

OVERVIEW

In 2022, high levels of violence, poverty, and unmet basic needs have worsened the humanitarian crisis in the subregions of Telembí, Sanquianga, and Pacífico Sur in Nariño department. As at 31 August, armed conflict affected a total of 86,400 people in 45 events: 19,400 people (35 events) were forcibly displaced, and more than 67,000 people (ten events) had experienced forced confinements (KII 14/09/2022; KII 15/09/2022; OCHA 22/08/2022; KII 12/09/2022). In the same period, the conflict killed 12 human rights defenders, including one Afro-descendant and nine indigenous people, and armed groups committed five massacres affecting 17 people (Indepaz 15/09/2022).

About this report: the report aims to provide an overview of the displacement and confinement situation and the differentiated impact on indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant communities observed between January–August 2022. It presents the main conflict dynamics in the subregions of Telembí, Sanquianga, and Pacífico del Sur in Nariño department. The report intends to support the understanding of the complex dynamics of the conflict, its impact, and the humanitarian needs of the people facing major challenges in terms of protection and meeting their urgent needs in three of the most conflict-affected subregions of the department.

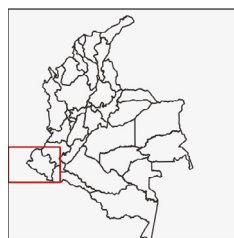
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KEY FINDINGS

- In 2022, the expansion of the 30th Front (so-called dissidents of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia or FARC-EP) and associated armed groups (Franco Benavidez Front, Urías Rondón Mobile Column, and Alan Rodríguez Mobile Column) towards the south of Nariño department has resulted in multiple confrontations in the subregions of Telembí, Sanquianga, and Pacífico Sur. The main consequences have been the confinement and forced displacement of the civilian population.
- Between January–August 2022, 35 events of massive displacement have affected at least 19,379 people, especially Afro-descendant communities, indigenous peoples, and peasants in the subregions of Telembí, Sanquianga, and Pacífico del Sur, Nariño department (OCHA accessed 15/09/2022).
- Forced confinements are still the main warfare tactic of armed groups. Mobility restrictions and confinement events have been highly underreported in Telembí and Sanquianga subregions (KII 15/09/2022).
- During confinement, populations lose access to their livelihoods (fishing and agriculture) and suffer from a lack of food security and protection. Although not a direct consequence of the armed conflict in Nariño, food insecurity is aggravated by forced displacements and confinement (KII 15/09/2022).
- Violence in the department particularly affects Afro-descendant communities and indigenous peoples. Afro-descendant communities inhabit small villages along the rivers that armed groups use to collect and transport cocaine hydrochloride and gold from illegal small-scale gold miners (KII 15/09/2022).
- The territorial expansion of and violent clashes between armed groups present in Putumayo department have started extending towards the jurisdiction of Jardines de Sucumbíos, Ipiales municipality, Nariño department. In June, armed groups in Putumayo grew in size and territorial reach, and some expanded their control. For one, the armed group Comandos de Frontera (originally operating in Putumayo) expanded their control to natural indigenous reservations in Nariño. They made a violent incursion in the Awa indigenous reservation in Jardines de Sucumbíos and perpetrated violations against indigenous peoples from villages along the border between Nariño and Putumayo (OCHA 21/09/2022; Defensoría del Pueblo 29/08/2022).

SUBREGIONS OF TELEMBÍ, SANQUIANGA, AND PACÍFICO SUR



Subregion of Pacífico Sur

145,521 inhabitants

Municipalities with armed conflict events: Tumaco

Dissident armed groups Western Block Alfonso Cano and Urías Rondón Mobile Column (associated with the 30th Front) have perpetrated clashes and violations against the civilian population. Two other armed groups – Los Contadores and the Iván Ríos Front under La Segunda Marquetalia – are maintaining control of urban areas. In 2022, these dynamics have changed, with the 30th Front trying to expand towards the center and south of Nariño department.

Subregion of Sanquianga

101,713 inhabitants

Municipalities with armed conflict events: El Charco, La Tola, Olaya Herrera, and Santa Bárbara

Violent clashes among dissident armed groups have been reported in 2022, with Western Block Alfonso Cano and Oliver Sinisterra Front on one side and the Franco Benavidez Front and Alan Rodriguez Mobile Column (associated with the 30th Front) on the other. The National Liberation Front (ELN) maintains control in the rural areas of El Charco, Olaya Herrera, and Santa Bárbara municipalities, although no incidents associated with the group in 2022 have been reported.

