

UNHCR COLOMBIA IDP OPERATION

1. The context

Overall, the most affected areas by the internal conflict in Colombia continue to be the Pacific Coast, central Colombia, specific parts of the Department of Antioquia, border regions with Venezuela and Ecuador, as well as urban centres. With presence of illegal armed groups, insecurity, sexual and gender-based violence, forced recruitment, threats and extortions still affect civil population. This worrying situation is showed by "Accion Social" figures. According to this Presidential Agency the number of displaced persons so far this year stands already at 76.476, while in all 2010 was 122.712.

In the south of the country, severe incidents have occurred against the civil population in Nariño, specifically in the municipalities of Cumbitara, Magüi Payán and surrounding areas. According to information of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), at least 30 members of a post-paramilitary demobilization group invaded in September the village of Pesquería (Cumbitara) and accused the population of being informants. Subsequently, two men were murdered and 13 kidnapped. This incursion generated more than 70 displaced people to the municipality of Magüi Payán.

Another serious displacement was provoked due to operations by the public Force's against illegal armed groups in the lower areas of the Atrato River (department of Chocó). Consequently mobility restriction increased and community leaders have been murdered, causing internal displacements. In addition, the Indigenous Emberá Community has also been victim of accusations and threats, especially in the areas of Curvaradó and Jiguamiando. On the other hand, the armed strike promoted by illegal armed groups (guerillas) in the Bajo Atrato zone has already started. Similar situation occurred in Putumayo, with reduction of the humanitarian space. Mobility of people is also a concern in the department of Arauca, where constant checkpoints have been installed by illegal armed groups in many points of the department.

On the other hand, continuous displacements are affecting the life of the Jiw indigenous people in the southeastern part of Colombia, where more than half of this group is concentrated. In the last month, about 100 people - including 34 minors- were forced to flee from their settlement after receiving threats from illegal armed groups.

The massive displacement not only affect the rural areas but also the urban area such as Medellín. In the first semester of 2011 alone, according to the Ombudsman's Office, 4,228 intraurban massive displacements were registered in the capital city of Antioquia

However, a positive step has been made with the Victims' and Land Restitution Law which was sanctioned by the President Juan Manuel Santos on June 11th, with the presence of the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. The Law includes provisions relating to the right to truth, justice and reparation for all victims, including IDPs and refugees. This initiative has also positive effects in creating adequate conditions for durable solutions for this population.

2. Prevention and Protection

Census and Documentation for IDPs

UNHCR carried out a documentation campaign led by the Vulnerable Population Unit of the National Registry of Civil Status (UDAPV) with the objective to cover the needs of at least 1650 IDPs in the municipality of Bahía Solano. Seeking to ensure the community's access to their basic rights, UNHCR along with "Opción Legal" and the National Registry initiated this process by supporting the provision of ID cards, birth certificates and other documents which enable displaced persons to vote for the



UNHCR/Román, C. Documentation campaign in Curvaradó, Chocó

Assembly and the Legal Representative who will be responsible for the process of land restitution. To give an example, in the Township of Cúpica Bay, Bahía Solano, Chocó 201 documents were issued, 50% of which were distributed for Afrocolombian communities.

3. Donors Missions

On August, ECHO visited the municipalities of Puerto Asís and Leguízamo on August 16-19 with the aim to get first hand information on the advances of the PPP (Practical Protection Projects) executed by UNHCR at the Ecuadorian and Colombian border, along the Putumayo river.

This project counts with 2,224 beneficiaries between men and women of different ages, and it has the objective of reducing the vulnerability resulting from the armed conflict, which affects about 2,000 Siona natives and 254 children attending school in the border area of the river side of the Putumayo River. An example is the construction of a school restaurant, which helps to improve their communitarian area.

Likewise, ECHO visited a project that includes the construction of the Attention and Orientation Unit (UAO) in Mocoa, which benefits 21,471 displaced persons, settled in the urban area of Mocoa. The objective is to gain better access to the assistance routes for displaced population offered by the Institution in the municipality.

Another mission was organized on the 13-14 July in Buenaventura with the Swedish Ambassador with the objective to have a field update information on the humanitarian situation in the area. A presentation on the process and implementation of the "Auto" Constitutional Court N. 05 /2009 for the special protection of the Afro communities, their authorities and their territories, was made by the organization CMAIPDV.

