

## HIGHLIGHTS

- ICRC President visits Colombia, states that work remains to be done to respond to armed violence.
- Armed violence is steady in February compared with January.
- A 6.9-magnitude earthquake hits the south-west Pacific coast, affecting a conflict-prone region.
- Child protection and shelter identified as important needs.



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## ICRC: work remains even if peace agreement is brokered.

In his recent visit to Colombia, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Peter Maurer, indicated that the organization would remain in the country regardless of the outcome of current talks with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército Popular (FARC-EP) guerrillas. “We are here because we are committed to facing the humanitarian consequences of the use of violence. Part of this violence may be reduced with a peace process, other violence could continue, at least for a time. The only thing I know is that we are going to closely monitor how this evolves, with precision, the panorama of violence and we will adapt our work to this evolution,” said Mr. Maurer in an interview with *El Tiempo* in Bogotá on 16 February. He lauded the general level of respect for International Humanitarian Law in Colombia and the Government’s openness with the ICRC. He also recognized the problems in humanitarian financing in Colombia and worldwide.

## FIGURES

# ha. of land lost by IDPs over past 11 years (10.8% total arable land)	5.5 million
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# Human rights defenders murdered 2012	69
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#Hectares affected by fires in 2013	9,800
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## FUNDING

**US\$583 million**

Official Development Aid for Colombia in 2012, GoC.

**US\$700,000** in ERF projects started in February 2013.

## Displacement numbers stabilize during peace process.

Nearly 5,000 people were displaced in February. This represents a more than 70% increase in displacement as compared with January, when it was around 3,000. This total number represents only a small proportion of total displacement, and consists of the number of internally displaced persons (IDP)s observable in cases of mass displacement and recorded by OCHA. In Colombia, mass displacement events are those that displace more than 50 individuals. Armed-violence events occurred between the armed forces and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército Popular (FARC-EP) (67 per cent of total events). These events were also the principal cause of mass displacement (70 per cent respect to January).

The majority of forced displacement events were along the Pacific coast, with an exception on the border with Venezuela in La Guajira. A displacement in a rural indigenous reservation in Chocó took place following the community’s attempt to return to its native territories. Severe restrictions on the community members’ movements placed them in danger of food insecurity and made their livelihoods impossible. More than half of all displacements during February took place near the border with Ecuador in Nariño department.

### Post-Demobilization Armed Groups cause displacements in cities.

In Medellín, north-western Colombia, approximately 100 families were displaced in February by the Post-Demobilization Armed Group (PDAG) Los Urabeños and Oficina de Envigado. This situation has been ongoing throughout 2012. According to the City Ombudsman’s Office, nearly 5,000 people were displaced in the city during 2012 in battles for territorial control. The Mayor of Medellín declared that

*According to UNHCHR's annual human rights report, PDAGs were a grave threat to the protection of civilians, and "responsible for the largest number of killings, rape, sexual exploitation, physical and psychological violence, forced displacement, extortion, harassment and threats."*

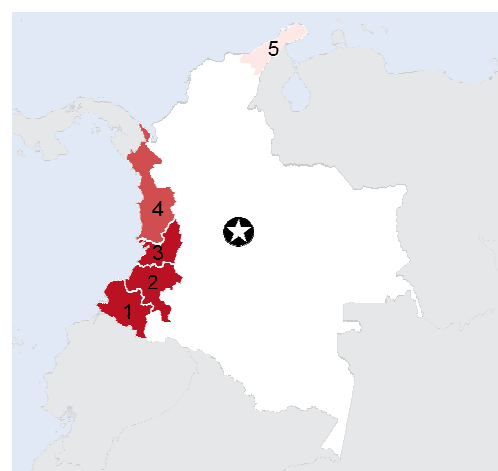
although the national authorities refused to register these IDPs, the local authorities would mobilize a response. An estimated 10,000 people were reported to have attempted to register in 2012.

In the port city of Buenaventura on the Pacific coast, 290 people were displaced within the city during February, presumably also by PDAGs. Buenaventura is one of the poorest cities in Colombia and the only major port on the Pacific coast.

During a radio interview, the Bishop of Buenaventura, Monsignor Héctor Epalza, said: "Buenaventura lives a humanitarian crisis that is not only made clear by the violence of bands in the plain light of day ... [the city] is a strategic drug-running corridor, and criminal bands have taken over the port, day and night, confining the local inhabitants and extorting the population."<sup>1</sup> According to the Attorney General's office, 23 dismembered bodies were discovered in the city in 2012 and are being investigated.

