Nearly 6,000 people newly displaced in Buenaventura

The Pacific port city of Buenaventura, despite being the main commercial port for the country, is also one of the poorest cities with the highest level of unsatisfied basic needs. Its strategic geographic location and natural resources have converted it into a battleground for guerrilla and Post-demobilization Armed Groups (PDAG) seeking to gain control of the area.

Starting in 2003, when Colombia began a demobilization process for paramilitary groups, in Buenaventura there were more than 115,000 people displaced. Displacement is just one humanitarian consequence of the conflict dynamics in the city, however. Other consequences include homicides, forced disappearances, forced recruitment of children and adolescents, and confinement.

Currently, there is a presence of the FARC-EP guerrillas in the large rural areas in the municipality around the port, while the PDAG groups Los Urabeños, Los Rastrojos and La Empresa compete for control of narcotrafficking, mining and other illicit activities. There are also allegations that these groups are linked to major mining and port interests.

In just November 2013, nearly 6,000 were displaced from urban areas in a single event due to PDAG confrontations in the city. The displacement resulted in humanitarian needs including protection, food and non-food assistance and shelter (see Flash Update, sitreps). 1

According to the Constitutional Court order: Auto 005, this is a landmark case that requires special protective measures.
In 2013, about a quarter of the people displaced in mass events and over 10 per cent of the total IDPs were expelled from Buenaventura, according to the National Victims Unit (UARIV). Many of these people have been displaced more than once.

In Colombia, intra-urban mass displacements have been an increasing concern. These are events closely associated with urban armed violence. In 2013, 19 per cent of IDPs were massively displaced within urban areas such as Buenaventura, Tumaco and Medellín.

**Dynamic persist despite early warnings**

Buenaventura faced a similar emergency in October 2012, when approximately 5,000 people were displaced due to clashes between PDAGs. In urban areas such as Buenaventura, armed groups cause access constraints and mobility restrictions. The weak response of local and departmental authorities and the dispersion of the displaced people limit the capacity to conduct needs assessments and provide timely humanitarian assistance. During this emergency, assistance was only sent two weeks afterwards.

As the main causes of the displacement persist in Buenaventura, urgent measures are required to strengthen the capacity of local authorities and institutions in response, preparedness and prevention, and in increasing protection for host families and community leaders. The municipality needs increased staff and resources for victims’ assistance, and responsible authorities must implement the recommendations of the Ombudsman’s Office and the Constitutional Court to ensure victims receive effective response and protection.

**Over 7,000 newly displaced in November**

About 7,000 people were displaced in November due to mass displacement events. This number is more than double compared with the monthly average of Internal Displaced People (IDPs) in 2013, 2,622 people, and the highest figure in 2013. FARC-EP, Post-Demobilization Armed Groups (PDAGs) and the ELN caused forced displacements during the reporting period.

**Confrontation and displacement in Northern Cauca**

FARC-EP was involved in seven mass displacement events. Unilateral actions and confrontations with Armed Forces displaced nearly 1,000 indigenous and rural inhabitants of the south-western department of Cauca. Intense hostilities were reported in northern Cauca, apparently related to the second anniversary of the death of former FARC commander Alfonso Cano. In November, FARC-EP attacked military infrastructure. It damaged homes, injured a child and displaced nearly 400 people in Miranda municipality.

**Clashes between guerrillas and PDAGs caused new displacements**

In northwestern Antioquia, running disputes between the PDAGs and FARC-EP over control of illicit mining in the area of Zaragoza resulted in the forced displacement of rural communities to the municipality’s urban centre (see Flash Update). Along the Pacific coast in Chocó, in Alto Baudó a group of families was displaced due to fighting between PDAG and ELN guerrillas.
Armed lockdown confined 14,000 people

More than 14,000 people were confined for about 10 days in northwestern Colombia in El Bagre, Antioquia. This confinement was the result of a FARC-EP armed lockdown that restricted movements along roads and rivers in the area. The lockdown limited local people’s access to their livelihoods, as the main economic activity in the area consists of mining in rivers. The restrictions affected nearly half of the municipality and affected food security, education and health (see Flash Update, sitrep).