Subregion of Telembí

40,810 inhabitants

Municipalities with armed conflict events: Barbacoas, Magúí Payán, and Roberto Payán

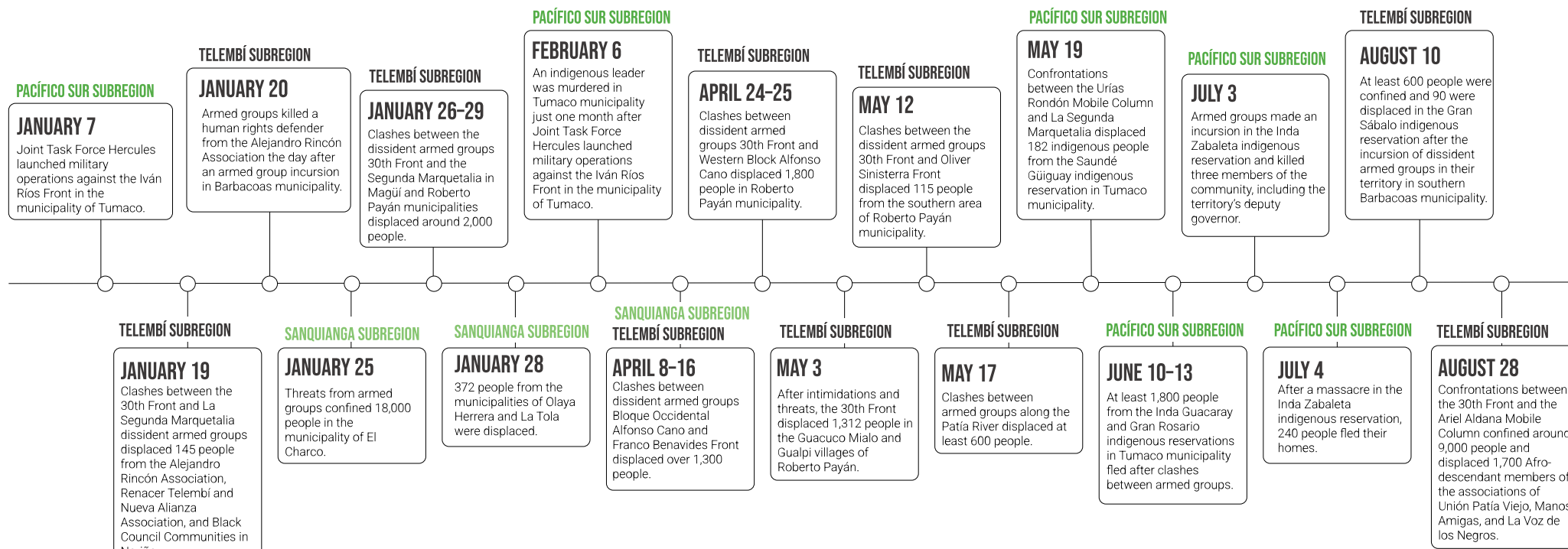
At least three armed dissident groups, including Western Block Alfonso Cano, the 30th Front, and the Oliver Sinisterra Front, are in dispute over the control of the three municipalities in the subregion. The ELN continues to be present in the area, although no incidents associated with the group have been recorded in 2022.

CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN 2022

The intensified presence of armed groups was the key driver in the worsening of the humanitarian crisis in the Telembí and Sanquianga subregions between January–March 2022.

Dissident armed groups 30th Front and La Segunda Marquetalia continued to be in dispute over territories within Nariño. Clashes with the Western Block Alfonso Cano and Oliver Sinisterra Front caused a spike in reports of mass displacement and confinements in the Telembí and Sanquianga subregions during April–May 2022.

In Pacífico Sur and the Telembí subregions, the Awa indigenous people suffered abuses and forced displacements between May–August 2022.



