

# Colombia

## Refugee quota factsheet

## New Zealand Refugee Quota Colombian Refugees

The New Zealand Government works with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to offer permanent resettlement solutions in New Zealand for 1000 refugees annually.<sup>1</sup> Refugees from Colombia are included in the 2017/2018 refugee quota and will be resettled to New Zealand throughout the year.

Prior to their arrival to New Zealand the Colombian refugees were living in Ecuador recognised as refugees by the UNHCR.

Before settlement in the community all refugees accepted under the annual refugee quota programme complete a six week reception programme at Auckland's Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre.

In order to become successfully resettled, refugees will be accessing the assistance of mainstream services such as health, education, housing and Work & Income. The New Zealand Red Cross is the key agency responsible for assisting quota refugees in their initial community settlement.

*This document aims to provide New Zealand's community-based professionals with general information about Colombia, the human rights situation in Colombia, the Colombian culture as well as some general information on supporting successful refugee resettlement in your community.*

### Humanitarian situation and needs

The Government of Colombia is implementing a peace accord with the country's largest guerrilla group, the FARC, after more than 50 years of conflict. However, civilians continue to suffer the humanitarian consequences of the ongoing violence by several armed groups, including the ELN (National Liberation Army), EPL (Popular Liberation Army) and others. The resulting violence has increased. In 2016 alone, 94 social and indigenous leaders and human rights defenders were murdered.

In 2015 and 2016, 345,271 new Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were registered officially. Murders, death threats, extortion, the forced recruitment of minors by armed groups, sexual violence, landmines, forced 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 with limited protection and opportunities for livelihoods.

With more than 7.3 million IDPs, Colombia has the world's largest displacement caseload (according to government figures). An additional 360,000 Colombian refugees have sought refuge in neighbouring countries such as Ecuador (UNHCR figures for 2016), where they are vulnerable and need protection.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This figure includes an additional intake of 250 Syrians in the 2017/2018 quota year before the permanent quota increase to 1000 refugees takes effect from 2018/19.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission: European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), May 2017, *ECHO Factsheet – Colombia*

## Cultural communications:<sup>3</sup>

- › **Greetings** – both women and men, customarily greet foreigners the first time with a firm handshake. Women who are close friends may grasp each other's forearms and offer a kiss on the cheek. Between men who are friends, an embrace, a hug, or a kiss on the cheek is often customary.
- › **Titles and names** – Colombians have two family names, the mother's last and the father's second-last. The father's name is the official surname, and the one used in everyday speech.
- › **Gestures** – It is appropriate to maintain close but relaxed eye contact. Looking away conveys disinterest or rudeness. Colombian people tend to stand closer to those with whom they are speaking. Backing away may be perceived as impolite.

## Supporting successful refugee resettlement:

- › Be aware of differences between yourself and your client / student in terms of customs, values and belief systems, as well as perceptions of service delivery and treatment. It may be advisable to obtain the assistance of a cultural adviser, or someone familiar with the culture of your client's home country to help you develop culturally appropriate forms of service delivery when working with a new refugee community in your area.
- › Many adult refugees will have only had limited formal education so communication styles may need to be adjusted accordingly.
- › Refugees may also have difficulty comprehending the importance New Zealand society places on official documentation. Some refugees may associate the recording of personal information with suspicion because of past experiences in their home country. As such, it is important to ensure refugee clients understand why you are recording information, where it will be stored and with whom it will be shared.
- › Explain your role carefully to the client and always use a professional interpreter if the client is not proficient in English. If your organisation does not have established procedures for using interpreters, interpreting services can be found through the following organisations: Interpreting New Zealand - <http://www.interpret.org.nz/> and Language Line - <http://ethniccommunities.govt.nz/browse/language-line>
- › The Citizens Advice Bureau Language Connect provides free and confidential support in different languages. Advice on settlement needs, such as housing, renting, health, education and any other settlement issues. They can also help with immigration questions. Please call 0800 788877 (free phone) or email: [language@cab.org.nz](mailto:language@cab.org.nz)

