EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT · CARUAO, VENEZUELA

LITTLE PASSENGERS

Empowering Minds, Enriching Futures



littlepassengers.org · All photos from the Caruao community, by CUMIS



THE PLACE

Caruao, La Guaira

A small coastal community more than two hours from Caracas. Families here are close-knit and resilient — but doctors, therapists and enrichment programs rarely make it this far.

RURAL

Over two hours from the nearest city, Caracas.

LIMITED ACCESS

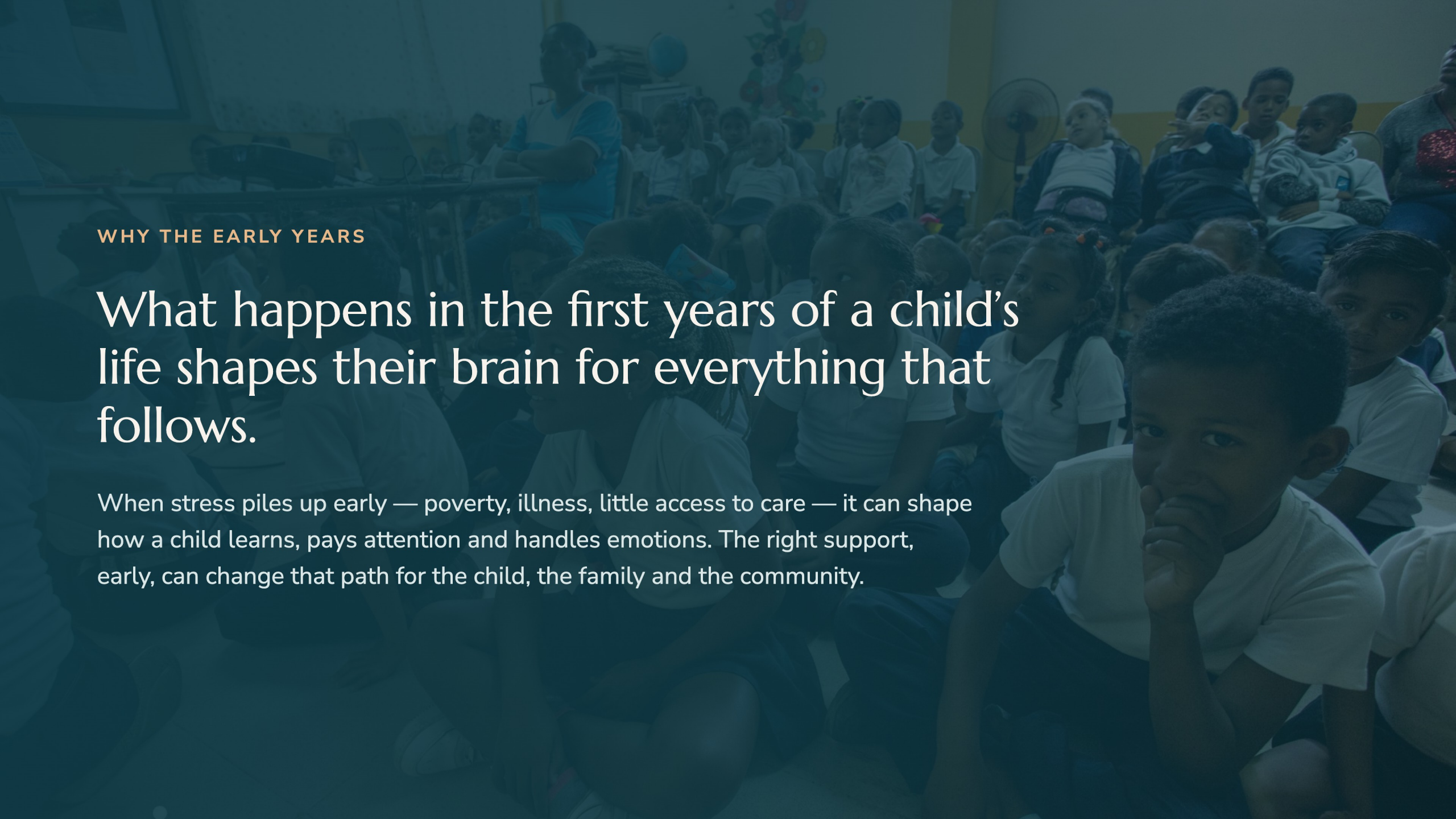
To health care, education and other resources.

