

Anticipated implications of US stop-work orders and subsequent cuts

BACKGROUND: SUSPENSION OF US-FUNDED FOREIGN AID

On 20 January 2025, US President Donald Trump issued an executive order mandating a 90-day suspension of US-funded foreign assistance, including humanitarian operations (WH 20/01/2025). On 24 January, the administration began issuing stop-work orders and halting the initiation of new aid programmes. By 7 February, most United States Agency for International Development (USAID) staff had been placed on administrative leave, with only critical personnel remaining active (CNN 05/02/2025). Although a waiver to allow lifesaving humanitarian assistance was granted on 28 January, implementation has been limited and inconsistently applied across contexts (Reuters 29/01/2025). Despite continued legal challenges to the funding freeze, humanitarian organisations globally were already reporting significant disruptions to their operations by 20 February (ACAPS 21/02/2025; HRW 10/02/2025; NYT 07/02/2025).

Colombia faces a longstanding and complex humanitarian crisis, driven by decades of armed conflict. Up until February 2025, over 9.88 million people had been registered as victims of the conflict (JARIV 28/02/2025). By March 2025, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had identified eight domestic armed conflicts in the country, based on international humanitarian law criteria (ICRC 25/03/2025). These multiple conflicts are largely fuelled by the expansion and fragmentation of non-state armed groups (NSAGs), particularly in rural areas with limited state presence (OCHA 21/03/2025).

In 2023, over 2.1 million people (4.1%) in Colombia identified as Indigenous and over 3.9 million (7.5%) as Afro-Colombian (DANE 24/04/2024). Limited information is available on the humanitarian implications of the US funding freeze, particularly for ethnic communities living in remote rural areas with an NSAG presence. These communities face disproportionate exposure to protection risks. In 2024, 39% of people affected by confinement were Indigenous, while 33% of those displaced in mass events were Afro-Colombian (OCHA 03/02/2025).

These dynamics increase the risk of escalating violence and protection incidents, such as mass and individual displacement, confinements, mobility restrictions, and threats, which also lead to humanitarian health, food security, and other needs. The humanitarian situation in Colombia is concerning, as the US funding freeze aggravates a response capacity already strained by multiple, overlapping emergencies linked to the country's complex and prolonged armed conflict (OCHA 21/03/2025).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background: suspension of US-funded foreign aid.....	1
Overview: anticipated effects on funding and humanitarian needs in colombia	1
About this report	2
Potential effects on needs.....	3
Protection.....	3
Food security and nutrition	5
Health	6
WASH	6
Shelter	7
Aggravating factors.....	7
Climate and natural hazards	7
Expansion and fragmentation of NSAGs	8
Peace agreement and land rights	8
Additional US policies	9
Humanitarian access and operational constraints.....	9

OVERVIEW: ANTICIPATED EFFECTS ON FUNDING AND HUMANITARIAN NEEDS IN COLOMBIA

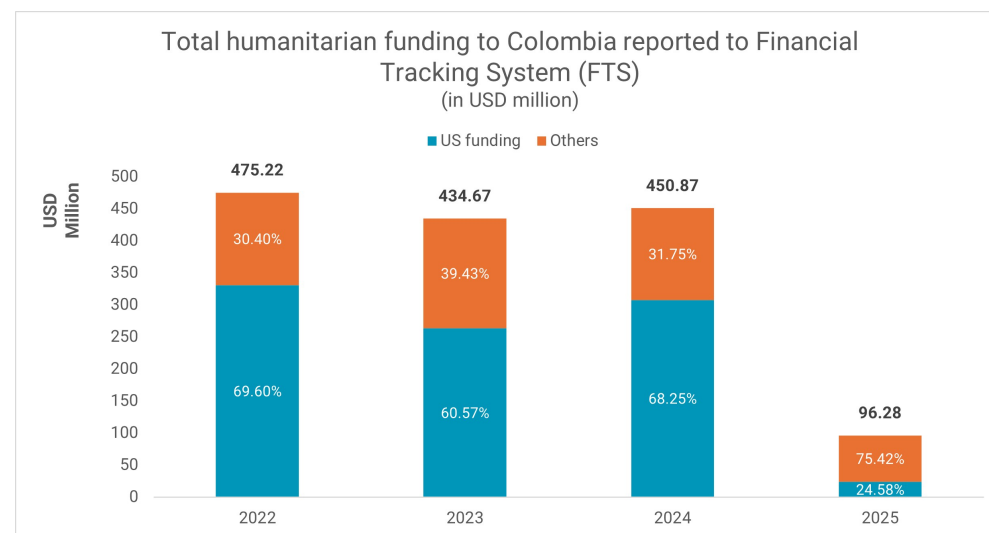
Since 2018, the United States has been Colombia's main humanitarian assistance donor. In 2024 alone, US contributions reached USD 307.7 million, representing 68% of the total humanitarian funding Colombia received that year, according to the Financial Tracking Service (FTS). This figure underscores the extent to which Colombia's humanitarian response depends on US financial support (FTS accessed 28/03/2025).

