

### HIGHLIGHTS

- The humanitarian imperative brings us to continue attending and raising awareness around the situation of the victims.
- The humanitarian situation of the department of Arauca is characterized by a multi-sectoral impact, with the convergence of several factors related to the armed conflict, natural disasters and the dynamic along the border with Venezuela.
- The negotiation process between the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP has been a global best practice in relation to the inclusion of women rights and a gender-based approach in the final agreement.

### FIGURES

No. people of people affected by access and mobility constraints	218.338
No. of people affected by disasters	16.085
No. Threat events.	50
IDPs in massive events	9.247

### FUNDING

USD 54.776.305 (HRP 2016) by October 25<sup>th</sup> (OCHA 4W)



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## Responding to humanitarian needs is the first step towards a sustainable peace

*By Martín Santiago, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Colombia.*

Colombia is living a crucial moment. The country is increasingly close to ending the armed conflict between the Government and FARC-EP, a conflict of more than fifty years which has left millions of victims. The ceasefire and other measures to create confidence between the parties have already saved lives and reduced suffering. This is, without doubt, excellent news in humanitarian terms.

For this reason the United Nations has supported and will continue to support peace efforts in Colombia, convinced that this is the only possible way to put an end to the suffering of victims, to overcome humanitarian needs and to advance decidedly towards a development agenda.

Due to its presence and experience working with the communities most affected by violence, the humanitarian community has much to provide to support the country in this new phase. Respond to humanitarian needs and ensure the protection of civilians is the first step towards a sustainable peace.

The transition between war and peace can lead to great uncertainty and implies many challenges. While a peace agreement between the Government and FARC-EP is fundamental to put an end to armed violence, other sources of violence persist and continue to be responsible for humanitarian impacts. Threats and homicides against social leaders and human rights defenders, sexual and gender-based violence, the use and recruitment of children and adolescents, restrictions on movement and social control imposed by armed actors on communities continue to be of concern to the Humanitarian Country Team.

Providing a response in this scenario is even more complex when the most vulnerable communities, located in areas with difficult access and affected by armed violence, are also exposed to natural disaster such as flooding and drought.

In Colombia, the Humanitarian Country Team faces major challenges: the humanitarian imperative that guides us bring us to continue attending and raising awareness around the situation of the victims. At the same time, financial cutbacks and pressure from other large-scale crisis on donors has meant that humanitarian funding has decreased in Colombia, although humanitarian activities continue to be of vital importance in the current transition phase.

In this sense, humanitarian planning that has begun with regional workshops, and that

will continue at national level in October is key to ensure that the humanitarian community adapts its actions to the new context. This means keeping a response capacity to complement national counterparts, at the same time contributing strategically to peacebuilding and development efforts over the longer term. Strengthening national and local response capacities, as well as strengthening resilience of local communities, are priority themes.

In the words of the Secretary General, in his report “One Humanity: shared responsibility”, this implies “working on a new paradigm characterized by three fundamental changes: a) reinforce, don’t replace national systems; b) Anticipate, do not wait for crises; and c) Transcend the humanitarian-development divide, working to achieve collective outcomes, based on comparative advantage”.

Along this line, this year we have introduced innovative aspects in humanitarian programming such as establishing a link between humanitarian issues, durable solutions and peacebuilding. At the same time, we have increased our efforts to identify more precisely the different impact of humanitarian crisis on women, children and adolescents, Indigenous, Afro-colombians, and other vulnerable groups, to design specific actions addressing their needs, capacities and expectations.

I invite all members of the Humanitarian Country Team, development actors, humanitarian donors and our local and national counterparts to take advantage of the humanitarian planning process. The formulation of a joint vision around humanitarian needs (the Humanitarian Needs Overview) and the Humanitarian Response Plan 2017 are an opportunity to strengthen coordination ensuring the strategic use of resources; to achieve joint prioritization; to comply with the humanitarian imperative of alleviating suffering of the most affected people, at the same time creating a solid foundation for development and peacebuilding.

## Arauca, a scenario of multi-sectoral impact

The humanitarian situation of the department of Arauca is characterized by a multi-sectoral impact, with the convergence of several factors related to the armed conflict, natural disasters and the dynamic along the border with Venezuela. The presence and actions of non-state armed groups and confrontations with the Armed Forces continue to impact local population creating protection needs. Limitations on movement and restrictions on access to basic goods and services, social control, threats, extortion, homicides, armed harassment, attacks on oil infrastructure continue in this region.



