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**Challenges for DDR in Colombia: Experiences of
Former Girl-soldiers.**

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This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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List of Acronyms

ACR	Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración (Colombian Agency for Reintegration)
AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self- Defense Forces of Colombia)
ELN	Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (National Liberation Army)
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration.
FARC	Fuezas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia- Ejército del Pueblo (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombias People Army)
ICBF	Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (Colombian Institute of Family Welfare)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization

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Abstract

In the Colombian armed conflict, women represented between 40% and 50% of guerrilla ranks. Since 1999 until 2017 the DDR program in charge of the rehabilitation and reintegration for children lead by ICBF has attended around 1720 girls that disengaged from non-stated armed groups, from which 60% came from FARC. Keeping in mind that in 2016, the peace agreement between the government of Colombia and FARC was signed, the analysis of challenges in the reintegration processes of these girls, obtain relevance.

Considering that the gender inequalities in the Colombian Society represent a structural violence that in many cases are the root causes that push girls to join the guerrilla groups, this research addresses to what extent the DDR Program for children lead by ICBF, managed to break the perpetuation of the sex/gender cultural system, based on the life trajectories of six former Colombian child combatants that were in the guerrilla groups and today have finished the ICBF program.

The study will be grounded in ideas of post-conflict peacebuilding and DDR as a practice tool to peacebuilding. Also, insights of feminist theories such as the sex/gender system, intersectionality, gender stereotyping among others will be discussed to delimit the understanding of the structural violence based on gender to analyze the life-stories of the disengaged people.

Relevance to Development Studies

Development goes beyond economic growth. Peace, social justice and inclusion are requirements for sustainable development. In order to achieve positive peace, it is not enough to sign a peace agreement. The claim is to address the structural violence that reinforces the perpetuation of the conflict. Even though in Colombia, important efforts of transitional justice are being made to achieve peace, it is crucial to take into account that if the multiple oppressions based on class, age and gender are maintained, a positive peace can not be achieved. The challenge is to understand the unequal systems as roots of the violent conflict, and should be addressed since DDR programs, as a stand-alone point, are not enough for peacebuilding and achieving sustainable development.

Keywords

DDR, peacebuilding, positive peace, sex/gender system, reintegration, communitarian reintegration, disengaged girls.

Introduction

“But why? I asked myself more than once. Why, having stood up for and held their own place in a once absolutely male world, have women not stood up for their history? Their words and feelings? They do not believe in themselves. A whole world is hidden from us. Their war remains unknown . . . I want to write the history of that war. A women’s history.” (Alexievich 2017)

Colombia is a country that has been immersed in an armed conflict for more than 50 years. Involved in this war have been several non-state armed groups, but for the last twenty years, the principals have been FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia’s People Army) and ELN (National Liberation Army), guerrillas with left-wing political ideals, and the paramilitary or AUC (United Self- Defense Forces of Colombia) with right-wing ideals. And on the other side is the Colombian Army, that is the governmental armed force.

In the midst of this scenario of violence, the recruitment and use¹ of children and adolescents² by all the armed groups mentioned, has been a systematic phenomenon, and in the majority of the cases the non-state actors have been the principal recruiters (Villaraga 2013; 221). For the year 2012 it was estimated that approximately “18,000 children and adolescents were fighting in guerrilla groups and emerging criminal gangs” (Springer 2012; 30), distributed over 23 departments of Colombia (United Nations 2012a: 5). Of this total number of children in the non-state groups, a significant percentage were girls from FARC and ELN. “Women and girls represented almost 50 per cent of the combatants in the ranks” (Bartolomei 2012: 508).

In the 90’s, the disengagement³ of children from the non-state groups arose, so the National Government had to create a special program for the rehabilitation and reintegration of them, called the Program for the Restoration⁴ of Children's Rights (Which will be referred to as the program or the ICBF program).

The program has been directed by the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF) since 1999 and the principal aim of it has been to repair violated rights of children and socially integrating them into society (Instituto de Bienestar Familiar, 2016; 16). This has been done within the framework of the govern-

¹ Permanent or transitory engagement of minors to armed groups as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, among others. It is carried out by force, by deception or due to personal conditions or the context that facilitates it. (CONPES, 2010)

² In Colombia the children (boys and girls) and adolescents are people below 18 years of age. (Congreso de la República de Colombia 2006; Unicef 2007)

³ Technical concept of the children and adolescents under 18 years of age who in any condition are no longer part of non-state armed groups. For adults the concept is demobilisation. (Villanueva ODriscoll 2013)

⁴ The processes of DDR for children in Colombia vary in reference to the adults, because children who are disengaged are considered “victims of the armed conflict” (Congreso de la República de Colombia 2014) and passive subjects of illegal recruitment offense (Congreso de la República de Colombia 2000: article162).

ments Peacebuilding commitment through the implementation of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration – DDR- processes, that started to run in the 1980s after peace agreements with different non-state armed groups (Herrera and Gonzalez 2013).

Since the origin of the program in “November 1999 until the 31 of December 2016, this program attended 5923 children and adolescents” (ICBF 2016: 10). From these total numbers, 71% were men and 29 % women and 3.607 of them were from FARC, which represents 60% of all children attended. (Aguirre et al 2014; Gonzalez 2016.)

Even though, girls’ participation in the armed conflict is a fact, is a topic that has not been widely explored, and therefore has not reached deep analysis of the challenges of their rehabilitation and reintegration in the framework of a gender perspective. Most studies have explored the adult female combatants trajectories and their reintegration processes (Merteens 1994; Serrano Murcia 2013) but information from the girls perspective are almost non-existent, and the little information collected is focused on analyzing the motivations of the engagement into the non-state groups (Carmona, 2010) or the different victimizing situations girls are exposed to before and within the war (Schwitalla and Dietrich 2007; Romero and Chavez 2008; Bartolomei 2012).

Only one research done by the investigation team of Mercy Corps in collaboration with ICBF and the International Organization for Migration -IOM- in 2014, analyses nineteen cases of former girl-soldiers in the framework of a gender perspective during their life trajectories, using mix methods of quantitative and qualitative analyses. It concludes that from a gender perspective, after the reintegration process “the women have changed some patterns that allow them to empower themselves as free women, self-value positively, rebuild their links with important affective reference such as family, friends and other networks and go on the ascent to be autonomous” (Aguirre et al 2014: 20)

This research, on the other hand, beyond analyzing the victimization of the girls who disengaged, will seek to follow the effects of the cultural system of inequalities based on gender of six former Colombian child-combatants in different moments of their life trajectories, and how the ICBF program, as part of the peacebuilding governmental efforts, addressed these effects. Contrary to the research led by Mercy Corps this investigation concludes, based on the six children experiences, that the ICBF program has some challenges regarding the gender perspective and the communitarian reintegration.

The above, taking into account the postulates of Peacebuilding developed in a first instance by Johan Galtung, as “the absence of not only direct physical violence but also the indirect structural violence, caused by forces such as poverty, marginalization, and exploitation” (Galtung 1969 as cited in Rylko-Bauer and Farmer 2016: 49)

The investigation will be focused on one aspect of the multiple structural violence found in society, regarding gender inequalities, which in return will be analyzed in the light of a feminist theoretical approach, considering the sex/gender system theory, coined by Gayle Rubin (1975). Other feminist approaches as the compulsory heterosexuality, gender stereotyping and stigmatization and intersectionality will be used as framework to understand the roots of the unequal power relationships between women and men in Colombia and the effects it has on the life trajectories of the former child-combatants.

The timeframe of the study will be from 1999 to 2017, as a response to the existence of the ICBF program and because we will be studying the most recent DDR program implemented in Colombia (Jaramillo et al 2009; Fundación Ideas para la Paz 2014).

The research was done through a qualitative research methodology, which included a study of the life trajectories of five women and one man, who joined the guerrillas and then disengaged from them under the age of eighteen. Then they began their rehabilitation and reintegration process in the ICBF program and today being adults who culminated this program, told me their stories for the development of this research. In addition, six semi structured interviews were done with experts in the study, design, or implementation of the ICBF program, which aim to reinforce the analysis and the comprehension of the topic.

This research is truly relevant, since 1.720 women have attended the ICBF program after their disengagement from guerrillas (Gonzalez 2016) and from which we do not know to what extent the program has considered the effects of the Colombian structural violence (Galtung 1990; Lederach 1995 cited by De la Rey and McKay 2006; Arellano 2004; Gawerc 2006; Saenz 2007) based on gender, to offer an effective rehabilitation and reintegration process.

It is also important, to analyze this topic considering the updates academic developments in peacebuilding have recognized, that DDR processes need a more “gender-sensitive” components (Bartolomei 2012: 501,510; United Nations 2006a: 10 10; McKay et al 2011:37 Shekhawat and Pathak 2015: 57) and sometimes demobilized females are not equal stakeholders of the programs as men, a situation that is worst in the case of girls who have dual vulnerable categories, gender and age (United Nations 2006b ; Bartolomei 2012: 516).

In addition to the above, the country’s political conjuncture requires an in-depth analysis of lessons learned and challenges in the implementation of DDR programs, taking into account that after almost four years of negotiations in November of 2016, the Colombian Government and FARC, Colombia’s oldest guerrilla group, signed a peace agreement (Peace Agreement 2016). Bearing in mind that FARC is perhaps the group that has recruited most of women involved in the history of armed conflict, (Rubio 2016) it is a crucial opportunity to review and see if it is pertinent to rethink the attention of these girls, to pave the way for breaking the perpetuation of a male-female and masculinity-feminine binary hegemonic model (Rubin 1975).

This research is divided in four chapters. Chapter 1 gives an explanation of the general aspects of the research, such as background, research questions, methodology, obstacles faced in the field work and the positionality of the researcher. Chapter 2 tackles some arguments of the main theoretical approaches that support the research related with the peacebuilding theory and the DDR processes, as well as the sex-gender system, the performativeness of gender, compulsory heterosexuality, intersectionality, and gender stereotyping that will be used for the analysis of the empirical findings. Chapter 3 analyses the life trajectories of the women and man interviewed in light of the ideas around the feminist theories and the standards of the DDR processes in the framework of peacebuilding. And finally, the last chapter will include the conclusion.

Chapter 1. Contextualising the Research Problem

1.1 Background

The Colombian armed conflict is an issue that cannot be explained in a very simple manner because it has been active during a long period of time. Thus the dynamics and actors have varied since its origin. However, some prevalent determinants for its emergence have been identified in the report from the Commission for understanding of the Colombian Conflict, written in 2015 (Comision Historica del conflicto y sus victimas, 2015). It indicates that the most prevalent roots are the economic inequalities of the population, and the limited access of some part of the population, primarily the peasantry, to land and income from its exploitation (Fajardo 2015; Giraldo 2015; Estrada 2015: 56), the conditions of injustice and inequality in all the social and cultural levels that “legitimize the rebellion rights” (De Zubiria 2015: 10), and the lack of political inclusion and effective access to institutions as well (Chernick 1989: 57).

All of the above, generated the emergence of different non-state groups, primarily left-wing guerrillas in the 60’s and then paramilitary groups in the 80’s to counteract guerrilla actions.

