

COLOMBIA: THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN FLEEING VIOLENCE HITS A 10-YEAR HIGH

BOGOTÁ, 17 March 2026 – At least 215 children on average were forced from their homes each day in Colombia in 2025 - the highest number in at least a decade – due to intensified armed conflict, with displacement continuing into 2026, according to a Save the Children analysis.

A study of official national data found that about 78,000 children were displaced in 2025¹, almost 30% more than in 2024 and more than any year since the signing of a 2016 peace agreement. Displacement puts children at risk of abuse, family separation, dropping out of school, or being recruited into non-state armed groups.

The situation in Colombia has deteriorated further in 2026 as violent clashes between armed groups and criminal bands lead to children and their families being killed, displaced, or confined to their homes - a tactic used by armed groups to cut entire communities off from schools, healthcare, and markets, facilitating child recruitment.

This humanitarian crisis has been compounded by severe flooding in Colombia earlier this year, affecting at least 330,000 people² and displacing over 11,000³.

Colombia now has one of the largest internally displaced populations globally at over 7 million people which is 13% of the population. About one quarter of the displaced are children, many of whom have been forced on the move more than once⁴.

Jorge, * 17, fled from Cauca to the south of the country in 2016. He said:

“When I arrived, I was very different from the children there, even in the way I spoke.

As children, sometimes we don’t understand at such a young age what the consequences of a conflict are. The problem was that we arrived in a place where no one knew us [...] we didn’t have opportunities because, at least in my case, I had to stop studying for two years.

I faced bullying from my classmates because not many understood that I hadn’t left because I wanted to, but because I had been forced to.”

María Mercedes Liévano, Save the Children’s Colombia Country Director, said:

“We are seeing displacement in Colombia at unprecedented levels in recent years. The world’s eyes may not be on Colombia, but the worsening humanitarian emergency here continues to upend the lives of children and their families every day.

¹ <https://datos.paz.unidadvictimas.gov.co/informes/>

² <https://reliefweb.int/report/ecuador/latin-america-caribbean-weekly-situation-update-27-february-2026>

³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/colombia-floods-update-un-ocha-noaa-cpc-copernicus-emsr-echo-daily-flash-23-february-2026>

⁴ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data/>

“Thousands of families are forced to take the painful decision to leave behind everything they have known as it is too risky to stay due to the violence, the presence of armed groups, and the very real fear that their children will be recruited into these armed groups.

“For many children being displaced is not a one-off event. Many children find themselves displaced time and time again as their families have to continually run for safety amid constant threats.

“All parties to the conflict need to immediately de-escalate the violence, ensure that children are protected from recruitment, and ensure that those who were forced to join armed groups can reintegrate back into their communities.”

Save the Children is also calling on international donors to fund the humanitarian response in Colombia which remains critically underfunded. Last year, only 28% of the humanitarian aid appealed for by the UN for partners in Colombia was received⁵.

Save the Children has worked in Colombia for 40 years, working in six of the most affected regions by armed conflict, widespread violence, poverty, climate change, and mixed migration. Promote safe environments that prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children and their communities, prioritizing their voices, while contributing to poverty reduction by generating opportunities and access to basic services for children.

For further enquiries or to set up an interview:

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⁵ <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/49/summary/2025>