



Graduate School of Development Studies

**Beyond Categories of Vulnerability for Displaced
Children:
Case Study of a Bogotá Primary School**

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List of Acronyms

ANCI	Agustín Nieto Caballero Institute
CODHES	Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
MEN	Ministerio de Educación Nacional
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RUPD	Registro Único de Población en Situación de Desplazamiento
UAO	Unidad de Atención y Orientación

Abstract

The argument of this research paper is that the current policies in place for displaced children are based on assumed vulnerabilities and do not include children's perspectives or actions; as a consequence, they are not recognising and addressing some of the challenges displaced children face. Despite the strong attention prescribed by the government towards the displaced population, displaced children can actually become invisible within the school because student peers give a negative connotation to being IDP and displaced children react by staying anonymous about their status. National policies consider neither the negative connotation of being an IDP at school nor the reaction of displaced children. This points to the fact that the government cannot recognise this situation of invisibility and reach many of the displaced children at school. Moreover, the Ministry of Education conceptualised vulnerability as exclusion from the education system, and all its efforts are aimed at increasing access to education, leaving little or no consideration to displaced children's perceptions of vulnerability, namely insecurity and the limitations it causes. If the government is trying to identify and reach displaced children with its support and services, it needs to go beyond its categories of vulnerability and investigate the experiences of displaced children.

Relevance to Development Studies

This paper questions the efficiency of public policies about displaced children that are created and implemented within a top-down approach, with little or no participation of the population group they are targeting. Such policies are not conducive to the inclusion of all the real problems of displaced children. Within a political context in Colombia that is trying to create mechanisms for displaced children's participation in matters that influence their lives, this paper suggests that the schools might be the channels for displaced children to have their voices heard. In this respect, this paper connects with the global attempt to increase children's participation in decision-making processes as established by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This research also contributes to the critique, in children's and disaster studies, that vulnerability is too often taken for granted and excluding children's agency. As the findings have demonstrated, if policies are based on assumed vulnerabilities that are also excluding children's agency, they fail to capture the real situation. Moreover, by investigating on displaced children's perceptions about their vulnerabilities, this paper hopefully reveals areas of improvement for current policies targeting them.

Keywords

[displaced children's education, vulnerability, children's participation, political discourses]

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Focus of the research paper

According to the Government statistics, the conflict in Colombia has caused the displacement of 3.7 million people (Acción Social 2011a)¹. Among the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), over 50% are below the age of 18 (IDMC 2011: 4) and this poses a huge burden on the Colombian government who is trying to secure primary education for the children of the displaced families.

The government has done and is also planning many policies and programs to meet the needs of the displaced population, and in particular of the displaced children, positioning the topic of displaced children at the centre of many debates. Despite government efforts towards solving displaced children's challenges in education, recent studies have demonstrated that much more should be done (CNC 2008, Ferris 2008, ICRC-WFP 2007). At present there is a strong focus on fostering access to education and retention, especially for primary education, but less has been done in terms of understanding what happens after the displaced children enter school. The research paper is an attempt to fill this gap, through a case study in a public primary school of Bogotá.

In this research paper I argue that the current policies in place for displaced children are based on assumed vulnerabilities and do not include children's perspectives or actions; they therefore cannot capture the situation at local level and solve the many challenges of displaced children. Despite the strong attention prescribed by the government towards the displaced population, displaced children can actually become invisible within the school because student peers give a negative connotation to being IDP and displaced children react by staying anonymous about their status. The big focus of current policies is on access to education because vulnerability is seen as exclusion from education, but this does not represent the vulnerabilities perceived by displaced school children themselves. They are in fact more concerned for their security and the limitations it causes.

¹ CODHES (Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento), a non-governmental organization working for the rights of IDPs in Colombia, claimed that there are currently 5.2 millions IDPs. For both government and CODHES, the numbers are cumulative; the difference depends on the starting date to count and also on considerations about who is an IDP (IDMC 2011). Given the fact that part of the focus of the research is on government policies for the displaced children, government data will be used as reference.

1.2 Contextual background

Colombia has been characterised by more than four decades of internal conflict, exacerbated by drug trafficking since the '70s. Right wing paramilitary groups and left wing guerrilla are fighting against each other in rural areas to conquer territories; they are also using violence against civilians, while the government seems to struggle in trying to put an end to this situation (Livingstone 2003: 59-93). Rural areas are the most afflicted by episodes of violence and this led many families to flee to urban zones looking for secure places to live. Among the various causes of displacement, direct threats to civilians have been identified as the most frequent one, followed by forced recruitment and situations of murders or fear (IDMC 2009: 5-6, Ferris 2008: 38).

According to Article 1 of Law 387 (1997) of the Republic of Colombia “a displaced person is any person who has been forced to migrate within the national territory, abandoning his place of residence or customary economic activities, because his life, physical integrity, personal freedom or safety have been violated or are directly threatened as a result of any of the following situations: internal armed conflict, civil tension and disturbances, general violence, massive Human Rights violations, infringement of International Humanitarian Law, or other circumstances arising from the foregoing situations that drastically disturb or could drastically disturb the public order”. This definition is in line with the international principles on IDPs as established within the official Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (UN 1998), integrated in and used by the Colombian system. The only difference is that in Colombia there is no reference to displacement caused by natural disasters.

The official government registry (RUPD), created in 2000, officially recognises the presence of 3.7 million IDPs (Acción Social 2011a). Children, women and ethnic groups are recognised as the most vulnerable among the displaced population. Over half of the displaced population is below the age of 18, women and girls represents 52%, and people belonging to ethnic groups represent 30% (IDMC 2011: 4). Given the relevant incidence of these groups among the displaced population and their recognised vulnerabilities, the government has started specific interventions for each of them.

Acción Social is the official government agency coordinating the national system for helping the displaced population. The agency is also responsible for coordinating efforts to overcome extreme poverty and in general, the system for international cooperation (Acción Social 2011c). The specific mandate of Acción Social for the displaced population encompasses various fields of intervention: IDPs' registration and identification, prevention, protection, humanitarian intervention, assistance to return, reparation, coordination with local entities and also with other governmental entities, like for instance the Ministry of Education (ibid.). The structure and tasks of Acción Social are expected to change as a result of the recently approved Victims Law (2010), which focuses on reparation processes for the victims of the armed conflict (including IDPs) and entails a restructuring of all the main institutions dealing with the population affected by the conflict (Key Informant at Acción Social, interviewee n. 6).

In terms of distribution, the major areas of reception of IDPs are the departments of Antioquia and Bogotá, with the capital being the second major area of reception in the country (IDMC 2009: 24). Bogotá has currently 320,518 officially registered IDPs, of which 39.5% are minors (Acción Social 2011b). The displaced population is mainly concentrated in the southern area of Bogotá, Ciudad de Bolívar, where over 20% of the population is IDP (de Geoffroy 2009: 516). It has been demonstrated that IDPs usually settle in the outskirts of the cities, like the area of Ciudad de Bolívar and also where this case study is located (Los Mártires), because in those areas house rents are lower (ibid.: 514) and they can find jobs in the informal sector (Guevara Corral and Guevara Flétcher 2010: 19).

Colombian political system is highly decentralised and this means that the policies established at national level for IDPs, which emphasise the importance of addressing IDPs' needs, are implemented at local level based on the context and the local needs. In particular, the local government of Bogotá has established a high priority for the education of the displaced population. In fact, among the funds available for programs helping IDPs in the five year plan 2004-2009, 48% has been assigned to education (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2010: 35). Moreover the political program of the current administration of Bogotá, in terms of educational goals, is set on improving school access and retention for vulnerable population groups, which includes IDPs (Secretaría de Educación 2008: 66-84).

At Municipal level one can notice a replication of the main concepts of the national policies for IDPs but also an evident debate about the challenges of the decentralised system. A recent study about the role of Municipalities in helping IDPs has emphasised problems of implementation of national policies at local level because of lack of resources, lack of clear responsibilities for local government actors but also an evident discontent of these actors about what they consider an unfair priority given to IDPs, compared to other vulnerable groups (Ferris 2008).

1.3 Research problem and guiding questions

This research is concerned with the socio-political implications of being a displaced child within the school environment. I set out to better know what happens to displaced children after they get into school and also understand urgent issues, anxieties and concerns emerging from the school context, which might not be taken into account within the general representations of displaced children. The conclusions of this research will therefore try to answer my main question:

“How are the experiences of IDPs socially and politically implicated in schools?”

More specifically, I critically investigated how displaced children are constructed within national discourses and perceived within the school environment in which they are located. This in turn helped understanding how they perceive themselves. The vertical analysis through the three main levels involved, namely national, local (the school) and individual (displaced children), allows the identification of tensions and gaps, which help identifying local needs and more specifically displaced children's needs. Ultimately this

would help clarifying how educational intervention for displaced children can be improved.

My review of documents and collection of data were guided by three sub-questions in order to be able to answer the main question of the research.

1) *What are the recurrent representations of displaced children produced by government policies and programs?*

This question helped identify not only the main discourse about displaced children at national level but also what are the main actions put in place or planned in order to solve the identified recurrent problems of displaced children. It also connects with the next sub-question, which helps explain what happens with national policies in the reality of a public primary school.

2) *How is the context of a public primary school?*

This question helped to identify the socio-political dynamics present in a primary school, the environment created for meeting displaced children's needs, how displaced children are perceived and it was also useful to understand and justify displaced children's views and behaviours.

3) *How do displaced children feel about the new school environment?*

This question gave space to the voices of the displaced children and helped to identify their main concerns about being an IDP and settling in a new school.

1.4 Methodology

I used a case study because of the belief that the analysis of a specific context can help understanding practical and actual problems associated with the intervention from the national level. Moreover, given that the social power relations system involved around a displaced child is very complex, using a contextualised setting seems the best way to understand the situation.

The case study analysed the situation of the Agustín Nieto Caballero Institute (ANCI), a public school located in the center of Bogotá.

The capital of Colombia has been chosen as the location for the case study because IDPs based in Bogotá come from almost all the regions of Colombia (Ferris 2008: 37) and could therefore cover the variety of conditions depending on the place of origin.

