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NATIONAL REPORT OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMITMENTS FROM THE FOURTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS



**OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR NORTH AMERICA
AND MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS
DEPARTMENT OF MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS**

**REPORT OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA
ON COMPLIANCE WITH THE MANDATES
AGREED IN THE PLAN OF ACTION OF THE
FOURTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS**

CREATE DECENT WORK

1.- To eliminate forced labor before 2010 by strengthening measures and policies, to enable those countries that have not already done so to achieve this goal. To this end, promote the creation of national plans of action with the support of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

There are no cases of forced labor in Venezuela. The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has stated that the reports made by the Committee of Experts on Application of ILO Conventions and Recommendations regarding alleged irregularities of the CIOSL are imprecise and without grounds.

2.- To eradicate by 2020 at the latest, the worst forms of child labor and reduce the number of children who work in violation of national laws. We shall continue strengthening national policies that enable achievement of these goals. In addition to providing quality basic education, we undertake to build bridges between child labor eradication programs and other support programs, such as income support programs, extracurricular activities and training. To meet this objective, countries shall set national goals and deadlines based on the local situation.

Work is a fundamental human right and an activity that allows for self-realization of persons and the effective integral development of our societies. It is therefore the shared responsibility of the state and society to guarantee conditions in which it can be fully exercised and universally practiced, through decent jobs that place the human being over and above matters pertaining to the market and capital.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is committed to the scope of the Millennium Goals and that is why, through its revolutionary, transforming process, it has proposed as a strategic objective the eradication of poverty and social and productive exclusion, by transforming all those circumstances that produce and reproduce poverty and exclusion.

The principal policies and measures to generate decent work that are being implemented by the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela are based on an endogenous development approach, and are supported by constitutional principles and clear guidelines to create conditions of social, economic, political, territorial, and international equilibrium. These guidelines cut across the strategic objectives and proposed actions that drive our national policy, and are designed to generate truly humane living conditions for all Venezuelans, to vindicate all aspects of human beings, and to build the path to socialism based on concrete achievements for the common good.

The effectiveness of this policy is shown in the creation of 423,904 new jobs and the addition of 253,778 persons to the work force between November 2005 and November 2006, reducing the unemployment rate for December 2006 by 8.4%,^{1/} according to data reported by the National Statistics Institute (INE) of Venezuela.

On the specific subject of eradication of child labor, the Venezuelan state has adopted a series of legislative measures to eradicate the worst forms of child labor, including the following:

- In an international legal context, it has ratified the following instruments:
 - International Convention N° 138 on the Minimum Work Age
 - International Convention on Children's Rights
 - Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor
 - International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights,
 - Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, regarding Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Use of Children in Pornography
 - Protocol to Prevent, Control, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children

- In the area of domestic law, Venezuela has the following provisions on the subject:
 - Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Articles 88, (6.a)
 - Organic Law for Protection of Children and Adolescents, (LOPNA), Articles 33 and 38,
 - Organic Labor Law, Articles 247 to 257.

In addition, the aforesaid Organic Law for Protection of Children and Adolescents contains provisions regulating the right of children and adolescents to protection in the area of work in the following articles:

Article 94.- Right to Labor Protection

“All working children and adolescents have the right to be protected by the state, their family, and society, especially against economic exploitation and the performance of any work that could hinder their education, or be dangerous or harmful to their health or to their integral development..

1. Report on the Job and Work Market in Venezuela: 2006. Ministry of the People for Labor and Social Security, Department of Employment. Also in INE (<http://www.ine.gov.ve>).

Single Paragraph: The State, through the appropriate ministry, will give priority to ensuring compliance with the provisions pertaining to minimum age, authorizations to work, and supervision of the work of adolescents.”

Article 95. - Harmony between Work and Education

“The work of adolescents should be harmonized with the effective exercise of their right to education. The State, the family, and society and employers must ensure that working adolescents complete their required education and have effective access to continued education.”

Article 9. - Minimum Age

“Throughout the territory of the Republic, the age of fourteen (14) years is established as the minimum age to work. The Executive Branch may issue decrees to establish a higher minimum age than this for dangerous or harmful work.

First paragraph: Persons who have achieved the minimum age but are less than eighteen years of age may not engage in any type of work that is specifically prohibited by law.

Second Paragraph: In cases of violation of the minimum age to work, children and adolescents [... text missing...] of all rights, benefits, and remuneration to which they are entitled as a result of the work relationship.

Third Paragraph: The Protection Council may, in certain duly justified circumstances, authorize adolescents under the minimum age to work, provided that the activity to be carried out does not affect their right to education, that it is not dangerous or harmful to their health or integral development, or that it is not expressly prohibited by law.

Fourth Paragraph: In all cases, before authorization is granted, adolescents must undergo a complete medical examination that guarantees their health and physical and mental capacity to perform the work to be done. Moreover, the opinion of the adolescents must be heard, as well as that of their parents, representatives, or guardians, whenever possible.”

Article 97. - Working Children

“Working children shall be covered by protective measures. In no case may these measures entail any harm in addition to that derived from their work and must guarantee the daily sustenance of the working child.”

Article 98. - Registration of Workers

“In order to work, all adolescents must be registered in the Register of Adolescent Workers, maintained for this purpose by the Protective Council

Second Paragraph: The data in that Register shall be sent every month to the appropriate Ministry, for purposes of inspection and supervision of the work.”

At the same time, the State of Venezuela has implemented a series of measures designed to ensure integral, quality basic education for children and adolescents, based on the relevant provisions of the Constitution pertaining to restitution of the right to democratic, free, compulsory education. These measures include those adopted to ensure the gradual restoration of the physical infrastructure of schools, which led to the creation of the Bolivarian schools. By 2005-2006, there were 5,504 primary schools, with an enrollment of 1,098,489, and 1,269 Bolivarian secondary schools, with 1,333,462 students enrolled.^{2/}

Moreover, the Bolivarian schools have food security policies in force, and provide four daily meals to students, as a way of guaranteeing that they obtain an education, through the School Food Program, which covers more than 1,815,977 school-age children.^{3/}

On a broader scale, and with specific reference to eradication of the worst forms of child labor, Venezuela has also developed plans, programs, and projects such as the following ones:

- Plan for Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor - 2004
- “Moral y Luces” School Program
- Program for Integral Care Centers (HOGAIN), that also cover the population of indigenous children; in 2006, they cared for a total of 292,758 boys and girls.
- National Continuing Teacher Education Project, using computers and telematics / RENDINT
- Project for Dissemination and Adaptation of Educational Infrastructure -2007

3.-To reduce youth unemployment and significantly lower the percentage of young people that neither study nor work. We shall strengthen our efforts in the development of specific policies for training, vocational training, reinsertion into the educational system and promotion of access of young people of either gender to their first job. In this respect, some countries promote youth employment in non-traditional sectors such as in the conservation and rehabilitation of the environment and in areas of public-private partnerships to enable access to formal education and introductory professional courses in the workplace. We shall promote targeting these programs, in particular, towards youths that are most vulnerable, whether because of low levels of education or low income.

The achievements of the Venezuelan Government in the area employment and decent work for all follows an integrated policy, the main lines of which can be summed up in the “Bolivarian Missions,” designed to guarantee the rights to health, education, food, work, culture, and participation, among other rights, and to cancel the social debt inherited from previous decades, by creating the conditions in which citizens can develop as a productive work force.

With regard to creating decent work in the context of building a socialist society, mention should be made of the “*Misión Vuelvan Caras*” in which the Venezuelan people work together with the Government to achieve the social and economic transformation of the country and to build a joint, popular economy through education and work. This Mission provides for organization into

2. Social Equilibrium Achievements – Ministry of Planning and Development, February 2007.
3. National Coordination of the School Food Program of the Ministry of Education. Social Equilibrium Achievements – Ministry of Planning and Development, February 2007.

cooperatives and other types of work associations for persons living in poverty, including female heads of household, persons with disabilities, the elderly, youth, and indigenous peoples. The Mission also provides for the formation and reinforcement of endogenous or local development centers, to put into practice the job training and instruction received. In 2006, approximately 345,409 participants graduated, including 227,331 women and 118,078 men.^{4/}

With regard to youth employment, the Government has a specific program, “*Misión Vuelvan Caras Jóvenes*,” based on the active participation and revolutionary action of Venezuelan youth between 18 and 28 years of age. Since this Mission has been put into practice, 133,401 young people have been trained throughout the country in sectors such as fisheries, mining, agriculture, industry, and others, with an investment of 110,963,200,372.00 bolívares (approximately US\$52 million) made on training these young people, thereby guaranteeing employment opportunities for them as a result of their job training and the financing of productive projects.^{5/}

4.-To eliminate discrimination against women at work through, among other measures, the implementation of a range of policies that will increase women’s access to decent, dignified, and productive work, including policies addressing training and education and protection of the rights of women, as well as proactive policies to ensure that men and women enjoy equality in the workplace

The Venezuelan Government has taken different steps to ensure equal access in all areas of national life. With regard to work, it has sought ways to create employment and self-employment, where women can play a leading role. In this effort, the Women’s Development Bank (BANMUJER), a public micro-financial institution attached to the Ministry of the People for the People’s Economy, has implemented activities designed to achieve equality, such as access to micro-credits and to financial and nonfinancial services in a timely manner, all of which are directed especially to women in vulnerable situations. This has opened the way for women living in poverty to organize in their communities to engage in socio-productive work. In the five years it has been in operation, BANMUJER has benefited around 1,785,090 persons throughout the country. In 2006 alone, BANMUJER granted a total of 14,629 credits, amounting to 61,896,252,477.90 bolívares (approx. US\$ 29 million) in the agricultural, textile, industrial, and service sectors, among others.

