PROJECT
LESSONS LEARNED IN POST-DISASTER RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

CASE STUDY: COLOMBIA

(Draft Document - Rev.1)

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I. BACKGROUND

The recurrence of great disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean is unquestionable, the effects of which delay the development of the countries and regions affected quite significantly.

This is why great efforts are being undertaken throughout the Continent in regard to preparations for responding to emergencies and the introduction of risk prevention and mitigation concepts and activities in the region’s development processes, even though the latter purpose is at a very early stage in many of these countries.

However, the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean have not concerned themselves with the establishment of State policies or strategies that would lead their people to prepare in advance to face the recovery and development processes that they invariably must face up to after the occurrence of disasters.

This is the reason why governments, with the support of international cooperation, generally improvise speedy and uncoordinated reconstruction programs with a short term vision, which have sustainability problems in the medium and long term and, oftentimes, reproduce or increase the risks that generate such disasters.

In view of this situation, the UNDP Disaster Prevention and Recovery Program has initiated a project towards the solution of this problem.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT.

The medium-term objective is the analysis and systematization of the lessons learned in post-disaster recovery and development processes in Latin America and the Caribbean so that, based on this, work instruments may be generated and they may be useful to the governments and to international cooperation, the purpose being of taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by such situations, if a long-term work vision and the concepts of risk reduction and sustainable development are adopted.

The Project’s short-term objective, which is being developed at present, is to make an approximation to the analysis of this type of experience in three countries of the Andean region, with the purpose of formulating a first proposal of strategic lines to orient the decision of the UNDP and the Agencies of the United Nations System on what path to follow in the future in this field.
III. METODOLOGIA DEL PROYECTO.

As part of the process that has been initiated, the Disaster Prevention and Recovery Directorate of the UNPD has prepared a document entitled “Preliminary Guidelines for Post-Disaster Recovery”.

In the general context of this document, workshops were conducted in Colombia, Bolivia and Venezuela, with the purpose of spawning reflection on this theme. Public servants from the national and local governments, NGOs and several UN agencies and private consultants participated in each one of these workshops. Complementarily, an analysis was made in the three countries, based on the existing documents; it dealt with the manner in which the recovery processes subsequent to two of the three disaster situations that took place in the last few years were handled.

With the aforementioned information, a document for each of the three countries selected for the case studies was prepared, which studies have served as a basis for the formulation of the first proposal of strategic lines for future action in post-disaster recovery processes. Based on this documentation, a Regional Workshop with Focal Points of the UNDP and of other UN Agencies will be carried out, after which and based on their results, the final documents of this phase of the Project will be drafted.

IV. COLOMBIA. ANALYSIS OF POST-DISASTER EXPERIENCES.

Pursuant to the methodological guidelines of the Project, a one-day workshop was conducted in Bogotá, with the participation of representatives from the following organizations: National Directorate for Disaster Prevention and Response; the National Planning Department; the Ministry of Civil Protection; the Ministry of the Environment, Housing and Territorial Development; the Ministry of Social Protection; the Directorate for the Prevention and Response to Emergencies of Bogotá, the National Roads Institute; The Colombian Institute of Geology and Mining (INGEMINAS); the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (IDEAM); UNDP; OCHA; OPS/WHO; UNICEF. In addition, two experienced consultants in post-disaster recovery processes.

As regards experiences on this theme, the eruption of the Ruiz Volcano in 1985, the Tierradentro earthquake – Paez, 1994 and the 1999 Coffee Belt earthquake were all analyzed. A summary of these cases is presented as follows:

The 13th of November 1985, one year after its reactivation, the Nevado del Ruiz volcano erupted. This caused part of the snowy cap to melt, thereby provoking great stone and mud avalanches, which ran throughout river-beds and brooks that originate in the snowy mountain and reached the lower zones of both flanks of the mountain range on which the Volcano is located.

On its path, these avalanches destroyed almost all of the city of Armero. Chinchiná, other minor settlements and part of a large rural area were hit to a lesser degree and 23 municipalities were affected in different degrees.

As a consequence of this event, more than 20,000 people were killed, 5,200 were wounded, 5,000 houses were destroyed, social and physical infrastructure, as well as public and transportation services were seriously damaged and the agricultural, industrial and commercial sectors were highly affected. Direct loss was estimated at approximately 212 Million Dollars.