When looking for a possible school to work with, the main criteria were: enough variety of cases, namely indigenous, afro-descendants and from different parts of Colombia; children displaced and enrolled in the last two to five years, in order to capture experiences of recent displacement.

Apart from covering the aforementioned criteria, the ANCI has been receiving various waves of displaced children in recent years and has been mentioned by the Education Department of Bogotá as a school where there are usually places available for newly arrived displaced children. For these reasons, the Institute was chosen.

Furthermore, the area where the school is located has the typical characteristics of areas where displaced families usually end up living: it is an urban poor area, with possibility to work in the informal labour market and with low house rents. This case study therefore could have the potential to be generalized for other similar areas within urban centers.

I spent six weeks in Bogotá in July and August 2011. My fieldwork includes ethnographic observation sessions in class and within the school during the breaks, and informal chats with displaced, non-displaced children and school staff. I also conducted 30 semi-structured interviews with key informants from Acción Social (1), Ministry of Education (MEN) (2), Government Planning Department (1), NGOs working with IDPs (2), Education Department of the Municipality of Bogotá (1), and also one academic working with education and displacement, school staff (10) and displaced students (12).

The displaced students of this case study were between 9 to 12 years old, indicating that some of them have lost some years of school. The initial idea was to interview the eldest students of primary school in order to have respondents more likely to remember the changes from their place of origin to Bogotá. No IDPs were identified among the students of 5th grade so 3rd and 4th grade were chosen instead. The group includes six males and six females, from various areas of Colombia, including one student from an indigenous group and two Afro-Colombians. It was very difficult to identify them as IDP because of the confidentiality of their status, established for security reasons. In respect of this confidentiality and upon advice of the school, I did not use their real names in this research paper.

The use of qualitative interviews has been important in order to emphasize the perceptions of the respondents and in particular the individual experiences of the displaced children. In this respect, this research paper is in line with the position among researchers in children's studies that children can give meaningful insights in investigation processes (James 2007).

Qualitative interviews were complemented by secondary data. They include policy documents, programs reports, constitutional court documents, school teaching plans and textbooks.

With regards to the methodological aspects of the research, it is important to remind the reader that the results produced by this research and, in particular the ones about perceptions of the different respondents, are undoubtedly filtered by my perspective.

1.5 Justification for the research and location in current literature

Within the current debate in Colombia about displaced children, there is a strong focus on vulnerability and the idea of securing their rights, which seems to leave little space for considering them as actors deserving to be heard. Despite this general position, the government is also trying to create mechanisms for children's participation in matters that influence their lives. This implies the idea of letting their voices to be heard but this attempt is still at an early stage and there is the need to investigate more on this issue. This

research is to be positioned within this attempt. In particular, I was trying to understand the perspectives of displaced children in the context of what happens at local level and to analyse these issues within the larger discourse of the government, in order to identify gaps and options for improvement. The government, in fact, despite the enormous amount of resources used to help displaced children, is struggling to achieve its commitments.

This research is theoretically grounded on the idea that there is a dominant knowledge about displaced children and their vulnerability, created by the government and perpetuated by the current policies and programs that try to solve their challenges. In particular, this research paper is built on a constructivist perspective applied to childhood studies and firstly theorised by James and Prout (as cited in Ensor 2010: 19-20). It defines childhood as “socially, politically, economically, and culturally constructed” (ibid.).

The strong presence of the idea of vulnerability positions the discourse of displaced children within a wider discourse that is typical of Latin American studies on disasters and that has been criticised for not including any reference to agency (Aguirre 2004). This critique can be found also in studies on immigrant children, which call for a conceptualisation of vulnerability that does not exclude agency and that, for children, should not just be assumed because they are little and without any defences, but should be investigated (Gozdziaik and Ensor 2010). This research paper is an attempt to respond to this call and, at the same time, given the intention of the Colombian government to create space for children’s participation (and therefore their agency), it is also an attempt to understand what children think and do about their situations.

Moreover, I consider children as social actors, with the right to have a say in matters that influence their lives as described by Christensen and Prout (2002: 481). This perspective is in line with recent developments of children studies but it also connects with international standards about IDPs and children, which require their participation in decision-making processes (Ferris 2010: 109). This includes for instance the Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement and also the Convention on the Rights of the Child, whose concepts and principles are used by the Colombian government. Within this view it is therefore important to include children’s perspectives in policy-making processes and implementation of programs in which they are targeted.

Colombian public policies for IDPs are embedded in a Human Rights paradigm which the national government strongly uses for its policies and which particularly focuses on the full enjoyment of those rights for every human being. These policies reflect the international position that IDPs have specific vulnerabilities, and these prevent them from fully enjoying their human rights. The principle of impartiality in humanitarian intervention implies that every individual is secured his or her human rights. Since IDPs have specific vulnerabilities, the intervention for securing their rights should be specific so that they can enjoy their rights, as does any other population group. This does not mean that other population groups are discriminated and left out; it means that, in order to secure the rights of every citizen, different approaches should be adopted, in accordance with the different situations of the population groups (Mooney 2005: 19). This research paper is in line with the aforementioned concepts on the specificity of intervention for the displaced

population. Clarifications in this respect were thought necessary, given the continuous debate in Colombia caused by local perceptions that IDPs are unfairly given priority by the government.

1.6 Structure of the research paper

After this introduction, Chapter Two describes how government policies for displaced children create a dominant knowledge that does not necessarily represent the situation of displaced children and cannot be challenged. It also demonstrates that, given displaced children's vulnerability is taken for granted and excludes their agency, there is need to critically investigate their experiences within the school environment.

Chapter Three starts with a description of the social power relations in which displaced children are positioned, followed by an analysis of the implications of being an IDP at school, which identifies tensions and gaps among national policies, what is done at the school and what displaced children experience at school. One of the main findings is that there is a potential situation of invisibility of displaced children, which is in contradiction with the strong attention towards them, as required at national level. This contradiction is therefore a sign that national policies should be improved and changed if the government wants to meet displaced children's needs.

Chapter Four describes two important concerns of displaced children, namely the school as the only place to play and security issues after displacement. These concerns are not among government's priorities because of the way government conceptualises displaced children vulnerability, but they should be taken into consideration if the challenges and problems of displaced children are to be overcome.

Chapter Five concludes by saying that there is the need to go beyond the assumed categories of vulnerability for displaced children and investigate on them by including displaced children's perspectives and actions, and also considerations of how the schools could be used to improve displaced children's conditions.

Chapter 2

National policies: displaced children's participation and the need to investigate on their experiences

2.1 “It is us going to them. They do not come to us”²

Since the establishment of the Official Law for IDPs in 1997, Colombian government demonstrated its intention to deal with IDPs' problems and solve them. Nevertheless, in 2004 the Constitutional Court of Colombia declared an 'unconstitutional state of affairs' with regards to the situation of the rights of IDPs (Corte Constitucional, República de Colombia 2004) and in 2008, with the Auto 251, the Court repeated the declaration on the subject of the rights of displaced children and adolescents, and engaged the government in taking action to ameliorate displaced children's conditions. Moreover, the Court declared the need for the government to take specific actions for the IDPs because their challenges are different from other vulnerable groups (Corte Constitucional, Sala Segunda de Revisión, República de Colombia 2008).

As a consequence, since 2008 the government has started a series of policies and projects in order to ensure the rights of displaced children and adolescents. This created a strong attention to displaced children in the political debate, reinforced by the increase of the national budget for helping the displaced population. The government has in fact been increasing the national budget for the displaced population by ten times, from 250 million US dollars in the period 1999-2002 to 2,500 million in the period 2007-2010 and this represents the biggest budget increase in Colombia in recent years (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores 2010: 16). Not only are relevant resources available for interventions towards the displaced population, but the achievements are also not always the hoped ones. For instance, a recent evaluation of the government program delivering subsidies to displaced families to keep children at school (Familia en Acción for IDPs) has been declared unsatisfactory (CNC: 2008). This reveals that the government is under pressure to find new and better solutions to solve the challenges of the displaced children.

According to a key informant at Acción Social, one of the main changes caused by the Constitutional Court action in 2008, is the systematic presence of IDPs as a target of public policies. This means that the intervention for helping them has become more comprehensive and is covering all the rights that need to be secured. The Auto 251 is a very influential document because it engaged

² From a personal interview with a key informant of Acción Social at the department for Displaced Children Policies, Bogotá, 22 July 2011 (Interviewee n. 6). Details of interviews are contained in the Appendix.

the Colombian government in adopting specific concepts and judicial positions within the national policies and programs for displaced children.

In response to the need of a differential attention to IDPs among social vulnerable groups, the government has planned a process of intense identification of the various challenges that IDPs have to face. In each case of displacement there should be an analysis of the situation that covers three main levels, namely the social/community situation in the area of reception, the family situation and the individual situation (Key informant at Acción Social, interviewee n. 6). This would allow the government to identify vulnerabilities, areas of intervention for each case and also services to be provided in order to secure their rights. Part of this process is the project 'Mis Derechos Primero' (My rights first), started in 2010. It is a pilot project with the main goal of "guaranteeing integral protection to displaced children and adolescents through the effective enjoyment of their rights" (Acción Social 2010: 14). Access to this project for displaced children is based on being registered in the official IDP list and on the evaluation of Acción Social operators. The representative of Acción Social that I interviewed in Bogotá and is involved in 'Mis Derechos Primero' mentioned the fact that despite the intention of serving as many displaced children as possible, there are limited resources. She added that the government has to make priorities and identify the most vulnerable among the vulnerable and then carry on the planned activities. In particular, she mentioned:

We cannot create expectations so it is usually us that go to them, once we have identified them. They do not come to us (Interviewee n. 6).

This consideration demonstrates that the identification of IDPs' vulnerabilities, the prioritization and the access to services are done according to categories decided at national level and to resources available. The process is also implemented through collaboration with local authorities because they better know the local context, but there is little space left for the participation of the targeted population. Displaced children are therefore seen mainly as final receivers of government services.

