

Colombia

Main objectives

- Promote a comprehensive and coordinated response to the humanitarian crisis to prevent displacement, reinforce the protection of the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and populations at risk and seek durable solutions, taking into account the special needs of specific groups.
- Contribute to strengthening international protection of Colombian refugees in Latin America and elsewhere in the world through early warning, border monitoring and provision of country of origin information.
- Ensure international protection for the small but growing number of asylum-seekers and refugees in Colombia.



Planning figures		
Population	Jan 2006	Dec 2006
IDPs ¹	2,200,000	2,400,000
Various (refugees)	160	200
Various (asylum-seekers)	20	20
Returnees	10	10
Total	2,200,190	2,400,230

¹ The Government has acknowledged that there are more than 2 million IDPs in Colombia. NGOs have estimated more than 3 million.

Total requirements: USD 8,443,625

Working environment

Recent developments

Colombia continues to experience a large-scale and complex internal armed conflict involving the

State, a loose confederation of paramilitary organizations, the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), and two guerrilla groups, the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército Popular* (FARC-EP) and the smaller *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN). The Organization of American States (OAS) has reported progress on the process of demobilization of the AUC, which it has been monitoring. To date, a significant number of troops has been demobilized but the process of reintegration has had mixed results. Despite the demobilization of these paramilitary troops, a definitive solution to the conflict is still a long way off.

No substantive peace talks have been held with the two guerrilla groups and the conflict continues despite the Government's robust security policy, including a military offensive in southern Colombia (*Plan Patriota*). Indeed, in some areas of the country clashes between the Armed Forces and guerrilla groups have become even more frequent, causing further population displacement. The number of

Colombians seeking protection, both within the country and abroad, is still growing. According to Government estimates, there are between 2 and 3 million displaced people, 1.6 million of whom are officially registered. However, NGO figures suggest the presence of more than 3.4 million IDPs. In surrounding countries more than half a million of Colombians live in refugee-like situations, but only some 50,000 Colombian asylum-seekers and refugees have been registered.

The recently enacted Justice and Peace Law develops the legal framework for the demobilization process, but there is a fear that it fails to adequately address several important concerns, for example reparations for violations committed by irregular armed groups. Its application and humanitarian impact will be closely monitored by the international community. A proposed humanitarian accord between the Government and the FARC, involving the exchange of kidnap victims for FARC prisoners, has yet to materialize. Attempts to initiate substantive peace negotiations with the ELN have also foundered.

Elections are scheduled for 2006 and President Uribe is seeking re-election. A constitutional amendment which allows for his re-election has been challenged before the Constitutional Court, which is expected to issue its ruling by November 2005.

Since 2002, the Government has promoted the return of internally displaced people. Although voluntary return is in principle the solution most appropriate to situations of internal displacement, the voluntary nature of some returns has been called into question, especially in the absence of alternatives. Returns have often been carried out despite the absence of secure conditions, and the persistence of the internal armed conflict gives rise to concerns regarding the sustainability of returns.

The Constitutional Court handed down a landmark judgement on the protection of the internally displaced in 2004, in which it found that the response to the internal displacement crisis was inadequate. UNHCR then presented the Government with a set of recommendations to improve national policies on internal displacement

and to ensure IDPs' enjoyment of the full range of rights. UNHCR will also collaborate on a new review of the public policies relating to internal displacement which will be presented to the Government in 2006.

Constraints

The ongoing conflict is characterized by armed confrontations between the Armed Forces and the guerrilla groups and frequent cease-fire violations by the paramilitaries. This continues to impinge on the enjoyment of basic human rights by the civilian population, and leaves whole communities at risk of displacement.

The magnitude of the internal displacement crisis can be explained by the prevailing weakness of State institutions, especially in rural areas, including their complete absence from many areas of the country, and their inability to protect civilians.

Strategy

Protection and solutions

Colombian IDPs and refugees generally flee for the same reasons and UNHCR sees all victims of the conflict who remain in the region as part of a broader "Colombian situation". The Office will therefore adopt a two-pronged approach that seeks to guarantee protection both for those who are displaced within the country and those who cross an international border. Support for international protection of Colombian asylum-seekers and refugees will be provided to asylum countries through border monitoring and early warning of potential refugee movements, as well as timely provision of detailed country of origin information. Given that different sectors of the population are affected differently by displacement, the protection strategy adopts a differential approach that takes into account age, gender and ethnicity.

It is expected that global migration routes and events in other countries in Latin America will continue to lead to increased arrivals of asylum-seekers in Colombia. The Office will strengthen legal advice and reception

arrangements and redouble the search for durable solutions in individual cases, particularly through local integration.

UNHCR's protection strategy in Colombia seeks to ensure that: 1) there is an adequate legal framework in place; 2) the authorities put these protection standards into practice; 3) internally displaced people are able to defend their rights and participate fully in the conduct of public affairs; and, 4) domestic institutions have the capacity to supervise compliance with the law and the State's obligation to respect and enforce IDP rights. The existing legal protection framework (and in particular Law 387/97) is consistent with the UN *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, and the Office is working to ensure that the framework evolves to meet changing realities.

UNHCR will offer advice on public policy formulation in all major sectors: emergency response, registration, health, education, housing, income generation and protection of property rights. A new 'Evaluation of Public Policy' (*Balance de la*

política pública de prevención, protección y atención al desplazamiento interno forzado en Colombia) will be presented to the Government with a set of recommendations for an improved response to internal displacement.

