

Colombia



- A project was launched to reinforce the capacity of Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities to prevent displacement and address their individual and collective rights.
- UNHCR's protection capacity was strengthened through the opening of new offices and the designation of UNHCR as the lead agency for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Protection cluster.

Working environment

Colombia has one of the largest displaced populations in the world. According to preliminary governmental figures, more than 200,000 newly displaced people were registered in 2006 alone.

In line with a 2004 Constitutional Court ruling ordering the Government to fulfil its obligations towards displaced people, the Congress approved a budget of USD 365 million for the assistance of IDPs in 2006. Colombia has a sophisticated legal framework for addressing the humanitarian situation, but there is a considerable gap between the legislation and its implementation, particularly at the regional level. Human rights violations have been reported by the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons.

The conflict in Colombia has spread over the last decade, moving from central regions to the more remote border areas in Chocó, Norte de Santander, Nariño and Putumayo provinces. This has negatively affected Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities in these regions. Conflict has also affected regional stability and Colombians in need of international protection continue to flee to neighbouring countries.

Operational highlights

- The Government allocated substantially more resources to the displacement crisis, and new health, housing and income-generating programmes were launched.
- A draft law was submitted to the Congress to mark 2007 as the Year of the Rights of Internally Displaced People (IDPs), bringing displacement issues to the forefront of the national agenda.
- Major protection needs of IDPs were addressed through the issuance of more than 400,000 identity cards and the protection of some 1.2 million hectares of land that belongs to IDPs and persons at risk of displacement.
- As a result of UNHCR's advocacy, the protection and assistance of displaced people were integrated into local development plans and assistance programmes in the municipality of Bogotá, the main provincial capitals and in provinces affected by the violence.

The reasons for displacement in Colombia are complex, including armed conflict and targeted killings. The Constitutional Court and the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs consider the aerial spraying of coca crops as another possible cause of displacement. Furthermore, the impact from the demobilization of paramilitary groups remains uncertain. New armed groups have formed and urban militias are still active in many cities.

Achievements and impact

Main objectives

In 2006, UNHCR's main objectives in Colombia were to promote a comprehensive and coordinated response to the humanitarian crisis in order to prevent displacement, foster durable solutions and reinforce the protection of displaced people; to strengthen international protection of Colombian refugees in surrounding countries through early warning, border monitoring and provision of country-of-origin information; and to ensure international protection for asylum-seekers and refugees in Colombia.

Protection and solutions

UNHCR continues to work closely with the Constitutional Court. In 2006, new recommendations were made to reduce the gap between legislation and its implementation. A key achievement was the approval by the Economic and Social Policy Council to allocate some USD 2 billion for the assistance of IDPs in the coming years.

In another judgment, the Constitutional Court ordered the inclusion of gender, age and diversity issues in public policies. UNHCR advocated for the protection of women and mainstreaming of gender issues in state programmes through a project implemented with the Presidential Council for Women's Equality. Another project was launched, with a Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior and Justice, to develop specific assistance for Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities.

The Office lobbied for the incorporation of the needs of displaced people in public programmes. Agreements were concluded with the municipalities of Bogota, Medellín, Cali and Bucaramanga to assist IDPs and facilitate their social integration and self-reliance. UNHCR supported municipal and provincial IDP Support Committees to formulate local development plans in Nariño, Norte de Santander, Antioquía and Putumayo provinces. The plans included income generation initiatives along with housing, health and education programmes.

The Office continued to reinforce national supervisory mechanisms. With UNHCR's support, the Procurator General's Office effectively monitored and evaluated the compliance of legal norms by local authorities in 10 regions. The capacity of the Ombudsman's Office was strengthened, particularly in remote areas. The Ombudsman issued two important reports to raise awareness on the displacement crisis and to promote State action.

Activities and assistance

Community services: UNHCR applied a gender, age and diversity-specific approach in all its activities. Seven participatory assessments were carried out by a multi-functional team, identifying protection risks and challenges to sustainable socio-economic integration of IDPs in host communities. The Office encouraged community participation at different levels, in particular by strengthening the managerial capacity of IDP associations. Some 130 IDP associations promoted the incorporation of more than 40,000 displaced people in local health, housing, education and income-generating programmes. Special projects were implemented to empower women, children, adolescents, and vulnerable ethnic groups. Over 10,000 students participated in awareness campaigns against sexual and gender-based violence. A project was implemented within the framework of the Global Fund in seven municipalities to raise awareness on HIV and AIDS. Training was provided, in close coordination with other UN agencies, to ensure the sustainability of income-generating projects implemented by women's associations. Support was also provided to the National Indigenous Organization (ONIC) and the Association of Displaced Afro-Colombians

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Various	150	50	38	22
IDPs (registered by the Government)		(*)	401,500	53	62

(*) According to the Constitutional Court of Colombia, there are serious discrepancies between the real magnitude of displacement and the figures of the national registration system. In an Order of Compliance to the Landmark Judgment on Displacement, the Court cites the Director of the *Agencia Presidencial para la Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional* who acknowledged in public statements that IDP figures in Colombia are close to three million (Order of Compliance 218, dated 11 August 2006, related to the Landmark Judgment T-025).

