Critical needs

Setbacks Protecting and Finding Solutions in Colombia for Populations Forced to Flee Their Homes

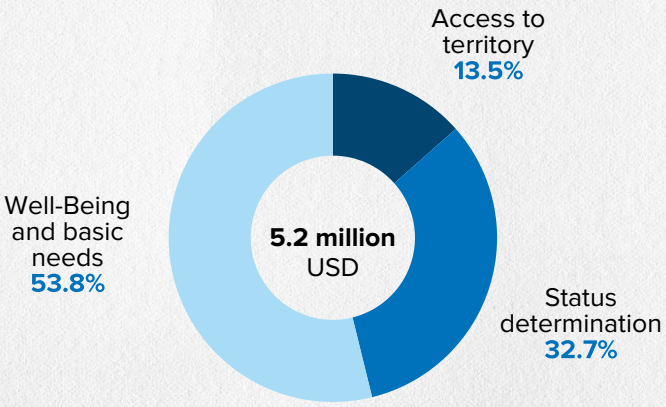
Colombia | September

Colombia is facing a deepening humanitarian crisis. The country hosts the fifth largest population of internally displaced in the world, with nearly **7 million internally displaced people**[1] remaining in need of assistance and access to reparation measures. An **additional 2.8 million people from Venezuela require international protection.**[2] As conflict intensifies and funding decreases, the suffering extends beyond those forced to flee as host communities are also overwhelmed and under-resourced.

Through a solid field presence in critical areas, UNHCR builds upon decades of experience and best practices in Colombia. Working hand in hand with communities, the State, local partners, UN agencies, and the private sector, UNHCR boosts local resilience and strengthens government capacity.

Without urgent and increased support, millions risk being left without access to protection mechanisms, basic services, and the opportunity to rebuild their lives. Amid rising needs, a drastic reduction in support jeopardizes years of progress in protecting forcibly displaced populations and advancing long-term solutions.

Your support is urgently needed to strengthen the humanitarian response and ensure UNHCR's presence to protect lives.



Colombia's most vulnerable populations are being left behind

Nearly 85,000 people[3] forcibly displaced by armed conflict and trapped in the Catatumbo region face escalating risks, minimal protection, and rapidly deteriorating humanitarian conditions.

Approximately 450,000 Venezuelans[4] are currently undocumented, cutting them off from essential services such as healthcare, employment, and legal protection.

The parents of over 350,000 children with legal status in Colombia[5] may remain in irregular status without access to legal stay or protection through the PEP Tutor permit, posing serious challenges to family unity and access to rights.

Support has been suspended for:

informal settlements in 14 municipalities[6], many of which house people living in precarious conditions.

17,000 children[7], who would not benefit from critical child protection services.

UNHCR deploys mobile protection teams in high-risk areas like Catatumbo and the Pacific coast to assess urgent needs, mitigate risks such as child recruitment by armed groups, and provide legal guidance, psychosocial support, and assistance to forcibly displaced communities.

UNHCR partners with local organizations to distribute emergency kits — including hygiene items, solar lamps, mattresses, and mosquito nets — and to deliver cash assistance to help displaced families meet essential needs such as food, transportation, and healthcare.

UNHCR supports the legalization of informal settlements by providing technical assistance to local authorities, enabling forcibly displaced families to access basic services like water and electricity, and advancing socio-economic integration pathways for mixed communities of refugees, internally displaced, migrants, and Colombian returnees.

[1]Victims's Unit (UARIV), July 2025.
[2]Migración Colombia. Dashboard Migrantes Venezolanos en Colombia. May 2025
[3]Catatumbo emergency situation dashboard, Colombia. ELC/ GIFMM Norte de Santander. June 30, 2025
[4]Migración Colombia. May 2025
[5]Migración Colombia, GIFMM Plenary Meeting, June 10, 2025.
[6]UNHCR project monitoring. July 2025.
[7]UNHCR project monitoring. July 2025.

