

Colombia

January - December 2023

UNHCR and IOM jointly carried out the **Safe Mobility initiative**, supported by the Government of the United States, improving access to **resettlement** and **other legal pathways** for Venezuelans, Cubans, and Haitians in Colombia.

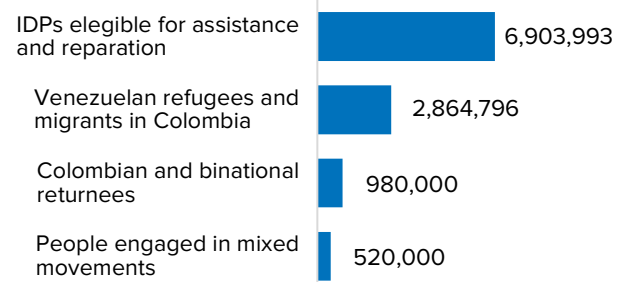
Colombia's role as a co-convenor and representing the Americas in the second **Global Refugee Forum (GRF)** was an important opportunity to strengthen its leadership on the response to the **refugee situation** and aims to achieve several objectives of the **Global Refugee Compact**.

The **Nansen Award** for the Americas was bestowed to an Afro-Colombian **human rights defender** in recognition of her outstanding work in her native Chocó, plagued by violence and severely affected by displacement and confinement.

CONTEXT

Colombia is a country affected by **armed conflict** and **large-scale internal displacement** (6,9 million IDPs in need of support and reparations), receiving **returnees** (980,000 Colombian and binational returnees), hosting **refugees and migrants** (2,9 million Venezuelans), and confronted with complex **mixed movements**. Compared to 2022, mixed movements across the Darien **doubled in 2023** with more than 520,000 refugees and migrants transiting through Colombia towards Panama in 2023 (63% Venezuelans, 11% Ecuadorians, 8% Haitians and 18% other nationalities).

PEOPLE WITH AND FOR WHOM UNHCR WORKS



*UNHCR also assists refugees of other nationalities, stateless persons, and others in need of international protection.



UNHCR's Protection Officer with the only child left in the community of Togoromá in the municipality of Litoral del San Juan, Chocó; other children were displaced.

The **humanitarian situation** remained a concern in 2023 with 144 large-group displacements affecting 58,469 persons, and 73 confinements, in which 100,402 individuals were unable to move freely due to the presence of armed groups ([UNHCR monitoring of humanitarian emergencies](#)).

Of the nearly **2,4 million Venezuelans** who registered for the **Temporary Protection Status (TPS)** in Colombia, nearly 1,9 million had received their Temporary Protection Permit valid for 10 years by 31 December 2023 (300,000 in 2023). More than 500,000 Venezuelans who registered have not yet received their permit, while another 500,000 are in an **irregular situation**: they do not have access to the TPS due to the ending of the initiative (except for school-enrolled children).

Response: main activities

Throughout 2023, UNHCR promoted **access to rights**, provided **lifesaving assistance** and strived to find **solutions** for the people with and for whom it works: **internally displaced persons (IDPs)**, people **affected by conflict**, Venezuelan **refugees** and migrants, people with international protection needs caught up in **mixed movements**, Colombian **returnees**, **stateless persons**, as well as their **host communities**. Here are some highlights of UNHCR's work.

Protection

UNHCR guarantees access to a fair and efficient protection system in accordance with universal and regional standards.



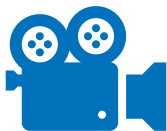
Alan was born in Venezuela and arrived in Colombia in 2019. He practices taekwondo and in 2023 won a gold medal in a national competition in Sogamoso, Boyacá. With the support of the mobile PAO, he is now waiting for his Temporary Protection Permit (TPP). In 2023 the mobile PAO of Norte de Santander provided 7,760 services.

- **232,000 people received information and guidance on how to access rights and services** in 25 departments and 139 municipalities. 44% of them sought to access protection services, 25% TPS and asylum system, 21% needed to access to healthcare. Moreover, 23,000 people received specific guidance on the dangers of crossing the Darien.