With regards to a possible participation of displaced children in the categorization process and also in decision-making processes in issues that concern them, 'Mis Derechos Primero' is planning to create mechanisms of children's and adolescents' participation in decision-making processes about public policies (Acción Social 2010: 14-15). Nevertheless this process is still at an early stage. For the preparation of the Auto 251, displaced children were presented before the judges to give testimony of their experiences in order to corroborate the case for the unconstitutional state of affairs. These are the only two official and important examples of efforts to include children's perspectives that I found, the first of which is at a very early stage of implementation. This reveals some scope for doing more to achieve children's participation.

In supporting the idea that displaced children are mainly considered as receivers of government services, another example, related to the field of education, could be provided from an indigenous school operator working within the ANCI. He supports a group of displaced indigenous children arrived in Bogotá less than two years ago. They need a support person because

they do not speak Spanish well. When the displaced children arrived in Bogotá with their families and they started the procedures for registration in the official list of IDPs, they were assigned to the ANCI. According to a key informant of the Education Department of Bogotá (interviewee n. 7), the assignment is based on the availability of place in the school and the vicinity of the school to the living place.

I leave the house every day with all of the students because we live in the same area. We walk 46 blocks to reach the school, which accounts for more than one hour walk. This school is not what we hoped for because our children do not learn anything about our culture. Their parents are also not happy because of this situation and they do not consider the education that their children are receiving as important. The children also get tired to walk everyday to this school [...] Despite attempts to change into a nearer school, it was not possible because of unavailability of places (School operator, interviewee n. 28).

The indigenous displaced families and the children are thus not happy about the school assigned. The distance of the school but also the type of education delivered, are the causes of their dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, there is nothing they can do about it. This example shows that these displaced children are accessing school, in accordance with government priorities, but they do not have any influences on the matter. They have to accept what is available, namely a school that provides an education which does not fit with their culture and far from their living place.

The implementation of IDP policies, despite attempts to understand the vulnerabilities of the displaced children and also to start mechanisms for their participation, is located in a social power relations context that reduces displaced children and their families to final receivers of government services. Many of the mechanisms targeting the displaced children are in a pilot or early phase and there is naturally room for improvement, in terms of involving them in decision-making processes. Given the position of this research paper in terms of considering children as social actors but also given the international and national legal standards supporting displaced children's participation, one can conclude that much more should be investigated and understood if the government is planning to go forward in this direction.

Moreover, given the general attention paid to the issue of displaced children and the relevant amount of policies and programs in place for them, one can also recognize a specific discourse on displaced children. This discourse is a dominant one because it is created by the government and, given the lack of participation of displaced children, it cannot be challenged. The following sections will describe and analyse this dominant discourse. It will demonstrate that it sets specific political priorities and takes for granted the vulnerabilities of the displaced children without critically investigating children's experiences.

2.2 Dominant discourse: displaced children are vulnerable

There are 50 countries in the world with significant levels of displaced population and among them, 18 have specific legislation for IDPs. Colombia is

one of them and it follows the common trend of identifying the displaced population as a vulnerable group in need of special attention (Ferris 2010: 104-106).

From the analysis of policies and programs for displaced children in Colombia, one can say that there is an evident discourse on displaced children³. This discourse is built on a pool of meanings which all point to the idea of victimization and vulnerability. When reading a policy document or discussing with a government representative about displaced children, these expressions are regularly present: 'the specific risks of displaced children'; 'special risks'; 'transversal problems'; 'protection'; 'pronounced victimization'; 'identification of risks'; 'identification of displaced children vulnerabilities'; 'critical phase'; 'double victimization'; 'focus on prevention, protection and attention'. These expressions indicate that displaced children are mainly seen through a lens of vulnerability, which implies the idea that the role of the government is to protect displaced children.

Moreover one can also identify a constant semantic reference to the idea of clarifying displaced children's specific situation of vulnerability: 'identification of risks'; 'characterization phase'; 'differential focus'; 'differential protection'; 'differential attention'. These are just some of the common expressions used when talking about the projects in place for displaced children. This demonstrates a strong impulse to categorise displaced children as a special group of concern, different from other vulnerable groups, but it represents also the attempt of further identifying vulnerabilities within the vulnerable group of displaced children. These can include: victims of landmines, ex-child soldiers, unaccompanied children, children of demobilised parents, sexually abused children, indigenous, Afro-Colombian, girls. These are all fixed categories, described with specific features and corresponding to specific government interventions. For instance, the fact of being indigenous and displaced implies vulnerabilities associated with being culturally discriminated at school and having lived traumatic experiences in violent areas; government intervention is therefore oriented towards expanding school curricula in order to include basic teaching about indigenous culture and training teachers to deal with students with traumatic and violent experiences (MEN 2005).

It is important to underline also that among the displaced population, children are usually considered as the most vulnerable ones because the problems caused by displacement, be it losing a parent or being threatened, happened during a developmental phase, namely childhood or adolescence,

³ A part from interviews with government and non-government representatives working on displacement and education, the sources for identifying this discourse include: Auto 251 (Corte Constitucional, Sala Segunda de Revisión, República de Colombia 2008), two sets of guidelines of the MEN targeting vulnerable groups at school (MEN 2005, Nieto Roa 2010), a report of the Municipality of Bogotá about the situation of displacement in the capital (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2010) and brochures produced by the government to inform its operators and the targeted population about the policies in place for IDPs (Acción Social 2010, ACNUR- Acción Social 2010, 'Programas de Gobierno' 2010).

and this can have life-long consequences (Corte Constitucional, Sala Segunda de Revisión, República de Colombia 2008: 13-14). Such children are also more likely than adults to be exposed to various types of problems after displacement. These can include sexual abuse, child labour, being threatened by urban criminal bands within the reception areas, and discrimination within the school and the receiving community (Key informant at Acción Social, interviewee n. 6). One also needs to consider that minors represent 50% of the overall displaced population in Colombia (IDMC 2011: 4) and this fact naturally locates them at the centre of attention for policy intervention, as one of the most vulnerable groups.

From a constructivist perspective one can conclude that the discourse of displaced children in Colombia, within a political context where there is a focus on helping and protecting them, implies a strong idea of victimization and vulnerability, strongly amplified by the attempt of identifying in detail their specific vulnerabilities. The role of the government as protector of displaced children emerges very clear, together with the importance of the types of activities it should do to help displaced children. Within this discourse, one could associate the ontology of displaced children to a traditional view of childhood, also referred to as 'global model of childhood', expression that "defined children by their limitations and saw them as weaker, incomplete, and biologically and psychologically distinct from adults" (Ansell, as cited in Ensor 2010: 17). However, the government is trying to create processes that include displaced children's participation and this entails a possible change in the way children are seen, indicating that the government is moving away from the traditional view of children. Nevertheless one can recognise a tension between the strong role of the government as protector of displaced children and its intention to involve them in improving their conditions.

The discourse described can be traced among the displaced children. When asked about the situation of displacement, displaced children usually mentioned 'help from the government', 'receiving a house', 'receiving money' and 'going to the UAO' (Unit of Attention and Orientation for IDPs). Displaced children's responses about displacement and who is an IDP reflect the fact that they are aware that the government is doing something about their condition. They also reflect the fact that displaced children have a specific knowledge about what the government does for IDPs and about IDPs' vulnerability. Michael and Juan, two displaced students of the ANCI, mentioned the following with regards to who is an IDP:

Displaced people are the ones left in the street, changing house or being kicked out of their place (Michael, interviewee n. 15).

Yes, I heard about IDP, it is about people not able to maintain their family; they have kids and cannot give them things. In the school we do not talk about this (Juan, interviewee n. 27).

One can therefore conclude that a dominant knowledge created by the government is perpetuated through the services delivered. Since children voices are seldom heard, this knowledge cannot be challenged. Surely IDPs encounter many problems during and after displacement and this cannot be negated, but vulnerability might not be the only thing that displaced children

experience or it might not be solely as it is described at government level. One should consider in fact that government and displaced children have different role in terms of dealing with displacement and, because of these different roles, they assign different meanings to 'IDP'. For the government 'IDP' is a status, a category of identification for provision of specific services aiming at diminishing a situation of vulnerability. For displaced children it represents a condition that can influence their lives at school and can be perceived in many different ways depending on the influence of various factors, including family situation, the receiving community, the school environment and how school peers perceive them.

Moreover, displaced children often mentioned that they do not talk with other students about being displaced. Regular answers to the question 'do you talk about being an IDP at school?' include the fact that they were never asked to talk about their status, they do not like to talk about it, it is not something that they talk about with their friends. Reasons for this situation can include the fear of being discovered in the city by illegal armed groups who threatened them. It can also include, as it will be demonstrated later, the fear of being called names, because of the negative connotation that the meaning of IDP can receive. But their answers also give the sense that they have not internalised this IDP identity; it is an external category, established by somebody else. This can be related to the fact that some of the displaced children are not clear about the causes of their displacement and what happened, and they might therefore not identify with this category. For example, this is how Michael explains why his family was displaced by the conflict:

They wanted my father to work for them but my father did not want so we left. They gave my father 12 hours to leave. He left first and then my mother and me left later. We were together in San Bernardo del Viento. This was the first time we moved (Michael, interviewee n. 15).

When asked about what type of work the father was asked to do, Michael did not seem to have more details on that.

The fact that a group of displaced children do not relate personally to the category of IDP and consider it as external, points to the consideration that the dominant knowledge about IDPs might not be representative of the experiences of displaced children.

Understanding their experiences and what happens in their lives is therefore a matter that should be further investigated. Chapter 3 and 4 are attempts towards this direction. Moreover, the conceptualisation of their vulnerability has implications for the priorities set by the government and the efforts put in investigating children's experiences.

2.3 Implications of the conceptualization of vulnerability

In a political context strongly emphasising the specific vulnerability of displaced children and their need of having their rights secured as any other Colombian citizen, education is seen as an important tool to overcome vulnerabilities. The idea of vulnerability considered by the MEN is that of a "phenomenon which deteriorates the well being and quality of life of a person and which delay people's development" (MEN 2005: 5).