Special mention should be made of the Misión Madres del Barrio “Josefa Joaquina Sánchez” [“Josefa Joaquina Sánchez Neighborhood Mothers Mission”] which has brought respect to working women and contributed to their social protection. That Mission, in keeping with the provisions of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, recognizes as employment the work performed by housewives and mothers at home, since it generates added value to society and has become a fundamental pillar for its development. The Neighborhood Mothers’ Mission serves women living in poverty and extreme poverty, by providing integral services for these women in the areas of education, health, food, and economic incentives representing 80% of the minimum wage. In addition, it insures that they are included in socio-productive projects, and guarantees their social organization so that they can play a leading role in the social development of our country. This

4. MINEP (<http://www.minep.gov.ve/>)

5. Employment and Work Market Report in Venezuela, 2006. Ministry of the People for Labor and Social Security, Department of Employment and MINEP

Mission benefits 229,451 mothers working at home, 11,451 of whom have a disability or are responsible for the care of a disabled person.^{6/}

5.-To ensure equal access for men and women to the benefits of social protection and ensure attention to gender issues in labor and social policies

The legal system in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela views women from a historical and social approach, and guarantees their human rights. In this regard, the Venezuelan Constitution has a gender approach, as it includes gender in principles of equality and equity related to duties and rights in different areas, including as a citizen in marriage and the family, in the political sphere, and in work and social security. Of particular importance is recognition of the economic value of domestic work and social security for housewives (Article 88 of the Constitution).

Following this approach and these principles, President Hugo Chávez' Government has been developing a policy to eradicate discrimination against women, protect their human rights, ensure their active participation in various facets of national life, and promote gender equity, based on the following guidelines:

- Ensuring persons living in poverty access to productive resources (credit, education, training, technology, knowledge and information), public services, and participation in the decision-making process;
- Development of policies, structures, objectives, and goals that guarantee gender equity in decision-making processes, and expanded political, social, economic, and cultural opportunities for women, empowering various women's organizations, and especially organizations for indigenous women and grass-roots community organizations;
- Expansion of the legal framework for gender equality and equity, to ensure respect for human rights, justice, and fundamental freedoms, and to eliminate all forms of discrimination.

In the area of social security, measures to maximize and protect male and female workers have been developed or strengthened, using a joint, proactive, gender approach, which gives preference to human beings and places them at the center of the system of human and social rights.

In addition, the National Women's Institute (INAMUJER), the leading national agency for gender equality policies, is doing important work in training and information with a view to disseminating women's rights and a gender approach and changing stereotypes and discriminatory tendencies, through radio programs and training workers in communications. It has also succeeded in incorporating this approach in all the activities undertaken by the State, with a view to making gender mainstreaming a cross-cutting issue in all public policies. In this regard, the Institute participates in two of the projects developed by the Venezuelan Government on social protection, the "Misión Negra Hipólita" and the Neighborhood Mothers' Mission referred to earlier, by making a gender perspective a cross-cutting issue and guaranteeing equity and equality.

6. Ministry of Labor and Social Security with Workers on the path to socialism. Review of achievements of the Ministry of the People's Power for Labor and Social Security..

The Misión Negra Hipólita is working to combat marginality and deal with street children living in poverty, by coordinating and promoting all aspects of integral care for children, adolescents and adults living in the streets, pregnant adolescents, persons with disabilities, and the elderly living in extreme poverty.

Similarly, in accordance with guidelines established in the National Plan for Economic and Social Development of the Nation, and taking into account commitments assumed under international instruments, INAMUJER drafted the Equality Plan for Women, aimed at systematizing gender mainstreaming in the formulation of public policies and the projects and programs of national organizations. This Plan is being developed in five dimensions, i.e., in social, economic, political, territorial, and international arenas.

In the area of education and equitable access to it, free education is implemented at all levels, on an equal footing for women and men, and this is reflected in school registration. In the case of the educational missions implemented by the National Government, it is noteworthy that over half of the persons registered in schools are women: 51%⁷ of the persons receiving literacy training in the Robinson Mission (program for elimination of illiteracy) and 55% of the participants in the Ribas Mission (inclusion of the population excluded from the formal education system, basic and diversified education, and graduating with “*bachilleres*”) are women.

Moreover in primary and middle diversified education, a program to educate students in equality has been included, to incorporate gender equity in thinking and textbooks.

Among efforts to combat poverty, Venezuela has implemented a series of measures since 1999 to promote social equality and equity, such as granting credits through the Women’s Development Bank (referred to under mandate 4), creating the Community Kitchens Program, to help women with little training located in the poorest geographical areas, and medical care for 55% of women through the Misión Barrio Adentro (free primary health care and integral health services).

Furthermore, in the international sphere, Venezuela has been a party to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women since 1982, and it has also ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Protocol to Prevent, Control, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

On a regional level, Venezuela is also a party to the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belem do Pará).

Nationally, it recently enacted the Organic Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free of Violence, to correct the shortcomings in the current Law on Violence against Women and the Family (adopted in 1998). It approaches gender violence as a structural problem, and takes an integral and multidisciplinary approach, covering all the possible manifestations of such violence. Venezuela also has a Law on Equal Opportunities for Women, decreed in 1992 and amended in 1999, which provides for equal opportunities for and nondiscrimination against women.

7. This and other statistics are for the second half of 2004.

6.-To develop and strengthen policies to increase opportunities for decent, dignified, and productive work for senior citizens and persons with disabilities, and ensure compliance with national labor laws in this area, including eliminating discrimination against them in the workplace.

The Bolivarian Government has created benefits by increasing the purchasing power of male and female workers, with a 462.9% rise in the minimum wage over what was earned in 1999 (making this minimum wage, at US\$238.29, one of the highest in Latin America and throughout a large part of the world),^{8/} which has led to advances, such as an 86.4% increase in new pensioners between 1999 and 2006. Moreover, 100% of the minimum wage was accepted for old-age and disability pensions, longstanding debts exceeding 700 million dollars were cancelled, and Decree No. 4269 approved government support to make up for the contributions still owed by persons who meet the requirements for age and accreditation of more than 700 contributions but who did not have access to the pensions. This last measure benefited 17,784 elderly persons.^{9/}

As for persons with disabilities, Hugo Chávez' Government is working to bring about a significant change in the collective attitude towards persons with disabilities, by promoting the full integration of these persons into Venezuelan society. Signs of this change are found in the recognition of the rights of these persons in the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (Article 81) and the recent adoption by the National Assembly of the Law for Persons with Disabilities, which took effect on January 5 of this year. This law, designed to regulate the means and mechanisms for guaranteeing the integral development of persons with disabilities, the exercise of their human rights, and their integration into family and community life, establishes, among other things, integral health care and education for prevention, and contains specific provisions on the following: the right to work of persons with disabilities (Article 28 establishes the obligation of public and private organizations and State-run, private or joint enterprises to include in their staffing plans at least 5% of positions for persons with disabilities); job training (Article 29 establishes the obligation of the state to create programs, courses, and workshops for persons with disabilities for job training purposes); and a series of policies, which are currently being designed by the Ministries of Labor and Social Development, to ensure that this law is effectively implemented.

7.-To implement policies that provide equal pay for equal work or, as appropriate, for work of equal value.

The Venezuelan Government has been making considerable efforts to reduce the gap between different types of work and their remuneration. In this context, one of the main labor policies to equalize the wages of the working class has been the increase in the minimum wage decreed by President Hugo Chávez, even up to two times in one year, making it one of the highest wages in all of Latin America.

Moreover, with the formation and strengthening of the cooperative movement, the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has succeeded in changing the capitalist philosophy, as seen in the equal rights and equitable distribution of surpluses or profits among the partners in cooperatives, in recognition of their collective effort or in proportion to the operations

8. Speech by the Minister of Venezuela of Venezuela at the Fifth Summit on Social Debt, 2006.

9. Ministry of Labor and Social Security with Workers on the Path to Socialism. Review of the achievements of the Ministry of the People for Labor and Social Security.

carried out with the cooperative, the work done in it, and their contributions. This production modality is established in Article 54 of the Special Law on Cooperative Associations (2001).

8.-To significantly reduce the levels of unregistered work by implementing or strengthening mechanisms that ensure enforcement of national labor laws in the workplace.

To achieve this goal, the national inspection system has been launching campaigns to find production units that are not operating within the law. These enterprises are then invited to work within the framework of the law and thus comply with all of the rights to which workers are entitled.

