



A church-run soup kitchen on the Colombian border providing meals for Venezuelan migrants.



**Strengthening Women's Leadership.** The Institute is developing online training and support for grassroots women leaders seeking to rebuild the social fabric in their communities as they prepare to play a stronger role in formal peacebuilding efforts. USIP also supports exchanges between women leaders seeking to bridge political and social divides.

## CURRENT SITUATION

Venezuela is in the midst of an unprecedented social and humanitarian collapse—the result of bad economic policies and political conflict—that has led to food insecurity, the second largest migration crisis in the world, and regional instability. The international community has responded with pressure against the regime coupled with support for an opposition-led government, but to date it has been unsuccessful in bringing about a positive change.

Many experts now believe that the path to re-democratization involves a lengthy negotiation process leading to free and fair presidential elections and the rebuilding of democratic institutions. It must be based on an agreement for coexistence between the heavily polarized political actors and include Venezuelan civil society. Many Venezuelan civic and political leaders are supportive of this course and seek to exert their influence to bring it about. International actors will also be essential players, from a respectful distance and at the appropriate time.

## USIP'S WORK

Since 2018, the U.S. Institute of Peace has worked to generate the conditions for a peaceful negotiated political settlement in Venezuela by enhancing engagement and supporting moderate civil society actors, especially women, who will play an essential role in a successful negotiation process. The Institute's expanded alliances with civil society actors include youth, religious and ecumenical leaders, women peacebuilders, and private-sector leaders who aim



to advance dialogue, social cohesion, and the promotion of tolerance in order to build fertile ground for a peaceful and negotiated political solution to the crisis.

**A Vision for Venezuela's Future.** USIP supports efforts to develop a long-term vision for Venezuela in order to create spaces for dialogue and build bridges across the current political divide. Through this initiative, USIP is countering the negative impact of political and social polarization across the political spectrum, while seeking to offer a compelling vision for Venezuelan society as a whole.

**Building a Social Dialogue and Peacebuilding Platform.** USIP supports a network of more than 500 organizations across Venezuela who are promoting an inclusive dialogue—with the aim of mitigating deep polarization and helping to reconstruct the democratic social fabric of Venezuelan society. In addition, USIP offers active support to nonviolent action cohorts seeking to develop the knowledge and expertise needed to promote peaceful, democratic change.

**Mapping Past Political Dialogue Experiences.** USIP has undertaken a mapping exercise to identify the various initiatives underway in Venezuela focused on bringing together diverse voices and fostering inclusive spaces for dialogue. Informed by this exercise, USIP will identify opportunities to both scale and complement existing negotiation efforts.

**Creating a Binational Bridge for Peace between Colombia and Venezuela.** The Institute supports a binational engagement called “Puentes Ciudadanos Colombia-Venezuela,” or “Citizen Bridges,” which is led by local civil society leaders across eight border cities. Its binational work is aimed at enhancing coordination on security, humanitarian, and commercial challenges to support more collaboration between both countries, particularly related to border dynamics.

**Religious Leaders Supporting Peace Processes.** In coordination with USIP's religion and inclusive societies team, USIP has expanded coordination with religious leaders as critical voices that can help foster spaces for dialogue, social cohesion, and the promotion of tolerance within a highly polarized society. USIP supports the newly created Interreligious Council in Venezuela, which represents a diverse spectrum of Venezuelan faith communities. At the same time, USIP has developed and shared lessons with other regional and international experts and scholars based on the past experiences of Venezuelan religious leaders in political negotiations, facilitated dialogues, and exchanges.

**Interorganizational Global Forum.** In partnership with the U.S. government, the Institute convened a multi-stakeholder and interagency strategy session to examine the challenges and opportunities for the re-establishment of democracy in Venezuela. The event provided the opportunity for the world's foremost Venezuela experts to exchange ideas while developing a possible framework for a strategic working group.

**Engaging Youth.** USIP built on the prominent youth engagement in Colombia through its flagship Generation Change Fellows Program (GCFP) and launched a program for 26 Venezuelan youth fellows throughout Venezuela. The program elevates the work of Venezuelan youth leaders with local organizations through training on peacebuilding skills and community-based dialogue.