

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Four urgent humanitarian challenges in Colombia, ICRC
- The communities of Litoral de San Juan continue facing critical humanitarian issues, Red Departamental de Mujeres Chocoanas.
- A decrease in mass displacement, but limitations on mobility and access continue in the first quarter of 2016
- Children and adolescents face constraints to access to education in Córdoba.

## FIGURES

# IDPs in mass events (Jan-Mar 2016)	2.017
#people affected by access and mobility constraints (Jan-Mar 2016)	2.555.371
# people affected by natural disasters (Jan-Mar 2016 UNGRD)	199.709

## FUNDING

US\$ 108,415,166  
2016 humanitarian funding being implemented as of 22 April 2016 (OCHA 4W)



Credit: Colombia: retos humanitarios 2016 (ICRC)  
Photo: Andrea Carolina Garcia

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## Humanitarian challenges in Colombia will not disappear with a peace agreement

*This article is contributed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)*

Although the intensity of the conflict in Colombia and mass displacement have decreased, ICRC continues to register possible IHL violations and violations of other norms. During 2015, we documented 812 cases with nearly 19,000 victims. Among these infractions were threats, disappearance, mistreatment and sexual violence.

This is a panorama which will not disappear from one day to the next, and which was reflected in ICRC's annual report: "[Colombia, retos humanitarios 2016](#)", published in March.

### Four main issues

There are four urgent humanitarian challenges in Colombia this year: disappearance, landmines and other explosive devices, organized armed violence, and the situation of detention facilities.

Although the exact number of people disappeared in the framework of the armed conflict remains unknown, in total in Colombia there are at least 79,000 cases of people who are still missing. While the agreement achieved on 17 October 2015 between the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP to search for the missing persons is a major step, we make a call to accelerate its implementation and offer response to the thousands of homes that continue to live in uncertainty and hope to know the truth about what happened to their loved ones.

Antipersonnel mines and other explosive devices will also continue to cause humanitarian consequences. There is uncertainty around the timeframe for demining contaminated territories, which would allow communities to walk again without fearing accidents. For this reason, while demining advances, prevention is key to save lives.

If the armed conflict between the guerrillas and the Government ends one day, there will remain a third challenge that will continue to have negative consequences on civilians: the actions of organized armed groups, *combos* and gangs. This new geography of violence includes urban spaces. The cities where ICRC registered the largest number of presumed humanitarian consequences of armed violence were Tumaco, Medellín and Buenaventura.

An additional issue identified in the report is the humanitarian crisis of Colombian detention facilities. Besides chronic overcrowding, during 2015 and early 2016, we registered an overload of detainees who were unable to access healthcare services. The

country needs a concerted and efficient crime policy that ends this unsustainable situation behind bars.

### Beyond a peace agreement

Each of the humanitarian challenges discussed represents a constant challenge for Colombia. In 2015, more than 275,000 people benefited from ICRC activities in the country. Nonetheless, there is much that remains to be done.

Colombia this year enters the final phase of peace negotiations between the FARC-EP and the Government, a giant step that we salute from our role as a neutral organization. We hope that what is discussed in la Havana will be reflected in concrete progress at the local level, where thousands of Colombian families do not yet see a tangible change related to what has been agreed on paper.

Read the complete report here: <https://www.icrc.org/es/colombia-conflicto-armado-y-retos-humanitarios-de-2016>

## Promoting the rights and protection of women and adolescents affected by the conflict

*This article was contributed by the Red Departamental de Mujeres Chocoanas*

The community of Litoral del San Juan, located in Chocó and mostly populated by Afro-colombians and Wounaan indigenous people, has been facing for the past three years a humanitarian crisis impacting its stability. Confinement situations, forced displacement; restrictions on access to food and livelihood; continuous threats from non-state armed groups and post-demobilization armed groups against local leaders, women and adolescents; the use of sexual violence as a strategy for social control are some of the situations frequently faced by the community.



Credit: Red Departamental de Mujeres Chocoanas  
Photo: Mandala representative afro women

*Since 2014, the Red Departamental de Mujeres Chocoanas, with the support of CERF funding, and in strategic Alliance with UNWOMEN, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNDP, have accompanied and trained different population groups in the areas most affected by the armed conflict.*

Healthcare services are precarious for the population of Litoral de San Juan. Women are particularly vulnerable, since they face limitations on access to the judicial system to report and get response to high risk situations and to cases of sexual and gender-based violence. Some of the constraints faced by the women of these communities to access justice are related to the lack of awareness of their rights; lack of awareness of the route for assistance; the absence of response institutions; and security threats against victims who want to denounce. In addition, the constant insecurity and poor educational and work opportunities lead adolescents and youths to migrate to other towns.

