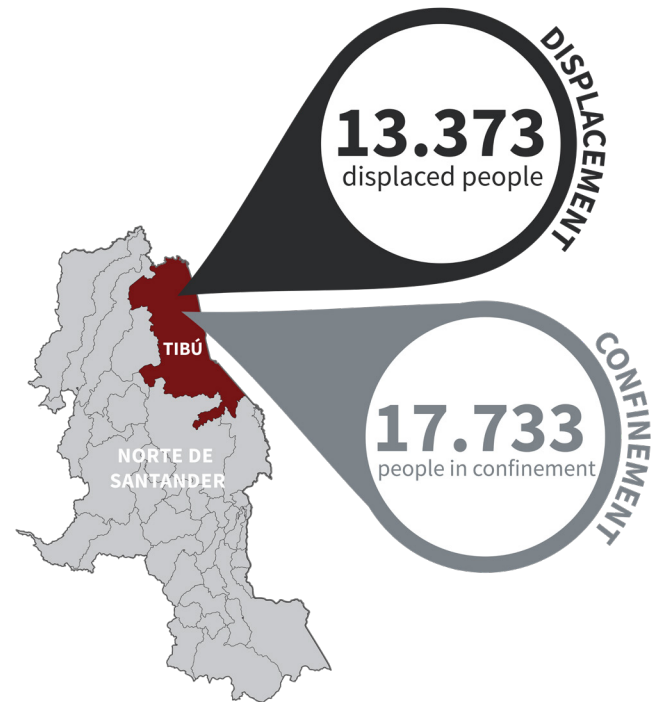




PROTECTION MONITORING SNAPSHOT: HUMANITARIAN IMPACT AND PROTECTION RISKS DERIVED FROM THE FORCED DISPLACEMENT CRISIS IN TIBÚ, NORTE DE SANTANDER

The humanitarian emergency resulting from the armed confrontation between ANSAs (Armed Non-State Actors) has led to the mass forced displacement of approximately 13,373 people¹ from rural areas of the municipalities of the Catatumbo region, and the confinement of approximately 17,733², as well as attacks on civilian population in the form of homicides, threats and enforced disappearances. This snapshot lays out the findings of the protection monitoring conducted by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) through direct observations, interviews to key actors and focal groups³ in 5 shelters from the urban area of Tibú [Francisco José de Caldas Educational Institution (ID FJC)], La Mechita Fishing Club, Papa Francisco Integrated Community Center (CCIPF), San Luis Beltrán Minor Seminary, and the Cultural Center, with approximately 785 people⁴], in Norte de Santander, between January 18th and 25th, 2025. This analysis aims to identify protection risks and human rights violations, the challenges faced by the displaced populations and the obstacles in accessing services, as well as to inform the ongoing humanitarian response and planning of future interventions.



Data taken from Bulletin #7 of the Humanitarian Crisis Room of the Mayor's Office of Tibú published on January 27, 2025.

PROTECTION RISKS

Separation of Families

Attacks on civilians and mass forced displacements have caused the separation of families. The main causes of this separation, identified by DRC in the population located in the 5 shelters from Tibú, during and after the displacement, are as follows: fear of recruitment; use of Children and Adolescents (C&A), who are sent outside the territory to safeguard their lives; due to deep-rootedness in the territory, one or more family members do not move in order to keep

their means of life related to agriculture, or due to fear of their land and houses being appropriated by the ANSAs and direct threats from them; and in the case of social leaderships, to safeguard their integrity and that of their families.

Almost thirteen (13) community leaders, who were forcibly displaced from their veredas⁵ to the urban center of Tibú –due to direct death threats by an armed actor–, had to

1. Mainly located in 5 shelters enabled by the town hall, approx. 13 temporary shelters in Tibú, and other shelters created in rural zones such as Pacheli, La Gabarra, Versalles and Guayabales. Data taken from Bulletin # 7 of the Humanitarian Crisis Room from the town hall of Tibú, published on January 27th, 2025.
 2. Data taken from Bulletin # 7 of the Humanitarian Crisis Room from the town hall of Tibú, published on January 27th, 2025.
 3. Other secondary sources used include reports from the ELC (Local Coordination Team in Spanish), GTP (Subject-specific Protection Group), GIFMM (Interagency Group on Mixed Migration Flows in Spanish), and the Department of Protection of Citizens' Rights, and early warnings.
 4. Data taken from Bulletin # 7 of the Humanitarian Crisis Room from the town hall of Tibú, published on January 27th, 2025. There are 5 shelters in the urban area of Tibú, with management from the town hall.
 5. Veredas are small rural communities in Colombia.

