

Colombia Situation

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Colombia, Panama, Ecuador & Venezuela NRC Fact Sheet



Country Director:
Christian Visnes



Phone:
+57 313 4223614
E-mail:
christian.visnes@nrc.no

Office Country established:
1991 – 2004: Indirect presence through Project Counselling Service Consortium.
2005 – Direct presence in Colombia

International Staff: 1

National Staff: 167 permanent national staff. Over 259 persons contracted for specific services to programs.

Budget 2016:
NOK 95 millions
(USD 11 millions)

Budget 2015:
NOK 74 millions

Budget 2014:
NOK 59,5 millions

DONORS: Bureau of Population Refugees and Migration (BPRM); Canada Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD); United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID); European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO); The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR); Telethon (Norway); Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Note: The written budget for 2015 and 2016 includes resources for the pilot project in Honduras



Photo: NRC / Fernanda Pineda

Humanitarian and political context

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As a result of an on-going, five decade old internal armed conflict, Colombia has the most prolonged and serious humanitarian crisis in America. Notwithstanding the good news that the insurgency and the Government are pursuing a peace dialogue, armed conflict and generalized violence continue on the ground. According to OCHA the conflict has led to more than 15.000 newly displaced each month since the peace negotiations started in 2012.

Through February 2016, the government's official registry put the number of victims of forced displacement at nearly 6.6 million. The Country's protracted conflict is the main cause of displacement, but spreading criminal violence has also forced people to flee from their homes. Widespread abuses, including the recruitment of minors, sexual violence, the deployment of anti-personnel mines, extortion and the targeting of human rights defenders have also forced many people to flee their homes. The central actors in the Colom-

bian conflict are the paramilitary successor groups, the insurgency, the groups called by the government BACRIM (criminal gangs, that emerged after the demobilization of the paramilitaries) and the armed forces of the Colombian State.

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All these groups have caused and continue to cause forced displacement. According to official sources, on average nearly 200,000 people have become forcibly displaced per year from 2010 to 2015. According to OCHA in 2015, “there were 628

emergencies resulting from armed actions. These figures represent a drop as compared to 2014, when there were 798 such emergencies. Nevertheless, the number of mass displacement events remained stable. In 2015 the FARC-EP participated in 37 per cent of mass displacements, the ELN in 31 per cent, and the BACRIM in 13 per cent”.

A public security challenge remains violence by armed groups which emerged after the paramilitary demobilization and armed groups linked to organized crime. Violence affects the rights of those living where such groups are in control or are fighting to gain control of illicit revenues derived from the drug trade, extortion, illegal mining, prostitution, trafficking in persons and illegal migration. Moreover, it is worrying the increase in armed actions of the ELN (National Liberation Army). According to the ombudsman, the armed strike declared by the ELN (February 2016), was spread over 10 departments of the country (30% of Colombia). This shows

that, besides being a military threat, ELN may become a risk to achieve the end of the conflict in Colombia.

In the country the displaced population has moved mainly to urban areas. Stigmatized or threatened in cities, displaced persons have generally tried to remain invisible among a receiving population of low socio-economic status. As a result, in Colombia, there are no major displacement camps, but an urban footprint of silent mass settlement in municipal centres. These populations are exposed to human rights abuses and live in dire circumstances, with inadequate housing, scarce employment opportunities and no access to public services. Displacement also drives people into poverty. In urban areas, the number of victims of displacement below the poverty line is 63.8%, while 33% are living in extreme poverty; while the situation of the displaced rural population is more vulnerable. In this context, creating an environment in which displaced people find guarantees of non-repetition and durable solutions will require enormous efforts. Lack of resources and infrastructure, the volatile

security situation and the absence of state structures pose serious threats to human rights after a peace agreement. This is probably the main reason why Colombian authorities, the international community and donors need to perform further and new strategies to ensure protection of the rights of 6.6 million people displaced by conflict.

