



Situation Highlights

- The cumulative number of Colombians who have officially returned from Venezuela since 19 August 2015 reached 22,696 as of 23 September, of which 1,678 were officially deported a month ago during police operation carried out by Venezuelan authorities. In total 23 municipalities in three states have been closed by the Venezuelan Government, affecting four Colombian departments along the 2,600 km border between the two countries.
- Returnees were registered in Norte de Santander until 10 September, when Colombia’s National Unit for Disaster Risk Management stopped counting. La Guajira, Arauca and Vichada departments have now also ceased registrations.
- In Norte de Santander, Colombian authorities have increasingly moved the displaced population from hotels into shelters; authorities have announced plans to create one single large camp for returnees, to open on 28 September 2015.
- In a face-to-face meeting held in Quito, Ecuador on 21 September 2015, the Colombian and Venezuelan Presidents Santos and Maduro agreed to normalize relations and to resolve the border dispute peacefully. Certain crossings will be re-opened gradually, and both governments will address the underlying issue of violent activities by criminal groups. At the same time, Venezuela extended its state of exception to Vichada Department of the Amazon region.
- UNICEF continues to work in hygiene promotion and psychosocial support in Norte de Santander. Additional work is planned for La Guajira department. *tional activities for returnee children In La Guajira Department, on the far north eastern border with Venezuela.*

23 September 2015 In Norte de Santander:

7,124 (estimated)
of children affected out of
22,696
of people affected
(OCHA September 2015)

In Other Departments:

1,954 (estimated)
of children affected out of
4,886
of registered returnees

UNICEF Requirement:
US\$ 740,000 to serve 3,000 children

Context of the Crisis

On 19 August 2015, Venezuelan authorities closed the main crossing at Cúcuta and initiated a police operation against criminality that deported over 1,600 Colombian long-term residents. Venezuela has progressively closed official crossings in four of the six departments that border Colombia. Over the past three weeks, another 21,000 persons have returned home en masse, straining the capacity of the Colombian local authorities to cope with the sudden influx. OCHA has reported cases of children separated from parent(s) who have remained in Venezuela or crossed over into Colombia without them. Negotiations have taken place between the two Presidents in order to reach a peaceful resolution of the crisis, and a binational commission is being established to address it.

Figure 1: Colombians expelled or returning from Venezuela, as of 23.09.2015

Department	Deported	Registered Returnees	Unregistered Returnees	Living in Shelters	Population under 18 years (approx.)
Norte de Santander	1,099	17,810	2,815	1,930	7,124

La Guajira, Arauca and Vichada	579	4,886	n/a	n/a	1,954
TOTAL	1,678	22,696	n/a		9,078

Source: OCHA Situation Report 8

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

In Norte de Santander the situation of Colombians deported and returnees remains rather changing. Authorities increasingly try to move returnees from hotels into shelters, and to close shelters as some returnees are induced to accept the Government package and transportation home. This led to a constant turnover in shelters, where the girls, boys and adolescents face complicated adjustments to their new surroundings. While many services have been improved in the shelters, there remains difficulties including poor hygiene conditions, lack of access to education and psychosocial problems related to the overpopulation, insecure and precarious conditions that characterize shelters. Humanitarian needs remain:

- Hygiene promotion for displaced people living in the shelters and informal settlements around Cúcuta.
- Implementation of psychosocial techniques in schools, including UNICEF's "Return to Happiness" programme.
- Assessment, support and establishment of basic conditions for children traumatized by displacement, through psychosocial support and recreational activities, including "Return to Happiness" and "Golombiao" (The Game of Peace).

