

# Conflict, Displacement, and Elections Action Plan for Municipal Elections in Colombia

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**Political Rights and Enfranchisement System Strengthening Project  
(PRESS)**

## **Action Plan VII**

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November 2006



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**IOM International Organization for Migration**

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**International Organization for Migration**

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## Acronyms and Organizations

AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia – United Self-Defense Units of Colombia
CNE	Consejo Nacional Electoral – National Electoral Commission
CODHES	Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento – Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional – National Liberation Army
EMB	Election Management Body
EPL	Ejército Popular de Liberación – Popular Liberation Army
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
INCODER	Instituto Colombiano de Desarrollo Rural – Colombian Institute for Rural Development
IRI	International Republican Institute
M-19	Movimiento 19 de Abril – 19 <sup>th</sup> of April Movement
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OAS	Organization of American States
ONIC	Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia – National Indigenous Organization of Colombia
PDA	Polo Democrático Alternativo
PEP	Participatory Elections Project
PRESS	Political Rights and Enfranchisement System Strengthening
RPG	Refugee Policy Group

RSS	Red de Seguridad Social – Social Security Network
SNAIPD	Sistema Nacional de Atención Integral a la Población Desplazada – National System of Comprehensive Assistance to the Displaced Population
SUR	Sistema Unico de Registro – Unified Registration System
UAO	Unidad de Atención y Orientación – Attention and Orientation Unit
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## PART I

### Executive Summary

The Political Rights and Enfranchisement System Strengthening (PRESS) Project is an initiative of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to address issues concerning the political rights of persons displaced by conflict. The right to political participation for persons displaced by conflict is enshrined in numerous of international covenants such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

Colombia was selected as an Action Plan case because of the opportunities presented by the 2007 municipal electoral process that could be leveraged to improve conditions, accelerate returns, and enhance political rights for the Colombians who have been internally displaced by the conflict. These opportunities can be found in several convergences involving displacement and political processes. The first convergence is one of local interests. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are municipal security and public services issues; and the 2007 elections are municipal in nature. A second convergence is the intervention of the Constitutional Court; and the acquiescence of the government to this intervention. The government of Colombia is under the Court's orders to allocate more funding to IDP services and improve its response to the displacement crisis. A third convergence is that of new international attention to the linkages between democracy and displacement. Although such organizations as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and IOM have been working in Colombia many for years on displacement issues, democracy development organizations, such as the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI), are relatively new on the scene and focused on political parties, domestic observation, and elections.

Although these convergences could be leveraged to create opportunities, there are also risks associated with any actions taken to improve the conditions of IDPs. From early evaluations, it is important for the international community to evaluate the feasibility of electoral programs in light of the security situation surrounding IDPs in some locales.

The methodology of this Plan blends commonly employed approaches for pre-election technical assessments with those issues raised in the *Refugees and Elections*, compiled by the Refugee Policy Group (RPG)<sup>1</sup>. In a general sense, the pre-election technical assessment dimension involves an evaluation of the legal framework for the election and the Election Management Body (EMB). It examines political parties and campaigns; media and voter education; election monitoring; and the adjudication of election complaints. The RPG dimension to this methodology considers factors such as the size, locations, political alignments, and other demographics associated with the displaced populations. It seeks to harmonize the electoral processes with the movements of the displaced, resettlement patterns,

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<sup>1</sup> Gallagher, Denis and Anna Schwengerdt, *Refugees and Elections: A Separate Peace*, Refugee Policy Group, October 1997.

and other needs. This methodology seeks to integrate a relevant electoral perspective into the basic scope of humanitarian concerns for the displaced. The Plan is intended for use by Colombian and international stakeholders concerned about conflict, displacement, and elections.

The Colombian legal framework governing conflict, displacement, and elections is comprehensive. It is defined here to include a combination of constitutional provisions, Constitutional Court orders, national legislation, and presidential decrees. In its landmark ruling T-025-2004 (January 22, 1994), the Constitutional Court ordered the government of Colombia to improve its public services to IDPs and bring an end to the “unconstitutional state of affairs” surrounding IDP rights. Failing to gain a prompt government response, the Court issued several supplementary orders during the course of 2005. Under pressure from the “final implementation order” by the Court on September 13, 2005, the government announced on November 29, 2005 that it would increase the budget for IDP support to 18,000 million pesos (\$362.16 million USD) in 2006; and would devote 5,100 billion pesos (\$2.26 billion USG) to the problem over the next five years. The ruling came about because of a petition filed by hundreds of IDP families who alleged that their constitutional rights were being violated as a consequence of government failures.<sup>2</sup>

Violence and the fear of violence are the principal sources of internal displacement in Colombia. The UNCHR report states that 97% of the IDPs interviewed in Bogotá cited actual or feared violence as the cause for their displacement. The roots of the current conflict can be traced to 1948, a period in Colombian history known as *La Violencia*, The Violence, a period of conflict between the Conservative and Liberal Parties. It is estimated that *La Violencia* cost the lives of 200,000 Colombians. Between 1948 and 1966, it is estimated that two million Colombians were displaced by the violence in the rural areas.

The census figures on the number of IDPs in Colombia vary by the source. The range is from a low end of 1.8 million people, representing the number of individuals who have registered with Action Social, one of the government agencies responsible for IDP services; to a high of over three million persons, a figure provided by Consultoria para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (CODHES), the non-governmental organization which monitors IDP communities and issues. This deviation between unofficial and official statistics is symbolic of the societal gaps in rights, services, and returns that are experienced by IDPs.

The communities impacted by displacement can be divided into two categories: 1) municipalities of expulsion; and 2) municipalities of reception. Examples of expulsion communities include Bolivar, Antioquia, Carreta, and Tolima. Many of the displaced ultimately migrate to the largest cities such as Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla, and Cartagena while spending time in smaller or medium-sized cities in between times.

Few data are available on the subject of IDP voting in the May 2002 presidential elections. The elections were marred by guerrilla violence, murders, and intimidation. President Alvaro

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<sup>2</sup> Springer, Natalie, Colombia: Internal Displacement – Policies and Problems, United Nations High Commission for Refugees, June 2006, page 10

Uribe Velez was elected by a margin of 53% to 31% over Horacio Serpa Uribe. Minor political parties were relatively successful in legislative elections because of perceptions of establishment party corruption.

Municipal elections were last held in 2003. In those elections, there were three parties – Partido Liberal Colombiano, Partido Conservador Colombiano, and the Movimiento Equipo Colombia – that won over 5,600 municipal seats with the Liberals winning over 2,700 seats alone.

Electoral processes provide opportunities to bring visibility to social issues, attract resources, and identify “champions” for these issues who will advocate for IDPs after the elections are concluded. The 2007 municipal election cycle presents to enhance assistance to the displaced and provide IDPs with a stronger voice in governance to advocate on their own behalf. However, to maximize effectiveness and create a critical mass of resources, there should be a coordinated approach that integrates humanitarian and electoral assistance programs. From an institutional perspective, participating entities should include international and national stakeholders from the governmental and non-governmental sectors in a constellation of organizations unique to this election cycle.

The basic Action Plan tenets are summarized below:

- The municipal electoral process will attract democracy assistance programs and election observers. This increase in assistance and presence should be used to strengthen the channels of advocacy and enfranchisement for the IDPs.
- These democracy resources can be leveraged to provide greater visibility on the conditions of IDPs. The transparency that democracy assistance brings to a process should be used to encourage immediate improvement in IDP conditions and benefits.
- The municipal electoral processes can provoke local political competition and conflict and the programming in each municipality should be tailored accordingly so that IDPs are not placed in vulnerable situations.
- The municipal electoral process offers opportunities for civil society capacity building. The Colombian civil society community is diverse, but can play a role in voter education and domestic monitoring. In particular, civil society organizations for IDPs, indigenous people, Afro-Colombians, and women can be targeted for assistance programming.

## PRESS Project Background and Methodologies

The Political Rights and Enfranchisement System Strengthening (PRESS) Project is an initiative of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to address issues concerning the political rights of persons displaced by conflict. The PRESS Project follows that of Participatory Elections Project (PEP) where the initial knowledge base and methodologies were developed. In both projects, IOM has collected a unique repository of data on conflict, displacement, and elections. It has also developed a draft set of Guidelines to encourage observance of international norms and standards for political rights of persons displaced by conflict. Finally, IOM has conducted numerous field missions to make specific Action Plan recommendations on enfranchisement options for elections involving significant populations of conflict displaced voters.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees around the world face special challenges in realizing their rights to political participation. Their disenfranchisement violates fundamental human rights norms and weakens the reconciliation value of post-conflict elections. The right of political participation is enshrined in Article 25 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR), ratified by Nepal in 1991, which holds that:

*“Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity... without unreasonable restrictions: (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free will of the electors...”*<sup>3</sup>

Core human rights standards for IDPs have been enumerated in the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. “The Guiding Principles consolidate into one document all the international norms relevant to IDPs, otherwise dispersed in many different instruments. Although not a legally binding document, the principles reflect and are consistent with existing international human rights and humanitarian law. In re-stating existing norms, they also seek to address grey areas and gaps.”<sup>4</sup>

Guiding Principle 1 declares that:

*“Internally displaced persons shall enjoy, in full equality, the same rights and freedoms under international and domestic law as do other persons in their country. They shall not be discriminated against in the enjoyment of any rights and freedoms on the ground that they are internally displaced.”*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, G.A. res. 2200A (XXI), 21 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 49, U.N. Doc. A/6316 (1966), 993 U.N.T.S. 3, entered into force Jan. 3, 1976. Available at [http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a\\_ccpr.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm).

<sup>4</sup> Roberta Cohen, “The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement: A New Instrument for International Organizations and NGO’s,” *Forced Migration Review*, no.2, (August 1998): 31.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, UN Doc E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2, (11 February 1998), Available at <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/7/b/principles.htm>; Internet Accessed on 1 June, 2002.