At the same time, displaced seeking international protection in neighbouring countries (Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela) continues. According to UNHCR there are about 370,000 Colombians who are living in a refugee-like situation but have yet to get their need for international protection recognised by the neighbouring countries. During 2015, estimations indicate that the refugee recognition rate status is still low in Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela. Structural institutional barriers to refugee status determination are evident and neighbouring countries should strengthen its ability to consistently respond within the time framework established by the refugee local policies. Meanwhile, the Colombia-Ecuador border area continues to be affected by conflict. Mon-

thly arrivals from Colombia continue to range between 900 to 1,000 individuals according to UNHCR.

On the other hand, in Venezuela violence has exacerbated an already tense political situation. Crime is rising; the deadliest place in the world in 2015 was Caracas, the Venezuelan capital, a city of 3.3 million people, which recorded 3,946 homicides in 2015 - equivalent to nearly 120 per 100,000 residents. The political polarisation reverberates beyond Venezuela's borders and affects the stability of the Venezuelan-Colombian border. The economical situation is also worsening as a result of oil prices. In August 2015, President Nicolas Maduro decreed a state of exception in the border municipalities with Colombia. Sweeping security operations in neighbourhoods predominantly populated by Colombians swiftly followed this measure. This situation increased the number of deportation of Colombian nationals from Venezuela, which affects also individuals seeking international protection in that country.



NRC Colombia Program

Colombia, Ecuador, Panama y Venezuela

NRC will, in the context of a peace agreement with FARC, increase efforts to contribute to durable solutions, both in Colombia and in neighbouring countries.



Photo: NRC / Fernanda Pineda

Strategic priority for 2015-2017 continues to be to address displacement and emergency related protection gaps and humanitarian need when the state is unable or unwilling to fulfil its obligations. NRC will respond to protection gaps and humanitarian needs arising during the immediate aftermath of mass displacement, individual displacement or confined communities, in addition to those seeking international protection. Geographic focus will be those places most adversely affected by the conflict.

NRC will in the context of a peace agreement with FARC increase efforts to contribute to durable solutions, both in Colombia and in neighbouring countries. A possible peace accord will increase the likelihood that sustainable solutions can be sought with more vigour,

NRC will seek to broaden its humanitarian response capitalizing on gained experience in education (access to education and infrastructure), shelter, Gender Based Violence and Housing Land and Property programming. Access to education in the most conflict-affected areas is a structural gap that NRC is well placed to respond to, particularly in rural areas, where access to enrolment, teacher coverage and infrastructure needs are components of NRC's offer. Furthermore, local integration of demobilized guerrilla fighters through the education system and local schools will be essential, NRC's flexible education models is key tool in so forth. NRC aims to strengthen community based programming as part of efforts to strengthen the focus on durable and sustainable solutions. However, NRC's approach to du-

rable solutions in an atmosphere of continued violence as earlier described, will be grounded in a mainstreamed protection strategy.

NRC primarily keeps activities in rural geographic areas where access of the population to protection and assistance is most precarious (e.g. Pacific Coast and Catatumbo in Colombia and border areas in Ecuador and Venezuela) but services are also being provided and activities implemented in urban areas when the protection gaps are significant (e.g. in Tumaco). Localized emergency response is complemented with institutional strengthening (authorities) and capacity building (individuals and communities) at local level. New offices have been set up in Chocó and Caquetá to increase NRC's support and assistance to the displaced populations in these parts of the country.

All programs combine a strategy of implementing project activities addressing protection gaps and humanitarian needs coupled with a set of advocacy efforts intended to promote a change in policy, practice or law in compliance with international and national human rights standards. To make the duty bearer responsible and capable for promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of all individuals and in particular the displaced population under its jurisdiction is a key advocacy aim.

NRC priorities for 2016

General Objectives:

NRC will through humanitarian emergency assistance, technical assistance to duty bearers and community empowerment, contribute to increased protection for population affected by forced displacement in the context of violence and armed conflict in the acute, transition and early recovery phase.



NRC Core Competencies

NRC started a direct implementation of its programming in Colombia during 2005 through implementing Education and Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance - ICLA activities. In 2010 a Refugee program that has focused in providing ICLA services to refugees and PNIPs in Venezuela, Panama and Ecuador was formally created. In 2011 NRC Colombia consolidated an internal capacity to ensure rapid Education in emergencies Response to massive displacements.

