

# COLOMBIA

## Overview of risks from November 2021 to April 2022

### SUMMARY

This risk report seeks to inform humanitarian decision makers and facilitate response planning through an analysis of the following:

- the possible evolution of the crisis dynamics in Colombia over the next six months (November 2021 to April 2022)
- factors that may lead to changes in the humanitarian situation
- humanitarian needs that may arise if risks materialise.

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## METHODOLOGY

Risk analysis is the process of identifying and unpacking potential future events that may affect individuals, assets, and the environment. Risk analysis is not a forecast and does not aim to predict the immediate future; instead, it aims to identify possible futures with significant negative humanitarian consequences.

ACAPS' risk analysis aims to help humanitarian decision makers understand potential future changes in a specific context and their humanitarian impact. If probable future developments are exposed and their impact understood, they can be included in response planning and preparedness. The methodological basis for this risk analysis is described in the [ACAPS risk analysis methodology](#) note. It is based on a secondary data review and is supplemented by interviews with experts.

Risk analysis is not an exact science. An event identified by one analyst as a hazard might be identified by another as a trigger for a different event that the second analyst considers the hazard. Risk analysis depends on a solid understanding of the context and on investigating the interaction of variables that cause or resist change.

Risk is a function of severity and probability. The risk posed by a potential event increases as either the expected severity of the event or the probability that it will occur increases. The probability of a risk does not need to be high for it to be of concern.

Each risk presented in this report is introduced by a **rationale** explaining the risk and its context. The identified **triggers** are a series of factors and events that could contribute to the materialisation of the risk. The **impact** section describes the likely humanitarian consequences of each risk.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACAPS thanks the Intersectoral Emergency Response Mechanism (MIRE) consortium partners and OCHA for their input. The analysis presented in this report is the sole responsibility of ACAPS and does not necessarily reflect the position of the organisations cited.

## SITUATION OVERVIEW

### Armed conflict

The diversification of armed groups following the demobilisation of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) in 2016 and conflicts over territorial control have significantly contributed to the increase in displacements and confinements in areas previously occupied by the FARC-EP. The conflict is fragmented, with different groups and dynamics present in different parts of the country ([CORE 26/07/2021](#)).

Conflict between armed groups is related to economic interests in areas where the FARC-EP previously operated, such as in the Pacific and Catatumbo regions. Economic interests are associated with territorial expansion and the control of transport routes and strategic regions for coca cultivation, gold extraction, and overall control of the community ([Pares 19/08/2021](#); [Indepaz 13/09/2021](#)). Aside from clashes between armed groups, there are also clashes with state forces seeking to combat these armed groups.

There are different armed groups currently active in Colombia, including the Gaitanist Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AGC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), Los Caparros (or Caparrapos), Los Rastrojos, and the Popular Liberation Army (EPL, also called Los Pelusos). These groups are present in several parts of the country, with differences in their territorial reach. They are present in the departments of Antioquia, Arauca, Cauca, Chocó, Norte de Santander, and Meta, among other regions ([Indepaz 04/10/2021](#); [Pares 19/08/2021](#)).

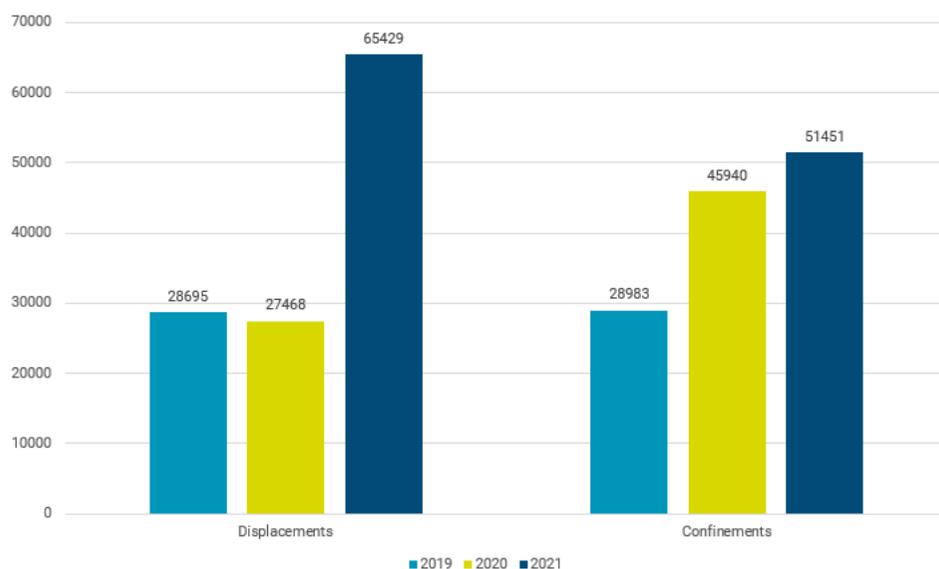
Following the demobilisation of the FARC-EP in 2016, 30 groups have been formed. These groups comprise members who did not demobilise with the 2016 peace agreement, demobilised members who subsequently returned to the armed groups, and new recruits. Some of the main groups are Segunda Marquetalia, the structures affiliated with alias 'Gentil Duarte' such as the Comando Coordinador de Occidente (CCO), and the Oliver Sinisterra Front ([InSight Crime 27/10/2019](#); [Indepaz 04/10/2021](#); [CORE 26/07/2021](#)). These groups have approximately 5,200 members ([Indepaz 04/10/2021](#)).

