

Impacts of displacement

Conflict and violence in Quibdó
and Cauca, Colombia



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Cover photo: A displaced boy in Colombia, working to support his family. Photo: NRC



*In October 2017, thousands of people fled violence in Colombia's Chocó region. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities have been disproportionately affected.
Photo: Ana Karina Delgado Diaz/NRC*



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*A 20 years old Colombian girl who had to flee after a massacre in her village, along one of many rivers in the region of Chocó, Colombia. Her oldest brother got killed, as well as as three cousins and an uncle.
Photo: Beate Simarud/NRC*

Executive summary

Colombia is one of the countries most affected by internal displacement. Conflict and violence have forced people from their homes for decades. Despite the peace agreement signed in 2016 by the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the country's largest armed group, nearly five million people were still displaced at the end of 2020, many of them requiring urgent support.¹

IDMC conducted a study in August 2021 to inform the humanitarian response and bridge a knowledge gap on the impacts of displacement on the security, livelihoods, housing conditions, health and education of internally displaced people (IDPs) and host communities in Quibdó, the capital of Chocó department, and Cauca, a municipality in the subregion of Bajo Cauca Antioquia. This report presents its key findings.

Impacts on security

The main security concern in Quibdó is urban violence linked with the presence of criminal gangs and armed groups. Insecurity was such that the research team had to leave before the end of the data collection. Nearly half of the surveyed IDPs feel less safe now than before they left their homes. People who had been recently displaced were especially fearful and many refused to be interviewed for this study. More than a third lost important personal documentation during their flight, which may prevent them from exercising their rights or receiving support.

Most surveyed IDPs in Cauca feel safer than they did in their rural areas of origin nearby, where armed groups cause insecurity. About 20 per cent lost some personal documentation, mostly identity documents, but also lease agreements, deeds and work contracts.

Impacts on livelihoods

Loss of income is one of the most prevalent impacts of displacement in both locations. Since 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has created even more obstacles for IDPs to earn a living.

Half of the surveyed IDPs in Quibdó became unemployed or lost all income when they fled, two-thirds of whom remained without an income for more than a year. A quarter of the IDPs receive financial support from the government or other institutions, but not as a result of their displacement. Only 15 per cent felt they had enough financial resources to meet all their needs and wants, compared with 61 per cent before displacement.

Only five per cent of the surveyed IDPs in Cauca were able to continue earning money in the same way after displacement, and 55 per cent became unemployed or lost all their income. About 45 per cent of them were still unemployed at the time of the survey, and 24 per cent had been without an income for more than a year. Nearly a third receive financial support from the government or other institutions. Only 11 per cent feel they have enough financial resources to meet all their needs and wants, compared with more than half before displacement.

Impacts on housing conditions

Areas in Quibdó and Cauca where most IDPs found refuge lack basic services and infrastructure, and their houses are often of much poorer quality than those of non-displaced people. Many displaced homeowners lost their homes and have resorted to renting or other less secure housing arrangements.

Forty-four per cent of the surveyed IDPs in Quibdó owned their home before they were displaced, but 46 per cent now rent their accommodation and 20 per cent live with

someone else without paying rent. Forty-nine per cent of the surveyed IDPs in Cauca owned their home before they were displaced, falling to 12 per cent at the time of the study. Most now rent their accommodation, but six per cent live in a makeshift shelter. Others live in collective shelters or are hosted by other households.

Most IDPs in both locations are less satisfied with their housing conditions now than they were before they were displaced. The most reported reasons were increased costs, exposure to disasters and the elements, the risk of eviction, lack of privacy, physical insecurity, poor sanitary conditions, lack of accessibility, overcrowding and culturally inappropriate shelter.

Impacts on education

Information could only be gathered on 11 displaced children in Quibdó because security issues interrupted data collection. All of them used to go to school, but nine suffered an interruption in their education which lasted for several months as a result of their displacement. All 11 were eventually able to go to school in their host area, and 55 per cent of their parents are more satisfied with the quality of their education now than they were in their area of origin. Lack of financial resources and lack of knowledge of the support displaced children are entitled to are known barriers to education in Quibdó. Displaced children from the African-Colombian and indigenous communities can also face language barriers.

Ninety-four per cent of the displaced children in Cauca went to school in their home area and 73 per cent had their education interrupted as a result of their displacement. The disruption lasted several months in most cases, but some children were out of school for more than a year. Most are now back in school in their host area, and 48 per cent of their parents are more satisfied with their education than they were in their area of origin. The main barrier to education in Cauca is displaced families' lack of financial resources to pay for indirect costs such as uniforms and school material.

Impacts on health

The most visible impact of displacement on health relates to the increased cost of healthcare in host areas. In both locations however, about 60 per cent of the surveyed IDPs said they had access to free healthcare. Although

most IDPs are entitled to free healthcare, those who are employed or are not registered as IDPs may have to pay.

A third of the IDPs in Quibdó feel their health has deteriorated since their displacement, and 46 per cent have less access to healthcare. They pay an average of 143,333 Colombian pesos to see a healthcare professional, compared with 59,500 in their area of origin.

Forty-seven per cent of the IDPs in Cauca feel their health has deteriorated since displacement, and a third have less access to healthcare. They pay an average of 112,267 pesos to see a healthcare professional, compared with 90,446 in their area of origin.

