IASC COLOMBIA
NATIONAL WORKSHOP
BOGOTA 6-7 MAY 2010

REPORT

The National Workshop of the IASC Colombia took place in Bogotá on 6-7 May. Some 37 representatives of 18 different organizations -UN Agencies and NGOs- attended the event.

The Workshop involved both the Thematic Groups at national level and the Regional IASCs and focused on:

-   Analyzing the current context in Colombia in order to identify new trends relevant to humanitarian assistance and the implementation of IASC activities

-   Discussing, through a participatory approach (National Thematic Groups and Regional IASC together), the main achievements and challenges vis-à-vis the recommendations submitted by the Inter-Cluster Mission of 2006 (list of recommendations attached)

-   Identifying at the Thematic Groups and Regional IASC level main achievements and challenges of inter-cluster coordination and of humanitarian response in the field.

-   Identifying main issues for discussion in preparation for the Inter-Cluster mission that will take place in June 2010.

1. Analysis of the current context in Colombia

During the first part of the discussion, IASC representatives concentrated on analyzing the context in 2010 vis-à-vis the context in 2006, when the first Inter-cluster mission took place.

Generally speaking, the humanitarian situation in Colombia is still serious. The South-East, the Pacific Coast, the border areas in Arauca and Norte de Santander, the departments of Nariño, Cauca, Tolima, the Uraba Chocoano and Antioqueño and the region of Bajo Cauca (Antioquia) are currently the most affected areas in terms of humanitarian crisis.

Participants identified a number of new elements which characterize the current situation compared to 2006:

-   **Internal Displacement**: In the current context, the IASC observed a new trend characterized by an increased weight of individual displacements vis-à-vis massive displacements; this is decreasing the general visibility of the phenomenon, but not the extent of the problem. At the same time insecurity and displacement in urban areas are increasing. Massive displacements continue to be concentrated in some regions of the country; Afro-Colombian and Indigenous populations are especially vulnerable in this context. On the other hand, there is an increase in the rejection rate of demands for registration in the official IDP registry, managed by the Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation (Accion Social), excluding vulnerable populations from State's assistance.

-   **Anti-personal mines:** Despite National Government's effort through the Presidential Program for Integrated Action against Antipersonnel Mines (PAICMA), the current context is characterized by

an increased vulnerability of rural communities. This situation is aggravated by existing gaps in the humanitarian response in the most isolated areas and the poor mine awareness of the population. In some cases, the "demining argument" (military demining conducted by the Armed Forces opposed to humanitarian demining) is used as a way to push the return of displaced populations.

- **Directive 001 and Government's policy of "Integrated Action" (Accion Integral):** Colombian Government's Policy of "Social Recovery of the Territory" and especially the Directive 001 of March 2009, foresee the implementation of joint programs carried out by different Government's agents, both military and civilian. In this framework initiatives such as "education days", "health days" and other "humanitarian actions" are carried on in the communities by the Armed Forces and/or the Police, together with civilian representatives of the National Government. The purpose of these initiatives is to "consolidate the territory" as part of an integrated strategy. However, the confusion of roles and mandates, and the provision of "humanitarian assistance" by military actors have in some cases deteriorated the perception of neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian actions carried on by humanitarian Agencies and NGOs. This has resulted in an increased risk for humanitarian personnel and beneficiaries and in a shrinking of humanitarian access in some areas.

- **Gender based violence and forced recruitment of children and adolescents**: GBV is increasingly affecting children and adolescents and it is more and more often linked to the dynamic of drug trafficking. Moreover, there is an increase in forced recruitment of children and adolescents, not only for conflict-related purposes but also connected to sexual abuse.

- **Presence of new illegal armed groups/new criminality:** New illegal criminal groups are currently operating in some regions of the country, often occupying the spaces which were previously under the paramilitaries' control (now demobilized). These groups have increased their operational capacity since 2006 and their activities are related to an increase in homicides, threats, forced recruitment, displacement, drug production and trafficking and sexual violence.

- **Increasing tensions at the borders with Venezuela and Ecuador:** Diplomatic and political relations between Colombia and Ecuador have just been re-established after months of tension, while the relations with Venezuela remain frozen. The normalization of relations between Colombia and Venezuela has been conditioned to the results of the presidential elections in Colombia. Small border clashes can lead to an escalation of the sub-regional diplomatic crisis. Humanitarian situation at border areas is worrying; cross-border actions of the Armed Forces and of illegal armed groups are affecting the civilian population.