(AFRODES) to promote their participation in the design and implementation of public policies.

Domestic needs and household support: Basic household items were provided to newly arrived asylum-seekers and refugee families with specific needs.

Education: Many children do not go to school in Colombia despite provision for free primary education in the constitution. UNHCR has encouraged the placement of all displaced children within the education system. A letter of intent was signed with the Ministry of Education to promote the right to education in all phases of displacement and to review education programmes, ensuring they encompass an age-, gender- and diversity-specific approach. Through the Childhood Protection Project, over 1,000 teachers have been trained to facilitate the placement of displaced children within the public education system.

Health and nutrition: Refugee families received health care as needed. UNHCR participated in the "Health Road Map" programme, which improved the access of IDPs to the public health care system.

Income generation: The Office signed a letter of intent with the Association of Social Benefit Funds to incorporate IDPs into their programmes in 697 municipalities. Over 2,000 displaced people in the most affected regions benefited from self-reliance projects, such as microcredits in Soacha and the Atlantic coast, vocational training and support with revolving funds initiatives in Urabá and self-employment schemes in Putumayo.

Legal assistance: Legal and social counselling was reinforced in the main host areas. More than 6,400 people received legal support from the House of Rights, which started its operations in 2006 in Altos de Cazuca. 16 institutions and UN agencies participated in this initiative. Assistance and Orientation Units provided counselling in 34 locations, and students from eight universities provided legal aid to some 4,800 people through legal aid centres. The National Registry Office issued identity cards to 85,000 displaced people. Project costs were shared by the Government and international organizations. The Land and Property Protection project was expanded, in conjunction with local authorities, in order to register and protect the land of some 60,000 IDPs.

Operational support (to agencies): Administrative support was provided to implementing partners. Major partners were supported with capacity-building measures for administrative issues and the carrying out of audits.

Shelter and infrastructure: In 2006, health, sanitary and education facilities were rehabilitated in five rural

communities, benefiting more than 1,500 people in Chocó, Norte de Santander and Magdalena Medio.

Transport and logistics: Transport support was provided to refugees in order to facilitate voluntary repatriation from Colombia.

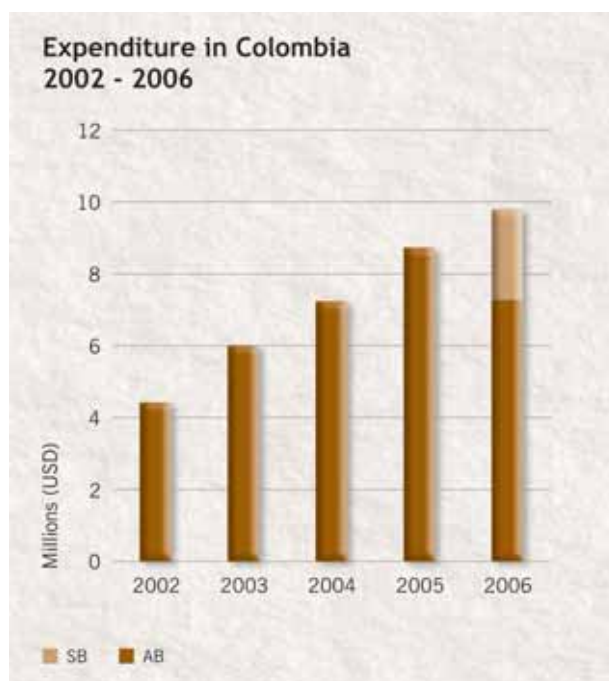
Constraints

The ongoing conflict made it harder for humanitarian aid agencies to reach affected communities, especially in rural and border areas. The civilian population was often caught up in the armed conflict. Humanitarian problems were further exacerbated by the presence of landmines. The proliferation of armed actors and criminal activities rendered the situation even more hazardous.

The State's response to the displacement crisis remained insufficient despite growing efforts by the Government. Prevention of displacement, protection and stabilization programmes were hampered by a weak State presence in remote areas and the lack of self-reliance opportunities. The issue of land and property rights and restitution for victims remained major concerns in rural areas.

Financial information

In close coordination with the Government, UNHCR's operations have gradually been expanded to strengthen the protection response, particularly in border areas and cities with the highest concentration of IDPs. Consequently, budget requirements and expenditure levels have more than doubled during the last five years. A supplementary programme was created in March



2006, which enabled UNHCR to open new offices. This has improved, and will continue to improve, UNHCR's ability to undertake comprehensive assessments and protection activities in areas that had previously been beyond the reach of humanitarian agencies. The expansion of UNHCR's operations has been possible thanks to strong support from the international community.

