

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

MAY-JUNE 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

CONCLUSION OF "MAMBRU ISN'T GOING TO WAR" RECRUITMENT PREVENTION STRATEGY

Cultural and artistic celebrations of the conclusion of the "Mamburu isn't going to war" child recruitment prevention strategy took place in twenty-six cities around Colombia on June 26th. The strategy, which began in August 2013, was led by the Colombian Reintegration Agency (ACR) and the Colombian Future Corporation (Corfuturo), and included more than 1,800 children from across the country in cultural, sporting, and educational activities that aim to prevent their recruitment to illegal armed groups. The cities in which "Mamburu isn't going to war" was implemented included Bogotá, Cauca, Puerto Berrío, Cartagena, Barranquilla, Santa Marta, Pereira, Rionegro, Pasto, Necoclí, Cali, Aguachica, Valledupar, Sincelejo, Montería, Villavicencio, and Quibdó.⁽¹⁾

FARC AND ELN CONTINUE CHILD RECRUITMENT

The ELN's top commander (Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista, alias 'Gabino') admitted to ongoing child recruitment practices by stating that 16 and 17 years old combatants are included among the ELN's ranks.⁽²⁾ The Office of the Ombudsman called on the ELN to clarify how many children and adolescents are members of the group and to surrender them from its ranks "as soon as possible," since child recruitment is prohibited by national and international law.⁽³⁾

Meanwhile, the FARC denied child recruitment practices following the disengagement in May of three girls between 15 and 16 years old from Magüí Payán (Nariño), and El Bordo (Cauca), who the FARC surrendered to the Red Cross.⁽⁴⁾ The FARC claimed that the girls joined the group to spy on the FARC, in coordination with the police.⁽⁵⁾ The FARC also stated that recruitment of minors less than 15 years of age is in "clear violation" of its rules, stressing that those under 15 years are not involved in combat.⁽⁶⁾

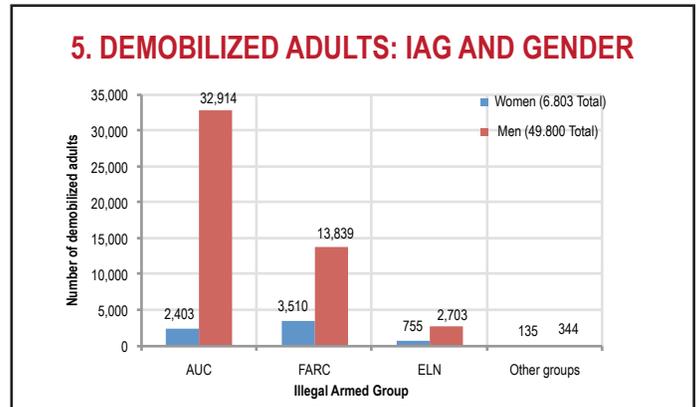
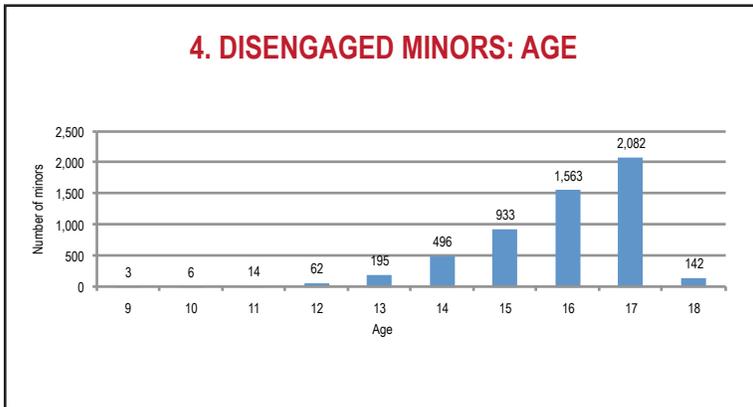
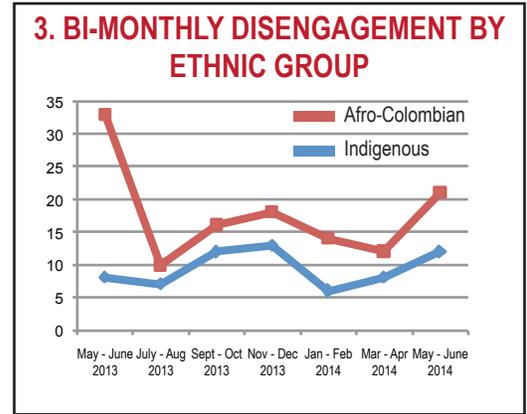
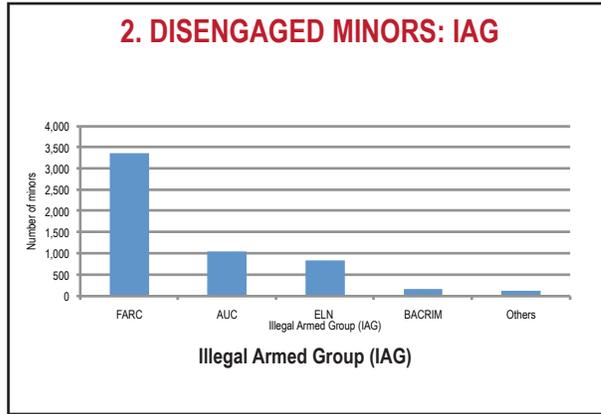
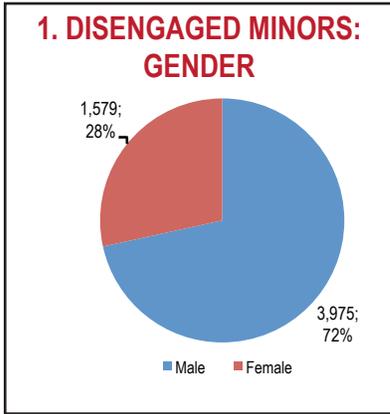
GOVERNMENT-LED RECRUITMENT PREVENTION EFFORTS

