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# Education as Humanitarian Response

Access to Compulsory Education for  
Venezuelan Migrant and Refugee  
Children in Barranquilla

Silvan Oberholzer

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Education as Humanitarian Response: Access to Compulsory Education for Venezuelan Migrant and Refugee Children in Barranquilla

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*“Here what needs to be strengthened is humanity [...]. What needs to reunite us is their [migrants’ and refugees’] wellbeing to minimize the impact of the difficulties they face.”*

(own translation; Interview 31, March 9, 2020)

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## **ABSTRACT**

Building on three interpretive conceptual frameworks –Education in Emergencies (EiE), Education as a Humanitarian Response (EHR), and the human rights-based approach to education–, this paper analyses the experiences, challenges, and opportunities concerning access to compulsory education for Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in Barranquilla. By shedding light on the educational humanitarian response in Barranquilla, I draw lessons on access to education for humanitarian responses in large-scale migration settings. This exploratory research applies grounded theory to analyse 35 semi-structured interviews with 45 individuals and observation conducted in Barranquilla. I identify six challenges and four opportunities in Barranquilla, and four implications for humanitarian responses concerning access to education for migrant and refugee children. Thereby, this study contributes to a better understanding of factors that impact access to compulsory schooling with a special focus on the various coordination agencies (governmental institutions, humanitarian actors) and the institutional (public schools, incl. administration and teachers) as well as the individual level (migrants and refugees).

**Keywords:** migration, refugees, education, education in emergencies, humanitarianism, human rights, Barranquilla, Colombia, Venezuela.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CFS	Child Friendly Space
COP	Colombian Peso
CRC	Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989)
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EFA	Education For All
EHR	Education as a Humanitarian Response
EiE	Education in Emergencies
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018)
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees (2018)
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GIFMM	Interagency Group for Mixed Migration Flows
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MS	Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery by INEE
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NES	Número Establecido por la Secretaría de Educación (Enrolment Number established by the Secretariat of Education)
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PEP	Permiso Especial de Permanencia (Special Stay Permit)
PSS	Psycho-social Support
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

SISBEN	Sistema de Identificación de Potenciales Beneficiarios de Programas Sociales (Colombian public health insurance)
TLC	Temporary Learning Centre
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

## **FOREWORD**

I dedicate this paper to migrants and refugees who face burdens in or are deprived of accessing their human rights, such as education. May the inclusion in society and involvement in policymaking of migrants and refugees empower them to encounter a peaceful and human life.

This publication has won the Global Migration Award 2020 which is delivered every year by the Global Migration Centre for the best master's dissertation of the Graduate Institute Geneva in the field of migration. The corresponding master's dissertation was written by Silvan Oberholzer under the supervision of Prof. Gita Steiner-Khamsi.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Venezuelan migration exodus is considered one of the largest migration phenomena of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since 2015, around 5.1 million persons fled Venezuela, generating a humanitarian crisis in the neighbouring host countries (Rodríguez and Ramos 2019, 547; Castro Franco 2019, 16; R4V, n.d.). Hosting more than 145,000<sup>2</sup> out of over 1.8 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the number one host country, Barranquilla is among the major host cities of this population in Colombia. Venezuelan migrants and refugees account, according to official numbers, for over 10 % of the city's population (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 114; Migración Colombia 2020a; R4V, n.d.). The intensity of the ongoing Venezuelan migration flow<sup>3</sup> has been new in Barranquilla's migration history and puts additional pressure on existing challenges related to access and quality of public services and goods, among other in the education sector (Interview 7, personal communication, January 27, 2020; Interview 14, personal communication, February 22, 2020; Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 32). Therefore, education has increasingly become part of the humanitarian response to the Venezuelan migration phenomenon in Barranquilla, which is characterised by a high number of undocumented migrants (Blanquicet 2020). Up to 47 % of Venezuelan migrants in Barranquilla have an irregular status due to either entering Colombia through unofficial crossing points or remaining in the country beyond the legally established period (Blanquicet 2020; Migración Colombia 2019a, 11; CONPES, 2018).

Since the global average of a period of displacement approximates 17 years (Halman et al. 2018, 207), most displaced persons will receive their only education during this time, making their access to quality education particularly relevant (Dryden-Peterson 2017, 1–2). This is also likely the case for many Venezuelan migrants and refugees whose country of origin is not expected to fully recover from the multidimensional humanitarian crisis for the next two decades (Rodríguez and Ramos 2019, 571). Importantly, access to education is also enshrined in vast international human rights law instruments, both soft and hard law, as a fundamental human right. Consequently, denied access to education for migrant and refugee children constitutes not only a violation from a legal perspective but also exacerbates the overall vulnerability of these children (UNESCO 2018, 34), besides other, due to the lack of physical, psychosocial, and cognitive protection as widely cited in Education in Emergencies (EiE) literature (Halman et al. 2018; Global Education Cluster 2018; Burde et al. 2017; Anderson et al. 2011, 87; Muñoz 2010, 13; Aguilar and Retamal 2009). Moreover, the United

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<sup>2</sup> The author's calculations based on official numbers and estimates at the national level on the Venezuelan migration population in Colombia at compulsory school age (World Bank 2018, 97–97), illustrate that between 20,000 and around 33,000 Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla are at compulsory school age.

<sup>3</sup> Venezuelan migration flow refers in this paper to the mixed migration flow of Venezuelan migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers as well as Colombian returnees from Venezuela with different profiles. It is important to note that in the last years, the number of Venezuelans leaving their country has been higher than the initial flow of Colombian returnees in 2015/16 (Rodríguez and Ramos 2019, 565).

Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO 2018) highlights the relevance of migrants' and refugees' access to education in facilitating their inclusion in host communities. Education optimally challenges stereotypes on migrants and refugees through interaction at school with and provision of “critical skills to enable engagement with different cultures” to students of both host and displaced communities (UNESCO 2018, 78).

Despite the significance of access to education for migrant and refugee children and the Venezuelan migration phenomenon in Colombia, relatively little academic literature exists on education in the latter context and less on how Venezuelan migrant and refugee children access the right to education. This shortage in literature and the lack of in-depth EiE case studies on access to education (Nicolai and Hine 2015, viii–xi) and on the interaction of different EiE actors in non-camp settings, in host countries experiencing large-scale migration, set the ground for this qualitative research. Therefore, this study contributes to better understand the determinants of access to education which are shaped, as uncovered in this research dissertation, at the coordination (governmental institutions, humanitarian actors), institutional (public schools, incl. administration and teachers), and individual level (migrants and refugees). Consequently, the understanding of the complexities and interactions between different agents that are involved in access to education in emergency contexts can help to implement effective educational responses.

Building on three widespread concepts —Education in Emergencies (EiE), Education as a Humanitarian Response (EHR), and the human rights-based approach to education— this paper analyses the experiences, challenges, and opportunities concerning access to compulsory education for Venezuelan migrant and refugee children<sup>4</sup> in Barranquilla. Considering these findings and by shedding light on the educational humanitarian response in Barranquilla, this study draws lessons beyond the context of Barranquilla for humanitarian responses concerning education in large-scale migration settings. For that purpose, this research applies grounded theory as a method of analysis. Data for this qualitative in-depth and intrinsic case study consists of 35 semi-structured interviews with 45 individuals and observation. This primary data is analysed and complemented with academic literature of the disciplines of international education, development, and law, as well as publicly available primary data on the socio-economic context of Barranquilla.

To start with, chapter 2 reviews EiE literature as well as education in the current migration phenomenon from Venezuela to Colombia in the Colombian context with a focus on children's access to compulsory schooling. The research gaps encountered in the literature review result in the research questions deducted at the end of the chapter. Next, chapter 3

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<sup>4</sup> The term children, as applied in this paper, refers to human beings below the age of 18. This is in accordance with the definition of children in the discipline of International Law (see, for example, Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Art. 1).

discusses the concepts the study builds on: EiE, EHR, and the human rights-based approach to education. In the following, chapter 4 explains the methodology and discusses the limitations of the study. The context of the topic under study is specified in chapter 5, which examines the Venezuelan migration phenomenon in Barranquilla, its humanitarian architecture, and Barranquilla's compulsory education sector. Chapter 6 sheds light on the challenges and opportunities that Venezuelan migrant and refugee children face when accessing compulsory education in Barranquilla. In the following, chapter 7 addresses the critical and diverse role of education among key actors of the humanitarian response to the Venezuelan migration phenomenon in Barranquilla. Subsequently, chapter 8 analyses the findings of this study, using information from academic literature and the three conceptual frameworks to discuss the implications for educational humanitarian responses in large-scale migration settings. Finally, a brief conclusion summarises the most relevant issues raised in this paper.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Access to education for migrant and refugee children in situations of emergency or crisis is primarily discussed in Education in Emergencies (EiE), a field of humanitarian practice, advocacy, and academic research (Thompson et al. 2019; Versmesse et al. 2017, 538). This chapter reviews the debate around education in humanitarian action, the focuses and perspectives of EiE literature, and education in the current migration phenomenon from Venezuela to Colombia in the Colombian context. The literature review focuses on children's access to compulsory education<sup>5</sup> (usually, and in the case of Colombia, consisting of pre-school to secondary education).

### **2.1 Education and Humanitarian Action**

As indicated by the title of this paper, education is one of the core elements of humanitarian action,<sup>6</sup> especially since the establishment of the Global Education Cluster<sup>7</sup> by the Inter-

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<sup>5</sup> Compulsory education includes basic education, which Pigozzi (1999, 3) defines as a context-specific, broad, and complex concept “[consisting] of a combination of indispensable competencies, knowledge, skills, and attitudes that serves as the foundation of any individual's lifelong learning”.

<sup>6</sup> The Global Education Cluster (2018, 11) reports that, on average 80 % of Humanitarian Response Plans from 2014–2018 included education as part of the first phase of humanitarian responses. Nevertheless, in comparison to other sectors of humanitarian action, education remains among the most underfunded (Mendenhall 2019, 9; Halman et al. 2018, 207/211; Nicolai and Hine 2015).

<sup>7</sup> The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Save the Children Alliance lead the Global Education Cluster with an advisory role by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR; holding the mandate for refugee education) (Lopes Cardozo and Novelli 2018, 240/244; Dryden-Peterson 2011, 18/20; Anderson and Hodgkin 2010). The Cluster Approach of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), adopted in 2005 and designed to attribute clear coordination responsibilities to groups of humanitarian actors, consists currently of eleven “main sectors of humanitarian action”: early recovery; shelter; emergency telecommunications; camp coordination and camp management; logistics; education; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); nutrition; food security; protection; and health (OCHA, n.d.).

Agency Standing Committee (IASC)<sup>8</sup> in 2007 (Lopes Cardozo and Novelli 2018, 240/244; Dryden-Peterson 2011, 20; Anderson and Hodgkin, 2010). Education has long been part of the development and humanitarian field, at least since World War II in the form of refugee education in camps. However, it had been delivered frequently at the operational responsibility of the affected communities themselves and as a 'development activity' until the mid-1990s (Lopes Cardozo and Novelli 2018, 236; Dryden-Peterson 2011, 12–13; Burde 2005, 2/9). Lopes Cardozo and Novelli (2018, 239) describe in their reflection on the global governance of EiE “the expansion of development and humanitarian intervention in conflict zones” since the late 1990s as the primary driver for increased interest and recognition of “education delivery in emergency, protracted crises, ongoing conflict and post-conflict zones”. The reform of humanitarianism starting at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century added to the fulfilment of humans' basic needs (i.e., food and water, health care, and shelter) through physical relief efforts also their “rights to a certain standard of life” (Burde et al. 2017, 621). This legitimated education as the “fourth pillar” of humanitarian action (Versmesse et al. 2017, 538; Mendenhall 2014, 67; Anderson et al. 2011, 86). Only during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this ‘pillar’ had become increasingly coordinated in the form of EiE, a subfield of international education and development, among other, due to the creation of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)<sup>9</sup> in 2001 (Halman et al. 2018, 208; Lopes Cardozo and Novelli 2018, 236/247; Burde et al. 2017, 621).

However, according to various EiE scholars, some humanitarian actors still resist viewing education as ‘life-saving’ in humanitarian disasters, despite the high priority that affected communities attribute to education in emergencies (Halman et al. 2018, 207/211; Dryden-Peterson 2011, 6; Matrone 2010, 97–99). Notably, children affected by humanitarian crises prioritise education over other needs (Nicolai and Hine 2015, viii; Wessells and Kostelny 2013, 34). Additionally, often intertwined political goals of education provision make some humanitarian actors fear to depart from the traditional humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence. As a consequence, the initial focus on the EiE field lied on service delivery and rhetorical emphasis on access to rather than the quality of education (Burde et al. 2017, 622–623; Anderson et al. 2011, 86).

Halman et al. (2018) argue that the humanitarian imperative for EiE responses focuses on its “life-saving and life-sustaining” impact beyond teaching and learning. Specifically, the humanitarian imperative in EiE ascertains —widely accepted, if not taken for granted— that

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<sup>8</sup> The IASC was established in June 1992 and is defined by Anderson and Hodgkin (2010, 1) as “an inter-agency forum for coordination, policy development and decision-making involving the key UN [United Nations] and non-UN humanitarian partners”.

<sup>9</sup> Lopes Cardozo and Novelli (2018, 234) define INEE as a network organisation that “brings together key policy and practice actors, as well as academics, and is located at the center of the global architecture of international engagement in education in contexts of humanitarian crisis, armed conflict and post-conflict reconstruction”.

education needs to be part of humanitarian response due to its provision of physical, psychosocial, and cognitive protection (Halman et al. 2018; Global Education Cluster 2018; Burde et al. 2017; Anderson et al. 2011, 87; Muñoz 2010, 13; Aguilar and Retamal 2009). In addition to the provision of protection, Sinclair (2002, 27) states that the impact of education in crisis and post-crisis situations is related to the preparation for reconstruction, social and economic development, as well as the promotion of personal development and therefore “preparedness for responsible citizenship”. Despite these findings on and attributions to EiE, Halman et al. (2018, 207) identify the need for further research on both “processes and effects of education as part of emergency response”. In addition, Nicolai and Hine (2015, xi) stress that such research must focus beyond primary education. Similarly, Burde et al. (2017, 643) mention that beyond the vast literature on the potential of EiE on aspects such as protection, the “extent to which formal education itself provides protection outcomes” in specific emergency contexts needs to be analysed more rigorously.

Referring to the former well-established academic discourse on EiE, Versmesse et al. (2017, 539) critically reflect on EiE and note “how research topics predominantly derive from a need to discursively legitimatise the rationales as advanced by the humanitarian community”. They argue that this practice may obscure and be disconnected from the actual education context, resources, and concerns by those affected and “risks legitimizing a global status-quo” (Versmesse et al. 2017, 551–552; see also Epstein 2010, 22–23). Moreover, Bromley and Andina (2010, 576/585–586) argue that the ‘INEE Minimum Standards (MS),’<sup>10</sup> among other EiE standards and from a sociological neo-institutional theory perspective, legitimate and institutionalise education in the humanitarian field rather than optimise EiE programming due to the standard’s “ambiguity of discourse”. Also, Versmesse et al. (2017, 551–552) highlight criticism on emergencies as ‘social imaginaries’ by Western cosmopolitans, disconnecting understandings and responses from the targeted social contexts. Consequently, they conclude that the EiE discourse presents an idea of ‘education *out* of emergency’. The lack identified in EiE research of including the voices of children as well as their parents or guardians, which would benefit identifying real needs and priorities in ‘education *in* emergencies,’ supports this criticism (Alalami 2019; McBride 2018; Nicolai and Hine 2015, 67).

## **2.2 The Triple Perspective of Education in Emergencies**

Burde (2005) and Dryden-Peterson (2011) describe the following three approaches to EiE: human rights approach (see also chapter 3.3), humanitarian approach, and developmental approach. These approaches are not mutually exclusive and are often applied as integrated

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<sup>10</sup> Strongly recognized by EiE practitioners, Bromley and Andina (2010, 576) define the INEE MS (2010) as “provid[ing] guidance to all the stakeholders involved in education in emergencies, conflict, and post-conflict situations to attaining a minimum level of education”.



approaches in praxis, beyond a linear relief-to-development continuum or nexus, to ensure a smooth transition between the relief and development responses (Burde 2005, 11; Mendenhall 2014, 67). Various scholars recognise the relevance of the humanitarian-development nexus concerning access to education for displaced children due to the protracted nature of humanitarian disasters (Monaghan 2019; Halman et al. 2018, 207; Burde et al. 2017, 623; Dryden-Peterson 2017, 1–2). The average period of displacement of 17 years is beyond the one of the basic education cycle lasting for 12 years (Mendenhall 2019, 4; Halman et al. 2018, 207). Hence, the Global Education Cluster (2018, 10) confirmed that numerous Education Clusters had increasingly addressed the humanitarian-development nexus in the field of EiE.

First, the discipline of international law extensively discusses the right to education for refugees and migrants (see Appendix 3; Willems and Vernimmen 2018; OHCHR and GMG 2017, 53/106–108; Anderson et al. 2011; Tawil 2000; CESCR 1999). The right to education is enshrined in human rights law and thus applicable to all human beings independent of their migration status or location in specific circumstances such as emergencies or crises. Carseley and Russell (2020) empirically analyse the persistent policy-practice gap in refugees' right to education and base it on the weak enforceability of economic, social, and cultural rights in international law, allowing for noncompliance. Policy-practice gaps in refugee education are also identified in recent EiE studies (Rodríguez-Gómez 2019; Buckner et al. 2018; Mendenhall et al. 2017, 8).

Second, the humanitarian approach to EiE focuses on the provision of immediate protection to children and the prevention of the violation of their human rights, as a “stop-gap measure” (Dryden-Peterson 2011, 9/84–85; Burde 2005, 10–11; Kagawa 2005, 495–496; Sinclair 2002, 29). Frequently applied measures to ensure this protection include the establishment of Child Friendly Spaces (CFSs) or Temporary Learning Centres (TLCs). CFSs are intended to provide controlled, “protected” spaces in disaster zones that allow implementing psychosocial support and educational activities for children who deal with traumas (Halman et al. 2018, 210–211; Wessells and Kostelny 2013). These activities and support intend to improve their emotional and behavioural well-being and, as a result, potentially strengthen children's learning outcomes (Singh and Tocchio 2019; Burde et al. 2017, 620). This approach typically includes community participation to deliver and manage education services until regular services can resume, as well as collaboration with government officials. Collaboration with the government is deemed necessary for the sustainability and transition from the relief to reconstruction and development phases (Mendenhall 2014, 71; Burde 2005, 10). As Kagawa (2005, 499–500) highlights, “any short-term, temporary [emergency] intervention has long-term implications and effects” and, thus, needs to “be based on visions of long-term comprehensive development of the society in consultation with local people”.

Third, the developmental approach to EiE is characterised by a long-term view of education, prioritising access to quality education. Understanding “education as a long-term investment for [...] human and national development”, its lack is viewed as holding back development potential and even allowing for “backward development” (Dryden-Peterson 2011, 9; Burde 2005, 10). Burde (2005, 10) specifies that the developmental EiE approach focuses on “educational content, community participation, and collaboration with government officials immediately or as soon as possible”. The approach is based on the argument that the “proper definition of education is inherently a development activity,” which does, however, not render it incompatible with the humanitarian approach to education (Burde 2005, 26). It rather illustrates the importance of the humanitarian-development nexus in the field of EiE. The developmental approach entails the opportunity to transform and strengthen education systems positively, especially by applying a community-based, participatory approach which emphasises capacity-building, including fostering access to more inclusive and better education (Sinclair 2002, 26/29; Pigozzi 1999, 4/9/13–16).

### **2.3 Research Foci of Education in Emergencies**

As it lies at the origins of EiE —namely the focus on technical solutions to the provision of education in conflict-affected contexts and the corresponding rights-based justification— as well as the evolution of development priorities since 9/11, EiE literature has strongly focused on education in contexts of armed conflict (Lopes Cardozo and Novelli 2018, 247; Burde et al. 2017, 623; Nicolai and Hine 2015, 67). Scholars have extensively studied the impact of conflict or extreme criminal violence on education and vice versa. Education was identified as having both the potential of ameliorating and mitigating conflict (Monaghan 2019, 35; Burde et al. 2017, 619–620; Anderson et al. 2011, 88; Cahill 2010; Novelli and Lopes Cardozo 2008, 474; Bush and Saltarelli 2000). Burde et al. (2017, 619/625) identify in their extensive literature review on EiE in contexts of armed conflict that access to education received the strongest attention and find that conflict is driven by diminished or inequitable access to education (see also Nicolai and Hine 2015). An increasingly emerging shift in EiE to focus on fragile states has led to the inclusion of quality of learning in emergencies in academic research (Burde et al. 2017, 631, 646; see, for example, Retamal and Low 2010; Aguilar and Retamal 2009).

In addition, refugee education, a sub-field of EiE mainly discussed in crises linked to armed conflict, has historically received strong emphasis in academic literature (Dryden-Peterson 2011, 19/83; Pigozzi 1999, 19). Structures through which refugees access education globally are identified by Dryden-Peterson (2015, 11) as consisting of official schools; separate, refugee-only schools in camps; and informal schools, initiated by refugees, in camps or urban areas. The inclusion of refugees into national education systems optimally benefits refugees and host communities through strengthening national education systems and is,

therefore, preferred by several scholars over parallel education delivery (Simopoulos and Alexandridis 2019; Mendenhall et al. 2017; Dryden-Peterson 2015, 12; Dryden-Peterson 2011, 7/9/44–45).<sup>11</sup> Moreover, it is especially relevant in urban settings, where nearly 60 % of all refugees reside and seek to access education (UNESCO 2018, xiii–xx/57). However, Dryden-Peterson (2011, 26) finds access to education for refugees in urban areas at the global level to be lower than in camp settings, which makes in-depth analyses of access to education for refugees in urban areas pertinent.

The second focus of EiE literature, with fewer amount of research existing than on conflict, is related to natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and droughts, among others, and their impact on the delivery of education (Burde et al. 2017, 621; Nicolai and Hine 2015, 66; Kagawa 2005, 492). Furthermore, Kagawa (2005) mentions that silent and chronic emergencies, like persistent poverty or street children, also fall into the field of EiE. The latter types of emergencies are, however, rarely addressed by the emergency discourse. Therefore, global warming and climate change are hardly discussed in EiE if they occur in the context of non-armed conflict or non-natural disaster (Kagawa 2005, 492–493).

EiE literature on Colombia mostly focuses on the impacts of the internal armed conflict on education and the educational inclusion of internally displaced people (IDPs) (Retamal and Low 2010; Aguilar and Retamal 2009). Noteworthy is the research on ‘Escuela Nueva’ (New School), a flexible, rural quality education program that was made accessible to IDPs through ‘Learning Cycles.’ The latter strengthens the IDPs’ psychosocial resilience and prepares them for inclusion into Colombia’s formal education system (Retamal and Low 2010, 537–538/544–545; Aguilar and Retamal 2009, 7–8). Nevertheless, both the humanitarian and legal context of IDPs cannot be deemed identically with those encountered by Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Colombia.

Finally and regarding applied methodologies in EiE research, Nicolai and Hine (2015, viii) identify in their literature review on EiE that in-depth analyses of the educational situation in a specific country or region in crisis or disaster contexts are rare. They argue that vast EiE studies are cross-country, producing generalised outcomes, the only exception being the prioritisation of education by affected communities. Consequently, Nicolai and Hine (2015, xi) recommend that “[i]n-depth systems research [beyond the analysis of enrolment] focused on specific countries and regions experiencing emergencies would add value at this point given gaps in data and a lack of nuanced understanding of what is happening in specific situations”.

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<sup>11</sup> Mendenhall (2014, 71–74) specifies in her study on education in the relief-development transition in conflict contexts that a parallel or “complementary” education system is needed where the government is incapable of providing education, under the condition of integrating it as quickly as possible into and, if possible, strengthening the capacity of the official education system.

Therefore, they find that case studies and mixed methods research may be most appropriate to understand the complexity of EiE issues (Nicolai and Hine 2015, 70).

## **2.4 Access to Education in Emergency Contexts**

Much academic literature on EiE analyses barriers in accessing education in conflict- and disaster-affected contexts at the global level. Sinclair (2002, 43) identifies poverty as a common barrier for children in accessing schooling, as well as gender or disability, which may be intensified in emergencies. Similarly, Iversen and Oestergaard (2019) stress that conflicts tend to reinforce pre-existing gender disparities in access to education and that globally, girls are at higher risk of sexual harassment and violence in and on their way to school. Identified barriers in accessing education for refugees and migrants include language barriers (McBride 2018, 2–3; Dryden-Peterson 2011, 26), indirect education costs for households (e.g., uniforms, learning material, food, and travel) (Muñoz 2010, 22), already over-stretched education systems, and legal and policy barriers for refugee students (Dryden-Peterson 2011, 44). Besides, McBride (2018, 2–3/6/10) identifies the following general obstacles for refugee children in accessing education: the time of arrival during the school year in the destination country, lack of identification documents and previous school records for admission, feelings of insecurity and exclusion in the wider community, and lack of understanding or ignorance of pre- and post-migration aspects affecting refugee children and their families, including trauma.

In-depth case studies on barriers in access to education in emergencies complement global findings. The study on EiE, in a non-armed and non-natural disaster context, on access to education among Colombian refugees in Quito, Ecuador, by Rodríguez-Gómez (2019) finds that in practice these refugees face various barriers in enrolling their children at schools, despite the existence of an inclusive legal framework. Specifically, the author stresses the vulnerability of Colombian refugees to rely on the decisions of public officials, which are based on the latter's understandings of education policy. Furthermore, she highlights that Colombian refugees in Quito often have more reduced access to social services due to their non-citizen status (Rodríguez-Gómez 2019, 67–68/83). The research by Rodríguez-Gómez (2019, 62) reveals the “unpredictable character of educational access for refugees,” which is in stark contrast to the “assumptions” and descriptions of universal barriers to education access. Consequently, Rodríguez-Gómez (2019, 82–83) suggests conducting in-depth interviews to understand and reveal actors, spaces, and practices behind localised barriers to access to education faced by displaced children. Concerning barriers to school access in Kenya, Erwin et al. (2020) highlight the importance of understanding the home environments of urban refugee children. Moreover, they identify the following barriers: lack of financial resources to pay indirect education costs, limited school transportation, inability to access required enrolment documentation, lack of knowledge about enrolment processes, frequent

displacement of migrant children linked to better housing or employment opportunities for their parents or guardians, keeping children out of school to support the household or paid informal labour (linked to families' expectation of the relevance of education), and inadequate learning spaces at home (e.g., lack of table or light) (Erwin et al. 2020, 142–144).

In contrast, opportunities in access to education in emergencies, beyond the ones promoted by the humanitarian imperative to EiE (see chapter 2.1), are primarily related to social inclusion. Sheikh and Anderson (2018, 22/30) show in their study on the acculturation of refugee students that high levels of positive educational outcomes such as academic achievement, school attachment, school adaption, or social support at schools are directly associated with the inclusion of refugees in the host society. The Global Education Monitoring Report 2019 (UNESCO 2018, 78) stresses then also education's contribution in shaping positive attitudes towards migrants and refugees in host communities, thereby, challenging stereotypes when ensuring inclusive access to education. In addition, Block et al. (2014, 1339) find that supportive formal education environments for refugees can promote social inclusion, among others, through the creation of pathways for future academic and career success.

## **2.5 Education in the Venezuelan-Colombian Migration Phenomenon**

Relatively little literature exists on education on the subject of the Venezuelan migration phenomenon occurring in Latin America. This is, however, not surprising due to the recent and emerging phenomenon of Venezuelan 'mass' immigration in several countries of the region. The same holds for academic literature on education in the Colombian context concerning the Venezuelan migration phenomenon. Most of this literature consists of legal public policy analysis focusing on the rights of Venezuelan migrants and refugees from an international law perspective (Bonil 2019; Pinto et al. 2019; Rincón 2019). Further research focuses on the respective obligations of the Colombian State in ensuring education access and providing education services to Venezuelan migrant and refugee children (Duran and Parada 2018; López et al. 2018). However, scholars do not discuss specifically how Venezuelan migrants and refugees access the analysed rights in practice. For instance, Pinto et al. (2019, 211/213) mention, without further addressing the issue in detail, that access to education for Venezuelan migrants in Colombia is often constrained due to the lack of capacity of educational institutions to receive more students, despite much efforts made concerning school access in public policies.

