



Activation of Contingency Plan in Norte de Santander Branch, January 2025

Appeal: MDRCO034	DREF Allocated: CHF 90,800	Hazard: Population Movement	Country: Colombia
Population at risk (if available): -	Operation Start Date: 09-01-2026	Operation End Date: 28-02-2026	
Event Onset: Sudden	Forecasted day of event (or peak): -	Operation Timeframe: 45 days	

Targeted Regions: **Arauca, La Guajira, Norte de Santander**

Scenario analysis

When and where is the hazard expected to happen?

According to information provided by the Government of the United States and various open sources, during the early morning hours of Saturday, 3 January 2026, the U.S. Government carried out a military incursion in Caracas, Venezuela, during which Nicolás Maduro and his wife were captured on the territory of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. As a consequence of these events, on Monday, 5 January, the Venezuelan Government declared a state of internal emergency, in response to a situation that has had a significant impact on the international community due to its implications for regional stability. The State of Emergency establishes: a) the mobilization of the National Armed Forces throughout the entire national territory; b) the militarization of public service infrastructure, the oil industry, and other basic state industries; c) the reinforcement of patrols and security at land, air, and maritime borders; d) the restriction of entry into the national territory/national border; e) the restriction of movement of people or vehicles within the national territory; and f) the suspension of public assembly and demonstrations.

In light of this situation and its potential repercussions for Colombia—a country that hosts approximately 2.8 million Venezuelan nationals and whose border areas are characterized by the presence of non-state armed groups and heightened security and humanitarian risks—the Colombian Government decided to militarize the main border crossings with Venezuela.

In response to recent events, specific restrictions, and public order situations, a pattern of pendular mobility has emerged in border areas, along with movements toward these areas to access basic goods. Currently, border crossings are open, and according to Venezuelan migrant organizations, Colombia continues to be the main destination country for migrants, considering that a significant number of people still plan to leave the country following the political and social events there.

According to Migración Colombia, between January 1 and January 4, 2026; 6,117 entries into Colombia from Venezuela and 5,390 exits from Colombia to the neighboring country were recorded. This reflects the continuation of an outbound dynamic from Venezuela, which could intensify in the coming weeks, based on trends observed in previous years that show an increase in mixed migration flows between the second and third weeks of January, particularly at the border crossings of Norte de Santander, La Guajira, and Arauca. In addition, restrictions on air mobility have made the connection between both countries mainly by land, and taking into account the recent political changes in the neighboring country, some return flows could increase, motivated by the expectation of change, as expressed in some media by citizens of Venezuelan nationality in Colombia and other countries in the region.

The military intervention, social unrest, and the current volatility of the situation increase the likelihood of an intensification of mixed migration flows and humanitarian needs in the border region. This mobility, characterized by the use of irregular crossings, is affected on the Venezuelan side by restrictions on institutional mobility and limitations on media access, which has reduced the availability of services, being mainly limited to guidance for the local population.

Based on the above, two main scenarios are anticipated: on one hand, the massive arrival of Venezuelan migrants to Colombian border cities; on the other, an increase in returns to Venezuela due to changes in the political and security context. In addition, there may be greater pendular movement of people traveling between both countries.

Arauca, La Guajira, Norte de Santander

Explain the underlying vulnerabilities and risks the hazard poses for at-risk communities?

In view of the current situation in Venezuela, which is leading to an imminent movement of people through mixed flows between the two countries, primarily via land routes, the National Society has identified a high risk of large-scale population movements, compounded by the absence of humanitarian services in the border areas.

Currently, there is no strong humanitarian response in the border areas. Among the organizations providing services in these regions are: the World Food Programme in Norte de Santander; Médecins Sans Frontières in the departments of Norte de Santander and Arauca; and Centro Intégrate in all three prioritized departments. The Colombian Red Cross, for its part, provides health care, protection, and case management services in Norte de Santander and Arauca, while in La Guajira it lacks operational capacity to respond to an increased migratory flow. This situation highlights significant gaps in emergency humanitarian assistance, transportation, protection, gender and inclusion, and WASH services.