The presentation was followed by a visit to the low tide neighborhood called "Barrio Lleras", where the delegation had the opportunity to talk directly with the displaced and host communities about their situation and needs. A visit to another ethnic minority group was also paid, the indigenous community of Noanamá.

A visit to Medellin was also organized on June 7 and 8, with Mrs Lena Nordström, Swedish Embassy, Renske Hertroys the Representative of the Netherlands and, with representatives of UNFPA and UNHCR to make visible the situation of girls and women forcibly displaced and at risk of displacement.



UNHCR Medellín, girls and women from Medellín talking about their realities and possible solutions.

During institutional and community forum were discussed proposals on possible responses under the framework of Prevention, Protection and Durable Solutions. Three themes were emphasized: SGBV, Local Integration and Leadership in women under the Right to Effective Participation. This initiative is part of series of regional dialogues conducted by UNHCR and the University of Southern New Wales (Australia) with the aim to update the knowledge of the current challenges facing the protection of women and girls and ways to solve them. Colombia is one of the seven participating countries in this exercise.

Finally, at the end of August, on the 21st until the 24th, UNHCR accompanied a EU mission to Neiva, Caquetá area, for an assessment on the EU long term program called "New peace territories".

The Colombian Vice-Presidency and UNHCR sign a Letter of Intent for Technical Cooperation in protecting Internally Displaced Persons

In 2010 alone, about 31.900 people were displaced. The government has addressed this humanitarian concern, but some challenges remain unresolved. Among them, the effective protection of the displaced persons, the process of land restitution, and the development of durable solutions for the displaced population.



UNHCR/Castañeda, R. Angelino Garzón and Terry Morel sign a Letter of Intent for Technical Cooperation.

In this context, on July 18th the Vice-President and UNHCR signed a Letter of Intent with the objective of providing technical support to improve the protection response from the Government towards the rights of the affected specific groups (youth, women, indigenous communities and afro descendants).

The Vice-President manifested the need for cooperation in the presidential programmes, as well as the importance of increasing the effectiveness in the implementation of public policies related to the prevention and attention to forcedly displaced persons and the return of the population to their home lands.

4. SOLUTIONS

Letter of Intention UNHCR and Ministry of Agriculture

The past August 9th, UNHCR signed a Letter of Intention with the Ministry of Agriculture with the main objective of providing company and technical assessment to the Ministry in the process of preparing, regulating and implementing the land restitution in the framework of the Victims' Law sanctioned on June. It consists of seven lines of work through which there will be a direct contact with the Ministry in terms of the transition process from the Lands Project to a Restitution Administrative Unit. During this act, UNHCR received recognition for its intervention in the Lands Project, and for its technical assessment, coordination and accompaniment labor.

Transitional Solutions Initiative (TSI)

In view of this, in specific locations, where security conditions are enabling, UNHCR and UNDP are seeking to promote a solutions approach for the displaced persons and their hosting communities in order to transition away from humanitarian assistance and dependence on development.

On these basis both Agencies will implement a Transitional Solutions Initiative in Colombia to support affected communities and national and local authorities to provide specific successful examples of solutions for IDPs and to encourage the consolidation of a State comprehensive strategy, based on lessons learnt and encompassing all options of return, relocation, and local integration.

In this manner, three results and areas of intervention have been established: improving quality of life, organizational and institutional strengthening, and protection and rights of the victims. Eight initial communities have been selected for the initiative on the basis of specific criteria for a total number of approximately 22,300 direct and 54,300 direct and indirect beneficiaries.

The intervention will be sequenced according to a multi-stage timeline, starting where already available needs-assessments and the Agencies' consolidated presence enables early start of implementation. More over, a key component of the programme will consist in the monitoring, evaluation and systematization phase, in order to draw lessons learnt and to advocate for those practices which help overcoming the obstacles that hinders the achievement of results.

5. UNHCR Projects

In Buenaventura children are proud to be afro descendent

UNHCR Buenaventura implemented a project destined for 720 children of 24 schools located in

the 3rd, 4th and 5th commune of the city, where the territorial control maintained by illegal armed and drug trafficking groups deepen the low levels of social development and worsens precarious life conditions. This initiative realized together with "*La Fundación de espacios de convivencia y desarrollo social*" includes a variety of activities ranging from identity, territory and ethnic right.

Each workshop is attended by 30 children. After each cycle a Afro cultural event will take place for sharing the learning experience through a work exhibition done by each child. Once the cycle of workshops and meetings by area will be concluded a final event will be organized and accompanied by different actors such as schools, community arts groups, cultural centers and the parish.



