

December 2010

### 1. The context

In 2010, an analysis of internal displacement in Colombia reveals mixed scenarios, requiring a variety of interventions ranging from ensuring prevention of displacement, emergency humanitarian assistance and protection for newly displaced, to facilitating opportunities for appropriate solutions for those who have been displaced for several years.

Progress in security has been registered in some parts of the country with a consequent reduction of the displacement levels, such as in the Departments of Sucre, La Guajira and Cesar, while other areas continue to be heavily affected by the armed conflict, in particular Nariño, Antioquia, Cauca, Caquetá and Tolima, the main IDP producing Departments. Displacement is caused by the impact of the conflict and related violence such as murders, threats, persecution, land disputes, sexual violence, landmines and forced recruitment of children. Among the approximately 3.5 million IDPs officially registered at September 2010, 51% are men and 49% per cent women. Of particular concern are the specific needs of afro-Colombian and indigenous people, 21% and 2,3% per cent of the total registered respectively, considering their special ties with the territory and their traditional practices.

While the overall figure encompasses a wide range of situations and different needs, the level of risk and vulnerability of IDPs remains high, due to their precarious conditions, the absence of durable solutions and threats and selective killings, particularly related to community leaders (especially those defending their lands), human rights defenders and other social actors. Most IDPs are displaced from rural to urban areas, thus changing the profile of the population and increasing its vulnerability. Intra-urban displacement is also on the rise. According to State entities' estimations (Contraloría and Procuraduría), IDP's have lost between 4 and 6 millions hectares of land during their flight.

As far as the operational environment is concerned, the volatility of the security situation in certain areas of the country makes access to communities difficult and impacts on humanitarian space.



Children in El Charco (Department Nariño), a municipality highly affected by the conflict. UNHCR/ S. Abondano. 2010

## 2. Response by the authorities

Responses to forced displacement have featured as key issues in the new administration's programme. The President has committed to comprehensively address the problem and grant reparation to all victims of violence, with a special emphasis on the land restitution issue. This is a welcome and courageous step forward which is likely to meet many challenges along the way. Hence, the government's specific request for support by the international community. In this respect, UNHCR has been asked to accompany, where possible, displaced persons through restitution processes, identifying the associated risks.

The State's annual budget for internal displacement related policies, including funds from departmental and local authorities, is approximately USD 700 million in 2010. Important resources are devoted to: emergency assistance, including income and housing subsidies, health and education programmes, Early Warning System promoted by the Ombudsman's Office, the Land Protection Project and the promotion of return, through the programme "Retornar is Vivir".

Critical gaps in policy implementation, particularly as far as local institutions are concerned, are often due to lack of funding and/or technical capacity at the municipality level. A particular challenge lies in the area of solutions (approximately 60% of registered IDPs have been displaced for 5 years or more), which requires a more comprehensive and sustainable strategy to provide the appropriate conditions to implement return, relocation or local integration programmes. Some 1.7m IDPs are located in urban areas and young people are less likely to return, making urban local integration an important challenge.

## 3. UNHCR activities

With 14 offices in the country (see map) UNHCR's role is to provide technical assistance to the State and support IDP communities in comprehensively addressing internal displacement. The focus is on: **Prevention, Protection and Solutions**, within the framework of the Colombian Constitution and in line with international law.

In IDPs reception zones, UNHCR works to help national and local authorities deliver programs so that the displaced can receive assistance and enjoy their rights, with tools varying from UNHCR-sponsored legal clinics to special education schemes facilitating displaced children's return to school, support for planning and participation in committees with the authorities. Follow-up on threats against displaced leaders and coordination with government and UN bodies for their protection are other key tasks.

In IDP producing zones, accompaniment to communities at risk of displacement ("protection by presence"), practical protection projects, community strengthening and support for contingency planning are among the main tools to improve protection. Practical protection projects include providing drinkable water, improving schools facilities and building temporary displacement shelters. Moreover, the Land Protection Project, undertaken by Acción Social with the support of UNHCR and other partners, aims at granting judicial recognition and protection to IDPs' lands and properties, in order to avoid their plundering and ensure the possibility of restitution. In 2011, this project will be taken over by the Ministry of Agriculture.