The MEN has specific goals for the so-called vulnerable population, understood as a group that, for “its biological, socio-cultural and economic differences, is excluded from the education system” (ibid.: 7). Under the umbrella of vulnerable population there are various categories: ethnic groups, illiterate young/adults, children with special needs, minors with social problems, children living in the borders of the country, rural population living in remote areas and the ‘population affected by violence’ (ibid.: 8). The last group includes IDPs, former child soldiers and children of demobilised parents. The main feature of this vulnerable group is having lived traumatic and violent experiences, but IDP are considered the most vulnerable because of the humanitarian crisis in which they are living and the human rights violations they have experienced (ibid.: 26).

One of the responses to the identified vulnerabilities of the population affected by violence, will be equipping teachers with psycho-social tools, human rights knowledge and peace culture (ibid.), but this is just at a planning stage. What teachers are presently required to do is identify vulnerable groups at schools, in order to try to secure their access to education and retention, but still without specific training or tools to be able to do it.

There are precise categories of vulnerabilities identified for displaced children to which specific government interventions are attributed. These categories are somehow assumed. Moreover the way interventions are thought and planned always involves the role of the government, its operators or the displaced adults: training for teachers, active search of displaced children in the city in order to place them at school, subsidies to displaced families so that they keep sending their children to school (MEN 2005). There is no or little consideration of what children are already doing to solve their problems, and therefore no or little consideration of displaced children’s actions that might hinder or foster government attempts to help them.

Because of the way displaced children’s vulnerability is conceptualised within Colombian policies, it can be positioned within the current trend in disaster studies in Latin America. According to Weichselgartner’s study on the conceptualization of vulnerability in the literature on disasters, Latin American studies focus mainly on the idea of vulnerability as a social product with a strong emphasis on politics and the goal of improving disaster programs by identifying the distribution of vulnerabilities and reducing them (as cited by Aguirre 2004: 487). The idea of social product refers to the fact that depending on the social class in which an individual is located, he/she can experience vulnerability in different ways (ibid.). The vulnerability of displaced children in Colombia seems to be conceptualised as in Latin American studies on disasters because of its emphasis on the specific vulnerability of the target group and the need of identifying those vulnerabilities.

This concept of vulnerability has been strongly criticised because it excludes a priori the idea of any forms of agency and it is therefore not able to capture how the effects of disasters can actually be mitigated (ibid.: 503). Moreover, recent studies on migrant children, including refugees and IDPs, are calling for challenging any conceptualization of vulnerability that excludes agency and, more importantly, is assumed for children (Gozdziak and Ensor 2010).

In the context of displaced children in Colombia, vulnerability is conceptualised and operationalized by adults within the government system, with little influence from displaced children. It is built on different fixed categories to which specific government services correspond. For these reasons one could conclude that the vulnerability of displaced children is somehow taken for granted and current policies might therefore not address the various problems displaced children face. Also, displaced children are mainly seen as in need of being protected and receiving government services and there seems to be little space for considering their agency. Because of the way vulnerability is conceptualised within Colombian policies, one would therefore conclude that there is the need to critically investigate those vulnerabilities without just taking them for granted, and also consider what displaced children do and think within their school environment, and what happens in the schools. Moreover, if the Latin American studies on vulnerability imply the idea that any social group within a society can experience vulnerability in different ways, one should also include displaced children's experiences because they are also a social group.

Apart from these conceptual implications about how vulnerability is defined, there is also a practical aspect that should be considered. Given the fact that vulnerability is understood as exclusion from the education system, the MEN has been promoting a policy of inclusion targeting the vulnerable groups, with particular emphasis on increasing access to education, improving retention and aiming at better quality of education. Education policies are targeting IDPs specifically but also as part of the broader umbrellas of vulnerable population and population affected by violence. One of the main policies to secure school access and retention for the displaced population is for instance allowing access to school at any moment of the school year without presenting any official documentation (MEN 2011). Documentation can be processed at a later stage. The government is also planning to target displaced children, as part of the population affected by violence, with programs aiming at preparing teachers to deal with children with experience of violence and family problems (MEN Key informant, interviewee n. 1). In particular, a lot of efforts have been put towards increasing access to education. In fact, among the displaced children between 5 and 17 years old and officially registered as IDPs, 82.6% are receiving education in a formal education centre (IDMC 2009: 31). Less can be said with regards to efforts to retain displaced children at school: among the same population, only 10.7% receive books, subsidies and other supporting tools that would help them keep going to school (*ibid.*). Moreover, in terms of improving the quality of education the work is at a planning stage.

This shows that, among the three main goals of MEN for displaced children, namely school access, retention and education quality, there is a strong interest and a lot of efforts put towards improving access to schools but less is known and done with regards to what happens after displaced children get access to school.

2.4 Concluding remarks

One of the socio-political implications of being an IDP is that there is a dominant discourse about displaced children that might not be representative of their actual experiences, but it cannot be challenged. This is because the discourse is framed within a top-down approach in which displaced children have little or no influence. This discourse is built on the main interest of the government, namely to respond to and solve the ‘unconstitutional state of affairs’ declared by the Constitutional Court. It is not a coincidence in fact that national policies share and address the vulnerabilities identified by the Court itself. Also, the Court has the legal mandate to monitor the progress of the government towards the reduction of displaced children’s vulnerabilities and this positions the government under a constant pressure to achieve this objective. If the government is trying to improve displaced children’s conditions, it should not only respond to the ‘unconstitutional state of affairs’, as framed and monitored by the Court, but also speed-up the current attempts to create mechanisms for displaced children’s participation, in order to shape a discourse, and therefore a response, that is more representative of their situations.

I also demonstrated that the discourse about displaced children includes an idea of vulnerability that is mainly assumed and does not consider the agency of displaced children. Moreover, because of the way vulnerability is understood at government level, there is a strong priority set on improving school access for displaced children, and less is known and done about what happens after school access. There is therefore a strong need to try to understand what happens after school access, investigate more on displaced children’s experiences at school and while doing that, also considering both their vulnerability and their agency. Chapter Three and Four will analyse these aspects.

Chapter 3 IDP Status: perceptions at school and implications

3.1 Factors influencing perceptions of displaced children: discernable patterns

The social power relations involved in the life of a displaced child include the government, the family, teachers, school staff, peer students and in general the receiving community of the place of arrival. It is therefore so complex and context-related that it cannot be captured entirely by national policies and the associated representations of displaced children. This section will describe the context and the social power relations directly involved in the life of the displaced children. Context and social power relations are important factors because they influence displaced children's perceptions and therefore the way they experience their new lives at school. There are discernable patterns that can be recognised within the relations between displaced children and the receiving community, teachers, families and students peers. They will be described in the following section. Some context details have also been included in order to have a clear picture of the school investigated for this research paper.

3.1.1 Socially vulnerable neighbourhood and school

The ANCI is a public school, funded by the district administration of the capital. It is located in the central area of Bogota', in a locality called Los Mártires. This area is considered by the municipality a vulnerable area for its social and economic problems: it is a zone of prostitution, receiver of IDPs, with high incidence of drug addicts and drug selling, large presence of people living in the street and a high incidence of crime and small arms selling (Secretaria de Salud 2011: 25-26). Many of the families in this area work in the informal sector. They are mainly street vendors or they work in recycling rubbish. The fact of having low house rents and space to enter in the informal job sector makes displaced families choose this area for settling (School coordinator, interviewee n. 8).

The school includes early childhood, primary and secondary education. For the purpose of this research there will be a focus on primary education. The school provides courses in the morning and also in the afternoon with a separate set of teachers and coordinators for the two parts of the day. There are 273 students attending the morning session and 259 attending the afternoon course. Each class has an average of 20-25 students. The number of students changes continuously and the school secretary has to update the database every two months. A transient student population is in fact a characteristic of the institute. Because of the high incidence of families depending on volatile incomes and living in vulnerable situations, they tend to move to new locations as better options arise and they change the school of their children accordingly.

Given the fact that students can be accepted without presentation of any documents, data on the presence of IDPs in the school are not clear and systematic. The research study focuses on 3rd and 4th grade students and for this group, thanks to the help of the teachers, it was possible to identify that 13% of the students of 3rd and 4th grade of the morning and 21% of the ones in the afternoon were IDPs. Girls and boys have almost equal presence and, in the afternoon group, half of the displaced children are indigenous.

The students of the ANCI are characterized by high incidence of vulnerabilities. The school staff, in particular the two psychologists, mentioned numerous cases of sexual abuse, child labour and extreme poverty. Many students are children of convicts or drug addicts.

The displaced children of this case study therefore arrive to an unfriendly neighbourhood, a school where the student population exhibits various social problems and where IDPs are not carefully identified.

3.1.2 Teachers trying to understand vulnerable situations

The conventional wisdom has been that teachers, as adults and as repositories of knowledge, are guides and examples to be followed. From the interviews with displaced children, one can also recognize that teachers are seen as ‘the ones that know things’ and a certain level of teacher authority in class has been recognized during the observation sessions. Teachers therefore have an important role within the class and towards the displaced students. In order to understand their relations with displaced children it is important to understand how they see displaced children and their attitudes towards them. A 3rd grade teacher of the school for instance said:

They are usually the ones that come and go. They stay in the school for a while and then never come back, sometimes warning that they are leaving, sometimes in silence (Interviewee n. 19).

A 4th grade teacher within the institute, mentioned that one displaced student in his class was calling for attention by being extremely aggressive towards his peers, preventing his integration within the class. He also mentioned he felt unprepared to deal with displaced students, who experienced violence and traumatic episodes in their lives (Interviewee n. 10).

Despite some differences in how teachers see displaced children in their class, there is a common consensus about their vulnerability, in particular the fact of having lived traumatic experiences and the dependence on the precarious conditions of their families. This shows that teachers’ perceptions are related to the main vulnerabilities identified by national policies. At the same time however, when talking about the various students in their class, one can notice that teachers do not only focus on the problems students have but also on how they are facing those problems and how they react. Their responses towards students with vulnerabilities, including displaced children, take into consideration both their vulnerability and their agency, showing an attempt to try to understand their situation and how they feel. For instance, the 3rd grade teacher of the class where almost half of the students are displaced indigenous students, lamented the fact that it is very difficult to keep this group

seated in class because they are not used to study in a closed environment for hours. She had a hard time in obtaining some authority but she is slowly getting some control of the class by gaining their trust and showing affection (Interviewee n. 9).

