



KEY PRIORITIES

25,000

APPROXIMATE NO. OF
PEOPLE AFFECTED BY
FLOODING

195,000 +

PEOPLE ALREADY
AFFECTED BY EL NIÑO
IN 2024

HIGH RISK

OF FOOD INSECURITY

5.4

INFORM CLIMATE
CHANGE RISK SCORE

CRISIS OVERVIEW

The onset of El Niño in Colombia in November 2023 led to dry conditions in the Orinoquia region, with precipitation deficits ranging from 20–60% below average, particularly in January–March 2024. This period also saw a 2° C increase in temperature compared to the seasonal average (IDEAM 01/2024 and 03/2024; IFRC 14/06/2024). These conditions resulted in food insecurity, water shortages and rationing, and wildfires, affecting an estimated 195,000 people, predominantly in Arauca department (OCHA 02/07/2024). In February, there were water shortages in rural areas of Casanare, where wildfires engulfed 11,091 hectares of land, significantly affecting farmers (El Tiempo 07/02/2024; Prensa Libre 05/04/2024).

In May–June, the National Unit for Disaster Management reported that flooding in the Orinoquia region had affected approximately 25,000 people (7,300 families). The floods damaged 25 roads and over 2,800 hectares of land, although specific information on land usage is not available. The departments of Arauca and Casanare bore the most impact, with each reporting around 11,000 people affected (OCHA 02/07/2024). This report focuses on river flooding – specifically floods caused by overflowing rivers – and landslides, both related to above-average increases in rainfall (WHO accessed 30/07/2024 a; WHO accessed 30/07/2024 b).

By 5 June, the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology, and Environmental Studies reported that flooding resulting from heavy rainfall and river overflowing had led 26 municipalities in the Orinoco hydrological zone to be on red alert for hydrological emergencies. This alert indicated an imminent threat, necessitating the mobilisation of people and equipment, interrupting communities' daily activities. In June, the Orinoco hydrological zone had the highest number of Colombian municipalities on red alert, more than twice the number reported by the second most affected hydrological zone, the Caribbean (IDEAM 05/06/2024).

Orinoquia, one of the six regions of Colombia, is located in the eastern part of the country and has a population of approximately 1.6 million inhabitants (Region Orinoquia accessed 31/07/2024). The region is bordered to the northeast by Venezuela, to the south by the Amazonia region, and to the west by the Andes Mountains (ICANH accessed 13/06/2024). Orinoquia comprises the Arauca, Casanare, Meta, and Vichada departments (Banco de la República 06/2009). The region, characterised by vast plains, is located within the Orinoco hydrological zone, one of Colombia's five hydrological zones, which includes municipalities from 11 departments (Ministerio de Ambiente accessed 27/06/2024; Sima accessed 27/06/2024).

From January–July 2024, Orinoquia experienced precipitation, temperature anomalies, and extreme weather events, showing its high susceptibility to both climate change and the effects of El Niño and Southern Oscillation. Fluctuating weather conditions, such as drought and rainfall, have compromised food security, livelihoods, housing, and access to education and healthcare services. At the beginning of the year, El Niño-driven dry conditions affected communities (IFRC 14/06/2024). In response, in January 2024, authorities declared a 'National Disaster Situation' for the following 12 months, allowing for the allocation of resources to address the situation (Ministerio de Educación 27/01/2024; IFRC 14/06/2024). From May–June, the rainy season, which typically runs between late March–December, led to widespread flooding from heavy rainfall and river overflowing (WCS accessed 25/06/2024; IDEAM 01/05/2024). These climatic events pose significant challenges for communities, who must cope with crop losses and damage to their homes while preparing for similar events throughout 2024.

ANTICIPATED DEVELOPMENTS/IMPACTS

Seasonal precipitation forecasts anticipate drier-than-normal conditions as a result of below-average rainfall in the Orinoquia region between August–October 2024 (IRI accessed 09/07/2024; ECMWF accessed 09/07/2024; WMO accessed 09/07/2024). Precipitation deficits of 10–30% are expected in this period, coupled with high temperatures (IDEAM 19/07/2024; C3S accessed 31/07/2024). These climate conditions may lead to a reduction in surface and groundwater, increasing water scarcity. From January 2024, the dry season affected around 195,000 people in the region and caused 138 wildfire events. The possible arrival of further dry months could produce similar figures (OCHA 10/05/2024; OCHA accessed 22/07/2024).