In the current context of the political, economic, and social crisis in Venezuela, Colombia's border areas are facing a sustained increase in mixed migratory flows, characterized by disorderly movements, high vulnerability, and immediate humanitarian needs. This situation has placed significant pressure on the border territories, particularly in transit corridors, irregular entry points, and areas with limited institutional capacity. The most urgent needs identified in this scenario include the lack of safe means of mobility, insufficient access to



safe drinking water and adequate sanitation, limited access to hygiene and self-care items, unavailability of food along the migratory route, deterioration of the physical and mental health of the population in transit, and an increase in protection risks, particularly for women, girls, boys, adolescents, and people with specific needs. The main protection risks that may arise during this migratory movement include: the breakdown of family links, disappearances, gender-based and sexual violence, human trafficking, denial of international protection, restrictions on mobility, recruitment and use of children, as well as discrimination and stigmatization.

Additionally, there may be needs for physical health care and psychosocial support. These impacts are likely to affect primarily pregnant and lactating women, older adults, children, and persons with disabilities. It is estimated that areas with high migratory circulation will mainly be the border zones, particularly the municipalities corresponding to the departments prioritized in this operation.

In response to this situation, the branches in Norte de Santander, Arauca, and La Guajira have informed the National Directorate of the Colombian Red Cross of the need to strengthen and expand their capacities at the border, given the high volatility and the potential increase in humanitarian needs arising from a deterioration of the situation in these areas.

Source Name	Source Link
1. Official press release of the Bolivarian Government of Venezuela	https://www.lanacion.com.ar/el-mundo/que-dice-el-comunicado-que-emitio-el-regimen-de-maduro-en-medio-de-las-explusiones-en-caracas-nid03012026/
2. Testimonies from Venezuelans crossing the border in Cúcuta, amid the tension following Nicolás Maduro's capture by the United States: "There is unease."	https://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/otras-ciudades/asi-transcurre-el-paso-fronterizo-en-cucuta-en-medio-de-la-tension-politica-en-venezuela-tras-la-captura-de-nicolas-maduro-por-ee-uu-hay-zozobra-3521578
3. Is the border between Colombia and Venezuela closed today?	https://www.elespectador.com/tags/crisis-en-venezuela/
4. Political instability may generate significant humanitarian needs and tensions at the border.	https://www.clarin.com/mundo/donald-trump-anuncio-nicolas-maduro-capturado-llevado-venezuela_0_XIY7pNGYNc.html
5. Official press release of Colombian Government	https://www.presidencia.gov.co/prensa/Paginas/Comunicado-del-Gobierno-de-Colombia-sobre-situacion-en-Venezuela-260103.aspx

[Supporting Documentation](#)

Plan

Will surge personnel be deployed? If yes, please provide the role profile needed.

Yes

Within the framework of this operation, it is expected to have the support of surge personnel in information management—Humanitarian Information Analysis, IM Officer (Surge Profiles)—to assist the National Society in assessing the information landscape and gaps, and to recommend tailored assessment approaches. This includes developing an analytical framework and a plan to strengthen decision-making and planning in emergency situations, as well as supporting, advising, or guiding the National Society regarding potential information management needs. The Colombian Red Cross, with the support of the Humanitarian Information Analysis Officer, will continue to monitor the evolution of the situation and the potential impacts on the operation.

Considering that access to media outlets at the border has been limited in recent days, it is proposed that this deployment be conducted in person in order to ensure on-site data collection. Additionally, to address the temporary limitations of this DREF, it is proposed that the deployment be managed by the IFRC Regional Office.

Which of the expected severe humanitarian impacts of the hazard are your actions addressing? Why were these impacts chosen?

Through this DREF operation, the Colombian Red Cross aims to directly reach 1,000 people at the three most important border points with the neighboring country—Arauca, La Guajira, and Norte de Santander—through the sectors of migration, health, WASH, PGI, and



livelihoods, in the event of an escalation of migratory flows. The request for this DREF operation is part of the existing Contingency Plan and the recent update of the Colombian Red Cross Action Plan, which seeks to reach 12,600 people in the coming months, prioritizing humanitarian assistance in water, sanitation, and hygiene, shelter, humanitarian transportation, primary health care, protection, restoration of family links, among others. This action plan was developed based on the potential escalation of needs identified by the Colombian Red Cross branches on the ground. The intervention sectors have been prioritized taking into account the main needs identified by the Red Cross over the past two years of operation.

This approach will enable the Colombian Red Cross to be better prepared for a potential escalation of humanitarian needs among the population on the move in the coming weeks, particularly at the main border points.

