

## 5. Post-demobilisation groups and forced displacement in Colombia: a quantitative approach

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This chapter seeks to carry out a quantitative and geographic review of the presence of post-demobilisation groups (PDGs)<sup>2</sup> in Colombia and their impact on forced displacement in the country up to December 2013.

Its purpose is to offer an overview of forced displacement in Colombia, showing the impact of new actors who reproduce and adapt tactics of social and territorial control towards capturing legal and illegal income. These groups also demand particular attention in the framework of negotiations towards the end of the conflict between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People’s Army (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército del Pueblo – FARC–EP) insurgency. This attention should focus on the potential of former combatants being again drawn into criminal activities that cause violence and exert pressure on rural and urban populations, and participating in the growing consolidation of criminal networks with local and national impact that may affect the stability and sustainability of a possible agreement in Havana.

The data presented in this chapter comes from four complementary sources:

1. Fieldwork carried out in six municipalities in Colombia traditionally affected by armed conflict (Bogotá, Soacha, Cúcuta, Quibdó, Buenaventura and Tumaco). Semi-structured interviews and focal groups were carried out with representatives of local and national institutions, officials from international organisations, members of civil society and leaders of grassroots and victims’ organisations.

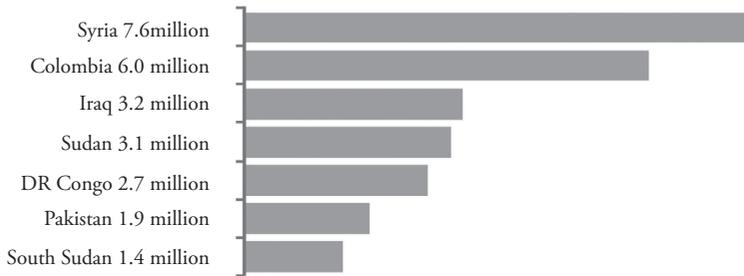
1 Graphs and maps, unless otherwise noted, were prepared by Paola Hurtado from the Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (CODHES) and the Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

2 For the purposes of this chapter, PDGs are macro-criminal structures derived from paramilitary groups which demobilised in 2005 and took up arms again later, those that never demobilised, and those that appeared after the demobilisation process of the so-called Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC). They include former members of these paramilitary groups.

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2. Monitoring by the Human Rights and Displacement consultancy (Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento – CODHES) on the humanitarian situation in the country. Its estimates of the number of displaced people are obtained through a methodology that contrasts different sources of information'. The main official and unofficial sources used in this methodology are:
    3. (a) Official sources: Public Ministry (Ministerio Público), including the Office of the Ombudsman (Personerías Municipales and Defensoría del Pueblo) and the Integrated Assistance and Reparation to Victims Unit (Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas).
    - (b) Unofficial sources: this includes the monitoring of national and regional news sources; ethnic organisations; grassroots groups; the Catholic Church (through the Secretariado Nacional de Pastoral Social); United Nations (UN) agencies, local and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations.

Information from these sources provides the basis for contrasting the data. The displacement figures for each municipality are calculated according to their scope and the dates of multiple and mass events. Department and national-level figures are derived by aggregating municipal and departmental data. The main restrictions identified when using the 'contrast' methodology are that: a) although it tries to avoid duplication, there is still a high risk of under-reporting despite the resulting figures being higher than in other information systems; b) the available information does not cover all areas of the country; c) the data refers to the displaced population only according to the municipality to which they arrived, and it is only possible to identify the respective municipalities of origin in multiple, mass and intra-urban displacement events.
  4. Maps showing the territorial presence of armed actors. The paramilitary presence in the maps shown in this chapter is a categorical variable. In other words, it indicates only whether or not there is a presence, with different groups indicated by the depth of shading on the map. The elaboration of the maps draws on reports from the Early Warning System (Sistema de Alertas Tempranas) of the Office of the Ombudsman, INDEPAZ NGO compilations, news reports and army announcements. Maps identify the presumed armed actors behind acts of armed conflict and similar events, which allows the existence of a particular group to be evidenced in a specific municipality.
- Since data are disaggregated at a municipal level, the same group can be present in several different locations in the same department. These



Graph 5.1. Countries with the largest displacement related to conflict and violence

Source: IDMC 2015

data are indicative of the (visible) presence of armed groups, particularly paramilitary and post-demobilisation groups, but do not allow the size of the group membership to be identified.

- Literature review of project reports from government agencies, press items and reports by international civil society organisations.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first gives a general description of the PDGs' modus operandi and the strategies through which they cause forced internal displacement. It continues by demonstrating the historical presence of paramilitary and PDG groups through two contrasting maps of such presence. Finally, brief consideration is given to the reintegration of former combatants into civilian life through transitional strategies within peace process framework between the Colombian government and the FARC.