According to seasonal forecasts for August to the end of 2024, temperatures are expected to remain high in the Orinoquia region, particularly in eastern municipalities (C3S accessed 09/07/2024; WMO accessed 09/07/2024; IRI accessed 09/07/2024). High temperatures will compound the effects of below-average precipitation expected until October, increasing evapotranspiration and further reducing water availability. Communities in Orinoquia have already been exposed to higher-than-normal temperatures and heatwaves since December 2023, with a significant increase in February–March 2024, especially in Arauca and Casanare, resulting in wildfires and water scarcity (IDEAM 09/02/2024; El Tiempo 12/04/2024; IFRC 14/06/2024; OCHA accessed 30/07/2024).

La Niña has a 70% chance of developing between August–October and a more than 80% chance of developing between October–December. La Niña typically increases precipitation and river flow in Colombia (NOAA 29/07/2024; IDEAM 19/07/2024). Above-average precipitation associated with La Niña may increase the likelihood of flooding and landslides, which could be aggravated by the previous dry months. High temperatures favour the warming of the atmosphere, causing it to retain more moisture and increasing the probability of rainfall. The dryness of the land, on the other hand, affects its ability to absorb moisture when it rains, causing water to accumulate on the surface and promoting flooding and landslides (UN News 22/07/2021; BBC 16/08/2022). The impacts of these potential natural hazards would include the contamination of water sources and damage to homes, infrastructure, crops, and livestock.

CRISIS IMPACTS (CURRENT AND ANTICIPATED)

Food security/livelihoods

Extreme weather patterns, including severe rains and drought, which adversely affect soil health and reduce food availability, are making Orinoquia's reliance on traditional agriculture increasingly unsustainable (WWF 10/2023). These weather fluctuations contribute to rising food prices and diminished food access for communities with economic vulnerability (DNP et al. 04/2012). Water shortages for crops, livestock, and internal consumption, aggravated by deforestation, further increase communities' vulnerability to food insecurity (WWF 10/2023). This is particularly challenging for indigenous communities that heavily depend on nearby water sources, which may be contaminated or depleted. In Vichada, only 24% of indigenous communities obtain water for cooking from public aqueducts, while 55% of households rely on alternative sources, such as ponds, rivers, and streams (ONIC 09/05/2020).

Since November 2023, El Niño has significantly compromised food security in the Orinoquia region. Arauca department is among the worst affected, with over 38% of its population experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity. The risk of food insecurity in this department is compounded by multiple factors, including armed conflict and natural hazards (R4V et al. 12/12/2023). The other departments in the region also report high rates of moderate/severe food insecurity: Vichada (30.9%), Casanare (27.7%), and Meta (25.1%) (Food Security Cluster 24/08/2023).

In Arauca, 77% of the indigenous population faces food insecurity, although information gaps exist regarding the types and levels of insecurity (Agronet 18/10/2022). Vichada, which has the highest proportion (58%) of indigenous population in Colombia, ranks among the departments with the highest prevalence of acute malnutrition, which disproportionately affects the indigenous population (ACAPS 07/03/2024). Vichada reports the highest prevalence of acute malnutrition among children under five, with mortality rates associated with acute malnutrition significantly exceeding the national average (ACAPS 07/03/2024; 3iSolution et al. 02/01/2024).

In Arauca and Vichada, migrant and refugee communities endure high levels of food insecurity, a situation aggravated during extreme weather events. Approximately 60% of migrant and refugee communities in Arauca face food insecurity, with gaps in information around the specific levels of insecurity. In Vichada, 20% of the migrant and refugee population faces severe food insecurity (ACAPS 07/03/2024; GIFMM/R4V 17/02/2023; WFP 03/07/2023).

Between December 2023 and January 2024, approximately 1,300 cattle died as a result of drought in Arauca and Casanare (El Universal 26/01/2024). Around 20% of the national livestock

production comes from the Orinoquia region. While information on the distribution between self-consumption and trade is not available, this level of production underscores the relevance of livestock to the local economy (El Espectador 07/07/2022). Crops commonly cultivated in the region include rice, bananas, and maize, with rice and maize harvest expected between July–September (Region Orinoquia accessed 03/06/2024). As these crops depend heavily on water for growth, yields in 2024 may be below average, posing significant risks to food security, as many families depend on these crops for both income and sustenance (ACAPS accessed 13/06/2024).

