

### OVERVIEW

Vichada department is facing a critical food security crisis, with climate change and the El Niño phenomenon affecting local food production and availability. Poor infrastructure, hindering access to public services, and the reliance on traditional farming methods, hampering farmers' ability to sell their produce and generate income, have deepened the crisis (WFP 12/04/2023; ADR 05/07/2023; CR 26/08/2021).

The presence of non-state armed groups and insecurity compounds these factors, resulting in humanitarian access constraints for organisations trying to reach affected people.

Indigenous communities and migrants and refugees from Venezuela are the most affected populations. The continuing crisis and food price inflation affect these groups disproportionately because of their reliance on subsistence farming, geographical isolation, and socioeconomic barriers.

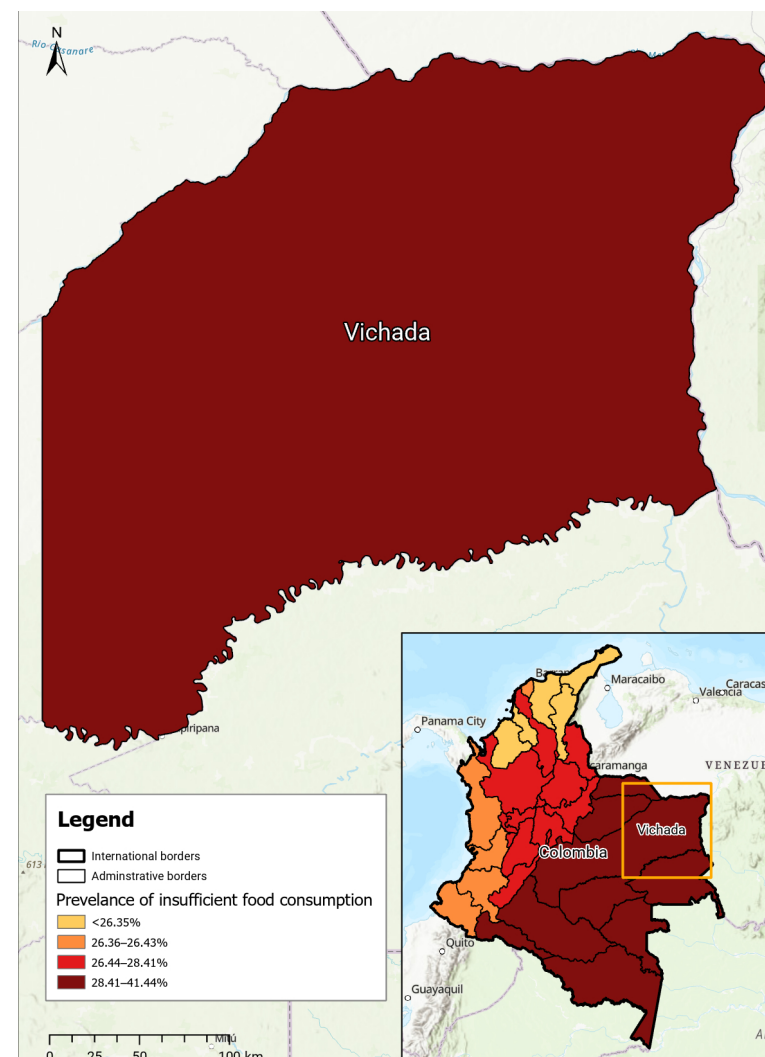
#### About the report

**Aim:** this thematic report provides an overview of the food crisis severity in Vichada department. It presents the main drivers that converge and increase the number of food-insecure people and the related humanitarian impacts. The report also examines the potential evolution of food insecurity in the next six months considering the influence of El Niño and climate change.

**Method:** this report is based on a review of secondary data from international institutions, including humanitarian organisations, networks, and think tanks.

**Limitations:** food security is not well documented in Vichada because of the lack of sufficient government entities and humanitarian organisations present to gather information.