Since 2014, the Red Departamental de Mujeres Chocoanas, through CERF humanitarian funding, and in strategic Alliance with UN Agencies such as UNWOMEN, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNDP, have accompanied and trained different population groups in the areas most affected by armed conflict. These activities have benefited 1,981 people, who have been sensitized and trained on violence prevention, human rights, leadership, sexual and reproductive health, healthcare, justice and business to recover livelihoods. Among these, 28 neighborhood leaders have become Operators for Change, with knowledge and skills to replicate these awareness activities on women's rights with more than 1,000 people. At the same time, a psychosocial support network to accompany victims of violence was created, and women and adolescents were trained in productive initiatives to recover livelihood. The project has also supported the creation of a women's

community center to provide a safe space for them to continue to promote their activities and association.

For the RED, this is one of the most comprehensive interventions implemented in a territory that has not only responded to emergency issues, but has also installed capacities, ensuring the sustainability of these processes.

The support and willingness of the municipal administration, as well as the Woundeko Indigenous organization and Indigenous leaders, have been key to reach the expected results, thus contributing to improvements in the situation of women, girls and youths in Litoral de San Juan.

From the RED we are sure that the awareness raised around the needs of these communities; the advocacy strategies created to give continuity to the development and life plans; and the installed capacity and social assets left in Litoral have all been very useful for this isolated population, suffering from war and violence.

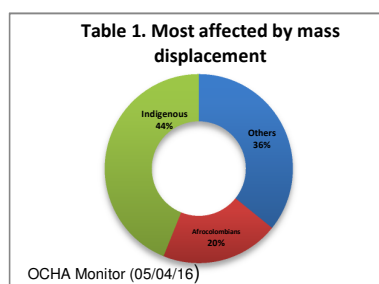
We invite all the actors to continue working on comprehensive and sustainable interventions, reinforcing connections between local, regional and national institutions, as well as with international cooperation agencies. In this way, we can effectively address the causes of these problems to overcome the chronic emergency of this area.

## Balance of the first quarter of 2016

*The presence and actions of post-demobilization armed groups (PDAGs) and of the ELN were the major causes of mass displacement in the first quarter, affecting more than 950 people*

### A drop in mass displacement, but limitations on mobility and access continue

During the first quarter of 2016, according to data from Monitor,<sup>1</sup> 2,017 people were victims of mass displacements,<sup>2</sup> a 38 per cent drop as compared to the same period in 2015. Indigenous communities continue to be the most affected by these types of emergencies, making up 44 per cent of mass displacement victims, followed by Afro-colombians at 20 per cent (see Table 1).

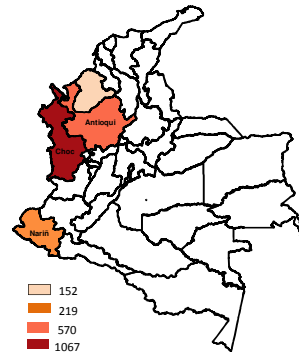


Since mass displacement only represents a small percentage of total displacement, these trends may change once consolidated displacement data are available. In 2015, mass displacement represented 8 per cent of total displacement, while individual displacements were the majority.

The presence and actions of post-demobilization armed groups (PDAGs) and of the ELN were the major causes of mass displacement, affecting more than 950 people (47 per cent), followed by armed clashes between the FARC-EP and PDAGs (28 per cent). No mass displacement was caused by the unilateral action of the FARC-EP, according to OCHA's monitoring. This confirms the trend observed since the last FARC-EP's unilateral ceasefire (20 July 2015 to present). The departments of Nariño, Antioquia and Chocó concentrated 92 per cent of IDPs in mass displacement during the first quarter of 2016 (see Map 1).

<sup>1</sup> See OCHA Monitor (05/04/2016)

<sup>2</sup> More than 50 persons or 10 families displaced by the same event.

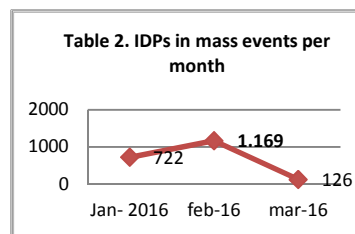
**Map 1: Departments most affected by mass events**

OCHA Monitor (05/04/16)

*Mass displacement had a major impact on the Embera and Wounaan communities in Chocó, due to the presence and actions of PDAGs and non-state armed groups*

### Indigenous communities in Chocó, particularly impacted

Mass displacement had a major impact on the Embera<sup>3</sup> and Wounaan communities<sup>4</sup> in Chocó, due to the presence and actions of PDAGs and non-state armed groups. The increase in overall IDPs figures reported in February (see Table 2) is related to the displacement of 604 people between indigenous and afrocolombians. These displacements created needs in protection, health, education and shelter.



