



Assistance to migrants, Colombian returnees and host communities in response to the COVID-19 emergency

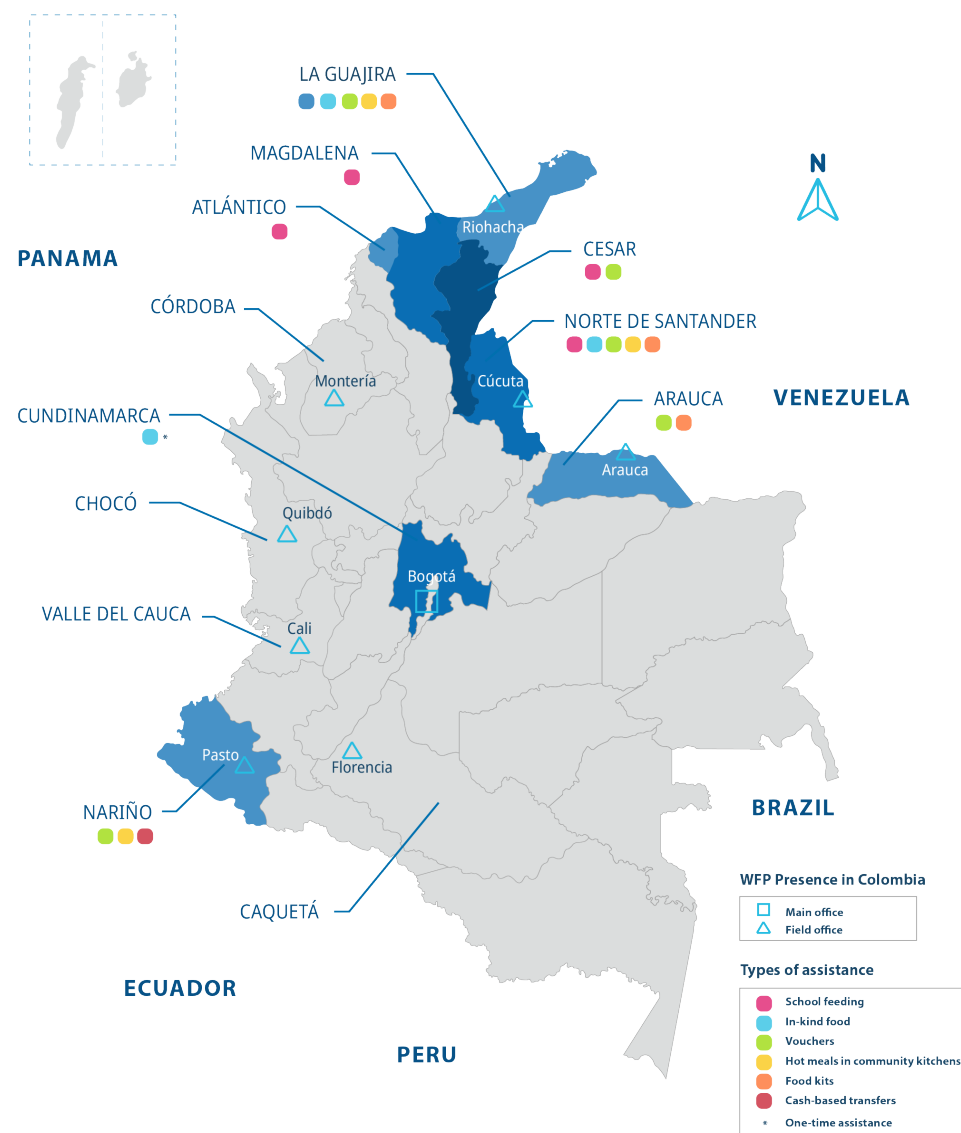
From the onset of the crisis, the United Nations World Food Programme has assisted 1.5 million migrants in Arauca, Atlántico, Cesar, La Guajira, Magdalena, Nariño and Norte de Santander. During the first quarter of 2020, WFP provided assistance to approximately 300,000 migrants and members of host communities per month. This, thanks to the support of its partners and donors as well as to the collaborative work with national institutions at the central and local levels.