Photocredit: OCHA/ Luigi Nicoletti. Floods in Arauca

Arauca also suffers from the cyclical impact of floods during the rainy season, and wildfires during the dry season with an impact on housing, livelihoods, water, basic sanitation and hygiene, healthcare and education. The border dynamic impacts particularly Colombian and mixed Colombian-Venezuelan families<sup>1</sup> arriving from Venezuela to Arauca; and on host communities.

<sup>1</sup> Mixed families refer to families integrated by Colombian and Venezuelan nationals.

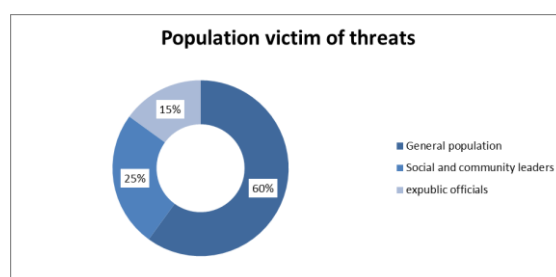
## Armed strikes limit movement and access to basic goods and services

According to OCHA's monitoring, during the first nine months of 2016 there was a 232 per cent increase in the number of people suffering restrictions on movement and access to basic goods and services due to armed violence, as compared to the same period in 2015 (see Graphic no. 1). This situation is linked to two armed strikes declared by the ELN in February and September respectively, affecting more than 200,000 people in the region.

Although these events were of limited duration in time, they had a significant impact on the population, restricting their movements and limiting their daily activities. Restrictions on education access affected 54,000 students. Trade and transportation were paralyzed and medical missions faced restrictions.

## Threats increase in 2016

According to OCHA's monitoring, between January and September 2016, there were 27 cases of threats in Arauca, a 200 per cent increase as compared to the same period in 2015. It should be noted that 60 per cent of threats registered in 2016 were against the general population, followed by social and community leaders (25 per cent), ex-public officials, cattle ranchers and transportation workers (15 per cent).



Source: OCHA-UMAIC Monitor, (accessed on:06/10/2016)

*More than 17,000 people were affected by floods in 2016.*

## Armed actions drop in 2016

Over the first nine months of 2016 armed actions in Arauca fell by 14 per cent as compared to the same period in 2015.

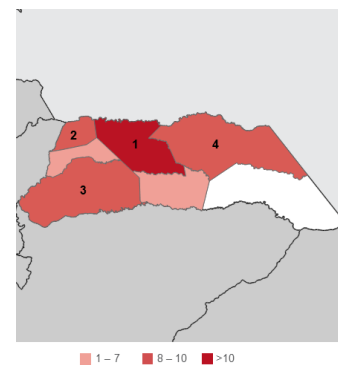
The increase in armed actions in February and September is related to the armed strikes by the ELN.

While in 2016 armed confrontations between the ELN and the Armed Forces in Arauca fell by 64 per cent, unilateral acts by the ELN increased by 14 per cent as compared to the same period in 2015. The municipalities with the greatest impact continued to be Arauquita, Saravena and Tame (see map).

Although armed confrontations fell in the department, practices of social control which limit movement and access to basic goods and services are on the increase. Threats, homicides against protected persons and armed strikes continue to impact civilians in different sectors.

## Floods impacts nearly 17,000

According to the Disaster response unit, Unidad Nacional de Gestión del Riesgo de Desastres (UNGRD), between 2006 and 2015 more than 87,000 people have been affected by natural disasters in Arauca. During the first nine months of 2016, according to official figures, floods impacted nearly 17,000 people. The municipalities of Arauca, Arauquita and Saravena were the most impacted. These municipalities are also simultaneously the most affected by the armed conflict and border crossings, creating a multi-sectorial impact and an increase in humanitarian needs.



municipality	#armed actions
1 Arauquita	22
2 Saravena	10
3 Tame	9
4 Others	16

During the rainy season, flooding impacted housing, livelihood (loss of crops), water, basic sanitation and hygiene, health and education. The loss of homes due to floods forced many inhabitants to relocate without accompaniment to informal settlements where they are more vulnerable and at high risk, facing high levels of unsatisfied basic needs and limited access to basic services. At the same time, rains impacted school infrastructure, increasing constraints to access to education and impacting on protection of children and adolescents.

### **Border dynamic with Venezuela**

The closure of the border with Venezuela<sup>2</sup> had a significant impact on the most vulnerable population in Arauca, limiting access to basic goods and services for families living off of informal border commerce, causing an increase of expenses for a population already impacted by natural disasters and the armed conflict with a high degree of unsatisfied basic needs.