Another stream of literature discusses the possible effects of the Venezuelan migration phenomenon on education in Colombia, pointing to variation in impact across Colombian regions (Galeano et al. 2019; Namen et al. 2019). In their socio-political analysis of the Colombian-Venezuelan migration phenomenon, Rodríguez and Ramos (2019, 573) highlight the need for alphabetisation of Venezuelan migrants and stress that the education actors

(especially teachers at primary and lower-secondary levels) are fundamental in the inclusion process of migrants in Colombia. Cazzetta (2019) finds in her study on the situation of Venezuelan migrant students at the tertiary education level in Colombia that more barriers than support exist; namely requirements of admission documents which are difficult to obtain for Venezuelan migrants, lack of financial support and information on their rights, and limited or no access to technology. López et al. (2018, 11/23–24) identify that few studies exist on the situation of Venezuelan migrant children and refugees in Colombia and that those existing, focus mainly on labour exploitation. Also, they highlight the need for further research on migrant and refugee children in Colombia, taking into account gender as a transversal component as well as disability, and importantly considering children as active agents by giving them a voice (López et al. 2018, 11/23–24). Finally, research on formal education for Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in Barranquilla was not identified as part of this literature review despite its relevance in light of the migration context of the most influential city on Colombia's Caribbean coast (see chapter 5).

## **2.6 Resulting Research Questions**

Regarding the emerging humanitarian response to the Venezuelan migration phenomenon in Colombia (OCHA 2020; R4V 2020; R4V 2019; World Bank 2018), it is not only relevant to consider access to education and the related challenges and opportunities experienced by migrants and refugees but also to analyse the humanitarian architecture around education in specific contexts. This allows to better understand the complexities and interactions between different agents (incl. local responses) that are involved in access to education in emergency contexts. Consequently, insights for educational responses to similar contexts can be gained (see chapter 8). Based on the gaps identified in the broader EiE literature,<sup>12</sup> the need for in-depth research on education in the Venezuelan migration phenomenon in Colombia, and the fact that Barranquilla is among the major host cities of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Colombia (Migración Colombia 2020a), the following research questions derive for this paper:

- What are the experiences, challenges, and opportunities concerning access to compulsory education for Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in Barranquilla?
- What can be learned from these findings for humanitarian responses concerning education in large-scale migration settings?

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<sup>12</sup> The gaps identified in the broader EiE literature (see chapters 2.1 to 2.4) include the identified lack of in-depth studies on the interaction of different EiE actors in non-camp settings in host countries that experience large-scale migration, beyond the case of Syrian refugees in Turkey (Mccarthy 2017).

The research questions are analysed considering three levels of analysis: coordination (governmental institutions, humanitarian actors), institutional (schools, incl. administration and teachers), and individual (Venezuelan migrants and refugees).

### 3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the literature review presented in the previous chapter and the derived research questions, this paper builds on the following concepts as discussed in the following: Education in Emergencies (EiE), Education as a Humanitarian Response (EHR), and the human rights-based approach to education.

#### 3.1 Education in Emergencies (EiE)

As a concept, the Global Education Cluster (2018, 6) describes EiE as “cover[ing] many dimensions, but ... primarily [being] about bringing safe, inclusive and quality learning opportunities to people affected by humanitarian crisis”. The INEE (2010, 117) Minimum Standards (MS) specify that EiE ensures

[q]uality learning opportunities for all ages in situations of crisis, including early childhood development, primary, secondary, non-formal, technical, vocational, higher and adult education [...] [which provide] physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection that can sustain and save lives.

EiE understands education “in relation to the broader economic, political, cultural and social processes within which it is embedded” (Robertson and Dale 2015, as cited in Lopes Cardozo and Novelli 2018, 235). It is grounded in the concept of ‘complex humanitarian emergencies’ which Sinclair (2002, 21) describes as emergencies<sup>13</sup> that can last for years or decades and include displacement across borders (refugee settings) or within countries (IDPs settings), as well as ongoing conflict or insecurity. These emergencies are characteristic of requiring a system-wide response to meet the humanitarian needs of various intertwined crises in one context (Kagawa 2005, 488).

Mendenhall (2019, 9) defines the key actors of the EiE field as including “communities directly impacted by crises;<sup>14</sup> national governments in both crisis-affected and host countries; local, national, and international organisations; academic institutions; and donors”. It is, however, crucial to EiE as a concept, that the obligation to ensure the right to education always

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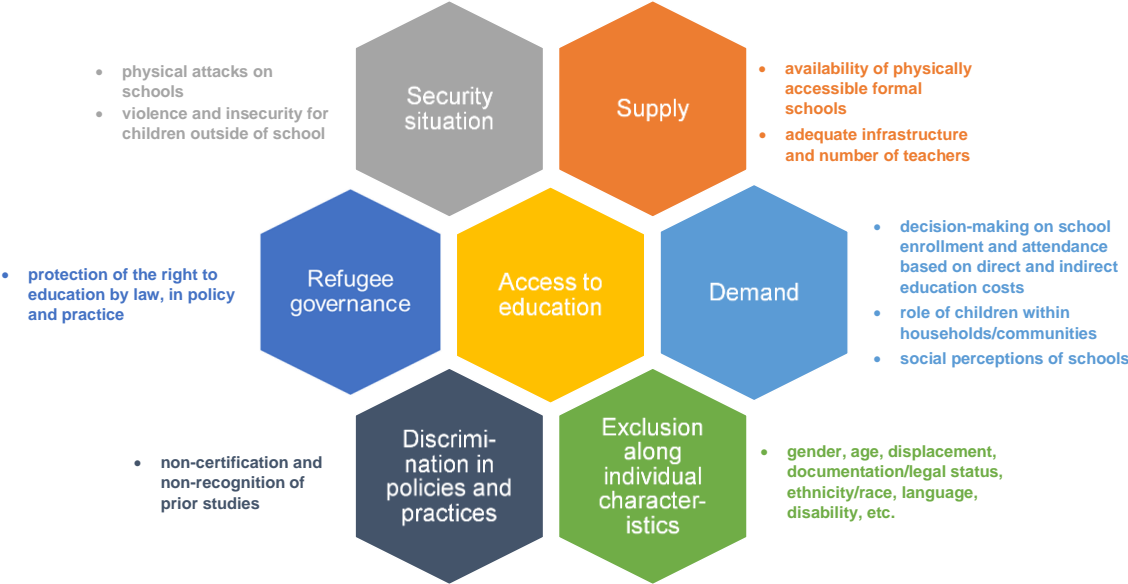
<sup>13</sup> Various definitions exist on emergencies in EiE (Nicolai and Hine 2015, 5; Muñoz 2010, 10–11). The Global Education Cluster (2010, 234) defines an emergency or disaster as a “serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources”.

<sup>14</sup> According to Burde (2005, 7), communities directly affected by crisis may include: “refugees, [...] IDPs, civilians caught in a conflict (“stayees”), returnees, displaced children and orphans, victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), youth and adolescents, child soldiers, street children [and] people living with HIV/AIDS [...]”.

remains on States, even when the will or capacity to do so may be lacking, and that other actors at best “shoulder this responsibility in part” (Muñoz 2010, 16).

With regard to access to formal primary and secondary education, as illustrated in *Figure 1*, Dryden-Peterson (2011, 26) identifies six determinants in refugee education, which are also applicable to EiE in broader terms and with differing relevance depending on the context: supply, demand, exclusion along individual characteristics, discrimination in policies and practices, refugee governance, and security situation. Besides formal schooling, EiE recognises non-formal education activities and specific quality attention programs as essential for children, who have experienced traumatic moments or suffer from learning or mental health problems (García del Soto 2010, 201/205; Aguilar and Retamal 2009, 3/6). Consequently, Dryden-Peterson (2011, 22) stresses that “[education] access, quality, and protection must be conceptualised as integrally connected in effective policy and programmatic approaches to [...] education”.

*Figure 1: Determinants of Access to Education in EiE/Refugee Education*



Source: own figure based on information from Dryden-Peterson (2011, 26)

Finally, various scholars highlight that a one-size-fits-all approach or concept to EiE is inexistent since EiE responses depend on a crisis’ specific context and the needs of crisis-affected communities they are implemented in (Burde 2005; Kagawa 2005, 495; Sinclair 2002, 26). Therefore, EiE definitions vary strongly on the time frames that ‘emergency’ or ‘crisis’ reflect (Muñoz 2010, 10–11), and are linked to the unresolved question in the humanitarian and development sector of “what constitutes a crisis, or emergency, and when it becomes urgent” (Burde 2005, 4/6). Nevertheless, the critical aspects of EiE as a concept, as presented in this sub-chapter, help to analyse the educational response to the needs of Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in Barranquilla.

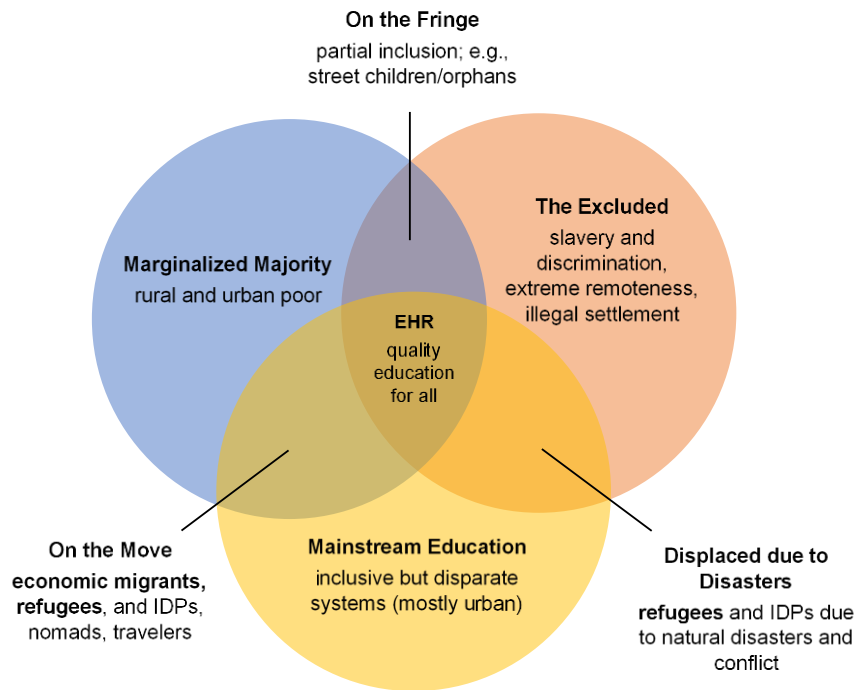


### **3.2 Education as a Humanitarian Response (EHR)**

In contrast to EiE, Education as a Humanitarian Response (EHR) by Brook (2011, 19–20/25/40) is a holistic concept grounded in human rights law that includes not only the excluded, marginalised, and disadvantaged individuals receiving humanitarian assistance in emergencies but also those already having access to local mainstream education that can be marginalised or otherwise disadvantaged. At the same time, the concept focuses strongly on cultural diversity (Brook 2011). Consequently, EHR does not perceive the mainstream education system as appropriate for all individuals; indigenous children may, for example, be included in the latter but not receive culturally adequate education (Brook 2011). Brook (2011, 19) defines EHR as “education for everyone, at any particular time, place or circumstance, and appropriate to their individual needs [and cultural context] as well as those of their families and local communities”.

As illustrated in *Figure 2*, various categories of the EHR concept include migrants and refugees. They can be partly excluded from the formal mainstream education system as minority groups, through ignorance or inability to meet their specific needs, or be neglected or persecuted (Brook 2011, 22). Natural and human-made disasters can lead to forced displacement and migration and, therefore, to temporary exclusion—a scenario frequently addressed in EiE (Brook 2011, 22–23). In specific contexts, it is also possible that migrants and refugees fall into the marginalised majority without having access to mainstream education, or only irregular access due to their economic needs (Brook 2011, 23). Finally, national policy may simply prohibit refugees’ and irregular migrants’ access to mainstream education. In this case, they may benefit from non-formal education provided by international agencies, national NGOs (non-governmental organisations), or their own initiatives in camp or other settings (Brook 2011, 23–24).

Figure 2: EHR Concept



Source: own figure based on Brook (2011, 20)

According to Brook (2011, 21), the ideal condition of EHR lies in “meeting the educational needs of all in a situation of sustainable social and economic development, where informal and non-formal education are enabled to contribute effectively to generating social capital for civil society”. The nature and delivery of education are influenced at the international, national, regional, and local levels by political, economic, demographic, social, historical, religious, geographical, and cultural factors (Brook 2011, 26–30). In EHR, understanding the interrelation of these factors which contribute to the current educational context is crucial to ensure an integral educational humanitarian response. Therefore, allocating sufficient time to understand the current educational situation in a specific context is central to EHR, and must also consider the time over which response to educational needs occurs. In emergency contexts, however, rapid response is vital but must nevertheless include sustainable actions and considerations (Brook 2011, 30–33). Consequently, EHR recognises three temporal educational interventions and related impacts on sustainability: short-term educational humanitarian response (“sustainable survival”), medium-term educational humanitarian response (“sustainable stability”), and long-term educational humanitarian response (“sustainable development”) (Brook 2011, 33).

Finally, EHR deems the provision of formal education, as well as to some degree non-formal education, as political in terms of funding and content (Brook 2011, 34). Therefore, in the EHR concept, the power for change and sustainable development lies at the local level of

family and community (e.g., relationships between sexes, parental support for schooling), rather than at the macro-level of governments and international agencies (Brook 2011, 35–38). This highlights the different value of agency attributed to individuals in EHR, including those directly affected by emergency or disaster contexts. The former aspect contrasts EiE, which focuses rather on the technicalities of humanitarian response —understanding education as one component of a comprehensive approach to alleviating suffering and promoting sustainable development— and the ‘recipients’ of educational responses.

The EHR concept allows analysing interactions between agents at different levels while taking into account the complexity of contextual factors (e.g., cultural differences, historical context, community-specific needs) that impact the educational situation in a crisis context. This enables unpacking the complexities involved in access to education in the migration context of Barranquilla, as analysed in this paper. Moreover, the concept is in accordance with my understanding of migration as a complex and non-linear process, impacting education adversely.

### 3.3 Human Rights-based Approach to Education

Education is enshrined in various human rights instruments<sup>15</sup> as a fundamental right in itself and an enabling right that allows realising other human rights (Anderson et al. 2011, 86; Dryden-Peterson 2011, 8–9; CESCR 1999, para 1). Anderson et al. (2011, 86) specify:

Children have a right *to* education (access to quality education), they have rights *in* education (a non-discriminatory environment based on respect and the best interest of the child); and they gain rights *through* education (the ability to make informed choices concerning their lives and to participate as citizens in the world).

The universally ratified *Convention of the Rights of the Child* (CRC 1989) is the most central international legal instrument concerning the right to education for children in conflicts or emergencies (Carseley and Russell 2020, 10; Anderson et al. 2011, 85/124; see CRC 1989, Arts. 22(1/2)/23(2)/28/29(1/2)). Together with the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* (Refugee Convention 1951; ratified by Colombia,<sup>16</sup> see Art. 22(1/2)) and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR 1966; see Arts. 13/14), it forms the backbone of the legally binding right to compulsory education for refugees

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<sup>15</sup> For human rights instruments on the right of access to education, see Appendix 3.

<sup>16</sup> Despite ratifying the Refugee Convention (1951) and the Additional Protocol of 1967, the Colombian government has not officially classified all Venezuelan migrants, who fear human rights violations and being persecuted once returning to Venezuela, as refugees. However, many more Venezuelans in Colombia would need to be entitled to the refugee status according to international law as well as UNHCR (Cazzetta 2019, 37–38). This fact and Venezuelans’, who are migrating to Colombia, experiences in their home country (see also HRW 2019; HRW 2018; HRW 2016) are the reason that this paper speaks of both migrants and refugees when addressing Venezuelans settling in Colombia.

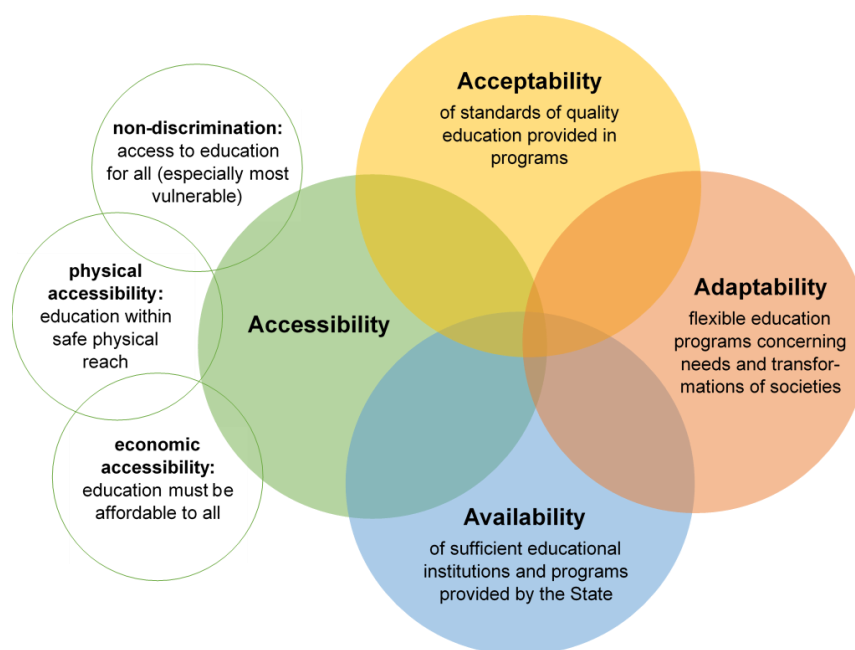
(Carseley and Russel 2020, 10). For migrants, except the Refugee Convention (1951), all human rights instruments are equally applicable (incl. the ICESCR (1966) and CRC (1989)).

Concerning the right of access to education for migrant and refugee children, various human rights instruments, among others, the *Convention against Discrimination in Education* (UNESCO 1960; ratified by 101 States, excl. Colombia), reaffirm the right to equality in education. Article 3(e) of this convention explicitly mentions the right of foreigners to equal access to education as for nationals (UNESCO 1960).<sup>17</sup> Moreover, in its ‘General Comment No. 6’ the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2005, para 41) stresses that “States should ensure that access to education is maintained during all phases of the displacement cycle” and that unaccompanied and separated children “have full access to education in the country that they have entered”. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) provides a comprehensive interpretation in its ‘General Comment No. 13’ (1999) on the right to education. As illustrated in *Figure 3*, it consists of the following interrelated features: acceptability, adaptability, availability, and accessibility (CESCR 1999, para 6). With regard to the latter, the CESCR (1999, para 6(b)) stresses that education has “to be [physically and economically] accessible to everyone, without discrimination, within the jurisdiction of the State party”. These and other international human rights law instruments impose obligations on States and their education ministries in countries hosting refugees, migrants, or crisis-affected victims, such as the guarantee of access to education. Additionally, in a situation of lack of resources, States need to support educational access provided by non-State actors, such as multilateral or non-governmental organisations (Sinclair 2002, 39).

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<sup>17</sup> See also of the same Convention (UNESCO 1960) Art. 1(1): non-discrimination concerning equality of treatment in education, Art. 3(b): non-discrimination in “admission of pupils to educational institutions,” and Art 4: right to education (access to different education levels).

Figure 3: Features of the Right to Education according to CESCR (1999)



Source: own figure based on Rincón (2019, 1) and CESCR  
'General Comment No. 13' (1999, para 6)

Over the past three decades, access to education has been considered a top priority of international development agendas. The 1990 Education for All (EFA) commitments,<sup>18</sup> made in Jomtien in 1990 and primarily focusing on access to primary education, were integrated into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) a decade later. The MDGs placed education as a necessary objective on the global agenda and as a basic right, which cannot be denied under any circumstances. Additionally, the MDGs focused beside access to primary education on primary completion. Subsequently, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, set education as a priority in SDG 4 and address the extension of universal compulsory education from pre-primary to lower secondary levels (Halman et al. 2018, 209; Lopes Cardozo and Novelli 2018, 237).

Additionally, further non-binding declarations or soft-law instruments that address refugees' and migrants' right to education exist —beside other, the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (2016),<sup>19</sup> the *Global Compact on Refugees* (GCR 2018),<sup>20</sup> and the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* (GCM 2018)<sup>21</sup> (Carseley and Russel 2020, 11; see Appendix 3). These soft-law instruments address wide-ranging issues related to

<sup>18</sup> EFA consists of six goals: “[expansion of early childhood care and education], free access to primary education, equitable access to appropriate learning for youth and adults, adult literacy, gender equity and quality education” (Dryden-Peterson 2011, 23).

<sup>19</sup> See paras 32, 39, 59 and 81, Annex I paras 13(b) and 14(a).

<sup>20</sup> See paras 68, 69 and 75.

<sup>21</sup> See paras 21(g), 23(f), 29(h), 31(f) and 34(h).

access to education. For instance, the GCR (2018) not only renews the commitments made in the 1951 Refugee Convention but additionally “promote[s] inclusion of refugees in national education systems” (UNESCO 2018, 2/6; GCR 2018, paras 68–69).

However, despite the numerous international law instruments on the right to education (both hard and soft law) applicable to children in conflicts and emergencies, Anderson et al. (2011, 85–86) mention a “lack of knowledge, resources, political will and adequate enforcement tools” which decrease the legitimacy and cause challenges to the implementation of these rights. Consequently, millions of children remain out of school (Anderson et al. 2011, 85–86). Specifically, Carseley and Russel (2020, 11/28) stress that the CRC (1989), the Refugee Convention (1951), and the ICESCR (1966) “are some of the least enforceable in international human rights law”. The authors argue that historically priority on economic, social, and cultural rights in the domain of international law has been weak, resulting in few enforcement entities and weak consequences in the case of violation in comparison to other human rights treaties (Carseley and Russel, 2020).

Nevertheless, the human rights-based approach to access to education allows for an inclusive analysis of humanitarian context, including both migrant and refugee children. For instance, Bromley and Andina (2010, 578) argue that education as a human right does not legitimate to subordinate education to other efforts in emergency response. Therefore, this study’s analysis of the migration context of Barranquilla considers the human rights-based approach to education.

#### **4. METHODOLOGY**

This chapter discusses the research design, applied methods, sample, as well as limitations of this qualitative study. I understand research as a process of constant interaction between the researcher and participants or objects of study, and social reality as an individual’s interpretation (Corbin and Strauss 2015, 18–19/21; Charmaz 2006, 2/7/10/15; Becker 1996). Therefore, it is indispensable to reflect in a first step on my positionality towards the object of study.

Having travelled five times and spent in total over seven months in Barranquilla over the past four years before conducting this research, I became familiar with local customs and culture. Furthermore, I could witness —both through observation and discussion— how the Venezuelan migration phenomenon has affected social interactions, socio-economic dynamics (incl. the labour market), media, local perceptions of Venezuelans, and various aspects of the everyday lives of both ‘barranquilleros’ and ‘barranquilleras’ (locals of Barranquilla) as well as Venezuelan migrants themselves. Most visibly, to me, the drastic increase in informal street vendors from Venezuela, often accompanied by children, in buses, in front of supermarkets, shopping malls, or at traffic lights, motivated me to comprehend in-depth one aspect of the

migration phenomenon occurring in Barranquilla. It is here where my conviction of education as a key contributor to personal growth and sustainable socio-economic development as well as my advocacy for education as a universally accessible human right in all situations, led me to focus on the process of access to compulsory education of Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in Barranquilla.

#### **4.1 Research Design**

Corbin and Strauss (2015, 5) argue that qualitative research methodologies allow “tak[ing] a holistic and comprehensive approach to the study of phenomena” and “explor[ing] areas not yet thoroughly researched”. Considering the research gap established in chapter 2 and the nature of the derived research questions, this study applies the qualitative research design of grounded theory.

Grounded theory is defined by Charmaz (2006, 2/6) as “consist[ing] of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories [or concepts] ‘grounded’ in the data themselves [...], thereby providing abstract, conceptual understandings of the studied phenomena”. It is characteristic of its non-linear approach to research, requiring continuous reflection on the interrelated process of data collection and analysis. This also includes the revision and adaptation of research questions and methods throughout the research process to “gain a deeper view” into the subject in question (Corbin and Strauss 2015, 7/11/28/52; Charmaz 2006, 9–10; Glaser and Strauss 1967, 33/102). Therefore, grounded theory allows to go beyond the pure description of a process and instead to understand why and how a process occurs or occurred in a certain way (Corbin and Strauss, 2015, 60; Strübing 2014, 51). The latter is also the aim of this paper, rather than establishing a formal theory or concept, which would be beyond this research project’s scope and time constraints. I apply the characteristic of grounded theory as “flexible guidelines” (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 1967), which allows revealing the different facets constituting access to compulsory schooling for Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in Barranquilla and the respective humanitarian response.

Moreover, grounded theory can integrate already existing general theories and concepts as “sensitizing concepts” in the form of pre-knowledge to view the phenomenon under study from diverse perspectives. This gives the researcher first ideas and a loose frame, rather than validating the functioning of the world (Strübing 2014, 59–60; Charmaz 2006, 16). Consequently, I understand the concepts presented in chapter 3 as providing a general framework for the topic studied, rather than imposing them on the collected primary data. This allows both me and the readers of this study to take a step back from the established and widely re-cited “self-legitimizing” EiE discourse and concept (Versmesse et al. 2017), as discussed in chapters 2.1 and 3.1, and instead to focus on reflective fieldwork.

Finally, grounded theory has various limitations. First, it is prone to researcher bias when self-reflection throughout the research process is neglected. Indeed, grounded theory forces no theory or concept on data during the collection and analysis process. The writing of a research diary, especially during the data analysis process, was an attempt to limit this bias to the best possible for this research. Second, grounded theory aims to reach ‘saturation’ in research, defined as “the point in the research when all major categories are fully developed, show variation, and are integrated” (Corbin and Strauss 2015, 135). In practice, however, it may be difficult, if not impossible, to define this point. This entails the risk of the researcher getting lost in the process. Additionally, various resource restrictions of researchers may hinder reaching ‘saturation.’ With regard to this paper, I followed a time plan to benefit to the greatest extent to understand the topic under study during field research. Third, as Charmaz (2006, 27) states, and applying to qualitative research designs using the method of interviews, data collected through interviews are “a construction –or reconstruction– of a reality”. Therefore, awareness of collected information being overtly influenced by public discourse (e.g., if talking in a formal setting with a representative of an institution) or on the opposite, by personal experiences, ideologies, or political orientations, was vital during the research process of this paper.

#### **4.2 Research Process, Methods & Sample Description**

Data for this intrinsic and explorative case study was collected in Barranquilla during field research from January to March 2020, and primarily through semi-structured interviews<sup>22</sup> and observation.<sup>23</sup> These methods to produce qualitative evidence permitted to understand the phenomenon studied in its complexities and enabled dynamic interactive data collection processes.

The research process initiated with the creation of a preliminary list of institutions to contact interviewees based on an initial search conducted online, and expanded through the method of snowball sampling to get a complete sample. In the next step, the interviewees were solicited via email and phone. Since the number of humanitarian and developmental actors involved in the educational response to the migration phenomenon in Barranquilla is manageable, the risk of snowball sampling to produce homogenous samples was minimised through the preliminary list of potential interviewees, which started several snowballs.

The sample (n=45) of this study consists of 27 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with representatives (n=36) of 17 institutions and eight informal ‘street interviews’ with migrants and

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<sup>22</sup> Semi-structured interviews are based on open-ended questions that guide the interview without a given order and encourage interviewees to express their answers within their own framework. These interviews can, therefore, increase the quality and validity of responses, going beyond preconceptions of the researcher (Corbin and Strauss 2015, 39; Charmaz 2006, 26).