Map 1. Prevalence of insufficient food consumption in Vichada, Colombia



Source: ACAPS using data from WFP (accessed 22/02/2024)

## KEY FINDINGS AND FIGURES

- Vichada ranks among the departments in Colombia with the highest acute malnutrition prevalence, disproportionately affecting the indigenous population. The department has the highest acute malnutrition prevalence among children under five, and mortality associated with acute malnutrition is significantly higher in Vichada compared to the national average (FSC/Nutrition Cluster 02/01/2024).
- The food security situation in Vichada is deteriorating, with increasing percentages of the population facing insufficient food consumption and crisis food insecurity levels (IPC Phase 3). Access to food markets has also become more challenging since 2022 (WFP 12/04/2023). These trends indicate a growing food security crisis in the region.
- Climate change and El Niño are primary food insecurity drivers in the department, leading to extreme climate hazards, such as droughts and floods, which directly affect food production and availability. These conditions also indirectly affect maternal and child health as they limit healthcare access during food crises (ELRHA 05/07/2023). Understanding how these factors may evolve in the future is crucial for addressing their impact on food security.
- Agriculture and livestock farming, the main livelihood sources, face challenges from climate variability and limited market access. Poor infrastructure, challenging road conditions, and illicit crop cultivation intensify vulnerabilities, such as economic marginalisation and dependency on illicit economies, leading to heightened food insecurity.
- Non-state armed groups take over vital transit routes, and their participation in illicit economies, such as drug trafficking, hinders the humanitarian response (DP 2023). The presence of armed conflict also causes displacement and livelihood losses, challenging the implementation of interventions to address the climate change impact (ELRHA 05/07/2023).
- Food insecurity increases protection risks, including early marriage, affecting indigenous populations and migrants and refugees from Venezuela. This crisis escalates violence and exploitation, such as child labour, significantly affecting children and adolescents.

## Key figures on Vichada department

- It is the second-largest department in Colombia and is scarcely populated, with 110,599 people as at 2019 (DANE accessed 24/02/2024).
- It has the highest proportion (58%) of the indigenous population in the country (MSPS et al. 08/07/2022)).
- It hosts approximately 11,000 migrants and refugees from Venezuela (GIFFM/R4V 26/12/2023).
- It has the highest rurality rate in Colombia, with 76% of people living in rural areas (MSPS et al. 08/07/2022)).
- The multidimensional poverty rate in the department increased from 64.8% in 2021 to 75.4% in 2022 (DANE 23/05/2023 b).
- In 2022, out of the approximately 25,000 students enrolled in school in the department, authorities estimated only around 1,600 students enrolled in higher education (high school) (SINEB/MEN accessed 01/03/2024).
- It was among the departments with the highest unemployment rates in the country at 16.2% as at August 2023 (DANE 16/08/2023).

## FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION OVERVIEW

### Vichada comprises four municipalities, all facing moderate to severe food insecurity

Table 1 displays the estimated number of people experiencing moderate and severe food insecurity by municipality according to the Food Security Cluster in Vichada in 2023. It also displays the estimated number of people (over 34,000) likely to face moderate (10%) and severe (25%) food insecurity during El Niño.

Table 1. Food insecurity indicators in Vichada related to El Niño as at August 2023

MUNICIPALITY	MODERATE FOOD INSECURITY	SEVERE FOOD INSECURITY	CHILDREN UNDER FIVE
Cumaribo	19,100	8,200	160
Puerto Carreño	4,700	2,000	95
La Primavera	2,400	1,000	6
Santa Rosalia	979	418	3

Source: FSC/Nutrition Cluster 02/01/2024

As at February 2024, 41% of Vichada's population faced insufficient food consumption, while 35% experienced IPC 3 or worsening food insecurity levels (WFP accessed 25/01/2024). In the capital of the department, Puerto Carreño, 66% of evaluated households consumed two meals a day or less, and 28% consumed only one meal or less (FSC/Nutrition Cluster 02/01/2024). Vichada was among the three departments reporting significant food insecurity percentages, with 20% of the migrant population facing severe food insecurity (GIFMM/R4V 17/02/2023).