9.-To promote goals for the gradual registration of workers who are wage earners but not covered by social protection, especially domestic workers.

The inspection system has conducted special operations directed to vulnerable sectors of the population, such as rural workers, building attendants or caretakers, child care workers, and others. With specific reference to domestic employees, supervision of this important component of the labor force is currently in the process of being systematized.

In addition, INAMUJER has conducted a study on legislation governing domestic workers in Venezuela, since this work is done primarily by women. The Institute is working on a coordinated proposal to close the gap of inequality between this economic activity and any other work, and to ensure recognition of the fact that this activity differentiates between men and women, and, and so laws governing it should also consider this difference.

10.-To provide, improve or widen, as appropriate, comprehensive social protection systems so that all workers have access to relevant social safety net mechanisms.

Legal and institutional instruments and processes make it possible to protect the labor and social rights of workers, while guaranteeing stable, quality productive employment and offering propitious conditions before, during, and after concluding their working life.

Between 2005 and 2006, a series of revolutionary labor laws were strengthened, reflecting government efforts to create decent work and guarantee universal social protection. Laws on Housing and Habitat and Social Services were approved, for instance, and reforms were enacted to strengthen the Organic Labor Regulations, the Law on Food, and the Joint Resolution of the Ministries of Health and Labor on Breast Feeding. Working conditions were improved in these legal instruments, and advances were made in social security for the country's work force and in the fundamental rights to a decent life.^{10/}

In 2005 the Organic Law on Prevention, Conditions, and Environment in the Workplace was reformed, in 2006 there was a public referendum on its regulations, and in January 2007 it was formally adopted. With this, a legal framework for creating a working environment and conditions that will protect the safety and health of workers was guaranteed. This was strengthened with the

10. Ministry of Labor and Social Security with Workers on the Path to Socialism.

election of 17,758 prevention agents to actively manage the occupational safety and health of more than 800,000 workers.^{11/}

Also in 2005, the Law on Employee Benefits Systems was adopted, to provide greater protection and participation of the unemployed in processes of joining the work force, and in 2006, implementation of the Law was initiated with the creation of the National Employment Institute and the design of the Plan for Protection of Workers who are Unemployed.^{12/}

“Solvencia Laboral” was created and implemented as a requirement for all businesses that want to have access to government benefits. According to this system, businesses must show proof that they have observed labor laws and rights, and that they have fulfilled their obligations to their workers. Collections for social security, occupational training, and housing savings were increased with this instrument, among other things.^{13/}

In seven years of operation, the Ministry of the People for Labor and Social Security has maintained the stability of labor through presidential decrees such as the measure to protect the job stability of low-wage workers; 4,558 collective bargaining agreements were considered, 3,062 labor unions were registered, and over 250,000 workers were defended through the Attorney Offices [*Procuradurías*] for workers.^{14/}

The National Employment Service created favorable conditions for incorporating unemployed workers into the labor force, with special emphasis on groups excluded from the labor market, such as persons with disabilities, persons over 45 years of age, and youth. In 2006, the focus was on providing guidance, job training, and support so that a total of 46,673 persons identified as belonging to these groups could be inserted into the work force. The training and instruction process was accompanied by economic incentives or scholarships that facilitated their situation, so that they could remain in the socio-productive work insertion program until they could earn their own income.^{15/}

11.-To promote tripartite and inclusive social dialogue and cooperation among social partners and governments and call on the ILO for support as needed.

There has been an ongoing dialogue in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela since the Constituent Assembly in 1999 that has been expanded even further since 2004. No sectors or workers’ or employers’ organizations, regardless even of their specific legal status, have been or will be excluded from the social dialogue being held in different places.

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11. Ministry of Labor and Social Security with Workers on the Path to Socialism, Review of the achievements of the Ministry of the People for Labor and Social Security.
 12. Ministry of the People for Labor and Social Security, Employment Department. Document on “Structure of Report for Establishment of the National Employment Institute – INEMP,” Nov. 2006.
 13. Ministry of Labor and Social Security with Workers on the Path to Socialism, Review of the achievements of the Ministry of the People for Labor and Social Security.
 14. Ministry of Labor and Social Security with Workers on the Path to Socialism, Review of the achievements of the Ministry of the People for Labor and Social Security.
 15. 2006 Report and Account of the Employment Department, Ministry of the People for Labor and Social Security.

In order to ensure that there is a broad-based, inclusive social dialogue, the new regulations of the Organic Labor Law provide for national social dialogue committees, where both the most representative employer and worker organizations participate, as well as organizations that are more representative of the people's economy. These regulations are a specific response by the Government to need to include the traditionally excluded persons without representation.

13.-To carry out actions for the promotion of the fundamental principles and rights to work and develop, together with the ILO, and cooperation strategies to be complied with by member countries.

It was during the Government of President Hugo Chávez that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela received technical assistance from the ILO in various areas such as social security, health and safety at the workplace, implementation of international labor agreements, and training courses, among other things.

14. To increase the proportion of the active population, both employed and unemployed, that participates in occupational training activities to acquire or update their skills, including those required in the knowledge-based economy, making use of the good practices developed by CINTERFOR/ILO in various countries in the region.

The National Institute for Educational Cooperation (INCE), a leader in occupational training for different trades, carries out activities for training and instructing the working population needed by the productive sectors, society, and the State, so that they can participate in generating goods and services and thereby contribute to the country's economic and technological development and improvement of the standard of living of all citizens.

With a view to modernizing INCE, the Ministry of the People's Economy has provided it with high-technology agro-industrial laboratories to train the youth belonging to Misión Vuelvan Caras and Vuelvan Caras Jóvenes (known as "lanceros" and "lanceras"), and to give them instruction in Bolivarian socialist values and technological know-how so that when they complete their studies, they will have practical and technical job skills, and the ability to think critically and rationally, which are needed in order to advance the socialist economic model the country requires.

15. In addition to public efforts in this area, to promote the development of business services that support occupational training that facilitates the entry into the formal labor market and the upgrading of the skills of the labor force.

Over 500 key industries strategic for the country's development have been reclaimed and strengthened so far, in the agro-industrial, agro-food, textile, clothing, footwear, metalworking, construction, and chemical sectors, among others. The Venezuelan State has devoted 778 million dollars in financing^{16/} to this end, and has promoted shared corporate responsibility with private business through active and passive policies, and through the leading, active participation of workers and communities in administration and management of the enterprises, thereby advancing efforts to move towards a model for industrial relations based on social aspects.

With this measure, 20,000 workers in the private sector have been incorporated in the preparation of industrial projects, a total of 5,510 jobs are protected, and 16,037 direct new jobs and

16. MIPPLCO: "Oficinas de Fábrica Adentro"

75,420 indirect jobs have been created, for a total of 91,457 new jobs created directly and indirectly.^{17/}

Moreover, approximately 72,000 new cooperatives were registered at the end of 2005,^{18/} and they hired 709,000 persons in 2006, once they had received financing for their productive projects, which guarantees that workers will have decent working conditions based on closer work relationships and a commitment to the country's development.

The Employment Incentive Plan is also being developed, to promote small and medium-sized industries, cooperatives, partnerships, family firms, and other types of community associations. At present, the People's Ministry of Labor and Social Security is financing and monitoring 22 co-managed companies, which currently have 465 employees. Before reclaiming or reactivating these enterprises, there were 379 jobs, some of which were already virtually lost, while others were in danger of disappearing. This situation was clearly reversed with implementation of a co-management system, since not only was the number of jobs maintained, but it was also increased by adding 86 direct new jobs.^{19/}

16. To promote occupational health and safety conditions and facilitate healthy work environments for all workers, and, to that end, ensure effective labor inspection systems. For this purpose, it is essential to foster strategic alliances between the labor, health, environment and education sectors.

The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela guarantees respect for labor rights, which from a broad perspective includes a decent, equitable work environment, with healthy and safe conditions, and appropriate work tools, means, and processes, and the prevention of physical, chemical, biological, ergonomic, and psychosocial risks. The fields in which it intervenes are the work day, wages and other forms of payment, maternity and family matters, employment, social security, work safety, basic health and sanitation, and management systems.

In establishing the Work Health and Safety Benefits System, and with regard to benefits under the Organic Law of the Social Security System and compliance with the Organic Law on Prevention, Working Conditions and Environment at the Workplace (LOPCYMAT), the agencies of the system in charge of supervision or inspection are the Supervisory Units attached to the Office of the Labor Inspector and the Technical-Administrative Units of the National Work Safety and Health Prevention Institute, INPSASEL (under the Ministry of Labor).

The Ministry of Health in turn developed regulations for handling the removal of asbestos materials from buildings, with a view to protecting the health of persons involved in the removal of those materials and those living in communities close to the places of removal.

17. Report on Employment and the Labor Market in Venezuela: 2006, Ministry of the People for Labor and Social Security, Employment Department.

