

NAVIGATING THE EFFECTS OF DISPLACEMENT: COLOMBIA

Insights From Internally Displaced Populations

JUNE 2024

"POR LAS NUEVE
MILLONES DE HISTORIAS
PARA NO REPETIR"

**PROGRESS
2023**

Periodic Global Report on the State of
Solutions to Internal Displacement



SFS

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
Walsh School of Foreign Service
Institute for the Study of International Migration



Effects of Displacement on Internally Displaced Populations

This report presents a deeper country-specific dive into the findings of the qualitative analysis of two focus group discussions conducted between 1 and 15 August 2023 in Bogotá with 19 representatives of the IDP population to provide their perspectives on the effects of displacement and progress towards durable solutions. Over half (68%) of the respondents were female and all respondents were between the age of 18 and 59. More than a third (36%) were Afro-Colombian and 16 per cent belonged to Indigenous groups. Over half (58%) of respondents served as local community leaders.

IDPs

IDP respondents in Colombia mentioned that their IDP status is recognized but have received little to no administrative compensation as outlined in Act 1448 of 2022. Many encounter misinformation about entitlements at national, district, and local levels. Indigenous men and women displaced in Bogotá described how different their lives were in the city, where they felt discriminated against as displaced people, as Indigenous people, and as people lacking resources. However, they felt they could not return home due to insecurity resulting from the internal conflict, noting a risk to teenagers being subject to recruitment by non-state armed groups and of children being kidnapped, with a lack of state action to protect them. IDP respondents felt that they had insufficient aid while displaced, where their IDP documentation did not guarantee them food and other assistance. Prolonged displacement has led many IDPs to attempt to locally integrate by default, particularly as all respondents had been displaced for five years or longer. Most IDPs in Colombia are located in cities and urban areas where they face limited livelihood prospects, lack of access to housing and family separation.

The city was more expensive, IDPs noted, and suffered from pollution and overcrowding. However, they felt that it was safer than the rural areas from which they were displaced as much as a decade earlier. Although they wished they could return, they shared a feeling that death or insecurity were inevitable in the conflict areas outside of Bogotá. Some also noted that security within the city was deteriorating as well, threatening to increase intra-urban displacement and reducing the opportunities to find housing or stability. These were significant worries for those displaced in Bogotá, who shared the experience of devastation if they could not find shelter, combined with significant difficulties renting apartments given the need for complicated documentation. Moreover, IDPs described how unpleasant shelters for displaced people were, adding that children, elderly people, people of African descent, Indigenous People, white and mestizo people all lived together with no privacy and differing customs.



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To me, the term ‘displaced’ is not correct because I am not displaced; I am a victim of the armed conflict. Where I live, people who know the displaced say, ‘my house isn’t for the displaced.’ They’re directly stating you’re not part of this community.”

Focus group discussion with mixed-sex IDPs, Colombia,

August 2023.

Men and women in Bogotá shared consistent, painful and significant difficulties they faced with the host community, including discrimination and negative association with displacement. One respondent from Ciudad Bolívar recounted that upon discovering their origin, their employer remarked that the displaced were a “threat,” adding that other “people say that the displaced are drug users, thieves, the ones who caused harm in [their] territories, which is why the guerrillas or paramilitaries drove them out, and they should be thankful they weren’t killed” (FGD 14, August 2023, mixed-sex IDPs). Another respondent shared that they never mention being displaced when looking for a job due to the risk of discrimination and a sense that they will be taken advantage of.

Furthermore, people displaced to the city struggled to navigate complex pathways to access durable solutions, which over time has led them to greater socioeconomic vulnerabilities. They felt that there was no guarantee of justice and that the promises of a safe, dignified and voluntary return, as well as land restitution were an unattainable “utopia.” They also hoped for more than monetary administrative compensation, asserting that lost income was not the most significant harm they faced. One survivor recounted being sexually assaulted after seeking her mother’s pension documents; she refrained from reporting it for decades because of social stigma and lack of support. During that time her daughter also faced assault. The generational trauma resulting from assault and death threats left lasting wounds for IDPs, wounds that they asserted no amount of monetary compensation could heal.

The duration of displacement also contributed to individuals feeling like outsiders or out of place upon returning to their original locations. Additionally, some were unable to return due to concerns that doing so would endanger their non-displaced family members, or that their own families would report them to the authorities.