UNHCR/REINA, J. Children in their activities in an education center

The project is a tool of motivation for children between 7 and 11 years old and teachers that enables them to identify or re-identify cultural elements that help to highlight and build pride and admiration of being afro descendant children in everyday life, as an element of self-recognition and self-perceived identity. The strengthening of the auto esteem is a prevention mechanism against external elements that could create risks, such as child labor, abuse, recruitment, child prostitution, gangs, drugs and so on.

"Conflict and Displacement in the Caribbean: a commitment for the future" Forum in Barranquilla

On August 18th and 19th was held the "Conflict and Displacement in the Caribbean: a commitment for the future" Forum in Barranquilla organized by UNHCR. About 100 officials from the National System of Integral Attention to the Displaced Population (SNAIPD) participated, as well as representatives from the displaced population communities, indigenous organizations communities, women's organizations, NGOs and International Cooperation, from six departments of the region.

The participants had the opportunity of working in five thematic groups during the two days of the event, in which they discussed the issues of registration and humanitarian attention, the guarantee of their right to land, durable solutions, prevention and protection, and effective participation.

Overall, the participants emphasized on the importance of strengthening the basic organizational processes with the aim to guarantee an effective participation, and to generate coordination spaces and the construction of a regional agenda. Likewise, they highlighted the productive capacity of the displaced population, who has an active role in the construction of the country, even though this is invisible due to the stigmas related to this population

6. UNHCR CONMEMORATIONS

UNHCR launching the Indigenous Campaign “If they disappear, a part of you will disappear and never will be back” UNHCR commemorated the International Day of Indigenous Groups, August 9, with the launching in the Colombia situation countries (Venezuela, Panama, Ecuador, Costa Rica y Colombia) and Brazil of the awareness campaign “If they disappear, a part of you will disappear too and never will come back”. The aim of the campaign is to visibilize the situation of the 35 indigenous groups, declared by the Constitutional Court at risk of cultural and physical extinction. Some of these groups are also located at the Colombian borders with Venezuela, Ecuador and Panamá. Out of the total displaced Colombian population, the 2.5 per cent corresponds to displaced indigenous people who had to flee their reservations. The campaign invites you to visit the web site www.mipresente.org and take action on October 12th at Plaza Bolivar in Bogotá.

2011, World Afro descendant Year

Being 2011 the Afro descendant year as declared by the General Assembly with the resolution N. 64/169, UNHCR organised a series of events along this

period to commemorate the year.

Among the activities is the participation in the 24th International Bogotá Book Fair on May 14th and 15th, with the stand “Put yourself in the Afro descendants shoes, and give the first step to understand their situation”. Same initiative was also implemented in the prestigious XV “Petronio Álvarez” Pacific Music Festival in Cali, Valle del Cauca, on August 24th..

Both events allowed to reach a large audience and contributed to the visibility of the Afro situation. Another initiative was the organization of a photo exhibition at the Luis Ángel Arango Library in Bogotá named: “2011, World Afro descendant Year”. The exhibition comprises of 20 photos taken by two famous photographers, the Spanish Álvaro Ybarra Zavala and the Colombian Juan Manuel Barrero Bueno. The collection illustrates the life, inequality and poverty in the Chocó department.

World Refugee Day, 20th of June

UNHCR, as every year, celebrated on June 20th the World Refugee Day. This year the main event took place at the Colombian border with Venezuela (Cucuta_Tachira) with the participation of the civil society organizations, local governments, the Catholic Church and several Colombian and Venezuelan singers, like Jorge Rojas, Omarcito, Sebastián Yepes, César López, and a group of refugee Colombian singers. The event was a symbolic act through which 100 students from both side of the borders unified the two countries illustrated by two big panels, with 10 meters shoe laces. This gesture represented a call for solidarity and, support for the refugees around the world “Open borders and give them refuge”.

In addition, UNHCR inaugurated the Film Cycle “Put yourself in their refugees and displaces shoes-” in 10 theatres in Bogotá. Between July 6th-22nd, 11 national and international film were screened, showing different artistic perspectives on the topics of refuge and displacement around the world. A number of 3.813 people assisted to these events.



In Colombia there are 35 indigenous communities declared in danger of physical and cultural extinction by the Constitutional Court due to the forced displacement and the armed conflict context that affects their territories. Enter www.mipresente.org and take action. If they disappear, a part of you disappears too.

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).

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