

LOCAL LEADERSHIP IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Case Study
COLOMBIA



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MAP

Colombia



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Colombia is one of the countries in the world with more internally displaced population, affected by conflict, reception of migrants and refugees, and prone to natural disasters. It's a context with a multilayer crisis, on top of structural poverty and inequality. These cause constant emergencies and humanitarian needs, notably a loss of basic shelter for many people. This study looks into how different humanitarian shelter and settlement actors perceive localization in Colombia, and how the different crises have been addressed by this sector. The impact and the response of the shelter sector to the different crises in the overall context were studied thoroughly to understand the existing practices, gaps, and barriers to provide final recommendations.





After reviewing national and international literature and through direct interviews and primary research, across the country, there are positive impacts of the inclusion of local actors in the shelter response. However, there is still a long way to go to generate more standardized dynamics in local responses. It is necessary to invest more in strengthening local capacities, both technically and financially, to give more independence and capacity to local responses. However, it is a sector where there have been many advances and there are experiences that need to be capitalized and can be replicated not only in the shelter sector but also in other sectors. Investing in emergency preparedness, early warning systems at the community level, and rapid response plans in the Shelter Sector for any crisis is still a big challenge.

Given the Colombian context, the geographical diversity, and the lack of access of the State to many areas of the country affected by conflict or natural disasters, in addition to the high level of bureaucracy in Colombia to activate emergency funds, this has meant that local actors, grassroots organizations, volunteer groups, or religious communities have become the first responders. This confirms that in practice there are local response experiences, but they still require a lot of support to standardize processes and generate quality responses, based on international standards.

The local organizations have frequently served as subcontractors to the Government's social programs, which somehow risks the response being politicized. On the other hand, humanitarian organizations have started to consider more the localization approach, as is becoming mandatory for donors to collaborate with local partners, which indeed opens the door to a new era of locally led response in the Shelter Sector. Nevertheless, substantial challenges and gaps still exist. The major findings include:

-  **There's no agreement yet on who's 'local.'**
-  **It is necessary to invest more in strengthening local capacities, both technically and financially, to give more independence and empowerment to local actors and communities.**
-  **It's needed to reduce bureaucratic processes to make emergency response more efficient and able to be led locally.**
-  **There is a lack of shelter-specific expertise at local and national level.**
-  **There are existing manuals and guidelines on shelter response led by the national system of disaster risk reduction, however in practice those are obsolete and not followed. IOM is supporting the Government to update and redefine the strategy.**
-  **Shelter projects nowadays are covered by international cooperation funds. There is a need for the national Government to prioritize preparedness and emergency response funds.**
-  **Donors should be flexible in their requirements for local actors to be able to access those fundings. The local actors still require a lot of technical support.**

Through this study, a few recommendations are made for enhancing local leadership in the Shelter and Settlements Sector in the future:

-  **Build the capacity of local actors, not only local authorities, but also local communities.**
-  **It is required to improve the capacities of local authorities in emergency preparedness, early warning systems at the community level, and rapid response plans in the Shelter Sector, so they can include it in the annual budgets.**
-  **The national authorities should define a proper plan for the long term, and not depend only on the transitory politician in charge.**
-  **Support local organizations to document their work and share it with peers.**

ABBREVIATIONS

ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (which translates to “the National Liberation Army” it’s a historical non-state illegal armed group)
EPL	Ejército Popular de Liberación (which translates to “the Popular Liberation Army” it’s a historical non-state illegal armed group)
ESAL	Entidad sin ánimo de Lucro (which translates to “Non-profit entity”)
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (which translates to “the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia” was a non-state illegal armed group that signed a peace process)
GIFMM	Interagency Group on Mixed Migratory Flows
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
ICBF	Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (which translates to “Colombian Institute of family welfare”)
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PND	Plan Nacional de Desarrollo (which translates to “National Development Plan”)
RUV	Registro Único de Víctimas (which translates to “Victims register entity”)
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SNGRD	Sistema Nacional para la Gestión del riesgo de desastres (which translates to “National System for Disaster Risk Management”)
UNGRD	Unidad Nacional para la Gestión del riesgo de desastres (which translates to “National Unit for Disaster Risk Management”)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
NIRAPAD	Network for Information, Response, and Preparedness Activities on Disaster

1. INTRODUCTION

The term “localization” arises from the discussions carried out in the framework of the Grand Bargain, an agreement between more than 50 donors and international organizations that provide humanitarian assistance. It arose as a space for discussion to rethink a more efficient and effective way of international cooperation, where aid truly reaches those who need it, reducing transaction costs, access barriers, and intermediaries.

Putting the concept of localization into practice requires a significant change in the existing practices of international cooperation. Changes are required in donor requirements, strengthening local capacities, and establishing policies and funds for emergencies that allow local actors to respond directly and reduce dependency on international humanitarian assistance. While the concept of localization has been a recurring theme in international cooperation discussions, there is no common definition of localization. However, there is a general commitment among the signatories to the agreement that “humanitarian aid should follow a principle of action that is as local as possible and as international as necessary.” It should be noted that in practice it is a concept that is not yet realized, and still poses many challenges. This study explores local leadership which seeks to promote humanitarian assistance led by local actors who know the context and the capacity for rapid deployment., With strengthened capacities and technical knowledge, they can respond directly to emergencies without having to depend on international organizations.

This research aims to analyze the concept of locally led response in Colombia as a case study. It considers whether the concept is understood and put into practice by local actors and international cooperation in Colombia. Thus, it seeks to show whether there are experiences of responses led by local actors that can serve as an example to understand and document locally led shelter responses in Colombia. The research focuses on the Shelter and Settlements Sector to assess existing experiences of local stakeholder participation and leadership, and to generate recommendations and lessons learned. Further details on the methodology are in Annex A.

2. CONTEXT OVERVIEW

Colombia was chosen as a case study because of its context, where there is vast experience in the Shelter Sector, with protracted humanitarian crises that have challenged local response capacity in the country. Three types of existing crises were chosen.

