátegui, Bolívar, Delta Amacuro and Zulia, which are also the states with the largest indigenous population in the country (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Hydrometeorological emergencies and disasters that have affected indigenous communities in Venezuela in the period 2000-2022**

Year	States affected by flooding	Indigenous peoples affected	reported effects
2003	Zulia	wayúu and añú.	Loss of homes and household goods, crops and domestic animals
2010	Zulia	wayúu	Loss of homes and household goods
2011	Delta Amacuro	warao	Loss of homes and household goods
2012	Delta Amacuro	warao	Loss of homes and household goods
2018	Amazonas, Bolívar, Delta Amacuro, Anzoátegui	Several; warao most affected	Loss of household goods, work materials, food and crops. Displacement of communities
2021	Zulia (south of Lake Maracaibo) Amazonas, Bolívar	wayúu / pemón / warao / yukpa	Loss of household goods, work materials, food and crops
2022	Zulia, Bolívar, Amazonas	wayúu / anú / pemón / Not specified in Amazonas	Waterlogged houses, loss of crops. Unsanitary conditions

**Source:** Prepared by Authors

No precise information was obtained on the number of indigenous people who were harmed as a result of these situations. However, in 2010, the President of the Republic reported that 6,000 indigenous people had been rescued in La Guajira.<sup>34</sup> In 2021, UN agencies reported having provided humanitarian aid to 1,400 Yukpa displaced by the rains.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Efe. (2010). Chávez anuncia que 6.000 indígenas fueron rescatados en La Guajira [Chávez announces that 6,000 indigenous people were rescued in La Guajira]. <https://www.elmundo.es/america/2010/12/07/venezuela/1291753492.html>

<sup>35</sup> DW. (2021). ONU apoya a 1.400 indígenas venezolanos afectados por inundaciones [UN provides aid to 1,400 Venezuelan indigenous people affected by



Likewise, 9,600 Wayúu families were reported to have been affected by floods in 2022.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, it can be estimated that an important fraction of the indigenous population has been affected by these events.

Additionally, it has been reported that the floods had the effect of increasing infectious diseases among the residents of the affected communities.<sup>37</sup>

An extreme case has occurred in the La Guajira peninsula, where periods of flooding have been interspersed with periods of extreme drought. When prolonged, the phenomenon of drought in the region has had serious effects on the food security of its inhabitants by destroying crops and killing the animals on which their diet depends, thus generating acute periods of hunger that have mainly affected children.

Despite the above, no information was obtained on plans or actions for prioritized attention to any of these human groups.

floods]. <https://www.dw.com/es/onu-apoya-a-1400-ind%C3%ADgenas-venezolanos-afectados-por-inundaciones/a-57987192>

<sup>36</sup> González, E. (2022). Alcaldía de Guajira reporta más de 9.600 familias afectadas por lluvias [Guajira Mayor's Office reports more than 9,600 families affected by rains]. <https://www.radiofeylegrianoticias.com/guajira-reporta-9600-familias-afectadas-por-lluvias/>

<sup>37</sup> González, E. (2022). Op. Cit.

The IDMC estimates that the disasters caused by rains in 2021 caused 33,000 people to be displaced from their communities or homes.



Inundaciones en La Guaira, estado La Guaira, tomado de Ciudad CCS



# *Migrations caused by disasters of hydrometeorological origin*

The IOM defines climate migration as the “movement, within a State or across an international border, of a person or groups of persons, who are obliged to leave their habitual place of residence or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment due to climate change”.<sup>38</sup>

In Venezuela, information on this subject is very scarce.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, the magnitude of the national migration crisis<sup>40</sup> makes it very difficult to determine which human groups or what proportion of them have moved due to socio-natural disasters or changes in local weather patterns.<sup>41 42</sup>

The data gathered for this work is fragmented. However, it is useful to understand the magnitude of the problem.

In the 2022 Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID), the IDMC estimates that the disasters caused by rains in 2021 caused 33,000 people to be displaced from their communities or homes.<sup>43</sup> In 2015, the organization estimated the figure at 45,000.<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, according to reports published by the media, some indigenous populations were displaced from their communities due to floods, in some cases without the possibility of returning.<sup>45 46 47 48</sup>

<sup>38</sup> IOM (nd). Climate migration. <https://weblog.iom.int/defining-climate-migrants-beyond-semantics#:~:text=It%20is%20an%20advocacy%20definition,lives%20in%20a%20changing%20climate>

<sup>39</sup> IDMC. (2020). Global Report on Internal Displacement 2020. <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/2020-IDMC-GRID.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> The R4V Platform estimates the number of Venezuelan migrants and refugees at 7,131,435 as of Dec 12 2022 <https://www.r4v.info/en/refugeeandmigrants>

<sup>41</sup> Muggah, R., Brazil, L., Margolis, M. (2022). The climate crisis and displacement in Venezuela. Humanitarian Practice Network. Issue 80 - Article 13. <https://odihpn.org/publication/the-climate-crisis-and-displacement-in-venezuela/>

