

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

COLOMBIA

IN 2007



CORE COUNTRY DATA

Population under 18 (thousands)	16755
U5 mortality rate	21
Infant mortality rate	17
Maternal mortality ratio (2000, adjusted)	130
Primary school enrolment ratio, 2000-2005, net (male/female)	90/92
% U1 fully immunized (DPT3)	87
% population using improved drinking water sources	93
Estimated no. of people (all ages) living with HIV, 2005 (thousands)	160
% U5 suffering from moderate and severe underweight	7

Source: *The State of the World's Children 2007*

Summary of UNICEF financial needs for 2007

Thematic areas of work – humanitarian action	US\$
Protection of child soldiers and prevention of recruitment	3,800,000
Humanitarian action for internally displaced children	600,000
Humanitarian mine action	1,100,000
Total*	5,500,000

* The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7 per cent. The actual recovery rate on contributions will be calculated in accordance with UNICEF Executive Board Decision 2006/7 dated 9 June 2006.

1. CRITICAL ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

Colombia has a population of more than 45 million inhabitants, of which 37 per cent are less than 18 years old. In 2005, it is estimated that 64.2 per cent of the population were living in poverty and 31 per cent in extreme poverty.¹ Rural poverty is three times higher than urban poverty; children have a 36 per cent greater probability of living in poverty² than adults, and the rate of violence associated with the conflict is twice as high in the territories of Native American groups than in the rest of the country.³ Colombia is also vulnerable to natural disasters, including earthquakes, floods and volcanic eruptions.

Political negotiations during 1998-2002 with the two main guerrilla groups – the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) – were suspended in early 2002, though they have been recently re-established at the end of 2005 with the ELN. Negotiations with various blocks of the AUC (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, United Self-defences of Colombia), the main rightwing illegal armed group, since the end of 2003, have been carried out, allowing the demobilization of approximately 30,000 members of these groups. However, only some 400 children have been handed over in the frame of collective demobilizations. The re-groupment of demobilized children in criminal groups remains a serious concern, as well as the surge of new illegal armed actors or the strengthening of the existing ones in areas already evacuated by demobilized groups.⁴ The conflict remains impregnated by drug trafficking interests.

The level of violence, both related and unrelated to the armed conflict, continues to be very high. Violence has a tremendous impact on society and childhood and poses serious obstacles to humanitarian operations. Although homicides have declined since 2003, the 2005 rate of 42 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants – 18,111 deaths per year – is one of the highest in the world.

All groups involved in hostilities are blamed for forced displacement as a result of fighting, pressure and threats. It is estimated that approximately 40 per cent of the displaced population is less than 18 years old.⁵ Assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) is limited in several zones of the country, especially in those with difficult access due to lack of roads, military blockades or other security conditions. In most cases there is no guaranteed return process for families who are internally displaced because of security and socio-economic conditions. The average school absenteeism rate of displaced children is 4.2 per cent, almost double the national average of 2.7 per cent. The child malnutrition rate amongst displaced populations is estimated at 23 per cent, as compared to the national average of 12 per cent.

Colombia has experienced an alarming increase in the number of events involving mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO). Between 1990 and 2006, 2,742 accidents were reported, leaving a total of 5,275 victims, of which 89 per cent were adults and 11 per cent children – 37 per cent of all casualties being among civilians.⁶ In 2005 Colombia registered the highest number of new victims worldwide. The registration of victims is ongoing despite delays due to difficult access to and knowledge of procedures. There is no comprehensive demining programme underway in Colombia.

¹ Joint Declaration of Colombian Social and Non-Governmental Organizations - 2006, for the 62nd session of the UN Commission on Human Rights. Colombia-Europe-US NGO Coordination, Bogotá, January 2006.

² Measured by unsatisfied basic needs (UBN). Source: Colombia National Department of Planning.

³ *Los pueblos indígenas en Colombia. Derechos, políticas y desafíos*, UNICEF, Bogotá, 2003.

⁴ Sixth Quarterly Report of the Secretary-General to the Permanent Council on the Mission to support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OEA), March 2006.

⁵ Percentages sourced from Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation (for the period June 2002-31 May 2006).

⁶ Programa Presidencial de Derechos Humanos y Derecho Internacional Humanitario, Observatorio de Minas Antipersonal, 17 de julio de 2006.