2.1 Armed conflict

Colombia has been in internal armed conflict for more than 70 years, involving armed groups, such as the FARC, the ELN, and the EPL. These and other groups were formed as a result of “a gradual collapse of the state, which began to deteriorate after the confrontations that took place between 1930 and 1946 (...) The weakness of a state was that was unable to provide itself with sufficient means to exercise its authority over a large part of its territory; as a result, power dynamics were created and led by the FARC. Weakness of a state that is unable to provide itself with sufficient means to exercise its authority over a large part of its territory.”¹

As a result, power dynamics were created, led by illegal armed groups which, in protest against the state for the lack of development and coverage of basic needs in the national territory, took alternative measures. These included the exploitation of natural resources through illegal mining, and drug trafficking, which degenerated into a social conflict through the use of violence and arms to gain territorial control. Colombia ranks second in the world after Syria in internal displacement, with 5.6 million internally displaced people. Eighty-nine percent have been displaced from rural to urban areas because of conflict and violence. In Colombian cities, informal settlements have become the last place of refuge for many IDPs.² The government of Colombia reports that 8,375,715 people have been included in the Single Registry of Victims (RUV).

2.2 Refugees and migrants from Venezuela

The mass arrival of refugees and migrants is due to the internal crisis in Venezuela. In 2017 there was the largest influx of people from Venezuela into Colombia, with people sleeping in the streets or forming informal settlements with plastic and sticks, with high protection risks. For this reason, different efforts were deployed from the national level and the humanitarian architecture to respond to shelter needs. According to the Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V), (Refugee and migrant figures from R4V) coordinated by UNHCR and IOM, Venezuelan migration in the world reached 7,320,225, of which 6,136,402 remain in Latin America, as of 11 June 2023, making it one of the largest migration crises in the world.

Colombia has 2,219 kilometers of open border with Venezuela, making it the main receiving country of migrants coming from Venezuela, both for transit and permanence. according to the R4V above-mentioned report, Colombia had received 2,477,588 Venezuelans who were residing in the country, making it the main receiving country of Venezuelans.

2.3 Natural Hazards

Colombia is prone to disasters due to its geographic location and the climatic variability of the tropical region. That variability has worsened in recent years. In Colombia, there have been earthquakes, floods, avalanches, fires, hurricanes, and droughts, which have generated sudden and massive displacement of people. Although there is no formally calculated figure in Colombia for the internal displacement of people due to such disasters and other consequences of climate change, it is indeed an increasing trend.

¹ Ríos Sierra, Jerónimo (2021) “Historia de la violencia en Colombia. 1946–2020. Una mirada territorial.” Madrid: Sílex Ediciones.

² Internal Displacement Monitoring Center. (n.d.). The Last Refuge: Urban displacement in Colombia. <https://story.internal-displacement.org/colombia-urban/index.html#:~:text=Colombia%20is%2C%20after%20Syria%2C%20the,of%20refuge%20for%20many%20IDPs.>

3. FINDINGS

These three types of crises are constant in the country and, over the last few years, have triggered massive displacement of people that has demanded an emergency response from the Shelter and Settlements Sector, among others. It is for this reason that Colombia is an example that is the subject of research, as it has become a country with experience in emergency response due to its prolonged crises, allowing for reflection on the concept of localization within the framework of this research.

The analysis of both the literature and the interviews was carried out in three phases. The first focused on analyzing the context and the existing preconditions that facilitate or constrain the implementation of local leadership in the Shelter Sector in emergency response in Colombia. This was followed by an analysis of current dynamics, existing capacities, and common barriers. That allowed us to identify the opportunities and provide a series of recommendations to implement the concept of locally led response in Colombia.

3.1 Existing capacities and common barriers

The experience of emergency response from the Shelter Sector in Colombia has been weak and sometimes almost non-existent, as the regulations explain what to do but there is no clarity on how to do it. The main challenge is the bureaucratic scheme, on top of the lack of funding and technical capacity at the local level for emergency preparedness and response. Technical expertise is limited as key roles in the disaster risk management units at the national and local levels are politically defined, and they change in each government period. This constrains the real capacity to operationalize this regulatory framework.

The support of the international community has been constantly – almost permanently requested – while the dependence on the international community support is not recognized by the government authorities. According to a UN agency, by the end of 2023, more than 90% of temporary shelter response projects have been financed by its donors (Male, UN agency, 2023). This has become almost the only source and response in the Shelter Sector, ensuring international standards and technical quality to the multiple emergencies is ongoing.

Another challenge in the operationalization of Law 1523 of 2012 is that a public declaration of “emergency state” can only last up to 90 days. So, the UNGRD can lead the response and activate the system of disaster risk management only for that period. The emergency state brings also budgetary flexibility so they can move resources from different funds to attend to the emergency. In most cases, there is a lack of planning for a second-line response, and the 3 months of emergency response is not enough to cover the needs.

Such is the case in the migratory crisis caused by the massive arrival of Venezuelans and national returnees since 2015. UNGRD was given the power to coordinate and lead the process of service provision and emergency response in the border areas, together with the Foreign Affairs Ministry, which created the position of presidential adviser for the migration crisis from Venezuela. It is worth noting that, after a year of crisis, the UNGRD has no funds dedicated to responding to an already protracted crisis, and it was the first crisis of this nature, so no law allows it to activate the national risk management system, which in turn activates the respective ministries to respond. The only entities able to assist in the border areas, were the recipients of the migrants and refugees where the municipalities were overwhelmed with the response, as they are historically poor areas with reduced capacity to respond and no funds to dedicate for this crisis, on top of the reduced technical capacities. They also lack financial resources and the capacity to access basic services, even for their local population historically, much less to cover for the additional arrival of vulnerable people coming from Venezuela.

The UNGRD calls on the national government to address this crisis, which is outside the guidelines, especially to manage resources to support this humanitarian crisis that increases the structural problems of the country's border areas. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued the Comprehensive Migration Policy (referred to as CONPES 3603), which calls for a multi-sectoral response, making all ministries responsible for responding to the migration crisis in Colombia. However, CONPES 3603 does not translate into economic resources, as it is not linked to the general national budget. As a result, there are no resources to respond, and local authorities have no funds to manage this crisis. Some decrees oblige local authorities to provide shelter, health care, education, and financial inclusion services. This creates a lack of capacity to respond to the crisis, which is already protracted.