2. Recommendations of the 2006 Inter-Cluster Mission: Achievements and Challenges

Three years after the 2006 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Mission to Colombia, which aimed at advising on the implementation of the humanitarian reform in the country, the IASC Colombia held a workshop to assess achievements and challenges vis-à-vis the recommendations of this Mission.

The following are the main results of this joint effort, organized in relation to the 2006 Mission's recommendations. Many of the achievements and challenges presented below are cross-cutting to the findings of the 2006 Mission and apply to several recommendations despite they are not repeated in this document.

1. *The recently established Humanitarian Country Team (or 'IASC Country Team') needs to be strengthened and consolidated as the primary mechanism for coordination, policy formulation and decision-making on issues related to the international humanitarian response*

Achievements

- The IASC CT was established in Colombia with the participation of 11 UN agencies, 80% of the international humanitarian NGOs that operate in the country, and the ICRC, IFRC and ECHO as observers. The monthly meetings of the IASC CT, chaired by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), are instances for information sharing and facilitate decision making on strategic issues.
- An Inter-Thematic Group was created with the participation of the thematic groups' leaders and co-leaders; it works as an advising mechanism for the IASC CT.
- The general capacity of the IASC Colombia to provide a coordinated humanitarian response has improved since 2007, through the mobilization of CERF and ERF resources.
- There is a UN Emergency Technical Team (UNETE) which has favored an effective and coherent response to natural disasters.

Challenges

- Promote greater participation and representation of international NGOs in the coordination mechanisms
- Advance in the consolidation of the IASC CT as the main coordination space of the international community, vis-à-vis other coordination mechanisms (some of which are led by the government). In relation to this, there is a need to reinforce the IASC CT as a high- level decision making body, ensuring the participation of heads of agencies and NGOs and establishing a formal dialogue with the Government at the highest level.
- Achieve greater articulation between the IASC CT and the UNETE
- There are still gaps in the evaluation and follow up of coordination decisions and results, as well as in the design and systematization of lessons learned and best practices
- Move forward in positioning the Inter-Thematic Group as an advising instance of the IASC for strategic issues.

2. *Ensuring a coherent approach to humanitarian action and a common vision*

Achievements

- The IASC CT, through a coordinated presence, has been able to enhance the visibility of the general humanitarian situation of the country, with a special focus on the most affected areas.
- In 2007 the IASC CT and the Thematic Groups conducted a joint need and gap assessment at cluster level
- In the framework of the Thematic Groups and the regional teams, progresses have been made in the definition of common response strategies and approaches, based on the joint identification of needs and gaps
- Through some of the IASC and the Thematic Groups actions, the Colombian situation has been positioned in the international agenda at headquarters and other global instances level (ECHA/Policy Committee).
- In the IASC framework and led by the HC, a special working group was established to analyze the humanitarian consequences of the implementation of the Presidential Directive 001 of 2009. This Directive calls for the integration of civil (humanitarian) and military actions. The working group has identified problematic cases and made proposals to influence high level decision making.

Challenges

- There is a need to build common messages on the humanitarian situation and humanitarian action in Colombia.

- In order to facilitate the development of a IASC common vision, roles and mandates should be clearly defined, to support the implementation of a complementary and coherent response at national and local levels.
- The development of a common vision should acknowledge the different advocacy mandates between UN and the international NGOs especially in reference to sensitive issues.
- There is a need to develop a common IASC's assessment of the humanitarian situation of the country
- Mainstream the 'Do No Harm' approach in the IASC's activities
- Move forward on the implementation of approaches that guarantee sustainable solutions in the response.

3. *Coordination with Government authorities, State institutions and local civil society*

Achievements
- The IASC CT has facilitated a better liaison between the UN system and international NGOs and it is generally recognized as a space for dialogue with authorities and civil society at the national and local levels.
- Some of the IASC's Working Groups are regularly consulted by the Government, especially in areas such as health, water and sanitation and education in emergencies. Through a continuous advisory process, the Working Groups managed to influence the formulation of sectorial public policies.

Challenges
- There are new scenarios for the coordination with State institutions and government authorities (Policy of Social Consolidation of the Territory and Paris Declaration) in which there is a need to maintain the independence of humanitarian action.
- Notwithstanding the acknowledgement of the IASC CT by Government Authorities, there is a need to consolidate a space/mechanism for dialogue with the Government that counts on IASC consensus and common vision on the humanitarian situation
- There is a need to enhance the IASC Country Team's capacity to involve the donors community
- There is a need to improve coordination with the civil society, which so far has been limited to specific issues.

