



# BULLETIN 3

## OBSERVATORY of CIPRUNA's Technical Secretariat

### Opportunities, challenges and difficulties in public policies to prevent the recruitment, use and sexual violence against children and adolescents by illegal armed groups and organized criminal groups: **Difficulties and Challenges**

CONPES 3673 of 2010 is an effort by the Colombian State to prevent the recruitment and use of children and adolescents, based on an approach that comprehensively protects their rights as established in the Code of Infancy and Adolescence. This policy document includes an action plan for 21 national agencies that establishes concrete actions.

Now three years after its creation, this **two bulletin series** assesses the progress made in implementation of planned activities. Beginning with initiation of the policy and continuing through recent implementation efforts, the bulletins contextualize reports from national agencies on the actions taken to address risk factors, vulnerabilities and conditions related to recruitment, use and sexual violence against children and adolescents. These bulletins aim to identify successes and challenges for policy and to support the adoption of new prevention guidelines and strategies.

**This second bulletin** in the series evaluates the regional coverage of institutional services. The current status of the inter-institutional organization of each of the objectives is assessed, with an emphasis on strategic actions that have been implemented, including some that have been carried out beyond the scope of CONPES 3673. Finally, the bulletin proposes some recommendations for improving the impact of those actions.

***This is an English summary of a bulletin produced by the Observatory of CIPRUNA's Technical Secretariat.***

*Since 2001, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has been implementing its Disengaged Child Soldiers and Youth at Risk of Recruitment Program (CHS). This program is aimed at strengthen the capacity of the Government of Colombia to assist child and adolescent victims of recruitment by illegal armed groups, through institutional strengthening for the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF), and to prevent their recruitment in the context of the armed conflict, through institutional strengthening for the Inter-sectoral Commission on the Prevention of Recruitment, Use and Sexual Violence against Children and Adolescents (CIPRUNA). As part of these efforts, the program has supported the creation and strengthening of the Observatory of CIPRUNA's Technical Secretariat.*

## INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of recruitment and use of children and adolescents in Colombia has been characterized by a multiplicity of interrelated risk factors and variables. In this regard, populations have been affected in different ways, including physical, emotional and social consequences for children and adolescents. Various documents have addressed the issue of recruitment and use of children and adolescents (academic papers, investigations, judicial sentences, policy papers and thematic papers). These sources were used in the initial development of CONPES 3673 of 2010, to examine and analyze issues and risk factors related to recruitment and to establish prevention policy objectives.

These identified objectives, defined according to the methodology of the National Planning Department, enabled the creation of a Plan of Action that includes 133 activities aimed at achieving the general objective of “preventing recruitment and use of children and adolescents by illegal armed groups and organized criminal groups, guaranteeing the prevalence and effective enjoyment of rights and comprehensive protection by the family, society and the State.”

This policy framework has impacted and shaped institutional actions since 2010, as institutions have developed implementation strategies resulting in a consolidation of management mechanisms and a configuration of related products and impacts. However, implementation of CONPES 3673 will not put an end to recruitment, and the larger context must also be considered. The analysis of impacts and results must be considered together with the creation of a set of actions and mechanisms for comprehensive protection and guarantees of the rights of Colombian children and adolescents.

Monitoring and tracking the implementation of prevention policies has been of paramount importance for CIPRUNA, and annual progress reports have been produced since 2011. This monitoring and evaluation approach has become a cornerstone of the Observatory's work, resulting in the generation of analytical inputs (technical, conceptual, and administrative) regarding lessons learned, difficulties and challenges in implementation. These inputs also aim to facilitate the creation of a new prevention policy. In this context, this bulletin presents important elements to be considered in the implementation of recruitment prevention policies.



## **OBJECTIVES AND RESPONSES**

### **Objectives**

The objective of CONPES 3673 is to coordinate the action plans aimed at strengthening protective mechanisms and mitigating diverse forms of violence and exploitation within family, community and social environments. The focus is also on guaranteeing adequate, pertinent and effective institutional services at national and local levels, and promoting the recognition of children and adolescents as subjects of rights.

As part of this approach, four objectives were established in recognition of the main problems associated with recruitment and use of children and adolescents, which served to group the 133 planned actions established by CONPES 3673:

1. Create and strengthen tools for comprehensive protection of children and adolescents within their personal environments, prioritizing areas with the presence (occasional, frequent, or transitory) of illegal armed groups that engage in recruitment practices.
2. Counteract the diverse forms of violence and exploitation exercised against children and adolescents within their networks and family and community environments, guaranteeing comprehensive protection of their rights.
3. Guarantee adequate, pertinent and effective institutional services, at national and local levels, for the full exercise and guarantee of the rights of children and adolescents.
4. Promote the recognition of children and adolescents as subjects of rights in their family and community environments and their social networks.