1 Pandemic context & WFP Colombia

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) plays, at the global level, a fundamental role in the lives of around 90 million people that benefit of its programmes of assistance and monitoring to achieve nutritional and food security.

With a presence in Colombia since 1969, WFP is the UN agency that supports the Colombian Government and national institutions in their goal of eradicating malnutrition by 2030, while promoting local economic development and providing transformative and sustainable solutions in the context of peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance, and management of mass migration from Venezuela. WFP has a territorial presence in 15 departments of the country through eight offices strategically located in the capitals of the departments of Arauca, Caquetá, Córdoba, Chocó, La Guajira, Nariño, Norte de Santander, and Valle del Cauca. Its activities are strongly aligned with the priorities of the National Government to address the needs of humanitarian assistance, recovery, development and peace throughout the Colombian territory.

The COVID-19 crisis is directly affecting Venezuelan migrants, who, in many cases, have lost their jobs and sources of income. Food insecurity is rapidly increasing for migrants: According to a rapid needs assessment carried out by the Inter-Agency Group for Mixed Migration Flows (GIFMM), with support from WFP, 85% of migrant households have reduced their food intake after the crisis started; another



48% reports not to have any source of income; and at least 71% of the surveyed households report to have lost their employment during the crisis. Thus, according to the rapid assessment findings, it is estimated that food insecure migrant households have nearly doubled moving from 55% (EESA, WFP 2019) to 95% while comparing the situation before and after COVID-19. This means that nearly all migrants find themselves in food insecurity.

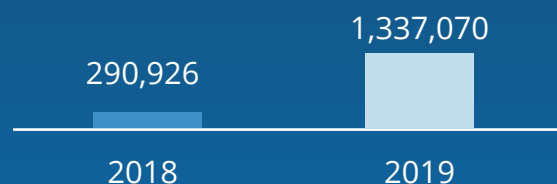
As Colombia implements procedures to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19, new needs have emerged among the most vulnerable and unprotected populations. The effects of the necessary containment measures of COVID-19 adopted at the national level, such as restrictions of movement, closure of many establishments and reductions in trade-related activities, are affecting the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of workers, especially women and those with atypical forms of employment in the informal sector.

The population belonging to these vulnerable and fragile social strata is left with limited or no coping capacity. This, in turn, generates a new large group of people in vulnerable conditions and with high levels of food insecurity that will require immediate assistance to prevent them from falling into extreme poverty.

Due to the serious socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak, hundreds of Venezuelan migrants have begun to return to their country through the border departments of Norte de Santander and Arauca. Migrants in transit face increased exposure to COVID-19 contagion.

Likewise, the temporary closure of schools in the whole country has required significant adjustments in the management of the School Feeding Programme, which has been affected in all departments.

Beneficiaries assisted per year



2 Planning and response

WFP is implementing a comprehensive two-track approach in light of the escalating COVID-19 emergency, based on two main objectives:

- **Adapt** all ongoing programs to the new context, ensuring not only their continuity but also support for the most vulnerable groups in need. Such groups include migrants, Colombian returnees, host communities, victims of violence, displaced persons, confined populations, as well as boys and girls in social vulnerability that require school feeding in educational institutions.

- **Scale-up** WFP interventions and articulate programmes that respond to the growing medium-term and humanitarian needs of new vulnerable groups, affected by the crisis generated by COVID-19.

The main priority of WFP is to ensure continuity of support for the most vulnerable populations, which reaches around 340,000 beneficiaries per month. This requires to rapidly adapt and reinvent, if necessary, its assistance modalities, complying

with the guidelines stipulated by the Colombian Government and local authorities.

