

Facts & Figures

€401 million in humanitarian assistance since 1994, of which **€202.7 million** to the Colombian conflict.

€72.4 million in humanitarian aid to South America for the period **2013-2016**

€87.7 million for disaster preparedness from 1995 to 2016.

ECHO is the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department.

Through ECHO funding, over 120 million people are helped each year in more than 80 countries outside the EU through approximately 200 partners (International non-governmental organisations, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement, and UN agencies).

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* All the latest ECHO Factsheets: bit.ly/echo-fs



Search-and-rescue teams being trained on disaster preparedness as part of an EU-funded project implemented by the Spanish Red Cross in Ecuador. © Cruz Roja Española 2006

Key message

- Following the **deadly earthquake of 16 April 2016 in Ecuador** the European Commission immediately provided coordinated European support to the relief efforts and released €1 million as initial humanitarian aid to the victims.
- South America is one of the world's most vulnerable regions to natural disasters. Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela are highly exposed to **earthquakes, floods, landslides, droughts, cold waves and volcanic eruptions**. Local capacity to cope with such disasters is limited.
- The European Commission's assistance to South America focuses on **responding to the humanitarian needs caused by the Colombian conflict**, providing **emergency response to natural hazards** and preparing communities for future disasters by **increasing the resilience and preparedness** of the most affected populations and local disaster management institutions.
- Since 1994 the Commission has supported South America with **€401 million in humanitarian aid, of which €202.7 million** has been dedicated to alleviate the humanitarian consequences of the Colombian armed conflict in **Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador**.

Humanitarian situation and needs

Background

South America is **highly exposed to natural hazards**. Floods and droughts continue to be the most significant and recurring disasters. Additionally, **climate change-related events** increase the frequency, intensity and unpredictability of impacts. Phenomena like El Niño (unusually warm temperatures in the equatorial Pacific) or La Niña (unusually cool temperatures) continue to cause extreme weather patterns and substantial economic impact, including significant loss of subsistence crops and livestock, affecting the food security and livelihoods of many. Located in a very dynamic geological region, the South

America is also affected by earthquakes and active volcanoes. Both rural and urban populations living in extreme poverty often reside in fragile settlements, highly exposed to natural hazards.

In addition, the **50-year old armed conflict in Colombia** continues to have **major humanitarian consequences**, despite the on-going peace talks between the Colombian government and the guerrilla group FARC. With more than 6.9 million IDPs, Colombia has the world's second largest number after Syria (government figures). In addition, more than 340 000 Colombian refugees have fled to neighbouring Ecuador and Venezuela (UNHCR, 2014), where they are vulnerable and need protection. Murders, threats, extortion, forced recruitment of minors by armed groups, sexual violence, landmines, forced displacement (up to 200 000 additional people every year), confinement and lack of access to basic goods and services affect many, particularly in remote, rural areas. Thousands flee the violence in the countryside and migrate to cities where they frequently face protection, development and security challenges.

Major needs and related problems

When a disaster strikes, the most pressing needs are **shelter, food and relief items** (water cans, mattresses, cooking utensils and hygiene products), access to **safe water and proper sanitation**, as well as **primary health care**. Helping affected populations recover their **livelihoods** is also essential.

The main needs for the populations affected by the Colombian conflict are **protection, access to healthcare, education and safe water**, as well as **food assistance**. Refugees and IDPs often need temporary **housing and basic household items** (hygiene kits, kitchen utensils), as well as **psychological support, legal protection**, and assistance to register or apply for refugee status.

The European Union's Humanitarian Response

Funding

Since 1994, the EU has allocated **€401 million** in humanitarian aid to South America, of which **€202.7 million to the Colombian** conflict.

Humanitarian aid to Colombia

[Colombia](#)* is the largest recipient of the Commission's humanitarian aid in Latin America. The **needs of Colombians affected by the conflict**, including IDPs, refugees and People in Need of International Protection (PNIP) in neighbouring countries (mainly Ecuador and Venezuela) account for 50.5% of EU funds (**€202.7 million**). The aid focuses on providing **protection, food assistance, health care, water, sanitation and education** to vulnerable groups.

Disaster Risk Reduction

The **European Commission's Disaster Preparedness programme (DIPECHO)** supports local disaster response committees, drafting emergency plans, setting up early warning systems, information and education campaigns, reinforcing vital infrastructure (shelters, schools and hospitals), protecting livelihoods, as well as promoting coordination among those responsible for anticipating or reacting to disasters.

For **2015-2016**, the Commission has allocated **€17.5 million to Disaster Risk Reduction*** in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela, and in initiatives to reinforce Disaster Risk Reduction strategies for South America in terms of education and inter-governmental structures such as UNASUR and MERCOSUR. This EU funding includes, for instance, €3 million to support resilience activities in the departments of Beni and La Paz in Bolivia, hard-hit by severe floods. Also, in some countries, important efforts are being undertaken to integrate Disaster Risk Reduction and risk management into humanitarian and development cooperation through ECHO/DEVCO joint programming.

Response to emergencies

The Commission has assisted the region with all major disasters. Very recently, the Commission gave immediate support to Ecuador following the deadly earthquake of 16 April 2016, which left over 400 casualties and more than 4 000 injured, by providing €1 million as initial humanitarian aid to the victims and by coordinating European support to the relief efforts.

In 2016, after the impact of El Niño in the Caribbean coast of Colombia, the Commission released €1.5 million to respond to the severe drought in la Guajira through the provision of water supply, food assistance, nutrition activities and livelihood support to the most affected indigenous families.

From **2013 to 2016**, the Commission assisted more than **55 000 people impacted by extreme weather and floods** in Argentina (€415 000); Bolivia (€1.2 million); Colombia (€2.1 million); Paraguay (€652 098); Peru (€837 695); **drought and a volcanic eruption** in Ecuador (€389 206); **wildfire** in Chile (€119 549); and **civil unrest** in Venezuela (€23 267). Funding was used to provide shelter, safe water, sanitation, health support and livelihood recovery.



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