WFP delivered 4 tons of food in response, prioritizing pregnant and nursing mothers and children. ICRC delivered habitat and cooking kits for confined families. The Local Humanitarian Team (LHT) carried out a MIRA needs evaluation. This evaluation identified gaps in protection, as the current legal framework does not acknowledge confinement as a situation that should trigger State assistance. As a result, local authorities face difficulties justifying the purchase and delivery of aid for affected people.

According to OCHA’s monitoring of confinement, at least 24,832 people remained confined in 10 departments at the end of November. This number began to be compiled in January 2013 and includes all those currently confined. Indigenous people account for 57 per cent of this population, while Afro-Colombians represent 21 per cent.

Civilians continue to be victims of armed actions and IEDs

The number of armed actions recorded in November is close to the monthly average for the rest of the year. Armed actions, mostly combat, were concentrated on the border with Venezuela in Arauca and along the Pacific coast in Cauca, Valle del Cauca and Nariño.

In November, Monitor, an OCHA information system that records armed violence incidents, registered six attacks with Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) on police and military infrastructure. These attacks caused significant consequences for civilians, including death, injury and damage to infrastructure.

On the Venezuelan border in Arauca, an attempt to attack military installations using IEDs caused severe damage to the local airport. In the centre of the country in Meta, an IED was used against a police station and injured five civilians.

The use of IEDs is affecting disproportionately civilian population. At least six attacks were recorded in November causing severe humanitarian consequences.
A civilian was killed in an IED attack on a military base in Nariño, on the Pacific coast. In another attack on a military base in Cauca department, a child was injured and at least 400 people displaced. On the border with Ecuador, in Putumayo, IEDs were used against a police station, causing damage to several homes in the village. At least six families left their houses. In this same community in August, a child died in an attack. Months before, the local school closed due to the risk associated with its proximity to the police station (see story “El Placer: Rebuilding spaces and hopes”).

Stories from the field

El Placer: Rebuilding spaces and hopes

Text and photos: OCHA/Isabel Suárez.

“This really IS a pleasure!”, said a man as he drank a glass of chicha, a locally produced corn liquor, after a long walk along a footpath to reach the town of El Placer (“pleasure” in Spanish). The town, nestled deep in the Colombian jungle along the border with Ecuador, was the site of a major project funded by the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) that ended in mid-2013. This remote town was founded in the 1960s following an oil and natural resource boom in the area. Despite these invaluable resources, the town’s inhabitants have suffered the worst consequences of the country’s armed conflict.

In El Placer, places tell stories

Since its founding, El Placer was dominated by local armed groups that exercised control over the day-to-day life of local communities. Children and adults have witnessed the cruelty of Colombia’s conflict. When the paramilitary group Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, or AUC, entered the zone in 1999, there were constant atrocities against local residents for six years following their arrival.

El Edificio, or “the building”, as it is known in Spanish locally, is a four-storey building in front of the town school. It was first a restaurant, and then functioned as the headquarters of paramilitaries operating in the zone between 1999 and 2005. Today it is a police station, and the school continues to operate just in front. This is a dangerous situation, as children cross in front of the station many times each day. FARC-EP guerrillas frequently attack the station, which this year resulted in the closure of the school and the relocation of students to a school in a town that lacks infrastructure capacity for these new students. During a FARC-EP attack in August 2013, a 13-year-old boy was killed. Ironically, as part of an initiative related to the Victim’s Law, the school was recently outfitted with a “Museum for Memory”, where the community has been encouraged to reconstruct its historical memory of the conflict in the zone.