Of these objectives, roughly half (49%) of actions are focused on Objective 3, due to the concern for targeting efforts on the improvement of institutional coordination around construction comprehensive policies, to overcome discontinuous and inefficient institutional responses to cases of recruitment. This involves a reevaluation of the use of resources, in part due to resources used by programs or institutions without an operational character or without a focus on prevention, but primarily due to the observed distance between institutional services available and the full exercise of rights of children and adolescents. Actions are therefore oriented toward overcoming barriers to access to institutional services and strengthening reporting and investigating cases of recruitment.

### **Institutional Response**

Significant institutional strengthening was observed in response to the objectives established by CONPES 3673. The role of CIPRUNA's Technical Secretariat, which is responsible for leading inter-institutional coordination, was transferred to the Presidential Program for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, given the greater relevance of its mandate (Decree 552 of 2012), along with the provision of 800 million pesos of government funds to ensure the sustainability of actions and commitments taken by the Technical Secretariat. Nine of the 23 institutions participating in CIPRUNA experience important structural changes in light of the reform of government institutions. A strengthening of public policies was also observed through the development of more cross-cutting and strategic actions.

Regarding institutional services, monitoring activities carried out by CIPRUNA identified 30 strategies, programs, projects, and actions oriented toward prevention of recruitment, use and sexual violence against children and adolescents. Taken together, these institutional services were reported to cover 595 municipalities, including 97% of the municipalities prioritized in 2012.

Through its institutions, the State is gradually creating more appropriate tools and instruments for determining strategic directions, to provide useful information for targeting institutional actions by prioritizing high-risk municipalities, to explore the dimensions of rights violations (recruitment, use and sexual violence), and to identify and characterize the dynamics and factors associated with those violations.

Although much work remains to be done, it is important to highlight that institutions are making significant efforts to identify increasingly pertinent and sustainable actions that, based on each institutions mission, promote comprehensive protection, address diverse forms of violence, guarantee more adequate institutional services and promote the recognition of children and adolescents as subjects of rights.

As an example of this, nearly 20% of planned activities that were meant to finalize at a specific moment (between 2010 and 2013) were converted by the institutions into cross-cutting and sustainable strategies by integrating the activities into the institutions mission and devoting resources for continued implementation. This includes the inclusion of a recruitment prevention perspective within institutional strategies and programs, monitoring factors and dynamics related to recruitment risks in specific territories, and the development of more pertinent assistance that use a more adequate differential approach.

As a result of the implementation of the planned activities of CONPES 3673 in 2013, to date the following “products” were finalized:

- Production of six documents, reports and other analytical inputs related to the characterization and understanding of the phenomenon and other themes related to the promotion of comprehensive protection strategies.
- Expansion of four programs, projects or strategies aimed at comprehensive protection in high-risk municipalities.
- Establishment of an inter-institutional legal process as a strategy for strengthening legal investigations of crimes.
- Strengthened three organizational (or institutional) structures that work to provide comprehensive protection of implement prevention policies.
- Creation and launch of six communication strategies specifically aimed at recruitment prevention.
- Production of around 60,000 advertising materials in 2013, with messages about prevention and the recognition of children and adolescents as subjects of rights, and 200 radio messages were released through national police and community radio stations, and a short film as a tool to raise awareness on recruitment prevention.
- Presentation of five international documents to increase visibility of progress made by the Government of Colombia regarding preventing recruitment, use and sexual violence.

## CONCLUSIONS, DIFFICULTIES AND CHALLENGES

With the strengthening of the Technical Secretariat with support from international cooperation agencies, in 2011 the Observatory began to carry out monitoring and evaluation of the Plan of Action of CONPES 3673. This first phase involved three institutional workshops that were aimed at developing a strategic interpretation of the document. Later, during 2011 and 2012, the institutional reported qualitatively on their activities. These activities were classified according to the status of progress made, which enabled the realization that in this period, the actions, strategies and programs reported a considerable increase in their implementation: from 36% in 2011 to 60% of implementation at the end of 2012.

