

Colombia

Main objectives

Reinforce the rights of IDPs and populations at risk, and consolidate national mechanisms to improve compliance with national IDP legislation and policies. Support state institutions and civil society organizations working with IDPs through capacity-building activities, and seek durable solutions for IDPs whenever possible, including return, local integration and relocation. Enhance IDP self-reliance and support IDP associations through vocational training and pilot income generation projects, and target IDP groups with specific needs, such as displaced women, children, young people and ethnic minorities. Facilitate, with the support of OCHA, coordination within the UN system of humanitarian activities on behalf of IDPs, and promote international protection and durable solutions for 199 asylum-seekers and refugees in Colombia.



Impact

- As the humanitarian crisis worsened, UNHCR reinforced respect for the constitutional rights of IDPs through capacity-building activities for officials working on IDP issues.
- In the absence of any State presence in many conflict-affected areas, UNHCR monitored persons at risk of being displaced, as well as the IDP returns induced by the Government.
- The Office also supported IDPs and their associations with legal aid, documentation, access to basic services, and income-generating activities.
- The specific needs of displaced women and children (including adolescents) were incorporated into all activities. At the same time, UNHCR also provided support to displaced indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities through training on human rights awareness, and small community-based projects which helped them to cope more effectively with displacement. In addition, the Office, in partnership with NGOs, promoted community development activities for 45 IDP associations.

- UNHCR continued to work within the framework of the UN Humanitarian Action Plan (HAP). The plan included activities which were complementary to national efforts to assist IDPs, and it facilitated coordination among UN agencies. However, limited international support for the HAP in 2003 made its implementation problematic. During the second half of the year, the UN Country Team started to plan implementation of the second phase of the HAP.

Working environment

The context

The Government reported that some 36,000 IDPs had returned since President Alvaro Uribe Vélez assumed power at the end of 2002. A referendum organized by the Government to further reduce the budget deficit (i.e. freeze public workers' salaries, abolish local auditing offices and freeze central government spending) did not receive sufficient support. However, a public survey indicated a 76 per cent approval rating for President Uribe and his

"democratic security policy". The Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-four on International Monetary Affairs (G24) signed a declaration in London supporting the national policies of the Government, and endorsing its commitment to a resolution of the Colombian conflict. In November 2003, negotiations between the Government and paramilitaries led to the demobilization of some 870 fighters. However, opposition groups criticized the *ley de alternabilidad penal*, a law which could be interpreted as offering impunity to paramilitaries who had committed atrocities. There were several fatal bomb attacks and acts of sabotage in Bogotá, which were attributed to the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC).

President Uribe's democratic security policy aims to establish a state presence throughout Colombia, to dismantle guerrilla groups, and promote economic recovery. The strategy involves an increased budget for military action, including the use of peasant soldiers, the establishment of information networks, and demobilizing armed elements.

The Colombian Government has been preoccupied with the security situation in the border areas. Bilateral meetings took place with the Governments of Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela to discuss the spill-over effect of the conflict into these countries, as well as forced migration and cross-border movements. A bilateral agreement with the Government of Panama in July 2003 led to the voluntary repatriation of some 84 Colombians.

Constraints

The deterioration of the security situation in certain areas made it difficult for UNHCR to gain access to remote IDP communities. UNHCR questioned the Government's policy of return to areas that were not safe, whereby populations were forcibly displaced again or were subject to security incidents. There were many indications that a large number of communities were besieged, thus preventing civilians from fleeing to safer areas. The Government appears to have become more restrictive in its implementation of affirmative action for IDPs, claiming that displaced populations should be included in the wider framework of vulnerable populations. This has resulted in fewer direct assistance programmes being designed for their benefit.

Persons of concern				
Main origin/Type of population	Total in country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Colombia (IDPs)	2,039,800 ¹	183,000	52	43
Various nationalities (refugees)	186	45	40	26
Asylum-seekers	13	13	40	26

¹ Government estimate - however, only some 1,244,072 are registered. NGOs have estimated that there are some 3.08 million IDPs.