Colombia has several Institutional Governance Challenges (PND) and seeks to:

- 1. Harmonize their planning instruments.**
- 2. Reducing the proliferation of ineffective procedures and rules in their application.**
- 3. Avoid disarticulation between the activities developed in the territory and its vocation.**

In addition, the national development plan (PND) identified the purpose of moving from a procedural to a functional planning that recognizes cultural, environmental and social diversity and its relationship with the territory. (male, GOV, August 2023)

Colombia has strong institutions and a normative framework and some resources are allocated to emergency response and preparedness. It also has local capacity and professional staff for a locally led Shelter Sector response and an emergency response and preparedness action plan. However, the bureaucratic constraints, the lack of connection between the regulations and the national budget, plus the presence of politically appointed staff rather than technical staff at all levels, constrain emergency responses in the sector.

There is a great need to empower local actors, both authorities and civil society, as they are the first responders. They do not have access to specific government funds, but they have the duty – in addition to technical expertise and capacity – to respond to imminent humanitarian needs. It is also relevant to improve coordination in existing spaces to maximize efforts and reduce the risk of duplication of efforts.

Throughout the research with different actors from local, national, and international civil society, there is a common understanding that the state is the first responder and has the ultimate responsibility to respond to emergencies. However, there is agreement that it could not deploy this assistance effectively. Each government maintains the general regulations but creates its guidelines and appoints political rather than technical people, which has generated a great deal of instability in the National Risk Management Unit, the main emergency response agency in Colombia.

“The first responder will always be the state, which is the one that must watch over the rights of the population in the context of emergencies of natural or unintentional anthropic origin. What is done is that the unified command posts are led from the territory, and that is where the different actors of the national government and other operational organizations such as the fire brigade, civil defense, the air force, depending on the city, are articulated. These resources are directly managed by the national government. The support that we can provide as an auxiliary role depends on the needs that are seen in the territory, but it is not that our funds go directly to supplement what the state does, but rather that we complement the action taken by the government, local, departmental and national governments. Our agency has the capacity to be in remote places with easy access to places where not even the government can enter, because impartiality is one of our principles, and I believe that neutrality has led us to be trusted by the population. Because we have no political or economic goals. This constant coordination that we have from the territory to the nation is a constant work of articulation with the different local authorities, which allows us to replicate those good actions or lessons learned that we have had.” (Woman, I-XNGO, August 2023)

The lack of technical capacity, together with a limited national budget for emergency preparedness and response to the multiple crises in Colombia, plus the post-COVID-19 pandemic economic recession, has left a country with a scenario of recession and austerity. This limits the capacity to respond to potential emergencies, which can be preventable and worked on through early warning systems.

“We have been trying to communicate in some joint meetings that we have had with the Shelter Cluster and the GIFMM multi-sectoral table. The common message, because we start from a very concrete fact, is that in Colombia, with all the needs that exist in the different contexts that we see in each department, it does not make sense to coordinate a response on the one hand focused on refugees and migrants, which does not connect with a response to the needs of armed conflict and disasters such as the Clusters. And I think that intrinsic to that, as to that dialogue between the two structures is the concept of localization, and that is that we are responding to places more than to people. And I think that intrinsic to that, as to that dialogue between the two structures is the concept of localization, and that is that we are responding to places rather than to people, and the impact of the response on shelter, on settlements, on community infrastructure, on housing infrastructure, This is an impact that we hope will have a long-term impact and will end up strengthening the local ties of both the host communities and the receiving communities with refugees, internally displaced persons and other profiles that are arriving in the same area together with the local authorities.” (Male, UN, July, 2023)

On the other hand, there is international cooperation, with organizations present in the country for several years, attending to all the aforementioned crises in a multi-sectoral manner. Colombia is a country with a solid international humanitarian architecture that has been active since 1976, with a strong Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and the active participation of international NGOs present in Colombia for more than 30 years. However, the migration crisis has required specific technical capacity, mainly in the Shelter and Settlements Sector, as expertise has been limited to IDPs or natural disasters. These require a rapid response but displaced people have usually been quickly relocated or absorbed by the host community.

The large influx of Venezuelans has exceeded all the country’s capacities. The Venezuelans are a very vulnerable population, requiring basic support in health, food, sanitation, housing, education and livelihoods. They are entering an already deficient system that could not guarantee the quantity and quality of services for the already poor Colombian population located in the border areas through which the Venezuelans were entering.

3.2 Conclusions

Concerning the Shelter Sector, on the one hand, no predominant technical leadership has been perceived, beyond the historical support that IOM has provided to the Colombian state. Other organizations have adapted to the context, to the different crises, and to specific responses in the Sector, but they have not taken on a predominant role in technical assistance. Funds have been prioritized and managed for sectors other than Shelter, even when globally recognized actors in the Shelter Sector are present.

On the other hand, there has not been an effective coordination system that homogenizes emergency preparedness, fundraising, visibility of actions to prepare for La Niña or El Niño events, and above all to ensure the technical quality of the response. There are currently two coordination spaces, one is the Shelter Cluster. The massive arrival of Venezuelans in Colombia triggered the creation of the Inter-agency Group on Mixed Migratory Flows (GIFMM), the second coordination space, led by IOM and UNHCR. GIFMM created the technical tables, with guidelines oriented to the Regional Response System for Venezuelans (R4V). In the GIFMM mechanism, there is currently a multi-sectoral roundtable that includes accommodation and shelter, as well as humanitarian transport.

This duplication of spaces demands greater effort from organizations acting in response to both the migratory crisis and armed conflict and natural disasters. In other words, they must generally attend two meetings, with demands for specific information, and where there is also competition for funds, given that donors are promoting the coverage of populations that are doubly or triply affected.

It is worth noting that local voices are largely absent throughout the research. There is a disconnect between the national and local levels. In practice, there is no evidence of an effective example of a locally led response organically and naturally; it has occurred spontaneously by certain actors with capacity and presence in the territories who have genuinely organized the information in the form of lessons learned.