In this history of war, children have played a big role since almost all of the actors, used and recruited children to swell the group ranks. However, FARC is the non-state organization that has the highest percentage of recruitment of minors in their ranks in the context of warfare (Defensoría del Pueblo 2006; Bartolomei 2012; Springer 2012; Villarraga 2013; Gonzalez 2016).

It has been difficult to calculate the exact number of children in the armed groups. However, some studies have elaborated estimations. In 2005, the Constitutional Court estimated that between “11.000 and 14.000 children” were in ranks of non-state armed groups (Corte Constitucional 2005). More recently, Natalia Springer (2012), stated that about “18.000 children and adolescents were fighting in guerilla groups and in criminal gangs” (Springer 2012: 30).

As victims, the recruited children suffer deep psychological consequences as the result of their experiences inside the war, related to the fact of being separate from their families, kept away from school and experiencing fear of being murdered (Corte Constitucional 2005). A situation that violates their rights to personal integrity, life, freedom, education, health, family and recreation, among others (Corte Constitucional 2004a). In the cases of girls, their sexual and reproductive rights in a way that “girls up to 12 years of age must use contraception and have an abortion if they become pregnant” (Constitutional Court 2003: 81). In that sense, the duty of the State is to prevent their participation in the armed conflict and to bring rehabilitation and reintegration to them when they disengage from the armed groups (Congreso de la República de Colombia 2014; article 14).

In the 80’s, the Colombian Government began a peacebuilding agenda by negotiating with different guerrilla groups such as M-19, Quintín Lame, People's Liberation Army -EPL-, the Workers' Revolutionary Party and others (Jaramillo et al 2009; Joya 2015). All of the agreements reached, represented partial peace

processes and experiences, but despite them, the conflict was still alive, with the presence of the main guerrillas, FARC and ELN and the AUC (Nussio 2011).

In this scenario in the mid-90`s, the problem of recruitment and use of children, began to be visible when minors began disengaging from the non-state armed groups. Being the reason why ICBF, started in 1999 the implementation of a Specialized Program to attend these children who disengaged from non-state armed groups. With the aim of restoring their rights, building their citizenships and socially integrating these children and adolescents (Instituto de Bienestar Familiar 2016).

Before 2005, all the disengagements were individual⁵, this means that the boy or girl involved, individually decided to leave the non-state group and get involved in the reintegration process. In most cases, this kind of disengagement is through the escaping (45%) of the child or through governmental military rescue operations (35%) (Defensoría del Pueblo 2006: 43). Between 1999 and 2005, the ICBF program exclusively attended children from the paramilitaries and the guerrilla groups who individually disengaged (Villanueva O'Driscoll 2013).

But in 2005, children disengaged collectively, under the peace agreement between the government and the AUC groups, when around “31,687 members of the defense forces abandoned their military activity, turning in more than 18,000 weapons” (Jaramillo et al 2009: 13; Nussio 2013:11) and began a DDR process implemented by multiple governmental institutions, such as: Colombian Agency for Reintegration, Ministry of Defense and the High Commissioner for Peace. Regarding the recruited children, AUC had to fulfil certain obligations such as bringing all minors in their ranks to the ICBF (Congreso de la República de Colombia 2005; article 10), to begin the rehabilitation and reintegration process (Fundación Ideas para la Paz 2014; Jaramillo et al 2009). (See figure 1)

In this context, the ICBF program has attended, since its origin until today, children that disengaged individually from the guerrillas and AUC and children who disengaged collectively from AUC during the demobilization of 2005, in numbers 5923 children and adolescents until 2016.

The aim of the ICBF program is to facilitate children exercising of their rights that were violated inside the groups (Congreso de la República de Colombia 2006: article 50; ICBF 2016:10). These rights should be restored in the program that lasts approximately 4 or 5 years, and then they should enter the reintegration process for adults that is led by another governmental institution, the Colombian Agency for Reintegration (ACR).

The statements of the program specify that to realize an effective rehabilitation and reintegration the attention should be based on diagnostic activities that allow therapeutic and particular interventions to address specific social problems that affect the children that attend the program (Instituto de Bienestar Familiar 2016: 10).

⁵ An individual disengagement happens when the combatants decide on their own to return to civilian life, without there being any peace agreement between the Colombian government and the armed group to which they once belonged. As a result, there is a dispersal of demobilized persons throughout the country. In the framework of an agreement the collective demobilisations take place (Jaramillo, Giha, Torres 2009 ICTJ: 13-14).

The ICBF develops the program through the contracting services of operators who in most cases are institutions of the third sector (NGO's or foundations) and they are in charge of the implementation. (Instituto de Bienestar Familiar 2016). In return, ICBF, gives technical guidelines and follow-ups on these operators.

The program is developed in four modalities; (i) a shelter house or transition home, (ii) a house for specialized protection, (iii) a managed home, modality in which the children can live with their own families but under the guidance and follow-up of the ICBF and (iv) a substitute foster home. (See figure 2)

This investigation will be focused on the fourth modality regarding the primary data collected. In this modality the children go to live with a foster family that receives them voluntarily and permanently until they reach adulthood. The foster mothers receive training, by the NGO's who operate the program, to do an appropriate job, by offering the child or children they are in charge of an affective and healthy family environment in which they can fulfill their rehabilitation and reintegration (Villanueva O'Driscoll 2013).

In this modality, the children also have complementary attention by the foundations or NGO's. These are related to nutritional, psychosocial and occupational health, also recreational activities, meetings with their original families and others (Instituto de Bienestar Familiar 2016; Experts 4 and 5 2017).

Overall, this is how the program has been developed and implemented during the last eighteen years, time in which many children have been beneficiaries of this attention.

Bearing in mind that in November 2016, "The final agreement for the termination of the conflict and the construction of a stable and durable peace", between FARC and the Colombian government was signed (Peace Agreement 2016) which includes the commitment to develop a "road map" to progressively disengage minors in their ranks. (Peace Agreement 2016 see paragraph 3.2.2.5). Also, that "women and girls represent up to 50 per cent of all forces" and that the "United Nations openly condemned the use, rape and sexual abuse by commanders of more than 2500 girl soldiers, who were primarily members of FARC" (Barolomei 2012: 508). It is crucial to understand the successes and failures regarding the gender perspective of the program, as it is an important fragment of the big picture of the DDR processes of the governmental peacebuilding policy.

Objective

The research pursues to inquire how the ICBF program, as part of the government's peacebuilding efforts, addressed the effects of the system of inequalities based on gender, understood as a structural violence. The research will be done following the life trajectories of six former Colombian child-combatants from the guerrilla's groups.

Main question

To what extent did the DDR Program for children lead by ICBF manage to break the perpetuation of the sex/gender cultural system in these six former Colombian child combatants?

Sub- questions

1. How was the sex/gender system influenced in the former girl soldiers' life-stories?
2. How is the DDR program designed and implemented to address the specific issues concerning former girl soldiers?
3. How do these former girl soldiers perceive their life after the DDR program?

1.3 Methodology

This investigation was done through a qualitative methodology which includes narrative interviews and semi-structure interviews to collect primary data. The narrative interviews, were used to explore the life trajectories of five women and one man, who entered, as minors, guerrilla groups of ELN and FARC between 2001 to 2009.

The average age of the participants when they entered the guerrilla groups was 13 years. They then disengaged from the non-state armed groups, between 2006 and 2014, and today they have finished their path through the ICBF program. They all come from different regions of the country (see map 1), and today they are in different moments of life as their ages range between 18 and 31.

This method of research, was the tool used to explore the historical “construction and deconstruction” of their identities according to specific contexts and specific moments (Butler 1999:9), the reasons why they made one or another decision in a specific moment and their perceptions about their rehabilitation and their reintegration.

1.3.1 Narrative interviews: Life-stories

For the collection of these life-stories, narrative and unstructured interviews were conducted and were done in an informal way and in a “one-on-one interaction” (O’Leary 2004: 164). The interviews were conversations without a specific format, to generate confidence in these young people, so they felt free to express their emotions, beliefs and contexts (Messias and DeJoseph 2004: 44). The life-stories were recorded with the approval of the interviewees, who asked to not be referred by name in the research, reason I will use codes for their identification (see table 1).

The interviews attempted to focus on four highlighted moments of their lives; (i) before they were recruited, inquiring how their family relationships were, which were their home roles and the reasons why they entered the group, (ii) during the time in the armed group; what were their roles, if they had romantic relationships inside the group, and why they left the group, (iii) once they were disengaged from the group and join the ICBF program, regarding this moment I inquire how they experienced their route through the program, how was their relationship with their foster families and the attention given by the program. And finally, (iv) their lives today, where I asked about their actual lives after finishing the program, how was their interaction with their communities, about their personal relationships and their future life-projects.

Following Jovchelovich (2002) I use narrative interviews “aiming to encourage and stimulate the interviewee subject (informant) to tell the interviewer something about some important event of his/her life and the social context” (Jovchelovich 2002 as cited in Junqueira et al 2014: 184). Hence, through this methodology, I achieved to listen, identify and understand (Jacob and Ferguson 2012: 9) how the roles assigned by the sex/gender system in Colombia’s specific context influenced their experiences in different moments of their lives. Every event in their life-stories was a valuable resource, which allowed me to interpret how the program was aware or not of the issues regarding their gender identities and how they have handled them until today.

1.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

To contrast the information of the interviews with the disengaged people and the official information about the program for the restoration of rights I did 6 semi-structured interviews in which the intention was to know more about the DDR for children and the operation of the program

Therefore, these interviews were flexible. I started with some fixed questions about the children in the armed conflict, then about the specific issues of girls, why they are recruited, how they have experimented with the program, what has been the specific approach of ICBF in terms of gender, however they were more a conversational style than a formal interview (O’Leary 2004: 164).

With the purpose of receiving information about the ICBF program I interviewed two people who knew the structure of the ICBF program because they had worked on its design or implementation as they were former ICBF’s officials. One between 1993 and 2008 and the other between 2012 and 2013. Likewise, I interviewed a current official from ICBF, who has been working in the entity since 2012 until today. Also, to know more about the implementation I interviewed two people who are the leaders of NGO’s that operate the modality of substitute foster homes of the ICBF program.

In addition, to understand more about the women’s profiles after they finish the ICBF program I interviewed one official from ACR, the entity where the former child-soldiers do their reintegration processes for adults, immediately after they finish the process with ICBF.

Finally, I decided to interview a well-known scholar in the country that has already done research work about topics related to women, children and armed conflict, in Colombia, with the aim of enriching the findings and the analyses of the research (see table 2).

1.4 Obstacles and Opportunities Faced in the Fieldwork

The initial methodology, proposed a field work in Bogotá City, the capital of Colombia, to interview some officials from ICBF, to know in a deeper manner about the program and their technical guidelines and some statistics about the number of children attended, percentages of children disengaged from each non-state group, averages of ages, percentage of children that left the program and the gender approach guideline.

The plan was to do 6 or 7 interviews with adults of both sexes equally distributed, that had attended the ICBF program when they were children and were now doing their reintegration processes for adults in ACR Bogotá.

However, during the field work, the plans went in a different way than how they were arranged. The first obstacle I faced was that ICBF, refused to help me, because they had a different view on the merit of conducting a research of this nature. And the second being more a change than an obstacle, was the response to the open call done by the ACR to reach the disengaged people who were interested to attend the interviews. Only one man and five women, responded, a situation that didn't fulfil the equal distribution of sexes.

