



UNICEF Colombia/2024/Amboculle/Colombia

UNICEF and its partners implement violence prevention initiatives in northern Medellín in August as part of a mobile response to provide assistance to children and families in transit.

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## Humanitarian Action for Children

# Colombia

### HIGHLIGHTS

- In Colombia, children and adolescents face multiple crises: escalating armed conflict and other violence, challenges posed by refugee and migration flows, disease outbreaks and the effects of climate change and climate variability, such as the La Niña and El Niño weather patterns. All these contribute to food insecurity and protection crises, and because of these conditions, in 2025 an estimated 13.4 million people,<sup>1</sup> including 4.2 million children and 4.5 million refugees and migrants, will require humanitarian assistance.
- UNICEF, alongside the Government and partners, will deliver life-saving assistance while integrating resilience-building into all programmes. This approach addresses immediate needs while ensuring sustainable interventions for children are connected through the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. UNICEF will implement gender-responsive, inclusive and integrated multisectoral programmes that prioritize the participation of children and adolescents, focusing on areas with the most urgent needs.
- UNICEF requires \$97.1 million in 2025 to meet the needs of vulnerable children and families affected by multiple crises, particularly those impacted by armed conflict, migration and natural disasters.

IN NEED

**13.4 million**  
**people**<sup>2</sup>

**4.2 million**  
**children**<sup>3</sup>

TO BE REACHED

**768,800**  
**people**<sup>4</sup>

**591,700**  
**children**<sup>5</sup>

### KEY PLANNED TARGETS



**43,700**

children screened for wasting



**172,000**

children/caregivers accessing community-based mental health and psychosocial support



**386,300**

children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning



**95,800**

people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

**US\$97.1**  
**million**

Figures are provisional and subject to change upon finalization of the inter-agency planning documents.

## HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS

Children in Colombia face multiple crises, including armed conflict, displacement, gender-based violence, disease outbreaks, migration challenges, malnutrition<sup>6</sup> and the impacts of climate change. In 2025, an estimated 13.4 million people, including more 4.2 million children, will require humanitarian assistance.

Armed conflict continues to devastate the lives of 9.7 million people in Colombia, with children often bearing the most severe consequences.<sup>7</sup> The situation has worsened with rising displacement, child recruitment into armed groups, gender based-violence,<sup>8</sup> landmine and unexploded ordnance accidents, attacks on schools and movement restrictions.

In the first half of 2024, more than 183,400 people were confined or displaced due to clashes between armed non-state actors.<sup>9</sup> Armed non-state actors and criminal organizations are reported to be present in more than 40 per cent of the country.<sup>10</sup> The Ombudsman's Office has raised concerns about the expansion and consolidation of non-state armed groups in Colombia.<sup>11</sup> As of October 2024, the Ombudsman's Office of Colombia had issued 323 early warnings have been issued, with 83 per cent related to the imminent risk of child recruitment by these groups – a phenomenon on the rise since 2021 and one that testifies to the territorial control exerted by these groups.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, attacks on schools jumped from 107 in early 2023 to 125 in 2024.<sup>13</sup> The suspension of the dialogue between the Government and armed non-state actors has resulted in an escalation in violence, child recruitment, incidents involving improvised explosive devices and attacks on schools.<sup>14</sup> Beyond these human-caused threats, in 2023, natural disasters displaced 351,000 people.<sup>15</sup>

Refugee and migrant children face escalating crises, including violence, family separation and a lack of access to protective services. As the country hosting the highest number of Venezuelan migrants in the region, with more 2.8 million as of January 2024,<sup>16</sup> Colombia's migrant and refugee population faces critical humanitarian needs. Children among these populations require immediate action, including a stronger protective environment to prevent violence and family separation. Unaccompanied and separated children require enhanced protective mechanisms, the establishment of effective monitoring systems and support for regularization and documentation processes.

Moreover, refugee and migrant children require improved access to early childhood development, to services for prevention and response to gender-based violence,<sup>17</sup> secondary education, menstrual health<sup>18</sup> and essential health and nutrition services. Among refugee and migrant populations, 15 per cent of pregnant women and 41 per cent of children under age 5 lack critical services. Nineteen per cent of surveyed households rely on unsafe water sources; this includes 14 per cent of the most vulnerable refugee and migrant households.<sup>19</sup>

## SECTOR NEEDS



### 3 million

Children need access to essential health services



### 741,400

Children in need of nutrition interventions



### 2.5 million

Children in need of protection services



### 3.5 million

Children risk losing educational continuity



### 2.1 million

Children in need of access to WASH services

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## STORY FROM THE FIELD



Yiner Quiguanter Cortés is a young leader of the Nasa Indigenous community in the department of Cauca, Colombia. He is leading an intervention aimed at protecting children and adolescents from the risks of armed conflict.