<sup>23</sup> Participant observation was conducted during both visits to educational institutions and ‘street interviews.’



refugees (n=9). These semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 1 for the full list of interviews) lasted between five to 83 minutes. They mainly focused on factual data, asking, amongst others, for the evolution of the migration and related educational context in Barranquilla, access to compulsory education, and how the represented institutions responded to or individuals were coping with the current educational situation. Of these interviews, 33 were conducted in person and face-to-face. Due to the Covid-19 outbreak in Barranquilla in March 2020, I conducted two interviews via Skype. All participants were selected based on their willingness to participate in the research project.

At the coordination level of analysis, the criteria for the selection of interviewees included their position at a local (n=6) or international (n=7) humanitarian or development organisation, related as closely as possible to direct or indirect education provision to Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in Barranquilla. Out of the ten interviews conducted in this category, seven were conducted with one and three interviews with two participants. Additionally, I individually interviewed public officers (n=2) of the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla.

At the institutional level of analysis, 14 interviews (10 individual and four group interviews) were conducted at five educational institutions (four public schools and one publicly-privately run CFS at a private school) to get an insight into access to formal education at the level of educational institutions. Participants included rectors (n=4), coordinators (n=4), teachers (n=5), psycho-social workers (n=1), and Venezuelan students (n=6). The selection criteria for the schools included being public, enrolling students from transition to upper secondary education level, and willing to participate in the research. Three of the schools were located in the South-East and one in the South-West of Barranquilla. The CFS, run at the infrastructure of a private school and community centre located in the South of Barranquilla, was randomly selected on the criteria of willingness to participate and its focus on the inclusion of Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in the compulsory education sector of Barranquilla.

In addition, eight 'street interviews' with Venezuelan migrants and refugees (n=9), each lasting between five to 10 minutes, complement the sample. These interviews included questions on the experiences of the interviewees concerning access to compulsory education of their children in Barranquilla and the role of education. The criteria for selection were willingness to participate in the research, as well as being a Venezuelan migrant or refugee having one or more children at compulsory school age. This otherwise random sample includes both women (n=7) and men (n=2), whereby one interview was conducted as a group interview with a couple. Due to safety reasons, the geographical location of these interviews was determined under consideration of local advice and limited to the surroundings of shopping malls in the centre and North of Barranquilla. Therefore, the sample is limited to informal street

vendors due to their recognisability and probability of being Venezuelan migrants or refugees. This was the most feasible approach due to my time constraints and limited resources. In addition to these interviews, I conducted a semi-structured interview with a local community worker (n=1). This person had been working with a public entity and in cooperation with humanitarian actors in settlements primarily occupied by Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla.

For each level of analysis, as outlined in chapter 2.6 (coordination, institutional, individual), questionnaire guidelines, which were adapted over the research process according to its evolution, guided the conversations. Oral consent was obtained before every interview, and participants were informed on the objective and procedures of the research. Additionally, before each in-depth interview, I asked for permission of recording and mentioned the possibility to stop the visibly located digital audio recorder at any time if interviewees did not feel comfortable with what they said. Due to the different settings and lengths of the 'street interviews' and their revelation of often highly personal information, I decided against recording, but instead, took detailed notes. Besides, all research participants had the opportunity to speak in their mother tongue or working language, which was in 44 cases Spanish and one case English. This omitted misunderstandings and ensured that participants felt at ease during the conversations.

Each recorded interview was transcribed in its entirety, verbatim, and language of conversation. If wished by the participants, transcripts were sent back for revision before I started coding them.<sup>24</sup> In a first step, I conducted line-by-line open-coding (without pre-defined codes or themes) in English,<sup>25</sup> which allowed me to identify and group patterns into broader themes. Subsequently, I applied focused coding (i.e., separating, synthesising, and sorting of data; Charmas 2006, 11). All interviewees and their affiliated institutions are anonymised in this study due to consistency. Only the type of institution the participant worked at, at the moment of the interview, is indicated for analytical reasons in Appendix 1. This ensured and encouraged all participants to speak freely about their experiences and utter critique about their own and represented institutions' practices.

A preliminary literature review to identify pertinent interview questions was followed by an extensive literature review after the majority of the data collection process was completed. This allowed analysing the phenomenon under study from a fresh lens and, thus, revealed information that may have been obscured if established research were followed too strictly

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<sup>24</sup> Charmaz (2006, 3) defines coding as "attach[ing] labels to segments or data that depict what each segment is about. Coding distils data, sorts them, and gives us [researchers] a handle for making comparisons with other segments of data".

<sup>25</sup> I am aware that the transcription of interviews is an interpretive act (e.g., punctuation), and that coding the transcripts in English entails limits concerning certain terms which are hardly translatable from Spanish to English. This is, however, a limitation to all research projects whose data is collected in another language than the one the study is written in.

(Charmaz 2006, 6). Rather than starting with an extensive literature review, the first 'street interviews,' as well as an in-depth interview with a key representative of a multilateral humanitarian organisation, gave me a good grasp of the research topic and its relevance. Finally, data collected in the field was complemented by primary data of governmental institutions and international organisations as well as secondary data, which mainly included critically selected local media coverage of the migration context in Barranquilla. For the analysis part, secondary literature was mainly drawn from the disciplines of international education, development, and law.

### **4.3 Limitations**

This paper entails five principal limitations. First, the sample size (n=45), especially concerning Venezuelan migrants and refugees (n=9), only permits to draw limited generalisations for the context of Barranquilla. To complement the small sample of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, I conducted an in-depth semi-structured interview with an experienced local community worker. The latter revealed additional information on the educational and socio-economic situation of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla. Despite the overall limitation of the representativeness of the sample size, mainly due to time constraints, this study provides an in-depth understanding of the process of access to compulsory education for Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in Barranquilla and the respective humanitarian response. By taking into account various stakeholders, it produces diverse angles on the analysed topic. Rather than aiming at generalising findings, this research provides a snapshot of the issue under study to draw learnings for the educational response in Barranquilla and similar contexts.

Second, the snapshot is also temporal since the migration context in Barranquilla is a social phenomenon experiencing change over time. This became especially evident during the Covid-19 outbreak, which led to the closure of all educational institutions in Barranquilla in mid-March 2020. The pandemic drastically changed the everyday life of many Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the city, beyond educational needs. For reasons of access to information and public health considerations, as well as the consistency in data concerning the context, this paper does not cover the Covid-19 lockdown and posterior period, which would require a separate research process with additional resources.

Third, the fact that each interviewee participated in only one interview may restrict "thick description." Specifically, the latter requires the confidence and trust of research participants, which can be gained over time. This constituted a particular limitation concerning information gained on the streets. However, due to time constraints and the levels of analysis of this research, conducting one interview per participant was the only feasible option. Nonetheless, I only experienced in one of the 35 interviews mistrust at the beginning of a conversation.

Additionally, I am aware of the heterogeneity of interviewee's backgrounds and roles concerning access to education, relevant for the collection, coding, and analysis of the primary data.

Fourth, Colombian returnees are not taken into account in this study. They were reported to struggle with inclusion or re-inclusion in host communities in Colombia (Interview 22, personal communication, February 20, 2020; Interview 29, personal communication, March 6, 2020; López et al. 2018, 18) and account for a considerable percentage<sup>26</sup> of the migration flow from Venezuela to Colombia. However, this population group would have been especially challenging to identify for interviews and is, therefore, beyond the scope of this paper, hopefully being considered in future research projects.

Finally, the focus of this research is limited to access to education, leaving largely aside the quality of education and actual learning of Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in Barranquilla. Despite the importance and relation of access to education with education quality indicated in the collected primary data (see chapter 8.4), assessing education quality and actual learning would have required the application of different concepts and methods. This goes beyond my aim of understanding access to education and the educational response to the migration phenomenon in Barranquilla, as discussed in the subsequent chapters, which summarise the main findings of this empirical research.

## **5. MIGRATION AND EDUCATION IN BARRANQUILLA**

Historically, the city of Barranquilla —the capital of Colombia's Caribbean coast— has been characterised by international immigration (especially of European and Latin American origin), which is reflected in its culture and socio-economic context (Interview 11, personal communication, February 5, 2020; Interview 27, personal communication, February 28, 2020). Additionally, Barranquilla hosts a considerable amount of IDPs, as a result of Colombia's ongoing internal armed conflict,<sup>27</sup> who mostly live in marginalised conditions in the city's South (Interview 12, personal communication, February 6, 2020; Interview 21, personal communication, February 19, 2020; Interview 28, personal communication, March 2, 2020; Interview 31, personal communication, March 9, 2020). However, the intensity of the ongoing

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<sup>26</sup> UNHCR (2019, 3) estimates the number of Colombian returnees from Venezuela to amount to around 500,000. Adding this number to the most recently reported total of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Colombia (R4V, n.d.), Colombian returnees would account for 21.65 % of the Venezuelan migration flow (incl. Venezuelan migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and Colombian returnees).

<sup>27</sup> Colombia's internal armed conflict started as a political conflict, characterized by fighting between left-wing guerilla groups —seeking to ensure social justice for the poor— and the government and right-wing paramilitary groups. Between the 1970s and 1990s, and up to date, multiple armed and criminal groups and government security forces have rendered the conflict complex, primarily aiming at either benefitting from the drug trade, other illegal economies, or both (GCPEA 2018, 104). [The information of this footnote is based on a previous class assignment of Prof. Gita Steiner-Khamsi's course 'MINT072 Education and Development: Tools and Techniques for International Cooperation', at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, that I handed in on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019].

Venezuelan migration flow has been new to the city and puts additional pressure on existing challenges related to access and quality of public services and goods, among other education (Interview 7; Interview 14; Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 32). Based on field research and primary data, the following sub-chapters describe Barranquilla's current migration context, its humanitarian architecture, and the compulsory education sector.

## 5.1 Venezuelan Migration Phenomenon in Barranquilla

The Venezuelan 'mass' migration phenomenon is the result of the Bolivarian revolution<sup>28</sup> (1998–present), characterised by the fall of Venezuela's representative democracy in 1998, the collapse of its strongly oil-based economy and economic mismanagement resulting in hyperinflation, and to some degree increasing political and economic pressure from Washington since 2013 (Rodríguez and Ramos 2019, 550–552/556; Antonopoulos and Cottle 2018, 53–59/64). Since the longest border closure in history between Venezuela and Colombia from August 2015 to August 2016, the Venezuelan emigration flow increased exponentially due to Venezuela's political, economic, social, and security crisis which has resulted in a humanitarian crisis (Grattan 2020; Rodríguez and Ramos 2019, 550–552; Castro Franco 2019, 15–20; HRW 2019; HRW 2018; HRW 2016).

Consequently, the Venezuelan migration exodus is among one of the five largest migration phenomena of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, qualified by various international organisations as a humanitarian crisis, among the Syrian, African-Mediterranean, Rohingya, and Central American-US migration phenomena (Rodríguez and Ramos 2019, 547; Castro Franco 2019, 16). By May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020, around 5.1 million migrants and refugees<sup>29</sup> had left Venezuela since 2015, and more than 1.8 million of them (or 35.8 % of the total Venezuelan migrant and refugee population) had been residing in Colombia.<sup>30</sup> This has rendered Colombia the number one

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<sup>28</sup> The Bolivarian revolution started in 1998 with Hugo Chávez's presidency and is split into four stages by Rodríguez and Ramos (2019, 550–551): the end of the representative democracy (1998–1999), the introduction of the participative and protagonist democracy (1999–2006), the competitive authoritarian system (2007–2013), and the dictatorship of the 21<sup>st</sup> century under the Presidency of Nicolas Maduro (2013–present). For more information, see Rodríguez and Ramos (2019) and Antonopoulos and Cottle (2018).

<sup>29</sup> 895,777 Venezuelans were registered as having requested refugee status, but only 66,014 had been granted this status by May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Most recent data on Venezuelan refugees in Colombia from May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 show that 5,303 claims for refugee status were made, but only 140 Venezuelans were recognised as refugees (R4V, n.d.).

<sup>30</sup> Around 76,000 Venezuelan migrants and refugees were reported by Migración Colombia (2020b) to have returned to Venezuela by June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020 during the national Covid-19 lockdown in Colombia which started on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020). Most of them returned to Venezuela due to the loss of their economic activities in the informal sector and thus inability to pay for day-rate accommodation ('pagadario') and alimentation (Blanquicet 2020; Ebus 2020; Grattan 2020; Guerrero 2020; Mesa 2020). However, experts expect the migration flow from Venezuela to be increasing in the long term. They stress that Venezuelan returnees are unlikely to remain in Venezuela once the lockdown in Colombia is over, due to the sanitary situation in Venezuela (Grattan 2020; Ebus 2020; Mesa 2020). Migración Colombia (2020b) expects that 80 % of the current Venezuelan returnees during the Covid-19 pandemic will return to Colombia in the long term. From the political point of view, Rodríguez and Ramos (2019, 571) mention that even with the fall of the current Venezuelan regime, the continuation of the emigration of Venezuelans will depend on the political, economic, and social transition and reconstruction process of Venezuela. Regarding the level of the current crisis, they expect this process at best to take at least 20 years (Rodríguez and Ramos 2019, 571).

host country of this population group since the outbreak of the Venezuelan crisis (R4V, n.d.). Venezuelan migrants and refugees are spread among the large Colombian cities,<sup>31</sup> where long-term inclusion takes place. Simultaneously, the migration flow has strongly impacted departments and municipalities of transit in the short term (Rodríguez and Ramos 2019, 562; CONPES 2018, 42–45).

Characteristic for the Venezuelan migrant and refugee population in Colombia is the high percentage of irregular migrants, amounting to 56.2 % by May 2020 (R4V, n.d.). Migrants with an irregular status either enter Colombia illegally through ‘trochas’ (unofficial crossing points along the 2,219 km border between Colombia and Venezuela) or remain in the country beyond the legally established allowance of passport entry, Special Stay Permit<sup>32</sup> (PEP, by its Spanish acronym), visa, or identity card for foreign nationals (Migración Colombia 2019a, 11; CONPES 2018). Due to the high number of migrants and refugees leaving Venezuela through ‘trochas’ —even and especially during times of border closures (Grattan 2020; Guerrero 2020)— and the nature of migration, it is likely that the official number of this population may be underreported (Castro Franco 2019, 18).

By February 2020, 145,805 Venezuelan migrants and refugees, continuously arriving since 2015, were reported to live in Barranquilla. Consequently, Barranquilla became Colombia’s third city after Bogotá and Cúcuta to host the largest amount of this population, accounting for more than 10 % of the city’s population (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 114). Similar to the national level, a high amount of Venezuelan migrants in Barranquilla —Blanquicet (2020) mentions a percentage of 47— are undocumented (Interview 13, personal communication, February 12, 2020; Interview 16, personal communication, February 17, 2020; Interview 22; Interview 27; Interview 35, personal communication, March 27, 2020). Therefore, one interviewee mentioned that, based on his daily work with Venezuelans, the absolute number of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla may be up to three times the officially communicated number, without including Colombian returnees (Interview 11).

Alike the evolution of the Venezuelan migration flow at the national level (see Rodríguez and Ramos 2019), Barranquilla received three major migration waves originating from Venezuela. In the early 2000s, under the presidency of Hugo Chávez and his anti-neoliberal ideology, Venezuelans from the higher socioeconomic class, including entrepreneurs and

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<sup>31</sup> Bogotá, Cúcuta, Barranquilla, Medellín, and Cali host around 40 % of the total Venezuelan population in Colombia (Migración Colombia 2020a, 4). This illustrates that the Venezuelan migration phenomenon in Colombia is not only a border phenomenon and requires a nation-wide institutional response (Castro Franco 2019, 21).

<sup>32</sup> The Special Stay Permit (PEP, ‘Permiso Especial de Permanencia’) is a measure of the Colombian government introduced in 2017 and currently applied in its eight version. It regulates the status of irregular migrants, allowing them, besides others, to access the formal labour market, health services, (higher) education, and open bank accounts. It permits Venezuelan nationals in the Colombian territory to stay temporarily with official identification for up to two years (Castro Franco 2019, 20–21; Decree 1228 of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, Migración Colombia and Ministry of Education Colombia, Art. 1 para 1; Resolution 5797 of July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores Colombia).

business owners, followed by students and qualified professionals from the higher middle class, started to migrate to Barranquilla. Consequently, various Venezuelans created their business in the city (Interview 7; Interview 11). The closure of the Venezuelan-Colombian border by Maduro's regime in August 2015 and the forced expulsion of millions of Colombians living in Venezuela, led to a massive exodus of Colombian returnees and Venezuelans with social links to family members in Barranquilla (e.g., Colombo-Venezuelan families). This second migration wave marked the beginning of the continuous exodus of Venezuelans from the middle-class due to deteriorating socio-economic conditions, political persecution, or both, in Venezuela. A third migration wave started in 2017/18 *en mass* and at a high pace, increasingly including Venezuelans from the lower-class who have been in search of survival and economic stability (Interview 7; Interview 11; Interview 12; Interview 16; Interview 27; Interview 30, personal communication, March 9, 2020). Migrants and refugees arriving in Barranquilla in poor health and economic conditions characterise this ongoing third migration wave (Interview 7).

Evidence from the interviews with both Venezuelan migrants/refugees and Colombians working closely with these population groups suggests that the former's primary motive of migration to Barranquilla is economic: seeking better work opportunities, that ensure financial stability and allow to send remittances to family members in Venezuela (Interview 6, personal communication, January 20, 2020; Interview 13; Interview 16; Interview 35). Further reasons for leaving Venezuela and settling down in Barranquilla included: the deterioration of public services in Venezuela (i.e., the privatisation of public services and consequently more expensive and exclusive services, and the lack of public services such as shut-down public schools)<sup>33</sup> (Interview 1, personal communication, January 14, 2020; Interview 2, personal communication, January 14, 2020; Interview 6; Interview 11; Interview 13; Interview 31), hunger and survival (Interview 5, personal communication, January 20, 2020; Interview 25, personal communication, February 28, 2020; Interview 26, personal communication, February 28, 2020; Interview 27; Interview 31), deterioration of security and human rights violations (Interview 11; Interview 19, personal communication, February 19, 2020), and political/ideological reasons (Interview 31).

Beyond the motives to leave Venezuela, the in-depth interviews revealed seven reasons which may explain the high number of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Barranquilla:

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<sup>33</sup> Similarly, at the national level of Colombia, Rodríguez and Ramos (2019, 559) identify the impossibility of accessing public quality education in Venezuela as a motive of Venezuelan migrants and refugees to migrate to Colombia. They explain the former by the loss of teachers and qualified education staff emigrating and the lack of energy and school material (Rodríguez and Ramos 2019, 559).

- i) Barranquilla's geographical proximity to the Colombian-Venezuelan border in the North East of Colombia (La Guajira region) allows migrants and refugees to arrive and return to Venezuela in around one day by bus or two to three weeks by foot (Interview 27; see Appendix 2 *Figure A-1*). Most of the Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla were reported to come from Maracaibo or the department of Zulia (Interview 14; Interview 17, personal communication; February 19, 2020);
- ii) of the four largest cities in Colombia, Barranquilla has the lowest living costs and, thus, became an attractive destination for both IDPs and Venezuelan migrants and refugees (Interview 7; Interview 14);
- iii) hosting one of the most relevant ports in Colombia and the Caribbean region, Barranquilla (representing 29 % of the gross domestic product of the Colombian Caribbean) has increasingly attracted industrial and financial business over the past decades. Consequently, it made significant social and economic development (see Appendix 4), becoming one of Colombia's fastest-growing cities (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 27–28; Interview 21). Hence, formal and informal labour has been created,<sup>34</sup> attracting Venezuelan migrants and refugees to settle down, even though a vast part of Colombians in Barranquilla continue to live in poverty (Interview 21; Interview 30; Interview 34, personal communication, March 18, 2020);
- iv) around four million Colombians, many of whom originated from the Caribbean coast, migrated to Venezuela in search of better professional opportunities during Venezuela's 'bonanza petrolera' (petroleum bonanza). Others fled from Colombia's internal armed conflict and violence (Interview 11; Interview 21; Interview 27; Interview 34; Castro Franco 2019, 15; Barrera 2019, 125–126). Resulting social networks between Colombians and Venezuelans were mentioned to considerably facilitate the arrival of Venezuelan migrants and refugees as well as Colombian returnees in Barranquilla (Interview 7; Interview 34);
- v) Barranquilla's Caribbean climate is very similar to certain regions of Venezuela, especially to the department of Zulia (Interview 14; Interview 27; Interview 34);
- vi) Venezuelans share similar cultural values with 'barranquilleros' (locals of Barranquilla) which may facilitate social inclusion (Interview 7; Interview 11; Interview 27; Interview 34); and
- vii) the local authorities and mayor of Barranquilla have generally been open to receiving Venezuelan migrants and refugees, in comparison to other Colombian

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<sup>34</sup> Barranquilla's reduction in poverty, extreme poverty, and inequality from 2008 to 2017 went along with an increase in the employment rate from 50 % in 2008 to 59.6 % in 2017. From 2014 to 2017, 102,500 new workplaces were created (Alvarado et al. 2018, 6–7). However, the majority of employees work in the informal sector in Barranquilla (52.9 % in 2019; Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 33).



districts (Interview 7; Interview 11; Interview 21; Interview 27; Interview 31; Interview 34).

Nevertheless, as the interviews showed, it is difficult to generalise how easily Venezuelan migrants' and refugees' inclusion into Barranquilla's society occurs (Interview 17; Interview 35). Despite lower levels of xenophobia, compared to other Colombian cities (e.g., no violent attacks reported), xenophobia against Venezuelans in Barranquilla exists. It often takes the form of fear against the poor migrants and refugees<sup>35</sup> ('aporofobia' by its Spanish term) (Interview 7; Interview 11; Interview 14; Interview 15, personal communication, February 12, 2020; Interview 28). The latter's inclusion in local communities often remains a challenge (Interview 31, Interview 35). Blanquicet (2020) highlights that 55.5 % of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla have felt discriminated one or several times.

The humanitarian needs of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla vary among communities, and especially on pre-migration existing family or social links in the city (Interview 7; Interview 21). The interviews conducted for this study illustrate that various human rights of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla are under threat and that their most relevant needs between January and March 2020, included: the legalisation of the migration status (i.e., Special Stay Permit, 'PEP') (Interview 7; Interview 11; Interview 13; Interview 14; Interview 28; Interview 30; Interview 35); labour for both, documented and undocumented migrants<sup>36</sup> (Interview 7; Interview 11; Interview 13; Interview 14; Interview 22; Interview 27; Interview 28; Interview 30; Interview 34; Interview 35); homologation of professional and academic titles<sup>37</sup> (incl. education professionals) (Interview 13; Interview 27); shelter<sup>38</sup> (Interview 7; Interview 13; Interview 16; Interview 21; Interview 28; Interview 34); food

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<sup>35</sup> Xenophobia against Venezuelans in Barranquilla was mentioned to be driven by two phenomena: i) the perception of Venezuelans taking away jobs from Colombians by offering labour for significantly lower wages than Colombians (Interview 8, personal communication, February 5, 2020; Interview 11; Interview 21; Interview 35), and ii) locals who start facing problems in accessing basic services such as health care and education, blaming Venezuelans for it (Interview 7).

<sup>36</sup> This illustrates that labour, despite being the most relevant migration motive for Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla, remains a major need once arriving in the city. Furthermore, it reveals the discrepancy between Venezuelan migrants' and refugees' expectations and the reality they face in Barranquilla. This finding is supported by Blanquicet (2020), who mentions that the unemployment rate among Venezuelan migrants in Barranquilla is 10 % higher compared to Colombians. Nevertheless, evidence from the interviews was not clear on whether, in general, Venezuelan refugees and migrants perceive their life as being better in Barranquilla than in Venezuela (Interview 3, personal communication, January 14, 2020; Interview 30; Interview 35).

<sup>37</sup> Homologation of professional and academic titles was mentioned by one interviewee to be a problem for 80–90 % of all Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla (Interview 27). Blanquicet (2020) mentions that 96 % of Venezuelan migrants in Barranquilla has not homologated its academic titles due to the high costs of the process or belief that documents are needed, which are not obtainable in Venezuela.

<sup>38</sup> Own observation between January and March 2020 and interviews conducted in Barranquilla illustrate that various Venezuelan migrants and refugees, including their children, live on the streets where they often work informally (e.g., selling sweets or cleaning car windows at traffic lights) (Interview 9, personal communication, February 5, 2020; Interview 13; Interview 17; Interview 21). Moreover, two interviewees reported that the majority of Venezuelans in Barranquilla lives in neighbourhoods of social strata one and two (on the scale of social strata of neighbourhoods in Colombia, ranging from one (lowest class) to six (highest class)) in apartments with 20–25 persons, paying daily rents (Interview 17; Interview 21).

(Interview 13; Interview 21; Interview 27; Interview 35); access to education (Interview 27; Interview 34); access to physical and mental health services (Interview 11; Interview 15; Interview 21; Interview 27; Interview 34); and protection of children's rights (e.g., protection from child work,<sup>39</sup> sexual abuse, and leaving children at an unknown's home due to parents' need of work for survival) (Interview 15; Interview 22).<sup>40</sup>

A particular group in need of humanitarian assistance amongst Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla are individuals with severe physical and mental disabilities. This population group was mentioned during several field interviews to be numerous and increasing daily, including children at compulsory school age (Interview 12; Interview 16; Interview 27; Interview 35). The disabled migrants and refugees were of concern to humanitarian workers since they often lack access to public services and have not been fully included in the local government's humanitarian response (Interview 13; Interview 28; Interview 35). However, Colombian persons with disabilities face similar issues (Interview 13; Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 32).

The current migration context of Barranquilla is characterised by pre-existing, high levels of poverty, insecurity (especially in neighbourhoods of social strata one and two) (Interview 11; Interview 21; Interview 28), high unemployment rates (Interview 14; Interview 17), and a lack of guarantee of the rights of vulnerable host communities (Interview 11). Access to and quality of public services and goods (especially education and health) remain a challenge in Barranquilla (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 32). Additionally, the migration phenomenon is affecting all social classes and industries, besides others, due to increased labour competition, including in the informal labour market (Interview 8; Interview 17; Interview 27). The phenomenon of people living on the streets has been pre-existing to the Venezuelan migration flow, although at a lower intensity, and increasingly since 2009 (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 111). Consequently, a risk of disregarding the seriousness of the current migration in masses and its implications on society was observed during field research (Interview 11; Interview 15).

In the context of Barranquilla, Venezuelan migrants and refugees tend to re-settle frequently in different neighbourhoods of the city, mainly due to labour reasons (Interview 8; Interview 12; Interview 16; Interview 17; Interview 24, personal communication, February 28, 2020). Despite being spread all over the city, specific neighbourhoods with concentrations of

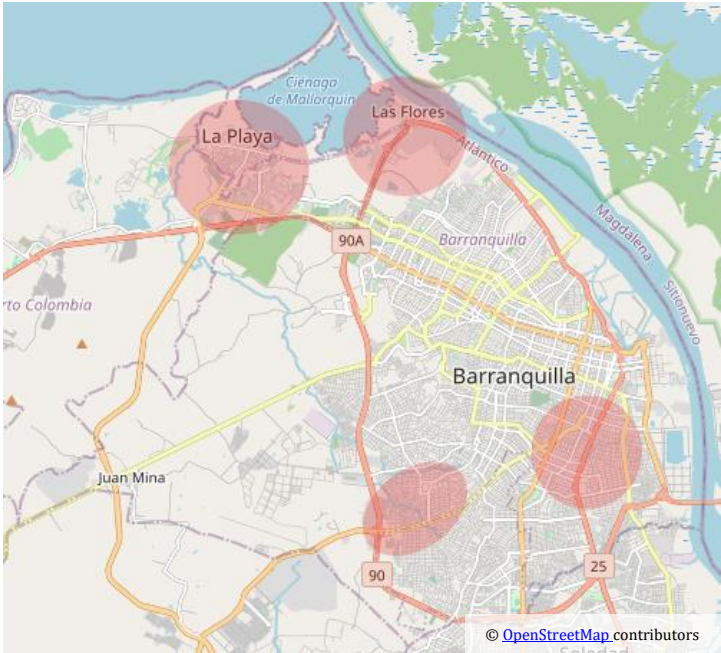
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<sup>39</sup> The mayoralty of Barranquilla reported that child work in Barranquilla amounted to around 5 % (over 13,000 children/youth) of all children and youth in Barranquilla in 2019, and aims to reduce it to 3.75 % by 2023 (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 118).