Given the persistence and characteristics of the conflict, UNHCR will support State and civil society efforts to search for durable solutions. In most areas, conditions are not yet suited to the voluntary return of IDPs in security and dignity as set out in the Mexico Plan of Action. The Office will redouble efforts to support local integration, especially in the large urban centres which host most IDPs (referred to as "Cities of Solidarity"). The Office will focus efforts on assisting local authorities to structure local durable solutions plans.

In order to empower displaced people and communities, UNHCR will promote the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* and other applicable standards, and will strengthen organizations representing IDPs, women, indigenous peoples and afro-Colombians. These efforts will help them to



UN House in the Bogota suburb of Altos de Cazuca, where some 30,000 IDPs live. UNHCR established its presence there in December 2004 in response to a request from IDPs to provide protection in an area where human rights violations are rife. Other UN agencies share the premises with UNHCR, ensuring a collaborative response to the problems faced by Colombia's displaced. *UNHCR / W. Spindler*

defend their rights, enter into dialogue with authorities and participate fully in decision making. At the same time, IDP protection will be reinforced through the issuance of personal identity documents and the provision of legal assistance through a growing network of university legal aid clinics.

The Office will further develop protection networks within civil society, particularly through the work of the field offices. UNHCR's field offices also implement "practical protection projects" whereby the Office seeks to help prevent displacement by demonstrating the support of the international community for communities at risk and promoting the presence of the State authorities.

Finally, UNHCR will support the use of domestic supervisory mechanisms, in particular the specialized internal displacement units of the Ombudsman's Office and Procurator-General. When called upon to do so, UNHCR will also provide its opinion on legal issues to the Constitutional Court.

Desired impact

Primary responsibility for the protection and assistance of internally displaced people lies with the State; however, in keeping with the complementary role of the international community and the specific mandate given to the Office, UNHCR seeks to help strengthen the national response. The Office will reinforce efforts to design and implement public policies relating to prevention of displacement, protection of IDPs and the search for durable solutions. Given that local integration is the most viable durable solution for the majority of Colombia's displaced, the Office will redouble support for the State in relation to housing, income generation and education, notably through adoption and implementation of local durable solutions plans. The Office will also step up efforts to support State programmes to protect the property rights of IDPs.

Particular emphasis will be given to the protection of the rights of women, young people, indigenous peoples and afro-Colombians.

With a greater field presence, UNHCR will be better positioned to implement its strategy, particularly as regards local integration of IDPs in large cities and strengthening protection in border areas as well as its capacity for border monitoring and early warning. The Office will continue to collect and analyse relevant country of origin information and make it available through the online database on UNHCR's Spanish website (www.acnur.org) and *RefWorld* with a view to strengthening international protection in asylum countries.

By maintaining an active public information campaign, UNHCR will aim to increase the visibility of the internal displacement crisis, both at national and international levels.

Organization and implementation

Management structure

UNHCR will have 73 staff: 15 international (including one JPO) and 31 national, 16 international UNVs, eight national UNVs and three protection staff from the Surge project.

The Office in Bogota is responsible for the overall management of the programme and liaison with the Government, national and international agencies, members of the diplomatic community and NGOs. The six field offices and three satellite offices implement and undertake follow-up on projects at the local level, provide advice to local authorities and implement practical protection projects which seek to promote State presence in communities at risk in order to prevent displacement.

Coordination

The UNHCR protection response will continue to be part of a collaborative approach, whereby UNHCR works closely with other international agencies. Each of the agencies is called upon to contribute to the response to internal displacement based on its respective mandate and expertise. While overall responsibility for the UN

response to the humanitarian crisis in Colombia lies with the Humanitarian Coordinator, UNHCR has taken the lead role in IDP protection, which requires input from all sectors. The UN Thematic Group on Displacement (TGD), chaired by UNHCR, was reactivated in 2005. It has an important coordination role within the UN family, ensuring that the various protection needs of IDPs are addressed. The Government, IOM, ICRC and NGOs are also participating in the TGD.

Offices
Bogota
Apartado
Barrancabermeja
Barranquilla
Bucaramanga
Cucuta
Mocoa
Pasto
Quibdo
Soacha

Partners
Government agencies
<i>Agencia Presidencial para la Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional</i>
<i>Defensoría del Pueblo (Ombudsman's Office)</i>
<i>Procuraduría General de la Nación (Procurator's Office)</i>
<i>Registraduría (National Registry)</i>
NGOs
<i>Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular</i>
<i>Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento</i>
<i>Fundación Compartir</i>
<i>Instituto Latinoamericano de Servicios Legales</i>
<i>Liga de Mujeres</i>
<i>Mujer y Futuro</i>
<i>Opción Legal</i>
<i>Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia</i>
<i>Secretariado Nacional de Pastoral Social</i>
Others
<i>Universidad Nacional de Colombia</i>
UNV

Budget (USD)	
Activities and services	Annual Programme Budget
Protection, monitoring and coordination	2,607,435
Community services	917,362
Domestic needs	32,609
Education	247,646
Health	3,913
Income generation	248,279
Legal assistance	2,318,307
Operational support (to agencies)	406,312
Shelter/other infrastructure	95,271
Transport/logistics	300
Total operations	6,877,435
Programme support	1,566,190
Total	8,443,625