Paramilitaries once occupied many homes in the community. Today, most of these homes are abandoned, reminders of the worst days in the community. However, not all serve as a symbol of fear. In one of these, a community centre was built where more than 100 local families participate in the Demonstrative Training Center, or Centro Demostrativo de Capacitación (CDC) in Spanish, launched by FAO with CERF funding.

Healthy food and safe water: the future of El Placer

In response to the recent impact of conflict in the zone, and due to frequent local flooding, most recently in July 2012, El Placer was prioritized by Putumayo’s LHT to receive an integral CERF project response. For this effort the LHT desired a response that contemplated all the most urgent needs of the community, coordinating the response across several key sectors. A joint initiative was planned between FAO, PAHO-WHO and UNICEF to carry out food security, health, protection and WASH interventions to alleviate the most urgent needs, and to improve response capacity and preparation.

The needs assessment carried out between PAHO-WHO and the local authorities in Putumayo identified urgent needs for potable water sources for 2,000 local people. PAHO-WHO began an infrastructure project in response in order to guarantee potable water access in the local health centre and schools, the distribution of water filters for families and community training to ensure water-quality measurement in homes and community infrastructure.

The intervention was fundamental for FAO’s future actions in the town. More than 300 local families participated in the CDC programmes. This includes community gardens, where organic crop production was taught to community members for use at home, as well as training on food preparation, making use of the new potable water sources. “Pickle milkshakes... no one has seen that around here!”, commented one woman after learning a new recipe that was popular among programme participants.
The peace so frequently discussed in Havana has yet to arrive in Putumayo, where in the past year more than 1,000 people were forcibly displaced in mass events, many from El Placer. However, a large number of these people are deciding to stay in the community. They hope to improve their living conditions and prepare for upcoming challenges. When the project results were presented, María, an El Placer resident, sang:

“Companions from El Placer
Save your farms
Practice what you’ve learned
Then there will be prosperity for sure.”

Land restitution during conflict raises protection concerns

In a context of ongoing violence, land restitution to the victims of the armed conflict in Colombia implies a significant risk. This is due to the continued presence of armed groups in the territory where restitution is to take place, and potential interference by third parties with interests in the land such as illegal gold mining, or other investments. The danger to land claimants is significant in such a scenario. According to UNHCR, 11 land claimants were killed in 2013. The staff of the Land Restitution Unit and the magistrates and judges assigned to land restitution processes are also at risk.

UNHCR has identified particular stages in the land restitution process where the claimants are at highest risk: restitution request; notification; land surveying; and court rulings and their associated actions to enforce compliance. Intimidation strategies against land claimants by armed groups and other actors with interests over the land include direct and indirect actions. These include threatening pamphlets and messages declaring claimants as military targets and demanding the suspension of the restitution process; transferring mining equipment or cattle to the land; destroying crops; and illegally moving boundary fences and armed patrols.

In the first semester of 2013, 452 land claimants benefitted from the Government’s protection measures. Through 30 July, 77 per cent of protected people lived in six departments: Chocó, Antioquia, Bolívar, Cesá, Cundinamarca and Córdoba. The protection provided by the Government through the National Protection Unit (UNP) needs to be complemented with measures to promote local environments prone to restitution. Land restitution needs to be implemented through a coherent approach by the different institutions involved, including the local authorities, UNP, UARIV and the Ombudsman’s Office.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>#Land claimants killed</th>
<th>#Land claimants’ son/daughter killed</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Córdoba</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolívar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antioquia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlántico</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chocó</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meta</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Secondary information processed by UNHCR Colombia.

*Land claimant son/daughter.

New attack against the land restitution process

Another leader of the land restitution process was killed in November, adding to the number of threats, intimidations and killings in 2013 in Córdoba department, northern Colombia. The Ombudsman’s Office issued a risk report in September 2013 that warned...
of the risk generated by PDAGs operating in the region. These groups are often implicated in threats and violence against land claimants.