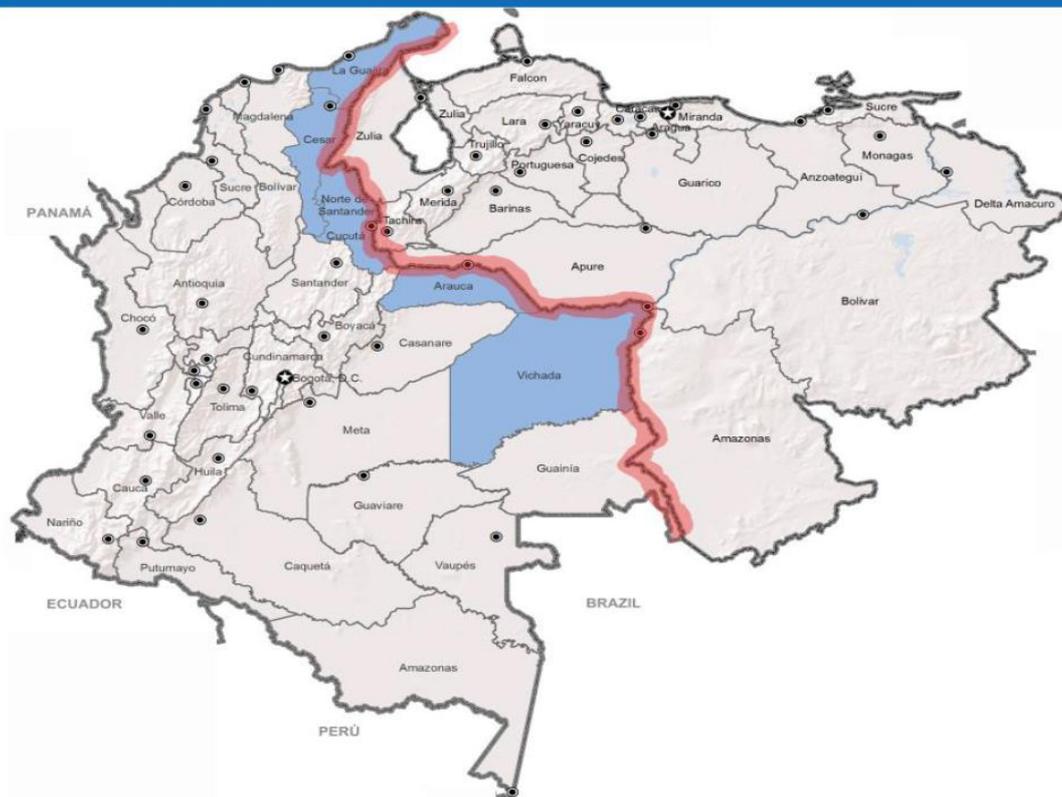
In La Guajira Department, a permanent Government presence was established at Paraguachón, the principal crossing point, as well as the activation of a migrant care centre. The difficult conditions faced by returnees (intense heat, lack of shelter, no services) have been partially improved with toilets, showers, sinks and 5000-litre water tanks on site. There remains gaps in the implementation of "road maps" with regards to specific problems, especially the lack of documentation. Numerous returnees children do not have access to education or need support to access schools on either side of the border. The border closure has already had an impact on households' food security, despite assurances that access would be possible for Wayuu indigenous peoples, who make up 90% of the population.

Key Challenges and Issues

The UNICEF teams working in the Cucuta area have identified several concerns regarding the conditions in the ten consolidated shelters and three hotels currently housing 1,930 persons (according to OCHA, 23 September 2015). Key issues include:

- Lack of registration since 10 September 2015, which skews the actual number of persons in need of assistance.
- Rapid turn-over in sites, as hotels and shelters are closed or consolidated, contributing to isolation and further life disruptions.
- Insufficient supply of basic needs items: shoes, clothing, toys for children, hygiene materials, etc.
- Continued difficulties relating to water and sanitation (ie toilets and hygiene), raising health concerns for children.
- Plans by the authorities to consolidate the remaining shelters into one mega-camp for returnees, which may existing issues of over-crowding, insecurity and lack of clearly identified space for children.
- Evidence of social tensions and schisms within families, resulting in additional conflicts.

Frontera Colombia - Venezuela



(Map courtesy of OCHA)

UNICEF's Response with partners

EDUCATION:

- UNICEF education specialists have identified out-of-school children in shelters and referred them to local education institutions.
- The 50 UNICEF-trained youth volunteers have implemented the "Return to Happiness" programme of psychosocial support in the schools around Cucuta with young students including returnees.

WASH:

- UNICEF WASH technicians rehabilitated water systems, baths, showers and sinks in prioritized shelters, in close coordination with local authorities, UNGRD and representatives from the Vice Ministry of Water, providing training in repair and maintenance of the equipment.
- Four UNICEF hygiene technicians (female) have carried out hygiene promotion activities, emphasizing hand-washing and disposal of solid waste.

