

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

JULY - AUGUST 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.

CONTENT

1. Background	1
2. Key developments	1
3. Peace Process	1
4. Institutional Advances	2
5. Further reading	2
6. Progress report	4

2. KEY DEVELOPMENTS

ARMED FORCES TO PARTICIPATE IN DISARMAMENT AND DEMOBILIZATION IMPLEMENTATION

President Juan Manuel Santos stated that active members of the Armed Forces will play a crucial implementing role in the DDR of the FARC. However, this issue will not be negotiated in Havana. The military will aid in the logistical and operational design of the disarmament process, according to Santos, as well as supporting reintegration in roles as yet to be defined.⁽¹⁾

CHILD RECRUITMENT CONTINUES, AT INCREASINGLY YOUNGER AGES

Some 6,290 children and adolescents have carried weapons as members of illegal armed groups, according to the Victims Unit (UARIV).⁽⁶⁾ Recruitment and use of children and adolescents continues to be a systematic and large-scale practice in Colombia, according to a recent article by Rocío Rubio Serrano, a researcher who collaborates with IOM's Migration and Childhood Program, funded by USAID. The conflict is increasingly being waged by children recruited at ever earlier ages. The average recruitment age of 13.5 years previously provided by the Office of the Ombudsman may now be outdated, as the ICBF indicates cases of recruitment of children as young as 9 years old.⁽³⁾ Youth are also affected in large numbers; according to the ICBF, the average recruitment age is 20 years – for men it is 22 years and for women it is 19 years.⁽⁴⁾

3. PEACE PROCESS

SECURITY REFORMS INCLUDE NEW TRANSITION COMMANDER

President Santos announced a new military unit headed by new Transition Commander General Javier Flórez. He will be in charge of supervising a national ceasefire followed by the disarmament and demobilization of guerrilla groups. Flórez led the military sub-commission sent to Cuba at the end of August to advise the GOC team on DDR.⁽⁵⁾ This sub-commission will advise the GOC on the third agenda point, including analysis of possible models for a bilateral ceasefire and the surrender of FARC weapons, both of which would occur at the end of the dialogues as an initial step in post-conflict transition.⁽⁶⁾

In addition, a Ministry of Citizen Security was created and will be the responsibility of newly-appointed Minister of Post-conflict, General (r) Oscar Naranjo. This appointment raised concerns in the National Police. The first is that as Naranjo will define work areas for ex-combatants, these demobilized people could be integrated into the police force. The second is that the Police could be detached from the Ministry of Defense and made part of the Ministry of Citizen Security, which would change the police model.⁽⁷⁾

COALICO: CHILD RECRUITMENT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED IN DIALOGUES

The Coalition against child recruitment in Colombia (COALICO) drew attention to the UN global report on child soldiers released in July. COALICO called for children recruited by the BACRIM to be treated the same as those recruited by other illegal armed group officially involved in the conflict. The Coalition also recommended the streamlining of the process of reporting sexual violence against children, and that special attention be paid to children living in border areas where illegal armed groups are especially active.⁽⁸⁾

PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

The Victims of State Crimes Movement requested that the government include direct participation of women, children, adolescents, members of indigenous groups and afro-Colombians in the commission that would travel to Havana to address victims' issues.⁽⁹⁾

4. INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCES

80% OF EX-COMBATANTS REPORT HAVING GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT

An ACR survey of ex-combatants in the reintegration program showed that 80% has gainful employment. This represents an 8% increase since the last survey was taken in November 2013. ACR Program Director Esneyder Cortés said that this increase was due in large part to increased trust in the ACR by the businesses with whom they work, resulting in higher levels of employment. In addition, 55% of those surveyed stated that they have a formal contract of work, while 45% did not.⁽¹⁰⁾

RECIDIVISM OF EX-COMBATANTS STUDY RELEASED, RECOMMENDATIONS MADE FOR FARC

The NGO Fundación Ideas para la Paz presented a study on the recidivism – and lack thereof – of ex-combatants, finding that 24% have gone back to criminal activity in some way. Based on the conclusions of the study, the organization highlighted independent permanence in the reintegration program, breaking ties with illegal groups and other ex-combatants, and lowering levels of insecurity for ex-combatants as keys to prevent recidivism in the future.⁽¹¹⁾