This language is strengthened in Principle 22, which declares that:

*“Internally displaced persons, whether or not they are living in camps, shall not be discriminated against as a result of their displacement in the enjoyment of the following rights: (a) The rights to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, opinion and expression; ... (c) The right to associate freely and participate equally in community affairs; (d) **The right to vote and to participate in governmental and public affairs, including the right to have access to the means necessary to exercise this right...**”* (emphasis added)

Colombia ratified that ICCPR in 1969, and therefore has an obligation to ensure that all citizens have the opportunity to vote in elections.<sup>6</sup> In addition, Colombian Law 387 of 1997 declares that “the forcibly displaced shall enjoy internationally recognized basic civil rights.”<sup>7</sup> The right to participate in the political affairs of the state is universally considered a “basic” civil right. Further, in the introduction of the Government Policy Document CONPES 3057 (1999), the government explicitly states its commitment to “promote and respect the implementation of the Guiding Principles.”<sup>8</sup>

Colombia was selected as an Action Plan case because of opportunities created by the 2007 municipal electoral process that could be leveraged to improve conditions, accelerate returns, and enhance political rights for the Colombians who have been internally displaced by the conflict. These opportunities can be found in several convergences involving displacement and political processes. The first convergence is one of local interests. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are municipal security and public service issues; and, the elections scheduled for 2007 are municipal elections. Municipal elections hold the potential for IDPs to be both political issues and political victims. IDPs may be a political issue because of their strain on municipal services, infrastructure, employment, and law enforcement. IDPs may be victims if they are the objects of vote buying schemes or intimidation instigated by local economic and political powers.

A second convergence is the intervention of the Constitutional Court; and the acquiescence of the government. The government of Colombia is under the Court’s orders to allocate more funding to IDP services and improve its response to the displacement crisis. Any resulting government actions will be taking place against the backdrop of municipal campaigning creating potential linkages between humanitarian services and the elections.

A third convergence is that of a new international focus on democracy and displacement in Colombia. Although such organizations as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and IOM have been working in Colombia for many years on displacement issues, other democracy development organizations, such as the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI), are relative newcomers on the scene and focused on political parties, domestic observations, and

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.unhchr.ch/pdf/report.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/idp/Colombia\\_IDPlaw\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/idp/Colombia_IDPlaw_Eng.pdf)

elections. In addition, the United Nations Special Representative for Internally Displaced Persons, Walter Kälin, made an assessment trip to Colombia in June 2006 providing greater UN emphasis on the displacement problem.

The information for this Action Plan was collected through desk research and a field mission to Bogota conduct from September 4 to September 11, 2006. In Bogotá, interviews were conducted with people displaced by the conflict, government officials, grassroots organizations, international organizations, political parties, and media representatives. Although a list of meetings is attached as Annex A, the attributions and citations that are used in this text involve only the published writings and not the individual interviews.

The methodology of this Plan blends commonly employed approaches for pre-election technical assessments with those issues raised in the *Refugees and Elections*, compiled by the Refugee Policy Group (RPG).<sup>9</sup> In a general sense, the pre-election technical assessment dimension involves an evaluation of the legal framework for the election and the Election Management Body (EMB). It examines political parties and campaigns; media and voter education; election monitoring; and the adjudication of election complaints. The RPG dimension to this methodology considers factors such as the size, locations, political alignments, and other demographics associated with the displaced populations. It seeks to harmonize the electoral processes with the movements of the displaced, resettlement patterns, and other needs.

The Plan is intended for use by Colombian and international stakeholders in conflict, displacement, and elections. Its Action Points are not confined to those that could be taken by IOM alone; but, rather, the Plan will provide a broadly-based instrument for national and international agencies and non-governmental organizations to plan and consider their own courses of action over the next twelve to fifteen months.

### Colombian Legal Framework for Conflict, Displacement, and Elections

The legal framework governing conflict, displacement, and elections is comprehensive. It is defined here to include a combination of constitutional articles, Constitutional Court orders, laws, and presidential decrees. As Walter Kälin, Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons who visited Colombia in June 2006, stated, “Colombia is a country with commendable legislation and a far-reaching policy framework on internal displacement. However, there is a clear gap affecting the human rights of many among the up to three million displaced persons between what the law says and what is implemented at the regional and local levels.”<sup>10</sup>

This sentiment is reiterated in a statement by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). A report by the Norwegian Refugee Council/Global IDP Project states, “although Colombia has

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<sup>9</sup> Gallagher, Denis and Anna Schwengerdt, *Refugees and Elections: A Separate Peace*, Refugee Policy Group, October 1997.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/idp/200606\\_rsg\\_colombia.htm](http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/idp/200606_rsg_colombia.htm), Statement by Walter Kälin, Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, June 26, 2006.

some of the most progressive IDP legislation, the government has undermined the existing legal framework through various amendments.”<sup>11</sup>

As a result, deficiencies in the legal framework are not as pressing a concern as are implementation issues. Nevertheless, the following sections describe the major elements of the conflict, displacement, and elections legal framework.

## ***Conflict***

### *Peace and Justice Law*

Law 975, the Peace and Justice Law passed in July 2005, provides for a de-mobilization and re-insertion of paramilitary forces. By a recent count, the law formed the basis for the demobilization of 30,944 members of the United Self-Defense Units of Colombia (AUC) and the Elmer Cardenas Block seizing a total of 17,564 weapons. A description of its basic provisions is discussed below:

- Although its main object is the demobilization of combatants, the law never mentions the existence of the armed conflict for the applicability of international humanitarian law;
- Members of irregular combatant groups who wish to demobilize, must apply and can be admitted to the process provided that the group to which they belong agrees to cease its activities;
- Perpetrators of crimes committed during the conflict “may” provide information on those crimes but are not compelled to do so;
- A maximum penalty of five to eight years foreseen for non-pardonable offences;
- The interests of the victim are ignored and there is no provision or compensation for victims; and the government is not required to investigate those financing otherwise supporting the paramilitaries.<sup>12</sup>

### *Special Protections to Afro-Colombians and Other Minorities*

Article 176 of the Colombian constitution stipulates that “The law may establish a special electoral district to ensure the participation in the Chamber of Representatives of ethnic groups and political minorities and Colombians resident abroad. Up to five representatives may be elected for this district.” Law 70 (1993), which provides for special protections to Afro-Colombians, implements this principle in its Article 66. The latter establishes a special electoral district to elect two members of the country’s African communities to ensure their participation in the Chamber of Representatives. However, in its decision C-494-96 of September 26, 1996, the Constitutional Court has declared this article cannot be executed.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=RSDCOI&id=3ae6a6180>, pg. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Springer, Natalie, *Colombia: Internal Displacement: Policies and Problems*, United Nations High Commission for Refugees, June 2006, pages 37-38.

## *Displacement*

### *Constitutional Court Orders*

In its landmark ruling T-025-2004 (January 22, 2004), the Constitutional Court ordered the government of Colombia to improve its public services to IDPs and bring an end to the “unconstitutional state of affairs” surrounding IDP rights. Failing to gain a prompt government response, the Court issued several supplementary orders during the course of 2005. Under pressure from the “final implementation order” by the Court on September 13, 2005, the government announced on November 29, 2005 that it would increase the budget for IDP support to 18,000 million pesos (\$362.16 million USD) in 2006; and would devote 5,100 billion pesos (\$2.26 billion USD) to the problem over the next five years. The ruling came about because of a petition by 1,150 IDP families who alleged that their constitutional rights were being violated.

The Court ordered that the following actions be undertaken by the government:

- Adopt a budget in accordance with the identified needs of the registered IDP population;
- Develop an action plan which addresses the deficits of state action;
- Inform the victims of forced displacement about their basic rights and entitlements;
- Undertake within six months all necessary steps to guarantee a Court-defined minimum level of protection for all IDPs;
- Guarantee full participation of the displaced population in the decision-making; sanction any civil servants or agencies that had forced IDPs to have recourse to legal remedies to obtain their entitlements
- Sanction any civil servants or agencies that had forced IDPs to have recourse to legal remedies to obtain their entitlements.<sup>13</sup>

As part of its response to the Court order, the government set up a National Development Plan. This pilot program involves the return of 30,000 displaced families which brings together assistance elements of housing subsidies, land registry processes, and training for income generation. However, return is not always a viable option for some families or communities in the short term.

### *Displacement Laws and Presidential Decrees*

- Law 387 (1997) - adopts measures for the prevention of forced displacement, provides assistance, protection, consolidation, and socioeconomic stabilization of the displaced, and provides for a series of mechanisms for guaranteeing the rights of the displaced.<sup>14</sup> According to the Global IDP Project, “Law 387 must be recognized as an important governmental effort to create an integrated policy on the issue of displacement. Unfortunately, like many other well-intentioned laws in Colombia, its

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<sup>13</sup> Colombia, Constitutional Court, Sentencia T-025 de 2004, 22 January 2004.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.cidh.oas.org/countryrep/Colom99en/chapter-6.htm>.

effectiveness depends on the actual resources and the political will of many for it to be carried out and implemented. Interestingly, article 35 of the law sets forth the right of NGOs, state entities, and victims to use the newly regulated 'compliance action' to request the effective judicial implementation of what is promised by law."<sup>15</sup>

- Presidential Decree 173 (1998) - creates the Plan for Integrated Attention to the Displaced Population in which the objective and general concepts of a national strategy are defined in a generic way. The plan lays out an activity agenda and to some degree designates the entities in charge of certain aspects of the problem. But it does not include guidance on implementation processes nor does it assure sufficient resources to meet its objectives.<sup>16</sup>
- Government Policy Document CONPES 3057 (1999) – provides an analysis of the current IDP situation and the existing mechanisms to service IDPs. The document presents the activities foreseen in the field of prevention, protection, humanitarian assistance, and return/resettlement. In the introduction to the document, the government explicitly states its commitment to “promote and respect the implementation of the Guiding Principles.”
- Presidential Decree 2569 (December 12, 2000) - outlines the responsibilities of the Social Solidarity Network (RSS), an agency in the National System of Comprehensive Assistance, to IDPs. Issues covered include government responsibility at local and national levels in regard to prevention, assistance, registration and durable solutions. The decree also outlines criteria for people classified as no longer in a state of displacement.
- Presidential Decree 250 (February 2005) adopted a National Plan for the Comprehensive Assistance to the Population Displaced by Violence. Its guiding principles consist of five orientations and five intervention principles. The orientations recognize that services must be delivered to different communities in different methods tailoring to a differential focus, a territorial focus, a humanitarian focus, a restitution focus, and a focus on human rights. The five intervention principles are shared responsibility, integrality, cooperation and solidarity, participation and social control, and attention to vulnerability.

