

# COUNTRY FOCUS - COLOMBIA 2004



## 1. Introduction

According to the most recent study of the World Bank, after Brazil, Colombia is the country with the highest levels of inequality in South America. The endemic armed conflict which has been on-going for over 50 years has taken its toll and for most Colombians the economic situation is becoming more difficult with unemployment reaching levels above 21%. Poverty and violence are the two main characteristics of the Colombian social crisis, which is aggravated by high levels of corruption and drug trafficking. These elements combined increase the vulnerability of the Colombian population. The country is one of the most violent in the world with 30,000 homicides per year on average. Homicide has become the most prevalent cause of death for young men (51%).

The armed conflict has caused the displacement of two million people, 49% of whom are women and 48% of whom are under 18 years of age. In addition, an average of 240,000 Colombians leave the country on an annual basis as a result of the conflict, according to the International Organization for Migration.

Colombia is vulnerable to natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, landslides, avalanches and volcanic eruptions. Each year there are regular reports of floods that affect up to 15 million persons.

## 2. National Context

### Human Development Indicators 2003

Country Ranking - HDI	64
Total population (millions)	43.7
Life expectancy at birth	72.2
Annual population growth rate %	1.5
% population under 15 yrs of age	32.4
% population aged 65 and above	4.8
% urban population	75.5
% of the population living below \$1/day	14.4
% of the population living below \$2/day	26.5
GDP per capita (US \$)	7,040
Infant mortality per 1,000 live births	19
Under 5 mortality per 1,000 live births	23
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	86
% of population with access to essential drugs	80-94
% of adults living with HIV/AIDS	0.40
Women living with HIV/AIDS	20,000
Children living with HIV/AIDS	4,000
Net primary school enrolment ratio %	89
Adult literacy rate % MALE age 15 yrs +	91.9
Adult literacy rate % FEMALE age 15 yrs +	91.9

(UNDP 2003, World Bank 2003)

### 3. Priorities of the National Society

Foundation CRC	1915
Joined the Movement	1922
Branches	31
Municipal units	230
Staff	2100
Active volunteers (estimated)	35,000

The Colombian Red Cross (CRC) has approximately 35,000 active volunteers (*Juveniles, Socorristas, Damas Grises*) and 2100 employees, 176 of which work at the headquarters. The CRC has 31 branches and 230 municipal units, covering all of the country except for some parts in the east which have sparse populations. The CRC therefore is therefore one of the National Societies with the broadest coverage in Latin America. The headquarters is divided into 8 departments: health, relief, doctrine and protection (dissemination), youth, volunteers, development, international cooperation and finance and administration. The CRC has particular strengths in the areas of relief, health and dissemination. The CRC has good coordination with the national system of disaster preparedness and relief (DNPAD). In spite of the difficult security situation due to the armed conflict, armed groups show respect for the Red Cross emblem. The CRC has no problems in maintaining its independence in relation to the government.

The capacity of the National Society is to a considerable extent limited by financial constraints. Its resources come from the lottery, the national blood bank, the clinic laboratory, its temporary shelter and the leasing of some properties. However, CRC income is insufficient and, given the humanitarian challenges the country faces, the National Society remains dependent on international cooperation. The CRC benefits from considerable support from all components of the Movement; the Federation, the ICRC and a number of PNSs of which four have presence in the country: the American, French, Netherlands and Spanish Red Cross Societies. In order to maintain its programmes, the CRC needs to seek new funds and ways of generating income.

The CRC has completed its strategic plan and national development plan (NDP) in line with *Strategy 2010*. This NDP covers the period 2003 to 2005 and emphasizes strengthening the capacity of the organization to better respond to the significant demand for humanitarian services.

The areas of action prioritized by the NDP:

#### **Health and Care:**

- Primary health care services for communities and ambulance services, health care in emergencies.
- Blood banks throughout the country which ensure standards of quality and security.

#### **Disaster Response and Preparedness:**

- Trained volunteers capable of carrying out relief operations, and providing basic first aid to individuals/populations in need. Recurrent natural disasters: earthquakes, land-slides, flooding and man-made calamities related to the armed conflict (displacement) result in the response level of the National Society being regularly challenged and put to the test.
- Community based disaster preparedness projects in several areas of the country.
- The CRC's directorate of relief operations maintains 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 *Fondo Nacional de Calamidades* (fund at the disposal of the national governmental disaster prevention organization). The vehicle fleet at the disposal of the CRC comprises 40 ambulances, 216 other vehicles, 26 boats, and 1 small aircraft.

