



Evaluation of UNHCR's programme for internally displaced people in Colombia

By Josef Merkx, Regional Bureau for the Americas,
and Esmerelda Francisco, Office of the Senior
Coordinator for Refugee Women and Gender Equity

EPAU/2003/03
May 2003

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Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Case Postale 2500
1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland

Tel: (41 22) 739 8249

Fax: (41 22) 739 7344

E-mail: hqep00@unhcr.org

Website: www.unhcr.org/epau

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Summary

1. The longstanding conflict in Colombia has resulted in an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, with internal displacement as one of its most painful consequences. Since 1995 more than 1.5 million Colombian citizens have been forced to leave their homes to look for safety in other regions of the country and in neighbouring countries. In 1999, following an official request by the Colombian Government, UNHCR initiated its programme for IDPs and established three field offices. UNHCR became the lead UN agency for displacement, heading the Thematic Group on Displacement (GTD). For three years UNHCR has been supporting the government and civil society to improve the response to internal displacement. This review, based on existing documentation, field visits and interviews, comments on achievements and constraints and makes certain recommendations for the new operational plan. The terms of reference are attached in annex 1 and a list of organizations consulted in annex 2.

2. The scale of internal displacement has been growing rapidly over the last few years. During the first six months of 2002 alone, UNHCR's government counterpart, *Red de Solidaridad Social (RSS)* (Government Institute for Displacement), registered 168,967 IDPs; an increase of 100 per cent compared with the number registered during the same period in 2001. The number of new IDPs per day is now between 900 and 1000 persons. General threats remain the main reason for displacement, although armed conflicts between the paramilitary and the guerrillas have also led to massive displacements. The paramilitaries are causing some 50 per cent of the displacement, followed by the guerrillas with some 25 per cent. Eighty two per cent of all municipalities in the country are currently affected by internal displacement. The emergency response has been largely inadequate with a coverage of only 43 per cent, leaving 57 per cent of all newly displaced persons with no access to relief assistance from the government, ICRC, the UN or any other organization.

3. Since the breakdown of the peace process in February 2002, the armed actors have changed their strategies. With increased strength, they have moved to occupy large areas in the country, often controlling the movements of the civilian population. The FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*) have increasingly targeted national infrastructure, destroying bridges (76 in the last 5 months), electrical towers and water supply systems. Since June 2002 the FARC have started a campaign of threats against public officials to weaken the state presence in large areas of Colombia. The AUC (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*) paramilitaries have consolidated their control over several areas including major cities such as Barrancabermeja and Cucuta.

4. The level of violence in Colombia is still growing; in just one month, August 2002, 248 people were kidnapped, bringing the total number of kidnappings in 2002 to 2020. Ex-presidential candidate, Ingrid Betancourt, still remains in the hands of the FARC. Currently, some 50 to 70 assassinations are being reported per day, 16,797 people have been killed in 2002 alone. Most human rights violations are committed within a climate of impunity. According to UNICEF and the National Ombudsman,

up to 6000 children fight in the ranks of the FARC, ELN and the AUC. Forced recruitment is on the rise. A new government started its term on 7 August 2002 and introduced a State of Internal Disorder (*Connoción Interna*), giving additional powers to the national security forces. In this context, the humanitarian situation in Colombia has become extremely complex. The role of the international community is under a lot of pressure and expectations are high¹.

Recommendations

5. UNHCR's mandate on IDPs in Colombia should be expanded following the Humanitarian Plan of Action (HPA). By increasing UNHCR's field presence, through the opening of a new office in Barranquilla (and satellite offices in Pasto, Quibdo and Cali), enhanced national coverage will be achieved. An increased field presence will reinforce UNHCR's protection role, including the accompaniment of vulnerable IDP communities. Despite the deteriorating humanitarian crisis and increased UNHCR involvement, discussions should continue about a clear timeframe for the programme and exit strategy.

6. Governmental and international responses to internal displacement need to be improved, with a greater focus on concrete action in remote areas affected by the Colombian conflict. UNHCR should not only undertake capacity building activities, but also facilitate the rehabilitation of IDP communities.

7. The Joint Technical Unit will need more independence to properly guide the National IDP Assistance System. Although UNHCR is concentrating on capacity building and technical advice for IDP protection during the emergency phase attention also needs to be given to the search for durable solutions.

8. To research and put forward durable solutions UNHCR will have to consider the post-emergency phase of displacement. Whenever feasible, voluntary return movements should be promoted and IDP communities should be accompanied. Local integration of IDPs could be more successful if the needs of the receiving communities are taken into account and a community-based approach is followed. There is great need for socio-economic stabilization programmes; in this respect UNHCR could link up with more development-oriented organizations with relevant experience.

9. UNHCR should continue to facilitate the work of NGO partners by creating "humanitarian spaces" and ensure access to IDP communities. UNHCR can play a mediating role between government institutions and NGO partners. UNHCR's implementing partners should be closely involved in UNHCR programming exercises.

10. As head of the Thematic Group on Displacement (GTD), UNHCR with the support of OCHA, will initiate the implementation of the HPA. Once the new UN Resident Coordinator is on board, coordination mechanisms will need to be reviewed.

