

Principles of Consolidation of State Presence

Working Paper

Basic Concepts of Consolidation

- **Consolidation** is defined as the recovery of GOC institutional and territorial control, creating the conditions for a thriving civil society and a vibrant private sector. The goal of consolidation is to incorporate previously disenfranchised communities as citizens of Colombia with all the implicit rights and responsibilities included in that status. Creating an alliance between communities and the Colombian State is the way forward.
- **Coordination** of interventions, time and location among the different actors (ministries and agencies), state entities (municipal, departmental and national), civil society organizations (including Juntas de Accion Comunal) and international donors (including USG agencies and partners) in a given territory is essential. The Regional Coordinator Centers in each consolidation region play a key role in this coordination process.
- **Sequencing** the order in which different State interventions take place (i.e. permanent territorial security; eradication; citizen protection by the police; and social, economic and institutional development) is key to not repeating the past.
- **Synchronization** of actions over time ensures that an imbalance in the sequence of events does not weaken the impact of interventions and destroy previous achievements. This is especially important in the post-eradication phase.
- **Flexibility** of the interventions of different actors gives the ability to adapt actions to particular circumstances and changing dynamics in an inherently fluid environment.
- **Speed** of the State's response to community needs builds confidence in the GOC's interest and ability to respond to community priorities.
- **Commitment** by the GOC to fully support consolidation efforts is the foundation of the entire consolidation process.
- **Creating Awareness** regarding progress in the consolidation process, while also managing expectations, works to support the growing partnership between the GOC, communities, civil society, and the private sector.

1. Permanent Security for Communities is the Required Beginning, Middle, and End State – the Underpinning of the Consolidation Strategy

Citizen security is a determinant part of an integrated consolidation strategy. Citizens initially decide who to align with based on their assessment regarding who is in the position to provide their families with security.

A security strategy for extending and permanently consolidating territorial control by the military and the police is absolutely essential. This strategy plans for the provision of permanent security to citizens, building out from *nucleos de seguridad*. The security strategy also serves as a planning tool for the extension of civilian programs into newly-recovered territories once coca eradication is complete.

The consolidation of security also requires the development of a doctrine that guides the coordination between the army and the police during the transition phase between the two groups. Currently, in many places, the army continues to play a security function that is more appropriately served by the police. This is in part a resource issue, but is also in part the result of the police requiring policies adapted to their role in the unfolding consolidation process.

The security strategy is not necessarily a written document, but rather a conceptual understanding by key players, and a commitment by the MOD to provide the necessary resources. While this component is necessarily the responsibility of the MOD, USAID partners have the responsibility to ensure that permanent citizen security is in place before beginning program implementation in a given zone and potentially putting communities at risk.

2. Coca Eradication

It's necessary to change the strategic focus of coca eradication to one that takes into account the factors that determine replanting rather than focusing primarily on numbers of hectares eradicated. The primary determinants of replanting are institutional control (security) and the existence of other economic opportunities post-eradication. 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 have the capacity to accompany the often-rapid pace of eradication.

Given the right conditions, communities are willing to manually eradicate their own coca, as has been demonstrated in Meta where nearly 2,000 hectares were voluntarily eradicated by communities – and has also happened in several *consejo comunitarios* in Narino. The conditions necessary for this to happen are:

- The communities must believe that the security provided by the armed forces is permanent, and that coca cultivation is no longer an option.
- Communities have reached the point where the violence associated with the coca economy does not compensate for the quick-income generated by coca cultivation.
- 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.
- State presence must be more than periodic visits by officials. An official or *tecnico* residing in the community greatly enhances confidence in the State.

A strategically-critical way to consolidate licit crop production in a sustainable way – and to discourage replanting - is to give farmers title to their land.