Violent clashes broke out among different armed groups in the subregions of Telembí, Sanquianga, and Pacífico Sur, including the dissident armed group called 30th Front, Rafael Aguilar (associated with the Franco Benavides Front and the Urías Rondón mobile column), Western Block Alfonso Cano, Ariel Aldana, Oliver Sinisterra, and Iván Ríos Front.

The dynamics of territorial disputes between dissident factions for control over key mobility corridors for the transport of people, illegal gold, and drug shipments increased violence in villages along the Patía and Tapaje Rivers.

Sources: Monitor OCHA (accessed 15/09/2022); CGFM (11/01/2022); CGFM (accessed 21/09/2022); Diario del Sur (14/01/2022); Radio Nacional (24/01/2022); Indepaz 2021; Indepaz (22/02/2022); Radio Nacional (16/06/2022); Radio Macondo (23/05/2022); UNIPA (13/06/2022); CGFM (17/06/2022); El Espectador (11/07/2022); KII (12/09/2022); KII (15/09/2022).

Note: the information on these security incidents is presented in chronological order, based on sources from the humanitarian community and local sources, and may not represent all the events that occurred during this period.

Since the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2016, the FARC-EP armed groups in Nariño have coalesced into two broad factions: those aligned with the Comando Coordinador de Occidente, a confederation of FARC-EP dissident structures from Cauca department, and those part of La Segunda Marquetalia, which subsumed dissident groups already present in Nariño (Indepaz 2021; CORE accessed 17/09/2022).

Telembí, Sanquianga, and Pacífico Sur are strategic areas for illegal economies. Coca crops are present in all three subregions, with two productive enclaves in the municipalities of El Charco, Olaya Herrera (Sanquianga), and Tumaco (Pacífico Sur) (UNODC 29/07/2021). The illegal extraction of gold also occurs in the subregion of Telembí, especially in villages along the Patía River (UNODC 09/06/2022).

As at August 2022, 45 events of forced displacement and confinement within the year revealed a series of dynamics in Nariño department. The year began with military operations in the municipality of Tumaco (Pacífico Sur), bringing with it a continuum of displacements, confrontations between armed groups, and retaliations, with aggravated violence against the civilian population in the subregions of Telembí and Sanquianga.

CONFLICT IMPACT

Conflict dynamics mostly affect Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples in the subregions of Telembí, Sanquianga and Pacífico Sur. In 2022, displacement and confinement in the Nariño department affected more than 67,000 people (35 events). 89% of the total number of events are concentrated in the Telembí subregion (KII 12/09/2022; OCHA 22/08/2022).

The Telembí subregion gathers 40,810 people, including Afro-descendant communities from at least 20 Black Council Communities and 15 indigenous reservations from Awa indigenous people. 81% of the population are unable to meet their basic needs (DANE accessed 22/08/2022). This subregion, comprising the municipalities of Barbacoas, Magüí Payán, and Roberto Payán, faces a humanitarian crisis because of fighting among various armed groups for territorial control.

Forced displacement

Between January–August 2022, 35 events of massive displacement affected at least 19,400 people, including Afro-descendant communities, indigenous peoples, and peasants in the subregions of Telembí, Sanquianga, and Pacífico Sur. Estimations suggest that 82% of IDPs registered by humanitarians have returned to their habitual place of residence. The figure is an estimation based on OCHA preliminary findings and should not be taken as definitive (KII 12/09/2022).

Displacement in the three subregions follows a cyclic pattern. First, people face pre-expulsion threats, abuses, and risk exposure. In the Telembí subregion, a great part of the population suffers from mobility restrictions and forced confinements in their territories. After clashes and violent incursions, people flee their homes, and individual and mass displacements are observed between small villages along the Patía River. In Sanquianga subregion, the increase in violence and humanitarian needs leads many IDPs to move to the urban areas of Olaya Herrera and El Charco municipalities. Movements among neighbouring villages along the Patía River in Telembí and Sanquianga subregions follow a pendulum pattern, with people relocating every few days or weeks to access goods and services in host communities already experiencing unmet basic needs. Threats by armed groups against displaced people and officials involved in the registration of IDPs in host communities impede the precise counting of the newly displaced. Some of them, whether as individuals or in groups, are forced to flee again or return to their communities of habitual residence without security conditions or dignity (KII 12/09/2022; OCHA 22/08/2022; KII 15/09/2022).