By early February, wildfires aggravated by drought and high temperatures related to El Niño had destroyed over 17,000 hectares of vegetation in Colombia, resulting in substantial agricultural and livestock losses as well as disruptions to communications and transportation (ACAPS 20/02/2024). By May, the four departments in the region were among the six most affected by wildfires nationwide, with 66% occurring in grasslands, 28% in forests, and 2% in agricultural land (3iSolution et al. 28/06/2024). From January–May, there were 69 wildfire incidents in Vichada, 44 in Meta, 17 in Arauca, and 8 in Casanare (OCHA 02/07/2024). Although there are information gaps around impact, these fires likely compromised water sources and soil quality, affecting future crop yields and food availability.

Flooding and landslides can also affect community livelihoods by damaging crops, disrupting transportation networks, and affecting grazing lands. By the end of May, Meta department had registered 14 floods in Villavicencio municipality (UNGRD 31/05/2024). Roads in Monfort, San Juanito, and Villavicencio municipalities were damaged, leaving 600 farmer families unable to transport their harvests, leading to economic and livelihood losses (RCN Radio 30/05/2024). In El Castillo municipality, flooding affected 450 families and damaged 800 hectares of crops (El Tiempo 24/05/2024).

In Casanare department, seven rain-induced flooding events were registered during May (UNGRD 31/05/2024). In the department's capital, Yopal, floods in rural areas affected around 500 families, destroying rice, yuca, maize, and banana crops valued at USD 250,000 (Prensa Libre 31/05/2024).

In June, extreme rainfall in Arauca department resulted in the widespread flooding of grasslands and the destruction of rural roads. These adverse weather conditions restricted livestock mobility and production, causing economic losses (CONtexto Ganadero 20/06/2024). This event may have further worsened already insufficient access to food and heightened pre-existing food insecurity in rural areas.

Anticipated drought in the third quarter of 2024, followed by potential heavy rains in the fourth quarter, is expected to further aggravate these challenges, especially for people in rural areas and indigenous and migrant and refugee communities. Drought is likely to lead to water scarcity for both personal consumption and productive sectors, resulting in

crop losses. Towards the end of the year, above-average precipitation associated with La Niña may trigger flooding, which could reduce crop production, cause livestock losses, and increase the prices of certain agriculture, limiting access for communities (Croper 14/05/2024). This extreme weather variability may also further aggravate communities' access to water and crop production, potentially increasing the long-term prevalence of food insecurity (DNP et al. 04/2012).

Shelter

During May 2024, the rainy season resulted in significant damage, with more than 14,000 houses affected and 297 destroyed by rain and floods (UNGRD 31/05/2024). In El Castillo municipality, Meta department, floods overflowed houses, rendering 20 uninhabitable (Radio Nacional 04/06/2024; El Tiempo 05/06/2024). In Puerto López municipality, floods led to the evacuation of 250 people, who were subsequently accommodated in temporary shelters established by government authorities (Caracol Radio 29/05/2024).

In June, 113 floods and landslides affected more than 11 municipalities in Casanare, leaving approximately 4,000 families affected and 168 houses partially or completely damaged (Gobernación de Casanare 04/06/2024). In Yopal municipality, floods damaged seven houses and destroyed 14 (Prensa Libre 21/06/2024). Specific impacts on individuals have not been reported.

Migrants and refugees in Arauca municipality, Arauca department, are highly vulnerable to floods, as approximately 47% of these populations reside in informal settlements near rivers and other flood-prone areas, placing them at greater risk during extreme weather events. These makeshift shelters are easily damaged, as they lack the structural integrity to withstand severe weather (Alcaldía de Arauca 03/03/2023). In May 2023, in Arauquita, Fortul, and Saravena municipalities, authorities assigned temporary shelter for 919 migrants and refugees, as their houses had been affected by flooding (OCHA 05/06/2023).

Extreme weather conditions in the Orinoquia region, combined with activities of non-state armed groups (NSAGs), are likely worsening shelter vulnerabilities for affected populations. In 2023, displacement affected approximately 500 people in Arauca and 550 in Meta (OCHA 13/02/2024). This suggests that communities in these departments are grappling with both displacement and severe weather events, which aggravate shelter vulnerabilities. Indigenous communities in Vichada are particularly affected by displacement resulting from NSAG activities and the rainy season, with temporary plastic shelters often destroyed by heavy rains (OCHA 27/03/2024).

Flooding at the end of 2024, driven by extreme rains, may continue to damage or destroy homes, especially those in poor condition as a result of economic constraints (3iSolution et al. 25/04/2024). The anticipated increase in extreme weather events, such as heavy rainfall, is likely to further reduce communities' capacity to manage these conditions, leading to the progressive deterioration or destruction of shelter infrastructure.