The first obstacle did not represent a significant gap in my research as the most relevant statistics were obtained in documents that the same entity publishes on its webpage and were contrasted with some press reports. Also, being situated in Colombia I could contact an ICBF official, out of the institutional protocol, who despite not working in the department of the DDR program, accepted to be interviewed by me, out of the institutional arena, and thanks to her I gained access to an official document that contains the differential approach guidelines.

My hypothesis about the reactive answers of the institution, is that it is over requested in the support of investigations, because of the boom on issues related to conflict that are taking in the political conjuncture of the country. And on the other hand it seems that in the subject of gender approaches, the entity hasn't explored too much and there is not much information to share, further than the general document of the different approaches that the official interviewee gave me.

The second situation, turned to an opportunity in a way that reaffirmed that the gender perspective in the investigation was a key point to analyze the gaps and the challenges of the rehabilitation and reintegration processes of the girls that disengaged form the guerrillas group. Because it became evident that their decisions, oppressions, and the different constructions of their identities in the different contexts, have origins in the hegemonic cultural sex/gender system.

Regarding the only man who answered the open call, he turned the milestone of the research since he represents the point from which a comparative analysis regarding sexes was done. The comparison of experiences and perceptions in different moments and contexts of his life with the lives of the women was a valuable topic in the analysis.

The interview with him was much slower, I had to ask more questions because his narrations were concise and he did not elaborate that much around the events in his life. This was the shortest interview I did. At first, I constructed an analysis of this situation based on beliefs of typical gender behaviors, for example that women need to express more than men.

This helped me to rethink my position as a researcher and begin to question myself about my own assumptions. This led me to make a deeper analysis of my positionality in this research, which I will develop in the next section.

1.5 Positionality

Trained as a lawyer and being a woman who has been focused her entire professional career on the implementation of social intervention projects with minors in situations of risk of being recruited by non-state armed groups, had framed my construction and understanding about the topic of recruitment in a very legalistic way.

My readings about the recruitment of minors until today has been limited as it as an offense against the children which means for me all the people I interviewed are the passive subjects of this crime.

In addition, my understanding of the recruitment is that it is always forced even if the children decide to join the group themselves. This means that I deny the genuine willingness of children to decide to join the groups, because they are not conscientious enough to decide to violate their own rights.

Finally, as a Colombian woman I have been immersed in the same sex/gender system as the people I interviewed, and I have felt oppressed in different and similar ways to them.

All of the above, is to make my personal position evident, when facing the topic and the awareness that I will have for the analysis of the data to prevent falling into biased analysis that stereotype women as victims and men as offenders or children as vulnerable people without agency.

Chapter 2 Theorising Peacebuilding, DDR and Gender

To address the purposes of this investigation, this chapter will use ideas of Peacebuilding and DDR to understand what is structural violence and how a DDR program should work. And I will use ideas from feminist theories to understand the sex/gender system as the root of one of many structural violence in Colombia.

In that sense, the first segment discusses some ideas related to the post-conflict peacebuilding, from an academic view, explaining the positive peace and the structural violence using Galtung, Lederach and Lund's ideas and from a practical perspective, explaining DDR as one tool to peacebuilding, according to the United Nations recommendations and other literature regarding the topic.

On the other hand, understanding the gender inequality as one of the different structural violence's in Colombia. Some insights of feminist theories will be discussed to delimit the understanding of gender, sex/gender system, intersectionality analysis, compulsory heterosexuality and stereotyping, to analyze the life-stories of the disengaged people, and the manifestations of these theories and concepts within them.

2.1 Peacebuilding

Johan Galtung is the most important thinker regarding conflict and peace studies. He was the first scholar to develop the term peacebuilding "to characterize progression towards positive peace following the ending of war" (Miall et al 2005; 186). To understand better the conflict, he explains that "war is only a particular form of orchestrated violence, usually with at least one actor being the government" (Galtung and Fischer 2103: 36), so the absence of war or "direct violence" understood as the visible violence, which is specified with behaviors and responds to acts of violence, does not mean peace. In other words, "seeing peace merely as the opposite of war, and to limit peace studies to war avoidance studies, is rather narrow" (Galtung and Fischer 2013: 36). (See figure 3)

Based on the above, emerges the concept of positive peace, which implies to address not only the visible violence, that in words of Galtung "is not an inherent aspect of human nature" (Fisher 2000:10) but to address also those contextual situations embedded in the society that creates the invisible violence, such as "poverty, discrimination, social injustice, among others" (Fisher 2000:10) that are cultural and structural violence, which activate visible violence.

Positive peace represents an insight of a theory of violence that has been used by other important scholars such as Lederach and Lund. In the case of Lederach, he explains the transformative character of conflict, which entails "multiple steps and interventions involved peace-building processes at multiple levels, tracks, etc. With the ultimate goal of increasing justice, reducing violence, and restoring broken relationship" (Lederach 1995 as cited in Gawerc 2006: 440). The main dimensions of this transformation are to change personal, structural, relational, and cultural aspects of the context in which the conflict arises. The cardinal point of peacebuilding, is the reconciliation, which seeks to rebuild

broken relationships within the society through transformation processes that “not only promote short-term solutions, but also build platforms capable of promoting long-term social change” (Paffenholz et al 2009: 8) recreating past violent relationships by “renegotiating history and identities”. (Lederach 2005:145)

In turn, Lund, states that the conditions for a sustainable peace are “to look to the elimination or reduction of the major known causes of intra-state armed conflicts, direct and indirect. (...) These causes could include `structural` societal conditions” (Lund 2003: 25).

This idea of invisible violence will be used to understand the gender inequality as one of the many structural violence’s in Colombia, and as a trigger issue that causes so many girls in the country to join the non-state armed groups. So following this statement, the prerequisite to build a sustainable peace which prevents the emergence of conflict again, should be the break-down of this cultural system of inequality that will be explained further in light of ideas of feminist theories.

2.2 Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Processes

The United Nations also developed the concept of peacebuilding in 1992 as a commitment of the organization and the State members as an action to “identify and support structures which will help to strengthen and solidify peace, in order to avoid a relapse into conflict” (United Nations 1992:6). In the framework of this commitment, appears the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program as an important tool of peacebuilding that contributes to “safety and stability in post-war contexts through the elimination of weapons at the hands of fighters of military structures and helping them to reintegrate socially and economically in society” (United Nations 2012b).

Normally, in all the countries where DDR has been implemented, the two first phases, the disarmament and the demobilization, don’t have greater complaints, being technical processes. Given that there is no dispute for how it should be improved or how it should be done. However, in the third stage is where there is a lot of debate, because implementing an effective reintegration process is a very complex mission (Nussio 2011: 22).

Since the 90’s, the DDR programs have turned into a central component in the framework of government agendas for peacebuilding, “between 1989 and 2009, 60 DDR processes have been documented. In 2008, 15 DDR programs were carried worldwide” (Caramès and Sanz 2009 in Nussio 2009: 19), and 34 “Comprehensive Peace Agreements (CPAs)” have been negotiated “between 1989 and 2012” (Joshi and Darby 2013)

Based on demobilization experiences of children in other countries such as Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, some guidelines or principles emerged to help children return to civilian life, most of them included in the Paris Principles (2007). The main objective for children’s reintegration should be to recover lost time, or the loss of opportunities to study, be with their

relatives and enjoy life, so the restoration of their rights, should focus on allowing them access to “education, livelihood, life skills and a meaningful role in society” (United Nations 2006a).

The most important aspects of recommendations for the children’s DDR programs are about the participation of the children in the formulation and the implementation of the programs and all decisions that affect them. The approaches in the particularities of children, and not assuming that every child has the same needs, the engagement of their families and the local communities in the processes, the recognizing of girls’ specific needs and other statements (Derluy 2012; UNICEF 2007). Also, the comprehension of the cause of the conflict is a good key for the program to know how to demobilize and reintegrate the child soldiers (Rivard 2011: 52).

On the other hand, The International Center for Transitional Justice in 2014 pointed out that some of the challenges of the DDR programs were based on the limited supply of productive projects, supply and orientation in education and vocational training, few spaces of participation and agency, poor inclusion of gender perspectives and weakness in the communitarian reintegration dimension (Correa et al 2014; United Nations 2006a; United Nations 2006b).

Focusing on the inclusion of gender perspectives, Denov said that in DDR programs the issue of girl soldiers is not as visible as that of boy soldiers, because of the fact that war and warlike phenomena have always been associated with men (Denov 2008 as cited in Carroll 2015: 36). And it is necessary because the affectations of the girls are different from the ones of boys, which implies different procedures at the time of the implementation of their reintegration processes:

“Girls may be affected in other ways than boys, in particular owing to their exposure to repeated forms of sexual assault. They are more often ostracized and reject by their communities than boys are because of the stigma associated with loss of virginity, pre/marital sex and rape. This can have devastating effects in these girls’ psychological and physical healing, making it even more difficult for them to adapt to civilian life” (Carroll 2015:47)

The lack of gender components, imply inadequate responses to female needs, creates risks of not having successful reintegrations and harms the probabilities of a long-term recovery (Shekhawat and Pathak 2015: 57; Worthen et al 2011: 37).

Taking into account, that the Colombian governmental commitment of peacebuilding has used DDR programs as a tool to make transitions from war to peace, and in light of this, the recommendations and literature regarding the DDR processes for children, and especially for girls, will be used to analyze the ICBF programs advances in addressing the structural violence based on gender inequalities to build a successful reintegration.

2.3 Feminist theories

Colombia is a society that has a cultural and social systems that sustains an unequal power relationship between women and men (Rubin 1975; Aguilar García 2008). This system is evident in the life-stories of the disengaged people interviewed, in some cases as an oppression and in other cases as possibilities of empowerment depending on the contexts.

2.3.1 Gender, Sex/gender system and Compulsory Heterosexuality

Judith Butler explained gender as a concept culturally constructed, that doesn't have a biological description as sex could have. Gender is not fixed as sex, and it is not a binary category. So, multiple cultural meanings are not the result of a sexed bodies. Thus, even if the sexes appear to be binary in their morphology and construction, it doesn't mean that genders should be two as well (Butler 1990: 6).

Butler, also points that gender is performative, this means that it is composed by those acts, in which the body shows or reproduces the cultural fictions that have naturalized and are divided in masculine and feminine, this is what Butler called performativeness of gender:

“Gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative- that is, constituting the identity it is purported it be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by subject who might be said to preexist the deed” (Butler 1990: 25).

In the same theoretical line, Gayle Rubin develops the sex-gender system concept, which refers to “a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner, no matter how bizarre some of the conventions may be” (Rubin 1975: 164). Under this system, the oppression of women are built, because it defines different social conditions for women and men, depending on some roles and functions that have been assigned to them socially, also it defines their social position as subordinate beings or beings with power over the main resources (Rubin 1975).

Adrienne Rich, goes further developing the concept of the compulsory heterosexuality as one way in which the sex/gender society perpetuates the domination of men over women, by imposing male sexuality on them, through rape, incest father-daughter, brother-sister; the socialization of women to make them believe that the male sexual "impulse" is equivalent to a right; and the idealization of heterosexual love in art, literature, the media, advertising, etc (Rubin 1975: 164).