- Through the **network of Information and Orientation Centers (PAOs)**, **97,497 people** received information and were referred for assistance services.
- **58,064 Venezuelans** accessed information, legal assistance and support receiving their Temporary Protection Permit (PPT in Spanish).
- **15,314 civil servants** in **25 departments** and **180 municipalities** received training and technical assistance in protection (specifically about international refugee law, victims' rights).
- UNHCR supported Colombia's **Public Ministry** (Attorney General Office, Ombudspersons at national and local level) in improving access to rights for **31,828 IDPs, refugees and people in need of protection**. UNHCR also contributed with financial, human resources, and logistical support.
- **Protection monitoring** enabled to identify key protection risks and promote an adequate response, as well as support the effective implementation of the 2016 Peace Agreement. The first report **Colombia: at the crossroads of forced human mobility (in Spanish)** analyzed protection risks for all displaced populations in Colombia to promote a more efficient response. The second report focused on **returnees**.
- **128 field missions** to monitor areas affected by conflict and protection advocacy in 16 departments.
- Technical assistance and advocacy to **103 Mayor's Offices in 21 departments** for prevention, protection, and solutions to overcome situations of internal displacement.
- The **asylum system** was strengthened both through human resources and technological support to develop a customized **information system called HIT** that traces case management, thus improving claim processing efficiency and asylum-seekers' access to rights.

Video - Colombian lawyer puts life on the line to serve communities under threat.



WATCH THE VIDEO



Assistance

UNHCR promotes access to rights and responds to the basic needs of forcibly displaced persons.

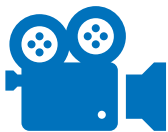


UNHCR staff hugging a child in the department of Chocó during an assistance day. Quibdó, Chocó. 2023 ©UNHCR

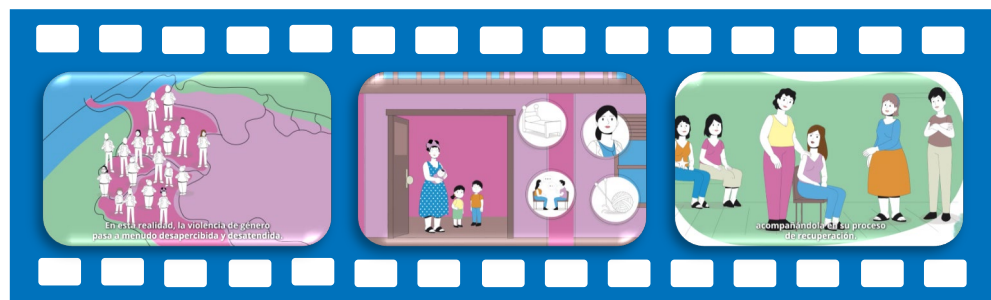


- **23,770 individual cases** with **specific and heightened protection needs** (including 3,460 children, and survivors of gender-based violence).
- **Complementary humanitarian assistance in emergencies** (i.e. large-scale displacement events and confinements). Over 15,000 people received emergency response and over 6,000 received 9,000 Core Relief Items (CRI).
- Access to **public services**: UNHCR supported the **affiliation of 19,600** people to the **public healthcare system** and supporting 890 children to access and stay enrolled in school.

Video - No place for abuse



WATCH THE VIDEO



Community empowerment

UNHCR ensures the effective and differential participation of the people with and for whom UNHCR works.

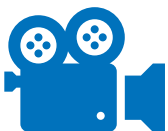


The Bello Oriente community engaged in an award-winning innovation project. Medellín, Antioquia. ©UNHCR



- UNHCR contributed to the strengthening of **community structures** and **organizations**, particularly first and second level **ethnic authorities**, to improve their self-protection mechanisms, foster community leadership and expand spaces for their effective participation and advocacy in local and national planning and decision-making fora.
- UNHCR promoted the **participation** of women, children, youth, LGBTQI+ people in community processes and consulted 2,952 people through 97 **participatory assessments**.
- **14,400 children** received training in human rights and peaceful coexistence, benefited from protection interventions to prevent child recruitment (sports for protection and artistic projects).
- UNHCR supported a network of **community outreach volunteers** to identify and support people facing heightened protection risks.

Video - Seeds of Solace | Allies of Hope



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Durable solutions

UNHCR promotes access to solutions involving host communities in urban and rural contexts.

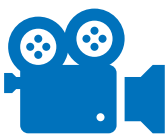


Entrepreneur women showcase their products developed with UNHCR's support. Pereira, Risaralda. ©UNHCR



- While data on the number of Venezuelans who obtained **formal employment** was not available during the reporting period, based on UNHCR's extensive engagement and advocacy with the private sector a significant increase in the number of Venezuelans accessing formal employment was observed.
- **1,200 entrepreneurs in 34 municipalities and 21 departments** received technical assistance to create or develop their entrepreneurship; and over 2,000 people received training and job certification.
- Progress was also achieved in **promoting financial inclusion** for Venezuelans such as opening bank accounts (515,000 Venezuelans had a bank account in Colombia by end-2023), as well as the recognition of Venezuelans' secondary school diplomas and vocational trade certifications.
- Continued progress was made through **the legalization of informal settlements** which facilitate the establishment of critical services such as water and electricity. In 2023, a further **2,800 people benefited from legalization** while another **3,200 people** in these settlements received **land titles**. This initiative was particularly relevant given the national survey on the socio-economic situation of IDPs, financed by UNHCR in 2023, which revealed that **75% of IDPs expressed a preference to remain in their current locations**.

