Practical solutions in land and housing

Context and interventions

In Colombia, despite the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2016, 6.8 million displaced people still require assistance and reparation due to the armed conflict.\(^1\) Forced displacement entails multiple human rights violations, including losing houses, land, properties, livelihoods, community protection networks, and others. A large portion of the displaced population resides in informal settlements, under precarious conditions, with low possibilities of achieving rights to land, decent housing, and basic services (water, electricity, sewage, access roads, transportation, health, and education). This situation constrains the ability of the displaced population to overcome their vulnerabilities and move forward to durable solutions.\(^2\)

UNHCR supports and develops solutions to displacement, which generally are return, relocation, land restitution, and local integration.\(^3\) By promoting the regularization of informal settlements and establishing, expanding, and constituting reserves, UNHCR provides solutions to problems related to land informality.

Since 2011, UNHCR has been working on the legalization of informal settlements, providing practical solutions to solve land access issues through the Practical Solutions in Land and Housing project. This initiative promotes the right to adequate housing for the displaced population, Colombian returnees, and host communities, with a differential focus on age, gender, and ethnicity.

Criteria used for case selection

- Non-legalized informal settlements, or already legalized but lacking titling.
- Eviction cases, abandonment, or relocation of the displaced population.
- Security situation in the communities.

Key facts 2022

Beneficiaries: 39,645 people
Prioritized communities: 41
Period: 2022 - 2023
Partner: Corporación Opción Legal

Figure 1: Departments covered by the project

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1 Victims Unit, Single Registry of Victims. Available in: https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es/registro-unico-de-victimas-ruv/37394
2 According to the Constitutional Court, in 2015, 74% of the displaced population preferred to settle in urban areas. Constitutional Court, Process 373, Num. 2.3.3.3. Available in: https://www.corteconstitucional.gov.co/relatorias/autos/2016/A373-16.html#_ftn992
Results 2022

- UNHCR worked with the Association of Traditional Authorities and Cabildos of the Indigenous Peoples of the municipalities of Leguízamo and Alto Resguardo Predio Putumayo (ACILAPP) to support 5 communities in the design of mechanisms to solve land-related legal problems.
- Assistance to 9 indigenous communities on topics related to constitution, expansion, or establishment of reserves.
- Preliminary assessments in 41 communities.
- An integrated strategy was developed to support 15 informal settlements with urban regularization processes.
- UNHCR contributed to achieve the urban regularization of 1 informal settlement and deliver 117 individual land titles.
- Organization of 16 workshops to train 503 persons on accessing rights within the framework of urban regularization.
- Technical and legal support provided to 16 local territorial entities during urban regularization processes.
- In association with the Ministry of Housing, the partner Corporación Opción Legal, and the Colombian Center for Construction and Regional and Urban Development Studies (CENAC), UNHCR organized a National Forum to present the pedagogical tools developed by the project.

2023 Interventions

In 2023, UNHCR will focus on the following priorities:

- **Legalization of informal settlements and individual land titling**
  - 11 initial assessments will be conducted focused on further urban regularization processes. Also, 19 prioritized communities will receive technical assistance in urban regularization, and 9 communities in individual titling.

- **Constitution of collective property**
  - UNHCR will conduct 1 community council assessment and case study, providing continued support in the process of collective property defense and constitution, in 9 prioritized communities and 1 agricultural community.

- **Strategic alliances**
  - In association with the Ministry of Housing, UNHCR will conduct regional workshops to provide training, promote socialization and analyze local institutions to strengthen public policies on the legalization and land use planning.

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