

# The mother of all missions

1,704,022 lives saved by the "Barrio Adentro" Mission in eight years



AN 80-YEAR-OLD COMPATRIOT WITH LOTS OF STORIES

# “Love must with love be repaid”

In 1998, Lourdes Valera found her true love and a project of country that brings her benefits



Lourdes does not listen well. She was born raised in Los Jardines del Valle, a popular Caracas parish.

She moved from Caracas to Valencia (Carabobo state) and then to Cua (Miranda state). Living there, she met the man that she would later describe as the “love of her life”. It happened in 1998 during one of her visits to Caracas. “I started to love him from the very first day he appeared on TV asking us to be patient. It was on February 1992 and I thought: ‘This man is a godsend.’ I later saw him when he was running President in a rally: ‘This is the President. We’ll never have one like him again!’”

## Weak Gender?

Lourdes Valera introduces herself as a “Fellow Countrywoman”. She assures her age has given her lots of experience. She’s also optimistic regardless of the tough experiences she has undergone. “I’ve suffered a lot, but I found the love of my life: Hugo Chavez”, she says jokingly.

But she is serious when talking about passed times. “When I got married the first time, my husband mistreated me and I left him. Do you know what I was told at the police stations when I denounced him? They told me: we don’t meddle in couple’s fights.”

Contrary to what happened then, today there’s a legal and institutional frame that protects women. “Nowadays, men have to be more respectful. Now I’m not afraid, we women rule now,” says Lourdes slightly.



As a single mother of six, Lourdes settled in Valencia. “Copei, a right-wing party, was in power back then. They demolished my house with everything in it; they did not care that I had six kids to look after.”

Hard times did not seem to fade away. “While working at the National Guard Club, my contributions to the social security were robbed, that’s why I don’t have social insurance now. In those times they did whatever they pleased.” says Lourdes.

“We’ve suffered a lot; we’ve been humiliated and stolen. At my age I had no idea where the oil income was invested. I knew there was money around, but I had no idea what it was used for. Now I do!”

After years of dedication to her family, her own children rejected her because of her support to the Bolivarian Government. But nothing destroys the mood of this woman. She also warns that some people benefit from the Government’s policies though they do not recognize its achievements.

## Loving yourself is the key

Lourdes now lives with her second husband Alfredo Ostas in a humble house. She gives off a scent of flowers and love. “At my age I feel very well loving people. Loving everybody without caring about their skin colour is what life is all about.”

The couple agrees when talking about social benefits: “Our retirement pension”, he says. “The slums look pretty”, she says.

According to Ostas, soup kitchens are a great help. “We used to eat there when I was unemployed.” Lourdes also benefits from the economic support given by the Government through The National Institute for Social Services (Inass, Spanish acronym)

Lourdes thinks love is the big answer. “Venezuelans need to give love” she says, “Many people think that the most important thing is how much money you have.”

When our conversation draws to an end, she tells her partner not to get jealous when she talks about her love for President Chavez. Alfredo just smiles and says: “He is the Commander.” ♦ *Degnís Merlo*

COMMUNAL ACTIVISTS FROM GUARENAS MAKE THEIR DREAM COME TRUE

# Hardwork and perseverance

900 FAMILIES FROM CIUDAD BELÉN BENEFIT FROM THE TEXTILE FACTORY AND THE COMMUNAL ROUTE

Nineteen workers shape the fabrics taken to the Textile Factory of Belén, an ongoing social productive project on the Belen Socialist City, a 23-year-old worker at the factory, Cindy Rauseo confesses “fascinated”. She says: “I don’t have to spend money on transportation because my workplace is right here in my community. I have more time for my family and the environment in the company, which I also feel mine, is very good. The earnings are shared with everyone.”

They work with enthusiasm in the company’s first large task: To produce 6,000 shirts for the Mission Vivienda Venezuela. Working together they can produce around 1,000 shirts. After this job, they can focus on the production of school uniforms for their neighbors.

They got together about a year ago in order to plan the creation of the factory. Nancy Aguilar, a 45-year-old entrepreneur, mother, and spokeswoman of the Social Inspection Committee narrates the experience: “We’ve been here for a year, but we started in shanty houses. We got organized and created a communal council that would develop socio-productive projects like the textile factory. We presented the project and here we have it. But our main goal is to keep growing, join the new neighbors, and create the commune.”

