



# **COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN**

**Executive Committee Summary**

**Country: Colombia**

**Planning Year: 2005**

# COLOMBIA

## 2005 Country Operations Plan

### Part I: Executive Summary

#### (a) Context and Beneficiary Population

##### **Political context**

The first year and a half of the Uribe administration has been marked by the implementation of the Democratic Security Policy. Increased State and military presence in the territory, the dismantling of illegal groups, the demobilisation of armed groups and economic recovery are the pillars of this Government. A recovery in governability and a general confidence are reflected in increased investments, economic revitalisation and widespread national and international support.

However, armed conflict continues to affect large parts of the country, resulting in a serious humanitarian crisis for hundreds of thousands of Colombians. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) continues to be extremely high: the total number varies from **2,003,591** (Social Solidarity Network latest report) to over three million (CODHES).

Although the absolute numbers are extremely high, for the first time since 1995, when a national registration system was set up, the growth trend has decreased. Governmental and CODHES figures agree in indicating that in 2003, new internal displacements grew 47% less than compared to the same period in 2002. However, there is no consensus on the reasons for this phenomenon. The figures can be seen as the result of improved security in many areas, which now have State presence, others say that there there is only a temporary withdrawal of the guerrilla forces following intense operations by the Armed Forces. Furthermore, there is a change in the paramilitary groups' strategies resulting from dialogue with the Government. Finally, there is an increased number of blocked communities, where the population has been confined in restricted areas.

##### **Security situation**

The intensification of the government's military offensive against the guerrillas, combined with the narcotics trade, the dynamics of the FARC operations (Latin America's largest and most powerful insurgency) and the fragmented structure of the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) which has been accentuated by the demobilisation process, indicate that Colombia's armed conflict will intensify in many parts of the country, particularly in rural areas, strategic corridors and at the borders with Panama, Ecuador and Venezuela.

Colombian security forces show a good level of professionalism and training, but their efficiency and effectiveness is limited due to the complexity of the territory. The army and police sometimes deter illegal armed groups but usually the FARC, ELN and AUC strategy is to avoid direct confrontation. Likewise, civilians are becoming

increasingly involved in the armed conflict as a result of the growing polarisation of society, the deployment of peasant soldiers and the civil informant's network. During the last year, the number of antipersonnel mines increased steadily although they are seldom marked and in many cases there is no reliable source of information because the conflict is still ongoing. Illegal groups are producing and using weapons such as gas cylinder rockets and hand-made mortars that has made large areas insecure and inaccessible for UNHCR and NGO staff. Attacks and terrorist actions such as bombings, hijackings or kidnapping are anticipated but targets and methods are highly unpredictable, causing great concern for 2005.

### **Protection issues**

The Colombian Government will keep presenting IDP returns as an indicator of the success of the "Democratic Security Policy", and this situation will continue to impose constraints on UNHCR's ability to refocus State policy towards the search for durable solutions for IDPs and to guarantee that the State retains or reinstates affirmative action measures in favour of IDPs. Similarly, the Government's focus on reducing the perceived magnitude of the IDP crisis may also lead it to propose applying cessation clauses to large numbers of IDPs, many of whom may not yet have found a truly durable solution.

UNHCR will therefore need to continue close monitoring of State policy and practice and insist that minimum standards are respected. During 2005 it will be particularly important that the new National Plan on IDPs (which must be adopted by February 2005) respects these minimum standards and complies with rules set out by the Constitutional Court relating to affirmative action for IDPs.

Projected demobilisation of paramilitary groups demonstrates the importance of mechanisms for the protection of land and other property as in the past these groups have frequently carried out forced displacement in order to take control of property.

UNHCR's efforts will be supplemented by the internal supervisory mechanisms of the State (General Procurator, Ombudsman) and UNHCR will put into place specific mechanisms for evaluating compliance with national norms relating to IDPs.

The Colombian conflict will continue to cause significant numbers of Colombians to seek international protection abroad and, according to the regional approach adopted in previous years, UNHCR Colombia will need to further reinforce coordination, information and early-warning mechanisms with other UNHCR offices in the region.

