

HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP) CENTRAL AMERICA / MEXICO

1. Context

During the last years, the rapid expansion of non-political organized armed actors such as drug cartels, street gangs (*maras*¹) and organized crime groups has increased the level and intensity of violence in the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA - covering Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador) and Mexico. The humanitarian consequences of this phenomenon are comparable to the ones experienced during the civil wars that plagued the region at the end of the 20th century.

These organised armed actors are involved in all sorts of lucrative illegal economic activities, including drug trafficking, prostitution, robbery, extortion, human trafficking, money laundering, coercion and arms trafficking. They regularly resort to war-like activities, including mass murder and summary executions, forced recruitment of children, kidnapping, extortion, often in a context of corruption and impunity, deepening inequalities and abject poverty.

Death rates have globally skyrocketed in the last five years, reflecting a very bleak reality for civilian populations caught in the cross fire between these organized parties which violently fight each other while also opposing security forces. Although the countries in the region are technically at peace, the effects and humanitarian consequences of the levels of organised violence are similar to those occurring in officially recognized armed conflicts: the number of killed and wounded, displaced populations and refugee claims in neighbouring countries, humanitarian access issues, forced recruitment of children, use of sexual violence as a war weapon, and devastating psychological impact. All basic human rights are constantly violated.

This form of organized violence, usually labeled "Other Situations of Violence (OSV)" covers a variety of conflict-like situations, which are often more brutal to the civilian population than many classical wars. This new violence differs from the classical armed conflicts in that there are not two clear contenders with political aims, respecting certain basic rules in fighting each other over the conquest of territory.

As a result of this situation, some 164,000 people have been killed in Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador only over the last five years², amongst whom 60-70% were civilians killed by organized groups. This makes this region the most violent area in the world. As recent reports show, in 2011, 20 out of the 20 world's most violent cities and 19 out the 20 most violent provinces³ were in the LAC (Latin America and Caribbean) Region. Also, if we compare with the worst period of the Iraq war some 59 people per 100,000 inhabitants were killed, while

¹ Large street gangs originated among young Latin American immigrants on the west coast of the US in the 1980s and which have followed their deported members in the whole region. Some of them are considered transnational crime organizations and count several thousand members. They are very violent.

² UNODC, 2011, Global study on Homicides

³ The Citizens' Council for Public Security and Criminal Justice, 2011

figures show rates of for example 86.5 in Honduras, 71 in El Salvador or 46 in Guatemala in 2011. However, if we have a closer look to those areas where organised violence is prevalent and disputes for territory are present, more dramatic figures appear: 1,600/100,000 killed in the Juarez Valley and 229/100,000 in Ciudad Juarez (Mexico) in the 2009-10 period, 159/100,000 in San Pedro Sula and 99.69/100,000 in Tegucigalpa (Honduras), 95/100,000 in San Salvador (El Salvador) or 74.6 in Guatemala City (Guatemala) in 2011. With only 2% of the world's population, this region accounts for 18% of the homicides worldwide, but homicide rates are only the tip of the iceberg: for every death, at least seven people need medical assistance, of whom a portion will suffer some kind of permanent disability.

One of the consequences of the high level of violence is the militarization of the public security and a high presence of private security which largely outnumbers police forces. This is the case in Honduras, where there are 89,000 private guards for only 14,000 policemen, a fraction of them only (around 20,000 members) being officially registered. It is also true for Guatemala, where it is estimated that there are 7 guards for every policeman. Guards are feared to be among the main perpetrators of crimes or the main providers of information to perpetrators.

People live in constant fear. Traditionally, the countries cited in this HIP have been areas of migration, be it internal, from rural areas to urban slums, or to the USA and Canada. Hundreds of thousands left Central America in the 90's fleeing civil wars, while years later the migration trend obeyed mostly to economic reasons. However, since at least 2006, the on-going wave of violence is expelling thousands from their homes. Forced displacement occurs today in most of the countries in the region. A frequent scenario is that people first escape inside the country, trying to seek refuge with family or friends, but are then localized by their aggressors and decide to leave the country.