## *Elections*

### *Constitution*

Colombia’s present constitution was enacted on July 4, 1991 and amended on numerous occasions since its adoption<sup>17</sup>. This Constitution introduced a number of rights and reforms into Colombia society including civil divorce, dual nationality, and the election of the Vice President and that of department governors. The Constitution also introduced the concept of

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=RSDCOI&id=3ae6a6180>, pg. 174.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=RSDCOI&id=3ae6a6180>, pg. 174.

<sup>17</sup> Decree 2576 of July 27, 2005 actualized the constitution’s text.

“tutela,” whereby immediate court actions can be requested by individuals if they believe that their constitutional rights are being violated and there is no other recourse for judicial protection.

Concerning personal rights, Article 2 of Colombia’s constitution provides that “The essential goals of the state are to ... guarantee the effectiveness of the principles, rights, and duties stipulated by the Constitution; to facilitate the participation of all in the decisions that affect them ...” and that “The authorities of the Republic are established in order to protect all persons residing in Colombia, their life, dignity, property, beliefs, and other rights and freedoms...”. Article 5 further stipulates that “The state recognizes, without any discrimination whatsoever, the primacy of the inalienable rights of the individual ...”

Concerning voting rights, Article 40 foresees that “Any citizen has the right to participate in the establishment, exercise, and control of political power. To make this decree effective the citizen may:

- 1) Vote and be elected.
- 2) Participate in elections, plebiscites, referendums, popular consultations, and other forms of democratic participation.
- 3) Constitute parties, political movements, or groups without any limit whatsoever.”

Article 258 states the following regarding the management of elections: “Voting is a right and a civic duty. The State will supervise the balloting so that it is without any form of coercion and done secretly by the citizens in individual polling booths installed in every electoral district without prejudice to the use of electronic means or informatics. In the election of candidates numbered voting ballots printed on paper distributed officially and providing secrecy can be used. The electoral organization will provide ballots equally to all voters on which they must clearly and impartially indicate the political movements and parties with legal personality and the candidates. The law may establish voting mechanisms that provide more and better guarantees for the free exercise of this right of the citizens.”

The Colombian constitution describes the requirements for the formation of political organizations in Article 107, “all citizens are guaranteed the right to establish, organize, and promote parties and political movements and the freedom to become affiliated with them or to withdraw from them. Social organizations are also guaranteed the right to demonstrate and to participate in political events.” Article 109 provides that the State contributes to the financing of election campaigns and parties. And, Article 111 provides political parties with access to the media. The composition of the National Electoral Commission is found in Article 264, while Article 120 foresees that the National Registry of Vital Records is responsible for the organization of elections, their direction and supervision, as well its matters relating to personal identification.

#### *Electoral Laws and Decrees*

- Presidential Decree 2241 (1986) – the Colombian Election Code describes the general provisions for election organization, identification cards, voting procedures, the

regulation of presidential and governor candidates, and election crimes and penalties. However, many of its provisions are superseded by the constitution that was ratified in 1991.

- Law 130 (1994) – governs the organization and funding of political parties and other provisions.
- Law 199 (1995) and Presidential Decree 2546 (1999) – integrates administrative responsibilities for the electoral process with other agencies and branches of government.
- Presidential Decree 2267 (1997) – creates committees for cooperation and coordination for elections that take place on the municipal, departmental, and national levels.
- Law 599 (2000) – criminalizes certain political behaviors and stipulates the penalties for these crimes.<sup>18</sup>

Each Colombian citizen over the age of 18 possesses the right to vote. Citizens over 18 are automatically registered in the census and designated to a specific polling station based on their residential address. If a change of address occurs, voters must re-register and will be assigned to a new polling location.

## Colombia History of Conflict, Displacement, and Elections

### *Conflict*

Violence and the fear of violence are the principal sources of internal displacement in Colombia. A recent UNCHR report states that 97% of the IDPs interviewed in Bogotá cited actual or feared violence as the causes of their displacement.<sup>19</sup> The roots of the current conflict can be traced to 1948 and a period in Colombian history known as *La Violencia*, The Violence, a period of conflict between the Conservative and Liberal Parties. . It is estimated that *La Violencia* cost the lives of 200,000 Colombians. Between 1948 and 1966, it is estimated that two million Colombians were displaced by the violence, many from the rural areas.

Out of this conflictive environment, left-wing insurgent groups began to appear including the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC – Revolutionary Armed Force of Colombia), Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN – National Liberation Army), and Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL – Popular Liberation Army). Of the two largest groups, the FARC was established in 1964 as the military wing of the Colombian Communist Party. A Council on Foreign Relations report in 2005 estimated their membership strength at 12,000

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<sup>18</sup> Report of the Electoral Observation Mission in the Republic of Colombia, 2002, Organization of American States, September 26, 2003, page 4.

<sup>19</sup> Springer, Natalie, *Colombia: Internal Displacement: Policies and Problems*, United Nations High Commission for Refugees, June 2006, page 21.

to 18,000 individuals while the US Department of State has estimated the numbers at 9,000 to 12,000. Although FARC's Marxist philosophy is still pertinent to its goals, the bombings, murders, kidnappings, and extortions that it undertakes are often economic in nature and objective. At its inception, the FARC brought together communist militants and peasant self-defense groups.

The ELN was established in 1963 by leftist intellectuals, students, and radical Catholics inspired by Fidel Castro's revolution in Cuba. ELN may be considered as more ideological than FARC, however, its numbers are much fewer and around 4,000 and it operates principally in northeastern Colombia.

Later, other insurgent groups appeared such as the Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19 – 19<sup>th</sup> of April Movement) and the indigenous-based *Movimiento Armado Quintin Lame* (Quintin Lame Armed Movement). In response to these insurgencies, so-called right-wing paramilitaries were established to combat the guerilla groups. These paramilitaries were organized under a common banner of the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC - United Self-Defense Units of Colombia). Annex B shows a map of the conflict zones.

The current conflict possesses economic and criminal dimensions that have intensified the violence and resulting displacement. In many cases, illicit economic and criminal interests drive the armed movements and use civilians as targets in the quest to control desirable land for its natural resources, extraction, or potential cultivation of illicit crops.

The recent conflict zones have been clustered in departments in the northwest of the country on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts; and in the southwest on the border with Ecuador and Peru. Specifically, in the north it is the departments of Bolivar, Sucre, Norte de Santander, Chocó, Antioquia, and Caldas; while in the south it is Nariño, Putumayo and Caquetá. This conflict geography generally tracks with the identification of "at risk" communities by UNHCR in such departments as Norte de Santander, Antioquia, Chocó, Caldas, Valle, Nariño, Putumayo, and Caquetá.

From a municipal perspective, the violence often has a local character and local roots that are both historical and economic. As the UNHCR report states, "The degree to which Colombia municipalities are vulnerable to armed violence is not directly related to poverty, but empirical analyses show a clearly positive correlation between inequality and violence. This applies especially to rural areas where sudden unequally distributed economic growth and social transformation create sharp contrasts between the newly and the poor, while state institutions fail to regulate the ensuing conflict."<sup>20</sup>

### ***Displacement***

The domestically developed census figures on the number of IDPs in Colombia vary by the source. The range is from a low end of 1.8 million people representing the number of individuals who have registered with Social Action (one of the government agencies

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<sup>20</sup> Springer, Natalie, Colombia: Internal Displacement – Policies and Problems, United Nations High Commission for Refugees, June 2006, page 3.

responsible for IDP services) to a high of over three million persons, a figure by Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (CODHES), the non-governmental organization that monitors IDP communities and issues. This deviation between unofficial and official statistics is symbolic of the societal gaps in rights, services, and returns that are experienced by IDPs. The table below shows the divergence between the non-governmental and official statistics:

Table I  
IDP Statistics Matrix<sup>21</sup>

Year	CODHES IDP Figures	Colombian Government IDP Figures
1985 – 1994	720,000	No data
1995	89,000	247
1996	181,000	2,570
1997	257,000	11,099
1998	308,000	34,460
1999	288,000	29,139
2000	317,375	329,981
2001	341,925	373,663
2002	412,553	422,957
2003	207,607	219,431
2004	287,581	145,995
2005	252,802	131,716
Cumulative Total	3,662,842	1,706,459

A map of displacement patterns is shown as Annex C. However, there are caveats that are attached to both sets of figures. On the one hand, the CODHES figures are estimates; however, on the other hand, official registrations do not necessarily reflect returns, multiple displacements, and demographic changes in the displaced populations such as births and deaths. In addition, many IDPs take refuge in outskirts of urban areas and settle along side other indigent populations, further blurring the conflict forced migrant census. Finally, the government registry does not include intra-municipal displacement or displacement by coca fumigation.