In Manangué (in the northern department of Bolívar), police thwarted the attempted recruitment of two minors by illegal armed groups after their families reported that a large group of youth were being recruited and transported by bus into the neighboring department of Cesar.⁽⁷⁾ In Cauca, to protect three indigenous youth who had returned to their homes after being recovered by the FARC in April, the youth were placed in an ICBF temporary protection program in the nearby department of Caldas, based on the threat of their re-recruitment as indicated by the Office of the Ombudsman. Indigenous authorities requested similar protection measures for two others who had recently disengaged from the FARC.⁽⁸⁾

3. PROGRESS REPORT: DISENGAGED MINORS & DEMOBILIZED ADULTS*

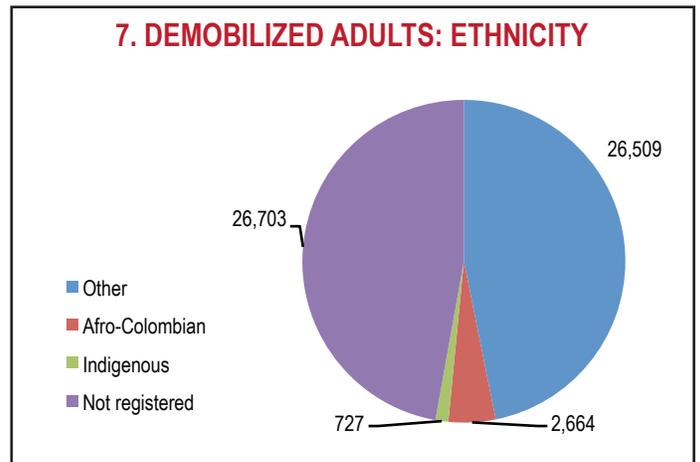
Total disengaged minors: 5,554

Total demobilized adults: 56,603



6. TOP 8 DEPARTMENTS FOR ADULT RELOCATION

Department	Number	%
Antioquia	11,616	21%
Bogotá D.C.	5,646	10%
Córdoba	3,406	6%
Cesar	3,070	5%
Meta	2,996	5%
Valle del Cauca	2,568	5%
Santander	2,254	4%
Magdalena	2,048	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