WASH

While there is a lack of information on the impact of previous floods and rains on WASH infrastructure, these events likely contaminated water sources and interrupted water services. Extreme weather events aggravate the precarious conditions of water distribution, particularly in rural areas where the lack of access to potable water is already high and where indigenous communities, farmers, and migrants and refugees live: Meta (23%), Casanare (24.6%), Vichada (86.3%) and Arauca (10.7%) (OCHA 15/03/2024 and 17/01/2024; 3iSolution et al. 14/05/2024; DANE 19/05/2024).

In the Orinoquia region, water scarcity is frequent. From late 2023 to April 2024, 19 municipalities experienced water shortages as a result of El Niño, including nearly all the municipalities in Arauca, making it the worst affected department (3iSolution et al. 01/04/2024). Since May 2024, Yopal municipality in Casanare has been affected by heavy rains, with the local water, sewage, and sanitation company reporting disruptions to the treatment of drinking water, leading to an interruption in supply at the end of May (Gobernación de Casanare 11/06/2024; Prensa Libre 29/05/2024). In Meta department, 80% of Villavicencio's population endured water rationing – resulting from the impact of rains on treatment processes and damage to infrastructure caused by floods – for 30 days from the beginning of May (El Tiempo 11/06/2024).

Although there are no recent reports of water service disruptions in the region, anticipated below-average rainfall and above-average temperatures between August–October may put added strain on already limited access to water resources, especially for rural communities, indigenous communities, and migrant and refugees in rural territories (IDEAM 19/07/2024). Damage to supply infrastructure and changes in water quality and quantity as a result of increased sedimentation from low water levels, among other factors, such as soil degradation by livestock and land expansion into productive areas, can also be expected (UNGRD 20/12/2023).

The potential arrival of La Niña with above-average precipitation by the end of the year may disrupt drinking water services and treatment, especially if flooding and landslides affect pipelines and infrastructure, as was the case in previous years and also in May and June of 2024 (Infobae 18/06/2023; Prensa Libre 29/05/2024; El Tiempo 11/06/2024). This could result in unsafe water consumption and contribute to the spread of vector-borne and gastrointestinal diseases (3iSolution et al. 25/04/2024).

At the sanitation level, the potential effects of water scarcity can significantly affect women, who are typically responsible for water collection in rural areas and whose menstrual health is more affected by inadequate sanitation facilities. The lack of access to clean water may force women to use nearby sources in unsuitable conditions (Gobernación de Arauca accessed 31/07/2024; WHO 06/07/2023).

Health

In the Orinoquia region, drought and high temperatures create favourable breeding grounds for mosquitoes, contributing to the proliferation of vector-borne diseases such as dengue, chikungunya, and Zika (INS accessed 12/07/2024). Dengue occurs cyclically in Colombia every three–four years, with the last significant increase in 2019 (ACAPS 24/01/2024; INS 25/08/2023). Orinoquia has one of the highest incidences of and mortality rates from dengue in Colombia, recording 791 cases and a mortality rate of 0.60 per 100,000 people. The prevalence of dengue in Meta is three times the national average (3iSolution et al. 25/04/2024). The emergence of a new vector in Meta, *Aedes Albopictus*, may be contributing to the high incidence of the disease (Periodico del Meta 13/06/2023).

During drought and periods of water scarcity, communities often prioritise water for essential purposes, such as cooking, leading to a reduction in hygienic practices. This reduction increases the risk of acute diarrhoeal diseases (INS accessed 12/07/2024).

Prolonged exposure to high temperatures, particularly affecting indigenous communities and rural populations engaged in agricultural work, tends to cause stress and chronic fatigue (3iSolution et al. 28/06/2024). High temperatures and heatwaves are also likely to increase the incidence of premature births and infant mortality rates (ACAPS 24/01/2024; 3iSolution et al. 26/09/2023).

Extreme weather events can further restrict access to medical services for binational indigenous and migrant and refugee communities. In Vichada, a lack of formal registration in the national health system and residence in informal settlements mean that binational indigenous communities, including Venezuelan and Colombian nationals, face barriers accessing healthcare services (ACAPS 07/03/2024; IFRC 01/09/2020).