<sup>42</sup> Chemnick, J. (2019). Where Climate Change Fits into Venezuela’s Ongoing Crisis. Scientific American. E&E News. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/where-climate-change-fits-into-venezuela-s-ongoing-crisis/>

<sup>43</sup> IDMC. (2022). GRID 2022. Children and youth in internal displacement. [https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/IDMC\\_GRID\\_2022\\_LR.pdf](https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/IDMC_GRID_2022_LR.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> IDMC. (2016). GRID 2016. Global Report on Internal Displacement. <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/2016-global-report-internal-displacement-IDMC.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> Ávila, M. (2021). Delta Amacuro | Crecida del río Orinoco obliga a indígenas a abandonar sus aldeas [Delta Amacuro | Flooding of the Orinoco river forces indigenous people to leave their villages]. <https://www.elpitazo.net/guayana/delta-amacuro-crecida-del-rio-orinoco-obliga-a-indigenas-a-abandonar-sus-aldeas/#:~:text=%E2%80>

<sup>46</sup> D.W. (2021). Op. Cit.

<sup>47</sup> Torres, E. (2021). Familias damnificadas por inundaciones se desplazan a Tucupita [Families affected by floodings displaced to Tucupita]. <https://www.radiofeyalegrianoticias.com/familias-damnificadas/>

<sup>48</sup> OEP. (2022.) ¿Hay desplazamientos por motivos ambientales en Venezuela? [Climate displacement in Venezuela?] <https://ecopoliticavenezuela.org/2022/05/23/hay-desplazamientos-por-motivos-ambientales-en-venezuela/>

### 3.- Government action

DRM is a continuous process with three identifiable phases that can be used to analyze the compliance of the Venezuelan State with its obligations regarding risk management.

The phases are:

- **Before a disaster** (Prevention, Preparedness and Warning), the measures and actions designed to avoid a disaster or mitigate its effects.
- **During a disaster** (Response), the activities and measures implemented during and immediately after the occurrence of a disaster to minimize its effects.
- **After a disaster** (Rehabilitation and Reconstruction), the actions aimed at restoring the living conditions of the population affected by the disaster, while promoting the necessary changes for disaster mitigation.

**Before a disaster.** The planning processes that define the actions to be implemented in each territory or circumstance are carried out in the phase before a disaster. The executions of these tasks are supported by an institutional framework (regulations, institutions and the professional praxis) whose operational components have the competencies, capacities, resources, and willingness to promote, design, and implement these plans.

In Venezuela, a series of events and circumstances promoted the development of the institutionalization of risk management as a State policy. Different authors have identified as drivers of this process the nationwide impact of the 1999 "Vargas Tragedy"<sup>49 50 51</sup>, a new National Constitution (1999) establishing the right of citizens to protection against situations that threaten their lives and property,<sup>52</sup> as well as the development of a series of international instruments such as the Hyogo Framework and the Sendai Framework aimed at guiding Disaster Risk Management.<sup>53 54</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Linayo, A. (2011). Vargas 99: Un punto de inflexión en la conceptualización y el tratamiento normativo del riesgo de desastres en Venezuela [Vargas 99: An inflexion point in the conceptualization and normative treatment of Disaster Risk Management in Venezuela]. [https://www.desenredando.org/public/variros/2009/2009\\_Linayo\\_Vargas99\\_Punto\\_de\\_Inflexion.pdf](https://www.desenredando.org/public/variros/2009/2009_Linayo_Vargas99_Punto_de_Inflexion.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> Genatios, C. & Lafuente, M. (2003). Lluvias torrenciales en Vargas, Venezuela, en diciembre de 1999 [Torrential rainfalls in Vargas, Venezuela, December 1999: Environmental protection and urban recovery]. Protección ambiental y recuperación urbana. IMME [online]. 2003, vol.41, n.2-3, p.49-62. [http://ve.scielo.org/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0376-723X2003000200004&lng=es&nrm=iso](http://ve.scielo.org/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0376-723X2003000200004&lng=es&nrm=iso). ISSN 0376-723X

<sup>51</sup> Jiménez, V. (2006). Apoyo a la Prevención de Desastres en la Comunidad Andina – CAN ASR/B7-3100/99/313. Componente de Fortalecimiento de Sistemas y Políticas Nacionales de Prevención y Atención de Desastres - Resultado 1. Servicio de Asistencia Técnica para la Recolección y Sistematización de Información en la Región Andina – Venezuela. PREDECAN. [https://www.predecan.org/9609\\_VENEZUELASistematizaciC3B3n.pdf](https://www.predecan.org/9609_VENEZUELASistematizaciC3B3n.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> Every person has the right to protection by the State [...] against situations that constitute threats, vulnerabilities or risks to the physical integrity of persons, their property, the enjoyment of their rights or the fulfillment of their duties. Article 55 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