## Forced displacements and confinements

There is an increase in the number of mass displacements<sup>1</sup> and confinements resulting from armed conflict. In 2020, 27,400 people were involved in mass displacements, similar to 2019 figures. As at 31 October, over 65,000 people have been displaced in 2021 – an increase of 138% compared to 2020 figures. The number of people affected by confinements has also increased, from 29,000 in 2019 to 51,400 in 2021 as at October 2021 (OCHA accessed 05/11/2021; OCHA 26/10/2021). Displaced and confined people in 2021 are concentrated in the departments of Antioquia, Bolívar, Córdoba, Cauca, Chocó, Nariño, Norte de Santander, and Valle del Cauca (OCHA accessed 05/10/2021; OCHA 26/10/2021).

Individual displacement<sup>2</sup> is difficult to track, and comprehensive, up-to-date data is unavailable. Evidence suggests that it occurs frequently (ACAPS 29/09/2021).

Figure 1. Mass displacements and confinements in 2019–2021.



Source: OCHA (05/11/2021 and 26/10/2021)

<sup>1</sup> 'Mass displacement' refers to the displacement of at least 50 people or ten households in a single event (OCHA accessed 26/09/2021).

<sup>2</sup> 'Individual displacement' refers to displacements with fewer than 50 people or ten households being displaced in one event (OCHA 2013).

## COVID-19

Although the progress of the national vaccination plan in Colombia has led to an improvement in the country's economy and a decrease in containment measures, the socio-economic impact of the pandemic in Colombia continues.

On the one hand, during the first half of 2021, the country experienced an economic growth of 8.8%, compared to 7.4% for the same period in 2020 (DANE 17/08/2021 and 14/08/2020). Annual growth is expected to be at 9% by the end of 2021 (Portafolio 23/09/2021 and 24/09/2021). On the other hand, unemployment rates have not reached pre-pandemic levels. In September 2021, the unemployment rate was 12.1% (DANE 09/2021); the rate was 10.2% for the same month in 2019 (Portafolio 31/10/2019).

The pandemic has led to an increase in people living in poverty in the country, with the number reaching 18.9 million in 2021 compared to 17.5 million before the pandemic (World Bank accessed 06/10/2021). It also worsened food insecurity (FAO and WFP 30/07/2021).

## Refugees and migrants from Venezuela

Colombia hosts 1.74 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela (R4V 22/10/2021). 87% of them entered the country for the first time between 2016–2019, 9% in 2020, and 2% until August 2021. The remaining 2% entered the country before 2015. 58% of these refugees and migrants have jobs, 96% plan to stay for at least another year, and 3% plan to return to Venezuela (DANE 15/10/2021).

As at August 2021, 89% of Venezuelans have considered applying for the Temporary Protection Permit (PPT) launched by the Colombian Government to regularise their migration status (DANE 15/10/2021). The PPT is a temporary protection mechanism for refugees that allows the transit of Venezuelans into the country. Venezuelans who take advantage of this measure will have ten years to acquire their resident visa (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores 01/03/2021). Around 1.2 million Venezuelans are in the application process, and about 345,000 have already received the PPT (Blu Radio 26/10/2021).

# 1. Significant changes in territorial control trigger conflict escalation and lead to an increase in humanitarian needs



## Rationale

The increase in the number of armed groups following the demobilisation of the FARC-EP and new configurations in their alliances facilitate their expansion and control of strategic transport routes and regions (Indepaz 13/09/2021; Pares 19/08/2021). From 1 April to 8 October 2021, there has been a 111% increase in violent events compared to the same period in 2020 and a 34% increase compared to the same period in 2019. During the last six months, 71% of violent events have been in the departments of Antioquia, Bolívar, Córdoba, Chocó, Cauca, Valle del Cauca, Norte de Santander, and Nariño (ACLEDD accessed 12/11/2021). These violent events include clashes between armed groups and attacks against civilians.

From 1 January to 31 October 2021, these eight departments accounted for 98% of displacements and 99% of confinements at the national level (OCHA accessed 05/11/2021). As at August 2021, 46,000 people were still displaced because of a lack of security guarantees to facilitate their return (OCHA 22/09/2021).

**The conflict is at risk of escalating because of possible breaches of non-aggression pacts and increased clashes between armed groups to expand their territorial control, which would increase violent events. This increase in violence would lead to more people being affected by displacement and confinement, people in need of humanitarian assistance, and returns without security guarantees.**

Populations exposed to the actions of armed groups face a reduction in their access to essential services, livelihoods, and humanitarian aid because of increased confinements and displacements. The areas most at risk of increased violence are those that had a strong

FARC-EP presence before the peace agreement in 2016 and have been disputed by other armed groups after the FARC-EP's demobilisation. These areas include the north of Antioquia, the Catatumbo region, and the Pacific region in the departments of Chocó and Nariño, with a presence of ELN, AGC, and post-FARC groups.