<sup>40</sup> Since a universally agreed definition on what constitutes a humanitarian crisis is inexistent (Burde 2005, 4/6), the lack of a society to stem the capacity to ensure the fundamental rights for a large number of people, as applied by the Global Education Cluster (2010, 234) to define humanitarian emergencies, can be applied to define the migration phenomenon in Barranquilla as a humanitarian crisis. In the latter, "large number of people" refers to both vulnerable local communities, Colombian returnees, and Venezuelan migrants and refugees.

Venezuelan migrants and refugees can be identified. These concentrations are located primarily in the South East, South West, and North (La Playa, Las Flores) of Barranquilla, as illustrated in *Figure 4*, in neighbourhoods of social strata one and two, and to a lesser degree in social strata three and four (Interview 7; Interview 21; Interview 27). Highly vulnerable and, at times, illegal settlements are characteristic of these neighbourhoods. For instance, ‘Villa Caracas’ in the South West of Barranquilla refuges around 5,000 Venezuelan migrants and refugees living in shacks without minimum living conditions that attracted various humanitarian actors (Interview 15; Interview 21; Interview 27; Bonil 2019, 109).

*Figure 4: Mayor Concentrations of Venezuelan Migrants and Refugees in Barranquilla*



Source: own figure based on interviews, OpenStreetMap

The conducted interviews illustrated a general perception of the mayoralty of Barranquilla as being openly receiving Venezuelan migrants and refugees (Interview 7; Interview 11; Interview 21; Interview 27; Interview 31; Interview 34). However, the mayoralty’s Development Plan 2020–23 only devotes a small part to this population group. Concerning education, the Venezuelan migrant and refugee population has not been directly addressed (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b). Specifically, the mayoralty of Barranquilla’s (2020b, 406) budget on governmental spending for 2020 only devotes 0.013 % (COP 400 million) of the total budget to the attention of migrants and refugees, and none for 2021–23. However, the need to integrally attend migrants, refugees, and host communities is highlighted as a priority by Barranquilla’s citizens in the Development Plan. Also, the mayoralty sets the goal of attending 100 % of migrants and refugees in the city by 2023, keeping the existing attention centres running, ensuring strengthening the host communities, and running information workshops for

public institutions to effectively attend the populations of the Venezuelan migration flow (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 139–140).

## **5.2 Humanitarian Architecture for the Venezuelan Migration Phenomenon in Barranquilla**

International cooperation and aid from the Colombian government in Barranquilla initially focused on IDPs seeking refuge in the city from Colombia's internal armed conflict (Interview 21; Interview 34). The Venezuelan 'mass' migration flow, which has been arriving in Barranquilla since 2017, has increasingly attracted international cooperation actors, especially since the beginning of 2019. Most of these actors focus on Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the areas of health care and multi-purpose cash transfer (Interview 16; Interview 21; Interview 22; Interview 27; Interview 28; Interview 34). As analysed in this paper, the humanitarian architecture in Barranquilla can be divided into three key actors: international cooperation actors (with humanitarian or mixed humanitarian-development mandates),<sup>41</sup> governmental authorities, and local CSOs (civil society organisations).

Barranquilla's humanitarian architecture has an overarching coordination mechanism, called GIFMM (by its Spanish acronym; Interagency Group for Mixed Migration Flows). The GIFMM is a regional platform to efficiently coordinate the humanitarian response to the Venezuelan migration phenomenon at the national and local levels in Colombia, in complementation to the response of the Colombian State. At the end of 2016, the UN Secretary-General established the national GIFMM, which has been led by IOM (International Organisation for Migration) and UNHCR. By mid-2020, nine local GIFMMs covering 11 departments joined the GIFMM at the national level in Colombia, which counts 68 organisations. The local GIFMM in Barranquilla, led by UNHCR and IOM, has covered the departments of Atlántico, Bolívar, and Magdalena since early 2019. It is organised around thematic clusters, consisting of six UN agencies, twelve international, and four national organisations.<sup>42</sup> Members of Barranquilla's local GIFMM gather monthly to share initiatives, projects, and updates on the humanitarian context to coordinate the humanitarian response (Interview 7; Interview 22; Interview 28; Interview 34; R4V, n.d.).

Interviews with representatives of humanitarian organisations that implement projects in Barranquilla identified two major concerns about the humanitarian architecture for the Venezuelan migration phenomenon in Barranquilla (i.e., the local GIFMM). First, local organisations such as CSOs are only part of roundtables taking place every three to six months

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<sup>41</sup> One interviewee mentioned that the focus of the humanitarian response to the Venezuelan migration phenomenon in Barranquilla had been in a slow transition process from an emergency to a medium-/long-term and, thus, developmental response since July 2019 (Interview 7).

<sup>42</sup> Not all 22 members of the GIFMM in Barranquilla are present in all of the three departments it covers (Interview 7; Interview 22; Interview 28; Interview 34).

to share their positions and views on the humanitarian response in Barranquilla (Interview 7; Interview 11). Second, one humanitarian professional raised concern over the lack of efficient humanitarian coordination since i) the GIFMM in Barranquilla is still in a phase of growth, and ii) it is led by two international humanitarian organisations that lack the specific mandate of coordination of humanitarian affairs (Interview 34).

Out of the humanitarian architecture's three key actors, first, international cooperation actors in Barranquilla provide legal orientation and counselling services (e.g., regularisation of migration status), protection work, and basic services/goods to Venezuelan migrants and refugees (and to some degree Colombian returnees and host communities). Besides, some of them run cash transfer programs, and conduct needs assessments to visualise unmet needs and strengthen the attention routes of migrants and refugees (Interview 7; Interview 21; Interview 22; Interview 28).

Second, the humanitarian response by governmental authorities of the district of Barranquilla and the department of Atlántico is ongoing but limited (Interview 7; see also chapter 7.3). Importantly, issuing the 'PEP' (Special Stay Permit) enabled irregular migrants to legalise their status and access health services, social insurance, (higher) education, and with the recently issued 'PEP-FEF' the formal labour market (Interview 13; Castro Franco 2019, 20–21).

Lastly, and characteristic for the response to the Venezuelan migration phenomenon in Barranquilla, four Venezuelan-led local CSOs (legally constituted non-profit foundations and associations) assist Venezuelan migrants and refugees and, to a lesser degree, Colombian returnees and vulnerable host communities. These CSOs were mostly founded in 2015 during the second migration wave and count each between 30 to over 160 staff, including primarily volunteering professionals (Interview 11; Interview 13; Interview 14; Interview 22; Interview 27). In the national and local GIFMM, no requirements exist on cooperation with these CSOs. Consequently, a low degree of articulation persists between members of the local GIFMM with the local CSOs, not excluding bilateral cooperation between the latter and international cooperation or governmental actors. Nevertheless, local CSOs are at the forefront of the humanitarian response in Barranquilla. They are advocates of public policy for Venezuelan migrants and refugees and Colombian returnees, especially concerning access to public services and referral pathways to these services (i.e., referral to governmental authorities and international cooperation actors which provide basic services) (Interview 11; Interview 13; Interview 22; Interview 27; Interview 34). Also, they frequently act as the first point of contact for Venezuelan migrants and refugees arriving in Barranquilla, informing daily on rights and how to access them (e.g., regularisation of migration status) individually or through public events, and provide in-kind aid (e.g., food, health services) (Interview 11, Interview 13, Interview 14, Interview 27).

As mentioned in the previous sub-chapter, xenophobia in Barranquilla is part of the Venezuelan migration phenomenon. Especially in marginalised communities in Barranquilla, humanitarian agents are prone to foster xenophobia against Venezuelans since most of their projects currently implemented focus exclusively or mostly on Venezuelans (Interview 21; Interview 22; Interview 28). A representative of a humanitarian INGO (international non-governmental organisation) mentioned, for instance, that a multi-purpose cash transfer program included only 10 % of Colombian host community members as part of the total beneficiaries (Interview 28). Another representative of an international humanitarian organisation raised concern over this practice since it caused that local communities perceived his organisation as exclusively benefitting Venezuelans, despite various activities and several decades of activity taking into account Barranquilla's local communities (Interview 21). Finally, two interviewees reported that negative perception by Colombians concerning governmental and international cooperation assistance to Venezuelans was increasing in Barranquilla, due to perceived prioritisation of Venezuelans despite large amounts of Colombians without access to basic services, such as education (Interview 7).

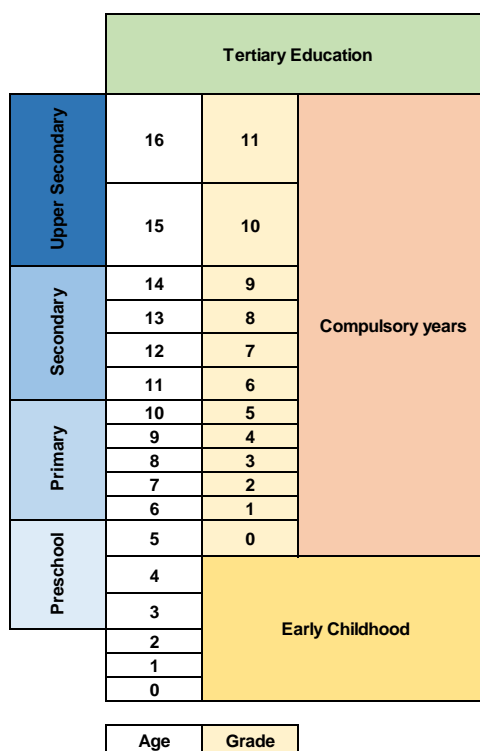
### **5.3 Compulsory Education in Barranquilla: Sector Overview**

The Constitution of Colombia of 1991 defines education as a fundamental right and public service with a social function (Título II, Arts. 44/67). Further, the Constitution of 1991 defines the State, society, and family as being responsible for ensuring education quality and promoting access to public education (Radinger et al. 2018, 48). Thereby, the Ministry of Education of Colombia is the principal actor and mainly responsible for policy drafting, provision of the right to education, supervision, and resource allocation (MINEDUCACIÓN 2009, 34–35; OECD 2016, 40/64/133). For an overview of Colombia's principal institutional stakeholders of the highly decentralised compulsory education sector, see Appendix 5.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> This information is based on a previous class assignment of Prof. Gita Steiner-Khamsi's course 'MINT072 Education and Development: Tools and Techniques for International Cooperation', at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, which I handed in on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019.

Figure 5: Colombian Compulsory Education System



Source: own figure based on figure 1 in MINEDUCACIÓN (2013, 8)<sup>44</sup>

As *Figure 5* illustrates, Colombia’s compulsory education cycle lasts 12 years and starts with the pre-primary transition level (‘transición’) at age five as part of pre-school. Basic education is composed of a total of nine compulsory levels split into two stages: primary education (‘básica primaria’) starting at age six and consisting of five levels, and lower secondary education (‘básica secundaria’), consisting of four levels and regularly entered at age 11 (Ley 115 de Febrero 8 de 1994, Arts. 11(b)/15/17). Compulsory education is concluded in 11<sup>th</sup> grade and regularly at age 16 after two years of upper secondary education (‘educación media’) (Ley 115 de Febrero 8 de 1994, Art. 11(c)). The vocational higher secondary track (‘técnico’) prepares students for labour market entry. The general track (‘académico’) permits students to specialise in a field of interest, preparing them for tertiary education after passing the national university entry exam SABER 11 (MINEDUCACIÓN 2013, 7; OECD 2016, 28–29; Radinger et al. 2018, 152).<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> This figure is based on a similar figure in my Bachelor’s dissertation submitted at the University of St. Gallen in January 2018 in fulfilment of the B.A. HSG in International Affairs.

<sup>45</sup> This information is based on a previous class assignment of Prof. Gita Steiner-Khamsi’s course ‘MINT072 Education and Development: Tools and Techniques for International Cooperation’, at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, which I handed in on May 23rd, 2019. See also *Figure A-2* in Appendix 2 which shows that the formal education system of Colombia is in accordance with the ISCED (1997) — besides some specialized tracks for displaced people— with regards to education levels, entry ages, and duration of the respective education levels (UIS 2019).

Compulsory education in Colombia can be provided by public schools, private schools,<sup>46</sup> public-private partnerships ('escuelas concesionadas'; i.e., publicly subsidised and supervised private schools with operational autonomy), or contracted modes of education provision ('matrículas contratadas') (OECD 2016, 137; Barrera-Osorio et al. 2012, 20/26; World Bank 2006, 29/32). The latter form of education provision is enshrined in Decree 1851 of 2015 of the Ministry of Education that allows Secretariats of Education to flexibly guarantee access to free compulsory education by contracting private education providers. Thereby, through vouchers, a limited amount of study places is usually provided to low-income students (Radinger et al. 2018, 152–153/170).

In Barranquilla, 261,063 students were enrolled in a total of 543 schools<sup>47</sup> in the compulsory education sector in 2019. Out of the total student population, the majority was enrolled at the primary (42.4 %), 35.5 % at the lower secondary, 14.6 % at the upper secondary, and 7.5 % at the transition level (SDE Barranquilla 2019b, 4–5). Out of the gross enrolment, 3,394 students (1.3 %) had either mental or physical special needs<sup>48</sup> or both, and 5,169 (1.98 %) belonged to the population of IDPs. 70.87 % of the total student population in 2019 was enrolled at public schools, 22.4 % at private schools, and 8.18 % at contracted providers (SDE Barranquilla 2019b, 6–7). Total public education staff (incl. the administration and coordinators) increased by 4.81 % from 2014 to 7,330 in 2019, and total public classroom teachers by 6.94 % over the same period to 6,319 in 2019 (SDE Barranquilla 2019b, 10). Consequently, and due to the decreasing student population, the student-teacher ratio of the public compulsory education sector in Barranquilla decreased from 31.47 in 2016 to 29.28 in 2019 (SDE Barranquilla 2019b, 10; SDE Barranquilla 2016, 10).

According to official numbers by the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla, the city's student population aged five to 16 decreased by 5.7 % between 2013 and 2019 to 232,665. By education level, transition (-6.72 %) and primary education (-6.44 %) experienced the most substantial decrease in the student population, followed by lower secondary (-5.31 %) and upper secondary education (-4.15 %) (Datos Abiertos Colombia, n.d.; see Appendix 2 *Figure A-3*). Despite an overall population growth of 6.74 % from 2006 to 2018, this overall decline in Barranquilla's student population is in correlation with official data on the city's demographic

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<sup>46</sup> It is important to note that private school attendance in Colombia is strongly characterized by socio-economic segregation. For instance, mostly socio-economic advantaged students in urban areas access private schools (Radinger et al. 2018, 21).

<sup>47</sup> For the location of schools in Barranquilla see Appendix 2, *Table A-1*. See Alcaldía Barranquilla (2020b, 55/58/102) for information on the respective socio-economic context of the schools.

<sup>48</sup> In 2017, the Ministry of Education passed Decree 1421 that requires every formal education institution to include students with special educational needs and disabilities and to make adequate pedagogical and organisational adjustments. However, at the national level, the lack of a detailed implementation plan, trained teachers, specialists, and respective infrastructure impede the access of students with special needs to formal education. [This footnote information is based on a previous class assignment of Prof. Gita Steiner-Khamsi's course 'MINT072 Education and Development: Tools and Techniques for International Cooperation', at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, which I handed in on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019].



change over the same period. The latter illustrates the only increases in the population groups aged 25 to 44 years (9.63 %), 45 to 64 years (34 %), and 65 years or older (38.68 %) (Datos Abiertos Colombia, n.d.; see Appendix 2 *Figure A-4*).

When considering data on the Venezuelan migration flow to Colombia and Barranquilla (see chapter 5.1), it is likely and understandable that official data on Barranquilla's student population may not include the numerous irregular migrants residing in the city. At the national level, the officially reported number of Venezuelan migrants and refugees by Migración Colombia increased by 7,514 % between 2014 and 2019 (see Appendix 2 *Figure A-5*; Migración Colombia 2020a; Migración Colombia 2019c; Migración Colombia 2019d). According to Migración Colombia (2019b, 6), by June 2019, 14 % or 197,248 persons of this population were below the age of 18 (see Appendix 2 *Figure A-6*). The World Bank (2018, 97–98) estimated that 38 % of the Venezuelan migration population was below the age of 18 and that 22.8 % of the total Venezuelan migration population in Colombia was at compulsory school age by June 2018. Based on these estimates, the current Venezuelan migrant and refugee population at compulsory school age in Barranquilla would amount to 33,244, accounting for 14.3 % of Barranquilla's total population at compulsory school age.<sup>49</sup>

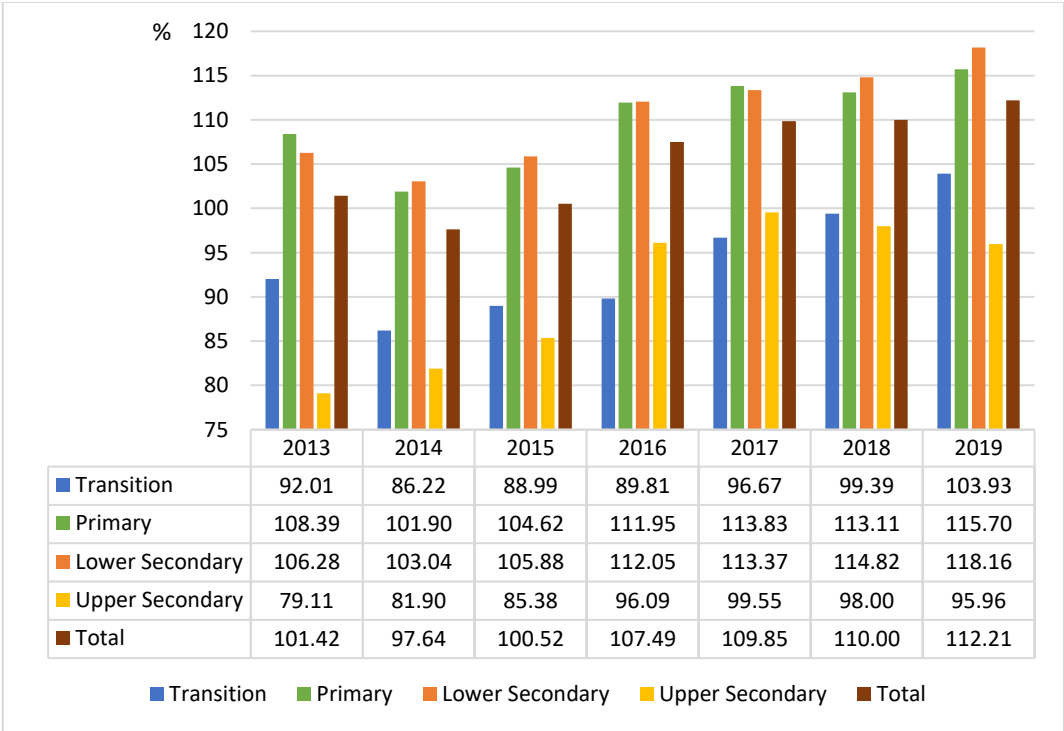
Concerning the Venezuelan student population in Barranquilla, two interviews with representatives of the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla confirmed that the number of enrolled Venezuelan students in Barranquilla had been increasing from 2016 to 2019 and was expected to increase further during 2020 (Interview 12; Interview 16). Specifically, the arriving Venezuelan population, as well as the number of Venezuelans born in Barranquilla, have been increasing (Interview 12). In 2015/16, the enrolled migrant and refugee population at public formal education institutions were reported to be below one % compared to around five % in February 2020. Some schools in Barranquilla have student populations consisting of up to 10–15 % of Venezuelan migrants and refugees (Interview 16). The out-of-school population of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla is hard to measure due to the latter's continuous movement within and out of the city, and the fact that many migrants enter Colombia irregularly (Interview 16). One humanitarian worker assumed that in absolute numbers, around 30,000 to 40,000 Venezuelan migrant and refugee children at compulsory school age were out of school and at risk of homelessness in Barranquilla in March 2020 (Interview 21). Two other interviewees supported the fact that many Venezuelan children were out of school in Barranquilla (Interview 11, Interview 17).

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<sup>49</sup> The Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla was not able to provide the absolute number of enrolled Venezuelans in Barranquilla's compulsory education sector despite several requests made by myself. The inconsistency in the evolution of numbers concerning the total student population in Barranquilla with estimates on the student population of the Venezuelan migrant and refugee population in Barranquilla illustrates the difficulty of providing numbers on migration phenomena and the impossibility of reporting absolute numbers. Therefore, the numbers presented in this sub-chapter can at best be understood as estimates, rather than absolute values.

Figure 6 illustrates that the gross enrolment ratio (GER) had steadily increased overall and at transition, primary, and lower secondary levels between 2014 and 2019 (SDE Barranquilla 2019b, 5). According to the mayoralty of Barranquilla (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 56), this increase, as well as reduced desertion rates, are results of the implementation of the School Feeding Program (benefitting daily 119,018 students in 2019) and free school transport services. The latter was implemented in 2007 and benefitted 7,280 students in 2019 (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 56). The total GER of 112.21 in 2019 may be explained by a high and volatile repetition rate, amounting to 6 % in 2018 (Datos Abiertos Colombia, n.d.). In addition, the identified practice of enrolling Venezuelan migrant and refugee students one or several education levels below the level corresponding to their age may be another reason explaining Barranquilla’s GER (see chapter 6.1.1; Interview 16; Interview 17; Interview 18, personal communication, February 19, 2020; Interview 23, personal communication, February 28, 2020).

Figure 6: Gross Enrolment Ratio (%), by education level, Barranquilla, 2013-2019

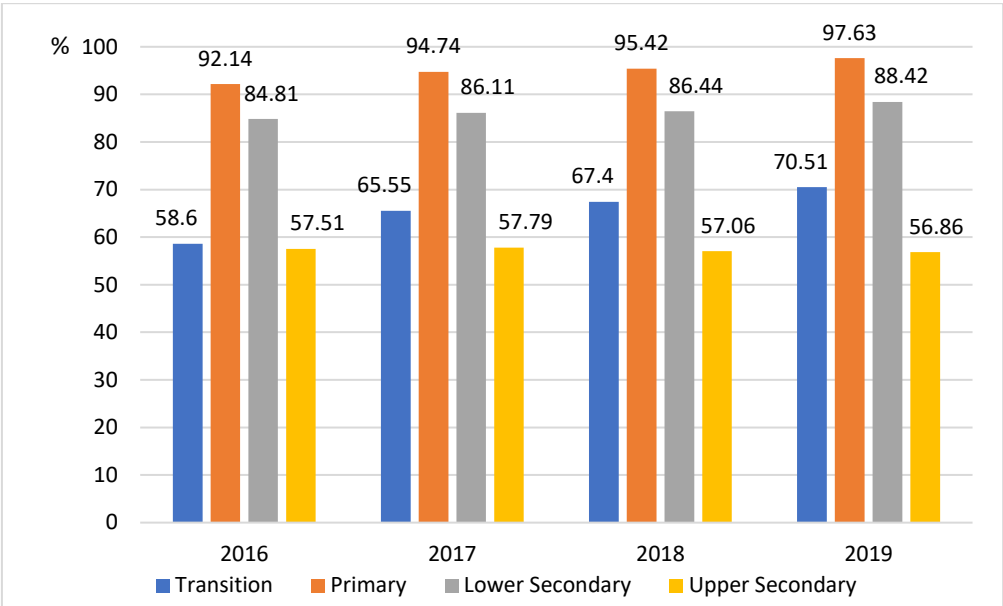


Source: SDE Barranquilla (2019b, 5)

The net enrolment rate (NER), illustrated in Figure 7, shows a slightly increasing gap and a weak link between lower and upper secondary education in Barranquilla from 2016 to 2019. Despite steadily increasing NERs for transition, primary, and lower secondary education for the same period, age-adequate enrolment and out-of-school children have remained a

challenge in the formal education sector of Barranquilla, and especially at the upper secondary level (SDE Barranquilla 2016, 2018, 2019a, 2019b, 2020b).<sup>50</sup>

Figure 7: Net Enrolment Rate (%), by education level, Barranquilla, 2016-2019

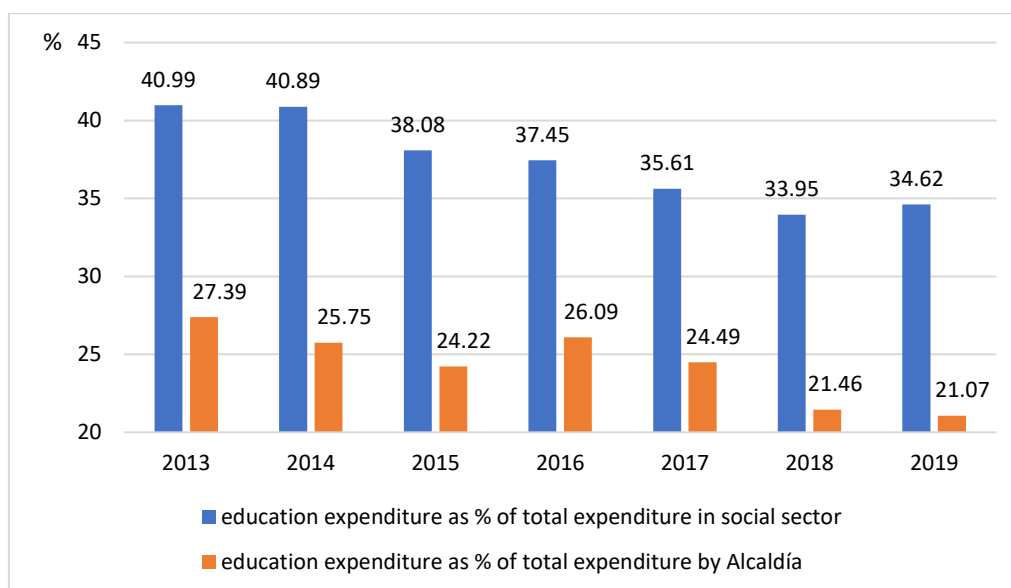


Sources: SDE Barranquilla (2016, 2018, 2019a, 2019b)

As Figure 8 shows, education spending by the mayoralty of Barranquilla decreased by 6.32 % from 2013 to 2019, accounting for 21.07 % of total government expenditure in 2019. Similarly, as a percentage of total government expenditure on the social sector by the mayoralty of Barranquilla, education expenditure decreased over the same period by 6.37 %, accounting for 34.62 % in 2019. Relative to other social expenditure, only health expenditure ranked higher since 2015 (see Appendix 2 Table A-2; Alcaldía Barranquilla 2014; Alcaldía Barranquilla 2015; Alcaldía Barranquilla 2016; Alcaldía Barranquilla 2017; Alcaldía Barranquilla 2018; Alcaldía Barranquilla 2019; Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020a). The education expenditure is planned to increase in absolute terms between 2020 and 2023. Relative to the planned total expenditure in Barranquilla’s Development Plan 2020-2023, education accounts for 21.48 %, just below health (24.84 %). Of the planned education expenditure, the mayoralty of Barranquilla plans to spend the majority (89.15 %) on increasing access to formal education (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 404/406).

<sup>50</sup> Data on out-of-school children in Barranquilla were only reported publicly from 2013 to 2017 (see Appendix 2 Figure A-7). Over this period, the number of out-of-school children decreased by 35.17 %, accounting for 7,869 out-of-school children in 2017 (SDE Barranquilla 2018, 4).