Several Colombian families returning from Venezuela have settled in rural areas and in marginal urban neighborhoods. These families live in precarious conditions and have found opportunities only in the informal labor market, or as day laborers, creating tensions with local inhabitants who also live out of these options. A drop in informal trade along the border also had a negative impact on the livelihood of the most vulnerable host communities.

The increase in prices has made basic goods too expensive for poor families, who have been forced into negative coping strategies such as rationing and reducing the quality of food. Some families report difficulties in getting three meals a day.

### **Multi-sectoral impact goes beyond the sum of single impacts**

These dynamics in Arauca have had a direct and multi-sectoral impact on civilians, affected simultaneously by the conflict, disasters and border related issues. At the same time, gaps in prevention, mitigation and response to each issue and the chronic nature of the situation have caused psychosocial impacts on the population, limiting their resilience and capacities for durable solutions.

## **The rights and protection of women and girls are not re-negotiable**

*Colombian armed conflict has caused pain and discrimination for many women and children, who have lived the war disproportionately on their lives and bodies*

*By the Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad - LIMPAL Colombia*

Colombian armed conflict, the longest of the American continent with more than seven million victims of forced displacement, has caused pain and discrimination for many women and children, who have lived the war disproportionately on their lives and bodies.

Despite this, these same women, through effort and dedication, have been an important force to achieve for the first time in the world a peace agreement that includes the rights of women and a gender-based approach as a fundamental component to achieve a durable and stable peace. Nine platforms of women's organizations at national level joined forces in 2013 to call for the first National Women and Peace Summit, which brought together more than 500 women from 700 organizations from throughout the country. In this occasion, women called the Negotiation Table in Havana to be included

<sup>2</sup> On 19 August 2015 the Government of Venezuela declared the state of emergency in the State of Táchira. This situation caused the deportation of 1.950 Colombians and the return, fearing deportation, of additional 22.432 who arrived to Norte de Santander, La Guajira, Arauca and Vichada. On 13 August 2016 Colombia and Venezuela agreed on a gradual re-opening of the border in six points in Norte de Santander (3), Arauca (2) and La Guajira (1), for 18 hours a day, for three months; after that, a possible extension will be evaluated based security, trade and migratory influx.

as active participants “to be members of the pact and not objects of the pact”; not to leave the negotiations without reaching an agreement; and to involve women throughout the negotiation process including as part of the negotiation team, among other demands. Three years later, the second National Women and Peace Summit called together 600 women to review the content of the Final Agreement between the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP and to analyze the inclusion of the gender approach, identifying opportunities and challenges for women in the framework of peace at regional level.

The second National Women and Peace Summit marked an historic moment, not only to claim a number of acquired rights – which have been historically denied to women – such as participation and inclusion, but also to define regional working strategies. Representatives of different institutions committed to work with women on peace; and to include women’s perspective from a gender approach in the implementation of the final agreement.

However, following the results of the plebiscite on 2 October, in which the final agreement was rejected by a minimal difference of votes, women’s organizations such as Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad - LIMPAL Colombia, have expressed great concern about the risks associated with a delay in implementation of the accords, in particular for the regions. These risks are not only related to losing a unique opportunity to achieve peace through a negotiated solution; they are also related to the continuing presence of other armed groups who continue to threaten and attack disproportionately women and girls, who continue to be the victims of sexual violence, threats and displacement, facing difficulties in accessing basic services, rights and opportunities.

The recent comments against the agreements, based on an inappropriate reference to gender equality as if it was an attack against family values are also of concern. These arguments represent a risk to the integrity of society, as they deny the benefit of an equal society where men, women and different people can enjoy the same rights and opportunities, as stated in the Constitution of Colombia of 1991.

The negotiation process between the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP has been a global best practice in relation to the inclusion of women rights and a gender-based approach in the final agreement: for this reason it is important not to recede from what has been achieved. Colombian women will not permit that our rights are renegotiated in this new process of adjustment of the final agreement. Peace with the participation of women is a fundamental and *sine qua non* demand, which continues to be indispensable in light of Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council, on “Women, Peace and Security”.