## Displacement in Colombia

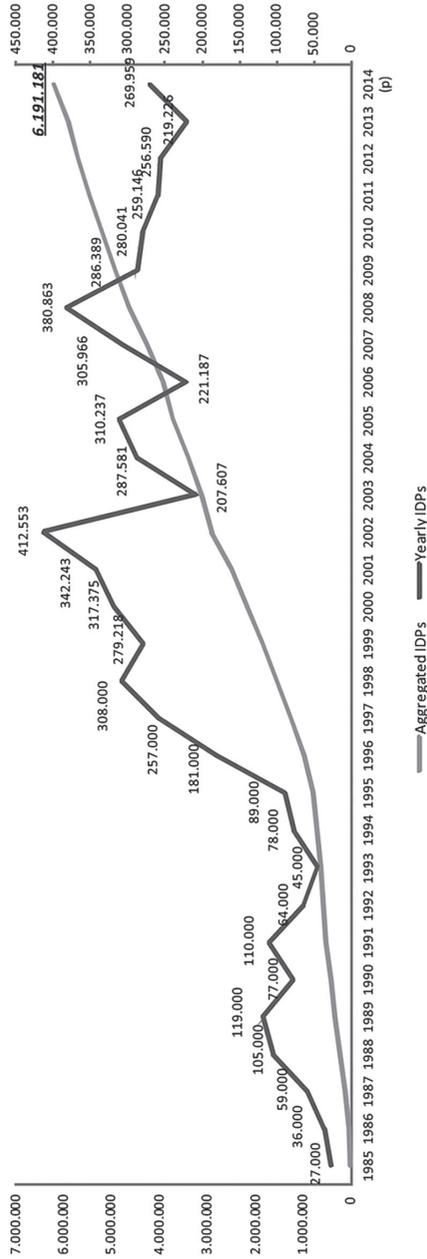
According to data from the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)'s *Global Overview 2015, People Internally Displaced by Conflict and Violence*, Colombia has the second-highest levels of internal displacement associated with conflict and violence in the world. Its 6 million victims are surpassed only by Syria's 7.6 million.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, CODHES estimates for 2013 indicate that in Colombia at least 203,976 people were forced to flee their homes due to armed conflict. Out of this total, 28,032 were displaced in massive<sup>4</sup> or multiple<sup>5</sup> events, which were comprised of 130 cases and 7,205 families.

3 NRC and IDMC *Global Overview 2015, People Internally Displaced by Conflict and Violence* (2015), p. 8, available at <http://bit.ly/1ldAq3n> (accessed 15 March 2016).

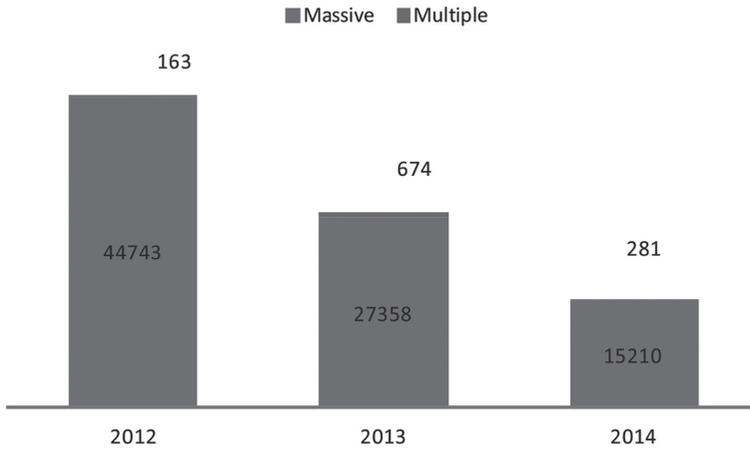
4 Mass displacements are events that affect 50 or more individuals or 10 or more families.

5 Multiple displacements are events that affect between 15 and 49 individuals or between 3 and 9 families.



Graph 5.2. Forced displacement in Colombia: 1985–2014

Source: CODHES – SISDHES 2014



Graph 5.3. People displaced by multiple and mass events in Colombia, 2012–14

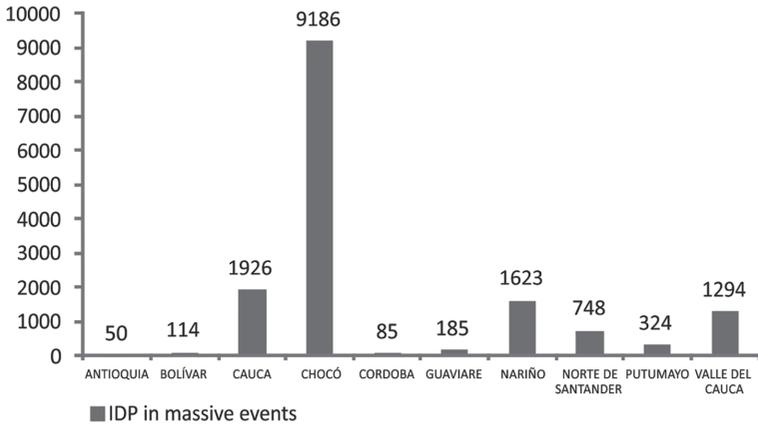
Source: CODHES – SISDHES 2014

This means that, according to CODHES, at least 5,905,996 individuals in Colombia were forcibly displaced between 1985 and 2013.<sup>6</sup> It indicates that, on average, 203,665 individuals were displaced per year in the last 29 years. Out of this total, the departments with the highest numbers of people affected by mass displacements in 2013 were Antioquia (3,774), Cauca (8,223), Chocó (2,496), Córdoba (1,053), Nariño (5,168) and Valle del Cauca (4,589). These departments also have the highest post-demobilisation group presence levels of the last five years.