Migration:

Within the anticipated scenarios, the need for humanitarian transportation is established as a vital mechanism for assisting the migrant population, facilitating safe movement from points of assistance and transit to their final destinations. The implementation of this measure could ensure dignified access throughout the migratory process, providing a timely and coordinated response to the current situation. Humanitarian transportation also contributes to mitigating protection risks during transit along routes and strengthens comprehensive humanitarian assistance. In light of the above, it is necessary to implement assistance actions through national transportation for people requiring mobility in border areas.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):

Currently, in the border areas, there are no hydration points or access to safe drinking water, which can have significant impacts on the health of the population, including gastrointestinal illnesses, skin conditions, and dehydration. In addition, the Humanitarian Service Points located in these areas do not have hygiene and self-care items available to distribute to the migrant population in transit. In response to this situation, actions are planned to ensure access to safe drinking water, provide hygiene and self-care items, and disseminate key messages that can be used by the population during their journey or stay in the area.

Health:

Considering the displacement dynamics of the migrant population due to long walking journeys, exposure to injuries, and limited access to health services, problems such as physical exhaustion, dehydration, minor skin and foot injuries, sprains, falls, headaches, and general malaise are frequent, as well as complications arising from previously untreated medical conditions. It is necessary to strengthen immediate and basic care at border points through the establishment of first aid stations at Humanitarian Service Points. Accordingly, this DREF seeks to reinforce the response capacity of the branches to provide first aid, if necessary, through the provision of first aid kits.

Protection:

Regarding protection, migrant populations face greater barriers to accessing basic services and are more exposed to various forms of violence, discrimination, and the lack of guidance and assistance mechanisms to ensure the exercise of their rights. A significant risk is the loss of communication with family members, which generates considerable stress and uncertainty among people on the move and their relatives.

In response to this situation, it is essential to implement a comprehensive response that includes guidance and referral to available service pathways, the establishment of family tracing and contact restoration services (calls, internet access, and mobile phone battery recharging), the dissemination of self-protection messages to maintain family links, the provision of useful information, and assistance to people with specific protection needs. Additionally, safe referrals to local authorities are planned to ensure the proper handling of individual cases.

Livelihoods and Basic Needs:



According to the needs analysis of the migrant population in transit, the provision of food through Humanitarian Service Points has proven to be vital, as a large portion of this population faces extreme vulnerability with limited access to food during their displacement. The absence of immediate food assistance significantly increases the risks of malnutrition, illness, and deterioration of physical and mental health. Ensuring the provision of these supplies not only addresses essential basic needs but also enables the migrant population to continue their journey with dignity, strengthening their resilience in the face of adversity and preventing the humanitarian crisis from worsening.

In the event of a rapid and massive escalation of mixed migratory flows, the Colombian Red Cross will operationally update this imminent DREF into a full-scale response operation. This update will allow for the implementation of early actions and the strengthening of branch capacities at the border, ensuring a dignified and timely response.

Additionally, should the event materialize, the Colombian Red Cross has already initiated a Cooperation Plan aligned with the activities prioritized in the Action Plan, with the aim of securing additional funding. Furthermore, it has support tools from the International Committee of the Red Cross, the German Red Cross, and the American Red Cross, which can complement the humanitarian response in the field.



Proposed Actions

	Sector	Activities	Budget (CHF)
 Early Actions	Migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditional CASH Vouchers for humanitarian transportation for 100 people 	CHF 70,000
	WASH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hygiene items for 1,000 people through the Humanitarian Service Point methodology • Maintenance and operation of hydration points (Norte de Santander and Arauca) • Installation of 500L water storage tanks (1 per branch) • Deployment of WASH National Intervention Team (ENI volunteer) • Key WASH messages 	
	Health (public)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of first aid kits for the prioritized branches (2 per branch) 	
	PGI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RFL services • Cellular data plan top-ups for branches • Dissemination of self-protection messages and information as support for people with specific protection needs 	
	Livelihoods and basic needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food for 1,000 people through the humanitarian service point methodology 	
	NS Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DREF National Coordinator and administrator focal points of the National Society • NS Monitoring visits • Volunteer support • Distribution of uniforms for volunteers in the branches • Lessons learned workshop 	
 Early Response	NS Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployment of National Intervention Teams (ENI General volunteer) 	CHF 5,000
Sub-total			CHF 75,000
Surge Deployment (if applicable)			CHF 10,000
Indirect Cost			CHF 5,800
Total			CHF 90,800

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