Figure 8: Education expenditure (%), transition to 11<sup>th</sup> grade, by the mayoralty of Barranquilla, 2013-2019



Sources: Alcaldía Barranquilla (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020a)

Beyond increasing access to formal education in Barranquilla, the Development Plan 2020–2023 of the mayoralty of Barranquilla lays out the aim to possess the best quality public education of Colombia (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 63). The evolution of the results from the national standardised learning assessment of 11<sup>th</sup> grade (SABER 11) illustrates that education quality fluctuated overall between 2014 and 2019. The results reached a height of 266 points in 2016 and a low of 257 points in 2019, out of 500 points. However, in relative terms, Barranquilla scored each year beyond the Colombian average (see Appendix 2 *Table A-3*; ICFES, n.d.). Improvement made in Barranquilla’s compulsory education system, before the occurrence of the Venezuelan migration phenomenon, concerning infrastructure, education access, and quality education was also mentioned during three in-depth interviews (Interview 12; Interview 21; Interview 27). Significant discrepancies exist, however, between the SABER 11 test results concerning private and public education institutions, which from 2016 to 2019 varied between 17 and 22 points (see Appendix 2 *Table A-4*; ICFES, n.d.). Therefore, the mayoralty of Barranquilla aims to further implement full-day schooling<sup>51</sup>, improve

<sup>51</sup> The General Education Law of 1994 (Congress of Colombia) established full-day schooling for all formal education schools in order to increase enrolment, which has been implemented very slowly. Consequently, in 2016 and as part of Colombia’s National Development Plan 2014–2018, Decree 501 established the ‘Jornada Única’ (Full Day) policy. The latter requires all formal education institutions to provide full-day schooling by 2030. At the primary education level, six hours of education are required per school day (Radinger et al. 2018, 161). The policy aims to improve access for students with single parents, especially at pre-primary and primary education levels, and to reduce exposure to out-of-school risks. However, full-day schooling has so far been highly correlated with students’ socio-economic background and enrolment in independent private schools, benefitting mainly economically advantaged students (Radinger et al. 2018, 24). [This footnote information is based on a previous class assignment of Prof. Gita Steiner-Khamsi’s course ‘MINT072 Education and Development: Tools and Techniques for International Cooperation’, at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, which I handed in on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019]. In Barranquilla, the number of students enrolled at full-day schools increased from

mathematical-logical thinking, reading, and writing competencies, and promote teacher wellbeing and teaching quality through increased teacher training until 2023 (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 64–65). For these activities, it allocated a budget of 7.12 % of total education expenditure between 2020–2023 (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 406). This small budget reserved for improvements in education quality illustrates the prime focus of the mayorality and Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla on access to education. The following chapter discusses experiences related to access to compulsory education for Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla.

## **6. ACCESS TO COMPULSORY EDUCATION FOR VENEZUELAN MIGRANT AND REFUGEE CHILDREN IN BARRANQUILLA**

The majority of ‘street interviews’ with Venezuelan migrants and refugees and a group interview with three Venezuelan pupils revealed the significance of accessing compulsory education to Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla, which was directly associated with a better (professional) future and, thus, hope (Interview 1; Interview 2; Interview 3; Interview 4, personal communication, January 20, 2020; Interview 5; Interview 6; Interview 33, personal communication, March 13, 2020). Certainly, the context of Barranquilla offers opportunities in guaranteeing the right to education to Venezuelan migrant and refugee children. However, they face various challenges in accessing formal education from transition to upper secondary level, as identified during field research. The following sub-chapters discuss the respective denominators identified, based on experiences at the coordination, institutional, and individual level.

### **6.1 Challenges**

The major challenges identified concerning access to compulsory schooling in Barranquilla for Venezuelan migrant and refugee children include: Barranquilla’s limited education system capacity, discriminatory enrolment procedures, denied access to formal graduation from the compulsory education cycle, frequent movement among Venezuelan migrants and refugees, lack of educational infrastructure for physical and mental special needs students, and in some cases lack of academic support by parents or guardians.

#### **6.1.1 Limited Education System Capacity**

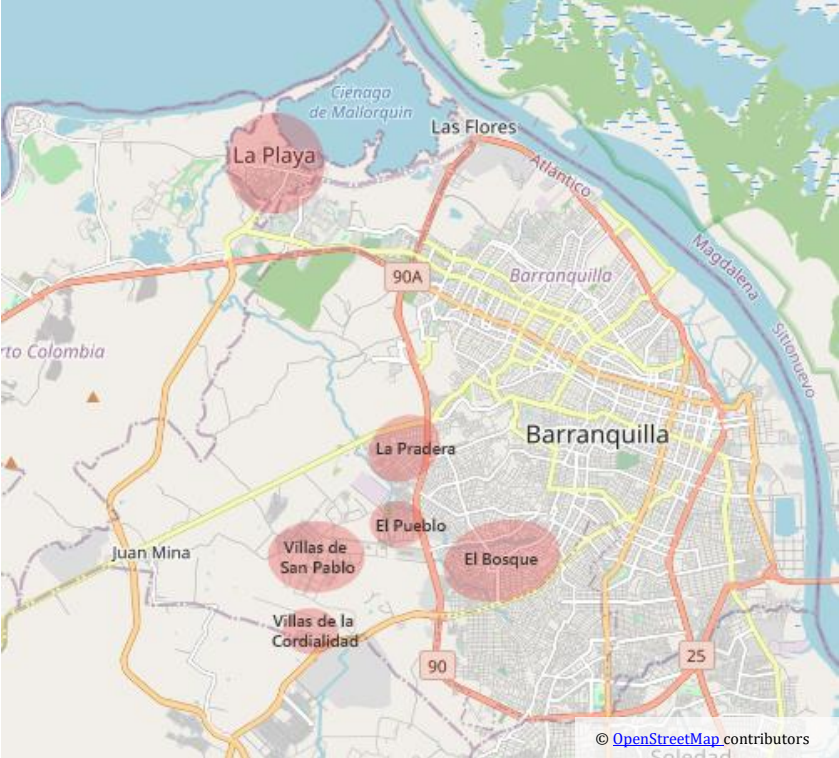
The lack of Barranquilla’s education system capacity to absorb the current education demand is a significant barrier for Venezuelan migrants and refugees when accessing compulsory schooling. This lack is best illustrated by an estimated amount of 30,000 to 40,000 Venezuelan

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nearly 16,000 in 2015 to around 43,000 in 2019. The mayorality of Barranquilla expects this number to reach 46,000 students by 2023 (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 29/66).

migrant and refugee children at compulsory school age, who were out of school in Barranquilla in March 2020 (Interview 21). This assumption is also in accordance with the findings from interviews with both representatives of local humanitarian NGOs and Venezuelan migrants and refugees. They indicated that many Venezuelan migrant and refugee children had been out of school for one to two years in Barranquilla, due to a lack of study spots (Interview 11; Interview 14; Interview 27; Interview 29). In addition, representatives of the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla and two other interviewees highlighted the lack of study spots and consequently the high number of out-of-school children (i.e., the collapse of public education services), among both Colombians and Venezuelans, in locations that had been characterised by a high presence of the Venezuelan migrant and refugee population, as illustrated in *Figure 9* (Interview 12; Interview 14; Interview 16; Interview 35). In these zones, many schools changed to full-day schooling<sup>52</sup> before the migration phenomenon occurred, reaching full capacity already before the arrival of the Venezuelan migration flow (Interview 12).

*Figure 9: Zones in Barranquilla Facing Collapsing Education Services*



Source: own figure based on Interviews, OpenStreetMap

In the short term, public school transport services are only a limited solution to distribute the education demand more equally. A transport service covering the entire student population of a specific location is often not feasible due to long distances between these locations and

<sup>52</sup> Educational institutions in Barranquilla are either full-day schools where children are at school in the morning and afternoon (8h) or count with three day shifts, of which only one is attended in a row by each student: morning (6h), afternoon (6h), or night (3h; for the highly overaged student population) (Interview 12; Interview 17).

educational institutions with the capacity to further enrol students, combined with the diversity in school-age in certain geographical areas (Interview 12). The opening of the contracted matriculation ('matrícula contratada') to Venezuelans ensured access to schooling for some of them, but at the same time left more frequently Colombians out of school (Interview 16). Similarly, regarding Colombia, the World Bank (2018, 99) found in areas with a high presence of Venezuelans decreasing schooling quota of Colombians, overfilled classrooms, a lack of learning material, teachers, and infrastructure, and an increasing demand for school transport and meals services.

International and local humanitarian actors interviewed mentioned that the Venezuelan migration phenomenon puts additional pressure on education services in certain zones of Barranquilla, which have historically been deficient in education delivery capacity. Despite efforts of the local government to increase enrolment, insufficient education infrastructure and the lack of teachers hinder to absorb the entire student population at compulsory school age and to provide quality education (Interview 7; Interview 11; Interview 14; Interview 21; Interview 22; Interview 27; Interview 28; Interview 34). The lack of qualified teachers<sup>53</sup> is hardly filled with qualified Venezuelan teachers of the migration and refugee population. The latter struggle to homologate their academic and professional titles due to lacking certified identification documents or/and reportedly high costs<sup>54</sup> of the official homologation procedure by the Venezuelan government (Interview 16; Interview 21; Interview 27).

The enrolment of Venezuelan students at the four visited public schools was reported to have been considerably increasing from 2016/17 to 2020 —at three schools, especially at the primary level and at two schools at the night turn for youth and adults. Three schools experienced a significant increase in education demand by Venezuelans in 2020 (Interview 8; Interview 9; Interview 17; Interview 18; Interview 19; Interview 23; Interview 24; Interview 30; Interview 31; Interview 32, personal communication, March 13, 2020). For instance, at school IV, the Venezuelan student population increased by around 50 % from 2019 to 2020. This increase was explained not only by new arrivals of migrants and refugees to the city but mainly due to reallocation caused by rejection at other schools in Barranquilla (Interview 30; Interview 31; Interview 32). Consequently, the capacity of several schools to enrol further students was reached in February and March 2020 (e.g., school IV mentioned an overpopulation of 40 % (Interview 9; Interview 17; Interview 18; Interview 30). Similarly, two representatives of the

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<sup>53</sup> One representative of a local humanitarian organisation, who had been in contact with various schools and Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla, mentioned a student-teacher ratio of 60:1 in certain schools (Interview 27). For instance, at school IV the limited staff to attend the high education demand is illustrated by 79 teachers and one psychosocial worker for a total of 2,400 students, split in three dayshifts (Interview 30).

<sup>54</sup> One interviewee mentioned that this costs range between USD 2'000 and 3'000 per person, independent on online or in-person consultation (Interview 27). Considering the average monthly salary of a medical practitioner of USD 5 (Interviewee 11, personal communication, June 27, 2020) and the minimum wage of USD 2,33 as of May 2020 in Venezuela (*Deutsche Welle*, 2020), official homologation is not accessible for most Venezuelans.

Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla confirmed that the enrolment capacity at educational institutions for the academic year 2020 was reached by the end of February of the same year. They stressed that before the migration phenomenon, enrolment was open until May or June of the academic year starting in February (Interview 12; Interview 16).

Furthermore, the rector of school III raised concerns over the Ministry of Education's financial allocation mechanism ('Sistema General de Participaciones'),<sup>55</sup> which assigns financial resources to the Secretariats of Education and educational institutions in proportion to students registered in the civil registry (Interview 23). Thereby, the mechanism misses out on undocumented migrants and refugees and, thus, discriminates schools enrolling these population groups. This aggravates the problem of the inadequate infrastructure of various and especially small public educational institutions in Barranquilla (Interview 23). Similarly, the rector of school IV and coordinator of school II mentioned the lack of additional government support at the institutional level to attend migrants and refugees (incl. IDPs) (Interview 18; Interview 30). Also, the coordinator of school II emphasised that schools in Barranquilla generally lacked guidance by the Secretariat of Education on pedagogy for migrants and refugees and that their capacities to enrol overaged students (especially at night turns) were limited (Interview 18).

Finally, access to the corresponding education level of Venezuelan migrant and refugee children remains a challenge due to the differences between the Colombian and Venezuelan education system, additionally affecting the education sector's capacity. Evidence from the interviews suggests that Venezuelan students arrive with less knowledge concerning the education level adequate to their school-age, in comparison to local students in Barranquilla (e.g., lower linguistic skills).<sup>56</sup> Consequently, they need stronger guidance in the classroom and are often enrolled one or more levels below the grade they are aspiring (Interview 9; Interview 10, personal communication, February 5, 2020; Interview 16; Interview 17; Interview 18; Interview 23; Interview 24; Interview 29; Interview 34). According to the rector of school III, 90 percent of Venezuelans arriving at the educational institution are enrolled at lower education levels than aspired, resulting in frustration of students, an overaged student population, and interpersonal problems in the classroom (Interview 23).

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<sup>55</sup> The financial allocation mechanism 'Sistema General de Participaciones' is enshrined in Law 715 of December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2001 (Congress of Colombia). In addition, Article 140 of Law 1450 of June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011 (Congress of Colombia) specifies that the financial resources, dedicated to public education and distributed through this system, need to be directly assigned to the educational institutions.

<sup>56</sup> In general, various interviewees had the perception that the education quality in Venezuela would be lower than in Colombia (Interview 3; Interview 19; Interview 23; Interview 24; Interview 25; Interview 26; Interview 32).



### 6.1.2 Discriminatory Enrolment Procedures

The Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla issued no guidelines on the required documentation for enrolment at the institutional level and followed the requirements issued by the Ministry of Education (Interview 12; Interview 18). One representative of the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla mentioned that all educational institutions require the same enrolment process, no matter if a child is a Colombian or Venezuelan national (Interview 12). This practice was also identified at schools I and IV (Interview 8; Interview 9; Interview 18; Interview 30), and risks being discriminatory concerning irregular migrants. Thus, it contradicts Decree 1228 of the Ministry of Education (see chapter 6.2.1). In fact, various formal educational institutions in Barranquilla require the Special Stay Permit ('PEP'), registration in the 'SISBEN'<sup>57</sup> (Sistema de Identificación de Potenciales Beneficiarios de Programas Sociales; the public health insurance only attainable by regular migrants with the 'PEP'), and complete, official academic certificates to enrol Venezuelan migrants and refugees. This barrier at the institutional level poses an obstacle for most Venezuelan migrants and refugees who arrive undocumented or without/incomplete<sup>58</sup> official academic certificates<sup>59</sup> in Barranquilla, and with often limited options to obtain these documents (Interview 9; Interview 12; Interview 13; Interview 16; Interview 29; Interview 34). Additionally, it illustrates the misinformation and lack of instruction concerning enrolment requirements for Venezuelan migrants and refugees among education professionals<sup>60</sup> (Interview 12; Interview 13; Interview 14; Interview 21; Interview 23; Interview 27; Interview 28). For instance, one interviewee mentioned that some rectors would fear persecution by the Secretariat of Education when enrolling students without official documents. Consequently, Venezuelan migrant and refugee children without the required official documents<sup>61</sup> might not be enrolled in schools (Interview 27). Besides, the rector of school IV mentioned that the majority of schools in Barranquilla still requires complete documentation and does not accept students randomly due to fear of

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<sup>57</sup> One representative of a local humanitarian NGO mentioned the 'SISBEN' (by its Spanish acronym) as denominating discriminatory factor of enrolment of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the formal education sector of Barranquilla (Interview 27).

<sup>58</sup> One reason for gaps in official education certificates was mentioned to stem from the vast migration of Venezuelan teachers, leaving behind students in Venezuela without having the opportunity to study certain subjects (Interview 18).

<sup>59</sup> As the experience of school I illustrates, even though school certificates may be presented during enrolment, the difficulty of homologating these documents in accordance with the educational institution's curricula often remains (i.e., no note explaining when a grade counts as failed or approved, different forms of evaluation) (Interview 8; Interview 9).

<sup>60</sup> Misinformation leading to a denial of enrolment at educational institutions can, according to one interviewee, be reduced to two reasons: i) educational institutions not sending apt staff to information sessions conducted by the Secretariat of Education, and ii) education staff selecting incoming students without having the required information on the enrolment process (Interview 27).

<sup>61</sup> These documents include valid identity documents (such as civil registry, birth certificates, baptismal certificate, identification card, passport; incl. the one of the person matriculating the child), and complete, official certificates of studies (study records with approval of successful completion of study levels) (Interview 8; Interview 9; López et al. 2018, 20).

achieving lower results in the national standardised education test (SABER) (Interview 30).<sup>62</sup> This statement illustrates the polarisation caused by the SABER test in Barranquilla.

Moreover, lack of information among Venezuelan migrants and refugees about their right to education aggravates denied access to education due to misinformation at the institutional level (Interview 9; Interview 11; Interview 13; Interview 14).<sup>63</sup> Illustratively, one representative of a local humanitarian NGO stated that misinformation was the main characteristic of the migration context in Barranquilla (Interview 13). One interviewed migrant mentioned the lack of any social contact/point of reference in Barranquilla as a barrier to access information on how to enrol children at school. Hence, the migrant described the enrolment process as “complicated” (Interview 2). Evidence from further interviews shows that social contacts with Colombians or other persons can help Venezuelans with the enrolment process at formal educational institutions, mainly through providing relevant information (Interview 1; Interview 3; Interview 27; Interview 33).

Three out of eight ‘street interviews’ revealed rejection of Venezuelan migrants and refugees at public educational institutions in Barranquilla due to lacking or incomplete official academic or identification documentation (Interview 5; Interview 6; Interview 26). In one case, the lack of complete, official school certificates resulted in a gap in schooling of two years (Interview 26). A student at school II mentioned having been out of school for one year due to lacking identification documentation (Interview 20, personal communication, February 19, 2020). In contrast, one street interview revealed that the private education sector can be more accessible but coming with the burden of higher matriculation fees and indirect education costs (Interview 25). In two cases, besides requiring full documentation, a matriculation fee was required at public educational institutions (Interview 6; Interview 26). This practice stands in contradiction to Decree 4807 of December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011 (Ministry of Education), which requires education to be free of cost. A humanitarian worker and representatives of school I confirmed that this practice has been occurring at some public educational institutions in Barranquilla (Interview 9; Interview 21).

A third discriminatory practice during the enrolment process includes the requirement of mandatory accident insurance, as identified at some public schools in Barranquilla. Migrants and refugees arriving with few financial resources are often unable to cover this insurance at the moment of enrolment (Interview 4, Interview 23). Even though some schools may provide sufficient time for payment (Interview 23), the practice contradicts the duty of providing

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<sup>62</sup> The same interviewee mentioned that some schools in the North of the city, which mainly enrol students from the higher social classes of Barranquilla, preferred Colombians over Venezuelans (Interview 30).

<sup>63</sup> One interviewee mentioned that the lack of information about accessing basic services among migrants and refugees in Barranquilla was not always the fault of the latter since some lacked access to the internet and other modes of information. In addition, the interviewee estimated that around 50 % of the lack of information could be attributed to the lack of information amongst public officers (Interview 14).

compulsory public education free of cost as enshrined in Decree 4807 of December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011 (Ministry of Education). Two interviewees specified that asking for accident insurance at the time of enrolment is a measure taken by most schools in Barranquilla, stressing that it should be voluntary (Interview 9).

Finally, another barrier concerning education access at the time of enrolment, reported by one interviewee working daily with Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla, is xenophobia against Venezuelans by public officers at educational institutions (Interview 27). This includes communication of incorrect information on purpose, such as informing about the lack of study places even they are available. Xenophobia at the institutional level can already start with security guards denying entrance to schools when Venezuelans try to enrol their children (Interview 27). On the other hand, schools openly receiving undocumented children are recommended by word of mouth among migrants and refugees. Consequently, these schools attract more migrant and refugee students compared to other schools (Interview 9; Interview 27; Interview 30), adding to the challenge of collapsing education services in certain zones of Barranquilla, as discussed previously (see chapter 6.1.1).

### **6.1.3 Denied Access to Official Graduation**

Currently, Venezuelan students who do not possess complete, official education certificates of all compulsory education levels face the problem of being denied official graduation certificates after completing the compulsory education cycle in 11<sup>th</sup> grade (Interview 12; Interview 16; Interview 23; Interview 30). The coordinator of school IV specified that the Secretariat of Education especially verifies the completion of certificates from 6<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grade before graduation (Interview 32).

In addition, Venezuelan students need a Special Stay Permit ('PEP') or Colombian identity document (civil registry, ID, passport) to access the SABER 11 test results. These results are needed for graduation, since the number established by the Secretariat of Education at the moment of enrolment of undocumented children (Número Establecido por la Secretaría de Educación, 'NES') solely permits writing the SABER 11 exam (Interview 12; Interview 23; Interview 30; Resolución Icfes 624 of August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Art. 9).<sup>64</sup> The Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla was aware of this problem at the time of field research for this paper. One of its representatives mentioned that in 2015/16, only a few Venezuelan students faced this issue but that by 2019 this population increased considerably to around 70 cases (Interview 16). The current situation weakens Resolution 1228 of the Ministry of Education (see

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<sup>64</sup> Resolution 624 of August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019 of Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación (ICFES) allows undocumented migrants to regulate their migration status between the period of writing the SABER 11 exam and the publication of the test results. According to the resolution, 1,041 Venezuelan students registered with their 'NES' for the SABER 11 test during intake A of 2019 (Resolution 624 of August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, ICFES).

chapter 6.2.1) and makes the official graduation from compulsory education a barrier to many undocumented Venezuelan students, and a severe problem for educational institutions (Interview 23; Interview 30). Hence, one interviewee mentioned that particularly undocumented migrant children above the age of 12 frequently remain out of school; some of them are working informally instead (Interview 35).

#### **6.1.4 Movement Among the Migrant and Refugee Population**

Venezuelan migrants and refugees frequently<sup>65</sup> move within Barranquilla and in/out of the city due to changing labour opportunities and housing situations. This poses a challenge concerning access to compulsory schooling before the fact that Barranquilla's compulsory education system reached its capacity (Interview 8; Interview 12; Interview 16; Interview 17; Interview 24). High levels of instability at educational institutions (i.e., dropouts, desertion) are hard to manage, especially once the school year has started since enrolment at the new location of the migrants and refugees may be impossible (Interview 12). For instance, the dropout rates of Venezuelans at school I were mentioned to be considerable, sometimes even after the first month of the semester (Interview 8). In these cases, public school transport to ensure stability in the schooling of children has not always been a feasible solution for the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla due to the geographical distance between the educational institution of first enrolment and the new housing location (Interview 16). Additionally, where school transport is not subsidised, it is barely a feasible solution for most Venezuelan migrants and refugees due to their lack of financial resources. As a result, they tend to enrol their children at schools closer to the new housing location (Interview 8; Interview 17; Interview 24). Finally, one interviewee highlighted that some Venezuelan parents would not be willing at all to enrol their children at school since they moved a lot and had the mentality to stay only for a few months at the same location (Interview 35).

Related to the continuous movement of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, their time of arrival at educational institutions during the Colombian school year often determines access to education (Interview 14; Interview 15; Interview 16; Interview 27). Once the academic year has started, chances are usually smaller to enrol children at schools due to the limited capacity of Barranquilla's compulsory education system (see chapter 6.1.1; Interview 16).

#### **6.1.5 Re-collapsing Physical and Mental Special Needs Education**

Despite the right of disabled persons to education established in Article 11 of Law 1618 of 2013 (Congress of Colombia), either physically or mentally disabled, or both, Venezuelan migrant and refugee children face additional problems in accessing compulsory public

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<sup>65</sup> With frequent movement by Venezuelan migrants and refugees, respondents referred to displacement every one to three months (Interview 16; Interview 17; Interview 24).

education in Barranquilla. The migration phenomenon has led to a re-collapse of access to special education in Barranquilla (Interview 27). Consequently, the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla mentioned not having further capacity to increase access to education for this specific population and that many schools already enrolled the maximum of this population that they can attend with their staff and infrastructure (Interview 12). According to a public officer of the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla, the total number of study spots for students with special needs in Barranquilla amounted to around 1,000 in February 2020 (Interview 16). Additionally, two other interviewees stressed that the available study spots at public schools for special needs students had been insufficient (Interview 21; Interview 27). This is worrying before the increase in reported numbers of students with special needs in Barranquilla, which grew in relative terms by 0.31 % and in absolute terms by 840 students from 2016 to 2019 (see Appendix 2 *Table A-5*; SDE 2016; SDE 2018; SDE 2019a; SDE 2019b). From the visited schools during field research, only school IV enrolled few Venezuelan migrants and refugee children with disabilities (Interview 32).

The lack of official medical evaluations and certificates which prove their disability, and the time needed to get this documentation in Colombia, independently of the possession of a Special Stay Permit ('PEP'), was identified as a barrier for Venezuelan special needs students during enrolment processes. After undergoing the official medical evaluations and receiving the certificates, which is a process that can take several months, educational institutions may already have reached their enrolment capacity (Interview 16).

Regarding psycho-social support (PSS), higher demand and a lack of PSS in public schools in Barranquilla were identified to be correlated to the migration phenomenon (Interview 15; Interview 16; Interview 19; Interview 27; Interview 34). However, frequently public schools with over 2,000 students (mega schools) count, if possible, with only one psychosocial worker (Interview 30; Interview 34). Some Venezuelan migrant and refugee children have been affected by their broken familiar environment, street life, and migration experience ('duelo migratorio,' i.e., the abandonment of friends, family, neighbourhoods, or customs), which affects their performance at school, psycho-social wellbeing, and personalities (e.g., attention deficits, social interaction problems) (Interview 16; Interview 22; Interview 21; Interview 27). Even though these factors are similar or the same for some Colombians, Venezuelan students are confronted additionally with a more rigorous academic system in Colombia, socio-cultural differences, and xenophobia,<sup>66</sup> which requires adequate PSS (Interview 15; Interview 21; Interview 27). It must be remarked that in Colombia, educational institutions carry the responsibility for the provision of PSS. One representative of the Secretariat of Education of

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<sup>66</sup> Xenophobia against Venezuelan students in Barranquilla was mentioned to originate from both peers and teachers, and as only occurring in few and particular cases (Interview 8; Interview 9; Interview 11; Interview 21; Interview 23; Interview 27; Interview 30; Interview 33).

Barranquilla perceived this as a challenge due to migrants' and refugees' different customs and cultures (Interview 16).

### **6.1.6 Lacking Academic Support by Family Members or Guardians**

Further challenges identified regarding access to compulsory schooling are related to the family context of Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in Barranquilla. The interviews showed that additional barriers in accessing education for these children include: the lack of resources for school uniforms and material (Interview 24; Interview 26; Interview 28) or/and parents realising that their income increases when taking their children to informal work (e.g., begging or selling sweets on the streets), and, thus, lack of academic support from parents (Interview 23; Interview 34). One rector of a visited school and another interviewee mentioned, furthermore, that many Venezuelan migrant and refugee families are dysfunctional (i.e., children living with or being guarded by relatives, neighbours, or other persons). Therefore, they mentioned that children from these families often do not receive the needed support from their parents, especially during the acculturation process (Interview 23; Interview 29). For instance, a teacher at school III described the contact between the school and parents of Venezuelan students as generally low or inexistent due to the latter's intense labour routine (Interview 24).

On the other hand, the rector of school IV mentioned that Venezuelan parents, residing in the neighbourhood of the school, were more attentive to their children than Colombians (Interview 30). Similarly, a social worker mentioned that some Venezuelan parents, and especially mothers, followed up on their children's school efforts and were eager to send them to school (Interview 35). Moreover, one interviewee highlighted the need for access to and inclusion in Barranquilla's compulsory education sector of Venezuelan migrant and refugee children (aged five and above) as the central educational need in the city (see Appendix 6 for findings on inclusion). The reason for this argument was based on the interviewee's observation that many of these children's parents work the entire day, and the longer the children are at school, the better for their daily income (Interview 16). Consequently, it seems to depend on the specific context of a school, the migrants' and refugees' needs, and the latter's prioritisation, whether academic support by parents or guardians is given or not.

## **6.2 Opportunities**

Beyond the educational response by humanitarian actors (see chapter 7), migrant- and refugee-friendly education policy at the national level, welcoming public officers and individuals at educational institutions, and Child Friendly Spaces (CFSs) and catch-up programs are supportive to Venezuelan migrant and refugee children's access to compulsory education in Barranquilla.

### **6.2.1 Migrant- and Refugee-friendly Education Policy**

At the policy level, Circular No. 45 of 2015, Circular No. 7 of 2016, Circular No. 01 of 2017, and Circular No. 16 of 2018 of the Ministry of Education and Directive 009 of 2017 of Unidad Administrativa Especial de Migración Colombia (in the following Migración Colombia), guarantee the right to education for Venezuelan children and youth in the Colombian territory (Decree 1228 of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, Migración Colombia and Ministry of Education; Circular No. 16 of April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Ministry of Education; López et al. 2018, 21). Based on Article 44 and Article 67 of the Colombian Constitution (1991), Circular No. 16 of 2018 of the Ministry of Education grants access to compulsory education for all Venezuelan children in the Colombian territory, including those who are undocumented. This is a significant migrant- and refugee-supportive evolution in education policy in comparison to the circulars issued before 2018. Specifically, the Ministry of Education states that undocumented children cannot be rejected at official educational institutions and that the latter cannot be prosecuted by Migración Colombia if enrolling undocumented children. However, enrolling undocumented children at formal educational institutions does not regularise the children's migration status (Circular No. 16 of April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Ministry of Education). Therefore, rectors must inform family members on the need to provide the children's official legal documents throughout their studies to enable the writing of state exams (i.e., SABER 11) and official graduation from 11<sup>th</sup> grade. If the child does not have any valid identity document (i.e., Colombian identity card for foreigners, Special Stay Permit, national identity document), the school administration or responsible Secretariat of Education needs to register the child with the 'NES' (by its Spanish acronym, Special Number Established by the Secretariat of Education) in Colombia's Education Information Management System (EIMS, 'SIMAT' by its Spanish acronym) and report it to Migración Colombia (Circular No. 16 of April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Ministry of Education).