Under this normative system, women are expected to marry and have children. This is considered the “normal” path because “heterosexual romance has been represented as the great female adventure, duty, and fulfillment” (Rich 1996: 139).

In opposition, she argues that relationships should be built without the imposition of cultural judgment (Rich 1996). The research, will use this approximation, to analyse how the compulsory heterosexuality, is permeating the familiar structures of the people interviewed. Also, to observe how this normative way of relationships influence their life projects and desires, impeding the overcome or the break of the cultural system from which the structural violence of gender is grounded.

2.3.2 Stereotyping and stigmatization

It could be said that from the distribution of roles based on the binary and deterministic view of gender, gender stereotypes are built. Following Sandra Fredman, a stereotype is a “generalized view or preconception of attributes or characteristics possessed by, or roles that are or should be performed by, members of particular group” (e.g., women, lesbians, adolescents) (Sandra Fredman 1997 as cited in Cook and Cusack 2010: 1). Of course, such attributes and characteristics are imposed by “high-status groups who usually set the standard of culturally valued behavior against which others are defined and expected to define themselves” (Deschamps 1982 as cited in Bruckmuller 2012: 211).

As a result of normative gender stereotypes which reflect the “different social and cultural constructions of men and women” (Cook and Cusack 2010: 2), the stigmatization is developed as “the process by which an individual's or group's character or identity is negatively responded to on the basis of the individual's or group's association with a past, imagined, or currently present deviant condition” (Dijker and Koomer 2007 as cited in Tonheim, 2017).

“The stigmatization is used as a social control mechanism that societies use when encountering conditions that are perceived to be undesirable and to diverge from a society’s norms and standards (deviance). Stigmatization often involves allegedly deviant individuals being exposed as bad examples and others being warned of these individuals’ bad reputations or perceived dangerous characters” (Tonheim 2014: 636).

Taking into account that the social acceptance and belonging should be the main objective of reintegration programs (Ozerdem 2012 as cited in Toheim 2014). The research paper explores the stigmatization experienced by the disengaged people interviewed, especially in the women who have an additional stigma based on the normative feminine roles that they should perform in a sex/gender system, and which they transgress performing masculine roles inside the non-state armed groups.

2.3.3 Intersectionality

Finally, the concept of intersectionality coined by Crenshaw (1989), explains how the women’s experiences are not only crossed by issues of gender but by a multiplicity of categories (class, race) that are immersed in the power relations in a specific time and context⁶.

However, Patricia Hill Collins, explained the concept as a model. She argues that the black women were in a unique place where two systems of oppressions come together, race and gender and that place is where the intersectionality appears (Hill Collins 2005).

Hill Collins focused on black women, but stated that intersectionality poses on the individual oppressive experiences of each woman, depending on the different axes of social divisions: “Intersectionality is a particular way of understanding social location in terms of crisscross systems of oppression” (Hill Collins 2000 as cited in Hill Collins 2005: 7), so they can be based on age or religion, amongst others. In turn, Cohen, explains that all the systems of oppressions are

⁶ Taken from the midterm take-home exam written by the author in fulfilment of the course “Contemporary Perspectives on Social Justice”.

common in the way they operate, they tend to be ‘naturalized’, because they are exposed as a “biological consequence, related to inherent intelligence and personal characteristics” (Cohen 1988 as cited in Yuval Davis 2006: 199).

On the other hand, as an analytical tool, intersectionality approach claims to start looking not only in the different identities of people, but how identities are immersed in the different hierarchies of society. In this sense, intersectionality allows for a multilevel examination of the multiple power relations in which one identity could find itself on the top of a hierarchy structure but at the same time in the bottom of another one⁷ (Mohanty 1988).

In this research the intersectionality will be used to study the life trajectories of the people who disengaged from the non-state groups. The use and recruitment of girls in Colombia is not only crossed by the category of gender, but other power relations as class and age are also tangled. As well, it is important to analyze the social division of adult/children and victim/offender for the understanding of the issue and the formulation of DDR programs.⁸

In conclusion, all the ideas exposed in this chapter and some of the insights given by the experts in the semi-structure interviews will be used to analyze the primary data regarding the life-stories of the disengaged people. The findings and the analysis of them will be develop in the next chapter.

⁷ Taken from the midterm take-home exam written by the author in fulfilment of the course “Contemporary Perspectives on Social Justice”.

⁸ Taken from the midterm take-home exam written by the author in fulfilment of the course “Contemporary Perspectives on Social Justice”.

Chapter 3 Life Trajectories of the former child-soldiers

This section will divide the life-stories of the disengaged people in temporal categories. In the case of the women's stories the challenge was to find common patterns to "identify several story lines within each participant's narrative, recognizing that there often are connections and overlaps within these story lines, as they are part of women's "larger" life-stories" (Messias and DeJoseph 2004: 47).

The main objective of the chapter is to analyze how the sex/gender system has influenced the former girl soldiers' lives in each temporal category using the concepts of sex/gender system, performativity of gender, compulsory heterosexuality and the intersectionality analysis to address the inquiry.

Also, their path through the ICBF program will be analyzed, to understand how the design and implementation addresses the specific issues concerning former girl soldiers. To do this, Peacebuilding statements and DDR recommendations and challenges will be used. ICBF's technical guidelines of implementation and the differential approach documents of the entity will be used as well.

Finally, in the actual moment of the life trajectories, the women's perceptions about their lives after the DDR program, will be examined using compulsory heterosexuality and the gender stereotyping and stigmatization insights.

3.1 Before the Guerrilla Group

All the people interviewed, were born in rural areas, far from capital cities of different departments of Colombia. This situation agrees with the study done by Springer which states that the origin of most of illegal recruited children, in general, are rural and their parents are peasants (69%) (Springer 2016: 21). Mainly, the rural areas of the country, are the poorest ones, because the public services are not present in the quality and quantity the population needs and the level of education is basic and job supply is very restricted (Parra Peña et al 2013: 16).

Consequently, they were people with high levels of poverty. Some of them indicated that they had to do nonqualified work to support the economy of their homes. This is a very common condition of children victims of recruitment, they "come from families of atypical composition (66%) that are part of the poorest fraction (12.6%) of the Colombian population" (Springer 2016: 21).

The poverty, the structural socio-cultural and political violence has penetrated the peasant families, in a way that episodes of family violence occur very frequently in the life trajectories. Their stories are permeated by stories of alcoholic fathers that mistreated the mothers; verbal aggression and sometimes sexual abuses of them, mostly in the case of the girls (Expert 2 2017). All the people interviewed argued that they were nonconformist with their family contexts and

that they “voluntarily”⁹ enrolled in the non-state armed groups. In contexts of social and cultural vulnerability, the willfulness should be questioned, in the sense that the children join the groups to escape from these environments. In a study of characterization of disengaged children “it was found that most of these minors were unaware at the time they entered into the groups, of the implications and the very nature of the condition of combatants” (Defensoria del Pueblo and UNICEF 2006: 28)

The structural violence based on gender is represented in the stories of the people interviewed, they were physically and verbally abused by their relatives, two of them narrated how they were sexually abused by their grandfather and uncle respectively. Another one, indicated that she was verbally abused by her stepfather. Following Rich, the typical situations in which the daughter "accepts" the rape of her father or of her relatives and the mother denies what happens, is a clear manifestation of the compulsory heterosexuality to preserve the masculine power in a specific context (Rich 1996: 32).

"Maybe [entering into the group] was the only choice I had to leave the house. My uncle abused me, one day I told my mom and she said that I was telling lies and I had huge anger because she did not believe me and finally I decided to leave" (D 2017).

On the other hand, another common factor that facilitates the engagement of girls in the guerilla groups was their involvement in romantic relationships with men that were already members of the guerrilla groups:

“At that time, a lot of members of the guerrilla began to arrive into the town, mainly militiamen who were young boys who came from other places of the country. They were new, I fell in love for the first time at that time. He started flirting and we became a couple, after some months he went to a guerrilla training course. When he left, the wife of one of the members convinced me to join the group too, I was in love" (N 2017).

It seems that the overlap of the two situations in the life-stories of the women; the violent experiences inside the family environments and the romantic affairs with members of the guerrillas, were the perfect scenarios to finally join the group:

“In those families where children do not have greater protection, the armed group becomes the referent of care, identity and also gives life options in terms of income, in terms of providing security. We know (through the Ombudsman's Investigation) that one of the triggers in the process of linking the peasants to the groups (especially FARC) was intrafamily violence” (Expert 1 2017).

The above, because they are being oppressed by a family structure which is the intimate scenario in which the sex/gender system is reproduced, the use of violence by the masculine representatives in their homes, seem to be, as Butler stated, a warning to them “the other”, “the women”, as a construction of the

⁹ According to the Constitutional Court, the apparent 'voluntary' decision of children to join the armed groups, does not correspond to the genuine willing to be in an armed group; indeed, the choice of a child to enter these groups is generally not a free choice. The determination to join the ranks is due, in practice, to economic, social, cultural or political pressures, which leave no alternative to children or their families. (Constitutional Court 2005)

otherness of the masculine, who do not dare to subvert an established social masculine hierarchy as a model of domination (Butler 1990: 37).

Following Meertens (1995), the result of this situation can be the resignation or the desperate pursue for affection in a relationship with another man or a way to escape of their "small world" is to enter the guerrilla (Meertens 1995; n.p).

Following Rich this is exactly the moment in which a woman who wants to avoid such casual assaults can easily look for a "heterosexual relationship as an option of desirable protection" (Rich 1996: 133), so the romantic involvement with a guerrilla man is a suitable option to abandon their homes.

In the case of the interviewed women that had been abused, their ideas were that inside the group they would not be forced to do things and that there they would find the protection they hadn't had in their family context: "I told the story about my uncle to a boy from the guerrilla, after this, the guerrilla was looking for him to kill him, but he escaped. (...) Being there would be good because I will be far from my uncle" (D 2017).

Some other ideas also played an important role in the decision to join the group of the interviewees; that they were going to get some money, that they wouldn't be approached and would not receive orders and the fact that they were going to have status.

Those ideas found eco with these people, having in mind the restricted economical and educational opportunities in rural areas of the country, so the chances the children have after finishing high school of having a professional career is very remote, and in the case of the women even worse, as a result of the normative roles of a sex/gender system in which they have to be mothers and housewives even though they want to be something different. So, the idea to have their own money or status, in some cases is extremely seductive, because of the possibility of performing roles from the other side of the social division of gender, age and class. This means having economic independency and perform masculine and adult roles.

In the case of the only man interviewed, he joined the group to follow all his friends that went into the group. "We were 5 boys, very close, and all of us decided to join the group, was more about not being different from my friends" (A 2017). Here we might argue that in the case of the boy the trigger point of joining the groups was more connected with status; being in the guerrilla, as all his friends represents status, because allow him to perform a typically masculine role as a combatant. Different as it seems in the case of girls that the trigger point was the violence based on gender inside their homes.

The basis of the analysis and action related with the case of the girls that disengaged from the non-state groups, not only should take into account the power relations between men and women, following Kandirikirira (2000), doing an intersectional analysis of a situation should consider, as well power relations "between adults and young people, heterosexuals and homosexuals, dominant cultures and oppressed, and between rich and poor, among others" (Kandirikirira 2000:112).