Colombia will keep receiving a small but steady stream of asylum-seekers and refugees and the office will continue to strengthen the international protection regime through lobbying for the adoption of adequate legislation and training of migration and other authorities on the relevant standards and procedures. It is also foreseen that returns from neighbouring countries will continue and returnee monitoring capacity will therefore be reinforced by the Bogota and field offices.

### **UNHCR role in 2005**

In 2005, UNHCR's main operational goals will be:

- To promote a co-ordinated and comprehensive response to the IDP crisis, so as to reinforce protection and assistance mechanisms and to foster viable solutions for

displaced people, taking into account the special needs of specific population groups;

- To promote international protection for asylum-seekers and refugees in Colombia and search for durable solutions as well as to strengthen a “*regional approach*” for Colombians in coordination with UNHCR offices in the region.

These goals will be reached through two main strategic lines: **Prevention and Protection**, and **Solutions and Integration**.

The differential approach will continue to be the driving principle for ensuring equal enjoyment of rights by displaced men, women, boys and girls, adolescents, elderly persons and minorities.

### **Prevention and protection**

The protection strategy in Colombia is based upon the national legal framework, the application of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and on four of the Agenda for Protection’s goals: the strengthening of the application of the legal framework, the protection of displaced population, the search for durable solutions and the attention to the needs of women and children. The aim of this strategy is to reduce the essential causes of refugee movement in the region, by developing and consolidating preventive and responsive mechanisms, and to ensure IDPs full enjoyment of their rights.

In 2005, a range of mechanisms will be established to increase the impact of UNHCR’s activities through greater participation in policy design and improved collaboration, at the national and local level, with authorities responsible for the execution of these policies. UNHCR will also increase its awareness-raising activities and the visibility of the conflict’s impact by reporting on relevant issues, including: the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis, progressive vs. regressive public policies measures, returns, re-establishment, violence against the displaced and its leaders and SGBV (sexual gender-based violence).

UNHCR will continue working with NGOs, universities and the Ombudsman’s Office to facilitate IDPs’ access to legal protection. The Ombudsman and General Procurator Offices’ monitoring and control systems, conceived during 2004, will be fully operational in 2005.

UNHCR will persist in developing documentation campaigns and promoting the correct use of the Social Solidarity Network’s Unique Registration System (SUR) through the review of inclusion and exclusion criteria applied to IDPs.

UNHCR will apply, in coordination with national authorities, other protection mechanisms such as for property/land protection (inventories, trade constraints, among others) and will design and implement policies for the security of threatened IDP leaders. Regarding returned and ‘at risk of displacement’ communities, UNHCR will support their autonomous organisation systems and promote the presence of State institutions.

Finally, UNHCR will continue developing training programmes with government officials and IDPs aimed at improving IDPs knowledge of their rights and informing authorities and humanitarian agents of how their actions can better take IDP rights into account.

### **Solutions and integration**

UNHCR will promote that all durable solutions (return, local integration and relocation) are taken into consideration and that they meet the principles of voluntariness, security and dignity. UNHCR will not promote the return of IDPs but will strengthen the public institutions to respect the standards when the Government promotes return processes.

Durable solutions, including the stabilisation of their socio-economic situation: access to basic services; economic stabilisation and reconstruction of the social fabric, must respond to the special needs of specific groups and be in accordance with the Guiding Principles. In all cases, the interests and needs of receiving communities will be taken into account.

The strategy will concentrate on the local and regional (sub-national) level, covering the municipalities and regions where UNHCR has a field presence. In addition, the implementation will take into consideration two approaches, improvement of the institutional response and community empowerment.

UNHCR has incorporated the differential approach in the whole strategy with the aim of concretely impacting on the enjoyment of the rights of displaced men, women, boys and girls, adolescents, elderly persons, indigenous and Afro-Colombians.

### **Overview on beneficiary population**

The total number of IDPs varies from **2,003,591** (Social Solidarity Network latest report) to more than three million (CODHES). The salient features of the current displaced population are: rural origin and low income level; large proportion of boys, girls and women; disproportionate number of individuals belonging to minority groups.

