
Executive Summary

This report contains the Final Evaluation of the UNHCR-Government of Colombia Four-Year Plan (2015-2019), hereinafter "the Plan". UNHCR Colombia commissioned Econometría to conduct the evaluation between December 2019 and April 2020. It covers the Plan implementation period from January 2016 to December 2019. The objectives of the evaluation were to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the Plan; to draw lessons and best practices; and to formulate conclusions and recommendations that can serve as the basis for planning the next cooperation cycle. The stakeholders of this evaluation are UNHCR, the Government of Colombia (GoC) at the national and territorial levels, and the participating communities, in addition to other United Nations and cooperation agencies.

The UNHCR-GoC Four-Year Plan (2015-2019) was a response to the UNHCR's commitment with the GoC to strengthen national mechanisms for protecting and assisting the country's forcibly displaced population. An investment of USD 50.2 million was allocated to four lines of cooperation (LC): 1. Protection and Prevention; 2. Durable Solutions; 3. Participation; and 4. Overcoming the Unconstitutional State of Affairs (ECI).¹ The Plan was designed in 2015 under the Santos administration, in light of the implementation of the 2016 Peace Agreement and the Peace Agreement process between the GoC and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

This evaluation employed a mixed methods research methodology, using quantitative and qualitative data, focused on verification of the Plan's theory of change. Evaluators collected data from the literature review² and through online surveys, interviews, and focus groups, triangulated data to answer evaluation questions and confirm findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and develop recommendations. Field work consisted of visits to the municipalities of Quibdó, Cúcuta, Arauca and Mocoa where evaluators conducted 34 interviews with municipal authorities, ombudsman's offices, municipal attorney's offices, UNHCR officers, and other relevant partners. Evaluators carried out ten interviews at the national level with UNHCR officers and some entities from the National Government. They held eight focus groups with 101 participants including women, young people, persons with diverse SOGI,³ leaders, and 58 UNHCR and national and territorial government officers.

The evaluation adhered to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Code of Conduct for Evaluation, involved harmless actions, and obtained informed consent from all participants. In addition, the evaluation team carried out quality assurance mechanisms consisting of the evaluation team's interaction, output revision, and joint work with the UNHCR monitoring team.

¹ "In early 2004, the Constitutional Court issued Ruling T 025, which declared the existence of an Unconstitutional State of Affairs (ECI) due to the systematic and massive violation (of rights), resulting from the State's failure to fulfill its constitutional obligation to guarantee the rights of the victims of forced displacement caused by the internal armed conflict, and to protect their lives, honor and property" <https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es/gestion-interinstitucional/estado-de-cosas-inconstitucional-eci-y-estrategia-de-superacion-sup-eci>.

² Approximately 32 documents

³ Persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (SOGI)

1. Main findings and conclusions

1.1. Relevance

The Plan was relevant in that it was designed jointly with the national government with the goal of ending the armed conflict and overcoming the ECI, at a time of institutional change and readjustment (2015). The core of the Plan was protecting and assisting the displaced population. Counterpart organizations and agencies were the Colombian State, the Legislative, Executive and Judicial Branches, controlling bodies, and territory-based organizations.

The Plan complemented regulatory and policy structures as well as national and territorial programmes. Entities included under the Plan signed letters of understanding with UNHCR that included capacity development advice, thereby contributing to achievement of their objectives and goals. Alignment under the Plan extended to the territorial level, where UNHCR worked with the mayor's offices, governor's offices and the Public Prosecution Office to promote implementation of the Victims Law, to consolidate processes for durable solutions in both urban and rural areas, to strengthen the technical tools for assisting the displaced population, and to identify and develop solutions for the displaced indigenous and Afro-descendant communities.

The Plan faced challenges concerning the relevance of action plans, due to a change of administration in the national and territorial governments, worsening of the humanitarian crisis resulting from the mixed influx of refugees and migrants from Venezuela to Colombia, and a reconfiguration of the armed conflict.