18. Report on Employment and the Labor Market in Venezuela: 2006, Ministry of the People for Labor and Social Security, Employment Department., and SUNACCOOP (http://www.sunacoop.gob.ve/cierre_balance_positivo.html)

19. Report on Employment and the Labor Market in Venezuela: 2006, Ministry of the People for Labor and Social Security, Employment Department.

18. To adopt measures to encourage the full and effective exercise of the rights of all workers, including migrant workers, as well as application of core labor standards, such as those contained in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its follow-up, adopted in 1998. Explore ways for the ILO to provide technical advisory services to member states to help them accomplish that objective.

The migrant workers' policy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is based on the new concept of the State, and framed by the precepts established in the National Constitution, the General Guidelines of the National Economic and Social Plan for 2001-2007, the recently created legal framework, and international commitments signed and ratified by the Republic, all of which concur on the following lines of action:^{20/}

- Non-discrimination by race, sex, creed, and nationality;
- Respect for the diversity of our multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society;
- Providing a response to the unmet demands for labor on the national labor market;
- Migration oriented to the priority areas for national development;
- Full respect for the human rights of migrant workers and their families, including all aspects of their labor rights (decent work), social security, and education, among others;
- Respect for international commitments assumed under various international legal instruments to which Venezuela is a party.

These guidelines can be found in the preamble of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which states that this Constitution is the framework for:

“...remodeling the Republic to establish a leading democratic, participatory, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society in a decentralized, federal state of justice, which reinforces the values of freedom, ... solidarity, the common good, territorial integrity, and peaceful co-existence ... and ensures the right to life, to work, to culture, education, social justice, equality without discrimination ..., the universal and indivisible guarantee of human rights”^{21/}

Likewise, Section III of our Magna Carta on “Human Rights and Guarantees, and Duties,” includes a series of rights and duties in keeping with the new paradigm of what the National Government’s social policy should be, to cover the social needs of all persons, including nationals and foreigners who live in the national territory, by providing equitable opportunities to all regardless of their status. In addition to these rights, the Constitution also establishes the obligation of the State to “... guarantee to all persons, in accordance with the principle of progressiveness and nondiscrimination of any kind, the irrevocable, indivisible, and interdependent exercise and enjoyment of Human Rights ...”;^{22/} Moreover, it establishes the equality of all persons before the law, without discrimination for “...race, sex, creed, social status, or for any reasons that are aimed at or

20. Information collected in the Survey on International Labor Migration sent to the International Labour Organization (September 2003).

21. The underlining is ours.

22. Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Article 19

would result in undermining or diminishing the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise of these rights and freedoms under conditions of equality ...”^{23/}

In this context, the Venezuelan State has been developing a series of legislative and administrative measures to implement these constitutional precepts and ensure compliance with international commitments signed and ratified by the Republic, such as International Labour Organization Conventions 111, 97, and 143, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, its Optional Protocol, and the International Covenant of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

In this regard, the following legal action should be noted:

1. Approval of a new Law on Foreigners and Migration (Official Gazette No. 37944 of May 24, 2004), regulating all matters pertaining to:

“... the admission, entry, stay, registration, control and information, departure and re-entry of foreigners in the territory of the Republic, and their rights and obligations, with a view to facilitating the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and strategies in migration matters issued by the National Executive Branch.”

This instrument establishes for the first time in Venezuelan history policies pertaining to migration, going beyond the matter of aliens alone, as contemplated in the now revoked 1937 Law on Alienage. This reflects the broader view of the State on this matter.

2. Promulgation, by Decree 2823, dated February 3, 2004, and published in Official Gazette N° 37871, of the Regulations for Regularization and Naturalization of Aliens residing in the National Territory. This instrument takes on the State’s social debt to all those aliens who never received a timely response to their situation as migrants, and who, through this Decree, may normalize their migrant status in the country, on the basis of the following principles: “...to defend and guarantee human rights, dignity, fair and equitable treatment, gratuitousness, a timely and adequate response, honesty, transparency, impartiality, and good faith, so that an effective procedure may be implemented”

With regard to administrative action pertaining to the control and monitoring of international migratory labor flows, the Ministry of Labor has been working on a positioning strategy for different national and international scenarios that will enable us to consolidate a migrant labor policy consistent with the real needs of the domestic and international markets. The policy will endeavor to minimize the negative impact generated by the globalization process, which “accentuates the economic and demographic differences among states,”^{24/} and has a direct impact on the movement of migratory flows.

23. Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela,, Article 21

24. Report VI “In Search of an Equitable Commitment / Compromise for Migrant Workers in a Globalized Economy, International Labor Office, Geneva, Chapter I, paragraph

The following steps will be taken:

- Implementation of an automated system for issuing work permits for foreign workers
- Implementation of a system interlinked with SIRE-VE of the National Network of Employment Agencies
- Creation of a computerized data base interconnected with the data bases of SENIAT, DIEX, and IVSS, among others
- Gradual decentralization of Migrant Labor Services in the direction of the Network of Employment Agencies
- Updating and simplification of the mechanisms and procedures to control migratory flows for work purposes.

At the same time, a series of measures are being implemented to protect and monitor the human rights of migrant workers, including the following ones:

1. National Campaign on “Rights and Duties of Migrant Workers and their Families in Venezuela,” which is an information-education strategy designed to protect these rights and to achieve a new management model to improve the quality of the services provided to the international migrant population located in the country, by training public employees. Moreover, there is also a communications component, part of an effort to sensitize various members of society on the subject. In this regard, four national workshops were conducted for civil servants in the government and other organizations working in this area. A total of 138 civil servants were trained to meet the needs of the international migrant population located in the country.

2. Trafficking in persons is the subject of another communication campaign to alert, inform, and sensitize different members of society on the problem.

The Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela establishes punishment for this crime for the first time, in its Article 54. Various international and regional legal instruments on the subject have been ratified, and national laws have been adopted, including the following:

- International Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Protocol to Prevent, Control, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Official Gazette No 37353 12/03).
- Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish, and Eradicate Violence Against Women, “Convention of Belem Do Pará”
- Statute of Rome (Official Gazette No. 5507 del 21/13/00).
- ILO (International Labor Organization) Convention No. 29 on Forced Labor (1930)
- ILO Convention No. 105 on Abolition of Forced Labor (1959).
- ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor (1999).
- Domestic Legal System
- Criminal Code
- Organic Law for Protection of Children and Adolescents
- Law on Aliens and Migration: Articles 52, 53, 55, 56 and 57.

19. To criminalize migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons, effectively enforce national laws and regulations to confront migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons, and strengthen institutions and the training of professional staff to be better positioned to investigate and prosecute the responsible parties, undertake prevention initiatives, as well as protect and assist the victims of these crimes.

The State of Venezuela has been developing a series of national legislative and administrative measures to criminalize trafficking in persons, including the following ones:

- Legislative measures:
 - Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Article 54: “No persons may be subjected to slavery or servitude. Trafficking in persons, and especially women, children, and adolescents, in all its forms, will be subject to the punishment stipulated by law.”
 - Organic Law Against Transnational Organized Crime, that criminalizes this crime and provides for the pertinent punishment in its Article 16.
 - Organic Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (LOPNA), establishes, in its Article 40, the responsibility of the State in the protection and illicit movement of children and adolescents within or outside the national territory.
 - Law on Migration and Aliens, establishes the punishment of imprisonment for natural persons or the representatives of legal persons who, by action or omission, promote or engage in the illegal trafficking of persons.
 - Criminal Code, which stipulates that any citizens who, within or outside the country, take part in the slave trade or in any activity that reduces persons to slavery or submits them to a similar condition shall be subject to prosecution in Venezuela.
 - Organic Law on Public Defendants.
 - Preliminary Law on Trafficking (currently being drafted).

- Administrative measures:
 - The Department for Crime Prevention in the Ministry of the Interior and Justice was designated as the Central Authority to prepare, coordinate, and implement the preventive and cooperative measures stipulated in Article 9 of the Protocol to Prevent, Control, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.
 - National Plan of Action to Control and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Children and Women (2006).
 - National Plan of Action Against Sexual Abuse and Commercial Sexual Exploitation (2005), under the responsibility of the National Council for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent (CNDNA)
 - Bi-national Plan of Action for the Integral Protection for Children and Families along the Colombian-Venezuelan border (2004), under the responsibility of the National Council for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent (CNDNA).

- Inter-Institutional Plan of Action for the Integral Protection of Children and Adolescents Against Violence (2006-2007), under the responsibility of the National Council for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent (CNDNA).
- The preliminary version of the Manual for Care of Victims of Trafficking was drafted.
- A nationwide communications campaign to prevent and provide information on the crime of trafficking was designed and developed.
- Workshops to sensitize government employees to the problem were conducted.

GROWTH WITH EMPLOYMENT

24. To promote an inclusive social tripartite and transparent dialogue as an instrument for the proposition of policies and resolution of labor conflicts in order to strengthen the representation and stimulate the participation of unions and of employer organizations in the formulation and implementation of national policies for the promotion of decent work.

In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, there has been an ongoing social dialogue since the 1999 Constituent Assembly, and it has expanded since 2004. No sectors or workers' or employers' organizations have been excluded, or will be excluded, from the social dialogue committees, and even their legal situation at the time will not be given consideration.

