over 200 percent per month. Although the pace of inflation decelerated to 33 percent in December after the government allowed transactions in US dollars, Venezuelans’ purchasing power to buy food eroded by more than 8,000 percent in 2019 (Banco Central de Venezuela, 2019). In April 2019, the minimum wage was estimated at USD 7 per month and only covered 4.7 percent of the basic food basket (OHCHR, July 2019). An assessment concluded in December 2019 found that an average family required 55 minimum daily wages to cover the cost of a monthly basic food basket (CENDA, December 2019). The impact of the economic crisis has been magnified by the collapse of the country’s public infrastructure and services (IMC, February 2020).

More than a third of respondents in WFP’s 2019 EFSA (37 percent) said they had experienced a total loss of income, such as losing their only job or losing their business and half (51 percent) had suffered a partial loss, such as reduced salaries or the loss of one of two jobs. Results showed that 18 percent of households relied on government assistance and social protection systems (WFP, February 2020).

The 2019 maize harvest was expected to be below average following a significant reduction in the planted area because of high costs of and a general lack of agricultural inputs, reflecting the significant depreciation of the currency and import difficulties (OCHA, November 2019). Consequently, reliance on imported food increased, but with dwindling foreign exchange earnings, food shortages became increasingly pressing.

**NUTRITION OVERVIEW**

The Venezuelan Government has not published nutrition data since 2007. UNICEF collected nutrition status data from 100,000 children under 5 years and pregnant and lactating women in 16 states in 2019. It found 6.3 percent of children within this group were wasted, considered a ‘medium’ GAM prevalence (UNICEF, December 2019).

In 2019, four major national blackouts left the majority of the country without electricity for several days. The power disruptions, coupled with medicine and equipment shortages, and mass exodus of healthcare workers and specialists, have pushed the healthcare system to the brink of collapse. Hospital patients – many of whom are already critically ill – have a higher risk of acquiring new infections while in the hospital, due to a lack of basic cleaning supplies. The disintegration of services disproportionately affects the most vulnerable, including indigenous populations, children under the age of 5 years, pregnant and lactating women, adolescents, those with chronic and non-communicable diseases, and the elderly (IMC, December 2019).

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1 The decline foreign exchange earnings was mainly caused by the drop in oil production as the management of the state oil company went into disarray. Economic sanctions imposed on Venezuela further limited export earnings and access to external finance.