Consequently, analyzing the multiple power relations in which they are immersed, the most significant, as we already mentioned, is the gender, but class and age are categories that create social inequalities as well. The children that are

usually recruited are the poorest, situation that represent another structural violence in which they are immersed (Galtung 1990). This is a factor, facilitates their recruitment, since in some cases they go in the non-state armed groups looking for the promises of payment, which these groups usually do (Otalora and Bermeo 2013: 294).

Also, the fact of being minors is something that guerrilla groups take advantage of, because they are more vulnerable, easy to convince, the investment they make for training and support is less than that they must do with adults and they are more docile and more obedient following rules (Instituto de Bienestar Familiar 2013: 8).

In summary, during this temporal category, it seems that the girls are living in a vulnerable context in which they suffer the interaction of structural violence, regarding their positions in relation to gender, age and class. However, according to their narrations the trigger point to decide to get involved in conflict were the oppression is mainly based on gender.

3.2 During the time in the Group

3.2.1 *The equalities*

After they entered the guerrilla groups they could not go back. All of them stayed in the group between one and five years. Overall, the six-people interviewed stated that some of the things they disliked from the group was that everything was very normative and if they did something wrong, they could receive strong retaliations or punishments; they didn't like the fact that they could not leave the group whenever they wanted, sometimes they had to sleep on the ground, and do heavy work transporting things, walking entire days and standing on guard. Also, the women pointed that they depend on the commanders to receive their personal products (shampoo, lotion), and sometimes they didn't receive them.

When they referred to their everyday in the guerrilla groups, they indicated that they played the role of a regular soldier, so they had to stand guard, transport the economy (food), take care of kidnappers, cook, fight against the paramilitaries or the army if that was the case, among others.

Two of them argued that there is no difference in terms of age, regarding the distribution of responsibilities or tasks, which could be read as a performance from a position of adulthood which allows them to abandon a vulnerable position in the framework of the social division based on age.

“Everything is the same to anyone, children, women and commanders¹⁰ should do the same. The power is given by the antiquity, but this does not mean that they can abuse it” (A 2017).

It is important to mention that in many cases the discursive power of the construction of childhood universalizes the category, stripping these children of any possibility of agency. The fact that these children, mostly girls, have acted to

¹⁰ It's curious how the person referred to women, children, and commanders as men. Showing that there is a clear imaginary that men are the natural commanders, the ones on the top of the pyramid in the guerrilla structures.

leave a place of victimization also represents their agency (Schneider, 1993) to achieve a specific goal, as knowers of their own realities.

Thus, beyond that these children legally have the conditions of victims, because it is understood that they do not have enough information to make a conscious and informed decision to be part of an armed group, it is vital to understand that childhood cannot be analyzed from a universalized view of the category, nor the responsibility of their decisions completely annulled.

In the same way that there was no difference between adults and children, the interviewees stated that men and women performed the same tasks or activities, there was no differentiation between sexes:

"We had the marches with super-heavy luggage of 25-pound. That was the same for a man or a woman. I was really small, and I was not able and the only one who cared about it was my boyfriend who used to help me, or they let him to help me" (N 2017).

As a result of the binary view of the world in which women and men have defined roles, the stereotype of the combatant is affiliated with the members of the men's social group (Cook and Cusack, 2010: 9). In this way, the war and combat actions historically have been identified with male roles according to heteronormative conventions, regarding the sex/gender social divisions for the distribution of tasks.

Following Butler on the notion of the performativeness, it seems that the women interviewed were performing actions of the men's repertoire as combatants, which made them feel empowered, transgressors of submissive gestures typical of female roles within their family and community settings. The use of weapons and wearing a uniform makes them build their gender identities from another place, different from other women in the world.

"Everyone in the village was frightened of me because they knew that I used to have guns. For me that was cool. To feel that you have a little bit of power, the power that nobody is going to bother you. You could do things that others could not" (N 2017).

In this cite, it is interesting to go further in the analyses of the sensation of *coolness* that she describes, which can be read as the consequence of hegemonic masculinity, that has considered the "access to armed aggression and warfare" as a "supreme male prerogative, even the most gendered of all the privileges" (Mann 2015: 20), of course performing an activity that translate to a privilege and a source of security, feels suitable.

3.2.2 The inequalities

Although all the people interviewed insisted that inside the guerrilla groups there were no differentiations between women and men in the distribution of tasks, in other aspects, it seemed that there were some gender-based hierarchies that facilitated women's oppressions in many ways.

Regarding the distribution of the high military positions, as commanders, they stated that it was not common that women took these roles, only some of them were squad commanders or nurses but these were the highest positions that they could have, and in proportion to men there were only a few.

Not only is this evident in the military positions, but in other arenas such as access to healthcare attention:

“Some testimonies, tell how for being men who were in front of war lines, if they had, for example Leishmaniasis, the medicine was for them, and for the women with the same disease, only home medicines. The men had the priority to get medicine because they had to be healthy, as they assumed with more strength the conflict sceneries” (Expert 4, 2017).

In relation to other ways of oppressions three of the young women and the man told in the interviews that in the guerrilla the “women are respected”, because “rapists are punished”. Two of them said that they have not known any cases of rape or abuses to any of their female partners.

The comprehension of being respected, might show that the sex/gender system is so internalised that, the respect emerged from the only fact of not being raped. However, other behaviors mentioned by Adrienne Rich as ways of oppression such as the “male control of abortion, contraception and the horizontal segregation in work” (Rich 1996:132), that are common situations inside the group are too naturalize that don’t seem to represent oppressions based on gender for them.

Despite the above, one of the women said that she felt harassed by some commanders, in the way that they bet who would be the first one to have sex with her. They were rude and wanted to force her to have sex with them and then abused her.

"I felt like an object that can be traded. Also, one of the commanders since I joined the group he abused me: since I was very small he abused me, he introduced his fingers there in the intimate parts and took me to motels and threatened me" (S 2017).

Another woman indicated that the reason she had escaped from the guerrilla was because she was physically and verbally abused by her partner in the group, the squadron commander:

"Every week he hit me, he got drunk and then he came back and abused me physically and psychologically. One day after we had a very strong fight, he hurt my mouth and one of my eye. I complained to other commanders but they said that it was something of our private life. After this, I decided to escape to another place far from the town where I lived with him" (N 2017).

This part of the life-stories shows that the sex/gender is reproduced inside the group as well, it seems to be that the commanders could sexually and physically offend women as something private and inevitable. In words of Rich the girls were consumable “as long as the sexual and emotional needs of the male can be met” (Rich 1996: 135).

On the other hand, when we spoke about maternity, they narrated that they had to use birth control methods from an early age, it was usually an injection that was applied once a month (N 2017). Two women commented that in cases when other women became pregnant, they had the options to give birth and give the baby up for adoption or performing an induced abortion. But in ELN, there were no pregnancies because they were forced to plan and that the commanders always warned them to be careful to get pregnant because they would never meet that child (S 2017).

This situation represents the men's control over the women's bodies and agency which following Rich, are methods through which male power is shown and maintained (Rich 1996: 35).

In all the situations described above, girls were involved, in oppressive situations based on the intersection of the three categories of vulnerability resulting from the gender, age and class power relations. It seems that even though the guerrillas' statements claim gender equity, the sex/gender system is reproduced, which means that the power in the structure still appeared to be masculine and based on that, the oppression of women is built.

3.2.3 The relationships with the commanders.

Of the six persons interviewed, three women reported that they had sexual-romantic relationships with commanders and that this situation generated some benefits, such as being the first ones to take sanitary pads, shampoos, lotions, boots, and new uniforms and possibility of becoming mothers. As well as not having to perform many of the activities of a regular soldier, all of these, by the fact of "being the woman of the commander" (J; N and Y 2017).

All three women indicated that they were with the commanders because they "wanted to", because they gave them security and that they liked them. Though, they also mention that it was a way in which they enjoyed benefits within the group.

This is a situation that must be analyzed from several different points of view, and it will serve as a clue to understanding the identity path that these girls have built up in the group and that they already have imprinted when they enter the DDR program.

First, it is necessary to do a disclaimer that the category of childhood immersed in this specific sexual relationship, must be analyzed from a legal perspective, from which the minimum age to consent in a sexual activity in Colombia and in many Latin American countries, is fourteen years old, and that before this age it is considered sexual abuse (Unicef, 2015). Taking in to account that the average age in which these girls joined the group is thirteen, it had to be analyzed in each particular situation, even if the girls consented to be with them.

In contrast, it is also important to say that considering some feminist literature, it emphasizes that in a society that suppresses female sexual feelings, an adolescent's decision to having sexual intercourse, might be seen as a form of empowerment in a way that feeling desired is positive (Lamb, Peterson 2011). "This feeling of empowerment could derive from thinking about herself as an independent chooser, weighing options, and becoming more and more certain over time" (Lamb and Peterson 2012: 706).

According to the two positions, it is clear that the agency and the victimization of these girls appear to be playing simultaneously important roles in the situation, because the decision to be with the commanders, can be read as a manifestation of their agency, but also as the way of resisting an oppressive environment. According with Schneider this situation evidences how "sexuality may simultaneously be a source of women's experiences of victimization and oppression, and a site of women's agency and resistance" (Schneider 1993:399).

Finally, according to what they commented during the interviews, and the experiences of the experts who have been working the topic, it seems to be that

the decision to have sexual-romantic relations with commanders was not crossed by a free and informed consent but by a need of protection or by the desire to have those benefits that they mentioned. Taking into account that they come from poverty backgrounds, access to some privilege goods in their context looks to be an opportunity difficult to discard, which means that it was not a free voluntary choice.

"There was a naturalization that their bodies (girls' bodies) are to service the commanders without this being perceived as a violation of their sexual and reproductive rights. Only after a long time and because they have been in psychological therapy, did they realized that maybe they did not want to be with them "maybe I would not do it voluntarily, maybe if the conditions inside the guerrilla would be different I would not do it" they said" (Expert 3 2017).

The story of the only man in the interviewee group was different. He narrated that he was with an adult woman inside the guerrilla group, a time where he was a minor. Here the difference in the stories between the women and the man is that for the women the sentimental relationships represented benefits, on contrary for him it did not. In fact, he indicated that he was with this woman, but he knew that he could not fall in love because "at any moment they (the commanders) can take her away" (A 2017). This, supposes a higher level of freedom and voluntariness than in the case of the girls, who were expecting benefits in exchange to getting involved with the commanders.

In conclusion, during the time in the guerrilla, the women seem to perform activities and roles that are primary assigned to the construction of masculinity and some roles of the adulthood category, and in other moments they perform the roles and activities assigned primarily to a feminine gender, and in these moments, were victimized by the oppressions of power binary relationships just as during the time before entering the group. This means that the construction of their identities was through the positions of power and submission, in the way they experienced victimization and agency simultaneously.

