



SPOTLIGHT: Disengagement Trends in 2013

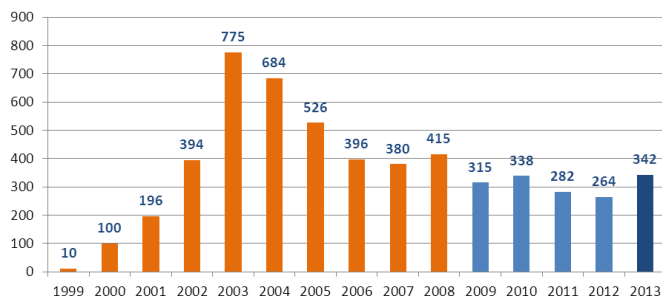
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This document presents and analyzes statistics of children and adolescents (CH&A) who disengaged from illegal armed groups (IAG) and were assisted by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF), using ICBF data as of December 31, 2013. This includes an analysis of data for both the final quarter of 2013 (October to December) and the entire year (January to December), as well as an analysis of trends observed over the past four years (2010-2014).

Context and summary

A total of 342 disengaged CH&A were assisted by the ICBF Assistance Program in 2013, the highest number recorded over the last five years. This is an increase of 29.5% from 2012 and a reversal of the negative trend observed in previous years. In 2013, the second quarter recorded the highest numbers, and the months with the highest numbers were March, May, June and December. A total of 87 CH&A disengaged in the last quarter of 2013 (including 23 in October, 31 in November, and 33 in December). In total, from October 1999 through 2013, 5,417 disengaged CH&A were assisted by ICBF.

Annual number of disengaged children and adolescents assisted by ICBF, 1999-2013



Of the total who disengaged in 2013:

- **Girls** composed one third of the total number (33%), reversing the negative trend that had been observed in recent years.
- Three-fourths were recruited by the **FARC**, an increase of 37% from 2012. Numbers from the ELN also increased (up 76%). There was a decline in the percentage that disengaged from **criminal groups**.
- Some 24% were from **indigenous groups**, indicating a high rate of victimization (since indigenous groups, including adults, are only 3% of the total population).

- The average age of recruitment was 14 years, and most spent **2 years or less** in the IAG. This resulted in an average age at time of disengagement of 15 and a half years, corresponding to the data from previous years (2010-2012).
- The phenomenon is geographically dispersed, as indicated by the number of departments with cases of recruitment (24) and disengagement (25).
- However, a **regional and municipal concentration** can be observed. Departments in the south and on the Pacific coast were major areas of recruitment and disengagement, and only 12% of municipalities reported cases of disengagement. “Geographic corridors” extending across departmental borders can also be identified, and in some cases this reflects existing **mobility trends** between departments of birth, recruitment and disengagement.

Main recruiters and time spent in group

The vast majority of those who disengaged during 2013 (75.7%) were recruited by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), while 19% were with the National Liberation Army (ELN) and 4.4% with criminal groups (BACRIM). Compared to the total from 2012, **increasing numbers were recruited by the FARC** (up 37%) **and the ELN** (up 75.7%) in 2013. In the case of the FARC, this was an increase from 188 to 259 cases. On the other hand, the number recruited by **criminal groups decreased by 55.9%**, when compared to 2012.

As for time in the group, the majority of disengaged CH&A in 2013 spent less than one year in the group (47%), as was also the case in previous years, followed by those who spent a year (21.9%) and two years (13.7%). Taken together, **82.7% spent two years or less with the armed group**, in line with numbers from previous years (74.9% in 2010, 81.9% in 2011, and 84.5% in 2012). It is notable, however, that in 2013 there was a slightly lower percentage of those who spent less than a year in the group (from 51.1% in 2012 to 47.1% in 2013) and a slightly higher percentage of those that spent 4 years (from 3.8% in 2012 to 6.7% in 2013). Most of those who disengaged in 2013 did so voluntarily (91.1%).



Area of recruitment and disengagement

Departments in the south and on the Pacific coast were major areas of recruitment and disengagement in 2013. Of Colombia's 32 departments, a high number were areas of recruitment (24) and disengagement (25). This indicates a geographic dispersion of the phenomenon, although there is also a significant regional and municipal concentration.