Nearly half of the IDPs in both locations feel worried, nervous, angry or sad more often since their displacement.

Conclusion

The results presented in this report show that IDPs in Quibdó and Cauca faced a number of significant challenges at the time of the survey.

Results vary between the two locations, but some similarities were found in the way displacement caused by conflict and violence affects displaced people. Many suffered severe losses of income and capital, including their former home. In parallel, they face higher costs in their host area, for accommodation and healthcare in particular. Many displaced children had their education interrupted for months and in some cases years, but nearly all were able to get back to school eventually. Impacts on host communities seem limited overall.

The study also highlights the specific profile of the surveyed displaced populations in both locations. The surveyed households were much younger than the national average and showed a much higher prevalence of disabilities. There were also more African-Colombians and indigenous people than the national average. These characteristics may overlap with their displacement status to create particular vulnerabilities that must be addressed through tailored support. Although support from the Colombian government, such as free access to healthcare and education for IDPs, was recognised, it appears that some of the most vulnerable were not able to access it.

Introduction

Colombia has faced one of the world's most acute internal displacement crises for more than five decades. The peace agreement signed in 2016 by the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the country's largest armed group, represented a significant step towards finding durable solutions for the country's internally displaced people (IDPs).² At the end of 2020, however, 4.9 million people remained internally displaced and many still require assistance.³

Conflict and violence triggered about 106,000 new displacements in 2020.⁴ The Pacific coast department of Chocó, of which Quibdó is the capital, and Antioquia, where the municipality of Cauca is located, are two of the three departments that recorded the most displacement in the first half of 2020.⁵

At the end of 2021, there were 213,305 IDPs in Chocó, of whom 60,136 were in Quibdó.⁶ There were 1,185,701 in Antioquia, of whom 27,095 were in Cauca.⁷

IDMC conducted an assessment of the impacts of displacement on the security, livelihoods, housing conditions, health and education of IDPs and their host communities in both locations to help tailor humanitarian responses to the needs of those affected. Data was collected through surveys and key informant interviews in August 2021.⁸

Sample description

The study in Quibdó focused on IDPs who had arrived in the city between July 2018 and July 2020. About 30 per cent had been displaced three times or more, 30 per cent twice and 39 per cent once. Nearly all were from Chocó, and all had been living in rural areas before moving to Quibdó. Security issues arose during the data collection process, which forced the research team to leave the area. Only 46 IDPs and 157 host community members were

interviewed as a result. It is also important to note that many people who had been recently displaced were too afraid to speak to the research team. They are therefore not represented in this study's results. Sixty-seven per cent of the IDPs were women and 33 per cent men. The figures for the host community members were 50 per cent each.

In Quibdó, several informants mentioned a change in the pattern of displacement in recent years. Since the peace agreement was signed, people tend to be displaced one at a time, rather than in large groups. This makes the issue of displacement less visible.

Map 1: Study locations in Colombia



"Maybe armed groups find it more convenient (...). There is less media coverage, less push back and less pressure from the army. If mass displacement occurred again, there would be a greater chance of confrontation." – Representative from the African-Colombian community in Quibdó.

There are also reports of armed groups not allowing people in the communities of origin to flee, keeping them as shields in case of attacks.⁹

The study in Cauca focused on IDPs who had arrived in the municipality between July 2018 and July 2020. About 23 per cent had been displaced three times or more, 23 per cent twice and 59 per cent once. About two-thirds were from Antioquia and 60 per cent had lived in rural areas before their displacement. A total of 254 IDPs and 153 host community members were interviewed. Fifty per cent of the IDPs were women and 50 per cent men. The figures for the host community members were 56 and 44 per cent.

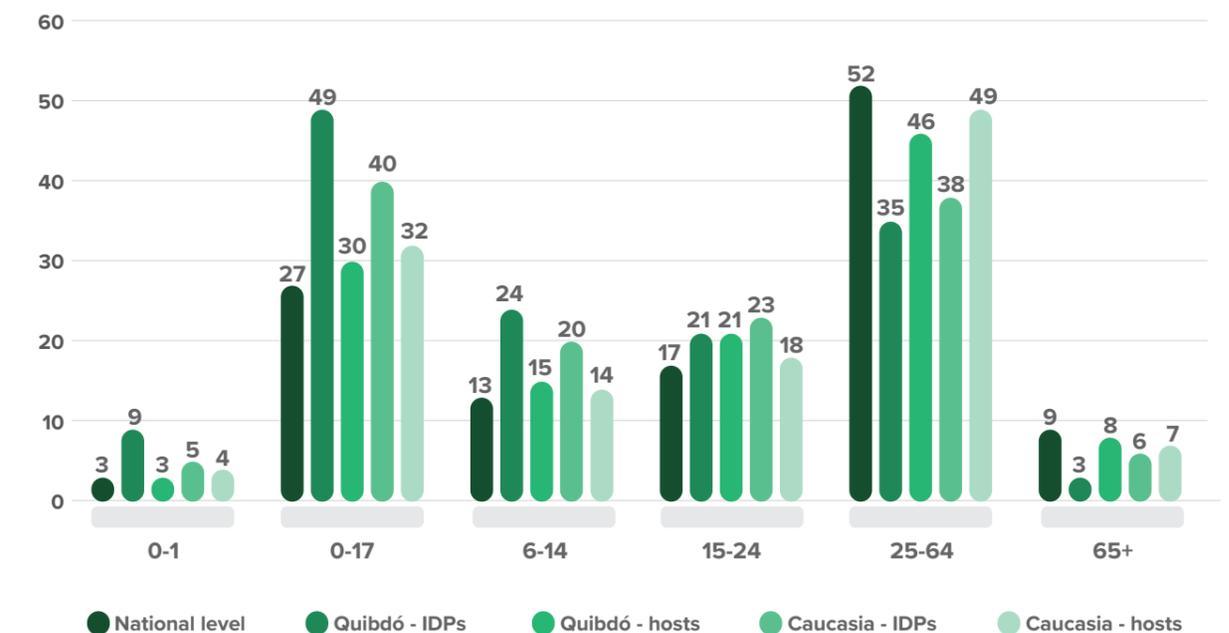
The sociodemographic distribution of the respondents in both locations differs quite significantly from the national picture. This is important to keep in mind when designing humanitarian responses to plan for the correct number of