The prevalence of insufficient food consumption causes households to resort to crisis-level food-based coping strategies, such as consuming less preferred foods, reducing portion sizes, reducing adults' food consumption to increase children's food consumption, and reducing the number of meals per day (WFP 12/04/2023). The prevalence of both physical and economic access challenges to food markets almost doubled in Vichada from 37% in 2022 to 60% in 2023 (WFP 04/01/2024).

National data shows that food insecurity is more prevalent among indigenous people (47%) in the country's southern departments, possibly because of the enduring historical inequities and challenges that indigenous communities face (WFP 12/04/2023). The Ombudsman's Office of Colombia considers the situation to be critical for indigenous children (DP 2023).

### The department ranks among those with the most significant malnutrition prevalence

Mortality caused by and associated with acute malnutrition is six times higher than reported nationwide (6.9 per 100,000) (FSC/Nutrition Cluster 02/01/2024). In 2023, authorities linked the deaths of seven children under five in the department to acute malnutrition. This was a significant increase in the number of deaths reported compared to historical data (INS 2023 a). In 2022, the rate of deaths from malnutrition among children under five exceeded the national rate by seven times in Vichada (WFP 12/04/2023).

## DRIVERS OF FOOD INSECURITY BY DIMENSION

### Climate change and El Niño reducing food availability (availability dimension)

Climate change and the enduring El Niño are the primary acute food insecurity drivers in Vichada, as they threaten food production stability and endanger food availability (MADS 04/11/2023).

At the end of 2023, environmental authorities identified Vichada as one of the departments most vulnerable to droughts, floods, and wildfires. Extreme weather events from El Niño pose significant risks to agriculture, water resources, and public health (Infobae 13/10/2023).

The combination of El Niño and rising temperatures from climate change has sparked a wildfire emergency throughout the country (ACAPS 20/02/2024). As at 26 January 2024, wildfires had caused landscape destruction and worsened food insecurity in Vichada. The fires significantly affected Tuparro National Natural Park, which lost more than 8,100 hectares of forest (El País 26/01/2024; Blu Radio 24/01/2024 and 26/01/2024).

Environmental degradation caused by intensive farming and livestock practices over the past decades has heightened Vichada's vulnerability to climate change. Between 1985–2017, this degradation led to a 60% loss in forests (Vitar-Mendoza et al. 21/12/2021; USAID 09/2018; MADS 04/22/2023). In October 2023, the National Unit for Disaster Risk Management noted a high flood risk in both rural and urban areas of the municipality of Puerto Carreño (OCHA 13/10/2023).

Agriculture and livestock are the primary livelihood sources in Vichada, with trends indicating potential challenges and opportunities for food security in the region. Traditionally, family-based agriculture has been the cornerstone of food production, with a focus on crops such as

cashew, palm oil, banana, sugar cane, and yucca (ADR 05/07/2023). The reliance on traditional agricultural practices, however, may not be sustainable with increasing climate volatility and limited access to broader markets (CR 26/08/2021).

Agricultural production primarily goes towards self-consumption, with over 80% of output allocated for personal use. Key crops, such as sweet and bitter cassava, rice, corn, sorghum, and soya, play crucial roles in local diets and economies (USDA accessed 08/02/2024; MADS 04/22/2023). Rice and corn are susceptible to climate change impacts, posing challenges to future agricultural productivity (MADS 04/22/2023).

In the livestock sector, cattle raising dominates the department, with ranching being the main practice, followed by pig and horse breeding. Climate variability, including extreme weather events such as droughts and floods, poses a considerable threat to livestock farming (FAO 06/2023). Beekeeping has emerged as a viable alternative income source for agricultural producers, especially near forestry crops and cashew trees (SADE accessed 02/03/2024). That said, the proximity to forestry crops and cashew trees increases vulnerabilities to climate shocks, such as wildfires. These sectors are highly sensitive to climate change-induced weather pattern changes, which can profoundly affect the livelihoods and economic stability of farmers and agricultural producers in the region (FAO 06/2023).