At the time, the country was neither organized nor prepared to face such a big emergency or the recovery for such an event. After two or three weeks, the National Planning Department and the Agencies of the United Nations System – SINU finished the evaluation of direct damage and established guidelines for a development program in the affected area.

Eleven days after the event, the National Government created the RESURGIR Corporation, attached to the Presidency of the Republic and with autonomy for functioning. This Corporation was responsible for coordinating all reconstruction activities and handling international aid and the resources that the Government would allocate for this aim. Subsequently, with the purpose of accelerating the development of actions, RESURGIR was given direct execution capacity for projects.

In March 1986 RESURGIR finished formulating the “Program for the Recovery and Reactivation of the zones affected by the volcanic activity of the Nevado del Ruiz”. The Program was oriented towards: the full recovery of the persons affected, the social, economic and material reconstruction and recomposition of the communities, disaster prevention efforts, and the economic and social development of the areas affected. A large part of the program was executed in approximately 4 years, with the participation of many national and international entities; the latter contributed with almost 12 per cent of the Corporation’s total investment. Among the many achievements are the relocation outside the risk area of the surviving population and among the most important results we can mention the creation of the National Disaster Prevention and Response System (SNPAD) and
the definition, for the first time ever, of State policies in connection with risk reduction, with the support of the UNDP.

Nevertheless, the formulation and execution of the Program encountered much criticism, among which, the excessive centralism in decisions, without the real participation of local authorities and the communities, which lead to questions about, for example, the election of the principal relocation area for the population, the lack of coordination in institutional actions and the lack of transparency in the management of resources.


On June 6, 1994, an earthquake of a 6.4 magnitude on the Richter scale, whose epicenter was the municipality of Paez, shook the region of Tierradentro, located on the slopes of the Nevado del Huila volcano. It affected 15 municipalities of the Cauca and Huila Departments in different degrees, extending to almost 10,000Km2.

The quake, which was destructive per se, triggered thousands of landslides, some of which blocked the rivers that run through deep valleys surrounded by vertical mountains. These temporary dams, which had formed rapidly, broke causing, in a matter of hours, an overwhelming flow of mud and debris, with avalanches that descended to the riverbed of the Paez river, causing death and destruction.

Human loss is estimated at 1,100 people, including the dead and the missing. The quake and the landslides destroyed 1660 houses, dispensaries or health clinics, community houses, schools, public buildings, churches, roads, bridges and an mini-power generation plant, risk districts and full settlements located on the Paez’ riverbank (a orillas). The ecological destruction extends to approximately 400 Km2. The value of damages is estimated at $150 Million Dollars.

One of the main characteristics of this event was that its greater impact was on native communities, Paez and Guambians, which resulted in the expulsion of close to 1,600 families from their native territory due to the critical unstable condition in which a vast part of the territory was left.

Three days after the disaster, the National Government declared an economical, ecological and social emergency situation and created the Nasa Kiwe Corporation, with the purpose of formulating and executing a “General Reconstruction and Sustainable Development Plan of the Affected Area”, with the task of coordinating, preparing and serving as link between the communities affected and the governmental authorities. Due to administrative and financial
difficulties, the Corporation started to operate only six months after the event.

The strategies of the Plan were basically directed at relocating the community at risk, support productive projects, and endow the population with a services infrastructure. For its implementation, a zonification study for the use of the soil was made available. A large part of the program has been executed, but some investments are still being made in the area, which is why the corporation is still active today.

One of the strengths of the recovery process lies on the community, political and cultural organization that exists in the affected area. Based on this and even though the style of intervention and orientation from the central levels persisted, the communities participated in the decisions that were made throughout the whole recovery process, hence the fact that the cultural values of the native community were a central point of the development program.

However, the creation of the Nasa Kiwe Corporation has been widely questioned. Its adversaries do not agree on the creation of a new institution outside the SNPAD and the governmental structure, which was one of the causes for the delay in the beginning of activities of this new body and for the shy participation of other public sector entities. On the other hand, its defenders claim that this institutional structure allowed native communities to have a sole interlocutor in the government.


On January 25, 1999, a seismic event of 6.2 degrees in the Richter scale took place, and four hours later, another one of 5.8 degrees shook the Coffee Belt located in the central region of Colombia, on the central Cordillera. The earthquake unchained a series of landslides which blocked some of the main routes that communicate the cities and towns of the region.