Displacement is difficult to quantify as no reliable data are available. However, the relevance of this phenomenon has been recognized by UNHCR, which in view of both the sharp increase in refugee claims relating to victims of organized crime, and on the pressing phenomenon of forced displacement caused by organized armed actors has had to: (i) issue a guidance note to governments on how to assess whether the victims of organized crime are entitled to international protection and (ii) release, after receiving political clearance from the governments concerned, a study on forced displacement caused by organized crime in Central America. Central American governments declared themselves to UNHCR extremely concerned and ill prepared to deal with the phenomenon. None of the countries covered by this HIP, with the exception of the state of Chiapas in Mexico, have well-established mechanisms that recognize the existence of these vulnerable populations and/or meet their most immediate needs. Moreover, cumbersome legal processes and a general lack of proper understanding of the violence phenomenon make most potential asylum-seekers go undetected, legally unassisted or underrepresented.

This situation of violence is particularly severe for trans-migrants, mostly NTCA nationals travelling through Mexico on their way to the US or Canada, many of whom are already fleeing violence in their countries. Women, who represent some 20-25% of the trans-migrant population, pay a particularly heavy price. According to different sources, 6 to 8 of every 10 women are raped at least once on the migrating trail, this is linked to the fact that sexual and gender-based

violence is widespread in the whole Central American region, and is sometimes extreme, to the point that it can be qualified of femicide: women are attacked and killed because they are women. Moreover, many brutal accidents also happen on the cargo train ("*La Bestia*") on which many trans-migrants get up on their way north, leading to amputations and invalidity. Another concerning trend is the dramatic increase in the last year of the number of non-accompanied minors among the trans-migrant population (96% increase in a six-month period alone).

As mentioned before, one of the main effects of violence include a high number of casualties and extraordinary high numbers of wounded overwhelming emergency departments and hospitals' capacities. In **Honduras**, the "Hospital Escuela", linked to the university, is de facto the only hospital in the capital Tegucigalpa (one million inhabitants) with an emergency ward and people from the whole country are referred there in some cases. The attention to high numbers of victims of violence has the effect to decrease the attention to chronic diseases, which leads to preventable acute crises. This situation hampers the access to health care for society as a whole. In **Guatemala**, it is estimated that 40% of surgeries performed are caused by violence. In addition, violence against medical staff is particularly harsh and worrying, as is the case in some states of **Mexico**, where medical doctors are regularly the blanket of attacks to prevent them to provide care to the enemies of their aggressors. In the whole region, the result is that in highly insecure locations positions for general practitioners are vacant for years, weakening the access to medical services in communities with already poor coping capacity. The Inter-American Development Bank estimates the annual health cost of violence at 4% of the regional GDP, i.e. USD 3,250 million per year. The global violence cost for the region is estimated at 7% of the regional GDP.

The control exerted on some neighbourhoods by gangs practicing extortion and other abuses leads to the increased underserving of entire neighbourhoods by state services. The curfew imposed in some areas hampers access to emergency health care during the night. Access to education is also endangered, because of gang attacks in schools to recruit young boys, which push some boys to flee. This is particularly the case in **Honduras**, where gangs make pressure on several schools and don't hesitate, in some cases, to decapitate students who would oppose themselves to their recruitment.