5. FURTHER READING

GOC CALLS FOR PRIVATE SECTOR SUPPORT FOR REINTEGRATING EX-COMBATANTS

Alejandro Eder, Director of the Colombian Reintegration Agency, called for private businesses to support peacebuilding and reconciliation by opening jobs for demobilized people and thereby facilitating their entry to the formal employment sector, as many of them are currently employed in informal jobs.⁽¹²⁾

PROFILE OF NEIGHBORHOOD WHERE VICTIMS AND DEMOBILIZED PEOPLE LIVE SIDE BY SIDE

Pulzo.com published a profile of a neighborhood in Bogotá where victims and demobilized people live side by side. The profile includes interviews with a demobilized person and a victim, both of whom moved to San Cristobal, Bogotá, in hopes of reestablishing their lives after their different experiences in the conflict.⁽¹³⁾

FARC WILL “NEED A HAND” IN THE POST-CONFLICT PHASE

Analyst John Mario Gonzalez highlighted the need for the GOC and society to support the reintegration of the FARC in the post-conflict phase. He stated that despite the emotional and economic challenges that this presents to some sectors, it is crucial that ex-FARC combatants are supported in their transition to civilian life so that they do not return to crime.⁽¹⁴⁾

UN ANNUAL REPORT ON CHILDREN AND CONFLICT

The UN Secretary General's Annual Report on Children and Conflict for 2013 verified recruitment of 81 children and adolescents in 25 departments – 58 recruited by the FARC, 17 by the ELN and the rest by “ex-paramilitary groups.” Released in May, the report was presented on July 1st to Vice President Angelino Garzón by the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Colombia, Fabrizio Hochschild and the UNICEF Deputy Representative, Viviana Limpías. The report also calls for children to be taken into account in the peace negotiations.⁽¹⁵⁾