3.3 During the time in the ICBF Program

Four of the interviewees, narrated that they escaped from guerrilla groups. They indicated different reasons to escape. In one of the cases, the woman escaped because she was physically and verbally abused by her partner in the group, the squadron commander (N 2017). Another girl escaped the group because two months after having her baby, she was notified that she had to give her child to someone else, her family or for adoption. After this notification, she decided to escape with the baby and never return to the group (J 2017). Other two, a man and a woman, specified that they escaped because they were tired of the extremely hard work, and of living in constant fear of being attacked by the army or the paramilitary groups (Y, A 2017).

In other cases, the Colombian army liberated them, one of them in a rescue operation of hostages, the other did not state in which situation she was specifically rescued (D, S 2017). This agrees with the Ombudsman's Colombian Office statement, that most "recurrent practices of children disengagements from the armed groups is by escaping (45.1%) and by army's capture (35.5%)" (Defensoría del Pueblo and UNICEF 2006: 42).

After these events, five of them started the DDR process for minors, with ICBF as they were disengaged before reaching the age of eighteen years. One of the women started her reintegration process with ACR, the entity in charge of the reintegration process for adults, because she escaped at the age of nineteen.

The case of the only man in the group was different, he narrated that he started the process in a foster home, but because he wanted to work, he left the home. The workers of the NGO, agreed with him that if he studied, he could leave the foster home and work and not attend the workshops and the attention given by the operator.¹¹

From these points of view, the interviews tried to explore the experiences of these people when they attended ICBF's program, mostly in the substitute foster homes, which was the modality where they fulfilled their processes. Their stories focused on their relationships with their foster families and the attention by the NGO's who implemented the program.

3.3.1 The NGO's

Overall, when children start the program, they are evaluated on physical development, health, education, and all areas where their rights are represented. According to the results of this preliminary diagnosis, a plan of care is drawn and shared with the family where the child will be located, and these families are almost always represented by a foster mother who ensures that the child has access to all the services that he/she needs, and then the NGO's are in charge of monitoring (Expert 5, 2017).

The perceptions of the interviewees regarding the attention of immediate needs of the program were positive. Their stories showed that the assistance regarding these needs, during that time was effective, they had a pleasant shelter, the attention of the nutritionists, and educators was good and they could attend school.

“I liked the recreational activities that made us for example go swimming or do gymnastics. Sometimes we went out for a couple of days to a recreational house. Also, I received a lot of therapy in wellness (Psychological) and studied too. We were going to meetings about different topics” (D 2017).

However, they mention that there were some negative aspects of NGO's implementation such as the constant change of the organizations that implemented the programs. And because of the discontinuity in the processes for example, they pointed that things were constantly changing and they had to build trust with them again: “The psychological care was bad because the operator changed all the time and the professionals too and we had to start telling our story again” (Y 2017).

Also, some of them said that the professionals from some NGO's were distant in the attention, they did not know how to handle the children and it seemed that they were only doing their work and there was no involvement with them: “Sometimes NGO's hire professionals who do not know how to handle the adolescents” (Y 2017).

¹¹ It would be worthy to make a deepest exploration about the bases of this individual agreement.

Contrasting this information with the experts' views about the program, some of them stated that the way the program is operated limits the quality of the attention given by it. NGO's operating the program in some cases are contracted at a national level and others at the regional level and this fact affects the monitoring done by the ICBF. The control in hiring and operation is one of the critical factors in the success of the program because the NGO's follow the ICBF guidelines, but it doesn't mean that they are doing a good job with the children (Expert 1 2017).

Related to the points above, expert 3, stated that in paper, the technical guidelines of the Program "are not bad, but how much of it is applied? It is not evident in the day-to-day exercise of the program. The monitoring done by ICBF is more administrative than providing change to the youngsters, they provide them soap and the cleaning kit, but beyond that no more" (Expert 3 2017).

Based on the perceptions of the disengaged people and the experts interviewed, it seems that the program addresses very well what is called in the DDR approach, the reinsertion, as a form of "transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families and can include transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, education, training, employment and tools" (United Nations 2006c: 5).

However, in words of a former official of the program, there are some challenges regarding the follow up of the NGO's implementation of the long-term process for the reintegration and rehabilitation of the children and how they are reacting to the program. It is not a priority of the institution:

"Like all governmental services ICBF's supervision is very focused on indicators of structure and very little on processes; if you have towels, if you bought shampoo, if they sleep in beds, if you have sheets, if you bought the two pajamas but how is the process of the children? What are the results of the operators (NGO's) facing the process? Not so much" (Expert 4, 2017).

To conclude this segment, based on the disengaged peoples stories and in the experts opinions, it might be argued that the DDR process regarding these five processes is designed to assist the immediate needs of the children, such as shelter, feeding, schooling, but facing the particular processes of the children the ICBF has some challenges with the continuity of processes related to the psychological attention and the involvement of educators in the processes and the quality of the implementation of the entity guidelines to guaranty follow up on the particular processes of each children and not only about the performance indicators.

3.3.2 The Substitute Foster Home

The Administration of Substitute Foster Homes is in charge of the operators or the NGO's through a public contract. They assume the responsibility of each of the foster mothers to provide the attention and care to the children and adolescents in the process of the restoration of their rights (Congreso de la República, 2017).

The average time that the women stayed in the substitute homes was between two and five years. When they spoke about their experiences during that

time, three of them indicated that they had good family relationships with their foster mothers, and with other members of the family, meaning that they “felt loved by the family” (D 2017), “used to spend family time” (Y 2017) and “felt supported by them” (J 2017).

All of them mention that they always had everything they needed in terms of food, clothes and educational implements. Also, they indicated that the Office of the Ombudsman always monitored the foster homes, following up if they have enough food, nice beds and overall good living conditions.

Although they mentioned having good relationships with their foster mothers, they also pointed that they could be over controlling regarding the time to see their friends and boyfriends, they said that they used to go from school directly to their homes and vice versa. They could not stay outside their homes after 7 pm and could not have cellphones or Facebook pages.

"When I came to my foster home, I had a boyfriend who also entered another foster home. My foster mom let me see him on Sundays until 6 pm, however, my relationship was over when my foster mother no longer wanted to let me see him, she started to be mean to him. She did not like that he was a disengaged boy and then told me to look for someone else. But I was happy with him" (Y 2017).

Other remarkable perceptions of the women about their foster mothers were that they saw them as being too young to do some things like going outside the home at night and spend time with their boyfriends, but as to doing some other things as cook and take a bus they were treated as adults.

“My foster mother assumed that I could do things that I did not necessarily know (take a bus, cook some specific meal). She always said to me that if I had been able to go to the mountain and take a gun how could I not be able to do such things. “You don’t know how to cook but you know how to eat” (S 2017).

Finally, regarding the question if some of their partners left the program and why, they narrated that many of them decided to leave for different reasons. Some of them because they got tired of being controlled all the time by the operators (NGO’s) or the foster mothers or they never adapted to the new urban environments or the new family dynamics, so they decided to return to the non-states armed groups, to their biological homes and others, especially women, got married so they left the program.

“Some of my friends did not return to the program. They got bored with the limitations of their freedom for example in communication because they could not have cell phone and Facebook” (Y 2017).

“The girl who lived with me in the foster home, fell in love with a boy and left the foster home. Then she called our mother and told her that her husband was hitting her and that she was pregnant” (D 2017).

The experience of the substitute foster homes has positive effects in the reintegration processes for children, from the point of view that the main objective is the restoration of their basic rights as education, shelter and having a family, live skills and others as it is stated by the United Nations (United Nations 2006a).

Additionally, following Lederach (2005) peacebuilding is a process that should be done in the framework of reconciliation of society, so in fact it can be

said that this modality of DDR for children, is a good method to create a “constructive engagement that responds to individual needs” but also to a “collective healing” (Lederach 2005: 145) through a primary process of reconciliation inside a familiar context and sometimes in the near local community, where the children build their relationships.

However, based on their stories, it seems that the program in this modality does not take into account the life trajectories of the girls, in which it was exposed in the temporal category during the time inside the group, that in spite of being girls, they already performed roles assigned to adults and in that sense, they activated their agency by making decisions, that probably another child with a different life trajectory, would not. Once they enter foster homes, there are restrictions regarding their social and sentimental life. This can be the cause of the high cases of abandonment of the program and the consequence of their category as victims, in a vulnerable situation, of the armed conflict.

Without denying that they are victims and for that they must be repaired, it is necessary to consider the fact that they have developed some skills and they are used to be in a different environment related with their possibilities to decide and be independent over some events in their lives that are not common in other children of their age with different life trajectories.

3.3.3 The gender approach in the program

On one hand, regarding a special treatment for being women or men inside the program, they explained that in general everything was the same, except that when they stayed in the transition centers before going to foster homes. There they gave some additional things to the girls and not the boys, such as lotions and makeup. "They took us to some special stores to buy clothes and make-up. They bought us some lotions as well and we all smelled the same. It was nice that there we could have a manicure" (S 2017).

Also, some of them indicated that during the time in the foster homes, the NGO's gave some special workshops only for girls such as “sexual health, sex education and how to improve relationships with families and regarding the boys' behaviors” (J; Y; and D 2017).

According to the testimonies, it might be said that the attention in some of the cases, seemed to be based on gender stereotypes to define the needs of girls. So, the reintegration process, in words of Toheim (2017) seems to be “re-directing the girls towards acceptable female behaviour and roles” (Toheim 2017:440) that has been the root of their subordination.

Reinforcing the information above, in the semi-structure interview with the ICBF official and the leaders of the NGO's that implement the program, when they were inquired about the program's differential approach in gender, they explained that the substitute foster home is an expression of a special modality with a gender approach because it is for children that can't return to their biological families because they don't represent a safe environment, and it is a modality for “girls in pregnancy condition or adolescent mothers with their children, in the way that they need more personalized attention” (Expert 4, 5 2017).

Also, they explained that in the past, the girls and the boys were separated in the centers before going into the substitute foster homes, but following a gender approach in which the program didn't reinforce the cultural differentiations of gender, they started being in the same centers and treated equal (Experts 4,6 2017).

The ICBF official explained that there is a general differential approach guideline that includes different gender, ethnicity and childhood categories, that are used as a conceptual guideline that should be included in the implementation of all the attention programs lead by ICBF, but there is not a unique document for the program (Expert 6 2017).

This guideline, establishes that the program aims to “recognize the particularities, needs and expectations of children, adolescents and families to ensure their integral protection from a differential perspective of rights, through a response that promotes equality, non-discrimination and the contextual characteristics of the territories” (Instituto de Bienestar Familiar 2017: 46).

The gender approach in the document is supported by theories of Rubin and Butler so it recognizes the gender's performativity and also recognizes that Colombia is a society imbedded in a sex/gender system. Subsequently, it states the importance to “understand that the way of living the feminine, masculine or transgender genders depends on specific territorial and historical contexts, there is no general and universal way of living gender. Additionally, the gender with which a person is identified can vary over time, that is, the person can change gender throughout his/her life” (Instituto de Bienestar Familiar 2017: 40).

The development of the ICBF's differential approach guideline is well conceptualized and very pertinent regarding women's oppressions in Colombian society, as well as performing an important analysis around the intersection of race, class, age, ethnicity, rurality and gender categories, that should be taken into account in the attention of the children. However, the document does not specify clearly how these guidelines are operationalized in practice in the program for disengaged children.

