Context of the Crisis
In response to a perceived increase in criminality associated with Colombian non-state armed groups allegedly operating across the border, Venezuelan authorities closed the main crossing at Cúcuta on 19 August 2015 and initiated a police operation to deport Colombian residents. An estimated 18,619 civilians have crossed from Venezuela into Colombia in three weeks, as a result of the operation. During the first two weeks, authorities deported at least 1,467 civilians; the remainder have fled in anticipation of additional expulsions. In the Colombian department of Norte de Santander alone, approximately 17,462 persons have repatriated, with smaller numbers reported crossing into three departments of La Guajira, Arauca, and Vichada. 3,402 civilians are housed in 14 shelters and 9 hotels in Cúcuta (approximately 1,360 are under 18 years), with at least another 10,000 self-settled in informal sites in the urban area. [See Table below.] Venezuelan authorities initially closed the border for a few municipalities of Táchira and Zulia States that flank Norte de Santander department, but on 8 September 2015, the Venezuelan Government closed the border crossing of Paraguachón in La Guajira Department as well (with an exception allowed for indigenous Wayúu people). There is serious concern that a much larger portion of the border will be closed in the coming days. Historically, the long shared border has represented a social, political and economic safety valve for Colombians, tens of thousands of whom have settled in Venezuelan territory over the past decade seeking refuge or economic opportunity.
Figure 1: Colombians expelled or returning from Venezuela, as of 08.09.2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Deported/Expelled</th>
<th>Total Returned</th>
<th>Approx. number of Children/adolescents¹</th>
<th>Persons living in Shelters/hotels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norte de Santander</td>
<td>1,097</td>
<td>17,462</td>
<td>6,985</td>
<td>3,402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Guajira</td>
<td>223²</td>
<td>194²</td>
<td>194²</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arauca</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vichada</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,467</td>
<td>18,619</td>
<td>7,448</td>
<td>3,402</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OCHA Situation Reports 3 & 4  
1. Estimated pending formal enumeration  
2. Reported by Municipal Authorities and UNICEF mission

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

- The situation of the deported and displaced in Norte de Santander raises serious concerns about their well-being and survival, especially with regard to the girls, boys and adolescents who have been uprooted from their homes and communities. Conditions in shelters are complicated albeit improving, with Colombian authorities providing water, food and health services.

- Serious gaps remain in the establishment of toilets and showers, provision of nutritional care as well as basic protection of children. The situation of the self-settled displaced in public areas is considerably more precarious, as lack of services, over-crowding, and the absence of essential supplies is felt even more acutely. UNICEF has three psychologists/social communicators based in Cúcuta, supporting the Colombian Family Welfare Institute in ensuring a minimum level of normalcy for children. One UNICEF WASH expert based in Cúcuta is already working with Ministry counterparts to design toilet and shower modules for the shelters. Hygiene promotion materials are being produced for distribution and use in the shelters and self-settled areas. A combined mission of WASH-education-protection experts is currently visiting Norte de Santander to support experts on the ground.

Key humanitarian needs include:

- WASH service in shelters, hygiene promotion for displaced in the informal settlements around Cúcuta.
- Teacher training and implementation of psychosocial techniques in schools, including UNICEF’s “Return to Happiness” programme.
- Screening, support and the 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).

UNICEF’s Response with partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNICEF</th>
<th>Sector/Cluster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WASH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator: hygiene promotion, installation of toilets/showers</td>
<td>500 beneficiaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator: application of “Return to Happiness” in schools</td>
<td>2,000 beneficiaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator: psycho-social support and recreation in shelters</td>
<td>3,000 beneficiaries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Humanitarian leadership and coordination

- Key Government agencies have been present in Norte de Santander from the start of the crisis, including the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF), the National Unit for Disaster Risk Management (UNDRG) and the Unit for Assistance to Victims (UARIV). They have led the evaluation of needs and the response.
- The United Nations Resident Coordinator and agency heads visited Cúcuta on 31 August 2015.
- The Local Humanitarian Team based in Cúcuta, composed of United Nations Agencies, NGOs and the Red Cross Society, coordinates the humanitarian organisations on the ground which support Government efforts.
- Inter-agency assessments have been undertaken in Norte de Santander and La Guajira. Another mission is scheduled to evaluate needs in Arauca this week.