This event also caused one of the major disasters that has ever hit the national territory, due both to the extent of the affected area and to the complex urban situation that originated due to the high level of destruction and the considerable amount of survivors that were seriously affected.

Its consequences were felt in 25 municipalities of 5 Departments. 1185 people were killed, 732 missing, 8523 wounded, 79,446 houses were destroyed or seriously damaged, 160,000 people were left without a roof, 560,000 persons were affected in a direct way, close to 100,000 urban buildings were damaged, the urban and rural physical
infrastructure was seriously affected, public services completely collapsed, the main economic, primary, industrial, commercial and tourist activities were hindered, with serious consequences for regional employment. The damage was estimated at US$1.558 Million Dollars.

One of the consequences of the disaster was that it made evident the great crisis present in different parts of the region and aggravated the economic, social and political problems of which this region has not yet recuperated. Indeed, the quality of life of its inhabitants is increasingly deteriorating.

From the beginning, the National Government excluded the SNPAD and decided that the crisis would be handled by the President’s wife, which led, three days after the event, to an acute lack of governance, accompanied by public order problems and looting in two of the most important cities of the region.

In addition to declaring a national disaster situation and an economic, social and ecological emergency, on January 30, 1999, the government created the Fund for the Reconstruction and Social Development of the Coffee Belt (FOREC), as an entity attached to the Presidency of the Republic, with full autonomy with regard to the budget for financing and carrying out the activities necessary to fulfill its objective.

FOREC was not created with an administrative structure. Rather, it was empowered to contract with NGOs for all the works required and to accompany them to all the communities affected. This model fits clearly within the neo-liberal purpose of handing over all public functions to the private sector. Most of the NGOs that participated in the process were set up as a result of the disaster and were made up of entities from the financial and construction sectors.

Based on the diagnosis of the damages, the region affected was divided into three zones, each one of which was given to an NGO, whose responsibility was to formulate and execute a Zonal Action Plan for the corresponding area.

Since the government had just taken office six months before, it included in the National Development Plan a chapter relating to the Coffee Belt, which focused on the reconstruction of the affected area. Although an action plan for reconstruction efforts was not formulated, the following work areas were established in the National Development Plan: housing and equipment and public services restoration, strengthening of the social structure, economic reactivation, environmental recovery and public policies.
FOREC lasted almost three years and was highly efficient in the execution of many resources allocated to the process, in which the risk variable incorporated into the plans for territorial planning was one of the bases for its execution. Several national and international institutions present it as a model to be replicated upon the occurrence of similar situations in other countries.

At the same time, however, some essential criticism has been raised with regard to this model. Strongly questioned is the exclusion of the National Disaster Prevention and Response System and the fact that the capacities of the whole governmental apparatus were not utilized. In particular, local governments were relegated to the position of passive actors and local institutions were weakened and left with the responsibility of developing the region in the medium and long term, but without any instruments to do so.

Furthermore, there were no formal bodies for the participation of communities in the decision-making processes. Some criticism has been raised regarding the fact that it was mainly a reconstruction process, without a regional vision due to the model of fragmentation by zones and to the fact that the opportunity to encompass it in a sustainable development vision at medium and long term was lost, which many local actors demanded, conscious of the crisis that the region was going thorough at the time and is still going through today; this has been confirmed by the current deterioration of the quality of life which was mentioned earlier.

V. COLOMBIA’S CURRENT STATE OF PREPARATION FOR FUTURE POST-DISASTER RECOVERY PROCESSES.

The first theme that was tackled at the Workshop refers to the level of preparation of national and local authorities to address, in an effective and timely manner, a recovery and sustainable development process following a great disaster.

With the disasters that have taken place in the last few years, the country has had several relevant experiences in managing post-disaster situations, both from the planning and from the execution point of view; particularly, the recovery process subsequent to the earthquake in the Coffee belt has had a positive recognition by some international organizations.