In El Salvador, the main perpetrators of organised violence (up to 60% of all criminal acts) are the two most powerful street gangs in the continent, the "13" and "18" *maras*. In March 2012, a "truce" was brokered between the two main *maras* in exchange of more favourable prison conditions. Since then, homicides figures have decreased from an average of 14 per day to a current average of 5 per day, representing a 60% decrease. Attacks against women and children, police and military personnel have significantly diminished as well, and conflicts in prisons have been reduced. However, the situation remains volatile, extortions and the recruitment of children continue and the requests made by gang leaders to the government linked to the continuation of the truce (job opportunities for their family members) are judged abusive by a very poor population struggling to find jobs. On the political level, the government has announced a Pact for Security and Employment focusing on violence prevention activities, a Humanitarian Foundation has been created to carry out, between other activities, social work in jails, where national standards are far from being respected, and contacts are being established with the private sector for employment creation. Additionally, the gangs have declared ten municipalities

(some 900,000 people) sanctuaries free of violence in early 2013, and more municipalities are to join later in the year. The future of the truce is however uncertain and some observers state that other interests might be at stake.⁴

In this context, the relevance and importance that this new type of violence is reaching in the 21st century is indicated by the increasingly public strong engagement in alleviating its humanitarian consequences by reference humanitarian partners such as the UNHCR, MSF, and the ICRC. The latter two have made addressing the humanitarian consequences of the internal organised violence phenomenon in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region a strategic priority in the next years and are conducting an increasing number of relief operations in a growing number of countries.

Internationally however, although some institutions like the World Bank⁵ acknowledge the dire consequences of the violence in economic development terms, the situation continues to be largely invisible or assumed to be the normal status quo in the countries affected. Information is lacking on the extent of the humanitarian consequences and there is no political engagement to render the humanitarian crisis visible.

2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

1) Affected people / potential beneficiaries:

Being well aware that not all violent situations do qualify as a humanitarian crisis, very strict criteria⁶ have been used for determining which countries and situations have to be, or not, understood as a humanitarian crisis demanding special attention. The following countries are targeted: El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, in what is commonly called the "Northern Triangle" (NTCA). The most violent states in Mexico are retained too.

Although the exact quantification of victims and the humanitarian needs is a real challenge on the basis of the information available today, it is estimated that at least two million people are affected by forced displacement only⁷. There are therefore millions of people directly affected by the violence in the whole region.

However the aim of this HIP cannot be to provide direct assistance to all affected population, it aims through targeted actions to increase the knowledge and the visibility of the humanitarian

⁴ **Central American Gangs and Transnational Criminal Organizations** *The Changing Relationships in a Time of Turmoil*, Douglas Farah, Senior Fellow, International Assessment and Strategy Center and Pamela Phillips Lum, Project Research Director

⁵ *Crime and Violence in Central America: A Development Challenge*, 2011

⁶ The criteria taken into account were: (i) sharp, unmet humanitarian needs, (ii) violence intensity, (iii) existence of organised parties, (iv) duration of the violent situations and their trends, (v) social collapse (vi) involvement of key humanitarian partners, (vii) official reports/studies published by mandated institutions and (viii) involvement of development donors having a complementarity role with Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (DG ECHO) actions

⁷ This data was obtained from the Mora Institute from Mexico – specialized in investigation - during interviews held by ECHO in June 2012 and the estimated number is based on what has been evaluated in Mexico only, and should hence be amplified if we look at the entire region.

situation, and to promote that the necessary assistance is provided in an effective way by the relevant actors.

Actions will focus on information gathering in order to better quantify and qualify the magnitude of the issue in the region, to identify and promote the best interventions and also and most importantly to advocate will all relevant actors involved in the phenomena of violence at local, national and regional levels. In this sense, all DG ECHO partners in the region, development donors and governments will benefit from this action as on how to better respect humanitarian principles in their operations and to be guided on how to enhance assistance levels towards affected populations.

Finally the actions will benefit to populations affected by violence, living in areas where access to most basic services is seriously restricted because of the on-going organized violence, forcibly displaced persons, health staff affected by the violence, the most vulnerable trans-migrants, especially women, unaccompanied minors and asylum seekers, and the youth at risks and other vulnerable groups.