3. Speed and Flexibility

Given the dynamic nature of the consolidation process, starting with the permanent provision of security, moving to eradication, and then providing socio-economic services, it is practically impossible to be able to plan where exactly a program will be operational even six months into the future. Speed and flexibility are essential 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 complete. A rapid response by the GOC (or in the name of the GOC), based on community needs, even if symbolic in nature, can quickly create a positive perception of the State; whereas a slow response may undermine the process of building trust in the State. Especially important at this critical juncture are small, rapid-impact, income-generating projects. These quick-impact projects have great political value in quickly demonstrating that the State is concerned for community welfare – and have the advantage of being small enough such that exhaustive studies are not required prior to beginning implementation.

The ideal scenario is that socio-economic projects (especially income-generating projects) arrive as soon as security permits and coca eradication is ending. To facilitate this sequence, security forces should share advances that are taking place/planned with respect to security and eradication in order for civilian entities to respond as quickly as possible with rapid-impact projects - with the potential to phase into long-term development efforts.

Current GOC programs to address the post-eradication phase tend to be too bureaucratic to be effective tools in the early stages of the economic transition period where a rapid and agile response is required. In general, the arrival of the civilian part of the State tends to be slow and may become a source of frustration to communities. This frustration, however, can be mitigated if there is an understanding, at least by a significant part of the community, that the consolidation of State presence is a time-consuming process.

4. The Regional Coordinator Centers

The RCCs (civilian, military, police coordinators) are the primary GOC consolidation interlocutors at the regional level. They have the responsibility of ensuring that, to the extent possible, GOC and other resources are best serving the region's strategic vision – in partnership with other State and non-State actors. Implementing partners, as part of the process of working in partnership with the RCCs, should look for opportunities to help increase the RCC's capacity to serve their coordinating function. One example is the continued refinement of the operational plan – and working to ensure that the consolidation process is more-or-less following this road map.

5. Strategic and Operational Plans

A strategic plan, developed by CCAI and adapted to each consolidation region, guides the prioritization of strategic actions designed to lead to structural change and the consolidation of State presence.

A detailed operational plan for each region of the *Plan Nacional de Consolidacion*, based on the Strategic Plan, 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 over time, lays out a notional implementation schedule of interventions by relevant ministries and agencies, and establishes

accountability for these same entities. Trying to consolidate a region in the absence of a detailed operational plan is a recipe for mediocrity and possibly failure.

6. Local Governance

Local governments, especially the mayors, are the primary face of government in consolidation zones. Departmental and municipal entities must be closely involved in all activities from the start given that they represent the permanency of the State. Their participation is an important symbol of consolidation, while recognizing that municipal governments frequently lack significant resources to support project implementation with counterpart funding. Governors have significantly more resources to contribute to the consolidation efforts and should be included from the onset.

It is critical to increase the local governance capacity in order for local leadership to better gain local confidence in the State – as well as to increase mayors’ capacity to serve leadership roles in the consolidation process.

7. Access to Justice

The dismantling of illegally-armed groups in an area is often accompanied by an increase in common crime and sometimes 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 – not just to deal with narco-terrorism, but also to deal with debt, family violence, and land issues which are the most important justice issues for communities. Lack of an effective justice apparatus 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. Unfortunately, this key component of consolidation is proving difficult to resolve.

8. Technical Assistance

Frequently, technical assistance primarily focuses on crop-specific education and increasing the capacity of local government officials. However, the consolidation process requires a broader definition of technical assistance.

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). Ideally, community leadership that is supportive of State consolidation would be strengthened through capacity-building programs and leadership training.

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

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 had previous association with the FARC, but the consolidation of security neutralizes

the FARC's ability to influence these groups. These groups should be formalized to facilitate their access to State resources and provided with technical assistance to enhance their institutional and empresarial capacity.

9. Communication Strategy

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. A communications strategy is necessary to highlight positive developments and achievements in order to inform and moderate community expectations to buy time and community patience, and to inform communities in "red zones" regarding opportunities that come with aligning with the State. A communication strategy is also an important tool for assisting communities move from a culture of illegality to a culture of legality, based on the promotion of the key values that support legality: security, democracy, *convivencia*, and participation.

10. International Cooperation

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

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