The above can be a result of the operation of the program, that is outsourced by ICBF to the NGO's and in the case of substitute foster home, it is outsourced again to the foster mothers, so the path that the technical guidelines have to travel is long. And since ICBF designs the guidelines, that is then transferred to the NGO's that then also have to transfer it to the foster mothers, it is probable that something gets lost in the process.

In addition to the above, bearing in mind that the foster mothers are people who have grown up in a society where the sex/gender system represents a cultural hegemony and that they are families of a particular sectors who may not necessarily have had the opportunity to have a training that allows them to break the cultural prejudices and beliefs, it is possible that some of them reproduce the sex/gender system conventions that have been naturalized in their communities.

3.4 After the program

3.4.1 Personal reintegration challenges

As mentioned before, almost all the interviewees, when the interviews were done, were participating in the reintegration process for adults in charge of ACR. Only one woman had finished the reintegration process.

This last part of the narrative interviews, explores life projects and their daily lives today after finishing the program. Four of the five women interviewed, immediately after finishing the ICBF program, started living with their men partners, three of them now have children. Only one of them is today a single mother. In the case of the man he is single, and he does not have children.

Regarding their educational or professional life, all the interviewees finished high school and three of them additionally finished a technical educational level. The man works as a guard. One of the women, the one that finished the reintegration process for adults is working with the government but the other four women are not working. Two of them told me that the reasons for not working or not studying, are that their partners do not allow them to do this.

Based on two of the women's stories, it might be argued that in these cases, the sex/gender manifestations are again inside their homes, through the suppression of their agency facing decisions regarding their lives and the imposition of men's will on them.

When they were inquired about their dreams they said they want a family, a house and all of them indicated that they would like to have occupations related with attention to children, psychological attention and in general, labors of community help.

Contrasting the previous information, with some of the experts' understandings, they indicated that the profiles of the women who disengage from the guerrillas, after finishing the ICBF program have some common patterns; “

“They are submissive, they have many dreams, but they live in that patriarchal society, and they have not discovered the exercise of citizenship. (...) They have dreams, but they think they are impossible. But from the context they come from, the only dreams that they are allowed to have is to marry a man. When we tell them: Do you have dreams? Yes? Ok, we can fight for those dreams, you do not need to marry, or have children or be a housewife. They open their eyes: I don't have to? And we say: No, we can work it out, but it is your responsibility that you do not engage with the first man you meet and to take care of yourself, being aware that you have sexual and reproductive rights.”
(Expert 2 2017)

Following the feminist theories, this fact can be understood, as a way of victimization by a compulsory heterosexuality system that idealizes the heterosexual relationships as a source of protection for women, that “marriage and sexual orientation toward men are inevitable components of their lives”, this is what Richs called “forms of compulsion to control consciousness” (Rich 1996: 133).

Also, the coincidence in the occupations they would like to perform and the marriage desires can be read as the product of what Cook and Cusack explain as “prescriptive stereotypes that women should be mothers, housewives and caregivers” (Cook and Cusack 2010: 22).

As a preliminary conclusion, based on the women's stories and with the support of some of the experts' points of view, it can be said that women are entering and escaping during their lives in different systems of oppressions.

In the first moment, they entered in the armed group, seeking to leave a familiar and sometimes communitarian oppressive systems, and looking for a protection in this armed structure. And sometimes feeling attracted by the possibility of performing different roles, different from what they have normatively always performed.

They then escape from this system which, as it was seen, is also oppressing them as women and as children, to enter the ICBF program, which again reproduces some of the sex/gender system's trials and additionally does not take into account the identity history that these women have. And when they end the program the most suitable option is to have a heterosexual marriage as a desire of protection, and also because that is what in the collective system represents a successful reintegration into the society as it is written in the document of public policy for reintegration:

“The demobilized woman who voluntarily makes the decision to put down weapons, assumes the commitment to build and promote the growth of her family; and in the case of being the couple of a demobilized man, in addition their role is oriented to motivate the permanence of his partner in the process” (CONPES 3554 2008: 58).

As it was seen in some cases, the new family environment again reproduces unequal social conditions between men and women, restricting the possibility of studying or working which in words of Rich exemplifies a form of perpetuation of the sex/gender order by limiting the knowledge of women (Rich 1996: 132) and restricting their roles to the ones within a marriage and related to the home.

This situation suggests to us that the program is getting them out of the war, and giving them the shelter, food, clothes and a basic educational level, but has not managed to promote that these women have autonomy over themselves for the first time in their lives.

“I was a prisoner of someone else’s will; my family, my husbands, the program, until I realized that I could do things by myself, I learned it when I was 26, I began to do what I wanted to, and I realized that I enjoy it, so now I am alone and I can work and spend the money on me, on my own dreams” (N 2017).

3.4.2 Communitarian reintegration challenges

Speaking about their lives after the disengagement from the armed groups, something that constantly came up was their relationships with their communities (their immediate social surroundings) and how it is something that makes their social integration difficult. In most of the cases they prefer to remain silent about their past in the groups or only share this information with the people of the immediate circle like their couples and family.

They aren’t honest about their histories for many reasons; in the case of the man the reason to stay silent about his past is for his own safety, more than because he cares about what community will think about him. “I don’t care what people think of me, but in the city there are still a lot of paramilitaries so I have to be careful about them” (A 2017).

In the cases of the women, because they know that in the collective imaginaries, women who disengage from a non-state armed group, are immediately related to some negative stigmas. They felt that if people realized that they are disengaged they will be labeled.

Following Goffman (1963) and Dijker and Koomen (2007), the stigmatization is a process in which a group of people is devalued, spoiled, or flawed by other on the bases of a social identity considered a deviant condition. In the cases of the child soldiers the stigmatization comes mostly because they are perceived as a threat to the society's safety because they were in a non-state armed group.

The stories and the feelings of the people interviewed, make evident that they fear to be victims of stigmatizations, regarding their conditions as soldiers, because in the collective imaginaries they are violent, and dangerous so they fear people's retaliation.

"I do not tell my friends. I am afraid that if I tell the truth they could change their view of me. Because I heard people saying that: all those people from the guerrilla groups should be killed because they are killers, they are bad. So I fear that someday they find out that I come from a group and I do not know how they will react" (S 2017).

Also, some of them said that the negative stigma makes difficult to get immersed in the labor market. That the companies don't want demobilized people in their organizations.

"There is a stigma in the community. It has been very difficult for me to find a job because of the fact of being a disengaged girl. The community is filled with fear but not all the guerrillas are bad, not all people from the army are good: we were raised in a culture that the left-wing is bad and the right-wing is good" (J 2017).

On the other hand, the stigmatization can emerge when a group of people represent a "symbolic threatening to the beliefs, values, ideologies" (Tomheim 2017: 440) or social order. This is the case of the girl-soldiers.

They suffer a double stigmatization. One based on a gender stereotype of the women inside an armed group, which annuls the possibility of imagining them as warriors or commanders and linked them restrictively with sexual roles.

Many of them remarked that in the common beliefs of their communities they were prostitutes, or they used to have sexual roles in the groups.

"People thought that because you were in the guerrilla you are a bitch. Surely this happens because you are surrounded by men within the group, but it's only three or four women within the whole group. But they believe that you were the group's prostitute" (S 2017).

Reinforcing this information, one of the expert who worked in ICBF reported that some girls who had sexual encounters in the context of armed conflict were rejected by their own families because they were considered "contaminated" (Expert 1 2017).

And second, for being the transgressor of the normative mental social category of women. For being a soldier, for having abortions in some cases, for having children in early ages or only for the fact that they had sex encounters outside the frame of a marriage status. All these facts, deprived these women of representatives of the values given to them.

"Everyone in the village knew that I came from the guerrillas, they thought that I was a bad daughter, a bad girl because I disobeyed my parents and abandoned my home to go to the group" (N 2017).

Based in the above, the fear of being stigmatized that push them to remain silent about their past can restrict the construction of their life projects, it is not desirable to build their life outside the group from a state of denial of their own identity trajectories.

“There are very creative make up stories based on what the others want to hear, this does not allow them to have a place in the world, to feel or to be” (Expert 3 2017).

Also, this situation restricts a successful reintegration process because the children cannot do their “transition into civil society and enter meaningful roles and identities as civilians who are accepted by their families and communities” (Unicef 2007:7)

As a preliminary conclusion, we may mention that the reintegration program in relation to the histories of these women has failed to address a scenario that facilitates community reintegration, by rebuilding the societal relationships, allowing the reconciliation which according to Lederach (2009) is one of the main objectives of peacebuilding processes.

The challenge of the DDR should be to achieve the individual healing of the children and simultaneous boost a process of national or communitarian reconciliation that set the ground, to deconstruct the structural imaginaries that oppress women. Allow them to recreate their civility from their particular identities.

Chapter 4 Conclusion

In this research, firstly I explain, how the women interviewed before entering the guerrillas, were living in oppressive homes where they were verbally, physically, and/or sexually abused by men within their own family context as a result of the sex gender system (Rubin 1975) that is immersed in the Colombian society. Additionally, that they have restricted economical and educational opportunities in rural areas of the country where they lived at the moment they join the armed groups and that their age represented an interested characteristic for non-state armed groups, based on easy learning and low average risk of the children. These three vulnerable positions inside the social divisions of the context, were the trigger points that made them decide to get involved in conflict.

Second, I explore how during the time in the group, girls would perform other tasks than those that they had been performing in their homes. The fact of having a relatively equal treatment regarding tasks inside the group, allowed them to perform some masculine and adulthood normative roles (Butler 1999). Nevertheless, in other aspects, such as freedom to decide about their maternity, their sexuality and the inequality of probabilities of having command positions, oppressions based on gender was clearly present. These facts show that the guerrilla groups despite having a discourse of gender equity, still maintain a power organization that remains to be masculine.

Thirdly, I analyze the way in which during the trajectory in the ICBF program, after the womens disengagement, some aspects of the attention given by the NGO's and the foster mothers doesn't take into account their trajectories of agency in some aspects of their lives, universalizing the category of childhood. It also reproduces some of the gender stereotypes (Cook and Cussack 2010) that define the needs of girls. It generates that a successful reintegration happens when the girls' life projects go towards the normative female behaviour and roles that have been the roots of their subordination before and during the time in the group based on a sex/gender system.

Regarding the gender approach in the program I argue that the technical guidelines of different approaches of the entity are well developed and the gender approach in specific "understands that the way of living the feminine, masculine or transgender genders depends on specific territorial and historical contexts, there is no general and universal way of living gender" (Butler 1986 in Instituto de Bienestar Familiar 2017). However, in the operational aspect it is not clear how the guideline is functioning. Founded in the primary data I suggest that by the complex way in which the program is implemented, through multiple outsourcings for the implementation, to put in practice what is on paper is difficult. Also, I argue that the multiple actors that are involve in the DDR program are people embedded in the same sex/gender system of oppression.

Finally, the research explores the lives of the women after they finished the ICBF program. Based on their narrations I suggest that some of them end up in heterosexual marriages that have again manifestations of the sex/gender system through the suppression of their agency facing the decisions regarding their lives and the imposition of men's will on them, as an indicator of the compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1996)

Also, I cite the profiles of the women when they enter the reintegration process for adults; They are submissive and have dreams, but which they think are impossible to achieve, because their self-perception of success is to have a family, marry a man and have children, and they think that their professional and educational dreams clash with their roles as mothers and housewives. I argue that these profiles and stories are manifestations of the perpetuation of the sex/gender system that creates a compulsory heterosexual consciousness (Rubin 1949; Rich 1996).

