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# Not Just Victims: A Case Study of Internally Displaced Women's Response Strategies in Barrancabermeja, Colombia



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# Abstract

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Internally displaced women hold together the social fabric of society; they are resilient, resourceful and creative in ensuring the well-being of their families following forced displacement. By utilizing the analytical framework of the actor-oriented approach, and the concepts of feminization of poverty and response strategies, this research demonstrates that women's agency, as actors in the reconstruction of their lives, is derived from how social networks construct agency and response strategies. Social networks are valuable in providing internally displaced women with, not only the support in reflecting and healing from their experience of forced displacement, but also in giving them the tools to be autonomous as women, as well as being economically independent. However, this greatly depends on how social networks view women. Displaced women can be viewed as either empowered or victimized. The aim of this thesis, then, is to explore and capture how internally displaced women in Barrancabermeja, Colombia reconstruct their lives and the perceptions they associate with their experience. The focus is thus on the true voices of the women, as they demonstrate their agency.

**Keywords:** Forced Displacement, Women, IDP, Social Networks, Actor-oriented, and Response Strategies.

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# Acronyms

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**Note:** For purposes of clarity, Colombian organizations cited in this text will initially be introduced with a literal translation in English and then be referred to throughout the document by their Spanish acronyms when applicable.

Acronym	English Name	Spanish Name
<b>AUC</b>	United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia
<b>CAUSE</b>	Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy	
<b>CODHES</b>	Human Rights and Displacement Consulting	La Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento
<b>ELN</b>	National Liberation Army	Ejército de Liberación Nacional
<b>FARC</b>	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia
<b>FHH</b>	Female Head of Household	
<b>FMO</b>	Forced Migration Online	
<b>FMR</b>	Forced Migration Review	
<b>FOP</b>	Feminization of Poverty	
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross	
<b>IDMC</b>	International Displacement Monitoring Center	
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person	
<b>MPPV</b>	Women of Peace, Bread and Life	Mujeres de Paz, Pan y Vida
<b>NGO</b>	Non Governmental Agency	
<b>OPF</b>	Popular Women's Organization	Organizacion Femenina Popular
<b>RUPD</b>	Central Registry for Displaced Population	Registro Único de Población Desplazada
<b>SJR</b>	Jesuit Refugee Service	Servicio Jesuitas para Refugiados
<b>SNAIPD</b>	National Comprehensive Assistance System for the Displaced Population	Sistema Nacional de Atención Integral de población Desplazada
<b>UN</b>	United Nations	
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	
<b>UNIFEM</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender equality and the Empowerment of Women	
<b>WCRWC</b>	Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children	
<b>WFP</b>	United Nations World Food Programme	

*All photos used in this document are the property of the authors.*

# 1. Introduction

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The number of persons internally displaced by armed conflict, generalized violence, and human rights violations within their own national borders has been steadily increasing on a global scale. Currently figures stand at 27.5 million worldwide (IDMC 2011:6), of which 3.6 million to 5.2 million are from Colombia<sup>1</sup>. Within these figure the issue requiring further attention is that of women, as they are usually the most marginalized and discriminated against of the internally displaced person(s) (IDP) population (Meertens 2002, Perez 2008). In Colombia, displacement<sup>2</sup> has been used as a strategy of war, a deliberate act towards the female population (Newland 2003:90), in which the factious groups have used rape and sexual abuse towards women and young girls as a form of intimidation (Obregon & Stavropoulou 1998:418). This is a tactic used in most conflicts, where women are specifically targeted because they are portrayed as a national symbol and act as “the nascent nation as well as carriers of culture and tradition” (Ganguly-Scrase & Vogl, 2008, cited in Oo & Kusakabe 2010:3).

**“With displacement we have suffered but we are proud of our abilities to move forward in our lives and to provide for our children alone, it is hard but we are doing it”.**

*Internally displaced woman,  
Barrancabermeja, Colombia 2011.*

Women represent just under half of the IDP population in Colombia at 49% while men represent the rest. Governmental statistics identify women heads of household as representing slightly over 46% of all displaced households in Colombia, of which 67% are headed by women without a spouse (Carrillo 2009:531-535, 540; Meertens 2002:5). This has many implications for IDP women in that the loss of their husband or male support network equates with an abrupt shift in how they negotiate their lives (Myers 1999:5). Furthermore, in displacement situations women suffer additional vulnerabilities such as sexual violence and death threats, while they take on the added burdens of being sole providers for the family as head of households (Perez 2008:32-34). Women, who are placed in this situation, play a central role in developing coping mechanisms and in reducing the vulnerabilities faced by families and communities (Hines & Balletto 2002:8). One of the ways they cope is through social networks as it gives them the support to deal with the trauma of displacement as well as access resources that permit them to provide for their families (Sorensen 1998; Oo & Kusakabe 2010; Sohne 2006). Colombian IDPs, slightly over 90%, find themselves fleeing to urban centers, and thus face a host of vulnerabilities

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<sup>1</sup> The discrepancy between the figures is due to numbers from the government registry which is 3.6 million, a cumulative number of the displaced since 1997. The 5.6 million is from a prominent NGO, CODHES, whose figure is cumulative since 1985 (IDMC 2011:71).

\*Possible differences to the figures may be due to government registry not counting either intra-urban displacement or displacement due to aerial fumigations, and includes only those registered in the national IDP registry (Ibid).

\*\* For further governmental statistics visit Social Action website at: <http://www.accionsocial.gov.co/EstadisticasDesplazados/>

<sup>2</sup> The terms forced displacement and displacement will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

and challenges with shelter, food security, and income generation (Carrillo 2009:537). Displaced women generally tend to disappear among the urban poor, making it difficult to identify their needs and the risks they face (IDMC 2011:51).

The International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) (2010) recently has been advocating for the need to recognize women's strengths and creativity as IDPs. Additionally, development agencies such as USAID (2007:2) began to make distinctions in women's roles in conflict, specifically in environments of instability and fragility rather than on broader gender issues. This allows for the promotion of a greater understanding of women's distinct viewpoints. Furthermore, as Sen (1999:190-191) points out, there has been a concentration on women's 'ill-being', while still significant, there is a greater urgency to adapt an agent-oriented approach to women's agenda. Women are responsible beings who choose to act or not act, and in this regard they need to be acknowledged, not only for their acquiring inner strength in dealing with the pain of displacement, but that "they strive to re-create the social fabric in the midst of unemployment, poverty, and discrimination" (Perez 2008:30).

## **1.1 PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

There has been a growing body of research on refugees and IDPs settled in camps, which makes it easier to identify them as opposed to those living in urban settings (Jacobsen 2004). Additionally, most case studies on internal displacement only examine the background and conditions experienced by IDPs in situations of forced displacement (Banerjee et al. 2005; Cohen and Deng 1998; IDMC 2002; Hampton 1998 cited in Brun 2005:15). Although this is useful, as it permits an investigation into the global variations within internal displacement situations, the number of studies on how individuals and small groups of IDPs are affected by war and cope with displacement is limited (Brun 2005:15). Furthermore, what is lost in the above discussion is the focus of making the specific situations of internally displaced women visible. For this reason, our research focuses on internally displaced women in an urban setting.

Using a qualitative case study approach this research was carried out in an urban setting with the purpose of exploring how internally displaced women in Barrancabermeja, Colombia reconstruct their lives, while exploring the perceptions associated with their experience. To achieve this, an analytical framework consisting of actor-oriented approach (Long 2001) was employed, as a principal theory, combined with the concepts of feminization of poverty (Pierce 1978 cited in Moghadam 2005) and response strategies (Vincent & Sorensen 2001); allowing the research to focus on the true voices of the women and demonstrate their agency.

That being said, the intention of this research is to answer the following three questions:

- How has the process of displacement changed being a woman?
- In what ways do internally displaced women respond to the challenges of displacement?

- How do social networks contribute to the construct of women's agency and response strategies?

Through answering these research questions this thesis aims to contribute to the gap in empirical data available on internally displaced women in urban settings, and the ways they creatively respond to displacement. It is our hope that this research will serve to represent internally displaced women's voices and experiences as a way to give insight to their differential needs in the construction of durable solutions for urban IDPs worldwide.

The thesis is divided into the following main sections: background, methodology, literature review, analytical framework, analysis of findings, and concluding remarks.

## 2. Background

The current wave of forced displacement in Colombia can be traced as far back as the 1950's to early 1960's, an era of tumult in Colombian history during the civil war known as 'La Violencia' (1946-63). This period either produced or influenced many of the armed groups which still remain today, such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) (Braun 2009:460). These groups prompted drug wars, paid assassinations and encouraged the formation of small local militias in urban centers (Meertens & Stoller 2001:132). The FARC and the ELN were both formed in 1964 as self-defense groups in opposition to land reformation. Both groups operated in areas which were sparsely populated and where state control was limited (Braun 2009:460; Echeverry, Navas & Salazar 2001 cited in Lozano-Gracia et al. 2010:159). By mainly maneuvering in rural regions of the country, these groups were able to subsidize their activities by extorting money in the guise of protection, kidnapping landowners or

**Figure 1: Map of Colombia and Research Site, Barrancabermeja**



Source: [www.nocheyniebla.org](http://www.nocheyniebla.org)



taxing goods such as coca that entered or exited regions under their control. The lawless actions of these organizations resulted in forcing inhabitants, who resided in rural regions, into the middle of an ideological war between the militant groups and the social elite (Meertens 2010:151).

Many of the country's elite, such as politicians, landowners, drug lords, businessmen and industrialists in the more developed and populous urban centers, decided to join forces to create and employ private militias. The new militias became commonly known as the Paramilitary or the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). The militias were employed to counter the kidnapping and extortion practices of the FARC and the ELN and to better defend resources and assets of the elite, that the army was unable defend. Soon after the militias' formation, the Paramilitary captains recognized they could generate more income by claiming a stake in Colombia's drug trade rather than taking payouts from the social elite (Braun 2009:460-461). Consequently, the rural population found themselves once again stuck in the middle of a conflict which, as Meertens & Stoller (2001:132-133) explain, led to a situation in which "armed actors have made territorial domination their principal objective in a way that does not permit neutral spaces or populations". This highly aggressive practice led to an abundance of victims who, along with being terrorized through murder, intimidation, kidnapping and eviction from their property, were forced to migrate and became internally displaced (Meertens & Stoller 2001:133).

The nefarious activities by armed groups in rural areas led to a considerably high rural to urban displacement rate. Migration patterns show the majority of IDPs flee to larger urban centers rather than adjacent towns as this grants the possibility for family and friend support and government programs, which also help to put distance between themselves and their aggressors (Loranzo-Gracia et al. 2010:160; Carrillo 2009:529-530).

## **2.1 GOVERNMENT RESPONSE FOR THE INTERNALLY DISPLACED**

IDPs that have been forcefully displaced and find themselves in urban centers frequently need governmental assistance. Among the challenges faced when migrating to urban cities a lack of formal education is the most precarious, as it results in limited employment opportunities and changes in gender roles where the women become the breadwinners (Loranzo-Gracia et al. 2010:160-161). Making the transition to urban living is often difficult for IDPs due to their agricultural background<sup>3</sup> which traditionally placed lower value on a classroom education. The lack of schooling has led to a high rate of illiteracy amongst IDPs which inhibits their prospects of competing for jobs with other urban residents, creating a high level of dependency on aid (Carrillo 2009:538). In an attempt to improve conditions and alleviate the burden of displacement, the Colombian government has put in place some of the most dynamic regulations in the world for assisting the internally displaced (WRITENET 2006 cited in Lozano-Gracia et al. 2010:161).