<sup>53</sup> ISDR. (2005). Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters. <https://www.unisdr.org/cdmah/contenido/hyogo-framework-english.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> UN. (2015). Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. [https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291\\_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf](https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf)



In response to these precedents and drivers, the Venezuelan State promoted the creation of a legal framework,<sup>55</sup> a system of agencies and a structure of responsibilities on DRM and disaster management.<sup>56</sup>

Despite the progress, the process has experienced a series of problems of a political nature, a lack of administrative continuity, as well as contradictions in national priorities. All of these have hindered and, in some cases, completely halted the advance and implementation of DRM policies or consolidated misconceptions and inadequate orientations that prevailed in the country in previous periods.<sup>57 58 59</sup>

A significant aspect of the existing problems is the lack of coordination between risk management and environmental management in the country, a situation that is evidenced by outdated and unobserved land-use plans and the deterioration of the capacity to monitor and register environmental variability.<sup>60 61 62</sup>

Some of the current obstacles are a source of concern. For example, the Plan Nacional de Gestión de Riesgo 2019-2025 (2019-2025 National Risk Management Plan)<sup>63 64 65</sup> and the Atlas Nacional de Exposición frente a Amenazas Naturales y Tecnológicas (National Atlas of Exposure to Natural and Technological Hazards)<sup>66</sup> and other fundamental documents are not available for study and remain unknown to most of the specialists consulted. The second document mentioned was recently published by a news site.<sup>67</sup>

On the other hand, some public officials have spoken of early warning systems, as well as community contingency and evacuation plans, which in practice do not seem to exist.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Protección Civil. (nd). Marco Legal [Legal Framework]. <https://www.pcivil.gob.ve/marco-legal/>

<sup>56</sup> MPPRIJP / VGRPC. (2014). Avances de la gestión de riesgo en Venezuela y su prospectiva [Advances and prospective of risk management in Venezuela]. <https://dipecholac.net/docs/files/790-dp-version-del-30-10-14-final.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> See "los riesgos de la Gestión de riesgos" [The risks of risk management] in: Jiménez, V. (2006). Op. Cit.

<sup>58</sup> Dona, K. (2022). ¿Qué pasó en Las Tejerías? Experto en riesgos de la ULA lo explica [What happened in Las Tejerías? An ULA expert explains]. <https://talcualdigital.com/que-paso-en-las-tejerias-experto-en-riesgos-de-la-ula-lo-explica>

<sup>59</sup> Figuera, R. (2022). Desastres se intensifican por fallas en gestión de riesgos y cero cultura preventiva [Disasters intensify due to shortcomings in Risk Management and the lack of a culture of prevention]. <https://talcualdigital.com/desastres-se-intensifican-por-fallas-en-gestion-de-riesgos-y-cero-cultura-preventiva/>

<sup>60</sup> Grupo Orinoco. (2017). Op. Cit.

<sup>61</sup> Carrere, M. (2022). Deslave en Las Tejerías: "Muchos de los desastres que hemos vivido es porque el hombre ha ocupado el territorio del río" [Landslide in Las Tejerías: "Many of the disasters we have experienced are due to the occupation of the river's territory by men] <https://es.mongabay.com/2022/10/que-provoco-el-deslave-en-las-tejerias-en-venezuela-entrevisa/>

<sup>62</sup> Sanabria, C. (2010). La ordenación del territorio o política territorial en Venezuela [The spatial planning, or territorial policy in Venezuela]. Revista Terra Nueva, Vol. XXVI, núm. 40, julio-diciembre, 2010, p. 13-44 [https://ve.scielo.org/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1012-70892010000200002](https://ve.scielo.org/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1012-70892010000200002)

<sup>63</sup> Román, A. (2019). Randy Rodríguez: Plan Nacional de Gestión de Riesgo garante de atención a las comunidades [Randy Rodríguez: National Risk Management Plan a guarantor of attention for communities]. <https://www.pcivil.gob.ve/2019/08/randy-rodriguez-plan-nacional-de-gestion-de-riesgo-garante-de-atencion-a-las-comunidades/>

<sup>64</sup> VTV. (2019). Plan Nacional de Gestión de Riesgo 2019-2025 cumple con las metas de la ONU. [The 2019-2025 National Risk Management Plan complies with UN goals] <https://www.vtv.gob.ve/plan-nacional-gestion-riesgo-cumple-metas-onu/>

<sup>65</sup> Últimas Noticias. (2019). Perfeccionan líneas estratégicas del Plan Nacional de Gestión de Riesgo 2019 – 2025 [Strategic lines of the 2019-2025 National Risk Management Plan perfected]. <https://ultimasnoticias.com.ve/noticias/politica/perfeccionan-lineas-estrategicas-del-plan-nacional-de-gestion-de-riesgo-2019-2025/>

<sup>66</sup> Freitas, J. (2022). Op. Cit.