In Vichada, barriers to accessing prenatal health services include high transportation costs from rural areas, lack of transportation, and insufficient information about health services (ACAPS 07/03/2024). Deficient road networks and limited access to healthcare services disproportionately affect the life and health of pregnant indigenous women (OCHA 05/06/2023). Towards the end of 2024, increased rainfall associated with La Niña is expected to elevate the incidence rates of dengue, malaria, and infant mortality from acute respiratory infections in Meta department. Vichada and Casanare departments are also projected to see an increase in dengue and malaria cases (3iSolution et al. 25/04/2024).

Public healthcare coverage averages 98% in Arauca, Casanare, and Meta. For Vichada, the coverage is 53.8%, and access levels for rural communities may be lower (UNIAJC 02/08/2022). With La Niña, limited access to healthcare facilities may continue to aggravate healthcare needs, especially in rural areas. Floods caused by rainfall can damage or obstruct roads, further hindering access to healthcare, especially given the region's limited road network (WWF 24/03/2020).



Education

Both flooding and drought have a notable impact on the education sector, particularly in rural areas of the Orinoquia region. In April 2024, the Education Cluster estimated that 158,234 children in the region (30% from rural communities, including indigenous children) were affected by water scarcity and rationing. This situation was linked to school closures and other factors that make students less likely to attend, such as health impacts resulting from water supply and quality constraints and nutrition effects resulting from food insecurity caused by agricultural losses (Education Cluster 18/04/2024; 3iSolution et al. 27/04/2024).

Students in rural schools are also more susceptible to non-attendance during months of heavy rainfall, as they often do not have transportation and their schools are long distances from where they live, along unpaved access roads vulnerable to the effects of heavy rainfall (Semana 10/11/2022; LEE 02/10/2023). Students' mobility is also limited by anti-personnel mines laid by NSAGs, creating further barriers to educational access (OCHA 08/05/2024). Recent flooding has damaged access roads to schools in Yopal municipality in Casanare, disrupting classes (Prensa Libre 30/05/2024). In Meta, the overflowing of the Ariari River near El Castillo municipality isolated students from their schools (Radio Nacional de Colombia 04/06/2024).

Dry conditions from August–October 2024 could lead to further disruptions to water access, which may affect school attendance. The potential coming of La Niña between October–December could generate flooding that impedes access to educational institutions and damages facilities. The use of schools – those without infrastructural damage – as potential shelters could also disrupt school attendance (Pulzo 23/01/2023).

Among the Orinoquia region's departments, Arauca has the highest percentage of Venezuelan migrants a Special Stay Permit (OM3 03/2024). Above-average rainfall and drought can compound other barriers, such as socioeconomic issues, and affect migrant and refugee children's access to education (Voz de America 07/10/2022).

Critical infrastructure

The region's proximity to the eastern Anes Mountains heightens the risk of road damage and landslides during the rainy season (INV 02/06/2024). Between May–June 2024, flooding and landslides impaired roads and bridges, disrupting transportation, food supply chains, and emergency response. Indigenous and rural communities, often located in areas without paved roads, have been particularly affected (Prensa Libre 12/10/2022). In June, key routes between Boyacá and Casanare were intermittently closed as a result of debris falls (INV 01/06/2024). Meta experienced 20 landslides, 18 bridge collapses, and road damage (Blue Radio 11/06/2024; Gobernación del Meta 27/05/2024; Radio Nacional 04/06/2024). Casanare reported

32 windstorms, 13 affected bridges, and widespread road damage (Gobernación de Casanare 06/06/2024). In Arauca, heavy rains in early June temporarily closed the sole road connecting Arauca and Norte de Santander (Caracol Radio 03/06/2024). The potential arrival of dry months in August–October could create other types of transport challenges. The Orinoquia region has one of the four river basins of the Colombian river network and is mainly fed by the Orinoco and Meta rivers. This basin has 38 useful docks for the transport of cargo and trade (Logistic Cluster accessed 29/07/2024). Low water flows could affect the navigability of rivers, affecting the trade and transport of food and people.

By the end of the year, the potential arrival of rains and subsequent flooding and landslides, aggravated by the soil dryness associated with preceding dry months, could again significantly affect transport roads (UN News 22/07/2021; 3iSolution et al. 28/06/2024).

DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS

El Niño and La Niña

In Colombia, El Niño typically triggers below-average precipitation and La Niña is associated with above-average precipitation (IDEAM accessed 15/07/2024). In the Orinoquia region, El Niño and La Niña enhance the likelihood of extreme weather events, such as extreme rainfall and drought, and are aggravated by the region's specific geographical and climatological conditions, such as a large number of rivers and weather variability.