Total needs for Colombia

5.2 million USD

Outcome area	Funding gap (USD)	Overview of needs
OA1. Access to Territory	700,000	Protection monitoring effectively detects protection needs in the territory.
		Ensure UNHCR's presence in key areas to provide timely assistance and strengthen protection.
OA2. Status Determination	1,700,000	Access to rights and services promoted through documentation.
		Parents and caregivers of children supported with legal status in Colombia.
		Maintain UNHCR presence in Necoclí, Cauca, and the Venezuelan border to address rising protection risks and humanitarian emergencies.
OA3. Well-Being and Basic Needs	2,800,000	Support to new displacements in Catatumbo and other areas of the country.
		Emergency support to new displacements.

UNHCR at Risk: Colombia's Progress and Immediate Needs Under Threat

Sub-Office Barranquilla

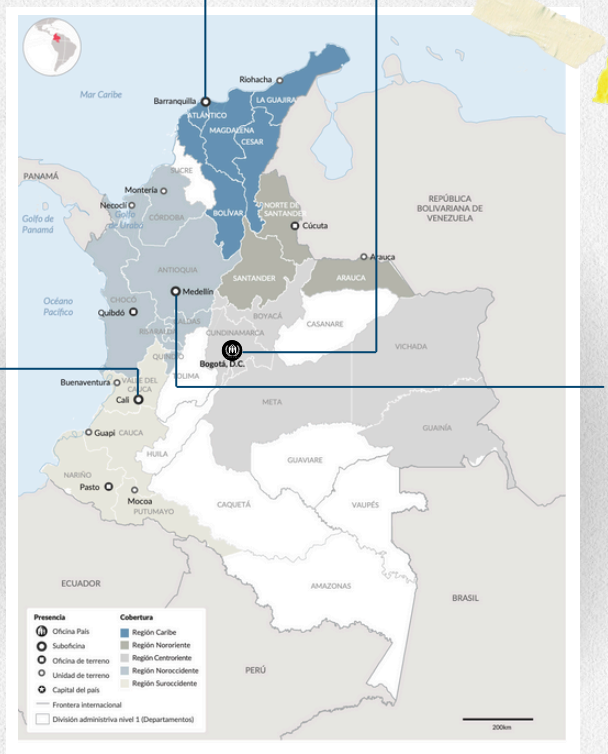
UNHCR has been forced to reduce its presence and downsize or even close offices in the Caribbean region which still faces increased forced displacement and confinements in the nearby Catatumbo region and protection needs along the border with Venezuela.

Sub-Office Cali

UNHCR had to close its field unit in Popayán, therefore downgrading its presence in the department of Cauca, which in 2025 accounts for 71% of victims of humanitarian emergencies in the southwestern region and is on red alert due to the increase of the conflict and armed confrontations between non-state armed groups. This, combined with the reduction of staff in at least three of the four southwestern departments that border with Ecuador, has created significant challenges in monitoring and response efforts, primarily affecting work in priority territories and communities in the areas of child protection, information and guidance for the population, border monitoring, and durable solutions.

National Office Bogotá

UNHCR's protection network bridges Bogotá and field offices, enabling case management, humanitarian assistance, and protection monitoring in emergencies and along borders. UNHCR has had to severely reduce its presence at our Information and Orientation Centers (Puntos de Atención y Orientación, PAOs in Spanish) from 71 to 21 fixed physical centers nationwide.



Map of UNHCR's presence in Colombia. UNHCR/2025

Sub-Office Medellín

The closure of the UNHCR Field Office at the Colombian border with Panamá, in Apartadó, after more than 25 years of frontline response, further shrinks operational capacity. A reduced Field Unit in Necoclí alone cannot meet the escalating demands of the area. This drastic reduction has triggered a collapse in core protection and community-based programming across a region historically impacted by conflict, confinement and forced displacement.

Your support is vital to

- Maintain a Field Unit in Necoclí, ensuring presence in the Darién region, where north-to-south migration and protection risks are rising amid limited resources.
- Maintain a Field Unit in Guapi, Cauca to monitor and protect one of the largest populations of confined people in the country.
- Maintain operations along the Venezuelan border (Riohacha, Arauca and Cúcuta), where there are persistent humanitarian emergencies.

So far in 2025, UNHCR has been able to assist and protect 86,881 people, but to reach our goal, we need your support to assist and protect 163,119 more people.

Private Donors from Colombia, France, Spain, Italy, Japan, Korea and Sweden

Interested in learning more?

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