<sup>3</sup> Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, March 2016, *Spanish-Colombia Cultural Orientation*, p.46-59

## Religion

Religion: A mix of Christians and Catholics (90% of Colombians are Roman Catholic).<sup>4</sup>

## Language

Language: Spanish as their first language (94% of Colombians are literate in Spanish), however their English may be limited.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, [2017], *World Factbook: Colombia*

<sup>5</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, [2017], *Field listing: Literacy*

## ■ BASIC SPANISH:<sup>6</sup>

**Hello** – *hola*

**Welcome** – *bienvenido*

**Thank you** – *gracias*

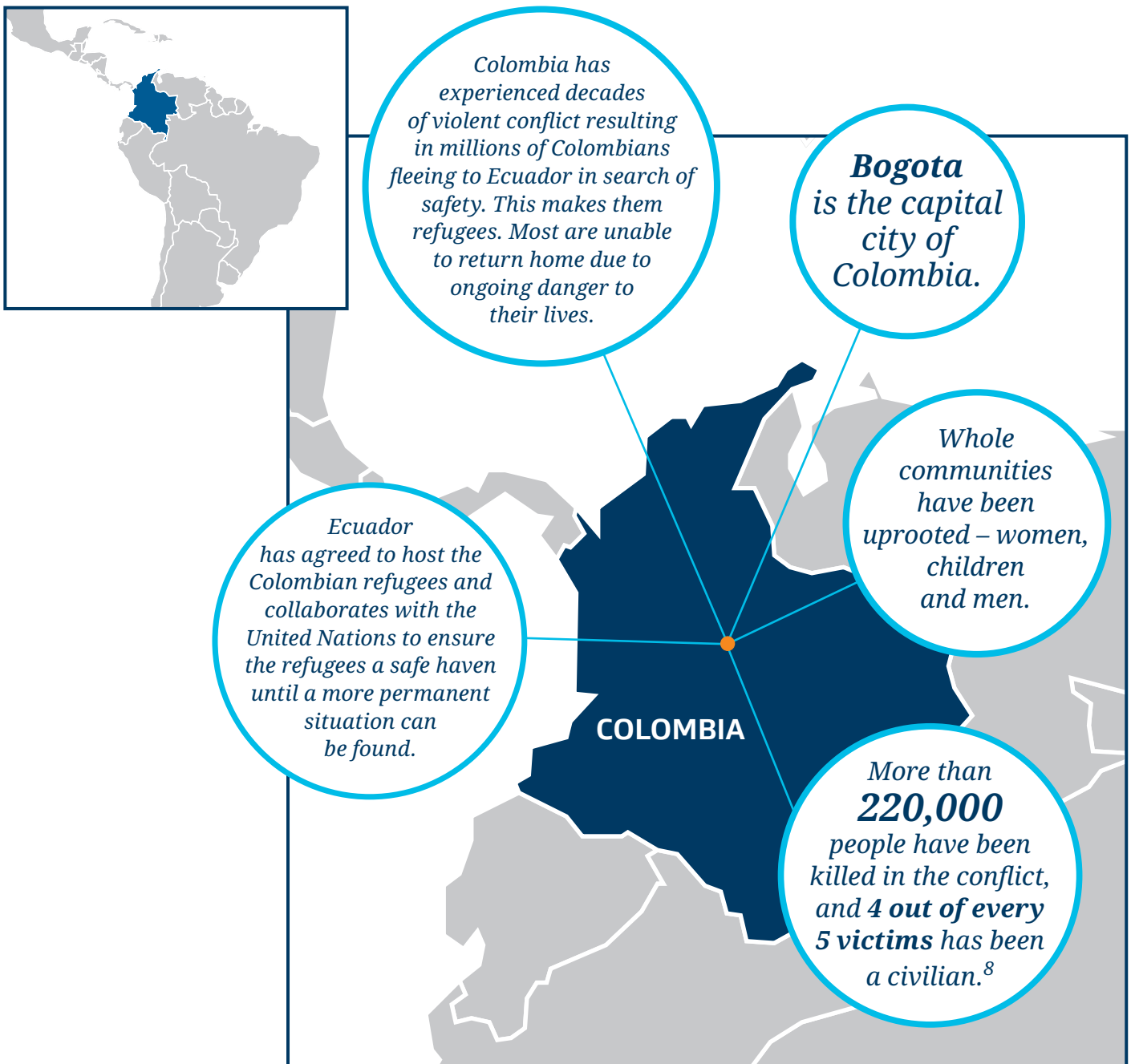
**Yes** – *si*

**No** – *no*

<sup>6</sup> *Collins Spanish Dictionary plus Grammar*, [2004], HarperCollins, Glasgow

New Zealand is one of thirty seven countries that take part in the United Nations Refugee Agency's regular refugee resettlement programme. Our annual refugee quota of 1000 refugees is a reflection of the government's commitment to fulfilling its international humanitarian obligations and responsibilities to provide protection to refugees.

The New Zealand Government and a number of local organisations, such as New Zealand Red Cross, are helping these families to resettle, and to access the goods and services they need to restart their lives.



<sup>8</sup> Colombia statistics taken from Associated Press, 25 July 2013, *Colombian conflict has killed 220,000 in 55 years, commission finds*, The Guardian.

## Additional Resources

- › New Zealand Immigration has factsheets and videos for refugees and family members settling in New Zealand which are available at <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/what-we-do/our-strategies-and-projects/supporting-refugees-and-asylum-seekers/information-for-refugees-settling-in-new-zealand>
- › Detailed UNHCR guidelines for working refugees are available in a publication called Refugee Resettlement: *An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*, see <http://www.unhcr.org/4a2cfe336.html>
- › BBC, 4 October 2017 [last updated], *Colombia country profile*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19390026>