The grassroots organizations interviewed do not receive technical and budgetary support from civil society organizations or international cooperation agencies. They do not know how to access this support, either in terms of technical training or resources, which is the pressing need they share.

“In 2021 we participated in a first dialogue meeting on the issue of localization in Colombia. This was initially coordinated between OCHA, the Colombian Red Cross and the Swiss Agency for development and Cooperation, SDC, and there we were also invited to participate as part of the organization and there we realized that it really was a term that, although it had been under discussion for some years, it was still a concept that we had not really worked on much in Colombia, so there we also said, it is very important to be able to translate when talking about localization in broad terms, localization can mean many things, but it does not really resolve the concerns that gave rise to the issue of localization, not how to ensure greater funding for local humanitarian actors, but how to ensure greater participation in humanitarian coordination spaces, how to ensure greater visibility for the sustainability of local humanitarian actors. So we concluded that there is still a long way to go before this concept is appropriated and adapted to the context. And when we began to dialogue and discuss the concept of localization within [our organization], we said, this is very similar to the principle of the social doctrine that talks about subsidiarity, because subsidiarity is not only the duty of aid, and not only that there is a commitment that the first responsible and the first actor that must respond in an emergency is the State and our support is subsidiary.” (Male, NNGO, September 2023)

In the Shelter Sector, there is a great deal of improvisation in responding to emergencies, with the communities themselves being the first responders: community leaders, churches, and volunteers, among others. Humanitarian aid arrives late and, above all, does not focus on prevention as it should. Spending on sudden-onset emergencies is much higher than investing in preparedness. Unfortunately, the government, when it has the funds, does not have a plan and in the end, needs to execute in the very short term without a roadmap.

In Colombia, there is a strong network of community-based and local organizations, operating in the different rural and hard-to-reach areas of the country. They are legally constituted and recognized as non-profit organizations in the Electronic Public Procurement System (SECOP), which allows them to receive public funds. These organizations can work in different social programs and execute state projects. However, it has become a strategy to execute public funding through these non-governmental organizations, which work as implementing partners of local and national authorities, due to the lack of government capacity to be present.

This is why national and local NGOs have been considered as the executors of public and social welfare policies. This creates a dynamic of corruption and political interest, since the more money they obtain for social programs, the more votes they can provide to those in power, at all levels. This encourages the abuse of power, including the direct selection of suppliers with a percentage of the resources to be distributed, and other bribery practices that have become normalized in Colombia.

Despite the strong grassroots organizational base and professional capacity in Colombia, the main localization challenges could be related to this perception and risk of corruption and lack of neutrality. This also poses a risk to illegal armed groups in terms of political support, which may become a constraint on permission to access remote areas. On the other hand, strict donor procedures and requirements reduce the capacity to work directly with local actors. This is due to the lack of a strong structure to ensure technical operating procedures based on international standards, and the lack of a financial and logistical structure to ensure adequate administrative processes.

3.3 Examples

There are different experiences and examples of localization efforts in Colombia that offer scope for lessons learned. ActionAid (which absorbed Alianza por la Solidaridad), Diakonie and Caritas have for years been an example of international NGOs supporting grassroots organizations as direct implementing partners.

“I think the main challenge is to be properly constituted as a Non-profit organization, ESAL, after the tax reform. It is particularly challenging and I know that many organizations left the country after the reform, which no longer has any offices but the administrative office in the country. After the reform, it becomes very difficult for social organizations to stay in the country, we have particular scrutiny that makes it very difficult to stay in the country, and what I find most difficult is to be able to stay as an ESAL, it is a big barrier for social organizations to be competitive and to be able to receive international funds, which is the main difficulty, but now even if you are located in Bogotá and you have the desk of the District Legal Secretariat which is particularly strong and excessive and is perhaps where the most money is going to me from the administrative area just to respond to the District Legal Secretariats, we can do it, but smaller organizations do not.” (Male, NNGO, August 2023)

Caritas has supported Pastoral Social, the largest faith-based organization with a nationwide presence, financially and with expertise on international standards and quality frameworks. Pastoral Social has access to the whole country and has recognized expertise in the humanitarian sector. It has multi-sectoral technical capacity, including in the Shelter Sector, having managed emergency shelters for years, mainly to assist IDPs in transit, from a charitable perspective.

Finally, a concrete example of the localization effort is the HCT. In Colombia, they are inviting local organizations to sectoral meetings to access their knowledge and perspective. More and more local and national NGOs are being included in different coordination spaces with a relevant place on the agenda, as well as local authorities. For example, in La Guajira in 2019, the local humanitarian coordination team invited local authorities, such as ICBF, the mayor’s office, and their sectoral managers (education, infrastructure, disaster risk management) from the municipal, departmental, and state level, to different coordination meetings on needs, to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive approach.

La Guajira is a context where different responses are occurring at the same time, due to its historical poverty and lack of natural resources such as water. This has led to a prolonged malnutrition crisis in a border area with a history of corruption and smuggling. La Guajira, already in crisis, has been immensely affected since 2017 by the large influx of Venezuelans entering Colombia. These multiple layers of crisis have required an emergency response, and for the coordination system of the humanitarian architecture, the coordination and active participation of local authorities and actors has been of great interest.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a great need to empower local actors, both authorities and civil society. They are the first responders, who do not have access to specific government funds, but have the duty, in addition to technical expertise and capacity, to respond to imminent humanitarian needs. It is also relevant to improve coordination in existing spaces to maximize efforts and reduce the risk of duplication.

4.1 Strengthen capacities on preparedness and risk reduction

It is necessary to strengthen the capacities of municipalities and local authorities on emergency preparedness and risk reduction, specifically in the shelter response, so that they can operationalize the existing policies and activate the risk management system. This should start with a more appropriate risk identification and classification system, where they can foresee the probability of events, quantify the response in case of an event, and also invest in preparedness. This should occur both at the relevant agency level and at the community level with early warning systems. This will allow a budget for risk management to be defined and earmarked from the national budget in a planned manner, rather than resorting to emergency alternatives, such as the declaration of a public emergency, which depends on a lot of bureaucracy to make funds available, is not immediate and minimizes the effective response capacity of the state, which should be the first responder.