Orinoquia region, where Vichada is located, faces escalating illicit coca cultivation despite government initiatives to promote alternative crops, such as cocoa. Between 2020–2022, coca cultivation increased notably, from 121 to 283 hectares of land in the region, a 134% increase (UNODC 09/2023). The largest proportion of coca cultivation (60%) is concentrated in indigenous reservation areas (El Morichal 28/11/2022). Climate shocks, such as droughts, floods, and extreme weather events, can worsen socioeconomic vulnerabilities, making communities more susceptible to engaging in illicit activities, such as coca crop cultivation, as a means of economic survival, affecting traditional livelihoods and agricultural productivity.

**Outlook:** authorities expect El Niño to affect livelihoods beyond the dry season (typically from November–March), during which a seasonal reduction in crop productivity limits access to livelihoods and increases malnutrition rates (MSPS et al. 08/07/2022; ACAPS accessed 08/02/2024). The combination of a 10–30% decrease in precipitation anticipated in March in eastern Vichada, together with the above-average temperatures expected to continue until June 2024 across the country, may affect food and cash crop yields in 2024, particularly rice, corn, soya, and palm oil (IDEAM 20/02/2024; IRI accessed 08/02/2024; USDA accessed 08/02/2024). A reduction in food production may lead to food shortages, higher food prices, reduced household food consumption, and limited access to diverse and nutrient-rich foods. As a result, children and pregnant and lactating women may experience malnutrition from inadequate dietary intake and nutrient deficiencies. Authorities estimate that 11,600 people (9.2%) in Vichada will face severe food insecurity and 27,200 people (30.9%) will face moderate food insecurity in 2024.

Acute malnutrition caused by El Niño will potentially affect the 256 children currently at risk (FSC/Nutrition Cluster 02/01/2024). Estimates indicate that El Niño will also affect health, WASH, and protection services (OCHA 02/11/2023).

Forecasts predict El Niño-induced temperature and precipitation anomalies to extend until at least May 2024 (Infobae 13/10/2023). The forecasted below-average rainfall will likely reduce water access and decrease agricultural production, increasing food insecurity and malnutrition rates (IDEAM 20/02/2024; El Tiempo 13/10/2023; AAH 06/11/2023).

### Food price inflation affecting food access (access dimension)

Food price inflation significantly affects the access dimension of food security, worsening acute food insecurity by placing basic goods and services beyond the reach of low-income individuals, including migrants, refugees, and host communities. While food price inflation decreased slightly in 2023, with rates dropping from 13.12% to 9.28%, the price increase impact on food items has eroded household purchasing power (DANE 09/01/2024). The conflict in Ukraine and global inflation trends further compound these challenges, driving up food prices globally and increasing the cost of living, with severe repercussions for low-income households (WFP 11/07/2023).

Food price inflation affects the access dimension by limiting individuals' ability to afford an adequate and nutritious diet. As food prices rise, households may resort to potentially harmful coping strategies, such as reducing the quantity or quality of food consumed, skipping meals, or relying on less expensive, less nutritious alternatives. These can lead to decreased dietary diversity and nutritional deficiencies, contributing to poor health outcomes and aggravating existing vulnerabilities (WFP 08/06/2023). High food prices may also force households to reallocate limited resources away from other essential needs, such as healthcare, education, and housing, and increase inequalities.

Insufficient infrastructure and rainy seasons causing river overflow and road blockages restrict farming and livestock livelihoods in Vichada and affect food access. This hampers farmers' ability to sell produce and earn income. Access to both national and international markets for soya, corn, and cashew, the department's main agricultural product, remains limited (CR 26/08/2021).