The number of victims of anti-personnel mines (APMs) has also increased by 582% between 2017–2020, making these mines another relevant factor to consider. There were 57 mine victims in 2017, 221 in 2018, 352 in 2019, 389 in 2020, and 263 during the first half of 2021 (ICRC 2021; CICR 12/08/2021).

## Triggers by region

Among the primary triggers are two dynamics. First is the escalation of territorial disputes in areas where no armed actor has consolidated territorial control. Second is the consolidation of an armed group or several groups under alliances and non-aggression pacts in a specific region.

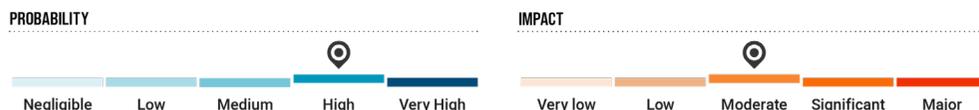
- The capture of AGC leader alias 'Otoniel' may spark violence in regions where the AGC was given territorial control to 'franchises', which have expanded organised crime through local gangs in Colombia. Violence in Norte de Santander, Nariño, Córdoba, Bolívar, and Antioquia may rise with the weakening of the franchises without AGC backing, making these regions vulnerable to attacks by other armed groups (InSight Crime 25/10/2021). Violence in these departments may also increase with the search for culprits of Otoniel's capture and for the consolidation of a new AGC leader (El Colombiano 25/10/2021).
- In northern Antioquia, southern Bolívar, and southern Córdoba, the presence of the Segunda Marquetalia through Fronts 18 and 36 heightens the clashes between the AGC, ELN, and Los Caparros (Indepaz 13/09/2021; FIP 09/07/2021). The number of armed groups in the region is likely to increase as they aim to control the passage to the Magdalena Medio region and its connection with the seaports in the north of the country, gold mining, and coca cultivation. These three departments account for 18% of coca cultivation and 57% of mining in the country (Observatorio de Drogas de Colombia 2020; UNODC 15/07/2021).
- The territorial expansion of the AGC and ELN towards southern Chocó and northwestern Antioquia and their interest in controlling the Pacific region of Chocó may increase territorial disputes (InSight Crime 24/10/2021; Indepaz 13/09/2021). Mainly, the control of the Pacific region of Chocó facilitates drug trafficking and allows the extraction and trafficking of gold in the municipalities of Nóvita, El Cantón de San Pablo, Istmina, Río Quito, and Unión Panamericana. These municipalities account for 60% of gold mining in the department (UNODC 15/07/2021).

- In the municipalities of Argelia and El Tambo in the department of Cauca, the confrontations may increase between the CCO (through the Jaime Martínez and Carlos Patiño mobile columns) and the ELN, given their interest in expanding north towards Valle del Cauca (Pares 19/08/2021; Indepaz 13/09/2021). These clashes are associated with the control of river access to the Pacific region through the Micay River, which facilitates the transit of irregular economies, principally drug trafficking.
- In Catatumbo and southern Cesar, confrontations between the ELN, the EPL, Los Rastrojos, and the AGC could intensify, given the alliances between the EPL, Los Rastrojos, and the AGC to weaken the ELN (Pares 22/02/2021; InSight Crime 19/01/2021). About 28% of the country's coca crops are concentrated in these areas, facilitating drug trafficking to Venezuela and Brazil (Observatorio de Drogas Colombia, 2020).
- The expansion and territorial control of the CCO, with alleged alliances with the 'Post FARC' in the Telembí triangle (made up of the municipalities of Magüí Payán, Barbacoas and Roberto Payán), could result in disputes over territory with AGC (Pares 19/08/2021; Indepaz 09/2021). The importance of the Telembí triangle is related to the concentration of 24% of coca cultivation in the department of Nariño and the fact that it is a connection point to the municipality of Tumaco, where about 29% of coca cultivation in the department of Nariño is registered (Observatorio de Drogas de Colombia, 2020).
- Increasing territorial disputes raise insecurity levels and **make humanitarian access to populations in need more difficult** because of security risks that members of humanitarian organisations may face (cf. risk 2).
- **Humanitarian needs increase.**
  - The escalation of the conflict increases unmet needs. Needs are expected in the areas of health, protection, food security, nutrition, and WASH.
  - There are protection risks associated with community members living in areas of disputed or changing territorial control and targeted by armed groups for allegedly collaborating with the groups' respective opponents.
  - The physical and mental health of populations in regions with high levels of conflict deteriorate.
  - Sexual and gender-based violence as a result of women's vulnerability to sexual aggression in the context of conflict increase. From 1958–2017, about 92% of sexual assaults in the context of the armed conflict were against women and continue to be after the peace agreement in 2016 (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica accessed 12/11/2021; HRW accessed 12/11/2021).
  - Increased restrictions on access to crops and livelihoods because of the installation of APMs, confinement, and fighting lead to increased food security needs and more frequent disruption of income-generating activities.