<sup>67</sup> MPPRIJP/ VGRPC/ Total/ Terracon/ PNUD. (2016). Atlas Nacional de Exposición frente a Amenazas Naturales y Tecnológicas [National Atlas of Exposure to Natural and Technological Hazards]. <https://runrun.es/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/1-Atlas-Nacional-de-Exposicion-ante-Amenazas-Naturales-y-Tecnologicas-20-08-2016.pdf>

<sup>68</sup> Palacios, Y. (2020). Venezuela afronta la temporada de lluvias con un Sistema Nacional de Gestión de Riesgo fortalecido [Venezuela to enter the rainy season with a strengthened National Risk Management System]. <https://www.pcivil.gob.ve/2020/07/venezuela-afronta-la-temporada-de-lluvias-con-un-sistema-nacional-de-gestion-de-riesgo-fortalecido/>

**93% of the population is not organized to reduce the risk of disasters; 95% lack information and/or prevention training; 95% are unaware of the existence of any evacuation plan; and in 88% of cases no warning system is available for emergencies.**

An additional element that weakens the ability to establish effective DRM plans is the government's refusal to recognize the existence of a Complex Humanitarian Emergency that had a negative effect on all national sectors and processes.<sup>69</sup> This type of humanitarian crisis manifests in the massive impoverishment of the population, as well as in health, food, transportation, education and public services crises, high levels of conflict and environmental degradation, among other issues.<sup>70</sup><sup>71</sup> <sup>72</sup> All the effects of this humanitarian crisis constitute major vulnerabilities that should be taken into account in the design of objective and relevant DRM plans.

Finally, the Sendai Framework establishes the need to promote national strategies to strengthen public education and awareness of disaster risk reduction.<sup>73</sup> However, according to the 2015 National Survey on Living Conditions (ENCOVI), 93% of the population is not organized to reduce the risk of disasters; 95% lack information and/or prevention training; 95% are unaware of the existence of any evacuation plan; and in 88% of cases no warning system is available for emergencies.<sup>74</sup> Nor is there knowledge of the existence of public policies aimed at raising awareness and educating citizens on the subject of risk management, as provided for in the Sendai Framework.

On the other hand, unlike the incipient institutional advances in terms of DRM, the Venezuelan State has made very little progress in the institutionalization of climate change management.

<sup>69</sup> Cartaya Febres, V, Reyna Ganteaume, F. & Ramsay, G. (2020). Report: Venezuela's Complex Humanitarian Crisis, Responses, and Challenges for Civil Society. WOLA /Acción Solidaria. <https://www.wola.org/analysis/venezuelas-complex-humanitarian-crisis/>

<sup>70</sup> HumVenezuela. (2022). Follow-up report on the impacts of the Complex Humanitarian Emergency in Venezuela following the confinement due to the covid pandemic. Updated as of March 2022 and evolution compared to March 2020 and June 2021. <https://humvenezuela.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/HumVenezuela-2022-Report.pdf>

<sup>71</sup> Cartaya Febres, V, Reyna Ganteaume, F. & Ramsay, G. (2020). Report: Venezuela's Complex Humanitarian Crisis, Responses, and Challenges for Civil Society. WOLA /Acción Solidaria. <https://www.wola.org/analysis/venezuelas-complex-humanitarian-crisis/>

<sup>72</sup> Meléndez, L. (2022). Deudas ambientales en Venezuela 2022: del deslave más letal de la última década al inesperado viaje de Maduro a la COP27 [Environmental debts in Venezuela in 2022: From the most lethal landslide in a decade to the unexpected trip of Maduro to the COP27]. <https://es.mongabay.com/2022/12/deudas-ambientales-en-venezuela-2022-deslave-mas-letal-de-la-ultima-decada/>

<sup>73</sup> UN. (2015). Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Op. Cit. See 24.m.

<sup>74</sup> Rangel Sánchez, A. (2016). Op. Cit.



However, a series of instances recently created may configure an institutional framework to guide and promote actions to face the climate crisis,<sup>75 76</sup> but in none of these cases was it possible to establish their current attributions or actions.

On the other hand, the environmental legislation in force in Venezuela is scarcely specific in terms of climate change, disconnected from the rest of the national regulations and does not provide guidelines to implement policies and actions that allow the State to prepare the population for inevitable climate changes.<sup>77 78</sup>

Despite this, the 2009 Ley de Gestión Integral de Riesgos Socionaturales y Tecnológicos (Law on the Comprehensive Management of Socio-natural and Technological Hazards) establishes the formulation of a National Plan for Climate Change Adaptation. This instrument of planning for climate change is also established in the 2015-2019 National Human Rights Plan as one of the actions to be implemented during the period.