4. *Development of a Humanitarian Country Team Strategy and Action Plan for 2007*

Achievements
- 2008: the United Nations Emergency Technical Team (UNETE) together with international NGOs, IASC members and National Disaster Response Agencies, drafted a Response Plan to assist populations affected by flooding in different departments of the country. The Plan requested a total of US$33.7 million to implement humanitarian response and recovery for approximately 500,000 people in 5 priority zones: Magdalena and Chocó departments, the regions of Magdalena Medio and La Mojana, and the area of influence of the Nevado del Huila volcano
- 2009: The HC and the IASC Colombia attended a national retreat to evaluate the status of the implementation of the humanitarian reform in Colombia and to identify priorities and objectives for 2009. As an output of the retreat, the IASC produced a joint document including impact evaluation criteria and progress indicators.
- Regional coordination teams made progresses in the joint identification of strategies and work plans that include a regional prioritization strategy and intervention criteria.

Challenges:

- Colombia currently does not count on a CAP/CHAP process. The Government states that these mechanisms are not necessary in the current situation, however the UN and the NGOs recognize that there is a need to enhance common planning and to develop a more coherent framework for common financing mechanisms. The absence of a CHAP and a common humanitarian action strategy still represents a challenge to the implementation of a coherent response as IASC Colombia. The possibility of developing a common framework for humanitarian action would also support the process of building a IASC common vision on the humanitarian situation in Colombia (recommendation 2)
- Given the lack of a CAP/CHAP process, there is an urgent need to speed up regional humanitarian frameworks to target the most affected areas of the country. This was also one of the recommendations of the USG/ERC John Holmes following his visit to Colombia in February 2009.

5. *Strengthened field presence:*

Achievements
- The IASC has achieved significant progresses concerning a strengthened presence in the field. In addition to the areas prioritized for the establishment of Regional IASCs, the IASC has expanded its presence to areas traditionally lacking international humanitarian presence. In this framework, the IASC and the Thematic Groups have supported joint interventions in remote areas of Meta, Guaviare, Vichada, Tolima and Caquetá.
- Currently seven Regional IASCs are active in the most affected areas of the country. In some areas, the existing Thematic Groups have been replicated at regional coordination level.
- Resources mobilized through the CERF have supported a coordinated response in areas such as the Pacific Coast and the Mojana region.

Challenges
- Regional teams need to be strengthened through the identification of clear leadership and accountability mechanisms. The quality of response needs to be improved through enhanced coordination at field level, which would allow going beyond single specific interventions, in order to build a sustainable presence. Moreover, there is a need to increase the visibility of forgotten areas that are not yet counting on a large international presence.
- Improve communication mechanisms between the IASC CT, the Thematic Groups, the regional working groups (Equipo Especial de la Resolución 1612, Grupo de trabajo dela Resolución 1820) and Regional IASC.
- The IASC emphasized the importance of jointly assessing and analyzing the local dynamic in urban areas, to promote the development of specific response strategies.

6. *Promotion of area-specific and community-specific approaches.*

Achievements
- Since 2009 the IASC has been working to achieve a better inclusion of specific cross-cutting issues (e.g. gender, GBV and child recruitment) through an improved coordination with the Special Working Groups. In particular, progresses have been made in the elaboration of strategies and action points in coordination with the Special Working Group on Resolution 1612 and the Special Working Group on Resolution 1820.
- Both the Thematic Groups and the Regional IASCs have prioritized the most vulnerable areas and communities for their intervention, giving special attention to Indigenous and Afro-Colombian

populations. The IASC has supported the formulation of humanitarian regional plans to elaborate specific responses for the most affected areas (both for conflict and natural disasters)

Challenges
- Despite the achievements in this context, there is still a need to improve coordination between the IASC and the different working groups (Working group on borders, Inter-Agency Group for indigenous populations, Gender Group, Group on Resolution 1612)
- Intervention plans for vulnerable communities need to take into account the communities' specific processes and priorities, in order not to disrupt their internal mechanisms.

7. Capacity building

Achievements
- Government counterparts have strengthened their participation in the framework of the Thematic Groups' work plans. Moreover, coordination with ethnic and indigenous authorities has improved.
- In some areas, the IASC has supported through coordinated processes local authorities responsible for the implementation of the Constitutional Court sentence T-025 referred to attention to displaced population.
- At regional level, the IASC and local authorities have coordinated actions in the framework of Contingency Plans and local Integrated Plans for Assistance to Displaced Populations (Plan Integral Unico-PIU).