As a cross-cutting priority, UNHCR promotes a differential response to the needs of specific groups of the population, working with the government and other partners on the design and implementation of guidelines to facilitate the recognition of how the population is affected by displacement with respect



to age, gender and diversity and respond accordingly. Regarding prevention, over 50 per cent of the beneficiaries of the UNHCR-supported project for documentation of displaced people or people at risk of displacement (led by Colombia's National Register Officer) in 2009 were indigenous and Afro-Colombians. Also, 33.9 per cent of the rights protected by the Land Protection project in 2009 belonged to women, and over 40 per cent of the 420,000 hectares protected were collective land belonging to indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

UNHCR has opened 14 offices in Colombia since 1998, with a Branch Office in Bogotá and Field Offices in Apartadó, Arauca, Barrancabermeja, Barranquilla, Buenaventura, Cúcuta, Medellín, Mocoa, Neiva (covering central Colombia), Quibdó, Pasto, San José del Guaviare and Villavicencio, with a staff of 157 persons, including UN volunteers. The number of direct beneficiaries amounted to 572,298 in 2009, and the goal for 2010 is to reach 585,000.

### 3. Impact

**Prevention:** UNHCR works with local authorities and communities to address the conditions which generate displacement, including insecurity, the absence of respect for International Humanitarian Law and land conflicts by focusing on capacity-building and land protection.

2010 main results:

- Displacement prevention plans are implemented with local authorities and the Ombudsman's Office, in coordination with the UN thematic Protection Groups in seven regions of the country (Antioquia, Arauca, Atlantic Coast, Chocó, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Santander), including creation of monitoring and information systems, promotion of protection networks with state institutions, support to communities at risks of displacement and preparation and diffusion of early warning reports.
- Twelve prevention and protection plans for indigenous and afro-Colombian communities are under construction in the Department of Nariño, Antioquia, Arauca, Chocó, Norte de Santander and Guaviare.
- Prevention of displacement and protection of displaced persons is being incorporated into the formal curriculum of the Armed Forces through a specific Action Plan. In addition, UNHCR offices are continuing to provide awareness raising in the field and are in constant contact with military authorities.

**Protection:** UNHCR's focus is on coordination between the actions of State institutions and on concrete responses to community and individual needs at the local level. An integrated strategy, including presence and projects, is implemented in 66 districts highly impacted by displacement (out of 80 targeted), with special emphasis on local implementation of public policies, protection of land and property, and the strengthening of capacities of the communities and ethnic authorities.

2010 main results:

- UNHCR maintains a close relationship with the Ministry of Interior so as to inform about risks for the population and indicate technical problems in the policies design.
- Under the Land Protection Project, 162,121 hectares of land belonging to persons displaced or at-risk of displacement have been protected as at 30 June 2010, benefiting 3,656 displaced and at risk of displacement persons. Through the action of the Land and Property Protection Project, the accumulated amount of hectares protected amounts to a total of 3,624,239 since 2003.
- 63,180 displaced or at-risk of displacement persons have been provided with a national identification document. Of those, 49% were indigenous and afro-Colombians.
- Five action plans for protection of displaced or at-risk of displacement communities are being developed as a result of participatory assessments in the Departments of Norte de Santander, Santander, Tolima, Nariño and Putumayo. The plans include construction of



Young indigenous woman weaving, Kuna de Arquía (Department of Chocó). UNHCR/ B.Heger. 2010

medical centres, provision of youth centres, implementation of food safety programmes, installation of basic sanitation facilities and programmes for the prevention of sexual gender-based violence, and benefit more than 7160 displaced or at-risk of displacement persons.

- A total of 82,230 displaced children have been newly integrated into the education system, 21,000 with UNHCR technical support in 8 departments, thanks to a national partnership with the Ministry of Education and capacity-building initiatives for local authorities for improved access and retention.
- Initiatives to protect the displaced population from violence, abuse and exploitation have been implemented, including mechanisms to prevent and respond to SGBV, more than nine specific programmes to address child forced recruitment and 14 legal clinics to provide access to legal remedies, which have advised more than 5,270 displaced persons.
- 46 community capacity building projects have been implemented, including 26 projects for the protection of individual and collective rights of indigenous and afro-Colombian communities and 20 projects for capacity-building of IDP organizations to increase their autonomy and sustainability in order to participate in public policy processes.
- A total of 28 Practical Protection Projects are being implemented, benefiting some 6.000 people. These projects aim at building or improving existing infrastructure to provide IDP communities and communities at risk of displacement with access to basic services such as health assistance and education, as well as to enhance their socio-economic conditions.

