

SUMMARY

A CRISIS WITHIN A CRISIS

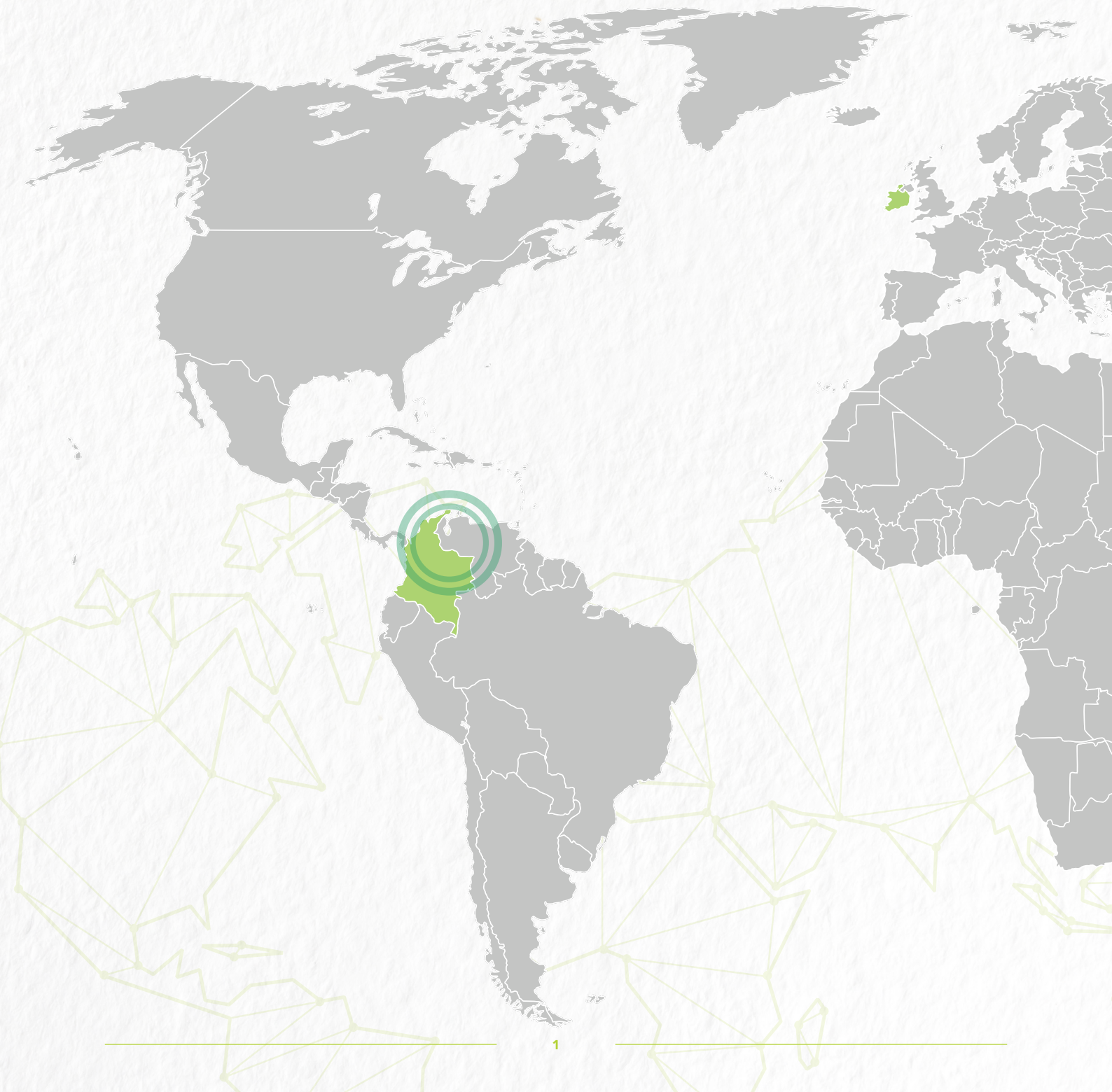
GOAL's recommendations for addressing the plight of vulnerable Venezuelan and Colombian populations in Colombia

GOAL is calling for the international community to increase and accelerate action to address the humanitarian and security crises facing millions of Venezuelans and Colombians in Colombia.

From our work in north-eastern Colombia, GOAL is witnessing first-hand how many already-precarious communities are being pushed beyond capacity by the arrival of Venezuelan refugees, and internally-displaced and returning Colombians. In many places, local residents, refugees and migrants are struggling to meet basic needs such as food, clean water, sanitation, housing and economic security. Local government services are challenged to

cope with the diverse and pressing needs of their increasing populations. Women, children, and other vulnerable groups are particularly at-risk.

Colombia is experiencing a crisis within a crisis which, without additional attention, is likely to deepen. As a global community, we have a collective responsibility to provide urgent humanitarian assistance, as well as interventions to promote the longer-term development and resilience of Colombian communities in general.