**Humanitarian Values / Dissemination and Protection:**

- Dissemination of Red Cross Fundamental Principles, Humanitarian Values, the use of the Red Cross emblem and IHL is carried out internally and to the general and specialized public (armed forces, universities, etc.). To this end, the branches have contracted full or part-time dissemination officials or have appointed (unpaid) dissemination volunteers. With ICRC technical and financial support, CRC staff and volunteers receive a three-level modular IHL-training course (basic, intermediate, specialized), as well as regular refresher courses.
- Psychological assistance to the victims of the armed conflict (and natural disasters). Support to the ICRC in its tracing activities, whenever necessary.
- Youth plays an important role in the promotion of Humanitarian Values and the promotion of peaceful co-existence through the PACO (Paz, Acción y Convivencia / Peace, Action and Coexistence) programme that is being carried out all over the country.

**International Cooperation:**

- Promote international partnerships with members of the Movement and other international organizations in order to better fulfil the institutional objectives.

**Volunteers:**

- Promote the development of volunteers who are fundamental to the work of the National Society and its work with communities.

**Training:**

- Maintain a well developed training department, to enhance the pool of human resources.

**AT A GLANCE**

<b>CRC</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
<b>Statutes</b>	2002
<b>National Development Plan</b>	2003-2005
<b>Cooperation Agreement Strategy (CAS)</b>	2004
<b>Self Assessment</b>	2003
<b>Last Elections</b>	2001
<b>Next Elections</b>	2005
<b>Yearly audit</b>	2002
<b>Youth representative in National Society governance</b>	Yes
<b>Disaster response plan within the National Society plan</b>	Yes
<b>Disaster response plan integrated with the government plan</b>	In process

**Main strengths**

- Ÿ Relief area: disaster preparedness and response.
- Ÿ Active, dedicated and well trained volunteers.
- Ÿ Internal and external dissemination of international humanitarian law.
- Ÿ A high degree of respect for the emblem.

**Main challenges**

- Ÿ Implement the NDP.
- Ÿ Improve branch network capacity.
- Ÿ Improve the financial situation.
- Ÿ Follow up and reporting on programmes.
- Ÿ Seeking new sources of funding.

#### 4. Red Cross and Red Crescent Priorities

The CRC receives considerable support from the Movement. Coordination is working well, although there is room for improvement. In 2001 the CRC and the ICRC signed a coordination framework agreement (ratified after a 6-month trial period in May 2002). The PNSs present in the country are involved in the process of building up the CAS through the coordination of the Federation's regional delegation.

To date, Federation support has mainly been in the area of community development though support to the Amazónico programme in the area of health and the Zona Andina programme in the area of community based disaster preparedness. The Federation maintained a liaison office in Bogota until June 2002 and has delegate presence in the country since November 2003

Four PNSs: the American, French, Netherlands and Spanish Red Cross Societies have offices in Bogota. Most are operating on a project basis with funding from donor agencies. The Canadian Red Cross implemented a major primary health care programme which closed in May 2003. The Netherlands Red Cross is supporting many projects in favour of IDPs and has used the Federation Amazónico programme methodology for community development. Furthermore, the Netherlands Red Cross is also supporting CRC in the area of organizational development. The American Red Cross is supporting a major humanitarian assistance programme in the southern Colombia, badly hit by the conflict, with many components in the area of health, relief distribution, support to IDPs and disaster preparedness. The Spanish Red Cross is supporting projects in favor of the IDPs, as well as community development in the coffee axis region.

Partner	Health	Relief	DPP	Humanitarian values	Organization Development	Other
ICRC		IDPs		Yes	Supports Federation position	Dissemination of FPs and IHL
Federation	IDPs Amazonico		CBDP	Non violence	Support for NDP and CAS	
American Red Cross	Yes	IDPs	Yes			
Spanish Red Cross	Yes	IDPs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Youth international friendship
French Red Cross	Yes	IDPs	Yes			
Norwegian Red Cross				PACO, non violence		Youth exchange
Netherlands Red Cross	Yes	IDPs	Yes	Yes	Yes	

#### 5. Priority Programmes for Secretariat Assistance

##### Health and Care

- Ÿ Amazónico programme.
- Ÿ Support to IDP programming.

##### Disaster Management

- Ÿ Support for community based disaster preparedness projects.
- Ÿ Better Programming Initiative.

##### Organizational Development

- Ÿ Support for dissemination of the NDP.

**Humanitarian Values**

Ÿ Non violence projects.

**Federation Coordination**

Ÿ CAS process.