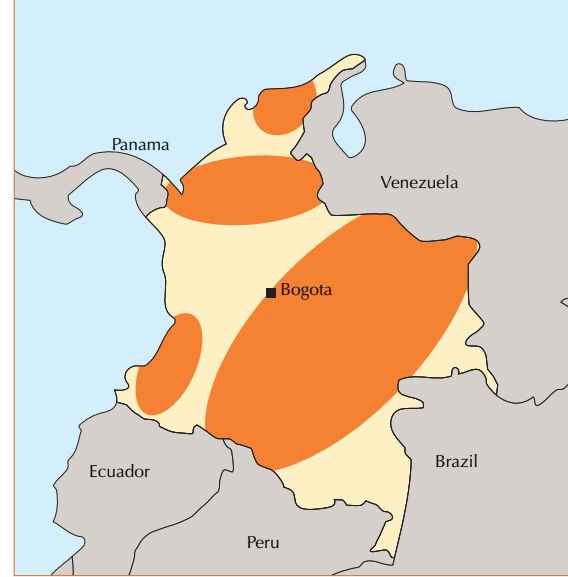


Colombia

Quick facts

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| Number of IDPs | 2,650,000–4,360,000 |
| Percentage of total population | 5.7%–9.3% |
| Start of current displacement situation | 1990s |
| New displacement in 2008 | 270,000 to June 2008 |
| Returns in 2008 | Undetermined |
| Causes of displacement | Internal armed conflict, human rights violations |
| Human development index | 75 |



40 years of multi-party conflict between the army and illegal armed groups including insurgent groups, notably the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) have led over four million Colombians to be internally displaced, according to the Consultancy on Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES). All the parties to the conflict have consistently targeted civilians for strategic ends. While paramilitary self-defence groups were formally demobilized until 2006, they have emerged under new names and continue to commit crimes and cause forced displacement, which increased markedly during 2008. The last year has seen an increase in the regional ramifications of the conflict.

People have been displaced from rural areas to towns and cities across the country, and have increasingly been forced to flee violence within those urban areas. Most of them are dispersed among poor urban populations, and after some initial support, do their best to cope with little assistance from the government or international agencies.

Colombia's displaced face a range of protection concerns, due not only to the ongoing conflict and the appropriation of their property, but also to the lack of access to emergency support after displacement and limited livelihoods opportunities. Their physical security and integrity is threatened due to targeted attacks by all the illegal armed groups, army operations against those groups, and fumigations to eradicate coca crops. IDPs have consistently more difficulties in enjoying economic social and cultural rights than the rest of the population: displaced children have lower access to education; IDP families live in inadequate housing; they experience hurdles in accessing public healthcare; and they have difficulty earning enough to afford even basic necessities.

A large proportion of IDPs have added vulnerability. 46 per cent of displaced households are led by a woman after the man has been killed or disappeared. Overall, displaced families have an average of 5.2 children, compared to four for non-displaced families, and so heads of household have more difficulty providing for family members. 36 per cent of the displaced population are under 18 years of age, and many risk forced recruitment by armed groups. Young women and girls face exceedingly high rates of sexual abuse and exploitation. 18 per cent of displaced families include someone with some form of disability, which makes it more difficult for them to rebuild their lives in a new location.

Almost all the country's indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups have been affected by forced displacement, as their lands are coveted by the armed groups. They are particularly at a disadvantage when arriving in urban centres, because of language barriers, lack of familiarity with the environment, and discrimination.

Prospects for the return of most IDPs to their original homes remain low because of the ongoing conflict. Local integration and resettlement in other municipalities are the most likely and more frequent forms of durable solutions.

Even though Colombia has a remarkably advanced body of norms for IDP protection, these are not applied on the ground. Acknowledging this, the Constitutional Court declared in 2004 that the Government's response to the displacement crisis amounted to a generalised "unconstitutional state of affairs". The subsequent involvement of the Court and its use of indicators of enjoyment of rights to evaluate outcomes has led to gradual improvement in the response – but in 2008 the Court found that the unconstitutional state of affairs persisted. The government would improve its response by streamlining plans at the local level and adopting differential measures to support vulnerable people such as displaced children, women, minorities, and the disabled. The Attorney General's Office has also publicised failings in the response by government bodies, while the Ombudsman's Office has protected IDP rights and heard individual complaints.

Colombian civil society includes many very active human rights NGOs, which also work to protect IDPs. Colombian NGOs have recently worked well in coordination by, for example, drafting a single submission for the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review of Colombia.

UNHCR with its well-established presence on the ground has coordinated the collaborative response to displacement in Colombia. The cluster approach has been implemented to coordinate this response, and results of evaluations were pending at the end of 2008. ICRC has routinely provided food aid after mass displacement, while international NGOs have provided protection and other support.