



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

ORGANIZING THE RETURN OF GOVERNMENT TO CONFLICT ZONES: COLOMBIA, 2004-2009

SYNOPSIS

In May 2004, Colombia's Office of the Presidency established a national-level agency, the *Centro de Coordinación de Acción Integral*, to manage the reintroduction of state institutions into areas that had been retaken from leftist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries and drug traffickers. The agency set up a central Bogotá office from which it coordinated work in so-called consolidation zones around the country. In many of these areas, the government had either been absent for decades or never present. In the words of Andres Peñate, former vice minister of defense and an architect of the initiative, "Although we were all Colombians, it was almost like conquering a different country." Despite setbacks, by late 2009 the agency had received broad-based domestic and international endorsement.

Matthew Devlin and Sebastian Chaskel drafted this policy note on the basis of interviews conducted in Colombia during October and November of 2009.

INTRODUCTION

The administration of Colombian President Alvaro Uribe (2002-2010) established the *Centro de Coordinación de Acción Integral* (CCAI, or the Center for the Coordination of Integral Action), in 2004. Uribe charged the CCAI with coordinating the reintroduction of civilian government agencies to parts of the country from which the state had retreated over the course of a decades-old fight against insurgents and drug trafficking networks. At the time, there were so many of these areas that Diego Molano, a former director of the CCAI, described Colombia as

more of a geographic expression than an actual nation-state.

When Uribe came to power in 2002, the Colombian state had a monopoly on neither violence nor governance. While the national government had concluded peace agreements with a smattering of guerrilla groups, the dominant *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC, or Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) continued to fight on. The FARC's position was so strong that, as part of a fitful negotiation process, President Andres Pastrana (1998-2002) had even ceded a "demilitarized

zone” the size of Switzerland to the Marxist insurgents.

The national government’s control was also challenged by right-wing paramilitary groups that had come together in the late 1990s under the umbrella of the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC, or United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia). The paramilitaries regularly massacred civilians they accused of collaborating with the guerrillas.

Both the paramilitaries and their leftist foes established independent fiefdoms throughout the countryside where they levied ad hoc taxes, administered their own brands of justice, kidnapped, extorted, raped and trafficked in illicit drugs. The Uribe administration inherited a country whose own military was already debating whether or not it was a failed state.

According to Andres Peñate, vice minister of defense from 2004 to 2006, “it was almost a 19th century American problem. ... This is a country, half of which nominally belongs to us, but where the constitution means little if nobody goes there with authority and force. I imagine that in the 19th century the Philadelphia constitution meant very little in Wichita, unless you had a hundred men with rifles.”

Determined to break the deadlock, Uribe adopted a hard-line approach. He pledged to confront all illegal armed groups and to establish government control over all territory in a strategy that called for full-scale military confrontation. He levied a special “war tax” on Colombia’s wealthiest citizens, increased the army’s manpower and drew heavily on U.S. military assistance.

The strategy worked. In 2002, the armed forces drove the FARC from Bogotá and its hinterland while raiding guerrilla and paramilitary strongholds in the hillside slums of Medellín. By the end of 2003, the AUC leadership was at the negotiating table working out a demobilization agreement and the country’s major urban centers were secure. In 2004, the military turned its

attention to the FARC’s heartland, swinging into the jungles and plains south of the capital.

THE CHALLENGE

A large part of the Colombian military’s success was due to a change in strategy. In the past, the military would retake populated areas only to withdraw shortly thereafter. Guerrillas or paramilitaries would soon return, retaliating against inhabitants for any collaboration with the state. Recognizing this problem, the military adopted a clear-and-hold strategy, retaking territory with the intent to stay indefinitely.

Battlefield success, however, proved problematic. The military’s advance often destroyed the thin extralegal governance of the guerrillas, leaving behind an institutional wasteland still beyond the reach of existing civilian government agencies. By early 2004, Peñate had a problem on his hands: “As the army went on, fought with the bad guys, pushed them back into the jungle, military operations began to get into a swamp. This was not a swamp of water; this was a swamp of people. The citizens of the area began to say, ‘Can you help me with this road? Can you help me to restore this hospital, this school?’”