### Armed strikes limit movement and access to goods and services

During the first quarter of 2016, two armed strikes caused limitations on movement and access to basic goods and services. These constraints, despite brief in time and limited to the duration of the armed strikes, had a high impact on mobility and access. A total of 2.2 million people were affected in the context of the two armed strikes, according to OCHA's monitoring (see Table 3).<sup>5</sup>

The armed strikes led to limitations of free movement; restrictions on access to education for thousands of children; a closure of businesses and production, and widespread fear among the population.

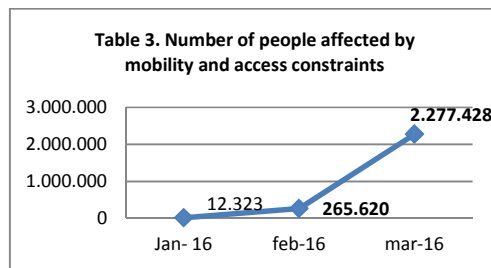
In February, the ELN declared an armed strike impacting Antioquia, Arauca, Cesar, Cauca, Bolívar, Chocó and Norte de Santander. In Arauca, more than 50,000 children did not have access to education as a result of this situation. In March, the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia or Clan Úsuga declared a 24 hours armed strike that affected 41

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/es/operations/colombia/document/flash-update-no-1-25022016-desplazamiento-masivo-y-restricciones-la>  
<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/es/operations/colombia/document/flash-update-no-2-01032016-desplazamiento-masivo-y-restricciones-al>

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/es/operations/colombia/document/colombia-bolet%C3%ADn-humanitario-mensual-febrero-2016>

<sup>5</sup> See OCHA Monitor (05/04/2016)

municipalities in Antioquia, Córdoba, Sucre and Bolívar, with an impact on access to basic goods and services, and creating protection and security needs for civilians in these regions.<sup>6</sup>



While the armed strikes had the main impact in terms of movement limitations and access to basic goods and services, other armed violence events such as confrontations between non-state armed groups and the Armed Forces, death threats, attacks on civilian infrastructure also created restrictions on movement and access to basic goods and services for 82,248 people.<sup>7</sup> This represents a 7 per cent increase in the number of people facing mobility and access constraints due to armed violence, compared to the same period of 2015. The persistence of these kind of impacts remains of concern to the humanitarian community.

### Persistent threats against civilians

According to data from Monitor,<sup>8</sup> during the first quarter of 2016 the number of threat events increased 26 per cent as compared to the same period of the previous year. In nearly half of the events, it was not possible to identify a responsible actor, but nonetheless, PDAGs participated in at least 36 per cent of all threat cases. This increase is related to the circulation of pamphlets declaring “social cleansing”, which was frequent in the analyzed period (29 cases), and to the impact of the ELN and Clan Úsuga armed strikes in February and March respectively.

The majority of threats identified by OCHA, totaling 95 events, were against civilians in general, followed by threats against public officials, social leaders, transportation workers, journalists, teachers, union members, and rural workers. Antioquia, Córdoba, Cauca and Tolima concentrated 53 per cent of threat events (see Map 2).

According to data from Programa Somos Defensores, between January and March 2016 there were 113 documented cases of aggression against human rights defenders, of which 81 were threats. This represent a drop compared to the same period in 2015, when 249 threats were registered. According to Somos Defensores, “paramilitary groups” were the primary responsible of these threats.<sup>9</sup> Despite the drop in threats, the Programa Somos Defensores expresses concerned about the number of homicides of human rights defenders and social leaders, that remain the same in 2016 as in 2015 (19 cases).<sup>10</sup>

*During the first quarter of 2016 the number of threat events increased 26 per cent as compared to the same period of the previous year*

<sup>6</sup> See OCHA Monitor (05/04/2016)

<sup>7</sup> These figures don't include people affected by natural disasters (additional 12,923 people).

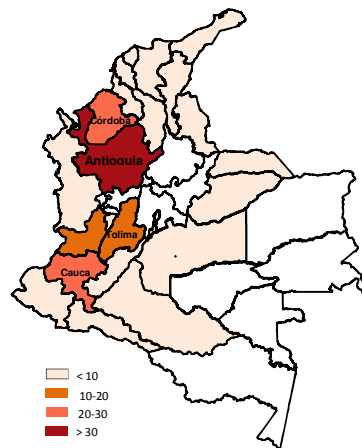
<sup>8</sup> See OCHA Monitor (05/04/2016))

<sup>9</sup> PROGRAMA SOMOS DEFENSORES. Boletín Trimestral. Sistema de Información sobre agresiones contra defensores de derechos humanos en Colombia SIADDHH. Bogotá, abril de 2016.

