

Alert note

*Chocó, Colombia Earthquake
August 10th, 2026.*

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Date completed: 12/08/2026

Forum: Colombia

Type of emergency: Medium: Earthquake 7.4 Magnitude (Mw) intra-slab earthquake

Date of emergency (if rapid onset): 10/08/2026 – 7:34COT

1. The nature of the emergency:

A 7.4 Magnitude (Mw) intra-slab earthquake was recorded due to a sudden tectonic rupture within the subducting Nazca Plate at an intermediate depth of approximately 110 kilometres beneath the South American Plate. The earthquake struck on August 10, 2026, at 07:34 COT. Subsequent severe aftershocks (up to 5.0 magnitude) have continued through August 12, 2026. The **epicentre** was located in Chocó, approximately 20 km from San José del Palmar. The impact extends across western and central Colombia, with severe effects reported in the Alto and Bajo Baudó regions and major cities including **Quibdó, Manizales, Pereira and Cali**. The epicentre area is characterized by dense jungle, river-based transport networks, high levels of poverty and limited state presence, compounded by complex security dynamics and the presence of armed groups.

2. The impact and scale of the emergency

Based on initial assessments by HEKS/EPER field teams and information from [OCHA](#), the Shelter and WASH Clusters, and the National Unit for Disaster Risk Management (UNGRD), the earthquake has caused significant humanitarian impacts across western and central Colombia, with particularly severe consequences in Chocó. The proposed ACT response will focus on Quibdó, Istmina and selected rural communities, where HEKS/EPER and the Diocese of Istmina-Tadó have identified significant unmet humanitarian needs.

- At least 265 people have been confirmed dead and more than 3,494 injured nationwide. An estimated 330,000 people are reported affected nationwide. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities in Chocó are among those particularly exposed to the humanitarian impact.
- Within the areas assessed by HEKS/EPER and the Diocese of Istmina-Tadó, and according to official initial information indicates approximately 22,810 people affected in Chocó (OCHA, August 12, 2026). Assessment of needs in selected rural communities remains ongoing, particularly where access and communications are constrained. The rapid assessment combines direct observations in affected communities, consultations with affected populations and local key informants, secondary information and remote assessments where physical access has not been possible.
- In the targeted areas of Chocó, damage to housing and essential infrastructure has left families displaced or living in unsafe conditions and has disrupted access to basic services.
- The impact is particularly severe in Chocó, where pre-existing poverty, limited infrastructure, restricted humanitarian access and weak public-service capacity amplify the consequences of the earthquake. Damage to housing, health facilities, schools, roads and other critical infrastructure is further disrupting already limited access to essential services.
- Short-term consequences include exposure to unsafe living conditions, limited access to safe water and sanitation, injuries and untreated health needs, loss of livelihoods, and increased risks of waterborne and vector-borne diseases. The earthquake has also increased psychosocial distress and affected food supply and market access, particularly in remote communities.

The combination of earthquake damage and pre-existing humanitarian vulnerabilities creates a compounded crisis in Chocó. For communities dependent on agriculture, fishing and river-based economies, disruption to infrastructure and market access may significantly affect livelihoods and recovery

prospects. The proposed ACT response will therefore address **specific gaps identified in Quibdó, Istmina and selected underserved rural communities**, rather than seeking to cover the wider national impact of the earthquake.

Sources:

3is Dashboard and its referenced sources

https://3is.org/emergenciaslatam/terremoto_choco/

i. Local and national capacity

Community coping mechanisms: Communities have activated informal search-and-rescue efforts and local support networks. Many households are sheltering outdoors due to concerns about structural safety, while others are staying with relatives or seeking alternative accommodation. Coping capacities remain particularly limited in remote and rural areas of Chocó, where access to assistance is more constrained.

Local capacity and resources: Local authorities, community structures, churches and other local actors are supporting the response. HEKS/EPER has maintained an operational presence in Chocó for nearly two decades and works in partnership with the Diocese of Istmina-Tadó, whose territorial network of parishes, community leaders and local contacts provides access to affected populations, including in remote areas. These established relationships and access mechanisms allow HEKS/EPER and the Diocese to reach communities where access for external actors may be more constrained.

