

HIGHLIGHTS

- Humanitarian presence alleviates suffering in communities affected by armed violence.
- SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict visits Chocó.
- Children face constraints to access education in Córdoba.
- Displacement decreases, but violence against civilians persists in the first three months of the FARC-EP unilateral ceasefire.

FIGURES

No. of IDPs in mass events March 2015 (OCHA)	1,467
No. of people affected by access constraints March 2015 (OCHA)	28,792
No. of people affected by natural disasters March 2015 (UNGRD)	22,375

FUNDING

US\$30,517,088
2015 humanitarian funding being implemented as of 15 April 2015 (OCHA 4W)



In this issue

Humanitarian presence reduces fear in Barbacoas P.1

SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict P.2

Córdoba, limitations on education access P.3

Three-month ceasefire with FARC-EP P.4

Humanitarian situation: I quarter 2015 P.6

Humanitarian presence reduces fear in Barbacoas

By Gerard Gomez, Head of Office, OCHA Colombia

In the early hours of eleven March, the OCHA team met on Tumaco's pier with our friends from the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Save the Children. We then travelled more than five hours by river to reach the municipal seat of Barbacoas, which is a distant and often forgotten part of Colombia. On arrival, we met with the UN Human Rights Office and the Ombudsman's Office - who had travelled by car, taking seven hours to cover the less than 250 km between the municipalities of Tumaco and Barbacoas.

One of the objectives of our mission was to visit the project "Vive la Educación", implemented by Save the Children and NRC, in the rural area of La Humildad. This initiative allows children and youths to access inclusive and appropriate education, ensuring their permanence in school in an environment fit for learning. The project helps to identify out-of-school populations and facilitates their re-entry into the education system. It supports the management of education processes by including education authorities.

Being a gold-rich territory has been positive and negative for Barbacoas. It is no coincidence that the municipality's 30,000 or so inhabitants have lived under the pressure of a variety of non-state armed groups over the past several years. I asked María Luisa, one of the female community leaders, whether she was optimistic about an upcoming peace agreement with the FARC-EP guerrillas. In response, she asked me: "The truth is that I'm optimistic that an agreement will be signed, but what will it change in my life here? What happens to the others, who aren't sitting in Cuba, the ones who are threatening us? Will I have better health care? Will my children have opportunities? The truth, sir, is that we would like to live in peace, but I don't think that that will happen soon".



Photocredit: OCHA/Gerard Gómez. Children and youths in Barbacoas face the pressure of the conflict. A joint project implemented by Save the Children and NRC, is allowing more inclusive education. Barbacoas (Nariño), Colombia, March 2015.

During our two-day trip we spoke with leaders of rural communities, women's leaders, teachers and municipal council members, as well as men, women and adolescents who live the humanitarian consequences of armed violence every day. They all have tragic stories to tell, yet they display extraordinary resilience. They explained that despite support from State institutions, humanitarian needs remain. They said that although a peace accord is signed, international organizations should continue their work in Barbacoas, since our presence goes beyond distributing a few kits. Our presence gives

relieves the constant stress of living with fear. All these voices should be heard because they aren't statistics; they are the basis for constructing sustainable peace.

One of the greatest criticisms of the humanitarian community has been its emphasis on assistance. It is true that assistance is often indispensable as it represents the only means to ensure communities' survival. However, it is also true that assistance alone cannot strengthen the most vulnerable people. NRC and Save the Children's project is a clear example that in Colombia, the international humanitarian community has placed affected people at the centre of humanitarian actions. Thanks to many years of experience and presence in the country's most remote areas, humanitarian organizations support youths who will contribute to tomorrow's Colombia.

Joint missions between UN agencies, international NGOs, and national and departmental institutions, such as our mission to Barbacoas, are fundamental to understanding the context in which many Colombians live, and to carrying out actions that respond to their needs. There is a large consensus that a peace accord will not immediately solve problems, such as those facing Barbacoas. In these remote areas, humanitarian actors' presence will continue to be fundamental for constructing long-lasting peace. Hopefully this won't be forgotten.

Women in Chocó vulnerable to sexual violence

UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict visits Chocó



Photocredit: OCHA/Pastor Caicedo.
Mrs. Zainab Bangura, SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict, heard first hand the stories of victims of sexual violence and displacement in Chocó, Colombia, February 2015.

Following her visit to Colombia in late February, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Bangura, highlighted the critical situation that women face in Chocó.