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<sup>3</sup> Up to 70% of IDP population have a previous vocational background in agriculture (Meertens 2002:6)

The Constitutional Court of Colombia introduced rulings regarding human rights, which had considerable implications on the future of IDPs, specifically resolutions such as Law 387, amendments T025 and Auto 092, each designed to benefit displaced populations (Meertens 2010:154).

In 1997, the Colombian Congress adopted law 387 which, as the Official Congressional Diary (cited in Springer 2006:8) says, is “for the prevention of forced displacement and the support, protection and socioeconomic stabilization of the population displaced by the violence”. As Meertens (2010:157) further explains, law 387 is comprised of humanitarian assistance and social and economic improvements whereby the displaced are aided in finding employment, locating a residence within a city, or are assisted with resettlement to place of origin or other rural areas. In trying to further alleviate the plight of the internally displaced, the Court amended Law 387 in both 2004 and 2008.

The amendment in 2004 of Sentence T025 decreed the government employ international standards for protecting the rights of the displaced (Corte Constitucional de Colombia 2004 cited in Meertens 2010:154). Part of the amendment was also the legislation for the use of ‘tutelas’<sup>4</sup> as a way to oversee the ‘effective enjoyment’ of citizens. Furthermore, the 2008 amendment, called Auto 092, made it mandatory that the state monitor gender-based violence from occurring during conflict. Auto 092 also decreed the central government to enact several programs<sup>5</sup> created for displaced women, ethnic groups such as Afro-Colombians and children focusing on protection, assistance, and restitution of rights (Corte Constitucional de Colombia 2008 cited in Meertens 2010:154). Thus, Law 387 and the subsequent amendments created the need for a governing body to coordinate efforts for assisting the displaced.

The National Comprehensive Assistance System for the Displaced Population (SNAIPD), which consists of 17 government agencies (see Appendix 1 for list), is in charge of managing and coordinating capacity for assisting with extreme poverty, reconciliation and furthering collaboration with international donors in the country. Social Action (Acción Social) is the leading agency in heading SNAIPD. One of the main roles of Social Action, in this regard, is to register IDPs and administer emergency assistance. IDPs need to be registered within the Social Action managed Central Registry for Displaced Population (RUPD). To register, a person must have been displaced due to violence, a violation of human rights or humanitarian law (Refugees International 2007:1). Those who meet the criteria are allotted three months of emergency aid and are provided with food, hygiene products, psychosocial care, rent money and other fundamental household items (Wong 2008:15).

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<sup>4</sup> A ‘tutela’ is a written grievance filed against anyone who infringes upon human rights, often used against governmental institutions.

<sup>5</sup> The thirteen programs announced by the central government for displaced women were: the prevention of disproportionate impact of displacement on women; prevention of sexual violence; prevention of domestic and community violence against women; health care programs; special employment opportunities for women head of households; educational opportunities; access to land; protection of rights of indigenous women; protection of rights of Afro-Colombian women; participation and protection for women leaders in social and civic movements; guarantee of the right to justice, truth, reparation and non-reparation; psychosocial accompaniment; and elimination of barriers to protection programs (Meertens 2010 154-155).

When this initial phase terminates, the displaced are authorized to seek further assistance in such socioeconomic areas as: education, health care and assistance in designing and implementing small business projects for sustainable and durable solutions (Lozano-Gracia et al. 2010:161). IDPs that are not included in RUPD, because they are unable to meet the government definition of an IDP under law 387<sup>6</sup> are excluded from the aforementioned emergency aid (Wong 2008:15).

That being said, this research does not deal specifically with the legislature of Colombia but we, the authors, felt it was important to give an overview of the key laws in place to assist the IDP population, as well as show the progressive and gender specific displacement laws for women. It is not the intention of this thesis to decide whether the government system works or does not work; rather, the intention is to explore women's perceptions and interactions with the state in fulfilling the requirements owed by law.

### **3. Methodology**

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A case study approach was used as a research strategy to add knowledge to a social phenomenon in a real-life context and to better represent experiences and actions (Yin 2003:4). Specifically, a single case study design was applied to explore perceptions of displaced women in Barrancabermeja, Colombia. Due to the limited empirical data on this topic, our research is interpretive in nature. We use focus groups comprised of internally displaced women, representative of different age groups, marital statuses and years of displacement, as our key method for data collection. Additionally, the city of Barrancabermeja was selected as a research site due to its importance as a central city, in a region of Colombia that continues to be directly affected by violence and displacement.

#### **3.1 RESEARCH METHODS**

Varying qualitative methods were used in the data collection process to facilitate further insight, knowledge and enhanced understanding of displaced women. Data collection took place between January and February of 2011 in four communes in Barrancabermeja. Upon arrival, initiating contact with internally displaced women in the city proved to be elusive. Having no prior contact with the intended target group made it particularly important to approach stakeholders that were willing to engage in conversation about our ideas and research goals. Through using both purposive and snowball sampling concurrently, we were able to select particular groups and individuals as part of our research.

The process of purposive sampling was used to filter out informants who did not fit the purpose of our research, and helped to ensure the inclusion of those who were relevant. Snowball

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<sup>6</sup> Law 387 stipulates that the displaced are those who are forced to migrate within the national boundaries and have been driven from their homes or economic livelihoods due to violations of physical integrity, personal freedom or safety from conditions such as: internal armed conflict, civil tension and disturbances, general violence, mass human rights violations, disregard for international humanitarian law, or other situations that dramatically disrupt or may disrupt the public order (Engel & Ibáñez 2007:335).

sampling led us to informants that had further contacts to local and national entities, who then acted as 'gatekeepers' in facilitating dialogue with internally displaced women and stakeholders. The first contact was made with the field unit office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Barrancabermeja. Through their suggestions and assistance, we were able to set up semi-structured interviews and discussions (See Appendix 2 for interview guides and Appendix 3 for table of informants and corresponding coding) with representatives from an international NGO: Jesuit Refugee Service (SJR); a local NGO: Popular Women's Organization (OFP); governmental agency: Social Action; an expanding city-wide process identified as Women of Peace, Bread and Life (MPPV); and finally with the Board of Organizations for Displaced Population (Mesa de Fortalecimiento Organizaciones de Poblacion Desplazada)<sup>7</sup>. The meetings with these entities contributed not only accessing the intended target group, but also in providing key information to supplement information gathered.

The primary method for gathering empirical data was five semi-structured focus group discussions with internally displaced women. Focus groups consisted solely of internally displaced women living in communes 1, 3, 4 and 5 of Barrancabermeja (see Appendix 4 for map of communes); where many of the IDP population are found. The number of respondents in each focus group ranged from 5-8 women, which as Hennick (2007:6) notes, is a good quantity to "encourage a range of responses which provide a greater understanding of the attitudes, behavior, opinions or perceptions of participants on the research issues". In total, 31 internally displaced women were willing to share their experiences. The respondents ranged anywhere from 18 to 69 years of age with varying degrees of marital status with almost all participants identifying themselves as head of household. Most had migrated to Barrancabermeja within the last 5 to 11 years, though some as recently as 2009<sup>8</sup> (See Appendix 3 for focus group respondents and corresponding coding). Focus group discussions were held at times and places convenient for the women. As such, meetings were in afternoons when there was a lull in work and family obligations. We traveled to their neighborhoods to meet in the women's homes or recreational centers as a way to gain confidence and give them a feeling of security which, in turn, we hoped would lead to open and honest responses.

Interviews were given in the local language, Spanish, without the use of interpreters or translators. A tape recorder was used for all interviews to insure information was analyzed thoroughly and with little information lost in transcription. With the tape recorder we were better able to capture what was said, including pauses, overlaps or inhalations which can be meaningful and lead to valuable information (Silverman 2005:183). Recording the interviews also permitted

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<sup>7</sup> A group of community leaders from different neighborhoods who represent the interests of the displaced population to the government.

<sup>8</sup> We felt it was important to capture this information (age, years of displacement, current status, and participation in an IDP association), because it allowed us to further understand the composition of displaced women, and to possibly explore variations in their perceptions.

\*Current status aims to capture how the women identify themselves, i.e. head of household, single, married, widowed, or other as a way to identify how many of them considered themselves as head of household.

us to continually analyze the data as it came in, a process that allowed us to formulate new questions for upcoming interviews.

### **3.2 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

Reliability and validity are important requirements in attaining credible research, and as such, we used semi-structured interviews and documents to triangulate information to help ensure the data collected during the interviews was reliable. We also made an effort to have a geographical representation within the city, reaching some of the most highly populated IDP neighborhoods. Since we are investigating women's experiences and perceptions, which are subjective in nature, certain information can be difficult to validate. Therefore, we used the informant interviews and group interview to further our knowledge, unearth new facts and crosscheck information we gained during the focus groups for validity. UNHCR and Social Action were especially helpful in procuring a number of documents on the IDP situation in Barrancabermeja, which added additional insight into the role of the regional government in aiding the internally displaced.

In the analysis, we will demonstrate how many of the same themes and experiences expressed during discussions arose in various focus groups. These themes and experiences are given further credence when cross referenced by the sentiments of the informants and assorted literature. As such, we, as researchers, tried to repeatedly evaluate and explore the results until a single generalization could be formed from all the collected data. The goal is for a result that, as Silverman (2005:215) says, will form a valid generalization which can be used as a statistical correlation and should precisely describe a specific phenomenon.

### **3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Many internally displaced women have experienced violence (physical, psychological or sexual) targeted directly at them or at their family members. They have lost husbands and children due to the conflict and, as is often the case, many have experienced more than one displacement before settling in Barrancabermeja. That being said, we understand the sensitivity of the research and therefore, extra precautions have been taken to clearly explain the research aims as well as guarantee anonymity and confidentiality. We interviewed, as Kvale (1996:117-118) puts in perspective, by trying to be conscious about our roles as researchers in relation to participants, and by being conscious to the sensitivity and moral obligations, to not only protect the respondents but, to represent them in an honest and truthful manner.

## **4. Literature Review**

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In an attempt to understand response strategies utilized by internally displaced women and their perceptions towards reconstructing their lives, an overview of what is perpetuating their circumstances is needed. This section will review some of the concepts surrounding the issue of displacement and its consequences on women. Specifically, there are two sub-sections, the first

discussing the concept of forced migration and IDPs by reviewing the debates surrounding the actual definition of each term. The second sub-section deals more with discussions on internally displaced women and the challenges they encounter, and how social networks contribute in offsetting their challenges.

Something to bear in mind is, that although there is a wealth of research done on refugees and the general plight of IDPs, there has been very little research conducted on displaced women; and if women are discussed, it's usually within the context of other vulnerable groups, such as children and the elderly.

## 4.1 FORCED MIGRATION AND THE IDP

Forced migration, which is a sub-sect of migration theory, stipulates that not all migration is economically driven and that a specific discipline studying the movement of refugees and IDPs should be created (FMO 2006). It is with this in mind that the study of IDPs and refugees immediately enters the discussion of forced migration as a conceptualization of displacement. Forced migration, as defined by Forced Migration Online (2010) is:

A general term that refers to the movements of refugees and internally displaced people; those displaced by conflict as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disaster, famine, or development projects /.../ a complex, wide-ranging and pervasive set of phenomena.