The participants to the Workshop expressed some contradictory positions as to the country’s level of preparation in order to timely and effectively respond to these kinds of situations, but the majority believes that there is a good level of preparation for small and medium-size events, but that it is insufficient for great disasters.
In this regard, numerous strengths were indicated, but great weaknesses were also noted, and while some achievements have been noticed in past experiences, there is some substantial criticism in this regard as well. High capacities have been noticed at the national level and in some of the large cities, but there are huge institutional, technical and financial weaknesses in most of the medium-size and small municipalities. However, it is generally considered that, the existence of the National Disaster Prevention and Response System being the most important strong point, the level of preparation for post-disaster situation in the country is better than in most Latin American countries and that its weaknesses have been relatively well identified, although they consider that past experiences must be evaluated more thoroughly, not only to better analyze the Government’s capacities, but those of other actors of the society in order to respond to an event of such proportions.

In the field of policies, it was acknowledged that there has been some relevant progress in the vision and integral management of risks and disasters in the past 20 years and that, in general, the theme has been given a relatively high importance and that basic State policies are available for acting in the reduction of risks.

However, at the decision-making levels of the Government and the private sector and among the population there is not enough awareness about the proportion of the existing risks and the complexity of the recovery process after a great disaster; also, a short-term vision generally rules when it comes to designing solutions for this problem. Particularly, in the political agenda of many departments and numerous municipalities, the risk theme holds a secondary position, although in some places, this problem has been widely included in the territorial agenda. Likewise, at the national level there are sectors that are quite advanced on this theme, while others are lagging behind.

Furthermore, the possibility of achieving a post-disaster sustainable recovery and development process has been questioned, if one accepts that the current development model is not sustainable per se. This reflects the increasing lack of governance, as well as the levels of marginalization and vulnerability, which increase after each disaster. A disaster is precisely an indicator of the lack of sustainability in development processes; hence the fact that it is very difficult to achieve sustainable development in post-disaster situations if the current model is not sustainable, especially with the internal conflicts that exist in the country, where a large number of inhabitants are displaced, making them more vulnerable in the case of a disaster. Yet, it has been acknowledged that post-disaster recovery processes offer an opportunity to work towards prevention and that risk reduction also contributes to improving governance.
In the regulatory field it is a fact that Colombia has a wide range of laws and decrees that constitute a strong point in the management of risks and disasters. Among these, the laws by virtue of which the National Disaster Prevention and Response System was created stand out, to which must be added many others in sectoral themes or in themes of a cross-cutting nature which have been strengthening the regulatory framework for the reduction of risks. However, every one agrees that there are still deficiencies, lack of updating, regulatory or legal voids, as well as non-observance of the law, especially in the post-disaster recovery phase. This explains the lack of clarity in the definition of responsibilities in recovery efforts among national institutions, among the three levels of State and among the rest of the actors of the society.

With reference to institutional aspects, it has been emphasized that the country’s strongest point in the reduction of risks is the existence of the SNPAD, whose actions have allowed a substantial increase in the capacity to respond to emergencies and attending to small and medium-size post-disaster recovery processes. Yet, there are some doubts regarding its capacity to act in case of great disasters, in which cases the government has in the last few years created specific institutions outside the SNPAD, parallel to the governmental apparatus, and has delegated to the private sector its own responsibilities, thus generating institutional conflicts at the territorial level, poor community participation and results that are subject to being questioned.

The attendees to the Workshop agree on the fact that the SNPAD has developed national capacities that can be utilized in recovery processes, and that it has stimulated inter-institutional and multi-disciplinary work, and has elevated the level of inter-institutional coordination even though it still has weaknesses; there is also a relatively fair amount of technical experts in this field in some national-level sectors. Similarly, weaknesses have been indicated, such as the low coordination between this entity and the national system for displaced persons, within the internal conflict context and the constant weakening of the state apparatus due to privatization policies and cutbacks in resources for public entities, which has important consequences for SNPAD institutions. At the municipal level, major weaknesses are reported in technical and inter-institutional coordination capacities, but it has been confirmed that most of the large cities have units that handle the theme and that Local Committees for the Prevention and Response of Disasters have been set up in most municipalities.

