



**Education Lab**  
*for* **Latin America**



HARVARD



GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF EDUCATION

# Education: A Key Pillar for Venezuela's Transformation

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**Opening Remarks · Emiliana Vegas**

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# Agenda

1. The crisis: **Education collapse in Venezuela**
2. Why education must be **central to the transition**
3. Goals & **priorities for today and *the after***

A PERSONAL JOURNEY

# From Caracas to the U.S. — and back.

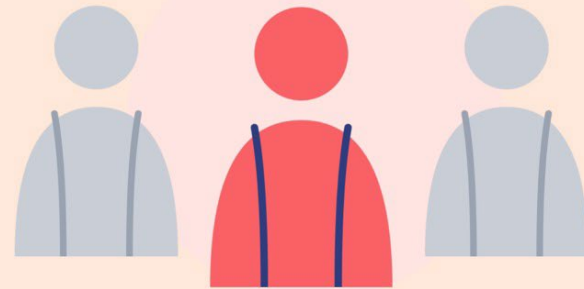
*Venezuela shaped me. The world taught me. Today  
I bring both home — to think with you about what  
comes next.*



# 1.

## The crisis

Education collapse in  
Venezuela



1 in 3 school-aged children in Venezuela  
are outside the education system.

*Source: ENCOVI 2023–2024 / HumVenezuela 2023.*

# Investment, access, and learning have all collapsed at once

Annual public spending  
per student in 2023

was

**USD 232**

— *far below regional  
averages.*

**34%**

of children in school  
age are  
**outside the education  
system.**

**70–75% of  
students fail**

to reach the minimum  
passing score (10/20)  
in both **mathematics**  
and **language.**

# The infrastructure of learning has been hollowed out

**100K+**

**teachers missing**

against an estimated 500,000 needed nationwide.

**12,000**

**schools severely damaged**

of roughly 23,000 schools in the system.

**20 USD**

**average monthly teacher salary**

grossly insufficient to meet basic living standards

**6M+**

**Venezuelans abroad**

the largest displacement in the Western Hemisphere.

# 2.

## Why education

must be central to the transition



# 3 reasons why education must sit at the center of Venezuela's recovery

## 1 Human flourishing

Education is the most reliable path out of poverty and into opportunity — for children today, and for the country they will inherit.

## 2 Economic recovery

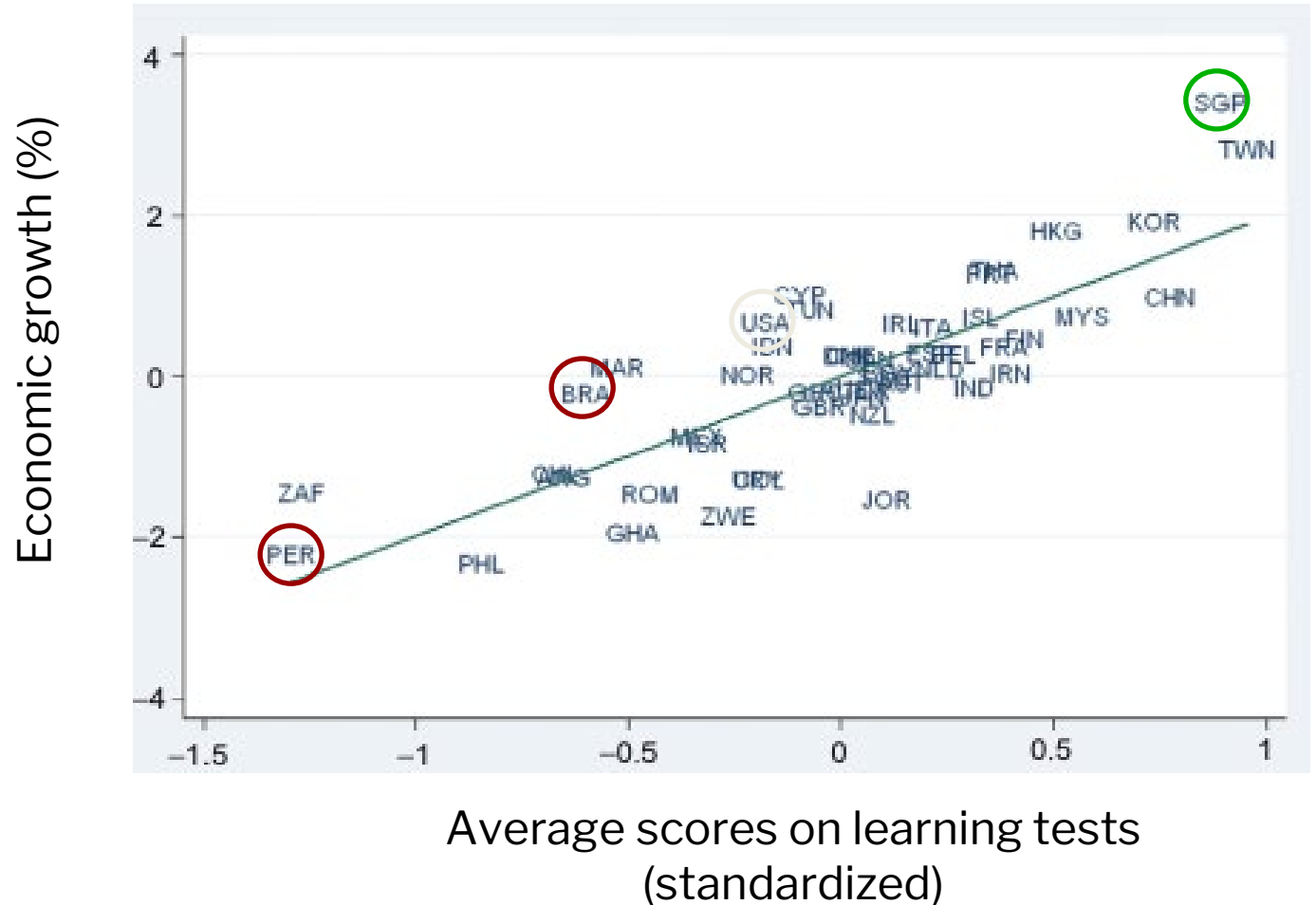
Each additional year of quality schooling raises lifetime earnings by ~10%.  
Foundational-learning programs return ~\$5 in social benefits per \$1 invested.