"Since 2018, we have been advancing a meaningful initiative titled 'Let's Take Children and Young People Away from War,'" said Yiner in September at an adolescent participation workshop led by the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC). Supported by UNICEF, this initiative offers alternative options and life opportunities to protect children and adolescents from risks linked to armed conflict, such as recruitment and exploitation.

"Today, children have dreams, and more than ever they are envisioning new possibilities and dreaming differently. They aspire to a dignified life, where their recognition stems from respect for life. We must be facilitators in making these dreams a reality. I believe that as youth leaders, we play a crucial role in facilitating these dreams."

[Read more about this story here](#)

# HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

UNICEF will collaborate with authorities and partners to address humanitarian needs arising from armed conflict, violence, migration and climate-related disasters. Efforts will focus on the most severely impacted regions of Colombia. An approach grounded in the humanitarian–development–peace nexus will balance life-saving assistance with initiatives promoting resilience and sustainable access to services.

UNICEF will implement prevention and response interventions addressing child recruitment, mine action, gender-based violence, child marriage, mental health, psychosocial distress and family separation. UNICEF will help enhance local capacities to respond effectively, empowering adolescents and families in crisis settings.

UNICEF will support the return to school for out-of-school children and promote safe learning environments and learning continuity in crises. UNICEF will also support the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration and provide mine risk education. Collaboration with teachers, leaders and government authorities will help develop disaster preparedness and response plans tailored to various ethnic groups.

In health and nutrition, UNICEF will enhance comprehensive primary health care and nutrition services in remote communities.<sup>20</sup> The focus will be on preventing and treating malnutrition in children under age 5 and addressing undernutrition during pregnancy. Ongoing monitoring and support of cases of malnutrition will ensure long-term success.

UNICEF's WASH interventions will use a community-based approach to improve services in health centres, schools, shelters and settlements. UNICEF will promote safe hygiene practices and distribute hygiene kits to prevent waterborne diseases and will also distribute menstrual hygiene management kits. Technical assistance and capacity-building for service providers are priorities.

UNICEF will support the Government in strengthening its shock-responsive social protection system by supporting government cash transfer programmes to reach vulnerable families, improving targeting mechanisms and enhancing local authorities' capacities for planning and financing.

UNICEF is committed to accountability and to involving affected populations, and especially girls and women, in decision-making. An important arm of work will be improving programme design and strengthening systems for protection of populations from sexual exploitation and abuse.

As part of its role in implementing the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan and the Humanitarian Response Plan for Community Priorities, UNICEF will lead the child protection, education, nutrition and WASH clusters. UNICEF will emphasize and promote localization, community engagement – especially girls' engagement – and preparedness, evidence-based decision-making and sustainability. The organization will enhance decentralized service provision through its field offices and will expand integrated service packages that are gender-responsive and inclusive. One priority will be collaboration with local authorities and with youth-led organizations, particularly those led by and working for such vulnerable groups as girls and adolescents and Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. Additionally, UNICEF will scale up services in regions severely impacted by crises and foster climate resilience through community-based solutions.

# 2025 PROGRAMME TARGETS



## Health (including public health emergencies)

- **124,800** children and women accessing primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities
- **3,800** children vaccinated against measles, supplemental dose



## Nutrition

- **43,700** children 6-59 months screened for wasting
- **3,000** children 6-59 months with severe wasting admitted for treatment
- **19,200** primary caregivers of children 0-23 months receiving infant and young child feeding counselling
- **30,700** children 6-59 months receiving micronutrient powder
- **12,200** pregnant women receiving preventative iron supplementation



## Child protection, GBViE and PSEA

- **172,000** children, adolescents and caregivers accessing community-based mental health and psychosocial support
- **113,500** women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions
- **40,100** people with safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel who provide assistance to affected populations
- **590** unaccompanied and separated children provided with alternative care and/or reunified
- **135,300** children provided with landmine or other explosive weapons prevention and/or survivor assistance interventions
- **930** children who have experienced violence reached by health, social work or justice services