Organization and implementation

At the end of 2006, UNHCR had its Country Representation in Bogota and ten offices in the Field. The Office had 106 staff, with 20 international staff, 59 national staff and 27 United Nations Volunteers (UNVs), secondees and consultants.

Working with others

UNHCR worked closely with the Government, a wide range of national partners, international organizations and NGOs. An Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) mission visited Colombia in September to launch the Humanitarian Reform Initiative and activate the "cluster approach". Three thematic groups were established under the overall leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator. As designated lead agency for the Protection Group, UNHCR coordinated a comprehensive needs assessment and promoted the establishment of regional protection groups in Nariño, Antioquía, Norte de Santander and Chocó.

Overall assessment

Colombia's humanitarian crisis continues with more than 800,000 newly displaced people having been registered by the Government in the past four years. UNHCR's operation in Colombia continues to be part of



One of UNHCR's main tasks in Colombia has been to ensure that IDPs are registered so that they can obtain help from the State.

a regional approach that seeks to protect IDPs in Colombia along with refugees and others of concern in neighbouring countries.

Given the gap between the sophisticated policies and their implementation in the Field, the registration system and assistance programmes need to be reviewed. Special efforts are also required to meet the needs of Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities, older people and adolescents. Within this context, the efforts made by the Constitutional Court and other national supervisory bodies have been fundamental to ensure that the rights of displaced people are respected.

UNHCR's interventions have proved valuable in reinforcing local capacities and the coping mechanisms of affected people. The Office's projects with the National Registry Office and the Land and Property Protection Project have been of key importance in ensuring that IDPs enjoy basic rights. Legal and social counselling mechanisms, such as the Legal Aid Centres and the House of Rights, are the most concrete examples of the collaborative approach.

UNHCR's main challenge for 2007 is to support the State's efforts to improve its response to displacement, while maintaining humanitarian issues at the top of the political agenda. The enactment of a law to declare 2007 as the Year of the Rights of IDPs would be a major achievement in increasing visibility and raising support for IDPs. At the same time, the consolidation of IASC mechanisms will be fundamental for the effectiveness of a collaborative inter-agency response. For the refugee programme, the main priority remains to amend the current refugee legislation in order to ensure its consistency with Colombia's international obligations.

List of partners

Government: *Agencia Presidencial para la Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional, Defensoría del Pueblo (Ombudsman's Office), Procuraduría General de la Nación (Prosecutor's Office), Registraduría (National Registry), Ministry of the Interior and Justice.*

NGOs: *Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular, Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli, Consultoría de Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento, Fundación Compartir, Instituto Latinoamericano de Servicios Legales, Opción Legal, Opportunity International, Secretaría Nacional de Pastoral Social, Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia, Liga de Mujeres Desplazadas.*

Others: *UN agencies, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Universidad de Antioquia, UNV, IOM.*

Budget, income and expenditure (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
AB	8,146,735	6,221,515	1,201,415	7,422,930	7,268,217
SB ³	4,112,150	2,900,060	(203,004)	2,697,056	2,543,791
Total	12,258,885	9,121,574	998,411	10,119,985	9,812,008

¹ Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

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

³ The SB figures apply to the IDP operation. The budget does not include a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

Financial Report (USD)				
Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects			Previous years' projects
	AB	SB	Total	AB and SB
Protection, monitoring and coordination	2,563,029	34,854	2,597,883	0
Community services	467,618	216,470	684,088	453,650
Domestic needs and household support	57,083	0	57,083	14,732
Education	138,052	77,006	215,057	122,839
Health and nutrition	2,547	0	2,547	718
Income generation	114,223	72,169	186,392	207,910
Legal assistance	1,420,469	895,974	2,316,443	497,263
Operational support (to agencies)	280,737	46,419	327,156	130,776
Shelter and infrastructure	0	13,711	13,711	13,197
Transport and logistics	2,632	0	2,632	0
Instalments with implementing partners	831,960	1,187,189	2,019,149	(1,441,086)
Sub-total operational activities	5,878,349	2,543,791	8,422,140	0
Programme support	1,389,868	0	1,389,868	0
Total expenditure	7,268,217	2,543,791	9,812,008	0
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure				(947)
Instalments with implementing partners				
Payments made	2,510,782	1,865,235	4,376,017	
Reporting received	(1,678,822)	(678,046)	(2,356,868)	
Balance	831,960	1,187,189	2,019,149	
Previous years' report				
Instalments with implementing partners				
Outstanding 1st January				1,493,550
Reporting received				(1,441,086)
Refunded to UNHCR				(16,145)
Adjustments				(7,130)
Balance				29,189