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## Food aid deal in Venezuela

The World Food Programme has struck a deal to deliver food to 183,000 Venezuelan schoolchildren by the end of the year, aiming to provide daily meals to 1.5 million students by the end of 2023. A spokesperson for the UN agency in Geneva told The New Humanitarian that WFP Executive Director David Beasley met with President Nicolás Maduro in Caracas and received assurances the distribution will be “independent of (the country’s) social programmes”. Maduro is accused of using state handouts to foster corruption and increase political support. He has long denied the country’s humanitarian crisis, refusing for years to accept international aid, even as the economy imploded and more than five million people fled. The ensuing crisis has been marked by food shortages, a decimated healthcare system, growing malnutrition, and the return of preventable diseases. The health ministry has failed to publish any statistics on infant mortality for four years – the health minister was sacked in 2017 after disclosing figures showing a 30 percent rise on the preceding year. The WFP said it would focus on the most vulnerable children first – those with special needs and at pre-primary level. A 2020 WFP study put Venezuela fourth in the world in terms of food insecurity, behind only Yemen, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Afghanistan.