Confinements

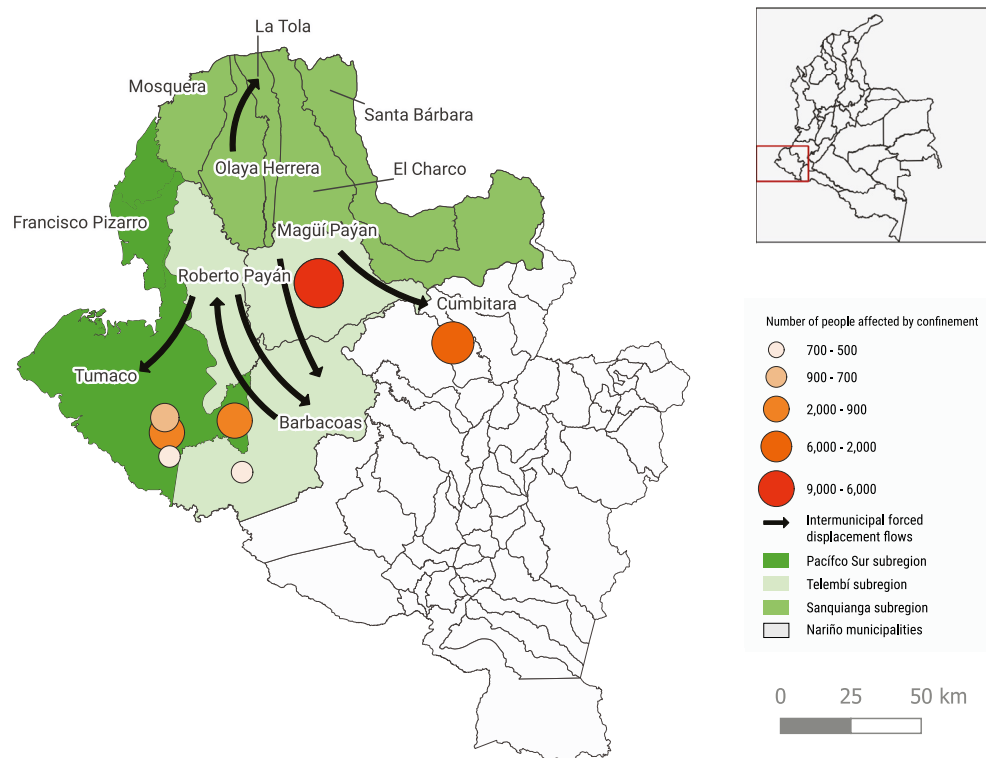
Forced confinements are still the main warfare tactic of armed groups. In 2022, ten events registered in the subregions of Telembí and Sanquianga forced more than 67,000 people to stay in their territories and experience mobility restrictions (JEP accessed 19/09/2022). The actual number is estimated to be higher. Mobility restrictions and confinement events have been highly underreported in Telembí and Sanquianga subregions. Villages confined along the river have only the fluvial route as a means of transportation, facilitating armed groups' social control of the communities. Armed groups prevent the population from alerting the outside world about their presence, their illegal activities, and the abuses they commit in the territories (KII 15/09/2022; KII 21/09/2022).

During confinement, populations lose access to their livelihoods (fishing and agriculture) and suffer from a lack of food security and protection. Although not a direct consequence of the armed conflict in Nariño, food insecurity is aggravated by forced displacements and confinement. Ethnic communities, mostly Afro-descendants, have been forced to remain in their territories despite the constant violent clashes among armed groups, the threats to the lives of the populations, the difficulty of accessing essential services and meeting their basic needs, and the high level of weapon contamination in their territories (KII 15/09/2022).

In the municipality of Magüí Payán in the Telembí subregion, access restrictions prevent a clear assessment of the humanitarian situation. While local sources denounced confinement events in April, official sources could not verify this information until 9 September (KII 21/09/2022). Armed groups operating in rural areas have blocked communications by controlling internet access and checking messages on people's mobile phones.

They have also restricted the mobility of more than 25,000 people in villages along the rivers and prohibited their movement by river to urban centres (JEP 10/09/2022; Infobae 23/04/2022 and 30/08/2022; Cerosetenta 03/08/2021).

