



Colombia



Quick facts

Number of IDPs	3,600,000–5,200,000
Percentage of total population	8%–11.6%
Start of current displacement situation	1960
Peak number of IDPs (Year)	3,600,000–5,200,000 (2010)
New displacement	Up to 280,000
Causes of displacement	Armed conflict, human rights violations
Human development index	79

Internal armed conflict and human rights violations by armed groups have caused massive internal displacement in Colombia for four decades or more. At the end of 2010, 3.6 million people had been displaced in Colombia according to the government, and 5.2 million according to the independent Observatory on Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES); both figures are cumulative figures and do not account for those who may have found durable solutions.

In September 2010, the military commander of the insurgent Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) was killed by the security forces, but the group confirmed its intention to continue its activities. Meanwhile, armed groups that emerged after the demobilisation in 2006 of paramilitaries continued to operate in 25 out of 33 departments; it was reported that they had up to 9,000 members.

In 2010, 95,000 people were newly displaced according to the government, and 280,000 according to CODHES. Direct threats by armed actors caused over half of new displacements, while assassinations of family members, massacres, and confrontations between combatants were significant causes. In 2010, thousands of Colombians also sought asylum in neighbouring Ecuador, Venezuela and Panama.

In 2010 as in previous years, most people were displaced from the countryside towards towns and cities. Mass displacements took place predominantly in the departments of Nariño, Antioquia, Chocó, and Valle del Cauca, and affected mostly indigenous peoples. Additionally, as many as 2,600 people were reportedly displaced within urban areas as a result of violence and insecurity, particularly in the cities of Medellín, Bogotá, Soacha and Neiva.

Under-registration of IDPs in the government registry (the RUPD) persisted, as IDPs did not come forward out of fear or ignorance of procedures, and because many who requested it were denied registration. In 2010, the government continued to implement the 2009 ruling by the Constitutional Court requiring it to address under-registration through information campaigns, by registering applicants rejected in previous years, by sharing information between the RUPD and other government databases, and by registering children who had been born to internally displaced parents after they registered.

Only IDPs included in the RUPD accessed special assistance. In 2010, the government and a civil society group

carried out nationwide surveys to gather information about their living conditions. Both surveys found that progress had been made guaranteeing IDPs' access to education and health care: roughly 80 per cent of internally displaced children attended school, and around 90 per cent of IDPs were registered in the subsidised health system. However, the access to housing and emergency humanitarian support was still limited in 2010: only a small minority of registered IDPs enjoyed these basic necessities, while about half of IDPs did not enjoy food security.

The lack of sustainable livelihoods was a critical obstacle to IDPs, and they remained significantly poorer than the non-displaced population. Female-headed households were particularly at risk, as 60 per cent of work for internally displaced women was in informal labour markets, and 20 per cent in domestic service, with lower pay and longer working hours. The situation of internally displaced Afro-Colombian women was even more precarious, with only about five per cent earning the minimum salary.

Colombia's new president, Juan Manuel Santos, took office in August 2010. In contrast to the previous government, his administration has signalled an intention to support the restitution of land to IDPs. To this end, it drafted new provisions on internal displacement, including a bill that was submitted to Congress in September 2010 which included elements strengthening the position of IDPs seeking to recover their land.

After declaring in 2004 that the inadequate response to internal displacement by the Government amounted to an "unconstitutional state of affairs", the Constitutional Court continued its oversight of the response to internal displacement in 2010. The government reported on the status of its IDP programmes and plans, but by the end of the year, the Court had yet to rule on whether the "unconstitutional state of affairs" still pertained.

The UN continued in 2010 to implement the cluster system to coordinate humanitarian action in Colombia, with positive outcomes including better information sharing and communication among international agencies. However, the need was identified for a more widespread international presence to prevent violations and better protect vulnerable groups including IDPs. Finally, the lack of a consolidated appeals process in Colombia was identified as an impediment to the quick mobilisation of international support.