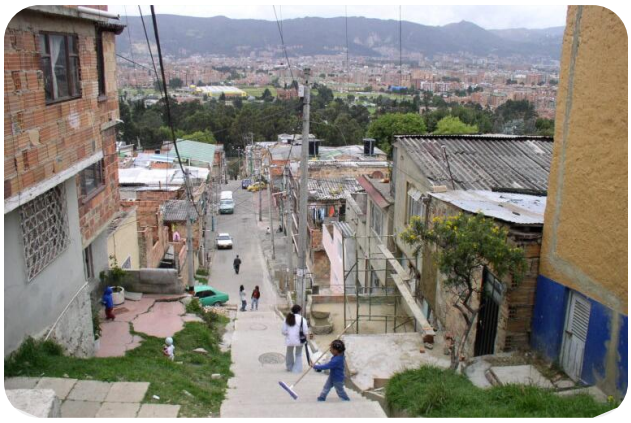
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Urban Resilience and Human Security Through Housing: Bogotá's Governance Mechanisms for Venezuelan Migration

Submitted By: University of Bristol



Organization Profile

Organization Name: City Hall of Bogotá

Organization Type: Subnational government

Website: https://www.gob.mx/sre/prensa/la-comision-intersecretarial-de-atencion-integral-en-materia-migratoria-adopta-el-modelo-mexicano-de-movilidad-humana?idiom=es

Practice Details

Country(ies): Colombia

City(ies): Bogota

Start Year: 2016

Ongoing: Yes

End Year: N/A

Main Adequate Housing Components:



Housing Thematic Areas:



Relevant SDGs:



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Problem & Context

Bogotá faced unprecedented demographic pressure from Venezuelan migration beginning in 2015, with 590,637 migrants (7.88% of city population) by 2024. Key challenges included irregular migratory status limiting access to formal housing markets, forcing migrants into precarious "pay-by-day" accommodations with structural hazards and overcrowding. Pre-existing urban crises—including housing deficits, informal settlements, and fragmented governance—compounded these challenges. Policy gaps included weak institutional capacity for migration mainstreaming, insufficient coordination mechanisms between sectors, and limited integration of housing with broader human security needs. Most migrants (70%) concentrated in urban areas lacking adequate services, creating protection risks including violence, exploitation, and systematic exclusion from formal systems.

Solution Developed

Target Beneficiaries: Venezuelan migrants and host communities, with particular focus on vulnerable groups including women, children, and irregular status migrants.

Objectives: The twelve-year Public Policy for Inclusive Reception and Development aimed to transform emergency responses into strategic integration through housing mediation as a platform for broader human security across physical-spatial, legal-administrative, economic, and socio-territorial dimensions.

Innovative Approaches:

- Urban Hybridisation: Multi-scalar coordination integrating international, national, and local actors through the Intersectoral Commission
- INTEGRATE Centres: Unified facilities combining shelter, documentation, health screening, and social services
- "New Bogotans" Narrative: Civic cosmopolitanism framework transcending national citizenship boundaries
- Resilient Process Design: Adaptive, absorptive, and transformative institutional capacities enabling continuity across political transitions
- Housing Mediation Framework: Holistic approach linking housing security to employment, education, and regularisation rather than treating shelter provision in isolation

Implementation

Actions Implemented:

- Established 17,000 services through INTEGRATE centres providing temporary accommodation, documentation support, and integrated services

- Implemented "Pay-by-day houses Strategy" improving conditions in existing migrant accommodations while providing statistical visibility
- Created rental subsidy programs through Ministry of Housing-World Bank partnership (Colombia: Resilient and Inclusive Housing Project)
- Completed 1,488 housing upgrades accessible to all residents regardless of nationality

Key Actors:

- Government: Intersectoral Commission coordinating across secretariats, Colombian Migration for documentation
- International: USAID, World Bank, IOM providing technical and financial support through Technical Support Unit
- Civil Society: 35 organisations coordinated through GIFMM platform
- Private Sector: Financial institutions accepting alternative documentation for services

Timeline: 2021-2025, from Commission establishment through strategic policy development

Resources: International cooperation funding ($600 million regionally), municipal budget allocations, technical assistance through partnerships. The Tu Llave Card system integration enabled 12,099 people to access financial services, while mass regularisation events distributed 186,000 Temporary Protection Permits through national-local coordination.