The following is the current status of these programs:

01 INFORMATION, COUNSELLING AND LEGAL ASSISTANCE (ICLA)



Photo: NRC / Fernanda Pineda

“ Helping people exercises their rights”

- participation in the restitution process at the administrative stage
- Legal assistance services will be offered in order to guarantee the victims' rights in the post-ruling stage of the land restitution process, with an emphasis on housing
- NRC will provide legal information, counselling and assistance for communities or individuals on how to access adequate housing including social programs or how to limit risks of eviction
- NRC will implement Collaborative Dispute Resolution (CDR) techniques in conflicts arising from second occupants of good faith settled in lands subjected to restitution and conflicts between landlords and displaced populations.
- In the case of acute emergencies, NRC staff will rapidly be deployed in the sites of newly displaced in order to facilitate the declaration process.
- During new emergencies leading to massive displacements, NRC will provide information to the heads of the affected households and provide training and technical support.

Key Processes

- NRC and its implementing partners will assist recently and protracted displaced people in rural and urban areas who have not yet declared their displacement to the Public Ministry
- NRC will provide legal services to IDPs and their communities who are victims of usurpation or abandonment of lands or housing
- NRC will provide information and counselling sessions in coordination with the Land and Restitution Unit in focalized communities to ensure their par-

Outcomes

- **Improved access to Declaration and registration procedures and humanitarian assistance for Internally Displaced People IDPs.**
- **Improve access to land and housing for communities that are victims of usurpation or abandonment of land.**

Outcomes

- Through the Access to Education program NRC will in close coordination with schools, public vocational training centers and local education authorities provide relevant education and training opportunities to conflict-affected out of school children and youth.
- The Education in Emergency program aim at improving the material and non-material conditions during the acute emergency in order to ensure that conflict-affected children rapidly resume education activities in a protective learning environment.

Key Processes

- Targeting of out of school children and youth through the implementation of census in municipalities particularly affected by conflict.
- Technical support to Secretariats of Education to ensure the provision of relevant education alternatives (formal education) to the out of school.
- Technical support to schools for the implementation of Flexible Education models to the out of school population.
- Technical support to TVS training centres schools for



Photo: NRC / Edgar Leon

- the implementation of Flexible Education models to the out of school population.
- Direct support to children and youth to access Flexible Education Models and TVS training.
- NRC will focus on children recently affected by the armed conflict to ensure their access to protective learning spaces. In situations of displacement, this is done by supporting existing schools in the host communities with trainings of teachers in Education in Emergencies methodology, provision of School in a box kits to rapidly resume teaching activities, and by improving or providing schools infrastructure
- Training of teachers and Education agents in Education in Emergency concepts and methodologies so that they are enable to respond to the educational and emotional needs of children during the acute emergency
- Distribution of educational Non-Food Items (Emergency education Kits for children, School in a box and sporting kits for schools)
- Provision of temporary school infrastructure (Classrooms and latrines) and or upgrading of school infrastructure
- The Emergency Response program gives NRC Colombia the opportunity to intervene in geographical areas where no permanent field presence has been or will be established.
- NRC will work with the Ministry of Education to ensure that all the information on out-of-school population and access barriers are well known at national level in order to find practical solutions to provide services to these populations.

Outcomes

- **People in need of international Protection (PNIP) effective access Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures and other forms of regularization on time.**
- **PNIPs in Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama have increased access to house, land and property (HLP) rights**
- **PNIPs have increased capacities to take informed decision on durable solutions**

Key Processes

- Provision of relevant information, counselling and legal assistance services to asylum seekers, refugees and PNIPs on RSD procedures and other forms of regularization.
- Personalized accompaniment to PNIP who have recently arrived to the host country in order for them to reach the Refugee Commissions.
- Provision of mobility kits to PNIPs to ensure they reach the Refugee Commissions.
- Provision of information, counselling and legal assistance to asylum seekers, refugees and PNIPs on Housing, Land and property rights.
- Provision of information, counselling and legal assistance services to asylum seekers, refugees and PNIPs to ensure access to the Victim's registry in Colombia and the reparation measures framed in the Victim's law,
- Technical support to authorities in order to increase their capacities to provide relevant services and attention to PNIP.
- NRC seeks to increase information on durable solutions using both individual and community information and empowerment and strengthen relevant authorities and increase advocacy work.
- Advocacy to overcome legal barriers that refrain PNIPs and Refugees access to basic rights.