PROTECTION:

- UNICEF experts in Villa del Rosario and Cúcuta continued to promote psychosocial support and recreation activities for children. Activities included the actual building of child-friendly spaces, running the "Return to Happiness" programme for younger children and using Golombiao (The Game of Peace) as a mechanism to promote values of tolerance, participation and peaceful coexistence among adolescents.
- Serious issues of protection are managed on a case-by-case basis, through consultation with parents, authorities and referral where possible. UNICEF team has dealt with family separation, substance abuse, violence and bullying.
- Local youth volunteers trained by the UNICEF experts led participatory activities, and assisted in restoring a sense of normalcy in the shelter environments, despite the lack of space, privacy and stability.

Humanitarian leadership and coordination

- The National Unit for Disaster Risk Management (UNDRG) directs the overall response through its Unified Command Post, with support from Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF), the Colombian Red Cross and the Victims Unit (UARIV).

- Inter-agency assessments have been completed in Norte de Santander, La Guajira and Vichada, however the volatility of the situation along the border requires needs to be constantly revised.
- The Local Humanitarian Team based in Cúcuta, (UN, NGOs and the Colombian Red Cross) continues to organize and coordinate the efforts of humanitarian organisations in Norte de Santander.

Humanitarian Strategy

A 'Binational Commission' was newly agreed-upon and established to manage border issues. While the Commission makes its assessment, the humanitarian needs of returnee children and their families living in precarious conditions in Colombia, remain the top priority. Because of the sheer numbers of people returning to Norte de Santander, UNICEF efforts have thus far focused on the needs of the most affected children and families in the shelters and hotels around Cucuta and Villa del Rosario. As these numbers diminish, UNICEF will intervene increasingly in the second most affected department, La Guajira. The same three sectors—WASH, education and protection—will be emphasized in La Guajira.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response to Date

UNICEF intervention continues in WASH, education and protection. New activities in Cúcuta included:

- **WASH:** hygiene promotion; design and installation of toilets and showers in the shelters; outreach to self-settled areas to ensure adequate supply of water, sanitation and hygiene services.
- **Education:** teacher training in institutions where displaced children have arrived; provision of materials and technical support to implement "Return to Happiness" programme of psychosocial support in the schools.
- **Protection:** assessment and referral of serious cases of trauma among children; prevention of violence, exploitation and abuse in families; psychosocial support to children in shelters through "Return to Happiness"; implementation of "Golombiao" (The Game of Peace) and other recreational activities in shelters and self-settled areas.

Media and Communications for Development (C4D)

- All UNICEF media contacts are channeled through the Representative, Roberto De Bernardi, and the Communications Specialist, Carolina Plata. [See contact details below.]
- Key behavioural change activities in WASH have started, with hygiene promotion posters and flyers designed and distributed by UNICEF experts.
- The Seres de Cuidado ("Care-Givers") strategy for early child health and nutritional care is being actively promoted in shelters, through discussions and demonstrations.

Supply and Logistics

- WASH supplies, including toilets and hygiene materials, were distributed in shelters and hotels.
- Small-scale nutritional care items are being distributed.
- UNICEF were provided printed materials to ICBF to use in the "Return to Happiness" psychosocial programme in schools.
- Shelters in Villa del Rosario and Cucuta are gradually being closed; authorities plan to open one large shelter in Cucuta to house over 1,000 people. Shelters, hotels and the self-settled areas in Cúcuta can be reached via local transportation.
- In La Guajira Department, local authorities have established a reception center at the main border crossing, Paraguachón.

Security

No change in conditions on the ground, both in Norte de Santander and La Guajira Departments. All UNICEF staff and consultants in both La Guajira and Norte de Santander are safe and accounted for.

Funding Requirements (as defined in Humanitarian Appeal of DD/MM/YYYY for a period of X months)				
Appeal Sector	Requirements	Funds received*	Funding gap	
			\$	%
WASH	300,000	0	300,000	100

Education	215,000	0	215,000	100
Child Protection	205,000	0	205,000	100
Cluster Coordination	20,000	0	20,000	100
Total	740,000	0	740,000	100

Funding

* 'Funds received' does not include pledges

Note: Country Office is using Regular Resources and local donations to cover the initial costs of its response.

Next SitRep: 30.09.2015

UNICEF Colombia Website: www.unicef.org.co

UNICEF Colombia Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=894460646&fref=ts>

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