In 2024, USAID disbursed at least USD 80.58 million to UN organisations such as the WFP and IOM (Foreign Assistance accessed 15/04/2025). Up until early 2025, OCHA also recorded the United States as its top donor, with USD 10 million in contributions. Disbursements by March 2025 to UN organisations totalled approximately USD 5.2 million, a significant drop compared to 2024. It remains unclear whether these figures reflect delayed disbursements or include waivers for 'lifesaving humanitarian assistance' (The Guardian 10/03/2025; Foreign Assistance accessed 15/04/2025).

The freeze on US humanitarian funding is expected to severely affect populations affected by armed conflict, human mobility, and climate hazards. An estimated USD 294 million in planned assistance will no longer reach the approximately 8.5 million people in need (3is/Humanitarian NGO Forum 14/03/2025). In total, NGOs in Colombia are projected to lose close to USD 216 million (3is/Humanitarian NGO Forum 14/03/2025; OCHA 17/03/2025).

The suspension of funding is also expected to heighten protection risks throughout 2025, particularly in areas affected by the presence of NSAGs. According to the 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), two million of the 9.1 million people in need are those most exposed to armed conflict (KII 20/03/2025; OCHA 22/01/2025). Protection concerns such as child recruitment, gender-based violence (GBV), landmine contamination, forced displacement, and mobility restrictions imposed by NSAGs (such though the use of threats, checkpoints, or road destruction limiting access to essential goods or services) remain critical (OCHA 03/03/2021). Without adequate funding, large-scale emergencies and humanitarian needs are likely to persist or escalate. Determining the full impact of the funding freeze is complex, as its consequences will unfold at different levels of the humanitarian response over the short, medium, and long term.

Figure 1. Colombia's total received humanitarian funding from 2022–2025



Source: ACAPS using data from FTS (accessed 28/03/2025)

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Aim

This report analyses the current and potential implications of the US funding freeze and stop-work orders on humanitarian operations and needs in Colombia. It aims to provide key stakeholders with an accessible overview of emerging operational and strategic challenges.

Methodology

This analysis is based on a secondary data review of publicly available information from humanitarian, government, and media sources. The analysis is complemented by preliminary findings from unpublished NGO reports and three key informant interviews with NGOs, which provide qualitative insight to contextualise and interpret available quantitative data. All financial figures come from the FTS, for both the Humanitarian Response Plan for Community Priorities (HRPCP) and the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMPRP), both funded by the US Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM 18/03/2024).

Limitations

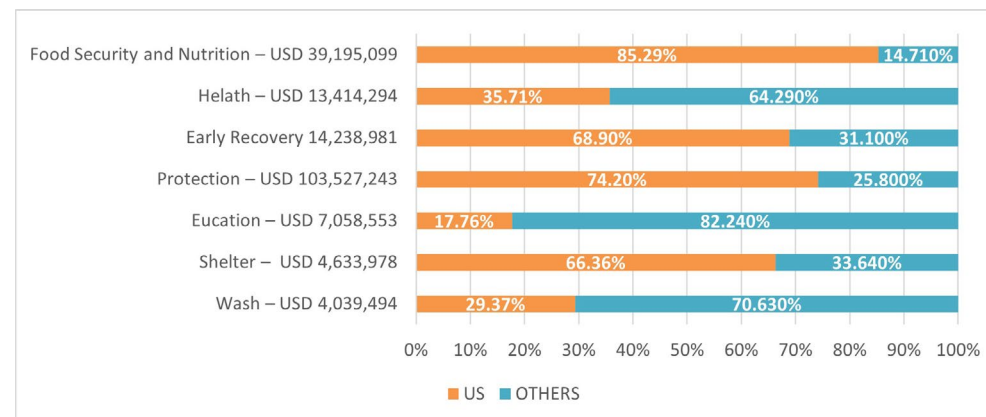
This analysis focuses on the implications of the US funding freeze on humanitarian assistance in Colombia, particularly funding reported through the HRPCP and OCHA-managed FTS. This is a limitation because the FTS does not capture all humanitarian contributions and there are humanitarian activities and funding flows that fall outside the HRPCP. As a result, this analysis may not reflect the full impact of the funding freeze on the broader humanitarian response.

Uncertainty surrounding the scope of the funding freeze, including the possibility of further cuts, has made organisations reluctant to communicate openly, limiting willingness to participate in key informant interviews. As a result, the availability of primary data is constrained and there may be an underreporting of needs and impacts. In particular, the funding suspension's disaggregated effects on different population groups and geographic areas remain unclear.

Even if the freeze is lifted or other donors step in, the disruption has already constrained access to essential services, particularly for ethnic populations (Indigenous and Afro-Colombian), including those confined and displaced by NSAGs. Information on NGO adaptation strategies remains limited, as the humanitarian architecture is still in the process of understanding and responding to the full implications of the funding freeze.

