

THE V REALITY TEAM REPORT

Introduction

In the city of La Paz, Bolivia wherever we go we see people on the streets trying to make a living by repainting the pedestrian sign, selling candy, or offering to wash cars. This is a reality here; these people came from Venezuela seeking a better life as in their own country they could not. The migrants here live in poverty, have little to eat and drink, and are unable to find steady jobs. Also when they came to La Paz they bring their entire families. You can hear the babies crying and the kids asking for money for food. We decided to take action on the matter. It is unacceptable that Venezuelan migrants do not have an opportunity to progress in life, have a roof over their heads, food on the table, clean water, education, and access to medical care. Our goal is to help the Venezuelan refugees in any way we can. The first SDG we want to help combat is SDG1: no poverty. We chose this SDG because as one of the targets mentions, migrants would qualify as people who are in a vulnerable situation, who have been forced out of their home country due to political, social, and economic disasters. Therefore these migrants have now sought a better future elsewhere, however, they still find themselves in vulnerable situations. Furthermore, with this project, which aims to spread awareness of the harsh stories and reality the Venezuelans have had to go through to arrive in Bolivia, we hope to promote the inclusion of these migrants into the new society they are living in. Thus we think this relates to SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities. SDG 16: Peace and Justice state that we should promote a society that is equal to all, even if you are from a different country. This also directly relates to our goal of helping the Venezuelan migrants become equal to all the people in La Paz. Our project's focus is to help the Venezuelan migrants by telling their stories and to help spread awareness about their conditions using an art exhibit along with an audio guide. We hope this project promotes other people to help so that over time the Venezuelan migrants living conditions will improve.

One of the chapters of the story we wrote to follow along with our art exhibit



Poem by a 2nd grader after visiting our photo exhibit

Hello, I am the street
You know what?
I feel sad because
There are people that don't have money
And they are working
All day long
To feed their families

By Alexia Rivera



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Highlights

From the start, we shared great group cohesion. While we had some failures and setbacks, we thankfully got through. Eventually, we learned that we are stronger and we kept looking until we found our diamonds in the rough. We had always been enthusiastic with high energies, we had so much help meeting a professional photographer, teaching his tips about how his experiences had been, how we can capture the background and the image. This had been good for the team given that we took every advice he gave us. We got to work. We went out onto the streets looking for Venezuelan migrants, looking for stories, away from the comforts we usually have of our 'bubble'. The encounters we had on the streets changed our lives, we were able to understand the reality of other people, and we realized that not everything on the street was bad. Families were always together and supported each other despite everything. Their faith in God has helped them to move forward with a positive attitude to be happy with what they have and enjoy the moment and the company of others. We met a couple, called Vladimir and Yusleidy, a family, and a young street artist Miguel. They were all very charismatic, friendly, and social people. We also met Aracely's family which was a little suspicious of us (which makes us realize how the situation on the street is precarious) but they were very polite. We wanted to have a picnic with them to spend time with them and form a deeper relationship. Unfortunately Aracely's family didn't show up, this led us to wonder if they had been deceived before, and showed that they were in a vulnerable position. The picnic failed because no Venezuelan came, so we decided to go in a car to distribute the food we had and drinks to many Venezuelans and Bolivians in need. We served rice pudding and handed out brownies. We did a photo session, the first was with Miguel, he is a very friendly guy who dedicates his life to street art. We saw many good actions of Miguel when he did this, he stopped the minibus (our public transportation) for people, he helped them to get on, always with a smile. he wished people a good day, he was a very good person the kind of person who brings out a smile, he was very connected with art. Then, we took photos of Vladimir and Yulsady, they were very kind, each person had a unique personality. They were very special, the photos came out spectacular, each one told a story, and it was not only a photo but feelings were transmitted in them.

Impact

The V Reality team is made up of 7 students and supported by our teacher Bernardo Rios. From the end of January to April 29, our team has put in 10 hours of hard work per member, reaching 70 hours. As we progressed, we got insight from a professional photographer, and went out on the street, spending time with Venezuelan migrants to interview them and take photos of them if they wished. As we worked on the project, we collected data on the impact we have made through interviews with Venezuelans, a list of the number of people who visited our exhibit, along with their opinions of the people who attended the photography exhibition. Three hundred people attended the photography exhibition and were able to learn about the lives of our Venezuelan friends. They became aware of their true reality, their day-to-day life, that Venezuelans have dreams, aspirations, and difficulties, but they continue "en la lucha." Also thanks to the photography exhibition, we have been able to add progress to the Sustainable Development Goals ten and sixteen.

We were able to impact people from all different age groups. One of our school board members said "These kids are going to change the world" while giving a speech to the school's general assembly. A US embassy representative also mentioned how impactful the stories were. Our photo exhibit impacted adults but even led to conversations in the elementary school. A class of second graders wrote us poems expressing how they felt about the photo exhibit. Some of the feedback we received from other members of our school were "Despite the circumstances there is always a reason to smile", "Venezuelans are brave, courageous, and hardworking", and "This project gives me hope for the future." Art can inspire us to change, but what will cause that change in the world is us. We were able to impact not only people connected to our school but also people outside of our school. The feedback we received demonstrates that people's mindsets have changed and the impact our photo exhibit made is not finite but it will only continue to grow. Though we realized that the most extensive impact our project had was on us, the 7 students who worked on this project. This project changed our hearts, and our way of perceiving the world, and now we are more than determined to make this world a better one.