

## FOCUS ON COLOMBIA 2003

### 1. Introduction

For many years Colombia achieved a stable record of economic growth. Since 1999, however, the endemic armed conflict and drug trafficking have taken their toll and the economic situation for most Colombians is becoming more difficult with unemployment close to 20%. The country is one of the most violent in the world and homicide has become the most prevalent cause of death for young men. The armed conflict has caused the displacement of close to two million people, half of whom are children. Between January and June 2002 the number of new displaced persons reached more than 200,000. If this tendency continues, the year 2002 will see the highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in history. In addition, according to the International Organization for Migration, IOM, an average of 240,000 Colombians leave the country each year as a result of the conflict. Colombia is also vulnerable to natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, landslides, avalanches and volcanic eruptions.

The Colombian Red Cross (CRC) has approximately 13,500 active volunteers grouped in the following categories: youth, relief and ladies and 2,400 employees of whom 230 are working at the headquarters. The CRC has 31 provincial branches and 232 municipal chapters, covering all the country except for some parts in the east with low population density. The headquarters is divided into 8 departments: health, relief, doctrine and protection, youth, relief and lady volunteers, development, international cooperation and finance and administration. The CRC has particular strengths in the areas of relief, health and dissemination. In spite of the difficult security situation due to the armed conflict, armed groups show respect for the Red Cross emblem; neither does the CRC have problems in maintaining its independence from the government.

The capacity of the National Society is to a considerable extent limited by serious financial constraints. The CRC headquarters has still to recover from the effects of a strike of its headquarters' employees which paralyzed the National Society in the first quarter of 2001. In early 2002, the labour court judges responsible for the trade union charge against the CRC, ruled in favour of the employees. The National Society also had to diversify income generation since the lottery and health services provide less resources than before. Given the humanitarian challenges in the country, the National Society remains dependent on international cooperation. The CRC has considerable support from the Movement: the Federation, the ICRC and a number of PNSs of which five have presence in Bogota, some with a team of delegates both in Bogota and in the field.

### 2. National Context

#### UNDP - Human Development Indicators 2002

Country Ranking - HDI	68
Total Population (millions)	42,1
% of the population living below \$1/day	19,7
% of the population living below \$2/day	36,0
GDP per capita (US \$)	6.248
Infant mortality per 1,000 live births	25
Under 5 mortality per 1,000 live births	30
Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births	80
% of births attended by skilled health staff	86
% of population using improved water sources	91

% of population using adequate sanitation facilities	85
% of people living with HIV/AIDS	0,40
Annual population growth rate %	2,0
% population under 15 years of age	32,8
% population aged 65 and above	4,7
Net primary school enrolment ratio %	87
Adult illiteracy rate % MALE age 15 yrs +	8,3
Adult illiteracy rate % FEMALE age 15 yrs +	8,3

### 3. National Society Priorities

The CRC has initiated the process of drawing up a national development plan. To date, each department has had its own national plan without clear coordination with other programmes. However, all activities are fully in line with Strategy 2010.

**1. Relief:** The CRC has at its disposal a considerable number of volunteers (7,000) who are trained and in a position to carry out relief operations and to provide basic first aid to individuals/populations in need. Recurrent natural disasters such as earthquakes, land-slides and flooding, together with man-made calamities related to the armed conflict, particularly displacement, ensure that the response level of the National Society is regularly challenged and put to the test. According to the CRC, 218,500 displaced people were assisted by the National Society in 2001, either in cooperation with the *Red de Solidaridad* (Solidarity Network) or with the ICRC. Furthermore, official CRC statistics indicate that 114,000 individuals affected by natural catastrophes and 95,000 persons affected by technological calamities were assisted by relief staff and volunteers throughout the year 2001. The CRC's directorate of relief operations has a network of 15 strategic warehouses with a total shelf space capacity of 50,000 m<sup>2</sup>. In addition, the CRC manages 14 disaster response warehouses belonging to the governmental national disaster prevention organization (*fondo nacional de calamidades*). The vehicle fleet at its disposal comprises 40 ambulances, 216 vehicles, 26 boats and 1 small aircraft. The CRC is also implementing community based disaster preparedness programmes in several areas of the country.

**2. Health:** Most CRC branches provide primary health care services to the communities. Beyond that, a number of branches offer specialized medical care treatment (dialysis, radiology, ophthalmology, pediatrics). 27% of the blood needs of the country are covered by 8 CRC blood banks distributed throughout the territory. The youth department is carrying out HIV/AIDS related activities.