## Water quality issues affecting food security (use dimension)

Outdated infrastructure, insufficient investment, and rapid population growth all strain Vichada's aqueduct system. Ageing water pipelines and distribution networks fail to supply adequate water services, leading to frequent shortages and restricted access to safe drinking water. Puerto Carreño inhabitants receive water services for only 20–30 minutes daily (El Morichal 03/02/2024). As a result, people resort to drinking contaminated water that can cause disease. Evidence suggests that there are waterlogged areas and critical deficiencies in excreta and solid waste management during the rainy season. These generate health risks from vector-borne diseases and the consumption of non-drinking water, increasing gastrointestinal ailments (especially among children) (GIFFM 23/08/2023).

Water scarcity affects food-processing activities, such as washing, cleaning, and cooking, and can compromise hygiene and sanitation practices, increasing waterborne disease risks. Poor sanitation conditions can lead to illnesses affecting individuals' ability to work, further aggravating food insecurity by reducing household income and productivity. Water shortages can also lead to insufficient irrigation, affecting crop growth and reducing yields. This can result in lower agricultural productivity and decreased food availability in the region.

## Armed violence preventing permanent and durable food access (stability dimension)

The presence of non-state armed groups aggravates the situation in Vichada. These groups are involved in drug trafficking and dispute the control of the Meta River, the main corridor for the transit of weapons and illicit economies. The department, located near the border with Venezuela, experiences widespread influence from several armed groups, including the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia dissident groups present in Vichada and Venezuela, as well as the National Liberation Army (ELN) and Gaitanist Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AGC). Since 2020, the ELN has expanded its control, particularly after 2022, reinforcing its position in the border areas. This expansion and disputes with other armed groups affect the security and stability of the region and weaken the Government's ability to assist people in need and ensure food supply security (DP 10/05/2023).

The lack of stability undermines efforts to ensure consistent access to food and agricultural resources, perpetuating food insecurity among local populations. Conflicts over land and property rights, along with unclear land titling for indigenous reservations and peasants, contribute to violence, displacement, roadblocks, and confinement in the department, further restricting civilians' access to basic services (MSPS et al. 08/07/2022). In 2022, armed activity and recruitment threats by these groups forcibly displaced over 1,880 migrants and refugees from Puerto Paez, Venezuela, to Puerto Carreño, Vichada (WASH Cluster 31/01/2022). In the first three months of 2023, the Unit for Comprehensive Attention and Reparation of Victims registered 63 events of forced displacement in the department (OCHA 13/10/2023).

## FOOD SECURITY IMPACT ON OTHER SECTORS

### Health

Food insecurity in Vichada has a compounding effect on health services. The high prevalence of food insecurity, evidenced by 67% of the population experiencing unmet basic needs according to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, places immense strain on already limited healthcare resources (MSPS 12/2020). Lack of access to an adequate and nutritious diet contributes to poor health outcomes, including malnutrition and related health conditions, which increase the demand for healthcare services.

The department's vulnerability to extreme climate events, such as heavy rains, flooding, droughts, and wildfires, challenges the healthcare system (MSPS et al. 08/07/2022). These events can lead to outbreaks of waterborne diseases, such as malaria and dengue, as well as respiratory infections because of dry soils and intensified fires (FEDEMADERAS 01/02/2024). The resulting increase in demand for healthcare services places further pressure on already overstretched healthcare providers and facilities.

Binational indigenous communities, including Venezuelan and Colombian nationals, face additional barriers to accessing healthcare services given their lack of formal registration into the national health system and their residence in informal settlements (IFRC 01/09/2020). Discrimination and stigma from host communities intensify these challenges (MSPS et al. 08/07/2022).

In 2023, Vichada had the second-highest maternal mortality rate countrywide at 96.8 per 100,000 deaths, only surpassed by Buenaventura (INS 2023 b). Indigenous pregnant women, both national and binational, do not receive regular prenatal checkups, and many have micronutrient deficiencies, low birth weight, anaemia, and malnutrition, especially in rural areas (MSPS et al. 08/07/2022). The main barriers to accessing prenatal health services are linked to expensive transportation costs from rural areas, the general lack of transportation, and a lack of information about health services.