Challenges
- Challenges related to a weak institutional presence still remain, especially in some regions. Moreover, there is a need to ensure the sustainability of the actions implemented in coordination with local authorities.
- In the current context, there is an increased risk of manipulation of humanitarian assistance and of threats against communities receiving assistance in the framework of the Government's Social Consolidation Plan

8. Information management

Achievements
- The IASC Information Management Thematic Group and the Emergency Telecommunications Thematic Group were both established in 2010.
- The Humanitarian Information Integrated System (SIDIH) managed by OCHA has become a key support instrument for the humanitarian community
- Thematic Groups have made progresses in the identification and formulation of sector-specific information.

Challenges
- Thematic Groups need to take the lead in the consolidation and dissemination of sector-specific information.
- There is a need to improve the flow of information between the national and regional levels.
- The IASC emphasized the importance of confidence building as a key factor to facilitate information sharing.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

The following are the main recommendations resulting from the workshop, based on the achievements and challenges identified.

1. The IASC stressed the importance of formulating a common framework for humanitarian action in Colombia, based on a shared vision of the gaps, priorities and action points. This common approach should acknowledge the existence of different mandates, perspectives and interests of UN Agencies and NGOs.

2. In relation to the above, the IASC also emphasized the importance of enhancing the visibility of the humanitarian situation in Colombia, at the same time reiterating the need to maintain independence of humanitarian action.

3. The IASC also pointed out the importance of an information management system (e.g. the existing SIDIH) that supports the elaboration of humanitarian plans and a common decision making process.

4. There is a need to strengthen the mechanisms for continuous feedback from the field to the national level of the IASC (and vice versa), in order to produce clear guidance to support humanitarian action at local level.

5. The IASC reiterated the importance of clear terms of reference for the Thematic Groups at national and local level, including leadership and accountability mechanisms.

6. The IASC also emphasized the need to formulate a humanitarian financing strategy linked to a common framework for humanitarian action (CHAP) that articulates existing resource mobilization strategies while exploring other mechanisms such as the CAP (possibly several sub-national CAP-like appeals). This strategy should also be articulated with pooled funds available for/in Colombia like the CERF RR/UF and the ERF, enhancing the sustainability and impact of activities started wit these resources.

7. The IASC also acknowledge the importance of involving donors community in the process of building a common approach to humanitarian response.

Protection Thematic Group (PTG)		
Dimensions	**Achievements**	**Challenges**
Formal	- The PTG was created and is an active part of the coordination structure - Methodological contributions (to address coordination, protection and response gaps) - There is a good relationship and trust among the members of the Group (continuance and sporadic participation depending on interests remains a challenge) - The PTG has a work plan	- Follow-up difficulties and bottlenecks in the diffusion of results - Loss of dynamism of the group at the national level - Coordinate with and avoid parallel mechanisms that address protection issues (limited impact due to contradictory actions) - Promote the active participation and appropriation of NGOs - Formulate terms of reference for the PTG leader - Operational capacity that requires an exclusive dedication for the Group's operation
Response	- Response to specific situations in the field - Characterization and follow-up to humanitarian access trends: identification and characterization of at-risk areas, documentation of specific cases and their impact, recovery of humanitarian access - Methodology for the assessment of humanitarian space, installed capacity in the field, sensitization on access constraints	
Crosscutting issues		- Better articulation with special working groups (1612 and 1820 Resolutions) - Gender mainstreaming
Programmatic	- The PTG has developed a strategy for protection - Prevention system: support and strengthening of the Early Warning System (EWS)	- Better advocacy capacities are needed to address strategic issues (e.g. denial of the existence of an armed conflict)

	Achievements	Challenges
	- Follow-up to zones at risk - Differential approach, compilation of security incidents and EWS recommendations	
Field presence	- Dialogue with regional mechanisms - Extension of coverage to the Southeast, Vichada and Guaviare, Tolima and Caqueta, Buenaventura (Pacific) - Joint missions to non-covered areas	- Better communication between national and regional levels
Capacity building	- Partial training on the Court Orders as requested by the field - Coordinated process of accompaniment to the observance of Court Orders 004, 005 and 007	- Move forward in the communities' strengthening
Information	- Thematic information: risks and gaps in the response, security and access incidents	- Gaps in the flow of information collected and produced by the Group
THE ASSISTANCE AND BASIC SERVICES THEMATIC GROUP		
Dimensions	**Achievements**	**Challenges**
Formal	- The Group was established (TORs, meetings) - Sub-groups on health, education WatSan and food	- Discussion on the Sub-group on mine action
Programmatic	- Joint identification of gaps in humanitarian assistance and basic services	- Integrate the different perspectives of humanitarian assistance and basic services - The thematic group is still to develop a work plan