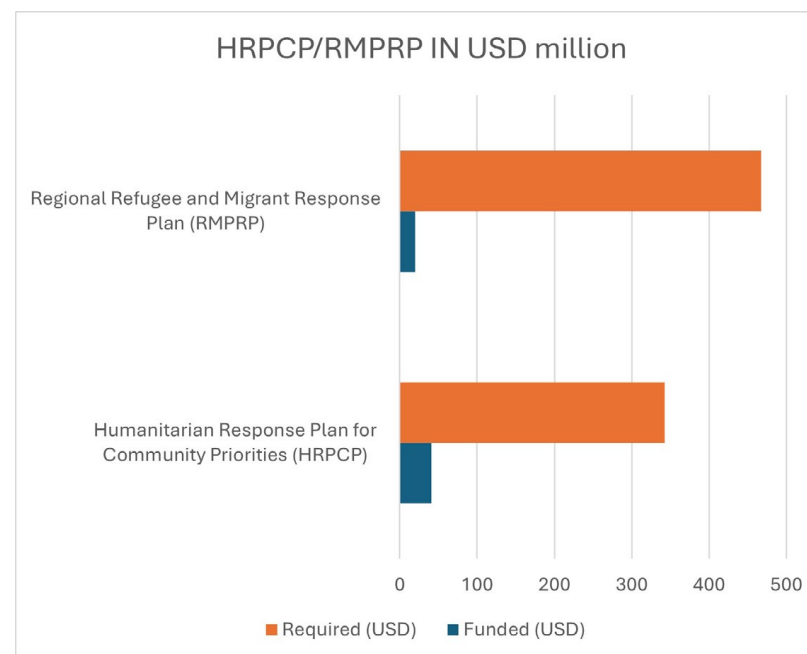
POTENTIAL EFFECTS ON NEEDS

Figure 2. US funding contributions to clusters in 2024 (in USD), as reported to FTS.



Source: ACAPS using data from FTS (accessed 28/03/2025)

Figure 3. Total Humanitarian Response Plan for Community Priorities and Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan funding for 2025



Source: ACAPS using data from FTS (accessed 07/04/2025)



Protection

Colombia faces a prolonged humanitarian crisis driven by armed conflict, which is further aggravated by the Venezuelan migration crisis and the effects of climate change. Protection-related risks remain the main humanitarian concern nationwide, particularly in rural areas (OCHA 22/01/2025). In 2024, the protection sector was allocated USD 103.5 million out of the USD 123.6 million required, reaching 83.4% funding coverage. Of this amount, the US contributed USD 76.8 million, representing nearly 74% of the sector's total funding, making it the largest donor to the HRPCP (FTS accessed 26/03/2025).

By March 2025, the US had contributed USD 5.2 million of the total USD 16 million reported by the protection sector (FTS accessed 26/03/2025). This marks a significant decline and highlights the extent of US-funding dependency for protection activities.

According to the 2024–2025 HRPCP, 5.2 million people are in need of protection assistance in Colombia. Of these, 1.9 million (34%) are Indigenous and Afro-Colombian individuals, who have been disproportionately affected by the armed conflict. Of Colombia's total population, nearly 12% is Indigenous and Afro-Colombian (DANE 24/04/2024). These communities represent one-third of all those affected by mass displacement (OCHA 22/01/2025).

The main protection concerns reported among these groups include forced displacement and confinement, when communities are unable to move freely through the territories in which they live and face basic services access constraints (OCHA 12/03/2025; DRC 13/11/2024).

Operations affected by the funding freeze are concentrated in three strategic regions: the Pacific axis (Cauca, Chocó, Nariño, Putumayo, Urabá, and Valle del Cauca); the border axis (Arauca, La Guajira, Norte de Santander, and Santander); and the urban axis (Antioquia, Atlántico, Bogotá, and Córdoba) (OCHA 22/01/2025). Humanitarian organisations have been forced to reprioritise, often focusing on areas where needs are high but operational costs are low. It is likely that in the next month, prioritised zones will include specific regions with a high severity of needs but less restricted humanitarian access constraints in terms of transportation of goods, security, infrastructure, and deployment (KII 20/03/2025). According to the HRPCP perspective, peacebuilding programmes are closely linked with both humanitarian and development initiatives, highlighting the need for integrated strategies across these sectors (OCHA 15/03/2025). In the Urabá region, programmes targeting migrants and refugees have closed, and in areas such as Buenaventura and Chocó, the suspension of peacebuilding and development projects has further aggravated the humanitarian crisis. Programmes reported as closed include coca crop substitution programmes in Cauca and protection for adolescents affected by violence in Chocó (OCHA 21/03/2025; KII 20/03/2025; Reuters 18/03/2025; La República 04/02/2025).