With a view to ensuring a broad-based and inclusive social dialogue, the new Regulations for the Organic Labor Law establish the formation of Social Dialogue Committees at national level, where the organizations that best represent employers and workers will participate, along with the organizations most representative of the people's economy. This regulation is a specific response by the Government to the critical need to include sectors that have been traditionally excluded and have not been represented.

26. To make efforts aimed at facilitating the incorporation and/or enlargement, as appropriate, to our national statistics systems, of the information on the contribution to the generation of added value, reduction of poverty, fostering of social welfare by productive cooperatives and other independent labor categories.

Based on the policies implemented by the Ministry of the People's Economy, 5,978 cooperatives have been financed nationally as part of the Misión Vuelvan Caras, in an investment amounting to 1,027,630,329,224.00 bolívares (478 million dollars). These cooperatives are made up of persons who pursue a common economic and social objective. The participation of the members is determined by the work they do towards the common objective and not by the amount of money they have contributed, with no preferential treatment for any of the members. The entities attached to the Ministry work together with the National Institute of Statistics (INE) to analyze the statistics and build gender indicators and methodology for impact evaluation.

28. To encourage investment in basic infrastructure having a high positive impact on employment in order to promote growth and productive employment.

The following table shows some of the projects implemented by the Venezuelan Government in the infrastructure sector in 2005, as well as their impact in creating direct and indirect employment:

PROJECT	JOBS CREATED	
	DIRECT	INDIRECT
Construction of medical care/welfare facilities for education, culture, sports, production support, among others.	4,286	7,723
New construction and repair of highways, urban streets, and roads. Maintenance and reconditioning of bridges, tunnels, and runways at national airports.	3,103	9,674
Improvement of rural road networks in the States of Anzoátegui, Barinas, Carabobo, Cojedes, Guárico, Mérida, Miranda, Portuguesa, Vargas and Zulia.	1,203	2,407
Construction of housing and other buildings. Rehabilitation and maintenance of the Central Park Complex and Torres del Silencio (Caracas)	1,009	3,027
Expansion of the building and runway at Maiquetía International Airport (principal international airport in the country)	580	1,740
Construction of public works on lines 3 and 4 of the Caracas Subway	2,650	4,960
Renovation of the Central-Western “Simón Bolívar” and “Ezequiel Zamora” railway systems	3,896	5,417
Construction of merchant marine offices in the States of Miranda and Vargas. Repair of the Harbormaster Offices at the Ports of La Guaira, Pampatar and Puerto Cabello	122	346
TOTAL	13,746	30,234

Moreover, based on the Agreement between the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Islamic Republic of Iran, ten corn processing plants, an auto parts plant, three plastic injection plants, and six milk production facilities are being built in Venezuela, and eighty stationary and eighty movable refrigerated storage facilities [*cavas*] were acquired, an investment amounting to 79,094,002,560.00 bolívares (approx. US\$37 million). These measures are part of the Special Economic and Social Development Plan for the acquisition of machinery and equipment in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In addition, through negotiations conducted by the Industrial Credit Fund

(FONCREI), an industrial plant for processing fish, using Italian technology, is being installed in the Municipality of Tubores in Nueva Esparta State.

32. To stimulate the design or strengthening of mechanisms or initiatives for access to credit, through, among other measures, the fostering of the property registry and cadastre, in which legal certainty is expressed, among other means, through the verification of the title and the use of it, ensuring that property rights benefit all people without discrimination

The Ministry of the People's Economy, together with the National Land Institute, is implementing a policy of Endogenous Development Nuclei, designed to eradicate poverty, improve the quality of life of the population, and create a new economic and social development model, to encourage community work and the attachment of peasants and rural workers to their land and to developing it for agricultural, industrial, and tourism purposes. Up to now, 173,165,492,837.22 bolivares (about US\$80 million) have been invested to support the growth of these nuclei.

34. To stimulate policies that improve income distribution

Credit policies advocated by the Ministry of the People's Economy, together with the entities attached to it, have provided access to micro-credits for the most impoverished sectors of the country, and have thereby improved the quality of life in their communities. More specifically, by establishing cooperatives, the free association of individuals and families with common interests is fostered. Their members have equal rights, and profits earned are distributed among the members or partners on the basis of the work each of the members contributes.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

45. To foster the development of comprehensive economic and social policies at the national level, principally aimed at employment growth; reduction of poverty, exclusion and inequality; personal skills development; and access to opportunities for integral development.

The Ministry of the People's Economy fosters the development of the micro-financial system with activities to develop the economy of the working class, building micro-businesses, cooperatives, and self-sustainable production units, that contribute to the well-being of the community in general, by ensuring decent productive work and improving the quality of life of Venezuelan families.

INAPYMI	Financing of Small and Micro-Businesses and Cooperatives	Total executed: 168,235,251,107
	National Technical Assistance System (Provides integral technical assistance to small and micro-businesses)	Total executed: 16,092,506,766
	Recovery and strengthening of the industrial platform	Total executed: 8,424,746,326

46. To implement – with the support of the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) – the "Three Ones Initiative: one HIV/AIDS action framework, one national AIDS coordinating authority, and one country-level surveillance and evaluation system," developing primary prevention of HIV/AIDS and strengthening health services for young people and other vulnerable groups, with special attention to the problem of stigma and discrimination in the labor environment, taking into account the ILO Code of Conduct on HIV/AIDS in the workplace. To promote efforts to provide integral prevention, treatment, and care to HIV/AIDS carriers with the aim of providing as close as possible universal access to treatment for all those who need it as soon as possible

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has legal instruments that provide for the right to equality and non-discrimination in the system of labor law, including measures to mitigate the social and economic effects of HIV-positive workers, and to protect the work place. Opinion 71 of the Ministry of Labor states:

"The right to equality and non-discrimination has also been recognized and developed in labor law and regulations. It is worth noting that the prohibition of discrimination or impediments at work for reasons incompatible with the system of labor law has always been inscribed in labor legislation. Thus, workers with HIV/AIDS have the same rights as any other worker; the Organic Labor Law's provisions on the subject of discrimination do not make any distinction as to the condition of the workers."

As regards policies and practices to ensure respect for the human rights of persons with HIV/AIDS at the workplace, and measures to promote, prevent, and apply the rules that guarantee the effective exercise of their human rights in Venezuela, these practices are described in Part III, "DISCRIMINATION BASED ON HIV/AIDS AT WORK," of the aforesaid Opinion No. 71, the domestic body of law, conventions ratified by the country, and any action taken by those affected, if applicable.

By virtue of the above, the State of Venezuela, through mechanisms provided for by law, specifically guarantees equality and non-discrimination. Thus, should an employer engage in any discriminatory practices, based on reasons that have to do with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), the affected persons may file a complaint pursuant to the terms established by law, take the matter to the competent courts and avail themselves of the established legal mechanisms, and in this way ensure the effective exercise of their rights and enhance social justice.

In another vein, on April 28, 2006, as part of the celebration of the Day for World Safety and Health at Work, the National Institute for Safety and Health at the Workplace devoted a space on its web page to reports of discrimination against HIV-positive workers.

Moreover, in the context of primary prevention of HIV/AIDS, the Government of Venezuela guarantees respect and protection for and the full realization of the human rights of persons living with HIV/AIDS, in addition to compliance with the Millennium Development Goals, and especially

goal number six regarding services for prevention, treatment, and diagnosis of this global pandemic, and care for its victims.

With regard to prevention, treatment, and care for carriers of HIV/AIDS, the Venezuelan Government guarantees universal access to quality anti-retroviral treatment for all patients that require it, on the basis of the principles of free, integral, and equitable care, social integration, solidarity, and nondiscrimination. Moreover, the Ministry of Health, through the Safe Health Project, groups together the necessary strategies and action to have a positive impact on HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, respiratory health (tuberculosis), and safe blood, by strengthening the blood banks and building hemocenters.

The preventive component is directed to fostering information, education, and communication on HIV/AIDS. Based on inter-institutional strategies between the Ministries of Health, Information and Communication, and Education and Sports, a publicity campaign on prevention has been launched using conventional and alternative communications media. This campaign focuses on *micros*, placement of billboards, and publication of printed material on subjects such as use of condoms, stigma and discrimination, prevention of vertical transmission, and distribution of condoms. In the formal education sector, projects on prevention of HIV/AIDS/STD and pregnancy among adolescents have been developed in the Bolivarian Schools.

The inclusion of nongovernmental organizations and grass-roots, community organizations in carrying out projects on promotion and prevention among vulnerable groups, projects financed by the national government since 2000, represents a significant step forward. To date, 160 projects have been financed for a total investment of approximately US\$1,400,000.

In addition to providing anti-retrovirals, consideration is being given to providing the medicines needed to combat the opportunistic infections that frequently affect persons with HIV/AIDS, and medicines for sexually transmitted infections at national level. In addition, pregnant women receive specialized care to prevent transmission of HIV from the mother to the infant, including treatment during pregnancy and childbirth, surgical protective equipment in the case of Caesarians, and substitution of the mother's milk.

