

Lessons Learned from the Integrated Consolidation Plan for La Macarena (PCIM)

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A. Basic Concepts of Consolidation

- 1. Consolidation** is defined as the recovery of institutional and territorial control.
- 2. Coordination** of interventions, time and location among the different actors (ministries and agencies), state entities (municipal, departmental and national) and international donors in a given territory.
- 3. Sequencing** the order in which different State interventions take place (i.e. territorial security; citizen protection; and social, economic and institutional development).
- 4. Synchronization** of actions over time. An imbalance in the sequence of events weakens the impact of interventions and destroys previous achievements.
- 5. Flexibility** of the interventions of different actors, with the objective of adapting actions to particular circumstances and changing dynamics.
- 6. Opportuneness** of the State's response to community needs in an effort to build confidence.
- 7. Harmonization** of actions among the community, departmental and municipal governments and State agencies.

B. Institutional Aspects

1. Effective mechanisms for interagency coordination are essential at the national level (management and institutional commitment) and local and regional level (operational). The effectiveness of these mechanisms is closely correlated with the GOC's level of commitment at senior levels, particularly at the national level. Without this high level of support, interagency coordination becomes informal and ad hoc and its effectiveness is limited to finite actions and minimal impact.
2. The iterative process of design and implementation of the Integral Consolidation Plan for La Macarena (PCIM) has highlighted that the available tools to support social consolidation are inadequate to respond quickly to the pace of progress on security and coca eradication. The type of civilian effort necessary lacks sufficient resources and flexible mechanisms to respond in a timely and targeted manner. As a result, contingent government institutions are utilized (e.g., Fund for Peace Program), but relevant State institutions (i.e. ministries) are not present in an optimal way.
3. The processes of recovery and consolidation of State control over areas affected by a high incidence of illegally-armed groups and drug trafficking require permanent

institutional mechanisms and rules that allow the Government to act in a coordinated, timely and flexible way. The Center for Coordination of Integrated Action (CCAI) addresses interagency coordination, but respective State agencies are not necessarily able to respond flexibly and rapidly to opportunities or requirements to establish their presence on a permanent basis.

4. A strategic plan adapted to each consolidation zone is necessary to guide the selection and implementation of actions towards structural change and to avoid ineffective interventions.

5. A detailed operational plan for each zone of CCAI is essential in order to have a road map to measure success and define an exit strategy. The plan also helps to determine the required resources and timeframes of interventions for relevant ministries and agencies and establishes accountability.

6. The programs that the GOC designs to respond to transitional and post-eradication opportunities should have maximum flexibility and rapid response capacity. Currently, programs, such as Familias Guarda Bosques and ReSA, are too slow and bureaucratic to be effective tools in the early stages of a transition period.

7. The arrival of the civilian part of the State, once security has been established, tends to be slow and may become a source of frustration - especially in the process of transitioning from an economy dominated by coca to a licit economy. This frustration, however, can be mitigated if there is an understanding, at least by a part of the community, that the consolidation of State presence is a time-consuming process. A communications strategy is necessary to highlight positive developments and achievements in order to moderate community expectations.

8. Reasons to explain the slow response of the civilian government:

- The institutional nature of government entities:
 - Budget flexibility, in general, is not a trait of strong democracies. Budgets are defined in the previous year, leaving limited ability to take advantage of opportunities that arise during a transition.
 - The bureaucratic steps necessary to receive government resources are often beyond the capacity of communities to address.
- The areas of operation of PCIM, and any other region requiring consolidation efforts, are characterized by a lack of State presence, which, by definition, limits the establishment of its presence. Access to information is poor and it can be unclear with whom to work. Perceptions of security based on recent history in an area limit the movements of officials from departmental and national government.
- Local governments, the primary face of government in the zone of operations, have limited capacity to direct resources and meet counterpart commitments.

- Some public agencies responsible for key services in the consolidation process have a history of corruption, which can paralyze decision-making, at the risk of being accused of more corruption. For many, it is preferable to do nothing, or hinder the process, than be exposed to accusations.
- The small population in many consolidation zones means few voters, therefore limited political value relative to zones with higher population density.
- A small population also results in a higher investment cost per person than more densely-populated areas. This high cost to outcome ratio can counter the level of commitment of State institutions that must be present during the consolidation process.

C. Consolidation of Security

1. Citizen security is a critical part of an integrated consolidation strategy. Within regions of illicit/coca production, there are strong incentives for armed groups to maintain control over territories.
2. Essential for the consolidation process is a security strategy for extending and consolidating territorial control by the armed forces. This strategy plans for the provision of permanent security to citizens, while also serving as a planning tool for the extension of civilian programs into recently-recovered territories where coca-eradication is complete.
3. The dismantling of illegally-armed organizations in an area is often accompanied by an increase in common crime and criminal gangs linked to narco-trafficking. This situation can present a threat to the legitimacy of the armed forces in a region if not accompanied by the effective presence of the justice apparatus (fiscals and judges). Lack of these entities makes timely and effective provision of justice difficult and makes the work of the police against criminal organizations more difficult. Citizens may interpret this lack of effective provision of justice as complicity with armed actors.
4. The consolidation of security requires the development of a doctrine that orients the coordination between the army and the police during the transition phase between the army and the police. Illegally-armed groups are very flexible and adaptive in the face of confrontation. When they lose their capacity to directly confront the armed forces, they adopt operational strategies that make them invisible to the army but very visible to communities, moving in small groups dressed as civilians – and threatening civilians. This weakens and can set back the growing confidence of citizens in the army to protect them.
5. The military and police approach to community relations has changed dramatically over recent years. Instead of seeing communities and associations as loyal to illegally-armed organizations in areas occupied by those entities, there is now a clear recognition that these communities are part of a long-term solution. Military commanders have

learned through experience that relationships based on distrust hinder and delay the collaboration necessary for consolidation, whereas interactions based on transparency and solidarity more rapidly facilitate consolidation efforts.