**3. Humanitarian Values/Dissemination and protection:** As a result of the conflict situation, the dissemination of the Red Cross Fundamental Principles and IHL represent major priorities for the National Society. Dissemination is carried out to the general and specialized public (armed forces, universities). To this aim, the branches have contracted full or part-time dissemination officials (10 branches), or have appointed (unpaid) dissemination volunteers. With ICRC technical and financial support, CRC staff and volunteers receive a three-level modular IHL training (basic, intermediate, specialized), as well as regular refresher courses. In the field of protection, the CRC developed a programme of psychological assistance to the victims of the armed conflict (and natural catastrophes). Finally, the CRC supports the ICRC in its activities of re-establishing family links, whenever necessary.

Youth plays an important roll in the promotion of humanitarian values and the promotion of peaceful co-existence through the PACO (Paz, Accion y Convivencia) programme that is being carried out throughout the country.

**4. Other:** The CRC has a well developed training department.

#### AT A GLANCE

	YEAR	COMMENT
Statutes	2,001	
NDP		Process started in 2,002
Regulations	-	In process
CAS	2,003	Pending national development plan
Self Assessment	2,003	Scheduled in 2,003
Elections	2,000	
Yearly audit	2,001	
Annual Report	2,000	

#### Main strengths

- Disaster preparedness and response;
- Active, dedicated and well trained volunteers;
- Internal and external dissemination of human rights and international humanitarian law;
- A high degree of respect for the emblem.

#### Main challenges

- To draw up a national development plan;
- To improve branch network capacity and compile a branch development plan within the plan mentioned above;
- To improve the financial situation;
- Follow up and reporting on programmes;
- Highly dependent on international funding.

#### 4. Movement priorities

The CRC receives considerable support from all components of the Red Cross Movement. Although coordination takes place, this could be improved. In 2001, the CRC and the ICRC signed a coordination framework agreement which was ratified after a 6-month trial period in May 2002. A much needed CAS will be possible once the CRC has established its priorities and programmes in a national development plan.

Federation support has mainly been in the area of community development though support to the health activities under the Amazonico programme and to community based disaster preparedness activities through the Zona Andina programme. The Federation manned a liaison office in Bogota until June 2002 and plans to maintain delegate presence in the country, however, this will now take the form of technical support to a project aimed at strengthening CRC capacity in providing response related to the IDP situation, especially in the area of health. In 2002 the Federation put organizational development resources at the disposal of the CRC to promote the much needed strategic planning exercise.

Five PNSs; the American, Canadian, French, Netherlands and Spanish Red Cross Societies have offices in Bogota. Most are operating on a project basis with humanitarian assistance funding from

donor agencies. The Canadian Red Cross has implemented a major primary health care programme over several years. The Netherlands Red Cross is supporting many projects in favour of IDPs and has used the Federation's Amazonico programme methodology for community development. Furthermore, the Netherlands Red Cross is also supporting the CRC in the area of organizational development. The American Red Cross is supporting a significant humanitarian assistance programme in the southern part of Colombia badly affected by the conflict, with several components in the area of health, relief distribution, support to IDPs and disaster preparedness.

Partner	Health	Disaster Response	Disaster Preparedness	Humanitarian Values	Organizational Development	Other
ICRC		X IDPs		X	X Supports Federation position	Dissemin- -ation
Federation*	IDPs Amazonico		CBDP	Non Violence	Support to NDP, Self Assessment	
American Red Cross	X	X IDPs	X			
Canadian Red Cross	X					
Spanish Red Cross	X	X IDPs	X	XXX		
French Red Cross	X	X IDPs	X			
Norwegian Red Cross				X PACO, Non Violence		Youth exchange
Netherlands Red Cross	X	X IDPs	X		X	IDPs

\* Federation Secretariat is supported by the Finnish Red Cross, the Norwegian Red Cross and the Swedish Red Cross.

## 5. Priority Programmes for Secretariat assistance

The South America regional delegation will provide support to the CRC in all key programme areas, as outlined above in section 4 of this document.

### Health and Care

- Amazonico project;
- Support to IDP programming.

### Disaster Management

- Community based disaster preparedness projects.
- Better Programming Initiative (BPI).

### Organizational Development

- Support to the national development plan process.
- National Society self assessment.

**Humanitarian Values**

- Non violence projects.

**Federation Coordination**

- CAS process to be initiated once the national development plan has been approved.