¹ See the latest discussion on the UN role in the return of IDPs and the so-called "*casco azules*" (blue helmets/peace keeping forces).

11. The HPA will need to focus on pilot initiatives to allow the UN system to conduct detailed, joint planning. The plan will also be used as a donor appeal document. The monitoring of the plan's achievements will only be possible if the different agencies commit themselves to measurable indicators. The HPA will have to be in line with government policies and ensure good co-operation with the ICRC and NGO partners. UNHCR should further support the UN Rapid Response System as an integral part of the HPA.

12. UNHCR and its partners should increase efforts to further mainstream gender equality in all its activities on behalf of IDPs. This may require renewed management support, both at branch office and field level; increased visibility (i.e. COPs, public information activities, protection strategy) of gender equality processes and activities to advance the right of IDP women and children, reinforced partnerships with local organizations and government institutions, as well as building implementing partner capacity to operationalize this approach. UNHCR, in co-operation with IDP associations, will have to facilitate access to basic services and participation of IDPs in income generating activities (e.g. employment schemes, micro-credit). Additional efforts should be made to orient and inform IDPs about their rights.

13. Protection of IDPs could be enhanced by additional and up-to-date public information. IDP issues still need more visibility in Colombia. UNHCR could increase its advocacy role, always balancing it with security concerns. A joint UN public information strategy is recommended, in conjunction with the implementation of the HPA. The creation of a Humanitarian Information Centre could assist in offering structured background information on internal displacement.

14. The local, decentralized application of the Colombian IDP legislation will need increased enforcement. UNHCR could play a supportive role here by training local authorities on IDP protection, following a rights-based approach. Training activities should be more concrete and result-oriented. Independent legal assistance for IDPs should be made more accessible, allowing IDPs to document lost property and address other legal problems they face. The documentation campaign could be accelerated.

15. More UNHCR involvement in Colombia requires stronger management, which in turn requires more experienced staff. To this end, the seniority of staff in the field should be increased. UNHCR staff in the field should be closely involved in the programme cycle for all UNHCR's funded activities. This could enhance a uniform country-wide strategy. Security concerns for IDPs and humanitarian staff should remain a high priority of UNHCR in Colombia. The continuation of a UNHCR oriented security system should be ensured.

16. In order to address the regional implications of the Colombian conflict, UNHCR Colombia should continue its border-monitoring role in high-risk areas. Country-of-origin information needs regular updating to enhance contingency planning and emergency preparedness in neighbouring countries. UNHCR staff on both sides of the border should be encouraged to have cross border meetings to exchange information on population movements and to develop joint strategies for border monitoring and the establishment of protection networks.

UNHCR's mandate for IDPs

17. Internal displacement does not fall within the core mandate of UNHCR². However, internal discussions about UNHCR's role with IDPs are ongoing and the Colombian situation has been on the agency's agenda since 1998. In 1999 UNHCR started working with IDPs, in close coordination with government institutions and NGOs. At the same time UNHCR became the designated UN agency for internal displacement. UNHCR's involvement with IDPs was further justified by having sufficient donor support and funding. This criterion was met from the start of the operation. UNHCR's current annual budget is US\$ 4.5 million (2002), which might grow to US\$ 5.6 million for 2003. The operation's focus covers four main areas:

- Strengthening of state and civil society response;
- Protection and prevention;
- Durable solutions;
- Coordination and awareness.

18. Throughout its work UNHCR has followed what has been called a "differentiated approach". This acknowledges the fact that the IDP population is not a homogeneous group and also requires that all interventions mainstream a gender-equality, age perspective and adopt a rights-based approach. This approach allowed the organization to address the specific needs of displaced women, children/adolescents and ethnic minorities, and to develop targeted interventions to advance their rights. Access to information on IDP rights and community participation has been emphasised within the guiding principles. The reinforcement of IDP organizations has received much attention to help mitigate the effects of displacement and to allow IDPs to negotiate their rights with local authorities and civil society organizations in order to ensure access to basic services. The design of gender sensitive participation mechanisms is key to ensuring displaced women's access to decision-making processes within IDP organizations and public fora. A need for clear indicators to measure the impact of the "differentiated approach" was signalled.

19. Throughout the review, people expressed satisfaction with UNHCR's involvement in Colombia, and UNHCR's mandate with IDPs was generally accepted. UNHCR's objectives are well understood by the partners. It is clear that UNHCR is not focusing on relief programmes for IDPs, but rather on capacity building and protection. Questions were raised regarding UNHCR's position vis-à-vis government and civil society. How is UNHCR working in areas without state presence and how critical can UNHCR be of government policies? UNHCR works closely with four state institutions (RSS, Ombudsman, Procurator, Registry Office)

² In the new UNHCR Agenda for Protection (A/AC.96/965/Add.1 - 26 June 2002) no reference has been made to IDPs.

and has established relevant partnerships with the civil society. UNHCR was seen to have an important coordination and mediation role between authorities and NGOs.

