Reaffirming the sense of "humanity"

By: Christian Visnes, Country Director - Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

Nowadays there are populations that can see by themselves that the intensity of the conflict has diminished. Nevertheless, there are legitimate reasons to consider that there are populations where fear has increased. In these territories, the struggle for control of the illegal economy based on coca and mineral extraction has flourished. Without sufficient efforts to protect the population and adequate humanitarian assistance that contributes to establishing the rule of law even in isolated areas, the conflict can turn into a conflict for the control of illegal economies with a severe humanitarian impact.

My organization, the Norwegian Refugee Council, continues to find and assist families forced to flee from their homes. They tell us about sisters and children recruited by force, mines deployed in their territories and armed groups that prevent them from cultivating on their land. It is urgent to reduce their risks and protect the population. “If ELN withdraws, the paramilitaries will remain as a loose wheel. This zone would be theirs, indisputably. With the many threats that we have in this community, we would definitely have to flee and anyone who does not have the means to leave will have to... assume [that situation]. I would go”, a leader from Chocó told us.

Currently, some information on 18 armed groups has been reported in the departments of the Colombian Pacific coast. In Norte de Santander, Arauca, Putumayo, Caquetá, Meta or Guaviare, the situation is not very different. The atomization of armed groups is real.

In these territories, the population has a realistic and sophisticated vision of what must happen so that peace can be real. “The post-conflict period will be more difficult. There has to be a process to provide people with what they deserve. That will take time,” said the Chocoan leader.
Without sufficient efforts to protect the population and adequate humanitarian assistance that contributes to establishing the rule of law even in isolated areas, the conflict can become a conflict for the control of illegal economies, with a severe humanitarian impact.

Colombia, donor governments and the organizations that support it have experience to achieve protection of their population and the implementation of the accord. Compared with countries such as El Salvador, Mozambique, Cambodia and Afghanistan, Colombia has stronger national government institutions to administer the process, with strong social organizations and local ethnic authorities. However, these institutional strengths per se will not guarantee success.

Colombian government is under immense political pressure. It must comply with the recent peace accords with FARC-EP. It should also initiate a similar process with the second largest guerrilla in Colombia, the National Liberation Army (ELN), while complying with the bilateral ceasefire that came into effect on October 1. And above these responsibilities, it must respond to the current situation of insecurity. International humanitarian support is needed now more than ever to ensure that this delicate process is not ruined.

Colombians are some of the toughest people in the world. In the 12 years that I have worked in the country, they have shown incredible strength and resourcefulness over and over again. They deserve the commitment of the international community and the reassertion of the principle of humanity to ensure that hard-won peace is consolidated and not compromised.

Quarterly Humanitarian Situation: July-August-September 2017

So far in 2017, the Pacific region and the border area with Venezuela continue to concentrate a large part of the humanitarian impact of the civilian population as a result of mass displacements, access restrictions, threats, selective homicides, etc., as well as other less visible but significant actions in terms of social and territorial control. This results from the reconfiguration and new dynamics of existing and new armed groups that are consolidating in the territories.

Worrying Increase in Mass Displacement Events

Between January and September of 2017, the number of mass displacement events increased by 36% compared to the same period in the previous year, affecting about 10,142 people, mainly from the Pacific region (77%). Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities are the most vulnerable to suffer the consequences of these events, with 73% of those affected recorded. Women, boys and girls are the population groups that face the different sectoral needs due to the exposure to new risks as they are outside their habitual environment.

Within the framework of the implementation of the peace accord between the Government and one of the most representative armed actors in the country, it is worrying that in just nine months of this year, the number of displaced persons
It is worrying that in just nine months of this year, the displaced population represents 93% of the total displaced population in 2016, evidencing the urgent need for care and protection of these rural and urban communities, within the framework of a peace accord with one of the most representative armed actors in the country.

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The departments most affected by this type of events have been Chocó, Nariño and Norte de Santander, concentrating 82% of the displaced population. Municipalities such as Litoral de San Juan, Santa Bárbara de Iscuandé, Buenaventura, Hacari and even Medellín call attention because of the recurrence of events (4 in each case), overcoming the response capacity and creating great challenges for the State and humanitarian actors for the timely attention of communities.

Considering that 47% of the displacements so far in 2017 are due to armed confrontations, the confrontations between GAPD¹ and the ELN², and the new armed groups unknown to the Military Forces, among others, stand out. However, the unilateral armed actions of GAPD, non-state armed groups, such as ELN and EPL³, and other unknown armed groups allow us to size the disputes over the control of the territories associated with the interests in illegal economies, creating new scenarios for armed violence which have a negative impact on the protection and living conditions of the affected civilian population.