Limited access to healthcare services and resources, coupled with increased demand during periods of food insecurity, can compromise the ability to address maternal and child nutrition needs effectively. This combination of factors can contribute to higher maternal and perinatal mortality rates resulting from malnutrition-related complications (ELRHA 05/07/2023).

Migrants and refugees from Venezuela and Colombian returnees are particularly at risk of waterborne diseases given their lack of access to basic services and infrastructure. Assessments in the department by the Interagency Group for Mixed Migration Flows and REACH conducted from May–June 2022 revealed that 39% of Colombian returnees and refugees and migrants from Venezuela identified the improvement and maintenance of



sanitation infrastructure as a need. The communities access sanitation through toilets connected to septic tanks (GIFMM/R4V 18/02/2023). Migrants, refugees, and Colombian returnees do not have sufficient access to clean water, with communities resorting to self-built wells and latrines as coping strategies. There are documented cases of diarrheal diseases in the summer related to the consumption of water from rivers and rainwater (MSPS et al. 08/07/2022).

Insufficient access to personal and domestic hygiene items disproportionately affects women and girls, increasing health risks and limiting their ability to safely purchase and manage menstrual pads (OCHA 08/09/2023). Women and girls also face the additional risks of harassment, violence, and injury when they go outside to search for water or use the toilet.

## Protection

Food insecurity in Vichada increases protection risks as populations resort to potentially harmful coping mechanisms for survival. Existing threats, such as armed conflict, child recruitment, and gender-based violence, particularly affect binational indigenous communities residing in border areas disputed by armed groups (OCHA 10/03/2022; GPC 02/2022). Women, girls, and adolescents, especially from indigenous and displaced communities, face heightened vulnerability to various forms of exploitation, including sexual assault, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation. The dire consequences of food insecurity also contribute to an increased risk of teenage pregnancies and early marriage or relationships, jeopardising the health and wellbeing of the youth (OCHA 08/09/2023). Children may be compelled to drop out of school to work and support their families, perpetuating cycles of poverty and the lack of social development for future generations.

## Education

Food insecurity poses significant challenges for children and adolescents to attend school in the department. In a Food Security Cluster report, half of the assessed households had to withdraw their children from school in 2023 so they could contribute to generating income for food for the family. 69.5% of households also prioritised food acquisition by cutting back on healthcare, education, and clothing expenses (FSC/Nutrition Cluster 02/01/2024). In 2022, 7% of migrant and refugee children between the ages of 6–11 were out of school, while the figure rose to 9% for those aged 12–17. The primary barriers to their education included insufficient income for school supplies, lack of documentation, and the imperative of these children to work and contribute to their family's income to purchase food (GIFMM/R4V 18/02/2023). In conclusion, food insecurity significantly impedes education access for children and adolescents in the department, leading to increased school dropout rates and reduced enrollment, primarily driven by economic pressures on households to prioritise food expenditure over educational expenses.

## SPECIFIC GROUPS FACING FOOD INSECURITY

### Indigenous communities

Vichada has a high proportion of indigenous populations, with over 67,600 indigenous people, including the Sikuani-Jiwi, Amorua, Saliba, Piapoco, Piaroa, Puinabe, Curripaco, and Cubeo. According to the Ombudsman's Office of Colombia, more than 50% of the reported cases of moderate and severe acute malnutrition in the country affect indigenous communities, with an estimated 26,000 indigenous people facing food insecurity in Vichada alone (FSC/Nutrition Cluster 02/01/2024). In 2022, 83.5% of the cases of moderate and severe acute malnutrition were among indigenous communities (DP 2023). Indigenous communities have also been victims of forced cross-border displacement, which adds to other protection concerns, including a lack of food sovereignty, human trafficking, mobility restrictions, and forced recruitment (OCHA 13/10/2023). Around the capital of Vichada, Puerto Carreño, there are 23 informal settlements inhabited by national and binational indigenous communities and victims of forced cross-border displacement. Overall, indigenous communities are settled in more rural areas in the department characterised by inaccessible infrastructure like inadequate roads and transportation options (MSPS et al. 08/07/2022). This lack of connectivity makes it challenging for people to travel to and from these communities and poses limitations in delivering essential goods and services, including healthcare, education, and humanitarian assistance.