Forced migration considers displacement as “a reaction to a violent attack and not a voluntary decision” (Ibáñez & Velez 2008:662). However, Shanmugaratnam, et al. (2003) make a distinction in that they agree force can clearly be seen when masses flee their homes as a result of violence, but force can also be a factor that prevents people's free movement, i.e. when military authorities force people not to migrate. Furthermore, Shanmugaratnam, et al. (2003:9-10) note, forced migration can turn voluntary and vice versa as circumstances, conditions, and an individual's capabilities to deal with challenges change over time; essentially blurring forced and voluntary migration. Turton (2003), on the other hand, finds the word combination of forced and migration, the former implying the absence of alternative and the latter implying choice and human agency, ‘logically awkward’. However, to overcome this logical awkwardness of combining forced migration, Turton (2003:1) goes further and defines forced migrants as “ordinary people or purposive actors, embedded in particular social, political and historical situations”. Additionally, as Brun (2005:21) points out, the use of the term forced “helps to prevent the normalization and even romanticism of the forced migration experience, which is in danger of becoming viewed as normal in today's globalized world”. More than anything, the term ‘forced migration’ allows for the recognition of a human agency which is in the process of and involved in events resulting in an individual being displaced (Turton 2003:9).

Forced migration takes into account both refugees and IDPs. However, this can be problematic in that it gives way for the two terms to be compounded and used interchangeably. As Mooney (2005:9) points out, there has been a general tendency by practitioners to use the term refugee as

a catch-all phrase for all uprooted persons without taking into account the legal definition distinguishing refugees as a group. That said, IDPs are universally identified by Kälın (2008:2) in the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* as:

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.

This definition tries to encompass all possible types of displacement without limiting it to conflict. However, for the purpose of this research we will only focus on internally displaced women affected by armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, and violations of human rights.

Nonetheless, we must understand that Kälın's definition holds no special legal status and that it is "a descriptive, rather than legal, definition, [which] simply describes the factual situation of a person being displaced within one's country of habitual residence" (Mooney 2005:13-14). Additionally, we need to identify IDPs as a distinct group with specific concerns because, as Mooney (2005:14-15) points out, the simple act of displacement brings on a set of circumstances that leads to serious vulnerabilities: the most obvious being the loss of property to the least obvious being emotional trauma and loss of social relations.

That said, there is a new area of concern in identifying IDPs displaced in urban centers, especially in Africa where in the past, IDP camps facilitated easy identification. As Sohne (2006) indicates, there have not been enough studies completed which explore and understand how urban IDPs cope with displacement. This point is further reiterated by the *Forced Migration Review* (2010), in an issue dealing specifically with the plight of the urban displaced. The *Review* states, "relatively little is known about the precise numbers of those forcibly displaced into urban settings, their demographics, basic needs or protection problems". As mentioned in the introduction, Colombian displacement takes place from rural to urban areas, and about 90% of IDPs have fled to urban centers.

## **4.2 INTERNALLY DISPLACED WOMEN AND SOCIAL NETWORKS**

Women and girls are generally considered "resilient survivors, courageous protectors and untiring caregivers", placing their families first at the cost of their own safety and well-being (WCRWC 2006:3). However, displacement deepens the 'historical discrimination' against women and may even generate new forms of discrimination and marginalization; which may include practices by governments, assistance agencies and refugee or local communities (WCRWC 2006:10). Perez (2008:33) further supports this point by noting that with the invisibility of the women "[t]heir general vulnerability underscores the patriarchal relationships and structures that configure specific gendered notions and practices that are applied both during wartime and on a daily institutional and organizational basis". Essentially, when women are forced into displacement,

they often deal with challenges in redefining their own perceptions both culturally and socially (Lindsey, 2001 cited in Oo & Kusakabe 2010:2).

This viewpoint becomes relevant when it impacts women's access to livelihoods, which compounds the challenges they already face when being viewed within the roles they play as mothers and wives, rather than as right-bearers (Perez 2008:33). An assessment conducted by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (2006) in Azerbaijan concurred through their own findings that internally displaced women suffer from double the burden through the addition of poverty and the trauma of losing their way of life. That said, in Colombia displaced women find themselves engaged in the informal sector working as maids, cooks or as street vendors as a way to counter poverty. They essentially carry out unskilled activities in urban centers with no real entitlement to health or social benefits, much less a guarantee for daily earnings (Carrillo 2009:538); this is usually due to their low educational background. In Indonesia, Adam's (2008:5) study on income generating strategies of IDPs, found women coped easier with displacement than men. This was, as Adam explains, mainly due to women's continued access to the informal sector of the economy, while men lost their jobs in the formal sector as a consequence of the conflict. However, Adam (2008:5) was quick to point out that jobs within the informal sector did not provide adequate financial income for the household but "caused a deeper impoverishment of the community".

To counter some of the challenges displaced women organize themselves through social networks as a survival strategy or as a coping mechanism (Meertens 1999 cited in Oo & Kusakabe 2010:2; Sorensen 1998:31). The creation of social networks allows displaced women a support system in which they are able to work together in times of crisis (Oo & Kusakabe 2010:2). As the Oo and Kusakabe (2010) study in Myanmar found, Karen women's ability to access social networks and use their status as mothers allowed them to respond to the challenges of displacement. Additionally, social networks were a vital instrument for IDPs in Uganda, where those who were part of social networks were relatively better off than those who were not (Sohne 2006).

Nevertheless, as UNIFEM (2006:5) discusses in their assessment, it is these socio-economic challenges, along with traditional patriarchal structures, that hinder women in fully achieving their right to participate in decision-making, economic independence, and a life without violence. Accordingly, in this regard, Lachenmann (1992 cited in Acheing 2003:8) stated that in order to "de-mythologize the notion of the vulnerability and invisibility of the women", researchers and studies should take on the consideration of "actors, agency, strategies, processes, autonomy, and institutional building"; which is what this research is aiming to achieve.

Having taken into consideration the different concepts and research surrounding the topic of internally displaced women, our research aims to contribute to the available empirical data focused on women. Where previous studies centered on a description of women's daily struggles,



we will discuss, along with the struggle, the agency of these women while not grouping them with the wider IDP population.

## **5. Analytical Framework**

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To address internally displaced women's response strategies to displacement and the perceptions and processes associated with their efforts to rebuild their lives, we will draw from the actor-oriented approach as a main theory for the analysis. This theory is composed of such concepts as agency, networks, and social interfaces. These concepts form a holistic representation of the factors which influence the actions of displaced women as actors in their own lives by interplaying internal and external factors. Furthermore, the actor-oriented approach will be used as the basis for the analysis because it identifies the central role of 'human action and consciousness'. The concept of feminization of poverty, complimented by gender, will be used to highlight the structural constraints that inhibit women from exercising agency. The concept of response strategies will be used to further support the actor-oriented approach. It will serve by contributing to an emphasis on ownership of resources in connection to the strategies displaced women employ such as: creativity in their responses and effort to seek strategies that satisfy their needs and rights. .

That said, the actor-oriented approach will be used to analyze all three research questions 1-3, while feminization of poverty will be used to explore RQ1 and the response strategy concept will be used to discuss RQ2.

### **5.1 ACTOR ORIENTED APPROACH**

The actor-oriented approach was developed by Sociologist Norman Long as a counterpoint to structural analysis, which focuses only on external factors. Long (2001:13) proposes to understand social change through "the interplay and mutual determination of internal and external factors and relationships". This is achieved by recognizing the central role played by "human action and consciousness". The approach begins by explaining differential responses in similar structural circumstances, which can appear homogenous, but it is within these differences that create new meaning by "joining creation of the actors themselves" (Long 2001:13). This implies cultural and organizational structures are an end product of the various ways 'social actors' rationally and organizationally deal with problematic situations while adjusting to the needs and desires of other actors (Shanmugaratnam et. al. 2003:12).

Social actors can be single persons, informal groups, organizations, collective groupings, and macro actors such as national governments. In this sense, the social actor is considered as a human being who has the ability to process social experience, and find new ways of managing life during extremely stressful situations (Long 2001:241,12). Thus, they are not seen as "disembodied homogenized social categories [of] class, race, refugees, market women, internally displaced people". Social actors are active participants able to process information and strategies

when it comes to dealing with other local actors, institutions and personnel (Achieng 2003:10). The actor-oriented approach's focus on internal, external, human action and consciousness as well as the social actor as an active participant allows for variations to exist in rationale, desire, capacity and practice (Long 2001:15). These variations are context defined and depend on the culture, the resources and organizational systems in which social actors are bound.

The following three key concepts: agency, social networks, and social interfaces will further allow us to analyze internally displaced women and their perceptions, self reflectivity, knowledge and capability to respond to displacement.

### **5.1.1 Agency**

As a key concept of the approach, agency is defined as “the knowledgeable, capability and social embeddedness associated with acts of doing (and reflecting) that impact upon or shape one's own and other's actions and interpretations” (Long 2001:240). Agency is associated with persons or networks of persons and can be a characteristic of resources available and ideas, which can shape actors' perceptions of what is possible. Furthermore, agency cannot be easily defined as it is governed by a complex mix of social, cultural and material elements; leading to an understanding that agency is shaped and restricted by discourse and institutional processes which can promote social agency (Long 2001:241,4).

Nevertheless, we should not equate agency with decision-making capacities, because it does not mean having persuasive powers or forms of charisma (Achieng 2003:12). Rather, as Long (2001:16-17) explains, although human agency may be embodied in the individual persons, they are not the only entities that are able to make a decision, act accordingly and manage results. Agency depends on the development of a network of actors who are interested in others actions. This can then generate physical or psychological manipulation of social relations in the construction of meaning in events, actions and ideas.

### **5.1.2 Social Network**

Networks are “sets of direct and indirect relationships and exchanges (interpersonal, inter-organizational and socio-technical). They usually transcend institutional domains and link together a variety of arenas” (Long 2001:241). As Long (2001:2) further explains, when networks, actions, expectations and values are contested in varying arenas, it is done to achieve a global scenario that shapes human choice and potential.

Social networks have the ability to evolve and transform themselves with time, which allows for specific ends and specific actions to be pursued. In this regard, Long (2001:55-56) discusses three types of collective actors: a coalition (share a common definition of a situation or goal), assemblage (an attempt to dissolve distinctions between things and people), and a unitary whole (social life is full of images, representations and categorizations of things, people and institutions).

However, for the purpose of this research, we will only focus on the coalition of actors which consist of networks that may be informally or formally constituted and spontaneously or strategically organized. We will also apply Adam's (1975 cited in Long 2001:56) distinction in identifying two types of organizations within the coalition of actors: coordinated and centralized. Adam's argument is, with coordinated patterned relations, there are no central figures of authority because individuals "grant reciprocal rights to each other, while retaining the prerogative to withdraw from the particular exchange relationships at their will". With this type of organization the networks are characterized by an equal relationship among the actors; however, it can "often have ambiguous and shifting boundaries" (Long 2001:56).

Centralized coalition actors, on the other hand, are characterized by asymmetrical relationships among the actors. Decision-making is carried out by an authoritative body or persons with the intention of representing the collective to external actors; however, there is a clear indication of imbalance in "exchanges, difference in access to strategic resources [and] centralized control" (Long 2001:56). The coalition actor, as a collective actor, will be used in the analysis when dealing with types of processes displaced women participate in as part of their response strategies for dealing with displacement and how it contributes to agency.