**Humanitarian Access at Risk for Communities and Partners**

In the first nine months of 2017, due to armed violence, over 73,000 people have been affected by access restrictions and limitations on mobility in 108 events, identifying a 44% increase with respect to the number of events in the same period in 2016. The unilateral actions of unknown armed groups, FARC dissidents, post-demobilization armed groups and ELN, without neglecting the confrontations between the different armed groups, are the main cause of these events.

There are still gaps to identify the number of people with restrictions, among which are its geographic location, the presence of armed actors, the lack of reporting by people and limitations to access information.

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¹ Post-demobilization armed groups (GAPD)
² National Liberation Army (ELN)
³ People’s Liberation Army (EPL)
For the quarter between July and September 2017, access restrictions are identified in at least 4,256 Indians belonging to the Pacific region, with particular involvement in children and adolescents. In Nariño, about 650 Awá and Afro-Colombian girls and boys had limitations on access to education caused by threats and the presence of armed actors on the roads, contamination by APLM/UXO, confrontations, damage to civilian property (burning of fluvial school transport), among other territorial control actions, by both FARC dissidents, and new unknown armed groups. In Chocó, the combats between ELN and AGC⁴, in addition to mass displacement, also triggered the suspension of classes in a Wounaan indigenous community, among other restrictions. In Putumayo, the presence of APLM/UXO next to a rural school caused risks for 15 BGAs. Finally, in Medellín, the fear of inter-gang disputes has caused the dropout of at least 183 boys and girls.

In this new scenario, the risk increasingly faced by humanitarian agencies in the field because of the recurrent restrictions in the means of work is a matter of concern. In Meta, Chocó and Nariño, there was suspension of activities in key areas and interference in the delivery of food and follow-up of the humanitarian situation in remote areas with low institutional presence. These incidents hinder timely and effective care of the most vulnerable communities and increase operating costs and time.

**Attacks against Civilian Population Continue to Increase**

Civilian population continues to be victims of victimizing acts and remains exposed to risks that threaten their integrity. Throughout the first nine months of the year, there were at least 1,121 attacks against civilian population, with a 22% increase compared to the same period in 2016.

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⁴ Spanish acronym for Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia
Among the subcategories of most recurrent events are, on the one hand, threats, with a slight increase (2%), as well as willful killings of protected persons with a worrying 219% increase with respect to 2016. Other subcategories of attacks against civilians which had an increase that shows the deterioration of the situation are the willful wounding of a protected person, hostage taking, attacks, kidnapping, recruitment and civilian casualties action in a war-like action, as seen in the graph corresponding to this category.

Regarding the participation of the perpetrating actors, despite being in a scenario of peace agreement between the Government and FARC, a similarity is identified with respect to the same period in the previous year: In both 2016 and 2017, 54% of the events correspond to unknown armed actors, whereas actors such as GAPD and EPL show a slight increase in their participation, with a slight decrease of ELN, and a stable participation of FARC dissidents. This, together with the notorious increase in the total number of actions, shows that community protection risks in the current situation do not seem to diminish.

Addressing events in a regional manner and focusing on the third quarter of the year, there is concern about increasing attacks against civilians in the south (Nariño and Putumayo with 375%), middle (Meta, Guaviare, Caquetá with 171%) and north-west (Antioquia, Córdoba and Bolívar with 155%) of the country and, at the same time, their expansion to other regions. However, many times these facts are not reported by communities, especially in remote rural areas that live in the midst of social control imposed by armed actors who are present, thus reflecting a sub-recording of official figures.

CEASEFIRE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND ELN...!

By: Departmental Network of Chocoan Women

Another Announcement of Positive Impact for the Harmonization and Peaceful Coexistence of Both Male and Female Colombians
In the midst of governmental powers and society, this announcement promises a more propitious scenario for the dialogue between the Government and ELN to make sense, and a nuance of unarmed wills to unite efforts in the establishment of a lasting peace in our Nation. It will be another illegal armed group that looks for a more adequate way so that its ideas and rights are heard and guaranteed by the social rule of law, while they submit themselves -in a strategic and political way- to leave communities in peace, leave the mountain, rivers, weapons and illicit economies in all this time of "struggle" for their ideals.

For 50 years, our country has been plagued by the scourge of a meaningless war, in which autonomy, freedom, dignity, and male and female leaders have been lost, together with opportunities for sustainable development. There are signs of a scenario for a greater ease to access and travel through its rivers, roads, forests and riverbanks, some of which with mines deployed as a result of conflict practices. It relies on the decrease of roadblocks, extortions, stigmatization of civilian population, controls and threats, thus paving the way to a timid hope.