In the context of a peace process between the government and the FARC, it is important to ask whether the humanitarian crisis due to internal displacement is being caused exclusively by the insurgent group or whether other armed actors have an impact on the continuous growth in the number of displaced persons during the last decade. As maps 1 and 2 indicate, challenges to a possible post-conflict scenario in Colombia are not limited to the consequences of a cessation of armed hostilities between the security forces and FARC members. Rather, it is also necessary to consider the presence and coercive power of other actors<sup>7</sup> that operate in the country and which are responsible for victimising the civilian population.

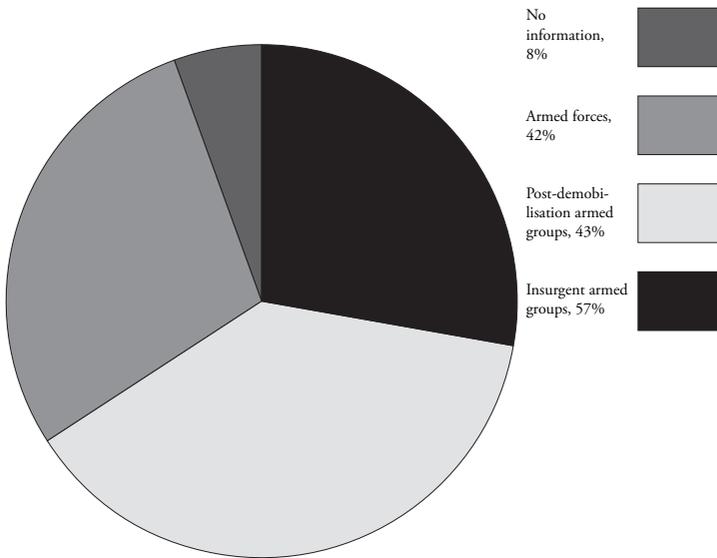
6 According to official data from the Colombian government, 6,414,700 individuals had been historically displaced by 1 Sept. 2015, out of which 25,922 had to flee that same year. See Red Nacional de Información (RNI) (2015), Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas (UARIV) (May), available at <http://bit.ly/1nPzF34> (accessed 15 March 2016).

7 The actor concept refers to an armed structure that, in the context of the conflict, has the capability to undertake recurring violent actions in a particular space and for a significant



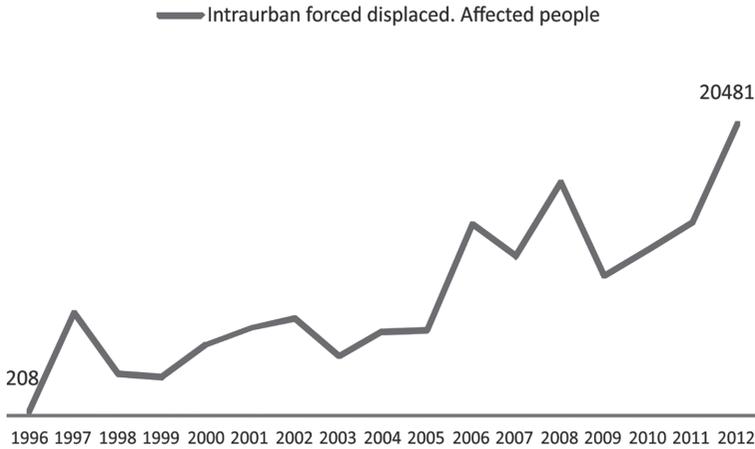
Graph 5.4. People affected by multiple and mass displacements, organised by department, 2012–14

Source: CODHES – SISDHES 2014



Graph 5.5. Actors allegedly responsible for mass and multiple displacements in Colombia, 2012–14