Additionally, Decree 1228 of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018 (Migración Colombia and Ministry of Education) and CONPES 3950 (2018) grant access to education for all Venezuelan children in Colombia, including undocumented Venezuelan migrants, constituting an obligation for educational institutions to guarantee their access to education (Pinto et al. 2019, 211). Specifically, Decree 1228 enables the validation in Colombia of levels of formal education achieved in Venezuela, without possessing official school certificates. This validation can take place through academic evaluations or activities conducted directly at educational institutions certified by the respective Secretariat of Education (Decree 1228 of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, Migración Colombia and Ministry of Education; Pinto et al. 2019, 209).

Various interviewees described Decree 1228 and the before mentioned circulars of the Ministry of Education as significant policy developments concerning access to compulsory education for Venezuelans in Colombia (Interview 9; Interview 14; Interview 16; Interview 22; Interview 23; Interview 27; Interview 29; Interview 34; Interview 35). The rector and

representatives of school I and coordinator of school IV highlighted that the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla additionally disseminated the message of enrolling Venezuelan children at schools and maintaining an “open door” strategy (Interview 8; Interview 9). The coordinator and a teacher at school II confirmed this strategy, highlighting that the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla provided orientation to school II on how to enrol Venezuelan children. Moreover, they stressed that the Secretariat of Education transferred Venezuelan children to schools with available study spots (Interview 18; Interview 19). During my field visit, the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla mentioned its duty to grant equal education access to Colombian and Venezuelan nationals and to treat all children without distinction by race, population group, migration status, or nationality due to the character of education as a universal human right (Interview 12; Interview 16).

In addition, Resolution 8470 of the National Civil Registration Entity (Resolución 8470, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil) temporarily grants children of Venezuelan parents born in Colombia after August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015 the Colombian nationality —due to their risk of becoming stateless since their right to the Venezuelan nationality is hindered by “insuperable barriers.” This measure is planned to be in place until August 2021 to facilitate access to public services and ensure, in the case of compulsory education, the official graduation from 11<sup>th</sup> grade of children who obtained the Colombian nationality (Interview 34; Resolución 8470, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil, Art. 1). However, Article 5 of Resolution 8470 obliges Venezuelan parents of stateless children to present an official identification document (i.e., Colombian identity card for foreigners, Special Stay Permit (‘PEP’), or a valid or expired Venezuelan passport or identity card) to claim the Colombian nationality for their children (Resolución 8470, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil). Before the fact of the high number of undocumented Venezuelans in Colombia and Barranquilla (Blanquicet 2020; Migración Colombia 2020a), the rights of the resolution remain inaccessible to many.

Finally, Law 715 (December 21<sup>th</sup>, 2001, Ministry of Education) and Decree 1851 (September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Ministry of Education) on contracted matriculation (‘matricula contratada’) allow the Secretariats of Education contracting a private education provider to guarantee access to free compulsory education when the public education sector’s capacity is reached (Interview 16; Radinger et al. 2018, 170). Contracted matriculation was found by Radinger et al. (2018, 20/170) as providing Secretariats of Education flexibility in education delivery, mainly resulting in improved access to education in contexts characterised by a high number of special needs students, expanding urban areas (e.g., rural to urban migration), or forced displacement. Since the capacity of public schools in Barranquilla has been reached, the Secretariat of Education views the contracted matriculation as part of the solution to ensure



that the education sector can absorb the current population at compulsory school age (Interview 16).

## **6.2.2 Welcoming Public Officers and Educational Institutions**

In general, three interviewees described the education sector of Barranquilla as being receptive to Venezuelans (Interview 21; Interview 27; Interview 34). One representative of a local humanitarian NGO based this receptiveness on the considerable migration of Colombians from the department of Atlántico to Venezuela during the 70s and 80s. The interviewee argued that, therefore, as a social gesture, the district of Barranquilla had generally been less restrictive to grant Venezuelan migrants and refugees access to formal education in comparison to districts of other departments (Interview 27). By February 2020, approximately 7,000 Venezuelan children were enrolled in the compulsory education sector of Barranquilla (Interview 21). Moreover, the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla communicated to international cooperation actors that it was actively seeking additional teachers and resources for the construction of education infrastructure (Interview 21). This illustrates the mayorality of Barranquilla's general "open door" approach in receiving Venezuelan migrants and refugees.

Beyond migrant and refugee-friendly policies and the receptiveness of the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla towards these population groups, migrants' and refugees' access to compulsory education in Barranquilla is strongly determined at the institutional level by public officers and further education staff. The Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla is aware of particular educational institutions that enrol Venezuelan children without asking for official identification and academic documents. In these cases, the schools evaluate the children through entry exams<sup>67</sup> (usually in mathematics and languages) to enrol them at the corresponding education level (Interview 12; Interview 16). This practice, in accordance with Decree 1228 and Circular No. 16 of 2018 of the Ministry of Education, was confirmed by the visited public schools I, II, and IV (Interview 8; Interview 9; Interview 18; Interview 30; Interview 32). Accordingly, two Venezuelan students at school I explained that they were enrolled at the first school they presented themselves, even without providing official identification documents (Interview 10).

A public officer of the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla specified that the provision of the official documentation would be preferred, even if it took additional time, but

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<sup>67</sup> Initially, Venezuelan students at school I were enrolled at the equivalent grade as in Venezuela, but due to high repetition rates among this population group, the entry exam was introduced (Interview 9). School I and II mentioned that the entry exam had worked so far in practice and that repetition rates had been low (Interview 8; Interview 18). Decree 1228 of 2018 of the Ministry of Education mentions then also that the educational institutions need to provide these "levelling" exams and validation of grades for Venezuelan students free of cost and validate them with the respective Secretariat of Education and Ministry of Education, respectively. The validation of 11<sup>th</sup> grade can only be achieved through the State exam SABER 11 (Decree 1228 of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, Ministry of Education; Decree 1075 of May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2005, Ministry of Education).

there were no legal consequences if the documents could not be provided (Interview 12; Interview 16). The latter illustrates the misinformation and unjustified fear of rectors that exist at the institutional level in the compulsory education sector of Barranquilla, as discussed in chapter 6.1.2. In practice, school I made the experience that most parents of undocumented enrolled Venezuelan children got the documentation over the next months after enrolment (Interview 8). Similarly, school IV most often received the missing enrolment documents from parents via fax, email, or in the form of smartphone pictures, which was sufficient for the Secretariat of Education (Interview 30; Interview 32).

Additionally, it is in the autonomy of each educational institution's administration to decide how many Venezuelan migrant and refugee students to enrol, even if full capacity is technically reached, or to recommend parents seeking a study place for their children to schools with availability (Interview 18; Interview 23; Interview 30; Interview 34). Hence, public officers at both mid-level (Secretariat of Education) and low-level (educational institutions) in the education sector of Barranquilla can actively support Venezuelan migrants and refugees in accessing education (Interview 30; Interview 34). At school IV, support from mid-level public officers allowed the rector to officially graduate Venezuelan students from 11<sup>th</sup> grade without having complete official documentation (Interview 30).

Representatives of schools II and IV highlighted that the enrolment of Venezuelan students at their school is an act of solidarity and humanity towards the Venezuelan migrant and refugee population (Interview 17; Interview 30). For instance, the rector of school IV specified that the legalisation process of identity documents in Colombia could take up to six to eight months. Consequently, the rector mentioned it to be his duty during this time to protect undocumented children, through enrolment at his school, from being exposed to the risks on the streets of the school's neighbourhoods (e.g., abuse, hunger, prostitution, drug consumption) (Interview 30). In addition, the rector had a migration background, and various of his family members were residing in Venezuela at the time of field research. Hence, he felt the responsibility to accept as many Venezuelan children at his school as possible, prioritising the social and protective role of education above academic performance (Interview 30). Similarly, the rector of school III highlighted the need to enrol children from the school's neighbourhood to protect them from the dangers of the sector, such as drug consumption, strong forms of violence, and recruitment by criminal groups (Interview 23).

### **6.2.3 Child Friendly Spaces and Catch-up Education Programs**

This study identified four CFSs in Barranquilla, run by local, international cooperation, or both actors (Interview 7; Interview 14; Interview 22; Interview 27; Interview 34). These CFSs prepare out-of-school children (aged five to thirteen) cognitively and psychosocially (i.e., strengthening of emotional resiliency), often through play, in adequate and safe spaces for entering

Barranquilla's compulsory education system (Interview 7; Interview 14; Interview 22; Interview 27; Interview 29; Interview 34). For instance, one of the identified CFSs has applied the 'Learning Cycles'<sup>68</sup> methodology explicitly (Interview 22; Interview 29). Thus, CFSs can help Venezuelan migrant and refugee children access compulsory schooling in Barranquilla optimally. However, they are limited in capacity—around 40 to 100 children participate at one CFS—to absorb the current out-of-school migrant and refugee population. The fact that some CFSs are not exclusive to migrants and refugees, and also include children from the local host communities, aggravates the situation (Interview 7; Interview 14; Interview 27; Interview 29; Interview 34).

One educational institution and community centre, located in the South of Barranquilla and visited during field research, functions as a private school in the afternoon, with contracted matriculations for Venezuelan students, and works as a CFS in cooperation with a humanitarian INGO, a local foundation, and government agency in the morning. Thereby, the international NGO adds the MHPSS (Mental Health and Psychosocial Support) and protection components (Interview 22; Interview 29). The participating Venezuelan refugee and migrant and Colombian returnee children (around 50), aged 6 to 13 years, were selected on a first-come-first-served basis on the criteria of being out of school. Participants only leave once they got enrolled at a formal educational institution and received the official school certificate by the CFS (Interview 29). Besides acquiring basic calculation, reading, and writing skills, the children learn how to control their emotions and feelings. The CFS applies gender as a transversal project dimension and includes disabled children. Staff at the CFS consists, besides the coordinator of the humanitarian INGO, of volunteering Venezuelan professionals as well as students from public and private universities of Barranquilla (Interview 22; Interview 29).

Furthermore, catch-up education or accelerated education programs conducted by the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla in 2019 benefitted a total of nearly 200 Venezuelan and Colombian children (Interview 15). Besides applying the 'Learning Cycles' methodology during these programs, this mode of education is also used by educational institutions in Barranquilla for the over-aged student population, including Venezuelan migrants and refugees (Interview 9; Interview 16; Interview 17). Since not all public schools provide catch-up education programs for overaged students, one interviewee mentioned the program by the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla to be very limited in reach (Interview 9). Further programs facilitating education access of Venezuelan migrant and refugee children are part of the educational humanitarian response, as discussed in chapter 7.

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<sup>68</sup> The 'Learning Circles' methodology ('Círculos de Aprendizaje') was designed in 2002 and initially addressed internally displaced students and ex-combatants in Colombia. This methodology allows students arriving at schools throughout the school year and overaged children and youth to access compulsory education (Radinger et al. 2018, 23; UNESCO 2018, 73; UIS 2019). Findings on persons affected by Colombia's internal armed conflict show that this methodology and mode of education has expanded access to compulsory education (Radinger et al. 2018, 23).

## **7. EDUCATION IN THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO THE VENEZUELAN MIGRATION PHENOMENON IN BARRANQUILLA**

Evidence from my field research in Barranquilla shows that the educational response to the Venezuelan migration phenomenon in Barranquilla varies among different actors from distributing education kits, support in academic methodologies, food delivery, to MHPSS services (Interview 12; Interview 16; Interview 21; Interview 27; Interview 30; Interview 34). The following sub-chapters illustrate the critical role that education plays in the humanitarian response to the Venezuelan migration phenomenon in Barranquilla, focusing on its key actors.

### **7.1 Local Humanitarian Civil Society Organisations**

Local humanitarian CSOs in Barranquilla, led by Venezuelans, provide orientation services on how to access education and report cases of out-of-school children and other educational needs to local government institutions or/and international cooperation actors when official attention routes are dysfunctional or inexistent. Consequently, the majority of the local CSOs interviewed described themselves as having an accountability role in denouncing educational needs such as access to education of refugee and migrant children (Interview 7; Interview 11; Interview 14; Interview 27). Frequently, public workshops and information sessions, conducted in collaboration with either local government authorities or international cooperation actors, or both (Interview 7; Interview 27; Interview 34), are the primary mode of these CSOs to identify out-of-school children among the Venezuelan migrant and refugee population in Barranquilla, besides arranged counselling services (Interview 11; Interview 15). Subsequently, the CSOs report the out-of-school children to the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla, which then bears the duty to identify schools with available study spots (Interview 11; Interview 15). Additionally, one local CSO reported cases of public schools with insufficient resources to include all students in school feeding programs to multilateral organisations with a presence in Barranquilla (Interview 27).

Furthermore, and at the institutional level, one local CSO provided various activities with a focus on MHPSS to children aged above six at public schools in Barranquilla. These activities, run by professional volunteers of the CSO, such as psychologists and social workers, aimed at creating safe spaces to prevent children from xenophobic acts, mitigating psychosocial effects caused by the migration experience, and developing values of respect and tolerance. In addition, the activities helped the CSO to refer children with severe psychosocial needs to psychosocial workers at schools and to follow up on these cases (Interview 27).

Finally, the strong connection with Venezuelan migrant and refugee communities, in some cases through volunteers living in need as well (Interview 13; Interview 27), facilitated local humanitarian CSOs to distribute education kits, besides other goods, in zones which are

highly populated by marginalised Venezuelans (Interview 12). Mainly due to this connectedness, a leading multilateral organisation of the humanitarian response in Barranquilla financially supported the interviewed CSOs (Interview 7).

## **7.2 International Humanitarian Actors**

Evidence from the interviews suggests that Barranquilla, namely the Secretariat of Education, received substantial support from international humanitarian actors involved in education (incl. non-formal education) (Interview 12; Interview 16). The international educational response is coordinated by the EiE group of the local GIFMM in Barranquilla, which in March 2020 was still in a consolidation process and led by UNICEF in close contact with the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla (Interview 7; Interview 34). Since mid-2019, various humanitarian and development organisations that implement education-related projects have arrived in the city (Interview 34). Around three to four organisations work in EiE, according to a representative of a humanitarian INGO (Interview 34). Additionally, this research identified that the educational response falls short of secondary education due to a strong focus on primary education. This constitutes a challenge before the fact that the secondary student population among Venezuelan migrants and refugees has been steadily increasing in Barranquilla (Interview 16; Interview 27).

Similar to the local humanitarian CSOs, representatives of humanitarian INGOs considered that their activities complement the governmental institutions in the educational response to the current migration situation in Barranquilla. They argued that governmental institutions have limited financial and human resources to ensure universal access to education and quality education (Interview 11; Interview 21; Interview 34). Additionally, three humanitarian INGOs highlighted that they produce evidence on the education situation in Barranquilla for the Secretariat of Education to ensure and pressure for improvement in education coverage<sup>69</sup> (i.e., construction of education infrastructure) and quality (Interview 21; Interview 28; Interview 34). Specifically, one representative of a humanitarian INGO tried to prevent the politicisation of aid (e.g., benefitting selected schools in specific zones) by identifying schools in need and afterward contacting the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla (Interview 21). This practice is contrary to food and education kit distributions by multinational organisations at the schools, identified by the Secretariat of Education, with the highest Venezuelan student population in Barranquilla (Interview 12; Interview 16; Interview 27).

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<sup>69</sup> Sinclair (2002, 29) describes coverage in the domain of EiE as referring to access to all levels of education and gender-sensitivity of education programs which need to be accessible to everyone and inclusive of all crisis-affected groups.

The educational response of humanitarian INGOs and multilateral organisations to the Venezuelan migration phenomenon in Barranquilla has included the distribution of education kits with basic school material (700 kits distributed by one INGO and 7,000 kits<sup>70</sup> by a multilateral organisation in 2019) and school uniforms, prioritising Venezuelan migrant and refugee children at educational institutions (Interview 12; Interview 16; Interview 21; Interview 30; Interview 34). Moreover, the educational response has been composed of the provision of lunch at schools with school feeding programs (Interview 16), cash transfer programs to support migrants and refugees in buying school material and uniforms (Interview 21; Interview 34), and improvement of school infrastructure (Interview 21; Interview 30). Beyond this in-kind aid, the educational response of these organisations has consisted of: i) enrolling children directly at schools thanks to past collaboration (Interview 21); ii) directing education cases to and strengthening the referral pathways of governmental institutions and apt international cooperation partners on education access (Interview 7; Interview 22); iii) sensitisation campaigns for parents and communities on the importance of schooling (Interview 34); iv) adjusting teaching methodologies (Interview 21; Interview 30); and v) teaching at schools about the migration history of both Colombia and Venezuela to create respect and tolerance among students (Interview 21). Moreover, international humanitarian actors supported the participation of around 200 migrant and refugee students at the primary level in catch-up education programs applying the 'Learning Cycles' methodology. These programs were run in four zones of the city where the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla has had insufficient capacity to meet the educational needs (see also chapter 6.2.3; Interview 12; Interview 16).

Finally, a regional program (incl. Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador), funded by Education Cannot Wait (EWC) and run by four international humanitarian NGOs, works toward increasing access to compulsory schooling for Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in Barranquilla, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education (Interview 21; Interview 34). To increase access to education, the program implements 'Learning Cycles' at educational institutions and CFSs to strengthen the mathematics, reading, and writing skills of out-of-school children. To this end, the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla identified the schools with the highest Venezuelan student population, which selected the program's participants. The program additionally aims at increasing the quality of education through improving education infrastructure (i.e., classrooms) and capacity building of the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla concerning teacher training with a specific focus on PSS (Interview 34).

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<sup>70</sup> The recipients of these education kits consisted of around 70 to 80 % of Venezuelans and 20 to 30 % Colombians. The INGO distributing the education kits perceived the inclusion of Colombians as a measure to prevent xenophobia (Interview 16).

### 7.3 Governmental Institutions

Despite favourable education policy for Venezuelan migrants and refugees at the national level and the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla's receptive attitude (see chapter 6.2.1), the latter has limited capacities to uphold the additional education demand from migrants and refugees (see chapter 6.1.1; Interview 12). Although the support received from international cooperation actors and local humanitarian CSOs, and its articulated work with the mayoralty of Barranquilla, the government of Atlántico, Ministry of Education, and Migración Colombia; the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla stressed the need for further aid to manage the current education situation considering the Venezuelan migration phenomenon in Barranquilla (Interview 11; Interview 12; Interview 21; Interview 22). Specifically, several interviewees highlighted that further resources to increase education coverage, focusing on the inclusion of migrant and refugee children, are necessary (Interview 8; Interview 12; Interview 14; Interview 16; Interview 17).

Within its capacities and according to two interviewees, the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla created additional education spots at the compulsory levels at all public educational institutions in Barranquilla (Interview 16; Interview 34). Additionally, public school transport or subsidies for transport for both Venezuelans and locals have been provided in the city's areas with a high presence of Venezuelans (see *Figure 4*, p. 32), which remains, however, only a limited solution to spread the increased education demand of specific zones (Interview 12; Interview 16). Furthermore, the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla runs a point of attendance where it attended, on a first-come-first-served basis, approximately 300 persons per day in search of a study spot in January and February 2020. Around 60 % of them were Colombian and 40 % Venezuelan nationals (Interview 12; Interview 16). Finally, as discussed in chapter 6.2.3, the Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla has implemented catch-up education programs for migrant and refugee children in selected schools. One interviewee criticised, though, that these programs would solely take place in the peripheries of Barranquilla and depend on the number of incoming students at specific schools (Interview 15).

As discussed in chapter 5.3, education is among the key priorities of the local government's Development Plan 2020–2023, whose number one priority is to improve equity (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b). Specifically, the plan highlights the aim to increase access to, inclusion, and quality of public education in Barranquilla (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 35–36). To increase access to education and education coverage, eight new schools in the mode of public-private partnerships shall benefit over 10,000 students from full-day schooling (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 65–66). Additionally, by 2023 the enrolment of all disabled children demanding public schooling shall be achieved, and school transport to public schools increased to spread the education demand more equally (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 62).

## 7.4 Educational Institutions

Besides enrolling Venezuelan migrant and refugee children (see also chapter 6.2.2), evidence from the interviews that I conducted at public schools in Barranquilla illustrates that the educational response to these population groups by educational institutions reaches further. School II provides uniforms and school material to Venezuelan students in need, according to the resources the school possesses to help those most in need (Interview 17). Additionally, teachers themselves, if they have sufficient resources, donate textbooks to these students (Interview 18). Similarly, at school III, teachers and the administration support, when resources allow, low-income and Venezuelan students who lack school material (Interview 24). School I runs an internal campaign to recollect used school uniforms, which it donates to newly arriving Venezuelan migrant and refugee children (Interview 9). As it is common in many public schools in Barranquilla, School II provides breakfast and lunch to the entire student population. The rector of school II considered it as one way to support the marginalised Venezuelan population in the city (Interview 17). Further support to the Venezuelan population in Barranquilla by public schools include parental education workshops on specific topics such as the prevention of drug consumption, alcoholism, prostitution, sex education, or psychosocial orientation. Some of these workshops had been run in collaboration with government entities (Interview 8; Interview 18). Finally, the psychosocial worker of school II has helped Venezuelan migrant and refugee children to adapt to the new education system and school environment and has referred psychosocially severe cases to psychologists (Interview 17; Interview 18).

## 8. IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES IN LARGE-SCALE MIGRATION SETTINGS

The challenges, opportunities, and experiences concerning access to compulsory education for Venezuelan migrants and refugees (see chapter 6), as illustrated in *Figure 10*,<sup>71</sup> and the educational humanitarian response to the migration phenomenon in Barranquilla (see chapter 7), illustrate the complexity around access to schooling in large-scale migration settings and the need to study these contexts in-depth to understand its underlying processes. Drawing on these findings, it is crucial to highlight that a one-size-fits-all approach and concept to EiE or education in a setting such as Barranquilla, is inexistent; each setting needs a context-/crisis-specific response to meet different community needs effectively (Burde 2005; Kagawa 2005, 495; Sinclair 2002, 26). Nevertheless, the following evidence-based analysis aims to inform

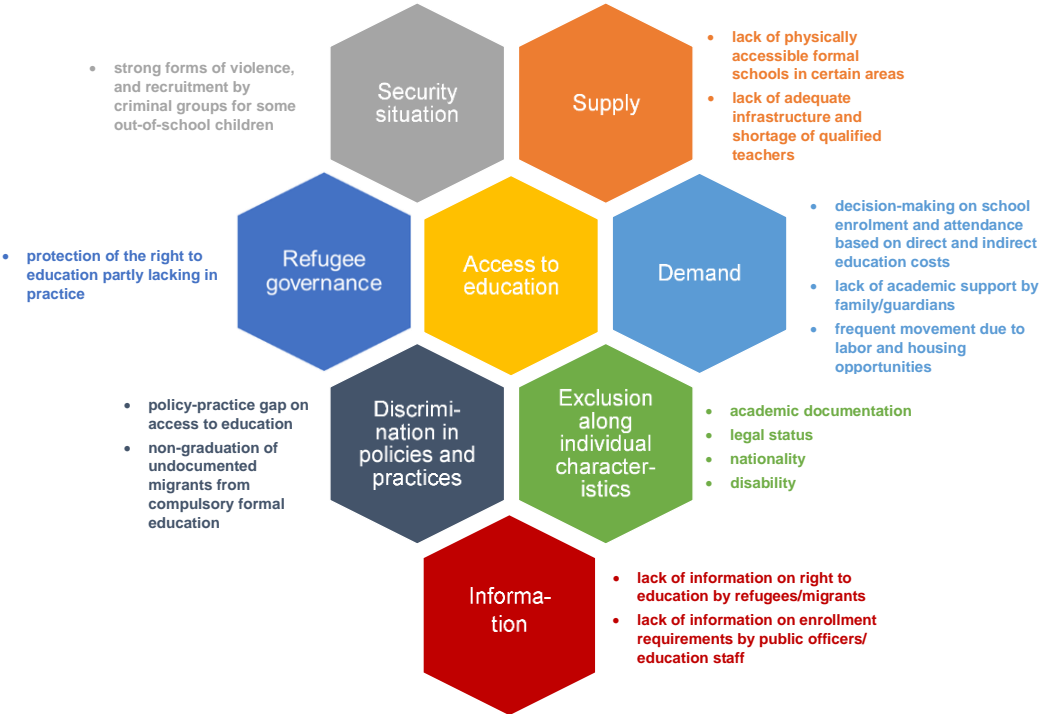
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<sup>71</sup> Taking into account the determinants of access to education in the EiE concept on refugee education by Dryden-Peterson (2011, 26; see *Figure 1*, chapter 3.1), the findings of this thesis suggest adding the determinant 'Information' concerning large-scale migration settings (see chapter 8.2). As all determinants, 'Information' is interconnected with other determinants, mainly 'Exclusion along individual characteristics', 'Discrimination in policies and practices', 'Refugee governance', and 'Demand'.



educational responses in large-scale migration settings by discussing the key characteristics identified in the context of Barranquilla.

Figure 10: Determinants of Access to Education in Barranquilla

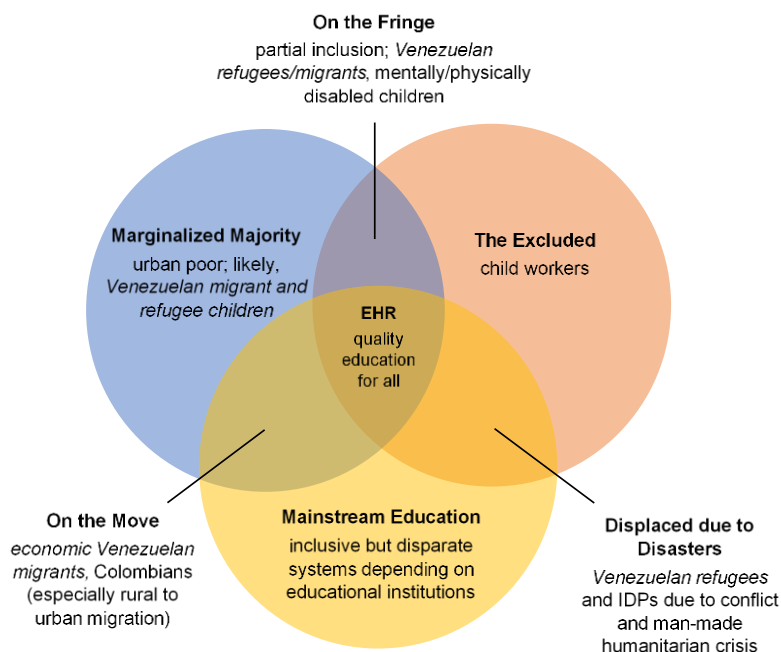


Source: own figure, based on information from Dryden-Peterson (2011, 26)

**8.1 Flexible and Integral Educational Response**

As illustrated in *Figure 11*, when applying the EHR concept of Brook (2011; see chapter 3.2) to the context of Barranquilla, Venezuelan migrants and refugees remain partly excluded from the formal mainstream education system through neglect or ignorance (i.e., xenophobia, lack of information, allegedly missing documents of undocumented migrants or refugees, and enrolment-related costs). Moreover, if estimates on the absolute number of out-of-school migrant and refugee children of the Venezuelan population in Barranquilla held, this population group would, together with the urban poor, constitute the marginalised majority in Barranquilla concerning access to mainstream education. Their exclusion is primarily related to the limited capacity of the education sector to absorb the current education demand (see chapter 6.1.1) and discriminatory enrolment procedures (see chapter 6.1.2), despite Colombia’s generally inclusive education policy for Venezuelan migrant and refugee children (see chapter 6.2.1).