Mrs. Bangura visited Quibdó, where she heard first-hand the stories of victims of sexual violence, and saw the situation of displaced Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities living in marginalized areas around Chocó's capital city. Her mission verified the historical challenges in the region, related to a weak State presence and the lack of effectiveness by institutions when attending and bringing justice to victims of sexual violence.

The visit included the Local Humanitarian Team (LHT), and representatives from UNWOMEN and the Office of the Resident Coordinator. UNDP participated through the Transitional Justice Fund, which supports the Government of Colombia in promoting the access of women victims of sexual violence to justice and reparation, in Chocó.

Civil society: prevention and response to sexual violence are needed

The SRSG also met with women's leaders and Afro-Colombian and indigenous organizations, as well as with LGBT leaders, the head of the Departmental Network of Chocoan Women and the Ruta Pacífica de Mujeres, among others. They shared their perspectives on specific prevention-and-response needs with an ethnic and gender-based focus.

Civil-society organizations highlighted their lack of confidence in reporting sexual violence cases to official institutions, and their concern about the persistence of sexual violence. Women are frequently raped due to the armed conflict and illegal activities, such as mining and drug trafficking.

The SRSG spoke with communities in the El Futuro Afro-Colombian settlement and the Citara indigenous settlement, where IDP families have been arriving for the past 12 years. Mrs. Bangura observed harsh living conditions, as well as risks associated with the presence of groups exploiting natural resources and drug trafficking. The relationship between the armed conflict and violence against women, increased by cultural patterns, socioeconomic vulnerabilities and ethnic and territorial discrimination, is of particular concern.

This article was contributed by the Local Humanitarian Team Chocó

The SRSG's meetings demonstrated that under-registration of SGVB cases and SGBV victims, has made the situation of the women in Chocó invisible. This, according to Mrs. Bangura, is the main challenge that the State and Colombian society must overcome in order to end sexual violence in the armed conflict and help the victims of this crime.

Ombudsman's Office publishes report on the risks of the armed conflict for women


Following Mrs. Bangura's visit, the Ombudsman's Office published [The Armed Conflict and Risks for Rural Women report](#), which states that the women of Chocó are highly vulnerable to sexual violence. Many women are forced to work as prostitutes or to join non-state armed groups in order to carry out domestic labour, and they are frequently sexually abused. The high costs of transportation and the difficult access to rural areas constitute significant barriers to an effective presence of institutions in the communities. These conditions also limit access to victims in terms of prevention, assistance and protection.

Limitations on education access in Córdoba

This article has contributions by the Local Humanitarian Team Córdoba

Presence of armed groups endangers students and teachers

The lack of access to and quality in education in Córdoba is of increasing concern for the rights and protection of children. In southern Córdoba and along the Sinú and San Jorge rivers, a variety of problems cause children and adolescents to remain outside of the education system, unable to complete the school year.

+18,000 
children and adolescents are outside the education system in Córdoba

The main risks, to which teachers and students are exposed, are due to the presence of armed groups in the area, combined with severe structural problems, such as the inadequate number of teachers, contracting delays, children being forced to travel long distances to reach schools, deficits in school infrastructure and gaps in schools' feeding programmes.

The strong social control exercised by non-state armed groups is reflected in threats and extortion against teachers in rural areas, frequently causing them to flee. The presence of armed actors also creates an environment of non-protection and fear, where children are vulnerable to forced recruitment, sexual violence and exploitation, adolescent pregnancy and temporary desertion. With a lack of socioeconomic opportunities and activities for free time, many students abandon school to work in illegal activities. IDP children do not always have access to education, which frequently causes their families to return without adequate security guarantees. A lack of water access in schools during droughts worsens the crisis for the education sector.

The Ombudsman's Office published a risk report in 2013, which raised awareness of this situation in Montelíbano and Puerto Libertador. It recommended response measures to prevent students from leaving school and improving education in areas at risk due to the armed conflict.

Concern about number of children outside of the education system

According to official data, in December 2014, 28,000 children and adolescents were outside the education system. During the first trimester of 2015, at least 18,000 children were outside of the system in rural southern Córdoba, specifically Montelíbano, Puerto Libertador, Tierralta and Ayapel, and in Montería, Planeta Rica, Moñitos and San Bernardo del Viento.

Due to the department's education crisis, parents and teachers have led protests for the past month, closing schools as a means to find a solution. In the municipality of Puerto Libertador, more than 10,000 students were out of school during the protests.