Source: CODHES – SISDHES 2014



Graph 5.6. Intra-urban forced displacement, historic patterns

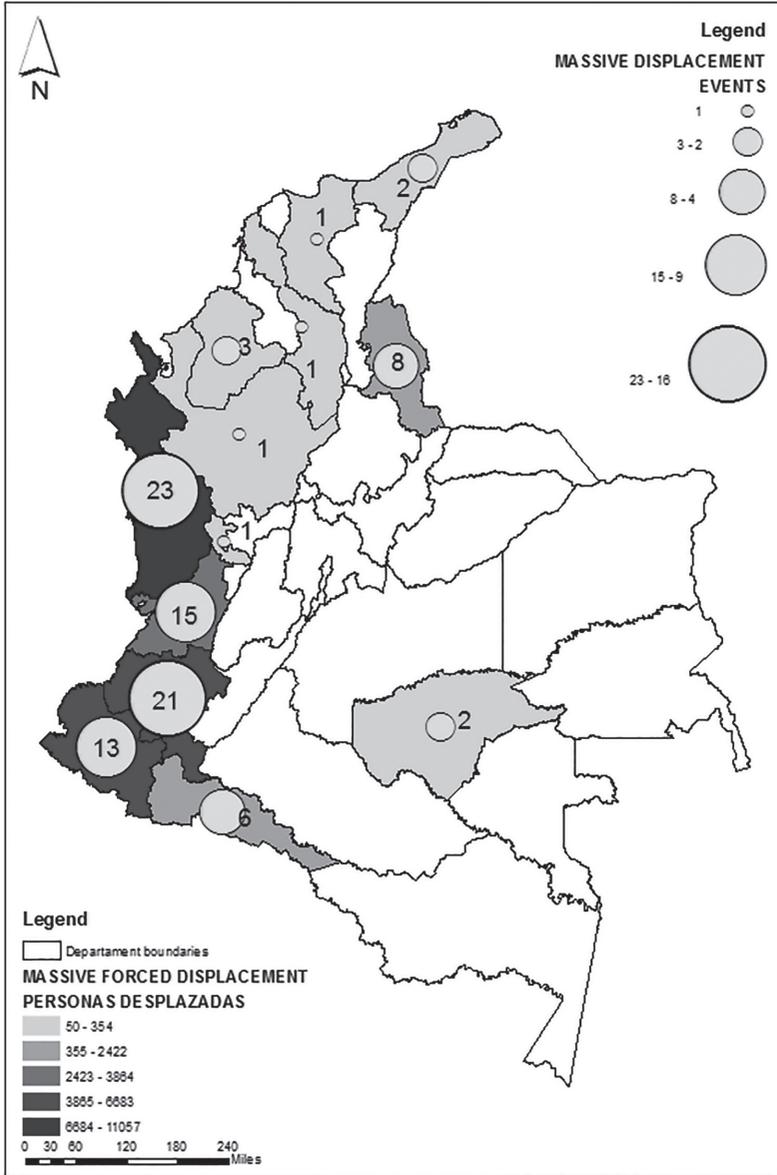
Source: CODHES – 2013

Multiple and mass displacement events are merely indicators of the degree of victimisation caused by PDGs compared with other armed actors in Colombia. Although the FARC's actions, and clashes between it and the security forces, still generate displacement of people whose lands are deliberately appropriated or who find themselves in the crossfire, mass displacement events in 2012 and 2013 are mostly associated with the actions of PDGs, particularly those events characterised as intra-urban forced displacement.

During 2012, the main armed actors in urban environments were PDGs. Twenty-four events of intra-urban displacement were identified by CODHES, out of which 23 were mass displacements. They were concentrated in six municipalities: Medellín, Buenaventura, Tumaco, Soacha, El Tarra and Toribío. In 22 of the 24 events the actors responsible formed part of the network of PDGs, including – among others – *La Empresa*, *Los Urabeños*, *Los Rastrojos*, *Los Combos en Medellín*, *La Oficina*, as well as other unidentified groups. The FARC and the security forces were the perpetrators in the remaining events. The increase in intra-urban forced displacement in 2012 and 2013 in the areas

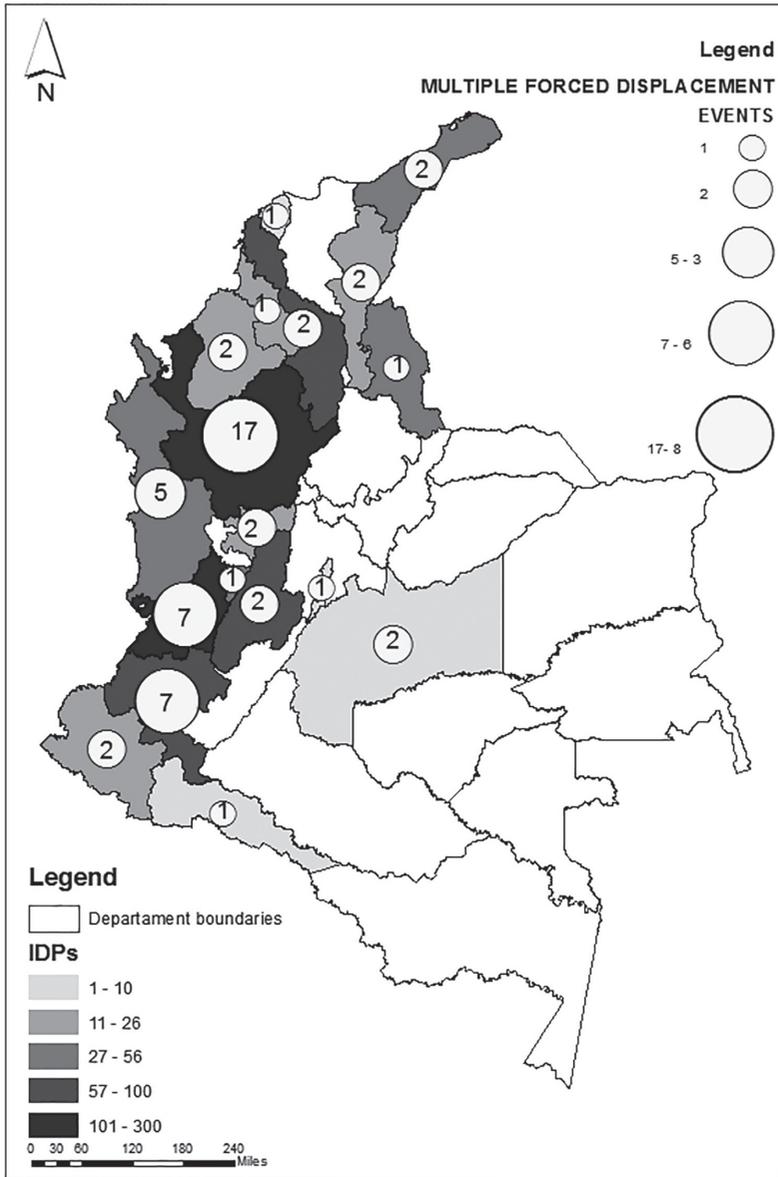
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length of time. For the purposes of this chapter actors are understood to cover the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército del Pueblo (FARC–EP); the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN); State agents including the national army, police, navy and air force (grouped together as 'security forces'); paramilitary groups such as the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) and the Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá (ACCU) and post-demobilisation groups like the Urabeños o Clan Usúga, the Águilas Negras, Los Rastrojos, La Empresa, la Oficina and the *combos* from Medellín and other unidentified actors.