The implications of the funding freeze are twofold. Firstly, in the short to medium term, the reduction in humanitarian assistance is likely to increase protection risks for communities already facing systematic violence as a consequence of disputes between NSAGs in regions such as Cauca, Chocó, and the south of the country. Secondly, the suspension of humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development nexus-related programmes – such as rural development, economic recovery, and peacebuilding – will have long-term implications, as many community-based organisations are losing access to USAID funding, undermining locally led protections efforts (El País 10/03/2025). By 9 March 2025, Afro-Colombian and Indigenous organisations had reported closures or severe operational impacts. For example, the Asociación Nacional de Afrocolombianos Desplazados announced its closure, while the Consejo Nacional de Paz Afrocolombiano reported significant effects (El País 10/03/2025). These community organisation funding shortages have humanitarian implications, as their projects were related to protection risks linked to internal displacement and recruitment (AFRODES accessed 07/03/2025).

By early March 2025, IOM programmes funded through Weaving Lives and Hope and USAID, which support victims of armed conflict by providing psychosocial support and access to mental health services, had been terminated (ACAPS unpublished). These closures increase the protection risks for communities living in armed conflict zones.

Humanitarian demining efforts in Colombia have also been directly affected by the US funding freeze (KII 20/02/2025). In 2024, funding for demining totalled nearly USD 3 million. Given that the US has been the primary donor for this effort, a reduction in support could significantly delay progress and increase protection risks for communities in affected areas, especially children and adolescents, who are the main population affected by mines in Colombia's rural areas. 30% of all mine-related injuries and deaths (19 victims) reported in 2024 were children and adolescents, in a country in which children and adolescents comprise 28.4% of the population (FTS accessed 20/02/2025; Senado de Colombia 07/04/2024; ICBF accessed 10/04/2025).

The discontinuation of US funding could also hinder Colombia's progress towards its goal of eliminating antipersonnel mines by December 2025. By December 2024, of the country's 1,103 municipalities, 523 had been declared free of suspected contamination and clearance activities were continuing in a further 72 (Acción Contra Minas 31/01/2025).

Protection assistance for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, particularly Venezuelans – who represent nearly 75% of the total people in transit – followed by Ecuadorians (6%) and Haitians (4%), have been significantly affected by the US funding freeze (Migración Colombia accessed 15/04/2025). Both pendular (commuting migration from Colombia to other countries) and in-destination populations have seen reduced support (KII 20/03/2025; Caplin News 25/03/2025; R4V 17/12/2024). Access to protection services has also been affected, including support for regularisation, legal aid, and protection against trafficking, labour exploitation, and recruitment risks (R4V 20/03/2025). This funding suspension has also affected governmental

programmes for migrants and refugees, limiting operational capacity to provide assistance for regularisation processes. A notable example is the 'Visibles' programme, which provided information about regularisation for Venezuelan migrants and refugees. Financed by the US and implemented by the IOM, this programme has been forced to terminate staff contracts (KII 21/03/2025; Infobae 03/02/2025).

According to the 2025 HRPCP, 3.8 million migrants and refugees are in need of protection assistance but only 10.5% are targeted by the protection sector. The main plan addressing these needs, the RMRP, was only 33% funded by late 2024. As the largest donor, any cuts to US humanitarian aid will worsen this funding gap, increasing economic vulnerability and protection risks such as trafficking, exploitation, and child recruitment by armed groups (R4V 20/03/2025 and 17/12/2024; Infobae 10/02/2025; OCHA 22/01/2025).

Other groups also likely to be affected by the funding freeze include LGBTQ+ individuals, survivors of human trafficking, and GBV survivors. Given the conservatism of the US Government, it is expected that assistance will be limited and may exclude funding for these groups (KII 20/03/2025; El Espectador 05/02/2025).

In areas such as Antioquia department, at least 82 NGOs have been affected by the USAID funding freeze, with no alternative financing offered by governmental, local, or national authorities (KII 20/03/2025; Infobae 05/02/2025). By 11 April 2025, there was no information on whether other donors or NGOs had stepped in to cover the gaps in protection programming. The funding freeze has highlighted the need for better strategic coordination between NGOs, government institutions, and communities, as well as greater clarity in how available resources are prioritised (KII 20/03/2025).

Uncertainty remains around how Colombia's protection crisis is positioned within global severity-based prioritisation frameworks, as such frameworks measure scale of need in a specific humanitarian crisis to determinate resource allocation (Protection Cluster 04/07/20234). This uncertainty raises concerns about the country's visibility in international funding decisions (KII 20/03/2025).

Food security and nutrition

By 2024, over 7.3 million people in Colombia were in need of food assistance (OCHA 15/03/2024). The Food Security Cluster was the second-most funded sector after protection, receiving USD 39.1 million of the USD 80.7 million required – representing nearly 48% coverage. Humanitarian activities were primarily concentrated in the departments of Antioquia, Bolívar, Cauca, Chocó, Córdoba, and La Guajira (FTS accessed 27/03/2025).

By March 2025, funding had dropped significantly. Of the USD 80.2 million required for the year, only USD 9.9 million (12.3%) had been disbursed. Although the full extent of US contributions to the Food Security Cluster is unclear, available data indicates that US paid and committed contributions for 2025 totalled only USD 2.6 million – representing 26.3% of current funding and 3.2% of the total annual requirement (FTS accessed 27/03/2025).