## The growth of Ciudad Belen

It takes 30 minutes to get from Guarenas downtown to Ciudad Belen. The scarce public trans-



portation and its high costs prompted the neighbors to set their own transport system as a cooperative. They now have a float of 9 gas vehicles of 25 seats each, and 6 with a capacity of 12.

The Mission Che Guevara gave them the vehicles which the cooperative pays in comfortable monthly installment.

The communal route is comprised by 900 families with 600 students. The students pay BsF 0.50, and regular users pay BsF 2. Juio Monroy is a member of the Nutrition Squad from the Communal Council, and he is also in charge of watching the bus stop, making sure everything is in order.

“I feel very happy working for my community, and for people who really need my help, and not for a company that produces for its own benefit.”

Rosalía Pérez (25) enjoys the socialist project. She says that after using the vehicles she is satisfied of the achievements of the Communal Council Lucero Belen. She invites the youth to “join the socio-productive projects because a lot of people are needed. The plans are very nice, and if you don’t believe it, just come to Ciudad Belen.”

Nancy Aguilar explains where the money from the social-production projects go: monthly payments, special funding for future projects, covering the needs of the community, honorary payments to the textile factory workers and the transportation cooperative. ♦ *Belén Van Arcken*



EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY

# Mission Barrio Adentro Keeps Ahead

The social program has saved over 1,704,022 lives since its beginning eight years ago.

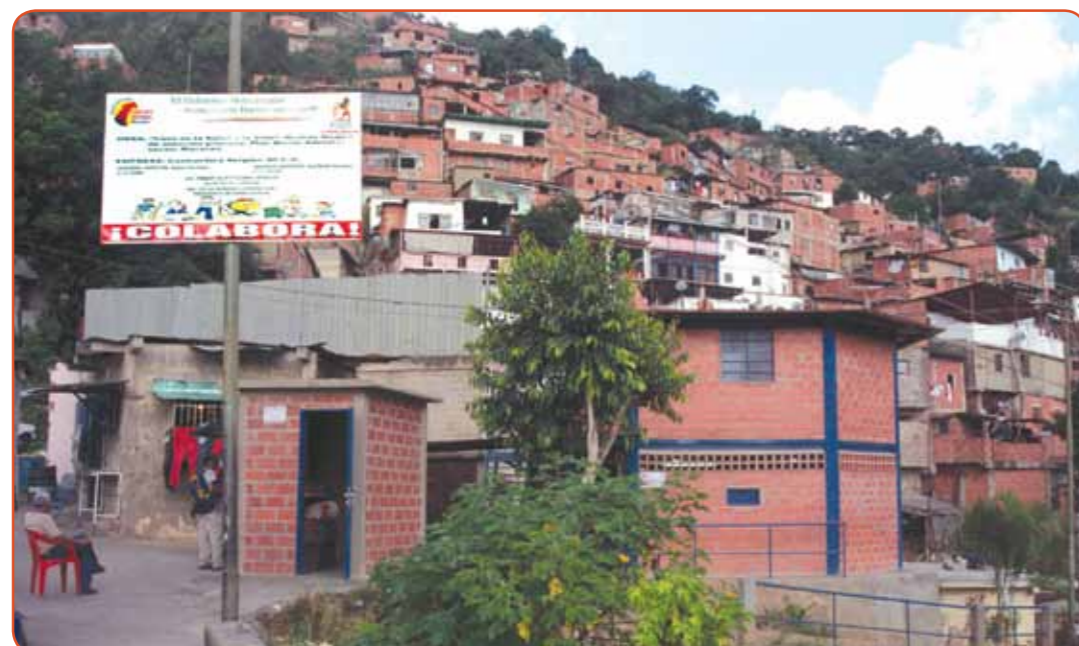
The way the Government responded to the 2002 coup d'Etat and oil sabotage was by deepening the revolution and the announcing its socialist trend. The Revolution now has the Mission Barrio Adentro as one of its first social-promotion programs and a space for the application of the social inclusion policy of the government.

"The best thing about the mission is that it's near our houses. That was never seen before; it was a big problem going to the doctor." Lesbia Martinez expresses with her words the mission impact on millions of Venezuelans who were left on their own for decades.

"Now, whenever you don't feel well, you just walk around the bloc and a doctor sees you." Far behind is the memory of family members dying because they could not get to a hospital on time, or if they did it, they did not receive proper attention.