The PDAGs were cited as the most significant threat to the protection of civilians in the recently released United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) human rights report for 2012 on Colombia. The report, released on 19 February, stated: "Post-demobilization groups are identified by all sectors as one of the greatest threats to public order and as responsible for the largest number of killings, rape, sexual exploitation, physical and psychological violence, forced displacement, extortion, harassment and threats. Their coercive presence and activities continue to devastate community life." The report further went on to state that, "The capacity of these armed groups to corrupt and intimidate greatly weakened the State's response in many rural and marginalized urban areas and affected local authorities, military, police and criminal justice sectors. Action by local civilian authorities against these groups is scarce, and preventive action, including social, situational and community measures, has not been developed, severely limiting the State's capacity to gain rights holders' trust and turn political promises of transparency and good governance into practice".

IDPs in Mass Events Feb 2013



#	Department	# IDPs	# of events	% Victims
1	Nariño	3052	2	62
2	Cauca	1090	6	22
3	Valle del Cauca	545	2	11
4	Chocó	108	1	2
5	Guajira	100	1	2
	Total	4895	12	

Source: SIDIH/OCHA

*An estimated 5.5 million ha of land has been forcibly seized from IDPs. This is equivalent to 10.8 per cent of all arable land in the country.*

### **Concern continues regarding the inclusion of IDPs displaced by PDAGs in the official registry.**

The UNHCHR report expressed specific concern regarding assistance to the victims of PDAGs, as it relates to the IDP registry.

The Humanitarian Country Team, OCHA and the IDP registry officials have made significant advances to release figures on displacement in the country. The IDP registry has not released official figures for more than a year, creating major barriers in planning an effective humanitarian response. OCHA has maintained figures focused solely on mass displacement, i.e. the displacement of more than 50 IDPs.

### **Land restitution issues affect IDPs.**

Land restitution became a key concern related to the implementation of the Victim's Law throughout 2011, and it directly affects many IDPs who have lost their land while being displaced. The second National Verification Survey, carried out in 2008, found that 5.5 million hectares were forcibly seized by armed groups over an 11-year period prior to the study. This is equivalent to 10.8 per cent of all arable land in the country. These statistics do not include the forcible occupation of indigenous reservations or

<sup>1</sup> [www.elpais.com.co/elpais/valle/noticias/buenaventura-le-debe-decir-verdad-obispo-hector-epalza](http://www.elpais.com.co/elpais/valle/noticias/buenaventura-le-debe-decir-verdad-obispo-hector-epalza)

the territories of Afro-Colombian communities, who are disproportionately affected by armed violence. The Government recorded more than 4,000 requests for land restitution in 2011 for land totaling more than 400,000 hectares. In 2012, that number grew by 500 per cent, to more than 25,000 requests for nearly 2 million hectares. This trend is expected to accelerate further as the Government increases its capacity to receive land-restitution requests.

## Armed groups pressure the peace process.

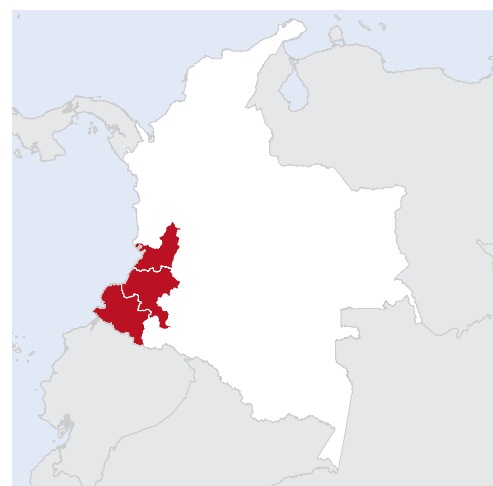
The end of the FARC ceasefire on 20 January led to an increase in armed violence. Since then, the peace process has been under pressure as the public has demanded results from Government negotiators. The ELN guerrillas have asked to participate in a peace process similar to that between the Government and FARC-EP, using kidnapping as a tactic to gain a seat at the negotiating table. The guerrilla group has released most of its hostages except for a Canadian mining company operator. OCHA monitoring revealed that the number of armed violence events in the country peaked in November and January, but were low during February. In north-central Colombia, OCHA received reports of alliances between the Urabeños, a PDAG, and FARC guerrillas. These negotiations would presumably be designed to hand over territory to the former group if the peace process is successful.

*A 6.9-magnitude earthquake struck the southern Pacific coast—one of the areas most affected by displacement.*

## 6.9-magnitude earthquake causes significant damage.

On 9 February, a 6.9-magnitude earthquake damaged nearly 4,000 homes in 57 municipalities in the south-west. The epicentre was in Ospina, near Ecuador. Some 10 health centres and 45 education centres were affected and 399 homes were damaged. Difficult conditions in some of the affected areas impeded access, making accurate damage evaluations in rural areas impossible. Many of these areas are also severely affected by armed violence along the Pacific coast, meaning they are areas of double vulnerability, with IDPs typically disproportionately affected by the disaster.

