

## MEETING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE IN CONFLICT

### Rationale

This reference document provides a general framework to stimulate discussion in preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit at the regional consultation for Latin America and the Caribbean taking place in Guatemala City, May 5-7, 2015. The consultation will provide perspectives and recommendations for different stakeholders on attending to the needs of people in conflict, using the case in Colombia as a reference point.

### The conflict in Colombia and its humanitarian consequences

Colombia faces ongoing humanitarian needs as a result of the impact of conflict and armed violence along with natural disasters in certain areas. While the armed conflict continues between the government and the FARC-EP guerilla forces as well as with the post-demobilization armed groups (GAPD), significant humanitarian and protection challenges are posed.

According to official data, between 1985 and 2015, the armed conflict has caused the displacement of more than 6 million people, which equals 14% of the country's population.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, in the same period, more than 150,000 people have been direct or indirect victims of forced disappearance, 38,000 people have been kidnapped and 12,000 have been victims of anti-personnel mines.<sup>2</sup>

Since November 2012, the Colombian government has pursued peace conversations with the FARC-EP, one of the principle actors in the conflict. This process is a historical opportunity to put an end to a source of violence and humanitarian crisis in the country. However, even if an agreement is reached with this group, other violent groups are likely to continue to operate, such as the ELN, the EPL and the GAPD.

In the first two years of the peace negotiations, according to official figures, at least 427,795 people were displaced, meaning that almost 16,454 Colombians were forced into displacement each month. In the same period, 713 victims of anti-personnel mines were recorded, the equivalent of 27 new victims of these devices each month. Likewise, during the peace negotiations, reports continue to be made of the use and recruitment of children, sexual violence, kidnappings, extortion and homicides which affect the normal life of entire communities and create humanitarian and protection needs.<sup>3</sup> Despite the hope placed in the peace process and improvements in certain indicators,

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<sup>1</sup> Red Nacional de Información de la UARIV <http://rni.unidadvictimas.gov.co/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> OCHA.(2015) Humanitarian Data and Trends.



the conflict and violence continue, disproportionately affecting indigenous and afro-Colombian communities as well as women, children and adolescents.

The downward tendency in the most visible emergencies (eg. mass displacements) has been accompanied by the persistence and increase in other, less visible and more difficult-to-monitor forms of violence, such as the use and recruitment of children, targeted killings, sexual violence, mobility and access limitations, social control, threats and extortion. This is a particular challenge for the State institutions and humanitarian partners.

### **Humanitarian needs**

Given the complexity of the humanitarian context in Colombia, if the situation is compounded by emergency situations caused by natural disasters and/or the armed conflict, women, children, adolescents, the elderly and people with disabilities are especially vulnerable. Gender discrimination and ethnic and cultural inequalities which are in existence in the culture before a crisis tend to increase in emergency situations, putting the mentioned population groups at higher risk of gender-based violence (GBV) and other human rights violations.

The Humanitarian Country Team predicted in their strategic planning for 2015 that almost 4.8 million people would require humanitarian aid. This estimate includes the population directly affected by the armed conflict: internally displaced people, anti-personnel mine or unexploded munitions victims, sexual violence victims and people affected by access limitations and confinement, as well as highly vulnerable people who live in host communities with high rates of arriving populations on the move and low institutional capacity.

Of the total people in need, the international community seeks to serve almost 2 million, including the search for durable solutions in each intervention and the application of a rights-based approach.

### **Humanitarian Access and mobility limitations**

Between January 2013 and December 2014,<sup>4</sup> almost one and a half million people suffered mobility limitations that restricted their access to basic goods and services.

Given that information is only available from areas where Local Humanitarian Teams are present—which is 34% of the national territory, the affected population is likely much higher. 19% of the affected population (282,488 people) suffered limitations that lasted for more than a week and affected their access to at least three basic services and constituting situations of confinement according to the OCHA guiding concept in Colombia.

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<sup>4</sup> OCHA. (2015) Humanitarian Data and Trends.



Mobility limitations and confinement have a significant humanitarian impact, particularly in food security situations but also in access to livelihood and services such as health and education.

### **Capacity and scope of the response**

Colombia has a solid legal and institutional framework for emergency preparedness and response with a focus on sustainable solutions. In recent years, Colombia has made fundamental efforts to be equipped with specialist agencies and resources to respond to emergencies caused by armed conflict and disasters. These institutions, the Unit for Attention and Reparation of Victims (UARIV) and the National Unit for Disaster Risk Management (UNGRD) are the principal providers of emergency assistance in the country; these institutions have allowed thousands of victims to receive aid and support. Nonetheless, response capacities, especially at the local level in some of the regions most affected by the conflict, are sometimes affected by access limitations, lack of sufficient budget, and lack of technical response capacity on the part of the local authorities, gaps in coordination and the tenuous civil presence of the State.

The presence of the international humanitarian community, although limited, complements and supports the national preparedness and response efforts in a comprehensive and multi-sectorial way, supporting institutional strengthening and providing technical assistance.

The organizations and agencies of the Humanitarian Country Team provide response in a coordinated and complementary way based on permanent dialogue with the national authorities. The key value added by the Humanitarian Country Team is in its territorial presence, particularly in the territories most affected by the conflict and with difficult access, and in its long experience with community work in accordance with humanitarian principles and international standards.