Local authorities – mayors' offices – require technical training in risk prevention and management so that they know how to foresee and classify risks and calculate the required budget. They also require training, in activating the SNGRD so that it is an agile, rather than a bureaucratic and slow, process. The above-mentioned aspect can be supported by international expert organizations to better operationalize the standardization manual for humanitarian assistance on temporary shelter guidelines.

4.2 Provide technical and financial support

Technical and financial support to grassroots organizations is also a priority. That will enable them to become legally constituted and to access national and international funds. Those organizations are the base for a real locally led response, as they are the first responders and have community engagement expertise. Their growth requires greater flexibility among donors to fund their administrative and structural costs, the lack of funding for those expenses reduces their capacity to grow as an NGO. Donors should not only fund their implementation activities but their support costs. The international community must advocate with donors for more funding through local partners to enhance a locally led response.

4.3 Improve coordination spaces

Finally, it is very important to improve the function of the shelter coordination spaces. GIFMM and Cluster meetings often address the same topics. They have become spaces to share what each organization is doing. Still, it was a common reply from the interviewees that it would be worthwhile to have a proper space for joint efforts with concrete projects, to generate real joint efforts, and to build documents of lessons learned from experiences in different territories to make good practices visible.

4.4 Better allocate resources

Finally, the national government has the responsibility to ensure a proper emergency response system. This requires a better allocation of resources, meaning technical staff and annual budget allocation, along with a more flexible system that allows municipalities to activate emergency funds rapidly. As well, the CONPES needs to be translated into specific resources and action plans.

There is still a big challenge in investing in emergency preparedness, early warning systems at the community level, and rapid response plans in the Shelter Sector for any kind of crisis. It is the national authorities' responsibility to define a proper plan for the long term, and not depend on the transitory politician in charge.

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6. ANNEXES

Annex A: Methodology

Annex B: Context analysis

Annex C: Stakeholder mapping

ANNEX A: METHODOLOGY

A.1 Approach

The methodology used for this research had three main phases.

1. Review of existing literature on localization.
2. Stakeholder mapping.
3. Interviews.

The research began in March 2023 with a process of gathering secondary information on the concept of localization in Latin America and in Colombia more specifically, defining it as a case study country. The literature reviewed showed that there is little existing literature on the application of the term localization in Latin America or Colombia. The literature reviewed included technical guides for shelters and settlements, existing laws, national regulations on the Shelter Sector, news, and academic documents. After gathering contextual information, including an analysis of the dynamics of civil society in responding to emergencies in which the Shelter Sector was relevant. Subsequently, a mapping of relevant actors responding to the three main crises was carried out. These were categorized as either government actors and local authorities, international actors present in Colombia, or civil society organizations with a national and local presence. A network strategy was generated to identify key actors for the research, who were contacted directly for the interview phase.

Finally, primary information was collected through interviews to document the voices of the main actors identified in the Shelter and Settlements Sector in Colombia about the three types of crises. For this purpose, a questionnaire was used as a guiding instrument to cover the topics defined by the research objectives. This questionnaire was constructed based on the literature review carried out, which already shed light on the conceptual interpretation that guided the research.

This questionnaire was used flexibly. It used open questions, which were counter-questioned as interviewees responded. This generated a discussion dynamic that built trust with the interlocutor and emphasized key points, such as challenges, success stories, and lessons learned. It also generated recommendations to improve the leadership of a response led by local actors. A total of 12 interviews were conducted with government agencies, international NGOs, UN agencies, and local/national NGOs.

The qualitative methodology gathered first-hand information showing trends in the interpretation of the concept of local Leadership. This allowed us to understand:

- who the local actors were
- what role they played
- how they worked with other stakeholders
- the tensions and challenges they faced
- the availability and allocation of resources in the Shelter Sector to respond to the crises mentioned
- the processes involved in the response and its outcomes
- general recommendations for improving the existing dynamics in Colombia that can promote a more organic local response.

A.2 Summary of KIIs

Code	Type of organization	Gender of interviewee(s)	Date of interview	Location of interview	Method
C1	UN/IO	Male	21/06/2023	Dhaka	In person
C2	UN/IO	Male	24/07/2023	Dhaka	Remote
C3	I-CNGO	1 Female, 1 Male	26/07/2023	Jhenaidah	Remote
C4	INGO	Male	27/07/2023	Nepal	Remote
C5	UN/IO	Male	28/07/2023	Kabul	Remote
C6	INGO	Male	31/07/2023	Kurigram	Remote
C7	NNGO	Male	08/08/2023	Sylhet	Remote
C8	Government	Male	21/08/2023	CXB	Remote
C9	Government	Male	22/08/2023	USA	Remote
C10	NNGO	2 Female	24/08/2023	Dhaka	Remote
C11	LNGO	Male	28/08/2023	Dhaka	Remote
C12	NNGO	Male	12/09/2023	Dhaka	Remote

Table A1: Summary of KIIs

A.5 KII questions

A1. Understanding and experiences

- a. What is your understanding of local-led response?
- b. Have you heard about the term localization?
- c. Do you consider the Government as the first responder? Or there is the need of International organization to respond.

A2. Examples

- a. How is local leadership applied/visible in the emergency response of the shelter sector in Colombia?
- b. What are the fundamental roles that local, national and international actors play in the protection of people affected by disasters, conflicts or displacement?
- c. Has coordination and leadership of the shelter cluster /GIFMM supported in the identification of local experiences to be replicated?
- d. At what times does international action continue to prevail or is it still needed?

A3. Outcomes

- a. How does strengthening local action make the system work better?
- b. How can the commitment of local and national NGOs contribute to the greater participation of affected people, especially women and marginalized groups in decision making?

A4. Challenges/tensions

- a. What challenges are there to greater local leadership in the shelter sector?
- b. What are the barriers to change in power dynamics?
- c. How can we increase the resources available to local and national agents to be first responders?

A5. Possibilities

- a.** How can NGOs accommodate genuine local ownership and leadership in humanitarian action?
- b.** What opportunities do local and national NGOs have to discuss openly with their donors and partners issues related to risk management and response to humanitarian emergencies from the temporary accommodation sector ?
- c.** What is the best way to create an enabling environment for local humanitarian action?