Income and expenditure (USD)				
Annual programme budget				
Revised budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
6,100,307	4,843,186	1,181,056	6,024,242	6,018,242

¹ The above figures do not include costs at headquarters.

² Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

² Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

Funding

During 2003, UNHCR's operations in Colombia received support from several Governments and private donors. The Office published reports to increase public awareness, and organized donor briefings to keep the international community up to date on developments in the country. In 2004, UNHCR will need additional funds to finance the activities of the new offices in Pasto and Quibdó.

Achievements and impact

Protection and solutions

UNHCR consistently influenced national IDP policy by presenting judicial concepts to the Constitutional Court, and responding to the specific requests of the Court on IDP issues. The Office continued to reinforce the local committees which implement the *Sistema Nacional de Atención Integral para la Población Desplazada* (SNAIPD), which is composed of public, private and community organizations which assist displaced persons.

In coordination with the Ombudsman and the Attorney General, UNHCR promoted the dissemination and application of National IDP Law No. 387, and joint fact-finding missions were undertaken to regions affected by new displacement.

UNHCR provided country of origin information to other UNHCR offices in the region to facilitate RSD for Colombian asylum-seekers. Governments in the region established bilateral agreements with Colombia on security in border areas, and during 2003, the Office monitored these areas. In coordination with the Church and NGOs, UNHCR also helped to reinforce the existing networks which provide protection and assistance to IDPs and asylum-seekers.

During 2003, negotiations continued with government officials through the Eligibility Commission on revision of the 2002 Refugee Decree to include more favourable provisions for refugees.

Activities and assistance

Community services: UNHCR fostered community development for IDPs by providing human rights



A UNHCR delegate providing counseling to an IDP woman. UNHCR/B. Heger

training and socio-economic empowerment to 45 IDP associations. Displaced women played an important role in these associations, where 46 per cent of the IDP committee members were female. Six groups of women undertook income-generating activities. UNHCR hired a consultant specialized in gender mainstreaming to work on the operational guidelines, to ensure that gender concerns were part of all activities implemented by UNHCR and its partners.

Domestic needs/Household support: Basic household items were given to refugee families to help them to integrate in Colombia.

Education: UNHCR continued to support the "pedagogy and childhood protection" project: an initiative at national and local level which promoted the rights of displaced children and facilitated their access to free education. Through the training of teachers, displaced children received the attention needed to deal with their traumatic experiences, thus facilitating their integration into the schools of host communities. In total, 833 teachers received training. This benefited 284 schools and more than 30,000 children. In 267 schools so-called "classroom pacts" were signed



to reconcile the interests of teachers, parents and children. UNHCR also established child nurseries to support IDP women in the Atlantic Coast Region.

Health/Nutrition: UNHCR provided for health/nutrition services to be made available to refugees.

Legal assistance: Legal aid was available to some 5,000 IDPs who visited the legal aid centres run in cooperation with the National University. By the end of the year, 600 cases received judicial follow-up with the support of the legal aid centres. UNHCR worked together with the *Red de Solidaridad Social* (RSS) to give interested persons access to training on refugee law and equipment. In consultation with the Registry Office, national ID cards were issued to some 76,750 IDPs.

Operational support (to agencies): Financial support was provided to all implementing partners to help them maintain administrative and financial control of sub-agreements signed with UNHCR. Funds were also made available for financial audits.

Transport/Logistics: Transportation was made available to take returnees to their final destinations.

Organization and implementation

Management

In addition to its main office in Bogotá, UNHCR had four field offices and two satellite offices. The offices in Pasto and Puerto Asís cover the provinces bordering Ecuador. The office in Barrancabermeja covers the Magdalena Medio region. The offices in Apartado and Quibdó cover the Uraba region and the Choco region bordering Panama. The new office in Barranquilla covers five departments on the Atlantic Coast. Overall, UNHCR has 58 staff (14 international, 17 UNVs and 27 national staff). Nine OCHA staff also operate from UNHCR's office: they report to the UNHCR Representative.

