

HIGHLIGHTS

- On the occasion of National Day of Memory and Solidarity with Victims, HC calls for all actors in conflict to redouble their efforts to end years of violence.
- UARIV: Our greatest challenge has been to attend victims in the midst of a continuing armed conflict.
- ICRC: Violence caused by the so-called criminal bands has a humanitarian impact comparable to the ongoing conflict.

FIGURES

# of IDPs in mass events Jan – Apr 2014 (OCHA)	7,114
# of IDPs in mass events Apr 2014 (OCHA)	1,029
# of APM/UXO victims Jan – Apr 2014 (PAICMA)	97
# of APM/UXO victims Apr 2014 (PAICMA)	18
# of people affected by natural disasters Apr 2014 (UNGRD)	21,251

FUNDING

US\$28,936,264

2014 total humanitarian funding received as of 20 May 2014 (FTS)

US\$56,792,849

2014 humanitarian funding being implemented as of 20 May 2014 (OCHA 4W)



Acción contra el Hambre / Colombia

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Special issue on the occasion of the National Day of Memory and Solidarity with Victims, commemorated on 9 April

Peace accord would be the best tribute to victims

By Fabrizio Hochschild, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Colombia

On 9 April, Colombia commemorated its National Day of Memory and Solidarity with Victims. It recognizes more than 6 million people who have suffered the effects of violence since 1985, and is a powerful message of the rejection of violence, murder, forced displacement, confinement, child recruitment, kidnapping, use of antipersonnel mines, sexual violence and all the practices of armed actors that affect civilians.

It is difficult to establish the real number of people affected by the violence, as only few Colombians have not been affected some way or another by the conflict. The number of registered victims, more than 6 million, represents the entire population of countries such as Denmark, Finland, Jordan or El Salvador.

The best tribute to these victims would be a peace accord that ends victimization and allows for Colombia to open the door to reconciliation, the restoral of rights and the peaceful co-existence of all sectors of society. For this reason, it is important that all actors in the conflict redouble their efforts to end years of violence.

While the peace talks continue, the conflict creates new victims. Between November 2012 and December 2013, according to official data provided by the Victims' Unit, there were more than 145,000 new IDPs, an average of more than 10,000 each month. This means that with each hour that passes, 14 more people are obliged to abandon their homes and displace due to the conflict; seven of these are children and adolescents. According to official mine-action data, between November 2012 and March 2014, there were 28 new antipersonnel mine, ordinance and IED victims each month. This means that while the conflict continues, each day another Colombian will die or be injured by these explosives. In 2013, according to official figures, more than 4,000 people forcibly disappeared. This would be equivalent to the entire population of municipalities such as Murindó in Antioquia disappearing from the planet, or half of the inhabitants of Nuquí, in Chocó.

These are only three examples to illustrate the humanitarian drama of the war in Colombia. They reiterate our call for all armed actors to take the necessary measures in order to mitigate the humanitarian impact of the conflict, while there is a definitive end to this scourge through peace agreements. Only in this way will it be possible to avoid new victims and then dedicate efforts to close this painful chapter in the country's history.

The Humanitarian Country Team in Colombia recognizes the efforts of the State and of all Colombians to overcome the conflict and build peace. We share this desire for reconciliation and reiterate our commitment to continue working in order to halt the high cost of this war. We renew our willingness to support and accompany the current peace process and any initiative oriented towards rebuilding the hopes of millions of victims and an entire country.

Government focuses humanitarian efforts on Pacific Coast

By Paula Gaviria, Director of the Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas (Victims' Unit)

Since the Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas (UARIV) began its work in 2012, its greatest challenge has been to attend, assist and provide reparations to victims in the midst of a continuing armed conflict. One of our strategic objectives in the Unit is “to strengthen the capacity of the State to give a response to humanitarian emergencies”.

For this reason, through the Sub-directorate for Emergency Prevention and Assistance, the unit coordinates emergency humanitarian assistance within the framework of the Transitional Justice Committees, which include representation of victims and local, regional and national authorities.

In 2014, we documented the forced displacement of Afro-Colombian communities living on the Pacific Coast. Support to these victims was strengthened through the unit's investment in social and community infrastructure, and through the delivery of building materials for projects where local authorities also provide workers. This is a positive example of State coordination.

From 2013 to the present, the unit has invested more than US\$2 million in several Pacific Coast departments, including Chocó, Valle del Cauca, Cauca and Nariño. This investment was made in building materials that support the construction of temporary shelters, basic sanitation and living infrastructure, collective centres including educational infrastructure, and housing reconstruction following terrorist attacks.

With prevention efforts, the unit combines its efforts as a technical adviser to municipalities in the formulation of contingency plans for emergency humanitarian assistance. In this way, in addition to coordinating institutional response to these situations, the unit supported local authorities that requested food and non-food assistance to attend those who abandoned their habitual place of residence. The unit intervened through assistance delivery totaling some US\$155,000¹ in Buenaventura (Valle del Cauca), Guapi (Cauca), Tumaco and San Francisco Pizarro (Nariño).