A6. Conclusion

- a.** Does the early warning systems installed by the municipality disaster risk unit with the support of international NGO and the UNGRD for the flood response in Mocoa could be replicated as an example of disaster risk reduction in other municipalities prone to disasters? Could it be directly led by the local authorities?
- b.** Does the Shelter response done by local actors to the refugee and migrant crisis is a long lasting response? or a short term emergency with no lasting impact?
- c.** Does the Shelter response done by local actors to the refugee and migrant crisis followed the international standards?
- d.** Does the UNGRD has a standard response to IDP crisis regarding shelter response? how long it takes?

ANNEX B: CONTEXT ANALYSIS

B.1 Country context

Colombia is characterized as a country of solid institutions with an established normative framework that regulates any political, economic, and social interaction. The constitution was updated in 1991 and is the main legal framework. However, over the years, specific frameworks have been structured to address specific topics, such as disaster risk management and emergency response.

“The La Niña phenomenon that occurred between 2010 and 2011 was one of the strongest of its kind, according to the records of specialized organizations, which also confirmed that Colombia, along with India and Pakistan, were the countries most affected on the planet by this natural phenomenon. ... it caused the largest and most prolonged massive emergency in Colombia’s recent history. Eighty percent of the territory was affected. This means that 1,060 municipalities in 29 departments suffered the consequences of excessive rainfall. In November 2010, a few months into his presidential term, the government of President Juan Manuel Santos created Colombia Humanitaria to address this situation, which overwhelmed the capacities of the National System for Disaster Prevention and Response, now the National System for Disaster Risk Management (SNGRD), and through this strategy... Colombia Humanitaria designed a model in which the institutional framework played a leading role. With mayors and governors, it formed a large network, to which strategic allies from the private sector, mostly called ‘operators,’ were linked. This network allowed for the timely delivery of more than 39,000 tons of food to nearly 3 million people, as well as the repair of houses and the construction of shelters. ... In terms of temporary housing, Colombia Humanitaria developed three modalities to guarantee shelter for those who lost part or all of their homes, according to the needs expressed by the people to their governors. These are the construction of shelters, economic support for renting with aid to more than 60,000 families, and the repair of houses.”³

Following the need to evolve the regulatory framework, and due to the emergency that overwhelmed the existing capacities, a legal framework was established to create the National Unit for Disaster Risk Management (UNGRD) through Decree 4147 of 2011. Previously, risk management was managed in a cross-cutting manner and was financed on a needs basis after sudden emergencies that required the declaration of a public emergency. It is for this reason that the government of President Juan Manuel Santos has prioritized the creation of a responsible entity that can work on prevention and risk management planning, accompanied by a technical team and a specific budget, to maximize the country’s response capacity (Figure 1).

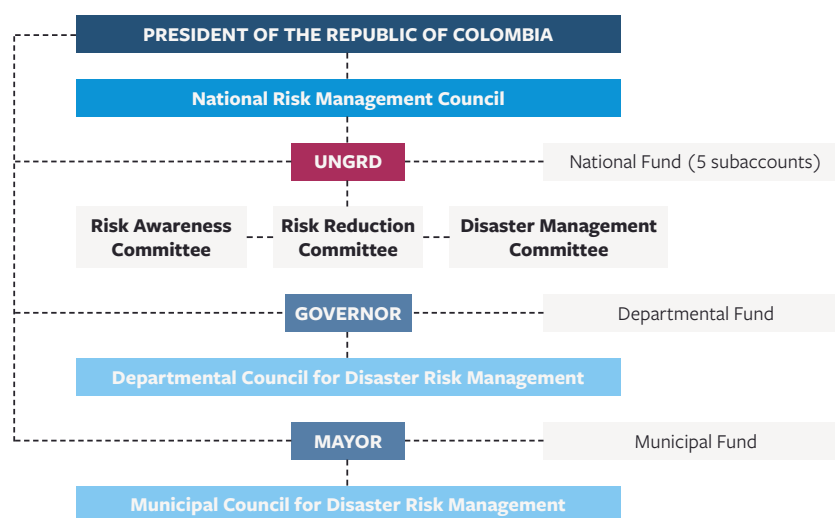


Figure 1: Governmental structure for disaster management in Colombia

³ Colombia Humanitaria and the International Organization for Migration. (December 2012). Manual of Introduction to the Management of Temporary Shelter. p. 12, <http://repositorio.gestiondelriesgo.gov.co/handle/20.500.11762/20441>

The creation of the UNGRD led to the enactment of Law 1523 of 2012, by which the National Policy for Disaster Risk Management is adopted and the SNGRD is established. It sets out the roles and responsibilities of the members of SNGRD and the committees for disaster management and prevention. In Colombia, the Colombian Red Cross, a civil society organization, is a member of the system.

By Law 1523 of 2012, we are part of the law of the national disaster risk management system. What does this imply? It implies that we are part of the different committees, both for management, reduction and risk management. This articulation is generated from the territorial level, from the municipal risk management councils, as well as from the departmental council. We do all our work by articulating with the 31 regional councils that we have at the national level.” (Woman, I-XNGO, August, 2023)

The Law establishes instructions for the deployment of aid in case of calamity and establishes coordination mechanisms, including international cooperation in Article 43:

“International cooperation in the field of disaster risk management, including support in disaster situations that are explicitly requested by the National Government, should be exercised with the central objective of strengthening the national system and the public, private and community entities that comprise it. Humanitarian aid should be provided considering the principles of quality, timeliness, relevance, and effectiveness that govern the institutions in charge of providing it at the international level.”⁴

As established in Law 1523 of 2012, each municipality must carry out a risk assessment and, according to the level of risk and probability of the same, a score will be given, and the Municipal Disaster Risk Index, adjusted by capacities, will be defined. This will make it possible to define the distribution of the necessary funds for the attention and prevention of emergencies at the departmental and municipal levels.