**Solutions:** in 2010 UNHCR has begun work with local authorities to analyze the gaps in solutions and will accompany selected communities with return, local integration and relocation perspectives. The aim is to identify the factors that most contribute to successful outcomes. In these selected cases, UNHCR aims at playing a catalytic role to bring together the relevant actors to facilitate the transition to development-related initiatives managed by local authorities, development agencies and the concerned communities ensuring the participation of all members.

2010 main results:

- Support has been provided to national and local authorities in order to guarantee the re-establishment of land, housing, property and documentation rights.
- Technical assistance and specific recommendations have been offered to the government on the Bill of Law on Victims and Land restitution.
- Accompaniment of 35 return process in 32 municipalities of 13 departments has been ensured, through monitoring missions to the field, assistance to local committees in the development of return plans and training on IDP's rights. Among 35 processes, 27 have been prioritized by the government in the "Retornar es Vivir" strategy, the other 8 being return process identified by UNHCR offices.
- Analysis and monitoring of 17 relocation processes have been carried out in coordination with INCODER. In seven of these processes, UNHCR has been accompanying communities through participatory assessments, construction of action plans, providing solutions for specific identified needs, in order to promote a more comprehensive institutional response to the relocation communities.
- Guidelines on integrating displaced children, youth, disabled and elderly persons into government programming are being published and launched by the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare, the Presidential Programme for Colombian Youth and the Ministry of Social Protection. The Guidelines for the protection of displaced women, published in August 2009 by the Presidential Council for Women Equity, are being used in the construction of affirmative actions for displaced women.

## 4. The way forward

Given the complexity of the Colombian context, including the continuing internal violence and the rise of new illegal armed groups, UNHCR does not foresee dramatic changes in the regional displacement dynamics in the near future. The Office, therefore, will continue to support the State to offer an integral response to forced displacement, to empower IDPs' communities and to promote and develop solutions. In this respect, a comprehensive and sustainable strategy to provide the appropriate conditions for solutions has yet to be fully implemented. UNHCR, while continuing to work on prevention and protection, will increase its focus on:

- Monitoring and assisting selected communities which are part of return, local integration or relocation processes;
- Exploring the different options available for solutions and flexible responses to the specific needs of IDPs;

- Identifying, through emblematic cases, the factors which make for successful solutions;
- Continuing supporting and improving judicial means of land protection and accompanying restitution processes, preventing at the same time related forms of violence.
- Promoting participatory assessments and the use of a targeted approach (Age, Gender, and Diversity Mainstreaming) as basic tools for planning successful solutions;

In a country characterized by a well developed legal framework and significant financial resources for responding to forced displacement, the task is now to support actions which have a lasting and concrete impact on the lives of IDPs, enabling them to gradually overcome their IDP status and the discrimination they are currently facing.

## 5. Partnerships

UNHCR Colombia works in coordination with key governmental entities, such as the Ministries of Social Protection, Agriculture, Interior and Justice, Education, Foreign Affairs and the Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation at the national level, and regional governments and mayors' offices at the local level. The Office also closely cooperates with other State institutions, including the Constitutional Court, the Procurator and the Ombudsman's Office.

UNHCR has a network of partnerships with international and national NGOs (such as the Norwegian Refugee Council, Action Contre la Faim, Solidaridad Internacional) and a number of Colombian associations, including IDP or ethnic-based organizations, as either operational or implementing partners. UNHCR is an active member of the UN system and co-chairs the UN thematic Protection Group with the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Finally, UNHCR's work in Colombia is made possible thanks to the support of the international community, in particular: 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 - Germany - Italy - Luxembourg - Norway - The Netherlands - Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) - Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) - Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) - Spanish Autonomous Communities and Local Authorities: Generalitat Valenciana, Junta de Comunidades de Castilla y la Mancha.



A UNHCR staff member talks with local children about participatory assessments, Puerto Leguizamo, (Department of Putumayo). UNHCR/S.Abondano, 2010