This region is highly vulnerable to a water supply deficit, as its infrastructure is insufficient and its geographical conditions are challenging, impeding the development of distribution systems, particularly in rural and indigenous areas (UNIAJC 02/08/2022). Farmers have also been diverting river flows for agricultural use, affecting water availability for nearby communities. In 2020, rice farmers in Yopal, Casanare, diverted the Cravo Sur River at seven locations, compromising water access for communities (Prensa Libre 31/03/2020). During El Niño, drought and water scarcity exacerbate the vulnerability of water availability for consumption and agricultural purposes (Ministerio de Ambiente 26/05/2023).

The drier conditions associated with El Niño also significantly contribute to the increased occurrence of wildfires, increased temperature, and strong winds (Corporinoquia 07/02/2024). In January, a wildfire in Maní municipality, Casanare, compromised 1,000 hectares of native vegetation, including 300 hectares of palm oil crops, triggering food insecurity for families (Prensa Llanera 30/01/2024).

Orinoquia's topography, characterised by vast plains, makes it particularly susceptible to flooding during La Niña (Mongabay 16/08/2018). Poor infrastructure and widespread deforestation further aggravate communities' vulnerability to flooding and landslides. Deforestation alters natural drainage patterns, increasing flood risks. Orinoquia ranks third in deforestation levels nationally (WWF 24/03/2020).

Climate change

Climate change is intensifying the effects of El Niño and La Niña and accelerating the transition between these phenomena, resulting in shorter periods of neutral conditions (Cai et al. 18/05/2023). Colombia's geographical location close to the equator makes it more vulnerable to the effects of El Niño and La Niña (strengthened by climate change), leading to food insecurity, water shortages, and rising temperatures (Banco de la República 15/10/2021; Ministerio de Ambiente 22/04/2023).

In the Orinoquia region, seasonal forecasts predict a more rapid increase in average temperatures compared to other areas, with a projected rise of 1.5° C over the next 20 years (ABI/CIAT 08/05/2017). This temperature increase, coupled with the region's diverse ecosystems – including moorlands, forests, and flooded savannahs – could significantly affect biodiversity (UN News 05/06/2024). Forecasts also indicate more severe rainy and dry seasons, with increased frequency of extreme weather events (ABI/CIAT 08/05/2017). Data shows a rise in climate hazards: 56 flood events affecting 14,000 people in 2022, with affected individuals quadrupling to 63,000 in 2023 (ACIS 07/2024). So far in 2024, the number of people affected indicates that climate hazards are producing twice as many people as in 2022, highlighting the intensification of climate-related incidents in the region (OCHA 02/07/2024).

Intensive resource extraction

Environmental degradation, driven by the exploitation of the ecosystem through mining, hydrocarbon extraction, livestock, and deforestation, increases the region's vulnerability to climate hazards and climate change. Although the region has established sustainable livestock production in floodplains, where gas emissions are low, livestock production can have negative impacts on other ecosystems. Such impacts include soil erosion from deforestation, which can reduce the soil's ability to retain water and lead to flooding (Instituto del Agua accessed 29/07/2024; WWF 25/04/2024).

The combination of these activities in the same ecosystem, together with the impacts of climate change, increase the region's vulnerability to natural hazards such as flooding and drought.

COMPOUNDING/AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Armed conflict

The presence of NSAGs in the region aggravates the vulnerability of communities facing extreme climatic conditions. In 2023, the Ombudsman's Office of Colombia reported the expansion of and potential conflict between FARC-EP dissident groups, the National Liberation Army, and the Gaitanist Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AGC) in Casanare and Arauca (DP 15/06/2023 and 30/03/2023). By June 2024, OCHA reported that 8,677 individuals had been affected by armed conflict across the region, with the most severe impacts being social control and confinements (OCHA accessed 13/06/2024). In July, while recovering from heavy rains, around 134 people were displaced in Arauquita, Puerto Rondón, and Tame, with further confinements reported in nearby rural areas (DP 24/07/2024). Confrontations between NSAGs were also reported near an indigenous reservation in Casanare (Prensa Libre 19/07/2024). The Ombudsman's Office of Colombia has highlighted a territorial dispute between the National Liberation Army and AGC in southern Casanare, resulting from the latter's expansion (DP 02/07/2024). These conditions could lead to further displacements and armed conflict, complicating access to refuges and humanitarian aid during upcoming drought and heavy rains.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Humanitarian constraints

Orinoquia region's operational capacity is limited, with anticipated drought and increases in extreme rainfall, flooding, and landslides potentially worsening existing access and security constraints. The potential for electricity shortages during drought is high, alongside the deterioration of already limited road networks during rainy periods (3iSolution et al. 25/04/2024; UNGRD 20/12/2023; WWF 24/03/2020). In Meta department, challenges are compounded by restricted road networks and the presence of NSAGs, impeding humanitarian responders' ability to maintain a consistent presence (OCHA 22/06/2023).