COFFEE REGION: GOVERNMENT PREVENTION EFFORTS

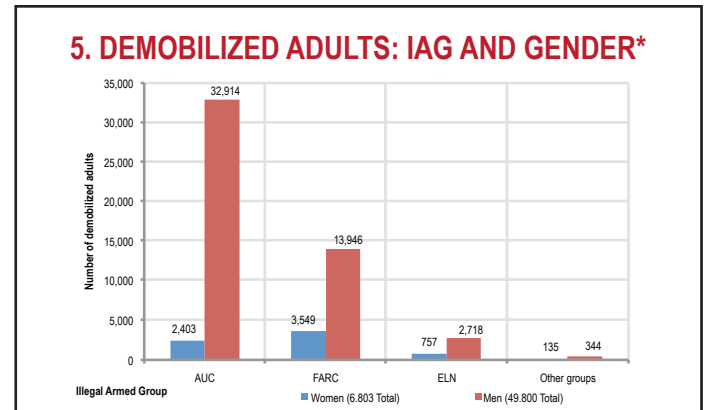
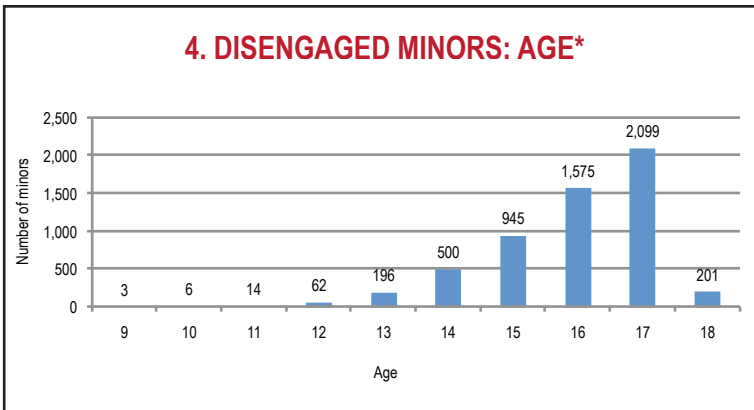
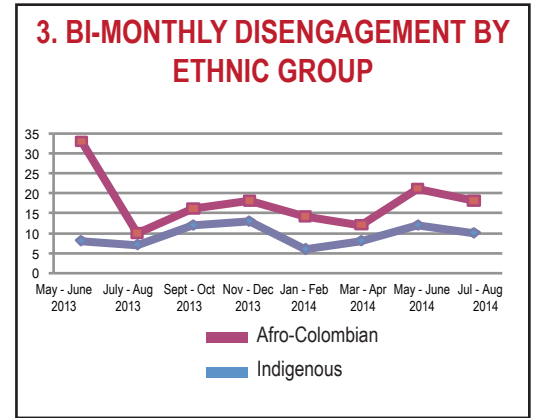
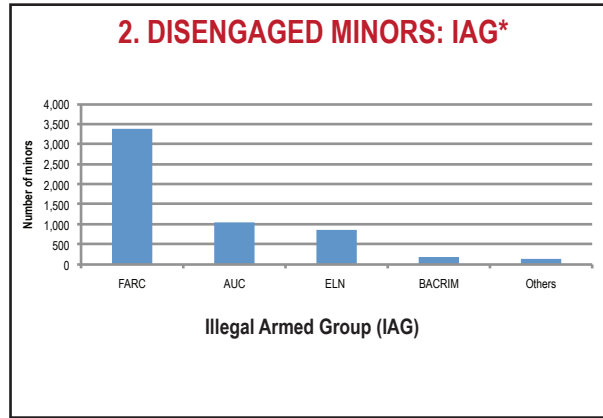
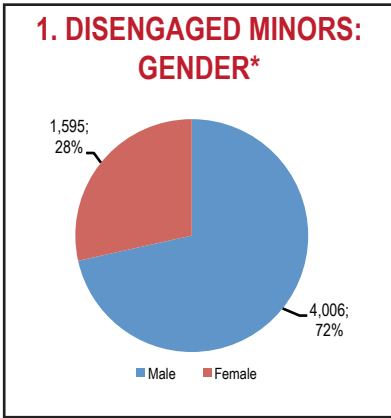
In mid-June, a new recruitment prevention project was introduced by the Colombian Reintegration Agency (ACR) to the local community in Armenia, where the third intervention in the coffee region under the strategy “Mambro isn’t going to war” will be implemented. The project aims to strengthen a youth stilt-walkers group “A New Smile,” by providing stilts and musical instruments along with technical advice to improve administration and resource management and teachers specialized in music, painting, soccer, etc. The strategy, which focuses on enabling children and adolescents to make positive use of free time, has already been implemented in 30 other municipalities throughout Colombia since 2013, benefitting more than 1,800 children, adolescents and youth living in vulnerable areas.

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6. PROGRESS REPORT: DISENGAGED MINORS & DEMOBILIZED ADULTS*

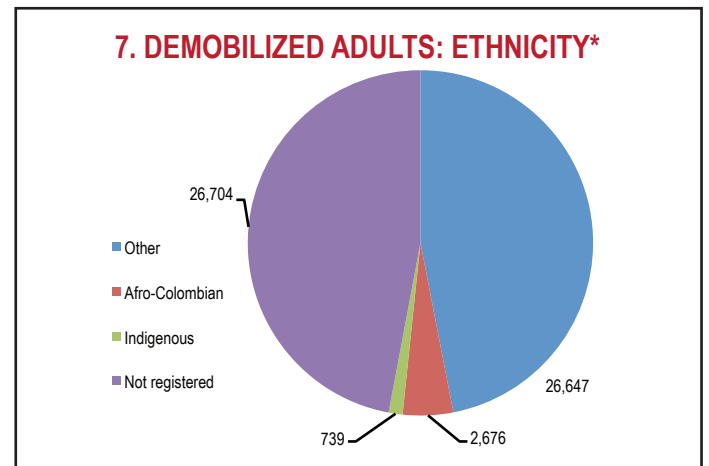
Total disengaged minors: 5,601

Total demobilized adults: 56,766



6. TOP 8 DEPARTMENTS FOR ADULT RELOCATION*

Department	Number	%
Antioquia	11,409	20%
Bogotá D.C.	5,541	10%
Córdoba	3,328	6%
Cesar	3,015	5%
Meta	2,966	5%
Valle del Cauca	2,532	4%
Santander	2,211	4%
Magdalena	2,017	4%



*Data up to August 31, 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)