



DDR & CHILDREN'S ISSUES: A BI-MONTHLY REVIEW

MARCH- APRIL 2014

1. BACKGROUND

The Colombian Reintegration Agency (ACR)'s DDR initiatives aim to fulfill the following objectives: 1) create conditions allowing demobilized ex-combatants to become independent citizens, 2) strengthen socio-economic conditions in receptor communities, and 3) promote national reconciliation.

Disengaged children and adolescents have received special attention through programs and policies led by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF). The ICBF Assistance Program aims to reestablish and guarantee the rights of each disengaged child and adolescent, with special emphasis on their protection, education and health.

USAID supports two IOM program areas that strengthen these initiatives: the Community-Oriented Reintegration of Ex-Combatants (CORE) Program, which has supported the GOC's DDR work since 2006, and the Institutional Strengthening Program to Support Child Ex-Combatants and Children and Youth at risk of Recruitment by Illegal Armed Groups (CHS), which has supported the ICBF's assistance to victims of child recruitment since 1999.

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2. KEY DEVELOPMENTS

FORMER COMBATANTS PROMOTE RECONCILIATION ON VICTIMS' DAY

The National Day of Memory and Solidarity with Victims was commemorated in a variety of ways throughout the country. In Puerto Triunfo, Antioquia, demobilized people participated in an event in which they asked for forgiveness and expressed their wish to promote reconciliation with the victims. The event was organized by the Colombian Reintegration Agency, National Police, Armed Forces, victims' organizations, and the municipal government. It ended with emotional embraces between some ex-combatants and victims.⁽¹⁾

MAYORS MEET TO ADDRESS CHILDREN'S ISSUES

Mayors from the 230 municipalities in Colombia with the highest levels of violence and insecurity gathered in Palmira (in the south-western department Valle del Cauca) to review strategies for protecting and guaranteeing the rights of children, adolescents and youth. Recruitment prevention was a prominent theme, and discussions also addressed strategies for achieving peace in the post-conflict period. The event was organized jointly by the Inspector General's Office and CIPRUNA's Technical Secretariat, with support from USAID and IOM.⁽²⁾

ELN ADMITS TO CHILD RECRUITMENT

The leader of the ELN, Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista, alias 'Gabino', also admitted in April that some members of the group are between 16 and 17 years old. The Office of the Ombudsman called on the ELN to clarify how many children and adolescents are within its ranks and to surrender them "as soon as possible."⁽³⁾

1. "Compromisos de perdón y no repetición en el día nacional de la memoria y solidaridad con las víctimas", *Colombian Reintegration Agency*, April 9, 2014, <http://www.reintegracion.gov.co/Lists/Contenido/DispForm1.aspx?ID=1878#.U3TZBoFdU24>

2. "Alcaldes se reúnen en Palmira (Valle) para debatir estrategias para la niñez", *El Tiempo*, March 31, 2014, <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-13756455>