In relation to the planning theme, the existence of relatively strong planning offices at the national and sectoral level and at the most important territorial administrations is viewed as a strong point; in this regard, there are indications of the existence, although with many deficiencies, of development plans at all State levels and of plans for territorial planning efforts in all the municipalities that include, to a great extent, the risk reduction concept. Many deficiencies are also mentioned
in this aspect, primarily, the short-term vision in all planning processes, the fact that the risk prevention and reduction concept has not been sufficiently delved into or sufficiently spread to the different levels and government sectors, the fact that people do not understand the complexity of recovery processes and that information about risks is weak, both among the population and among institutions, all of which results in weak post-disaster recovery processes. Also indicated was the absence of preparation and the long period between the moment when the emergency is attended to and the beginning of reconstruction efforts due to the lack of preparation for this purpose and to that fact that the general idea is to repair damages or rebuild, instead of trying to achieve sustainable development after a disaster. It was mentioned that Bogotá is formulating, with the help of the UNDP and for the first time ever, a project that with help to them to prepare to respond to a great seismic event, in which preparations for the recovery process following the quake are included.

In the financial field, the country suffers from high fiscal vulnerability with regard to risks and disasters, although some studies and surveys have been initiated in this regard; this vulnerability is made evident by insufficient resources and an increase in external indebtedness in case of a disaster. Except in the case of the Ruiz Volcano eruption, in all other disasters investments for recovery efforts have been less than the total value of the goods that were lost. Also, the different entities and levels of the government and other actors of the society do not clearly understand the financial responsibilities necessary to handle recovery processes. However, it has been acknowledged that the Nation has some permanent programs available that make such resources partially available, as is the case of the subsidies for housing and the existence of some financing funds at the national, sectoral and territorial levels.

Also, the National Government has not fully understood and lacks more explicit communication regarding the role that international cooperation could play, both in emergency response and in post-disaster recovery efforts.

VI. MEASURES TO BE ADOPTED FOR FUTURE POST-DISASTER RECOVERY PROCESSES

The second theme that was tackled at the Workshop refers to the type of measures that should be adopted in order to guarantee that the post-disaster recovery process is not carried out in an improvised and uncoordinated manner among the different institutional actions and the population.

The participants expressed that it is necessary to develop, in advance, specific policies for post-disaster recovery that promote better a preparation and better instruments to strengthen the actions undertaken
by institutions in these situations; these policies should also generate a commitment regarding the fact that recovery should not be only physical, but also social, with gender, economic, environmental, institutional and political perspectives. Therefore, it is necessary to have this theme included in the political agenda of the different levels of government and the society in general.

However, it was stressed that the best policy to achieve a good recovery process is to work permanently with the prevention concept in all development activities, in order to avoid or reduce the consequences of disasters. There is where the importance of promoting risk prevention lies.

It is necessary to broaden, update and develop the current regulatory framework, especially that which refers to recovery processes that can improve the definition of competences and responsibilities between institutions and government levels and between other sectors of the society.

Likewise, it is fundamental to continue strengthening the National Disaster Prevention and Response System and to endow it with the institutional structure, the capacities and the instruments necessary for better leadership and for a better performance in post-disaster situations. It is essential to strengthen the local level, where community participation must be the axis for a continuous and permanent work. There is also a need to strengthen the risk reduction concept at “urban guardian’s office” (where construction permits are delivered) for their task of approving construction requests.

Furthermore, it was noted that each disaster situation is unique and particular, according to the type of phenomenon that generates it, the type and degree of existing vulnerability and the kind of community in which it occurs. But, at the same time, there are similarities in many aspects between the different types of disasters, as well as the types of measures that should be adopted for managing post-disaster recovery processes. In general, but especially in Colombia, high risk zones tend to coincide more and more with the zones where there are the most conflicts and the least governance. This is why it is useful to collect the history of disasters that have occurred in a country, document these experiences beginning with their causes, integrate risk management into conflict management in the areas where they exist, and analyze the good and the bad measures to identify deficiencies and voids and be able to adopt the measures and make the preparations that need to be made for comparable situations in the future.

With this knowledge, a pedagogical process regarding this theme should be initiated, which could help to improve comprehension about the subject, stimulate the need for people to prepare to face these eventualities, covering both the educational and the political sectors, the
public and the private sectors and, in particular, high risk communities, with emphasis on the local level in so doing.

This problem must be explicitly reflected in planning efforts, under the concept of management for the reduction or risks as the only way to ensure that there is less improvisation, more coordination, more integration in development processes and a higher sustainability of post-disaster recovery actions.

In the case of Bogotá, there are 25 planning instruments that must be taken into account for recovery efforts in case of a great earthquake, but that it is still not clear how to evaluate them and timely include them in crisis situations.