### **5.1.3 Social Interfaces**

Social interface, which is defined as "a critical point of intersection between different life worlds or domains where social disconnections built on discrepancies in values, interests, knowledge and power are most likely to be found" (Long 2001:243), explores how such intersections are mediated and perpetuated or transformed. Social interfaces are complex in that they hold differing interests, relationships and modes of rationality and power (Long 2001:50,66).

The interface is a situation in which different actors assign meaning to the same issue or object, and then use it as a strategy to further their agenda (Achieng 2003:16). Shanmugaratnam et al. (2003:12) note, it can be used in situations of migration since it allows us to understand how "perceptions, interests, and relationships of the various actors involved are reshaped, leading to 'new' interface encounters". For our purpose, it will serve to explore the perceptions of internally displaced women related to the reconstruction of their lives.

## **5.2 FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY AND GENDER**

Feminization of Poverty (FOP) is a concept developed in the late 1970s, and has served to illustrate the various social and economical factors contributing to women's poverty (CAUSE 2002:3). FOP commonly identifies that women represent a disproportionate percentage of the world's poor, and that this increased share of poverty is linked to a rising incidence of female headed households (Chant 2006:202). Women are the central focus in FOP, specifically female headed households (FHHs), which are identified by two types, women who maintain their household alone and those who have a man who is unable or unwilling to work (Moghadam 2005:10). FHHs may consist of:

[E]lderly women (widowed or divorced) with no dependents, or younger women (divorced or never-married) with dependent children. FHHs may be permanent or transitory or embedded in a wider kin network of support. They may represent family breakdown or a conscious lifestyle choice. The majority of women in FHHs in developing countries are widowed, and to a lesser extent divorced or separated (Moghadam 2005:10).

This clarification is important to note, in that, the circumstances a woman finds herself in where she is identified as head of household varies and is never constant. This is true of the displaced women who participated in our research. That said, FOP has been criticized for its overemphasis on income, female headed households and the neglect of men and gender relations. However, the concept will be employed as part of the analytical framework of this thesis in so far as it emphasizes recognition of female headed households falling into poverty. Nonetheless, poverty in this regard is not just about income but includes restrictions of choices and options, with the understanding that women may also “opt to trade off the economic difficulties of female headship in favor of gaining more control over the lives and well-being of themselves and their dependents” (Rodenberg 2004:13 cited in Chant 2006:205).

In the context of forced displacement, we will also consider the concept of FOP in some instances to refer to women falling into poverty as a consequence of displacement, and from a more general perspective as women being poorer than men due to systemic gender bias. In most cases, women’s poverty in developing countries is directly related to the lack of economic opportunities, autonomy, inadequacy in access to resources, including credit, land ownership or inheritance, limited access to education and support services, and fewer opportunities in participating in the process of decision-making (Berger 2002:2).

The concept of gender, in its true form, will not be used for the analysis since the main focus is internally displaced women without, per-se, doing a comparison with male power relations. Nevertheless, an understanding of gender is an important consideration as it allows for a larger understanding of the circumstances and challenges faced by women. The following is a definition of gender provided by Vicente (2005:14-15):

Gender refers to the meanings that have been built through the social and historical processes surrounding sexual differences. Gender or gendered relations are the social norms and practices governing the relationships between men and women in a particular society, historical context and space, thus they vary through time and societies. Notwithstanding this, in all societies we find norms and practices based on gender, producing and reproducing views and realities that keep women in situations of subordination, exclusion and greater poverty.

This definition should be used for the sake of understanding that the meaning assigned to gender roles is culturally different. In the context of internal displacement, Sorensen (1998:65) notes the importance of recognizing gender differentiation and gender specific experiences, which can easily be concealed by terms such as refugees and IDPs. Berger (2002:2) further adds to this point by saying, “referring to classifications such as refugees and IDPs without distinguishing the

composition of these populations, their representational and experiential components are distorted". Thus the focus on women, rather than gender, is a point of departure in focusing on their 'representational and experiential components' in the greater context of displacement.

### **5.3 RESPONSE STRATEGY**

Vincent and Sorensen's (2001:7), the authors of *Caught Between Borders: Response Strategies of IDPs*, definition of response strategies is drawn from that of self-help strategies:

A self-help activity is any voluntary action undertaken by an individual or a group of persons, which aims to the satisfaction of individual or collective needs or aspirations. The main contribution to that activity must stem from the individual's or group's own resources (Sorensen 1998 cited in Vincent & Sorensen 2001:7).

Vincent and Sorensen chose to use the term 'response strategies' because it stresses "the motivation of internally displaced persons, the creativity and comprehensiveness of their strategies and actions, and their reflectivity regarding their situation, position and options" (Vincent & Sorensen 2001:8). The authors also point out that, contrary to common belief, not all internally displaced are poor of resources, and they do go beyond thinking about daily survival by being concerned with non-tangible aspects. In this regard, Vincent and Sorensen (2001:1-14) explain, IDPs are actors even when they are victims because response strategies are not just about physical survival but also social standing and dignity. Furthermore, IDPs' responses are based on their understanding of the available options to them, the position or situation they are in, which are then manifested by decisions executed in a creative and comprehensive manner.

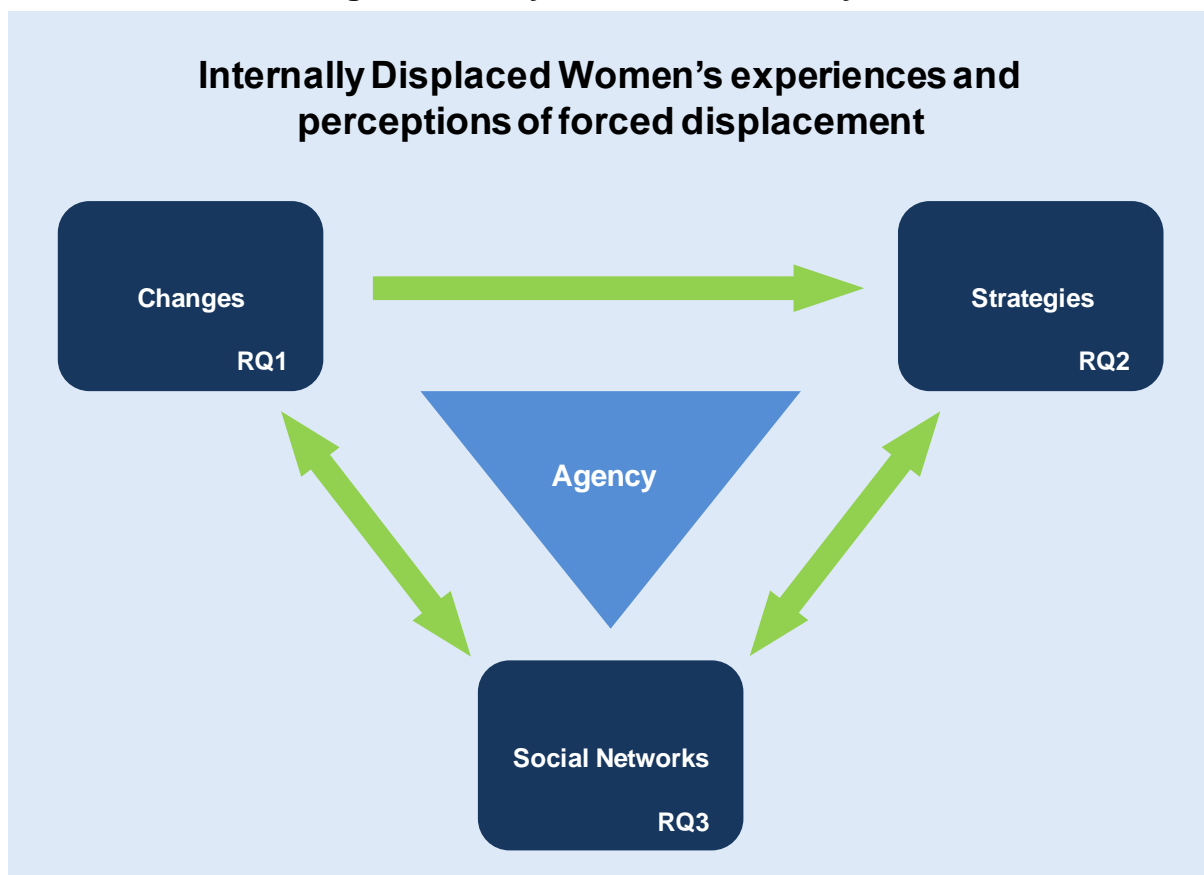
IDPs may use family and friends to meet their immediate needs, such as food and shelter, and they may set up communication networks to access information whether they are transmitting it or receiving it. IDPs are proactive and thus we should go beyond seeing them as victims and instead view them as active human beings with varied histories, backgrounds, ambitions and resources which all contribute to how they respond to displacement (Vincent & Sorensen 2001:9-8). The emphasis on the 'active human being' is also resonated in the actor-oriented approach discussed above, which highlights the interconnectedness of the two concepts. Employing the concept of response strategies, as a complimentary concept to the actor-oriented approach, allows us to identify three elements that may be present in displaced women's actions towards the reconstruction of their lives: ownership of resources used for activities, creativity in responses, and effort in seeking response strategies that satisfy needs and rights as displaced individuals and communities.

### **5.4 OPERATIONALIZATION**

The analytical model (see Figure 2) is applied to the interpretation of our empirical data by drawing from the analytical framework and themes brought up by the participants of the research. The model demonstrates *agency* as a core concept which contributes to internally displaced women's abilities (both physical and mental) to move forward with the reconstruction

of their lives. Agency allows women to reflect on their situation and from that, use the knowledge and capabilities they gain through the process of displacement to change their situation. For this reason, agency is an undertone in answering all three research questions. That said, the first research question aims to capture *changes* – how internally displaced women feel the process of displacement has changed what it means to be a woman. From there it will be demonstrated that these changes influence displaced women directly to adopt strategies to respond to displacement. The second research question explores *Strategies* – the ways internally displaced women respond to the challenges of displacement. The third research question will then examine *social networks* – how they contribute to the construction of the women’s agency and response strategies by discussing two types of networks, as was discussed in the analytical framework, coordinated and centralized and how they influence the changes women face and the strategies they adopt. The interconnections and relationships that exist between the elements in the model are influenced and governed by the meanings women attach to their experiences and their perceptions of forced displacement.