2) Description of most acute humanitarian needs:

Physical and sexual violence, forced recruitment, and restriction of free movement have a high impact on the population and victims are stigmatized. Young people are especially at risk, young males being the main victims of homicides and forced recruitment while young girls and women are the main victims of sexual violence, displaced people or trans-migrants, are often undetected, legally unassisted or underrepresented. Protection interventions are therefore needed for all these target groups.

Access to most basic services, basically health is often hindered because of insecurity: it is often inexistent in certain vulnerable areas where health and other staff and facilities are harassed and targeted by violent groups and become themselves victims of violence, and the curfew imposed by these groups in some neighborhoods may prevent some people from accessing emergency care. But medical emergency services, psychosocial support and mental health care services also need to be reinforced to respond to victims of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, and reduce/prevent long-term disabilities.

There is a need to better quantify and qualify the problem of violence in the region. It is also important to identify where the gaps are and what are the most effective interventions. It is imperative to advocate in front of the authorities and all relevant actors with the objectives of rendering visible the humanitarian crisis, promoting the respect of the humanitarian principles and identified and share the best interventions aimed to mitigate the humanitarian consequences.

3. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

1) National / local response and involvement

Direct humanitarian response to this phenomenon is still limited. For example, NTCA countries are only now beginning to acknowledge the existence of forced displacement due to the organized crime actions and have yet to design and implement programmes that provide a

response to the problems from a humanitarian perspective, and not only from a law and order point of view. Moreover, existing protection mechanisms at national level are clearly insufficient, lack resources and decisive institutional strengthening is greatly needed. At regional level, the Security Strategy from the Central American Integration System (SICA) is in the process of being developed and implemented, seeking an integral attention in terms of security, development and prevention. Unfortunately, this strategy – although one of its pillars is dedicated to violence prevention - does not foresee reducing the violence impact on the civilian population or on those forcibly migrating through direct assistance.

The effects of the violence phenomenon impact every pillar and institution in the affected countries and regions, from the Justice system to the Police and Military forces, from the Ministry of Health to the Education one. Every major achievement attained by these countries in partnership with development donors, both at the institutional and social level, is being compromised and undermined. Therefore, due to the multifaceted consequences and the deep roots of the problem, DG ECHO partners are working in partnership with local institutions, either relief oriented, institutional or, where feasible and relevant, governmental. There is a need to reinforce this partnership by increasing local capacities and society resilience, as well as to improve coordination mechanisms among key institutions.

2) International Humanitarian Response

In terms of humanitarian response, most donors are, so far, largely absent. However, funds allocated or to be allocated – with a large part coming from the EU - to security, justice reform, conflict prevention, human rights and fight against drug trafficking are very significant and reflect the magnitude of the problem.

A key objective of the proposed action is to engage other humanitarian actors and donors in responding to the humanitarian consequences of the violence in Central America and certain regions in Mexico, through proper advocacy mechanisms. Dialogues between institutions and different actors should be supported in order to visibilize the humanitarian crisis and the ongoing response actions.

The experience of the current programme might complete the "linking relief rehabilitation and development" (LRRD) circle, as DG ECHO would mainly focus on advocacy and information gathering from the humanitarian perspective while others such as the EU delegations and development donors focus their actions at other levels. Actions funded under this HIP need to continue to explore synergies between stakeholders.

3) Constraints and DG ECHO response capacity

Access is usually possible, although with periods of interruption for security reasons. Some areas remain off-limits, such as ultra-violent urban neighbourhoods, cities or provinces controlled by armed groups. In these areas, local partners may experience difficulties to work. Also, some areas are remote and isolated, which means that some of the operations may have logistical constraints.

Social and/or political instability in some countries could disrupt the projects and result in suspensions. The security situation in the Central American region is a growing concern related

to the situation of violence, which means that strict security protocols are necessary for partners' staff and visitors. Also, the likelihood of occurrence of disasters is high and this might affect the normal development of activities at local level.

Despite these concerns, there are sufficient potential quality partners in the region with appropriate technical and operational capacity to carry out the activities foreseen and achieve the objectives of the HIP.