children, people with disabilities and other groups with specific needs.

The displaced populations in both Quibdó and Cauca are much younger than the national average (Figure 1).¹⁰ This is also true of the host community in both locations, but to a lesser extent. The proportion of children under 18 in the displaced population in Quibdó is 49 per cent, compared with 27 per cent at the national level and 30 per cent in the neighbouring host community. The proportion of infants (0-1) and school-age children (6-14) is also much higher among IDPs, indicating potentially greater needs for education and nutrition. The dependency ratio for the displaced communities is 80 per cent in Quibdó and 62 per cent in Cauca, compared with about 50 per cent at the national level and in the host communities of both locations. This points to likely challenges in ensuring displaced households' livelihoods through work alone.

Ethnic distribution within the sample is also very different in both locations to that at the national level. Ninety-four per cent of the IDPs in Quibdó identified as "African-Colombian" and four per cent as "mixed". Twenty-two per cent in Cauca identified as "African-Colombian",

Figure 1: Age distribution in the surveyed populations in Quibdó and Cauca, and at the national level for Colombia (using the UN World Population Prospects data)



31 per cent as “mixed”, 13 per cent as “indigenous” and eight per cent as “white”. Twenty-two per cent identified as “none”. At the national level, nine per cent of the population is African-Colombian, four per cent indigenous and 88 per cent white or mixed.¹¹

Ethnicity can be a significant factor in people’s experiences of displacement, and indigenous and African-Colombian communities often face greater challenges than other groups.¹² Tailoring responses to their needs would require better data.

“We asked the entity in charge of [IDPs] to get statistics to differentiate displaced people who are Afro, indigenous or [something] else, but it was not possible. They say it is very complicated to ask: “Are you Afro or indigenous?”, although it is very important for us to have a separate diagnosis of [the conditions for] these two populations.” – Representative from the African-Colombian community in Caucasia

The prevalence of disabilities is also much higher in the surveyed populations than at the national level, which raises specific concerns for support and protection (see spotlight).



Colombian man displaced by the conflict: “I feel bad in this shelter, we cannot go out because of the pandemic and I want to be in my community, because I am free there. I think about what I invested in my rice harvest and it is already being lost”.

Photo: Fernanda Pineda / NRC



Maybe armed groups find it more convenient (...). There is less media coverage, less push back and less pressure from the army. If mass displacement occurred again, there would be a greater chance of confrontation.

– Representative from the African-Colombian community in Quibdó.



Spotlight: IDPs with disabilities

People with disabilities are one of the groups most vulnerable to the effects of ongoing violence and instability in Colombia.¹³ The country's Constitutional Court has recognised the disproportionate impact internal displacement has on them, including the heightened risks and discrimination they face.¹⁴ Consistent with the Constitutional Court's assessment, the findings from our studies in Cauca and Quibdó highlight some of the unique challenges that IDPs with disabilities and their families face, and the barriers they encounter in accessing support.

It is not known exactly how many IDPs are living with disabilities in Colombia, and under-reporting is widespread. Only three per cent of registered victims of forced displacement and subject to attention reported having a disability.¹⁵ The widespread use of anti-personnel mines, torture and sexual violence, which has often accompanied displacement in the country, has caused new physical and psychosocial disabilities and aggravated pre-existing ones.¹⁶ The Constitutional Court and various other organisations have noted that the disability prevalence rate is likely to be higher among the displaced population than the general population, and could even surpass the global average of 15 per cent.¹⁷

Findings from Cauca, Antioquia

Fifty IDPs in Cauca, or 20 per cent of those surveyed, were identified as having disabilities using the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning.¹⁸ Some of them also identified another household member as having a disability. Disabilities relating to vision and mobility were the most common, affecting 21 per cent and 15 per cent of displaced households, respectively. Thirty-one per cent of the displaced households included at least one member with disabilities, compared with 24 per cent among host community households. The high prevalence rate should be investigated further, but could be the result of several factors including the conflict itself and poor access to healthcare in the area.