Conflict forced displacement appears to have a direct affect on the IDPs civil and political rights. As the UNHCR report states, “Most IDPs suffer a total loss of their status as citizens. Not only are they forced to leave almost all their personal belongings behind, often the result of many years of hard work, and see their individual life projects destroyed, but in addition their collective forms of organization, participation, and identity are disrupted.”<sup>22</sup> Many IDPs are treated as “surplus populations” where they are re-located, a connotation that is

<sup>21</sup>

[http://www.internaldisplacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/\(httpEnvelopes\)/CC05B30C4C94EC96802570B8005A7090?OpenDocument](http://www.internaldisplacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/(httpEnvelopes)/CC05B30C4C94EC96802570B8005A7090?OpenDocument) , based on CODHES “Tendencias del desplazamiento en Colombia de 1985 a 2005”, [http://www.codhes.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=3&Itemid=5](http://www.codhes.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3&Itemid=5); and Government of Colombia, RSS-SUR, March 2005, [http://www.red.gov.co/Download/Files/Registro\\_SUR/Registro\\_SUR\\_Mzo\\_03\\_2005/Registro\\_SUR\\_Mzo\\_03\\_web\\_Acumulado.htm](http://www.red.gov.co/Download/Files/Registro_SUR/Registro_SUR_Mzo_03_2005/Registro_SUR_Mzo_03_web_Acumulado.htm).

<sup>22</sup> Springer, Natalie, Colombia: Internal Displacement – Policies and Problems, United Nations High Commission for Refugees, June 2006, page 11.

intended to underscore their marginalized position in Colombian society. The Archdiocese of Cali states that the displaced population is "young, unproductive, composed of poor, small land-owning peasants forced to leave their places of work by multiple threats to their lives". The ranks of the displaced disproportionately include women, children, and indigenous people.<sup>23</sup>

The displaced population has been characterized by the following UNHCR profile:

- 48.9% of IDPs are unemployed or reliant upon the informal economy;
- 46% of IDPs reside in overcrowded locations, 21% in high risk or invasion zones;
- 50% of IDP households are makeshift quarters;
- 21% of displaced families do not have a bathroom in the house;
- 34% of displaced household have access to basic health care services;
- Over 10% of IDPs are illiterate; 37% failed to complete primary school, 3.9% finished secondary education; and
- 77% of children attend school in their communities of origin do not return to school after their displacement.<sup>24</sup>

In addition, the UNHCR report identifies three communities at risk for displacement: 1) indigenous populations; 2) Afro-Colombians; 3) women and children. The one million indigenous persons in Colombia have become targets for displacement because of the value of the land that they possess and their refusal to waiver from their "neutral" stance in the conflict. Many indigenous leaders have been assassinated. Most of Colombia's 80 or so indigenous groups are equally at risk. Afro-Colombians, residing largely on the Pacific coast, represent another group that is disproportionately victimized by displacement. It is estimated that the rate of displacement in Afro-Colombian communities is 20% higher than the national average. In 2005, 66% of all those displaced by the violence were under 18 years of age rising from 55% in 1996. Females comprise almost half of the displaced population. Of this number, 52% have reported being victimized by some physical violence and 36% have reported sexual abuse.

In terms of magnitude, the displacement can occur on a massive scale with entire communities displaced in a single campaign; or, the displacement can also occur on a family-by-family basis. In either case, as a general rule, returns to home communities are not likely over the near term, although the government of Colombia has traditionally given preference to a return policy over that of immediate assistance.

There are four departments that account for 43% of the expulsions from 1996 to 2005. These departments are Bolivar, Antioquia, Caquetá, and Tolima. Other identifiable geographical areas stand out such as the Atrato River in Chocó, Eastern Antioquia, Uraba, Magdalena Medio, César, and the Catatumbo. Displacement in the northwest is said to coincide with the operations of paramilitary forces in that region.

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.cidh.oas.org/countryrep/Colom99en/chapter-6.htm>

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, page 11.

From a local perspective, the impact on municipalities of reception varies with the relative sizes of the existing and displaced populations; and the rate of incoming displacement. As the UNHCR report states, “It is clearly different for intermediate departmental capitals, like Sincelejo (Sucre) with around 230,000 inhabitants or Valledupar (César) with approximately, 270,000, to have to accommodate between 50,000 and 70,000 IDPs over the last ten years than it is for a metropolis like Bogotá (7.6 million) or Medellín (3.0 million) to receive 80,000 to 100,000 over the same period.”<sup>25</sup> However, it is estimated that 35% of the total displaced live in the Bogotá area.

Municipalities experience the impact of displacement from two perspectives: 1) municipalities of expulsion; or 2) municipalities of reception. Municipalities of expulsion are from such departments as Bolívar, Antioquia, Carreta, and Tolima. However, many of the displaced ultimately migrate to the largest cities such as Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla, and Cartagena while spending time in smaller or medium-sized cities (municipalities of reception). This urban migration pattern occurs because of perceived economic opportunities in the larger cities. But, IDPs often find that there is no economic space for them in the cities and they are relegated to the underground economy or menial jobs.

As the UNHCR report states, “On the one hand, internal displacement is regionally concentrated. Official RSS statistics show that 13 of Colombia’s 32 departments have received 75% of the forcibly displaced populations. These departments are Antioquia, Bolívar, Sucre, Magdalena, Valle, Bogota, Cesar, Cordoba, Santander, Atlántico, Chocó, Norte de Santander and Nariño. Among them, the first six have received more than 48% of all IDPs. On the other hand, internal displacement is fast spreading geographically. While in the year 2000 only 420 of Colombia’s 1,119 municipalities were affected by international displacements (i.e. 37.5%), in 2004, the phenomenon had spread to 904 (i.e. (80.9%) a doubling of the affected municipalities in only four years, leaving a mere fifth of all Colombia unaffected.”<sup>26</sup>

### ***Elections***

In Colombia, elections are held for the president and vice-president; and for a 102-member Senate and a 161-member Chamber of Representatives on four year terms. The president and senators are elected on national ballot, while the representatives are elected from multi-member districts co-located within the 32 departments. Elections are also held for the department governors and for municipal governments. In the May 2006 election, incumbent president Alvaro Uribe, with his *Primero Colombia* (Colombia First) party, captured 62.2% of the vote, compared with his closest rival from *Polo Democrático Alternativo* garnering only 22.04% of the total. Five political parties occupy over 75% of the seats in the Chamber and nearly 80% of the seats in the Senate. These parties are the Partido Liberal Colombiano, Partidado Social de Unidad Nacional, Partido Conservador Colombiano, Cambio Radical,

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<sup>25</sup> Springer, Natalie, Colombia: Internal Displacement – Policies and Problems, United nation High Commissioner for Refugees, June 2006, page 7.

<sup>26</sup> Springer, Natalie, Colombia: Internal Displacement – Policies and Problems, United Nations Commission for Refugees, June 2006, page 16.

and Polo Democratico Alternativo. Municipal elections were last held in 2003. In those elections there were three parties – Partido Liberal Colombiano, Partido Conservador Colombiano, and the Movimiento Equipo Colombia – that won over 5,600 municipal seats with the Liberals winning over 2,700 seats in themselves. An administrative map of Colombia is shown as Annex D.

Article 120 of the Constitution defines the “Electoral Organization” as responsible for managing Colombian elections as composed of the National Electoral Council (CNE), National Registry of Vital Records, and other government agencies. The CNE is the highest ranking body in the Electoral Organization and sets electoral policy and procedure. It is composed of nine members who are selected for four year terms. The mission of the National Registry is to implement the orders of the CNE in three fundamental areas: 1) civil registry; 2) identification cards; and 3) election administration.

However, under the Constitution, all three branches of government (legislative, executive, and judicial) are to have a role in the Electoral Organization. In addition, other agencies of government, such as the Ombudsman, have electoral mandates making the conduct of elections in Colombia a complex mix of institutions including the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Communications, Ministry of National Defense, Solicitor General’s office, Ombudsman office, Attorney General’s Office, Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic and the 1,123 municipal governments nationwide. These various efforts are managed through Election Coordination and Follow-Up Committees. In addition to administrative coordination, these Committees are intended to provide inter-agency monitoring and enhance transparency in administration. Relevant to the upcoming election cycle, the Committee representatives on the municipal level are the mayors, municipal representatives, Registry’s delegates, and Police Chiefs.<sup>27</sup>

The Organization of American States (OAS) 2002 election observation report cited two kinds of irregularities that were repeatedly observed in these March legislative elections. First, the OAS mission reported occurrences of alterations of the vote tally forms; and second, where voter’s names and identity document numbers did not match up. These complaints surfaced in each department but were particularly prevalent in the Atlantic coast regions, specifically the departments of Bolivar, Magdalena and Guajira. Instances of armed irregular forces preventing or coercing voting were also reported. A total of 165 persons were charged with election crimes and including mayors, town councilors, and judges who served as election officers. The OAS report describes an “apparent culture” of fraud in Colombian elections. However, the report is also silent on the issue of IDPs and voting; only stating that the difficulties in obtaining an identity card in general needed to be reduced. The voter turnout for the March legislative election was 42.5% compared with 40.5% for the 2006 legislative elections; and 46.4% and 45.0% for the 2002 and 2006 presidential elections, respectively. There were 26,731,700 registered voters eligible in the 2006 presidential election.

Few data are available on the subject of IDP voting in the May 2002 presidential elections. The elections were marred by violence, murders, and intimidation. President Alvaro Uribe

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<sup>27</sup> Report of the Electoral Observation Mission in the Republic of Colombia 2002, Organization of American States, September 26, 2003, pages 7 – 12.

Velez was elected by a margin of 53 % to 31% over Horacio Serpa Uribe. Minor political parties were successful in legislative elections as voter backlash from perceptions of establishment party corruption. Low voter turnout and an inordinately high number of blank and spoiled ballot papers raised concerns about the legitimacy of the elections.<sup>28</sup> These rates were 18.6% in legislative contests and 2.3% in the presidential election for 2002 compared with less than 1.0% in previous elections.<sup>29</sup>

The OAS observation report from the 2006 presidential election drew a completely different portrait of the electoral process. In its executive summary, the report notes that the “presidential elections have taken place in an atmosphere of freedom, transparency, and normalcy...”<sup>30</sup> Once again, the report is silent on the issue of conflict forced displacement and enfranchisement.