Map 5.1. Mass displacement events in Colombia, January–November 2014. Map created by Ingrid Paola Hurtado

Source: CODHES-SISDHES 2014



Map 5.2. Multiple displacement events in Colombia, organised by department, January–November 2014. Map created by Ingrid Paola Hurtado

Source: CODHES-SISDHES 2014

with PDG presence indicates that the peace process with the FARC does not entail the end of rural or urban violence in Colombia. On the contrary, one of the main challenges faced by the State is the increase in criminal actions by groups derived from the paramilitaries that now occupy the power vacuum left by the old leaders of the self-defence forces [autodefensas] and drug traffickers, and their role in prolonging the humanitarian crisis caused by armed conflict in Colombia.

If forced displacement in Colombia has not decreased after the AUC's demobilisation, but rather the perpetrators, patterns and flows have simply become more varied, then serious concerns arise regarding the future of FARC combatants who lay down their weapons and seek to reintegrate into civilian life. The next section provides a general description of the PDGs' modus operandi, their relationship with the demobilisation of paramilitary groups, and the social and territorial control that continues to generate forced displacement. The purpose is to suggest a number of possible scenarios concerning the presence of the armed groups in light of the possible peace deal with the FARC and the challenges it would bring to the rural and urban areas to which their armed actions would be redirected.

### **Former combatants, post-demobilisation groups and practices of recruitment and territorial control**

Since 2006, PDGs have organised themselves around the paramilitary structures and leaders that remained after the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia demobilised, at the same time as they have co-opted elements from guerrilla and drug-trafficking groups. As such, the spaces for territorial control and drug-trafficking corridors, as well as the coercive practices inflicted on the civilian population in pursuit of legal and illegal sources of income, have also adapted to the power vacuum left by the demobilisation of the old paramilitary leaders. In consequence, criminal networks – without a clear vertical hierarchical structure, but based on a franchise model that allows subcontracting to relatively independent local nodes – now exercise social and territorial control through billing offices, combos and gangs. Similarly, these networks also maintain links with transnational trafficking networks located in Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, Argentina and Spain.<sup>8</sup>

The process of readjustment among PDGs in order to consolidate their presence in strategic areas also takes advantage of the new urban dynamics of armed conflict in the country. In addition to processing and transporting coca

8 J. McDermott, 'La victoria de los Urabeños. La nueva cara del crimen organizado en Colombia', *InSight Crime*, May 2014, available at <http://es.insightcrime.org/noticias-del-dia/guerreros-unidos-nueva-cara-crimen-organizado-mexico>, pp. 10–15 (accessed 15 March 2016).

paste, and selling cocaine, PDGs have found both commercial and traditional mining an important source of income through their control of mining areas and extortion of small- and large-scale miners in rural areas. Nonetheless, urban spaces have also come to represent a means not only of subsistence but also of consolidating social, territorial and economic power.

The diversity of PDGs was originally due to the struggles between different remnants of the paramilitary groups that sought to take over the drug-trafficking business and gain control of income from local-level drug-trafficking, extortion, theft and plundering in the cities. As two of the most influential groups, the Rastrojos and the Urabeños, transformed into more effective and active networks, these were complemented by a wide array of other illicit sources of income. Thus, influence over drug-trafficking and mining became accompanied by their involvement in smuggling, the arms trade, extortion, human trafficking and prostitution.

These practices could not be sustained without an active presence in both the cities and the rural areas. For that reason, the exponential growth of PDGs was not limited to rural areas traditionally linked to the armed conflict, but also established itself by means of extreme violence in populations in the Pacific regions (59 events of mass displacement in 2013) and the Caribbean (49 events of mass displacement in 2013), in border areas. They also expanded to large cities, where the activities of extortion networks, combos and gangs that work as contractors for PDG groups have great impact, despite being camouflaged in local neighbourhoods, which makes detecting their presence difficult.<sup>9</sup>

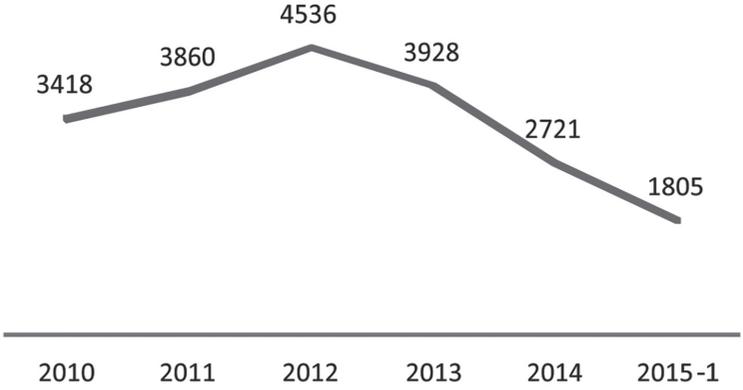
Despite frequent successes by the security forces against suspected PDG members (between 2009 and 2012, some 4,536 PDG members were 'neutralised' and 4,493 were captured, according to figures from the Ministry of Defence),<sup>10</sup> so-called criminal bands [*bandas criminales*] continue to expand throughout the territory of Colombia.