4) Envisaged DG ECHO response and expected results of humanitarian aid interventions

The aim of this HIP is to increase the knowledge and the visibility of the humanitarian situation, promote the knowledge and respect of the humanitarian principles and to facilitate that the necessary assistance is provided in an effective way by the relevant actors.

Partners: Key DG ECHO's partners who are already playing a key humanitarian advocate role, gathering information and those who are providing protection services and relief assistance in Central America and Mexico and have a good knowledge on the ground.

Beneficiaries: The final beneficiaries are those people suffering of the consequences of violence as described previously in this HIP.

Sectors: Protection and access to basic services are the main humanitarian needs identified. The strategy is focused on information gathering and advocacy. Targeted "demonstrative" actions in the main identified sectors that could illustrate and support the advocacy objectives can be supported.

Expected results of humanitarian aid interventions:

1. Lives are saved and preserved and the suffering of the most vulnerable people affected by violence is alleviated. Specific information on violence in the region and their humanitarian impact is gathered and shared. Humanitarian needs will be further identified and the best humanitarian responses are identified, evaluated and promoted.
2. The promotion, application and respect of **Humanitarian principles** is supported through active advocacy with all the relevant actor involved in the phenomena of violence at local, national and regional level.

Through these results and a comprehensive approach, people's **resilience** will be strengthened.

4. LRRD, COORDINATION AND TRANSITION

(1) Other DG ECHO interventions

DG ECHO has several on-going interventions in the region in terms of emergency response and Disaster Risk Reduction. Articulation between partners will be sought in order to improve humanitarian actions in violent contexts.

Central America:

- HIP– Drought resilience initiative: January 2013 – duration 18 months, amount EUR 1,500,000. Implementation area: Dry Corridor.
- HIP DIPECHO Action Plan 2012-2013, Duration 18 months, amount EUR 10,000,000.

Guatemala: Ad Hoc Decision ECHO/GTM/BUD/2012/01000: December 2012 – duration 12 months, amount EUR 2,000,000. Implementation area: Dry Corridor and Highlands.

(2) Other services/donors availability (such as for LRRD and transition)

DG ECHO and its partners will actively seek the involvement of development actors in order to scale up and provide sustainability to DG ECHO initiatives. The main development partners interested in violence in the region are, -among others-, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECID), the Swiss Cooperation (COSUDE), the Japanese Cooperation (JICA), the Canadian Cooperation (CIDA), OFDA/USAID and the US State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (DPRM) with whom DG ECHO has permanent contact. Technical Groups of Donors constituted in the region provide a forum for discussions on these issues with other interested donors at the regional level.

AECID has a strategy and regular funding dealing with the violence phenomenon in the region, funding mainly the Red Cross Movement on violence-prevention projects. AECID is also closely involved in the design and financing of the Security Strategy for Central America of the Central America Integration System (SICA). USAID/OFDA, is also conducting studies on the phenomenon, more oriented to the security situation. And the Swiss Cooperation has also been assessing "Future humanitarian scenarios" in which the promotion of safe access in conflict-ridden areas was discussed. They also included this issue in their 2013-2017 strategy in the region. In this sense, main donors in the region are positioning themselves on this matter through their respective mandates.

(3) Other concomitant EU interventions

In Central America, there is a strong interest of the EU Delegations to work together on this problem. Recognizing – at political level - the seriousness and urgency of the situation in Central America and Mexico, the EU is already working in the region in violence prevention, security, justice reform and human rights. In fact, more than EUR 110 million are programmed to strengthen the rule of law, the responsibility of states as the sole entity with the legitimate use of force or to promote community-based violence prevention.

The EU is currently in the process of re-orienting its cooperation activities in this sector, strengthening a comprehensive approach, taking more into account the root causes of the security challenges, to better focus and maximise its future interventions. This implies the involvement of all relevant stakeholders across the EU institutions applying the full range of the EU's external policies and instruments.