Peñate, an Oxford graduate and former adviser to British Petroleum, recognized the urgency of the situation. He knew that while the army was prepared to shoulder some degree of development work to win popular support, it had neither the capacity nor the desire to both wage a war and administer a state.

Peñate concluded that whether or not local populations transferred their allegiance to Bogotá would depend entirely on how adequately and swiftly civilian government institutions of security, justice and economic and social development arrived to fill the vacuum. The only way the national government could win legitimacy in the eyes of the areas’ inhabitants was to deliver tangible benefits. As Peñate put it, illegal armed groups “were thugs, but they were thugs that were solving problems. If government goes there and it

does not solve problems, then it's not a government. ... Don't just be good guys, solve problems.”

The first challenge to redeploying effective civilian government was motivating national institutions to assume an entirely new range of responsibilities. Government agencies would have to reintroduce their services from the ground up and at great expense. Low population densities in most of the areas meant not only that service provision would be extremely difficult but also that the corresponding political rewards would be modest.

Peñate and his colleagues would also have to overcome substantial bureaucratic inertia as budgets and personnel plans rarely included provisions for work in the newly recovered territories. The highly legalistic nature of Colombia's bureaucracy compounded the problem. Whatever excitement the prospect of pioneering the state's presence in these areas might have provoked among innovative and ambitious public servants was overshadowed by a fear of career-ending legal sanctions that could follow even small administrative missteps.

Mustering the necessary political will was therefore the most immediate challenge to any redeployment effort. Peñate would have to secure sustained commitment at the highest levels of government in order to goad the bureaucracy into action and give subordinates the confidence to take substantive actions.

Peñate faced a second set of obstacles having to do with coordination. Because kidnappings, assassinations and ambushes were still well within insurgents' capabilities, any reintroduction of civilian agencies would have to be carefully planned with the military. However, given that few agencies had ever functioned in any sustained way in these areas, there was little precedent for effective civil-military coordination.

Peñate also had to worry about coordination among the civilian agencies themselves. The problem, as one lead official in the redeployment effort put it, was that “the state, by definition, only functions where the state already exists.” For example, the national Agrarian Bank could not extend credit to peasant farmers if the Ministry of Agriculture had not titled their land. But the ministry could not title their land if the National Office of the Registrar had not already issued them government identification cards. As a result, credit was hard to come by and illicit crop cultivation continued to be the only economically viable option available to many farmers. Clearly, solving such problems would require government agencies to work together.

Close coordination also was needed to avoid duplication of effort. The mandates of many agencies overlapped to a great degree, leading to redundancy and counterproductive rivalries. Alternatively, similar sets of obligations made it relatively easy for two agencies to each abdicate responsibility and blame each other for inaction.

Complicating matters further, Peñate was acutely aware that whatever organizational structure and coordinating mechanisms were eventually settled upon, procedures and programs would nevertheless have to be flexible; newly pacified jungle was a poor setting for developing public policy.

While the challenges were evident, the solution was not. As Sergio Jaramillo, vice minister of defense from 2002 to 2004 and 2006-2009, put it, “The problem is not the concept or the idea. I mean, you can get on the Internet and you will come up finding millions of papers which talk about various ‘pillars.’ You need your justice pillar, and your governance, and your social development, and security. But all those things are obvious. The tricky thing is actually how to create the incentive within your system and the

organization to actually do it. ... It's not a question of the 'what'; it's a question of the 'how,' and the 'how' is the really difficult thing."

FRAMING A RESPONSE

While the nature and scope of the challenge were becoming clear to Peñate by late 2003, neither the Ministry of Defense nor any other government agency had the capability to address the problem. Mired in the day-to-day priorities of the ongoing conflict, the national government had never weighed the full implications of returning civilian agencies to the recovered territories. Without a formal framework for reintroducing government into these areas, the development of a response rested with a small group of key individuals.