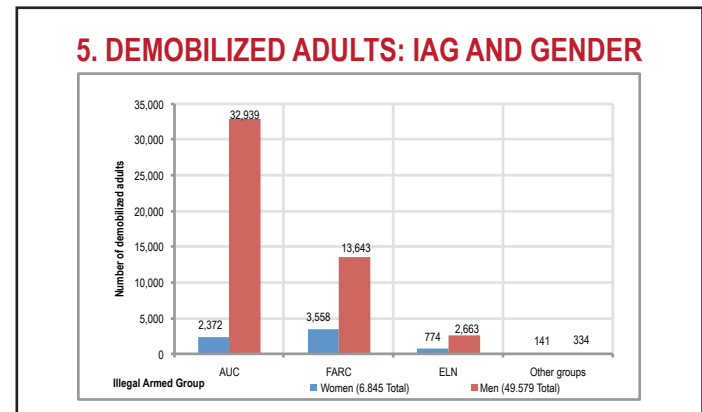
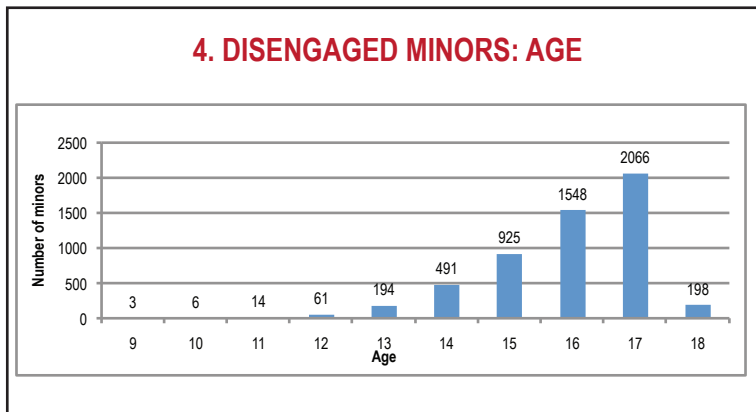
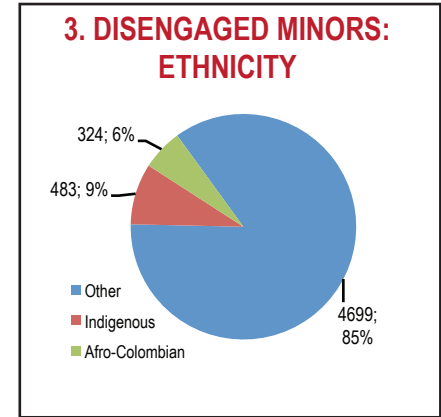
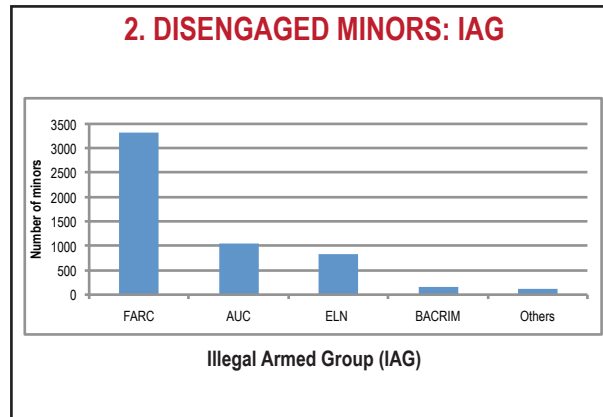
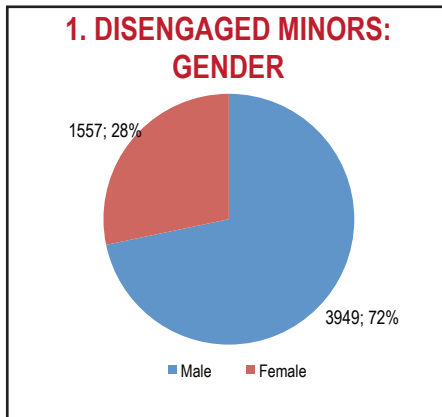
3. "ELN se confiesa sobre reclutamiento infantil", *Semana*, April 16, 2014, <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/eln-acepta-reclutamiento-infantil/383900-3>

4. "ELN admitió tener menores en sus filas", *La Libertad*, April 17, 2014, http://colombia.mmi-e.com/portal/tmp/zona_5/pdf/20140417LD008.PDF