## Humanitarian impact of the exploitation of alluvial gold based on evidence from satellite imagery

*By the UN Office on Drugs and Crime - UNODC*

According to the report, “Exploitation of alluvial gold – evidence based on remote perception”,<sup>3</sup> the evidence of alluvial gold exploitation- EVOA in Spanish<sup>4</sup> detected in 2014 in Colombia, is concentrated in Chocó and Antioquia with a high presence in the

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime – UNODC. 2016

<sup>4</sup> Evidence of exploitation of alluvial gold (EVOA in Spanish), refers to the “permanent footprint” left by the exploitation of alluvial gold on the landscape that is detectable through satellite imagery, due to the use of machinery on the shore of rivers to remove considerable volumes of land and vegetation. In this sense, EVOA differs from the gold exploitation done directly with dredgers on the riverbed and whose evidence is temporal. The benefit is a physical-chemical process used to separate gold from other minerals, implemented mainly through the use of mercury and cyanide in a lower quantity; nonetheless, EVOA can’t signal where this technique is used, it can only identify its presence in the mines (active or not).



territories of Afro-colombian Community Councils and is mainly located in areas that do not coincide with legal authorizations for its practice. Based on EVOA, it is possible to consider a number of impacts on the population directly related to detection or derived from an analysis of the findings of the study.

One detected impact is the risk of deriving from the flow and accumulation of sediment, as a consequence of erosion caused by the removal of vegetation, even when no exploitation occurs. On the Pacific coast, the populations of the upper basin of the Atrato river (Cantón de San Pablo, Río Quito, Quibdó and Medio Atrato - Chocó), the upper basin of the San Juan river (Condoto, Sipí and Nóvita - Chocó) and in the middle basin of the Patía river (Barbacoas, Roberto Payán and Magüí - Nariño) face the highest risk, as the EVOA is at least 1 km upstream. The negative effects on these communities may be related to the reduction in water quality of potable water sources or to a gradual increase in water levels of rivers. As related to impacts derived from the findings of EVOA, the detection of mines makes it likely that chemicals are used to extract gold;<sup>5</sup> for this reason UNODC study serves as a starting point to focus efforts on specific territories and to carry out additional research to verify these impacts and quantify potential effects on the population, water and fishing resources.

The report is focused on evidence of the exploitation of alluvial gold which due to its visible scale does not correspond to artisanal practices and that due to its impact does not correspond to proper mining techniques; in this sense, the elements of the baseline for the study are strongly associated with illegal and informal activities (illegal mining, the presence of illegal armed groups, precarious employment conditions, etc.) which have been reported from a variety of sources and that require State's response.

As is the case with coca crops, the presence of EVOA constitutes an obstacle for development and enjoyment of dignified living conditions; in this sense, UNODC study and other researches contribute to a monitoring model to create early warning for institutions with a mandate on prevention, mitigation and recovery measures of the humanitarian impacts of the exploitation of alluvial gold, and thus improve the quality of life in these territories.



EVOA satellite photos

Overflight zone alluvial gold exploitation

<sup>5</sup> The benefit is a physical-chemical process used to separate gold from other minerals, implemented mainly through the use of mercury and cyanide in a lower quantity; nonetheless, EVOA can't signal where this technique is used, it can only identify its presence in the mines (active or not).

## Simex: an opportunity to strengthen humanitarian response

*By the WASH Cluster Coordinator*

Between 26 and 30 September 2016 a simulation exercise – SIMEX - , was carried out in Bogotá to simulate 7.0 earthquake on the Richter scale. One of the main objectives of the exercise was to strengthen decision-making for response planning.

The simulation counted on favorable conditions for information management and communications. The Disaster Response Unit, Unidad Nacional de Gestión del Riesgo de Desastre (UNGRD), provided constant Internet access; telephone communications were available at all time. The availability of the Clusters and Government entities was a also a positive highlight. Beyond this situation, we could identify opportunities for improvement within the Cluster and in the relation with other sectors, in particular in the processes of drafting strategic documents for humanitarian response, such as the Flash Appeal for the mobilization of emergency funding.

The WASH Cluster participated in the simulation directly through UNICEF (the Cluster lead). The SIMEX was the occasion to test coordination and emergency response mechanisms created within the Cluster. For this exercise, we did not have information about the impact of the earthquake in rural areas or on neighboring populations, where the Cluster may be more active in complementing State's actions. However the "script" of the exercise was sufficiently realistic and well planned to encourage participants' participation, to imagine probable humanitarian impacts and prepare a realistic comprehensive response.