## Impacts

- **Increased violence and fighting lead to increased displacement and confinement.** From 1 January to 31 October 2021, more than 65,000 people were involved in mass displacement, and around 51,000 were confined (OCHA accessed 05/11/2021). Considering these figures, the next six months might result in 50,000–80,000 IDPs and around 50,000 confinements. These estimations are part of the possible escalation of conflict in the departments of Antioquia, Bolívar, Córdoba, Chocó, Cauca, Valle del Cauca, Norte de Santander, and Nariño. These departments accounted for 71% of violent acts, 98% of displacements, and 99% of confinements in the last six months.
- **The increased use of APMs** is affecting a growing number of people with injuries and deaths, as well as restrictions in their access to crops in areas where mines have been installed.
- **Forced recruitment by armed groups, particularly of minors, increases.** In recent months, the population and government institutions have denounced the forced recruitment of minors in the departments of Antioquia, Bolívar, Caquetá, Amazonas, Valle del Cauca, and Norte de Santander (Pares 11/06/2021; OCHA 22/09/2021).
- **Response capacity is insufficient.** State institutions and humanitarian organisations will likely not have enough capacity to respond to the needs of displaced and confined communities.
- The number of displaced people who return to their places of origin **without security guarantees** increases. IDPs decide to return to their communities because of the lack of institutional capacities to provide dignified humanitarian responses and the required assistance (OCHA 26/10/2021).
- **The number of Venezuelan refugees and migrants** affected by forced displacement and recruitment increases. In 2020, approximately 1,650 Venezuelans were displaced in Colombia as a result of armed conflict. Between 2017–2020, 33 cases of recruitment of children and adolescents were registered (CODHES 02/07/2021). Venezuelans often lack knowledge about the dynamics of the armed conflict and have high socioeconomic vulnerability.

## 2. Escalating conflict leads to a significant deterioration of humanitarian access to the affected populations



### Rationale

**There is a risk of humanitarian access to the affected populations significantly worsening because of the conflict escalation.**

In connection with risk 1, the escalation of the conflict is also likely to result in increased restrictions on the access of humanitarian organisations to the affected populations.

Attacks against health workers, ambulances, and health facilities are currently increasing. 218 attacks on medical missions were recorded in 2019, 325 in 2020, and 256 in 2021 until June (CICR 14/03/2021; Ministry of Health 02/06/2021).

In relation to the barriers to humanitarian assistance, between January–August 2021, only 31% of confinements reported were responded to because of access restrictions, such as the installation of APMs and fighting between armed groups (OCHA 22/09/2021).

In some instances, armed groups restrict people's access to humanitarian assistance because they do not allow people to report violent events. They instil fear in people through threats and reprisals (OCHA 30/03/2020). Given the situation, violent events are not registered, precise information about the needs of affected people cannot be collected, and their access to humanitarian assistance is highly limited.

### Triggers

- Conflict between different armed groups is sustained, and there remains no territorial hegemony by one of the groups.
- The diversification of armed groups that are unaware of humanitarian work and principles, and that do not trust humanitarian actors, continues.
- Threats and reprisals from armed groups against the affected populations increase to prevent the reporting of violent events.

### Impacts

- More needs are unmet because humanitarian organisations cannot reach the affected populations.
- Areas with severe access restrictions for humanitarian organisations increase because of the installation of APMs.
- Attacks on humanitarian organisations and insecurity for teams deployed in affected areas increase.
- There are fewer data and information available on the affected populations because needs assessments cannot be carried out, and the affected communities are afraid to denounce the facts to the authorities and humanitarian organisations.
- The lack of information makes the real needs and the current situation of the humanitarian crisis invisible, contributing to gaps in the response and unmet needs.
- Affected areas would be the regions highlighted in risk 1 in relation to the escalation of the conflict.

### 3. During the six months leading up to the 2022 elections, violence against political and social leaders increases and new protests emerge, with humanitarian consequences



#### Rationale

There is a trend of violence against political and social leaders during pre-election periods. Six months before the 2014 elections, 121 acts of violence (including threats, kidnappings, forced disappearances, attacks, and assassinations against political and social leaders) were reported (MOE 04/04/2018). Similarly, six months before the 2018 elections, 135 violent election-related incidents were recorded (Pares 06/06/2018; MOE 13/10/2021). This trend continued until the six months before the elections in 2022; 304 violent acts were reported between 13 March and 13 October, which is an increase of 126% compared to the same pre-election period in 2018 (MOE 13/10/2021). These attacks occurred in the context of a general increase in violent acts directed against social leaders in Colombia (Comisión Colombiana de Juristas 25/08/2021).

Of the 304 violent acts reported in 2021, 27% were aggressions against women. These occurred in 84.4% of the departments in Colombia. During the first semester of 2021, 51% of violent events were concentrated in six departments: Cauca, Antioquia, Valle del Cauca, Bogotá, Tolima, and Norte de Santander (MOE 13/10/2021).