The context – in numbers

- **2nd largest refugee crisis.** Approximately one in six Venezuelans (that's 5.5 million¹) are seeking refuge in other countries, fleeing the hyperinflation, chronic lack of services and basic needs such as food and medicine, political unrest and violence at home.
- **1.7 million Venezuelan refugees in Colombia².** Most displaced Venezuelans have stayed within the Americas, with the largest number choosing neighbouring Colombia.
- **50 years of civil war.** Over 7.9 million Colombians today remain displaced after decades of armed violence³. Despite the 2016 Peace Agreement, evidence shows renewed escalation of armed conflict⁴.
- **#10 globally for COVID-19 infections.** In 2020, Colombia experienced high rates of COVID-19, including ranking in the top 15 globally for fatalities⁵. Lockdowns and other restrictions to control the spread of the virus have impacted people's livelihoods and economic wellbeing.
- **At risk of 3+ natural hazards.** Colombia has the tenth highest economic risk for three or more hazards in the world⁶. Poor housing (especially in the informal settlements where many refugees and migrants reside) and weak local capacity for disaster risk reduction increase the potential impact of earthquakes, flooding and landslides.
- **60% of workers in Colombia work in the informal sector⁷.** Informal work is highly liable to disruption, and more so with COVID-19 and the increasing numbers of refugees and migrants. Those struggling to make ends meet can turn to sex work or illegal activities that bring them closer to criminal and armed groups.
- **46% of Venezuelans in Colombia report experiencing discrimination⁸.** The already-precarious socio-economic conditions in many Colombian communities is fostering tension and a sense of competition for resources, resulting in xenophobia against Venezuelans.
- **130+ informal border crossing sites⁹.** Many refugees into Colombia cross the border at unofficial routes, some of which are controlled by armed gangs. This exposes migrants to risks such as exploitation, recruitment, kidnapping and disappearances¹⁰.
- **A doubling of human trafficking cases between 2013 and 2019¹¹** – with notable increases among refugees and migrants. Women represented 89% of all trafficking cases in 2019¹². Unaccompanied migrant children are particularly vulnerable to trafficking¹³.
- **48% of female Venezuelan migrants at risk of gender-based violence¹⁴.** Venezuela and Colombia are highly gendered societies, and there is virtual impunity for gender-based violence¹⁵. People of LGBTIQ+ identities are especially prone to sexual violence and exploitation¹⁶.

1 <https://r4v.info/es/situations/platform>

2 Ibid.

3 <https://reporting.unhcr.org/colombia>

4 <https://undocs.org/en/S/2020/943>

5 <https://covid19.who.int/table>

6 <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/7376>

7 <https://www.oecd.org/economy/surveys/Colombia-2019-OECD-economic-survey-overview.pdf>

8 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/78013>

9 <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/care-rapid-gender-analysis-latin-america-caribbean-venezuelan-migrants-refugees>

10 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/01/22/guerrillas-are-police/social-control-and-abuses-armed-groups-colombias-arauca>.

11 <https://tratadepersonas.mininterior.gov.co/observatorio-del-delito-trata-de-personas/casos-de-trata-de-personas>.

12 Ibid.

13 <https://r4v.info/es/documents/download/74528>

14 <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/care-rapid-gender-analysis-latin-america-caribbean-venezuelan-migrants-refugees>

15 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666623520300039>

16 <https://profamilia.org.co/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Health-services-inequalities-affecting-the-Venezuelan-migrant-and-refugee-population-in-Colombia-how-to-improve-the-local-response-to-the-humanitarian-emergency.pdf>

What goal is calling for

GOAL is working with Terre Des Hommes Italy and key local stakeholders – including vulnerable populations, civil society and local government representatives – to deliver its proven *Barrio Resiliente* ('Resilient Community') programme in Colombia. This involves strengthening local capacity to mitigate against natural hazards, providing cash transfers to help people meet their basic needs, and making seed funding available to those looking to start economic enterprises. You can read more about GOAL's work in Colombia here.

But we know this is not enough to meet today's needs, let alone to address the spiralling and overlapping crises.

GOAL is calling for the international community to urgently recognise the scale and complexity of the insecurities facing vulnerable Venezuelans and Colombians in Colombia alike.

Specifically:

■ Mobilise funding.

An impressive \$2.79 billion was pledged by donors at an International Conference in Solidarity with Venezuelan Migrants and Refugees in May 2020¹⁷. It is now vital that these pledges materialise on the ground. For instance, recent figures suggest that there is an 80% gap in the funding made available for work in Colombia alone¹⁸.

■ Create pathways for longer-term development.

In addition to humanitarian support, Colombian communities need development interventions and investment to build their long-term prosperity and resilience. Local capacity should be nurtured to ensure sustainability. These interventions should factor in the impact of climate change on already hazard-prone communities.

■ Prioritise peace and security.

It is reported that Colombia's 2016 Peace Agreement could take 25 years to implement with current levels of expenditure¹⁹. In the meanwhile, armed violence and insecurity is on the rise. The full implementation of the 2016 Peace Agreement needs to be prioritised.

■ Strengthen services for survivors of sexual violence.

There are serious limitations to the provision of support for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, particularly at the local level where supplies, specialist knowledge and services, and funding are lacking²⁰. With these types of violence on the rise, it is essential that services are strengthened.

■ Provide for vulnerable populations.

The diverse risks and specialised needs of refugees and migrants with marginalised identities and status needs to be considered in planning and delivering services and interventions. In particular, GOAL calls for attention to be paid to women, children (especially unaccompanied youth), Indigenous groups, LGBTIQ+ populations, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

■ Combat xenophobia against refugees.

Targeted anti-xenophobia campaigns should be produced and disseminated to decrease stigmatisation and discrimination against Venezuelan refugees, and to promote integration and social cohesion.

¹⁷ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1064922>

¹⁸ <https://r4v.info/en/documents/details/83128>

¹⁹ <https://undocs.org/en/S/2020/943>

²⁰ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666623520300039>

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