Displacement and confinement events in Nariño



Sources: ACAPS using data from OCHA (accessed 29/09/2022) and IGAC (accessed 29/09/2022).

Impact on Afro-descendant communities

The conflict in Nariño has a particularly adverse effect on Afro-descendant individuals and communities. In 2022, out of the total number of IDPs (86,400 people) in the department, 79% are estimated to be Afro-descendant (KII 15/09/2022). In the three most conflict-affected

subregions in Nariño, Afro-descendants have suffered through multiple displacements, the uprooting of their culture and territories, and the territorial control of armed groups (KII1/09/2022; KII 15/09/2022).

The conflict dynamics worsen the poverty and humanitarian crisis Afro-descendants experience. Rural Afro-descendant communities reside in villages with poor roads, meaning livelihoods, access to basic services, and transportation depend on rivers. Most of their homes are along the rivers of Mira, Patía, and San Juan de Micay, and their livelihood is limited to fishing, carrying goods, and the river transportation of assets (TodaColombia 11/11/2018).

In conflict-afflicted areas, Afro-descendant communities are prohibited from going out to fish, transport goods, and sell food in small stores along the rivers. Some are forced to pay illegal rent, and the communities must accept imposed rules, such as social codes, curfews, and checkpoints. Armed groups force people to work in illegal mining and harvest illicit crops and prevent them from cooperating and developing productive projects with government authorities (KII 15/09/2022). Socioeconomic conditions remain favourable to the expansion of the armed groups, linked to drug trafficking, gasoline smuggling, and other illegal activities (Crudo Transparente 21/05/2020).

The legal recognition and protection of the rights of Afro-descendant people have not guaranteed the improvement of their living conditions.¹ Extractive projects, including illegal mining, and the harvest of illicit crops, substantially affect their individual and collective rights. In these conflict-afflicted areas, women and the youth have limited options for their socioeconomic insertion beyond fighting, illegal activities, and sexual exploitation. In places of extreme poverty and a lack of access to basic needs, illicit economies are the only source of income for survival (Minority Rights accessed 22/09/2022; KII 12/09/2022).

Most Afro-descendant communities do not have property rights (legal collective land titles) in Nariño. While they are organised and represented legally by around 49 associations of Black Council Communities in Nariño (Consejos comunitarios de población Negra), only 11 of these have obtained collective land titles (UNICISO accessed 18/09/2022). Only a few associations of Black Council Communities are involved in labour contracts developing productive projects with subsidies from government programmes. In 2021, four of their associations engaged Afro-descendant people in a government programme for the voluntary substitution of illicit crops in Tumaco municipality. Four others obtained funds from government development programmes, including agricultural and fishing production in the municipalities of Barbacoas, Mosquera, Olaya Herrera, Roberto Payán, Magüí Payán, Santa Bárbara, and Tumaco (UNODC 31/12/2020; CESED 12/04/2022; ART 27/08/2020).

¹ The 1991 Colombian Constitution contains an article on Afro-descendants, leading to the adoption of Law 70 of 1993 in "recognition of the right of Black Colombians to collectively own and occupy their ancestral lands". Under the law, Afro-descendant communities are entitled to receive collective titles to historically occupied territories in rural river-basin areas (CP accessed 29/09/2022; Suin Juriscol 31/08/1993).

Impact on indigenous peoples

Six indigenous peoples inhabit Nariño department. Among these six, the Awa indigenous peoples in Telembí and Pacífico Sur subregions are the most conflict affected. Official records in 2022 registered the assassination of six members of the Awa communities, but the indigenous organisation called Unidad Indígena de Pueblo Awa registered 22 killings of their members (EE 21/08/2022).

While living conditions are hard, displacement for the Awa indigenous communities affects their lifestyle, traditional lands and territories, and cultural integrity as indigenous peoples with collective rights (KII 15/09/2022).²

While they often relocate to the nearby indigenous reservation (resguardo), they are sometimes forced to flee to urban areas. In urban towns, they are vulnerable to a range of social and economic factors. They are forced to use Spanish instead of their native language and face discrimination because of their cultural traditions, rituals, and clothing. They face the risk of running out of money to pay rent and food and having no place to go (KII 15/09/2022). In groups, they live in poor human settlements, parks, or schools outside the support of traditional communities and suffer major disparities, such as poor health and a lack of protection for women and children. In their transitional settlements, indigenous communities lack drinking water, flushing toilets, and electricity and live in poor shelter conditions (with plastic trash bags covering most of their roofs to protect them from the cold and rain). Once displaced, people also lose a large part of their traditional houses, animals, and crops to outsiders, as they are unable to leave protection for their land and property (Pagina10 15/06/2022; Global Voices 14/07/2021; KII 30/07/2021).