Regarding their communitarian relationships they feared to be victims of stigmatizations, first regarding their conditions as soldiers, because in the collective imaginaries they are violent, and dangerous and second, of being rejected as transgressors of the feminine stereotypes and being treated as prostitutes and rebellious women. Based on this situation I explain that the program has challenges in the promotion of a community reintegration, which is one of the main objectives of peacebuilding processes (Lederach 1995).

The ICBF program is an important fragment of the whole DDR process that is leading the Colombian Government, to address the post-conflict peacebuilding, and should be represented as an opportunity to transform social systems that creates invisible violence (Galtung 1990) against some vulnerable people as it is in the cases of these disengaged women. However, the results after analyzing the primary data show that the program does not address or consider the root causes, that represent the trigger point of the girls' decisions to join the guerrilla groups.

The program addresses the immediate basic needs of the children (shelter, food, education) but not the long-term impacts and sometimes reproduces some of the typical conventions of the sex/gender hegemonic system.

Finally, the program doesn't take into account the societal-gendered social structures, that end up putting a great obstacle in the communitarian reintegration over these women, that suffer a huge stigmatization based on the gender stereotypes and restrict the construction of their identities according to their trajectories and their different performances during their lives.

Tables

Table 1. List of disengaged people interviewed

Interviewees ¹²	Age of recruitment	Age of disengagement	Non-state Group	Zone of origin	Date
Woman 1 (D)	12	13	FARC	Arauca	11/08/2017
Woman 2 (N)	14	19	FARC	Casanare	29/08/2017
Woman 3 (S)	13	16	ELN	Bolívar	11/08/2017
Woman 4 (J)	12	13	FARC	Putumayo	11/08/2017
Woman 5 (Y)	14	15	FARC	San José del Guaviare	11/08/2017
Man 1 (A)	14	16	FARC	Meta	11/08/2017

Table 2. List of Experts interviewed

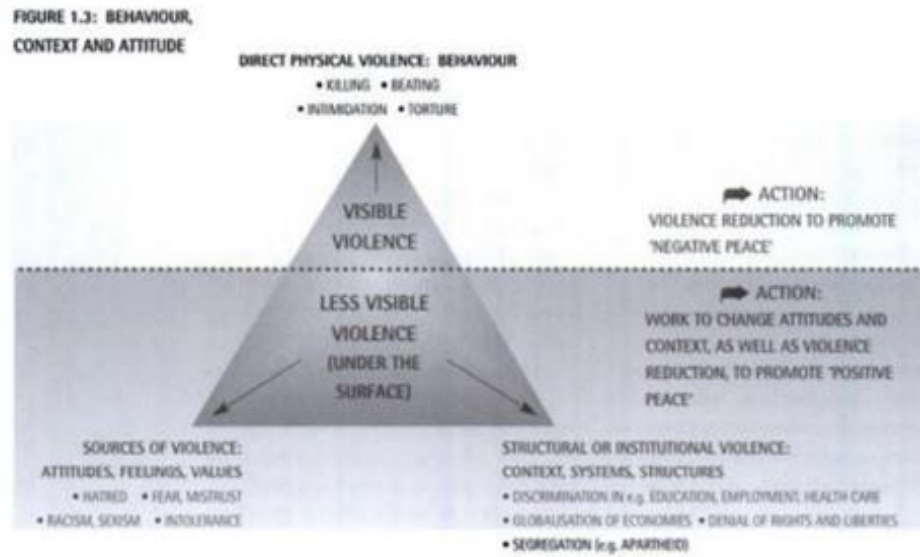
Experts ¹³	Professional Relevance	Date
Expert 1	Deputy Director of Technical Management for the attention of Children and Adolescents from ICBF, 2012-2013.	09/08/2017
Expert 2	Adviser who has worked in the transit of children and adolescents from ICBF Specialized Program to the Colombian Agency for Reintegration (ACR).	08/08/2017
Expert 3	Anthropologist, Master in Political Studies and PhD c in Political Studies and International Relations. Expert in children and conflict.	16/08/2017
Expert 4	Advisor and Technical Director of the group of early childhood of ICBF during 1993-2008	18/08/2017
Expert 5	Manager of a foundation that implements the program for restoration of rights of children, adolescents and youth that disengaged from the no-state armed groups.	15/08/2017
Expert 6	Actual official from ICBF.	22/09/2017

¹² I will use letters to identify the disengaged people through all the study to protect the identity of the people involved.

¹³ I will use numbers to identify the experts through all the study to protect the identity of the people involved.

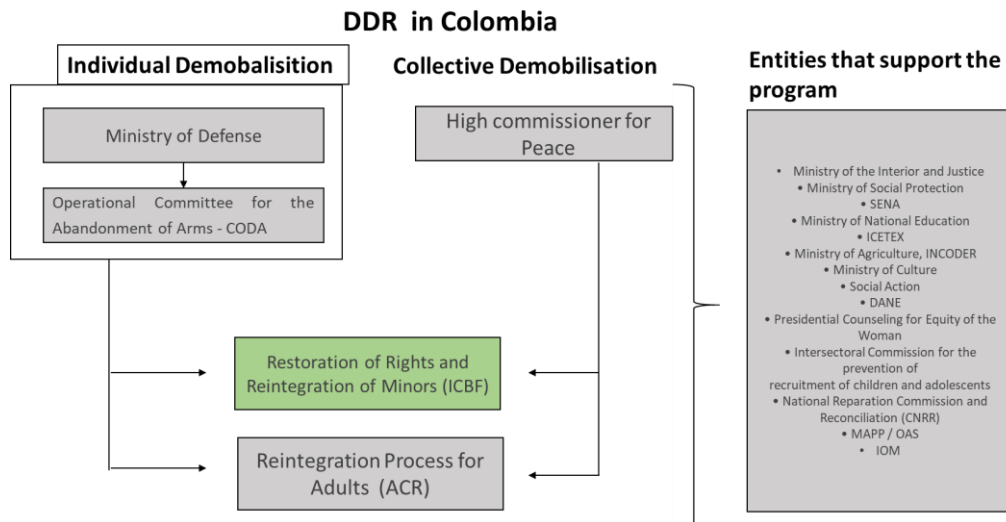
Figures

Figure 1: Galtung's Triangle.



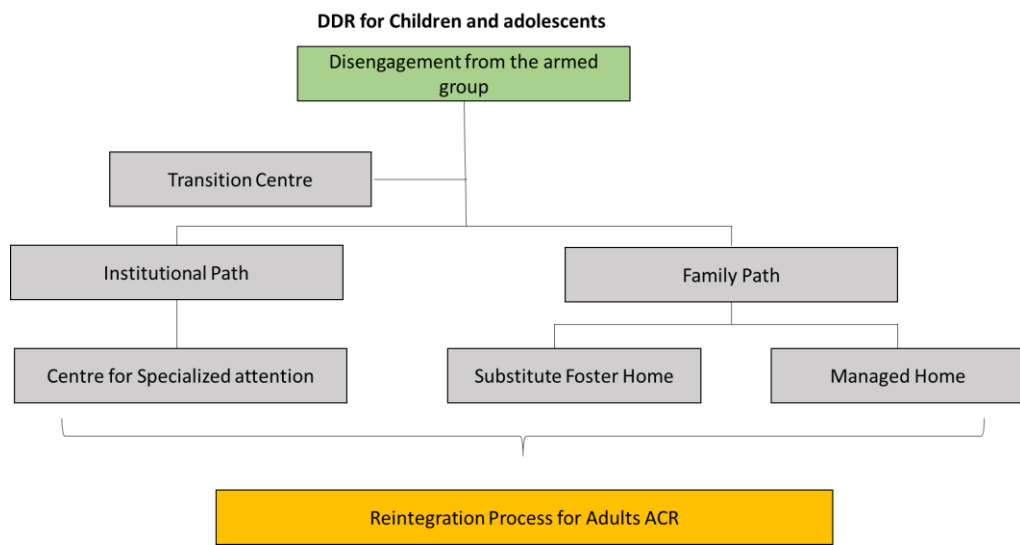
Taken from Fisher 2000:10

Figure 2: DDR in Colombia.



Based in the CONPES 3554 of 2008: 31

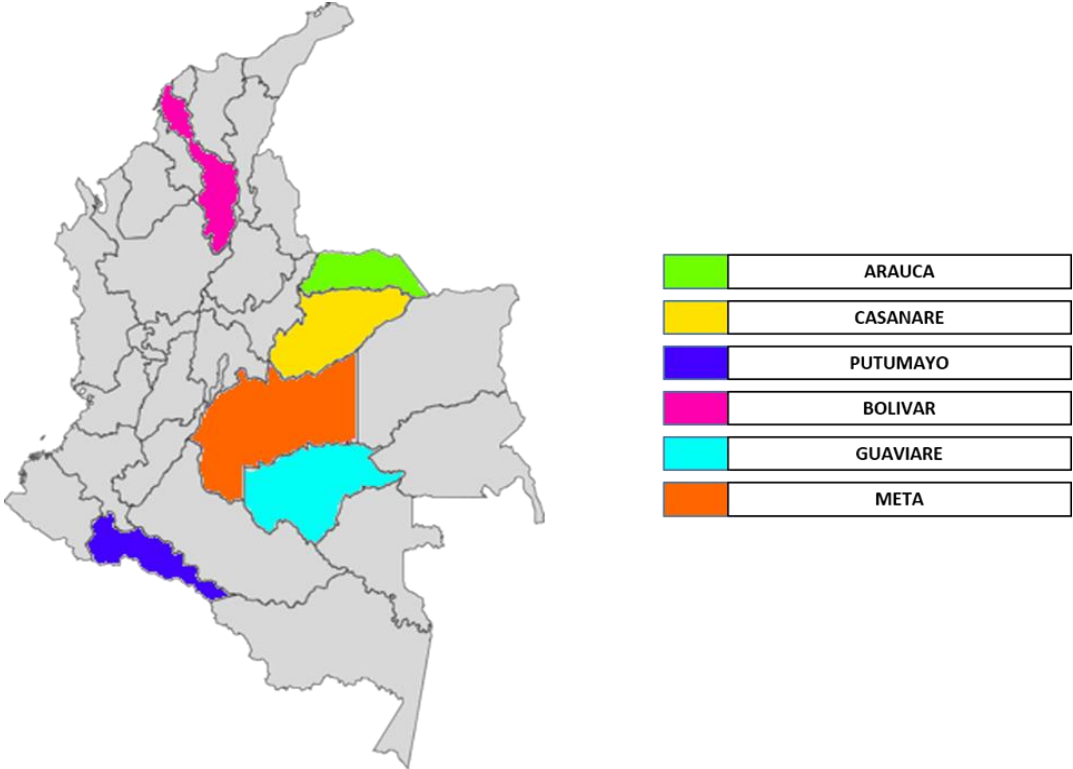
Figure 3: DDR for children and adolescents



Based on Villanueva O'Driscoll 2013: 131

Maps

Map 1: Colombia: places of origin of the interviewees.



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