The Pacific coast example represents a challenge for the Colombian Government, as it must dedicate funding and efforts in assistance and reparations. It is necessary to end the violence and, with it, the appearance of new victims. Only then can the State be able to engage in greater efforts to provide a sustainable public policy for victims, focused on overcoming vulnerability.



Photocredit: UARIV. Victims' attention activities UARIV.

This section was contributed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

ICRC: Victims' reality still critical

In Colombia, the hope to leave behind a conflict that has gone on for five decades contrasts with the reality that victims of armed violence continue to face. As was the case over the past several years, every day thousands of people are killed or exposed to threats, displacement, attacks on medical missions and sexual violence, among other violations to international humanitarian law, international human rights law and the principle of humanity.

As the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) confirmed in its report titled [Colombia: humanitarian situation. Action 2013 and perspectives 2014](#), presented in April, the situation for victims has yet to improve. This is not only related to the continuation of the conflict: violence caused by the so-called



Photocredit: ICRC Colombia.

¹ 294.581.590,72 pesos

ICRC: An eventual signing of a peace agreement will not mean an end to violence (...) actions of other armed groups will surely persist in several areas (...)

criminal bands frequently has a comparable humanitarian impact. Despite this, only recently have the victims of this violence been progressively included in the State system for assistance and reparations. To add to this, violence is slowly expanding into cities. During 2013, of the 617 attacks on civilians that ICRC recorded in the country, one third occurred in 39 urban areas.

Facing this reality of violence, which today is the reality for victims, ICRC concentrated its humanitarian action in 25 critical areas and offered aid to more than 235,000 people during 2013, which is 35,000 more people than in 2012. This aid included improvements to housing and water access for IDPs, legal advice and accompaniment to the families of disappearance victims, assistance to the survivors of weapon contamination (landmines and explosive devices) accidents and visits to people deprived of their liberty.

An eventual signing of a peace agreement will not mean an end to violence, since the actions of other armed groups will surely persist in several areas. We will therefore be before a mosaic of Colombias where the needs of victims continue latent.

On the one hand, a Colombia in post-conflict, where challenges such as the search for missing people, the clearing of lands contaminated by explosive devices, the re-establishment of contact between people separated by conflict and the return of IDPs to their places of origin will become important. On the other hand, a part of Colombia will continue to face armed violence, and it will be necessary to respond to the humanitarian consequences that this will cause. In both scenarios, ICRC will continue to work at the side of victims, offering its humanitarian work to aid in the arduous but not impossible path of Colombia towards peace.

Stories from the Field

Rising from the memory makes you stronger

By Yolanda Perea Mosquera, Representative of Antioquia at the National Victims' Roundtable

My name is Yolanda Perea Mosquera. I am 30 years old and a single mother. In 1997, in the municipality of Riosucio, Chocó, I was a victim of sexual violence and my mother was murdered. At that time, when I was 11, a member of an armed group raped me. My mother complained about what he had done to me, but a month later the same armed group beat me and I lost the baby I was expecting. After that, they ordered the assassination of my mother and we had to leave the town. When we returned they were still following me, so I decided to leave again but this time alone, since my grandfather blamed me for my mother's death. I went to Urabá and then the Red Cross sent me to Medellín. I stayed there for a while and then returned to Urabá.

In 2000 I got married and had my first child. At that time, my trauma started because I began to confuse my husband with my perpetrator. This was a problem. We divorced and I began to study and work to fully support other victims. I thought my life was fine. I was a strong woman and was very happy living with my two children. But in 2011 I received a threatening call.

As a result I moved again to Medellín. I started again from scratch and created Corporación Afrocolombianos el Puerto de mi Tierra: an NGO that trains victims in project management taking into consideration special needs of different population groups (women, children, elder, ethnic groups, etc.). Then the process of the victims' roundtables began; I joined the municipal roundtable in Medellín and the regional one of Antioquia. I am the representative of the department in the National Roundtable. From my work I have seen that our participation as citizens allows us to have an inclusive and effective influence in the development of public policies that provide socioeconomic benefits to victims of the armed conflict.

The experience in this participatory process has empowered me as a person and as a woman, since I have contributed to raising awareness of the impacts of the armed conflict, especially on women victims of gender-based violence. I have insisted that as citizens we are subjects of rights, and our fundamental rights were violated by the parties to the conflict. Our rights must be restored. We have succeeded in making women's voices heard, and we have demanded from the State a



Photocredit: MAPP-OEA Colombia. Yolanda Perea Mosquera, Representative of Antioquia at the National Victims' Roundtable.

differential approach to victims' needs that considers gender, age, ethnic group, socioeconomic condition, religion and political ideology. We have also promoted prevention, assistance and punishment to all violence against women, since these issues become worse during an ongoing conflict.

We have had difficulties in this task. For example, we have to acknowledge that we need more training to really influence decision-making processes. We have also found that the system attempts to prevent the participation of citizens in processes and decisions that affect them. This is especially the case for the participation of women victims.

To end these problems, the State must promote and allow the real and effective participation of victims. Institutions must become more proactive, thus accomplishing a real interaction between affected communities and State institutions. We are concerned about the negligence and treatment of victims, especially women, by some public officials. We demand the respect of our rights and that our claims are addressed. We propose that public officials are trained in victims' rights with a gender perspective, and that previous consultation processes become a reality when implementing plans, programmes and projects that address victims' needs.