The **area of recruitment** for those who disengaged in 2013 included 25 departments. Most were recruited in Cauca (15.5%), followed by Caquetá (12.6%), Antioquia (12%), Putumayo (10%), Chocó (9.4%), and Meta (8.8%). Over the last four years, Antioquia had the highest numbers, with a slight increase in 2012 and a slight decrease in 2013. Higher than normal numbers were reported for Chocó (an increase of 155.6% compared to 2012), Bolivar (175% more) and Cauca (65.6% more). In Cesar, 5 cases were reported in 2013, although no cases had been reported in 2011 and 2012. On the other hand, lower than normal numbers were reported in Nariño (47.1% less compared to 2012), Guaviare (28.6% less), and Norte de Santander (25% less).

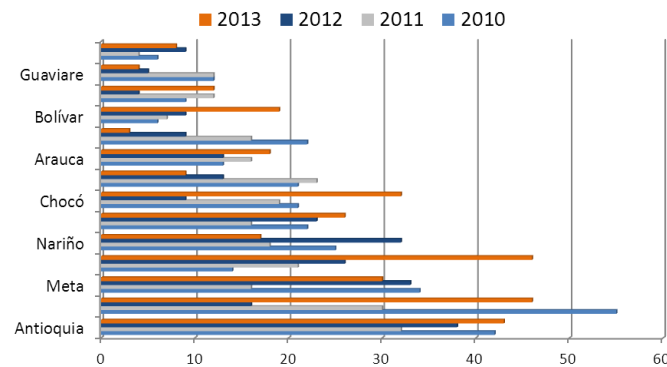
The **area of disengagement** in 2013 included 24 departments. Of these, eight departments accounted for 76% of reported cases: Caquetá (13.5%), Cauca (13.5%), Antioquia (12.6%), Chocó (9.4%), Meta (8.8%), Putumayo (7.6%), Bolivar (5.6%) and Arauca (5.3%). Over the last four years (2010-2013), the highest number of disengagement occurred in Antioquia (155 cases), with increasing numbers in that department in the last two years. Other departments that registered higher numbers in 2013 were Caquetá, Cauca and Chocó, with an increase of 187.5%, 76.9%, and 255.6%, respectively, compared to 2012.

In the fourth quarter, Antioquia and Cauca were the most common areas of recruitment (35%, taken together) and disengagement (32%), followed by Bolivar, Caquetá, Meta and Arauca; altogether, these six departments accounted for 72% of areas of recruitment areas and 71% of areas of disengagement.

At the **municipal level**, areas of recruitment in 2013 included 136 municipalities, none of which accounted for more than 4% of the total number of cases. The highest number of cases were reported in Puerto Asís (Caquetá), followed by Ituango (Antioquia), Morales

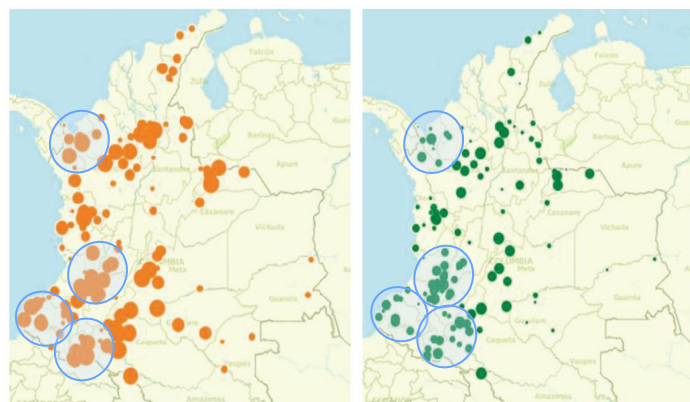
(Bolívar), Solano (Caquetá), Tado (Chocó), Apartadó (Antioquia), La Uribe (Meta), Tame (Arauca) and Toribio (Cauca). Disengagement was reported in 12% of municipalities (130); most were located in Cauca (18), Antioquia (15), Chocó (15) Caquetá (10), Meta (8), Nariño (both with 8 municipalities) and Putumayo and Norte de Santander (7 municipalities each).