Government response: The National Unit for Disaster Risk Management (UNGRD) is leading the national response, coordinating resource mobilization, information management and emergency assistance through the national Crisis Room. Puestos de Mando Unificado (PMU) have been activated in affected departments, including Chocó, to coordinate the territorial response, emergency assistance and prioritization of critical needs.

International and humanitarian response: The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) is coordinating international support and aligning assistance with the Government's Plan de Acción Específico (PAE), with the aim of ensuring complementarity, avoiding duplication and addressing priority gaps.

Despite the ongoing government-led and humanitarian response, the rapid needs assessment identified gaps in coverage in the areas considered for the ACT response. These are particularly evident in rural and hard-to-reach communities, where disrupted telecommunications, damaged roads and pre-existing access constraints have limited both assessment and access to assistance. In some remote communities, significant gaps remain between centralized assessments and the situation on the ground, with affected populations not yet fully captured by official assessments and response efforts. HEKS/EPER and the Diocese of Istmina-Tadó will use their existing territorial presence and community networks to complement the wider response and reach selected underserved populations.

ii. Key needs and gaps

Based on the ongoing rapid needs assessment priority needs in the areas assessed include WASH, food security, shelter/NFIs and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS). The assessment covered Quibdó, Istmina and other affected areas of Chocó through direct observations, consultations with affected communities and key informants, secondary data and remote assessments where physical access was not possible.

- **WASH:** Damage to water supply and sanitation infrastructure has disrupted access to safe water in several communities. Priority needs include emergency water provision, rehabilitation of community water systems, hygiene and dignity kits, and hygiene promotion to reduce public health risks.
- **Food security:** Damage to transport corridors and access constraints have affected markets and food supply chains, particularly in remote communities. Direct food assistance is required during the acute phase for households facing difficulties in meeting their immediate food needs.
- **Shelter and NFIs:** Damage to housing has left some families displaced or living in unsafe conditions. Priority needs include mattresses, hammocks, mosquito nets, blankets and other household and emergency shelter items adapted to the local context.

- **MHPSS:** The earthquake, loss of life, displacement and uncertainty are generating psychosocial distress among affected communities. Priority support includes psychological first aid and structured MHPSS, with particular attention to children, caregivers, bereaved families and other highly affected people.
- **Access and coverage gaps:** Government and humanitarian actors are responding to the emergency, but the rapid assessment has identified gaps in coverage in some of the areas considered for the ACT response. These gaps are particularly evident in rural and hard-to-reach communities, where disrupted telecommunications, damaged roads and pre-existing access constraints have limited both assessment and access to assistance. Some communities remain insufficiently reflected in centralized assessments and response efforts.

HEKS/EPER and the Diocese of Istmina-Tadó will use their longstanding existing territorial presence and community networks to complement the wider response and reach selected underserved communities in Quibdó, Istmina and surrounding rural areas where unmet needs have been identified.

Please indicate whether you are considering:

	Indicate your intention with an X below
Rapid Response Fund (<i>intended for small and medium scale emergencies</i>)	X
Appeal (<i>intended for large scale emergencies</i>)	

iii. Forum Capacity and members intention to respond

ACT Member	Geographical focus	Sectors of expertise and experience
HEKS/EPER	Chocó: Urban and rural areas of Quibdó and neighboring municipalities. Rural areas in the municipalities of Istmina, San Juan, Medio Baudó, Bajo Baudó, Novita, San Jose de Palmar	WASH, Shelter, Livelihood, Infrastructure, Food Security, MHPSS

iv. Potential responses

In accordance with the EPRP and based on the initial needs assessment, HEKS/EPER plans to implement a multi-sectoral response together with the Diocese of Istmina-Tadó, targeting approximately 7,000 people in Quibdó, Istmina and selected rural communities, focusing on WASH, food security, NFIs and emergency shelter, MHPSS, and the rehabilitation of community infrastructure.. The response will prioritize remote and underserved communities, particularly in rural and hard-to-reach areas where gaps in assessment and access to assistance remain. To implement this response effectively, strong coordination among Forum members will be essential to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication. Financial support is also required to capitalize on HEKS/EPER and its partner's immediate access to affected populations in remote areas.