Humanitarian overview

Colombia’s six decade-long armed conflict has forced millions to flee.

Although the country reached a milestone with the 2016 peace agreement between the government and the armed group FARC, the conflict has intensified in some areas since the group laid down its arms. Violence continues in former FARC-EP controlled areas as several armed groups fight for control of natural resources and drug trafficking routes. Many Afro-Colombian and indigenous people are forced to flee their ancestral land.

Nine out of ten people displaced by Colombia’s civil war have not received the promised compensation for crimes committed against them. Many suffered the loss of relatives, forced displacement, torture or sexual violence.

Colombia has the second largest displaced population in the world after Syria, and nearly four million people depend on humanitarian aid. Over 310,000 have fled to neighbouring Ecuador, Panamá and Venezuela.

Meanwhile, Colombia hosts around one million people who have fled the growing humanitarian crisis in neighbouring Venezuela.

NRC’s operation

We provide emergency and long-term assistance to internally displaced people in rural areas where authorities struggle to provide help, and in urban environments, where the majority of Colombia’s displaced population has sought safety.

Our Bogota office also runs a regional operation assisting Colombian refugees in Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama where we help them access their rights.

The crisis in Venezuela has caused many people to seek humanitarian aid in other countries. We are currently implementing an action plan to respond to their needs.
Areas of operation
Colombia: Florencia and San Vincente del Caguan (Caquetá), Granada (Meta), Pasto and Tumaco (Nariño), Guapi and Popayan (Cauca), Quibdo (Choco) Cucuta and Ocaña (Norte de Santander), Arauca (Arauca), Santa Marta (Magdalena). Ecuador: Esmeraldas, Lago Agrio, Tulcan and Quito – Panamá: Ciudad de Panamá – Venezuela: San Cristobal

Education
We help displaced families keep their children in school, and work with youth and adults to complete their education and find safe vocational training opportunities. Our teams:

• conduct censuses in municipalities affected by conflict to identify out-of-school children
• give technical support to educational authorities to provide alternative education programmes for those who are not in school
• give technical support to schools and training centres to implement flexible education models for those out of school
• support schools and vocational training centres, increasing their capacity to meet the needs of out-of-school children
• work with children so they can attend flexible education model programmes and technical and vocational skills training

In acute emergencies, we:

• distribute learning and sports equipment, so that children can continue to learn and play
• build temporary classrooms and latrines as well as upgrade school infrastructure
• provide newly displaced children with safe learning environments
• train teachers on how best to teach and support their students

Information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA)
We improve access to registration procedures and legal humanitarian assistance as well as access to land and housing for communities who had previously abandoned their land or houses or had them seized. Our ICLA teams:

• assist displaced people in rural and urban areas who have not yet declared their displacement to the proper authorities
• provide legal services to displaced people who are
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Bureau of Population Refugees and Migration (BPRM)

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Emergency response
When new conflicts arise in remote locations, we provide humanitarian assistance to communities where no permanent field presence has yet been, or can be, established. We also help newly displaced children go to safe learning environments during acute emergencies.

In emergencies, we:

• train teachers to best teach and support their pupils during an emergency
• distribute learning and sports equipment, so that children can continue to learn and play
• build temporary classrooms and latrines and upgrade school infrastructure
• supply food and temporary shelters
• facilitate the registration process in acute emergencies, so displaced people can gain access to humanitarian assistance.

Shelter and settlements
Access to shelter is essential for one’s dignity, privacy, health, and physical and social protection. Our shelter and settlements teams provide access to adequate shelter solutions for affected people across all phases of displacement. This ranges from rapidly deployable emergency shelters that can save lives, to supporting early recovery and promoting durable solutions.

Our shelter teams:

• provide temporary shelter solutions through cash for rent
• provide transitional shelters for vulnerable families through complete shelter construction or cash for a housing upgrade
• provide habitat or hygiene kits for vulnerable families, thereby increasing and promoting safe hygiene practices
• initiate multipurpose protective and collective shelters, like community centres
• construct and repair of classrooms

victims of usurpation or abandonment of land or housing
• offer legal assistance services to guarantee victims’ rights when they return to their land
• provide legal assistance on how to access adequate housing and how to limit risk of eviction