The armed conflict dynamics in 2022 have particularly affected the Awa indigenous peoples and their territories, especially in the municipalities of Barbacoas, Magüí Payán, and Roberto Payán in Telembí subregion (KII 15/09/2022). One of the protection mechanisms available to the indigenous communities of the Awa people is judicial processes that denounce situations of displacement and the dispossession of their lands (ONIC 04/07/2022). The Organización Nacional de Indígenas del Pueblo Awa, which brings together more than 32 indigenous councils, advocates their collective rights, including their right to land and territory. While the court has recently ruled the recognition of five indigenous reservations of 44,981 hectares in the Telembí subregion, the Awa indigenous peoples still face the challenge of not having sufficient security and protection conditions to develop their livelihoods, such as cultivating crops, hunting, and fishing in the reservations recently recognised by law (URT 12/01/2022; KII 12/09/2022).

² The Political Constitution of 1991 recognises and protects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Colombian nation (Art. 7) and their obligation to protect cultural assets (Art. 8). In recognition of the claim that indigenous peoples have over historically occupied territories, the Colombian State establishes a system of national indigenous parks and indigenous reservations (resguardos) to adopt programmes for the management and preservation of natural resources. In doing so, the State – through laws and decrees – creates and delimits the indigenous reserves and establishes the norms relating to the property rights of the indigenous peoples over those areas assigned for living, as well as their rights to exploit the renewable natural resources on those lands (Mora Vera 25/10/2017; CP accessed 29/09/2022; UMN accessed 29/09/2022).

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE CONSTRAINTS AND CAPACITY

The humanitarian community faces access difficulties in conducting rapid needs assessments, mostly concerning the security situation and the accessibility of communities reachable only by river. In general, the continuous clashes between armed groups and insecurity constitute the greatest obstacles to accessibility, both for humanitarian responders and people with unmet basic needs (KII 12/09/2022; OCHA 22/08/2022).

Although several NGOs, humanitarian responders, and Colombian government organisations are responding to the situation, mobility restrictions remain, as armed groups have blocked fluvial movement in and out of villages along the rivers of Tapaje, Patía (Telembí), and Satinga (Sanquianga).

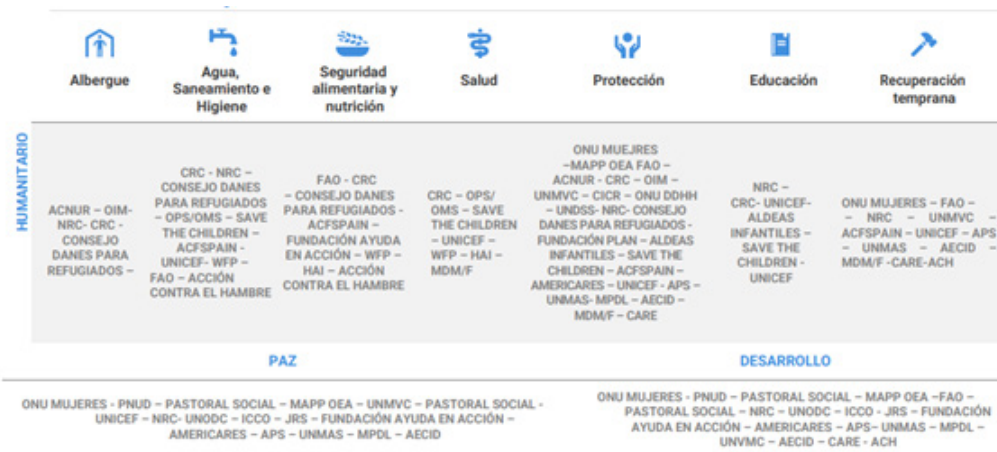
Local institutional capacity to assist IDPs is very limited. While a legal framework exists, IDPs are unable to meet their basic needs and achieve long-term stability because of limited resources in host communities. Weak institutional presence in impoverished municipalities and rural villages under the control of armed groups intensifies the crisis (KII 14/09/2022).