Updating and sharing the tools for preparation and response is a priority for the Cluster. The overall response leadership fell on UNGRD that conducted effectively the exercise preparation and response actions. However, the presence in the Cluster of government entities such as the Viceministry of Water and the UNGRD itself is needed to ensure an effective response.

The Humanitarian Country Team produced a Flash Appeal, MIRA needs analysis, situation reports and other documents to inform on the situation and plan the response. The construction of these products requires familiarity with each product and an understanding of the purpose of each document. Within the humanitarian programming cycle, there are a number of processes and products that are key to the response, but which are not known to all the members, which may delay the emergency response, impacting on the effectiveness of response in the field. SIMEX helped to raise awareness in the humanitarian community in Bogotá, to make Colombia a less vulnerable country.

## In Brief

### Hurricane Matthew impacts 26,000 families

The passage of Hurricane Matthew created humanitarian impacts in northern Colombia. According to official UNGRD information, approximately 26,548 families were affected by gradual and flash flooding, landslides and high tides in six departments along the Caribbean coast (see map).

Needs were identified in relation to access to potable water, food and non-food items and shelter.

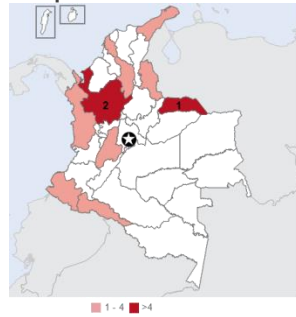
Landslides and destruction of bridges caused the interruption or restriction of movements on road. Specialized interventions were needed to re-open passage and access many affected areas. The authorities activated the Unified Disaster Victims Registry (RUD in Spanish) and provided emergency humanitarian aid delivering food, cleaning kits, blankets and mattresses. UNGRD supported the emergency response in the most affected areas.

For further information, see the [flash update](#)





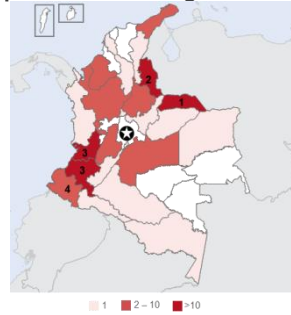
Map 1: # of armed actions



Departament	#Actions
1 Arauca	14
2 Antioquia	4
3 Norte de Santander	1
4 Chocó	1
5 Others	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>

Source: OCHA-UMAIC Monitor, (accessed on:07/10/2016)

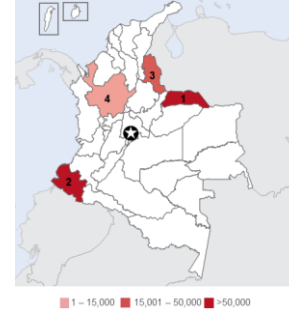
Map 2: # of attacks against civilians



Departament	#Attacks
1 Arauca	14
2 Norte de Santander	13
3 Valle del Cauca	12
4 Cauca	12
5 Nariño	8
6 Others	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>

Source: OCHA-UMAIC Monitor, (accessed on:07/10/2016)

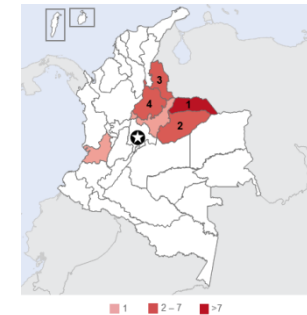
Map 3: # people affected by access and mobility constraints



Departament	#People
1 Arauca	144.060
2 Nariño	52.000
3 Norte de Santander	17.878
4 Antioquia	4.400
<b>Total</b>	<b>218.338</b>

Source: OCHA-UMAIC Monitor, (accessed on:07/10/2016)

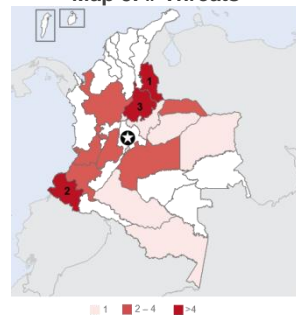
Mapa 4: # Ataques a objetivos ilícitos de Guerra



Departamento	#Eventos
1 Arauca	7
2 Casanare	2
3 Norte de Santander	2
4 Otros	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

Fuente: OCHA fecha de corte 7 de octubre 2016:

Map 5: # Threats



Departament	# Threats
1 Norte de Santander	11
2 Nariño	6
3 Santander	5
4 Arauca	4
5 Antioquia	4
6 Others	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>

Source: OCHA-UMAIC Monitor, (accessed on:07/10/2016)