Dimension	Achievements	Challenges
		- Strengthen nutrition perspective - Review and discuss the gaps on humanitarian assistance and basic services
Capacity building	- Departmental round tables on health and education with ministerial directives	
Differential approach		- Mine action mainstreaming
Field presense	- Immediate Response Teams (IRT): Inter-agency and inter-thematic actions - Regional presence (missions, regional IASC)	- Define the Group's leadership and accountability at the regional and local levels
Response	- Water and Sanitation group (CASH) - Interventions in food and nutrition (non IASC) - Mine action as a crosscutting issue -	- Tensions between the National System for IDPs Assistance and the Education Ministry regarding the use of schools as temporary shelters - The CASH group operates within the UNETT more than within the IASC
Information	- WatSan mapping (ECOWASH) - Mapping of schools (education in emergencies) - Ministry of Education information system	- Improve the quality of the information - A (e.g. study on nutrition) - Develop IASC crisis and humanitarian reports - Discussions on the public use of information produced by the group.
EARLY RECOVERY THEMATIC GROUP		
Dimension	**Achievements**	**Challenges**
Formal	- The Group was established and meets regularly.	- Identity and agreements upon the use of the concept of "early recovery"

	- Mine action sub-group created	- Early recovery as a cross cutting issue - Promote the active participation and appropriation by NGOs and UN agencies. - 3W of ER in Colombia
Presencia en el terreno	- Accompaniment and trainings in prioritized areas - Pilot projects: Nariño (Awá indigenous community) and Loma Central (Bolívar)	- Resource mobilization - Effective implementation of projects - Better communication between national and regional levels - Inclusion of EA perspective in local action plans. - Improved field presence
Programmatic	- Work plan elaborated - Mine action projects with ER perspective ongoing - Local needs assessments	- Strengthen coordination with civil society and local and national governments - Define mine action programme for Colombia - Improve ER perspective in Natural Disasters and Risk management
Capacity building		- Mobilize humanitarian funds for capacity building on ER
Cross-cutting issues		
Information	- Sectorial information provided - Use of the Humanitarian Integrated System (SIDIH)	- Permanent context analysis - Information system on ER
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT THEMATIC GROUP*		
	- Thematic groups focal points appointed - Seven UN agencies, 5 NGOs and 2 governmental institutions attending the meetings - Regular meetings - Support from 12 online UNV - Trainings on IM	- Promote the active participation and appropriation by NGOs and UN agencies. - Promote sectorial IM - Designation of permanent focal points - Wiki platform for information exchange
* The IM thematic group was not included in the IASC Mission's recommendations on 2006. OCHA led the creation of the group on 2009 in support of the IASC needs on IM.		

REGIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS (Antioquia, Chocó, Valle-Cauca, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Arauca, Bolívar-Sucre)		
Dimension	**Achievements**	**Challenges**
Formal	- Seven coordination mechanisms created and with regular meetings - Local thematic groups - IASC-R acknowledged by local authorities	- Promote the active participation and appropriation by NGOs and UN agencies.
Programmatic	- Effective implementation of work plans - Joint needs assessments on protection and response gaps (Nariño, Norte de Santander, Chocó)	- Emphasize in and inter-cluster perspective - Strengthen coordination mechanisms above individual mandates - Trust building - More coherence between assistance and ER perspectives - Involve donors in a common vision of the humanitarian situation
Response	- Humanitarian Assistance and Basic services local thematic groups - Response to emergencies in Valle and Cauca - CERF projects	- More vs. better response
Capacity building	- Support and advisory to local authorities - Permanent coordination with civil society and authorities - Local workshops with journalists on humanitarian issues	- Prioritize local visions during project formulation
Crosscutting issues	- Areas and communities prioritized - Strengthening of indigenous and afrocolombian organizations	- Gender perspective - Improve coordination with the monitoring mechanism of Resolution 1612 and special group for resolution 1820.
Information	- Use of the Integrated Humanitarian System (SIDIH)	- Promote leaderships and strategies for IM - Better communication between national and