During 2003, the office in Colombia received an internal audit mission which reviewed its operation and the work of implementing partners. The audit made some recommendations for improvements, but the operation and its implementing partners received a good, "above average" rating.

Working with others

UNHCR in Colombia is the lead UN agency for issues relating to internal displacement. During 2003, a newly appointed Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator took up his functions, overseeing the work of the UN Country Team and planning for the second phase of the Humanitarian Action Plan. The Office also maintains good cooperation with IOM, ICRC, ECHO, and USAID, as well as with donor countries. The implementation of UNHCR's IDP operation is undertaken through agreements with 15 national partners.

Overall assessment

Despite the difficult security environment, UNHCR managed to provide protection and support to a large number of IDPs and their associations. Specific attention was paid 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. UNHCR monitored the return policy of the Government and provided advice and recommendations concerning IDPs' rights, including the need to find durable solutions in the post-emergency phase.

Although the launch of the HAP raised expectations, the response of the international community did not allow for the implementation of nationwide activities. A second phase will focus more on joint planning and complementary activities with local authorities. It is expected that the HAP for 2004 will present a broad humanitarian perspective, covering not only internal displacement, but also other humanitarian components of the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

The opening of field offices gave UNHCR's operation a broader reach, permitting the delivery of humanitarian assistance to a larger number of IDPs. This also entailed maintaining updated information on sensitive border areas. The operation in Colombia continues to be part of a regional approach whereby UNHCR is dealing with the protection of IDPs as well as asylum-seekers in Colombia.

Offices

Bogotá

Apartado
Barrancabermeja
Barranquilla
Pasto
Puerto Asís
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

Fundación Social de Colombia (Cedavida)
Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular
Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento
Fundación Compartir (Compartir)
Liga de Mujer
Mujer y Futuro (Fundación)
Opción Legal
Organización Indígena de Antioquia
Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia
Organización Indígena de Putumayo
Servicio Nacional de Pastoral Social

Others

FAO
ICRC
IOM
OCHA
UNDP
UNFPA
UNHCHR
UNICEF
UNIDO-United Nations Industrial Development Organization
WFP
WHO-PAHO-Pan American Health Organization

Financial Report (USD)		
Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Prior years' projects
	Annual programme budget ^{notes}	Annual and Supplementary programme budgets ^{notes}
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	1,120,784	1,057
Community Services	491,970	782,565
Domestic Needs/Household Support	5,488	5,237
Education	332,086	7,196
Health/Nutrition	1,062	855
Income Generation	0	1,793
Legal Assistance	910,299	837,204
Operational Support (to Agencies)	762,677	185,275
Transport/Logistics	1,982	424
Transit Accounts	0	(1,623)
Instalments with Implementing Partners	949,478	(1,744,522)
Sub - total Operational	4,575,826	75,461
Programme Support	1,283,577	21,439
Sub - total Disbursements / Deliveries	5,859,403 ⁽³⁾	96,900 ⁽⁵⁾
Unliquidated Obligations	158,839 ⁽³⁾	0 ⁽⁵⁾
Total	6,018,242 ^{(1) (3)}	96,900
Instalments with Implementing Partners		
Payments Made	2,706,800	42,733
Reporting Received	1,757,322	1,787,255
Balance	949,478	(1,744,522)
Outstanding 1st January	0	1,696,580
Refunded to UNHCR	0	38,530
Currency Adjustment	0	86,472
Outstanding 31 December	949,478	0
Unliquidated Obligations		
Outstanding 1st January	0	107,874 ⁽⁵⁾
New Obligations	6,018,242 ⁽¹⁾	0
Disbursements	5,859,403 ⁽³⁾	96,900 ⁽⁵⁾
Cancellations	0	10,974 ⁽⁵⁾
Outstanding 31 December	158,839 ⁽³⁾	0 ⁽⁵⁾

Figures which can be cross-referenced to the Accounts:

- (1) Annex to Statement 1
- (3) Schedule 3
- (5) Schedule 5