According to the official rules of the school “teachers have the obligation to facilitate access to school to children, guarantee their retention and establish strategies for facilitating access and retention to children and adolescents in situation of vulnerability and social risk” (ANCI 2011: 28). Being the ‘guarantors’ for access and retention at school for vulnerable children entails the fact that teachers has to make efforts so that the students in their class feel well and are interested in what they learn. It also means, as one of the teacher said, that

We cannot be too rigid with the school rules; for instance, we are not rejecting a student from the class if he or she does not have the uniform [...] we try to be flexible and inclusive because there are many families that cannot afford to buy the uniform for their children (Interviewee n. 10).

The role of the teachers therefore entails a certain disposition to understand students’ problems, in order to keep them at school.

Moreover it seems that the teachers of the school belong to a higher socio-economic class than many of the students: to be enrolled as a teacher in the public school system, one needs to possess university or higher education degree (MEN 2008), which is usually not so accessible for the lowest economic classes. This might create a sense of ‘taking care of the less fortunate’ and might explain their attitudes towards the displaced children but also towards all the students of the school that are considered vulnerable. By the way teachers and school staff talk about the situation of the student population in their school, one can notice a genuine concern about the extreme poverty in which many of the students live but also about the regular serious cases they have to face, like for instance sexual abuse, fights or drug addiction of the parents. At the same time teachers were also complaining about being overloaded with work because of the attempt to deal with all the social problems of the students.

The displaced children interviewed showed affection and positive feelings towards their teachers. Their relations seem to be based on trust and recognition that teachers are the ones that know.

In terms of social power relations in the school, between teachers and displaced children, one could say that children are protected but also observed in their behavior in order to comply with school requirements and in a genuine attempt to help them and understand their problems. This attitude creates a space for consideration of children agency, which is seldom present in general policies at national level.

3.1.3 Family as a source of vulnerability

It is commonly understood at the international level that displaced families have vulnerable socio-economic conditions that can negatively influence

displaced children's education, in particular school access (Ferris 2010: 99). Various studies in Colombia have also demonstrated that the conditions of the displaced families can badly influence the education of their children through various factors, including not being able to pay for supportive means necessary at schools (books, uniforms, food, transport), parents not giving importance to regular attendance, older children not going to school because they have to take care of younger siblings (CNC 2008, ICRC-WFP 2007, Restrepo Vélez and Amparo Hernández 2010).

Moreover, the displaced children interviewed at the ANCI, when mentioning their stories of displacement, almost always talk about a change in their family structure, like for instance living with one parent, having siblings living in another city or not knowing where part of the family is. Changes in the family structure are likely to be negative. Loss of a family member for instance can cause sadness and depression. Children with one parent have to share a bigger burden of responsibilities like taking care of the younger siblings or cleaning the house, and this leaves less time for homework or playing. Michael, a 9-year-old displaced student living with her mother and two younger brothers, mentioned for instance the following:

I still have to get up-to-date with a lot of homework because I also have to clean the house, otherwise my mum shouts at me. I did not ask my classmate to help me. I can do home work only at night, after I have cleaned the house (Michael, interviewee n. 15).

These situations can strongly influence the way displaced children experience their life at school, causing for instance the fact of feeling insecure or, in general, creating a negative attitude towards the new place of arrival.

Moreover, a change in the family structure, with all the difficulties that it might entail, adds up to having at the same time to get used to a new school and a new community.

The teachers of the ANCI lamented constantly the low presence of parents in children's school life. Moreover, families are sometimes seen as an obstacle to children education because they do not encourage children to do well or they are not interested in providing good education to their children. Although these are not specific features of displaced families, a displaced family is likely to be subjected to a situation where there is only one parent with too many responsibilities and no time to participate to his/her children school life or to support him/her.

3.1.4 Adaptation among the other students

The change into a new school is usually accompanied by other challenges brought by displacement, namely separation from some members of the family, living in worse houses with extended family, change of climate, food and habits. This represents an overall change in the child's life and it influences the way in which he/she experiences a new school. Depending on each specific situation and the individual response to it, the phase of adaptation can be very different. Nevertheless, in every case it represents a situation in which the child needs to adapt and, in the school environment, it means to become

part of the class and of a group of friends. From teachers' descriptions and displaced students' testimonies one can notice that each experience of adaptation is different, but in the end they get used to the new life at school, some taking longer than others. In all the cases, the adaptation phase represents a situation of searching and understanding the others and also an attempt to find one's social place within the school. It is therefore a process of adjustment that can present some challenges.

When displaced children first arrive at school they need to adapt to a new social environment. An 11-year-old displaced student mentioned for instance that she used to live in a very isolated area and her only friends were her cousins and siblings, with whom she would also go to school. When she moved to Bogotá and started to go the ANCI, she started to have friends outside the circle of her family. Moreover, a major concern of many teachers and school staff is the challenge of the displaced indigenous children who arrived less than two years ago and are still having problems in adapting not only to the school but also to a new cultural environment. They belong to the Embera indigenous group and the education they were receiving before arriving at the ANCI is very different from what they are receiving in the current institute. They are also having some problems in understanding Spanish. In class they sit in the same area and tend to keep to themselves. During an observation session in the class, I noticed that the teacher tried to mix them with the rest of the class by seating one student among them. The indigenous students did everything they could to move him out of the group, including hiding his bag so that he went to look for it and they could take his seat. Because of the cultural and language difference, their difficulties in adapting to the school seem much bigger than other (non indigenous) displaced students. Their way to cope with the situation of arriving in a new school is to stick together and help each other.

Another way is just to try to be accepted within the class or a group of friends by identifying with what is considered positive within the group or by avoiding being associated with what is considered negative. In many instances children were talking highly about students with high marks, students with new things (like for instance a mobile phone) and students with money. Consequently, situations of negative connotation are usually associated with poor people and people living in the street, all situations that children going to the institute constantly see every day. Jennifer, a 4th grade displaced student of the institute said:

I have friends here but sometimes they do not talk to me; they get angry when I have a little money and I do not buy sweets for them in the little shop of the school, but when they have money and I tell them to buy me something they don't (Jennifer, interviewee n. 14).

In a school where many students are poor, money is considered very important and therefore not being poor or not seeming poor is reflected as a very positive thing.

When I was interviewing Maria, a 9-year-old displaced Afro-Colombian student, a student of the school approached us and started to call her names with reference to the colour of her skin. She did not reply to the boy and when he left we continued the interview. She said:

The students in the previous school were nice; here also, but sometimes they do not behave well, like they lift my skirt and call me names [...] Here I do not feel like making friends (Maria, interviewee n. 17).

The experiences of displaced children in the new school can therefore be considered a very delicate phase, a phase in which they attempt to understand where their social place is within the school and to understand the people around them and what they think. For indigenous students and afro-descendants this experience might be more troublesome because of cultural and racial tensions.

3.2 Strong focus of attention versus invisibility

3.2.1 Social mirroring and the negative connotation of being IDP

Some of the children interviewed prefer not to talk about being IDP with the other students. When asked if she talks about being IDP, Juliana, an 11-year-old displaced student, said:

Nobody asked me in the school and I do not like to talk with them about this. There is a boy in my class who says that displaced people live in the street. He told to a friend of mine [also IDP] that she lives in the L [name of a neighbourhood], on the street. So she defended herself once and told him that she has a place to live and water to take shower. I do not say I am displaced so this does not happen to me (Juliana, interviewee n. 23).

IDP status, given this negative connotation, is not shared among children. It seems that the anonymity of being IDP is useful in order to avoid being mocked and somehow appear as any other student. Moreover the fact of coming from a place different from Bogotá seems not to be relevant among children because in the ANCI there are many children coming from various parts of Colombia and also from Ecuador. Juliana mentioned that her best friend Susana (also IDP) knows she is IDP and understands what it means. Sharing the status of IDP is therefore connected with the perception that the other does not necessarily give a negative connotation to the word.

A teacher of the school mentioned that there is a student in his class who says explicitly he is an IDP, knowing that this means having a house and money. In a school like ANCI, where the majority of the students live in poor conditions, displaced children might therefore declare their status when it is associated with money or a house.

These two examples of negative and positive connotations of the status of IDPs imply two opposite responses by displaced children at school: keeping their status anonymous or declaring it. A study published in 2001 on immigrant children in the US used the concept of ‘social mirroring’ to explain the reactions and behaviors of immigrant children in their new schools (C. Suárez-Orozco and M. Suárez-Orozco 2001: 96-101). The same concept could be applied for displaced children. ‘Social mirroring’ means that “the child’s sense of self is profoundly shaped by the reflections mirrored back to her by significant others” (D.W. Winnicot, as cited in C. Suárez-Orozco and M.

Suárez-Orozco 2001: 98). The significant others can be family members but also teachers, friends and school staff. In the first example, Juliana is mirrored back from her peer students a negative image of IDP and her response is not declaring her status of IDP. Conversely, whenever being an IDP is considered positive the displaced child might want to declare his/her status.

In the school under study, among teachers and displaced children there is an informal rule of anonymity about the status of IDPs in order to avoid episodes of mocking. This is because IDP status is mainly seen as negative by the other students. The fact that being an IDP might create episodes of discrimination among other students has been mentioned in the Auto 251 as one of the challenges for displaced children at school, but no specific government intervention has been identified for this situation (Key informant at Acción Social 2011, interviewee n. 6).

The negative connotation attributed to being a displaced child can be considered a perceived vulnerability, to which displaced children react by remaining anonymous. Even if this perceived vulnerability has been identified in official documents, it has not been given much importance and certainly it has not been associated with how displaced children can act to solve the problem. Their response to this perceived vulnerability, if associated with a school environment that does not create the conditions for helping displaced children, can cause a situation of invisibility, which is in tension with the intense attention required by the government towards the displaced population. The next section will describe the dynamics of this possible situation of invisibility.

