



### The humanitarian context in Colombia

Colombia, with a population of over 41.5 million, has recently experienced relative political stability and institutional strengthening and is moving towards economic recuperation.

However, the country remains among the most unequal in the world in terms of income and access to basic public goods and services, such as health, education and housing. About half of the population lives below the poverty line, with 15 percent facing extreme poverty, and most of these reside in rural areas. This is exacerbated by continued outbreaks of violence that lead to massive population displacements.

Although the Government has made considerable progress in demobilizing armed groups, it remains limited in its capacity to protect vulnerable populations and humanitarian assistance is needed to bridge the gaps in service provision.



### United Nations (UN) cooperation in Colombia

The three main goals of UN assistance in Colombia for 2008–2012 are the elimination of poverty; conservation and sustainable use of resources; and consolidation of democracy.

National, regional and local capacity will be strengthened to ensure improved and more equal access to services, particularly for more vulnerable groups; sustainable resource management; more effective institutions; and peacebuilding.

### The UN Humanitarian Action Plan for Colombia

In 2001, the UN agencies in Colombia developed a humanitarian action plan for the country, which aimed to ensure respect for, access to and implementation of human rights and basic humanitarian principles for the population affected by the humanitarian crisis caused by armed conflict and massive population movements.

Seven areas of action were highlighted: (i) prevention and protection; (ii) food security; (iii) health; (iv) education; (v) family wellbeing; (vi) socio-economic transition; and (vii) coordination and institutional strengthening.

### FAO's role in the Humanitarian Action Plan

FAO has been actively working to support agriculture-, livestock- and fisheries-based livelihoods in Colombia.

FAO's activities fall into the following categories:

- medium- and long-term development to improve food security and increase agriculture, livestock and fisheries production; or
- emergency interventions to rapidly rebuild livelihoods of communities affected by conflict and/or natural disasters.

The FAO Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordination Unit (ERCU) was established in Colombia to manage the implementation of emergency activities and to ensure that assistance is provided in a clear, homogenous and effective manner.

Through its longer-term interventions, FAO supports the sustainability of emergency activities by building the capacity of local, regional and national level authorities.



## FAO's emergency interventions in Colombia

At present, FAO is implementing two projects to support internally displaced urban populations and vulnerable communities at risk of displacement in rural areas of Bolívar, Sucre and Chocó departments.

The projects have a budget of USD 2.5 million, funded by the Government of the Republic of Italy and are benefiting 13 000 vulnerable households (7 950 in Sucre and Bolívar and 5 100 in Chocó).

FAO's current projects are focused on improving the livelihoods of the following key groups and reducing their dependence on food aid:

- Displaced rural populations living in urban and peri-urban areas with no access to land: FAO is working with a number of municipalities to support urban agriculture. The municipalities have provided small plots to be used for community/individual cultivation. FAO is also promoting the use of available "mini-spaces" for horticultural production, including rooftops and containers.
- Rural populations confined to an area and at risk of displacement: FAO is helping these communities to improve the quality and quantity of their production, by providing marketing and nutrition training and promoting sustainable, low-cost production methods.
- Returning and resettling households: FAO is assisting these populations by identifying suitable land and supporting the resumption of agricultural livelihoods.

These projects are being implemented with the following expected outcomes:

- Beneficiary households will improve their agricultural production capacity and reduce their dependence on food aid.
- Beneficiary households improve their living conditions and feel more secure in the places in which they are living, thus contributing to their sense of dignity.
- Improved livelihood conditions will lead to socio-economic stabilization and contribute to the peace process at the local level.
- The activities supporting the resettlement process will serve as a case study for the reintegration of people involved in illegal armed groups.

## Future support

Within the objectives of the emergency assistance provided by the ERCU in Colombia are the following:

- Support to reducing the vulnerability of displaced people (in collaboration with other UN agencies, particularly the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and resettled populations through household improved food production and the creation of agriculture-based employment.
- Support to vulnerable communities living in areas affected by recurrent disasters (droughts and floods) through local and community level risk management and early warning and response. This will include assistance for improved agriculture and fisheries production in flood-hit areas.

Based on these, FAO has developed project proposals for which Italy, Spain and the European Commission Humanitarian Aid department have expressed an interest in providing funding.



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