## Right in the Heart

Since its beginning, on April 16, 2003, the mission has saved 1,704,022 lives. Many of these people have also received some kind of training in social organization, so they could solve their communities' problems.



The Cuban doctors have set the example of what a humanist, organized and kind revolutionary practice is about; their presence has also worked as a way to revive the values of solidarity, order, and responsibility.

Over 6,000 Barrio Adentro I care centers strategically positioned in the most populated areas are found all around the country. In there, the primary focus is preventive medicine. Therefore, in 2005 the mission was expanded to Barrio Adentro II through which the Comprehensive Diagnostic Centers (CDI Spanish Acronym), Comprehensive Rehabilitation Rooms (SRI) and High Technology Centers (CAT) became operative.

Several services are offered in the CDIs: lab exams, x-rays, hospitalization, medicines delivery, and intensive care. SRIs are focused on recovery therapies for both mental and physical treatments; and CATs offer the best technology for the diagnostic of more complex diseases. All of it absolutely for free.

After eight years, the mission has reported 340,153,813 consultations on its two stages; 19 million belong to the 2011 January-March period. Besides, over 5,000 births have been assisted.

## CDI Medical Emergencies (March 2011)

- 275,666 severe respiratory infections
- 83,484 high blood pressure
- 62,886 severe headaches
- 52,125 traumatisms
- 44,431 asthma
- 36,753 severe diarrhoea
- 29,465 urinary sepsis
- 26,645 gastritis
- 23,547 controlled hyperthermia
- 11,283 diabetes mellitus
- 10,689 renal colic

## The human side first

"Doctors treat you like friends," says Danny Soto a fruit vendor near the Barrio Adentro Unit in 23 de Enero parish. This kind treatment is the reason of the wide acceptance of the mission since the beginning. The mission is executed primarily by Cuban Doctors and supported by Venezuelan counterparts in the last year of Comprehensive Communitarian Medicine studies. The students are being prepared to change the existing health system in Venezuela to a more humanist view of the medical profession.

The acceptance of the mission has paved the way to other missions promoted by the Bolivarian Government whose primary goal is the eradication of poverty in all its forms.

♦ Yeneiza Delgado Mijares

## Increasing Presence

- 6,712 Popular clinics (Including consultation Units)
- 533 Comprehensive Diagnostics Centers
- 570 Comprehensive Rehabilitation Rooms
- 31 High-Technology Centers

## For Free

- 426,981 mammography
- 363,109 magnetic resonance images
- 556,106 x-ray computed tomography
- 578,656 bone density exams
- 328,117 3D Ultrasound



## Everybody loves it

Lesbia Méndez



People don't die in hospitals anymore. The medical treatment in Barrio Adentro is really good because doctors are very attentive with everybody. Besides, all medicine is free.



Denirek Cordero

I was well treated. I went with a friend to have some exams done; I had my blood samples taken, and the exams done. I arrived at seven and finished quickly.

Carlos Naranjo



I'm having my exams done here because I was diagnosed with a cardiac dysrhythmia. I had my blood pressure controlled and my exams checked. I am satisfied, the attention is excellent. Everything is for free; I reply every time people say bad things about the service and the Cuban doctors.



Jorge Rodríguez

Barrio Adentro is a 24/7 service. I had a personal experience in which I was taken to the Pedro Carreño Hospital. I was wrongly examined because the next day I was sick again, and I fainted. Then, I was taken to the CDI in 23 de Enero. I have felt alright since then.

Lourdes Rojas



Every time I've come here, I've received a good and fast assistance. I came with a deep pain, I was seen immediately, and I had an ultrasound done. Never before I had enjoyed of a service so near by.



EIGHT YEARS FIGHTING SHORTAGES AND HOARDING

# Plenty of food at home

12.800.000 Venezuelans had a balanced and cheap diet in 2010 thanks to Mercal



OIL, RICE, GREEN BEANS, SUGAR, BLACK BEANS, MEAT, FLOUR (COOK AND WHEAT), CASA DAIRY PRODUCTS, POWDER MILK, LENTILS, BUTTER, SPAGHETTI, MORTADELLA, AND CHICKEN.

As part of the strategy, Mission Mercal was born on April 22 2003. It was first created as a logistics network that would coordinate food distribution efforts for the communities, especially the poorest, in a way of guaranteeing the rights of all Venezuelans to have a good nutrition.