Outcomes

- **Directly address the protection needs of displaced or conflict affected women and girls, who are survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV) or at high risk, especially remote and vulnerable**
- **Build the capacity of public institutions to provide protection and assistance for women and girls at risk of and survivors of gender-based violence**

Key Processes

- Increases reporting rates for GBV by strengthening the referral pathway ensuring that survivors know where to go for such support
- Address the social challenges and taboos that women face in reporting violence by creating a safe space for young women and men to learn about women's rights and alternative ways of dealing with anger and frustration exacerbated by the conflict and displacement.
- NRC will work with wider community members (male and female) on rights awareness, advocacy and empowerment challenging long held social and traditional beliefs that are detrimental to women and girls
- NRC will identify and promote the provision of remedial actions to women and girls, by working with national actors that are at the frontline of providing direct response services to reported cases of GBV, building their capacity, distributing proper training materials, ensuring that such support to survivors of GBV is provided within a survivor centred approach that adheres to the IASC minimum standards
- GBV Program will support the Education team in conducting Sexual Exploitation and Abuse prevention and response actions in schools.

PRINCIPAL OFFICE
BOGOTA D.C.

Carrera 9 No. 81 A - 26 Piso 9 Tel.: (+57-1) 317 14 81

ADRESSES COLOMBIA

CUCUTA – NORTE DE SANTANDER

AV. 11 A E No. 4 - 55 y 4 - 61
Quinta Oriental TeleFax: (+57-7) 589 11 16

FLORENCIA – CAQUETA

Carrera 9 No. 8B-54 Piso 2 Edificio Las Peñas

GUAPI - CAUCA

Calle 4 No. 3 - 13 Esquina Barrio La Esperanza

OCAÑA – NORTE DE SANTANDER

Carrera 24 No. 3-17 Barrio Marabel, Piso 1 y 2
Telefax: (+57-7) 569 00 94

PASTO - NARIÑO

Calle 17 No. 40 -34 Barrio El Dorado
Tel.: (+57-2) 731 25 30

POPAYAN - CAUCA

Carrera 11 No. 9 – 39 Barrio Santa Clara

QUIBDO – CHOCO

Carrera 6 No. 29-39 Barrio Cesar Conto

SANTA MARTA - MAGDALENA

Calle 22 No. 20 - 115 Barrio El Jardín
Telefax: (+57-5) 420 21 68

TUMACO - NARIÑO

La Rada Vía al Aeropuerto Barrio La Florida
Tel.: (+5-72) 727 21 40

ADRESSES LATIN AMERICA

PANAMA CITY – PANAMA

Calle Vicente Bonilla, Casa 115B
Ciudad del Saber, Clayton
Tel.: (+50-7) 317 11 23 / 317 15 04

Edificio Torre Delta, Vía España
y calle Elvira Méndez
Piso 3, Ofi. 301

Tel.: (+50-7) 264 99 69

ESMERALDAS – ECUADOR

Sector las Palmas, Calle Hilda Padilla
y Avenida Kennedy,
Parroquia 04 del cantón Esmeraldas
Tel.: (+593-6) 246 03 31

MERIDA – VENEZUELA

Avenida 4, entre calles 18 y 19,
Centro Profesional Alfredo (Freddy Al),
piso 2, núcleo 6, oficina 1
(+58-274) 251 27 27

**SAN CRISTOBAL,
ESTADO DE TACHIRA – VENEZUELA**

Calle 2, entre Carreras 1 y 2, Quinta Marieliz, No.
1-45, Urb. Mérida
Tel.: (+58-276) 348 40 89

NRC

**CONSEJO NORUEGO
PARA REFUGIADOS**