In this new post-accord scenario, where the future is uncertain due to the crisis, political tensions and national polarization in the upcoming electoral scenario, the situation of middle-class Colombians who remain in urban areas is worrying and it is serious for those common people that remain in small and remote villages far from the madding crowd. This is the case of contexts, such as Chocó, where we hope that harassment, confinement, and selective deaths of black, indigenous and mestizo communities of Alto and Bajo San Juan, Litoral, Baudoes, Bajo Atrato, San José del Palmar and Andágueda, among others that are also being under siege of criminal gangs with different names, will be minimized. Given that the authorities have not taken immediate possession of the places left by FARC, allowing other known illegal armed groups, along with new and equally armed groups, to take control, generate shortages and prohibit mobility of Chocoans in their own territory.

In the meantime, the Social Movement of Women of Chocó positions its peace agenda, persistently has a bearing so that public gender equality policies are implemented, defines how it will take part in the March elections, and establishes regional work committees to follow up on the implementation of the agreement with the demobilized guerrilla, and participates with an unwavering interest in the design, socialization and presentation of the Humanitarian Agreement Now !!!, before the Government-ELN negotiating table. Let us wait and see.
MIRA as a Mechanism to Access Humanitarian Financing in Colombia

In Colombia, MIRA\(^5\) (Initial and Rapid Multi-cluster/sectoral Evaluation) is one of the main sources of information in terms of visibility and incidence of the needs identified in vulnerable populations throughout the country. Between January and September 2017, fifteen evaluations have been developed in nine departments prioritized by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in its work strategy (HRP 2017). These diagnoses have made it possible to provide information and generate responses in sudden and chronic emergencies on the needs and gaps associated with events of natural disaster, as well as on humanitarian situations generated within the framework of the internal armed conflict and now facing the humanitarian situation in the Colombian-Venezuelan border.

Of the missions carried out by the Local Coordination Teams (LCT), 66% of the assessments were due to chronic emergencies and 33% were of a sudden nature. The humanitarian needs identified within the framework of those emergencies related to the armed conflict represent 46% of these assessments, whereas 33% were due to emergency situations caused by natural events.

Three of these assessments have been conducted in the border area: In Guajira and Norte de Santander, MIRAs mainly showed the impact of the crisis with Venezuela and, in Arauca, affectations that encompass the three topics were exposed. In these situations, MIRA reports expose the panorama of the most vulnerable populations, such as women, boys, girls and adolescents, indigenous people and Afro-Colombians.

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5 Multi-cluster/Sector Initial and Rapid Assessment (MIRA). For further information, visit: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/es/operations/colombia/mira
MIRA, the Main Reference for Humanitarian Financing

These reports have been a prerequisite for accessing the Colombia Humanitarian Fund (CHF), activating efforts of humanitarian actors in different regions of the country to make multisectoral community needs visible. With the development of the missions and the publication of these reports, humanitarian organizations have accessed resources for the financing of humanitarian care and assistance projects in different high-impact emergencies.

A clear example of this process was the emergency that occurred in Mocoa, Putumayo, in April, where MIRAs were developed in May at both urban and rural levels to access Fund resources. Likewise, the Pacific Humanitarian Response Strategy, led by EHP to respond to the most pressing needs of the four coastal departments, given the double affection that they have concentrated in terms of conflict and natural events, also accessed resources from the Fund that exceeded USD400,000, following the findings described in MIRA reports.

In September 2017, the call for a new round of financing was opened, which contemplates the development of these missions and MIRA reports (developed for this round in Cauca, Nariño, Arauca and Guajira) in communities with multi-sectoral affection and, at the same time, it will allow the mobilization of resources for humanitarian response in the prioritized departments of the Pacific and the Venezuelan border, where there are still response gaps in communities affected by different types of emergencies.

Arrival of Venezuelans in Colombia: Needs and Opportunities

By: Nicolás Rodríguez Serna (ACNUR) and Carolina López Laverde (OIM), co-leaders of the Border Inter-Agency Group

In recent years, the situation in the region, progress towards the consolidation of peace in Colombia and the historical relations of brotherhood with Venezuela have turned Colombia into a country of destination for Colombians who wish to return, Venezuelans seeking to settle in Colombia, mixed families and indigenous peoples of border areas. This mixed flow has been increasing in recent months, and people who arrive in border areas and cities around the country have required a response to their needs.