"This kind of initiative was never seen in the country, and that's why this government is different from the previous ones. This one is interested in improving the welfare of the poor", says Gladis Torres.

It is precisely this interest in the welfare of the people what has brought Mission Mercal closer to the communal councils through

### In numbers

8.4 million of tons of food sold since 2003

8,000 direct jobs

40,000 indirect jobs

their nutrition committees and production units.

### Total Diversification

Since the inauguration of a Mercal outlet type I in the Caricuao parish of the Capital District in 2003, the Mission has benefited over 55,000

people. By the end of 2010, the beneficiaries of the mission (adding the Bicentennial, Pdval food distribution networks) summed a total of 12,800,000 people.

The 625 Mercal outlets existing in 2003 grew to 16,800 by the end of 2010. There are 210 Mercal outlets type I; 991 Type II; 36 SuperMercales; 114 storage; 4 fridge freezer; 3 Supermercals of vegetables and fruits expenditures; 346 mobile Mercalitos; 1,695 communal Mercalitos and 13,417 Mercalitos. The Mercal type I outlets are retail vendors of two types: Basic model (1657 square feet) and amplified model (2949 squared feet). Type II models are either state run or private and their dimensions depend on the location and needs.



Similar to Mission Barrio Adentro, Mercal is the response to the counterrevolution whip in the Trotskyian sense. This counterrevolutionary force was felt in the country during the coup on A-11 and the oil-commercial strike of the same year that failed on February 2003.

People still have it fresh in their memory: Gas shortages and food shortages endured by the people subdued by some lawless entrepreneurs and politicians. It was an upside-down world. The board of directors of PDVSA manipulated a group of workers to make them paralyze the company. They were supported by an employer's strike (Fedecamaras) and a worker's strike supported by (CTV) in an

anti-natural union meant to work as a coup.

The lines to fill the gas tanks and kitchen gas were very long. There were also lines to get some products in the markets.

"At Christmas' Eve we cooked with wood and my children did not get Christmas gifts", said José Romero in 2002 to an international news agency. During weeks, the organizations CTV, Fedecamaras, Coordinadora Democrática (today known as Mesa de la Unidad Democrática-MUD) and Gente de Petróleo forced the Venezuelan people to endure shortages they predicted to occur given a victory of Chávez in 1998.

### No more shortages

"Since the opening of Mercal, there has never been a shortage of any product. You can find everything at fair prices," says Gladis Torres. She believes the Mission Mercal is "the commitment of the Revolution with the needy."

In order to face the hoarding and subsequent shortages generated by the production and commercialization industries, the Venezuelan government has devised the Special Plan for the Strategic Nutritional Security. The program has the support of state-owned food producers like CASA and PROAI and counts with the mobilization power of the Armed Forces.



Supermercals offer a great variety of products and possess a wide space for sales and storage. Fruits and vegetables have a special place for them to locate their products.

### Home appliances

"Prices are very low. I can see that since the existence of Mercal, there's more food at home. When I was a little girl, buying food was done with the exact amount of money. But now Mercal has changed the life of many with good and inexpensive food," says Karley Linares.

The benefits of the Mission Nutrition (through Mercal, Pdval, Bicentennial network, CASA, Fundaproal, and SADA) go beyond the provision of food, but also by the selling of home appliances at lower prices than the speculative market.

The home appliances are sold 35% more economic than other places via a special agreement between the Bank of the Sovereign People, the Bank of Women, and the Mercal Network. Over 21,000 products

have been sold during the first trimester of 2011 in 24 outlets throughout the country.

Over 18,000 appliances were sold cash and the Bank of the Sovereign People approved 662 credits for the purchase of 1,826 items. The Bank of Women approved 861 credits for the same amount of products.

◆ Yeneiza Delgado Mijares

## Spare money



**María Conde**

"Buying in Mercal helps me to save money. The products are inexpensive if compared with private markets. This has been one of the most important initiatives by the Bolivarian Revolution aimed at the poor."



**Rosa Rodríguez**

"Here the prices are great, and the products have the best quality. There's also variety. My salary is not enough in private markets, but in Mercal I take a lot of food home for a month or so and still I have money left."



**José Mabares**

"Poor people get lots of benefits buying in Mercal. The food and the prices are great. Private markets steal from people to whom they sell food and that's a crime. There's no possible comparison."