6. Departmental and municipal entities must be closely involved in all activities, as they represent the permanency of the State. Their participation is an important symbol of consolidation and should serve as acceptable counterpart contributions, recognizing that municipal governments lack virtually any resources, at least in PCIM zones.

C. Community Relations

1. The determining factor for a community to align with the State is its belief that the presence of law enforcement and security is permanent and that illegally-armed organizations are no longer a credible threat. Loyalty is not driven by ideology - and even initially, by expectations of government assistance - but almost entirely by the confidence in military forces' ability to provide security.

2. The speed with which communities take collective decisions to align with the government is heavily influenced by their perceptions of what is happening in neighboring communities, particularly in the consolidation of security. Although security is the determining factor, expectations of assistance and permanent state presence are increasingly important.

3. To the extent possible, resources should be available for timely and flexible allocation in order to take advantage of opportunities that arise in areas where security has recently been established and where the eradication of illicit crops is underway. In the initial stages of reinforcing State presence, time is critical. A rapid response by the GOC, based on community needs, can quickly create a positive perception of the State; whereas a slow response may undermine the process of building trust in the State.

4. The ideal scenario is that socio-economic projects (especially productive projects) arrive as soon as security permits and coca eradication is ending. To facilitate this sequence, all government actors should clearly share advances that are taking place/planned with respect to security and eradication, in order for civilian entities to respond as quickly as possible.

5. When security and coca eradication are not synchronized with the arrival of socio-economic projects, the mood of a community can quickly become hostile. This has happened in PCIM transition zones, where security and eradication have occurred faster than the response by the rest of the State.

6. The implementation of small projects by the GOC, which are identified by the community – even if symbolic – demonstrates the State's rapid response capacity and can improve community perceptions of the government.

7. Community leaders who have chosen to align with the State with the expectation of a

life without violence must be identified as quickly as possible. These leaders should be supported through concrete actions; otherwise, they may become vulnerable to criticism and seen as responsible for the lack of progress and neglect by the State (real or perceived). Community leadership that is supportive of State consolidation should be strengthened through capacity-building programs and leadership training.

8. Isolated communities, in general, have little understanding of what is reasonable to expect from the State and how to request assistance. Communities need information on available programs, and technical assistance to better access those programs.

9. Local organizations represent the social fabric in consolidation zones and serve as a foundation to organize activities and establish credibility within local community structures. Some groups may have previous association with the FARC, but the consolidation of security neutralizes FARC's influence. These groups should be formalized to facilitate their access to state resources and provided technical assistance to enhance their institutional capacity.

D. Illicit Crops

1. The lack of state presence is strongly correlated with coca cultivation, illegally-armed groups and violence. Government policies related to zero coca, and strict verification procedures, take a long time and limit the State's ability to work with communities in transitioning from a coca economy to a legal economy. Policies must be more flexible in order to respond adequately to dynamic changes in these zones. A good example of this flexibility is PCIM, where the police and military undertake the initial verification and document the voluntary eradication of coca so that social programs can arrive - rather than wait for the longer verification process by the United Nations.

2. It's necessary to change the strategic focus of coca eradication to one that takes into account the factors that determine replanting. The primary determinants are institutional control (security) and the existence of other economic opportunities. The establishment of basic security conditions must precede and accompany eradication. The response of the State to communities in transition to the legal economy should accompany the pace of eradication.

3. Independent validation of eradication in a particular area (i.e. PCIM) is essential to establishing legitimacy and obtaining support for the consolidation strategy. Independent verification should be based on well-developed protocols and institutional consensus.

4. Given favorable conditions, communities are willing to manually eradicate their own coca, as has been demonstrated in the vicinity of Puerto Toledo (Puerto Rico) and several villages of Vista Hermosa, where nearly 2000 hectares have been voluntarily eradicated by communities. The conditions necessary for this to happen are:

- The communities must believe that the security provided by Public Forces is permanent, and that coca cultivation is no longer an option.

- The communities must believe that the State is strongly committed to working collaboratively with them in the transition from coca to a legal economy. This positive association is demonstrated by communities and State agencies reaching a mutual agreement with respect to assistance programs and the State implementing projects which respond to community needs and capacity requirements.
- State presence must be more than periodic visits by officials. An official residing in the community enhances confidence in the State.

5. The eradication strategy should include a mechanism to respond rapidly to any effort to recultivate coca and address individual resistance.

6. A way to consolidate licit crop production in a sustainable way is to give title to uncultivated land occupied by individuals.

E. International Cooperation

1. The fundamental objective of international cooperation in consolidation areas should be to work with the GOC in designing mechanisms that are flexible and responsive. These mechanisms should be present at all levels of the government in order to seize windows of opportunity as they arise.

2. Resources of international cooperation are especially valuable when they serve to catalyze and promote the presence of the State. Such resources shouldn't substitute for, but rather promote the presence of State institutions to provide services to citizens.

3. Ideally, all international assistance in consolidation areas should identify the GOC as the service provider, in order to reinforce the perception of State presence and promote community confidence in its institutions.