In contradiction to the provisions of these norms and guidelines, Venezuela still lacks a National Plan for Climate Change Adaptation,<sup>79</sup> being the only country in South America that has not formulated a legal instrument for the direction of national policies aimed at preparing the population in the face of the negative effects of climate change.<sup>80 81</sup>

An additional obstacle arises from the continuous use by government officials of political rhetoric on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management that prioritizes ideological confrontation over the common good, polarizes the population, and excludes people who disagree with their ideas.<sup>82 83 84</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Prensa Ecosocialismo (Minec). (2022). Instalada Comisión Presidencial contra el Cambio Climático [Presidential Commission on Climate Change installed]. <http://www.minec.gob.ve/installada-la-comision-presidencial-contra-el-cambio-climatico/>

<sup>76</sup> Prensa Ecosocialismo (Minec). (2022). Inaugurado Observatorio Nacional Contra la Crisis Climática [National Observatory on the Climate Crisis launched]. <http://www.minec.gob.ve/inaugurado-observatorio-nacional-contra-la-crisis-climatica/>

<sup>77</sup> ACFIMAN-SACC (2018) Primer Reporte Académico de Cambio Climático 2018: Contribución de los Grupos de Trabajo I, II y III al Primer Reporte Académico de Cambio Climático (PRACC) de la Secretaría Académica de Cambio Climático (SACC) de la Academia de Ciencias Físicas, Matemáticas y Naturales (ACFIMAN) de Venezuela. Villamizar, A., E. Buroz Castillo, R. Lairet Centeno, y J. A. Gómez (Eds.). Ediciones ACFIMAN – CITECI, Caracas. <https://acfiman.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/RRP-con-ISBN-DL-10052018.pdf>

<sup>78</sup> Phynatura, EDEPA, EcoJuegos. (2016). Bases legales y avances en políticas públicas para la adaptación al cambio climático en Venezuela. Una mirada desde los derechos humanos [Legal basis and advances of public policy for Climate Change Adaptation in Venezuela: A human rights perspective]. <https://clima21.net/informes/bases-legales-y-avances-en-politicas-publicas-para-la-adaptacion-al-cambio-climatico-en-venezuela/>

<sup>79</sup> República de Venezuela. (2021). Actualización de la Contribución Nacionalmente Determinada de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela para la lucha contra el Cambio Climático y sus efectos [Update of the Nationally Determined Contribution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for the fight against Climate Change and its effects]. <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/Actualizacion%20NDC%20Venezuela.pdf>

<sup>80</sup> Castellanos, E., M.F. Lemos, L. Astigarraga, N. Chacón, N. Cuvi, C. Huggel, L. Miranda, M. Moncassim Vale, et al. (2022). Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. et al. (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, p. 1689–1816, [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC\\_AR6\\_WGII\\_Chapter12.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_Chapter12.pdf)

<sup>81</sup> Plan Nacional de Acción Climática de Panamá [Panama's National Plan for Climate Action]. (2022). <https://transparencia-climatica.miambiente.gob.pa/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Plan-Nacional-de-Acción-Climática.pdf>

<sup>82</sup> Phynatura, EDEPA, EcoJuegos. (2016). Op. Cit.

<sup>83</sup> Davies, V. (2021). Juan Carlos Sánchez: Venezuela se comporta como si el cambio climático no existiera, o existiera solo para dar declaraciones en la ONU [Venezuela behaves as if climate change did not exist, or as if it did only for speeches before the UN]. <https://contrapunto.com/especiales/entrevistas-ctp/juan-carlos-sanchez-venezuela-se-comporta-como-si-el-cambio-climatico-no-existiera-o-existiera-solamente-para-dar-declaraciones-politicas-en-las-reuniones-de-naciones-unidas/>

<sup>84</sup> Pineda, J. (2017). Venezuela solo ha cumplido «a medias» en la lucha contra el cambio climático #COP21 [Venezuela has only met “in half” the fight against Climate Change #COP21]. <https://efectococuyo.com/la-humanidad/venezuela-solo-ha-cumplido-a-medias-en-la-lucha-contra-el-cambio-climatico-cop21/>

**During a disaster.** The activities carried out by public officials described in the media were taken into consideration to evaluate the action of government agencies during the phase of emergency.

The results show that 26.8% of the news articles mentioned activities of humanitarian assistance aimed at helping the affected, while 12.7% of the articles described infrastructure recovery efforts, mainly road reconstruction. (See Table 3)

In the first case, several activities were mentioned, including rescue work and the transfer of victims to shelters, as well as the supply of food products and drinking water. In most cases, the information available was imprecise and did not seem to respond to a planned process. Also, in some cases, these efforts appear to have had a partisan overtone.

Additionally, the activities were described as monitoring or "personnel deployment" in 21% of the cases, without further explanation of their objective or results.

In contrast, in almost 30% of the cases, the article did not mention any activity carried out by the agencies with a first-response function in the affected areas. Finally, almost 10% of the people affected reported not having received any help from government agencies (see example<sup>85 86</sup>).