3. PROGRESS REPORT: DISENGAGED MINORS & DEMOBILIZED ADULTS*

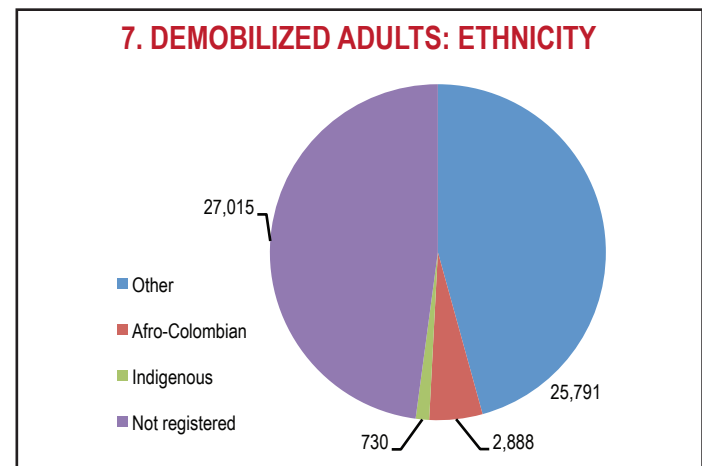
Total disengaged minors: 5,506

Total demobilized adults: 56,424



6. TOP 8 DEPARTMENTS FOR ADULT RELOCATION

Department	Number	%
Antioquia	11,598	21%
Bogotá D.C.	5,635	10%
Córdoba	3,410	6%
Cesar	3,069	5%
Meta	2,973	5%
Valle del Cauca	2,559	5%
Santander	2,233	4%
Magdalena	2,057	4%



*Data up to April 30, 2014

Figure 1: Total number of disengaged minors grouped by gender. Boys have historically been more frequently recruited than girls.

Figure 2: Numbers of minors who disengaged from each IAG. Most disengaged children were recruited by the FARC.

Figure 3: Total number of disengaged minors by ethnicity. Indigenous groups are disproportionately affected by recruitment.

Figure 4: Numbers of disengaged minors in each age group. The average age of recruitment is between 15 and 18 years old.

Source: ICBF Database, Unique Beneficiary Registry (RUI)

Figure 5: Total of number of male and female adults who demobilized from each IAG. The AUC had the lowest proportion of women.

Figure 6: The eight departments to which the highest numbers of ex-combatants relocate for their reintegration process.

Figure 7: Total number of demobilized adults by ethnicity.

Sources: ICBF Database and ACR Reintegration Information System (SIR)

4. PEACE PROCESS

LEGAL CASE THREATENS LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR PEACE

A legal case against the Legal Framework for Peace, which provides the transitional justice framework to implement a final peace agreement, was presented by ex-Minister of Defense Rafael Guarín. The case aims to overturn the part of the law that states that investigative efforts should be focused on those ultimately responsible for crimes against humanity, not all demobilized combatants. Inspector General Ordóñez stated his support for the case, and opined that the Legal Framework for Peace is unconstitutional due to its support for demobilized guerrilla members entering politics.⁽⁵⁾ The Legal Framework for Peace was approved by the Constitutional Court in 2013, but efforts to invalidate it continue.

DEMOBILIZED PARAMILITARIES WILL NOT RECEIVE NEW REINTEGRATION BENEFITS

President Santos stated that members of paramilitary groups who demobilized during ex-President Uribe's administration will not receive additional benefits as a result of the transitional justice model to be implemented in the case of an agreement with the FARC. Santos also said that whatever transitional justice mechanisms are applied to the guerrilla groups as the result of a peace agreement will be available for the armed forces.⁽⁶⁾

CALLS CONTINUE TO ADDRESS CHILD RECRUITMENT IN PEACE PROCESS

The Inspector General's Office requested that the government address child recruitment as a priority issue in the peace talks with the FARC. The delegate for the Defense of the Rights of Children, Adolescents and Families, Ilva Myriam Hoyos Castañeda, stressed the importance of this issue for achieving peace.⁽⁷⁾ The Colombian senator Guillermo García also reiterated a call for the Government and the FARC to commit to ending child recruitment as part of the ongoing peace process, before proceeding further with the planned negotiation agenda.⁽⁸⁾

UNICEF LAUNCHES PEACEBUILDING PROGRAM FOR COLOMBIA'S YOUTH

UNICEF has announced Colombia's first national youth program for peacebuilding, jointly launched with the Colombian government and Bogota's Santo Tomas university, which aims to provide Colombian youth with tools for building peace in their regions. In the peacebuilding process, the voices of adolescents and youth are critical to discovering new solutions, ideas, and actions that promote reconciliation and peace.⁽⁹⁾