3.2.2 Displaced children can become invisible

Because of teachers' recognised role as the 'ones who know things', their attempts to talk and advise, their support and their showing genuine concerns for their students, they do not mirror back to displaced children a negative reflection. Even when teachers see displaced children as the 'ones that come and go' or the ones with aggressive behaviour, teachers are supposed to include them, make them active part of the class and good students, because of their obligation to secure their school access and retention. Teachers' attitudes can therefore encourage the displaced student to tell their stories and this can open up opportunities for the displaced children to share their feelings and concerns and for the teacher to support. Moreover, teachers do not only see displaced children as vulnerable but they also consider the way they behave and can therefore help in understanding how to mediate any tensions with student peers or in general having a broad view of their situation. Nevertheless, having the possibility for this type of sharing and help is left to the sensitivity and initiative of the individual teacher and also to the will and perception of the individual displaced child.

In many cases the positive attitudes of the teachers are not enough to make displaced children share their status and ask for help or advise. This is made even more difficult if within the school displaced students are not considered a special group in need of attention. The ANCI is in fact a school with students that present many social problems. According to the teaching

plan for 3rd and 4th grade, there are various categories used to describe the student population: this includes their gender, their area of origin, IDPs, child workers, children living in dangerous areas of the city and children from vulnerable families. These are all categories identified at national level. When one talks with the teachers and the school psychologists about the student population, they also mention children in extreme poverty, sexually abused children, children of drug addicts, children of convicts and indigenous children. From the interviews with teachers and school staff one can understand that displaced children are seen as one of the many vulnerable groups present in the school. One of the two psychologists of the school in particular mentioned:

We have to deal with so many problems in this school that displacement is not a big issue; there are many girls sexually abused or beaten or for instance children with malnutrition problems. We are overwhelmed with all the problems that they have (Interviewee n. 29).

IDP is an official category of concern for the government but at the ANCI the categories of concern, on a daily basis and in practical terms, are mainly the ones associated with very specific and identifiable problems, that are perceived as needing urgent intervention, like child abuse for instance. It might be that a child is abused because after displacement he/she lives in shared houses with non-family adults, but for the staff of the school his/her vulnerability would be associated with being abused, without taking into account other major aspects of his/her situation. One can therefore conclude that being a displaced person represents a situation of intersectionality that is not perceived within the Institute. In this perspective one can identify a tension between the many prescriptions of the government at national level, which strongly emphasize the specific attention needed for the displaced population, and the lesser attention given to the displaced students of this case study, despite their relevant presence, at least in 3rd and 4th grade (between 13% and 21% of the students are IDPs).

As mentioned in the previous examples, displaced children do not talk about their status with the other students or do not like to talk about it or simply they were never asked so they did not say it. Even when chatting with the non-displaced students of the school, it seems that they seldom talk about displacement. Jennifer, a displaced student in 4th grade, mentioned:

If they asked me where I am from, I say I am from Bogotá. I am displaced but I do not talk about this with my friends at school (Jennifer, interviewee n. 14).

When asked if they have been explained in class what an IDP is, among the 12 displaced students interviewed, two said that they have. Michael (interviewee n. 15) mentioned that his teacher explained to him the floods of last winter and the population displaced because of that but he never heard about children displaced by violence in class. Antonio (interviewee n. 21) said that, in the previous school where he was, a teacher explained the population displaced by violence. The issue of children displaced by violence is thus discussed in class but not very often and certainly it is not mandatory for teachers to explain this issue at school.

Moreover, if one reads Social Science textbooks, one can find that children of 3rd and 4th grade are taught about children's rights and the organisations protecting them. They are also taught to be tolerant of people from different cultures and with physical differences, and they are taught extensively about the traditions of some indigenous populations (*Explorando y Aprendiendo* 2011, Urrego Pena et al. 2008). These subjects are supposed to help children overcome vulnerabilities, as the MEN identify them. For instance, given the strong focus of the government on protecting human rights, the textbooks are including them. For this case study, there is no specific reference in the textbooks to the population affected by conflict or specifically to IDPs. Having some lessons or talks about what it means to be displaced would possibly help clarifying the negative connotations that are attributed to IDPs, but self-perceptions of the displaced children, is not among government priorities.

Displaced children can be anonymous about their condition with both teachers and student peers. There are few opportunities to talk about displacement in class and the school staff consider IDPs as not in urgent need for help. In these circumstances one is left to wonder whether this might lead to the invisibility of displaced students. Some of the teachers of the school for instance do not know if they have IDPs in class. This would mean that displaced children are officially registered within the government system and they can receive some services but, within the school environment, their possible challenges would not be identified by teachers and therefore not addressed. This is in strong tension with the national policies prescribing a focus of attention towards the displaced population within school but it also implies that the needs of displaced children are not completely met by government interventions.

Anonymity not only plays an important role in creating a possible invisibility of the displaced children, it is also a tool for them to avoid being mocked by other students. It can therefore have both positive and negative sides. The next section will describe positive and negatives aspects of using anonymity for IDPs within the school environment.

3.2.3 Anonymity, a useful tool?

Displaced children arrive at the ANCI because the school has usually places available. When they arrive their status of IDP is not known by anybody within the school. Their status can be known by Acción Social (and/or by the Mayor of the city of reception) and it is considered confidential. Many of the displaced families in fact escaped because illegal armed groups threatened them; they therefore prefer to remain anonymous about their status so that nobody can trace them. The rector of the school can ask about their status and it is up to the displaced children or their families to declare it or not. Also, when talking with the school staff, it seems that there is an unofficial rule about not speaking of the IDP status of students in order to avoid discrimination and mocking episodes. Anonymity is therefore used as a tool for protecting the security of displaced families and children but also as a tool to overcome a perceived vulnerability within the school, namely the risk of being mocked by other students.

One cannot put under discussion the right of every displaced child and family to keep the status of IDP anonymous for security reasons. On the other hand, one can wonder about the usefulness of anonymity to avoid discrimination. It is useful for displaced children because they can avoid to be mocked by their peer students but at the same time, this could be seen as the only option they have. One could perhaps think of better and long-term solutions for that. If there was more space in the school to talk about displaced people and clarify the negative connotations associated with them, perhaps displaced children would not feel ashamed of their condition, would decide to talk freely about it and receive support from the teachers and maybe the peer students.

Moreover, anonymity does not work for everybody: many students in the school know for instance that the group of indigenous students, arrived less than two years ago, are displaced. They have heard from other students and from the news that indigenous people have recently been the target of the illegal armed groups and they were forced to escape. In their case, they cannot choose to declare or not their status of displacement and they might be laughed at by the other students because of their condition of displacement.

With regards to the anonymity of the status of IDP in their class, teachers interviewed agreed with the idea. They mentioned that they could identify IDPs in their class by asking new students about their families and trying to recover information about what happened to them. Nevertheless, in this way, they might not be fully aware of who in their class is IDP because some children might not want to talk about their experience. There is therefore a tension between teachers' duty to facilitate school access and retention of IDPs, which implies the knowledge of their situation, and respecting displaced children's anonymity. A 3rd grade teacher with one displaced boy in class told me the story of receiving a note from his mother, explaining how they were displaced. The student never told the teacher anything about his situation of displacement and it was just through the mother that the teacher was informed (Interviewee n. 19). Respecting anonymity can therefore be an obstacle for teachers and their duties, and it can prevent teachers from helping and displaced children from sharing their experiences and getting support.

These considerations lead to the conclusion that anonymity have many negative sides and that better options could be investigated, but at the same time it is positive for displaced children to avoid being mocked.

Among the positive aspects of anonymity one could also include the fact that it implies a decisional capacity, namely deciding or not if displaced children want their story to be told.

3.3 Concluding remarks

The potential invisibility of displaced children is a socio-political implication of being an IDP at school and it represents a problem because the government cannot recognise it and it cannot therefore reach displaced children in need for help. National policies in fact are not considering two of the major factors contributing to this invisibility: the negative connotation of being an IDP at

school and the reaction of displaced children to this problem, namely anonymity.

Apart from those factors, the low importance attributed to the displaced students as a category of concern within the school and the lack of space to talk about IDPs, can also contribute to this potential invisibility. The former signals a tension between national policies and local implementation, which in turn points to the need for the government to investigate more on how IDPs policies are perceived at local level in relations to policies for other vulnerable groups.

Addressing the issue of lack of space at school to talk about IDPs, would not only contribute to reduce displaced children's invisibility but also fill the current gap in their participation in matters that influence their lives, gap that the government is currently trying to fill. Having a space at school to talk about displacement, share displaced children's experiences and clarify the negative connotation attributed to being an IDP could in fact enable displaced children to better know their situation and also allow their voices to be heard within the school environment. In this sense the schools could be a form of access for displaced children to contribute to the dominant knowledge about them. This would mean revising current curricula in order to include explanations about IDPs but also creating space in class for discussions about the issue.

Chapter 4 School space and security: perceptions and implications

Displaced children go through many changes in almost all the aspects of their lives: family, social environment, physical environment, school, house, food, habits, and for some also culture and language. These changes influence the way displaced children experience their new lives after displacement. In the interviews, IDP students demonstrated a certain concern with regards to changes in the school space and in the perception of security. They will be described in this chapter.

4.1 Adults influencing the perception of insecurity

When chatting with various teachers and school staff, the issue of being in a dangerous area of Bogotá emerged many times. The displaced children, coming from rural areas to this particularly dangerous area of Bogotá, are not used to cars, drug dealing on the street and prostitution, and they might therefore be more exposed to the risks of living there. This transforms into a situation where children are constantly reminded to be careful when walking to and from school and this can influence the way they perceive the environment around them.

Parents also play a role in influencing the perception of the new place of arrival. In the case under study, some of the displaced children said that their parents do not let them play in the neighbourhood near the school because it is too dangerous. Teachers and parents can therefore contribute to creating a sense of insecurity among the displaced children about the new neighbourhood. Parents in particular can limit their space to play in order to protect them.

On the other hand, the government recognizes a general vulnerability deriving from living in urban violent areas, marginal areas or areas of extreme poverty, but this vulnerability is usually associated with difficulties in accessing school centers (MEN 2005: 10) and might therefore not be able to capture the perceptions of insecurity among teachers, parents and displaced children.