move once again to Cúcuta without their families because they kept receiving death threats via phone calls and text messages. There are also women alone with their children located in the shelters, as their spouses (men) and relatives are currently confined in their places of residence; others have suffered enforced disappearance or have been killed. Likewise, it has been apparent that some families and communities prioritized moving women, C&A, elder people, chronically ill or disabled people, for their security, well-being and guaranteed access to human rights.

Emotional impact on the families who have suffered separation due to any of these causes has been observed, as well as generalized distrust and an uncertain outlook on reunion, which generates constant anguish, stress, uncertainty and hopelessness, directly affecting their well-being.

Obstacles and gaps restricting access to basic rights and services

The massive arrival of displaced people to Tibú has generated a humanitarian crisis marked by obstacles in accessing fundamental rights and essential services. Though local authorities, as well as national and international NGOs, have contributed to managing shelters, persistent gaps in the humanitarian response, deemed insufficient and non-comprehensive, have been identified.

The community has reported significant barriers to their mobility towards and from their territories of origin due to armed conflict. These restrictions have deeply affected access to essential goods and services. Likewise, DRC has identified that the presence of ANSAs has restricted access to some corregimientos where humanitarian activities were previously being developed, thus preventing the provision of essential assistance and monitoring to the situation in these zones.

Conditions in the emergency shelters present several gaps affecting the dignity and security of displaced people. Among these gaps, limited access to food and basic hygiene services are critical. Insufficiency with sanitary units, showers and access to potable water aggravate the situation, whereas overcrowding⁶ and lack of adapted spaces have a disproportionate impact on people with reduced mobility, serious medical conditions or disabilities⁷. Pregnant and breastfeeding women face critical challenges, such as the lack of prenatal checkups, nutritional supplements, growth and child development checkups, and basic hygiene items. Additionally, elderly people and people with disabilities

face serious challenges to get medicines and medical care. Venezuelan people with irregular migratory status face additional barriers, particularly those undocumented or without Temporary Protection Statute (PPT in Spanish), limiting access to health services, even in cases of medical emergencies.

In terms of security, the lack of adequate lighting at night produces fear, especially among women, who avoid going to common areas due to perceived risks, as well as the fact that some shelters have green areas that are not delimited, and other people could enter. In other shelters, all people share the same room, which limits privacy and increases the vulnerability of women, girls, boys and teens, and elderly people; the lack of division of spaces according to specific needs—such as areas divided by families and single women—hinders the creation of a safe space adapted to the needs of the displaced population.

This situation increases exposure to protection risks, including those associated with Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation, particularly affecting women and C&A⁸. This also increases the conditions of vulnerability to negative coping mechanisms, such as unsafe returns and separation of families looking for means of life.

Obstacles to reparation and justice systems: Single Registry of Victims (RUV in Spanish).

Since the start of mass displacements in the region, a severe lack of knowledge and information on the procedures and attention routes for depositions related to victimizing events was observed. This information gap prevents victims from being registered in the RUV, which in turn hinders their formal recognition by the Colombian State as victims of the internal armed conflict.

The lack of valid documentation among a significant number of displaced people, especially among those of Venezuelan nationality who do not have a PPT, has also raised concerns. Victims have received confusing information regarding the need to submit valid documentation to present their depositions about victimizing events. Despite the Municipal Registry visiting the shelters to identify cases of individuals with no documents or deteriorated documents, the lack of clarity regarding how these processes are being carried out has led to misinformation among the displaced population.

Another obstacle identified is the confusion and lack of clarity on the roles of the public servants in charge. Even

5. Mainly displaced from the veredas Veredas Galan, Beltrania, Villas del Rio, Campo 6, Miramontes, Unión Vetas, Wachimán, el Tarra, Orú.

6. Overcrowding has been identified specifically in the shelters located in the Educational Institution Francisco José de Caldas and La Mechita.