The Global IDP Project reports low participation, generally speaking, of the displaced in public affairs. Many displaced people’s voting rights are restricted because of a lack of documentation. Others failed to exercise their right to vote out of fear and disappointment with the political system. CODHES documented testimonies of uprooted people being threatened to death if they did not vote for given candidates. Many displaced people failed to register, because of gaps in information, access, and timing.<sup>31</sup>

Electoral violence has been repeatedly documented in Colombia. According to a report prepared by the Ministry of the Interior, during the first eight months of 1997, 196 crimes were committed against local candidates for election and active mayors and city council members. These crimes included 78 kidnappings, 72 murders, 33 terrorist acts, 21 attacks and 4 disappearances.<sup>32</sup> Recent elections were heavily influenced by FARC, ELN, and paramilitary groups through kidnappings, murder, and extortion of political officials. Individual meetings with Colombian interlocutors revealed assertions that vote buying and voter intimidation are not uncommon practices. Entire villages are “kidnapped” by paramilitaries or guerillas and voting for particular candidates is compelled or prevented. In the elections in certain departments and municipalities, candidates other than the ones endorsed by the local militias are not permitted on the ballot or have been assassinated. These kinds of elections were described as “un-typical elections,” compared with typical elections in other parts of Colombia where the election results are not so lopsided in favor of one party or another. By one account for the elections in 2006, the FARC’s “guerilla tactics appear to have changed insofar as they refrained from actively sabotaging the elections this year [2006], [however] they remain adamant that they will not negotiate with a government they consider illegitimate.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Polity IV Country Report 2003: Colombia. 2004. <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/polity/Col1.htm>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.idea.int> - Voter turnout and balloting database

<sup>30</sup> Press Release, Organization of American States, “Secretary General Ratifies Support for OAS Mission to Support Colombian Peace Process,” June 12, 2006

<sup>31</sup> [http://www.idpproject.org/training/reports/2001/Colombia\\_2001.pdf](http://www.idpproject.org/training/reports/2001/Colombia_2001.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.cidh.oas.org/countryrep/Colom99en/chapter-9.htm>

<sup>33</sup> Springer, Natalie, Colombia: Internal Displacement – Policies and Problems, Commissioned by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, June 2006, page ii.

The table below considers electoral and available displacement statistics in a side-by-side analysis.

**Table II**  
**Elections and Displacement Matrix**

Election Year	Type of Election	Total Number of Voters	Total Votes Cast	% Turnout	% of Invalid Votes	CODHES Figures for Displaced	Government Figures for Displaced
1991	Parliamentary	15,793,566	4,962,383	33.0	na	na	na
1994	Parliamentary	17,003,195	6,145,436	36.1	7.8	na	na
1998	Parliamentary	20,000,000	9,000,000	45.0	na	308,000	34,460
2002	Parliamentary	24,000,636	10,188,929	42.5	18.6	412,553	422,957
2002	Presidential	24,208,150	11,244,288	46.4	2.3	412,553	422,957
2006	Parliamentary	26,595,171	10,767,726	40.5	na	na	na
2006	Presidential	26,731,700	12,041,737	45.0	na	na	na

There are two issues to examine with respect to these figures. First, the electorate has increased by 70% since 1991, gaining 11 million voters in the span of fifteen years. Although the turnout appears to hover between 40% and 45%, the number of ballots cast has risen fairly consistently from 4.9 million in 1991 (parliamentary) to 12 million in 2006 (presidential) for an increase of around 140%. Second, the correlation between the exceptionally high number of invalid votes and the peak in displacement around the 2002 parliamentary elections is possible indicator of the kinds of fraud and intimidation tactics that can be employed in the election process. The OAS reported such practices as the alteration of ballots, alteration of tally sheets, and vote buying. It can also be noted that 2002 was one of the few occasions where the government displacement figures exceeded those of CODHES.

Some of the principal concerns of the IDP community about elections are procedural in nature; specifically, that the period for voter registration prior to an election is too short for IDPs to have genuine access; and that obtaining a replacement national identity card takes six months to complete. IDP organizations have requested special voting *mesas* or tables for IDP voters; however election authorities have not complied with these requests. The disenfranchisement of IDPs can come from two directions. First, if they fail to transfer their registration or replace their identity cards, they can be disenfranchised at their residence of relocation. Second, the presence of armed groups in some locations prevents voters from within those communities to participate. After the reporting of election results in some locations, there can be retaliation against the political leadership from that community.

A few key dates in the upcoming electoral calendar are shown in the table below.

**Table III**  
**Key Electoral Dates – 2007**

Date	Electoral Activity
April 2007	Deadline to apply for new identity card
June 1 – 20, 2007	Voter Registration period
October 2007	Municipal Elections

## Colombian Government Services and Displacement

Although the problems of displacement began to intensify during the early 1990's, state institutions were slow or incapable of responding to the growing humanitarian crisis. It was not until 1997 and the adoption of Law 387, "for the prevention of forced displacement and the support, protection and socioeconomic stabilization of the populations displaced by the violence"<sup>34</sup> that a coordinated national response was organized. The law also established a National System of Comprehensive Assistance to the Displaced Population (SNAIPD). However, this "system" did not originally set up any new institutions, but rather served as a platform for public and private agencies to coordinate their activities while, at the same time, not providing a specific mechanism for coordination or establishing clear divisions of labor. The system included both, an advisory National Council and a Fund for the Comprehensive Assistance to the Displaced Population. The system included committees at the municipal, district, and departmental level formed to provide direct emergency assistance to IDPs.

Under President Andreas Pastrana, the government realized that its system to provide services to an ever-growing displaced population was inadequate. Services for IDPs were re-organized under the Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social (CONPES – National Council for Social and Economic Policy). The Consejo oversaw the planning and implementation of services through the Red de Seguridad Social (RSS) and the *Sistema Unico de Registro* (SUR- Unified Registration System). The decentralized committees established by Law 387 were replaced by mesas permanentes de trabajo (permanent working tables) in major cities.

### *Social Action*

In a booklet presenting its program, Social Action describes the package of services that it provides to IDPs:

- Social Solidarity Network – homecoming and emergency humanitarian attention as part of the SNAIPD and as registered on SUR;
- Aid to Victims of Violence – medical assistance to IDPs who have non-life threatening wounds from attacks by armed groups;
- Municipal Reconstruction – infrastructure rebuilding projects in 125 municipalities within 24 departments including homes and public buildings;
- Food Security and Microproduction Chains – the Food Security Network is designed to ensure that food is distributed to persons displaced by conflict; and 41,654 families take part in the microproduction chains for their livelihoods;
- Investment for Peace Fund – subsidies to families with young children for education, food and clothing;
- Musical Bands – musical training for displaced children;
- Productive Projects – alternative planting to coca and poppy plantations with cocoa, rubber, yucca, orchards, palm oil, coffee, palmetto and medicinal plant; and

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<sup>34</sup> Colombia, Congress, Ley 387 de 1997, 18 July 1997, Diario Oficial, No. 43,091, 24 July 1997.

- Forest Ranger Families – families displaced may have a livelihood and housing as forest rangers.<sup>35</sup>

The Social Action's mandate is to focus on the re-establishment of IDP rights and to assure their economic well-being for those who have been displaced by conflict. By July 31, 2006, there were 1.8 million IDPs had been registered with the Social Action. There are three steps to the IDP benefits registration process:

- Declare by oath at Social Action field office that they are displaced by conflict;
- Field offices send this registration information to the Social Action; and
- Social Action makes an assessment on the veracity of the claim, noting how long the person has been in residence at the present location and identifying what violent actions occurred in the area of origin.

Social Action must complete the registration processing within fifteen business days. Assistance is provided for the three months and then can be requested for an additional three months under this Social Action program.

### ***Office of the Prosecutor***

The Office of the Prosecutor (*el Ministerio Público/el Procurador de la Nación*) plays a different role in government than in other countries. In Colombia, the Prosecutor provides oversight on the agencies of government, elected officials, and military. A representative of the Prosecutor's office indicated that the office has special interest in IDPs with respect to protection of their property rights, benefits while in displacement, and their eventual resettlement. The Prosecutor's office is also alert to the issues of corruption within the distribution of IDP assistance and military abuses. The office is monitoring the government's compliance to Constitutional Court orders.

### **Colombian Civil Society Organizations and Displacement**

#### ***National Convergence of Organizations for Displaced Persons***

The representative of the National Convergence expressed concern about voter registration procedures and timing that had a dampening impact on IDP participation in elections. It was suggested that registration on the SUR benefits systems should automatically register IDPs to vote. According to this source, the short timeframe for registration makes it difficult for IDPs to register. Given the migratory nature of their existence, having a six-month delay between the application for a new identity card and receiving it, places added burdens on IDP enfranchisement.

The objective of the IDP movement is to empower the community for a greater voice in public policy and governance. The movement encourages IDPs to contest for public office and to influence policies on the national, departmental, and municipal levels. To achieve

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<sup>35</sup> Colombia, Social Action, Progress Report August 2002 – June 2005.

these objectives, the IDP movement needs support from the international community on programs and projects. In many cases, IDPs were local leaders who were expelled from their communities by armed groups. The IDP movement wants to use the leadership qualities of these individuals in the development of their organization.

### ***National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC)***

ONIC was established as a social organization and is only now examining political advocacy programs. The 1991 Constitution, as amended, (Articles 171 and 176) provides three set-aside seats in the legislature for indigenous people (two in the Senate and one in the Chamber of Representatives). Indigenous people also participate in the municipal councils and department assemblies. While not political in nature, ONIC has provided training for indigenous political candidates so that they are knowledgeable about the campaign issues and processes.

Indigenous political interests do not always coincide with those of the Conservatives or Liberals. As a result, ONIC reports difficulties in getting legislation passed at the federal level because ruling party and government political alignments will frequently favor with economic interests over those of indigenous people and their protected lands.