4.2 Displaced children's dual frame of reference

Migrating to a new place produces a process of continuous comparison between the 'here and now' and the 'there and then'. The study on immigrant children authored by C. Suárez-Orozco and M. Suárez-Orozco in particular deals with a "dual frame of reference [which] acts as a perceptual filter by which the newcomers process their new experiences" (2001: 87). This concept is very useful to explain the experiences of displaced children in the new school and the new neighbourhood.

Among the 12 displaced children interviewed, six of them have clear memory about the 'there and then', while the rest have either some memories or no memories at all. Except for the ones that have no memories at all,

displaced children, when talking about their experiences, clearly refer to the 'school of before' and the 'school now'; 'the friends I had before' and the 'friends of this school'; 'the places where I played before' and the 'the places where I play now'. There is a clear temporal and spatial division. Moreover for four of the students, they can compare between three different places and times, because after a first displacement from their place of origin to Bogotá, they have also moved within Bogotá.

Each of them has different experiences. The following for instance are responses by two brothers, going through the same situation but perceiving it in different ways:

I prefer Ciudad de Bolivar [southern area of Bogotá] than here [central area of Bogotá] because there I was doing a lot of capoeira (Antonio, interviewee n. 21).

I prefer to live here because the other area was dangerous (Juan, interviewee n. 27).

For some of the respondents, being in a new place corresponds to a negative experience, for others it has been a positive one. Depending on the conditions of before and after, but also on how those conditions are perceived, each displaced child can raise different conclusions on their current situation. Nevertheless the factors taken into consideration in the comparison between the 'here and now' and the 'there and then', refer mainly to space (and in particular the space to play) or to security issues. The two aspects are also very connected one another, as the following sections will describe. It seems that children give a lot of importance to these two aspects because they are the measures to decide if the current situation is good or bad.

For the children who have no memory at all about the 'there and then', their families, who certainly live their experience in the place of arrival through the dual frame of reference, might create a sense of 'there and then', in particular by talking about their place of origin and describing the life of the family there. This is important in the sense that families play a role in constructing the memories of their place of origin. Nevertheless, for those children, who have mainly experienced the life in Bogotá, what the family members tell them is unlikely to create a process of comparison between the two realities. The following sections therefore draw from the interviews and chats with the displaced children who could recollect their place of origin.

4.3 The school as the only place to play

When mentioning what were the main changes when they move to a new school, in many instances displaced children referred to spatial details:

This school here is better because it is bigger and we can play. The other school was smaller (Juan, interviewee n. 27).

The school there had no balcony (Julio, interviewee n. 16).

I prefer the school here in Bogotá. It is bigger here and there are more classes (Michael, interviewee n. 15).

The change in the space that surrounds them is perhaps the most striking change they can refer to, and this is valid not only for the school but also for their houses. When asked about the main change after displacement, many of the respondents mentioned the change of their house, referring specifically to the number of rooms and the dimensions of the houses:

We are eight brothers and when arrived we had problems to find house. We found a single room but my brother suffers from epilepsy and one day he broke a window and we had to move to another house. We have to move to another house again for the same reason. We look a lot for houses. Then this year we moved to this new single room but we are trying to look for a better one (Antonio, interviewee n. 21).

In S. Bernardo del Viento we had four rooms. When my aunty died [in Bogotá] we came here in her house (Michael, interviewee n. 15).

In particular, it seems that the space for playing is very important. Almost all of the children interviewed like the playground of the ANCI and mentioned the big spaces of the school, where they can play. At the same time, the neighbourhood where the school is located is seen as dangerous and parents do not let them go out and play. Also the teachers are constantly reminding them to be careful when they go out from the school because the streets are dangerous. This contrast between the school being a nice place to play and the dangerous neighbourhood around them, transforms the school into the only place where they could play, without the adults telling the children to be careful. The following statement of a respondent is explicative of this situation and in particular of how the options for recreational activities and places to play become more limited when arriving to such a dangerous area of the city.

I like this school, but when I go back from school I can only stay in the single room where I live with my family. We can only see one channel on TV and then I get bored. I want to go out in the street, even if I do not like the street, because I cannot do anything else. I do not want to sleep but then at nine I start to be sleepy and I can sleep (Antonio, interviewee n. 21).

This is not a fixed condition for all the displaced children and it is important not to forget the variability of this situation, which depends on the individual experience. For Juan, for instance, the neighbourhood where he is living now, which is considered very dangerous by many students, parents and teachers, is better and less dangerous than where he was living before, in the southern area of Bogotá. He is feeling therefore more comfortable in the street now than he was before and he is going out in the street despite his parents telling him not to do so.

Some of the displaced children come from rural and isolated areas and when they arrive to the capital city they also have to be careful to the cars in the streets, thing to which they are not used. With regards to this situation for instance, Jennifer mentioned the following:

We had a big garden and in front we had a fruit tree. And the school was very far; also the shop to buy food was very far. One had to go and buy a lot of things so that they could last long. The place was very nice

because one can go out and play and there is no danger of the cars (Interviewee n. 14).

This example also describes another contrast that some displaced children are experiencing: the contrast between their neighbourhood now and the place of origin where they could play outside without worry for the cars or any other danger. The place of origin is in fact often depicted as warm, with many trees and fields where they could play. One would wonder how this is possible, given the fact that displaced children escaped from their place of origin because their families were threatened by illegal armed groups. The fact is that this is the way displaced children remember their place of origin, despite the danger they might have gone through and despite the fact that, for instance, some of them know they cannot go back because it is dangerous. The idea that the school is the only place to play because the neighbourhood is dangerous, is therefore reinforced by this contrast with the place of origin.

Realising that the school is the only place to play implies the fact that displaced children become aware of the importance of having a place to play, which might not have been so strikingly clear before displacement. This in turn can be considered an emergent need of displaced children arriving in a marginal urban area, where they see their recreational spaces very limited.

The MEN is coordinating a program called 'Jornadas Escolares Complementarias' (Complementary School Days), targeting socially vulnerable children and aimed at organising sport, art and culture activities at school outside the normal school hours (MEN 2009). The objective of this program is preventing children from getting involved in child labour or illegal activities in the street and ultimately diminishing the factors that hinder school retention (Ibid.). This program cannot work in all the schools: the ANCI for instance is occupied both in the morning and in the afternoon. Moreover the program is implemented on a voluntary base by the schools and with limited resources. There are also some local foundations that organise recreational activities for children with family problems or aggressive behaviours but this does not represent a systematic approach to solve the lack of space for recreational activities because it is left to the initiative of local organisations. These considerations points to the fact that the lack of recreational activities identified by displaced children is not really a priority issue for the government.

4.4 Changes in perceptions of security

The fact of living in a dangerous area is influencing not only how the school space is perceived but also the perception of security.

It has already been mentioned that the place of origin is remembered in a positive way, as the place where displaced children could safely play outside. They do not negate that the area where they come from is violent; some of them also mentioned that they couldn't go back because they might be killed or threatened again. Nevertheless, when asked about it, they would always picture a positive image, where security is not an issue. The event of displacement on the other hand is the story where they would show security concerns. The security is related to their family: some of the members of the

family were killed, some were threatened and they decided to leave. It is always a family story.

In contrast, the area where they are living now is perceived as dangerous and as a threat for their individual security. They might be robbed or beaten and this concerns mainly themselves and the fact that they have to be careful about where they go and who is approaching them. The threat is perceived in this situation also as direct, in contrast with the indirect threat to the whole family, as they experienced it before.

Moreover some of the children seem not clear with what happened during their displacement and they do not seem to have perceived any threats to their security. For them, arriving in the area of Los Mártires means having to deal with security for the first time and it also represents a change in the perception of security: real and direct.

With regards to security issues for displaced children, the teachers of the school have a general view that displaced children coming from rural zones to violent urban areas could be more exposed to risks than the children who grew up in the urban violent areas. This is because displaced children face those risks for the first time. This points to the fact that, not only displaced children go through a change in their perception of security, but also the risks to which they are exposed within an urban environment are different from the ones in the rural areas. Thieves in the streets, urban criminal bands and cars are in fact new things for many displaced children.

Not all the experiences of displaced children are the same and for some of them, arriving in the locality of Los Mártires might seem a positive thing in terms of security. Nevertheless also in these cases there is a change in how security issues are perceived. The attention and interest of this research paper leans more towards negative experiences and the final conclusions would address mainly those, in the attempt of giving suggestions for future improvements.

Feeling unsafe in their neighbourhood and while going to school is connected with how displaced children perceive their vulnerability. In this case it is clear that, for a group of displaced children, moving to the area of Los Mártires and going to school every day in that area has meant feeling more unsafe. The only option they have in order to face this situation is going to school together with their siblings, being accompanied by their parents and, in general, going to school with a group of people. Nevertheless this does not completely solve the problem of feeling unsafe while going to school because children have constantly to be careful of what might happen to them, even if they are in a group.

If vulnerability, as defined by the MEN, is a “phenomenon that deteriorates the well being and quality of life of a person” (MEN 2005: 5), and education is seen as a way to overcome vulnerability, going to school should not be a source of vulnerability. The research paper is not pointing to the fact that the government is not addressing this issue but it indicates that this issue is a real concern for the displaced children interviewed and it should be given as much a high priority as the importance of creating new spaces for access to school. The government is officially providing transport to students and this could solve the situation, but this service cannot reach everybody because it

depends on the available resources. Moreover there are students who do not need a vehicle to go to school; they just need to walk safely towards their school.

The issue of security while going to school should be investigated more not only because it has been identified in this research but also because marginal and socially vulnerable areas, like Los Mártires, are likely to be the areas of arrival and settling of many displaced families in Colombia. Perhaps the government cannot control where displaced families arrive and if they arrive in a marginal urban area the government tends to assign their children to a school near where they are, in order to facilitate that children are sent to school. Nevertheless, the case of the Indigenous group of students, who walk 46 blocks to reach a dangerous area of Bogotá in order to be able to attend school, points clearly to the need of improving mechanisms for the services delivered to the displaced population. In order to access school, which is a priority of the government, they need to walk everyday through a very dangerous area and their situation of vulnerability is therefore in this case worsened by government policies. This situation proves that the government is prioritising access to school over the perception of insecurity of displaced children.