Armed violence continues to claim new victims

Even while the peace talks continue between FARC-EP and the Government, armed violence continues to claim new victims

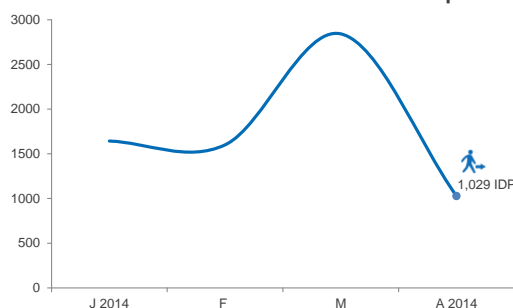
The National Centre for Historical Memory estimated that during 2012, more than 180,000 civilians died during the Colombian armed conflict, more than 5.6 million people were displaced during that period. Currently, forced displacement, confinement, homicides, the indiscriminate use of explosives and other forms of violence, attributed to a variety of groups and armed structures, continue to affect civilians. Even while the peace talks continue between FARC-EP and the Government, every day there is new victims of the conflict.

Almost 10,000 people are forcibly displaced each month

At least 142,000 people were forcibly displaced in 2013, according to the official registry. Since negotiations began in Havana, an average of 10,400 people were forcibly displaced every month. FARC-EP or ELN guerrillas were responsible for more than half of these cases.

According to OCHA's monitoring, about 7,100 people were displaced in mass events between January and April (see Illustration 1). Armed confrontations between FARC-EP and the military were the main cause, responsible for up to 61 per cent of cases. A total of 82 per cent of these IDPs were indigenous and Afro-Colombian.

Illustration 1: #IDP in mass events Jan – Apr 2014



Source: OCHA-Monitor



Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), 8 June 1977, states:

Article 17 -- Prohibition of forced movement of civilians

1. The displacement of the civilian population shall not be ordered for reasons related to the conflict unless the security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons so demand (...).
2. Civilians shall not be compelled to leave their own territory for reasons connected with the conflict.

In Colombia, **mass displacement** is legally recognized as a displacement that affects more than 50 people or 10 families. It is a type of internal displacement, which leads to an immediate emergency response by the government.

10,400

IDPs each month, since the start of the peace talks with the FARC-EP (Nov.2012 – Apr.2014)

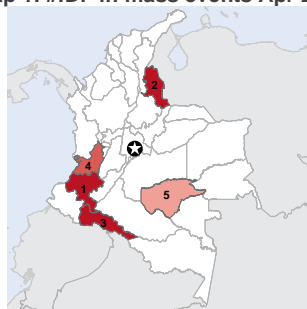
44,012

IDPs in mass events since the start of the peace talks with the FARC-EP **7,114** IDPs Jan-Apr 2014 in mass events

Many communities in Colombia are forced to repeatedly displace. This is often the case with Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities. In the last month, in Guapi municipality in Cauca department (see sitrep) and in San José del Guaviare in Guaviare department, communities were newly displaced only a few months after their first displacements.

An emblematic case was that of the Nukak indigenous community in Guaviare. It is the last remaining nomadic indigenous population in Colombia and is considered to be at imminent risk of extinction: it has just over 500 surviving members. The tribe's members were victims of forced displacements by non-state armed groups in June 2013 and April 2014. Other mass displacement events occurred in Putumayo –Ecuadorian border, Norte de Santander –Venezuelan border, and Valle del Cauca –Pacific Coast (see Map 1).

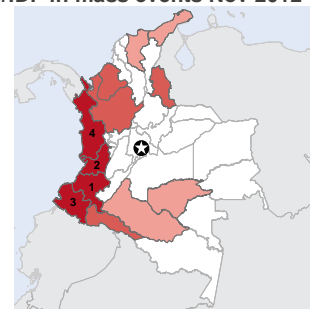
Map 1: #IDP in mass events Apr 2014



1 – 100 101 – 250 >250

	Department	#IDP
1	Cauca	323
2	Norte de Santander	281
3	Putumayo	274
4	Valle de Cauca	112
5	Guaviare	39
Total		1,029

Map 2: #IDP in mass events Nov 2012 - Apr 2014



1 – 1000 1001 – 5000 >5000

	Department	#IDP
1	Cauca	12,193
2	Valle del Cauca	9,069
3	Nariño	8,634
4	Chocó	5,167
5	Antioquia	4,190
	Other	4,759
Total		44,012

Source: OCHA-Monitor

Confinement: new type of humanitarian impact

At least 10,600 people have been confined each month, since the start of peace dialogues with the FARC-EP

According to OCHA's monitoring, there were 31 reports of confinement situations affecting about 270,000 people in 2013. Of these people, more than half were confined due to mass protests between July and September that year. Other causes included mine contamination, armed confrontations and restrictions imposed by non-stated armed groups on communities (e.g. armed lockdowns). The most affected departments were Caquetá, Antioquia and Norte de Santander.