“Based on Law 1523 of 2012, where communities carry out activities of

- a) Identification and characterization of risk scenarios.**
- b) Risk analysis and assessment.**
- c) Risk monitoring and tracking.**
- d) Risk communication.**
- e) Emergency response preparedness.**

The community seeks to empower the following processes:

- a) Governance**
- b) Community actions.”**

(male, GOV, August, 2023)

In case of any emergency, the municipality is the primary responder and must deploy the existing mechanism framed in the Law. If the funds budgeted in the emergency fund are not sufficient to cover the needs due to the magnitude of the emergency, then the municipality can declare a state of emergency and request support and deployment of funds at the departmental level. As a last resort, the national government will deploy the national disaster management pool to respond to any emergency if the needs cannot be covered by the municipal and departmental levels.

In case the pooled fund is not sufficient, the president can then appeal to Article 215 of Chapter 6 of the Colombian Constitution.

⁴ Law 1523 of 2012. <https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=47141>

When events other than those provided for in articles 212 and 213 occur that seriously and imminently disturb or threaten to disturb the economic, social, and ecological order of the country, or which constitute a serious public calamity, the president, with the signature of all the ministers, may declare a state of emergency for periods of up to thirty days in each case, which together may not exceed ninety days in the calendar year. Utilizing such a declaration, which must be reasoned, the president, with the signature of all the ministers, may issue decrees with the force of law, exclusively aimed at averting the crisis and preventing the extension of its effects. ... The government, in the decree declaring the state of emergency, shall indicate the period within which it will make use of the extraordinary powers referred to in this article and shall convene Congress, if it is not in session, within 10 days following the expiry of the said period.

There is a regulatory framework in place that defines the process to be followed, the people in charge, the administrative structure, the budgetary basis, and the coordination schemes to respond to emergencies, as well as working on prevention and early warnings. The risk management fund defined in the Law activates resources for disaster response, risk management, and financial protection policies. If the needs exceed the money available in the fund, a public emergency must be declared to mobilize resources from the national budget.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) supported the Colombian government in creating the standardization manual for humanitarian aid in Colombia, which has been a guide for dealing with emergencies, but this has become obsolete for ongoing crises that demand greater response capacity and flexibility, especially in the Shelter and Settlements Sector.

The state does not have the technical expertise in the Shelter Sector, so in 2023 IOM is working with UNGRD to update that manual based on international standards. That will make it easier to operationalize the written guidelines in more feasible and less bureaucratic practices.

“The implementation of the response generates resettlement processes, rent subsidies, emergency humanitarian assistance (community cooking pots, food baskets and food kits), as well as developing infrastructure actions and emergency works (water and sanitation, supply of yellow machinery and delivery of construction materials).” (male, GOV, August, 2023)

It is worth highlighting that there is a basis of lessons learned, thanks to the response to different emergencies, such as the Mocoa avalanche in 2017 where the three levels of response were activated, municipal, departmental, national, and international cooperation. It became an example of coordination and emergency response as well as a long-term reconstruction plan. This event provided lessons for future similar emergencies, as the three levels of response (municipal, departmental, and national level were required to be activated due to the level of the emergency.

Colombia has a regulatory framework that defines roles and responsibilities for emergency response. However, in practice, there are gaps in the dynamics of the territory and the existing capacities and conditions, before an emergency response can be carried out.

ANNEX C: STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

Identification of key actors:

International NGOs	
Name	Shelter and settlement related actions
IOM	In Colombia, IOM provides a comprehensive response to humanitarian needs under the Shelter Cluster Contingency Plan for migrants, internally displaced persons, returnees and communities affected by emergencies and disasters. As well they co-lead the interagency group of mixed migration flow for the response for venezuela R4V and is also co-leader of the shelter Sector.
UNHCR	UNHCR in Colombia provides emergency shelter during crises or displacement of nationals or migrants. They provide support with technical personnel and financial resources. As well they co-lead the interagency group of mixed migration flow for the response for venezuela R4V.
NRC	In Colombia, they provide protection, Information, Counseling and Legal Assistance (ICLA), Food Security, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and livelihood services to migrant populations and communities affected by emergencies. They are leaders of the largest emergency consortium in Colombia. MIRE consortium. Its also co-leader of the Shelter cluster, along with IOM.
DRC	In Colombia it is mainly based on protection activities, with components of shelter interventions, WASH, unconditional multipurpose cash, NFIs, and livelihoods, in the Caribbean coastal areas of Colombia such as Riohacha and Barranquilla and in the cities of Bogotá and Medellín, currently incorporating activities in the municipality of Barbacoas, Nariño, and in Norte de Santander, mainly humanitarian demining.
Heartland Alliance	Implements activities with refugees and migrants in temporary shelters in the department of Santander and Norte de Santander.
Blumont, Inc	It carries out shelter activities with vulnerable groups, particularly women, children and indigenous peoples, supporting their immediate needs.
Goal Global	It has provided support in a series of shelters and settlements strengthening urban resilience in neighborhoods in Riohacha, La Guajira, Cúcuta, Norte de Santander, Bucaramanga, Santander and Barranquilla, Atlántico.
Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli – CISP	Implements activities with refugees and migrants in temporary shelters in the department of Santander and Norte de Santander.
Samaritan´s Purse	Implements activities with refugees and migrants in temporary shelters in the department of Santander

International NGOs

World Vision International	Implements activities with refugees and migrants in temporary shelters, education in emergencies and monetary transfers in various areas of the country.
Action Against Hunger	It implements emergency response and nexus activities with development in the water, sanitation and hygiene, food safety, health, nutrition, protection and information management sectors. It is part of the MIRE emergency consortium.
MIRE Consortium (NRC, MDM, ACF)	It carries out protection and humanitarian assistance activities in the sectors of shelter, food security, health, wash, protection in the most acute moments of the emergency for the recently displaced population and confined communities that need access to health, water, sanitation and hygiene, food, shelter, education in emergencies and protection.