**In the context of the congressional elections in March 2022 and the presidential elections in May, there is a risk of increased violence towards political and social leaders who support the peace process.**

As at 13 September 2021, 30 of the 50 murders reported in 2021 resulting from political violence occurred in the Special Transition Circumscriptions for Peace (CTEPs), which are

the 167 municipalities most affected by the armed conflict (Caracol 15/10/2021). Of the 16 regions that make up the CTEPs, the regions that registered 68% of the violent acts are: Bajo Cauca, Magdalena-Guajira-Cesar, and Nariño-Cauca-Valle del Cauca (MOE 24/08/2021).

As at 23 August 2021, the political parties with the highest number of victims were the Green Alliance Party (29%), the Indigenous and Social Alternative Movement (13%), and Colombia Humana Patriotic Union (13%), which are opposition parties not aligned with the Government (Pares 03/09/2021).

The attacks against leaders highlight the fragility of the peace agreement and the shortcomings of the State in protecting communities and peace defenders.

**There is also a risk of increased social protests before the elections, affecting people's access to goods and services.**

There has been discontent with the Government over economic and social inequality and police abuses, amplified by the effects of the pandemic. In April 2021, a wave of protests related to an unpopular tax reform resulted in a prolonged national strike that, as at November, still congregates people (El Colombiano 11/10/2021; Portafolio 19/07/2021; ICG 02/07/2021).

In the context of the 2022 elections, protests will likely increase as people try to exert pressure on political candidates in relation to discontent on issues of health, education, poverty, and police reform, which have been presented as bills before Congress but have not yet been debated.

The national strike has caused fuel and product shortages and price increases and has affected the transport of agricultural products. For example, in May 2021, the national shortage of products reached 19.3%. Among the products least available on the market were eggs, chicken, and beef (La República 04/06/2021; El Colombiano 10/05/2021; FAO and WFP 30/07/2021).

#### Triggers

- The State does not have enough capacity to provide protection to social leaders, politicians, and candidates for the 2022 elections who support the peace process, particularly in the 16 regions that constitute the CTEPs.
- Conflict and the peace process are highly prominent in the political debate during election campaigns, meaning the proposals of candidates for Congress and the presidency will likely include a discussion on the peace process.

- Candidates and political and social leaders support protests to gain popularity in the 2022 elections (El País 07/10/2021; Caracol Radio 06/08/2021). In particular, these leaders back opposition parties.
- The Government fails to comply with the agreements reached in the national strike on health, education, poverty, and police reform, among other issues, and to debate before Congress the ten bills related to the agreements reached with the population and the National Strike Committee.
- Armed groups take advantage of the protests to commit acts of violence and vandalism. Between 28 April and 30 May 2021, 56 violent actions by armed groups with paramilitary and self-defence practices were recorded in the context of social protests. These violent acts were aimed at demonstrators to generate fear through violence (JEP 28/07/2021).

### Impacts

- Protection needs for social leaders, politicians, and candidates for the 2022 elections increase.
- The number of people injured and killed in clashes during social protests resulting from disagreements between the population and the Government increases. According to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, Colombia is the country with the second-highest number of violations to the right to life in the context of social protests (JEP 28/07/2021).
- The blockades of main roads make access to markets and livelihoods difficult, which leads to a shortage of basic products and price increases.
- The staff of humanitarian missions and ambulances will likely be affected by social protests. During the first 27 days of the national strike in Colombia, there were more than 180 attacks against medical missions (Infobae 25/05/2021). The main targets of the attacks were ambulances and medical personnel. 39 medical missions were also affected by road blockades from the beginning of the national strike on 28 April 2021 to June 2021 (Ministerio de Salud 02/06/2021).
- Humanitarian organisations cannot provide humanitarian assistance to people in need because protests and road blockades make access to the affected population difficult.

## 4. The strengthening of armed groups in Venezuela and the increase of armed confrontations in the border corridors between Colombia and Venezuela result in displacements towards Colombia



### Rationale

**There is a risk of further displacement into Colombia resulting from a possible escalation of the conflict in Venezuela's border states with Colombia.** The strengthening of armed groups in the border areas results in territorial disputes between armed groups and with the Venezuelan armed forces.

Several Colombian armed groups have a presence in Venezuela, including the ELN and two post-FARC structures: the Second Marquetalia and the Front 10 (InSight Crime 13/10/2021).

On the one hand, there is the possibility of increased fighting between armed groups for territorial control of the border corridors with Colombia, the exploitation of illegal coltan mining, and drug trafficking in Apure, Bolívar, and Táchira in Venezuela. Coltan is mined in the Venezuelan state of Bolívar and then transported to Colombia with the support of the Venezuelan armed forces (InSight Crime 18/08/2021). With regard to drug trafficking, the control of strategic corridors such as Puerto Nariño and Puerto Inirida in Colombia are critical to the trafficking of drugs from Venezuela to western Colombia and Brazil.