**Figure 2: Analytical Model for Analysis**

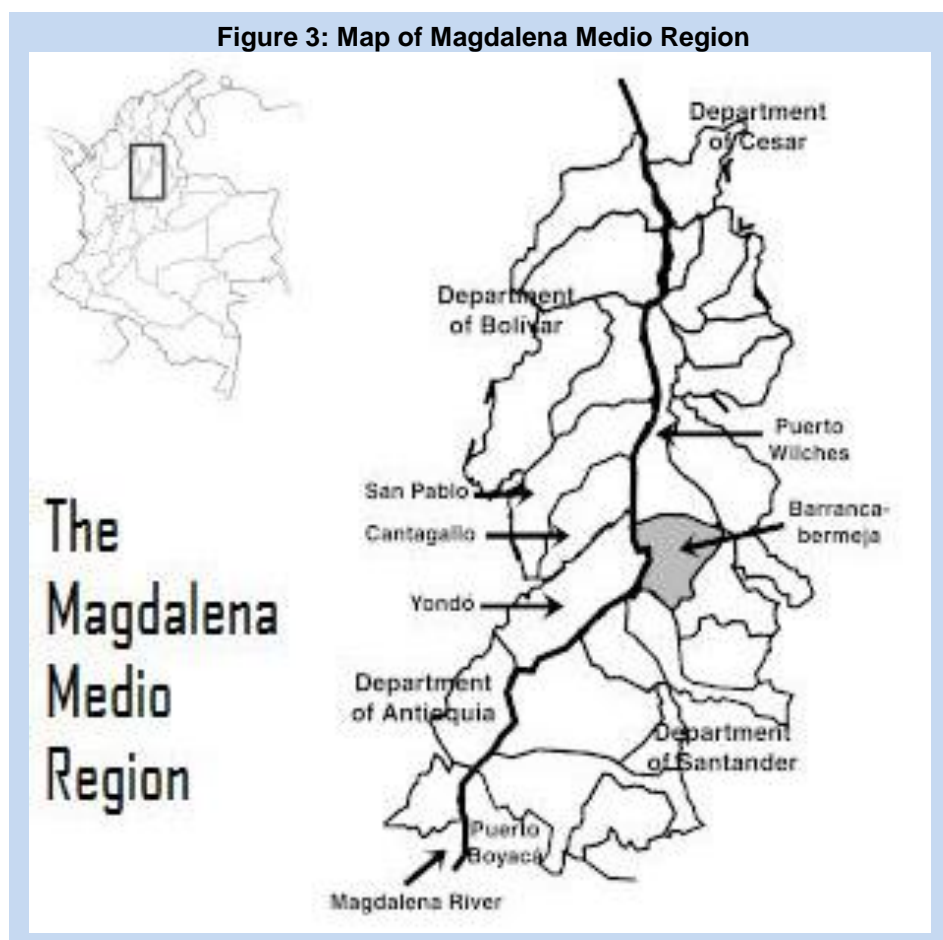


Source: Authors, 2011

## 6. Analysis of Findings

### 6.1 CASE STUDY BACKGROUND

Displacement affects all 32 departments of Colombia, both in terms of expulsion and reception (Meertens 2002:3). With this in mind, the Magdalena Medio region, located in the northeast of Colombia, defined by the river Magdalena, represents three of the top expelling and receiving departments of IDPs. Magdalena Medio however, is not an administrative region; rather it consists of four departments: Santander, Bolívar, Cesar and Antioquia. The region is mainly a rural area with two important city centers, Barrancabermeja and Aguachica (Henriques 2007:3). Magdalena Medio is relevant in the context of the Colombian conflict as it is considered a geopolitical axis due to its richness in natural resources such as: energy mines, fresh waters, forestry, distinct biodiversity, fertile lands and holds claim to the country's preeminent oil refinery as well as having easy access to the river Magdalena, making it a focal point for industry and commerce. This has led the FARC and ELN to use the Magdalena Medio region as a strategic zone which in turn has fueled violence and high displacement rates throughout the region. The majority of those who subsequently become displaced are women, who then migrate to Barrancabermeja (OFP 2004:20-21; Gonzalez and Matoma 2010:11; Peace Brigades International 2010:33).



Source: [www.Ciponline.org](http://www.Ciponline.org)

Women choose to migrate to Barrancabermeja for access to social programs, work opportunities, and as a safety strategy (Gonzalez and Matoma 2010:13, Peace Brigades International 2010:33). The city is known in the region for its defense of human rights through civil society organizations, international representation and locally implemented programs which aim to counteract displacement through administering protection, care and assisting in the reestablishment of rights to the displaced population (OFP 2004:21). Unfortunately, civil societies are often unable to administer aid to many of the newly displaced women who arrive in Barrancabermeja (Informant 3). In this instance, it becomes the responsibility of the government to respond to the immediate needs of displaced women. However, as informant 1 explained this in itself can be problematic as the Colombian government “set[s] up very ambitious laws that don't allow the state to give a response, or they give a response but for long and medium term, but not for the short term”. What is most relevant for IDPs is the short term response. Furthermore, as informant 1 clarifies:

At the national level, structurally there is not a lot of institutional clarity when it comes to displaced persons. There are programs but they are very inefficient in dealing with the issue of women, at least with regards to the numerous problems women face and this is also true of Barrancabermeja /.../. The laws are formulated without taking into account the capacity of the state in dealing with the issue. The state meets with the laws but not when the person needs it, which is the issue, especially as a developing country.

The aforementioned statements show the need for active solutions by the state and not only laws and regulations but durable solutions to help women integrate and further their stability in a new environment.

Almost all the internally displaced women respondents from our interviews, 87%, view themselves as head of household. In this regard we must keep in mind these women, through the process of forced displacement, have gone through a shift between having operated in the private sphere of family, home, and neighborhood to being forced to operate in the public sphere dealing with government representatives, NGOs and other officials. This shift is often intimidating and traumatic for women, as they have never



Landmark of Barrancabermeja, Petroleum Jesus Statue



dealt with the public sphere before (Myers 1999:5).

Through our empirical data we will highlight that, although government institutions like Social Action have the responsibility to respond for all internally displaced persons, the government often does not have the necessary capacity to take on a differential approach to assistance, i.e. focusing on women's needs. Thus, it is vital that displaced women be proactive and take stake in the reestablishment of their lives.

The problem is the willingness of the parties. On one side is the state of Colombia and the other side is the women. Women who are vulnerable of their rights need to make their own action plans to know what has happened and what needs to be covered. Moreover, for a vulnerable woman the challenge is to know how to overcome her vulnerabilities in regards to rights. She needs to know how to prevent from being vulnerable by strengthening herself through what the state has to offer with regards to trainings that allow her to move forward. Therefore, there has to be proper willingness from the women (Informant 1).

That said, the following subsections will deal with the analysis of our empirical data by first discussing the changes women experience with displacement, which will lead into a discussion of the strategies adopted to deal with the challenges they encounter, and then conclude with social networks and how they construct women's agency and response strategies in the reconstruction of their lives.

## **6.2 DISPLACEMENT AND CHANGES OF MEANING FOR WOMEN**

An older woman describes what her daughter has gone through in the process of displacement, from the loss of a loved one, to the loss of possessions, feeling forever alienated, and then seeking peace and security. Many of the women we have spoken to in focus groups shared a similar story (FG 1, FG 2, FG 3, FG 4, FG 5). In this section the aim will be to answer the first research question: *how has the process of displacement changed being a woman?* In answering the question three themes will be discussed which emerged in the discussions with the women: what it means to be displaced, the challenges of getting assistance specifically from the government, and finally what it means to be a woman after displacement.

**“They killed my daughter's husband, they left him dead at the door and with his death she lost her land, she lost everything. Why? Because she cannot go back there anymore. She was displaced because she lost everything. Then she came here and she found some peace and, thanks to God, everything has not gone bad.”**

*Older woman from FG 3,  
Barrancabermeja, Colombia*

### **6.2.1 Displacement**

The women spoke simply of the violence which forced them to leave; it was still a painful reminder and brought tears as they spoke. Some felt a sense of humiliation because of how they were treated, threatened for simply being human. Additionally, forgetting was not an option as they were constantly reminded of the violence in the media.

*I have been threatened two times and I have not done anything, I was not a leader or anything, they threatened me for being human! As if to be human is the most humiliating thing (FG 2).*

*One always tries to forget the violence but it is everywhere, the reminder, especially on TV (FG 3).*

Oo and Kusakabe's (2010) study on displaced Karen women in Myanmar notes, women, during flight, were more often likely to experience physical attacks, direct threats and death of family members. However, in the discussions with the women, these were elements that caused their displacement rather than something that occurred after the decision to flee was made (FG 1, FG 2, FG 3, FG 4, FG 5).

*Feminization of Poverty* speculates women, as heads of household, fall into poverty. The women, when asked about the challenges of displacement, felt one of the hardest things was the move from rural to urban centers. Among the aspects that made the move hard was the change in the women's abilities to satisfy their basic needs. Living on farms was an ideal situation because it gave them everything they needed, without requiring monetary fund to do so. However, being in an urban center meant the women had to "fight to get a kilo of rice" (FG 4). Thus, the city for these women was equated with having to pay for everything, which required employment.

*We had everything there. An armed group came and told us to leave. They gave us two hours to leave. We had everything there, livestock, food etc.; whereas here if one does not work one does not eat (FG 4).*

*The poverty one gets in [means] to go from a place where I had my work, housing, something to eat and my needs met, to go to a place where one is discriminated against, where there is more necessities, where we are not welcomed or have space to move around to find work (FG 5).*

*To go from one place to another is hard, there is a lot of difference. In the rural area you have everything but in the city it's harder, you don't have anything, you have to pay for the services and if you do not have a job you have no way of paying for life (FG 1).*

The process of displacement is what these women identified as having placed them in a situation of poverty, in which the only way to achieve security was to work. It is this impact that has made them view displacement as something that "has no positive or good about [it]" (FG 4). In this regard, it must be noted that displacement from familiar things and personal possessions, as it was documented by Oo and Kusakabe (2010:7), causes a deep sense of loss and resentment among women. Additionally, the women also pointed out that, often, at their new communities they faced discrimination "The people ignore us for being displaced, we are discriminated against for being displaced, this is a big challenge" (FG 5). Sohne (2006:36) notes that Acholi IDPs in Uganda were often discriminated in their new communities, which acted as a constraint in their reestablishment and economic opportunities.

As it has been discussed, displacement for the women in the focus group discussions signified humiliating violence and a loss of a way of life. They found themselves in situations of poverty and of being discriminated against. Compounding these challenges is that of government led assistance.

### **6.2.2 Challenges with Government Assistance**

The actor-oriented approach concept of social interfaces proposes social actors find themselves in intersections where social disconnections exist. This is especially true when the disconnections equate with the social actors representing different interests, values, knowledge and power (Long 2001:243). In this instance, Social Action, the governmental agency responsible for IDPs and internally displaced women are social actors with differing interests when it comes to assigning meaning to emergency aid assistance.

Throughout the focus group discussions with the women one theme kept surfacing: the need for government aid assistance, specifically from Social Action. One role of Social Action, as discussed earlier, is to register IDPs into the RUPD and provide emergency aid following forced displacement. Moreover, the informant from Social Action explained that the process for an individual to declare themselves and apply as an IDP takes almost two months to complete. Social Action, in turn, has to wait for three months to receive word from Bogota whether money will be sent for the individual or not (Informant 4). Nevertheless, the women felt a sense of hopelessness in receiving humanitarian assistance, or if they received it then it was once or out of luck as some would not be able to register.

*There are many of us that are hopeful that Social Action will give us [aid]. I'm one of those that is not hopeful that Social Action will give me something because if I was hopeful that they give me money or help then I'll die of hunger! (FG 3).*

*They have not helped me. If I wait for the state to help then I have no hope (FG 1).*

*[It is about] having luck that they help you, some get it while others do not. Some could not receive assistance money because they did not appear in the system at the national level (FG 1).*

*They gave me help in 2010 but after that nothing, no subsidies for the children or anything. I gave them all the paper work necessary but still nothing (FG 4).*

Social Action, however, was quick to point out that the emergency aid was only for three months and very basic; in other words that the women should not rely completely on the system. Additionally, a person needs to be registered in order to access all state benefits, and legally the state cannot help them as an IDP if they are not in the system (Informant 4).