## Education

- **386,300** children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning
- **45,570** children receiving individual learning materials
- **13,500** teachers and facilitators trained in basic pedagogy and/or mental health and psychosocial support



## Water, sanitation and hygiene

- **95,800** people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water for drinking and domestic needs
- **35,800** children using safe and appropriate WASH facilities and hygiene services in learning facilities and safe spaces
- **112,900** people reached with critical WASH supplies



## Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)<sup>21</sup>

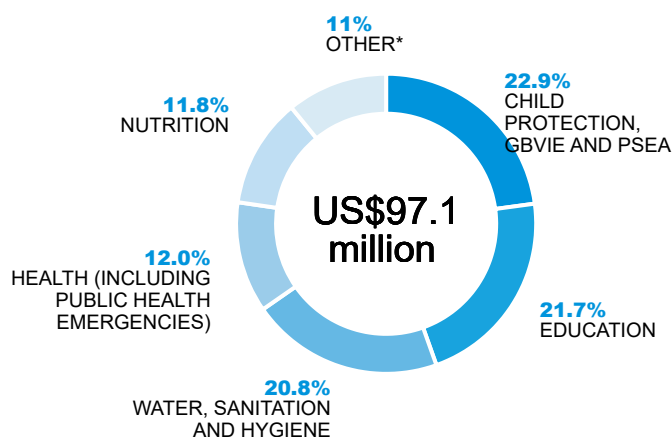
- **42,400** adolescents and young people who participate in or lead civic engagement initiatives
- **68,000** people reached with timely and life-saving information on how and where to access available services
- **45,900** people engaged in reflective dialogue through community platforms
- **139,900** people sharing their concerns and asking questions through established feedback mechanisms

## FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2025

In 2025, UNICEF is seeking \$97.1 to meet the urgent needs of children who are internally displaced or affected by violence, as well as refugee and migrant children and adolescents and their communities in Colombia, including those affected by climate-related disasters.<sup>22</sup>

The total funding requirement for Colombia has increased compared with the Colombia component of the 2024 Children on the Move South America regional appeal, which was \$68.7 million. In 2025, UNICEF aims to support 760,000 people – including approximately 600,000 children – who are affected by such ongoing crises as migratory flows, internal displacement and climate-related emergencies. Full funding will ensure children have continuous access to essential health, nutrition, child protection, water, sanitation, hygiene and education services, and will also strengthen emergency preparedness efforts.

Flexible funding is crucial to sustain critical services and enable UNICEF, partners and local authorities to provide a cross-sectoral humanitarian response, including vital protection and psychosocial support for vulnerable women and children. Without adequate and timely funding in 2025, the response to crises that are deeply affecting children, particularly migration and displacement crises, risks being underfunded and overlooked.



Sector	2025 requirements (US\$)
Health (including public health emergencies)	11,615,000 <sup>23</sup>
Nutrition	11,470,000
Child protection, GBVIE and PSEA	22,188,000 <sup>24</sup>
Education	21,067,000
Water, sanitation and hygiene	20,171,000
Social protection	775,000
Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)	9,788,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>97,074,000</b>

\*This includes costs from other sectors/interventions : Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP) (10.1%), Social protection (<1%).

