



AS IT IS

Argentina Struggles with Increased Poverty, Inflation

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The neighborhood of Manzanares outside the city of Buenos Aires in Argentina looks poor. People cook with firewood. Some have no electricity, gas or running water. Children play without shoes.

More than 100 years ago, Argentina was one of the richest countries in the world. By the end of 2020, 42 percent of the population was poor. The percentage has risen from 35.5 percent a year earlier. The coronavirus health crisis and years of recession have affected people's lives.

"Here we live day to day. We do not know what will happen tomorrow, if we will make it or won't get to eat," said Aida Mariela Unayche. She is a 43-year-old who is unemployed and has two children.

"Poverty leads you to this...We no longer have the right to anything. We've lost everything, even **dignity**," added Unayche. She now lives on **charity**.

Argentina's economy has been crushed by years of economic crisis and high inflation that has destroyed people's savings and ability to spend money. Prices have increased every year.

Before the pandemic, 8 million Argentines received food assistance. Now it is 10 million, in a population of about 45 million people.

Minister of Social Development Daniel Arroyo told Reuters: "The price of food is Argentina's most **critical** problem. What we see is people doing **informal** jobs, working, but then also going to **soup kitchens** to make ends meet."

The government of President Alberto Fernández wants to reduce poverty to help its position before the October elections. Many of the party's supporters live in the poor areas around Buenos Aires.

The Ministry of Social Development had a budget of \$2.6 billion in 2020 to lessen the economic effects of the coronavirus pandemic. In 2021, there could be additional measures, Arroyo said. He did not give details.

Argentina has high levels of poverty assistance for a Latin American country. But much of the aid is made possible by government financial measures that increase inflation – and poverty.

Argentina's central bank estimates that the economy will grow at a rate of 6.7 percent this year, with inflation at 46 percent.

“The first year of the pandemic was very difficult, I was left without work,” said María Núñez. She has 10 children.

“I always worked as a **domestic** worker and it was all very sudden. My husband was also without work and all my children. It was very hard for everyone,” she said.

I'm Susan Shand.

The Reuters News Agency reported this story. Susan Shand adapted it for Learning English. Mario Ritter, Jr. was the editor.

Words in This Story

dignity – *n.* a way of appearing or behaving that suggests seriousness and self-control

charity – *n.* the act of giving money, food or other aid to people who are poor

critical –*adj.* extremely important

informal –*adj.* not official or serious

soup kitchen – *n.* a place that gives food, like soup and bread, to the poor

domestic – *adj.* within the home

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