## 3 Democracy & return migration

Plural, inclusive classrooms anchor democratic life — and 6M+ Venezuelans abroad will only consider returning if their children can learn and thrive.

# Learning (not schooling) is the engine of economic development

A recent study indicates that **20-50%** of the differences in GDP between countries are associated with differences in learning levels.



# 3.

## Goals & priorities

for this conference

From a shared diagnosis  
**to a consolidated agenda for action.**

# What we hope to accomplish

## 1. Build a shared diagnosis

Across academia, civil society, and policy — a common picture of where Venezuelan education stands today.

## 2. Identify high-impact priorities

Concrete, evidence-based actions that can move the needle in the first 36 months of the transition.

## 3. Forge cross-sector partnerships

Coalitions of practitioners, researchers, government, and funders ready to act together when the window opens.

## 4. Produce a consolidated agenda

An edited volume and a public roadmap that outlives the conference and travels into Caracas, Washington, and beyond.

# Six priorities — one integrated system

## 1 Teaching talent

Preparing, retaining, and supporting Venezuela's educators.

## 2 Foundational learning

Recovering reading, writing, and math in the early grades.

## 3 Education for democracy

Plural, inclusive classrooms that strengthen democracy.

## 4 Nutrition & well-being

Safe buildings, services, and school meals that reach every child.

## 5 Financing & innovation

New models of funding and delivery for a constrained fiscal moment.

## 6 Early childhood development

A critical window for investing in the future.

# Beyond Oil Conference

**~1,000**

**participants**

Representing academia,  
civil society, members of  
the diaspora, and funders.

**6**

**panel discussions**

One per priority — each  
producing a chapter of the  
consolidated volume.

**1**

**edited volume**

Published with ELLA; the  
foundation for our shared  
agenda for action.

And a very special **Keynote Speaker**



**Veronica Rosich**



**Valentina Maza**

# Housekeeping

1. We will start all sessions **on time, sharp!**
2. We have 15-minute breaks (coffee & snacks provided) mid-morning and mid-afternoon; please plan to **return to the auditorium on time for a prompt start.**
3. Lunch is on your own from 12:30 – 1:30 pm. **Plan to be back by 1:25 pm.**
4. You're invited to a **networking event in the Gutman Conference Center today at 6:00-7:00 pm**



# Venezuela's future depends on what happens in its classrooms

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**Thank you.**

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