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GLOBAL FUND BOARD CALLS FOR REGIONAL RESPONSE TO HEALTH CRISIS IN VENEZUELA

The Global Fund Board has called for a coordinated regional response to the health crisis in Venezuela – one that addresses the impact on the region, incorporating relevant partners and donors.

At its 37th meeting on 3-4 May in Kigali, Rwanda, the Board expressed continued concern “about the resurgence of malaria, shortages of critical commodities for HIV and TB, and the broader health crisis in Venezuela and its impact on the region.” The Board also expressed appreciation for the engagement of communities, civil society groups, the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), UNAIDS, the World Health Organization (WHO) and others, and for their efforts to raise awareness and explore solutions for this situation.

The situation on the ground in Venezuela has been deteriorating for some time. A report in [The Guardian](#) dated 19 October 2016, paints a picture of a public health system in collapse. “These problems all converge in the nation’s hospitals,” the newspaper said, “where doctors report rising levels of mortality thanks to a dire shortage of medical supplies, shutdowns of operating theatres, staff declines and violent crime, including gunshots during surgery and mugging in corridors.”

The Guardian said that the Venezuelan Health Observatory, a research centre at the Central University of Venezuela in Caracas, estimated that fewer than 10% of operating theatres, emergency rooms and intensive care units are fully operational. The Observatory said that 76% of hospitals suffer from scarcity of medicines, 81% have a lack of surgical materials and 70% complain of intermittent water supply.

More recently, on 7 April 2017, [Fox News](#) reported that 85% of drugs usually readily available to Venezuelans are no longer available. Last year, the news outlet said, 11,000 Venezuelan babies died

within their first year of life. In just one year, the infant mortality rate went from 14.8 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2015 to 19.6 in 2016. The head of vascular surgery at the Children's Hospital JM de los Rios in Caracas said that the center has not performed any heart surgery in six years for lack of funding from the central government.

"In a rare cry for help," Fox News said, "last week President Nicolas Maduro asked for the United Nations' support to alleviate medicine scarcity."

In August 2016, the [New York Times](#) reported that there has been a resurgence of malaria. After Venezuela had eradicated malaria in its most populated areas – it was certified by the World Health Organization as being malaria free – "the country's economic turmoil has brought malaria back," the newspaper said, "sweeping the disease out of the remote jungle areas where it quietly persisted and spreading it around the nation at levels not seen in Venezuela for 75 years."

GFO has reported on the situation in Venezuela in two articles, [here](#) and [here](#).

The Board said that it had discussed the situation at length. It noted that Venezuela is currently not eligible for Global Fund financing. However, the Board said that in the context of a regional response, the Fund "will continue to engage and, if possible, support the regional response."

In addition, the Board directed its Strategy Committee and the Secretariat to discuss exceptional circumstances in non-eligible countries as part of the ongoing reviews of the Global Fund's Eligibility Policy.

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