In this sense, WFP makes available all its expertise and knowledge acquired during the management of emergencies and complex transition situations in many countries and regions of the world.

Based on an assessment of new vulnerabilities and the pandemic-generated needs, WFP is already implementing interventions in close collaboration with State entities. By reaching new groups and affected populations, including those with high levels of food and nutrition insecurity, WFP is contributing to a coordinated and solid management of the crisis at the country level.

Applying the highest biosecurity standards and promoting rigorous security measures at the operational level, WFP ensures the integrity of its beneficiaries, as well as that of its staff and partners so that they continue operating effectively and safely.

3 Key areas of intervention

WFP has a wide variety of humanitarian assistance modalities, all adjustable and adaptable to various scenarios, including cash-based transfers, vouchers, in-kind food distribution, food kits and take-home rations, among others.

In line with the National and departmental Governments' measures, and taking into account

the COVID-19 curve, WFP will continue providing humanitarian aid.

Working with local authorities, WFP has adopted different intervention and distribution methods, prioritizing assistance through cash-based transfers while implementing innovative procedures that respond to the demands of the current context.



a. Assistance to migrants, Colombian returnees and host communities

The assistance of the WFP responds to the requests of the Colombian Government, specifically coordinated with the institutions in charge of supporting the migration crisis, more precisely with *Gerencia de Frontera* and with the *Inter-agency Group on Mixed Migration Flows* (GIFMM) within the United Nations System.

During 2019, WFP supported an increasing number of Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees and host communities in the departments of Arauca, Atlántico, Cesar, La Guajira, Magdalena, Nariño and Norte de Santander, reaching a cumulative total of around 1.3 million people, with an average of 300,000 beneficiaries per month early 2020.

From April to December 2020, WFP aims to maintain its assistance to 300,000 Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees and host communities per month. This includes distributions of vouchers and food baskets, as is the case of 25,000 people living in the remote region of Alta Guajira.

b. Assistance to new vulnerable groups affected by the isolation measures of COVID-19

WFP is increasing its capacity and coverage to respond to the critical needs of the population belonging to the most vulnerable and fragile social strata affected by the isolation measures decreed to prevent COVID-19 contagion.

Based on the ongoing needs analysis, and the initial requests received, WFP is expanding its capacity to provide emergency assistance to up to 300,000 new people in vulnerable situations, through various intervention methods in different regions of the country.

The current crisis is particularly affecting the livelihoods of the most vulnerable population in urban and peri-urban areas. This include informal

economy workers requiring immediate assistance so that they do not fall into extreme poverty, and migrants with precarious income sources, often informal.

In this regard, working closely with national authorities, and in response to urgent assistance requests from various institutions, WFP has activated and implemented interventions aimed at groups affected by the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in different locations such as Bogotá, Soacha, Cali, Palmira and Pasto, among others.

More interventions will be directed to rural areas, targeting the needs of small-scale producers, rural women and other communities affected by the contraction of markets and the demands originated by COVID-19.

At the same time, in close coordination with the *Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar* (ICBF), other nutrition interventions are planned, targetting vulnerable groups, including boys and girls, as well as pregnant and lactating women.

c. Migrant school-age children and adolescents: school feeding and nutrition

Due to the isolation measures decreed by the pandemic, various forms of ongoing assistance have required urgent adaptations. This is the case of school feeding aimed at children and adolescents affected by the closure of schools.

In just over three weeks, working coordinately with national institutions, WFP has reviewed the logistics of its distributions, ensuring that parents or caregivers can collect the necessary foods from educational institutions to meet the needs of their children. This will ensure that students who do not attend school due to the mandatory isolation decreed by the pandemic, have access to school meals through a safe modality. Thus, **more than 110,000 students, including 34,000 migrant boys and girls, will continue having access to an appropriate and nutritious food diet.**



4 Cross-cutting approaches

In Colombia, WFP focuses its efforts on the triple nexus: humanitarian assistance, development and peacebuilding. The empowerment and protection of **women and children** is a central pillar of any action aimed at sustainable development and lasting peace in the country, therefore, WFP will continue to prioritize its assistance through the different programmes, working closely with national institutions and agencies of the United Nations System.