20. The mandate of UNHCR in Colombia permits the agency to address the lack of visibility for IDP issues and to speak out on behalf of IDPs. Through its field presence UNHCR has first-hand information about internal displacement, which can inform comprehensive and up-to-date public information. The new government has shown a more transparent approach towards the humanitarian crisis, openly admitting the seriousness of internal displacement³. Although UNHCR is not focusing on “first-line” intervention, many agreed that “being present” works as a deterrent to internal displacement. In the field locations, UNHCR has managed to increase protection and humanitarian accompaniment of conflict-affected communities.

21. There was broad agreement that the response to internal displacement in the post-emergency phase was completely inadequate. IDP families have few alternatives once the three months of relief have ended. As one of UNHCR’s objectives is the search for durable solutions, UNHCR’s mandate could include more interventions focusing on the post-emergency phase. Although UNHCR has no expertise in socio-economic stabilization programmes, it could play a facilitator’s role and support IDP associations obtaining support through employment, access to land and/or micro-financing. In the post-emergency phase it is important to address IDP needs in conjunction with the needs of host communities, which are often equally affected by the conflict.

³ Reference is made to President’s Uribe’s speech to the General Assembly, 13 September 2002, in which he talks openly about the humanitarian crisis and mentions two million IDPs.

Strengthening the institutional framework

22. Colombia has a well-developed structure to deal with internal displacement. UNHCR's main counterpart is the RSS, which has the prime responsibility of coordinating activities for IDPs. The RSS has a central office that operates under the President's office and is present in the field throughout Colombia. UNHCR also implements activities with the Ombudsman, Procurator and Registry Office. Departmental and municipal committees are responsible for the implementation of national policies. UNHCR's support to government counterparts has been much appreciated and national policies have become more focused. However, there is a considerable gap between IDP policies and their application. The same can be said of IDP legislation. Law 387 of 1997, which defines the rights of IDPs, is accepted as a progressive piece of legislation, but what is missing is enforcement. Many authorities responsible for the response to internal displacement in the field are often not fully aware of the legislation.

23. The Joint Technical Unit (JTU) was created in 1999 as a team of technical experts to strengthen the RSS and the "*Sistema Nacional de Atención Integral a la Población Desplazada*". The unit focuses on capacity building, monitoring and evaluation of the state response to internal displacement. It formulates national policies and consolidates the National Information Network. The JTU supports the municipal committees in charge of internal displacement. It also supports the registration system *Sistema Unico de Registro* (SUR). The JTU receives funding from UNDP, IOM and the World Bank. During this review the mandate of the JTU was under discussion and due to staff changes continuity was affected. It is generally felt that the unit needs more independence and should function as a kind of "think tank" or "advisory committee" for internal displacement, providing technical advice to the different government institutions involved in the response to displacement. The review team suggests including a gender specialist in the new JTU.

24. UNHCR, through the JTU, has given high priority to improving the registration system of the RSS. Over recent years the statistics of the RSS have become more in line with those of other sources:

Year/Source	2000	2001	6 months 2002	1995-2002
RSS	128,840	190,450	168,967	888,257
CODHES	317,200	341,920	203,723	1,986,013

CODHES - (*Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento*)

25. It is estimated that 49 per cent of the IDPs are female and 43 per cent are younger than 18 years of age. The registration of IDPs has improved significantly over the last three years, although registration remains problematic and IDP statistics are generally unreliable. The registration process is considered slow and cumbersome and a large number of IDPs are never registered. Other IDPs do not

want to be registered as they fear stigmatization, many IDPs lack confidence in the government assistance programmes. It has also been said that many urban poor, who were not necessarily displaced by the conflict, register as IDPs to have access to relief. There is no structured system of de-registration.

26. The Government of Colombia is making resources available for IDP programmes and exempts IDPs from paying fees for education, health and other basic services. Between 1995–2000 some US\$ 70 million were made available, in 2001 US\$ 66 million and in 2002 US\$ 67.5 million (planning figure). The funds made available are not always spent due to slow implementation and budget deficits. Most of the funds are used for emergency assistance, but only 43 per cent of the total number of registered IDPs received relief items. The government response is felt to be too centrally organized, and does not reach remote areas. Little progress is being made with re-integration and socio-economic stabilization programmes for the displaced population. Neither is there an adequate response to displacement into urban areas.

27. UNHCR has implemented many training and dissemination activities to promote the rights of IDPs. Copies of IDP legislation are widely distributed. It has also tried to ensure IDPs have access to institutions and basic services, but enforcement of government policies is weak. In the health sector, for example, 85 per cent of the whole IDP population is highly vulnerable with no access to the government services⁴. The role of the RSS to coordinate activities between government authorities responsible for IDP issues remains a problem. UNHCR's focus on the institutional framework and capacity building requires patience and long-term involvement. Frequently UNHCR staff and its partners are doing work which should be done by the government. Despite the fact that the RSS created 11 *Unidades de Atención y Orientación* (UAO), there is a growing need to properly inform the displaced population of their rights.

⁴ See article in *El Tiempo* of 14 October, 2002: "Radiografía del destierro".

