

## Escaping Hunger



According to the latest estimates more than 440 thousand, of the more than 2 million and 300 thousand people, who fled [Venezuela](#) from 2014 until now, have crossed the [Peru](#) border. They arrive after a very exhausting journey, uncertain about their future and surrounded by many dangers, including the recent need to cross a river by boat. “If the water is too high, and they can’t manage it, they’re loaded onto the shoulders of a man who naturally wants to be paid.” **Once again Silvano from the focolare community in Lima writes:** “Right from the start of this forced exodus “we have been accompanying an ever increasing number of people. Up until now, there are sixty whom we follow closely, not only spiritually, but also professionally and on a purely human level.” The situation is extremely difficult for those who arrive: “They only have the clothes on their backs. They’re cold because spring has begun and the temperatures are falling. We see the emotion in their eyes when they see the clothing that has been collected for them through a communion of goods.”

**The Focolare has two welcome centers in Lima, along with the Centro Fiore at Magdalena del Mar in the province of the capital.** “Three family units are being hosted here, including the family of Ofelia who many Venezuelans in Peru call “the mother.” In the first quarter of this year,” Silvan recounts, “**we came into contact with a psychologist, Irene**, who has already been here a few months. She was invited to our operating centre, which is the focolare house, along with her parents and a few friends. She got to know [the spirit behind the Focolare](#) and, aware of the needs of her many fellow-countrymen, offered her services as a professional psychologist. **A small project was immediately begun** in response to the Gospel promise: “Give, and it will be given to you.”

**After a workshop on the topic of feelings**, which was given by Irene at the end of July and a second one a few weeks later, **we opened a consultancy service at Centro Fiore of Magdalena del Mar.** “The “Project of Emotional Growth for Vulnerable Populations” was begun, to respond to the massive migratory situation that we are facing. In the presentation of the project, which is geared towards the most fragile members of the group such as women,

children, youth and elderly, it is written that 'providing tools for facing the situation and integrating' into the Peruvian community is imperative. Therefore, this Project enters into the objectives of the Focolare, to "collaborate in the building of a more united world under the guidance [of Jesus' prayer to the Father](#) that all may be one (Jn17:21), respecting and appreciating diversity, using dialogue as the method, and the constant effort of building bridges and relationships of fraternity among individuals, peoples and cultural groups." The most common cases that have already been treated include anxiety and depression over the precarious situations, the constant concern for survival, mistreatment and developmental problems. The project provides support, information, education, and training courses, workshops on feelings and emotions, self-esteem, love of others and of oneself."

Several of the people have found employment, others are still searching, and others are planning to return to their own or to another country. "Up until now 35 sessions of psychological care have been recorded. This service continues to be offered for free to Venezuelan immigrants."