Municipality	No. students
Tierralta	6,700
Montelíbano	2,300
Montería	6,000
Lorica	2,000
Puerto Libertador	766
Planeta Rica	600
Total	18,366 aprox.

Many actors, including community organizations, the local Secretary of Education, the Church and the LHT, have attempted to raise awareness of this issue and find an effective solution. However, so far there has been no response. Thousands of children and adolescents still lack their right to an education in schools that should be a protective environment.

Three-month ceasefire with FARC-EP

Forced displacement decreases, but violence against civilians persists

According to OCHA's monitoring, during the first three months of FARC-EP's unilateral ceasefire, 3,041 people were displaced in mass events. This represents an 8 per cent reduction as compared with the period immediately prior, i.e., between 20 September and 19 December 2014. During the ceasefire, 87 per cent of people displaced were in Cauca, Chocó and Norte de Santander (see Map 1).

FARC-EP's participation in mass displacements has dropped significantly since the ceasefire began. The group was formerly the largest perpetrator of displacement (with a participation in 78% of all mass displacements due to confrontations with Armed Forces and unilateral actions), but is now overtaken by the ELN, Post-Demobilization Armed Groups (PDAGs), the EPL and unidentified armed groups. During the first three months of the unilateral ceasefire, these groups caused 74 per cent of displacements, while FARC-EP caused 26 per cent (23 per cent due to confrontations with the Armed Forces and 3 per cent with PDAGs). There were no displacements caused by FARC-EP unilateral armed actions during this period.

FARC-EP's unilateral ceasefire is having a slight positive impact on the reduction of mass displacements, but the numbers for the first three months of the ceasefire indicate that the problem persists: on average, every hour a Colombian is forced to abandon his/her place of origin due to the armed conflict and armed violence. This analysis only takes into account mass displacement, which represents a small part of all displacement in Colombia.

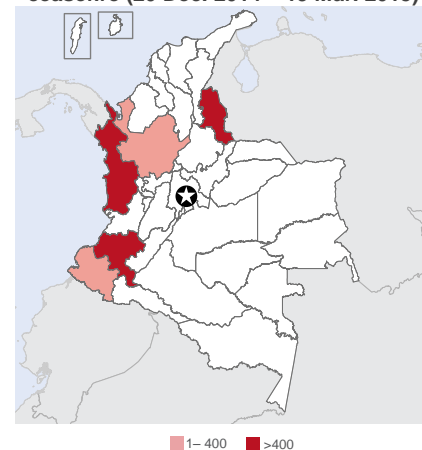
FARC-EP's armed actions decrease

According to [Monitor](#), during the first three months of the ceasefire, there was a 42 per cent reduction in the number of armed actions, as compared with the period immediately prior, i.e., 20 September to 19 December 2014.

FARC-EP's participation in armed actions during the ceasefire fell by 72 per cent. Confrontations between this group and the Armed Forces dropped by 76 per cent, while unilateral actions by FARC-EP dropped by 92 per cent. This indicates the group's high level of compliance with the ceasefire. The persistence of armed actions during the ceasefire is due to the number of different sources of armed violence which have a humanitarian impact.

During the first three months of the ceasefire, the number of armed actions by the ELN guerrillas was stable, as compared with the period prior. There was a 59 per cent increase in the number of events where no actor could be determined. This could be associated with a strategy of non-state armed actors to avoid visibility or attract the attention of the Armed Forces. Norte de Santander, Antioquia, Arauca and Cauca suffered the bulk of armed actions during the period (see Map 2).

Map 1: No. IDPs in mass events during ceasefire (20 Dec. 2014 – 19 Mar. 2015)



Department	No. IDPs
Cauca	1,570
Chocó	655
Norte de Santander	435
Antioquia	204
Nariño	177
Total	3,041

Source: OCHA-Monitor

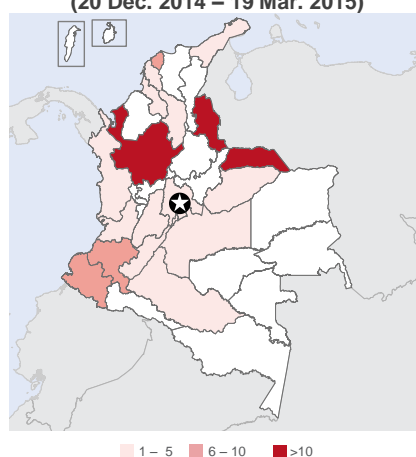
During the ceasefire, there was a 57 per cent reduction in attacks on illicit targets, as compared with the period prior (September to December 2014). This trend is connected to a reduction in FARC-EP activity in these types of attacks during the ceasefire.