7. DRC identified an elderly man with disabilities who, upon arriving at the Francisco José de Caldas shelter, was sleeping on the floor.

8. DRC identified the case of an unaccompanied girl, who was persuaded by a man of the community who offered her a job and better living conditions.

though some public servants have visited the shelters, the victims still do not have clear enough information about the role of each of them and remain uncertain whether the corresponding route for reporting mass victimizing events has been activated.

Additionally, community leaders face permanent threats by the ANSAs due to their role, and obstacles to request necessary protection measures to the local authorities, municipal attorney or ombudsman. This situation creates a lot of insecurity to conduct these types of processes and, along with uncertainty on the procedures for depositions before institutions, has had a negative impact on their psychosocial well-being, generating stress, fear and anguish. Even though the possibility of enabling the municipal coliseum for depositions has been mentioned, social leaders do not consider this space to be safe.

This set of obstacles represents a significant risk for the victims, limiting not only their inclusion in the RUV, but also their access to justice and comprehensive reparations. The lack of clear and accessible information about processes, the insecurity of interacting with the local authorities, the uncertainty about the required documentation and the constant threat to community leaders all reinforce the vulnerability of displaced people.

Psychological/emotional mistreatment or distress inflicted

People displaced and sheltered in Tibú have suffered serious impacts on their psychosocial and emotional well-being due to victimizing events they have gone through, such as forced displacement, threats, experience with or connection with homicides, enforced disappearances and kidnappings. There have been reports of recent events reactivating traumatic memories from previous episodes, intensifying emotional and psychosocial distress. This revictimization phenomenon has manifested in several ways, such as irritability, frequent crying, fatigue linked to insomnia, high levels of stress, constant anxiety, hyperalert, hypervigilance, and muscle rigidity, worsened by precarious and unsafe conditions in shelters.

Forced separation of families has also increased psychosocial risk. To protect some family members, many families have been separated and have a lot of uncertainty about future reunion. Emotional exhaustion arising from this separation becomes a constant source of anguish. In addition, community leaders and displaced people have expressed



growing concerns over the confinement of their relatives in many zones of the Catatumbo. Direct threats by the ANSAs to relatives in confinement have further worsened the situation. Armed actors have warned people in confinement about removing them from their land and have negated them the right to reenter their territory if they decide to evacuate. This situation creates a mood of panic and constant alert, since displaced families fear for the safety of their loved ones, who could be victims of violence or retaliations due to decisions made by the displaced people.

In some affected areas, the ANSAs have mandated that only people with community leadership roles are allowed to move the victims' bodies. This measure has a significant negative impact, since it weakens community support networks, promotes distrust and generates rumors about possible alliances from community leaders with the ANSAs, increasing anguish. Additionally, victims experience deep fear of being prosecuted by armed actors due to their closeness or connection to murdered people.

These experiences, along with the lack of proper psychosocial care, constitute a significant risk for the mental and physical health of displaced people, possibly leading to disorders such as post-traumatic stress, generalized anxiety and depression.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve access to essential services, ensuring continuous provision of food, hygiene products, medical services and potable water, with special attention to people with specific needs to mitigate negative coping strategies, such as unsafe returns.
- Implement security measures, such as adequate lighting, and establish separate spaces for different groups, ensuring privacy and reducing risks of violence and exploitation.
- Improve channels of communication and ensure safe depositions, providing accurate information about attention routes for victims of the armed conflict. This must include attention to specific needs of displaced people and people in vulnerable situations, such as Venezuelan migrants, social leaders and undocumented people.
- The Legal Affairs Department (Ministerio Público in Spanish) should adopt measures to make it easier for victims to access the route of attention, assistance and comprehensive reparations, regardless of having identity documents, nationality or migratory status of the people.
- The UARIV (Unit for Comprehensive Attention and Reparation to Victims in Spanish) should implement measures to ensure that victims of the armed conflict are included in the RUV, regardless of their nationality and migratory status, ensuring compliance with the guarantees recognized by Law 1448, 2011.
- Strengthen psychosocial care for people sheltered in Tibú, given the critical risk of emotional impacts derived from violence and forced displacement. Access to adequate psychosocial services must be guaranteed and security conditions in shelters must be improved to mitigate the emotional distress of the victims.
- Strengthen actions focused on prevention, response and mitigation of GBV risks.