Enablers & Obstacles

Key Enablers:

- Political commitment to inclusive governance over welfare chauvinism
- Intersectoral Commission providing permanent coordination mechanism transcending sectoral silos
- International cooperation framework enabling resource mobilisation and technical support
- "New Bogotans" narrative creating political legitimacy for long-term integration investments
- Multi-level governance architecture allowing flexible responses to emerging challenges

Obstacles Encountered:

- Volatile international funding dependency creating sustainability risks (highlighted by 2025 USAID cuts)
- Regularisation paradoxes creating new exclusions for those unable to access Temporary Protection Permits
- Pre-existing urban crises limiting absorption capacity
- Weak institutional capacity requiring continuous system strengthening.

Solutions included developing absorptive capacity through redundant service provision and seeking alternative funding sources when international support declined.

Results & Impact

Quantitative Results:

- 371,654 Temporary Protection Permits distributed with municipal service recognition
- 188,000 employment opportunities created through Inclusive Employment Program
- 1,488 housing upgrades completed through World Bank partnership
- 17,000+ services provided through INTEGRATE centres
- 12,099 people integrated into municipal financial systems

Impact on Marginalized Groups:

- Venezuelan women received comprehensive support through "Casa de Todas" spaces providing legal-psychosocial assistance and "Tejiendo Redes" training programs, addressing protection gaps where 70% experienced gender-based violence. Children benefited from "Inclusive Classrooms" project combating xenophobia while ensuring education access.

Broader Impacts:

- The governance innovation demonstrated that cities can serve as effective human security guarantors when national systems prove inadequate. The model influenced regional migration governance, with Bogotá recognised as "Migration Capital of Latin America and the Caribbean." However, structural tensions remain: dependency on volatile funding undermines sustainability, while pre-existing urban inequalities constrain full integration possibilities. The civic cosmopolitanism framework created political space for inclusive policies transcending nationalist constraints.

Replication & Scale Up

Based on the research, limited evidence exists for direct replication elsewhere. Bogotá participated in international networks including International Forums in 2024, suggesting knowledge transfers. The research notes comparative contexts where other Latin American cities adopted expulsion measures, while Bogotá pursued inclusion, indicating the model remains exceptional. Key enabling factors for potential replication would include political commitment to civic cosmopolitanism over welfare chauvinism, institutional capacity for multi-scalar coordination and international cooperation access.

Scale-up requires addressing three structural constraints identified: funding sustainability through diversified local revenue generation rather than volatile international dependency; institutional capacity building through permanent coordination mechanisms like the Intersectoral Commission model; and integration with broader urban development addressing pre-existing inequalities affecting all residents.

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Policy Uptake

This housing practice has been fully adopted into formal policy frameworks and legislation, and is being implemented at scale with institutional support.

Through District Decree 600 of 2023, Bogotá established its twelve-year "Public Policy for Inclusive Reception and Development of New Bogotans," creating a permanent Intersectoral Commission for institutional support. Implementation is scaled via integrated services: 371,654 migrants received formal status recognition, INTEGRATE centres provide unified aid, and employment programs generated 188,000 opportunities. This transformed an emergency response into a strategic, budgeted institutional architecture with national agreements, ensuring sustainability across political transitions.

Lessons & Takeaways

Critical revisions are needed to ensure long-term efficacy: develop sustainable local revenue to replace volatile international funding; create pathways for irregular migrants excluded from Temporary Protection Permits; address criminal governance in migrant-concentrated informal settlements; better integrate services with pre-existing urban systems to avoid parallel structures; bolster capacity to absorb sudden demographic shifts; and formally capture the resilience strategies of informal migrant networks.

Note

Image credit: Peter Ward, the Latin American Housing Network website Photo Archive