Figure 11: EHR in the Context of Barranquilla



Source: own figure based on Brook (2011, 20)

To approach the ideal condition of EHR which is to meet “the educational needs of all in a situation of sustainable social and economic development, where informal and non-formal education are enabled to contribute effectively to generating social capital for civil society” (Brook 2011, 21), a flexible educational response is needed in the context of Barranquilla, covering all levels of compulsory education. The latter is especially relevant since the focus of the current educational humanitarian response lies on primary education (see chapter 7), the link of lower and upper secondary levels remains weak, and enrolment rates at the secondary level are generally low (see chapter 5.3). Additionally, the human rights-based approach to education, as discussed in chapter 3.3 and namely the CESCR ‘General Comment No. 13’ (1999), demands flexible education programs according to the needs and transformations of societies (para 6). Flexibility is also relevant before the findings of Monaghan (2019, 39) in migration settings, highlighting the problem of uncertainty of the development of protracted displacement situations as a challenge for education planners concerning systematic aspects and curriculum design.

First, to improve Barranquilla’s education system capacity to absorb the additional education demand, mobile community-led spaces with Venezuelan education professionals who hold non-homologated titles could be the first step to prepare out-of-school children for entering the formal education sector (Interview 21). The time of arrival of the children during

the academic year to access these spaces should not matter. In contrast to the study at the global level of Dryden-Peterson (2015, 11), this paper finds no informal education spaces initiated by refugees and migrants in the context of Barranquilla, despite the high amount of Venezuelan educational professionals mentioned among the migrant and refugee population (Interview 16; Interview 21; Interview 27). However, CFSs and catch-up education programs (primarily run by INGOs and Colombian staff) exist already in Barranquilla but in a limited number (see chapter 6.2.3). Optimally, the Secretariat of Education would certify mobile community-led spaces and would facilitate the homologation of professional and academic titles of education professionals among the migrant and refugee population. Thereby, these spaces would receive a formal status and may be transformed into public schools with adequate infrastructure, as analysed by McCarthy (2017) in the context of the Syrian migration phenomenon in Turkey. Moreover, through the inclusion of governmental actors in the humanitarian response, the educational response could become sustainable and could help to strengthen the capacity of the public education system (Simopoulos and Alexandridis 2019; Mendenhall et al. 2017; Mendenhall 2014, 71–74; Dryden-Peterson 2015, 12; Burde 2005, 10).

Second, an increase in education supply needs to be complemented with labour opportunities that enhance stability in housing, and thus decrease dropouts at schools caused by frequent movement (see also Erwin et al. 2020, 142–144). Additionally, a stable income can help to overcome the barrier of indirect education costs (e.g., uniforms, school material) (Erwin et al. 2020, 143; Muñoz 2010, 22) or poverty (Sinclair 2002). Consequently, the current educational humanitarian response in Barranquilla needs to be linked to a system-wide developmental approach that includes the broader environment of both Colombian and Venezuelan children, taking into account broader economic, political, cultural, and social processes (Robertson and Dale 2015, as cited in Lopes Cardozo and Novelli 2018, 235; Brook 2011; Kagawa 2005, 488). For instance, Erwin et al. (2020, 143) find that the expectation on the relevance of education of urban refugee children's families in Kenya can pose a barrier to schooling when these children are kept out of school to support the household or paid informal labour. Similarly, this paper finds that family members or guardians of migrant and refugee children can be either supportive or an obstacle to their schooling (see chapter 6.1.6). This reaffirms the EHR's focus on the family and community level, including its contextual factors that shape needs, concerning the power for change and sustainable development (Brook 2011, 35–38).

Third, understanding the perceived role of education at the institutional level might help to effectively implement an educational response that is connected with the local context and understandings of social realities (see Versmesse et al. 2017). This allows preventing the imposition of EiE as an external concept which primarily benefits migrants and refugees and

oversees the educational needs of host communities. This study identified access to compulsory schooling at two educational institutions in Barranquilla to be in line with the humanitarian imperative for education in EiE (see chapter 6.2.2; Interview 23; Interview 30). The latter promotes education as a life-saving and life-sustaining component due to its provision of physical, psychosocial, and cognitive protection (Halman et al. 2018; Global Education Cluster 2018; Burde et al. 2017; Anderson et al. 2011, 87; Muñoz 2010, 13). Additionally, this paper revealed the solidarity of school administrations and teachers in supporting students in need of both the host community and migrant/refugee population (see chapter 7.4), which optimally constitutes a base humanitarian response builds on.

## **8.2 Information as Key to Inclusive Education**

This study identified a policy-practice gap on access to education, similarly to recent research in the field of EiE (see Carseley and Russel 2020; Rodríguez-Gómez 2019; Buckner et al. 2018; Mendenhall et al. 2017, 8), which is mainly based on a lack of information at the institutional level (see chapters 6.1.2 and 6.2.1). This gap constitutes a violation of the right to education as enshrined in the Constitution of Colombia (1991, Título II, Arts. 44/67) and various human rights instruments (see chapter 3.3 and Appendix 3). Specifically, it violates the principle of non-discrimination in accessing physically and economically accessible public education as outlined in the CESCR 'General Comment No. 13' (1999) on the right to education (para 6). Consequently, the possession of information on the right to education (incl. on the enrolment requirements), both by public officers/education staff and refugees/migrants, is decisive for Venezuelan migrants and refugees in accessing compulsory education in Barranquilla. Similarly, Rodríguez-Gómez (2019, 62/67–68/83) finds in her study on the access to education of Colombian refugees in Quito (Ecuador) a strong reliance of the former on decisions of public officers and consequently their understandings of education policy, as a major factor of the “unpredictable character” of refugees’ access to education. Besides, Erwin et al. (2020, 143) identify the lack of knowledge among refugees on school enrolment processes as a barrier to education access for urban refugee children in Kenya. Accessing accurate information allows migrants and refugees to access their rights and denounce cases of denial and discrimination. Denouncement and visibility of illegal enrolment practices may help to render the formal education sector more inclusive, especially concerning minority and marginalised populations.

Discriminatory and illegal enrolment practices in the compulsory public education sector of Barranquilla (i.e., matriculation costs, accident insurance, uniforms; see chapter 6.1.2) disproportionately deny education access to low-income migrants and refugees. As Rojas (2018) and Delgado-Barrera (2014) find in their analysis of Colombia’s formal education sector, poverty and barriers in accessing education are directly related: the higher the poverty

indicators of a community, the more barriers exist in accessing education. They argue that this perpetuates a vicious cycle of poverty and inequality as well as lower school attendance of students from low-income families (Rojas 2018, 140; Delgado-Barrera 2014, 129). Therefore, information-based elimination of illegal and exclusive enrolment practices needs to be one part of the solution to break this vicious cycle.

The enrolment of Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in the compulsory education sector of Barranquilla was identified to be both willingly and unwillingly exclusive, depending on educational institutions and individuals responsible for the enrolment process. In both cases, it is relevant that education staff is aware of the context of the migration phenomenon they are part of, and the respective role that education plays therein (e.g., protection, migrant-/refugee-specific needs). Only then can increased governmental spending on access to education, as it is the case in absolute terms in Barranquilla (see chapter 5.3), and migrant- and refugee-friendly education policy (see chapter 6.2.1) be effective and result in a strengthened education system.

To ensure a solid education system, at the institutional level, the dissemination of information on the fundamental right to education needs primarily to remain the responsibility of the State, and in the case of Barranquilla, the Secretariat of Education. This does, however, not exclude the capacity building of public officers through non-governmental actors. Concerning the information targeted at migrants and refugees, evidence of this research illustrates that the first contact points of migrants and refugees in Barranquilla are principally the migrant- and refugee-led CSOs (Interview 11; Interview 13; Interview 14; Interview 27). Hence, these CSOs are suitable for information dissemination on the right to education. The dissemination may reach its full effectiveness once these CSOs get included in the international humanitarian architecture and strengthened, as agreed in the 'Grand Bargain'<sup>72</sup> (IASC 2016, 5).

### **8.3 Inclusion and Empowerment of Migrant- and Refugee-led Civil Society Organisations**

The migrant- and refugee-led CSOs in the migration context of Barranquilla play a critical role in both denouncing denied access to education for Venezuelan migrants and refugees as well as providing orientation and referral services (incl. information dissemination on accessing rights). This is mainly the case due to their close contact and affinity with the migrant and refugee population. Even though these organisations were founded before the initiation of the government's official humanitarian response and the arrival of international cooperation actors

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<sup>72</sup> The Grand Bargain agreement launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016 and signed by over 50 of the world's biggest donors and aid providers, calls, besides other, on all humanitarian actors to build on local capacities and strengthen local actors in humanitarian crises (IASC 2016, 5).

(see chapter 7.1), their inclusion in the local GIFMM (international humanitarian architecture) to ensure contextualised and articulated responses of international actors in Barranquilla, is still lacking (Interview 11; Interview 14; Interview 15; Interview 23). Kagawa (2005, 499–500) stresses then also that the consultation of crisis-affected people is necessary for both short- and long-term EiE responses.

Furthermore, refugee- and migrant-led humanitarian CSOs are crucial in preventing the politicization and exclusiveness of aid, which can result in xenophobia (e.g., the selection of certain beneficiary schools by the Secretariat of Education; see chapters 5.2 and 7). One means to this is CSOs' advocacy of inclusive public policy. Similarly, Pigozzi (1999, 15) identifies “obvious disparities caused by international aid directed towards refugees and unavailable to poor local populations” as a problem of ‘incidental emergencies’.<sup>73</sup> To prevent this problem, EHR reminds not only to include the excluded, marginalised, and disadvantaged individuals who are receiving humanitarian assistance in emergencies but also those already having access to local mainstream education that can be marginalised or otherwise disadvantaged (Brook 2011, 19–20/25/40).

#### **8.4 Effective Access to Quality Education**

Even though this study focuses on access to schooling without assessing the quality of the education accessed, its evidence illustrates that quality education<sup>74</sup> must be an integral part of an educational humanitarian response. The average period of displacement due to the protracted nature of humanitarian disasters approximates seventeen years (Halman et al. 2018, 207). Therefore, access to quality education, taking into account a developmental approach (i.e., including EiE from the beginning of crisis interventions as part of the development process and not only relief action; Burde 2005, 3), becomes especially relevant since most displaced persons will receive their only education in displacement (Dryden-Peterson 2017, 1–2). This is also likely to apply to the Venezuelan migration phenomenon whose majority of migrants and refugees is not expected to return within the next twenty years due to the situation in their country of origin (Rodríguez and Ramos 2019, 571). However, as discussed in chapter 5.3, the mayoralty of Barranquilla financially prioritises access to education over quality education despite the fact that the potential for improvement in quality education is stressed in its Development Plan 2020–2023 (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b). In addition, the analysis at the policy level on education for Venezuelan migrants and refugees illustrates that the policy response of the Ministry of Education strongly focuses on education

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<sup>73</sup> Pigozzi (1999, 15) defines ‘incidental emergencies’ as “result[ing] from the effect of emergencies on neighbouring countries” and states the need for analysing educational impacts of these emergencies.

<sup>74</sup> Dryden-Peterson (2011, 30) defines quality education as involving “the teaching and learning that takes place once children are enrolled in and in attendance at school”. Specifically, quality education is defined by UNESCO (2000, 17, Goal 6, para 42) in the Dakar Framework of Action as education that “satisfies basic learning needs and enriches the lives of learners and their overall experience of living”.

access (see chapter 6.2.1). Also, this study identifies INGOs and local CSOs as having an accountability role in ensuring the quality of public education in Barranquilla (see chapters 7.1 and 7.2).

The developmental approach to EiE (Dryden-Peterson 2011, 9; Burde 2005, 10; Pigozzi 1999), EHR (Brook 2011), and the human rights-based approach to education all focus on access to quality education (see chapter 3). Especially psychosocial and cognitive protection, as highlighted in EiE (see chapter 3.1; INEE 2010, 117), may only be granted if education is of adequate quality. Therefore, the Global Education Cluster (2018, 6) defines EiE as covering inclusive and quality learning beyond safe opportunities. Respectively, Dryden-Peterson (2011, 22) stresses that “[education] access, quality, and protection must be conceptualised as integrally connected in effective policy and programmatic approaches to [...] education”. Notably, and regarding the humanitarian-development nexus, crises grant the chance of “building back better” —or in the case of Barranquilla ‘building better on the existing’— and more inclusive quality education systems (Sinclair 2002, 26/29; Pigozzi 1999, 4/9/13–16). In the context of Barranquilla, the latter refers, besides others, to remove the barriers of access to quality education for children with either physical or mental special needs, or both, be they Colombians or of other nationality (see chapter 6.1.5).

This study identifies adequate MHPSS and related pedagogic methodologies as one means to decrease the dropout and desertion of Venezuelan migrant and refugee students (Interview 15; Interview 29). This requires specific teacher training, enabling teachers to act as psychological first aid for the migrant and refugee students (Halman et al. 2018, 210).<sup>75</sup> McBride (2018) finds that feelings of insecurity, exclusion in the wider community, as well as the lack of understanding or ignorance of pre- and post-migration aspects (incl. trauma) can pose a barrier in accessing education for refugee children. Consequently, the inclusion of sensitisation on xenophobia, intercultural exchange, and MHPSS in the national education plan is crucial (Interview 22).

Lastly, Dryden-Peterson (2011, 24) defines access to education as the “ability to enroll in school and to continue one’s studies through to the end of a given level”. Moreover, Sinclair (2002, 43) specifies that access to education needs to include, beyond physical and legal access, effective and appropriate access. As identified in the context of Barranquilla, undocumented Venezuelan migrants are granted physical and legal access to formal education but lack the possibility of officially graduating from the last grade of the compulsory education cycle. Consequently, the findings of this paper point to the fact that effective access

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<sup>75</sup> García del Soto (2010, 197–198) stresses in her study *‘Psychosocial Issues in Education’* that the priority of children who have experienced traumatic events is not inclusion into formal education, but primarily clinical treatment of their mental health problems. This illustrates the need for educational institutions to refer severe cases to professional psychologists/psychotherapists, and not to deem access to education solely as the panacea for children who have experienced traumatic events.

to quality education needs to be an integral part of an educational humanitarian response from its very beginning.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

The underlying processes that determine access to compulsory schooling for Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in Barranquilla reveal the need to study migration contexts through a multidimensional and inclusive lens, taking into account different levels of analysis and the broader context of the migration phenomenon. Such a lens makes it necessary to examine the research question beyond education and also include an investigation of the evolution, migration motives, and humanitarian needs of the refugee and migrant population. As illustrated in this paper, the concepts of EiE, EHR, and the human rights-based approach to education can provide a pertinent framework to this end.

The context of Barranquilla is characterised by historically high levels of poverty and inequality and difficulties in accessing public services and goods, particularly by vulnerable persons. Therefore, taking into account the needs of the host community is necessary to ensure an inclusive, integral humanitarian response that complements the insufficient capacities of governmental institutions. Thereby, xenophobia against migrants and refugees, grounded on the prioritisation of this population group by humanitarian actors, can be diminished. Moreover, emergency contexts provide a chance to solve pre-existing challenges in access to basic services, such as education. For Barranquilla and the wider Colombian education sector, the migration phenomenon constitutes an opportunity to build better on the existing education system by improving its accessibility, quality, and inclusiveness and thereby contribute to broader socio-economic development.

This study illustrates the wide range of experiences of actors determining and benefiting from the access to compulsory schooling for Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in Barranquilla. Challenges identified concerning the latter include: i) the limited capacity of the education system to ensure access to corresponding education levels and to absorb the education demand; ii) willing and unwilling discrimination in enrolment procedures (e.g., demanding documents that only regular migrants or Colombians can access, enrolment costs, xenophobia); iii) undocumented migrants' denied access to official graduation from the compulsory education cycle; iv) frequent movement among Venezuelan migrants and refugees within and in/out of Barranquilla; v) re-collapse of education access for physical and mental special needs students; and vi), depending on the context, lack of academic support by parents or guardians of migrant and refugee children. However, evidence from the field research suggests the following opportunities for Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in Barranquilla concerning access to compulsory education: i) the migrant and refugee-friendly education policy at the national level, primarily enacted by the Ministry of Education; ii)



welcoming (low- and mid-level) public officers and individuals at educational institutions; iii) CFSs and catch-up education programs that include the migrant and refugee population and prepare them for entering the formal education system; and iv) the benefits resulting from the educational humanitarian response consisting of international cooperation actors, migrant- and refugee-led CSOs, and governmental and educational institutions.

Even though the findings of this paper cannot be deemed as generally applicable to education in large-scale migration settings, the analysis of the migration context of Barranquilla uncovers the following insights concerning access to education in such settings: i) the need of flexible and integral educational responses that include all levels of compulsory education and are linked to a system-wide developmental response, in compliance with the understanding of migration as a complex and non-linear process; ii) dissemination of information on the right to education as key to ensure inclusive education systems wherein migrants and refugees are active agents in accessing and denouncing their rights; iii) empowerment and inclusion of migrant- and refugee-led CSOs in existing or emerging humanitarian architectures; and iv) prioritisation of effective access to quality education for migrants and refugees—including official graduation from the compulsory education cycle—and its inclusion as an integral part of humanitarian responses as entailed in EiE, EHR, and the human rights-based approach to education.

Besides these findings, this research illustrates the value of including voices of children, parents, teachers, rectors, social workers, public officers, and humanitarian workers/volunteers to unveil the underlying processes behind localised barriers and opportunities regarding access to education. Analysing education policy and publicly available data isolated from the experiences of these actors would have dismissed the lived realities of both the Venezuelan migrant and refugee and local population of Barranquilla. Additionally, giving a voice to migrants and refugees in the research process allowed to uncover the power for change and sustainable development attributed to the local level of family and community by the EHR concept of Brook (2011). Consequently, future research on education in the Venezuelan and further migration phenomena optimally builds on the applied methodology of this research to add to further in-depth case studies. Hopefully, this kind of research contributes to improvement in the educational situation of both migrant and refugee populations and host communities in migration settings.

This study leaves numerous questions unanswered that will hopefully be addressed in future research to untangle the complexity of education in migration settings. First, the quality of education accessed and actual learning of Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in the formal education sector of Barranquilla requires further investigation to inform effective humanitarian response. Second, research on the impact of access to education by Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Colombia on their inclusion in society could help to comprehend

processes that determine a society's cohesion in a migration context. Third, investigating the perception attributed by educational institutions to education and their role in large-scale migration settings should be part of further study in order to understand how to include educational institutions effectively in educational responses. Fourth, the analysis of access to education for Colombian returnees, who account for a considerable percentage of the Venezuelan migration flow, can help to understand the inclusion of this particular migration group into Colombian society. Finally, this study serves as a starting point for comparative analysis of the pre- and post-Covid-19 situation for Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla's compulsory education sector.

Considering the research gap that this paper aims to fill and the nature of the Venezuelan migration phenomenon that is affecting Venezuela's neighbouring countries and the wider region, the present study provides a first in-depth analysis of education in the Venezuelan migration phenomenon in a specific setting in Colombia. Besides the many challenges, it also highlights the existing solidarity with the migrant and refugee population on which humanitarian responses need to be built.

## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1: List of Interviews

Interview	Level of analysis	Type of organisation represented / location of interview	Interviewee/s	Duration	Date
1	individual	none / public space	Venezuelan street vendor and mother of 2 children (aged 2 and 5 years)	5min	14.01.2020
2	individual	none / public space	Venezuelan street vendor and mother of 2 children (aged 1 and 7 years)	6min	14.01.2020
3	individual	none / public space	Venezuelan street vendor and mother of 3 children (aged 5, 9 and 11 years)	15min	14.01.2020
4	individual	none / public space	Venezuelan mother of 2 children (aged 5 years and unknown)	6min	20.01.2020
5	individual	none / public space	Venezuelan father of 2 children (aged 6 months and 7 years)	6min	20.01.2020
6	individual	none / public space	Venezuelan couple and street vendors with 2 children (aged 6 months and 6 years)	11min	20.01.2020
7	coordination	multilateral organisation / interview conducted at organisation's premises	Group interview with Head of Office of the organisation with vast experience on the Venezuelan-Colombian migration phenomenon and protection background, and Colombian Protection Officer	60min	27.01.2020
8	institutional	public school I (transition to upper-secondary levels) / interview conducted at school's premises	Rector of school I, who has been working for 15 years at this position, located in the South East of Barranquilla. The student population of school I consists of around 2,400 students, of whom around 15 % or 300 students at all	24min	05.02.2020

			education levels (transition to upper secondary) are Venezuelans.		
9	institutional	public school I (transition to upper-secondary levels) / interview conducted at school's premises	Group interview with coordinator and mathematics teacher of school I located in the South East of Barranquilla	20min	05.02.2020
10	institutional	public school I (transition to upper-secondary levels) / interview conducted at school's premises	Group interview with 2 Venezuelan students at upper-secondary level (11 <sup>th</sup> grade) which are studying since the beginning of and mid-2018 at school I, located in the South East of Barranquilla	12min	05.02.2020
11	coordination	local NGO I / interview conducted at public space	Vice-president of local, civil society organisation mostly run by Venezuelans in Barranquilla, providing counselling services, legal advice, as well as emergency in-kind aid to Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla	52min	05.02.2020
12	coordination	government / interview conducted at Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla's premises	High-ranking public officer at Secretariat of Education in Barranquilla	20min	06.02.2020
13	coordination	local NGO II / interview conducted at organisation's premises	Venezuelan volunteer at local, civil society organisation mostly run by Venezuelans in Barranquilla, providing medical counselling services, legal advice, as well as medical tests to Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla	28min	12.02.2020

14	coordination	local NGO III / interview conducted at organisation's premises	Founder and president of local, civil society organisation, providing mainly counselling services to Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla	22min	12.02.2020
15	coordination	local NGO IV / interview conducted at organisation's premises	Group interview with Head of Office and assistant of a local civil society organisation providing pro-bono psychosocial support to Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla	45min	12.02.2020
16	coordination	government / interview conducted at Secretariat of Education of Barranquilla's premises	Public officer at Secretariat of Education in Barranquilla with direct responsibility for 4 years of matters directly related to the Venezuelan migration phenomenon in Barranquilla	25min	17.02.2020
17	institutional	public school II (transition to upper-secondary levels) / interview conducted at school's premises	Rector of school II located in the South East of Barranquilla. The Venezuelan student population at school II constitutes a considerable number, but below 25 % of its total student population of 1,020 students who are attended in three dayshifts.	28min	19.02.2020
18	institutional	public school II (transition to upper-secondary levels) / interview conducted at school's premises	Coordinator of school II located in the South East of Barranquilla	21min	19.02.2020
19	institutional	public school II (transition to upper-	Chemistry and biology teacher working for around	16min	19.02.2020

		secondary levels) / interview conducted at school's premises	three years at school II located in the South East of Barranquilla		
20	institutional	public school II (transition to upper-secondary levels) / interview conducted at school's premises	Venezuelan upper-secondary student (11 <sup>th</sup> grade) at school II located in the South East of Barranquilla	5min	19.02.2020
21	coordination	INGO I / interview conducted at organisation's premises	Local coordinator for humanitarian matters of a globally active humanitarian INGO with almost 15 years working for the organisation in Barranquilla	71min	19.02.2020
22	coordination	INGO II / interview conducted at organisation's premises	Group interview with Head of Mission and responsible person for CFSs of a globally active humanitarian INGO with offices and CFSs related activities in Barranquilla	43min	20.02.2020
23	institutional	public school III (transition to upper-secondary levels) / interview conducted at school's premises	Rector for more than a decade at school III located in the South East of Barranquilla in a neighbourhood of social strata 1. The majority of Venezuelan students at school III are overaged and constitute around 7-8 % of the total student population of 2,534 students.	32min	28.02.2020
24	institutional	public school III (transition to upper-secondary levels) / interview conducted at school's premises	Primary teacher at school III located in the South East of Barranquilla	10min	28.02.2020

25	individual	none / interview conducted at public space	Venezuelan mother of 3 children (aged 5 months, 5 and 7 years)	8min	28.02.2020
26	individual	none / interview conducted at public space	Venezuelan street vendor and mother of 2 children (aged 6 and 16 years)	12min	28.02.2020
27	coordination	local NGO V / interview conducted at private premises	Founder and president of local, civil society organisation mostly run by Venezuelans in Barranquilla, providing counselling services, legal advice, as well as emergency in-kind aid to Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Barranquilla	83min	28.02.2020
28	coordination	INGO III / interview conducted at organisation's premises	Head of Office in Barranquilla of globally active humanitarian INGO with focus on protection services for refugees	19min	02.03.2020
29	institutional	Publicly-privately run CFS (for children aged 6-13 years) / interview conducted at the CFS	Group interview with a Venezuelan teacher with engineer background, Venezuelan psychosocial coordinator, and the local coordinator of the CFS located at a private school in the South of Barranquilla. The school is located in a neighbourhood of social strata 1, characterized by a high population of IDPs and, more recently, Venezuelans.	56min	06.03.2020
30	institutional	public school IV (transition to upper-secondary levels) / interview conducted at	Rector and founder of school IV located in the South West of Barranquilla. 196 students were Venezuelan by March 2020 (excl. mixed nationals with	47min	09.03.2020

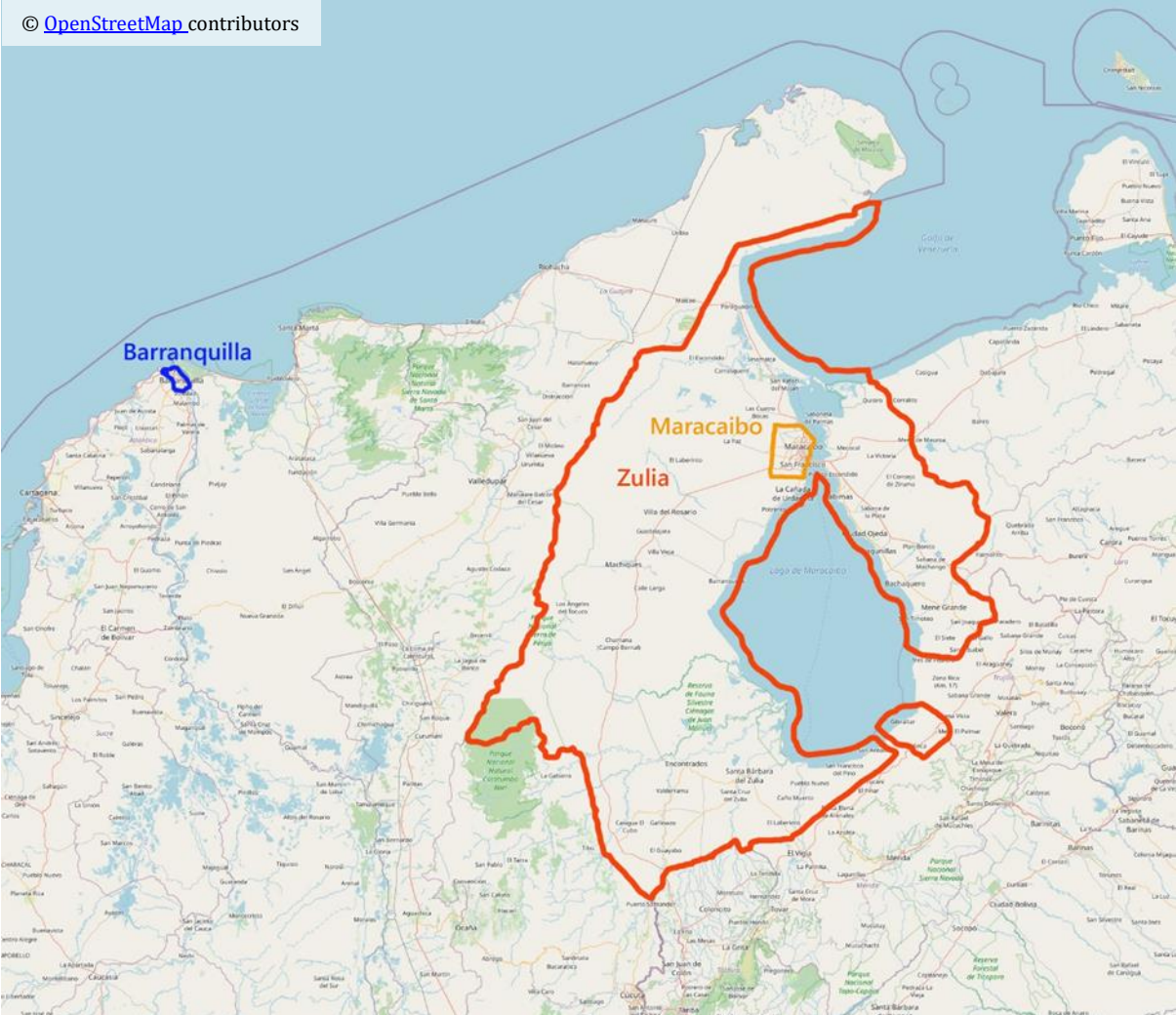
		school's premises	Colombian documents).		
31	institutional	public school IV (transition to upper-secondary levels) / interview conducted at school's premises	Geography, history, political science, and ethics teacher with around 20 years of experience working at school IV located in the South West of Barranquilla	16min	09.03.2020
32	institutional	public school IV (transition to upper-secondary levels) / interview conducted at school's premises	Coordinator with four years working at school IV located in the South West of Barranquilla	9min	13.03.2020
33	institutional	public school IV (transition to upper-secondary levels) / interview conducted at school's premises	Group interview with three Venezuelan students (2 upper-secondary, 11 <sup>th</sup> -grade students; and 1 primary 5 <sup>th</sup> -grade student) at school IV located in the South West of Barranquilla	16min	13.03.2020
34	coordination	INGO IV / interview conducted via Skype	Head of Humanitarian Response in Colombian Caribbean region of a globally active humanitarian INGO with various education-related responses	57min	18.03.2020
35	individual	Public entity / interview conducted via Skype	Social worker born and raised in Barranquilla, who has been working for 25 years as volunteer/professional with marginalised communities in Barranquilla	28min	27.03.2020