GOC AND FARC ANNOUNCE AGREEMENT ON ILLEGAL DRUGS

On May 16th the GOC and the FARC announced an agreement on the problem of illegal drugs, the fourth of six points on the GOC-FARC dialogue agenda and the third to be addressed in the peace process. The topic includes three sub-points: illegal crop substitution; prevention and public health programs; and the production and commercialization of illegal drugs. Proposals include broad measures to involve local communities and governments in their design and implementation. The agreement emphasizes joint GOC and FARC responsibility in the solution to the problem of illegal drugs, and includes a point about demining that implies the FARC will support the provision of information about the location of mines after their demobilization.⁽⁹⁾

POSSIBLE MILITARY PARTICIPATION IN DDR IMPLEMENTATION

President Santos announced that active members of the military will participate in the FARC's disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) in the framework of the current peace process with the guerrilla group. This participation would not be through representation at the dialogue table, but rather would imply a crucial role for the armed forces in the implementation of the agreements reached in the talks. This will be especially true in the disarmament phase and other activities in which the military's knowledge of the geography of Colombia and the conflict would be useful and will make an important contribution to DDR planning and implementation.⁽¹⁰⁾

COLLOQUIUM ON CHILDREN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PEACE PROCESS

On 4-5 June, the 32th childhood colloquium was held on the theme of children and adolescents and peacebuilding in Colombia in a context of inequality and violence. Among other issues, discussions included children's issues within the peace negotiations and children and adolescents as peace builders.

5. INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCES

NATIONAL MEETING ON PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENT TO PREVENT RECRUITMENT

Continued progress was made in preventing child recruitment and other violence against children in the context of the armed conflict, during the Third National Meeting in May of those responsible for cultural issues at the departmental level. Under the theme of "Culture: Protective Environment Against Recruitment," representatives from 32 departments met to discuss how the culture of each of their populations could serve as a tool for constructing protective environments for children and adolescents as a strategy to prevent forced recruitment by illegal armed groups.⁽¹¹⁾

6. FURTHER READING

ATTORNEY GENERAL PROVOKES DEBATE ON FARC REINTEGRATION

Eduardo Montealegre, the Attorney General, asserted that community service, not jail time, could be a good alternative sentence option for ex-FARC commanders. This statement has provoked a variety of reactions from across the political spectrum. Juan Manuel Galán of the Liberal Party said that it would be necessary to examine Colombia's commitment to international standards on transitional justice and victims' rights before allowing this kind of alternative sentence. Inspector General Alejandro Ordóñez said that Montealegre's proposal shows that he has already accepted that the FARC will receive impunity for their crimes.⁽¹²⁾

REUTERS PUBLISHES PHOTO ESSAY ON FEMALE COMBATANTS

Reuters News Agency published an article and photo essay of first-person accounts of female members of the FARC throughout the fifty-year conflict. It focuses on well-known women in the group, and the roles they have played.⁽¹³⁾

RECIDIVISM OF EX-COMBATANTS STUDY RELEASED WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FARC

Fundación Ideas para la Paz presented a study on recidivism – and the lack thereof – of ex-combatants, finding that only 24% have gone back to criminal activity, with the other 76% maintaining their legal status. Based on the conclusions of the study, the organization highlighted longevity in the reintegration program, breaking ties with illegal groups and other ex-combatants, and lower levels of insecurity for ex-combatants as keys to preventing future recidivism.⁽¹⁴⁾

CIVIL SOCIETY CAMPAIGN AGAINST INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN IN CONFLICT

Following the incident in Tumaco, when a youth died while throwing a grenade at the local police station, the Colombian Pediatric Society organized and launched a campaign called “Mourning our Children” (#delutopornuestrosniños). The campaign invites all Colombians, children and adults, as well as the international community, journalists and thought leaders, to use the hashtag on social networks in order to send a message to the armed groups to not involve more children in the armed conflict.⁽¹⁵⁾

GOVERNMENT ADDRESSES IMPUNITY AGAINST CHILD RECRUITERS

The Ministry of Defense, through its illegal recruitment prevention program, initiated joint efforts with the Seventh Division, the Office of the Inspector General, ICBF and others to bring the perpetrators of this crime to justice. The initiative seeks to draw on the field-level information gathered by the Armed Forces from demobilized combatants and intelligence, to provide the Inspector General’s Office with the necessary information to carry out judicial proceedings. A pilot project will be initiated in Anorí, Antioquia, one of the areas with the highest rates of recruitment.⁽¹⁶⁾

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