Thirty-nine IDPs with disabilities answered questions on the challenges and barriers they face. About 60 per cent said they had faced challenges moving to another area and finding a place to stay after leaving their home. The majority said access to work and food were key challenges during displacement (see figure 2). Of those who earned

money from work in their home communities, 27 IDPs with disabilities, or 63 per cent, lost their source of income after being displaced, compared with 53 per cent of their counterparts without disabilities. Six of the IDPs with disabilities that lost their income were unemployed for a year or more, while 12 were still unemployed at the time of being interviewed.

Seventy-eight per cent of surveyed IDPs with disabilities said their physical health had declined since leaving their home, compared with 39 per cent of IDPs without disabilities. Sixty-four per cent also reported a deterioration in their psychosocial wellbeing, compared with 41 per cent of IDPs without disabilities.

There were signs, however, that displacement has also had some positive impacts on respondents with disabilities. More than half said they felt safer than they did before they left their homes, which was slightly more than among their counterparts without disabilities. A third said they felt less safe.

The findings indicate that IDPs with disabilities have specific needs during displacement, but inclusive and specialised support is hard to come by in Cauca. Eighty-seven per cent said they did not receive financial support or specialised healthcare or equipment to help them cope with their displacement. When asked if they had ever been consulted about how assistance could be adapted to their needs, 90 per cent of respondents said they had not.

Findings from Quibdó, Chocó

Twelve IDPs in Quibdó, or 26 per cent of those surveyed, were identified as having disabilities. Thirty-seven per cent of displaced households had at least one member with disabilities, compared with a third of host community households. As in Cauca, the most common disabilities amongst surveyed IDPs were linked with vision and mobility.

The small sample size is a significant limitation of the study, but the findings still shed light on some of the obstacles IDPs with disabilities encounter. As in Cauca, most respondents in Quibdó identified access to work as one of the main challenges they faced. They also reported a deterioration in their physical and psychosocial health and sense of safety since leaving their homes.

Fifty-three per cent of households with at least one member with disabilities said they had less access to healthcare since their displacement, compared with 41 per cent of those without a member with disabilities. There may be a number of reasons for this disparity. In other studies, IDPs with disabilities said lack of transport prevented them from attending medical appointments during their displacement.¹⁹

In addition to barriers to accessing basic services, key informants said IDPs with disabilities and their families found specialised support difficult to come by in Quibdó. A local school teacher said staff did not have adequate training in how to care for children with physical or mental disabilities, meaning such pupils often had to stay at home. The fact that no respondents with disabilities receive financial support, specialised healthcare or equipment to help them cope with their displacement also points to a need for more tailored assistance.

Addressing the differential impacts of displacement

The Constitutional Court has played a key role in raising awareness of the differential impacts of displacement on people with disabilities and the need for more data and comprehensive support to address the intersecting risks they face.²⁰ In response to the Court's concerns, important steps have been taken at the institutional level to more systematically monitor and report on IDPs with disabilities, address barriers to support, and give visibility to the rights and needs of victims of the armed conflict with disabilities.²¹

While such progress is promising, greater efforts are still needed to address the ongoing attitudinal, communication, physical and socioeconomic barriers IDPs with disabilities face in Colombia. Continuing to expand the collection of data on IDPs with disabilities is essential to understanding their diverse experiences and ensuring they are included in responses to internal displacement.

Figure 2: Percentage of respondents who face challenges during displacement because of their disability (various answers possible)



Impacts on security

Quibdó

Quibdó is not only affected by displacement triggered by conflict and violence in nearby rural areas, but also by urban violence. The presence of armed groups and criminal gangs in the municipality causes insecurity in areas where IDPs live and sometimes leads to secondary intra-urban displacements.

Insecurity forced the research team to leave before the end of the data collection process. Many recently displaced people were too afraid to be interviewed.

Forty-eight per cent of the IDPs surveyed feel less safe than before their displacement, an impact felt slightly more by men than women at 53 and 45 per cent respectively. Fifty-seven per cent of host community members also feel less safe than before IDPs arrived in the area.

Thirteen per cent of IDPs and 12 per cent of their non-displaced counterparts have spent money on trying to improve their safety, for example by installing new locks or lights.

The loss of personal documentation during displacement can be one of the main obstacles to receiving assistance and achieving a durable solution to displacement in Colombia. Thirty-five per cent of IDPs said they had lost some form of documentation, of whom 88 per cent lost identity documents and 13 per cent their lease agreement or deeds. Eighty-five per cent of those who lost documents incurred costs in replacing them.

Caucasia

The presence of illegal armed groups involved in drug trafficking continues to cause violence and conflict in rural areas of Bajo Cauca and trigger displacement toward urban areas.

“In the rural areas of Caucasia, there is no security for anyone because of those armed groups. If [a displaced person] arrives there and nobody knows them, these groups may attack them thinking they are enemies.”
– **Representative from the local authorities in Caucasia**

Displaced young people are particularly at risk of being recruited by armed groups as unemployment adds to their vulnerability. Security is perceived as better in Caucasia, where authorities, police and military forces have a greater presence than in rural areas. Urban dwellers are, however, still at risk of getting caught in clashes between criminal groups or being the victim of traffic accidents.