Some 210,000 people, located in the Urabá, Magdalena Medio, Putumayo, Nariño, Atlantic Coast and Chocó regions are expected to be UNHCR's direct beneficiaries in 2005. Indirect beneficiaries will be, in general, those IDPs who will benefit from the improved capacity to respond to their assistance and protection needs by both government and civil society.

### **Linkages to other countries within a defined situation**

Colombia's programme is part of a "*Regional/Geographical Strategy*" oriented at strengthening the asylum regime for Colombian asylum-seekers and refugees in the region. In order to reinforce this "approach", Colombia has developed a strategic partnership with UNHCR Panama, Ecuador, Venezuela and Costa Rica.

### **Capacity and presence of implementing partners**

UNHCR is working with local implementing partners: State and Governmental institutions, local NGOs and the church. The decision to sign sub-agreements with local institutions only was made for two main reasons: local actors are capable and experienced in responding to the different aspects of the IDP crisis and, more

importantly, this approach guarantees continuity of response despite the presence of international actors.

**Presence and role of other UN agencies and international organisations, and efforts made to co-ordinate protection and assistance activities for population of concern.**

Since 2000 UNHCR, with the support of OCHA, has been assuming the co-ordination of displacement issues inside the UN system in Colombia in the framework of the Thematic Group on Internal Displacement. In 2002, it was decided to create a common UN operational approach in the framework of a Humanitarian Action Plan. UNHCR has led the common effort to achieve and start the implementation of a Plan, which has been widely endorsed by donors, local government and UN agencies.

**(b) Selected Program Goals and Objectives**

<b>Name of Beneficiary Population: Internally displaced people</b>	
Main Goal: To promote a co-ordinated and comprehensive response to the IDP crisis, in order to reinforce protection and assistance mechanisms and to foster viable solutions for displaced people, taking into account the special needs of specific population groups.	
<b>Principal Objectives</b>	<b>Related Outputs</b>
To promote the development and consolidation of prevention and protection mechanisms in order to improve State compliance assuring IDPs, returnees and at risk communities full enjoyment of rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public IDP policies are safeguarded and/or re-established as per the Deng Principles as well as other national and international legislation taking into account the differential approach.</li> <li>• State civil authorities are present in places of return and areas at risk of displacement.</li> <li>• 45 IDP organisations (including mixed, women, indigenous, Afro-Colombian and youth organisations) have effective communications with State institutions.</li> </ul>
To support voluntary return, relocation and local integration processes by promoting design and execution of public policy in accordance with the needs of the population, and by strengthening IDP organisations, taking into consideration the receiving communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Return processes have respected the dignity, safety and the voluntary character of returns.</li> <li>• There is a PIUR (Integrated Regional Plan) in the regions where there is UNHCR presence.</li> <li>• Municipal budgets have special lines for attending IDP needs.</li> <li>• Increased participation of women in decision-making processes and women's rights are part of the agenda.</li> </ul>

<b>Name of Beneficiary Population: Persons in need of International Protection</b>	
Main Goal: To promote international protection for asylum-seekers and refugees in Colombia and search for durable solutions as well as to strengthen a “ <i>regional approach</i> ” for Colombians	
<b>Principal Objectives</b>	<b>Related Outputs</b>
Strengthen international protection mechanisms and durable solutions for asylum-seekers, refugees and other persons of concern taking into account the different protection needs of men, women and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Durable solutions consolidated for refugees in Colombia, and in particular for “<i>long staying refugees</i>”.</li> <li>• Enjoyment of human rights for returnees and compliance with specific commitments of the</li> </ul>

children.	Government related to return are adequately monitored.
<p>UNHCR Colombia provides effective support for the protection of Colombians through consolidation of a “<i>regional protection approach</i>”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The security policy of the Colombian Government takes into account and respects protection needs of Colombians particularly in regard to repatriations.</li> <li>• Proactive country of origin information is provided: periodic reports, updated information for the database located in UNHCR’s Spanish web page and responses to specific requests from UNHCR offices, including information relating to trafficking of persons.</li> </ul>