Following the US funding freeze, prioritisation measures were implemented, focusing only on strictly necessary lifesaving actions under the HRPCP and RMRP, although the specific methodology and details of prioritisation are not available (KII 21/03/2025). Several organisations have suspended or reduced operations, including World Vision, Pastoral Social, the Danish Refugee Council, the Norwegian Refugee Council, and Action Against Hunger. These organisations previously led humanitarian food assistance activities targeting conflict-affected populations, migrants, and refugees. The departments most affected by reduced operations include Cauca, Chocó, La Guajira, and Norte de Santander, where large-scale interventions have been significantly scaled back (KII 21/02/2025; R4V accessed 15/04/2025).

The freeze has also disrupted community-led efforts. For example, Indigenous organisations such as the Organización Nacional Indígena del Cauca, which received USAID funding, have had to reduce food security initiatives aimed at strengthening local production and cooperation in Chocó, Nariño, Putumayo, and Valle del Cauca (Consonante 11/02/2025).

If current funding trends continue, the Food Security Cluster will likely face further technical and operational disruptions, including challenges deploying personnel, transporting food, and distributing monetary assistance. Such disruptions risk causing further response delays, limiting the ability to reach populations in need (KII 21/02/2025; FTS accessed 27/03/2025). If current funding gaps persist, food assistance will likely shrink further, affecting response capacity during critical periods and increasing risks for children, migrants, refugees, and rural communities already facing high levels of food insecurity. A decrease in coverage could result in fewer rations, reduced nutritional diversity, and service gaps during critical periods, such as during seasonal drought (December–February), the rainy season (May–July), or conflict escalation (ACAPS accessed 10/04/2025).

According to projections, 8.1 million people are expected to be in need of food assistance in 2025, with only around 900,000 targeted for humanitarian support under the HRPCP (Food Security Cluster accessed 05/12/2024). According to the WFP, 13 million people face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or higher levels of food insecurity, particularly migrants and refugees, of whom 37% are food insecure (WFP 01/2025). The departments of Córdoba (70%), Sucre (63%), Cesar (55%), Bolívar (51%), and La Guajira (50%) have reported the highest levels, driven by a combination of armed conflict, displacement, and weak institutional presence (WFP 08/06/2023).

Children under five are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. By 2024, 0.65% of children were suffering acute malnutrition nationwide, with Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities in rural areas being most affected (WFP 02/05/2024; INS 24/04/2024). If delays in food assistance continue, the risk of malnutrition is expected to rise, particularly among children under five and pregnant women, leading to long-term health consequences (Food Security Cluster 13/03/2025).

Health

According to 2025 HRPCP, six million people in Colombia are in need of health-related humanitarian assistance. Of these, 634,100 individuals are targeted for intervention, with a financial requirement of USD 40.2 million (OCHA 22/01/2025). Up until March 2025, the total funding received for the sector amounted to USD 6.6 million, including approximately USD 1.3 million from the US Government (FTS accessed 27/03/2025).

Despite insufficient data to fully assess the implications of defunding, preliminary Health Cluster evaluations estimate that over 683,700 people are at risk as a result of the funding gap, an increase on the number of people initially targeted. Over 183,700 people are also estimated to have lost access to health services, including mental health, general medical services, and diagnostics. 106 health facilities have also been directly or indirectly affected, although detailed information on how the funding cuts have affected these facilities is not yet available (Health Cluster 22/03/2025).

Health services in Antioquia, Arauca, Bolívar, Cesar, La Guajira, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Santander, and Valle del Cauca departments are those most affected by the US funding freeze. The services most affected include health emergencies, reproductive and maternal health services, mental health support, and laboratory and diagnostic exams (Health Cluster 22/03/2025). Programmes such as Save the Children's Transformational Anonymous Donor initiative, which provides children and pregnant women with sexual and reproductive health and nutrition support, have also been affected (FTS accessed 20/02/2025). By 11 April, however, there was no information on exactly how this programme has been affected, such as whether activities have been suspended, scaled down, or staff terminated.

If current funding trends continue, more patients are likely to face unavailable or interrupted treatment, delayed diagnoses, and limited access to preventive care. The collapse of referral networks and reduced capacity for mobile medical brigades may particularly affect remote or rural communities. These gaps will likely be aggravated during periods of increased demand – such as disease outbreaks or seasonal surges in respiratory and waterborne diseases – placing additional strain on the public health system and humanitarian responders.

Defunding has direct implications for patients. People might face longer travel distances to access healthcare, higher out-of-pocket costs, and delays in receiving diagnoses and treatment. Those with chronic conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension, or HIV/AIDS, may be unable to continue treatment consistently, increasing the risk of complications, disease progression, or even death.

Maternal and child health programmes have been severely affected, threatening progress made in reducing maternal and neonatal mortality. Services for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria have also been disrupted as a result of the reduced availability of treatment and testing (Health Cluster 22/03/2025). Venezuelan migrants and refugees report increasing difficulties accessing HIV/AIDS treatment (El Espectador 18/02/2025). Such barriers can lead to treatment interruptions, increasing the risk of disease progression and transmission.