“[During] the first week of August, we had seven homicides in Caucasia. In addition to the [Covid-19] pandemic, we had to keep attending to firearm injuries, to the people who were harmed in the massacre in Cuturú, and to the drunks who crashed their motorcycle. There are lots of traffic accidents here because people drink and then go out.” – **Medical doctor in Caucasia**

Fifty-one per cent of the IDPs surveyed feel safer in the municipality. Thirty per cent of their non-displaced counterparts, however, feel less safe than before IDPs arrived, a figure that rises to 38 per cent among women.

Less than five per cent of the IDPs and host community members have spent money on ensuring their safety, compared with 20 per cent of IDPs in their areas of origin. Most said they had installed lights or locks.

The percentage of IDPs in Caucasia who lost personal documentation during their flight was much lower than in Quibdó at 19 per cent. Of these, 77 per cent said they had lost identity documents and 21 per cent their lease agreement or deeds. Seventy-four per cent of those who lost documents incurred costs in replacing them.

Impacts on livelihoods

Quibdó

Unemployment and a lack of livelihood opportunities affect both displaced and host communities in Quibdó. Many IDPs survive on the informal economy.

Of the 41 per cent of IDPs – 47 per cent of men and 37 per cent of women – who earned money from work in their areas of origin, only seven per cent were able to continue doing so in the same way after their displacement. Half of them, and 67 per cent among women, became unemployed or lost all of their income. Of these, 62 per cent were without an income for more than a year and 24 per cent still at the time of their interview.

“Most people in Quibdó live on what they earn informally daily. I don't think formal employment and social security affiliation amounts to 15 per cent [of the workers]. The main problem is that there is no industry in Quibdó, only some commerce and state employees.” – **Representative of the African-Colombian community in Quibdó**

For those able to continue to earn money from work, their households' average income has dropped from and. About a quarter of the IDPs surveyed receive financial support averaging 359,111 pesos a month from the government or other institutions, up from seven per cent before displacement. Remittances from family or friends, however, have declined. Twenty per cent receive an average of 220,000 pesos a month, compared with 35 per cent who received an average of 312,555 a month before displacement.

Only 15 per cent of the IDPs feel they have enough financial resources to meet all their needs and wants, down from 61 per cent before displacement.

The proportion of host community members earning money from work is much higher at 72 per cent, and average household incomes have risen slightly to 1.28 million pesos

a month from 1.25 million before IDPs arrived. About half of the respondents earn their money in the same line of work as before the arrival of IDPs, 22 per cent have found another source of income and 17 per cent have become unemployed.

Nearly 20 per cent of host community members receive money from the government or other institutions, up from 13 per cent before the arrival of IDPs. The average amount, however, has dropped from 792,981 to 367,884 pesos a month.

The number receiving remittances has also decreased. About 15 per cent receive an average of 262,777 pesos a month, compared with 22 per cent who received a similar amount before the arrival of IDPs.

Host community members' living standards have deteriorated over the same period of time, but less severely than IDPs'. Thirty per cent feel they have enough financial resources to meet their basic needs and wants, down from 42 per cent before IDPs arrived.

Caucasia

Lack of livelihoods opportunities is an issue for all in Caucasia. The decline of industry and mining in the areas around the municipality and the region more widely has led to an increase in unemployment.

“The problem in Caucasia is that the main sectors are mining and agriculture, but these companies already have their own workers. It is very difficult for the displaced people to work there, so they dedicate themselves to informal sales and street trading.” – **Displaced man in Caucasia**

The presence of criminal organisations in rural areas also prevents people from going to work for fear of insecurity. Most IDPs work in the informal sector, where they felt the

impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic severely. IDPs from indigenous communities face additional challenges integrating into the local community.

“For indigenous people it is more difficult. When they arrive with their traditional clothes and their ancient customs, they are seen as foreign. Sometimes this does not help them.”
– **Representative from the local authorities in Caucasia**

Sixty-one per cent of the IDPs surveyed - 74 per cent of men and 47 per cent of women - earned an income from work in their areas of origin, but only five per cent of them managed to continue doing so in the same way after their displacement. Fifty-five per cent became unemployed or lost all of their income, and 31 per cent managed to find another source of income. About a quarter of those who became unemployed remained so for more than a year before finding work, and 45 per cent were still unemployed at the time of their interview.

For those still able to earn money from work, their households' average income dropped from 853,798 to 600,494 pesos a month. This compares with about 1.1 million for host community households in the area.

“There is still a lot of discrimination. People consider displaced people to be evil, even though they are victims fleeing the conflict. Most of them are families, whose homes and land were taken away from them.” – **Medical doctor in Caucasia**

Other sources of income include remittances from family and friends. Fourteen per cent of displaced households receive these, up from 11 per cent before displacement. The average amount they receive, however, has fallen from 351,250 to 162,500 pesos a month. A similar proportion of their non-displaced counterparts receive remittances and the amount received has also fallen, but to a lesser extent from 348,055 to 298,452 pesos a month.

Financial support from the government or other institutions is a source of income for 31 per cent of IDPs, up

from eight per cent before displacement. They receive an average of 196,306 pesos a month. Eighty-seven per cent do not, however, receive specific financial support for their displacement. About 20 per cent of host community members also receive money from the government or other institutions at an average of 151,436 pesos a month.