The only help that is automatic for the displaced is three months of emergency aid, but this assistance is temporary and very basic /.../. Education and basic health care is also automatic and a right but is not directed through Social Action (Informant 4).

That said, for displaced women, assistance means receiving aid such as food, clothing, housing, health, education, and employment among other things (FG 2, FG 1, FG 5), essentially, to make up for what they have lost. The issue with this is that it creates a confrontational environment between displaced women and Social Action (Informant 4). When the women approach Social Action with some of the requests mentioned above the consequence is Social Action sends them away because anything outside of emergency aid is not under their mandate.

Women often come to the office and want things like housing and work. We tell them that Social Action offers emergency aid, so they leave angry /---/. [Housing] is not the responsibility of Social Action /---/. When a woman needs surgery it is not social action who needs to respond for it but the department of health. An exception to this is if the woman cannot work due to having surgery then she can apply for prologa<sup>9</sup> (Informant 4).

It is the lack of contact from Social Action that perpetrates a disconnect between them and the women. Focus group 5 made the comment that women live in isolation and are unknown, either by the government or Social Action, when it comes to their needs. Some women felt Social Action was misusing money designated for the displaced because of the expensive upkeep of their large offices and staff (FG 5). When asked about contact with the IDP communities, Social Action did say, with reservation, they do not hold meetings in the communities anymore. The informant further explained, IDPs want immediate help which Social Action cannot supply, as a result people become angry which can put the lives of staff at risk, thus Social Action does not go into IDP communities. This has made the exercise of identifying IDPs needs a permanent struggle (Informant 4).

Nevertheless, the women and Social Action have assigned different meaning to what assistance should be. Women feel the government should be able to compensate and attempt to restore what they have lost during displacement, while Social Action feels if it is not providing emergency aid then there is not much they can do. Also, as mentioned, the emergency aid given is very basic, regardless, women have to find a way to fend for themselves. This will be discussed in further detail in the analysis of the second research question. The process of displacement has personally changed these women. Through the act of losing their possessions, and loved ones, their lives have been significantly changed. Even after all that, they continue to struggle to get assistance. That said, the question still remains, how has the process of displacement changed being a woman?

### **6.2.3 Displacement and Being a Woman**

Forced displacement has meant change for the internally displaced women of Barrancabermeja; specifically when it comes to their perception of what it means to be a woman. Upon asking the ways which displacement changed being a woman the focus group respondents needed a moment to reflect. Their responses coincided with elements of their physical appearance as well as emotional state of being in relation to their previous versus current context.

Slightly more than 80% of the women in the focus group discussions identified a major personal change that happened because of their displacement. This change equated with a feeling of living and learning to be strong for the sake of the children, and through that process recognize and be proud of their abilities to provide for their children.

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<sup>9</sup> Prologa is Spanish to mean a justification that serves to explain or clarify an important circumstance.

*To be a woman you learn. By the punches of life which teach you to be a woman. When they kill your husband one begins to suffer, to work. You no longer work for yourself but for someone else [children]; there are more costs and it takes one alone. The punches, experience and our children, these teach you to be a woman (FG 3).*

*My living, it has been very hard because there I had everything including having my husband by my side, whereas here, I have to be the mother, father, man, everything. I tried very hard not to let my son feel the situation we were in, it was not his fault (FG 2).*

*We suffered but we are proud of our abilities to move forward in our lives, to provide for our kids alone. It is hard, but we are doing it (FG 1).*

In this regard, we can say being a woman changed during the process of displacement because their identity as mothers propelled them to be strong, to provide for their children and to not let them feel something is wrong. Displaced women also identified other elements that, for them, meant change in being a woman. They identified that the process of displacement changed how they felt about their personal value and in being recognized as a human being, in that displacement validated them. It also made them feel like they had to fight, as one woman said, “displacement has caused me to fight for 5 years” (FG 5). For other women, change meant that because they now live in a city, they have to change their physical appearance in terms of clothing and the use of makeup.

*Being a woman has changed [me] in terms of being a human and feeling more valued (FG 2).*

*As a woman, you have to be esthetically more presentable, to put on shoes and make up or good clothes [to go out] in the city and it was not like that at the farm and this is positive (FG 1).*

Additionally, the process of displacement to some women has meant learning to be strong and participating in different capacities, which was not the case previously (FG 2).

### **6.2.4 Summary of Findings**

The concept of Agency, as discussed, is based on the ability of an individual's actions which are shaped by reflecting and acting on what they know and the capabilities they possess. It was important for the women in our research study to reflect on the process of displacement they have gone through, the challenges they faced in that process, and what it means to be a woman now in the context of displacement. In doing so we are able to answer the research question in that the process of displacement has changed being a woman in so far as the women have become heads of household; and consequently needed to negotiate and deal with the challenge of



*The child of one of the focus group respondents at her home*

receiving governmental emergency assistance. Change has also equated with positive aspects, in that the women learned and became aware of their own value and strength.

## 6.3 RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES OF DISPLACEMENT

In the previous section the women identified challenges such as: a loss of belongings, governmental assistance and the necessity to locate employment to offset the lack of government response. In this section we will discuss the second research question: *in what ways do internally displaced women respond to the challenges of displacement?* In this regard, there are two themes that we will explore, the first being the strategies the women adopt to ‘move forward’, and the second, how they used exercising their rights as a strategy.

### 6.3.1 Displaced Women and Strategies in Moving Forward

For women ‘moving forward’ implies having consciousness of oneself, meaning they rely on their own strength to survive and maintain their families (FG 1, FG 4). The women in the focus group discussions were adamant in explaining that the only way to fight against the challenges of forced displacement was by seeking out employment.

*If one does not work, one does not eat, neither will the children (FG 3).*

*Here one survives by working, whether it is a son or a daughter or by ironing [and] washing clothes, it is doing rebusques<sup>10</sup> (FG 5).*

*We had to work to get what we have and to fight against the challenges (FG 1).*

The women’s determination to survive by their own means is an indication of what the response strategies concept identifies as self help activity (Vincent & Sorensen 2001). They attain the satisfaction of their needs by using their own capabilities as a resource and by adapting to their context and pursuing any work they are able to obtain (FG 5, FG 3). This also resonates in the actor-oriented approach’s concept of agency in that displaced women use their capabilities to shape their actions in ways they consider to be moving forward. Many of the employment strategies the women spoke of were in the informal sector of the economy such as working in restaurants, as maids, as cleaning ladies or in recycling.

*I have been a recycler, I have [also] worked in restaurants (FG 1).*

*I do what comes up, I work in a restaurant, I clean offices /.../ I work as a cleaner for Eco Petrol and they pay us, the displaced, less than the rest of the cleaners because we are displaced. It is not fair /.../. They receive more and us less and we work more! (FG 3).*

*I work in a house, restaurant, if there are trainings I go (FG 1).*

To the women, working was a tangible exercise which permitted them to see their effort transformed into monetary value, which is something that was not guaranteed by the state. Additionally, working by their own means was another way for them to maintain self-dignity and not succumb to asking for help.

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<sup>10</sup> Rebusque is a Colombian expression meaning to take whatever opportunities that come along to earn a living.

As positioned by Vincent and Sorensen (2001:8), response strategies go beyond physical survival in that they also incorporate conserving one's dignity.

*By working, one can see the money immediately, instead of waiting in a long line and hoping they [the government] give you something (FG 2).*

*When we were first displaced we did not go to Social Action, we came in August but we did not go until October because it is hard to ask for help (FG 3).*

Additionally, IDPs, in an effort to seek response strategies, have the ability to reflect on their "situation, position and options" (Vincent & Sorensen 2001:8). In this regard, women from the focus group discussions illustrate they are in a 'situation' where they lack previous education, and find themselves in a 'position' where they need to have relevant job experience for the formal workplace in the city. When it comes to reflecting on the 'options' available to them, the women felt that if they took the time to study for an education they would not be able to adequately provide for their families.



*Women cooking Sancoche stew, which they then sell to the community*

*To get a job here means meeting requirements that they [employers] ask for, which one does not have. The lack of previous education, to write a resume is hard because we do not have previous work experience. I worked in a farm kitchen and if I put this [in the resume] then they will say what experience can you have? (FG 4).*

*As head of household I do not have time to complete courses necessary for employment /.../. To get a job one has to complete courses to have certificates, but one does not have time because one has to look after the children (FG 3).*

Hernandez-Delgado and Laegreid (2001:220) explain, many of the interviewees in their study on IDPs in Colombia commented on difficulties adjusting to urban life, and complained that a lack of urban skills made it difficult to find work. However, in our research the women did not dismiss the need to be proactive in pursuing opportunities that permitted them to 'move forward'. This is especially true when it comes to the education of their children. Furthermore, taking advantage of government led initiatives such as vocational training and free education were used as strategies by the women, as it also meant offsetting some of their expenses.

*I have improved more here because I have been able to do many trainings where I learned skills /.../. Where we lived before there were no means for the kids to study, whereas here they have an opportunity to finish their studies /.../. If we had stayed there [the village], then we wouldn't have had the same facilities (FG 2).*

*The previous mayor was interested in the displaced population, they gave trainings in sewing and they gave the machine and supplies to be able to do the job (FG 1).*

*A positive is that studies are free for our children and we do not have to pay for uniforms, so in this regard they [the government] helps (FG 3).*

Sorensen (1998:32) found, in post-conflict reconstruction efforts women placed an importance on education because it created the opportunity to build human capacity. In this way, education is seen as a gateway in the construction for a better future, and according to the women, as a means 'to move forward' (FG 2, FG 1, FG 3). That said, moving forward for some of the women implied using the system set-up for IDPs and demanding their rights from the government.

### **6.3.2 Displaced Women and Exercising Rights as a Strategy**

Exercising rights can be classified as a response strategy for the displaced women in the focus groups in that it permitted them to attain what they felt they deserved, and offset challenges from lack of employment. As discussed in the first research question, the women spoke of issues in receiving assistance from Social Action. One of the key instruments women used to counteract these issues was the use of a tutela, which is legislation under the Colombian Constitutional Court. Tutelas are used in such a way that IDPs can insure an 'effective enjoyment' of their rights by placing a written grievance against their perpetrators. In the focus group discussions, women identified tutelas as the best strategy to receive a response from Social Action when their rights were not met.