On the other hand, there is also the possibility of an increase in clashes between armed groups and the Venezuelan armed forces. Such conflicts are related to the end of Venezuelan government support to some of the leftist Colombian armed groups and changes in alliances thanks to economic and political interests. The clashes between post-FARC groups and Venezuelan armed forces in the Venezuelan state of Apure in March 2021 are evidence of a disagreement over economic and political interests between the armed groups and the Venezuelan Government, which until 2020 gave a certain degree of support to the leftist Colombian armed groups (InSight Crime 13/10/2021). There is evidence of Venezuelan government support to the post-FARC groups to facilitate their permanence and operation in Venezuelan territory through alliances for the profit of illicit economies, including drugs and mineral exploitation (InSight Crime 18/10/2021 and 18/08/2021; El Nacional 20/05/2021). Following smaller-scale attacks in March 2021, the Venezuelan Government carried out a military operation against the Front 10. As a result of the fighting, more than 5,800 people were displaced to Colombia (CISP et al. 27/03/2021; GIFMM 19/04/2021). With the March operation only targeting the Front 10, it remains unclear whether the Venezuelan Government continues to support (or tolerate) other groups present in Venezuelan territory (InSight Crime 13/10/2021).

With regard to the strengthening of armed groups within Venezuela, some of the needs of the Venezuelan population in the border area remain unmet, which makes them vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups. In the Venezuelan border states of Zulia, Táchira, Apure, Amazonas, and Bolívar, the State has neglected some of its obligations towards its citizens. The resident population in these states live in conditions of poverty. They rely on a precarious health system and a deficient education system that facilitates the penetration and recruitment of armed groups in the communities (FundaRedes 15/10/2021).

## Triggers

- Armed groups are strengthened through alliances for illegal mining and drug trafficking.
- The number of the members of armed groups in the Venezuelan border states of Táchira, Apure, and Bolívar increases as they aim to have greater presence and control in these territories and benefit from the economic rents derived from drug trafficking and the illegal exploitation and commercialisation of minerals (InSight Crime 18/10/2021 and 18/08/2021). Between 1,100–1,200 members of the ELN and 700 members of post-FARC groups are estimated to be in these Venezuelan border states with Colombia (Reuters 01/10/2021).

- The Venezuelan Government withdraws its support for Colombian armed groups because of the fighting between armed groups and with the Venezuelan armed forces as a result of the termination of alliances and given economic and political interests.
- Armed clashes between Nueva Marquetalia and Front 10, as well as between the post-FARC groups and ELN, in the territories of Apure, Zulia, Táchira, and Bolívar increase as a result of disputes over territorial control of drug trafficking and illegal mining routes (FundaRedes 15/10/2021 and 06/09/2021).
- The ranks of armed groups present in the border area are strengthened through the recruitment of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Colombia, in Venezuela, and at border crossings. The precarious economic conditions of some Venezuelan migrants and refugees make them more vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups, given that the latter offer food, shelter, and money in exchange for work in coca processing, surveillance, and intelligence, among other activities (Blu Radio 02/09/2021).
- The Venezuelan Government lacks the capacity to respond to the humanitarian needs of conflict-affected people in the Venezuelan territory, resulting in their displacement to Colombia.

## Impacts

- The capacities in Colombia to attend to future displacements in the border areas of La Guajira, Arauca, and Norte de Santander are overwhelmed.
- The humanitarian needs of communities potentially displaced into Colombia by armed clashes in Venezuela increase. Key needs include physical and mental healthcare, especially for children, adolescents, the elderly, and pregnant women; food security and nutrition, with a differential approach considering population groups that include the elderly, people with disabilities, newborns, children, and nursing and pregnant women; WASH to prevent the spread of diseases, including COVID-19; and shelter.
- Human rights violations by armed groups and protection needs increase. Mostly, displaced people are vulnerable to conflict-related dynamics, such as sexual assault, forced recruitment, and landmines, among other vulnerabilities.

## 5. Political instability, insecurity, and humanitarian needs in Haiti lead to more arrivals of Haitian migrants and refugees in Colombia, where they are affected by the conflict



### Rationale

**There is a risk of increased arrivals of Haitian migrants and refugees in Colombian territory as a result of the continuation and worsening of the crisis in their country, which puts them at risk of being affected by the conflict in Colombia, with serious consequences for their protection needs.**

Haiti is currently affected by a humanitarian, economic, and political crisis. Repeated postponements of elections and the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021 have amplified political instability (BBC 28/09/2021; ICG 30/09/2021; ACAPS 26/10/2021). Rampant insecurity and violence related to the presence of armed gangs have led to internal displacement and limited humanitarian access within the country (ICG 30/09/2021). This situation is compounded by humanitarian needs related to the August 2021 earthquake, which killed 2,200 people and affected 800,000, with more than 38,000 people still displaced at the end of September (OCHA 07/10/2021). Damage and destruction to crops and infrastructure caused by the earthquake and a tropical storm that followed shortly afterwards, as well as economic problems, have worsened food insecurity, with 4.3 million people experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) and requiring urgent assistance (IPC 24/09/2021). These factors have led to an increase in migratory flows to North America. The main route from South America towards Central America passes through Colombia and Panama (El País 12/09/2021).