Video - When Entrepreneurship is the Answer



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Public Information

- The most read story of 2023 was about durable solutions: **“Colombia is at a crucial moment to reach durable solutions for internally displaced people, refugees and migrants”**.
- UNHCR commemorated the **World Refugee Day on 20 June** and launched a new communications strategy – **Millones de Razones** – with the **Somos Panas anti-xenophobia campaign** meant to promote integration while countering xenophobia and discrimination.
- UNHCR maintained its editorial partnership with the **Colombia +20 project** of the renowned newspaper **El Espectador**, under which 14 contents were published for a national audience, focusing on displacement and confinement in Colombia. Among these, reports were conducted in Chocó, Cali (Valle del Cauca), and Turbo (Antioquia); 4 in-depth contents were produced on the twentieth anniversary of the Constitutional Court Ruling T-025 about the unconstitutional state of affairs for IDPs, and 3 opinion columns were written.
- UNHCR and journalists launch a manual on **how to report on human mobility**.



External Relations

- **28 donor missions** to the field were carried out in 2023 to showcase UNHCR’s protection and solutions work in the field.
- Over **100 protection products** were published in our **Operational Data Portal** (factsheets, reports, maps).
- **144 Tweets** were published mentioning donors.



UNHCR Team



UNHCR Team in Chocó. ©UNHCR

Staff: 408 (56% women, 43% men, 1% non-binary)
 370 National staff (including interns).
 38 International staff (including deployees).

Interagency



- UNHCR leads the **Protection Cluster** since 2006, with NRC and DRC. The Protection Cluster is one of seven humanitarian response sectors under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator supported by OCHA.
- The Protection Cluster promotes a rights-based approach in the humanitarian response to the effects of the armed conflict.
- Moreover, in 2023 UNHCR led 4 out of **11 Local Coordination Teams** (ELC in Spanish) in the departments of Antioquia, Arauca, Nariño and Putumayo; as well as **5 Protection Working Groups** (GTP in Spanish) in the departments of Cauca, Chocó, Nariño, Norte de Santander and Valle del Cauca.
- UNHCR co-leads since 2016 with IOM the **Interagency Mixed Migration Flows Group (GIFMM)** in Spanish), which includes **80 members**: UN agencies, international and local NGOs and members of the Red Cross movement.
- Its main objective is to coordinate the response to the needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, Colombian returnees, mixed and transcontinental movements, and the host population in a complementary manner with the Government.
- There are **11 local GIFMMs** co-led by UNHCR and IOM in Antioquia, Arauca, Bogota and Cundinamarca region, Bolívar, Costa Caribe, Cesar, La Guajira, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Urabá and Valle del Cauca.

R4V - Don't let the voices of refugees and migrants from Venezuela fade away.



WATCH THE VIDEO



Working with partners

Fourteen (14) partners support UNHCR throughout Colombia in operationalizing its protection and solutions mandate through partnerships with local NGOs, international NGOs and UN agencies.

A special thanks to each of them:

Local Partners (9)



International Partners (5):



UNHCR and partners reached **30 departments** and **428 municipalities** in 2023, providing protection, assistance and paving the way for durable solutions.

See our coverage and partner's map



Financial Information

UNHCR thanks its donors for their contribution to fund its **Operation Plan**:

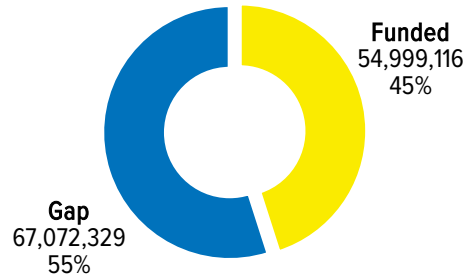


Read our top donors and funding factsheet

FUNDING (as of 31 December)

USD 122,1 million

requested for the Colombia Operation.



Spotlight: Publications



Protection Monitoring
Jan – May 2023



Protection Monitoring
Jul – Dec 2023



Practical solutions in land and housing



UNHCR Response
Jan – Dec 2023



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Contacts

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