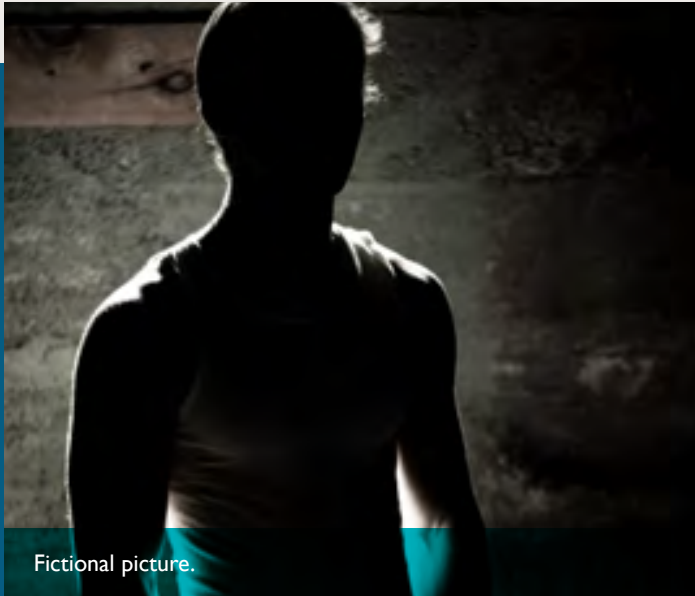


RUNNING FROM MY PAST

This is an adapted story of an unaccompanied minor from an FGD held in Bogotá.



Fictional picture.

‘Because I was an unaccompanied minor, I had to pay USD\$250 to bribe the authorities to cross the border and enter Colombia.’

Venezuelan caminante.

I had a terrible childhood. At 9 years of age, I was raped by one of my uncles, and by 14 I was kicked out of the house by my parents. Now, I am 17 years old and have been living alone for the past three years. I saw the need to migrate from my hometown, Santa Cruz de Mora, in Venezuela, to Colombia to get away from my family situation and because I could not complete my studies due to my sexual orientation. My hometown is very Catholic and conservative.

Because I was an unaccompanied minor, I had to pay USD\$250 to bribe the authorities to cross the border and enter Colombia. From there, I moved to Cucuta and worked in a bakery. Then a friend received me in Cucaramanga, there the migration offices were closed, so I could not request for Colombian documents. After working hard in Cucaramanga, I saved some money to travel to Bogotá to continue my studies and request national papers. On my route to Bogotá, I traveled to Pamplona and during my journey, I was alone, assaulted, and robbed of my phone and money.

In Bogotá, I received shelter from IOM and ICRC. Because I have a valid Venezuelan ID and am under 18, I know I will get the temporary authorization to stay in Colombia automatically. Even though I requested information from several NGOs about a travel authorization, I didn't get a lot of details. I just know that not having one gives me several benefits.

I have never received a prepaid card and have always been paid with cash. Nevertheless, I opened an Efecty account so my Colombian friends could send me money. I struggled to open an Efecty account because at the beginning they were not accepting my ID, but then they did.

I also have a public transport card and the account with Efecty, so I am the most integrated among the group I travel with. I received some learning materials from the German Embassy to help me study.

I would love to find a place to stay here in Bogotá. I have a cousin here in the city but since my phone was robbed, I cannot communicate with her.