By April 2014, OCHA verified a confinement situation affecting 245 indigenous people in Riosucio, Chocó, on the Pacific Coast. The community is limited in its daily activities due to the presence of armed actors and fear of confrontations. Since the start of 2014, OCHA identified about 40 humanitarian access constraints or limitations of access to basic services in nine departments (see Map 4). They will continue to be monitored as they may lead to confinement situations.



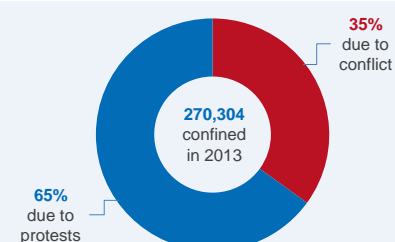
According to the **Constitutional Court** (Decision 284 of 2008), there is a direct causal link between confinement situations and later risk of forced displacements in Colombia. Confinement situations, blockades or isolation of the civilian population in the framework of an armed conflict are, at the same time, direct causes of violations of constitutionally protected rights, particularly right to life with dignity, personal integrity, liberty, food, health and work. According to **OCHA's** confinement monitoring framework, a population is confined when it suffers limitations on its free movement for one or more weeks, and has limited access to goods and services, such as education, health, water, sanitation or livelihoods.

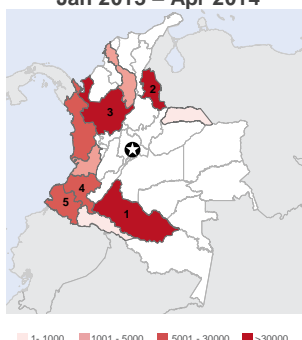
10,600

Confined people each month, since the start of peace dialogues with the FARC-EP (Nov.2012 – Apr.2014)

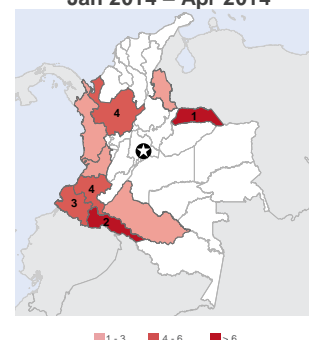
95,700

Confined people in 2013 due to the conflict



Map 3: #Confined people
Jan 2013 – Apr 2014

	Department	#Confined
1	Caquetá	160,000
2	Norte de Santander	42,931
3	Antioquia	37,460
4	Cauca	10,189
5	Nariño	9,139
	Other	10,585
	Total	270,304

Map 4: #Humanitarian access constraints
Jan 2014 – Apr 2014

	Department	#Events
1	Arauca	13
2	Putumayo	7
3	Nariño	6
4	Cauca	5
5	Antioquia	5
	Other	8
	Total	44

Source: OCHA-Monitor

Stories from the field

The conflict reduces our territory and confines us

By OCHA/Rodolfo Zapata



Photocredit: OCHA/Felinto Córdoba. Norita, Embera Katío community leader.

An elderly lady with a wide smile told OCHA the story of how she and her community have faced the conflict and one of its consequences: confinement.

Friends call me Norita. I'm an Embera Katío indian from the Alto Sinú in Tierralta. My sister and I were orphans from age 12. When I was young, I had the chance to learn to read, write and learn about "white" culture. I have two girls and a boy, 15 grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. For the past 20 years I have been a *Nokowera* ("femal leade" in Embera) of the Embera Katío reservation in Tierralta, Córdoba, which includes more than 4,500 people.

I organize women's work, community education and the work as a leader because I speak Spanish and I'm not

afraid to defend the rights of my community against the presence of armed groups. Women have been very important in keeping our territories out of the conflict, because the armed groups regularly try to abduct men from our community.

The indigenous people in this area of north-western Colombia have faced a serious situation that continues in their territories. Indigenous people have tried to isolate themselves from the conflict, and they have said to those who "make war" that they can't do that in their reservation, since this is where they hunt, fish and collect fruit and wood to live their lives. The armed conflict has progressively reduced their territories, harming communities accustomed to living in spread-out areas subsisting in a communal area.

Due to the situation and the problems we face in our territories, we are thankful for the help and the projects that international organizations and the UN have brought to the community, such as food, water and new crop techniques, despite difficulties.

Antipersonnel mines placed by non-state armed groups against the Army's presence are the community's main problem, putting many community members in danger. In addition, there is frequent combat, stigmatization of the community, and widespread and constant Army checkpoints that limit the community's mobility, livelihoods and access.

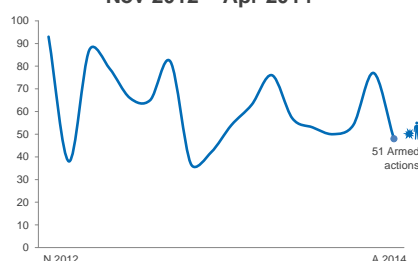
The community is also concerned about the poor response of Government institutions to its needs. Community members endure long waiting periods to express their concerns. The community currently receives support from CERF and ECHO projects, and other resources from agencies operating in the area.

Civilians are still victims of armed actions

In 2013, the Victims' Unit registered 7,089 civilian victims of terrorist attacks and combat.² This number includes all those who were materially, physically or psychologically affected.

Between January and April 2014, OCHA's [Monitor](#) information system reported 231 conflict events, with 51 in April (see Illustration 2). These events affect civilians' lives, health and property. In 2014, nearly 65 per cent of mass displacement events were caused by combat or attacks.