Protection and prevention

28. UNHCR Colombia is working for IDPs using a rights-based approach. Dissemination and application of IDP legislation at the local level remains a priority. UNHCR has worked within the framework of Law 387, which stipulates the rights of IDPs and the protection regime in Colombia. The IDP legislation is in line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (“Deng” principles) and includes many decrees that protect IDPs. Unfortunately, this legislation is not translated into practical activities. Training of government officials has been pursued but has not given the expected results because of a lack of commitment, high staff turnover and a lack of capacity at field level. The enforcement of IDP legislation has also suffered from a lack of government presence in conflict-affected areas.

29. Although the IDP legislation in Colombia allows for clear protection indicators it has proven difficult to provide effective protection and to prevent internal displacement. UNHCR’s expertise in the field of international protection has been helpful in reacting to massive displacements and in helping IDP communities to cope with the conflict. UNHCR has also managed to obtain good and reliable country-of-origin information that has led to the recently completed Eligibility Guidelines for Colombians. Increasingly, UNHCR is obtaining information about groups at risk and will be able to improve its response reaction in the case of a crisis. It goes without saying that the information collected in Colombia is very useful for the countries in the region that receive Colombian asylum seekers.

30. The importance of UNHCR’s presence in the field has been highlighted during the review, in particular because it is the only UN agency, together with UNHCHR, that has deployed international staff in the field. The fact of being close to the IDP communities and providing “physical” protection by accompanying communities in areas controlled by one of the illegal armed actors, has been appreciated throughout. Field visits by UNHCR staff are well received and provide isolated communities with some relief. In areas such as Urabá, communities are being used as human shields to provide security to illegal armed actors. In these cases UNHCR presence or UNHCR’s support to organizations that accompany relocation or return processes is seen as a deterrent (at least short-term) to internal displacement.

31. It has been recognised that prevention of displacement has not been effective. NGOs have argued that as long as the root causes of the conflict are not addressed there will be no end to further internal displacement. Even when information about upcoming incidents is available there are no clear communication systems and contingency plans to prevent displacement of the civilian population. Early warning systems have not been functional. However, field presence can sometimes prevent incidents and provide, even if only temporarily, some protection. Presence of international staff can also help to dissuade armed actors from interfering with civilian populations.

32. UNHCR has worked with the Colombian registry office to provide IDPs with documentation. So far, some 60,000 IDPs have received ID cards (*cedulas*) through UNHCR-funded documentation campaigns. This project has been well received by

IDPs. Many IDPs never had ID cards in their places of origin but these are now indispensable to obtaining access to basic services. The project has set as a priority the registration and documentation of Afro-Colombian and indigenous populations, in particular women and girls, through sensitization campaigns and training of local officials.

33. UNHCR has reinforced “protection networks” in the region. By working with NGO partners that are specialised in accompaniment of IDP communities, UNHCR has managed to broaden its coverage. Protection networks have been set up with church organizations (pastoral social), organizations such as Peace Brigade International and regional bodies (i.e. *foro de solidaridad de Chocó*). At the national level UNHCR has been sponsoring CODHES (*Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento*) to collect and disseminate information. Recently UNHCR has stepped up what is being called “border monitoring”. The objective of border monitoring is to strengthen protection mechanisms in border areas to respond to displacement both internally and across borders into asylum countries. Border monitoring in Colombia has facilitated the collection of reliable information. Through regular visits to affected border areas, such as Norte de Santander, Arauca, Putumayo, Nariño and Chocó, UNHCR has established valuable contacts with local authorities, civil society and church organizations that deal with internal displacement. These networks allow UNHCR to react quickly to new crises and to inform UNHCR colleagues in asylum countries about possible cross-border movements.

34. Inadequate access to information and lack of effective administrative responses to the legal problems faced by IDPs (i.e. documentation, registration, land restitution, lost property) is perceived as one of the major obstacles to effective protection. In this regard the initiative to establish a network of free legal aid centres for IDPs in partnership with the Ombudsman’s office and universities (in Pasto) is a good strategy to enhance UNHCR’s protection and outreach capacity, in particular for women and ethnic minorities. The university courses on internal displacement (“*Diplomado*”) have also been well received. UNHCR also has a partnership with ILSA (who manages the secretariat of the “*Mesa Mujer y Conflicto*”, where 22 agencies including all UN agencies participate) to provide follow up on the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women after her last mission to Colombia. The partnership with “*Casa de la Mujer*” focuses on gender training for civil servants working in local administration, the Registry Office and RSS. UNHCR should work towards ensuring that this partnership is enhanced and its experience transferred to our other implementing partners and UNHCR staff.

Durable solutions: return and relocation

35. In looking at the process of internal displacement UNHCR is making a clear distinction between emergency, post-emergency and reconstruction phases. The emergency phase of displacement is mainly covered by the RSS and ICRC. It is widely known that the situation of IDP families becomes more precarious in the post-emergency phase. Studies have shown that the nutritional status of IDPs becomes worse after the emergency phase, once relief items are phased out. Many IDPs have no alternative means as they have lost their traditional coping mechanisms and unemployment among IDPs is far above the national rate of 16 per cent. The response of the government and the international community to the fate of long-term IDPs is inadequate. During the review people (including government officials) agreed on the urgent need to better address the post-emergency phase and focus on rehabilitation of conflict-affected communities.

