

The civil conflict and resulting violence in Colombia, ongoing for more than five decades, has caused internal displacement of more people than any other country (except Sudan). Out of 45.6 million, nearly 4 million Colombians have been forced to abandon their homes due to violence, creating one of the largest humanitarian crises in the Western hemisphere.



Photo: Juan Carlos Tomasi/MSF

Graciela and her family left their rural village after receiving threats from armed groups. They now live in an urban slum and struggle to get by. MSF maintains clinics in such areas where displaced families have gathered, providing medical and psychological care to victims of violence.

Colombia faces many challenges. Although it has great riches from oil production and mineral and agricultural resources, an estimated two-thirds of Colombians still live in poverty, primarily Afro-Cubans and people of indigenous descent.

Though the drug trade is perhaps Colombia's most recognized problem, its civil war—fought between guerrilla armies, paramilitary groups, the private armies of drug traffickers and the military—has each party vying for control of the country's vast wealth and territory, with farmers and villagers caught in the crossfire.

"Massacres, executions, intimidation and fear remain inescapable parts of everyday life," reports member charity **Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières** (MSF).

In the past 20 years, an estimated 200,000 people have been killed. Others, known as "los desplazados," or the displaced, have left their lands—and their only means of making a living—for urban slums. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates nearly three-quarters of the internally displaced are women and children.

In addition to the large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs), other consequences of the conflict include executions, dismemberment and sexual violence against women in unsecured IDP camps. Between 3,000 and 7,000 children have been forced to fight as soldiers.

Forced evacuations and intimidation of farmers, coupled with deforestation and soil and water contamination from pesticides, have repeatedly disrupted the planting and harvesting cycle, resulting in chronic nationwide food insecurity.

Global Impact member charity **Pan American Development Foundation's**

(PADF) Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons program addresses this concern and bolsters local resources to bring attention to the gravity of the situation.



Photo: PADF

Funded through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), PADF partners with the Colombian government and local NGOs to provide essential services, including agricultural assistance, education, health care, job training, income generation and resettlement. To date, the program has directly benefited more than 400,000 displaced individuals and created more than 60,000 jobs.

Additional Global Impact member charities, including **ACCION International**, **AmeriCares**, **Church World Service/CROP** and **Women for Women International**, are engaged in a wide variety of vital aid programs across Colombia—in urban slums and refugee camps and in the nearly inaccessible mountain regions. Local and international staff work with refugees, farmers, former soldiers and with thousands of IDPs who have fled the crossfire among the warring factions and government forces.

Forced from his village a decade ago, Esau Mena Mena had been struggling to regain his footing. Assistance from PADF allowed him to grow an array of crops and raise pigs and chickens. He now has a secure income, provides food for his family and is taking positive steps towards a better future for his children.

To learn more about how Global Impact charities are assisting refugees in Colombia and neighboring countries, please read the following recent story:

[Working to Overcome a Legacy of Violence in Colombia](#)