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## ENDNOTES

1. This number is based on the Refugee and Migrant Needs Analysis 2024, which identifies 4.5 million individuals requiring assistance under the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan 2025, and on Humanitarian Response Plan for Community Priorities 2024–2025, which identifies an additional 8.9 million people in need.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. This figure is based on the number of teachers trained in education in emergencies, including psychosocial support, preparedness and educational response (13,497); the number of women receiving primary health care (31,210); the number of health and community workers trained to provide quality nutrition services to children under age 5, adolescents and/or pregnant and breastfeeding women (333); the number of primary caregivers of children aged 0–23 months who received counseling on child feeding and nutrition (19,231); and the number of people supplied with essential water, sanitation and hygiene supplies (112,841), plus the number of children to be reached as detailed in endnote 5. UNICEF uses the highest targets set for each programmatic area and an analysis to ensure no double counting.
5. The number of children to be reached includes children and adolescents accessing community mental health and psychosocial support services (35,236); children affected by landmines and other explosive devices who receive prevention and/or survivor assistance from UNICEF (135,300); children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning (386,284); and children aged 6–59 months who are screened for wasting (34,943, which is 80 per cent of the total target). UNICEF uses the highest targets set for each area, with cross-checking to ensure no double counting.
6. In 2023, Colombia reported 23,081 cases of wasting, with a prevalence of 0.62 per 100 children under age 5. A comparison of these figures with those reported in 2022 (where 21,195 cases were reported, with a weekly average of 401 cases and a prevalence of 0.56 per cent) reveals an 8.9 per cent increase in the number of cases, which is the highest prevalence reported for the event since the beginning of surveillance in 2017. Source: Instituto Nacional de Salud (INS) 2023. In 2023, a total of 288 deaths due to malnutrition in children under age 5 were reported. Of these, 57.98 per cent (167) occurred in children under age 1. Additionally, there was a higher incidence in males and in residents of populated centres and dispersed rural areas. Please note that the data on anaemia corresponds to data published for the country in 2015, with updated figures currently unavailable. The National Survey of Nutritional Status (ENSIN 2015) indicates that 25 out of every 100 children under the age of 5 (24.7 per cent) suffer from anaemia, representing a two-percentage-point improvement compared with 2010 data. The national prevalence of anaemia remains high, though, with the highest rates (62.5 per cent) observed in children 6–11 months. Afro-descendant communities, indigenous populations and the Orinoquia and Amazonia regions report the highest prevalence of anaemia, with rates reaching 33.1 per cent. Among pregnant women aged 13–49, the prevalence of iron deficiency was 44.5 per cent, which is 7 percentage points higher than the regional average.
7. Government of Colombia, Unidad para las Víctimas, online information, available at <[www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/](http://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/)>.
8. Children and adolescents are at risk of recruitment and use; sexual and gender-based violence; displacement and confinement; and are also victims of explosive devices. During disasters, schools are often used as shelters, leading to indefinite suspensions of academic activities. Women in conflict areas are exposed to gender violence, sexual violence, displacement and confinement. Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Colombia: Humanitarian Response Plan for Community Priorities 2024–2025, Summary, OCHA, March 2024, available at <[www.unocha.org/publications/report/colombia/colombia-humanitarian-response-plan-community-priorities-2024-2025-summary-enes](http://www.unocha.org/publications/report/colombia/colombia-humanitarian-response-plan-community-priorities-2024-2025-summary-enes)>.
9. OCHA, Humanitarian Report, January–July 2024, 3 September 2024, available (in Spanish) at <<https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/informe-tendencias-e-impacto-humanitario-en-colombia-2024-fecha-de-corte-enero-julio-de-2024-fecha-de-publicacion-03-de-septiembre-de-2024#:~:text=En%20lo%20corrido%20de%202024,afectada%20contin%C3%BAa%20siendo%20el%20Pac%C3%ADfico>>.
10. Pares Peace & Reconciliation Foundation, Chapter I I: Presence and actions of armed groups in Colombia 2024, July 2024, available (in Spanish) at <[www.pares.com.co/post/capitulo-i-i-presencia-y-accionar-de-grupos-armados-en-colombia-2024](http://www.pares.com.co/post/capitulo-i-i-presencia-y-accionar-de-grupos-armados-en-colombia-2024)>.
11. The Ombudsman's Office of Colombia, "La expansión y consolidación de los grupos armados ilegales son la principal amenaza para el país", press release, Bogotá, 23 January 2024, available at <<https://statics.teams.cdn.office.net/evergreen-assets/safelinks/1/atp-safelinks.html>>.
12. The Ombudsman's Office of Colombia, early warning system, accessed October 2024, available at <<https://alertastempranas.defensoria.gov.co/Alerta/Reporte>>.
13. Norwegian Refugee Council, Attack on education: An alarming increase in attacks on education during war, web article, 9 September 2024, available at <[www.nrc.no/feature/2024/attack-on-education/#:~:text=Attacks%20on%20education%2C%20documented%20by,NRC's%20Country%20Director%20in%20Colombia](http://www.nrc.no/feature/2024/attack-on-education/#:~:text=Attacks%20on%20education%2C%20documented%20by,NRC's%20Country%20Director%20in%20Colombia)>.
14. COALICO, "Children and schools continue to be targeted by armed groups in Colombia", public statement, Bogotá, 19 September 2024, available at <<https://coalico.org/prensa/comunicados-publicos/comunicado-publico-la-ninez-y-las-escuelas-siguen-en-la-mira-de-los-grupos-armados-en-colombia/>>.
15. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 2024 Global Report on Internal Displacement, IDMC, Geneva, May 2024, available at <[www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2024/](http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2024/)>.
16. International Organization for Migration, "Venezuelan Migrants Drive USD 529.1M Boost to Colombia's Economy: IOM Study", press release, IOM, Geneva, 25 April 2024, available at <[www.iom.int/news/venezuelan-migrants-drive-usd-5291m-boost-colombias-economy-iom-study#:~:text=Colombia%20hosts%20the%20highest%20population,Colombia's%20economic%20and%20cultural%20wealth](http://www.iom.int/news/venezuelan-migrants-drive-usd-5291m-boost-colombias-economy-iom-study#:~:text=Colombia%20hosts%20the%20highest%20population,Colombia's%20economic%20and%20cultural%20wealth)>.
17. Regarding sexual violence against migrant children in Colombia, in 2024, 1 out of every 2 Venezuelan women sexually assaulted was an adolescent (12–17 years old). In addition, 83 per cent of the reported cases among children and adolescents were girls. About 48 per cent of the migrant population is made up of women, more than 550,000 of them of menstruating age.
18. Chicas Ponderosas, Menstruación migrante: Una deuda pendiente con niñas y mujeres vulnerables, Different Latitudes, 9 January 2020, available at <<https://distintaslatitudes.net/historias/reportaje/menstruacion-migrante-10-historias-migrantes>>.
19. Note 19 per cent of the surveyed households use water supply methods without pre-treatment or disinfection, or those that are difficult to access due to cost or availability. Of these, 14 per cent are refugee and migrant households in situation of high vulnerability (makeshift housing, daily rental, in situations of homelessness, and others). Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela, Refugee and Migrant Needs Analysis, September 2024, available at <[www.r4v.info/es/rmna2024](http://www.r4v.info/es/rmna2024)>.
20. UNICEF, in close coordination with local authorities and the hospitals and health providing institutions (IPS) operating in the region, will continue to strengthen health and nutrition services through comprehensive primary care actions in the most remote communities of the prioritized departments. These areas are currently facing increasingly complex and prolonged emergencies – due to armed conflict, climate change and the migration crisis – leading to double and even triple impacts, especially in Indigenous communities with little or no access to services. The planned actions focus on identifying and treating nutritional risks, including moderate and severe wasting in children under age 5 and low birth weight during pregnancy, and providing ongoing follow-up of these cases until a successful outcome is achieved. Success will be measured by improved nutritional status, adherence to treatment and positive changes in feeding and nutrition practices among the target population (children under age 5, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers). The programme will also address prevalent childhood diseases (such as acute respiratory infections and diarrhoeal diseases); provide micronutrient supplements (to children under age 5 and pregnant women); and ensure vaccination. Local health institutions will carry out these interventions, with active community participation based on the available resources and specific context of each area.