**Table 3: Emergency response activities reported in the media (2018-2022)**

Reported activity	
Monitoring, assessment, "deployment"	<b>21.1</b>
Humanitarian assistance (transfer of victims to shelters, medical attention, supply of food and medicines)	<b>26.8</b>
Infrastructure recovery (roads, electrical service)	<b>12.7</b>
<b>None</b>	<b>9.9</b>
<b>Not reported</b>	<b>29.6</b>

**Source:** Prepared by Authors.

<sup>85</sup> Observatorio de Derechos Humanos ULA / Epikeia. (2022). Emergencias por lluvias en la región andina y el derecho a una vivienda adecuada [Rain emergency in the Andean region and the Right to adequate housing]. <https://www.uladdh.org.ve/index.php/2022/07/10/reporte-emergencias-por-lluvias-en-la-region-andina-y-el-derecho-a-una-vivienda-adecuada/>

<sup>86</sup> Figueroa, Y. (2022). Los damnificados por lluvias en Río Claro denuncian que mandatarios de Lara no han resuelto el problema de fondo [People affected by rains in Río Claro claim local authorities have not solved the underlying problem]. <https://cronica.uno/los-damnificados-por-lluvias-en-rio-claro-denuncian-que-mandatarios-de-lara-no-han-resuelto-el-problema-de-fondo/>



Also, in the cases mentioning the transfer of victims to shelters, the facilities seem to have been improvised and without adequate conditions to host a group of people.<sup>87 88</sup>

Similarly, criticism was found regarding the use of a military approach to rescue efforts, to the detriment of the civilian personnel that must act under the law.<sup>89</sup> According to the allegations, this situation gave rise to different restrictions and information censorship, as well as to limitations on the delivery of humanitarian aid by organizations not linked to the government.<sup>90 91 92</sup>

On the other hand, although the President of the Republic declared that the national executive power had information on the serious risk of flooding and landslides before the disaster in Las Tejerías, in no case were early warnings issued to prepare the population and define prevention and mitigation activities.<sup>93</sup> Although this activity formally corresponds to the phase prior to the event, the omission generates a greater impact on the population.

An additional element is the statements by government officials repeatedly declaring “the rains” or “climate change” as the cause of the disasters,<sup>94 95</sup> in contradiction with the current international trend of considering disasters the result of human actions and decisions and holding governments responsible for acting to prevent the consequences of these events.

In this regard, different specialists have warned about the use of climate change as an excuse for government inaction on DRM issues.<sup>96 97</sup> In consequence, this narrative conveys that many situations are beyond the control of citizens, thus reducing their capacities and motivation to seek their own solutions and increase their resilience.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Pulido, A. (2020). Refugios improvisados por desborde de río El Limón son centros de contagio de COVID-19 [Makeshift shelters in the overflowing of the El Limón river are COVID-19 hotspots]. <https://efectococuyo.com/la-humanidad/refugios-improvisados-por-desborde-de-rio-el-limon-son-centros-de-contagio-de-covid-19/>

<sup>88</sup> Gutiérrez Torres, J. and Rodríguez Rozas, R. (2018). Op. Cit.

<sup>89</sup> Nederr, S. (2022). Maduro carga a la FAN el peso de planes de contingencia por las lluvias [Maduro gives the Armed Forces a leading role in rain emergency plans]. <https://talcualdigital.com/maduro-carga-a-la-fan-el-peso-de-planes-de-contingencia-por-las-lluvias/>

<sup>90</sup> Espacio Público (2022). GNB impide que la prensa haga cobertura de emergencia en Tejerías [Bolivarian National Guard prevents the media from covering the Las Tejerías emergency]. <https://espaciopublico.ong/gnb-impide-que-la-prensa-haga-cobertura-de-emergencia-en-tejerias/>

<sup>91</sup> ODH – ULA. (2021). Gestión de ayuda humanitaria no debe politicizarse ni militarizarse [Humanitarian Aid Management must not be politicized or militarized]. <https://www.fronteradigital.com.ve/entrada/25748>

<sup>92</sup> Orozco, B. (2021). “Mérida necesita de todos”: Williams Dávila pide permitir ingreso de la ayuda [“Mérida needs us all: Williams Dávila calls to allow the entry of emergency aid]. <https://impactovenezuela.com/merida-necesita-de-todos-williams-davila-pide-permitir-ingreso-de-la-ayuda/>

<sup>93</sup> El Diario. (2022). Maduro reconoció que desde hace 10 días sabían que el suelo de Las Tejerías estaba saturado por las lluvias [Maduro recognized having information about soil saturation due to rains in Las Tejerías 10 days before the tragedy]. <https://eldiario.com/2022/10/10/maduro-reconocio-que-sabian-que-suelo-de-las-tejerias-estaba-saturado/>

<sup>94</sup> DW. (2022). Nuevo aluvión en Aragua eleva desastres por lluvias en Venezuela [New landslide in Aragua worsens the rain emergency in Venezuela]. <https://www.dw.com/es/nuevo-aluv%C3%ADn-en-aragua-eleva-desastres-por-lluvias-en-venezuela/a-63468612>