If the Ministry of Defence data are reliable (and those 'captured are not also those "neutralised"'), at least 9,029 individuals were members of PDGs between 2009–12. This number would exceed the number of FARC combatants calculated by the same source – that is, 7,200<sup>11</sup> – and would make PDGs the most numerous armed actor in the country. The figures also suggest that PDG members represent about one third of the total number of individuals who

9 For a detailed analysis of the composition and contribution of roles in PDGs see McDermott, 'La victoria de los Urabeños', pp. 7–11. McDermott uses the term 'criminal band' [*banda criminal*], employed by the Colombian government to describe what this chapter has referred to as 'post-demobilisation groups' (PDGs).

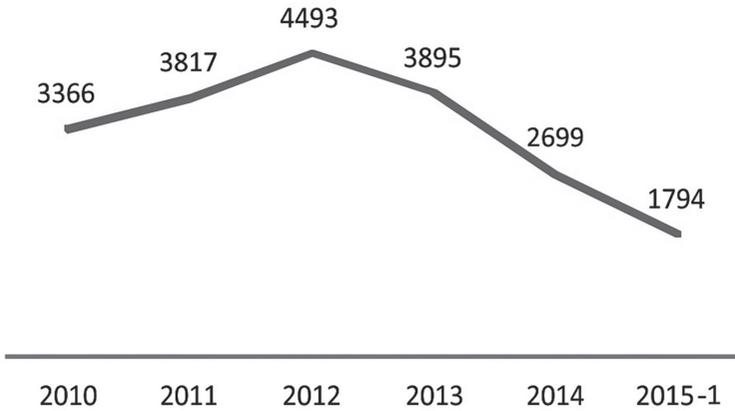
10 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, *Avance en la Política de Seguridad Nacional* (March 2014), available at <http://bit.ly/1gpAD6g> (accessed 15 March 2016).

11 *El Colombiano*, 'Las Farc solo tienen 7.200 guerrilleros: Mindefensa' (Sept. 2013), available at <http://bit.ly/1sPX8mM> (accessed 15 March 2016).



Graph 5.7. Neutralised PDG members

Source: Ministerio de Defensa. Observatorio del delito de la DIJIN Policía Nacional, 2014



Graph 5.8. Captured PDG members

Source: Ministerio de Defensa. Observatorio del delito de la DIJIN Policía Nacional, 2014

demobilised during the demobilisation process with the autodefensas between 2005 and 2006, that is, 29,079 individuals (see graph 1). In other words, from a merely quantitative standpoint, PDG membership could be made up of at least a third of demobilised AUC members.

*Table 5.1. Demobilisation of AUC members*

Demobilisation	# of people	Date of demobilisation	ZUT – Temporary Location Area
Bloque Resistencia Tairona (SNSM - Magdalena)	1,166	3 February 2006	Vereda Quebrada del Sol in the corregimiento de Guachaca, municipio Santa Marta, departamento Magdalena.
Bloque Norte	2,300	8 and 10 March 2006	Corregimiento Chimila, municipio de El Copey, departamento del Cesar.
Bloque Montes de María	594	14 July 2005	Predio 'Pepe' in corregimiento San Pablo, municipio María la Baja, departamento de Bolívar.
Autodefensas of the sur of the Magdalena	47	4 December 2004	Corregimiento Santa Rosa, municipio de Santa Ana, departamento Magdalena.
Bloque Catatumbo	1,437	10 December 2004	'Brisas of the Sardinata' farm, in the corregimiento Campo Dos, municipio de Tibú, departamento de Norte de Santander.
Frente Julio Cesar Peinado Becerra	251	4 March 2006	Corregimiento Torcoroma, municipio de San Martín, departamento Cesar.
Bloque Cintral Bolívar	2,523	31 January 2006	'La Granja' in el corregimiento Buena Vista, municipio de Santa Rosa del Sur, departamento de Bolívar.
Frente Mojana de las AUC	110	2 February 2005	Recreational area of the corregimiento Nueva Esperanza, municipio Guaranda, departamento de Sucre
Frentes Nordeste Antioqueño (Remedios Antioquia)	1,922	30 January 2005	Vereda San Cristóbal of the corregimiento Santa Isabel, municipio de Remedios, departamento de Antioquia.
Bloque Córdoba	925	18 January 2005	Corregimiento Santa Fe Ralito, municipio de Tierra Alta, departamento de Córdoba.
Anillos de Seguridad (Santa Fe de Ralito)	300	27 August 2005	Corregimiento Santa Fe Ralito, municipio de Tierra Alta, departamento de Córdoba.
Frente Héroes de Tolova	465	15 June 2005	Vereda Rusia Ocho of the corregimiento Mata Maíz, municipio de Valincia, departamento de Córdoba