4.5 Concluding remarks

The emergent need of displaced children to have a place, besides the school, where they can safely play seems not to be among the main concerns of the government but it represents a real problem for displaced children and also their families, forced to keep their children in the house because the neighbourhood is too dangerous. A more systematic approach should be implemented in order to extend the few attempts already in place for addressing this issue. The Program 'Jornadas Escolares Complementarias' for instance seems a good example but it is not feasible in many schools. Making physical spaces available to implement recreational activities might solve the problem. Moreover, the government could support local foundations already engaged in addressing this issue.

Ironically, the security conditions perceived by some displaced children worsen after displacement, when they are supposed to find a secure place to live. This is a perceived vulnerability that arises within a violent urban area and it is not among government priorities, despite the fact that this is typical of areas where IDPs usually settle. Perhaps, a way to address this issue at national level could be departing from the strong focus on access to schools, and investigating and investing more on the quality and safety of the environment that surrounds the schools.

Chapter 5 Conclusions

The argument of this research paper is based on the idea that, if one analyses the three main social levels involved in the policies and programs for the education of displaced children, one can recognise that these are permeated with tensions and gaps between set objectives and what actually happens. The social levels considered are government, school and displaced children. These tensions and gaps can be recognised in how displaced children, but also their vulnerabilities, are framed and perceived. They are important to identify because they influence the actions taken to help displaced children and can therefore have implications with regards to whether displaced children's needs are actually met or not.

The main argument of this research is that Colombian policies for the education of displaced children are grounded on categories of vulnerabilities which are taken for granted and do not consider children's agency. As a consequence those policies are not grasping the problems at local level and, more specifically, they are not meeting all the needs that displaced children have. Understanding the socio-political implications of being an IDP at school could therefore help having a clearer picture on those actual needs.

In particular I have demonstrated that there is a dominant knowledge about displaced children that depicts them mainly as vulnerable and victims. This knowledge is not fully representative of the experiences of displaced children but it cannot be challenged because displaced children do not have mechanisms for participating to decision-making processes or simply for having their voices heard. The government is starting to plan forms of children's participation but the process is still at an early stage.

Moreover, given the way displaced children vulnerability is assumed and excluding children agency, there is the need to investigate more on children vulnerabilities and their experiences. The conceptualisation of vulnerability at national level has also a practical implication: since it is seen as exclusion from education, the response of the government is a focus on improving access to school. Attention to what happens after displaced children enter school is left as a lower priority. For this reason, there is also the need to investigate more on what happens after school access. This research is an attempt towards this direction.

One of the socio-political implications of being an IDP is the situation of invisibility that can be created at school. The negative connotation of being IDP and the action of staying anonymous, which are the major factors causing this invisibility, are not taken into consideration by national policies because of the way government conceptualises vulnerability. This means that the potential invisibility of displaced children at school cannot be captured and addressed by government policies. If the government is trying to identify and reach displaced children with its support and services, it needs to go beyond its categories of vulnerability and understand the experiences of displaced children.

At school level, teachers are observing displaced children and considering their actions and feelings in order to better understand their conditions and help them. This entails a space for consideration of their agency, seldom present in national policies. For this reason teachers can have a broader view of the experiences of displaced children. Moreover, they are in position for which displaced children might be inclined to talk to them about their situation and receiving support. Nevertheless this potential for identifying and understanding displaced children is not fully exploited because it is left to teachers' and displaced children's initiatives and not systematically implemented at the school. The role of the teachers in fact, according to government prescriptions, is that of grantors of school access and retention. Their role, as it is shaped by government policies, is therefore not conducive to address vulnerabilities that go beyond getting and keeping displaced children at school.

Not considering that IDP status can be a source of vulnerability because of its negative connotation implies that there are no measures at school to challenge this vulnerability. Having a space at school to talk about being an IDP and clarify the negative meaning associated with it would help to sensitise peers students and possibly create a situation where anonymity would not be a necessary tool to avoid discrimination and mocking episodes. This would also address the vulnerability of indigenous displaced children, for whom anonymity might not be an option. In this sense the school could be used as a platform where displaced children share their experiences, can be helped, and also better informed about their condition and what the government can provide. This could also open up some mechanisms for displaced children's participation in matters that affect their lives, because it would create a space for their voices to be heard.

The tension between the strong attention towards IDPs at national level and the much lower consideration for them within the school of this case study demonstrates that the implementation of IDPs policies can work at local level only if there is clarity with regards to why IDPs need a different intervention from other vulnerable groups.

Another socio-political implication of being an IDP at school is the perception of vulnerability in terms of having limited space for recreational activities and also feeling unsafe while going to school. The conceptualisation of vulnerability as lack of access to school, as the MEN frames it, does not allow the government to consider these vulnerabilities important. With regards to the former, there are some initiatives in place targeting in general vulnerable children, but they are not systematic and, more importantly, not prioritised. There are no specific initiatives addressing the issue of feeling more unsafe after displacement. The perception of insecurity represents a real concern for both displaced families and children and could be considered as important as it is school access. For this reason the government should investigate and invest more on the safety of the environment in which the schools are located.

This case study has demonstrated that the implications of being an IDP at school go beyond the fixed categories established by the government. Moreover, if the government is willing to create mechanisms for children's participation in decision-making processes, it should open up to the

reconceptualization of vulnerability, namely one that includes their perspectives and actions.

The implications of being an IDP at school might change depending on context, social relations involved and individual experiences, and for this reason the case study cannot capture them all. There might be other issues and problems at local level that are not currently identified and addressed. The government should invest more on investigations that, instead of focusing mainly on school access and exclusion, aim at critically understanding what happens at local level after school access, the experiences of displaced children, and how to help them overcome the numerous challenges they face after displacement.

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Appendix

Table 1. Summary of interviews

N.	Date	Interviewee	Information acquired
1	12 Jul 2011	Key informant of the MEN working on education and displacement.	Policies on IDPs. Representations of displaced students.
2	12 Jul 2011	MEN: person responsible for the program “Jornadas Escolares Complementarias”.	Information on the program for improving school retention.
3	12 Jul 2011	Key informant of the Government Planning Department.	Feedback on the monitoring activities of the department with regards to the right to education.
4	18 Jul 2011	NGO worker.	Experience of working with displaced students in the countryside and also in the city.
5	21 Jul 2011	Bibiana Ortiz, Officer of CODHES.	Data on the situation of Bogotá and the right to education for displaced children. Differences in the way of counting IDPs between the government and CODHES.
6	22 Jul 2011	Acción Social: person responsible for Displaced Children Policies and the program “Mis derechos primero”.	Government policies and programs on displaced children. Representations of displaced children.
7	27 Jul 2011	Key Informant at the Education Department of the Municipality of Bogotá.	Municipal policies on education and displacement. Data on the displaced population in education centres in Bogotá. How displaced children get access to school.
8	28 Jul 2011	Coordinator of ANCI for the classes in the morning.	General introduction about the school and the student population. Information on how displaced population is presented in the curricula.
9	3 Aug 2011	3rd Grade Teacher of ANCI.	Understanding of the school environment and teaching methods; identification of displaced children in class; perceptions about displaced children and teacher attitude towards displaced children.
10	3 Aug 2011	4th Grade Teacher of ANCI.	
11	4 Aug 2011	Professor of Universidad de La Salle.	Information on children ethnographic studies in Colombia and in particular on displaced

			children.
12	10 Aug 2011	School Psychologist of ANCI for the morning classes.	Get a sense of the school environment, what is done for IDPs and perceptions about displaced children.
13	10 Aug 2011	Alejandro, 9-year-old 3 rd grade displaced student from Villavicencio.	Children perceptions about their old and new school environment, their understanding and perception of being an IDP at school, their relations with other students and with teachers, and the new place of arrival.
14	10 Aug 2011	Jennifer, 11-year old 4 th grade displaced student from Tolima Department.	
15	10 Aug 2011	Michael, 9-year-old 4 th grade displaced student from Cordoba area. Afro-Colombian.	
16	10 Aug 2011	Julio, 12-year-old 4 th grade displaced student from Antioquia Department.	
17	10 Aug 2011	Maria, 9-year-old 4 th grade displaced student from Tumaco area. Afro-Colombian.	
18	10 Aug 2011	Paula, 11-year-old 3 rd grade displaced student from Neiva.	
19	11 Aug 2011	3 rd Grade Teacher of ANCI	Understanding of the school environment and teaching methods; identification of displaced children in class; perceptions about displaced children and teacher attitude towards displaced children.
20	11 Aug 2011	3 rd Grade Teacher of ANCI	
21	11 Aug 2011	Antonio, 12-year-old 3 rd grade displaced student from another area of Bogotá.	Children perceptions about their old and new school environment, their understanding and perception of being an IDP at school, their relations with other students and with teachers, and the new place of arrival.
22	11 Aug 2011	Susana, 10-year-old 3 rd grade displaced student from Medellin.	
23	11 Aug 2011	Juliana, 11-year-old 3 rd grade displaced student from Santander.	
24	11 Aug 2011	Catalina, 9-year-old 4 th grade displaced student from Antioquia Department.	
25	16 Aug 2011	School Secretary	Quantitative information on student population and how identification of displaced children is done.
26	17 Aug 2011	José, 3 rd grade displaced student from the pacific coast. Belonging to Embera Indigenous group.	Children perceptions about their old and new school environment, their understanding and perception of being an IDP at school, their relations with other students and with teachers, and the new place of arrival.
27	17 Aug 2011	Juan, 11-year-old 4 th grade student from another area of Bogotá.	

28	17 Aug 2011	School operator supporting indigenous students.	Get a sense of the school environment, what is done for IDPs and perceptions about displaced children.
29	18 Aug 2011	School Psychologist of ANCI.	Get a sense of the school environment, what is done for IDPs and perceptions about displaced children.
30	18 Aug 2011	Coordinator of ANCI for the afternoon classes	Understanding of the school environment and teaching methods; identification of displaced children in the class; perceptions about displaced children and teacher attitude towards displaced children.