

Colombia

Main objectives

Promote a comprehensive response to the humanitarian crisis to reinforce the protection of the rights of IDPs and seek durable solutions, taking into account the special needs of groups disproportionately affected by the conflict; enhance a regional approach for Colombians in need of international protection in coordination with UNHCR offices in the neighbouring countries; consolidate national mechanisms to improve compliance with national IDP legislation and policies; mainstream gender-specific and age-specific needs into programmes, focusing on the needs of displaced women and children; and prioritize support to displaced indigenous and Afro-Colombian people and strengthen their community associations.



Impact

- With new internal displacement in several parts of the country, UNHCR addressed the plight of IDPs, adopting a rights-based approach. The Office also accompanied IDPs and at-risk communities on a needs basis;
- As a consequence of Constitutional Court Ruling T-025, which indicated that the Government's IDP policy was not providing satisfactory results, UNHCR provided advice to the authorities on the application of existing legislation;
- A *Review of National IDP Policy* was published by UNHCR to promote a more effective response to internal displacement;
- In partnership with civic and professional organizations, UNHCR implemented activities with 45 IDP associations to mitigate the effects of the conflict and to give IDPs access to basic services;
- UNHCR coordinated with the Social Solidarity Network (*Red de Solidaridad Social-RSS*) and its Joint Technical Unit to reinforce the decentralized committees attending to the needs of IDPs;
- UNHCR supported the elaboration of the UN Humanitarian Action Plan, in coordination with the Humanitarian Coordinator and OCHA. A Joint United Nations House was opened in Altos de Cazucá to better serve the needs of urban IDPs;
- A successful donor mission was organized by UNHCR to raise the international visibility of the internal displacement crisis. Through an intensified public information campaign, the Office generated wide media coverage of IDP issues.

Working environment

The context

President Uribe's democratic security policy aimed at establishing a State presence throughout the country, dismantling guerrilla groups, and promoting economic recovery. There was a general reduction in violent crimes (homicides, kidnappings and

attacks on civilians) in 2003 and 2004. A correlation can be seen between the decrease in the level of violence and the fall in the numbers of new internal displacements. The lower level of internal displacement may have also stemmed from the apparent retreat of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), fewer violations by paramilitary groups following the unilateral declaration of a ceasefire in 2002, and the blockading of communities. However, in 2004, the human rights situation remained critical.

Negotiations were held with the paramilitary group, the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), following the Santa Fe de Ralito Accord of July 2003, which envisaged the full demobilization of the AUC by the end of 2005. Although 2,620 AUC troops had been demobilized by the end of 2004, there was criticism of the legality and transparency of the process (contingent on factionalism within the paramilitary movement). Ceasefire violations by the paramilitaries resulted in clashes with the armed forces.

The narcotics trade facilitated the growth and consolidation of the guerrilla and paramilitary groups in 2004. In response, the Government of Colombia stepped up its efforts to combat the production and trafficking of narcotics and increased the operational capacity of its armed forces and police by deploying 66,000 new troops and police officers. This resulted in a combined force of some 360,000

troops. The armed forces launched the *Plan Patriota* which was the biggest military operation ever carried out in the south of the country, aiming to attack the FARC in its traditional strongholds.

The deteriorating security situation in border areas prompted the Colombian Government to hold several bilateral meetings over the course of the year with neighbouring countries to discuss the spillover of the conflict. These meetings highlighted forced migration and cross-border movements. UNHCR promoted a regional approach to the conflict in the country, linking IDP protection to the strengthening of asylum in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela.

Constraints

Ceasefire violations and the eventual rupture of the process of negotiations with the paramilitaries led to a deterioration in the conflict and increased attacks on the civilian population. In certain areas of the country, violence and armed clashes made it difficult for humanitarian aid agencies to reach affected communities and protect IDPs. Irregular armed groups sought to control segments of the civilian population, preventing them from fleeing to safe areas. This coercion effectively guaranteed a steady supply of provisions and recruits, permitted

Persons of concern				
Main origin/Type of population ¹	Total in country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
IDPs	2,000,000	265,000	51	41
Various nationalities (refugees)	140	60	40	16
Various nationalities (asylum-seekers)	40	40	23	16

¹ In 2004, RSS registered 1.56 million IDPs. NGOs estimated that there were some 3.3 million IDPs.

Income and expenditure (USD) Annual programme budget				
Revised budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
7,298,004	8,034,137	(178,684)	7,855,453	7,238,935

¹ Includes income from contributions restricted at the country level.

² Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments. The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

guerrilla members to “blend in” using entire communities as human shields and allowed them to harvest and produce drugs.