Demobilisation	# of people	Date of demobilisation	ZUT – Temporary Location Area
Bloque Bananero	453	25 November 2004	Finca La Macrena in corregimiento El Dos, in the municipio de Turbo, departamento de Antioquia.
Bloque Noroccidente Antioqueño	222	11 September 2005	School and neighbouring plot in the vereda 'El Rodeo', municipio de Sopetrán, departamento de Antioquia.
Bloque Sur oeste Antioqueño de las AUC	125	30 January 2005	Institución Educativa 'Juan TaMay' of the corregimiento Alfonso López, municipio Ciudad Bolívar, departamento de Antioquia.
Bloque Suroeste Antioqueño	125	30 January 2005	Institución Educativa 'Juan TaMay' of the corregimiento Alfonso López, municipio Ciudad Bolívar, departamento de Antioquia.
Frente Héroes de Granada	2,033	1 August 2005	Finca La Mariana, paraje 'Palo Negro', corregimiento Cristales, municipio de San Roque, departamento de Antioquia
Bloque Cacique Nutibara	868	25 November 2003	Lot 'La Montaña centr recreacional' (sede PROSOCIAL), municipio de La Ceja, departamento de Antioquia
Autodefensas Campesinas de Puerto Boyacá	742	28 January 2006	Vereda El Marfil, municipio de Puerto Boyacá, departamento de Boyacá.
Autodefensas Unidas de Cundinamarca	148	9 December 2004	Instituto Técnico Agrícola 'Luis Carlos Galán', in the corregimiento Terán, municipio de Yacopí, departamento de Cundinamarca.
Autodefensas Campesinas of del Magdalena Medio	990	7 February 2006	Corregimiento La Merced, municipio de Puerto Triunfo, departamento de Antioquia.
Frente Héroes and Mártires de Guatica	552	15 December 2005	Vereda La Esperanza, municipio de Santuario, departamento de Risaralda.
Bloque Tolima	207	22 October 2005	Hacienda 'Tau Tau' in la vereda Tajomedio, municipio de Ambalema, departamento Tolima.
Bloque Centauros	1,135	3 September 2005	'Corinto' farm in the corregimiento Tilodirán, municipio de Yopal, departamento de Casanare.
Bloque Arauca	207	23 December 2005	Vereda Puerto Gaitán, municipio de Tame, departamento de Arauca.
Frente Vichada	325	24 September 2005	Inspección de Policía El Placer, municipio de Cumaribo, departamento de Vichada

Demobilisation	# of people	Date of demobilisation	ZUT – Temporary Location Area
Autodefensas Campesinas de Meta and Vichada	209	6 August 2005	'La María' farm in the vereda San Miguel, municipio de Puerto Gaitán, departamento Meta.
Bloque Norte	1,765	11 April 2006	Corregimiento Chimila, municipio El Copey, departamento Cesar.
Bloque Pacifico	150	23 August 2005	Vacation and tourist center 'Estadero Kurungano', municipio Istmina, departamento Chocó.
Bloque Calima	564	18 December 2004	'El Jardín' farm in corregimiento Galicia, of the municipio de Bugalagrande, departamento Valle del Cauca.
Grupo de las Autodefensas Campesinas de Ortega	168	7 December 2003	Escuela El Edén, municipio de Cajibío, departamento Cauca
Bloque Libertadores of the Sur	667	30 July 2005	'El Romance' lot in el paraje 'El Tablón', of the Inspección de Policía de El Tablón, municipio de Taminango, departamento de Nariño.
Frente Sur PutuMay of the BCB	504	1 March 2006	Vereda La Esperanza of the corregimiento Santa Ana, municipio de Puerto Asís, departamento Putumayo
Frentes Próceres of the Caguán-B CB de las AUC	552	15 February 2006	Vereda Liberia, municipio Valparaíso, departamento de Caquetá
Frente Costanero of the Bloque Elmer Cárdivas	309	12 April 2006	Corregimiento Mello Villavicencio, municipio de Necoclí, departamento de Antioquia.
Frente Pavarando and Dabeida Bloque Elmer Cárdivas	484	30 April 2006	Corregimiento El Cuarenta, municipio Turbo, departamento de Antioquia.
Frente Norte Medio Salaqui Bloque Elmer Cárdivas	745	15 August 2006	Urabá Chocoano, municipio de Necoclí
Bloque Mineros	2,790	20 January 2006	Hacienda 'La Ranchería' in the vereda Pecoralía, municipio de Tarazá, departamento de Antioquia
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29,079</b>		

Source: CODHES 2006

The most recent Ministry of Defence data on PDGs warrant careful study. However, it is important to emphasise at this point that post-demobilisation groups are not exclusively made up of people who took up arms again or who never demobilised, but also of new recruits. Fieldwork in six municipalities (Bogotá, Soacha, Cúcuta, Quibdó, Buenaventura and Tumaco) found that most of these new members are children and young people hailing from places with structural problems in terms of access to services and the fulfilment of fundamental rights.

In these six areas, including the Capital District, gangs, combos and extortion networks co-opt children and young people as a means of ensuring the operation of the PDG franchise that they represent. Although one of the main tasks of such groups is to safeguard the existence of territorial corridors used to move drugs, other practices like kidnapping, robbery, extortion, selective homicide, microtrafficking and prostitution are commonplace and require a regular 'workforce' in order to be carried out. Forced or induced recruitment is a common practice in places where there is limited enjoyment of spare time or where there are no opportunities for forms of employment or recreation that are not based on violence. One of the main reasons for intra-urban displacement detected through fieldwork is that of resisting recruitment and the risks that this generates for individuals and their families.