- › Encyclopaedia Britannica, 3 October 2017 [last updated], *Colombia*, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/126016/Colombia>
- › Embassy of Colombia - Washington DC, [no date], *Colombian Culture*, <http://www.colombiaemb.org/node/1331>
- › Every Culture, [2017], *Colombians*, <http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Brazil-to-Congo-Republic-of/Colombians.html>
- › Human Rights Watch, 2017, *World Report 2017 - Colombia*, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/colombia>
- › UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), [2018], *Colombia: UNHCR country operations profile*, <http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/2542?y=2018#year>

## Contact Information

For more information about New Zealand's Refugee Quota programme, or New Zealand's Refugee Policy, please contact:

### **Sarah Ward**

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Refugee Quota Branch  
New Zealand Immigration  
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Email: [Sarah.Ward@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:Sarah.Ward@mbie.govt.nz)

If you require further information or support on any health or education issue for the refugees recently resettled in your region, please contact the following specialist agencies located at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre:

### **Refugees as Survivors New Zealand (RASNZ)**

(09) 270 0870  
[www.rasnz.co.nz](http://www.rasnz.co.nz)

### **Refugee Health Screening Service**

(09) 276 6719  
[www.refugeehealth.govt.nz](http://www.refugeehealth.govt.nz)

### **AUT – Centre for Refugee Education**

(09) 921 9366  
[www.aut.ac.nz/community/aut-in-the-community/centre-for-refugee-education](http://www.aut.ac.nz/community/aut-in-the-community/centre-for-refugee-education)

### **INZ Resettlement Team**

(09) 928 2648  
[www.immigration.govt.nz](http://www.immigration.govt.nz)

### **New Zealand Red Cross**

0800 RED CROSS  
[www.redcross.org.nz](http://www.redcross.org.nz)

*Please note: No personal information will be released without written consent from the client.*