Several inter-agency missions are planned to these areas. On 9 February, OCHA, the Norwegian Refugee Council and FAO carried out a Multi-cluster/Sector Initial and Rapid Assessment (MIRA) needs-assessment mission in earthquake-affected municipalities on the border with Ecuador.



Earthquake affected area

## Wildfires, flooding and water shortages affect thousands.

There is a wildfire alert in 214 municipalities in Colombia (approximately 20 per cent of the country). There have been 461 wildfires this year, affecting 9,800 hectares. On the Caribbean coast, a water shortage was declared in 14 municipalities, leading to water rationing and alternative distribution efforts. More than 100,000 people are affected.

Rainfall does not usually increase until mid-March, but flooding has already started in several locations in the north-east. On the Caribbean coast, a dengue-fever alert was issued, with reported cases more than doubling in the area as compared with a year ago, and affected nearly 12,000 people in February.

*In north-western Colombia, an estimated 1,600 people (400 in Briceño and 1,200 in Tarazá) have faced mobility restrictions since mid-January due to APM contamination and controls imposed by FARC-EP.*

## Access issues affect Pacific coast, Venezuela border.

Along the Pacific coast and border with Venezuela, the presence of non-State armed groups (mainly FARC-EP), active hostilities and APM contamination continue to cause mobility restrictions for thousands of people, and prevent timely and effective humanitarian assistance. In areas where non-State armed groups are present, it is challenging for Local Humanitarian Teams to explain adherence to humanitarian principles and establish acceptance for humanitarian actors and their work.

In Antioquia, north-west Colombia, an estimated 1,600 people (400 in Briceño and 1,200 in Tarazá) have faced mobility restrictions since mid-January due to APM contamination and FARC-EP's controls on the entrance of goods. The group is allegedly laying mines to protect illicit crops and deter military operations in the region. Affected people need food security, nutrition and protection assistance, but State institutions and humanitarian organizations face access constraints (a needs-assessment mission programmed by the local humanitarian team to one of these areas could not take place). The department of Antioquia's government, in north-central Colombia, told the international community that it suffered landmine contamination in 98 municipalities, or 80 per cent of the 125 municipalities in Antioquia.

### Strikes limit mobility.

An armed strike, i.e. a travel lockdown imposed by FARC-EP, was declared between 1 and 9 February in Chocó department on the Pacific coast in north-western Colombia. It affected most of that department. Only two roads go into or out of Chocó; both were blocked.

Civil-society organizations imposed a strike protesting the situation in the area. It went into effect between 12 and 18 February on the border with Venezuela in Arauca. Major areas were cut off. Restrictions were placed on the movement of food, leading to food shortages in many areas. Medical personnel are reluctant to return due to the poor security conditions. The Government has arrested several people. In 2012 there were three major displacements in this same area. Due to the kidnapping of two Germans in the area by the ELN guerrillas, there were access constraints for most of the month. This affected humanitarian needs-assessment missions and projects.

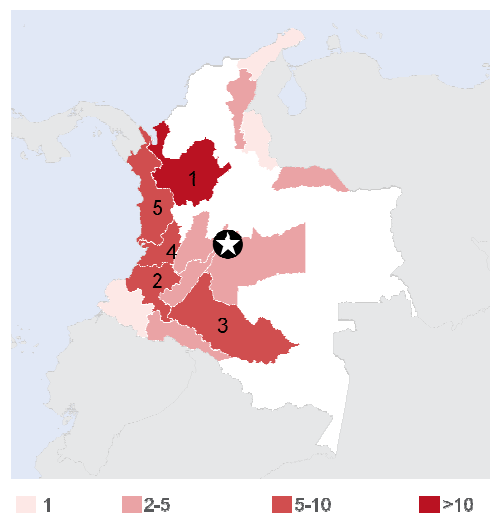
### Antipersonnel mines reduce access.

There has been a marked increase in landmine placement by FARC along the Ecuador border. FARC has warned local communities against sending children to school due to its expansion in mine placement and placement of explosives to deter new military operations in the area.

### Prolonged confinement on the Pacific coast.

Along the Pacific Coast, antipersonnel-mine (APM) contamination and hostilities between the armed forces and FARC-EP are causing mobility restrictions for an estimated 4,000 people in Chocó (mostly indigenous communities) and an estimated

Armed Violence Events Feb 2013



#	Department	# Armed Violence Events
1	Antioquia	14
2	Cauca	10
3	Caquetá	7
4	Valle del Cauca	6
5	Chocó	6

Source: SIDIH/OCHA

2,250 people in Nariño (1,741 in Roberto Payán since January; 807 people in Ricaurte since December 2012). Civilians cannot access their staple crops and humanitarian access is restricted, thus raising food–insecurity concerns.