Attacks against civilians persist

During FARC-EP's unilateral ceasefire, attacks against civilians registered in Monitor dropped by 17 per cent as compared with the prior period. The persistence of death threats, forced recruitment, sexual violence and targeted homicides, among other events, shows that the halt in offensive military actions by FARC-EP has not implied an end to violence against civilians.

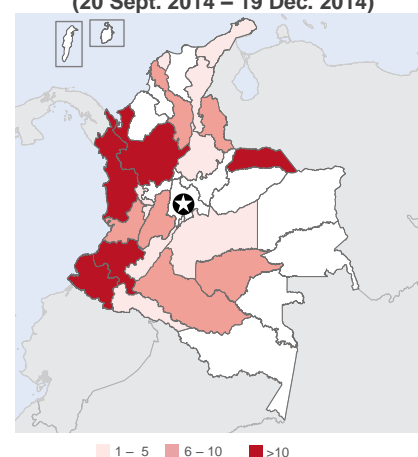
In 56 per cent of cases, unidentified actors are responsible for these attacks, followed by PDAGs, with 17 per cent. This reflects a changing dynamic of violence and impact in Colombia that goes beyond traditional armed actors. FARC-EP is the main actor in the armed conflict, but it is not always the main group responsible in armed violence overall. This type of violence will be a key challenge for the State and civil society in a post-agreement scenario.

Map 2: No. of armed actions during ceasefire (20 Dec. 2014 – 19 Mar. 2015)



Department	No. actions
Norte de Santander	15
Antioquia	13
Arauca	13
Cauca	9
Atlántico	6
Other	42
Total	98

Map 3: No. of armed actions prior ceasefire (20 Sept. 2014 – 19 Dec. 2014)



Department	No. actions
Cauca	37
Nariño	21
Arauca	21
Antioquia	13
Chocó	11
Other	65
Total	168

Source: OCHA-Monitor

Find more contents in salahumanitaria.co:

[Civilians at risk in Bajo Cauca region](#). By Local Humanitarian Team Antioquia.

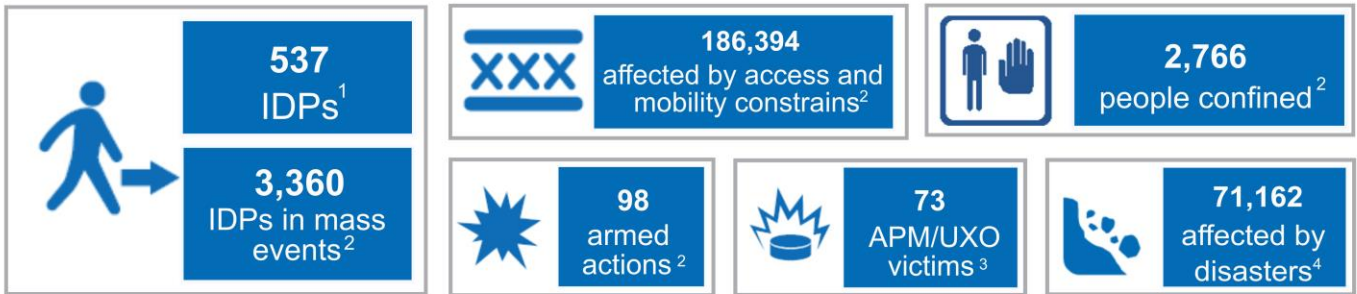
For more information, please contact OCHA Colombia: salahumanitaria@un.org Tel. +571 6221100

For media enquiries, please contact Isabel Suárez, Information Officer: suarezlopera@un.org Tel. +571 6221100 Ext. 1303.

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

All the information reflected in this report has been processed by OCHA from official and secondary sources. Data for mass displacement and protection of civilians has been processed by OCHA Colombia through the Integrated Humanitarian Information System. Sources: Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas (UARIV); Dirección para la Acción Integral Contra Minas Antipersonal (DAIMCA); Sistema Integrado de Información Humanitaria (SIDIH/Monitor).

Colombia Humanitarian Situation January - March, 2015



January

More than 100 people displaced from the rural area of Nariño to the departamental capital Pasto, due to armed clashes between the PDAG Los Rastrojos and FARC-EP, and threats of the PDAG against the community.