In April 2013, a tool was created to initiate the measurement and evaluation of the Action Plan of CONPES 3673. This was based on (1) lessons learned and findings that emerged from application of the methodology, (2) the recommendations proposed by CIPRUNA institutions, (3) the aims and commitments of the Technical Secretariat, (4) the need to report concrete preventive actions taken by the State, and (5) the need to review and evaluate the current prevention policy as it reaches the end of its implementation period. The aim of the evaluation tool was to examine the relationship between the budget spent and the presence of services at the local-level as a result of reported strategies, projects, programs and actions, as well as to map the networks established as a result of inter-institutional coordination.

The monitoring, tracking and evaluation process in 2013 was developed based on a review of the four specific objectives established in CONPES 3673. The Observatory classified each activity and created by creating groups of strategic or cross-cutting activities that support each objective, which enabled a characterization of the way forward for achieving each of the objectives.

### **OBJECTIVE 1: Create and strengthen tools for comprehensive protection of children and adolescents within their personal environments, prioritizing areas with the presence (occasional, frequent, or transitory) of illegal armed groups that engage in recruitment practices**

CONPES 3673 addresses the first issue based on the occasional, frequent or transitory presence of illegal armed groups and illegal criminal groups in specific areas. This presence generates risks that affect the lives and integrity of children and adolescents, and also threatens their living spaces and protective environments (family, school, and other spaces for learning, playing and training) and their community, completely violating the effective enjoyment and guarantee of their rights.



To strengthen these environments and provide comprehensive protection, in 2010 the institutions developed 25 specific actions that can be classified into 12 strategic activities. These strategic actions are aimed at implementing tools for comprehensive protection and promote prevention policies using an approach that prioritizes the production and dissemination of information on comprehensive protection, together with the inclusion of basic concepts such as prevention or a differential approach within normal administrative spaces.

***Strategic Activities***

- Guidance, support and technical assistance on comprehensive protection tools for national and local authorities
- Production of documents, assessments and specific information on the situation and/or context
- Monitoring and alerts on situations of individual or collective risks, threats or violations
- Dissemination and sharing of specific information or informational materials
- Design, development and implementation of information systems
- Implementation or strengthening of institutional strategies aimed at comprehensive protection
- Surveillance, regulation and investigation of crimes
- Identification, development and implementation of prevention methodologies
- Inclusion of prevention themes within existing institutional spaces
- Strengthening security in high-risk areas
- Expansion of the coverage of prevention programs, projects and strategies
- Inclusion of a differential approach within existing programs

***Conclusions, difficulties and challenges***

Based on the reported difficulties in obtaining results in implementation of planned activities, and a holistic understanding of Objective 1, the Technical Secretariat compiled some of the opinions expressed by the technical staff of the institutions and highlighted some aspects that should be considered as difficulties and challenges for prevention policies:

- The activities established under the Action Plan are mainly aimed at educational institutions and local authorities, but strategies oriented toward the participation of families are less visible.
- The objective has a strong focus on monitoring and issuing alerts on situations of risks or threats, but there is little focus on the response through strategies that implement prevention routes.
- Regarding urgent and protective prevention, CONPES 3673 has not enabled the building of commitments by local and national institutions with respect to specific actions to be taken in each phase of the prevention plan. Strengthening of the sharing, appropriation and local application of prevention plans is needed.
- It is necessary to strengthen existing processes by creating Administrative Acts based on interagency agreements that define the specific purview of each institution at national, departmental and regional levels.
- Regarding the tracking of referred cases, a need was identified to strengthen the process through use of an information system so that each month all CIPRUNA institutions are aware of the status of each of the referred cases.
- The Action Plan has not been updated to reflect the current dynamics of the conflict, and therefore does not conceive of new forms of joining illegal groups or forms of violence.
- Considering that recruitment is observed to be increasing, among other reasons due to the peace negotiations currently underway and the restructuring of armed groups, inter-institutional coordination has not been efficient in addressing this challenge, as evidenced by the excessive time that it has taken to develop a prioritization process, to construct prevention and protection plans, and to coordinate and implement those plans.

**OBJECTIVE 2: Counteract the diverse forms of violence and exploitation exercised against children and adolescents within their networks and family and community environments, guaranteeing comprehensive protection of their rights.**

The second objective is directly related to four violent practices that have certain common characteristics: their acceptance as a cultural practice, as a suitable mechanism for education and as an expression of inter-generational heritage. These practices are related to:

- Child Abuse (physical, psychological, emotional, social, and abandonment)
- Sexual Violence (harassment, abuse, exploitation, sexual servitude, trafficking)
- Labor Exploitation and the Worst Forms of Child Labor
- Participation of children and adolescents in gangs and criminal groups



CONPES 3673 established 25 actions aimed specifically at addressing these forms of violence, and the Observatory has grouped them into 7 strategic activities.