Illustration 2: #Armed actions/Month
Nov 2012 – Apr 2014



Source: OCHA-Monitor

Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), 8 June 1977, states:

Article 13 -- Protection of the civilian population

1. The civilian population and individual civilians shall enjoy general protection against the dangers arising from military operations. To give effect to this protection, the following rules shall be observed in all circumstances.
2. The civilian population as such, as well as individual civilians, shall not be the object of attack. Acts or threats of violence the primary purpose of which is to spread terror among the civilian population are prohibited.
3. Civilians shall enjoy the protection afforded by this Part, unless and for such time as they take a direct part in hostilities.

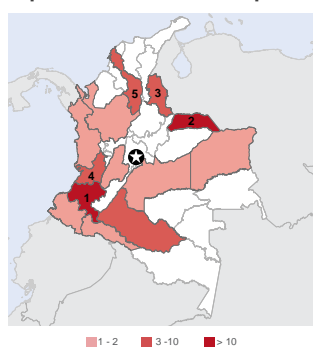
1,105

Armed actions since the start of peace dialogues with FARC-EP (Nov.2012 – Apr.2014)

231

Armed actions Jan - Apr 2014

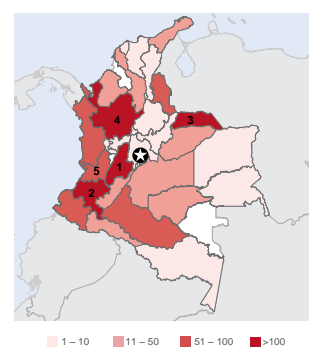
Map 5: #Armed actions Apr 2014



	Department	#Events
1	Cauca	15
2	Arauca	12
3	Norte de Santander	5
4	Valle del Cauca	4
5	Caquetá	3
	Other	12
	Total	51

Source: OCHA-Monitor

Map 6: #Armed actions Nov 2012 – Apr 2014



	Department	#Events
1	Tolima	156
2	Cauca	152
3	Arauca	117
4	Antioquia	107
5	Valle del Cauca	75
	Other	498
	Total	1,105

² Source: Red Nacional de Información. Report date: April 1, 2014

Since the start of peace dialogues with FARC-EP in November 2012, more than a thousand armed actions have been recorded by OCHA's Monitor


Armed activity in 2014 was spread out in 22 of 32 departments, but it was most concentrated on the Pacific Coast in Cauca, Nariño and Valle del Cauca, in the north in Antioquia, and on the Venezuelan border in Arauca and Norte de Santander. Some events were recorded in Caquetá, central Colombia. These areas are also the most affected by forced displacement.

Weapons contamination and the indiscriminate use of explosives

In 2013, there were 368 victims of antipersonnel mines and unexploded ordnance, according to official figures. Between January and March 2014, an average of 25 victims were recorded each month, 22 per cent of whom were civilians.

The use of these artifacts has mostly been attributed to non-state armed groups, including FARC-EP and ELN guerrillas. While the peace talks advance in Havana, institutions and international organizations have made numerous calls for these groups to cease their use of these artifacts. A major challenge is due to difficulties establishing the scale and location of weapons contamination. These artifacts represent a large risk, and they continue to create new victims.

The indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) is an issue of concern for the humanitarian community. IEDs are frequently used during confrontations and attacks, causing damage to homes and civilian infrastructure and injuring or killing civilians. During late 2013 and early 2014, there were frequent IED attacks on oil infrastructure, primarily in Nariño and Putumayo on the Ecuadorian border, and in Boyacá, Arauca and Norte de Santander on the Venezuelan border. These attacks contaminated rivers and damaged crops, with an increasingly worrisome humanitarian impact that is difficult to measure. In April, water contamination in Arauca, due to attacks on oil infrastructure, limited the access to safe drinking water for 2,000 people over several days.

 The **Ottawa Treaty** –or the Convention on the Prohibition on the Use, Storage, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and their Destruction-, is an international disarmament treaty that prohibits the acquisition, production, storage and use of antipersonnel mines. The Convention was signed in 1997 and went into force 1 March 1999. Since then, 156 countries, including Colombia, have joined the treaty.

Initially, Colombia committed to demining before 1 March, 2011. Despite this, mainly due to the regular use of these weapons by non-state armed groups, Colombia requested and received an extension through 1 March 2021.

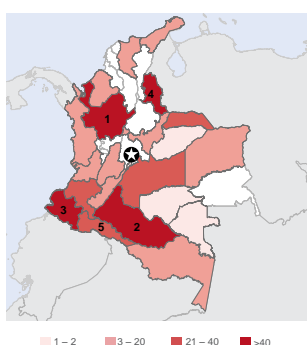
520

APM/UXO victims
since the start of
peace dialogues with
FARC-EP
(Nov.2012 – Apr.2014)

5

Departments have
69%
of all victims
(Nov.2012 – Apr.2014)

Map 7: #APM/UXO victims Nov 2012 – Apr 2014



Source: PAICMA

	Department	#Victims
1	Antioquia	112
2	Caquetá	82
3	Nariño	71
4	Norte de Santander	43
5	Putumayo	39
	Other	173
	Total	520

This section was contributed by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) on the occasion of the "International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action"

Colombia works towards the visibility of land-mine victims

In December 2005, the General Assembly declared 4 April as the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. This year's commemoration was dedicated to the work of women in Mine Action.

