

COSMOPOLITAN

12,000 Condoms Sent to Venezuela to Alleviate Shortage



By Alanna Nunez
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The country's economic crisis has left its citizens scrambling to find birth control, among other goods and services.

In December, Venezuela started running out of condoms due to an economic crisis that has left Venezuelan citizens scrambling to find and pay for basic goods and services, and now the country's condom shortage has gotten so bad that the Center for Biological Diversity has sent more than 12,000 condoms from its Endangered Species Condom Project (which highlights the connections between human growth, overconsumption, and wildlife extinction) to Venezuelan health clinics for free in an attempt to draw attention to the country's crisis.

"The condom shortage may have started as an economic policy issue, but when contraception is unavailable, it becomes a threat to public health, reproductive rights, families, and biodiversity,"

Stephanie Feldstein, population and sustainability director at the Center for Biological Diversity, said in a statement. "While 12,000 condoms won't be able to meet the country's need, we hope it will help draw attention to the urgency of the situation in Venezuela."

Indeed, 12,000 condoms is just a drop in the bucket. Due to import sanctions, so many pharmacies have run out of condoms that Venezuelan residents are turning Mercado Libre ("Free Market"), a website similar to eBay where people can buy and sell all kinds of products, to get them — and they've reportedly been going for prices as high as 4,760 bolivares, or the equivalent of \$755.

Public health workers worry that the shortage could further Venezuela's already high rates of teen pregnancy (it has the second-highest rate in Latin America,

second to Guyana) and HIV, as well as threaten prevention programs that nonprofits have been working on.

“An unwanted teenage pregnancy is a mark of government’s failure: failure of its economic, public health, and educational policy,” Carlos Cabrera, a practicing gynecologist in Caracas, told Bloomberg News in February.