RESILIENT

Strong local culture and strong families.

POTENTIAL

Real opportunities for growth and development.



WHY THE EARLY YEARS

What happens in the first years of a child's life shapes their brain for everything that follows.

When stress piles up early — poverty, illness, little access to care — it can shape how a child learns, pays attention and handles emotions. The right support, early, can change that path for the child, the family and the community.

APRIL 2025 · BASELINE PEDIATRIC EVALUATION

What the CUMIS pediatricians found

311

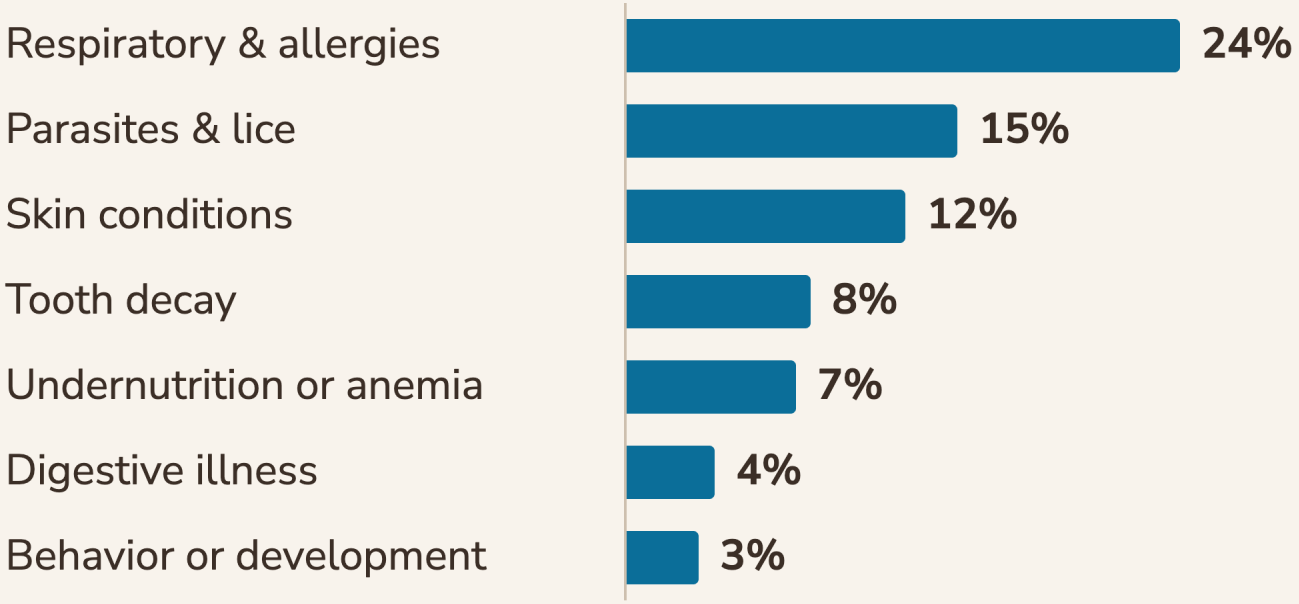
children seen in Caruao

4 in 5

had at least one health condition

A checkup isn't a developmental screening. Our evaluation day adds the NIH Toolbox to measure what a checkup can't see.

SHARE OF CHILDREN, BY TYPE OF CONDITION



Source: CUMIS pediatric evaluation, Caruao, April 2025 · shares of 308 clinical records · a child can fall into more than one category



WHAT WE DO

A year with Little Passengers

60 children and their caregivers, together, for 12 months.

Psychological support

Two psychologists lead weekly group therapy for emotional regulation and self-confidence, all year.

STEM & art

Hands-on science, art and engineering projects as a regular part of every week.

Family economic empowerment

Caregiver workshops in financial literacy and practical skills that build stability at home.

Home visits

Two local home visitors make about 20 visits a month, focused on the families who need it most.