***Strategic Activities***

- Training communities, families and local authorities in the prevention and detection of diverse forms of violence.
- Implementation or strengthening of institutional spaces aimed at preventing or counter-acting diverse forms of violence.
- Inclusion of specific initiatives in existing institutional spaces aimed at preventing or detecting diverse forms of violence.
- Dissemination and sharing of specific information or informational materials.
- Policy training for local and national authorities.
- Production of documents, assessments and specific information on the situation and/or context.
- Institutional strengthening.

***Conclusions, difficulties and challenges***

Based on the interpretation and classification of activities under this objective and the execution of activities, the following aspects were identified as difficulties and challenges:

- Although the execution and carrying out of communication activities can be considered relevant and appropriate, the main difficulties are focused on gaining support from regional and national media for the dissemination of messages.
- Keeping in mind that the diverse forms of violence that are carried out against children and adolescents in their family and community environments are related to cultural practices, there is not a strong focus on developing strategic actions to influence the transformation of those cultural practices and customs.

- The characterization based on reports does not enable measurement of the influence of actions on the reduction of diverse forms of violence.
- It is important to highlight that CONPES proposes activities for cultural transformation as part of the objective to promote the recognition of children and adolescents as subjects of rights (Objective 4), but in order to encourage cultural changes toward non-violence, it is necessary to implement more powerful strategies regarding the participation of children and adolescents.
- To alter those shared violent models and practices that affect the development of children and adolescents, practices should be promoted aimed in a concrete manner toward prevention, protection, assistance, punishment and reparations.
- It is necessary to identify the assessments created by members of CIPRUNA that seek to document contextual and/or situational information that characterizes the issues with the aim of avoiding replication of efforts, facilitating dissemination and identifying the characteristics of the technical approach proposed by each institution.

**OBJECTIVE 3: Guarantee adequate, pertinent and effective institutional services, at national and local levels, for the full exercise and guarantee of the rights of children and adolescents.**

As was previously mentioned, the third objective represents the central focus of CONPES 3673. This objective largely embodies the principle of comprehensive protection and co-responsibility, given that 65 commitments and tasks are taken on by 17 institutions, grouped into 10 strategic activities.

***Strategic Activities***

- Dissemination and sharing of specific information and information materials
- Guidance, support and technical assistance on comprehensive protection tools for national and local authorities
- Inter-institutional coordination with the objective of creating agreements, strategies, and programs aimed at recruitment prevention
- Implementation or strengthening of institutional strategies aimed at comprehensive protection
- Inclusion of prevention themes within existing institutional spaces
- Expansion of the coverage of prevention programs, projects and strategies
- Institutional strengthening
- Production of documents, assessments and specific information on the situation and/or context
- Surveillance, regulation and investigation of crimes
- Evaluation of institutional services



***Conclusions, difficulties and challenges***

It is important to collect inputs from local-level assessments for the construction of public policies, particularly for interventions that use a territorial approach. CONPES 3673 gives more emphasis to these tasks, and assigns less responsibility for the creation or strengthening of spaces that promote the working out of strategies, programs and projects. More emphasis is placed on improving coordination in order to strengthen implementation of prevention plans and criminal investigation processes.

It is necessary to increase visibility of the importance of coordination for all of these strategies, projects, programs and actions to increase the actual impact of interventions to prevent recruitment, use and sexual violence against children and adolescents in the context of the armed conflict. To achieve this, institutional commitments should be made through administrative acts and specific budget allocations.

Some of the perceptions of technical professional regarding this point include:

- “The actual fragmentation mentioned by institutions depletes communities and impedes an efficient allocation of resources.”
- “It is necessary to reformulate programs and strategies using a differential approach and a “do no harm” approach, understanding that our democracy is participative and pluralistic and ensure the involvement of multiple individuals and groups within the agenda of respect for diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, as these strategies seek the effective enjoyment of rights of children and adolescents from ethnic groups and vulnerable populations, the actions carried out must be in accordance with cultural dynamics” and the specific social context.
- Any new policy tool should consider strategies the implementation of Law 1448 of 2011, with in article 190 indicates: “All child and adolescent victims of recruitment will have the right to comprehensive reparations in terms of this present law. Child and adolescent victims of the crime of illegal recruitment can claim reparations for the harm suffered, in accordance with the provisions for the offense set forth in article 83 of the Penal Code.”
- In order to evaluate the impact of strategies, mechanisms and actions for monitoring and evaluation of policies and action plans adopted by CIPRUNA, willingness is needed on the part of each institution to support the activities and processes developed by the Technical Secretariat.