**Hilda Carrasquel**

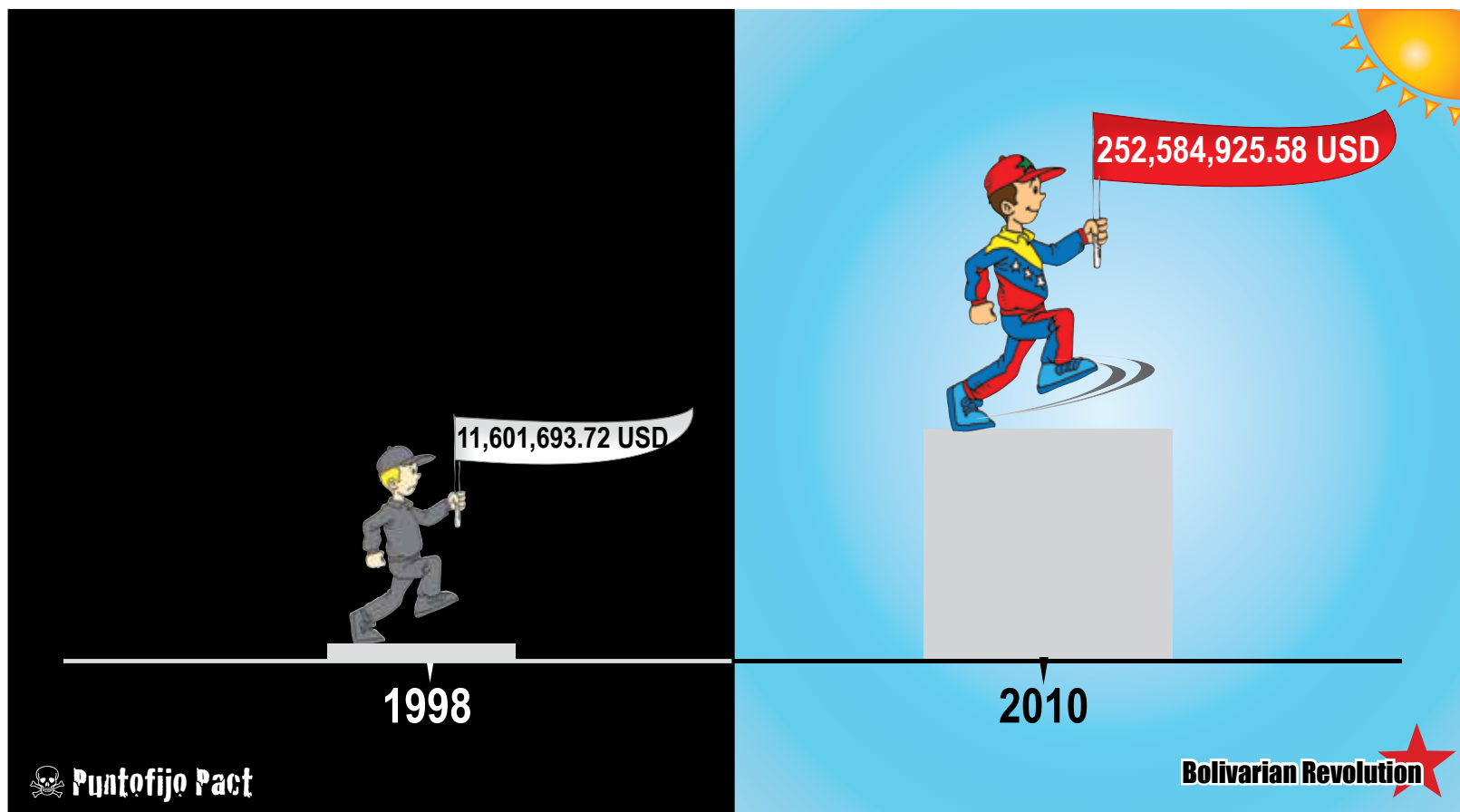
"Mercal is wonderful. Since its opening the life of Venezuelans changed. The success of Mercal consists of making the food available for the poor."



**Karley Linares**

"Prices are very low. I can see that since the existence of Mercal, there's more food at home. When I was a little girl, buying food was done with the exact amount of money. But now Mercal has changed the life of many with good and inexpensive food"

# Sports and Recreation Investment increased 22 times



Source: Ministry of People's Power for Sports

## VENEZUELAN STATE-RUN FOOD DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

# 1,951,000 tons of basic basket food distributed in 2010



Source: Ministry of People's Power for Food