The recruitment of children into non-State armed entities remains a serious concern. While the National Army has complied with the law approved in 1998 that forbids forced and voluntary recruitment of under-18-year-olds, some 5,000 to 6,000 children remain enrolled in non-State armed entities in the country, while an additional similar number is estimated to participate in urban militias. In 2005 and 2006, 853 children and adolescents were demobilized and joined the programme of the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF). Still, with recruitment continuing, it is unlikely that the number of children associated with fighting forces will decrease.

2. KEY ACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2006

UNICEF has been supporting and promoting actions aimed at preventing the recruitment of children and adolescents by armed groups, as well as implementing strategies for their demobilization, protection and social reintegration. In 2006 UNICEF supported the Centre for Specialized Assistance in Palmira, hosting 30 demobilized children, as well as socio-familiar reintegration alternatives, such as the new assistance system, the *Hogar Gestor*, which benefited 100 children and adolescents. Throughout the year UNICEF provided technical support to the ICBF to develop guidelines on how to deal with recruitment threats.

UNICEF has also supported 'El Golombiao: Playing for Peace', which seeks to promote sports, education for peace and systems of social coexistence among vulnerable adolescents, while contributing to the prevention of voluntary recruitment of youths into illegal armed groups. By the end of the year 'El Golombiao' will be active in 60 municipalities. In the departments of Cundinamarca and Eje Cafetero the project 'Sowers of Peace', and in Montes de María the project 'Interactive City of the Rights of Children', are benefiting almost 5,000 children and youths.

UNICEF's intervention was directed mainly at families forcefully displaced or at high risk of displacement, as well as at communities severely affected by armed conflict. The programme included an integrated intervention that addressed crisis recovery and capacity-building needs and aimed at strengthening local authorities' capacity to provide IDPs with access to social basic services. Within this integrated approach, UNICEF supported the access to health and education of some 33,242 children in 28 municipalities seriously affected by conflict violence and destruction. Activities increased education coverage, facilitated accessibility and improved the quality of education with a rights perspective, transferring the child-friendly schools strategy to 21 municipalities in Chocó, Urabá, Antioquia and Córdoba. This involved 7,546 children in basic primary schools as well as 232 teachers and 3,773 parents who were trained to educate other parents on the strategy.

UNICEF worked in conjunction with the National Landmines Observatory, at the office of the Vice-President, and several partner NGOs, and acted as the United Nations focal point for coordinating action against mines. As a result of joint advocacy by UNICEF, UNDP, the Office of the Governor of Antioquia and the Peace and Democracy Corporation, local governments in 63 of the 125 municipalities in Antioquia included the issue of mines into their plans for 2004-2007, and 10 departments of Cauca developed a municipal plan on mines. Together with its counterparts in the departments of Antioquia, Cauca and Magdalena Medio, UNICEF developed a training programme for local authorities and landmine survivors on the rights of victims of armed conflict, which benefited 4,700 local civil servants as well as 753 children and adolescents. A basis was set up for supporting the physical and psychological rehabilitation of 63 mine survivors in Antioquia and Bolívar. In Oriente Antioqueño and Bolívar, UNICEF supported Handicap International and the Colombia Integral Centre for Rehabilitation (*Centro Integral de Rehabilitación de Colombia – CIREC*) in the identification, rehabilitation and social reintegration of 65 mine survivors. Fifty-two municipalities participated in the mine-risk education programme developed by local counterparts and UNICEF.

3. PLANNED HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOR 2007

Coordination and partnership

Three Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) clusters are in place for coordination. The assistance and basic services cluster will have a rotating leadership system, with UNICEF as the first leader agency to chair this group. Among the five thematic groups of this cluster, UNICEF will lead mine action and education. UNICEF is also active in the protection cluster led by UNHCR and in the early recovery cluster led jointly by IOM and UNDP.

Regular programme

The Country Programme has the following components: basic policies, protection and humanitarian affairs, monitoring and evaluation, and communications. The 2002-2007 programme has two overall objectives: the promotion and defence of children's, adolescents' and women's rights; and the promotion of equality and social inclusion. Humanitarian action has three main components: prevention and care of children and adolescents recruited or associated to armed groups, mine action, and attention to IDPs and at-risk communities.