Gen. Freddy Padilla shared Peñate's belief in the need for a civilian complement to the military's presence in recovered areas. As a highly decorated two-star general approaching his fourth decade of service, Padilla had the clout to declare public-service provision as a national security priority for his officer corps. As Peñate put it, "If you are in the military and all of a sudden come some *señoritas* and *señoritos* from Bogotá telling you that they've come to help you, well, the last thing that you want is to divert resources to look after them. But the military understood that the presence of these public officers from the central government was important. That was done through the leadership of General Padilla."

The general also bridged a fundamental information gap. His officers encountered decrepit schools and unstaffed health posts in areas that had never even seen a local mayor, let alone a Bogotá bureaucrat. As a result, he understood the provincial situation far better than most national government officials.

Peñate and Padilla had more than enough influence within the ministry to get the initial planning process underway. Just as crucially, the two men had the time to devote to the problem.

As a vice minister, Peñate did not have the public obligations that sapped the attention of full cabinet members. And, although Padilla was in line to become overall commander of the armed forces, his elevation to that post was still three years away.

Peñate and Padilla had little to build upon. A review of domestic precedents proved disheartening. The Special Commission for Rehabilitation, established in 1958, folded after about two years, amid disagreements among the commission's constituent ministers. In the early 1960s, a program that set up so-called welfare teams for conflict zones was similarly unsuccessful. The teams consisted of doctors, nurses, agrarian technicians, engineers, veterinarians, economists, and, occasionally, public administration experts. The program collapsed, starved of resources as political support evaporated. The National Rehabilitation Plan, launched in 1983, did somewhat better. The program concentrated on infrastructure, social services, and agricultural and livestock industry support. Though the program survived in one form or another for nearly a decade, it lost focus. By 1990, its activities sprawled across nearly half of the country. Its organizers had never coordinated well with the military.

Unable to find much in the way of useful domestic precedent, Peñate and Padilla took advantage of the close links between the Ministry of Defense and the U.S. military's Southern Command, specifically its Military Group stationed at the U.S. embassy in Bogotá.

The Americans recommended establishing an interagency task force. The model promised a structure that could muster the authority of a formal institution yet move with the flexibility of an informal network. Specific examples reviewed were the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the U.S. military's counternarcotics Joint Task Force South and the Joint Terrorism Task Force run by the New York City Police

Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Peñate made trips to Florida, Washington and New York to study these and other models. All this, Vice Minister Jaramillo stressed, “was long before discussions that are now current, and kind of cliché, about a so-called whole-of-government approach.”

At the same time, a parallel line of thought was developing at the Office of the Presidency. In November 2003, the national ombudsman together with the Roman Catholic Church submitted a report to President Uribe. Titled “Humanitarian Crisis in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta,” the document focused on a troubled mountain range along Colombia’s northern Atlantic coast and highlighted the absence of civilian state institutions as a primary catalyst of the ongoing guerrilla and paramilitary violence in the region.

Uribe called for an immediate investigation and entrusted the job to Luis Alfonso Hoyos, a close confidant and director of Acción Social, an agency within the Office of the Presidency that coordinates international and domestic assistance to populations within Colombia affected by poverty, narco-trafficking or violence. Hoyos’ verification team confirmed the initial report’s findings. This determination reaffirmed Uribe’s growing conviction that in order to achieve definitive progress, his government would have to not only reassert military control over all territory but also reinforce civilian state presence with equal dedication.

The civilian and military leaderships were in agreement: The full panoply of civilian agencies would have to be reintroduced to areas formerly beyond the national government’s control. No real precedent existed, nor was there an obvious lead agency for the task. But Peñate and Padilla had a working model in the interagency structure recommended by the Americans. Hoyos was prepared to give the effort an institutional home and a visible profile within Acción Social.

Importantly, Uribe, often cited as the most popular president in Colombia’s history, had the political capital to bring the idea to life.