1.2 Efficacy

The Plan consisted of two types of actions: 1) institutional strengthening for prevention, protection, assistance, and reparation of displaced populations; and 2) building capacity in communities as the main actors in making decisions to guarantee their rights and seek solutions. Average goal attainment was 94%. UNHCR and the GoC achieved key results in institutional capacity building, particularly in municipal attorney's offices, the ombudsman's office (branch offices and the Early Warning System [EWS]), the National Protection Unit, Unit for Comprehensive Victim Support and Reparation (Unit for Victims), Attorney General's Office (PGN), and Ministry of the Interior. Reports, handbooks, manuals, CAYP (Children, Adolescents and Young People) participation tools, and a collective protection decree, among others, were created. UNHCR and the GoC achieved results in collective protection, community transformation, peace-building and awareness raising, as well as in the way communities rebuild the social fabric, manage their solutions, and interact with the government as rights-bearing citizens.

Achievements include hundreds of communities strengthened; hundreds of CAYP risk cases identified and assisted through local protection systems; the strengthening of 113 multi-function gender-based violence (SGBV) response committees, desks, and teams, and approximately 50 women's and diverse SOGI organizations; over 130 entities institutionally strengthened per year at the national and territorial level; 29 communities assisted in settlement legalization processes, 13 of them legalized successfully. From the above came extensive supportive evidence and informative lessons related to the implementation of the durable solutions approach, in addition, mayor's offices better able to form legalization teams.

The Plan's design and implementation are in line with the UNHCR Age, Gender, and Diversity Policy as it explicitly incorporated the various groups of concern within its lines of action. Action plans were created with a differential territorial and age, gender, and diversity approach based on participation assessments. Accountability processes with specific indicators with a differential approach were conducted. Nevertheless, there were coverage gaps, for example: the number of afro-descendant communities accounted for one fourth of the number of indigenous communities, and in 2018 and 2019 development processes were suspended.

There are five main factors identified as positive for attainment of the proposed results: 1) the joint work based on trust by UNHCR and the GoC, and by UNHCR with the communities, based on respect, impartiality, transparency of information, defense of human rights, recognition and visibility, dignity, dialogue, and inclusive participation; 2) the joint planning methodology implemented; 3) the support of the

Constitutional Court to continue efforts to overcome the ECI through Order of Compliance 373 in 2016, which makes the actions set forth in the Four-Year Plan highly relevant; 4) the UNHCR staff team based in the territory, praised by different interlocutors for their humanity, sensitivity, knowledge, experience and impartiality; 5) the convergence of different actors, the community and institutions, and even the private sector, in advancing and/or achieving the legalization of neighborhoods.

The following were identified as the Plan's limiting factors: 1) worsening of the armed conflict due to the reconfiguration of armed groups, that gave rise to challenges to the implementation of the Plan and required reinforcing prevention and protection actions, and that threatened the continuity of solution actions as well as participation from some at-risk communities due to access and communication difficulties; 2) change of administration, both at the national and territorial level, that entailed modifications to the approach and priorities and staff turnover; and 3) the crisis brought about by the mixed influx of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, which required reducing Plan resources due to a shift in donor priorities, as well as rethinking UNHCR efforts in the territory as response to this population's protection and assistance needs, under UNHCR's mandate.

1.3. Efficiency

The Plan's total operational resources were estimated at USD 50.2 million, of which 54% were allocated to LC (Lines of Cooperation) 1, 27% to LC2, 16% to LC3, and 3% to LC4, ensuring that all actions contributed to overcoming the ECI. The availability of resources was reduced throughout the five years as donors redirected resources to the Venezuelan mixed migration crisis, causing a decrease by 33% from 2016 to 2019, which in turn had a negative impact on goal attainment: 95% in 2016-2017, 90% in 2018, and 70% in 2019. Resources served different purposes in human resources; financing equipment and reinforcing safe spaces for communities (community infrastructure), ombudsman's office and municipal attorney's office teams, transportation for visiting communities, financing of workshops and training, focus groups, transportation for leaders, complex solutions processes aimed at stabilizing returned or relocated communities, among others. Additionally, interviewees praised the efficiency of UNHCR's response.

