

COLOMBIA OPERATION

Update
March 2012



COLOMBIA OPERATION-2012

SEXUAL GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (SGVB)

1. CONTEXT

In Colombia, sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) is one of the most alarming risk women run at all stages of forced displacement.

According to the report of Amnesty International published in September 2011, Colombian authorities have failed to tackle the lack of justice for women and girls survivors during the country's armed conflict. "Women and girls in Colombia are seen as rewards and trophies of war, and as a mean to punish the enemies," said Susan Lee, Americas Director at Amnesty International.

A study titled 'First Survey on the prevalence of sexual violence against women in the context of the armed conflict' was supported by international NGOs like OXFAM and undertaken in 2010 across 407 Colombian municipalities where conflict actors were present. On the basis of such study, between 2001 and 2009, 489,687 women stated they were victims of sexual violence. 74,698 of them held illegal armed actors (guerrillas and paramilitaries) responsible for the violence while 21,036 held members of the security forces responsible. It is complex to have a detailed idea on the size of this reality faced by women. As Congresswoman Angela Robledo stresses, official information is poor, the crime is highly invisible and high is the level of impunity in terms of justice investigation and sanctions.

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

In 2008, the Constitutional Court issued Ruling 092 as a juridical tool to protect the fundamental rights of women, victims of forced displacement caused by the armed conflict. The ruling points out that sexual violence, in the context of the armed conflict, is a regular, extended, systematic and furthermore invisible practice.

It also highlights the different forms of this type of violence:

- Acts of sexual violence in the context of violent operations.
- Deliberate acts of sexual violence perpetrated by individual members of armed groups.
- Sexual violence against women singled out as having family or emotional relations with armed group members.
- Sexual violence against forcibly recruited women and girls.
- Sexual abuse and harassment.
- Acts of torture, sexual mutilation and forced public nudity.
- Acts of sexual violence against organizations' women or leaders.
- Cases of forced prostitution and sexual slavery.
- Hurdles in access to land property and protection of own assets.



UNHCR/HEGER,
B.Darien region.

3. PROTECTION GAPS

To date, the implementation of the normative framework has focused on:

- Training courses for Officials.
- Designing programs, plans and operational manuals.
- Recruiting personnel to spread normativity.

Despite the above, several protection gaps currently still exist within institutional responses. This weakens the possibility of coordinated actions.

- Lack of local characterization processes enabling risk assessment and analysis.
- Little clarity on local attention route due to lack of confidentiality.
- Lack of a national and local disaggregated information system, for on-going case collection and consolidation, allowing establishing a link between Sexual and Gender Based Violence and forced displacement.

All the above prevents community and institutional actors from achieving timely and attention.

Furthermore, the low rate of formal complaints existing in this kind of scenario makes prosecution of sex offenders impossible.

This is due, inter alia, to:

- Distrust and lack of knowledge of institutional complaint mechanisms and attention route.
- Fear and lack of protection for victims and witnesses in case of potential retaliations by offenders.
- Little coordination among the legal, medical and psychological assistance received by the victims.



4. UNHCR OBJECTIVES FOR 2012

1. Strengthen the response of the Colombian State in the prevention, attention and protection of women victims of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in the context of forced displacement issues.
2. Improving local communities' capacity, especially in terms of problems knowledge and management.
3. Promoting participation in SGBV prevention and protection initiatives and supporting SGBV cases.

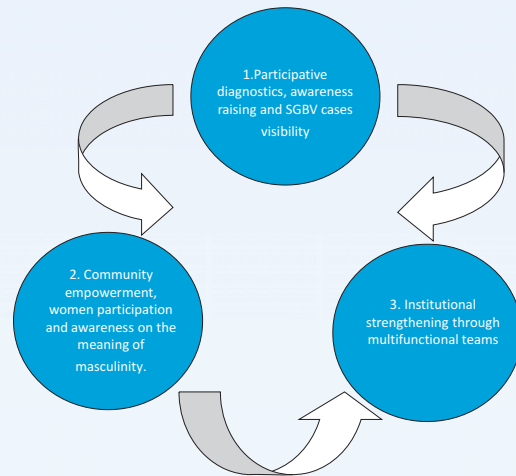
5. ACTIONS

• In the context of the Comprehensive Attention Directive for Displaced Population under a Differential Gender Approach, implemented by the Presidential Advisory Council on Women Equity in 2010, with the support of UNHCR, local community participative processes have been promoted in Arauca, Medellín, Putumayo and Villavicencio. Among such processes, SGBV risk characterization and local institution response diagnostics are to be noted.

• Supporting the communities and particular women groups in Arauca, Apartadó and Norte de Santander in the development of local sexual violence prevention and attention to victims. Mechanisms are then validated and shared with institutions responsible for promoting effective response.

• Setting up regional Sexual and Gender Based Violence multifunctional teams in Arauca, Putumayo, Norte de Santander and Bogotá. The teams develop several initiatives for the prevention and coordinated attention of SGBV cases such as raising awareness among state, municipal and community authorities and undertaking training processes on, inter alia, gender and violence issues. Such teams can rely on the participation of civil society organizations, local institutions and UN System agencies.

SGVB STRATEGY UNHCR 2011-2013



EMPHASIS

1. Working on the full displacement cycle: prevention, protection and durable solutions.
2. Durable solutions in urban and rural settings through emblematic cases.
3. Local impact (communities, municipalities and departments).
4. Inter-cultural dimension of the prevention and response to SGBV in ethnic contexts (indigenous and afro communities).
5. Strengthening UNHCR strategy on masculinity.
6. Protecting children from SGBV.
7. Access to multi-sector services and to the justice system by survivors.
8. Improvement of information collection.



UNHCR/BARRERO, M./ Mission to San Juan.

Support and assistance in developing and implementing local action plans to comprehensively respond to sexual violence.

- Training on a regular basis officials and communities on gender and sexual violence issues. At least 215 public officials have received training on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines for the prevention and attention of Sexual and Gender Based Violence.

- Promoting the inclusion of the actions pertaining to the Gender Approach-based Differential Attention in the design of the Single Comprehensive Plans (PIU in Spanish), Departmental gender policies, contingency, prevention, and protection plans in the Departments of Nariño, Antioquia, Meta, Arauca and Norte de Santander. Similarly, the Directive has been used at national level in the formulation of the 13 programs ordered by ruling 092 and in their operational manuals.

- The design and pilot implementation of an information system on sexual violence, in alliance with the United Population Fund (UNFPA), intended to offer case reports to service providers and allow them to share information and produce standardized statistics

- A soon-to-begin research, carried out together with sexual violence victims/survivors and service providers, intended to develop a methodology tool enabling the timing detection of sexual violence cases in order to improve victims' attention and protection. This activity will be developed in coordination with the Johns Hopkins University and the Ministry for Social Protection.

UNHCR's work in Colombia is made possible thanks to: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, US department of State (BPRM-USA) - Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) - European Commission and European Commission Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) - France - Luxembourg - Norway - The Netherlands - Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and Spanish autonomous communities and local authorities Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) - Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).