36. Return movements are becoming more and more sporadic⁵. The return movement of 1 September 2002 from Quibdó to Bojayá was an exception. Generally, it was felt that the conditions for return have not yet been met in most expulsion areas. ICRC has reported that many IDPs return within the first six weeks after displacement. The longer-term IDPs and the ones that have passed the emergency phase are less likely to return to their place of origin. The experience of the Peace Communities in Urabá is interesting and shows how complicated return is. Most of the communities are located in areas that continue to be affected by the conflict and therefore frequently suffer from armed incursions. The communities have also suffered from socio-economic isolation as access roads are frequently blocked and supplies do not arrive. For the same reason the communities have difficulties in marketing their produce. As long as the conflict continues to affect the Urabá region the Peace Communities will not easily resolve their socio-economic situation.

37. Integration of IDPs in host communities has been difficult as well. Receiving populations, like IDPs, often face hardship and are not able to share their already scarce resources. The arrival of large groups of IDPs can lead to tensions. Intervention with the idea of facilitating integration will have to take the needs of the host communities into account. IDP associations should also try to establish good relations with community-based organizations. Good relations with local authorities might bring benefits and could possibly resolve problems of shelter and access to agricultural land. Government authorities and UNHCR funded IDP activities should try to avoid a rigid focus on IDPs, without looking at the broader environment.

38. Integration of IDPs in urban areas is even more complex. As many as 40 per cent of all IDPs end up in larger cities, where they “integrate” or “disappear” amongst the urban poor. The government and international community are hardly addressing the issue of urban displacement arguing that it is a huge, overwhelming problem, which requires substantial additional resources. Another argument for not

⁵ However, the new government has presented a plan for the return of 30,000 families and requested the UN to provide humanitarian accompaniment. The UN rejected the idea of Colombian “blue helmets”, but is now part of a working group to discuss sustainable and voluntary return movements.

getting involved is the difficulty of distinguishing between the urban poor (*pobres históricos*) and the IDPs. UNHCR is involved in an education programme in Soacha, a poor neighbourhood of Bogotá.

39. To address the post-emergency phase there is an enormous need for socio-economic stabilization programmes. WFP has supported some “food for work” or “food for training” projects, which have a short-term impact on the situation of IDPs. However, these do not resolve their long-term needs. It might be useful to look at employment schemes or support for the informal economy. Another option could be to support micro-finance institutions to encourage small-scale business initiatives in affected areas. During the review a micro-credit project was visited in Cucuta; IOM and RSS were making small, interest-bearing loans available (through the local NGO *Minuto de Dios*) to some 200 families. Although micro-finance projects require a lot of expertise they might provide a solution for IDPs and other affected people. If UNHCR wants to embark on income-generating activities it should use the expertise of experienced NGOs in this sector.

40. UNHCR and its partners have provided a lot of support to IDP associations. These associations mitigate the effects of displacement and facilitate access to basic services such as health and education. UNHCR’s NGO partners have worked with IDP associations to reinforce teamwork and strengthen their legal set up. IDPs have established networks with authorities and other organizations to present their needs. IDPs have appreciated UNHCR’s approach, but complain about the lack of concrete projects aimed at attaining self-reliance. Many complained about the weak government response, giving examples such as the problematic rice-producing project in Urabá⁶. The search for durable solutions remains a priority for IDP associations, however the opportunities offered are very limited. There have also been discussions on the specific characteristics of IDP organizations. UNHCR’s implementing partner *Opción Legal* is talking about “socially competent organizations” that are truly democratic and legitimate, whose members feel represented and are there to respond collectively to the many problems faced by the displaced communities and in particular women. The focus of capacity building for IDP organizations will need further discussion, both internally and with UNHCR’s partners.

⁶ This project, managed by the RSS, is an employment scheme for almost 200 IDPs. Participants complain about the payments (below minimum wage) and the lack of transparency and sustainability of the project.

Coordination

41. UNHCR is playing an important coordination role in Colombia. Within the UN system UNHCR is heading the Thematic Group for Displacement (GTD), which has been operational since 1998. IOM is a member of the GTD and the Joint Technical Unit, ICRC and ECHO are observers. The objective of the GTD is to operationalize coordination and to ensure complementarity amongst the participating agencies. Over the years the GTD has collected a wealth of information, which has led to four publications. Following a high-level UN meeting in October 2001 in New York it was felt that the UN system in Colombia needed to be better prepared for the unfolding humanitarian crisis. Through the GTD, headed by UNHCR and OCHA, the UN Country Team developed the Humanitarian Plan of Action (HPA), with the objective of coordinating all activities dealing with IDPs and communities that risk being affected by the conflict.