**International Campaign to Ban Landmines:**
"FARC is probably the most prolific user of APM among rebel groups in the world"

According to the 2013 Land Mine Monitor report, which covers September 2012 to October 2013, Colombia is among a group of eight countries in which non-State armed groups produced and used antipersonnel mines or victim-activated IEDs. Non-State armed groups and criminal groups were also reported to possess Antipersonnel Mines (APM) stockpiles in Colombia, which is listed as a State with heavy contamination (10 to 100 km²).

Colombia’s progress to meet its survey-and-clearance responsibilities by 2020, following its 10-year extension request in 2010 remains unclear given the lack of accurate information on the problem and the continued use of APM by non-State armed groups.

During the reporting period, FARC-EP continued to use APM and IEDs regularly and in such a manner that, according to the report, the group is “…probably the most prolific user of antipersonnel mines among rebel groups anywhere in the world.” Non-State armed groups use APM in Colombia to protect areas of strategic importance, deter the eradication of illicit crops and prevent the reconstruction of damaged infrastructure.

Despite a recent decline, the country reported 496 casualties in 2012. This made Colombia the second country with the highest number of reported victims after Afghanistan. It should be taken into account that most deaths in Afghanistan are caused by large roadside IEDs placed to detonate when NATO convoys pass, making this modality of attack very different from those used in Colombia. A particular concern is the increase in the number of child casualties, which represented 35 per cent of all civilian victims by October 2013. Declining international funding is a special concern, as it has negatively affected victims’ access to assistance programs, including physical rehabilitation, psychological support and economic inclusion.

**Grave violations against children and adolescents persist**

Despite ongoing peace talks between the Government and FARC-EP, the United Nations identified at least 114 grave violations against children and adolescents related to the armed conflict in Colombia between July and September 2013. The most recurrent violations were related to the use and recruitment of children and adolescents, killing and maiming, forced displacements, and attacks and occupation of schools. During this
period, more violations were reported in Antioquia, Caquetá, Cauca, Chocó, Córdoba, Nariño, Putumayo, Tolima and Valle del Cauca.

During the same period, at least 78 children were recovered from non-State armed groups and joined the protection programme of the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF). At least 16 children were killed or injured in events related to the armed conflict, and at least nine schools were occupied by armed actors or damaged due to hostilities.

FARC-EP is the largest recruiter of children and adolescents, according to official data. However, the departments with the highest recruitment rate per 100,000 inhabitants are Arauca, Caquetá, Casanare, Guainía, Guaviare, Meta, Putumayo and Vaupés. The departments with the highest number of displaced children are Antioquia, Valle del Cauca, Bolívar, Nariño, Santander and Putumayo.

Despite advocacy efforts from civil-society organizations and some State entities such as the Inspector General’s Office, there has been no progress in including child-protection issues in current peace talks. A discussion about child-protection concerns is needed to end practices including child recruitment, SGBV, and attacks on and occupation of schools.

**Study analyses the effects of conflict on children**

UNICEF, IOM and ICBF carried out research that compares the psychosocial situation of children affected and unaffected by the armed conflict. The results show that child victims are most affected in health, nutrition and psychosocial welfare. According to the research, the effects vary depending on the type of victimization, including recruitment, displacement, APM/UXO accidents, kidnappings, SGBV, orphanage.

**Pacific Region is the most affected by the second rainy season**

In November, some 51,781 people were affected by the second rainy season that began on September 15th. This was double the number of people affected in October, according to the National Unit for Disaster Risk Management (UNGRD). Slow and flash floods of rivers affected at least 45,000 people in the Pacific Coast, particularly in Chocó and Valle del Cauca, and in northern Colombia in Magdalena, Bolívar and Antioquia. Landslides and windstorms affected more than 5,000 people in other departments such as Atlántico, Quindío, Boyacá, Cauca and Chocó.