Appendix 2: Figures and Tables

Figures

Figure A-1: Geographical Map, Barranquilla and Department of Zulia (Maracaibo)



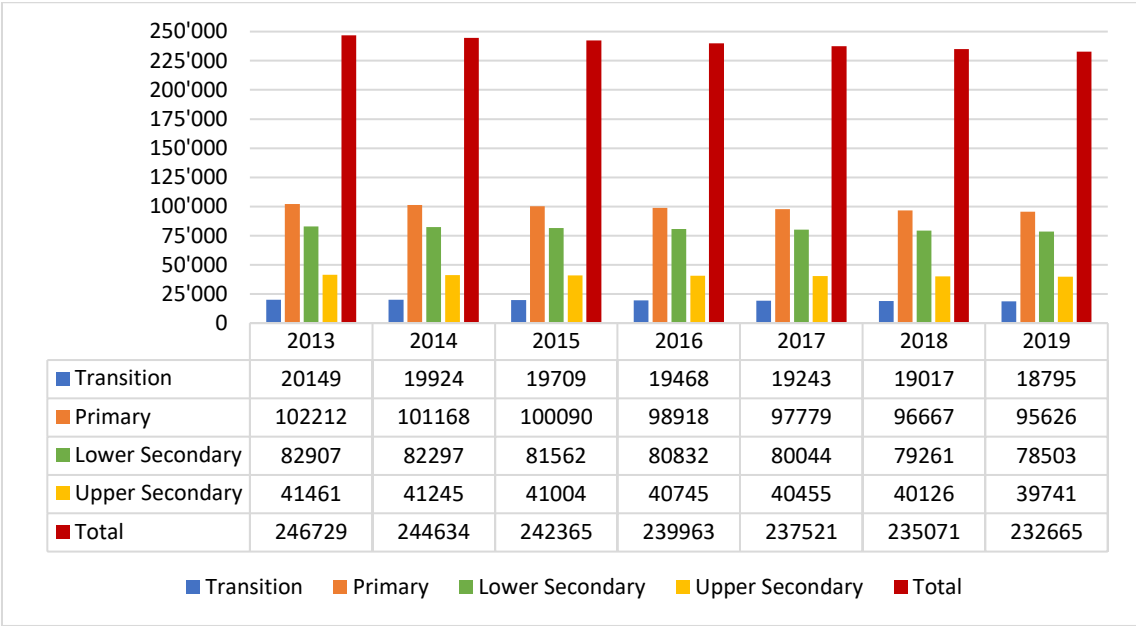
Source: own marking, OpenStreetMap

**Figure A-2: Colombia National Formal Education (2007/2008) in relation to ISCED (1997)**

Colombia National Education (2007/2008)						ISCED (1997 Level)				
Name of Education Program	Minimum Entrance Requirements	Main Diplomas or Certificates Awarded	Theoretical Entrance Age	Theoretical Duration	Compulsory Education	ISCED Level Name	ISCED (1997 Level)	Programme Orientation or Position in National Structure	Theoretical Entrance Age	Theoretical Duration
Pre-Kindergarten ('Pre-jardín')	n/a	n/a	3	1	No	Pre-Primary Education	0	n/a	3	3
Kindergarten ('Jardín')	n/a	n/a	4	1	No					
Pre-Primary enrolled/not enrolled ('Preescolar escolarizado y no escolarizado')	Age 5 for transition	Transition (graduated from pre-primary)	5	1	Yes					
Basic Primary ('Básica primaria')	Transition	Basic Primary Niveau	6	5	Yes	Primary Education	1	n/a	6	5
New School ('Escuela nueva')	Children between age 7-12	Basic Primary Niveau	7-11	5	Yes					
Accelerated Learning ('Aceleración del aprendizaje')	Overaged children/youth	Basic Primary Niveau	10-17	1	Yes					
Learning Circles ('Círculos de aprendizaje')	Children between age 7-14 who need to attain basic primary education, are not enrolled or arrived (displaced) at a school when matriculation was closed.	Certificate of any completed basic primary course	7-14	5	Yes					
Post-Primary ('Postprimaria')	Certificate of Basic Primary	Basic Secondary – basic 'Bachiller' (Bachelor)	11-16/ 12-17	4	Yes	Lower Secondary Education	2	General	11	4
Tele-Secondary ('Telesecundaria')	Certificate of Basic Primary	Basic Secondary – basic 'Bachiller' (Bachelor)	11-16/ 12-17	4	Yes					
Mediate Education ('Educación media')	Basic Secondary Nivel	University-entrance Diploma ('Bachiller')	15	2	Yes	Upper Secondary Education	3	General	15	2
Mediate Rural Education Program ('Modelo de Educación media académica rural')	Certificate of Basic Secondary (9th grade)	University-entrance Diploma ('Bachiller')	16-18	2	Yes					
Mediate Education with Emphasis on Vocational Education	Certificate of Basic Secondary (9th grade)	University-entrance Diploma ('Bachiller')	16-18	2	Yes			Vocational		

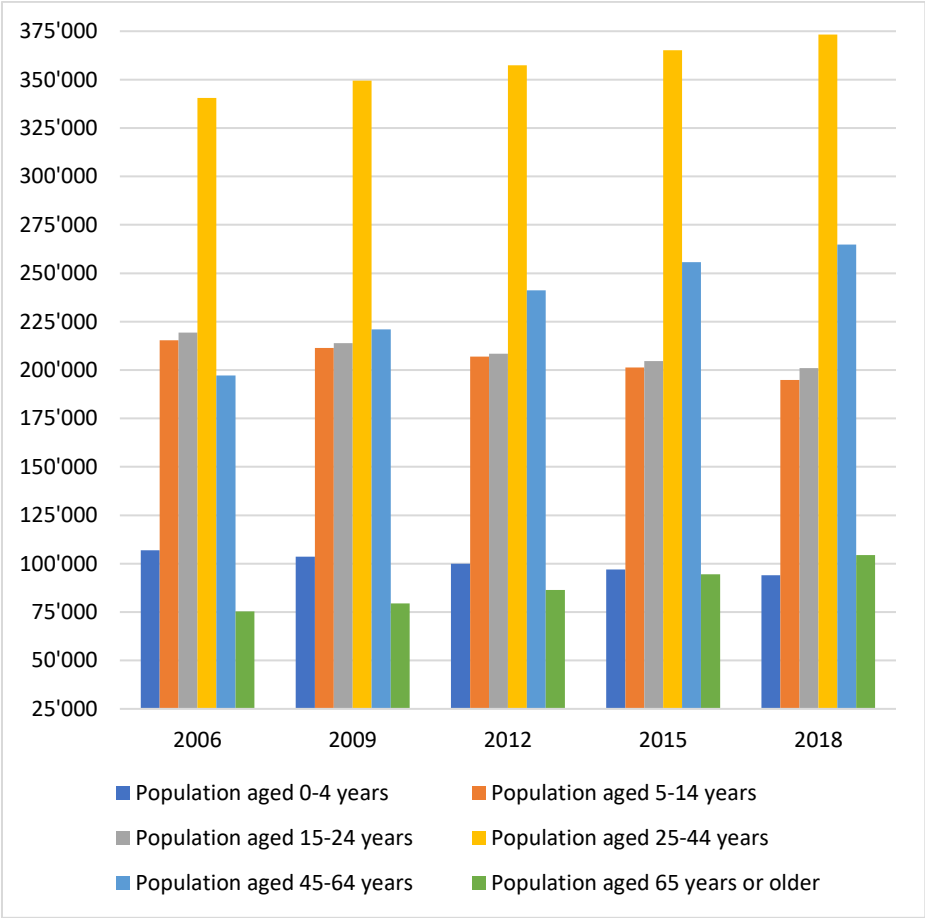
Source: own figure based on UIS (2019)

**Figure A-3: Total Student Population (5-16 years) by Education Level, Barranquilla, 2013-2019**



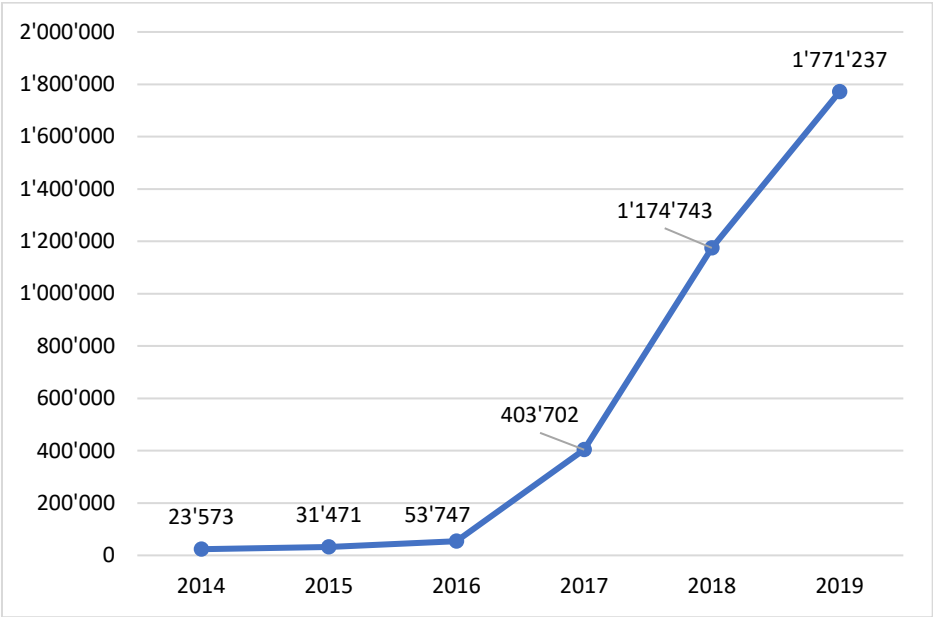
Source: Datos Abiertos Colombia (n.d.)

**Figure A-4: Total Population Growth and Demographic Change, Barranquilla, 2006-2018**



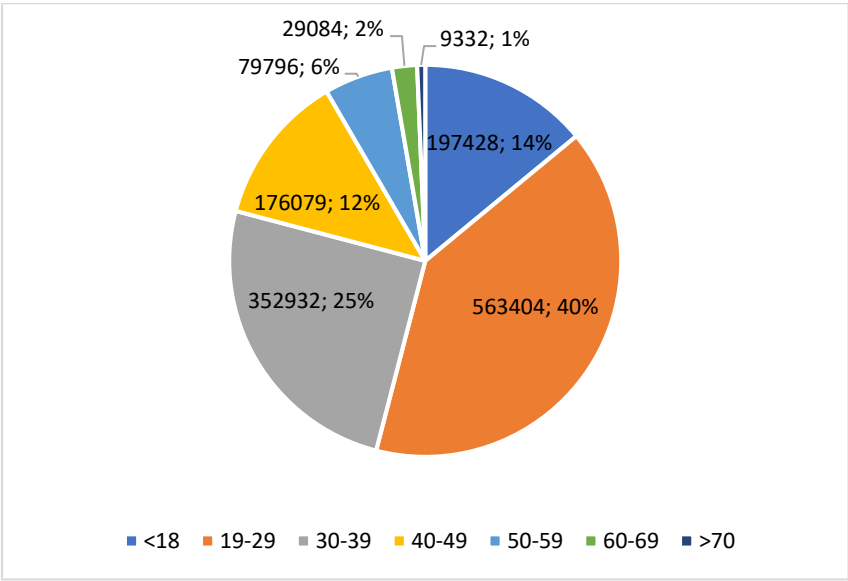
Source: Datos Abiertos Colombia (n.d.)

**Figure A-5: Total Venezuelan Migrants, Colombia, 2014-2019**



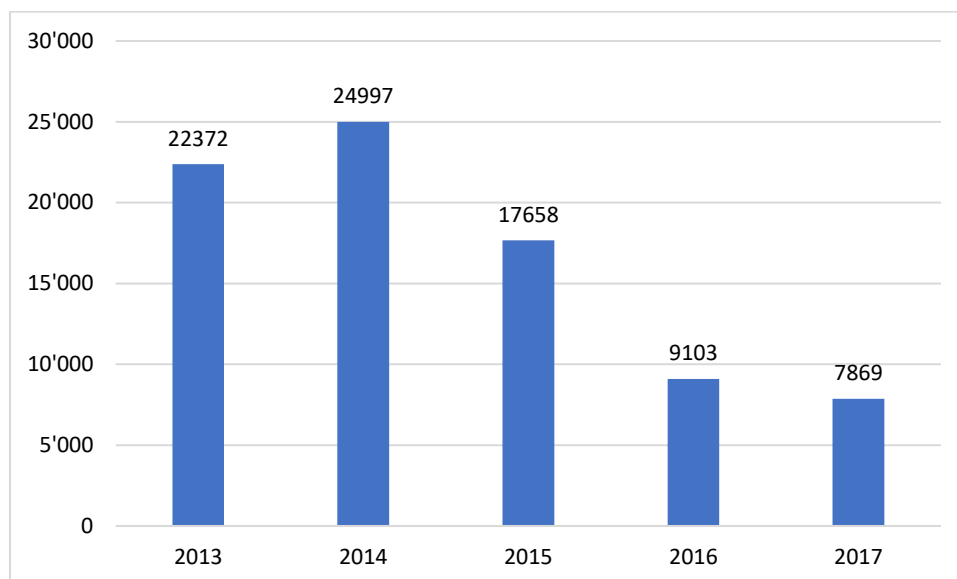
Sources: Migración Colombia (2020a, 2019c, 2019d)

**Figure A-6: Total Venezuelans by Age, Colombia, June 2019**



Source: Migración Colombia (2019b)

**Figure A-7: Total Out-of-school Children, Barranquilla, 2013-2017**



Source: SDE Barranquilla (2018, 4)

## Tables

**Table A-1: Geographical Distribution of Education Institutions (transition to 11th grade; total), Barranquilla, 2019**

	Public	Private	Public-Private ('contratada')	Total
<b>East</b>	37	75	0	112
<b>Metropolitan</b>	35	55	2	92
<b>West</b>	55	94	1	150
<b>North</b>	20	117	0	137
<b>Riomar</b>	7	44	1	52
<b>Total</b>	154	385	4	543

Source: SDE Barranquilla (2020a)

**Table A-2: Government Expenditure by the Mayorality of Barranquilla (% of government expenditure), 2013-2019**

Government Expenditure	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Government expenditure on education, total (% of government expenditure)	41.0	48.8	38.1	37.5	35.6	35.8	33.0
Government expenditure on health, total (% of government expenditure)	34.9	47.4	41.3	41.5	38.2	42.5	41.2
Government expenditure on water services, total (% of government expenditure)	3.5	1.6	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.3	4.2
Government expenditure on housing, total (% of government expenditure)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.0
Government expenditure on recreation & sports, total (% of government expenditure)	0.6	0.7	1.0	1.3	3.3	3.4	2.1
Government expenditure on culture, total (% of government expenditure)	1.1	1.6	1.3	1.3	1.4	2.4	2.0
Government expenditure on social/community development, total (% of government expenditure)	10.5	0.0	12.2	13.2	14.5	11.4	8.8
Government expenditure on environment, total (% of government expenditure)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	2.9	3.0
Government expenditure on subsidies for vulnerable, total (% of government expenditure)	8.3	0.0	6.1	5.2	4.3	1.1	5.8

Sources: Alcaldía Barranquilla (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020a)

**Table A-3: SABER 11th Grade, Test Results, Barranquilla, 2014-2019**

	Critical Reading	Mathematics	Social Sciences/ Civic Education	Natural Sciences	English	Total	Average Colombia
<b>2014</b>	52	52	51	51	53	259	255
<b>2015</b>	51	52	51	51	53	258	256
<b>2016</b>	54	53	52	54	55	266	264
<b>2017</b>	55	51	51	52	53	262	262
<b>2018</b>	55	53	50	52	54	262	258
<b>2019</b>	54	53	48	50	52	257	253

Source: ICFES (n.d.)

**Table A-4: National Saber 11th Grade, Total Results, 2016-2019**

	Barranquilla	Barranquilla Public Schools	Barranquilla Private Schools	Colombia
<b>2016</b>	266	260	280	266
<b>2017</b>	262	257	274	262
<b>2018</b>	262	256	278	258
<b>2019</b>	257	252	272	253

Sources: SDE Barranquilla (2020a), ICFES (n.d.)

**Table A-5: Students with Special Needs (% of gross enrolment, number), Barranquilla, 2016-2019**

	% Gross Enrolment	Number
<b>2016</b>	0.99	2554
<b>2017</b>	1.04	2714
<b>2018</b>	1.3	3361
<b>2019</b>	1.3	3394

Sources: SDE Barranquilla (2016, 2018, 2019a, 2019b)

### Appendix 3: Human Rights Instruments on the Right of Access to Education

*This is a non-exhaustive list of key human rights instruments on the right to (access to) education.*

Hard law instruments on the right of equal access to education (see OHCHR and GMG 2017, 107–108) include:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted 10 December 1948) UNGA Res 217 A(III) (UDHR), art 26(1);
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 3 January 1976) 933 UNTS 3 (ICESCR), art 13(1)/(2);
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990) 1577 UNTS 3 (CRC), arts 23(2) and 28;
- Convention Against Discrimination in Education (adopted 14 December 1960, entered into force 22 May 1962) 429 UNTS 93, arts 1(1), 3(b) and 4;
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (adopted 21 December 1965, entered into force 4 January 1969) 660 UNTS 195 (ICERD) art 5(e)/(v);

- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (adopted 15 November 2000, entered into force 25 December 2003) 2237 UNTS 319 (Trafficking Protocol), art 6(3d)/(4);
- Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (adopted 28 September 1954, entered into force 6 June 1960) 360 UNTS 117 (CRSSP), art 22;
- Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (adopted 17 November 1988, entered into force 16 November 1999) OAS Treaty Series A No 52, art 13;
- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (adopted 27 June 1981, entered into force 21 October 1986) 1520 UNTS 217, art 17(1);
- Arab Charter on Human Rights (adopted 23 May 2004, entered into force 15 May 2008) reprinted in (2005) 12 International Human Rights Reports 893, art 41;
- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (18 December 2000, entered into force 1 December 2009) OJ C 326, art 14;
- Protocol 1 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of the Council of Europe (20 March 1952, entered into force 18 May 1954) ETS 9, art 2.

Additionally, the *International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICRMW)*<sup>76</sup> mentions in Article 30 the right to education for children of regular and irregular migrant workers and in Articles 43 and 45 the right of access to education exclusively for regular migrant workers and their family members. Thereby, the ICRMW differentiates regarding migration status concerning access to education. According to the Convention, all migrant children are guaranteed the right to education, but only regular migrants and their family members have the right to access to education. This contradicts the various human rights instruments mentioned above.

#### Soft law instruments on the right of access to education for migrants and refugees:

- The right to education in emergency situations (9 July 2010) UN Doc A/RES/64/290, paras 7, 8, 9, 14, 17 and 18;
- Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (21 October 2015) UN Doc A/RES/70/1, Goal 4, Targets 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.5;

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<sup>76</sup> International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (adopted 18 December 1990, entered into force 1 July 2003) 2220 UNTS 3 (ICRMW).



- New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, (19 September 2016) UN Doc A/RES/71/1, paras 32, 39, 59 and 81, Annex I paras 13(b) and 14(a);
- Principles and Guidelines, Supported by Practical Guidance, on the Human Rights Protection of Migrants in Vulnerable Situations, OHCHR and GMG (2017), <<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/PrinciplesAndGuidelines.pdf>> accessed 12 May 2020, Principle 15, 53.
- Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (13 July 2018), <[https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713\\_agreed\\_outcome\\_global\\_compact\\_for\\_migration.pdf](https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713_agreed_outcome_global_compact_for_migration.pdf)> accessed 12 May 2020, paras 21(g), 23(f), 29(h), 31(f) and 34(h);
- Global Compact on Refugees (2 August 2018), UN Doc A/73/12 (Part II), paras 68, 69 and 75.

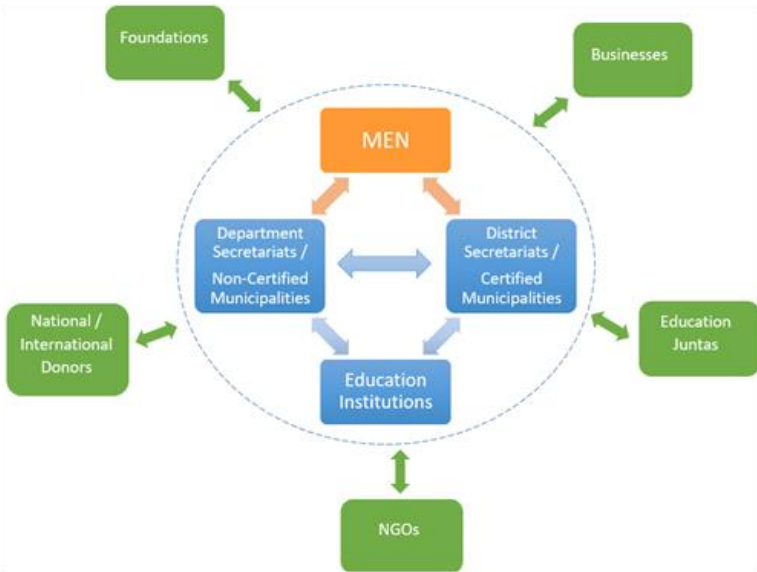
#### **Appendix 4: Socio-economic Development of Barranquilla Since 2008**

The percentage of Barranquilla's population living below the monetary poverty line (i.e., the monthly income a person needs to spend on alimentary and non-alimentary goods to ensure an adequate life) decreased from 43.3 % in 2008 to 20 % in 2017. Consequently, Barranquilla is Colombia's city which reduced poverty most significantly in this period (Alvarado et al. 2018, 1–2). However, in 2018 monetary poverty among Venezuelan migrants in Barranquilla was 1.9 times higher (40.4 %) compared to the total average (21.1 %) (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 115). During the same period, poverty at the national level decreased from 42 % in 2008 to 26.9 % in 2017. Extreme poverty in Barranquilla (i.e., the average household income is insufficient to ensure food security) fell from 10 % in 2008 to 2.4 % in 2017, illustrating Barranquilla's inclusive growth. At the national level, extreme poverty fell from 16.4 % to 7.4 % over the same period. Barranquilla's Gini coefficient decreased from 0.528 in 2002 to 0.440 in 2017, illustrating the most substantial decrease in income inequality among Colombian cities. In comparison, Colombia's Gini coefficient decreased from 0.567 in 2008 to 0.508 in 2017 (Alvarado et al. 2018, 3–5). At the same time, the homicide rate of Barranquilla decreased from 34.9/100,000 in 2015 to 22/100,000 in 2019, marking the lowest homicide rate for the last 15 years (Alcaldía Barranquilla 2020b, 30).

**Appendix 5: Overview of Principal Institutional Stakeholders of Colombia’s Formal Education Sector<sup>77</sup>**

Figure A-8 provides a visual illustration of the principal institutional stakeholders of Colombia’s compulsory education sector. At the national level, the Ministry of Education of Colombia (MEN) is the principal actor and mainly responsible for policy drafting, provision of the right to education, supervision, and resource allocation (MINEDUCACIÓN 2009, 34–35; OECD 2016, 40/64/133). The drafting process of education policy is joined by other ministries, such as the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and the Ministry of Culture (OECD 2016, 40/64–65).

Figure A-8: Formal Education Sector Stakeholders, Colombia



Source: own figure based on MINEDUCACIÓN (2009, 8–10/32–35), OECD (2016)

At the regional level, 95 District Secretariats of Education from 34 departments and 42 municipalities represent Certified Educational Territories (‘ETCs’). ‘ETCs’ correspond to departments and districts with a population higher than 100,000 people. Department Secretariats represent non-certified municipalities and are less autonomous in resource allocation and provision and management of formal education (MINEDUCACIÓN 2009, 8–10; OECD 2016, 65/133). Both types of Secretariats of Education are responsible for analysing the situation concerning education in their respective territory, establishing appropriate policies and strategies, and implementing adequate programs (MINEDUCACIÓN 2009, 32).

At the institutional level, school principals are responsible to adequately manage educational institutions according to their own curriculum, which needs to be approved by the

<sup>77</sup> The information presented in Appendix 5 originates from a previous class assignment of Prof. Gita Steiner-Khamsi’s course ‘MINT072 Education and Development: Tools and Techniques for International Cooperation’, at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, which I handed in on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019.

respective Secretariat of Education, to evaluate staff, and to manage financial resources to provide public education (OECD 2016, 65; MINEDUCACIÓN 2009, 9/36; Ley 115 de Febrero 8 de 1994, art 78). One of the most distinctive characteristics of Colombia's education system is the substantial autonomy that schools have to define their curricula and study plan, as laid down in Article 77 of the General Education Law of 1994. In contrast to the OECD average of 27 %, in Colombia, only 12 % of the responsibilities over the curriculum were held by education authorities in 2017. On the other hand, public schools have very little influence on teacher selection and dismissal (Radinger et al. 2018, 154–155).

Further national stakeholders in the Colombian compulsory education sector include, among others, education juntas (e.g., Junta Nacional de Educación, JUNE), private sector actors such as foundations and businesses, and NGOs (MINEDUCACIÓN 2009, 9; OECD 2016, 65). Besides, several international donors are involved in Colombia's formal education sector and specifically in the sub-sector of primary education.

#### **Appendix 6: Inclusion of Venezuelan Migrant and Refugee Children at Public Schools in Barranquilla**

The field research underlying this study identified the following experiences concerning the inclusion of Venezuelan migrant and refugee children in the education sector of Barranquilla. A representative of school III illustrated that inclusion at the school is difficult for both Venezuelan and Colombian students (Interview 24). However, due to similar social and economic contexts and problems that Colombian children face at some public schools in Barranquilla, the inclusion of Venezuelan migrant and refugee children at schools was described generally as fast, despite substantial cultural and academic changes experienced by these children (Interview 9; Interview 10; Interview 18; Interview 20; Interview 31). The emotional instability and long adaptation processes of the majority of Venezuelan migrant and refugee children negatively affected their inclusion at three visited educational institutions. Therefore, the schools mentioned enhancing the inclusion of these children accordingly with the support of teachers and psychosocial workers (Interview 18; Interview 19; Interview 23; Interview 31). For instance, school II organised an “integration process” at the beginning of the academic term with all students and teachers (Interview 19).

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