WASH

In 2024, the WASH Cluster received USD 4 million out of the USD 10.5 million required. Of this, an estimated USD 1.2 million came from the US Government (FTS accessed 27/02/2025). For 2025, the HRPCP identifies 4.3 million people in need of WASH assistance, with a target of 448,400 people and a total financial requirement of USD 23 million. By March 2025, only USD 2 million had been secured (FTS accessed 27/02/2025). Available data does not allow quantification of the US contribution to this total.

Available data also does not clearly specify which WASH activities have been suspended as a result of the US funding freeze. Reports confirm, however, that many NGOs have halted operations in regions such as Norte de Santander, following mass conflict-related displacement and rising humanitarian needs (OCHA 21/03/2025). In this department alone, nearly 18,000 displaced people have experienced constraints accessing water and sanitation services (3iS et al. 05/02/2025). These suspensions suggest a reduction in emergency water distribution, sanitation infrastructure support, and hygiene kit provision for displaced and mobile populations, particularly in high-risk areas such as Cauca, Chocó, and Norte de Santander.

If funding levels remain low, humanitarian WASH operations may remain halted or be further reduced, particularly in remote or conflict-affected areas. This would limit access to safe water and sanitation for at-risk populations and reduce humanitarian responders' ability to respond to new emergencies, including climate-related floods and displacement events. The scaling down of services increases the risk of waterborne disease outbreaks, especially in overcrowded informal settlements and transit areas with high population mobility (HOPE 18/02/2025; Wradio 01/04/2025).

By 2023, nearly 3.2 million people in Colombia faced constraints accessing water and sanitation services, 2.6 million of whom were living in rural areas of the Amazonas, Chocó, Guainía, Putumayo, and San Andrés y Providencia departments (Min Vivienda 18/11/2023). In a context of underfunding, ethnic communities are among the most at risk, with 2025 estimations projecting that 32% of the people in need belong to Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities (OCHA 22/01/2025). Within these communities, the mortality rate among children under five from water and sanitation-associated illnesses, such as acute diarrhoeal disease, is above the national average (OCHA 22/01/2025).

Migrants and refugees in transit also face heightened vulnerability to dehydration, waterborne disease, and poor hygiene-related health conditions as a result of limited access to WASH services in rural areas. In 2024, such constraints were reported in Nariño, Norte de Santander, and Valle del Cauca departments (GIFMM et al. 06/02/2025). In the context of reduced funding, such constraints are expected to worsen, limiting the capacity of humanitarian organisations to maintain or scale up interventions in remote transit areas.

Shelter

By 2024, the US Government was financing USD 3.03 million out of 4.6 million in total funding for the shelter sector (FTS accessed 27/20/2025). According to the 2025 HRPCP, the shelter sector requires USD 8.9 million in funding but, by March 2025, only USD 1.5 million had been secured. Of this amount, nearly USD 1 million corresponds to funding from the US Government (FTS accessed 27/03/2025). For 2025, the sector identified nearly four million people in need of shelter assistance, with a target of supporting 159,300 through ten projects implemented by seven organisations (OCHA 22/01/2025). While there is no specific interannual comparison of US contributions, the current funding gap is significant. By March, approximately 23% of the required annual budget had been disbursed. Given the increasing needs and the fact that shelter remains one of the most underfunded sectors in Colombia, the current funding gap is a concern (OCHA 22/01/2025).

While details of suspended activities are not publicly available, it is likely the cuts have affected key interventions such as the distribution of emergency shelter kits, transitional shelter support, and the rehabilitation of collective centres. This has direct implications for displaced populations, who may have to remain in inadequate or unsafe housing conditions as a result (KII 28/03/2025; OCHA 22/01/2025).

If current funding levels persist, the shelter response will struggle to meet rising needs across Colombia. Displacement and confinement events are expected to increase in 2025, driven by armed conflict, natural hazards, and the effects of climate change – particularly flooding during the March rainy season in the Pacific region (Presidencia de Colombia 26/03/2025; OCHA 21/03/2025).

The scaling down of operations may delay emergency shelter delivery, limit the availability of safe and dignified living spaces, and weaken community recovery capacity following displacement. The first quarter of 2025 saw a high number of both individual and mass displacement events. In the Catatumbo region, for instance, displacement figures in the first two months of 2025 alone exceeded the total number recorded for all of 2024 (OCHA 21/03/2025). Individual displacement in Colombia is generally understood as incidents involving fewer than ten households or 50 people. While not formally defined in law, the Victims Unit registers numerous such cases (ACAPS 02/12/2024).

Reduced shelter assistance has direct consequences for affected populations. People may face prolonged exposure to overcrowded, unsanitary, or unsafe environments, heightening protection risks, particularly for women and children, and increasing exposure to GBV. Such reduced access may also worsen health outcomes, including respiratory illnesses and the spread of waterborne diseases (KII 28/03/2025).

AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Climate and natural hazards

Climate-related hazards are likely to aggravate humanitarian needs in Colombia, particularly in conflict-affected and rural areas, while further limiting response capacity. In 2024, El Niño exposed 2.9 million people to drought, wildfires, and floods, leading to crop losses and water shortages in agriculture-dependent areas. Notably, 72% of these emergencies occurred in conflict-affected regions, overwhelming institutional response capacity (OCHA 22/01/2025).

Seasonal forecasts indicate an above-normal probability of rainfall in central and northern Colombia and along the Pacific coast. Above-normal temperatures are expected along the Caribbean and Pacific coasts and in the southeast, while below-normal temperatures are forecast near the northeastern border with Venezuela (IRI accessed 25/03/2025). By 14 April 2025, La Niña conditions were present, and a transition to El Niño and Southern Oscillation-neutral conditions remained likely for August-October, potentially altering rainfall and temperature patterns (NOAA 14/04/2025). These shifting patterns could increase the risk of localised flooding, crop disruption, and heat-related stress, particularly in rural areas.

Climate change is amplifying the impacts of La Niña and El Niño, accelerating their transitions and shortening periods of neutral conditions (Cai et al. 18/05/2023). Colombia's INFORM Climate Change Risk Score is 5.5/10 – high (EC accessed 25/03/2025).

This funding disruption coincides with a critical period of climate variability, as Colombia transitions from La Niña to El Niño and Southern Oscillation-neutral conditions. As a result,

humanitarian organisations may be forced to shift from anticipatory action to reactive response, reducing their ability to prepare communities for climate-related shocks. At the same time, overall response capacity may weaken as a result of reduced funding. Limited resources are being redirected to emergencies, increasing the risk that the most climate-vulnerable communities – particularly Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations in hazard-prone areas – remain unprotected against current and future climatic and natural hazards. This could lead to new displacement and deepen existing humanitarian needs.

Expansion and fragmentation of NSAGs

The expansion and fragmentation of NSAGs continue to drive humanitarian needs across Colombia, particularly in rural areas where there are significant Afro-Colombian and Indigenous populations (Pares 26/04/2024; FIP 13/02/2024). Throughout 2024, the Colombian Government pursued peace negotiations with several armed groups under its 'Total Peace' policy, accompanied by multiple ceasefire announcements. NSAG compliance has been inconsistent, however, with continued hostilities reported in various regions (HRW accessed 26/03/2025; El Colombiano 26/01/2025; Insight Crime 08/08/2024). By December 2024, 71% of Colombia's municipalities had an NSAG presence (DP 12/12/2024).

The Gaitanist Army of Colombia (AGC) has significantly expanded its territorial presence, from 213 municipalities in 2019 to 345 in 2024 – a 62% increase – making it the armed group with the broadest presence across the country (DP 27/01/2025). This means the AGC now operates in nearly one-third of Colombia's 1,122 municipalities, including 18 non-municipalised areas (DANE accessed 07/04/2025). This expansion, coupled with the fragmentation of armed groups, led to a 19% increase in armed actions in 2024. Clashes between NSAGs, as well as confrontations with Colombian security forces, were the main drivers of mass displacement and confinements. Approximately 33% of people displaced in mass events in 2024 were Afro-Colombians, while Indigenous people represented 39% of those affected by confinements. Many of these incidents occurred in areas with collective land rights, including Indigenous reserves and Afro-Colombian community councils (OCHA 03/02/2025).

In January 2025, an unprecedented surge in violence in the Catatumbo subregion led to over 51,800 mass displacements, over 8,600 confinements, and over 20,000 mobility restrictions. As a result, the number of people displaced in mass events during January–February 2025 in Colombia exceeded the total reported for all of 2024, representing a 462% increase compared to the same period the previous year (OCHA 21/03/2025). In January 2025, the fragmentation of the Estado Mayor Central also raised concerns about escalating violence in southern departments, including Amazonas, Caquetá, Guaviare, Huila, Meta, and Putumayo (OCHA 10/02/2025; DP 21/01/2025).

Insecurity and the possible escalation of armed conflict pose significant risks to civilians and humanitarian access. Civilians in rural and remote areas – particularly Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities – are likely to face heightened protection risks, displacement, confinements, mobility restrictions, and disruptions in access to essential services such as health, education, and food. These impacts are especially pronounced in Cauca, Chocó, Nariño, Norte de Santander, and Putumayo departments, where the presence of NSAGs overlaps with high humanitarian needs and a weak state presence (OCHA 03/02/2025). In this context, reduced US funding could limit humanitarian responders' capacity to monitor, prevent, and respond to such violence.

Peace agreement and land rights

The US funding freeze has affected government authorities involved in implementing the 2016 peace agreement, including the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the National Land Agency, and mechanisms related to the Ethnic Chapter (El Espectador 29/01/2025). While the US Government reinstated funding for a specific Special Jurisdiction for Peace project in March 2025, aimed at supporting access to justice for the victims of armed conflict, the implications of the funding interruption remain unclear (JEP 22/03/2025; SWI 22/03/2025).