**Floods in Chocó affect 27,000 people**

On the Pacific coast in Chocó, four major rivers flooded, affecting Bagadó, Lloró, Atrato, Quibdó, Medio Atrato and Unión Panamericana. According to preliminary data provided by local authorities, some 27,000 people were affected, 100 houses were destroyed and 200 were damaged. The emergency created significant needs in shelter, food security, nutrition, and water and sanitation.

In coordination with local and regional authorities, UNGRD delivered humanitarian aid. However, structural vulnerability and low institutional capacity in this department increase the impact of this type of event. The lack of effective prevention and risk reduction measures is evidenced by the recurrence and impact of floods in this region. In 2013, Chocó has
been the department most affected by rainy seasons, with 123,762 people affected. This represents almost 22 per cent of the national total of affected people by natural disasters. In March 2013, a large emergency in Chocó affected almost 60,000 people in six municipalities (see sitreps).

# People affected by natural disasters – Chocó
Jan. – Nov. 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>#People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bagadó</td>
<td>17,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medio Baudó</td>
<td>17,095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nóvita</td>
<td>14,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medio San Juan</td>
<td>13,291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantón de San Pablo</td>
<td>10,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>51,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>123,762</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNGRD
*No data available disaggregated by gender.

Livelihood recovery is the main challenge

Also on the Pacific Coast, the Raposo, Anchicayá, and Dagua rivers overflowed for the second time this year, affecting 900 households. The Valle del Cauca LHT will carry out a MIRA needs-assessment mission in this region in December, which is also affected by armed conflict and the presence of illicit crops (results will be available at salahumanitaria.co). As in the case of Chocó, although local authorities have provided humanitarian assistance, there are still significant early recovery needs. The majority of affected households need to recover their agricultural projects and fishing tools. Livelihoods recovery is still an issue to be addressed by State entities responsible for providing assistance in natural disasters.

Humanitarian Country Team agrees upon strategic priorities

On its annual retreat, members of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) agreed on their strategic objectives for 2014. The objectives focus on risk mitigation in communities affected by the armed conflict; providing humanitarian assistance to supplement the Government in areas that are neglected or difficult to access; and promoting recovery actions and common advocacy on behalf of the most affected people. The HCT will strengthen its coordination with the Government at the national level and with local authorities.

Following an inter-sectoral analysis of humanitarian needs and response gaps, the HCT identified four regions (13 departments) as the most vulnerable.
its collective actions in four regions (comprising 13 departments) identified as the most vulnerable: the Pacific Coast and Ecuadorian border (Nariño, Putumayo, Chocó, Valle del Cauca and Cauca); North-east region (Arauca and Norte de Santander); Centre-eastern region (Southern Tolima, Meta, Guaviare and Caquetá) and North-west region (Antioquia and Córdoba).

These departments represent 42 per cent of the country’s total population and were the location of 84 per cent of the displaced population in 2011 and 2012. Seventy-seven per cent of APM/UXO victims and 99.5 per cent of confined people also hailed from these 13 departments.

Within these departments, the HCT will prioritize municipalities with low institutional capacities or whose capacity has been overwhelmed by the magnitude of emergencies. The HCT will also focus on recently displaced people in rural and urban areas who are unattended; people at risk of displacement; people who face access constraints, mobility restrictions and/or confinement situations; and people affected by natural disasters, particularly in areas also affected by armed violence (“double vulnerability”).

Progress in implementing MIRA for needs assessments

In November, members of OCHA’s Coordinated Assessment Support Section visited Colombia to launch a pilot project of data-gathering in MIRA needs assessments making use of mobile devices. The mobile application, called Kobo, is being developed between OCHA and Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and is in its early stages. When fully implemented, Kobo will allow real-time data collection, processing and synchronization, thus facilitating needs-assessments analysis. Cluster members were trained to use the application, and three pilot MIRA missions were carried out to test the performance of the tool using tablets in the field.