*For assistance from Social Action you need to put in a tutela (FG 5).*

*A way to demand rights is to put in a tutela. I had to put in a tutela 23 times, each time so they can give me the assistance with housing and food. They [Social Action] said they gave me all the assistance, but I never received anything (FG 1).*

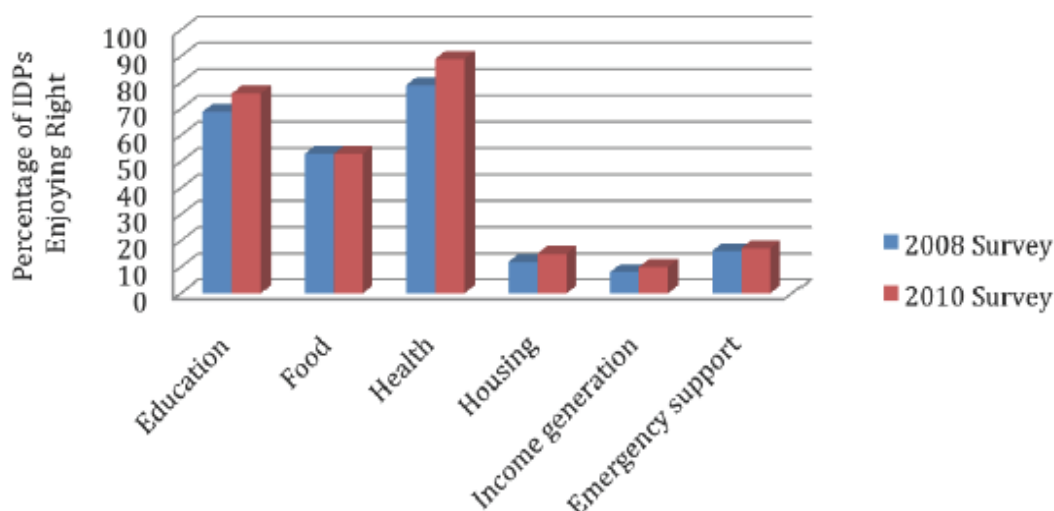
*My child was not covered after a certain age and I did not know. I put in a tutela to get assistance with the surgery of my child (FG 1).*

As Vincent and Sorensen (2001:10) stipulated, IDPs would try to meet their needs whenever possible. In this regard, the women felt using a legal instrument permitted them to meet their needs, as was demonstrated in their use of the tutela to acquire their right to housing, food and health care.

A recent survey from the Colombian government (cited in IDMC 2010:5) illustrated, housing, income generation, and emergency support were critical in comparison to other rights enjoyed by IDPs (see Graph 1). Our data also confirmed this in that, although 77% of the women in our research have been displaced for five years or more, lack of housing and income generating activities, as well as issues with emergency aid were aspects that dominated the focus group discussions (FG 1, FG4, FG 5). That said, it was relayed to us that it is not just Social Action that is responsible in assisting IDPs, it requires all government institutions in the service sector to respond to the needs of the displaced, whereas now most of the demands of rights are directed at Social Action (Informant 4).



**Graph 1: IDPs' Enjoyment of Various Rights**  
Government Surveys 2008 and 2010  
Data Source: Government of Columbia



(Source: IDMC 2010:5)

Something of concern we would like to call attention to, is the security issue displaced women expose themselves to in the process of receiving assistance from Social Action. All the focus groups mentioned queuing as early as two in the morning outside of Social Action's office (FG 1, FG 2, FG 3, FG 4). This is worrisome as it diminishes physical security and adds to the vulnerabilities of being a displaced woman.

*At 3 am you need to go to get in line so that they can attend to you and give you a file. The place is ugly to be there so early, it is insecure (FG 5).*

### **6.3.3 Summary of Findings**

Using the concept of response strategies we have been able to answer the second research question by identifying the ways internally displaced women respond to the challenges of displacement in two ways: using their own means and applying legal instruments. That said, through analyzing our data we have been able to observe a variation in how women view response strategies. The focus groups in communes 1, 4 and 5 were highly inclined to apply legal instruments when requesting assistance from the state. The two focus groups in commune 3, on the other hand, were more concerned with using their own capabilities and means rather than waiting for government assistance. A possible explanation for this variance in the focus groups can be the use of social networks.

## **6.4 NETWORKS AND WOMEN'S AGENCY AND STRATEGIES**

Dealing with the first two research questions has allowed us to demonstrate that forced displacement inherently changes displaced women; while the use of their own capabilities and legal instruments permits them to respond to the challenges of displacement. In this regard, an observation was made in the data, which showed a variation between the focus groups in the

strategies they adopted and their outlook towards life. Social networks played an important role in this regard. To further our analysis we will explore the third research question: *how do social networks contribute to the construct of women's agency and response strategies?* In answering this question, we will first describe two types of social networks, followed by a discussion on how these networks contribute to the construction of women's agency and response strategies, which is based on how women are viewed by these networks.

#### **6.4.1 Network Associations and Organizational Process**

As one informant put it “Colombia is a country of laws and we have the right to organize” (Group Interview 1). In this sub-section we will discuss two types of social networks that stem from self-organization of IDPs: The Board of Organizations for the Displaced Population and Women of Peace, Bread and Life (MPPV). The Board is made up of ten legally registered associations representing the displaced population, of which the leaders themselves are displaced (Group Interview 1). The role of these associations is to provide orientation and representation to the forcibly displaced, while they provide informational workshops. Additionally, each association has a different focus area such as working with sexually abused victims, ethnic groups or the newly displaced. As a Board though, their role is to advocate and represent the IDP population in Barrancabermeja. The Board is thus an umbrella for the ten associations, and they work together to meet with the government as one voice for attaining rights for IDPs (Group Interview 1).

The organizational process of Women of Peace, Bread and Life is a process which is unregistered by the government. It is born from the “empowerment of women and exists because of the ideas and efforts they share between themselves” while creating solidarity (Informant 2). The process has transformed throughout the years, from meeting displaced women's basic needs of food security to giving them a path towards long term strategies. In this sense, “it has been a process” (Informant 2). The name for the process is derived from the effort of constructing *Peace*, by transforming the conflict and learning how it affected the women; *Bread*, for food security; and *Life*, for ethics and spirituality (Informant 2). The process avoids a pyramid type of management; instead it is based on equal contribution, and solidarity between women.

It is relevant to convey the composition of these two social networks because they will help to further understand how a global scenario can be achieved that shapes displaced women's choices and potential. Nevertheless, using the concept of social networks from the actor-oriented approach (Long 2001) we can gather that the coalition of actors in this instance are organized in two ways: coordinated (equal relationships) and centralized (asymmetrical relationships). What we can denote is, although the Board is considered coordinated, the associations are centralized in so far as they have a top down structure between leaders and members. The MPPV process on the other hand is based on the equal participation of women, making it a coordinated type of organizational system. That said, the following sub-section will demonstrate how social networks

view internally displaced women and how this contributes to the construction of agency and response strategies.

#### **6.4.2 Social Networks in Constructing Agency and Response Strategies**

Most of the women in our research, 90%, indicated they did not currently belong to an IDP association. When asked about their reasons, women expressed the associations were more interested in making money than actually caring for its members, which meant they did not follow through with what they promised, such as buying equipment. However, one benefit the women did recognize was, through the associations, they learned about their rights (FG 4, FG 5).

*There are many associations that have been formed that say they protect the displaced, but they are looking out for their own communal interest and not those of everyone. They work for themselves but not to help the displaced /.../ they said they would buy sewing machines for us, but they did not (FG 5).*

*I have been in an association and they said they would help but they never did /.../. They take your money but do not do anything (FG 2).*

*I learned [rights] through chats given by associations and human rights organizations (FG 1).*

Furthermore, the women felt that, although they learned about their rights, their confidence and trust for the associations deteriorated, due to the lack of results. In this regard, it was interesting to note how the women in focus groups 2 and 3 felt the MPPV process helped them recognize their strength, while giving them a 'forward looking' mentality.

*When we first were displaced we did not know anyone, now that we are here we have been placed in the process of the Women of Peace, Bread and Life and the advisor has given us a great deal of knowledge and trainings on how to cook. All the things we have learned, we ourselves are doing. We are selling food in the community. The money we get we can use for our kids (FG 2).*

*With [the process] we have learned a lot of manual crafts that have allowed us to do things for ourselves instead of standing in line and hoping that they [the government] give you something (FG 2).*

*The group has helped a great deal, it provides us with someone that can advise us /.../ with the process we learned to look forward /.../ [we have] solidarity in the sense of if you have an issue everyone helps out with what they can (FG 3).*

As informant 2 notes, there is a difference between women who are organized and those who are not, when it comes to being better off. This is also in accordance with Sohne's (2006) study on urban IDPs in Uganda. This study found IDPs, who worked in groups to access resources, coped better with displacement than those who worked alone. Sohne's research also illustrated networks that had popular support, and represented the interests of its members, were the most effective in meeting needs. In this regard, we were able to observe the women in focus groups 2 and 3 easily spoke of the positives of MPPV, while the focus groups from the other three communes 1, 4 and 5 felt the associations were useless and were only out to collect their money.

We believe this variance has a great deal to do with how these social networks view displaced women. What we noted in the discussions with the informants (Group Interview 1, Informant 2)

is the associations are based on the idea of portraying the women as disempowered and victimized. In so far as there are violations of rights and necessities in the IDP communities, the associations have a role as advocates in setting the agenda for funding. This observation is based on the debate which arose in the group interview with the Board between their association leaders. One of the leaders felt that despite the violations of rights, women have been able to survive.

Yes, there are violations of rights of the women, but I believe many of them have been able to rise through it by accessing trainings and have been able to improve and move forward. Everything is not about the violence; we need to look at the positive and moving forward for the children /.../. I mean we cannot be stuck in the same position forever. We need to improve we cannot suffer all the time. As leaders we need to teach our population that we cannot be dependent all of our lives. We need to improve from this situation (Group Interview 1).

Besides this respondent, the rest of the leaders focused on the women as victims and disempowered them by speaking about their ill-being, and the difficulties of displacement. They indicated how displaced women are unable to speak up because of their rural background, how not all women are the same, in terms of motivation, and that they do not know how to do things, like read and write (Group Interview 1). In this way, the leaders were more interested in the legal side of displacement and focused on the laws and the rights of IDPs, as well as combating the lack of government response, rather than identifying the women as actors.

The MPPV process on the other hand, is based on the very empowerment of displaced women. As informant 2 conveyed, the process does not advocate for seeking assistance, but rather promotes a “self-discovering of the potentialities of the women” and is considered a “rebirth in which they can see the right to speak exists”. As it was further explained, MPPV works with displaced women through a life project where the aim is for them to be autonomous because “one the main issues [of the women] is their lack of autonomy and economical independence, and when it comes to economical independence it is not just having employment but it is also the mental state” (Informant 2). Furthermore, as informant 2 conveys the process is:

The process is a way for them [the women] to learn what they have lived. To learn from it, is to recognize the capacity that they can learn and teach each other. It is self valuing to grow as women and as people, they can overcome the experience they lived and the pain they have gone through with help, they can do it /.../. When they discover the value in this, they are independent and autonomous because they are aware of the resourcefulness and abilities they have in their own hands. This is a total transformation and in this sense we can talk of self improvement and self recognition in the capacities of the women and unlearning to learn and move forward.

#### **6.4.3 Summary of Findings**

What we have observed is that agency and response strategies can be constructed through social networks which permit internally displaced women, to not only reflect on their experiences, but also gives them the tools to be actors and go beyond their experiences without resentment. This

is what the process of Women of Peace, Bread and Life has given focus groups 2 and 3; it is also a 'coordinated' style of organization as it is owned by the women equally. In this regard, we can say the process, as a social network, helps to achieve a global scenario by fostering solidarity between displaced women, and in turn, by giving them wider opportunities to shape their choices and potential as internally displaced women. Furthermore, the role of the associations of pursuing the rights of IDPs and government response should not be done at the expense of displaced women and their abilities to reconstruct their lives.