In this process, the authorities have made very positive progress, including the adoption of the Special Stay Permit (SSP) and the Border Mobility Card (BMC), as well as measures to promote access to registration, health and education,

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6 Formerly known as CBPF (Country-based Pooled Funds). For further information, visit: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/es/operations/colombia/document/convocatoria-primera-ronda-de-financiamiento-2017-fondo-humanitario-de
among others. Mayors and governors have played an essential role in promoting access to local care routes, including orientation days and access to vaccination.

In some areas, particularly in border areas, there are still risks for both communities displaced by the conflict and people arriving from Venezuela, including possible cases of forced recruitment, among other situations. Population increase in areas that face gaps in the satisfaction of basic rights increases competition for access to services and generates difficulties in integration. Groups with particular needs, such as victims of trade or sexual exploitation, boys and girls lacking documentation, pregnant mothers, irregular migrants, separated families and people in need of international protection, also require efforts to ensure proper care.

The Border Inter-Agency Group of the Country Humanitarian Team, co-led by IOM and UNHCR, has coordinated the work of 18 NGOs and agencies of the United Nations System to promote a common approach, generate information on the profile of the population and their needs, share lessons learned in other countries, and ensure the complementarity of their actions with the work of the authorities in response to each of these needs.

Human mobility poses challenges to any country, but also opportunities to turn it into a host country (when it was perceived-and was of-expulsion in the past), with protection and opportunities for both Colombians and Venezuelans. The Country Humanitarian Team and the Inter-Agency Border Group will continue to support authorities in this transformation process.

**Field Messages**

**Putumayo Local Coordination Team**

The significant increase in selective deaths, situations of forced displacement that affect the leadership structures of the Community Action Boards (CAB), risk of displacement, threats to the rural population, and the increase in extortion aggravates the humanitarian situation in several municipalities of the department. Social organizations of Putumayo have reported before the instances of the Departmental and National Government so that they take actions that guarantee respect to the life and integrity of leaders and peasants who feel an increasing insecurity, especially communities that have welcomed the substitution of illicit crops within the framework of the peace accord.

**Antioquia Local Coordination Team**

In Antioquia, there are still humanitarian needs due to the double affectation caused by the armed conflict and events of natural disaster. The dispute over territorial control by illegal armed actors in zones of illicit crops and mining megaprojects accentuates the risks and the need to protect the rights of peasant, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities in both rural and urban contexts.

**Nariño Local Coordination Team**

The violence generated by the territorial control dispute over areas left by FARC-EP has caused various armed actors, (among others or among which ELN, post-demobilization armed groups, drug trafficking groups and FARC-EP dissidents stand out) to give rise to protection risks in rural and urban areas. In addition to this context, there are additional elements, such as the increase in crops for illicit use in both the Pacific area and mountain range (cordillera) area, thus generating, as a consequence, a scenario of food insecurity and the weakening of the social fabric in community and organizational structures. Likewise, the worsening humanitarian situation, the persistence of historical structural gaps and the weak institutional response at local and departmental levels are evident in the midst of a peacebuilding scenario.
Humanitarian Situation in September 2017

**Map 1: Number of Warlike Actions**

- **Department** | **#Events**
  - Antioquia: 13
  - Nariño: 11
  - Córdoba: 8
  - Norte de Santander: 7
  - Arauca: 6

Total: 60

Source: OCHA. Cutoff Date: 09 October 2017

**Map 2: Number of Attacks on Civilian Population**

- **Department** | **#Events**
  - Nariño: 21
  - Cauca: 11
  - Antioquia: 9
  - Norte de Santander: 9
  - Arauca: 8

Total: 104

Source: OCHA. Cutoff Date: 04 October 2017

**Map 3: Number of Threats**

- **Department** | **#Events**
  - Bolívar: 7
  - Nariño: 4
  - Cauca: 4
  - Casanare: 4
  - Arauca: 3

Total: 40

Source: OCHA. Cutoff Date: 04 October 2017

**Map 4: Willful Killing of a Protected Person**

- **Department** | **# Events**
  - Nariño: 3
  - Arauca: 4
  - Antioquia: 4
  - Norte de Santander: 4
  - Cauca: 2

Total: 31

Source: OCHA. Cutoff Date: 04 October 2017

**Map 5: Natural Disasters (NUDRM)**

- **Department** | **# Persons**
  - Chocó: 1,984
  - Antioquia: 1,352
  - La Guajira: 1,000
  - Cundinamarca: 375
  - Tolima: 373

Total: 6,102

Source: OCHA. Cutoff Date: 05 October 2017

**Map 6: Forced Displacement**

- **Department** | **# Persons**
  - Nariño: 364
  - Antioquia: 63
  - Norte de Santander: 45
  - 5

Total: 472

Source: OCHA. Cutoff Date: 04 October 2017