In the area of diagnosis, a network of laboratories has been established to conduct free tests to diagnose HIV, fourth generation ELISA, and WESTERN BLOT. In addition, tests are conducted, such as VDRL and FTA for diagnosis of syphilis, tests for diagnosis of opportunistic infections, and immunological and virological monitoring, in addition to resistance tests.

As for INAMUJER, it has worked in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNAIDS to train women community leaders in different states in the country, so that they can inform their communities on prevention of HIV/AIDS. This program has been operating for over a year.

47. To initiate immediately, with the support of PAHO, and finalize by June 2006, national plans on preparation for influenza and avian flu pandemics in countries that do not have plans. In countries that already have plans, these should be implemented immediately according to the January 2005 decision of the Executive Committee of the World Health Organization (WHO).

In January 2006, the National Plan for Surveillance, Prevention, and Control of Avian Flu was designed to facilitate a timely response, and thereby reduce the vulnerability of the population by increasing the first component (good poultry production practices), biosecurity of workers on poultry farms, and families with backyard poultry.

The National Plan for Surveillance, Prevention, and Control of Avian Flu is in compliance with WHO guidelines, and PAHO provided technical support in its preparation, in an effort to cope with a possible influenza pandemic. It is available on the web site of the Ministry of Health. The objective of the plan is to facilitate a timely response and to help reduce the vulnerability of the population and social chaos, and prevent high morbidity and mortality rates in the event of a potential influenza pandemic. This plan is the result of the participation of governmental and nongovernmental intersectoral and inter-institutional teams working on a national, regional, and local level. It comprises the following strategies: good poultry production practices; follow-up and evaluation of the epidemiological situation; prevention and containment; response of the health system; and, communication.

In addition, a National Committee was set up, and has conducted intersectoral working sessions with the participation of 11 ministries (Health, Labor, Environment, Communication and Information, Agriculture and Land, Infrastructure, Defense, Finance, Interior, and Justice). They have been actively cooperating in building the National Plan and making it operational, and they are reviewing the body of law on the subject, with a view to drafting the resolutions needed to implement this plan.

At present, work is proceeding with a team formed to implement the International Sanitary Regulations (ISR), using avian flu as a basis. On this project, the instruments for diagnosis of the basic capacity of ports and airports have been developed, and were validated by using them in major international airports and ports in the country. A National Liaison Center was also created for the ISR, as stipulated in Article 4 of the International Sanitary Regulations, under the coordination of the Early Warning and Response Unit of the Epidemiological Surveillance Department, attached to the Department of Epidemiology and Strategic Analysis of this Ministry.

Our system for surveillance of acute respiratory diseases in humans has been strengthened in 24 states in the country, where research on respiratory viruses is being done to learn how the influenza virus circulates in Venezuela. Up to 12/31/06, 762 suspicious cases were investigated, and 65 influenza-A positive cases, 35 influenza-B positive cases, 11 cases of adenovirus, 2 cases of parainfluenza, 3 cases of parainfluenza [sic], and 60 cases of respiratory syncytial virus were reported, and 526 cases were ruled out. At the same time, 31 Centinela Hospitals with resolute capacity were selected.

The country has two (2) national diagnostic laboratories, one for humans and the other for animals, in addition to a supply of anti-viral drugs to be used in treating infected patients according to WHO guidelines, and personal protection teams to minimize and cope with influenza risks.

Under the Expanded Immunization Program, the seasonal influenza vaccine was introduced, and use of it on the population over 60 years of age and health personnel began during the fourth quarter of 2006.

In addition, migratory wild birds and residents in the principal nature and wetland areas of the country were monitored, with negative results for avian influenza. Birds and poultry kept in backyards are also being monitored.

With the participation of representatives from the ministries involved in surveillance and control of avian influenza, a simulacrum of avian influenza and simulations in the principal ports and airports of the country were conducted, in order to determine our strengths and weaknesses in this area.

It is important to point out that the Venezuelan Delegation to the 47th meeting of the Directing Council of PAHO requested that Organization to work in coordination with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Organisation for Animal Health in the following areas: to promote and support exchange of information and cooperation among countries in the area of protective measures against the risk of avian influenza, and especially laboratory networks; to promote research on the different kinds of sustainable poultry production from an environmental and social basis, and on their vulnerability to avian influenza and other diseases, and appropriate protective measures in each case; and, to cooperate technically so that intellectual property on drugs and reactives do not present obstacles in dealing with the pandemic.

On a regional level, health ministers from Andean member countries of the Andean Health Organization–Hipólito Unanue Convention (ORAS -CONHU) adopted the proposed Andean Plan for Preparation and Response to an avian influenza pandemic (Resolution REMSAA XXVII/407).

At the same time, with a view to harmonizing guidelines, laws, and procedures related to epidemiological surveillance and risk control, work has been proceeding with MERCOSUR and Related States on progress in the area of the International Sanitary Regulations with respect to the National Plan for Avian Influenza. At the Preparatory Meeting for the 21st Meeting of Ministers of Health of MERCOSUR and Associated States, the Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group on Analysis, Evaluation, and Implementation of the 2005 International Sanitary Regulations (Brazil, September 2006), work proceeded on consolidating information and on developing a single instrument to evaluate the capacity of Annex 1A of the ISR containing the legal, institutional, and administrative framework, with a view to classifying activities to detect, investigate, analyze, intervene, and disseminate and exchange information, according to the level of application of the evaluation instrument (national, state, or municipal). Later on, at the Seminar of the Intergovernmental Committee for Implementation of the ISR (Brazil, October 2006), each country presented its progress and the consolidated document for evaluation of the basic capacity for epidemiological surveillance and responses, drafted by Brazil and Venezuela at the meeting in Porto Alegre, and they pledged to begin development of the instrument for capacities along land borders, so that the document could be consolidated by March 2007.

The Venezuelan delegation to the Preparatory Meeting for the 21st Meeting of Ministers of Health of MERCOSUR and Associated States, Intergovernmental Committee on the International Sanitary Regulations (October 2006), made various proposals, including the following: the need to

create a regional strategic position and lines of action related to surveillance and control of new, emerging, and re-emerging diseases, by implementing the International Sanitary Regulations (ISR); and, the idea of fostering regional and subregional integration in working groups to review and implement the ISR, with Southern Cone and Andean countries that are favorable to social and economic development and the states parties of the WHO.

48. To strengthen at the national level the strategy of supervised treatment of tuberculosis, with all of its components, and extend the coverage of the population at risk; in the same manner, coordinate efforts to reduce malaria in endemic countries and strengthen the fight against classic and hemorrhagic dengue.

Tuberculosis

The Ministry of Health has been working through the National Tuberculosis Program to develop policies and measures to guarantee the care and treatment of persons with tuberculosis. The Strictly Supervised Short-Course Treatment (SSST) has been applied since 1993, and coverage exceeds 98%.

The following pulmonary tuberculosis diagnostic technologies are being implemented:

- At treatment level I, sputum bacteriology, bacilloscopy (Ziehl Neelsen technique), which consists of a simple, rapid, economic, and highly specific and feasible method that can be used in any part of the country under biosecurity measures;
- At treatment levels II and III, the country has an extended network of laboratories that perform bacilloscopy using the fluorescent method (Auramina O), culture for BK Petroff at 4%, the Lowenstein-Jensen seed in solid medium (accurate diagnosis), radiometric methods (Bactec System), sensitivity studies (Canetti Method of multiple dilutions and proportions), in addition to radiological and anatomopathological studies in negative pulmonary and extra-pulmonary cases..

The National Law establishes three (3) treatment regimens:

REGIMEN	TREATMENT
I	Patients over 15 years of age (never treated, relapse, and recovery) 2EHRZ/4H3R3.
II	Patients 0-14 years of age: 2HRZ/4HE
III	Repeat treatment: 3AkCsOfIEthPz/18CsOfIEt

Source: Web page of the Ministry of Health

Malaria

The general strategy for combating malaria in Venezuela is based on early diagnosis and timely treatment, as well as on knowledge of the population dynamics of malarial areas. This includes regional research activities to determine the situation and to evaluate potential intervention measures. Based on these activities, the following has been achieved: a network for surveillance of

anti-malarial drugs has been organized; the primary therapeutic plan for treatment of *P. falciparum* has been changed for combined therapy (globally recommended) with Mefloquine+Artemisin; malaria has been controlled in hyper-endemic indigenous areas through use of mosquito netting impregnated with insecticides; the mining and indigenous population has been incorporated into the process of detection, diagnostic confirmation, treatment and prevention of malaria and other communicable diseases; handling of malaria patients has been strengthened at Misión Barrio Adentro I and in people's clinics; strategic alliances have been formed between the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Basic Industries and Mining, and the National Armed Forces, to organize mining activity in these states and to include practices for prevention of malaria and other diseases in the productive process in gold and diamond mining; the Amazonic Network for Surveillance of Anti-Malaria Drugs has been established; integral vector control measures have been improved in mining areas, remote areas, and border areas with law enforcement problems; and, technical cooperation has been implemented among border countries to standardize malaria surveillance, detection, diagnosis, treatment, and control criteria, and coordinate joint participation by the competent health authorities of these neighboring countries.