GETTING DOWN TO WORK

Peñate, Padilla, and Hoyos devoted the first five months of 2004 to creating the structure of what would become the *Centro de Coordinación de Acción Integral*. The three men took the lead, a role they would continue to play through the CCAI’s early years.

Each of them enjoyed direct access to the president, whose explicit endorsement was key to breaking political deadlocks. For example, the problem of interagency rivalry that Peñate feared would prove insurmountable was simply, he recalled, “overcome by presidential fiat. . . . It was important to [Uribe] and he was doing personal follow-up.” A micromanager, Uribe would continue to keep close tabs on the CCAI.

Nevertheless, Peñate, Padilla and Hoyos knew that there was a limit to how much time the president could devote to the effort. They were adamant that high-level political buy-in would therefore have to be a core premise of the CCAI’s institutional setup.

Building coalitions

Peñate, Padilla and Hoyos formed themselves into a three-member Directive Council that met once a month to set CCAI strategy. Formalizing each man’s involvement served an important political purpose. Hoyos’ presence signaled the long-term commitment of the presidency while his two colleagues from the Ministry of Defense lent the council even more clout in the eyes of a wartime government.

The three men created a second, subordinate, leadership body called the Executive Committee. The committee included a delegate from each of the government agencies judged most important to any redeployment effort, such as education, health, and agriculture. As Peñate told it, “We sat

down and said, 'Who are the people we need?' ... Twelve or thirteen institutions, not that many; the essence."

Because the Executive Committee would be the CCAI's primary link to the upper echelons of the national agencies, its members had to be able to deliver concrete results. Hoyos was therefore meticulous in his approach to staffing the committee, insisting that each delegate possess two key attributes.

First, the delegate had to be relatively junior, as Hoyos believed younger staff at an earlier stage in their careers would bring more enthusiasm to the task of pioneering the untried interagency model. Often, for example, the committee would be dealing with nuts-and-bolts issues involved in making bureaucracies work rather than questions of overall strategy. As Peñate explained it: "Sometimes this was as simple as authorizing the extra budget to buy a single camera to make ID cards. Move the money from X to Y. Buy the camera today. ... We discovered that big problems were big problems because something small wasn't being done, because somebody had not signed a resolution, because somebody had not sent an email." Hoyos could not realistically expect a minister or even a vice minister to have either the time or the inclination to devote adequate energy to such tasks.

Second, the delegates to the committee had to have influence within their ministries. Delegates would need to be able to secure firm commitments for CCAI initiatives. Their ability to do so frequently boiled down to their skill at fighting for funds. Peñate stressed the importance of this quality: "We were looking for those people who knew the details of the budgets of the offices, where the money was. Remember the famous quote: 'Why do you rob banks? Because that's where the money is.' So we wanted people who knew where the pots of money were. ... Instead of asking for more money, which is what everybody

does in government, we came with the idea of using money that was sitting idle." Delegates would go through their home ministries' budgets, highlighting available funds that, for whatever reason, were going unspent.

Finding people with these attributes looked like a difficult task, but Hoyos quickly discovered a pool of potential candidates. He found that junior advisers to ministers enjoyed direct access to their ministers and personal relationships that could be leveraged when necessary. A step removed from the formal workings of the ministries, these junior advisers understood the mechanics of their institutions but had enough perspective to refrain from becoming entangled in institutional turf wars. They also had job descriptions that were vague enough to allow them significant discretion over how they spent their time. Through them, the CCAI could tap into both the political and the bureaucratic leadership within each ministry.

However, getting the Executive Committee to function well was not just a matter of getting the right people in the room. This became obvious at one of the committees first weekly, two-hour meetings. "You know, one of the problems with the government, when you get senior officers," said Peñate, "is they tend to deliver speeches and justifications. I think my only contribution to CCAI was to organize meetings in a way that was executive: What's the problem and who needs to do what by when? The concept was very simple, [but] the culture of who needs to do what by when was important."