<sup>95</sup> Xinhua. (2022). Presidente venezolano atribuye el incremento de los desastres naturales al cambio climático [Venezuelan President attributes the increase in natural disasters to climate change]. <https://spanish.news.cn/20221011/9fb0fa3809d247deb1f01bf014f102a2/c.html>

<sup>96</sup> Linayo, A. (2011). Vargas 99: Un punto de inflexión en la conceptualización y el tratamiento normativo del riesgo de desastres en Venezuela [Vargas 99: An inflection point in the conceptualization and normative treatment of Disaster Risk Management in Venezuela]. [https://www.desenredando.org/public/vari%C3%B3s/2009/2009\\_Linayo\\_Vargas99\\_Punto\\_de\\_Inflexion.pdf](https://www.desenredando.org/public/vari%C3%B3s/2009/2009_Linayo_Vargas99_Punto_de_Inflexion.pdf)

<sup>97</sup> Figuera, R. (2022). Cambio climático se convierte en excusa para evadir responsabilidad ante deslaves [Climate Change becomes an excuse to evade responsibility for disasters]. <https://talcualdigital.com/cambio-clim%C3%A1tico-se-convierte-en-excusa-para-evadir-responsabilidad-ante-deslaves/>

<sup>98</sup> UNDRR. (2020). El poder de las palabras: Los desastres no son naturales [The power of words: Disasters are not natural]. <https://www.undr.org/es/news/el-poder-de-las-palabras-los-desastres-no-son-naturales>



**After a disaster.** The activities planned in this phase include, in the first place, the short-term recovery of services and basic living conditions in the affected community, as well as the medium- and long-term reconstruction of the damaged infrastructure.

Likewise, it will be necessary to address the health challenges derived from the disaster,<sup>99</sup> including psychological attention for the affected.<sup>100 101</sup> In some cases, it will also be necessary to rebuild shattered life projects in entire communities.<sup>102</sup>

There is very little information available about these actions in Venezuela. Most of them are complaints voiced by the affected, who affirm being abandoned by the authorities shortly after the first response actions or that the promises of support and reconstruction made to them are not honored.<sup>103 104 105</sup>

On the other hand, the news about adverse hydrometeorological events show that they affect the same areas on a recurring basis, with no indication that measures are being taken to prevent future damage.<sup>106 107</sup>

Lastly, no information was obtained on long-term rehabilitation processes of community infrastructures or economic, social and psychological support and accompaniment initiatives for the affected communities and individuals.

99 Pan American Health Organization. (2012). Vigilancia en salud pública Manual práctico para funcionarios de salud en situaciones de desastre o emergencia compleja [Public Health Surveillance Handbook for Health Officials in Disaster or Complex Emergency Situations]. [https://www.paho.org/col/dmdocuments/VSPde\\_052012.pdf](https://www.paho.org/col/dmdocuments/VSPde_052012.pdf)

100 Pineda Marín, C. and López-López, W (2010). Atención Psicológica Postdesastres: Más que un "Guarda la Calma". Una Revisión de los Modelos de las Estrategias de Intervención [Post-Disaster Psychological Care: More than "keeping calm". A Review of Intervention Strategies Models]. Ter Psicol v.28 n.2 Santiago dic. 2010.

101 Umaña Álvarez, S. and Zárate Montero, A. (2014). Manual de Intervención Psicosocial en Desastres de la Brigada de Apoyo Psicosocial en Emergencias y Desastres de la Universidad de Costa Rica. Universidad de Costa Rica [Handbook of Psychosocial Intervention in Disasters by the Brigade of Psychosocial Support in Emergencies and Disasters of the University of Costa Rica]. Universidad de Costa Rica. [https://uabierta.uchile.cl/asset-v1:Universidad\\_de\\_Chile+UCH\\_43+2020+type@asset+block@Umana\\_Zarate2015.pdf](https://uabierta.uchile.cl/asset-v1:Universidad_de_Chile+UCH_43+2020+type@asset+block@Umana_Zarate2015.pdf)

102 Montes, C. (2016). Lo que viene después de la emergencia de un desastre natural [The aftermath of a natural disaster emergency]. <https://www.elciudadano.com/medio-ambiente/lo-que-viene-despues-de-la-emergencia-de-un-desastre-natural/04/27/>

103 Figueroa Y. (2022). Op. Cit.

104 ODH-ULA (2021). Op. Cit.

105 Runrun.es (2026). Sin viviendas prometidas siguen Waraos damnificados [Homeless Warao without promised new houses]. <https://runrun.es/nacional/294953/sin-viviendas-prometidas-siguen-waraos-damnificados/>

106 Altez (2005). Historia sin memoria: la cotidiana recurrencia de eventos desastrosos en el estado Vargas-Venezuela [History without Memory: The everyday recurrence of disaster in the state of Vargas-Venezuela]. Revista Geográfica Venezolana, vol. 46, 2005, p. 313-342

107 Altez, R. (2010). Entre el cauce y la montaña: Memoria, olvido y negociación del riesgo en el estado Vargas, Venezuela [Between the riverbed and the mountain: Risk memory, oblivion and negotiation in the state of Vargas, Venezuela]. Revista Temas de Coyuntura. Núm. 61.