Moreover, existing institutional and regulatory structures were leveraged, and institutions served as support, both at the national and territorial level. The articulation with the National Government entities was efficient: with the Unit for Comprehensive Victim Support and Reparation to provide technical support to the Public Prosecution Office's capacity building in decision making about massive and individual displacement and confinement, as well as with the Ombudsman's Office, Attorney General's Office, municipal attorney's offices, Ministry of the Interior, UNP for prevention and protection, among others. Links with other agencies can be enhanced for all future plans.

1.4 Sustainability

Institutional and community strengthening yielded the following results in terms of sustainability: 1) strengthened public policy on urban legalizations in the four municipalities that received support; 2) the solutions processes became sustainable once an effective link with local and national institutions was achieved; 3) including the programmes (or policies) in municipal development plans supported sustainability; 4) the results of reinforcing community infrastructure and providing supplies remain; 5) the work with communities based on active participation and building communities' capacity to organize and take control of their own solutions made processes and youth leadership sustainable; 6) the settlement legalization processes have been replicated; 7) Decree 2078 of 2017 was a milestone in collective protection.

2. Lessons learned and best practices

Analysis and literature review showed the following best practices and lessons learned:

Best practices
The Plan's methodology with a differential approach for development and decision making as a whole and in the dedicated plans with entities and communities.
Lessons learned
Displacement dynamics respond to regional and sub-regional criteria. Therefore, regional strategies should be promoted.

The National-Territorial coordination and links between institutions with communities and other institutions are vital for ensuring implementation of prevention and assistance measures and advancing durable solutions for the displaced population.
The comprehensive policy on informal urban settlements transforms the lives of persons and communities. Actions to be taken should result from participation processes involving community dialogue and should be flexible and tailored to each context.
Strengthening processes with ethnic communities are long-term, systematic, and ongoing, based on trust, listening and the creation of spaces for dialogue.
Making leadership stronger, more diverse, and inclusive while engaging youth, contributes to sustainability within communities and takes over the entire solutions processes.

3. Recommendations

Recommendation 1 Strengthen and continue with the implementation of the durable solutions approach in displaced population communities. Place emphasis on generating lessons that will be incorporated in the knowledge management processes with the GoC, as well as influencing public policy on comprehensive assistance and reparation for displaced populations, returnees, relocated persons, and local integration. Continue documenting experiences, lessons learned, and best practices in the implementation of the durable solutions approach and creation of spaces for dialogue, particularly with the Unit for Victims return and relocation teams. Time frame: Short term

Recommendation 2 Reinforce and continue with the agenda for prevention, protection and non-repetition guarantees in favor of the displaced population and the population at risk of displacement, emphasizing highly vulnerable population groups. Along this line, reinforce and continue the work agenda with the Ministry of the Interior, UNP, Unit for Victims (registration), Attorney General's Office, and other relevant entities, as well as with communities in their risk identification processes, building of road maps for protection, and articulation with government entities. Time frame: Short term

Recommendation 3 Strengthen the relationship with other UN System agencies for a new and better articulated UNHCR-GoC action plan, explicitly integrating potential synergies and articulations, to enhance inter-agency strengths. Time frame: Short term

Recommendation 4 Reflect internally on the lessons learned from the work in ethnic communities which lead to creation of guidelines for actions in a new action plan, particularly regarding the scope and effort required for working with indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant communities. This reflection should include relevant time periods, resources, and aspects to be strengthened within the UNHCR team, in order to address the commitments agreed with these communities. Time frame: Short term

Recommendation 5 Strengthen "exit" mechanisms to be applied in the work with communities to gradually reduce the intensity of actions over time while making the parties increasingly self-sufficient. It is recommended to include explicit actions that can contribute to sustainability once UNHCR's intervention is complete. An example of a best practice was the creation of legalization offices within mayor's offices, allowing the continuity of informal settlement legalization processes.