The Directive Council and Executive Committee operated more like networks than formal hierarchies. As one CCAI official described it: "It is not a strong hierarchy inside CCAI because we want to maintain all the different agencies that participate in CCAI with enough of a level of appropriation of the strategy, to have them feel that they own it and that they

are as much a part of this process as any other agency. ... So it is all a way to maintain enough political will and an attitude to collaborate.”

Institutional trade-offs

The core structure of the CCAI began below the networks of the Directive Council and Executive Committee. Hoyos offered to house this permanent operation within his agency, Acción Social, in the Office of the Presidency.

There were distinct advantages to this move. First, as part of a presidential agency, the CCAI could be established by decree and would not require enabling legislation, thus bypassing congressional debates and political horse trading.

Second, Acción Social's aid programs were already targeted at Colombia's most vulnerable people, many of whom lived in newly recovered territories. Because of the agency's field experience in those areas, it was a logical choice to lead many of the quick-impact programs that the CCAI would want to either put in place or strengthen. Acción Social's preexisting operations also involved significant coordination with key ministries such as those of health, education and agriculture. It was therefore already the most interconnected of government agencies.

Positioning the CCAI within the Office of the Presidency also served to further institutionalize the president's support. While Uribe could not attend every meeting, the presidential seal would be above the CCAI's door and across its letterhead. When officials arrived for a meeting or received requests for assistance, they would have no doubt that presidential authority underpinned the agency.

Physical appearance was important, too, according to Peñate. “This was not a dirty office, you know, somewhere random. This was in one of the most important buildings near to the presidential palace, everything was brand new. It had lots of psychological signs telling the people we were important.” Hoyos supplied office space

on the top floor of the presidency, while the U.S. Southern Command donated new computer and communications equipment.

Nevertheless, placing the CCAI within Acción Social had significant drawbacks. Because it existed only by presidential decree, the CCAI would not receive its own budget allocation. It would have to lobby other entities for funding. Similarly, no law required anyone in the government to cooperate with the CCAI. While Hoyos and Peñate could take steps to make ministerial collaboration more likely, such as the careful setup of the Executive Committee, compliance could never be guaranteed.

The result was a balancing act. In the words of Vice Minister of Defense Jaramillo, “What you want is for the government institutions to do their job, for the Ministry of Transport to do its job, for the Ministry of Education to do its job, not for a third organization to do what they should do. So, you have to strike a balance between not wanting to create institutional distortions, but on the other hand, being able to deliver quickly.”

Leading with bonhomie

With the CCAI based inside Acción Social, Hoyos soon eclipsed both Peñate and Padilla as the individual most readily identified with the initiative. This shift was intentional.

Hoyos possessed, as more than one colleague noted, “an exceptional bonhomie.” His charisma was important. Running an effort like the CCAI required, as a close aide recalled, a great talent for “ego management.” Those involved in CCAI's early stages often praised Hoyos' ability to find middle ground with even the most obstinate of counterparts.

There were, of course, some situations in which charm alone was not enough. In those cases, it helped that fellow cabinet members viewed Hoyos as a comrade rather than a competitor. On 11 July 2001, the Council of State, Colombia's highest intragovernmental

arbiter, barred Hoyos from running for elected office in response to allegations of forged campaign signatures. As of late 2009, the case was still under appeal and the details had yet to be settled. During the intervening years, the allegations appeared to have not damaged Hoyos' credibility among his colleagues, several of whom dismissed any missteps that may have occurred as a matter of negligence rather than malfeasance.

The specifics of his case aside, Hoyos' legal problems didn't hurt his efforts on behalf of the CCAI, and in fact may have helped. Because his political future was clouded by the allegations, ambitious ministers stopped viewing him as a potential rival. In Peñate's words, Hoyos was now "respected, not feared. Nobody was thinking that Luis Alfonso was going to use this to become senator." The prospect of fulfilling Hoyos' requests for cooperation with the CCAI was no longer a zero-sum game for other ministers. The message became, Peñate said, "Let's put all the toys together and play with all the toys that belong to us,' instead of 'Give me your toys, and I'm going to play with your toys.'"