This commemoration was extremely important for Colombia, which hosted the global *Bridges Between Worlds* conference in Medellín, the 3 and 4 April. The goal was to advance the international community's understanding of the needs of and assistance to victims of mines and other explosive remnants of war. It was also an opportunity to create links between land-mine victims and the broader group of people with disabilities. UN representatives and 300 delegates from 36 States attended the meeting.

In the framework of the commemoration, about 11,000 Colombians participated in the 11k "Lend Your Leg" race in Cali, Medellín, Bogotá and Ibagué, to call for an end to the use of anti-personnel mines in Colombia.

The UNMAS Colombia office was actively present during the commemoration, and the Victims' Day. UNMAS is also working on a broader awareness campaign on humanitarian demining, called *Suelos de Paz*. It will be jointly launched next July with Arcángel Foundation, creators of the *Lend your Leg* campaign.

In Colombia, over 10,560 victims of landmines and explosive devices have been reported since 1990, either killed or wounded. They include approximately 1,071 children (PAICMA April 2014). According to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), Colombia has the second highest rate of mine casualties in the world, behind only Afghanistan (APM/UXO/IED).



Photocredit: UNMAS Colombia.
11k "Lend Your Leg" race. April, 2014.

Anti-Personnel Mines: A mine designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person and that will incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons.

Unexploded Ordnance (UXO): Explosive Ordinance that has been primed, fused, armed or otherwise prepared for use or used. It may have been fired, dropped, launched or projected yet remains unexploded either through malfunction or design or for any other reason.

Improvised Explosive Device (IED): A device placed or fabricated in an improvised manner incorporating explosive material, destructive, lethal, noxious, incendiary, pyrotechnic materials or chemicals designed to destroy, disfigure, distract or harass. They may incorporate military stores, but are normally devised from non-military components.

Stories from the Field

Landmine victims' assistance: Rebuilding life projects

By Handicap International

According to official data from Programa Presidencial para la Acción Integral contra Minas Antipersonal (PAICMA), between 1990 and March 2014, there were 10,682 victims of antipersonnel mines (APMs). One of them was Ricardo, who lives in rural Turbo, Antioquia. His accident occurred in March 2003, when he was planting teak trees, and cleaning the base of the trunks so that it would be easier to cut them with chainsaws. A mine was at the base of one such tree. It exploded as soon as Ricardo began his work. When he regained consciousness, he was in the hospital in Apartadó. His co-workers had carried him there, where he'd remained 33 days. He endured a series of operations, and one of his legs was amputated.



Credits: Handicap International, Colombia

At the time of the accident, Ricardo was unaware of his rights as an APM victim. But six months after the accident, Ricardo learned of his rights thanks to an NGO in Apartadó. He started a process to become officially recognized as a victim, and four years later (in 2007) he received reparations from the Government of Colombia. Handicap International has supported Ricardo in his rehabilitation, both physically and psychologically, to rebuild his life project. He now works in a recycling company, and he hopes to return to the countryside and have a small self-sustainable farm where he can bring his entire family.

There are many other victims who are unaware of their rights, or who cannot access successful rehabilitation processes due to failures in the route for assistance. For this reason, Handicap International has been implementing its Antipersonnel Mines Victim's Assistance Project in Colombia since 2005. This project is carried out in Antioquia, Bolívar, Norte de Santander, Santander, Arauca, Caquetá, Cauca, Nariño, Córdoba and Meta. It seeks to improve living conditions for civilian victims of APM and ERW, through institutional strengthening with local authorities in managing the route to assistance in order to contribute to an effective enjoyment of rights.

The project provides assistance and orientation to healthcare services providing humanitarian assistance, inter-disciplinary evaluations, psychosocial assistance, prosthesis adaptation and mobility aids. It also seeks to provide alternatives for socio-economic reintegration so that victims can be independent, rebuild their life projects and be subjects of rights.

For the development of these activities, Handicap International works hand in hand with local counterparts, national and international institutions.

This section was contributed by
Human Rights Watch

Buenaventura needs urgent action

In March, Human Rights Watch released a [report](#) and [video](#) about the human rights crisis in Buenaventura, Colombia's main Pacific port. Its population is more than 80 percent Afro-Colombian. The report describes how paramilitary successor groups —principally the Urabeños and the Empresa— are committing widespread abuses against Buenaventura residents, including abducting and dismembering people, sometimes while they are still alive. The groups have maintained “chop-up houses” (*casas de pique*) where they slaughter their victims.



© 2013 Stephen Ferry.
Boys observe a crime scene at the José Hilario López market in Buenaventura. November 2013.

For the past three years, Buenaventura has had the highest number of newly displaced people, according to Government figures. Last year, violence drove more than 19,000 Buenaventura residents from their homes.

People living in parts of the city where the Urabeños and Empresa have a strong grip reported that the police presence in their neighborhoods was scarce. Several residents reported witnessing members of the police meeting with the paramilitary successor group in their neighbourhoods.