The municipality of Necoclí, in the Urabá region, is a crossing point to the Darién Gap – a 266km jungle corridor between Colombia and Panama. Migrants must wait in Necoclí to ride boats to Capurgana, where they can begin their journey on foot through the Darién Gap. The problem is that the Colombian and Panamanian authorities have established a quota of 500 migrants per day who can ride the boats to Capurgana (El Tiempo 21/09/2021; Televisa 14/10/2021). More than 88,000 people crossed the Darién Gap between January–September 2021 (OCHA 24/09/2021). Around 21,000 Haitians were in the municipality of Necoclí, Antioquia, in mid-October 2021 (Radio Nacional 10/10/2021; ADRA 05/10/2021). By the last week of October, the Colombian Government reported that about 14,500 Haitians left the country following the foreign ministers’ summit on the Haitian migration crisis held on 20 October 2021, but that still leaves 7,000 Haitians in Necoclí (Blu Radio 24/10/2021).

Map: Haitian migrants’ route from Necoclí to Panama

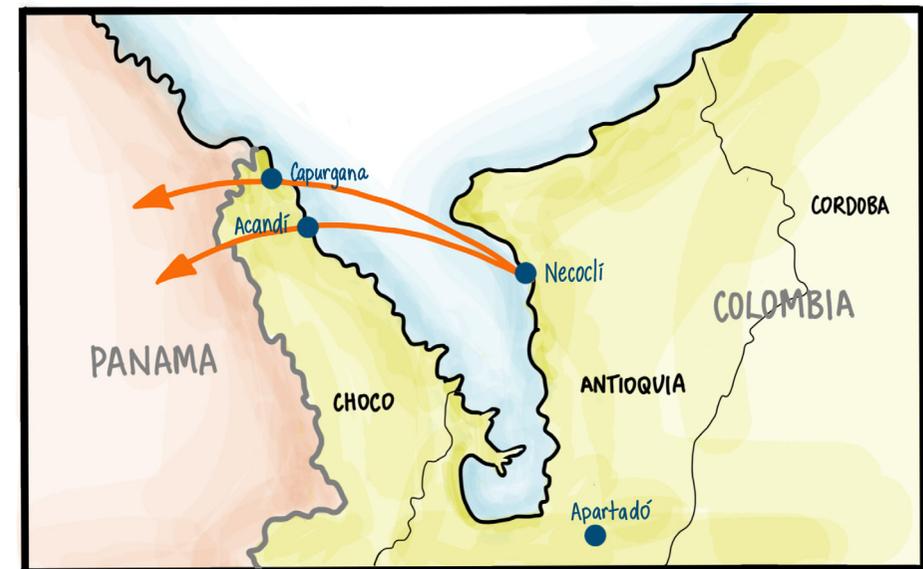


Illustration by Sandie Walton-Ellery

The humanitarian implications of the presence of Haitians in Necoclí are significant. On the one hand, Haitians are unaware of the dynamics of the conflict in Colombia, which puts them in a vulnerable position. Different armed groups are present in Urabá, and they exercise a certain degree of control over the border routes (OCHA 24/09/2021). Haitian migrants and refugees might suffer abuses (including rape, human trafficking, and forced recruitment) by armed groups. There are accounts of people dying trying to cross the border (El País 29/09/2021). On the other hand, there is insufficient institutional and humanitarian capacity to assist Haitians in Necoclí. Their needs have overwhelmed the capacities of humanitarian actors to respond and provide health and sanitation services (OCHA 24/09/2021).

## Triggers

- The number of Haitians leaving their country increases because of the following reasons:
  - increased insecurity and criminal violence in Haiti
  - increased political instability in Haiti
  - lack of state and humanitarian response to humanitarian needs related to the August 2021 earthquake.
- The number of migrants arriving in Colombia as a crossing point for their migration to North America increases.
- Borders between Panama and Colombia are closed to control migration and the spread of COVID-19, leaving migrants stranded in Colombia.
- The number of people who can transit between Colombia and Panama is restricted.

## Impacts

- Migrants' needs for protection when crossing the Darién Gap increase, given the difficult geographical conditions of the region and the risk of abuse by armed groups.
- Sexual violence against Haitian women and children during their transit in Colombia increases.
- Given their socioeconomic vulnerability and the presence of armed groups, migrants are subjected to forced recruitment and increased human trafficking while in transit to Colombia.
- Haitian migrants are subjected to labour exploitation.
- Migrant families are separated, with some family members reaching Panama while others cannot (for example because of the lack of resources or quota limitations).
- There are barriers to migrant access to healthcare because they are not affiliated with a health insurance system in Colombia and are unfamiliar with the routes and their rights to access emergency services.

- The need to access shelter and WASH increases, with many Haitians camping outdoors without access to sanitation facilities and drinking water (RCN Radio 24/09/2021; El País 30/09/2021).
- The response capacities of state institutions to provide primary care to Haitians stranded in Colombia are overwhelmed.