The security situation in Colombia made it difficult for UNHCR to access remote IDP communities. The Office questioned the Government’s policy of return to areas not considered safe and where populations suffered renewed displacement and security incidents. Of the returns monitored by UNHCR, many return areas continued to be under the control of at least one irregular armed group and some 20 returned IDPs were reported killed over the past two years.

In 2004, the Constitutional Court of Colombia ruled that measures taken to address the consequences of forced displacement were insufficient. The Court declared the existence of an “unconstitutional state of affairs” as the result of the multiple and massive violations of the human rights of IDPs. The Court allocated financial resources to enable the State to better fulfil its obligations towards IDPs.

Funding

UNHCR’s programme for IDPs in Colombia was fully funded, a confirmation of the interest and support of the international donor community. Ten countries made important earmarked contributions to the operation and seven private sector fund raising organizations contributed close to 30 per cent of all UNHCR’s requirements in the country. In October 2004, UNHCR organized a donor mission to Colombia, where donors visited IDP projects in Bogotá, Chocó, and Soacha. During the year, UNHCR maintained contacts with donors, organized briefings on Colombia, shared related information and undertook joint missions to the field.

Achievements and impact

Protection and solutions

UNHCR influenced national IDP policy by presenting judicial concepts to the Constitutional Court, responding to the queries of the Court on IDP issues. Detailed recommendations were made to the Government in UNHCR’s *Review of National IDP Policy*, as well as in coordination with the World Bank. UNHCR sought to promote mechanisms to protect land titles and thereby deter displacement caused

by the loss of property. IDPs whose homes were destroyed received building materials from UNHCR through so-called practical protection projects. UNHCR also accompanied displaced persons and at-risk communities, and promoted a State presence in insecure areas in coordination with the Ombudsman’s office and the Attorney General.

As a result of Constitutional Court Ruling T-025, the Government drafted a national plan of action which reflected UNHCR’s recommendations on increased budgetary provision for IDPs and greater participation of IDP organizations in policy-making forums in which they had previously been under-represented (or from which they had been completely excluded). The capacity of the Attorney-General’s office was also strengthened through the implementation of a system which monitored IDP-related legislation, facilitated prevention activities and investigated violations of law by public servants. UNHCR supported university legal aid centres, community and IDP organizations and worked closely with the Ombudsman’s office and the office of the Attorney General, to guarantee that IDPs were able to employ institutional mechanisms to defend their rights.

UNHCR provided technical advice to RSS and various ministries to further the implementation of public policies. The Office conducted field monitoring of some 20 returns which did not comply with minimum standards of voluntary return in security and dignity.

In the context of the Mexico Plan of Action, UNHCR intensified its efforts to strengthen the local integration of urban IDPs. A framework agreement with mayors of major cities was adopted to bolster political will, and facilitate the inclusion of IDPs in municipal development plans related to housing and income generation.

Activities and assistance

Community services: To foster community development, UNHCR supported IDP associations, indigenous communities and women and other organizations to consolidate their advocacy skills and their knowledge of human rights in general and IDP law in particular.

As part of the gender and age mainstreaming pilot project, UNHCR analyzed demographic and other data reflective of the distinct circumstances of men,

women and standardized age groups in all regions covered under field offices in Colombia. The team, composed of staff in various districts in Colombia, met on a weekly basis and developed a common approach to mainstreaming gender and age and a differentiated approach for indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. In 2004, UNHCR empowered displaced women, and increased public awareness of women's rights and self-reliance. The Office also initiated a process to evaluate and handle all cases of sexual and gender-based violence.

Domestic needs/Household support: Newly arrived refugee families in Colombia received basic household items and health coverage to facilitate their local integration.

Education: UNHCR focused on education and child protection for displaced children and adolescents, to avoid the risk of them becoming involved in illegal activities or being recruited by armed groups. UNHCR trained 290 male and 1,010 female teachers in conflict-affected areas, to support the integration of displaced children in the school system.

Health/Nutrition: UNHCR provided health and nutrition services to refugees.

Income generation: UNHCR supported several pilot income-generating projects to facilitate the access of IDPs to employment or self-employment schemes, as well as to promote their self-reliance.

Legal assistance: UNHCR strengthened the institutional response to internal displacement, through its support to the Attorney-General and the Ombudsman's office. In coordination with the National University, the Office provided legal aid to some 5,000 IDPs in legal aid centres. Six hundred of these cases were followed up by the courts with the support of the centres. Together with the RSS, UNHCR trained and provided equipment to 21 units for IDP orientation and assistance. Moreover, the Office supported the Registry with the issuance of national ID cards for almost 77,000 IDPs, and increased the visibility of IDP issues through press releases, and the production of public information materials on IDPs.