Communities' geographical dispersion in Vichada department poses added challenges to reaching those in need (OCHA 27/03/2024). In Arauca department, restrictions imposed by NSAGs further hinder humanitarian access to rural areas (OCHA 15/03/2024). As for Casanare, very little information is available around such matters (OCHA 13/02/2024).

Armed clashes between NSAGs can limit hazard response. Among Colombia's departments, Arauca ranks fifth in the number of humanitarian access constraints (OCHA 15/04/2024). NSAGs obstruct evacuation from affected areas through attacking medical missions, confinements, mobility restrictions, and anti-personnel mines (Infobae 14/01/2024).

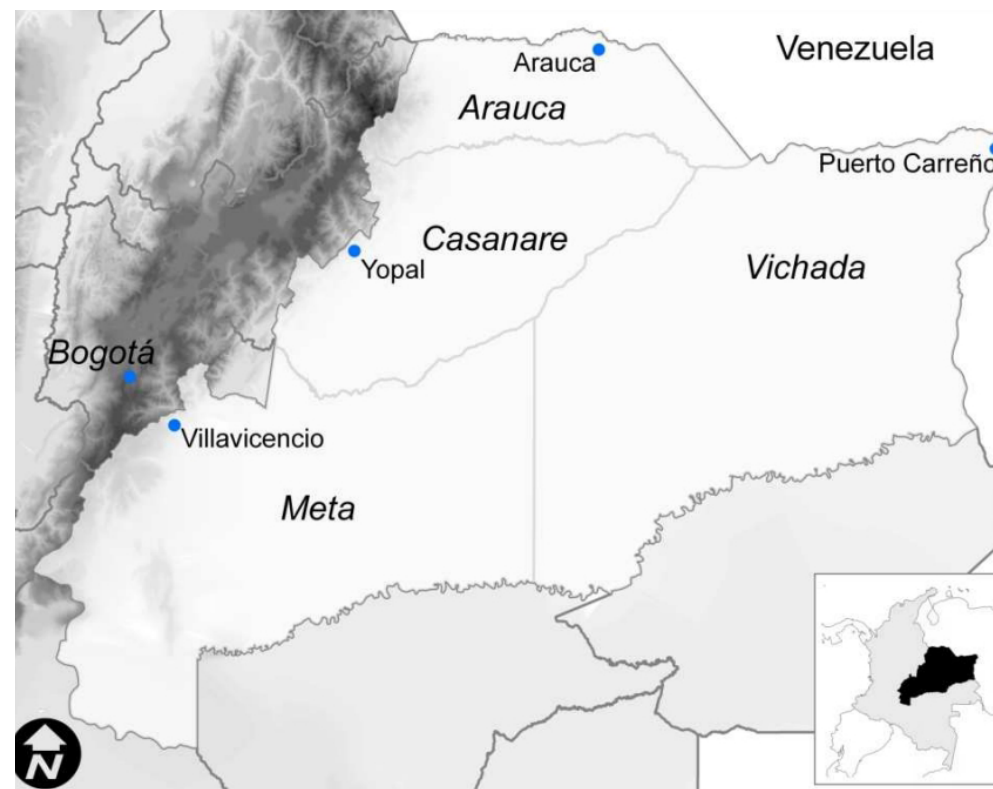
Funding and response capacity

The National Unit for Disaster Management is responsible for leading the response to La Niña in 2024. According to the institution, however, Colombia is not prepared to respond to the expected impacts of the upcoming La Niña (El País 26/05/2024).

In July, national authorities allocated COP 7 billion (approximately USD 1.7 million) for preparedness initiatives (Ministerio de Ambiente 18/07/2024). In response to May–June floods, authorities in Casanare and Meta provided assistance to affected communities, including food, cooking utensils, mattresses, and support with heavy machinery (Radio Nacional 04/06/2024; Gobernación de Casanare 30/05/2024). In Maní municipality, Casanare, authorities began the construction of a 900-metre barrier to prevent floods from the Cusiana River (El Nuevo Oriente 20/06/2024).