Displacement has had a significant impact on IDPs' living standards. Only 11 per cent feel they have enough financial resources to meet their needs and wants, down from 53 per cent before their displacement. Host community members' living standards have also deteriorated, but to a much lesser extent. Thirty-three per cent say they have enough financial resources to meet their basic needs and wants, down from 43 per cent over the same period of time.



There is still a lot of discrimination. People consider displaced people to be evil, even though they are victims fleeing the conflict. Most of them are families, whose homes and land were taken away from them.

– **Medical doctor in Caucasia**



Impacts on housing

Quibdó

Many displaced people live in the northern part of the city, in precarious houses that do not have clean water or sanitation infrastructure. Some newly arrived families find temporary refuge in schools, stadiums or churches, until they find host families who can shelter them.

“There is an area called the Displaced People’s Zone, where you can find Venezuelans, indigenous people, African-Colombians and people displaced from Chocó or Cauca. (...) Their houses are very small and shelter three or four families of five people each.” – Medical doctor in Quibdó

Only 22 per cent of the surveyed IDPs in Quibdó own their own home, down from 44 per cent before displacement. The average value of the homes lost is about 17 million pesos. Just 15 per cent of displaced homeowners have written proof of their ownership status before their displacement, a figure that rises to 50 per cent for those who have managed to buy another home since.

This compares with the 52 per cent of host community members who own their home at an average value of about 30 million pesos. Seventy-six per cent have written proof of their ownership.

More IDPs rent their accommodation since their displacement than before it, at 46 and 33 per cent respectively. Their average rent is 273,333 pesos a month, compared with 284,000 before displacement. This compares with the 35 per cent of host community members who rent their home at an average of 554,339 pesos a month.

Twenty per cent of the IDPs surveyed live with someone else without paying rent, compared with less than 10 per cent among their non-displaced counterparts.

More than 60 per cent of the IDPs are less satisfied with their housing conditions compared with those before their displacement. The main reasons cited are the risk of eviction, financial difficulties, lack of privacy, exposure to the elements and physical insecurity.

Caucasia

One of the areas where displaced people live in Cauca is called La Colombianita.

“This is another world. It does not seem like we are in Cauca there. There are people in this city who do not know this place exists. There are labyrinths of houses built over swamps, which makes them completely humid.” – Medical doctor in Cauca.

Only 12 per cent of IDPs in Cauca own their homes, down from 49 per cent before displacement. The average value of the homes lost is about 22 million pesos. More than 41 per cent of displaced homeowners have written proof of their status before displacement, a figure that rises to 71 per cent for those who have managed to buy their homes since.

This compares with the 48 per cent of host community members who own their home at an average value of about 54 million pesos. Eighty-four per cent have written proof of their ownership.

As in Quibdó, more IDPs rent their accommodation since their displacement than before it, at 58 and 33 per cent respectively. Their average rent is 212,469 pesos a month, compared with 232,827 before displacement. The host community members who rent their homes pay an average of 325,245 pesos a month.

Nearly a quarter of the IDPs surveyed do not own or rent the home they live in, which highlights the precarious nature of their housing conditions. Seventeen per cent live with someone without paying rent, six per cent in makeshift shelters and two per cent in collective shelters.

Nearly 60 per cent are less satisfied with their housing conditions now compared with those before their displacement. The main reason cited are financial difficulties, exposure to the elements and disasters, the risk of evictions, lack of privacy, physical insecurity, poor sanitary conditions, lack of accessibility, overcrowding and culturally inappropriate shelter.



In 2019 in Juradó (Chocó), nearly 1,000 indigenous people were displaced by armed groups. At least 400 students had to interrupt their education as a result. In addition, hundreds of indigenous people are unable to flee and confined in their villages because of the conflict. Photo: NRC

Impacts on education

Quibdó

Although public schools are free in Quibdó, as is the case throughout Colombia, displaced families' limited financial resources are a known barrier to their children's education.

"We talk about the right to education, but it is not guaranteed. It is not enough that the child is registered in school, they must also have the means to get to school, buy their uniform, their notebooks and food so that they do not think about their empty stomachs while they are in class".

– Teacher in Quibdó

When schools were closed because of the Covid-19 pandemic, displaced children were particularly affected. Teachers attempted online schooling, but many displaced children do not have access to the Internet.

There is financial support available for displaced children to pursue their education, but not all displaced families are aware of it. Lack of information on support options is particularly a barrier for displaced people in the African-Colombian and indigenous communities, who may also face language barriers.

Information could only be gathered on 11 displaced children in Quibdó because security issues interrupted data collection. All went to school before displacement, but nine suffered an interruption in their education as a result of their flight, and this lasted for several months.

All 11 were eventually able to go back to school in their host area, and 55 per cent of their parents are more satisfied with the quality of their education than they were in their area of origin.

Displaced families spend an average of 158,214 pesos a month on their child's education, mostly for transport and uniforms, but also for materials, school meals and tuition fees. A quarter receive financial support from the government or other institutions to send their children to school.

Host community families spend twice as much on their child's education at an average of 315,000 pesos a month. The money goes mainly on transport, school meals, materials and tuition fees, but also additional classes and uniforms. Nearly 30 per cent receive financial support from the government or other institutions to send their children to school.

Caucasia

Public schools are free and provide displaced children with school material, but private schools come at a cost. Even in public schools, families must buy uniforms for class and for sports, amounting to 55,000 to 70,000 pesos each. Costs linked with education, such as transportation to school, accessing the Internet, printing or copying documents, are not always affordable for the poorest displaced families.