The European Union and the Central America Country and Regional Cooperation Strategy (2014-2020) set out the priority of Violence prevention and/or Good governance/Human Rights in El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and at regional level through the support of the regional security strategy (stated as the first objective for the SICA Action Plan, based on the regional security strategy adopted in 2011).

There is a strong interest from other EC services to jointly work with DG ECHO in order to ensure a direct link between assistance and development. Concrete ideas have already been discussed and the EU also has other financial instruments and expertise, such as the Instrument for Stability, which can be used to complement future actions.

(4) Exit scenarios

For the exit strategy, there is a need to identify practices on how to reduce the effects caused by violence for the most vulnerable population in Central America. Local capacities need to be sufficiently strengthened and strategies developed to work together with development actors, ensuring proper complementarities. This would allow DG ECHO and partners to promote practices and convince the authorities and other development actors in the longer-term to support successfully tested activities and trigger a broader development process.

This initiative will be implemented in close coordination with the EU Delegations at regional and national levels to facilitate integration. The new EU comprehensive approach towards security issues could be the most appropriate institutional framework to include the humanitarian dimension, establishing operational links with other EU instruments (e.g. the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights –EIDHR-, the Instrument for Stability –IfS-, the Development Cooperation Instrument –DCI-, etc.) and defining EU interventions in a more logical sequence (relief, rehabilitation and development).

5. OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL DETAILS

The provisions of the financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2013/01000 and the general conditions of the Partnership Agreement with the European Commission take precedence over the provisions in this document.

5.1 Contacts⁸

Operational Unit in charge: ECHO/B5

Contact persons at HQ:

Anne-Françoise Moffroid (Anne-Francoise.Moffroid@ec.europa.eu)
and Eduardo Fernandez-Zincke (eduardo.fernandez-zincke@ec.europa.eu)

⁸ Single Forms will be submitted to DG ECHO using APPEL (e-SingleForm)

Contact persons in the field:

Virginie Andre (virginie.andre@echofield.eu) and
Vicente Raimundo (Vicente.raimundo@echofield.eu)

5.2 Financial info

Indicative Allocation: EUR 2,000,000

Man-made crises: Humanitarian Aid : EUR 2,000,000

5.3 Proposal Assessment

Assessment round 1 – Other Situations of Violence

- a) Description of the humanitarian aid interventions relating to this assessment round: Humanitarian assistance for the victims of other situations of violence in Central America and Mexico as described under section 3.4 of this HIP
- b) Indicative amount to be allocated in this round of proposals: up to EUR 2,000,000 from the Humanitarian Aid budget-line
- c) Costs will be eligible from 01/01/2013 ⁹
- d) The expected initial duration for the Action is up to 18 months.
- e) Potential partners: All DG ECHO Partners.
- f) Information to be provided: E-Single Form
- g) Indicative date for receipt of the above requested information: from 31/05/2013 onwards
- h) Commonly used principles will be applied for the assessment of proposals, such as quality of needs assessment, relevance of intervention sectors, and knowledge of the country and specific regions. In addition, the following criteria will be applied for the selection of proposals:
 - Relevance and methodology of the proposed actions.
 - Partners' capacity including security, mandate, presence, experience and proven knowledge of other situations of violence in the intervention areas. A careful selection of the partners will be conducted, based on these criteria and on the quality of proposals.
 - A consortium of agencies can apply. In such a case, the application should be made by a lead agency which will be responsible for all operational administrative, legal and financial matters vis-à-vis the European Commission. Copy of the draft agreement/Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) concluded among the parties to

⁹ The eligibility date of the Action is not linked to the date of receipt of the Single Form. It is either the eligibility date set in the Single form or the eligibility date of the HIP, whatever occurs latest.

the consortium should be included as annex in the single form. The signed MoU is expected by the end of the first month of implementation