**OBJECTIVE 4: Promote the recognition of children and adolescents as subjects of rights in their family and community environments and their social networks.**

As mentioned in CONPES 3673, this fourth objective is directly related to the previous three, acting as a sort of backdrop to the others. The objective indicates that it is not sufficient to only achieve normative transformation concerning the recognition of children and adolescents as subjects of rights, but also necessary to achieve a profound transformation of cultural perceptions, beliefs and practices, which influence and shape social action, everyday behaviors and educational practices. For this reason, over half of the



activities in the Action Plan include a focus on increasingly the visibility of children and adolescents as subjects of rights, and their participation in the joint construction of public policies among themselves, their families and community members.

Considering the importance of counteracting existing cultural beliefs and practices, it is necessary to implement and strengthen mechanisms for reporting specific cases. In a cross-cutting manner, the current prevention policy formulated 9 activities (7%) to promote surveillance and investigation of crimes, which should eventually increase within the next policy instrument, especially by strengthening the legal process for reporting, investigating and prosecuting specific cases.

#### ***Strategic Activities***

- Increasing the visibility of children and adolescents as subjects of rights, where they participate and jointly construct policies among themselves, their families and community members.
- Implementation and strengthening of institutional strategies aimed at promoting children and adolescents as subjects of rights.
- Dissemination and sharing of specific information or informational materials.
- Expansion of the coverage of prevention programs, projects or strategies.
- Strengthening of legal processes for reporting cases.

#### ***Conclusions, difficulties and challenges***

In this objective, within which interests and actions should come together to transform cultural perceptions, beliefs and practices, there is a lack of strong, coordinated strategies dedicated to social mobilization around the recognition of children and adolescents as subjects of rights. There is also a lack of coordinated strategies to help reduce the impacts of diverse forms of violence on children and adolescents. This does not indicate an inexistence of institutional strategies, but rather the absence of jointly developed strategies coordinated among members of CIPRUNA to achieve a greater impact.

### **ACTIVITIES BEYOND THE CONPES 3673 PLAN OF ACTION**

Between April and November 2013, institutions reported 30 strategies, programs, projects, and activities beyond the scope of the Plan of Action of CONPES 3673, which were considered to be important in the process of implementing the prevention policy, specifically to address the crime of recruitment. These strategies are important for the development of policies and should not only be recognized by reviewed in detail, so that they are taken into account in evaluating policy progress, in the same way that the other planned activities are evaluated.

These activities are an indicator of the horizon of new initiatives or tools for the inclusion of new variables and actions within a changing social context. In addition, they provide new perspectives for addressing the issue and enable the formulation of projects and programs that are less circumstantial and more strategic.

These strategies have been classified according to the objectives that are pursued. It remains to review the specific approach used by each to prevent recruitment, use and sexual violence, which will be developed during 2014, together with a formal report using measurement systems as indicators, the allocation of resources and means of verification.

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen inter-institutional coordination, moving from functional collaboration to a more strategic cooperation established on the inclusion of a differential approach based on age, gender and ethnicity, as well as the participation of children and adolescents in local-level institutional actions committed to implementing CONPES 3673.
- Carry out a joint inter-institutional comprehensive evaluation of the current prevention policy under the technical and administrative leadership of the National Planning Department, with the objective of using the process of evaluating the current policy as a support and input for the development a new policy.
- Continue tracking and monitoring the prevention policy, with an emphasis on the production of knowledge regarding institutional coordination and local-level actions and social and conflict-related dynamics related to the victimization of children and adolescents, specifically recruitment, use and sexual violence.
- Deepen the comparative analysis of the implementation of prevention activities with the aim of describing and understanding the successes, difficulties and challenges involved in implementation of policies to prevent recruitment, use and sexual violence.
- Consolidate systems for provision of timely assistance in cases of urgent prevention and protective prevention through the strengthening of local capacities to promote and implement prevention routes and legal monitoring of cases, which would help to improve the tracking and monitoring of these activities.
- Encourage greater involvement of social and community actors in local-level institutional actions with the aim of promoting co-responsibility and strengthening protective environments for children and adolescents.
- Adapt the products of the Technical Secretariat to the schedules and needs of the institutions participating in CONPES 3673, as well as to the new conflict dynamics that can alter the incidence of recruitment, use and sexual violence.