Protection of child soldiers and prevention of recruitment (US\$ 3,800,000)

UNICEF will assist vulnerable children and their families through the following key activities:

- Support government initiatives to promote a culture of peace and give children and adolescents alternatives for leisure: with the project 'El Golombiao' it is expected to reach 100 municipalities, benefiting around 29,000 adolescents and youngsters;
- Prevent the recruitment of children and adolescents into non-State armed entities, by expanding the execution of existing projects (Cauca, Antioquia, Norte de Santander, Montes de Maria, Chocó, Córdoba, Eje Cafetero, Caribe, Cundinamarca), benefiting an estimated 68,000 children and adolescents;
- Support the reintegration into their family environment of 200 children and adolescents demobilized from irregular armed groups – through support units – and provide subsidies;
- Provide technical support to the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF) to improve assistance to some 1,000 demobilized children and adolescents;
- Contribute technical assistance for Colombia's comprehensive legislative reform, as well as strengthen public policies with respect to humanitarian action and the protection of children's rights;
- Together with the Ministry of Communications, develop and strengthen Adolescents Network Organizations through radio stations, and create community radio modules to train adolescents and youngsters on child rights and on the prevention of child recruitment;
- Support adolescents' initiatives, benefiting 3,000 adolescents in Oriente Antioqueño;
- Publish and disseminate a Study carried out by the Ombudsman's Office with the support of UNICEF on children formerly associated with armed groups.

Humanitarian action for internally displaced children (US\$ 600,000)

Subject to funds, UNICEF will benefit 17,000 internally displaced children through the following key activities:

- Strengthen psychosocial support for 15,800 children affected by displacement and armed conflict and train teachers and support groups through the *Return to Happiness* methodology in 45 municipalities;
- Implement primary health care programmes, including nutritional education at community level for 100 pregnant women and 5,800 children and adolescents affected by displacement and armed conflict, as well as HIV prevention for vulnerable adolescents affected by armed conflict and internal displacement. In alliance with WFP, UNICEF will distribute food rations to 1,300 internally displaced children and 130 pregnant women suffering from malnutrition and support families and community health workers to monitor their nutritional status. Through the Healthy Homes Initiative, UNICEF will support the training of 150 adolescents and young mothers with

the aim to improve the environmental sanitation conditions of displaced families affected by the armed conflict;

- Promote hygiene education and hygiene awareness programmes in 30 schools and 60 local communities in order to complement existing water and sanitation services;
- Provide technical and financial assistance to the establishment of sanitation systems in temporary accommodation centres;
- Support the prompt re-establishment and improved quality control of existing water systems which may be damaged or that must satisfy an increased demand;
- Undertake advocacy at local level and train/support teachers to facilitate the access to school of children displaced by armed conflict through the strategy *La Escuela Busca al Niño*.

Humanitarian mine action (US\$ 1,100,000)

Subject to funds, the following activities in mine action will benefit 60,000 people:

- Assist national authorities, NGO partners and civil society organizations to develop a comprehensive, sustainable and decentralized mine action programme in support of the National Mine Action Plan; decentralize mine action to departmental and municipal levels, creating and developing the necessary capacity within government institutions to plan and develop mine action initiatives at community level and to ensure that those responsible respond to their legal obligations providing assistance to those most at risk;
- Support the overall strengthening of information networks, improving data collection and analysis through the decentralization of responsibilities, providing technical assistance to authorities and national NGOs for the training of government officials (municipal spokespeople, majors, teachers, hospital directors etc.) for the development and provision of well planned and well targeted mine-risk education (MRE) programmes, for the sharing and dissemination of information regarding mine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) contamination in at-risk communities, and streamlining service provision to victims. To make this plan operational it will be necessary to develop a range of activities to be conducted in partnership with all stakeholders – government, UN agencies and NGOs:
 - Strengthen local capacity to plan and implement mine action programmes at national, departmental and municipal levels, providing training and tools to local institutions to respond to mine/UXO threat;
 - Design and develop an MRE community-based strategy for the reduction of accidents caused by landmines/UXO;
 - Promote integral care for mine/UXO victims by empowering survivors to claim their rights and access to health care and humanitarian assistance;
- Support activities in 31 departments, with special focus on the 64 municipalities identified in the needs assessment published by the National Landmines Observatory.