According to ONIC representatives, ONIC has an indigenous information collection system that allows them to track indigenous displacement. To gather its statistics, ONIC has affiliated organizations throughout the country to provide an information flow from region to center. Their census shows that there are from 800,000 to one million indigenous people and at least 300,000 of them of voting age. However, many of the indigenous people do not have identity documents, or are apathetic and refrain from voting. It should also be noted that the 2005 Colombian national census identified only 450,000 indigenous people resident in Colombia

The causes of indigenous displacement including fighting on their territories involving the paramilitary and guerrillas; bombing, air spraying to control cocoa production, and threats of violence. There are reported cases where the armed groups have assassinated indigenous leaders.

### ***Afro-Colombian Ethnic Movement (Afrodes)***

Afrodes is a social movement organization. It engages in elections as civil society and endorses candidates who represent views important to the Afro-Colombian community. As is the case with indigenous people, the Afro-Colombians have two set aside seats in the Chamber of Representatives as mandated in the 1991 Constitution, as amended (Article 176). A representative of Afrodes expressed concern that the incumbents holding these seats are not effective advocates for IDP services, rights, and returns. Afro-Colombians have mixed levels of participation in different political parties. . .

Afro-Colombian and indigenous peoples are also similar in that both groups have collective property managed by Community Councils. These territories, including the environment, air,

water, land, cannot be sold; the territory is intended for collective usage. By comparison, in these jurisdictions, Municipal Councils are responsible to manage political issues, and the Community Councils manage the territorial issues. The causes of displacement of Afro-Colombians are the same as those of other groups and the objectives of the displacers are the same as well – territorial capture.

### ***Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES)***

CODHES is a non-governmental organization that collects data on the size and movements of displaced populations in Colombia, advocates on their behalf with government; and provides training sessions and workshops that promote reconciliation. CODHES also conducts research and issues publication on human rights, political rights, and migration rights. CODHES is supported by a network of nearly 40 conflict resolution and human rights organizations such as Paz Colombia, the Colombian Human Rights Committee, and Peace Brigades.

The organization promotes the peace process Colombia and human rights, through national policy advocacy, with an emphasis on persons and communities affected by the internal armed conflict.<sup>36</sup>

CODHES monitors and follows-up on internal displacement in Colombia, and publishes IDP policy updates.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Media for Peace***

Eighty journalists founded Media for Peace in 1996 to increase the professionalism of coverage of conflict and the victims of conflict. There are currently more than 3,000 affiliated journalists in the network. Media for Peace's programs are principally in information and training. For information, the organization provides tools to support their training programs and to be used in journalism classes of universities and in the editorial rooms of media organizations. Media for Peace also operates a web site. For training, the organization conducts workshops and has a certificate course. Media for Peace publishes a dictionary of 1,000 terms that describe different aspects of conflict. The journalists are trained to be selective in how they characterize aspects of the conflict so that they are not unintentionally victimizing or enflaming the crisis by mis-characterizations. They want to use the media as a reconciliation force and not a source of division.

Media for Peace supports responsible coverage of conflict forced displacement. Since such displacement is continuing and increasing, media training is needed on the topic to understand the issue better. Unintentional disinformation shapes public opinion about IDPs. In their conflict workshops, it was revealed that journalists are practicing a kind of self-censoring of their reporting to deliberately under-report on the IDP situation. The organization's methodology is to analyze what was written about the conflict; identify the

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<sup>36</sup> From CODHES website. <http://www.codhes.org/Info/Nosotros.htm>.

<sup>37</sup> Colombia UNHCR's Protection and Assistance Programme for IDPs and Refugees March 2004, [www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=NEWS&id=4061b4614&page=events](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=NEWS&id=4061b4614&page=events)

stereotypes and prejudices of the journalists; and then work with the sources to pose better questions of them. Journalists have difficulties using IDPs as sources of information for stories. These difficulties are based upon the migratory nature of IDP lifestyles and the resulting gaps in communications and continuity for journalists. Journalists also find contradictory information between government and IDP sources as well as differences in the descriptions of events by IDPs themselves.

## International Community and Displacement

The role of the international community regarding IDPs in Colombia is twofold: 1) to provide for humanitarian assistance and capacity building; and 2) to establish standards by which government performance can be measured.

### *International Organization for Migration (IOM)*

IOM is engaged in programming to provide institutional strengthening of Social Action in education, health, social, and housing. IOM operates seven field offices in Colombia. IOM also supports the Office of the Ombudsman. IOM sees the need to quantify the IDP problems and to establish a statistics consensus on the size of the problem. IOM also believes that there should be a focus on the intermediate sized cities for supplemental support to IDP programs; and to launch anti-corruption campaigns with respect to the management of IDP relief funds.

### *United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)*

The focus of the UNHCR programming for the displaced is on the communities at risk - ethnic minorities, women, and youth. There are three features to their programming:

- Coaching Colombian government on IDP policy issues;
- Analyzing IDP demographics; and
- Assisting in the whole cycle of displacement.

UNHCR believes that the policy analysis gaps from the government are the fundamental problem. It also believes there that should be policy differences that uniquely address the needs of each community at risk. Policy guidance for ethnic communities at risk is more complicated than that associated with gender. This is because ethnic communities have both individual and collective territorial rights that are affected by displacement unlike gender issues alone. The UNHCR program encourages these groups to learn advocacy skills in the belief that once they know about their rights, they will want to vote.

Indigenous communities have their own systems of community governance and justice where these processes do not conflict with national or international law. The issue of political manipulation is less critical for indigenous communities because they have more autonomy than other groups of displaced persons. UNHCR counts 84 indigenous groups, where ONIC claims that there are 94 groups, speaking 64 languages. The estimated population range indigenous people is from 800,000 to 1,000,000.

### ***National Democratic Institute (NDI) and International Republican Institute (IRI)***

NDI is assisting parties to build databases of their supporters, but IDPs are not part of these databases because of the circumstances. IDPs are reticent to be in an organization where they can be identified. There is apathy about political parties in general.

In its program focus, IRI has not yet included issues concerning IDP's specifically; however, the Institute is focused on encouraging political parties to adopt advocacy policies concerning vulnerable populations that include Afro-Colombians, women, and youth. IRI works with all political parties and is establishing a "Black Caucus" in the legislature.

Similarly, NDI political party building activities should intersect with IDP issues in terms of developing issue-based campaigning skills. That being said, both Institutes report that the parties are not really oriented to issue-based politics and will require coaching in this regard. IDPs were in some of the program workshops, but were not interested in party involvement in their circumstances. IRI has not yet become involved with indigenous communities, but NDI has done some training and education with the social indigenous alliance. Both organizations believe that there should be a focus on grassroots organizations where IDPs are located.

Civil society organizations seem to have more contact with IDPs than political parties do. The Colombian political process is not responsive to policy issues; it is more based upon clientelism. A useful political reform measure would be to establish better constituency services in general.

### **Colombian Political Parties and Displacement**

In order to ascertain the policy priority that the IDP issues represented to political parties, meetings were held with representatives from the major political parties. The views expressed were those of the individual party members, and do not necessarily represent the official party position. Given time and scheduling constraints, only two parties were able to meet with the assessment team.

### ***Polo Democrática Alternivo (PDA)***

The party representatives expressed the belief that the solution to the conflict is political in nature and that the current conflict is a violent expression of politics with new economic dimensions expanding and intensifying it. The PDA is composed of eighteen different political groupings. The party supports the return of the displaced. A PDA representative stated that the policy should be one that is focused on returns, based on the belief that the first generation displaced would like to return home. However, the second generation has to learn how to integrate from rural to municipal lifestyles and living in larger municipalities while still possessing the rural values of the first displaced generation. Furthermore, IDPs should be organized into a political and social force.

Concerning the program of re-insertion of de-mobilized paramilitaries, the party representatives contended new reception municipalities do not want these individuals to return to their communities because of their previously violent behavior. The party representatives stated that eight million hectares of land have been taken by the paramilitaries. The problem is spread over 900 of 1,120 municipalities. IDP protection will come from their own political organization and self-protection. However, because IDPs are often targeted for vote buying scheme or intimidation, they often choose to sit out electoral participation.

### ***Partido Conservador Colombiano***

The Conservative Party regards conflict forced displacement as a complex issue with an urban nucleus.

The political debate on IDPs is occurring on two levels:

- Constitutional – requiring increases in public expenditures; and
- Government – policies undertaken to improve conditions.

IDPs are not a major issue in the platforms of political parties. The issue may be of interest to mayors in the municipalities of reception. The Conservative Party has no stated position on the issue. Perhaps IDP policy is an issue for the municipal councils and candidates to consider. However, the party representatives stated that in a recent takeover of a town square outside of Bogotá by IDPs to protest living conditions, the IDPs did not ask for political parties to assist them; but rather, they asked the mayor of Bogotá to intervene. The IDP issue is a local issue more than a national issue.

The IDP issue is complicated by the land issues. In this case, the representatives stated that paramilitaries have illegally confiscated four million hectares of land, 65% of it was where IDPs had lived. The issue is complicated by the re-insertion process of paramilitaries and the camouflaging of land purchases for paramilitaries by third parties.

## PART II

### Action Plan Framework

The municipal elections scheduled for October 2007 offer opportunities to increase the humanitarian assistance to the displaced by enhancing their individual and collective political rights. These opportunities may be local in nature and, as such, programming will be uniquely configured to particular municipalities. The enfranchisement of displaced populations where they currently reside can change the political dynamic of the municipal campaign and open up local political competitions that did not exist before. Moreover, it also can be a small step from voter to victim for such populations who could be targeted for intimidation or vote buying schemes. These points are made to highlight the conflictive dimension that inherent in electoral assistance programs.

There will be three kinds of municipal elections occurring in October 2007. The first kind of election will occur in the municipalities of expulsion, many of which are located in rural areas. Significant groups of voters and political leaders will be absent. Coercion, ballot fraud, and vote prevention will be the tactics of armed groups that patrol the municipality and support particular candidacies. The absences of voters will increase potential for voter impersonation to occur.