## Humanitarian Needs in Protection and Shelter.

The protection of children continues to be a major concern in Colombia. FARC-EP's use of weapons which are by nature indiscriminate continues to affect children and adolescents. Reports indicate that at least five children were injured and one died in February due to improvised explosive devices and APMs in the departments of Cauca, Huila and Antioquia, while a car allegedly loaded with explosives was abandoned by FARC-EP near a school facility in Valle del Cauca. The group attacked a police unit in Cauca, during which an explosive device landed near a school facility. APMs placed by FARC-EP close to a school were reported near the Venezuelan border.

*In 2012, the Ombudsman's Office noted that 84 per cent of its risk reports focused on the risk of child recruitment and covered areas throughout the country.*

### **Ombudsman's Office reports on the child recruitment.**

A preliminary early warning system report from the Ombudsman's Office on potential human rights violations and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) infractions noted that of 55 risk reports issued in 2012, 44 (84 per cent) focused on the risk of the recruitment of minors in non-state armed groups, including PDAGs. These reports covered 105 municipalities throughout most of the country, and they illustrate the widespread practice of the recruitment of minors in the country.

The report also noted that out of the 55 risk reports, 56 per cent reported risk situations affecting indigenous groups, once again a hugely disproportionate number, taking into account that indigenous groups make up only 2 per cent of the country's population. Many of these groups are considered to be at risk of extinction, and are particularly targeted due to their relatively remote location close to situations of armed violence. Another 25 per cent of the reports documented risk situations involving Afro-Colombian communities. (Note: one report can document more than one group as being at risk).

### **IABD-ECLAC study shows many were left homeless during the last major flooding.**

An Inter-American Development Bank-United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (IABD-ECLAC) study concluded that during the 2010-2011 floods in Colombia, 2.3 million people were left homeless, while nearly another million were affected. This clarification is important given that the disaggregation of most statistics on the impact of that flood at the time merely accounted for "affected population", with no relative distinction between those who were forced into shelters and those who were more lightly affected.

## Challenges in humanitarian funding.

At the end of 2012, and despite global economic problems, Colombia continued to be the recipient of a significant amount of Official Development Aid: nearly US\$583 million. The bulk of this aid was in the form of military, antinarcotics, alternative development and reparations assistance from the US Government. Other aid was directed towards poverty reduction, free-trade promotion, peacebuilding and environmental support. Contributions directed to humanitarian assistance (figures registered in FTS by 31 December 2012) were less than 10 per cent of the total aid registered for Colombia in that year.

Humanitarian stakeholders observed a sustained shortage of contributions devoted to humanitarian response since 2010. One reason was the Government's efforts to increase its financial response capacity for the victims of the conflict through the approval of Law 1448 of 2011. Despite these efforts, a focus on reparations, land restitution and other efforts in this law have reduced the visibility of continued immediate humanitarian needs for displaced people and others who have continuing needs more immediate than reparation.

The Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, supported by OCHA, will advocate increased financing. A new and more strategic approach to humanitarian assistance is planned for 2013 and 2014.

*Contributions directed to humanitarian assistance were less than 10 per cent of total aid registered for Colombia in 2012.*

### **Emergency Response Fund mobilizes aid to victims of violence in 2013.**

The Humanitarian Country Team is requesting funding to cover urgent humanitarian needs caused by violence and natural disasters in several regions. During February, five projects began in Nariño (two for WASH and Protection), Cauca (one for WASH) and Arauca (WASH, Health and Food Security), allocating nearly \$ 700,000 to support nearly 10,000 people. These people were primarily rural residents and indigenous communities confined to areas highly affected by armed violence. Three proposals were presented to the ERF technical board during the month to mobilize urgent assistance in three different situations: to a crisis along the border with Venezuela in La Guajira department related to malnourishment among indigenous children under age 5 due to severe drought; to aid the victims of floods and violence in Putumayo department on the border with Ecuador; and, to respond to protracted crisis caused by floods in the Atlántico department in the Caribbean coast.

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OCHA humanitarian bulletins are available at [www.unocha.org](http://www.unocha.org) | [www.colombiassh.org](http://www.colombiassh.org) | [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)

All the information reflected in this report has been processed by OCHA from official and secondary sources. Data for mass displacement and protection of civilians has been processed by OCHA Colombia through the Integrated Humanitarian Information System.

**Sources:** Unidad Administrativa Especial de Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas (JAEARIV); Programa Presidencial para la Acción Integral contra Minas Antipersonal (PAIMCA); UNHCR; CODHES; Sistema Integrado de Información Humanitaria (SIDIH/OCHA).