### Pregnant and lactating women

In Vichada, pregnant women were identified with urgent food needs in 2023 (OCHA 08/09/2023). In rural areas, particularly within binational or national indigenous communities, there are cases of pregnant women who fail to attend prenatal checkups because of the systemic barriers posed by the rural setting, such as geographic isolation and poor infrastructure. This lack of consistent prenatal care contributes to a higher likelihood of complicated and caesarean deliveries, elevating the risk of maternal mortality (MSPS et al. 08/07/2022). These affect maternal health outcomes and, consequently, household stability.

### Children

Children were also identified with urgent food needs in 2023 (OCHA 08/09/2023). As at 24 August 2023, 264 children under the age of five were susceptible to acute malnutrition caused by El Niño (FSC/Nutrition Cluster 02/01/2024). Indigenous children are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition; as at 2 January 2023, 90% of children facing malnutrition in Vichada were indigenous (FSC/Nutrition Cluster 02/01/2024).

The presence of armed groups aggravates this situation by increasing the risk of sexual violence, used as a tactic of war and control over communities (GPC 02/2022). The recruitment of children into armed groups also exposes them to violence and exploitation.

The prevalence of indigenous child marriages perpetuates social inequalities and undermines the wellbeing of young girls, limiting their access to education and economic opportunities and affecting long-term food security (OCHA 13/10/2023).

## Migrants and refugees from Venezuela and Colombian returnees

Since 2016, Venezuela has been experiencing political and economic turmoil coupled with a humanitarian crisis, with more than 7.2 million migrants and refugees from Venezuela currently outside the country. This is the largest displacement crisis in recent Latin American history (R4V 30/11/2023). By August 2023, over 2.8 million Venezuelans were living in Colombia, the host country with the highest number of Venezuelans in Latin America (GIFFM/R4V accessed DD/MM/202Y). The movement of refugees and migrants from Venezuela to Colombia since 2018 includes:

- people with a Special Stay Permit enabling them to remain in Colombia regularly for up to ten years, with full access to their basic rights (in destination)
- people in transit towards other destination countries
- people in pendular movements entering temporarily to acquire food, medicine, and other basic products and visit relatives
- Colombian returnees (R4V 24/08/2023).

As at 27 December 2023, the department hosted approximately 11,000 migrants and refugees from Venezuela (GIFFM/R4V 26/12/2023). In 2022, 20% of these migrants and refugees faced severe food insecurity, and 50% of the population faced moderate food insecurity (GIFFM/R4V 18/02/2023). In 2021, over 56,300 of these migrants and refugees in Vichada received at least one humanitarian service. By 2023, however, the number of migrants and refugees reached with humanitarian assistance in the department dropped to 10,080 (GIFFM/R4V 26/12/2023). No information was found on the reasons behind this decrease.

These population groups are at risk of several forms of exploitation and violence by armed groups, including labour and sexual exploitation, gender-based violence, and individual and mass displacement resulting from armed confrontations between different groups (MSPS et al. 08/07/2022). Economic vulnerability heightens food insecurity among migrants and refugees, compelling them to accept unstable employment, where they are at higher risk of labour exploitation by armed groups.

Because of rising food prices and the loss of purchasing power, migrants, refugees, and Colombian returnees face higher risks of food insecurity, particularly affecting women and youth. They also face limited and deteriorated livelihoods because of the lasting socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, extreme weather events, and barriers to economic integration, including low education levels and lack of legal work permits (WFP 11/07/2023).