Second, there will be elections in the municipalities of reception where IDPs have migrated such as Bogotá, Medellín, Cartagena, and Cali. In these cases, IDPs may seek to obtain new identity documents and cast ballots from their current locations for the municipal councils of residence. These IDPs will likely continue to experience the administrative delays and bureaucratic hurdles to registration that have previously dampened their participation rates. In addition, the IDPs may also become issues in the municipal campaigns because of the pressure on public services that their presence exerts. IDPs may be targets for vote buying schemes and intimidation. Political manipulation of IDP assistance may also be a concern in these municipalities.

And third, locations where displacement is not an issue is the smallest of the three kinds of anticipated election, in both the number of municipalities affected and the relative sizes of their electorates compared to the other categories.

The Colombian legal, institutional (both national and international) platform that has been established to improve the IDP conditions; and elements of this institutional platform can be employed to improve their political rights and opportunities for participation in governance. Of course, the durable solution to the IDP problem is a political and peace settlement between the government, guerillas, and the paramilitaries. Reducing the conflict will correlate to a reduction in the displaced and to a certain level of returns over the short term. Although the resolution of the conflict is a matter outside of the municipal electoral process, it is the larger political process of which the municipal elections are one component that can provide a strategic channel for non-violent discourse among conflicting parties. The IDP problem has sufficiently intensified over the last few years to justify the introduction of an

enhanced international strategic and operational dimension to provide resources, leadership, and accountability to address its resolution.

This Action Plan strategy integrates conflict, displacement, and election programming. The Plan is divided into three phases of activity: 1) Consensus Phase; 2) Planning Phase; and 3) Operational Phase. The program period for the Action Plan is for twelve months, from January 2007 through January 2008.

Within this Action Plan framework, assistance programs of the international community can be divided into five activities: 1) political party assistance; 2) voter education; 3) electoral monitoring; 4) emergency government capacity; and 5) civil society programming. In each of these five programs areas, it is strategically important to build IDP dimensions into the assistance networks and processes that have already established. Implementation priorities for specific projects in specific municipalities should largely be driven by security and humanitarian concerns.

The section below describes the objectives of each Phase and the project activities that can be considered under each activity description.

### ***Phases and Activities***

#### *Consensus Phase Activities (January 07)*

Given the uneven domestic political will regarding the enfranchisement of conflict forced IDPs, leadership from the international community is required to catalyze a national response to the problem in the context of the 2007 elections. A combined international and national consensus building campaign to establish IDP rights as a priority in 2007 among international partners and between international partners and the national, departmental, and municipal governments of Colombia should be initiated. Consensus building can be developed through the establishment of an *ad hoc* constellation of democracy and displacement organizations and agencies that can arrange discussions, workshops, and bilateral meetings to shape the consensus agenda. Ostensibly, the catalyst for the consensus campaign is the municipal electoral process which can attract resources and draw attention to accountability and transparency.

Intergovernmental organizations that could participate in the constellation include IOM, UNHCR, and UN Electoral Assistance Division (EAD). International NGOs can include those from the democracy community such as NDI and IRI as well as the migration community including the NRC and the human rights community with Human Rights Watch. Domestic participants include relevant agencies of the Colombian government including the Electoral Organization and Social Action. Colombian civil society organizations such as ONIC, Afrodes, and CODHES should participate. Under international auspices, political party forums can be organized as instruments for multi-party communications.

By placing the IDP identity restoration, registration, and voting issues on the international agenda and projecting these issues against the time constraints of the municipal electoral

calendar, a critical mass of visibility for this issue can be assembled which would not be possible under other circumstances. This constellation of organizations and agencies should remain in place throughout the electoral process as a continuing source of dialogue and coordination among international and national community stakeholders. In some cases, this initiative will not represent the start of new programming for an organization, but rather to introduce a displacement and elections dimension into existing assistance projects.

#### *Planning Phase Activities (February 07)*

During the planning phase, the international community strengthens its relationships with national stakeholders - governmental, political, and non-governmental – to tune their focus, capacity, and commitment to support and empower IDP communities. Ideally, an agreement on a coordinated approach to reconciliation, displacement, and electoral assistance programming by international and national stakeholders should be concluded in this phase. With this implementation framework in place, each organization and agency can develop operational plans for their assistance programming during the election cycle

#### *Operational Phase Activities (March - December 07)*

During the operational phase, the five programmatic activities are to be implemented. The following Action Points can be taken by the organizations and agencies in the constellation according to the kind of election (municipality of expulsion or reception) that will occur.

These Action Points are intended for discussion during the Consensus and Planning Phases as potential areas of programming during the Operational Phase.

#### ***Action Points – Municipalities of Expulsion***

**Political Party Assistance** – Because of the uncertain security environments in these municipalities, it will be difficult for many political parties, particularly those in opposition to local armed groups, to find political space. As a result, assistance to political parties will have limitations but can employ the following themes to be incorporated into on-going political party training programs:

- 1) Political parties should be discouraged from encouraging or participating in ballot fraud and voter intimidation.
- 2) Political parties can agree to codes of conduct and other pacts to eschew electoral violence as a tactic among rivals.
- 3) Political party agents can monitor and enforce impartiality at the polling stations by poll workers and protect the integrity of the ballots and tally sheets.
- 4) Political leadership training can be conducted for those individuals assuming positions of responsibility in the absence of other party leaders.

**Voter Education** – The messaging for voter education programs will face similar limitations because of the uncertain security environment in municipalities of expulsion. Depending upon the environment in particular municipalities, a selection of the following messages (and their caveats) can be disseminated through existing or anticipated voter education programs by international and national; governmental and non-governmental organizations:

1) Voting rights messaging can be focused on reducing disenfranchisement by intimidation. However, any such messaging must presume that a complaining voter has access to a justice process and security so that his complaint can be heard and the law enforced. Otherwise, the complainant can become the target for violence. These messages can be disseminated by radio.

2) Electoral news and information about parties and candidates can be disseminated in these municipalities. The “neutral” nature of these information products should not represent the same kind of threat to local armed groups that other messaging would seem to be. This news and information can be disseminated by radio.

**Electoral Monitoring** – There can be three components to electoral process monitoring that can be effectively combined for the municipal elections. This monitoring configuration would include both international organizations and domestic observers. This methodology should combine election observation, human rights monitoring, and anti-corruption “watch dog” activities. Depending upon the municipality, a combination of these three kinds of monitoring activities can be configured to obtain an understanding of IDPs and electoral process that integrates humanitarian and human right issues into the electoral landscape. There should be follow-up on the report of the Attorney General on complaints from the 2006 elections when it becomes publicly available in order to guide the identification potential problem locations.

For international and domestic monitoring activities in municipalities of expulsion, the following points should be included in IDPs and elections evaluation criteria:

1) Examination of election results for unusual voting patterns such as high or low turnout, lopsided victories for certain candidates or significant numbers of invalid and blank ballots as indicators of fraud, intimidation, or other ballot manipulation practices.

2) Analysis of political party agent reporting on the impartiality and performance of poll workers as indicators of the neutrality of the Electoral Organization in that municipality.

3) Documentation of incidents of violence against electoral stakeholders, facilities, materials, or information.

4) Examination of the voter registry at polling stations for indicators of voter impersonation and another fraudulent registration practices.

**Emergency Government Capacity Building** – In an effort to manage or mitigate electoral violence, the international community can provide election security advisors to Colombian

security forces and to the municipal election coordination committees to advise the local election administrators and Police Chiefs. These advisors will provide guidance on election security strategies, planning, and tactics for the Electoral Organization and the security forces.

**Civil Society Programming** – Civil society programming can be developed to respond to the human needs sparked by conflict, displacement, or elections. Examples of civil society missions and projects in these municipalities are described below.

### *Conflict*

- 1) Civil society organizations representing “at risk” communities such as indigenous people, Afro-Colombians, women and youth can be provided with assistance and resources to develop advocacy programs, strengthen relations with government service providers, provide voter education, and organize themselves for political empowerment.
- 2) Civil society organizations can be established, transformed or developed into counter-insurgency tools through a focus on services and compensation to the victims of violence or to their survivors.

### *Displacement*

- 3) IDP civil society organizations should be supported to provide political organization, information, and advocacy skills for its members.
- 4) Civil society organizations and their international partners can be provided with education materials and assistance to gain access or additional benefits from government services. The strategy is to utilize the international scrutiny of the electoral process to compel improvements in humanitarian services to IDPs.

### *Elections*

- 5) Depending upon the security environment, civil society organizations can be engaged in both voter education message dissemination and in domestic election monitoring roles. The networks of people that comprise these organizations can receive printed materials through the indigenous distribution networks; and these organizations can also serve as forum for election outreach meetings, that is, “town hall” type sessions involving discussions and questions.

### ***Action Points – Municipalities of Reception***

**Political Party Assistance** – Political parties and elected officials can play critical roles in advancing the government’s policies on services for IDPs and their returns. However, the upcoming elections are municipal in nature, and the IDP issue will have to be framed into a municipal perspective. One of the features of the current program of political party training is the introduction of issue-based campaigning; compared with personality contests,

clientalism, or stealth interests. The following themes can be incorporated into training programs for political parties in reception municipalities:

- 1) Political parties should be advised of the deleterious effects of vote buying practices on political process and governance and assured that this practice will be monitored by election observers. The emphasis on vote buying is greater in these municipalities than in those of expulsion because of the presence of large numbers of IDPs who could serve as targets of political exploitation.
- 2) Political parties can agree to codes of conduct and other pacts to eschew abusive or unethical campaign practices. The focus in these locations is on ethical political practices, compared with anti-violence pacts that could be negotiated in municipalities of expulsion.
- 3) Political parties should adopt advocacy positions for the IDPs in their municipalities for improvement of conditions and an acceleration of peace talks to facilitate returns. In these municipalities, political parties can serve as platforms for IDPs to advocate on their own behalf.
- 4) Political parties should have special candidate and leadership recruitment for “at risk” communities such as indigenous people, Afro-Colombians, and women drawn from the local communities of IDPs.