In view of this degree of complexity which stems from a disaster situation, there is no doubt about the need to have, for each case, an Action Plan or a Recovery and Sustainable Development Plan. This plan must be formulated in the least amount of time possible, with the participation of different local actors, with the flexibility required to be adjusted as it progresses, and with the transparency, follow-up and social control required.

Moreover, as it has been indicated, Bogotá should permanently dispose of recovery plan models that contain policies, strategies and pragmatic structures for different scenarios of probable damages in which should be established clear internal relations between the phases of response and emergency, rehabilitation and recovery; such scenarios should also determine, with the prior accord of the national and territorial levels, the instruments and procedures required to rapidly initiate the recovery phase. Also mentioned was the possibility of including rehabilitation and reconstruction activities in contingency and emergency response plans.

The information theme was given great relevance. The need for improving information systems, from the national to the local level, was highlighted, as was the need to take full advantage, among others, of territorial censuses, the censuses supporting the updating of municipal land registers, while promoting even more the analysis of threats and risks and damage scenarios and especially incorporating them into plans for territorial planning. As to the management of post-disaster information, it is considered convenient to dispose of a center that can furnish information about damages in a timely and dynamic manner. This center should also have information about the characteristics and gender of the affected population, and about needs, priorities, actions that have been done, and what is left to be done, and it should provide specific information for each kind of actor and, in particular, information to orient the international communities and organizations.

In the financial field, the importance of supporting vulnerability studies and promoting them at the municipal level was considered important, as
was the establishment of policies on public and private security, while promoting among local authorities the need for their development programs to keep resources not only for the prevention of risks and emergency response, but also to prepare budget wise to fulfill their obligations in recovery processes.

VI. RISK REDUCTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN POST-DISASTER RECOVERY PROCESSES

The participants also discussed how to ensure that post-disaster recovery processes include the risk reduction concept and the medium and long-term sustainable development vision.

In this respect, it has been questioned whether it is possible to make progress recovery processes with a sustainable development perspective. They claim that it is not possible to talk about sustainable development, especially during post-disaster recovery, if the existing model, which is not sustainable, is not re-analyzed and reoriented. Furthermore, it is only possible to create sustainable development based on a public policy. In all reconstruction processes that have been initiated in the country, dynamic pressures that generate risks and that are related to macroeconomic themes have remained unchanged and very much outside governance reach. We must add to this fact that social exclusion processes are provoking situations of risk that are increasingly complex, without there being any immediate solution at sight.

By giving preference to the reconstruction of what is physical, without thinking of the social, economic, environmental and political aspects, a sustainable recovery process can not be envisaged.

It has been argued that by directing their attention to post-disaster situations, far more than to situations that only involve risks, both the governments and international cooperation are, in general, rewarding governments and communities that are not working towards the achievement of risk reduction. It is necessary to create incentives for territories that engage in risk prevention and mitigation efforts. However, this aspect is closely linked to the joint responsibility of all the actors, both as regards the generation and the reduction of risks, and to recovery processes. Only where there is a clear responsibility, that is to say, where actions to be engaged not only depend on the State, is it possible to expect a sustainable recovery process, which entails the responsible participation of all the actors involved.

Moreover, in order to guarantee sustainable processes in the long term, it is necessary to apply in recovery efforts, criteria regarding the rights of those who are affected by disasters, among which is the right for those who were affected to be attended to with priority; the right for the
recovery process not to extinguish in the short term, as it requires a more
lengthy follow-up; the right to a fair treatment for all sectors; the right to
strengthen autonomy and participation and the respect of the latter by
higher levels; and the right to risk prevention as an expression of the right
to life.

For a recovery process to be sustainable, it must be fundamentally based
on the existing planning instruments, among which are development
plans, plans for environmental management, and plans for territorial
planning. All of these must include the management for the reduction of
risks concept, which must be present in each one of the programs and
projects included in the recovery plan. These instruments must then be
adjusted by the local administration in order to overcome the crisis that
has taken place.

The participants to the workshop have indicated other aspects that must
be taken into account, to wit:

- Any recovery plan must pay special attention to the theme of
  productive activities and the employment of the affected population,
  among others, rescuing auto-construction processes and the use of
  appropriate technologies.