In this context, WFP will also continue working towards ensuring that the current conditions and needs of the populations affected by compulsory isolation, particularly **indigenous and afro-descendant**, are carefully evaluated and managed.

This is being done within the framework of the application of public health and safety measures that guarantee the development of assistance programmes through a safe modality that does not expose them to contracting the virus.

5 Innovation in social protection

WFP is working hand in hand with national institutions within the framework of the social protection system in Colombia, reaching those who need it most, including migrants in situations of extreme poverty:

- **Families in extreme poverty with children and adolescents:** in coordination with the *Departamento de Prosperidad Social*, WFP will make unconditional cash transfers to Colombian families, host communities and migrants in Arauca who currently do not benefit from regular social programmes, thus complementing the efforts of the Colombian Government to reach the most vulnerable population.
- **Adults over 70 years old:** in coordination with the *Departamento de Prosperidad Social* and the *Unidad de Gestión del Riesgo de Desastres (UNGRD)*, WFP will finance emergency humanitarian food assistance for beneficiaries of the National Government's Senior Support Programme in the department of Arauca. These in-kind food kits include 36 products from 14 categories, to support a four-member family group for two weeks.



6

Analysis and assessment

Through its Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Unit (VAM), **WFP is developing a series of analyses of the new socio-economic dynamics and of the needs generated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, aimed to optimize and report identification, prioritization and targeting of beneficiaries.**

This will contribute to a more effective articulation with local institutions, and to a nationally coordinated response to the affected populations

that might be at risk of high levels of food and nutrition insecurity.

In this same context, as part of an inter-agency and multidimensional approach to the crisis, WFP has also been supporting the activities of various partners and institutions of the United Nations System such as GIFMM (migrants), and agencies such as FAO (markets) and UNDP (socio-economic impact), among others.

7

Coordination and leadership

WFP is a global leader in humanitarian assistance, providing skills and expertise in

- Food and nutrition security
- Vulnerability analysis
- Disaster preparedness and response
- Logistics and supply chains
- Telecommunications
- Cash-based transfers, among others.

In the framework of the emergency response by COVID-19, under the leadership of PAHO/WHO, WFP continues to work efficiently and to coordinate its activities as part of the United Nations Country Team.

In this context, WFP:

- co-chairs the Food Security Group together with FAO and UNICEF
- co-chairs the Cash Transfer Working Group in Colombia, along with the Colombian Red Cross
- leads the Logistics Working Group
- leads the Interagency Procurement Group together with PAHO and UNDP
- actively participates in the Education and Early Recovery groups

These activities are aimed at ensuring coordinated and coherent evidence-based approaches that enable the efficient execution of the humanitarian programs of WFP and its partners.



8

Funding

The World Food Program is entirely funded through the voluntary support of partners and donors, such as Canada, the European Union, Germany, Switzerland, the United States of America, the UN Central Fund for Action in Cases of Emergency (CERF) and the Strategic Resource Allocation Committee (SRAC), among others.

In April, WFP assisted 243,000 persons in 38 municipalities of 7 departments, and expects to continue assisting an average of 300,000 beneficiaries per month. This includes 34,000 migrant children, through the School Feeding Programme, as well as the population affected by the indirect effects of COVID-19.

WFP urgently requires additional USD\$51.4 million to maintain its immediate response actions and attend new and increasing demands related to COVID-19 in Colombia.

These additional funds will cover the current requirements of the WFP emergency response to COVID-19 and will be updated according to the needs and the evolution of the crisis.

WFP currently has the capability to expand its assistance to a monthly average of 400,000 migrants, contingent to resource availability.