Staffing the central office

However effective a diplomat Hoyos might have been, as head of Acción Social he had significant responsibilities beyond the CCAI. Recognizing this, he named Diego Molano, his close confidant and eventual successor, as CCAI director. In doing so, Hoyos ensured that the CCAI would have a leader with both influence and the time to master the details of day-to-day operations.

Molano oversaw the CCAI's central office. In order to provide him with direct access to law enforcement and the military, Peñate seconded two colonels, one from the army and one from the police, to the office as coordinators for their respective services. Communication with the military was vital to ensuring that the central

office was aware of security developments across its various areas of operations. In many of those regions, the military also ran what was often the only reliable logistics network, and its help was essential in moving CCAI personnel and material.

Despite the presence of the two colonels, effective civil-military coordination was slow to emerge. "The one thing which was huge," recalled Peñate, "but we didn't realize it at the beginning, were the cultural differences." The American joint task force model, originally designed to facilitate cooperation between law enforcement agencies or among various branches of the military, "didn't work on automatic" when adapted to the CCAI's civil-military setup, he said. "People who work on social issues—well, they don't mix well with the military. They tend to like long hair and peace and love, and the military is the opposite. ... Many people in the military did not trust Acción Social because Acción Social was doing work in many parts of the country where it was the only presence in the land of the bad guys. So the military says, 'Maybe they are agents of the bad guys.'"

Peñate said he overcame this gulf between the civilian and military cultures by chance. Study trips to the United States had the unforeseen effect of building camaraderie between groups. Those who worked under Peñate gave equal credit to his habit of piling all CCAI personnel into a cargo plane and flying them out to field sites on weekends to see problems firsthand. These trips built relationships between civilian CCAI personnel while also earning them the respect of their uniformed colleagues. Peñate said taking staff out into the field also improved their performance: "Working for CCAI, I discovered something about human psychology that gave me an insight for things afterward. When you give a person a job that is important, and you let them know the job is important and show this person that his or her actions actually have an impact for

real people in real time, people feel empowered to an enormous extent and things move forward.”

In addition to Molano and the two colonels, the central office consisted of the operations unit. Hoyos asked each minister or agency director to attach a permanent representative to the unit who would act as the operational link to their home institution, mobilizing resources and pushing for action. As problems arose, these representatives would have to be able to act quickly. As Peñate told it, “We did not have the luxury of working with the cycles of budgets, because in the government if you have a problem in 2005 the budget cycle means that you will solve it in 2006. We did not have that luxury; we needed to find a solution now.”

By leaving the selection of representatives up to the ministers, Hoyos and Peñate calculated that the ministers would likely choose someone they knew personally. Thus, Peñate reasoned, the CCAI would get “junior people of the ministries but with enough trust of the minister to call him if a problem arose.” If Peñate did have any say in the selection, he recalled, he would once again press for people with “the knowledge, the wit, and the street wisdom to find new pockets of money that we could grab.”

Representatives were based full-time at the CCAI office and were freed of all responsibilities at their home institutions. Though numbers varied over time, there were about a dozen permanent ministry and agency representatives in the central office at any point, along with the military and police coordinators, while a half dozen Acción Social support staff provided assistance.

Everyone sat together in an open-plan corner office, a large rectangular room with desks along the walls and a conference table in the middle. “This may seem like a minor thing,” said Peñate, “but it was really an insight. We were going to have a representative of each minister who can solve problems there, together with a military

representative who would raise the problems in real time.”

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

By 2009, the CCAI’s carefully engineered structure was not working as intended and the shortcomings of housing the CCAI within the Office of the Presidency were becoming increasingly apparent.