- It is important to remember that while the emotional stability of the
  affected population is not achieved, it will not be able to engage
  successfully in a sustainable recovery process.

Another aspect that was mentioned repeatedly was the information
aspect.

- Recover, evaluate, systematize and spread information on the disasters
  occurred and their causes.

- Make inventories, strengthen and fully use the geo-referenced
  information systems that are available.

- Establish base line indicators that allow measuring the actual progress
  of the affected populations’ recovery.

An additional characteristic in the increasing generation of new risks is
the presence of illegal constructors, for which the participants requested
that special attention be paid to the regulations required and the
Corresponding penalties.
VIII. STRUCTURE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR POST-DISASTER RECOVERY.

Another theme that was addressed was that related to the characteristics of the structure and the institutional mechanisms that would be desirable in order to formulate and execute a post-disaster recovery and development plan. The main proposals or statements in this regard are summarized as follows:

Every one agreed that for post-disaster recovery processes, new entities parallel to those of the State, should not be created. Rather, full advantage must be taken of all existing capacities, both from the State itself and the society. For this, one must use as basis the institutional structure established for the National Disaster Prevention and Response System, making all the necessary adjustments and organizational improvements and endowing it with all the protocols, guidelines and instruments that are considered necessary to orient, coordinate and make more expeditious, efficient and effective the performance of the different actors involved in post-disaster recovery.

This institutional structure must guarantee the link between the macro and micro aspects of the recovery process, the articulation of national, local and community positions, the incorporation not only of the public sector, but also the private sector, the society and, in particular, the affected population, which must be reflected in the participation of all the actors, from the beginning of the recovery plan's formulation to its final execution. For this, the institutional structure must be flexible, diversified and intelligent so that recovery may focus on the principal objective, which is to attend to the needs of the affected population in an effective and timely manner.

Emphasis was made on the fact that the flexibility of the institutional structure must be such as to allow it to adjust in order to attend to any kind of post-disaster situation and not just to attend to some situations in particular, because the essence of the National Disaster Prevention and Response System (SNPAD) could be lost. The participants proposed, based on the positive aspects of past experiences, that SNPAD consider the convenience of having a coordinator for reconstruction processes, who could be permanent or appointed for each particular situation, but who should be included in the System’s structure.

There exists the need to better define the responsibilities of institutions and the population and to strengthen the capacities of the national and local actors, particularly those of departmental, municipal and community levels, so that SNPAD may function properly, in view of the current weakening process that the governmental apparatus is currently undergoing.
IX. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN POST-DISASTER RECOVERY PROCESSES.

The last theme that was discussed at the Workshop is the kind of work that the UNDP and the Agencies of the United Nations System could start to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the support given to the government in the post-disaster recovery and development phase. In this regard, the proposals were complemented by interviews with the Resident Coordinator and the UNDP Focal Point, as well as an analysis of documents on UNPD performance in recent recovery processes.

The attendees to the Workshop highlighted the importance of the role of international cooperation in risk reduction, emergency response and post-disaster recovery. The great contribution of the UNDP and other UN agencies has been recognized in the creation of the National Disaster Prevention and Response System, in the creation of seismic and vulcanological surveillance networks and the hydro meteorological warning network, as well as many projects that focus on risk prevention.

It is necessary to establish a closer collaboration between the National Government and the United Nations System and with the rest of the international cooperation bodies, so that the Government can better understand the policies, coverage, potentials and procedures of each one of them. The Government should have a map of priorities available on the risk theme and a standard agreement with international organizations for disaster cases, which would facilitate the Government's leadership in this field and would help to better define the areas in which international cooperation could intervene. Also proposed was a better coordination and definition among United Nations agencies of the area to be covered in order to promote the comprehension, communication and interrelationship that are required between the Government and the United Nations.

The participants also mentioned the fact that international resources are diminishing every day for the demands in this field and that the need to offer a response to great disasters throughout the world has caused international support for prevention programs, even for post-disaster recovery, to be weaker. Furthermore, international cooperation for disasters is influenced by the political and economic interests of the cooperation agencies, which situation must not be disregarded by the Government, but rather analyzed in order to reconcile interests and obtain the best results in cooperation activities. But more clarity from the Government is required regarding what it expects from international cooperation (here explicit reference was being made to the recent floods that took place in the eastern part of the country).
In this regard everyone agrees that the role of international cooperation is not to assume the Government's role, but to support it and complement it, and this only when the Government requests it.