Disengagement of children and adolescents by department, 2013



A number of **“geographic corridors”** can be identified, representing regional concentrations that extend across departmental borders and, in some cases, reflecting mobility between departments of birth, recruitment and disengagement. These include an area around the south of Cauca, the east of Putumayo and the east of Caquetá; a related corridor extending from the east of Putumayo toward the Pacific coast of Nariño; a significant group of municipalities in the northeast of Cauca and the southeast of Valle de Cauca; and another area that includes Antioquia, Chocó and Cordoba. This can be related to the current conflict dynamics, which involves a concentration of armed confrontations in certain areas of the country, a decreased mobility of armed actors, and a reconfiguration of their actions.

Examples of “geographic corridors” for recruitment (left) and disengagement (right), 2013



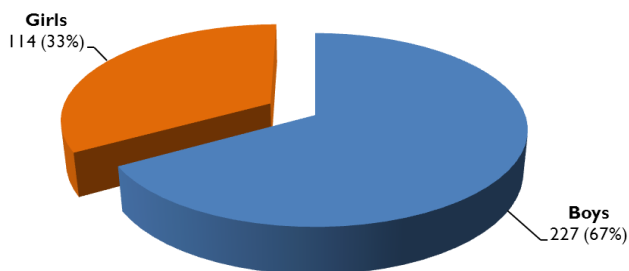


Of those who disengaged in 2013, the data reveals some existing **mobility trends** between departments: 23.4% were recruited in a different department than the one in which they were born, and 19.3% disengaged in a department other than the one in which they were recruited. In general, this involves only short distance movements to bordering departments. For instance, some born in Amazonas were recruited in the neighboring departments of Caquetá and Vaupés, and others from Córdoba were recruited in the adjacent departments of Antioquia and Bolívar. However, in other cases there was no difference between the department of birth and recruitment (Arauca, Bolívar, Boyacá, Casanare, Guainía, La Guajira, Nariño and Risaralda) and the department of recruitment and disengagement (Casanare, Cesar, Guainía, Norte de Santander and Santander).

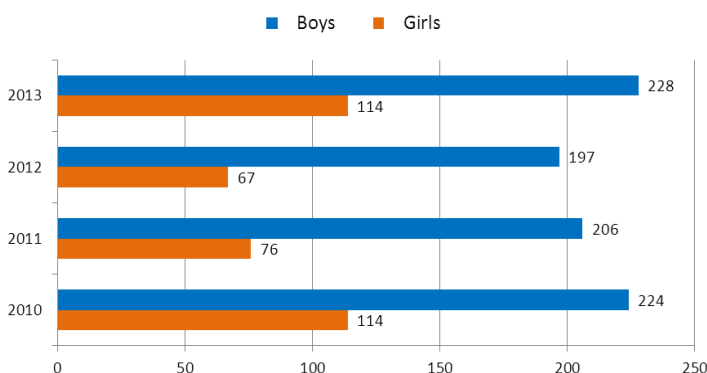
Characteristics of those recruited

Looking at those who disengaged in 2013 by **sex**, 33% of the total were girls (114 cases). This is an increase compared to total number reported in 2012 (67 cases), and a reversal of the negative trend seen in previous years (34% in 2010, 27% in 2011, and 25% in 2010).

Number of disengaged children and adolescents by sex, 2013

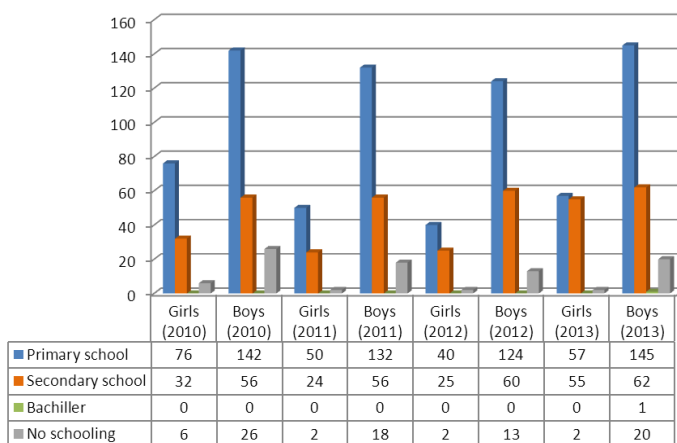


Number of disengaged children and adolescents by sex, 2010-2013



Increasingly, in recent years, disengaged girls have completed higher levels of **schooling**. The percentage of girls who completed a level of secondary school was 28.1% in 2010, 31.6% in 2011, 37.3% in 2012 and finally 48.3% in 2013. It is notable that a higher percentage of boys have had no schooling (8.8% of boys who disengaged in 2013), a consistent trend over previous years. Finally, although a higher percentage of boys had completed a level of primary school, greater numbers of girls had completed a level of secondary school.