## AGGRAVATING FACTORS

### Rainy season

Colombia is currently facing the second rainy season of the year. This season begins in September and intensifies in the months of October–November. Between October–November 2021, rainfall is expected to be 40% above the historical volumes reported in previous years, leading to flood risks. The regions most affected will be the Andean, Caribbean, and Pacific regions (IDEAM 09/2021).

### COVID-19

A fourth wave of infections is expected in November (Caracol Radio 15/10/2021). The people mainly affected will be those who have not yet been vaccinated. This fourth wave is linked to the circulation of the Delta variant in the departments of Antioquia, Norte de Santander, and Atlántico (Semana 25/10/2021). Nationally, 40% of the Colombian population has received the full vaccination schedule, which means that the majority of the population is still unprotected (Ministry of Health accessed 26/10/2021).

## INFORMATION GAPS

- Up-to-date data about individual displacements is limited. This information gap limits the analysis of impacts on the people affected and the scale of the issue.
- Precise, current information about the Venezuelan Government's motivation behind their support and reduction of support to Colombian armed groups is unavailable.
- There is a lack of concrete data on the humanitarian needs of people and communities who do not report emergencies because of threats from armed groups.
- Up-to-date information on the COVID-19 containment measures imposed by armed groups and their humanitarian impact is unavailable.

This report has been funded by ECHO.

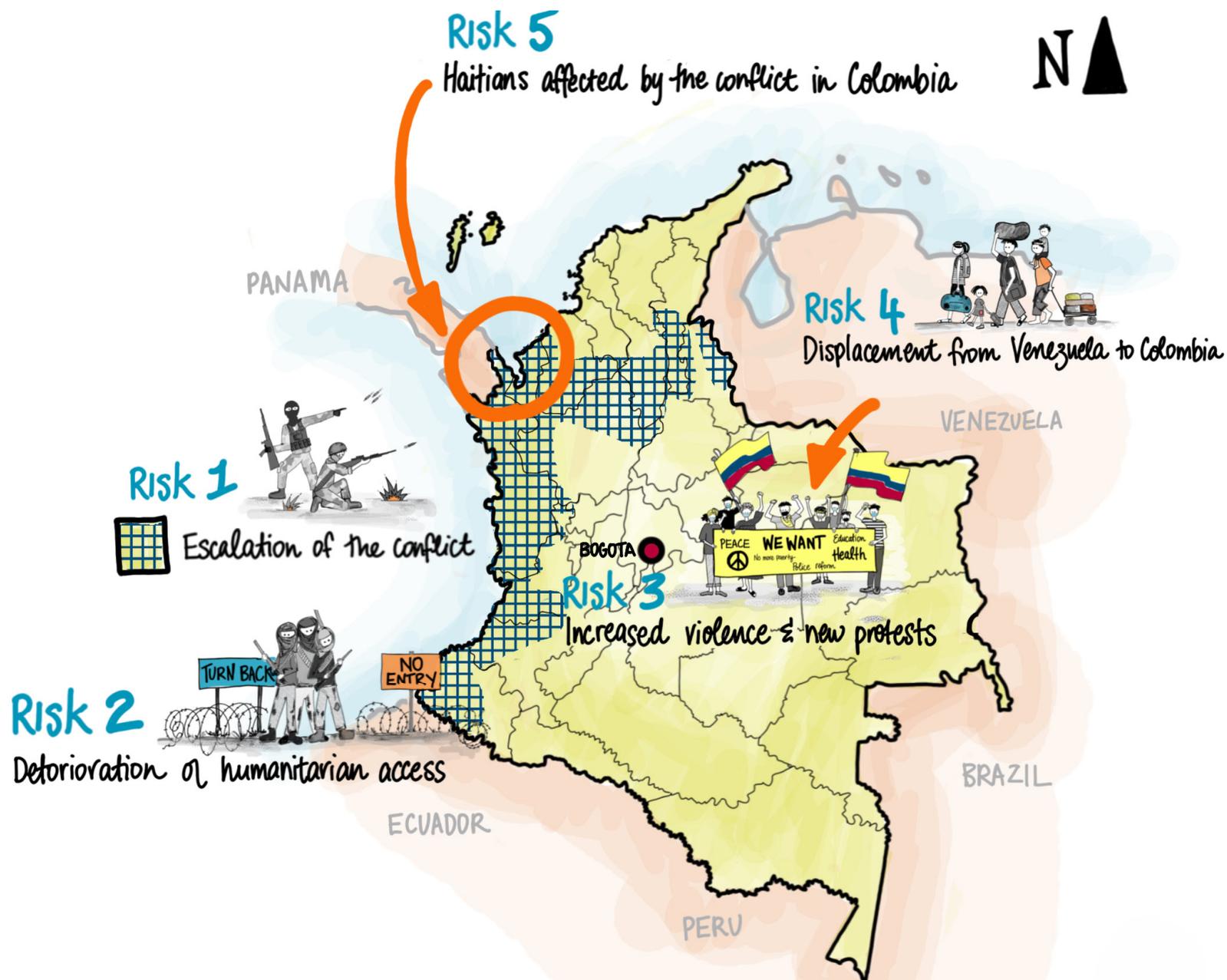


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