<http://www.somosdefensores.org/attachments/article/139/boletin-enero-marzo-SIADDHH-2016.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*

Map 2: Departments most affected by threats



OCHA Monitor (04/05/16)

Through March 2016, at least 11.400 children and adolescents were out of class, and the rest only receive part of the educational curriculum

## Persistent limitations on access to education in Córdoba

In Córdoba department, children and adolescents between 5 and 17 years continue to face difficulties in accessing education, mainly due to structural factors and risks caused by the armed conflict and armed violence. The Local Coordination Team has been issuing warnings about this situation since 2015.<sup>11</sup> In March 2015, OCHA already published an article from the team in Córdoba on this situation.<sup>12</sup>

Based on local data,<sup>13</sup> as of March 2016, at least 11.400 children and adolescents are out of class, and the rest only receive part of the educational curriculum; nearly 623 teachers have not been contracted yet due to structural issues that overlap with situations created by the armed conflict and violence.

Municipios	Docentes faltantes	NNA desescolarizados
Ayapel	51	2.569
Montelíbano	60	2.400
Puerto Libertador	140	+150
San José de Uré	10	
Tierralta	60	+500
Valencia	78	1.000
Canalete	22	
San Andrés de Sotavento y Tuchín <sup>14</sup>	202	4.797
<b>Total</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>11.416</b>

Source: Secretarías de Educación Municipales de Córdoba

This situation has been recurrent in the past years. In 2014, nearly 28,000 children and adolescents remained outside of the education system in Córdoba. In the first quarter of 2015, at least 18,000 minors were in the same situation in rural areas of the municipalities of southern Córdoba, including Montelíbano, Puerto Libertador, Tierralta and Ayapel, as well as in Montería, Planeta Rica, Canalete, Moñitos and San Bernardo del Viento.

<sup>11</sup>[https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/es/system/files/documents/files/gtp\\_limitaciones\\_acceso\\_educacion\\_cordoba\\_-2015.10.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/es/system/files/documents/files/gtp_limitaciones_acceso_educacion_cordoba_-2015.10.pdf)

<sup>12</sup>[https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/150417\\_boletin\\_humanitario\\_mensual\\_marzo\\_2015\\_es\\_2.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/150417_boletin_humanitario_mensual_marzo_2015_es_2.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Estimated from Secretarías de Educación Municipales de Córdoba.

<sup>14</sup><http://www.larazon.co/web/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/COMUNICADO-DE-PRENSA-CORREGIDO.pdf>



## **Structural factors and armed violence impact on children fundamental rights**

Some of the structural factors that limit access to education are related to irregularities in contracting processes; an inadequate management of public funds; low quality in the provision of education services; a lack of materials and infrastructure to hold classes; institutional abandonment; social exclusion and poverty. These aspects do not only impact the fundamental rights of children and adolescents, but they also expose them to a number of risks that increase in a context of conflict and armed violence.

Conflict and armed violence are at the same time barriers to access the right to education. Threats and extortions against teachers; the location of schools in strategic corridors and the use of education facilities by armed groups; the recruitment and use of children and adolescents, and the imposition of social control are some of the factors that limit the access to education, in particular in rural areas where institutional presence is lower.

## **Some actions taken but challenges persist**

This situation represents a major challenge to the authorities, institutions and responsible organizations to respond in a comprehensive manner, integrating a rights and protection approaches and connecting efforts at the national and local levels, in order to guarantee the access, continuity and gratuity of this fundamental right.

Diverse actors, including the Early Warning System of the Ombudsman's Office, community organizations, local authorities, the Local Coordination Team and other humanitarian partners, have carried out advocacy to raise awareness around this problem.

The creation of the Red Departamental de Educación en Emergencias, the implementation of local forums and of educational working groups at municipal level are some positive actions that can contribute to the solution of this situation. However, the low institutional commitment among other factors does not allow the achievement of sustainable results that can guarantee access to quality education to all children.

The Local Coordination Team in Córdoba will continue following up on this situation and will coordinate with local and national authorities to complement State's response (see more on this topic:

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/es/operations/colombia/document/limitaciones-al-acceso-la-educaci%C3%B3n-en-c%C3%B3rdoba>).