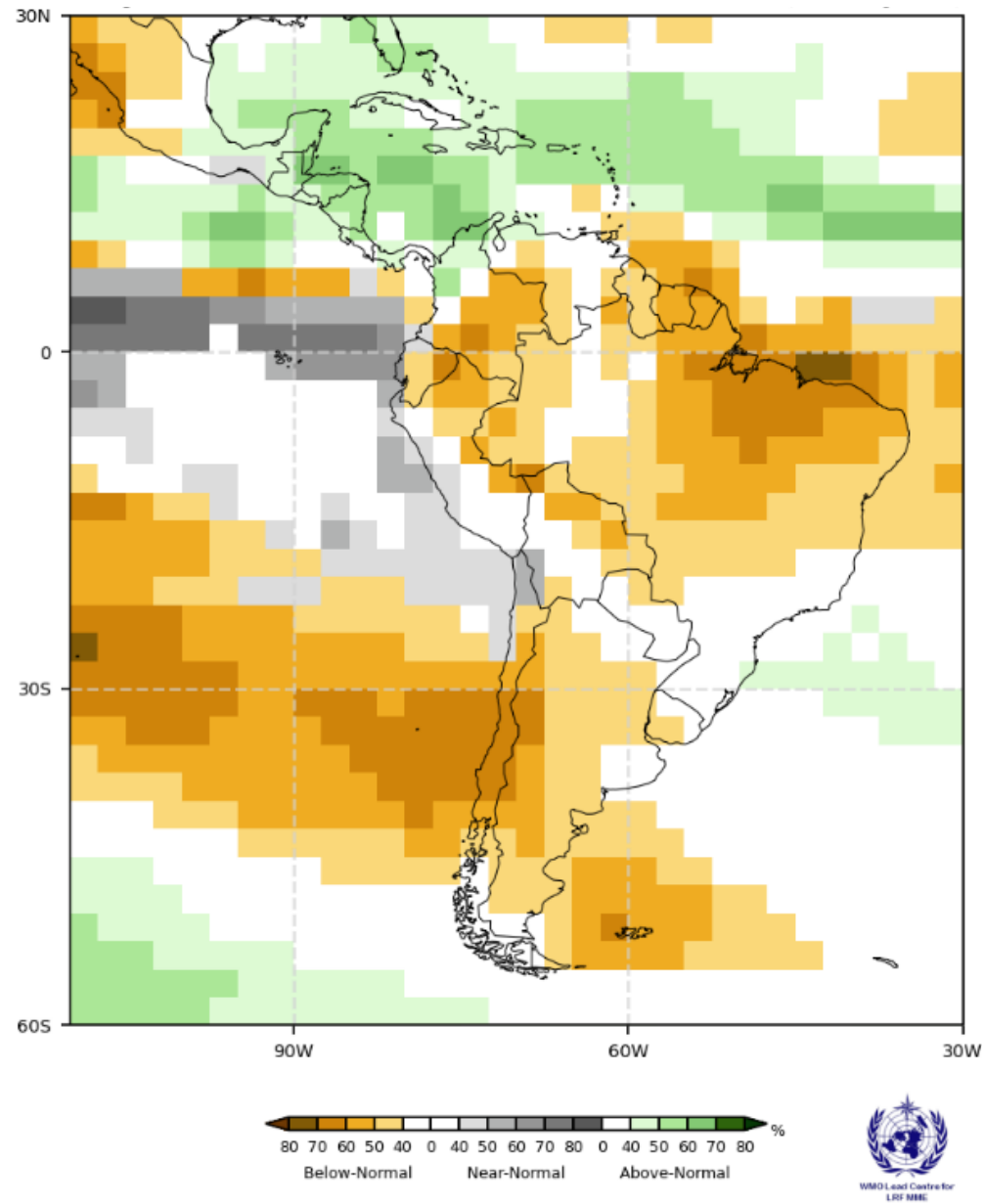
OCHA is present in three of Orinoquia's four departments, all except Casanare (ELC accessed 13/06/2024). Other organisations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, Save the Children, The Pan American Health Organization, the Council for International Development, HelpAge, and Pastoral Social, are also present in the region (ELC accessed 30/07/2024).

Map 1. Departments of Orinoquia region



Source: Banco de la República (06/2009)

Map 2. Seasonal forecast for August–October 2024



Source: WMO (accessed 15/07/2024)