Operational support (to agencies): All implementing partners received financial support to administer and control the finances of the sub-agreements signed with UNHCR. Funds were made available to conduct audits.



Shelter/Other infrastructure: In cooperation with local authorities and communities, UNHCR rehabilitated schools, health and community centres to guarantee IDPs' access to social services, and to consolidate civic, professional and community institutions.



Colombia: Wayuu women receive ID cards during a UNHCR-sponsored documentation campaign in El Paraiso, La Guajira, Colombia. UNHCR/W. Spindler

Organization and implementation

Management

In addition to its main office in Bogotá, UNHCR has four field offices and two field units. The offices in Pasto and Mocoa cover the border provinces with

Ecuador. The office in Barrancabermeja covers the Magdalena Medio Region. The offices in Apartadó and Quibdó cover the Urabá Region, bordering Panama, and the office in Barranquilla covers five departments in the Atlantic coast region. In total UNHCR had 73 staff members: 14 international, 21 UNVs, 35 national staff, and three Surge deployees.

Working with others

As part of the collaborative approach to internal displacement, UNHCR is considered the “point of reference” for IDP protection. As a member of the UN Country Team, UNHCR participated in the preparation of the Humanitarian Action Plan. The Office consolidated its coordination with institutions at the field level, with the aim of ensuring consistency between central and local field interventions and avoiding duplication of activities within the UN system. UNHCR signed an agreement with UNIFEM, produced several joint projects and initiatives with other agencies and cooperated closely with UNAIDS and the Global Fund in support of the eradication of AIDS in Colombia.

The Office worked with state institutions, NGOs and community-based organizations. In 2004, the RSS played a central role in the operations. At the same time, UNHCR continued to monitor the application of national IDP policies, implemented by the Attorney-General and the Ombudsman’s office.

Overall assessment

In 2004, despite limited access to conflict-affected areas, UNHCR provided protection and support to a large number of IDPs and their associations, paying particular attention to the needs of displaced women, children and affected minorities. The Office worked in coordination with government authorities and civil society institutions to maintain and, where possible, improve the implementation of national policies. The *Review of National IDP Policy* became a landmark document for the UN system. UNHCR closely monitored the return policy of the Government, and provided advice and recommendations on IDP rights.

UNHCR increased its involvement with IDP protection in urban areas and received recognition from municipal and central authorities for its work with urban IDPs at the UN House established in Altos de Cazucá. At the regional level, through its work with IDPs, the Office reinforced the asylum systems in neighbouring countries. UNHCR also received the support of the Government of Colombia for the *Ciudades Solidarias* and *Fronteras Solidarias* components of the Mexico Plan of Action.

Offices

Bogotá

Apartadó
Barrancabermeja
Barranquilla
Mocoa
Pasto
Quibdó

Partners

Government agencies

Attorney-General (*Procuraduría*)
Office of the Ombudsman (*Defensoría del Pueblo*)
Registry Office (*Registraduría*)
Social Solidarity Network (*Red de Solidaridad Social*)

NGOs

Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular
Compartir
Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento
Instituto Latinoamericano de Servicios Legales Alternativos
Liga de Mujeres Bolívar
Mujer y Futuro
Opción Legal
Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia
Representantes Mesa Nacional de Población Desplazada
Servicio Nacional de Pastoral Social

Others

Universidad Nacional

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Prior years' projects
	Annual programme budget	Annual and Supplementary programme budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	1,551,281	0
Community services	466,100	387,143
Domestic needs / household support	14,447	1,966
Education	337,605	187,899
Health and nutrition	2,225	345
Shelter and infrastructure	38,694	0
Income generation	163,466	5,408
Legal assistance	940,948	330,758
Operational support (to agencies)	962,926	47,232
Instalments with implementing partners	1,242,804	(960,751)
Sub-total operational activities	5,720,494	0
Programme support	1,518,441	0
Total disbursements	7,238,935	0
Instalments with implementing partners		
Payments made	3,122,115	
Reporting received	(1,879,311)	
Balance	1,242,804	
Prior years' report		
Instalments with implementing partners		
Outstanding 1 January		949,478
Payments made		58,004
Reporting received		(960,751)
Refunded to UNHCR		(45,927)
Currency adjustment		(804)
Balance		0
Unliquidated obligations		
Outstanding 1 January		158,839
Disbursements		(128,311)
Cancellations		(30,528)
Outstanding 31 December		0