**Voter Education** - Facilitating the registration and identification of IDPs in their new locations is the front-loaded activity that must first be addressed for other activities to follow. If the government continues to take six months to fulfill an application for a new identity document, then these applications must be completed by an April 2007 deadline. The education campaign will describe how to obtain identity documents and register as voters. The messages will be instructional, motivational, and admonitional. These messages can be disseminated by print, by radio, or through outreach meetings. International and domestic organizations that service IDPs communities or are participating in the electoral process can serve as distribution channels for these messages.

#### *Instructional*

The instructional dimension will describe the practical elements of obtain and identity card and registering to vote. It includes such information as where and when to register and cast ballots; and what identity documents to bring.

#### *Motivational*

The messages will be motivational in that they will encourage IDPs to claim their electoral rights. But, if empowered as voters, these populations are also exposed to vote by buying schemes and intimidation. The messages should urge voters to reject money for their votes.

### *Admonitional*

As a result, admonitional messages both warn voters not to accept money for their votes; and also to be aware political intimidation can occur.

**Electoral Monitoring** – The integrated electoral, human rights, and anti-corruption monitoring technique described in the previous section, can also be configured in municipalities of reception. For international and domestic monitoring activities in municipalities of expulsion, the following points should be included in IDPs and elections evaluation criteria:

- 1) Establishing a long-term electoral monitoring presence in voting locations where large populations of IDPs reside in order to monitor voter registration, political campaigning, and Election Day activities.
- 2) Coordination with human rights monitors to provide an additional perspective on the humanitarian condition of IDPs during the electoral campaign.
- 3) Coordination with anti-corruption “watchdog” organizations to monitor the provision of assistance to IDPs by municipal authorities during the electoral campaign.

**Emergency Government Capacity** – The government should have sufficient computer, identity card, data processing, or other critical capacity in staffing, equipment or supplies to identify and register thousand more individuals than originally planned. If that cannot be facilitated by the government, the international community can offer to provide this capacity as a temporary and emergency program to ensure that the IDPs who seek enfranchisement can complete the process in time to cast ballots in October. The government can also be provided with advisors to examine registration procedures for voters and IDPs and ascertain where the process can be streamlined to enhance enfranchisement opportunities for IDPs. This initiative can become a point of entry for a broad program of electoral assistance to streamline election administration and enhance its accountability.

**Civil Society Programming** – The civil society dimension to reception municipality programs can be implemented through the following activities and projects:

- 1) IDP civil society organizations should be supported to provide political organization, information, and advocacy skills for its members.
- 2) Media coverage is a civil society concern. Training programs on the coverage of elections and conflict forced displacement would provide journalists with the background and skills to accurately cover the plight of the displaced as well as uncover any political malfeasance associated with IDP humanitarian assistance, registration, and voting.
- 3) Civil society organizations and their international partners can be provided with education materials and assistance to gain access or additional benefits from government services. The

strategy is to utilize the international scrutiny of the electoral process to compel improvements in humanitarian services to IDPs.

4) Civil society organizations can be engaged in both voter education message dissemination and in domestic election monitoring roles. The networks of people that comprise these organizations can receive printed materials through the indigenous distribution networks; and these organizations can also serve as forum for election outreach meetings, that is, “town hall” type sessions involving discussion and questions.

## Conclusion

Electoral processes provide opportunities to bring visibility to social issues, attract resources, and identify “champions” for these issues who will advocate after the elections are concluded. The 2007 municipal election cycle presents to promote enhance assistance to the displaced and provide IDPs with a stronger voice in governance to advocate on their own behalf. However, to maximize on effectiveness and create a critical mass of resources, there should be a coordinated approach that integrates democracy and displacement assistance programs. From an institutional perspective, this integration should include international and national stakeholders from the governmental and non-governmental sectors in a constellation of organizations unique to this election cycle.

The basic Action Plan tenets are summarized below:

- The municipal electoral process will attract democracy assistance programs and election observers. This increase in assistance and presence should be used to strengthen the channels of advocacy and enfranchisement for the IDPs.
- These democracy resources can be leveraged to provide greater visibility on the conditions of IDPs. The transparency that democracy assistance brings to a process should be used to encourage immediate improvement in IDP conditions and benefits.
- The municipal electoral processes can provoke local political competition and conflict and the programming in each municipality should be tailored accordingly so that IDPs are not placed in vulnerable situations.
- The municipal electoral process offers opportunities for civil society capacity building. The Colombian civil society community is diverse, but can play a role in voter education and domestic monitoring. In particular, civil society organizations for IDPs, indigenous people, Afro-Colombians, and women can be targeted for assistance programming.

The Colombian statutory framework and the orders of the Constitutional Court provide the legal imperatives for actions to be taken regarding IDPs and reconciliation, returns, and enfranchisement. This Action Plan is intended to provide an integrated operational concept on the implementation of these orders with the municipal elections as program catalysts.

## Annexes

### Annex A – Meetings and Interviews (chronological order)

National Civil Registry and Elections Department (Colombian government)

Group of Internationally Displaced Persons – Soacha (outskirts of Bogota)

United Nations High Commission for Refugees (international)

International Organization for Migration (international)

Social Action (Colombian government)

Afrodes (social organization)

Office of the Prosecutor (Colombian government)

Media for Peace (NGO)

Polo Democratico Alternativo (political party)

National Convergence of Organizations of Displaced Populations (NGO council)

Conservative party (political party)

National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (NGO council)

Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (NGO)

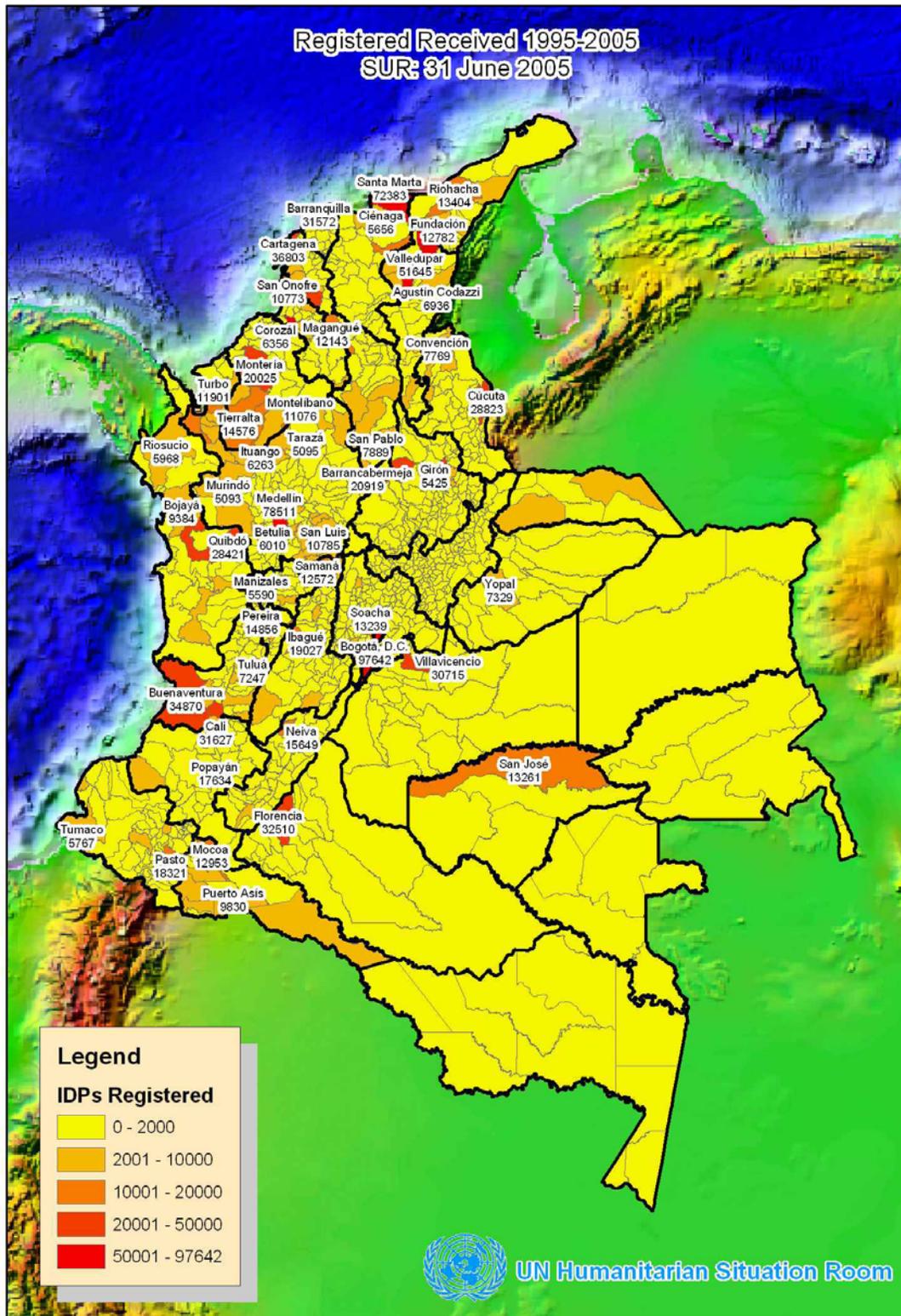
United States Agency for International Development (bilateral development agency)

Annex B – Conflict Zones Map<sup>38</sup>



<sup>38</sup> <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/AHAA-6L8KFZ?OpenDocument&rc=2&cc=col>

Annex C – Displacement Patterns Map<sup>39</sup>



<sup>39</sup> <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/JOPA-6KACXA?OpenDocument&rc=2&cc=col>

Annex D – Administrative Map<sup>40</sup>



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<sup>40</sup> <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900LargeMaps/SKAR-64GDRC?OpenDocument&cc=col&rc=2>