42. Since the beginning of 2002, UNHCR and OCHA have managed to bring together the UN agencies in Colombia to produce the HPA. The plan focuses on a joint UN response to internal displacement and its consequences. It highlights the importance of the transition between emergency relief and rehabilitation. It also includes support for communities without state presence, which have become "besieged" by one of the armed actors and are directly affected by the conflict. The areas of intervention of the HPA are:

- Coordination and institution building;
- Protection and prevention;
- Integration and socio-economic reconstruction;
- Social welfare, health and education;
- Food security.

43. The HPA is also developing a joint Rapid Response System, which was implemented for the first time in Bojaya/Quibdo in May 2002.

44. Consultations with the government, donor partners, Red Cross Movement and NGO partners have taken place during the first semester of 2002. In October a final draft was presented to the headquarters of the participating UN agencies. Once approved by the different headquarters the plan will be launched in Colombia. The HPA will also be presented by OCHA as a donor appeal document.

45. Coordination amongst UN agencies in Colombia has proved a daunting task. All agencies have their own way of working and it has taken time to produce a joint document acceptable to all. Donor countries have welcomed the coordination process that led to the HPA. However, they have also been very critical of the UN system; the fact that there has been no Resident Coordinator for more than a year has negatively affected the UN role in Colombia. It is now becoming urgent to sort out the

coordination roles within the UN system in Colombia. UNHCR seems to be well-placed to continue with the coordination of the GTD, having shown expertise in bringing partners together around the theme of internal displacement.

46. UNHCR's relations with OCHA are excellent. After a difficult start, UNHCR and OCHA have gained the respect of the other UN agencies in coordinating activities on behalf of IDPs. Two OCHA staff are working in the UNHCR premises and report directly to the UNHCR representative. They fully accept UNHCR's humanitarian coordination role and would prefer to continue with the existing structure. The OCHA staff have been instrumental in developing the HPA and should be given a central role during the implementation and monitoring of the plan. It would be advisable to expand the role of OCHA in relation to the HPA and develop a Humanitarian Information Centre, managed in close coordination with the JTU. UNHCR has already started looking for funds and office space to realise this initiative.

47. The HPA will require clear commitments from the participating agencies. By choosing three pilot areas (Valle/Cauca, Chocó and Magdalena Medio) the UN team has the chance to implement concrete activities from the start. International field presence will have to be expanded to increase impact at the local level. Other challenges of the HPA are:

- How to make coordination within the HPA framework operational?
- How to respond to the expectations created by the HPA?
- What will be the role of the new Resident Coordinator in Colombia? Will UNHCR and OCHA continue to co-operate during the implementation of the plan?
- How to get funding for the proposed HPA budget?

48. UNHCR has established good working relations with ICRC. Regular consultation is taking place in the field and centrally ensuring complementarity and a fluid exchange of information. UNHCR has been active in bringing together NGO partners working with IDPs. The Colombian PARinAC (Partnership in Action) forum has been active, serving as a body for exchange of information and reflecting on strategies to follow. NGOs respect UNHCR's coordination role. Often UNHCR is seen as the "mediator" between government authorities and NGO partners that have been critical of IDP policies. This bridge function of UNHCR is important and has created "*espacios de coordinación*" for the NGOs working with IDPs.

49. A negative aspect of all coordination and training efforts in Colombia is the fact that there are too many meetings, working groups, committees and workshops. A lot of this coordination is not result-oriented and its impact is hard to measure. More attention should be given to concrete, direct action to improve the situation of IDPs. The time spent by staff in meetings and events is tremendous and has repercussions on the other work to be done. Working days are very long.

50. As head of the GTD, UNHCR has the task of speaking out on behalf of IDPs. The new government has shown a more transparent attitude towards the humanitarian crisis, which has allowed UNHCR and its NGO partners a stronger

advocacy role. Many agree that more visibility is needed for IDP issues, both nationally and internationally. Adequate and regularly updated public information will facilitate UNHCR's work in Colombia and attract media attention. Publications on UNHCR's activities for IDPs could also increase international attention and donor funding.

51. Although more visibility is needed for IDP issues a balance will have to be sought between advocacy and security, for both IDPs and humanitarian aid workers. The current security situation is very complex and "misguided" public information might endanger IDP leaders and/or humanitarian staff. For UNHCR Colombia centralising and managing public information activities from Bogotá is recommended. It would also be wise to work on a joint UN public information strategy, which could promote the activities foreseen in the HPA.

Differentiated approach

52. Internal displacement in Colombia is affecting certain groups disproportionately. Studies and surveys have shown that indigenous groups are hard hit by the conflict, so are Afro-Colombians. Not only have they lost their land, which is often communal land, but also their traditional ways of living. UNHCR has acknowledged the specific composition of the IDP population and has started to obtain reliable information on the consequences of the conflict on ethnic minorities. Pressure groups, defending the rights of displaced minorities, are being supported. Although, relevant data has been collected by UNHCR and its partners, it has not yet resulted in concrete action.

