

Prioritising the participation of IDPs in driving solutions

GP20 Colombia

Participatory spaces – like those organised as part of the GP20 initiative in Colombia – must be maintained and expanded so that IDPs can work directly with local and national decision-makers in order to identify and take up opportunities to achieve durable solutions.

As Colombia continues to implement its peace process, violence and conflict persist along the Pacific Coast and in border regions with Ecuador and Venezuela. As a result, about 100,000 new displacements have occurred each year since the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2016. According to Colombia's Victims' Unit, established in 2011 with the authority to register victims of the armed conflict, more than eight million people have been displaced internally since 1985.

Colombia has a highly sophisticated legal and institutional framework to assist and protect people displaced by conflict, including Law 387 of 1997 for displaced persons, Law 1448 of 2011 for victims of armed conflict and the land restitution process, and Ruling T 025 of 2004 of the Constitutional Court, which – still in force today – urges the appropriate institutions to guarantee the rights of IDPs. Currently, an important component of Colombia's National Development Plan¹ is the legalisation of informal settlements, a process that benefits not only vulnerable communities in urban areas but also IDPs, refugees and migrants living in those settlements. Despite these important advances, however, much more can be done to enable the majority of Colombia's IDPs to secure a durable solution.

To mark the 20th anniversary in 2018 of the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, a GP20 Plan of Action was launched in order to mobilise and support global efforts to reduce and assist internal displacement. A group of international agencies and organisations in Colombia developed their own country-level GP20 action plan.² Throughout 2018 and 2019, high-level events were organised within the framework of this action plan to refocus attention on internal displacement

in the country. A direct dialogue with IDPs and leaders in conflict-affected areas was used to give more visibility to their day-to-day struggles, and to reinvoke the drive for solutions.

Dialogue and advocacy

GP20 partners in Colombia have made it their priority to offer IDPs a platform to raise concerns and propose ways forward to the national government. A series of events was organised in 2018 and 2019, including:

- two meetings for dialogue between GP20 members in Colombia and human rights leaders, IDPs and government human rights officials in Bogotá.
- a national public forum on displacement in collaboration with the national newspaper *El Espectador* and with participation from representatives of those most affected by armed conflict, national authorities, NGOs, UN agencies and civil society.
- a local forum in the department of Nariño, which, in the midst of the electoral process for governors and mayors, successfully brought together five candidates to debate with leaders, civil society and local institutions; the event aimed to facilitate direct discussion between the candidates and IDPs' leaders, and advocate for inclusion of IDP-relevant public policy in their plans once in office.

Through these events, and by having a strong voice, IDPs were able to raise awareness of their persistent protection risks and to discuss what steps should be taken to address these risks. IDPs were outspoken in these events, offering their own ideas on how to advance solutions to internal displacement. In particular, their messages presented a firm

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and determined call: “Do not leave us on our own.” IDPs were able to contribute concretely to local development plans, while advocating for the incorporation of the agreed public policy on IDPs within these plans. In the case of Nariño, IDPs were effective in putting their issues on the agenda for the elections.

The conclusions of the series of GP20 events highlight the need to:

- promote and strengthen inter-agency coordination for a comprehensive response to displacement and, particularly, support the drive towards solutions
- reinforce the presence of government institutions in areas difficult to access and with recurrent emergencies
- prioritise and strengthen the delivery of goods and services in territories hosting IDPs and Venezuelan refugees and migrants since these populations are exposed to the same risks and consequences of conflict and violence.

Partners engaged in GP20 in Colombia share the same objective to enhance visibility for and participation of communities and individuals affected by conflict. This in turn will help provide more effective support to the government in its efforts to guarantee adequate and successful responses to internal displacement – from prevention through to protection and solutions.

Participatory spaces, such as those organised under the auspices of GP20 in Colombia, need to continue and be expanded. In line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and in support of Colombia’s normative and institutional framework on internal displacement, IDPs must be facilitated to work directly with local and national decision-makers in defining and taking up opportunities to achieve solutions.

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1. *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2018–2022 Pacto por Colombia, pacto por la equidad* bit.ly/Colombia-PND

2. GP20 Colombia is composed of the Resident Coordinator’s Office, UNHCR, IOM, UNDP, NRC, JRS COL, OCHA and RET International.