Because the CCAI had no basis in law, several ministers, such as those of Transport and Commerce, were free to decline to send a representative to the central office. In these cases, the CCAI had to settle for a liaison who remained at the recalcitrant ministry, a civil servant simply designated as the point of contact for CCAI requests. Unlike full-time representatives, liaisons were not exempted from their regular job requirements. Several officials familiar with the CCAI were unwilling to discuss this particular matter on the record but suggested that those ministers who opted for such downgraded relationships did so because they viewed the CCAI as a distraction from their own priorities and an encroachment on their power.

The CCAI’s troubled effort to rehabilitate the judicial system in its areas of operation was a particularly damaging example to such obstructionism. Although the Colombian justice system was grappling with its own internal challenges, the situation was greatly exacerbated when a new minister of interior and justice, named in early 2008, simply declined to assign a representative to the CCAI’s central office.

On 20 March 2009, Uribe intervened directly by ordering his entire cabinet to comply with CCAI requests. All government entities were to prioritize and expedite their commitments to the CCAI throughout the last 17 months of his administration. The decree addressed concerns on the policing and judicial fronts by expanding the Directive Council to include the head of the national police and the prosecutor general. It

went on to explicitly order all noncompliant ministries and agencies to assign a representative to the Executive Committee and specifically noted that ministers and agency directors could not delegate this responsibility to anyone lower than their immediate deputies.

Still, there was no enforcement mechanism to ensure ministers complied with the directive, and by late 2009 few had. To make matters worse, Molano had been promoted to succeed Hoyos as head of Acción Social in mid-2009, leaving the central office with neither an operational leader nor a political champion.

ASSESSING RESULTS

Colombia's first civilian interagency effort certainly encountered difficulties. What is surprising, however, is the scale of what the CCAI was able to achieve in its first 4 1/2 years of operations and in the breadth of services it was able to improve.

By the end of 2009, the CCAI had completed, or was in the process of completing, nearly 4,500 projects representing US\$700 million of investment. Health coverage in CCAI areas of operations had risen from 73.2% of the population in 2006 to 91.5% by the end of 2009, surpassing the national average of 90%. Education coverage rates in CCAI areas similarly surpassed the national average in 2009. Violence indices, though still above average, were falling across the board. Kidnappings had fallen by more than 70% in CCAI areas since its establishment.

All these improvements had been achieved despite significant growth in CCAI responsibilities. In 2004, the CCAI was working with only 4% of Colombia's population (1.76 million people) across 12% of its territory. In 2009, however, the CCAI's coverage had expanded to 10% of the population (4.5 million people) and 20% of the country.

That said, the CCAI's performance came up short in some areas. Especially in its earlier years, the organization sometimes focused on high-

profile infrastructure projects at the expense of less visible, yet equally important, investment to build capacity in local government. Over a third of the US\$700 million marshaled by the CCAI went toward transport and infrastructure projects. The CCAI's preliminary surveys, conducted in 2009, revealed that while local populations' trust in the national government was increasing steadily, their faith in local officials was largely stagnant or falling. No one debated the importance of infrastructure development in the newly recovered territories; the argument was simply that the resources invested in physical structures and human capacities should be more equally balanced. Related to allegations of development showmanship were suggestions that the CCAI, by virtue of its location within the presidency, built trust in Uribe, the person, rather than the government of Colombia.

REFLECTIONS

The Center for the Coordination of Integral Action was widely acknowledged to have achieved significant results in the face of formidable challenges. The organization received broad, if sometimes grudging, approval from across the political spectrum and throughout civil society—no small feat in a country as polarized as Colombia.

As of late 2009, several of Colombia's major international donors were exploring whether the CCAI should be a main recipient of future assistance. The CCAI received numerous foreign delegations interested in the lessons to be learned from its model.

An unanswered question was whether or not the model was exportable. Andres Peñate, one of the architects of the plan, said he thought so, but he expressed one caveat: "The psychological elements and the elements of nationalism, the feeling that you are recovering something that is actually yours and not somebody else's, is very important. ... It has to be a locally owned effort."

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