## **7. Concluding Remarks**

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Forced Displacement and its consequences are growing problems within Colombia. These problems cannot be solved overnight. However, in recent years, the Colombian government has become assertive in their forced displacement policy agenda and placed more emphasis on internal displacement, and the IDP population. This has been evidenced by the numerous laws and policies designed with the intention of assisting the internally displaced. Additionally, this has led to the formation of Social Action as a governmental agency and main facilitator of assistance for the displaced. Nevertheless, Colombia continues to face new forced displacement, and initiatives to deal with the existing IDP population have been, to say the least, stretched as the government institutions are overwhelmed with the needs of the displaced and in turn have limited capacities to respond. Thus, continued necessities act as catalysts for internally displaced women to take their future into their own hands.

The purpose of this thesis has been to explore how internally displaced women reconstruct their lives and the perceptions they associate with their experience. Through employing the analytical framework of the actor-oriented approach, feminization of poverty, and response strategies we have been able to use the key concept of *agency* as an underlying theme in exploring our findings. In doing so, we have been able to demonstrate, through our research; the process of displacement has meant changes for displaced women, in so far as dealing with the loss of their previous lives, receiving assistance, and changes within themselves as women. When it comes to identifying response strategies adopted by displaced women, we have demonstrated there were two ways the women responded. The first mode of response women employed was through developing strategies which allowed them to use their own capabilities and strengths in searching for employment and providing for their families, rather than waiting for the government to give assistance. Their second mode of response was to use legal instruments such as tutelas as a strategy to request assistance from the governmental agency, Social Action. What we observed was the difference in response strategies women adopted was to a great extent due to women's access to social networks.

The two types of social networks we identified were the centralized Board of Organizations of the Displaced Population and the coordinated organizational process of Women of Peace, Bread and Life. What we noted was: it was how these social networks viewed internally displaced

women that had an implication on the construction of agency and response strategies for women. The associations of the Board were more likely to victimize displaced women by focusing on their limitations and challenges. In turn, women were impacted as they felt distrust towards the associations, and they used the strategy of seeking governmental assistance. However, displaced women who belonged to the organizational process of MPPV felt empowered to seek their own means and not rely only on the government to meet their needs; which stems from the very principle the process was based on, empowerment of women.

Through using an analysis of an agency based approach we were able to explore displaced women's voices and capture how the perceptions in knowledge, ability and capabilities possessed by the internally displaced women shape their actions and in turn how they negotiate in their lives. In this regard, we feel the words of Informant 3 best captures how we should view internally displaced women, rather than focusing on them as victims.

The displaced women are always starting to be, always starting to initiate, always starting to dream for a different tomorrow. They are always looking; if not for one thing then they are looking for another, if they look on one side they look on the other. They are always using their strength to go forward.

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# Appendices

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## APPENDIX 1: SNAIPD MEMBER AGENCIES

- Acción Social
- High Commission for Peace
- Agrarian Bank
- Foreign Trade Bank of Colombia (BANCOLDEX)
- National Department of Planning
- Colombian Institute of Rural Development (INCODER)
- Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Ministry of Environment, Livelihoods and Territorial Development
- Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism
- Ministry of National Defense
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Housing and Public Credit
- Ministry of Interior and Justice
- Ministry of Social Protection
- Presidential Program for Promotion, Respect and Guarantee of Human Rights and Application of International Humanitarian Law
- National Service for Learning (SENA)

(Cited in Wong 2008:13)

## APPENDIX 2: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION AND INFORMANT SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDES

### *Focus Group Discussion Semi-Structured*

#### Opening Question:

1. Que piensan de la situacion de las mujeres desplazadas? En que manera son mejor o peor?
  - a. What do you think of the situation of displaced women? In what ways are they better or worse?

#### Access to Rights:

1. Como han obtenido el conocimiento de sus derechos como personas desplazadas?
  - a. How have you obtained the knowledge of your rights as displaced persons?
2. Que han hecho para exigir sus derechos?
  - a. What have you done to demand your rights?
3. Ha sido mas facil obtener sus derechos como grupo o individualmente?
  - a. Has it been easier to obtain your rights as a group or individually?

**Response Strategies:**

1. Cual son lo mayores retos que han encontrado despues de desplazamiento?
  - a. What are the biggest challenges you have found after becoming displaced?
2. Que acciones especificas han hecho para contrarrestar estos retos?
  - a. What specific actions have you done to counter these challenges?
3. En que maneras han cambiado tus acciones desde el principio de su desplazamiento hasta ahora?
  - a. In what ways have your actions changed since the beginning of displacement so far?

**Creating/Recreating Social Structures:**

1. Que han hecho para construir la vida comunitaria despues de desplazamiento?
  - a. What have you done to build a community life after displacement?
2. Cual elementos de la vida comunitaria has traído de sus comunidades originales que estan funcionando en tus vidas hoy?
  - a. What elements of community life have brought from your original communities that are working in your lives today?

**Closing Questions:**

1. Como ha afectado desplazamiento a ser mujer?
  - a. How does displacement change being a women?
2. Que piensan de la situacion de las mujeres desplazadas? En que manra son mejor o peor?
  - a. What do you think of the situation of displaced women? In what ways are they better or worse?

***Informant Semi-Structured Interview***

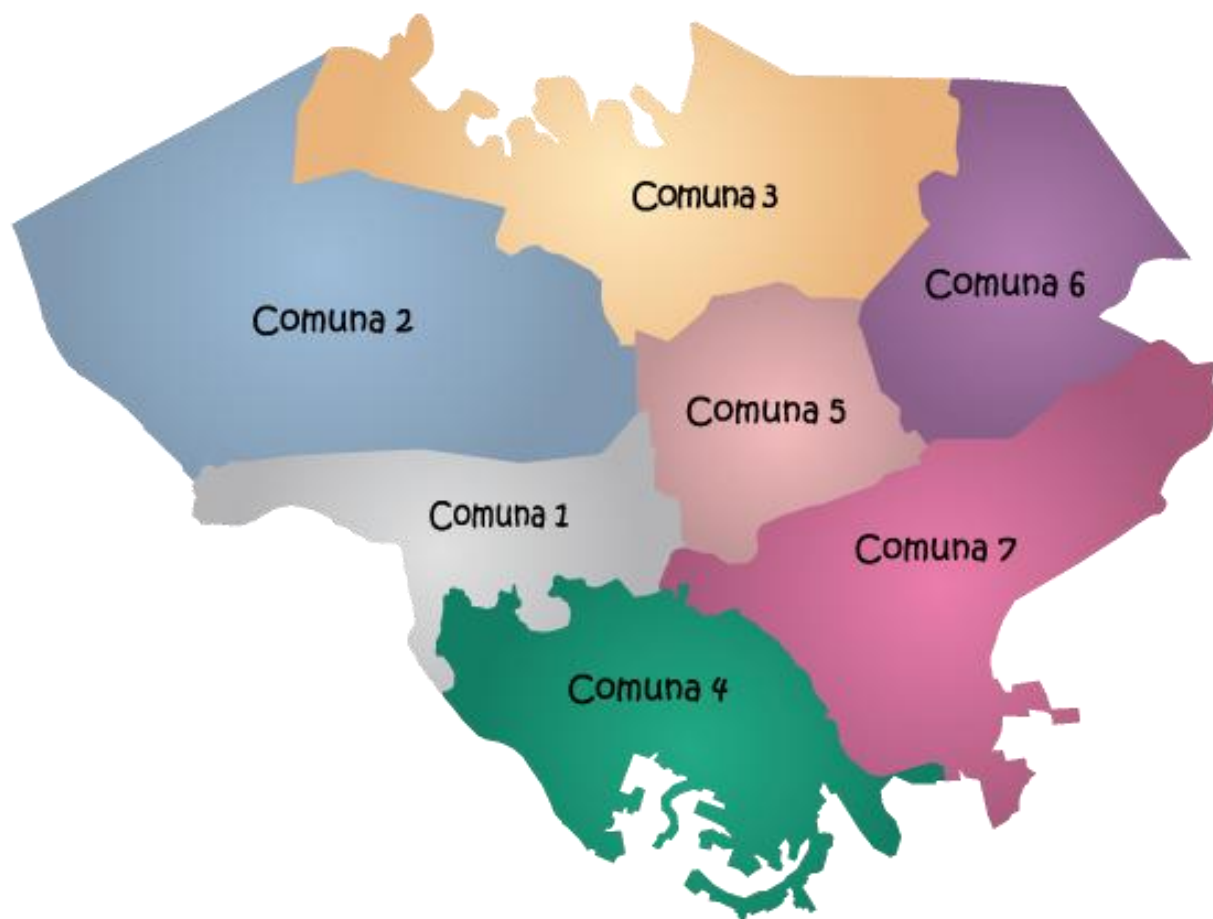
1. What do you think of the state of displaced women?
2. What are the challenges they have faced and continue to face?
3. Do you feel that the displaced women have enough knowledge and in what way?
4. Why is there such a lack of confidence by the women towards IDP associations?
5. What is the process women go through to get assistance?
6. What types of assistance are available to them?
7. How do the displaced exercise their right?
8. What do you think women need to be self-sufficient?

## APPENDIX 3: TABLE OF RESPONDENTS AND KEY INFORMANTS

Focus Group Coding	Respondents	Age	Number of Years Displaced	Current Status (Head of Household, Single, Married, Widow, or Other)	Participation to an IDP Association (Yes or No)
FG 1	<b>Commune 1</b>				
	Participant 1	27	2	Head of Household	No
	Participant 2	18	6	Head of Household	No
	Participant 3	55	11	Head of Household	No
	Participant 4	29	11	Head of Household	No
	Participant 5	37	10	Head of Household	No
	Participant 6	31	9	Head of Household	Yes
FG 2	<b>Commune 3 (Group 1)</b>				
	Participant 1	35	6	Single-Head of Household	No
	Participant 2	37	5	Head of Household	No
	Participant 3	37	5	Married-Head of Household	No
	Participant 4	54	11	Married	No
	Participant 5	23	11	N/A	No
	Participant 6	32	6	Single-Head of Household	No
FG 3	<b>Commune 3 (Group 2)</b>				
	Participant 1	33	9	Head of Household	No
	Participant 2	32	7	Widowed-Head of Household	No
	Participant 3	50	21	Single-Head of Household	No
	Participant 4	31	4	Widowed-Head of Household	No
FG 4	<b>Commune 4</b>				
	Participant 1	29	4	Married	Yes
	Participant 2	46	6	Married	Yes
	Participant 3	25	6	N/A	No
	Participant 4	52	10	Head of Household	No
FG 5	<b>Commune 5</b>				
	Participant 1	59	10	Widowed-Head of Household	No
	Participant 2	33	3	Open Relationship- Head of Household	No
	Participant 3	58	4	Head of Household	No
	Participant 4	36	10	Open Relationship- Head of Household	No
	Participant 5	69	6	Widowed-Head of Household	NA
	Participant 6	39	4	Widowed-Head of Household	No
	Participant 7	59	11	Single-Head of Household	Yes
Participant 8	55	4	Single-Head of Household	Yes	

**Table of Informants**

Informant Coding System	Organization	Organizational Role
Informant 1	UNHCR Barrancabermeja	Protection Officer
Informant 2	Women of Peace, Bread and Life	Advisor
Informant 3	OFP	Program Manager
Informant 4	Social Action Magdalena Medio	Lead Coordinator of IDP Affairs
Group Interview 1	Board of Organizations for the Displaced Population	5 Association Leaders

**APPENDIX 4: MAP OF BARRANCABERMEJA COMMUNES**

Source: Google Images, 2011