Impunity is the norm for abuses against Buenaventura residents. Prosecutors have opened more than 2,000 investigations into cases of disappearances and forced displacement committed in Buenaventura over the past two decades. As of January 2014, none had led to a conviction.

Authorities' efforts to assist displaced people, required under Colombian law, have been plagued by delays in delivering humanitarian aid, the lack of adequate temporary shelter, and the failure to protect victims' abandoned property from destruction or occupation by paramilitary successor groups.

This March, in response to mounting national and international attention to the crisis in Buenaventura, the Government sent several hundred additional security force members to the city. In early April, President Juan Manuel Santos met with his cabinet in Buenaventura and announced measures to increase social investment and improve security. The Attorney General also promised to take nine measures to strengthen judicial

investigations into abuses in Buenaventura, including doubling the staff at the local prosecutor's office, prioritizing cases of dismemberment and sexual violence, and establishing a strong witness-protection programme.

To ensure protection for Buenaventura communities, the Government will need to dismantle the criminal organizations terrorizing residents, hold accountable those responsible for atrocities, and address the pervasive socio-economic exclusion affecting the city. The dismembered bodies that have appeared in Buenaventura in recent weeks underscore just how urgently action is needed.

This section was contributed by
UN Women and UNFPA

Sexual violence: a systematic and invisible practice

For over 50 years, hundreds of people have been victims of the conflict and violence every day. Adult and young men are the main casualties of the conflict, whereas women and children become its main survivors, in what constitutes a serious humanitarian and human rights situation.

According to official figures, women represent 52 per cent of the victims of threats, 51 per cent of IDPs, 50 per cent of the victims of illegal evictions, 45 per cent of homicides, 44 per cent of enforced disappearances, 34 per cent of victims of torture and 29 per cent of children recruited by armed groups.

A recent report based mainly on official figures, indicates that thousands of women are victims of sexual violence every year: according to data from Red Nacional de Información, eight out of 10 victims of sexual crimes are women. Sexual violence is a systematic and generalized act, yet one of the most invisible practices of the conflict, as recognized by the Constitutional Court. Its invisibility is even greater when it takes the form of individual deliberate actions against women with family or intimate relationships with members of the armed groups. Sexual violence may include forced prostitution, sexual slavery and trafficking, as well as acts of torture and forced public nudity.

There is a strong correlation between forced displacement and sexual violence: on many occasions the decision to displace is the result of aggressions or threats against the sexual integrity of the victim or their family members. At the same time, IDPs' new socio-economic and family environment increases their vulnerability to become victims of new forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence.

The main perpetrators of sexual violence crimes are members of State and non-state armed groups who, on many occasions, are part of the community or family of the victim. This physical proximity with the perpetrator becomes a barrier to denounce the crime and access justice or other types of support services required by the victim. Hence, the high degree of impunity is simultaneously a consequence and cause of the low level of report and visibility of this situation.

"There can be no long-lasting peace without security and peace for women; much remains to be done to support the survivors of sexual violence, in terms of access to justice, assistance and social reintegration", asserted Margot Wallström, the Special UN Representative on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflicts, during her visit to Colombia in 2012.

Colombia, braced for El Niño

The Colombia National Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies Institute – IDEAM- estimates a 68 per cent probability that an El Niño episode will occur between July and September 2014.

El Niño reduces rainfall and increases temperatures. The most affected regions are expected to be the Andean region (centre and west of the country) and the Pacific and Caribbean coasts.

IDEAM estimates a 68 per cent probability that an El Niño episode will occur between July and September 2014

In March, the reduced rainfall and increased temperatures had humanitarian consequences in several regions, causing water shortages, forest fires and mobility restrictions due to the inability to navigate rivers (see [March Humanitarian Bulletin](#)).

Dry season still affects some regions, rainy season affects others

In April, forest fires fed by the dry weather, expand to Boyacá and in La Guajira at the border with Venezuela. In Magdalena and Córdoba (Caribbean Coast), the National Risk Management Unit (UNGRD) started an assistance plan for about 400,000 people affected by water shortages. Actions included water distribution and the rehabilitation of community infrastructure to collect and store water. In Casanare, where wildlife was severely affected by the dry season, the UNGRD arranged water and food distribution for animals, which are local families' main source of income.

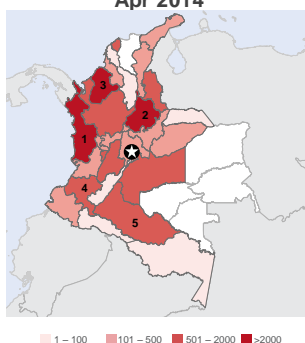
Other regions are affected by the rainy season, which started in mid-March and is expected to last until June. According to UNGRD, natural disasters affected about 21,000 in April.

Windstorms and floods caused with 94 per cent of the cases. Natural disasters hit the north, centre and west of the country (see Map 8). In Istmina (Chocó), an area prioritized by the HCT, floods affected about 600 people in rural communities. The Local Humanitarian Team (LHT) carried out a MIRA mission, identifying major needs in food security, health, water and sanitation, and a need to urgently relocate several houses (see [Flash MIRA report](#)). The difficult life conditions of the Pacific Coast communities increase their vulnerability towards natural disasters.