MEASURING IMPACT

How we'll know it works

DAY 1 · BASELINE

Evaluation day

Two pediatricians, psychologists, a neurologist and nurses: checkups, NIH Toolbox cognitive and emotional tests, and a family needs survey.

MONTHS 1–12

The program

Psychological support, STEM and art, family workshops and home visits for every child.

MONTH 12 · FOLLOW-UP

Re-evaluation

The same tests again, so we can show exactly what changed for each child.

Every child has a starting point. Every child has a follow-up. We measure what changes.

Delivered by Venezuelan professionals. Evaluation design and outcome measurement by our University of Miami team.

THE TEAM

Our team and partners

LITTLE PASSENGERS TEAM



Albany Merinsky



Ana Laura Rumbaut



Sabrina Samaniego



Monica Peña, M.D.



Rodrigo Ribeiro



Nya Martin



Fhabian Nessi, M.D.

CUMIS



FIELD TEAM · VENEZUELA

Valeria Carfora, Barbara Varguillas, Juan Camaripano, Sofia Morelly

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI MILLER SCHOOL of MEDICINE

SCIENTIFIC & CLINICAL ADVISORS



Jennifer Muñoz Pareja, M.D.



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Jennifer Coto, Ph.D.

MILESTONES

Where we are

2021–23

Founded Little Passengers, a registered 501(c)(3). Built our clinical and academic team with the University of Miami. Presented at the Harvard Center on the Developing Child.

2024

Formalized our partnership with CUMIS and finalized the bioethics committee proposal.

April 2025

Baseline pediatric evaluation with CUMIS in Caruao: 311 children seen, consent collected and volunteers trained.

2026

Research protocol complete. Bioethics approval with Venezuela's national committee (CENABI) in process.

Next

Fund Year 1 and launch our first 12-month cohort of 60 children and their families.



NEXT STEPS

What happens next

1. **NOW – EARLY 2027**
   Build the Founding Circle: 17 sponsors, Year 1 fully funded.

2. **IN PARALLEL**
   Complete bioethics approval with CENABI.

3. **2027 · TARGET**
   Evaluation day for 60 children, then the 12-month program begins.

4. **12 MONTHS LATER**
   Re-evaluate every child and share the results with our Founding Circle.



THE BUDGET

Year 1 at a glance

$8,500
per month: $5,500 program + $3,000 team

$102,000
for the full year, 60 children and their families

$142
per child, per month — $1,700 for a full year

HOW EACH MONTH'S $8,500 SPLITS

Program in Caruao · $5,500

Psychologists, a pediatrician, educators, home visitors, evaluations and local operations. Line by line on the next slide.

Team · $3,000

2 Little Passengers staff at $1,500 a month each

THE BUDGET, LINE BY LINE

Where the money goes each month

Category	What it pays for	Per month
Psychological support	2 psychologists, one 4-hour group session a week each, at $30/hour	$1,040
Pediatric care	Pediatrician 2 half-days a month at $200 each, supplies; dental referrals	$450
STEM & art	2 local educators, 4 hours a week each at $20/hour; reusable materials	$943
Family economic empowerment	Family facilitator 4 hours a week; financial literacy specialist monthly	$492
Targeted home visits	About 20 visits a month to the families who need them most; transport	$640
Evaluations	Baseline and month-12 evaluation days, blood panel at baseline	$782
Logistics & operations	Local coordinator (20 hrs/month), Caracas–Caruao transport, snacks, internet	$750
Administration & technology	Website, email, banking, video calls, project management	$180
Contingency	About 4%, for price changes	$223
Little Passengers team (U.S.)	2 staff at $1,500 a month each	$3,000

Total **$8,500 a month · $102,000 for Year 1**

JOIN THE FOUNDING CIRCLE

17 founding sponsors. $6,000 each. A full year for 60 children.

17 × $6,000 = $102,000

Eleven gifts run the program for all 60 children for a full year. Six more fund the Little Passengers team that makes it happen.



Thank you.

Thank you for considering a place in our Founding Circle, and for helping build healthy childhoods and stronger families in Caruao.

Albany Merinsky

Founder, Little Passengers

littlepassengers.org · Instagram @little.passengers