Registration gaps are identified concerning the number of people moving from one rural village to another for short periods to protect their lives. Some Afro-descendant men and youth stay longer at home to secure their houses and assets. Sometimes, they return before the rest of the family or community and leave the women, girls, and elderly waiting to return later (KII 15/09/2022).

In temporary shelters, humanitarians identify sanitation and safety issues. Most of these shelters are overcrowded. In informal settlements, such as public spaces, there are risks associated with protection and security and imminent risks of violence (including sexual violence) in the context of the conflict. Because the displaced population lacks resources, they often have to build shacks using waste materials (cardboard, wood, and plastic) in ‘invaded areas’ with unhealthy living conditions (including a lack of sewers, drinking water, and proper waste disposal) (KII 12/09/2022; KII 15/09/2022).

Out of 86,400 people (45 total events), humanitarian responders and NGOs have assisted at least 13,300 (27 events): 11,300 IDPs and 2,000 confined people. Of the 13,300 assisted, at least 85% are members of Afro-descendant communities. Assistance has focused on food and nutritional security (80% of cases), protection (74%), WASH (59%), and health (35%) (KII 14/09/2022).

Operational presence of 38 organisations that comprise the humanitarian community in Nariño, coordinated by the Local Coordination Team



Source: OCHA (22/08/2022)

AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Rainy season

Between January–April 2022, the rainy season affected 42 of the 64 municipalities in Nariño department. In April, the Chagüí and Telembí Rivers in the western part of the department overflowed, affecting at least 2,900 households in the municipalities of Tumaco and Barbacoas (Diario del Sur 19/04/2022). The municipalities of Pupiales, San Pedro de Cartago, Consaca, Funes, Ancuya and Tumaco were the most affected by increased rainfall (IDEAM 06/09/2022; OCHA 20/04/2022).

A second rainy season is expected to last from August–December, increasing the risk of flooding and overflowing of main rivers and landslides (IDEAM 07/09/2022). High rainfall and floods damage houses, roads, public facilities, and crops, increasing the humanitarian needs of the population in terms of access to drinking water, food, and shelter. In armed conflict areas, damage resulting from the rainy season can lead to multiple impacts, as communities are forcibly confined to small villages along rivers and cannot mitigate risks (KII 22/08/2022).

Information: there is a lack of clear information, especially among those that have only returned temporarily, including information on where to obtain humanitarian assistance and on government measures (particularly regarding shelter and food provision). In conflict-afflicted areas, IDPs may not register their status as displaced despite the access to services that such a declaration would bring, as some communities wrongly view IDPs as being affiliated with the armed groups that caused their displacement. Some IDP leaders actively seeking the restoration of their rights and redress for property losses and people actively advocating on behalf of IDPs have been threatened or killed. Humanitarians mentioned that people have decided to return to their homes even when the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (voluntarily, security, dignity) are not met (KII 12/09/2022; KII 14/09/2022).

Methodology: the analysis is based on the secondary data review of public and non-public sources and key informant interviews.

Information gaps and limitations: the constant displacement of individuals and people pose a significant challenge in obtaining data on numbers, locations, and covered and uncovered needs. Despite efforts to understand the conflict dynamics, the situation remains unsteady, and the lack of reliable data makes understanding movement patterns difficult. Information on the impact on indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant communities in conflict areas is extremely limited.

The armed conflict in Nariño also affects Venezuelan refugees and migrants. They face administrative difficulties in obtaining regular migration status, meaning their access to humanitarian services might be restricted. In 2021, 94% of Venezuelans arriving in Colombia reported crossing through informal crossings (trochas). The risk of human trafficking or smuggling potentially affects populations in transit and mixed migratory movements through border departments, such as Nariño and Putumayo. Although there are no recent monitoring figures for these migratory flows for the department of Nariño, humanitarians presume that the conflict dynamics that exist in the border departments with Ecuador and Peru have affected a large number of migrants (KII 12/09/2022; KII 14/09/2022; KII 22/08/2022; R4V accessed 29/09/2022).

This report was financed by ECHO.