Humanitarian Strategy

- UNICEF sees the humanitarian current crisis as an unstable and fluid situation, dependent on political factors which may not be resolved quickly. There is still much uncertainty about population flows, displacement figures and the likelihood of further closures of the long border between Venezuela and Colombia. Accordingly, UNICEF has chosen a light and flexible strategy in only three key sectors, working in close coordination with Government counterparts. Initially, UNICEF offered assistance to the key counterpart agency, ICBF, but was told that the situation was under control. Two days later, ICBF requested UNICEF support in psychosocial support, and was immediately provided with assistance in situ. Protection experts have embedded themselves in the mobile units of ICBF; WASH and educations specialists will be working directly with the line ministries on the ground in Norte de Santander. UNICEF is monitoring the situation constantly in order to modify its sites and interventions.
Summary Analysis of Programme response

The UNICEF intervention involves three sectors: WASH, education and protection. The activities in Cúcuta include:

- **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**: training of teachers in schools around Cúcuta, where displaced children have arrived; provision of materials and technical support in implementing “Return to Happiness” programme of psychosocial support in the schools.
- **Protection**: evaluation and referral of serious cases of trauma in 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.

In addition, UNICEF will be carrying out a constant monitoring and evaluation of needs on the ground, in light of the volatility of the situation and the possibility that other geographical areas will require assistance.

Communications for Development (C4D)

Key behaviour change activities are already being initiated in the WASH sector, through the use of hygiene promotion posters and flyers designed and distributed by UNICEF experts. The lack of sufficient water and toilets constitutes a serious bottleneck toward effective C4D action in this sector. At the same time, UNICEF is working with counterparts to promote its “Care-Givers” strategy for early child health and nutritional care within the shelters, through interactive discussions and demonstrations.

Supply and Logistics

- WASH supplies, including toilets and hygiene materials, will be distributed in shelters and self-settled areas.
- Small-scale nutritional care materials will be procured locally and distributed.
- UNICEF already provided 1200 printed materials to ICBF for use in the “Return to Happiness” psychosocial programme in the shelters.
- Most of the 23 shelters and hotels, as well as the self-settled areas, are located within a small radius of the town of Cúcuta, and thus can be reached via local transportation. More complicated is the situation of La Guajira Department, whose principal border crossing, Paraguachón, is located at some distance from the nearest town of Maicao.

Media and External Communication

- UNICEF has a team on the ground as of this writing, to document the situation of children and their families with video and print materials.
- The wider media is covering the situation from the political perspective, with considerable divergence between the perspectives of the news channels on either side of the border.
- All UNICEF media contact is channeled through the Representative, Roberto De Bernardi, and the Communications Specialist, Carolina Plata. [See contact data below.]

Security

- Despite the on-going police operation, security conditions have not deteriorated further than the norm for Norte de Santander Department, a part of Colombia which is characterized by a strong presence of non-state armed actors. There have been numerous allegations of human rights violations in the process of deportation and flight. Further north, in La Guajira Department, UNICEF staff has identified serious threats to children’s welfare in the lack of protection, transportation and other services between the border crossing of Paraguachón and the nearest town of Maicao. All UNICEF staff and consultants in both La Guajira and Norte de Santander are safe and accounted for.
COLOMBIA BORDER CRISIS: SITUATION REPORT #1

Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appeal Sector</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Funds received*</th>
<th>$</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>215,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>215,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Protection</td>
<td>205,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>205,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster Coordination</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>740,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>740,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*‘Funds received’ does not include pledges*

**Note:** UNICEF Country Office prepared an initial funding proposal to jumpstart Child Protection activities, which has been shared with EMOPS-NYHQ, PFP-Geneva and LAC Regional Office, as well as with local donors based in Colombia: Sweden, Canada, Norway and Switzerland. No response has been received to date. At present, Country Office is using Regular Resources and donations procured locally to cover the initial costs of its response.

Next SitRep: 15.09.2015

UNICEF Colombia Website: [www.unicef.org.co](http://www.unicef.org.co)

Who to contact for further information:

- Roberto De Bernardi
  UNICEF Representative
  Colombia
  Tel: +57 1 312 0090
  Fax: +57 1 321 0620
  Email: rdebernardi@unicef.org

- Carolina Plata
  Communications Officer
  Colombia
  Tel: +57 1 312 0090
  Fax: +57 1 321 0620
  Email: cplata@unicef.org

- Frederick Spielberg
  Child Protection/Humanitarian Action
  Colombia
  Tel: +57 1 312 0090
  Fax: +57 1 321 0620
  Email: fspielberg@unicef.org