The National Malaria Control Program has incorporated global strategies and guidelines for prevention and control designed to strengthen the local health system, such as the strategy entitled "Roll Back Malaria" (RBM), proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO), the National Fund of UNICEF, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the World Bank.

An integral approach is used in treating malaria, in which not only is it important to know and dispose of alternative pharmaceuticals, but also a series of clinical and epidemiological elements that influence the success of treatment, such as local availability of anti-malarial drugs, knowledge of the most likely site of origin of the infection and the risk of new exposure after treatment, whether the patient has received prior treatment, the level of tolerance to treatment, other concomitant diseases, the age of the patient, whether or not the patient is pregnant, and the reliability of the patient.

The distribution of anti-malarial drugs in Venezuela is controlled by the Ministry of Health, which has succeeded in delaying the expansion of resistance in the country, and it is completely free of charge. In addition to supplying drugs to patients diagnosed with malaria, the same anti-malarial drugs are supplied to patients who use them to treat other pathologies, such as colagenosis.

During 2006, 36,595 indigenous cases of malaria were diagnosed throughout the country, and 467 cases proceeding from other countries. The figure recorded for 2006 represents a reduction of 8,733 cases, 19% less than in 2005 (45,328), which shows a slowdown and containment of malaria for the second consecutive year.

As for drugs, in 2005, 201,554 anti-malaria treatments were distributed throughout the country, and 7,322 treatments for colagenic diseases, directly benefiting 208,876 persons.

In general terms, 2,535,412 homes were protected with insecticide to control the malaria-transmitting vector, thereby protecting 11,495,364 inhabitants living in states at risk for malaria in the country.

Moreover, as part of the general strategy to combat malaria, the Ministry of Health trained 173 community leaders, with a view to including communities in the search for sustainable solutions to their health problems, based on an approach for sharing social responsibility; this has strengthened epidemiological surveillance.

Similarly, with a view to increasing the public malaria diagnosis network to guarantee early, adequate, timely, and free diagnosis in endemic areas, training on “Parasitological Diagnosis of Malaria” was organized for 47 persons, who were given permanent contracts by the Ministry of Health, in the States of Bolívar, Sucre, Delta Amacuro, and Amazonas.

The Andean Border Malaria Control Project (PAMAFRO) has assisted by training 286 community health workers and 131 health workers in the promotion, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of malaria, and by training 135 persons for the Epidemiological Surveillance Community System (SICOVE).

Dengue

Classic and hemorrhagic dengue in Venezuela have appeared as endemic epidemics throughout the country. Between 1998 and 2000, there was a gradual decrease in cases, from 37,586 cases in 1998 to 21,130 in 2000 (a 44% reduction), although an increase was reported in 2004 y 2005.

Generally speaking, Venezuela has a good epidemiological surveillance system, with an excellent network of laboratories and experience in medical treatment of patients; this has made it possible to reduce the mortality rate from dengue to less than 1%. In addition, the National Dengue Control Plan has achieved the following:

- Kept the national incidence rate below 50 cases per 100,000 inhabitants for a 5 year period;
- Reduced mortality rates from hemorrhagic dengue to less than 0.5% a year;
- Actively incorporated the integral dengue prevention and control strategy in at least 50 public and private institutions and social organizations.

These activities have achieved the following results: maintained epidemiological surveillance throughout the country; maintained perifocal and focal treatment of suspicious cases; established the Cooperation Agreement for Combating and Controlling Dengue and Other Water-Borne Diseases, signed between Hidroven and the Ministry of Health; and, obtained community participation, as leaders in controlling dengue.

50. To strengthen, within national health systems, primary health care actions as a step to prevent diseases and their consequences and reduce morbidity, with a view to ensuring equal access to health services for all people in the hemisphere.

In order to bring about a profound transformation of the National Public Health System, in 2003, the Venezuelan government created “Misión Barrio Adentro” as a social policy strategy to strengthen primary health care and articulate social policies at local level, with communities serving as protagonists and the basis of the new people’s power. Designed on the basis of principles of equity, accessibility, free care, horizontality or cutting across sectors, relevance, culture, participation,

justice, shared responsibility, and social accounting, this “Mission” increases decision-making capacity and expands the integral nature of the system to respond to the social needs of the people, especially the excluded, and to enhance the quality of life and health.

Barrio Adentro has been designed in four phases:

1. The first phase comprises people’s clinics on a national level, for primary health care.
2. The second phase consists of integral diagnostic centers, integral rehabilitation centers, high-technology centers, and people’s clinics.
3. In the third phase, people’s hospitals [Hospitales del Pueblo] are added.
4. The fourth phase involves Highly Specialized Centers, such as the Latin American Children’s Cardiological Hospital, “Gilberto Rodríguez Ochoa.”

Misión Barrio Adentro I

Up to November 2006, 2,321 *consultorios populares* [people’s medical centers] were built and equipped throughout the country, and construction was begun on 3,624, representing an investment of US\$97,836,279, benefiting a population of 17, 378,000 inhabitants.

Misión Barrio Adentro I Indicators as of 11/25/2006		
Indicator	01/01/2006 al 11/25/2006	Cumulative history since 2003
Visits	53,643,44	213,214,888
Lives saved	6,99	37,448
Educational activities	37,988,518	132,531,023
Patients seen for eye care	2,296,710	6,004,172
Eye-glasses delivered	693,864	2,033,027
Dental visits	6,566,754	21,036,934

Source: Ministry of Health web page

Misión Barrio Adentro II

The creation of integral diagnostic centers, integral rehabilitation wards, high technology centers, and people’s clinics ensure equitable access by the people, especially for traditionally excluded sectors, to appropriate technology and free, quality care, to raise the capacity of the entire primary care system.

In the integral diagnostic centers, programmed basic diagnostic studies are performed, free of charge, to enhance the decision-making capacity of physicians in people’s clinics. These centers form a network for diagnostic support and emergency assistance, operating 24 hours a day, with intensive therapy services, including x-rays, ultrasound, electrocardiogram, a clinical laboratory, clinical ophthalmology, and emergency services. Plans are in place for one center for every ten to fifteen *consultorios populares*. One in every four will have a surgeon and one in six will have pathological anatomic services.

Integral Diagnostic Center (CDI) Indicators			
Center	Indicator	01/01/2006 to 11/25/2006	Cumulative figure (since June 2005)
CDI	Inpatients	3,007,575	3,449,613
	Tests conducted	16,091,790	20,998,754
	Patients admitted to intensive therapy	16,474	18,713
	Patients operated on	4,213	5,165
	Lives saved	22,870	24,183
	Ophthalmology visits	710,795	855,810

Source: Ministry of Health web page

The integral rehabilitation wards (SRI) offer rehabilitation and physical therapy services, at no cost, to those persons suffering from any type of disability, and from persons suffering from bursitis, arthritis, fractures, sprains, herniated discs, and cerebro-vascular injuries, among others. The wards are equipped with a gymnasium, hydrotherapy, acupuncture, motor therapy, traditional medicine, language therapy, and traditional magneto-therapy.

SRI Indicators			
Center	Indicator	01/01/2006 al 11/25/2006	Cumulative figure since June 2005
SRI	Outpatients	418,385	496,334
	Patient treated in rehabilitation	2,201,954	2,527,117
	Treatments performed	10,225,892	11,1974,128
	Natural and traditional medicine	354,707	435,044

Source: Ministry of Health web page.

Integral rehabilitation centers handle referrals of persons with temporary or permanent disabilities from people's clinics in the health care zone in question. These centers will all be in operation, and open for service in the morning and afternoon, by the second half of 2006..

Special mention should be made of the start of free care on a massive scale for training and rehabilitation of children in these services, in environments suitable for their size requirements. Very few private rehabilitation centers—none of which are free—provided services for this age group before mid-2005.

As for the high technology centers (CAT), these are second-level health care establishments for performance of medical diagnoses that require highly complex technical equipment, such as nuclear magnetic resonance, 64-cut, computerized axial tomography, mammography, bone densitometry, superior and inferior endoscopy videos, and laboratories, among others.

CAT Indicators as of 11/25/2006	
INDICATOR	* February-November 2006
Total examinations performed	646,340
Video Endoscopy	6,547
Mammography	14,345
Magnetic resonance	15,253
Axial tomography	26,352
Bone densitometry	23,997
Three-dimensional ecography	11,576
X-ray	16,918
Clinical laboratory	522,494

Source: Ministry of Health web page

The *Clinicas Populares* [people's clinics] are an integral part of the national public health system. They offer specialized diagnosis and treatment services, with an adequate diagnostic and therapeutic capacity to provide quality services, in coordination with other networks in the system. Their referral source is primary health care or emergency services and hospital discharges.