National NGOs

Name	Shelter and settlement related actions
Colombian RED CROSS	In Colombia, it is the main actor in emergency response. In the shelter sector, it applies a comprehensive approach that frames the strategy of temporary shelter, improvement, adaptation and eventual reconstruction of housing, integrating the sectors of water, sanitation and hygiene, protection, health, among others, with a focus on capacity building, articulated with the Government's response strategies and international guidelines
PLAN International-Colombian Branch	Implements activities with refugees and migrants in temporary shelters, education in emergencies and monetary transfers in various areas of the country.
Pastoral Social-Cáritas	Largest actor in the country with a capacity for deployment in the national territory with a multisectoral approach. Historically has provided shelter to internally displaced persons, among other comprehensive actions.
Mercy Corps Colombia	Organization that responds to emergencies and Early Recovery of crises with humanitarian assistance in the sectors of education, health, protection, income generation mainly. In the shelter sector, it has supported the provision of temporary shelter to populations that have had to leave their homes, both in contexts of migration and emergencies.
HIAS Colombia	Organization that responds to emergencies mainly in the sectors of protection and shelter. It has supported the provision of temporary shelter solutions to migrant communities affected by different emergencies in Colombia.
Scalabrini misión	Implements activities with refugees and migrants in temporary shelters in Colombia.
ZOA International-Colombian Branch	Organization that responds to emergencies mainly in the sectors of protection, wash and shelter. It has supported the provision of temporary shelter solutions to migrant communities affected by different emergencies mainly in the border with Venezuela, supporting indigenous communities.

National NGOs

Jesuita Refugee service-JRS Colombia.	Manages health services, rentals, food, response to migrants on the way, shelter and temporary housing for the migrant population and communities affected by emergencies.
CAMIG - comprehensive attention center for the migrant- ecclesiastic commission of Colombia	Implements activities with refugees and migrants in a collective temporary housing center.
TECHO Colombia	Improves housing and habitat conditions through the design, management and construction of housing projects in vulnerable areas of the country.

Local NGO/Network

Name	Shelter and settlement related actions
Albergue Las Pachas	Shelters and refuges for short-stay for migrants and Colombian returnees with orientation services, emergency medical and psychological care, in border areas of Colombia with Venezuela and Ecuador.
Temporary shelter Casa Volver Normandía	
CATM - Centro de Atención al Migrante	
Diocesan Service Shelter (SEDAMI)	
Fundación Communitas	
Temporary Foster Home for Unaccompanied or Separated Children, Hogar Monseñor Valerio Jiménez	
Temporary shelter Aldeas Infantiles SOS, Albergue Nubes Verdes	
Temporary shelter Casa Volver Normandía	

National government organizations	
Name	Role
National Army (Brigade of Attention and Prevention of Disasters-BRIAD)	The Specialized Military Brigade for Disaster Attention and Prevention (Briad), is a unit attached to the Command of Military Engineers of the Colombian National Army, with the purpose of acting in the event of any natural disaster or emergency, performing rescue activities along with infrastructure repair and shelter setting to mitigate and reduce the harm of the victim population.
Colombian Civil Defense	In 1948, the National Relief was created as an auxiliary body of the Army and attached to the Red Cross, being assigned the function of public assistance to attend to the population victims of calamities; in 1965, Legislative Decree No. 3398 was adopted as a permanent rule, whereby National Defense was organized, which defined Civil Defense as "The part of National Defense comprising the set of non-aggressive measures, provisions and orders that tend to prevent, nullify or cancel or prevent the occurrence of calamities which tend to avoid, annul or diminish the effects that the action of the enemy or nature may cause on the life, morale and goods of the social conglomerate". ⁵
Unidad Nacional para la Gestión del Riesgo de Desastres -UNGRD,	Is the unit that directs, guides and coordinates Disaster Risk Management in Colombia, strengthening the capacities of public, private and community entities and society, through the knowledge of risk, its reduction and the management of disasters associated with natural, socio-natural, technological and human unintentional phenomena. ⁶
Police-Unidad de operaciones especiales en emergencias y desastres PONALSAR	It is the unit within the police that responds to emergencies and disasters. It represents the National Police before the National Disaster Risk Management System, Colombian Civil Defense Board of Directors and other instances of the strategic order, in order to deploy the responsibilities given to the Police in any emergency. ⁷
Ministry of Health	the Office of Territorial Management, Emergencies and Disasters -OGTED OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH supports the timely and adequate response to emergencies in coordination with the Territorial Health Entities. ⁸
National Fire Department	It is the entity in charge of providing firefighting services, within the framework of integrated risk management for the protection of life, property and the environment. It leads the implementation of integrated fire risk management, preparations and rescue services in all its forms and incident response. ⁹
Victims Unit	The Unit for Attention and Integral Reparation to Victims is an institution created with Law 1448 (on victims and land restitution), which establishes measures for attention, assistance and integral reparation to victims of the internal armed conflict. It is responsible for prevention, attention, humanitarian assistance, returns, sustainable relocations and transformative reparation for individual and collective victims affected by the armed conflict and for articulating the entities that are part of the National System for Attention and Integral Reparation to Victims (SNARIV). ¹⁰

State and Municipality government organizations:

District Institute for Risk Management and Climate Change, Municipal Risk Management and Climate Change Unit (in 1,104 municipalities nationwide), Departmental Risk Management and Climate Change Unit (in 32 governorates nationwide). These institutions are framed by the law 1523 of 2012, which main objective is to create a normative frame that establishes the rules and standards for the management of emergencies and attention to natural disasters, receiving temporarily people affected by different crisis regarding shelter response (family, social private institutional level) guaranteeing the provision of supplies and administrative support

⁵ Defensa Civil. <https://www.defensacivil.gov.co/nuestra-institucion-1/historia-entidad>

⁶ UNGRD <https://portal.gestiondelriesgo.gov.co/Paginas/Mision-y-Vision.aspx>

⁷ PONALSAR <https://www.policia.gov.co/especializados/ponalsar/funciones>

⁸ Ministerio de Salud <https://www.minsalud.gov.co/salud/PServicios/Paginas/estrategia-nacional-de-respuesta-a-emergencias-en-salud.aspx>

⁹ National Direction of Fireman of Colombia <https://dnbc.gov.co/direccion-nacional/informacion-institucional/objetivos>

¹⁰ Victim Unit <https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es/quienes-somos/mision-y-vision/184>



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