USAID had a central role in supporting land distribution and agrarian reform efforts in Colombia. Reduced support for these programmes may delay land titling processes and prolong the state's absence in rural areas, potentially hindering the fulfilment of basic rights and services (El Tiempo 09/10/2024). In regions such as Montes de María, where collective land titling enables IDP returns to areas from which they were expelled by NSAGs, reduced institutional capacity could stall restitution and reintegration efforts (Unidad de Víctimas 04/04/2024). The inability to recover land and re-establish livelihoods may contribute to renewed tensions or escalate local conflicts, particularly in areas where territorial control and access to resources remain contested.

In the context of declining foreign assistance for development, peacebuilding, and humanitarian action, institutional capacity to advance the implementation of peace is increasingly constrained. This may delay land restitution processes, stall reintegration efforts, and weaken community recovery in areas previously affected by conflict. The erosion of institutional presence and support may also undermine trust in the peace process, reduce social cohesion, and increase the risk of localised violence, particularly in communities with a history of displacement or exclusion.

Additional US policies

Changes in US immigration policy between January–February 2025, including the suspension of the CBP One application and Temporary Protected Status, have contributed to the emergence of reverse migration flows towards Colombia (USCIS accessed 25/02/2025; El País 20/03/2025; CBP 21/01/2025). CBP One is a mobile application used by asylum seekers to schedule appointments at official border entry points. Its suspension has reduced access to regular migration channels (CBP 21/01/2025). At the same time, changes to Temporary Protected Status – a programme granting temporary legal status to nationals from countries facing crises – has raised uncertainty about the future of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in the US (USCIS accessed 25/02/2025). These shifts may be encouraging returns or deterring new departures.

Between 15 January and 28 February, national authorities recorded 1,885 people entering Colombia irregularly from Panama via Capurgana, in Acaandí municipality (Chocó). Of these, 1,599 individuals were characterised: 1,585 (nearly 99%) were Venezuelan nationals, and from them 298 (19%) were children and adolescents. Available border crossing data indicates that Venezuelan migrants and refugees entering Colombia from the north increased by 41% compared to the same period in 2024, highlighting a significant shift in mobility trends (Migración Colombia 10/03/2025).

This recent trend of reverse migrations – referring to the southward movement of migrants and refugees who initially travelled north but are returning because of policy changes – has led to increased arrivals in Colombia via both maritime and overland routes. Maritime transport costs of up to USD 230 limit some people’s ability to continue their journey, resulting in groups remaining temporarily in border areas, including in Acaandí, Juradó, Necoclí, Turbo (Antioquia), and Unguía (Chocó), with limited services. Communities report daily gatherings of 60–70 people awaiting registration and transfer to other municipalities, such as in Necoclí and Turbo (El Espectador 21/03/2025).

The increase in return flows is placing additional pressure on local infrastructure and response capacity in border areas with pre-existing humanitarian needs. Reduced US funding for migration and protection programming may constrain the ability to monitor and respond to emerging cross-border dynamics, including the increase in return flows and localised humanitarian impacts.

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS AND OPERATIONAL CONSTRAINTS

The active presence of NSAGs continues to constrain humanitarian access in Colombia. In 2024, 208 access-related incidents were recorded. Of these, 37% involved threats and violence against humanitarian personnel and assets; 31% were linked to military operations and hostilities disrupting humanitarian activities; and 28% resulted from movement restrictions imposed on humanitarian staff and supplies. Reported incidents included theft of humanitarian vehicles and relief items, as well as verbal threats warning of physical reprisals if organisations continued operations in certain areas. The departments most affected by these constraints include Caquetá, Cauca, Chocó, Nariño, and Norte de Santander (OCHA 03/02/2025).

Alongside insecurity, operational constraints stemming from overlapping crises and multiple at-risk population groups are further straining response capacity. Between January–February 2025, only 22% of the 22 humanitarian emergencies triggered by armed conflict and natural hazards received assistance in departments such as Antioquia, Arauca, Bolívar, Cauca, and Córdoba (OCHA 21/03/2025).

The suspension of US funding has reduced humanitarian organisations’ overall capacity to respond to emergencies, forcing responders to scale down operations and limit their reach. As a result, many people in need remain without support, creating tensions in communities and raising concerns around credibility and accountability (KII 21/03/2025). Organisations responsible for monitoring humanitarian access – such as the International NGO Safety Organisation, which has now limited its operations in Colombia to emergency response activities only – have also been affected (INSO 10/02/2025).

By February 2025, at least 1,336 humanitarian personnel had been directly affected by the US funding freeze, either through reduced operational activity or uncertainty around funding continuity (NGO Forum unpublished). Access constraints and operational limitations, compounded by funding cuts, are undermining the capacity of humanitarian organisations to meet growing needs in conflict-affected areas.

The recent crisis in Catatumbo (Norte de Santander) exemplifies the severity of the current situation. By January 2025, over 65,400 people had been affected by mass displacement and confinement in the subregion – representing 14.2% of all people in need nationwide and marking the largest humanitarian emergency reported in Colombia in over a decade (CODHES 24/01/2024).