El Niño is an oscillation of the ocean-atmosphere system in the tropical Pacific having significant consequences for weather around the globe. It is characterized by unusually warm ocean temperatures in the Equatorial Pacific (north coast of Peru, Ecuador and south of Colombia). Its periodicity can be irregular, but its events occur about every two to seven years. In Colombia, during El Niño, rainfall tends to decrease, but temperatures and dry weather increase. El Niño typically lasts 12 months; however there have been shorter episodes (seven months) and longer (28 months).

El Niño mainly affects food security and access to food, due to the reduced agricultural production, consequent price increase and reduction of maritime fishing. El Niño also affects river navigation, with a 10 to 25 per cent decrease in river cargo transport. It has consequences for the hydroelectric sector, due to the low level of water reservoirs, generating a price increase.

Map 8: #People affected by natural disasters
Apr 2014



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Source: UNGRD

	Department	#People affected
1	Chocó	4,946
2	Santander	3,116
3	Córdoba	2,541
4	Cauca	1,660
5	Caquetá	1,430
	Other	7,558
	Total	21,251

Environmental and humanitarian impact of attacks on infrastructure

OCHA estimates that by April 2014, around 28,000 people have been affected by water contamination and crop damages, due to attacks on oil infrastructure

In 2014 attacks on oil infrastructure are increasingly affecting water sources and communities livelihoods, with humanitarian consequences. The humanitarian response to these situations is challenging for State institutions and the international community, as there is no clear legal and administrative framework for intervention. The real dimension and impact of these situations are difficult to measure, as is the sustainability of response actions. According to secondary data, OCHA estimates that by April 2014, around 28,000 people have been affected by water contamination and crop damages.

Oil contaminates water in Arauca and Nariño

The Mining and Energy Ministry estimates that in the first four months of 2014, there were at least 37 attacks against oil infrastructure, mainly in Arauca and Norte de Santander (Venezuela border), and in Putumayo (Ecuador border).

In April in Arauca, 2,000 people suffered from the lack of access to safe water and livelihoods due to an attack to the oil infrastructure. In this region, several communities already vulnerable to the conflict are still suffering from the impact of the attacks at the end of 2013. A recent MIRA mission to Saravena (Arauca) highlighted that more than 1,500 people are using oil-contaminated water for consumption and food preparation (see [Flash MIRA](#)).

Humanitarian actors expressed concern for water contamination in the rural area of Tumaco (Nariño) on the Pacific Coast. Here, the installation of improvised tanks to store illegally extracted oil is having humanitarian consequences. Recent heavy rains caused the tanks to overflow, contaminating rivers and affecting access to safe water for about 4,000 Afro-Colombian families. The Nariño LHT will conduct a needs assessment to plan possible complementary response actions. Missions have been postponed due to access constraints caused by the agrarian strike.

The disaster of illegal mining

Illegal mining is also placing civilians at risk. On 30 April, an illegal gold mine collapsed in Santander de Quilichao (Cauca) –Pacific Region-, killing 12 people. The Ombudsman Office had already raised awareness of the risk for people working in this mine, which, according to the authorities, is controlled by post-demobilization armed groups. Local institutions have limited capacities to fight such illegal activities, and more people now see illegal mining as a source of income. The Ombudsman Office estimates that in Cauca, more than 1,500 people are at risk from this activity.

New Emergency Response Fund strategy

On 7 April, the Advisory Board of the Emergency Response Fund (ERF) approved the ERF strategy for Colombia, in line with the HCT's strategy. The document gives the humanitarian community greater clarity regarding the ERF's strategic priorities in the country, and allows them to speed the process of presenting, revising and approving proposals.

ERF closes the first round of financing for prolonged emergencies

The new strategy also creates a process with financing cycles, through which, during three defined periods each year, the ERF will allot part of its funding to finance projects that respond to prolonged humanitarian emergencies that show response gaps. For this first round, emergency response proposals were presented for Arauca, Valle del Cauca, Nariño, Norte de Santander and Guaviare.

NGOs participate in CERF and ERF workshop

ERF and CERF funds provide reliable, timely and targeted funding for life-saving humanitarian projects throughout Colombia. OCHA estimates that these funds (\$11 million) will represent more than 15 per cent of all humanitarian financing in the country in 2014. Resource-allotment processes for CERF and ERF funding to international and national NGOs and UN agencies were strengthened through the HCT Strategic Response Plan. This strategy has allowed for the alignment of CERF and ERF priorities.



Photocredit: OCHA. CERF and ERF workshop. April 2014.

Representatives from 25 NGOs attended a workshop on the funds, organized by OCHA in Bogotá on 29 April. NGOs shared local experiences and lessons learned regarding ERF and CERF project implementation. They discussed the ways NGOs can access the funds, the criteria, projects' life-

saving elements and the process-review function.

This training was part of a wider strengthening strategy that OCHA is leading throughout the country. It is also holding workshops on the MIRA needs-assessment methodology, the use of information management tools, risk management and other topics relevant to humanitarian workers.

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