21. For the calculation of the objectives outlined in the cross-sectoral area, only those related to direct intervention in the SBC-AAP, ADAP, and emergency coordination areas are included. This is because cross-sectoral support to programmatic areas is reflected in the objectives proposed by each sector, as these activities contribute to the sectoral programmatic strategy. This cross-cutting support includes inter-agency coordination, cluster leadership, territorial presence and deployment, strengthening of regional offices, and technical assistance to implementing partners on cross-cutting issues such as gender, PSEA, accountability, social and behavioral changes, localization, community engagement, humanitarian access, and other key issues of UNICEF's humanitarian agenda in Colombia.

22. This appeal is aligned with the Humanitarian Response Plan and the Refugee and Migrant Response Plan. Of the total budget, 34 per cent is allocated to addressing the needs of refugees and migrants in Colombia, as outlined in the Refugee and Migrant Response Plan 2025, while 66 per cent is designated for responding to the humanitarian situation arising from armed conflict and climate change-related emergencies included in the Humanitarian Response Plan 2025.

23. Priority is given to municipalities with severity levels 4 and 5, as well as those with greater inequalities in child health indicators, such as the under-five mortality rate and the infant (children under age 1) mortality rate.

24. Of the total amount in this line item, 21 per cent is for prevention and response to gender-based violence and 3 per cent is for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.