Due to the FARC-EPs threats against local commercial establishments, 5,000 people of the rural area of Puerto Libertador (Córdoba) faced constraints in accessing goods and services and risk of food shortages

February

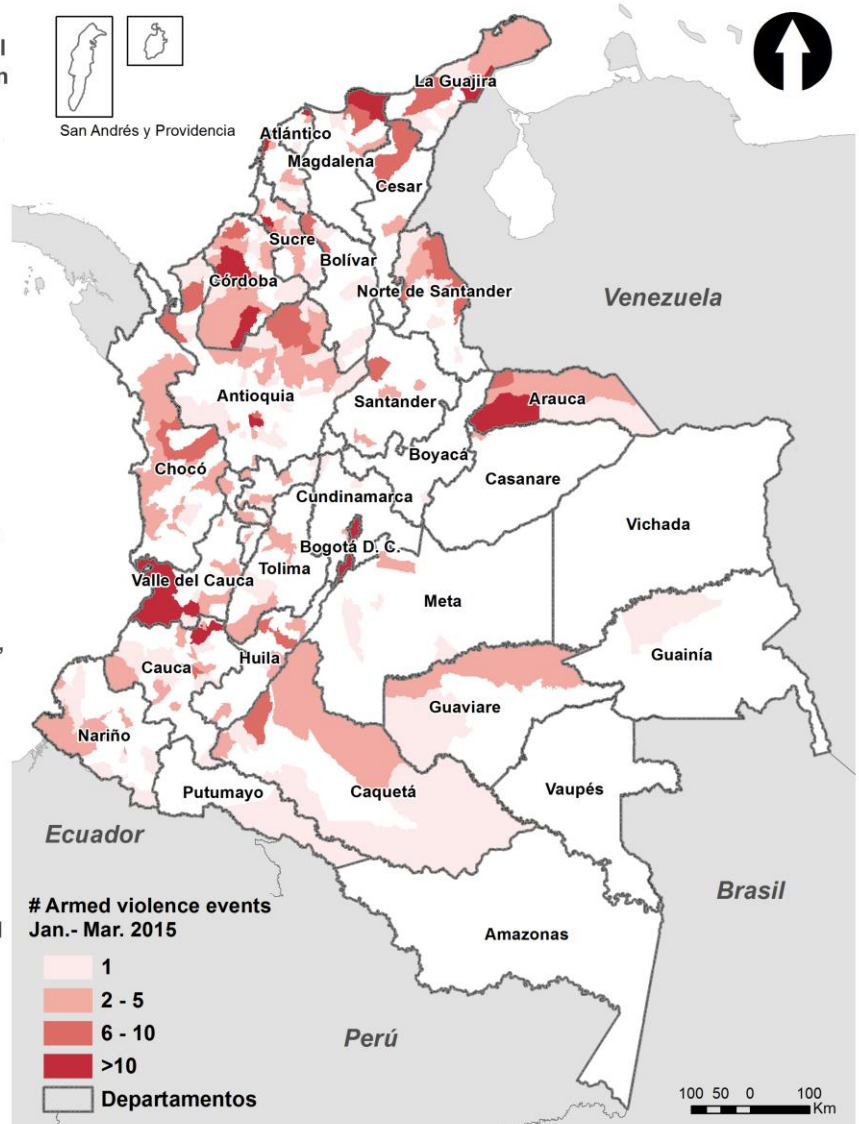
About 500 people displaced from the rural area to the urban centre of San Calixto (Norte de Santander) due to armed clashes between the Armed Forces and the ELN, supported by the EPL.

Four communities, 1,700 people, faced a situation of confinement due to homicides, armed clashes between the ELN and the Army; and presence of non-state armed actors in Cáceres (Antioquia).

March

Four Indigenous communities, 912 people, faced a situation of confinement in Timbiquí, (Cauca). The communities limited its mobility and daily activities due to fear of non-identified armed actors, who are making presence in their territories.

Some 452 people displaced following a Police operation against the PDAG Clan Úsuga (Urabeños), in several rural settlements of Turbo (Antioquia).



Sources: 1. UARIV (Jan. - Mar. 2015); 2. OCHA-Monitor (Jan. - Mar. 2015); 3. DAICMA (Jan. - Mar. 2015); 4. UNGRD (Jan. - Mar. 2015)