The participants highlighted the role that the United Nations System and, especially, the UNDP has played and keeps playing in supporting the definition of national policies in the risk reduction field and the management of disaster situations, with emphasis on preventive aspects.

As to the UNDP, its role as coordinator of the United Nations System in this field was acknowledged, as was the fact that the technical support through projects is primarily the task of other agencies, which is complemented by the UNPD itself in certain areas.

One of the most significant contributions that the United Nations System has made to the World in terms of development has been the standardization and dissemination of indexes, such as the human development index, the millennium objectives and, more recently, the risk indicators. It has been suggested that the United Nations should make an important effort to conduct comparative studies on this theme across countries and to disseminate the knowledge acquired in different experiences that have been conducted in the world of risk reduction management. In the specific case of this country, the United Nations System has been requested to propose to the Government the need to strengthen risk reduction policies, the basic organs of the National Disaster Prevention and Response System and, in particular, the entities of a scientific orientation, such as IDEAM and IGEOMINAS, which have undergone a process of institutional weakening.

X. UNDP COOPERATION IN RECOVERY PROCESSES.

In general, the different agencies of the United Nations System have participated in the response to disaster situations that have taken place in the country. Following is a summary of the principal activities developed by the UNDP in post-disaster recovery processes in Colombia.


One month and a half after the event, the UNDP subscribed with the National Government the Project entitled “Support to the Action Plan for the Social, Economic, and Material Rehabilitation of the Population and of the Areas Affected by the Eruption of the Ruiz Volcano”, which initiated activities in early January 1986. The UNDP administered the resources.
The goals of the Project were surpassed and were oriented at institutional support, building housing, connecting the population to jobs, reactivating agricultural activities, professional rehabilitation, and connecting the persons that were left disabled to productive activities. But the most exciting result was the support and orientation given for the creation of the National Disaster Prevention and Response System, the creation of the national seismic network and the volcanic surveillance system, which has afforded the UNDP national and international recognition.

Among the success factors of the Project, we can highlight the following: the support given by the UNDP and the rest of the UN agencies for, in a short term, disposing of a recovery and reactivation program with a significant preventive concept and the fact that the activities were executed by the State entities that are specialized in each subject and by social or private organizations; the participation of the affected community in the whole process; the expeditiousness and transparency in the management of resources; and, finally, the fact that all the activities were included in the National Government’s program. An indicator of these achievements by the Government and the communities is the fact that the Project, whose execution was programmed to end in two years and a half, was extended, at the request of the Government and with government resources, to approximately six more years in order to support the consolidation of the National Disaster Prevention and Response System.


In this disaster situation, different United Nations System agencies offered their support in handling the emergency. In particular, the UNDP initiated that same month of June 1994 the Project “Support to the community affected by the Paez event”, focused on attending to, from a humanitarian point of view, the affected community and on building new houses and strengthening the capacities of the indigenous community.

The Project left a wide experience regarding the need to understand and respect the cultural practices of the communities and the fact that the community must really participate in the process of making the decisions regarding the actions to be developed in their territory.


In relation to the international aid received specifically from the United Nations System, it was utilized, according to the mandates, both in humanitarian aid for relief and for rehabilitation and reconstructions actions. This aid reached in the amount of 4.3 Million Dollars; the UNDP accompanied the Reconstruction Fund (FOREC) throughout the whole process as well as the region in regard to the administrative financial administration, with the purpose of obtaining better results in
reconstruction efforts. At the request of the Colombian government, the UN team for the Evaluation and Coordination of Disasters (UNDAC) operated during the first days, facilitating the performance of the Resident Coordinator in managing the humanitarian aid; according to the article by Colombia UNDP engineer Luis Daniel Campos, "By way of conclusion for international cooperation and for the UNPD in particular, the reconstruction process of the Coffee Belt represented a huge lesson at various levels": it was an opportunity for human development, an opportunity for international cooperation in various dimensions: it demonstrated the need for and the possibility of counting on permanent coordination for actions between the different actors; an opportunity to redesign cooperation among donors, international NGOs, and multilateral banking and to view the need for the definition of priorities and general management to be headed by the national entities in charge of the theme.