5. DIVERSITY ISSUES

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN THE ARMED CONFLICT

Between 2008 and 2012, there were 48,915 reported victims of sexual violence against minors under 18 years of age (41,313 girls and 7,602 boys) where the alleged perpetrator was an armed actor, according to a report released in March, "Stop hunting children!" carried out in the context of the campaign "Leave my body out of the war." The most affected departments are Antioquia, Valle de Cauca, Nariño, Santander and the City of Bogota, which account for 56% of victims. However, it is believed that the actual number is much higher due to significant underreporting, particularly among indigenous and afro-Colombian groups and in the Amazon region.⁽¹⁰⁾

IMPUNITY FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

An estimated 98% of cases of sexual violence go unpunished, which triggers a lack of confidence in the judicial system. This is according to a report by ABColombia, "Colombia: women, sexual violence in the conflict and the peace process," also produced in the context of the "Leave my body out of the war" campaign. The report estimates that 12,809 women were victims of sexual violence between 2000 and 2009.⁽¹¹⁾

5. "Procurador insiste en tumbar el Marco Jurídico para la Paz", *El Tiempo*, March 11, 2014, www.eltiempo.com/justicia/procurador-insiste-en-tumbar-marco-juridico-para-la-paz_13634536-4

6. "Santos: "Paras" desmovilizados no tendrán nuevos beneficios", *El Tiempo*, March 12, 2014, www.eltiempo.com/politica/santos-descart-nuevos-beneficios-para-los-paramilitares-desmovilizados_13640065-4

7. "Procuraduría pide que en diálogo de paz se hable de menores reclutados", *El Tiempo*, March 26, 2014, <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-13731140>

8. "Exigen a Farc renunciar al reclutamiento y siembra de minas", *Caracol Radio*, March 3 2014, <http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/actualidad/exigen-a-farc-renunciar-al-reclutamiento-y-siembra-de-minas/20140303/nota/2109486.aspx>

9. "UNICEF launches peacebuilding program for Colombia's youth", *Colombia Reports*, April 24, 2014, <http://colombiareports.co/unicef-colombia-develops-new-peacebuilding-program-youth/>

10. "Niños, objeto de violencia sexual en el conflicto", *El Nuevo Siglo*, March 11, 2014, <http://www.elnuevosiglo.com.co/articulos/3-2014-ni%C3%B1os-objeto-de-violencia-sexual-en-el-conflicto.html>; "Que dejen de cazar a los niños y a las niñas en Colombia", *El País.com*, April 9, http://sociedad.elpais.com/sociedad/2014/04/09/actualidad/1396999363_380621.html

11. "Violencia sexual en el conflicto sigue impune", *El Nuevo Siglo*, March 19, 2014, <http://www.elnuevosiglo.com.co/articulos/3-2014-violencia-sexual-en-el-conflicto-sigue-impune.html>

6. INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCES

COMPREHENSIVE HEARINGS BEGIN IN JUSTICE AND PEACE PROCESS

In March, a comprehensive hearing was held for the case of ex-paramilitary commander Salvatore Mancuso and eleven others being processed in the same group under the Justice and Peace Law. This part of the Justice and Peace process involves the presentation of patterns of macro-criminality to formally establish the crimes for which each person is responsible, with the goal of defining the charges against them and contributing to the formulation of their sentence. The hearing held in March saw presentation of the patterns of macro-criminality overseen by Salvatore Mancuso and eleven other mid- to high-level members of the Catatumbo Bloc of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia.⁽¹²⁾ At the beginning of the prioritization strategy, it was estimated that Mancuso and the group of eleven others being processed under his case are responsible for 45,496 victims of forced displacement, 10,066 victims of forced disappearance, 120 victims of illegal recruitment, 148 indigenous victims, and 269 victims of sexual violence.

The comprehensive hearings are a component of the Justice and Peace Law prioritization strategy, which focuses on sixteen cases and five specific crimes: forced disappearance; forced displacement; homicide; gender-based violence; and illegal recruitment. Evidence related to these crimes is systematized to create patterns of macro-criminality used to sentence those responsible as well as contributing to truth, justice, and reparations.