53. A lot has been done to make UNHCR's IDP programme gender sensitive. Women in Colombia are particularly affected by the conflict. Forty-nine per cent of the displaced population is female, while more than a third of IDP families are headed by women. The environment in which women find themselves after displacement requires a lot of additional effort from them. Not only do they have to look after their children, but in many cases they have to obtain income to sustain the family. In most cases women also have the responsibility of ensuring access to basic services (health and education). UNHCR has promoted the participation of women in IDP associations and women's associations have been supported with training and legal assistance. It was felt that more could be done to inform and orient displaced women about their rights as well as to facilitate their access to information and services. Creating spaces for women to exchange information and form solidarity groups could be another idea. UNHCR has also worked with NGOs to address the reproductive health needs of displaced women.

54. Children under 18 years represent 43 per cent of the displaced population. According to UNICEF some 6000 children are directly involved in the armed conflict through forced recruitment by one of the armed actors. The number of traumatised children is alarming and psycho-social support is limited. Displaced children face serious obstacles in continuing their education once displaced by the conflict. Although there is a decree facilitating the integration of IDP children into the schools of the host community this is not common practice. The displaced children that do attend school have problems of assimilation and are often discriminated against. UNHCR's programme "Pedagogy and Child Protection" has been working with school teachers to facilitate the integration of displaced children into host schools. The results of this programme are found to be positive.

55. UNHCR is pursuing an integrated approach towards internal displacement, fostering relations between IDPs and the receiving communities. There is a perception that IDPs often receive more assistance than their hosts (or "stayees"). This creates tension. Government policies and many aid programmes seem to be rigid in relation to IDP assistance and only focus on registered IDPs. This is not facilitating the integration of IDPs into their host communities. UNHCR could promote a more community-based approach towards the integration of IDPs. The

“Development through Local Integration” (DLI) concept used for refugee situations could be applied in the case of IDPs in Colombia.

Management of resources and security

56. UNHCR is planning to increase its field presence. The current activities and the experience of the last three years justify the growth of the programme. If additional funding can be ensured the opening of a fourth office in Barranquilla should be accelerated. This field office could cover the Atlantic Coast Region and facilitate border monitoring in the Cesar and Guajira departments.

57. UNHCR Colombia has been fortunate with the selection of its staff. In the field offices as well as in Bogotá staff have ample experience with IDP programmes and have shown the capacity to deal with substantial workloads. For the next phase the UNHCR operation could use more senior staff in certain positions. This would facilitate UNHCR's coordination role and strengthen its position vis-à-vis the government and NGO partners. UNHCR Colombia relies heavily on the work of UNVs, who are mostly experienced professionals. The UNV support is financially attractive, but requires strong human resource management as it is characterised by high staff turnover. At a certain stage it might be necessary to convert UNV positions into more permanent UNHCR staff.

58. Security remains a big concern to UNHCR. To date UNHCR has not been affected by major security incidents, however staff are confronted with delicate situations and need to be aware of the risks of moving around in conflict areas. During recent months the UNHCR communication system has improved and staff have appreciated the advice of the Field Security Officer, who started his assignment in February 2002. Security issues should remain high on UNHCR's agenda.

Exit strategy

59. The question arises about the timeframe of the UNHCR intervention in Colombia. In 1999 it was assumed that UNHCR would work for a period of three years, to allow the state and NGOs to take full responsibility of IDPs. During the review it has become clear that UNHCR is increasing its presence rather than decreasing. The main argument is that the humanitarian crisis continues to deteriorate and the number of IDPs has increased sharply. However, UNHCR will have to reflect on its role and mandate and see when its intervention could possibly come to an end. A lot will depend on possibilities to end the conflict. The HPA will force the UN system in Colombia to come up with a clear timeframe, including measurable indicators, and monitoring and evaluation schemes.

Regional implications

60. The Colombian conflict is increasingly affecting border areas in the region and armed actors have become more active across borders in neighbouring countries. Still the Colombian operation of UNHCR is seen as a distinct programme, directed towards IDPs. This being said, it remains important to work on joint border monitoring and exchange of information to obtain reliable country-of-origin information. During this review we have seen that in the border area of Venezuela the number of Colombians has been increasing rapidly in recent months. Joint field visits and coordination of UNHCR staff are extremely important for contingency planning and emergency preparedness.

61. Regional tripartite arrangements have been established with UNHCR, the Colombian government and the governments of Ecuador and Panama. In these meetings the participants discuss the prospects for voluntary repatriation and the population flows across borders. Unfortunately, there is not yet a functioning tripartite arrangement with Venezuela.

Annex 1 :

Terms of reference

Evaluation of UNHCR's programme for internally displaced people in Colombia

Introduction

UNHCR has been playing a leading role in bringing together national authorities, civil society and the international community to streamline efforts for the attention of IDPs. From the beginning UNHCR has worked within the framework of Law 387, the law that defines the rights of IDPs and the protection and assistance regimes.

Four components have been identified as pillars of the Colombia programme:

- Strengthening of institutional framework;
- Protection/prevention;
- Durable solutions: return/relocation;
- Coordination, advocacy and dissemination.

In order to focus both on the IDP problem in the country of origin and the asylum and emergency preparedness systems in the surrounding countries, UNHCR has adopted a two-pronged approach, which together determines its interventions in the region.