The area of influence of the *Clínica Popular* comprises forty to sixty *Consultorios Populares*. The *Clínica Popular* is the natural referral health center of these *Consultorios*, and cares for a population of around 75,000 inhabitants living in the vicinity of the *Clínica*.

At present, the "Rafael Rangel" National Health Institute has new vaccination facilities, with an investment of 4,224.7 million bolivares (approximately US\$1,965,000). Its operations will start up in June 2007. This facility will produce vaccines such as DPT (Diphtheria, Whooping cough and Tetanus), dupla (against diphtheria and tetanus), Tetravalent (DPT, and Hepatitis B), Pentavalent (tetravalent plus a vaccine against *Hemophilus influenzae*), and anti-tetanus.

Summary of construction of Barrio Adentro 1 and 2 (August 2006)

Type of center	Goal	Total completed	% of Goal	To be completed
CDI	600	226	37.6%	374
SRI	600	318	53%	282
CAT	35	6	17%	29
Consultorios Populares			35.25%	3,857

Source: Health Ministry's Progress Report: 1999 - 2006

Misión Barrio Adentro III

Under this Mission, hospitals are equipped with state-of-the-art technology, which will enable these hospitals to provide services at maximum capacity in the near future, thereby ensuring the Venezuelan population of adequate care for any type of pathology. Intensive care, surgery, and emergency services have already been equipped at the following hospitals: Universitario de Caracas, Universitario de los Andes, Universitario de Maracaibo, Central de Maracay, “Enrique Tejera”, “Ruiz y Páez”, “Luís Razetti”, “Antonio María Pineda”, “Luís Ortega” and “Domingo Luciani”.

Increase in Services of the Hospital Network in 2006

	Prior to 1998	2006	Total	Increase
Emergency rooms	220	139	359	63%
Intensive care beds	241	537	778	223%
Hospital beds	21,041	1,011	22,052	4.8%

Source: Health Ministry’s Progress Report: 1999 – 2006

Misión Barrio Adentro IV

Includes the construction of new hospitals to respond to the growing demand for third and fourth level services in zones of exclusion. It consists of three modalities:

- Highly specialized hospitals to handle complex, high-impact health problems, with services comprising adult cardiology, general oncology, general orthopedics, burn unit, blood and cord banks, in addition to departments of ophthalmology, neuropsychiatry, and pneumonology.
- General hospitals with areas focusing on individual services, one for each hospital (gastroenterology, infectology, nephrology and urology, endocrinology, plastic surgery), will be located in Baruta, Maracaibo, Valles del Tuy, el Vigía, and Valle de la Pascua
- Hospital Solidario del Sur “Ernesto Guevara”: This hospital is linked to the Venezuelan headquarters of ELAM. It will have a capacity to care for patients from different parts of the hemisphere, and will specialize in infectology, tropical medicine, and traditional Amazonian medicine.

During the first phase of this Mission, construction of three general hospitals were approved (in Baruta, Charallave y Maracaibo), as were the Oncology Hospital and the Adult Cardiology Hospital.

In August 2006, the “Dr. Gilberto Rodríguez Ochoa” Latin American Child Cardiology Hospital was put into operation, one of the largest centers of this type in the world, with 142 hospital beds, plus 33 intensive care beds, 4 operating rooms, 2 hemo-dynamic facilities, and 24 additional beds for families and accompanying persons, plus a 169-seat capacity auditorium.

Increase in services as of 10/16/2006

	Prior to 1998	Increase as a result of Barrio Adentro	Total	% Increase
Primary care physicians	1628	15,943	17,571	979.29%
Population covered	3.5 million	17 million	20.5 million	485.71%
Primary level dentistry	800	4.800	5600	600%
Optical services	0	441	441	-

Source: Health Ministry Progress Report: 1999-2006

51. To promote an ongoing, respectful, and constructive dialogue with indigenous peoples and develop policies to create the necessary conditions to facilitate their integral and sustainable development, access to decent work, and living conditions, enabling them to overcome poverty with full respect of their rights.

By implementing the policies of the Ministry of the People's Economy, it has been possible to improve the quality of life of the indigenous population. With the support of BANMUJER, financial and nonfinancial assistance has been provided to a total of 1,891 indigenous peoples from different ethnic groups, including the Kariña, Warao, Añú, Yecuana, Baniva, Guajibo, Wayuu, Pemón, Piaroa, Piapoko, and Baré, in the areas of food, manufacturing, and services. These communities are located in the states with the largest indigenous populations, such as Amazonas, Anzoátegui, Apure, Bolívar, Delta Amacuro, Monagas, Sucre, Zulia, Trujillo and Mérida.

Similarly, with a view to maintaining control of diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and intestinal parasitosis in Delta Amacuro, Apure and Amazonas, indigenous people from different ethnic groups in these states are being trained and hired to provide a local approach to care for their communities, within the framework of policies for inclusion and community participation under the Ministry of Health.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

52. To identify and exchange, within the framework of the OAS, practices in the region regarding policies and programs to confront poverty.

With a view to facilitating fulfillment of this mandate on the part of the OAS, the following is a report on the activities carried out by the Venezuelan government in the area of policies and programs to combat poverty.

In the context of building a new development model with a focus on human beings, social development is conceived by the Government of President Hugo Chávez from an integral approach,

comprising human, social, economic, and cultural rights, aimed at achieving social justice through social inclusion and the elimination of poverty. In practice, this new approach means that health, housing, education, employment, and participation in decision-making processes, among other things, are inalienable rights that the Venezuelan state is required to guarantee for all Venezuelans, without discrimination of any kind. This new approach moves beyond the egoistic vision that was dominant in Venezuela for nearly 40 years, to include social considerations based on charity or public assistance.

As President Chávez himself has said in a report entitled “Meeting the Millennium Goals,”^{25/} Venezuela “has made considerable progress in the field of social development, including overcoming illiteracy and significantly raising the school attendance rates of the population in global terms, at all levels of education. This has placed us in an advantageous position in terms of meeting the Millennium Goals on education of the people.”

The government’s social policy is oriented towards achieving equality, social inclusion, eradication of poverty, guarantee of people’s human, social, and economic rights on a universal and an equitable basis, and strengthening of social and citizen participation, with a view to ensuring a decent life for those Venezuelans who were traditionally excluded and to settling the social debt and achieving social justice.

To achieve these objectives, the Venezuelan Government is implementing a series of social programs known as “Missions,” including the following ones: Misión Barrio Adentro, Misión Sucre, Misión Ribas, Misiones Robinson I and II, Misión Vuelvan Caras, Misión Negra Hipólita, Misión Guaicaipuro; and, programs such as MERCAL, CASA, PROAL y CIARA.

The implementation of these Missions has led to the reduction of poverty levels, the gradual inclusion of social sectors that have been traditionally excluded, universal and equitable enjoyment of social rights, a more equitable distribution of income and wealth, and the development of social and citizen participation in public decision-making spaces. Several of these Missions were already reflected in previous mandates. However, the data of other Missions are added, in addition to those referred to in those other mandates, and they also show the progress made by the Venezuelan government in policies and programs to combat poverty:

- Misión Robinson: program for eradication of illiteracy. As a result, our country was declared by UNESCO to be a territory free of illiteracy in October 2005.
- Misión Robinson II: Its objective is to permit certification of a sixth grade primary education and consolidation of knowledge acquired during the literacy training program. By August 2006, 327,000 Venezuelans had graduated from this program.
- Misión Ribas: Its objective is to incorporate the excluded population into the primary and diversified formal education system, and to have them graduate with “*bachilleres*.” In 2005, 132,662 Venezuelans graduated with those diplomas.

25. Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the United Nations System in Venezuela: Fulfilling the Millennium Goals, June 2004.

- Misión Sucre: It ensures access to university education for all persons with *bachilleres* without a space in a university. Through this program, 282,585 Venezuelans were admitted to the higher education system. (Ministry of Social Development)
- Misión Milagro: Its purpose is to bring down the high rates of vision problems for low-income persons, in view of the precarious nature of eye health in the country. (web page of the Ministry of Health)
- Misión Alimentación: It is developed through the so-called MERCAL food markets, whose objective is to market and sell products, at wholesale and retail, to guarantee food security for the Venezuelan population, and especially for those with meager economic resources, through fixed or mobile sales centers.
- MERCAL Program: Geared to the marketing and sale of food products and other basic commodities at common prices, to keep the Venezuelan population supplied and guarantee its access to food, with a focus on persons with scarce economic resources. MERCAL operates with family groups, small businesses, and organized cooperatives, through fixed and mobile sales points, which currently add up to .
- Misión Vuelvan Caras: 350,000 beneficiaries, who have organized socially for production, and are in the process of being trained, with access to financing for their production projects.

63. To urge member states, as necessary, to consider signing and ratifying, or adhering to the additional Protocol of the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, "Protocol of San Salvador" and to collaborate in the development of progress indicators in the area of economic, social, and cultural rights, in accordance with resolution AG/RES. 2074 (XXXV-O/05) of the thirty-fifth period of regular sessions of the General Assembly

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is currently taking the pertinent steps to ratify the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, "Protocol of San Salvador."