In 2013, OCHA and members of the Humanitarian Country Team have promoted the use of MIRA—a common agreed needs-assessment methodology, including the tool as a key element of the 2014 Strategic Response Plan. This methodology, developed by the IASC Task Force on Needs Assessment, allows humanitarian actors to have a general multisectoral understanding of the situation following the initial phases of an emergency.

| +300 people trained to use MIRA (HLTs, clusters, government) | 10 MIRA assessments since June 2013 | 5 ERF proposals formulated after a MIRA mission | 13 Flash MIRA and Final MIRA reports available at salahumanitaria.co |

As part of its strategy for 2014, the HCT has identified and prioritized geographical areas with important information gaps where the use of MIRA will be promoted. A systematic use of this tool will not gather comparable data for the entire country, but it could provide a much better situational awareness of priority clusters in highly affected communities visited by HCT members in 2014.

New humanitarian web portal promotes information sharing

On 26 November, the Humanitarian Coordinator and HCT representatives launched the HCT’s new web portal www.salahumanitaria.co. The tool allows humanitarian partners and HCT members to share information on the country’s armed conflict and natural disasters, with an

In 2013, OCHA and members of the Humanitarian Country Team have promoted the use of MIRA. More than 300 people have been trained by November 2013.
emphasis on humanitarian needs, response and gaps. The portal will facilitate decision-making and accountability by the humanitarian organizations in Colombia. It has a direct link to Monitor, an online tool for real-time tracking of conflict and natural disasters. “This site will help us better understand the humanitarian challenges we have to face as members of the international community…”, said the Humanitarian Coordinator, Fabrizio Hochschild.

Stories from the field

Vegetables for our use, to sell and trade…

Text and photos: LWF Colombia.

Today, as on every Saturday, Doña Emery woke up at 3 a.m. to light the oven and prepare corn cakes to sell in her village, Vista Hermosa, on the Venezuelan border in Arauquita, Arauca. This is her way of earning money to support her family.

Twenty four years ago, when she was pregnant with her first son, Doña and her husband were forcibly displaced from Arauca and moved to Santander. There she was displaced again, but five years ago she returned to Arauca with her husband and five sons, hoping to settle and raise her family in a peaceful environment. They now live in a house they built themselves on a small plot bought only with the greatest effort.

Doña and her family struggled to protect their livelihood during the 2012 rainy season, during which they lost their crops. Flooding caused water to reach the kitchen, where she had to prepare food for her family in dire conditions.

Doña benefited from the Emergency Response Fund project implemented by Lutheran World Federation. She says that it has been a “great relief”.

“The project supported the sustainability of our home,” she said. “Since we started with the project, we no longer face shortages of tomatoes, onions, coriander, corn and other vegetables. We also manage to save some good seeds to keep sowing new crops. We have had vegetables for our own use, to sell and to trade, which has helped us save some money…For me, this is my project and everything has gone well. I have been able to sell cucumbers and other vegetables and contribute to my family’s finances. My husband is also really happy about my participation in the project, and I feel grateful to be able to support my home.”

She continued saying that, “The rainy season has affected us again, but this time we have been able to keep going. We have dug up trenches and diverted the water to protect our land. I hope that these types of projects continue supporting communities facing difficulties, because they help us to move forward and recover from the damages suffered. Don’t forget about us, we want to work together to be able to remain in our territory.”

For more on this story, go to: http://lwfcolombia.org.co/node/164

Credit: LWF Colombia

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OCHA humanitarian bulletins are available at www.unocha.org | www.salahanitariana.co | www.reliefweb.int

All the information reflected in this report has been processed by OCHA from official and secondary sources. Data for mass displacement and protection of civilians has been processed by OCHA Colombia through the Integrated Humanitarian Information System.

Sources: Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas (UARIV); Programa Presidencial para la Acción Integral contra Minas Antipersonal (PAICMA); UNHCR, CODHES; Sistema Integrado de Información Humanitaria (SIDIH/OCHA).