Purpose of the evaluation

By the end of 2002, the first phase of UNHCR's IDP programme will come to an end. The upcoming evaluation will assist in defining the impact of the interventions and the formulation of objectives for the IDP programme for a next phase, beyond 2002. The evaluation will also have to review the Humanitarian Plan of Action (HPA) that will be launched at the end of November. The HPA will set the priorities of the UN Country Team in relation to activities on behalf of IDPs.

Earlier reviews (particularly the mid-term review in December 2000) noted that there is an imbalance between the emergency response and the search for solutions and measures to prevent displacement. The Joint Technical Unit of UNHCR with the *Red de Solidaridad Social* (Government Institute for Displacement) has proven very valuable, but will need further strengthening according to the review. It also acknowledged the role of the field offices, as these have contributed to both the protection of IDPs (through its presence) and prevention of further displacement. The review also highlighted the need to further incorporate gender and ethnicity issues in the UNHCR interventions, as well as the need for a stronger advocacy role

on behalf of the IDPs and efficient coordination amongst the agencies of the UN system.

Areas of review

Following the four components of UNHCR's IDP programme, the evaluation team will have to look at the specific impact of the implemented activities, reviewing the plans versus the achievements.

Other areas of interest, questions are:

- Perception of UNHCR's role on behalf of the IDPs in Colombia. How do other stakeholders in Colombia look at UNHCR's involvement with IDPs? Is UNHCR's mandate understood?
- Partnerships and coordination. How do the UNHCR activities fit in the governmental and international community's response to forced displacement? What are the coordination mechanisms and are they effective? How is the functioning of the Thematic Group on Displacement (GTD) and the Humanitarian Plan of Action? How does UNHCR deal with its implementing partners and with organizations that are working in the same field?
- Capacity building for government authorities and non-governmental organizations. How has UNHCR managed to strengthen government institutions that deal with forced displacement? Could UNHCR's existing protection activities on behalf of IDPs be enhanced, and its corresponding protection role feasibly expanded? What is the additional value of the Joint Technical Unit (RSS)? How is UNHCR supporting local organizations that work with IDPs?
- Documentation and registration of IDPs. Are IDP statistics reliable? How has UNHCR contributed to the registration and documentation of IDPs?
- Gender mainstreaming within UNHCR activities. Does UNHCR have a clear idea on the gender breakdown of IDPs? How has UNHCR focused its intervention on the specific situation in which displaced women find themselves?
- Attention for the situation of children during and after displacement. How did UNHCR address the specific rights of children in displacement? How were educational activities for displaced children supported by UNHCR or its partners?
- Focus on the specific rights of ethnic groups once displaced. What was done to support displaced ethnic groups and Afro-Colombian communities in relation to land ownership and the defence of their cultural rights?
- Community services. How does UNHCR strengthen Community-based organizations working with IDPs? How are IDPs empowered to address forced displacement? What has been the impact of psycho-social support provided to IDPs?

- Security. How does UNHCR deal with security? Which measures are taken to secure UNHCR staff members, the staff of its implementing partners and IDP leaders/associations?
- Human and financial resources. How does UNHCR deal with the available resources for the IDP programme in Colombia? During 2001, UNHCR received US\$ 3,370,372 in specific, earmarked contributions for the Special Operation. For 2002 the donor contributions amount to some US\$ 4,500,000. How are the donor-relations for this operation?

Methodology/outputs

To ensure a wide range of opinions the evaluation will be implemented by a three or four member team, with participation of a donor country, NGO or Colombian university, and UNHCR staff (not directly involved in the operation). The evaluation will be conducted through a combination of documentary research, stakeholder interviews and field visits. Preferably, one visit will be organized across the border in Venezuela to look into regional implications of the Colombian conflict.

Particular efforts will be made to seek the opinion of local counterparts and displaced persons.

The evaluation will consist of a ten-day visit to Colombia/region and several days of preparation and report writing once field visits and interviews have taken place.

The output will be a draft joint report for comments within two weeks of leaving Colombia.

In line with UNHCR's commitment to transparency in evaluation, the final evaluation will be available in the public domain.

Annex 2 :

Organizations consulted

<i>Government</i>	Red Solidaridad Social - Bogotá JTU - Bogotá Red Solidaridad Social - Apartadó and Cucutá Defensoria del Pueblo - Apartadó and Cucutá Comité Municipal para los Desplazados - Apartadó Military Authorities - Apartadó Personeros Municipales - Apartadó Authorities in Venezuela
<i>IDPs</i>	IDPs and their associations in Apartadó and Cucutá Colombians in Venezuela
<i>Donors</i>	Switzerland USA
<i>UN/GTD members</i>	WFP - Bogotá IOM - Cucutá
<i>UNHCR</i>	UNHCR - Bogotá/Apartadó/San Cristobal (Venezuela) USAID consultant - Bogotá
<i>NGOs</i>	Opción Legal - Bogotá/Apartadó Cedavida - Bogotá/Apartadó Pastoral Social - Apartadó/Cucutá Minuto de Dios - Cucutá Compartir - Apartadó CINEP -Apartadó Peace Brigades - Apartadó
<i>Others</i>	Bishop Urabá Researcher (Donny Meertens)