Seventy-three per cent of the displaced children in Cauca suffered an interruption in their education as a result of their displacement. For 40 per cent of them, it lasted less than three months, but a third were out of school for three to 12 months, and more than a quarter for over a year.

Ninety-four per cent of the children went to school before displacement, but only 89 per cent after their flight. For girls in particular, 96 per cent went to school before but only 87 per cent after. The reason most often cited for children not going to school is distance from home. Among host community children, 91 per cent go to school.

Fewer than half of the displaced families pay for their children's education, a similar number to before displacement. The average amount they pay each month has risen but only slightly, from 147,424 pesos to 163,076. The change for host community families is more significant. Forty-three per cent pay for their children's education, compared with only 17 per cent before IDPs arrived, and the monthly cost has risen from 76,166 pesos to 114,538.

Most IDPs cite transport, school meals, materials, uniforms and tuition fees as their main expenses. Their non-displaced respondents have similar outgoings, but cite materials and tuition fees first, and also additional classes. About a third of respondents across both groups receive financial support from the government or other institutions to send their children to school.

About half of the IDPs said they were more satisfied with their children's education than they had been in their area of origin. They said the facilities, teachers and overall standard of education were all better. Some also said classes were less crowded and that their children no longer feared or suffered discrimination. Thirty-one per cent said they were less satisfied, mostly citing the long distance from their home to school and the cost of education in the municipality. The arrival of IDPs in Cauca seems to have had little or no effect on host community members' satisfaction with their children's education.



Displaced girl in Colombia. Many displaced children are unable to access quality education as a result of their displacement. Photo: NRC

Impacts on health

Quibdó

In Quibdó, the displaced population mostly suffers from diarrhoea, malnutrition, malaria, dengue and typhoid fever linked with their poor housing conditions and lack of access to clean water, sanitation and waste management infrastructure.

Thirty-seven per cent of the IDPs in Quibdó feel their health has deteriorated since their displacement. Forty-six per cent said they had less access to healthcare and the same percentage that they spent more on their health. Nearly two-thirds, however, have access to free healthcare in Quibdó.

IDPs spend an average of 143,333 pesos on a visit to a healthcare professional, compared with 59,500 in their area of origin. The figure for their non-displaced counterparts has also risen from 112,245 to 160,105 pesos.

The arrival of IDPs in Quibdó does not seem to have had a major effect on host community members' health or access to healthcare. Two-thirds said they had the same access to healthcare as before, and 70 per cent feel their health has remained the same. Nearly a third, however, said they were spending more on their health.

Displacement has had a number of mental health impacts. Forty-five per cent of the IDPs surveyed feel worried, nervous, angry or sad more often since their displacement, and 37 per cent less often. The figures for host community members were 40 and 20 per cent respectively.

Caucasia

Most displaced people benefit from free healthcare through the Régimen Subsidiado. This social protection mechanism covers all costs related to prevention, diagnosis, treatment, emergencies and even transportation to better equipped hospitals outside of Cauca. Displaced and non-displaced people who earn an income and can contribute, however, do pay for health services depending on their resources.

Forty-seven per cent of the IDPs in Cauca feel their health has deteriorated since their displacement. Most said they had the same access to healthcare as in their areas of origin, but 32 per cent said they had less. Forty per cent said they spent more on their health than before.

IDPs spend an average of 112,267 pesos on a visit to a healthcare professional, compared with 90,446 in their area of origin. Sixty per cent, however, have access to free healthcare.

Cauca is only equipped to manage primary and some secondary healthcare. People who face complications or require specialists have to go to Medellín or Montería.

“Cauca has grown these past years (...). We had 80,000 inhabitants in 2010 and now 130,000, but the hospital is still the same. When we have complicated cases, like patients with cancer or in need of surgery, we send them to Medellín.” – Medical doctor in Cauca

Displaced people used to suffer from malnutrition, but the situation has improved in the past couple of years, leading to the decommissioning of the local Nutritional Centre. Health issues are now often linked to violence, traffic injuries and early pregnancies for displaced girls.

“Many displaced adolescents are pregnant. In their villages, when a paramilitary officer arrives and wants a 14 or 16-year-old girl, she is often forced to be with him out of fear that her family will get hurt [if she refuses].” – Medical doctor in Cauca

Three-quarters of the host community members surveyed said their health was the same as before the IDPs arrived, and a similar proportion said their access to healthcare was unchanged. Fifty-four per cent have access to free healthcare, up from 42 per cent before the IDPs arrived.

Two-thirds spend the same amount on their health as before, but 26 per cent spend more. They said the average cost of a visit to a healthcare professional had gone up from 87,809 to 129,792 pesos.

In terms of mental health, 46 per cent of IDPs feel worried, nervous, angry or sad more often since their displacement, and 30 per cent less often. The figures for host community members were the same.



The Pacific region, particularly Chocó, has become a battleground for clashes between the National Liberation Army (ELN) and another armed group. Seven out of ten people displaced in 2017 came from Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Photo: Ana Karina Delgado Diaz/NRC

Conclusion

Despite the peace agreement signed in 2016 by the government and the FARC, nearly five million people were still displaced at the end of 2020, many requiring urgent support.²² The findings presented in this report show that, as of August 2021, IDPs in Quibdó and Caucasia faced a number of significant challenges.