Level of schooling completed by sex, 2013



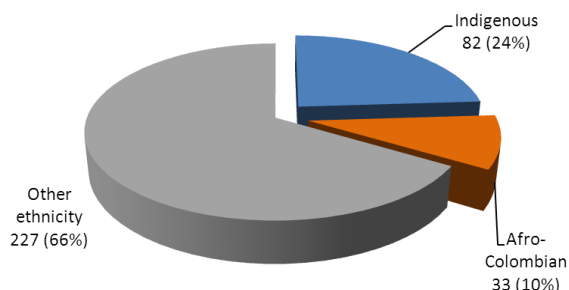
The most common **ages** of recruitment for those who disengaged in 2013 were 14 years (22.5%) and 15 years (21.1%). The weighted average age of recruitment was 14.01 years, a number that has fluctuated over previous years (13.7 years in 2010, 14.2 years in 2011, and 13.3 years in 2012). In 2013, the weighted average age at time of disengagement was 15.55, in line with the tendency of remaining around 15 and a half over previous years (15.57 in 2010, 15.75 in 2011, 15.76 in 2012 and 15.55 in 2013). For those who disengaged in 2013, the majority was 16 years old (28.5%) and 17 years old (27.9%) at the time of disengagement, which together represents 56.4% of the total. Another 23.3% were 15 years old, 14.2% were 14 years old, and the remaining 6.2% were between 10 and 13 years of age.

Looking at **ethnicity**, there was a large increase in the number of CH&A from indigenous groups in 2013. The difference in numbers of indigenous and afro-Colombian CH&A was not significant over the previous three years. In 2013, however, the number of indigenous CH&A increased by 148%. This increase is particularly significant given that although the indigenous population

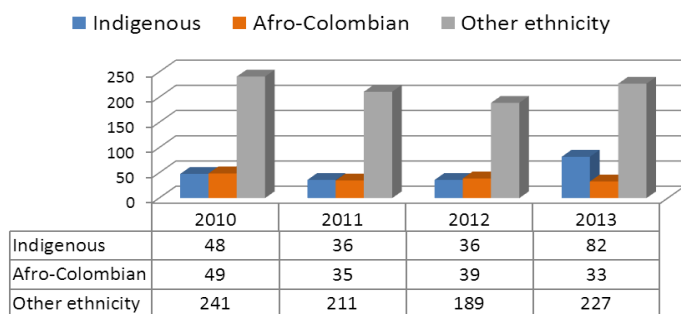


(including adults) is only around 3.2% of the Colombian population, while 24% of the CH&A who disengaged in 2013 were from indigenous groups. This indicates an extremely high victimization rate among this population.

Number of disengaged children and adolescents by ethnicity, 2013



Number of disengaged children and adolescents by ethnicity, 2010-2013



Recent events

A number of events occurred during the period of October to December 2013. A report released by the Restrepo Barco Foundation indicated that, contrary to what was believed, recruitment of CH&A has continued to grow throughout the country. As of the time of the report, it was estimated that more than 14,000 children and adolescents were involved with illegal armed groups, with insurgents preferring to recruit those between 15 and 18 years old.

Earlier in 2013, the UN Security Council (UNSC) held their annual debate on CH&A and armed conflict. A Presidential Statement was issued condemning violations of international humanitarian law against CH&A in armed conflicts, and called on States to sanction persistent perpetrators. The fight against impunity and for accountability was a central theme. Discussions also addressed the need to pursue dialogue with legal and illegal armed groups in order to put an end to the recruitment and utilization of CH&A. In this context, the Colombian Ministry of Defense stated that Colombia would look into strengthening its measures against youth recruitment in order to more strongly punish those who recruit CH&A for criminal activities.

For further information:

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