

LIFE STORIES

| **Jhoselyn, Young Venezuelan female migrant**

I arrived in Bogotá about four months ago,

along with my husband and children: a 10-year-old girl and an 8-year-old boy. I came here just like so many other Venezuelans in recent years in search of a better life. Because you do not come here to help your own country, no, you come here to have a better life and a better education for your children. But we had only been here for about twenty days when the quarantine was put in place. It didn't even give us a chance to get in touch with our new environment.

Before the quarantine, I was working in a small stand located beneath our house, but now we cannot work because of the quarantine measures; they won't let us because there are too many problems related to it, and because I have to be with the children. My husband made his money selling things in Transmilenio. But he doesn't work as much as he used to, so it's been a little difficult for us to make ends meet. Sometimes we

have to go out and beg because we can't let our children be hungry. The neighbors have helped us a lot with groceries: they give us two pounds of rice and eggs. I have realized that now, with the quarantine, people have been more united, more attentive, the neighbors are always paying attention to our needs.

My daughter is a special needs child who requires expensive treatment and has run out of medication. With the confinement and lack of money for bus tickets, I have not been able to take her to the doctor. Because of her, I was able to get a permanent travel document, but I have not been approved for health insurance. In my son's case, he took a pill and was hospitalized because of the depression caused by the confinement. Now, thank God, he is much better.

We are receiving psychosocial support

from a free text message service for migrants. These sessions with the psychologist have helped me a lot because this therapy does not only help my son; it helps me too, so let's say it helps me relax more, be calmer, check myself, and cope with my situation.



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| Alex, Transsexual young man, SRHR emphasis



My name is Alex, and I'm a transsexual guy

I'm 18 years old. I feel that the quarantine has not affected me so much because I don't have any problems with being in my house all the time. After all, even before the quarantine, I almost didn't like to go out. Besides, we kept having classes at school, just online. We have explored a lot of apps that I didn't really know existed, like video calling, paper uploading, creating animations and things like that allow us to keep studying. The biggest obstacle I've had because of the pandemic is that my endocrinologist appointment to get my hormones prescribed has been postponed a lot. I have already started my transition. In my documents, I am legally Alex. Still, I have not yet started to get hormone treatment. Getting an appointment with

the endocrinologist and especially if it is with a Health Promotion Agency (EPS), is very difficult. You can never find an open slot for your appointment. So, knowing that I finally got the appointment, but seeing it get postponed every time it gets close is very frustrating.

Being part of different support groups has allowed me to feel support during this long wait. I attend an LGBTI group, as well as a Transsexual-only group (Transgender and Transsexual). These are virtual conversations where you get a lot of information and where people tell you that things should not be rushed. I feel that those spaces where you receive good advice

have made it possible for me to be patient.

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| **Esperanza, low-income woman, mother, head of household**



I have three children:

a ten-year-old, an eight-year-old, and a six-year-old girl, and I haven't been able to see them since it all started. I am worried that my children will get sick or need something and I am not there to help them. I used to work in Riohacha as a maid in a family home, and I would travel to Manaure several times a month to see my children; they live there with my mother. Because of the quarantine, I have not been able to see them for almost two months. I can only call them, hear their voice, but I don't see them; this makes me feel a little sad because I think to myself "poor little things, not being able to see their mom." There is transportation available, but the tickets are costly, and I am afraid to travel because I don't know who I could be traveling with; if these people have obeyed the quarantine or where they are coming from; that is why I don't travel. I want to wait a little longer.

Besides, in the place where they live in Manaure, the food and especially the water is scarce. The leader of my community told me that help from the government and water arrived, but not enough, because there are animals that also need water and a water tank car is not enough so the best thing is not only for the government

to help, but also for people to help each other; for example, if I have something to spare and I am working, then I should help the ones who don't have anything.

I pray, listen to music,

and, above all, concentrate on my studies because, in addition to working, I am getting my high school diploma. Studying helps me not to think about my worries all day. It encourages me to believe everything will get better and that I will be with my family soon. Studying online is not easy because there is a lot of reading involved. It's not the same to have a teacher explaining the material to you. It's not the same thing to get some copies to read and study. The light on the phone screen and the computer gives you a bit of a headache. When I don't understand, I look information up on Google or YouTube or in the dictionaries. That way I am able to understand what I didn't understand before; I look up the subjects and start reading, after that, I understand a little better.

LIFE STORIES

| Sandra, Indigenous teenage woman

I was living in Popayán because I am studying.

But, due to the pandemic, everything was canceled, and I had to return to the indigenous reservation where me and my family live. This has made me happy because I spend more time with my family, and I feel better being at home. Now, I can spend more time with my grandparents, they mean a lot to me. Ever since the quarantine started, we avoid getting bored or sad by getting together as a family: we play, and we make food for everyone.

For my community to be better off, I would like to have educational talks to learn how to do many things such as cooking food, or activities we enjoy, and workshops on illnesses and how to care for them. One of the biggest challenges for me during this quarantine has been to continue my studies because here, it is difficult to get internet access, and all of my classes are online. Still, in the school located nearby, they have internet service, so they gave me permission to use it for a few weeks. Some weeks ago, they canceled the service, so I had to use prepaid internet refills. Although I am doing well and have managed to overcome many challenges, something that worries me is seeing how the indigenous people are doing because, at least here in my reservation, many families in need travel to the city and sell things to make ends meet.



A good thing I've seen is that health care

here has been handled mostly through our elders. They already know how to cure a headache or a stomachache, they know which plant works for each problem. As for food, we didn't use to grow anything; now that the quarantine has begun, my mom is growing potatoes, onions, chard, cilantro, cassava, and other things. My mom also wants to help the children, and she gives them food and some seeds to plant; she also encourages them to go into the garden and grow food. In the city, I have met many people who have plants by their windows in jars. They are producing these products in whatever way they can, not in significant amounts. Still, they have enough for personal use; this way, we can make the situation better.