# Synopsis and preliminary conclusions

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The results obtained from the analysis of the information available indicate that the Venezuelan population is exposed to the threat of being affected by extreme weather and climate events. As a consequence, a very high number of people in Venezuela have been affected by floods, mass movements and other adverse events during the country's history, sometimes with catastrophic effects.

Despite the impossibility of establishing with accuracy the number of people affected by these events, it is highly likely that every year hundreds of people lose their lives and thousands to tens of thousands lose their homes and livelihoods or are forced to migrate.

Under such circumstances, people living in poverty, indigenous people and very likely women, boys and girls are among the groups most harshly impacted by these phenomena.

This situation is being concealed by a government that fails to provide figures or effective and permanent solutions and, on the contrary, seems to be establishing a pattern of systematic institutional oblivion that has been permeating public opinion.<sup>108</sup>

Such circumstances seem to contradict the important efforts made by the national government to consolidate an institutional framework for DRM and emergency response. But at the same time, it seems that said institutionality does not seem to be capable of generating relevant, timely and efficient responses to anticipate, mitigate and address situations caused by extreme events.

Even more worrisome is that no progress has been made in the development of an institutional framework that allows the promotion of necessary social, political and economic transformations to face the negative changes derived from the climate crisis. On the contrary, climate change is only used as an element in the rhetoric of political confrontation and as an excuse for the failure to act on the subject of DRM.

<sup>108</sup> Noria, A. (2015). "El tiempo todo lo olvida". El desastre de El Limón del 6 de septiembre de 1987 en Venezuela. Apuntes para su estudio ["Time heals everything": The September 6, 1987 El Limón disaster in Venezuela. Keynotes for study]. HIB: revista de historia iberoamericana, ISSN-e 1989-2616, Vol. 8, N°. 1, 2015, p. 55-78.

Neither have efforts been made to articulate DRM with actions to deal with climate change, an essential step to integrate the efforts to protect the population from the effects of extreme weather events at their different geographical and temporal scopes.

Venezuela also lacks a human rights framework to guide actions aimed at complying with national and international legal obligations for the protection of the population from the effects of extreme weather events in the context of climate change.

These reasons preclude changing the conditions that create a situation of vulnerability among the population and turn the social damage generated by these events into a structural problem that seriously hinders any attempt to overcome the current situation of crisis.

All these circumstances constitute a pattern of systematic violation of the human rights of a very significant percentage of the population. In this context, many Venezuelans live in the extreme scenario of a risk society<sup>109</sup> centered on the fear that an adverse weather event might devastate their life projects and even their existence and the existence of their loved ones.

Based on these results, it can be concluded that the country is not advancing towards the achievement of Target 1.5 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals aimed at building the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reducing their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.

Nor will it be able to achieve the global targets of the Sendai Framework for measuring progress in reducing disaster risk and losses that bind the implementation of the framework with the achievement of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.<sup>110</sup>

109 Beck, U. (2006). *La sociedad del riesgo. Hacia una nueva modernidad* [Risk society: Towards a new modernity]. Paidos. Barcelona.

110 UNDRR (nd). IDDRR focus – The Sendai Seven. <https://iddrr.undr.org/publication/2021-international-day-disaster-risk-reduction-sendai-seven-targets-campaign>



# Recommendations

Based on the results obtained, the Venezuelan State is urged to assume the following proposals:

- **Establish a comprehensive, integrated, systemic and permanent national policy for Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Management.** This policy must be designed with a focus on risk prevention and strengthening the resilience of the population through participatory, interdisciplinary, multisectoral and non-exclusive processes.
- **Establish a reinstitutionalization process for both risk management and environmental institutions to promote their technical, political and financial strengthening.** This process must include the construction of a decentralized regional institutional framework aligned with a national vision that guarantees the effectiveness, continuity and relevance of the implemented plans and actions.
- **Establish information and participation policies under the framework of the Escazú Agreement.** These policies must be aimed at facilitating public access to information on the risks of socio-natural disasters and the strategies to mitigate them; guaranteeing the pluralistic and democratic participation of all stakeholders in decision-making, and promoting the implementation of dedicated educational programs at all levels of training and across the country.
- **Effectively incorporate a human rights-based approach into all policies and actions.** This framework must be incorporated into all stages of planning and implementation of actions for DRM and Climate Change Adaptation and must prioritize the protection of the most vulnerable groups, mainly indigenous peoples, women, children, migrants and people with disabilities. Likewise, these policies and actions must establish mechanisms that allow the reparation of damages to the victims and the active participation of the affected communities in reconstruction processes.