Results vary between the two locations, but some similarities were identified in the way displacement triggered by conflict and violence affects IDPs. Many suffered severe losses of income and capital, including their former homes. In parallel, they face higher costs in their host areas for accommodation and healthcare in particular.

Many displaced children had their education interrupted for months and in some cases years, but nearly all were able to go back to school eventually. Parents in both locations were more satisfied with the quality of their children's education than they had been in their areas of origin.

The research also highlighted impacts specific to each location. High levels of urban violence in Quibdó led many IDPs to feel less safe than they had done in their areas of origin, whereas the presence of authorities and the security forces in Caucasia made IDPs there feel safer than in their rural areas of origin.

Some of their non-displaced counterparts in both locations reported greater perceived insecurity, higher costs and feeling more anxious, worried, nervous or sad since the arrival of large numbers of IDPs. Overall, however, the impacts on host communities seem limited.

The study also highlights the specific sociodemographic profile of the displaced populations in both locations. The IDPs surveyed were much younger than the national average and showed a much higher prevalence of disabilities. Their ethnic distribution was also very different, with more African-Colombians and indigenous people than at the

national level. These characteristics overlap with their displacement status to create intersecting vulnerabilities that must be addressed through tailored support.

Although support from the Colombian government, such as free access to healthcare and education for IDPs, was recognised, it appears that some of the most vulnerable were not able to access it.

Endnotes

1 IDMC, [Country profile: Colombia](#), May 2021.

2 Gobierno de Colombia, [Acuerdo final para la terminación del conflicto y la construcción de una paz estable y duradera](#), 2016.

3 IDMC, [Country profile: Colombia](#), May 2021.

4 IDMC, [Country profile: Colombia](#), May 2021.

5 OCHA, [Colombia, Impacto humanitario y tendencias entre enero y junio de 2020](#), 2020.

6 Registro Unico de Víctimas, [Víctimas por Hecho Victimizante - Fecha Corte 31/12/2021](#), accessed 19 January 2022.

7 Registro Unico de Víctimas, [Víctimas por Hecho Victimizante - Fecha Corte 31/12/2021](#), accessed 19 January 2022.

8 In the two locations, areas that were deemed unsafe for the police to enter were removed from the study to ensure the safety of the research team. Random sampling points were then selected using cartographic mapping. From each sampling point, interviewers approached every third house to speak to the person most knowledgeable about household expenditure. In Quibdó especially, the team noted that recently displaced people were often too afraid to speak to them. This leads to a potential bias of this study's results, where the people who are potentially the most vulnerable were not included.

9 Defensoría del Pueblo, [Desplazamiento Forzado y Confinamiento, Tercer trimestre 2021](#), October 2021.

10 United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs, Population Dynamics, [World Population Prospects 2019: Percentage of total population by broad age group, both sexes \(per 100 total population\)](#).

11 Colombian National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), [Grupos étnicos – Información técnica](#).

12 OCHA, [Plan de respuesta humanitario, Colombia](#), April 2021.

13 OCHA, [Panorama de las necesidades humanitarias Colombia, 2021](#), April 2021.

14 See La Corte Constitucional de la República de Colombia, [Auto 006 de 2009](#), 26 January 2009; La Corte Constitucional de la República de Colombia, [Auto 173 de 2014](#), 6 June 2014.

15 Unidad para la Atención y la Reparación Integral a las Víctimas, [Registro Único de Víctimas](#), accessed: 5 November 2021.

16 Priddy, A., [Disability and Armed Conflict](#), *Academy Briefing No 14*, Geneva Academy, April 2019.

17 See La Corte Constitucional de la República de Colombia, [Auto 006 de 2009](#), 26 January 2009; Saldarriaga-Concha Foundation, [Disability and Social Inclusion in Colombia: Saldarriaga-Concha Foundation Alternative Report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), 2016.

18 The Washington Group Short Set on Functioning was used as the self-reporting tool to identify people with disabilities, who are defined as people who are “unable to”, or face “a lot of difficulties”: seeing; hearing; walking or climbing steps; remembering or concentrating; washing or dressing; and communicating. Respondents were asked whether they personally encounter difficulties in each domain and then whether any members of their household encounter difficulties.



19 See La Corte Constitucional de la República de Colombia, Auto 173 de 2014, 6 June 2014.

20 See La Corte Constitucional de la República de Colombia, Auto 006 de 2009, 26 January 2009; La Corte Constitucional de la República de Colombia, Auto 173 de 2014, 6 June 2014.

21 See Unidad para la Atención y la Reparación Integral a las Víctimas, Personas con discapacidad, 2017; Saldarriaga-Concha Foundation, Disability and Social Inclusion in Colombia: Saldarriaga-Concha Foundation Alternative Report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016; Unidad para la Atención y la Reparación Integral a las Víctimas, Víctimas del conflicto armado con discapacidad, 2014.

22 IDMC, Country profile: Colombia, May 2021.



Indigenous women of Amparradó. The indigenous communities named Amparradó and Cañaveral were affected by combats between armed groups in Colombia's Antioquia department. Photo: Marcela Olarte/NRC



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