The most significant factors hindering return were loss of access to land and insecurity. IDPs emphasized that without land, they could not support themselves and their families and would be expected to work other peoples’ land, placing them in a vulnerable position. The security situation in locations of origin was an absolute barrier to many people’s returns. Some said they wished they could go abroad, but most shared that they would stay in Bogotá and hope for improved circumstances in the next decade.



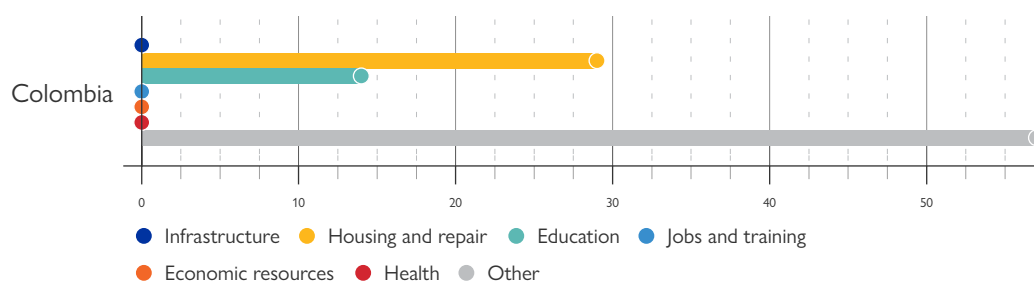
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On a personal level, I'd like to return to my territory because that's where my ancestors, my roots, and my customs are. I'd love for our children to experience them, but it's a bit complicated due to their role in the city since they were raised here.”

Focus group discussion with mixed-sex IDPs, Colombia,

August 2023.

MENTIONS OF SUPPORT NEEDED FOR SOLUTIONS IN COLOMBIA



The chart above shows the number of times each sector was mentioned by IDPs in each focus group discussion. In Colombia, the main themes that emerged were support with housing and repair as well as education.

Periodic Global Report on the State of Solutions to Internal Displacement (PROGRESS 2023)

The IASC Framework on Durable Solutions acknowledges three accepted approaches for addressing internal displacement: the return and sustainable reintegration in the community of origin (referred to as “return”), integration in areas where internally displaced persons (IDPs) seek refuge (referred to as “local integration”) into local communities, or sustainable integration into another part of the country (referred to as “settlement elsewhere”). However, integration is also a fundamental part of all three solutions and overcoming displacement-related vulnerabilities; for returnees it entails becoming reintegrated in their communities, and for IDPs it signifies inclusion, protection and assistance with access to livelihoods, jobs and basic services on par with the other members of the community.

As a contribution to addressing displacement challenges, the collaboration between the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Global Data Institute (GDI) and Georgetown University’s Institute for the Study of International Migration (ISIM) has produced the Periodic Global Report on the State of Solutions to Internal Displacement (PROGRESS). PROGRESS aims to be people-centered and operationally relevant, providing evidence-based analysis of factors facilitating internally displaced persons (IDPs) in moving towards and achieving durable solutions. It is designed for governments, development and humanitarian actors, and IDPs themselves, offering practical steps to enhance realistic opportunities for approaching solutions. Given the global focus on resolving internal displacement, there is a crucial need for the international community to unite efforts in supporting solutions for over 70 million IDPs, a number of whom have experienced prolonged displacement.

The report focuses on 15 countries, providing an analysis of operational quantitative data, mostly collected by the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) on the challenges and opportunities faced by IDPs. It shows the importance of job creation, security, and fostering a sense of belonging within communities for overcoming displacement-related vulnerabilities and, subsequently, reduce disparities between IDPs and their host communities. In addition, focus group discussions were carried out in 10 of these countries to include perspectives of individuals who were displaced, had returned, or were part of communities that hosted IDPs. The published PROGRESS report highlights the commonalities across countries and regions – such as the strong focus on economic recovery and security as fundamental to durable reintegration. The conversations also exposed the range of experiences within families, communities, and national contexts. Additionally, these discussions provided a platform to express perspectives often overlooked by conventional data collection methods, such as affected communities’ views on the cultural and gender-related impacts of displacement in their countries.



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