Migrants and refugees from Venezuela with pre-existing health conditions are at high risk of not receiving medical treatment given a lack of legal documentation (MSPS et al. 08/07/2022). Women face serious obstacles in accessing health services since most of them do not have the necessary documentation to access health services (OCHA 13/10/2023). The Special Stay Permit is not recognised as a valid document for vocational training processes, education, and health services (R4V 24/08/2023). Many migrants and refugees can only sustain regular food consumption by implementing potentially harmful coping strategies, such as selling property, receiving support from families and friends, and the consumption of fewer-than-necessary meals per day (WFP 11/07/2023).

## ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

Poor transport and communication infrastructure, as well as the presence of armed groups, hinder humanitarian access. 85% of the roads in Vichada are dirt roads given its flat terrain, and only 15% are paved (TodaColombia accessed 27/02/2024). Heavy rains, particularly during the rainy season between April–October, significantly affect the department's roads, making them impassable and forcing the population to resort to river transportation (Colombia Risk Analysis 02/10/2023; ACAPS accessed 08/02/2024).

Mobility restrictions by armed groups, traffic and conduct rules, and extortion fees for river transportation hinder humanitarian assistance and further limit people's access to aid (OCHA 13/10/2023). The presence of armed groups represents a significant obstacle to reaching people in need, contributing to food insecurity in the department.

By January 2024, over 18,450 people in the department required humanitarian assistance. As at December 2023, only 6,056 people in need were reached (FSC/Nutrition Cluster 02/01/2024). The assistance provided included monetary transfers and food supplements.

## RESPONSE CAPACITY

The Humanitarian Response Plan requires USD 47.6 million to address Colombia's food security (FSC/Nutrition Cluster 02/01/2024). WFP has formulated a Country Strategic Plan for Colombia for the 2021–2024 period. This plan aims to support the Colombian Government in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 2 on zero hunger (WFP accessed 02/03/2024).

The Vichada humanitarian team comprises 16 organisations:

- five UN agencies (IOM, UNICEF, PAHO/WHO, UNHCR, GIFMM, WFP, FAO)
- six international organisations (International Committee for the Development of Peoples, AmeriCaras, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, Norwegian Refugee Council, Action Against Hunger, Pan American Development Foundation)
- five national organisations (Colombian Red Cross, the Corporation Childhood and Development, Legal Option, Pastoral Social, Corporation for Research and Development of Democracy).

In the food security sector, the main organisation is Action Against Hunger, which has food security, livelihood, WASH, protection, health, nutrition, and disaster risk reduction programmes. WFP and the Norwegian Refugee Council are the other main entities providing a food security response (FSN 01/06/2023).

Several government institutions provide support to the department. These include the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development Agency, which aims to support Vichada by strengthening the economy of farmers through the public purchase of food for government social programmes promoted by entities such as the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare and the Departmental Secretariat of Education with the School Feeding Program of the Ministry of National Education (ADR 05/07/2023). The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development Agency has invested close to USD 2 million to reach more than 557 farming families with comprehensive productive projects in Vichada. It also assisted over 1,330 producers with the public agricultural extension service in the productive lines of cashew, cocoa, honey, and cotton in 2022 (ADR 06/07/2022).

The Colombian Government and FAO signed a letter at the end of January 2023 to strengthen existing cooperation to advance the fight against hunger, generate sustainable food systems, achieve prosperous and inclusive rural societies, and advance sustainable and resilient agriculture. Actions aim at overcoming hunger and malnutrition and advancing in guaranteeing the human right to food of the population, mainly in the departments of Arauca, Boyacá, Cesar, Guainía, La Guajira, Norte de Santander, and Vichada (FAO 08/12/2023). The International Committee for the Development of Peoples and UNICEF have employed Mobile Teams for Integral Protection with the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (OCHA 08/09/2023).