EVALUATION OF NATIONAL PREVENTION POLICY

Three years after the creation of the national recruitment prevention policy (CONPES 3673), the Inter-sectoral Commission on the Prevention of Recruitment, Use and Sexual Violence against Children and Adolescents (CIPRUNA) has been assessing the progress made in implementation of the activities planned for 2010-2014. The aim is to support the development of new policies, guidelines and strategies. As part of this process, the Observatory of CIPRUNA's Technical Secretariat released a two bulletin series, with support from USAID and IOM, on "Opportunities, Challenges and Difficulties for Public Policies for the Prevention of Recruitment, Use and Sexual Violence against Children and Adolescents by Illegal and Criminal Groups." The first bulletin looks at lessons learned and the second identifies challenges and difficulties.

7. FURTHER READING

EX-MEMBER OF THE FARC PUBLISHED BOOK

Yezid Arteta Dávila was a member of the FARC for twelve years before being injured and captured, then sent to jail in 1996. When he was released in 2006, he started to work for peace and reconciliation. He also wrote a book recounting his experiences in the guerrilla group. *El Tiempo* published a chapter on their website.⁽¹³⁾

ALMOST 4,000 CHILDREN RECRUITED BY ILLEGAL ARMED GROUPS IN LAST 10 YEARS

As reported by the Ministry of Defense, some 3,870 children and adolescents were recruited by illegal armed groups over the past 10 years. Of these, 1,255 were recruited by the FARC. This figure for the recruitment of minors, the first provided by the Ministry of Defense, is based on interviews with former members of the groups. The most affected regions have been Putumayo, Antioquia, Huila, Nariño y Meta.⁽¹⁴⁾

REGIONAL EVIDENCE OF HIGH RISKS OF CHILD RECRUITMENT

The Office of the Ombudsman has warned of a high risk of forced recruitment of minors in Bolívar, Soacha (Cundinamarca), and Antioquia. In Bolívar, this is due to the presence and violent activities of the FARC and ELN and the 'Urabeños' and 'Rastrojos' organized criminal groups, who operate with differing intensities in these three locations.⁽¹⁵⁾ In Antioquia, the main concern is for the 18,500 youth between 10 and 19 years of age in Medellín, who are at risk of recruitment and use by these groups.⁽¹⁶⁾

12. "Comenzó audiencia de priorización contra Mancuso y miembros de las AUC", *Cablenoticias*, March 10, 2014. <http://www.cablenoticias.tv/vernoticialpad.asp?WPLACA=12802> and "Así será la priorización de Farc y Auc en Justicia y Paz", *Verdad Abierta*, <http://www.verdadabierta.com/justicia-y-paz/4595-icomo-se-aplica-la-priorizacion-en-justicia-y-paz>

13. "La guerra y la paz en los ojos de un exguerrillero", *El Tiempo*, March 24, 2014, www.eltiempo.com/entretenimiento/libros/excombatiente-de-las-farc-presenta-un-libro-sobre-la-crueldad-del-conflicto_13715417-4

14. "En 10 años, guerrillas reclutaron casi 4.000 niños": *Mindefensa*", *El Tiempo*, March 13, 2014, http://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/farc-reclutaron-mas-de-1000-ninos-en-10-anos_13647296-4

15. "Defensoría advierte reclutamiento de menores en Bolívar", *Vanguardia*, March 21, 2014, <http://www.vanguardia.com/actualidad/colombia/252037-defensoria-advierte-reclutamiento-de-menores-en-bolivar> and "Reclutamiento de niños en Soacha, Cundinamarca", *Noticias RCN TV*, April 6 2014, http://colombia.mmi-e.com/portal/tmp/zona_5/mmi/20140406PB08.WMV

16. "Defensoría alerta riesgos de violencia en Antioquia", *El Colombiano*, March 1, 2014, http://colombia.mmi-e.com/portal/tmp/zona_5/pdf/20140301CL012.PDF