Women and girls are affected in different ways. In many cases, an armed group gains access to a neighbourhood or *vereda* through exerting pressure on a woman. The leader of a gang, band or combo who works for a PDG seeks to seduce a girl or teenager in order to gain entry into her home and then bring in new group members to occupy and taking over houses in strategic locations for control of the neighbourhood. Thus, territorial control starts through control of the youngest community members and then extends to the rest of the community through the use of terror, anxiety and invisible dividing lines that prevent the free movement of the population. If this dynamic lasts, the neighbourhood's young people turn into 'hard men/women' [*los duros*]<sup>12</sup> within those armed groups that cause forced displacement. War becomes a child's game in which children kill and are killed, and commit and fall victim to crimes that ensure the perpetuation of the criminal networks, with the justice system unable to protect or judge them effectively and guarantee their rights.

Forced displacement caused by PDGs in Colombia has thus become a consequence of a form of social and territorial control that uses violent practices to generate profit for criminal networks, but is also a strategy employed to ensure the continued viability of strategic corridors for contraband goods, and arms and drug trafficking. This has caused older routes that were already

12 The *duro* category in a neighbourhood refers to the leader of a criminal network node which exercises violent social and territorial control over a defined area.

controlled by paramilitary groups to transform in response to new pressures from security forces and also to generate new forced displacement flows.

The usual pattern of rural to urban displacement has been replaced by a strong movement between exclusively urban spaces which the population seeks to use as an individual protection strategy in order to activate the support of networks of family members and friends while avoiding a new displacement and maintaining their sources of informal income. Nonetheless, this protection is usually insufficient and thus persecution, fatiguing of the networks, lack of institutional support, clashes between groups or eviction as a strategy to consolidate territorial gains all end up causing the renewed flight of these individuals and their families. Intra-urban displacement thus turns to inter-urban displacement or even transnational displacement in border areas. The reach of the criminal networks operating in any one of these scenarios results in a constant pilgrimage of victims of forced displacement in search of safety.

The Single Victims' Registry (Registro Único de Víctimas – RUV) does not monitor this movement accurately, as it presently lacks a specific measuring mechanism to simultaneously identify the expulsion and reception locations of intra-urban displacement victims. The data thus reveal a high level of under-recording, which is also associated with the lack of complaints by victims, their distrust of the authorities and the absence of rigorous strategies for detecting cases of intra-urban displacement when these do not take place en masse. Moreover, it was not until Constitutional Court decisions in 2013 that it became possible to ensure that PDG victims were registered in the RUV. Based on Article 3 of the Victims and Land Restitution Law (*Ley* 1448, 2011), those evaluating the declarations of forced displacement victims originally rejected their legal recognition as victims requiring reparation by claiming that PDGs did not cause victimisation 'in the context of the armed conflict' but rather acted as manifestations of common crime.

It is evident that the criminal networks described above do not just carry out random and occasional criminal acts. Rather, their reach and modus operandi can generate as much or more coercion than a paramilitary or guerrilla group across an extended time in any particular location. In this respect, PDGs are situated in a 'grey area' of the Colombian armed conflict that is not strictly political, but does imply the control of a territorial power that seriously affects the fundamental rights of the civilian population. These arguments were recognised and endorsed in the Constitutional Court's 2012 judgments: C-253 and C-781 and the 2013 judicial writ [*auto*] 119, as a result of which the Victim's Unit Evaluation Directorate (Dirección para la Valoración de la Unidad de Víctimas) was forced to include those affected by PDGs as beneficiaries of integral reparation under the Victims' Law.

Finally, it is also important to highlight that the PDGs' actions cannot be exclusively categorised as criminal in the same way as those carried out by drug trafficking and criminal groups such as those in Central America and Mexico. Their continuity with the paramilitary groups who preceded them entails the continuation of anti-insurgent practices and stigmatisation of social, trade union and leftist leaders. Moreover, cruel acts still take place in order to generate terror, such as the dismemberment, of persons in the port areas of Buenaventura and Tumaco and threats, leaflets and murders perpetrated against local leaders in Bogotá. Although it is not possible to identify a clear political project behind the PDGs' actions, their paramilitary practices remain evident in their business activities, and in their involvement in the intimidation to social movements in Colombia have traditionally been subjected. Forced displacement is a symptom of this type of coercion.

The next section looks at the geographic changes in Colombia's PDG presence after the demobilisation of paramilitary groups. Its purpose is to set out the groups' territorial evolution and purging as a result of filling the ensuing power vacuums and taking control in areas that are strategic to their illegal income sources. Given the characteristics of their presence, as described in this chapter, it is important to note that the dynamics displayed in these maps are based on the coercive practices evidenced thus far in the chapter, and thus in the violation of the constitutional rights of those populations over which PDGs exercise power.

## **Presence of paramilitary groups and PDGs in Colombia**

This section presents a geographical overview of the historical presence of paramilitary groups and PDGs in the Colombian territory. In both cases, the 'paramilitary presence' category is retained to show continuity between the two sorts of groups. The two maps suggest that the process of demobilisation between 2006 and 2008, followed by the struggle for power and territorial control, led to a multiplication in the number of groups present in Colombia. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the dots on the map represent violent actions attributed to PDGs.

From a comparative perspective, what these maps demonstrate is a worrying increase in the territorial spread of those criminal networks that are the heirs of paramilitary actors, which now span the whole country. This gives the impression that as long as PDGs continue to maintain the businesses previously run by their paramilitary forebears, and while the social situation in those regions does not lead to an increase in citizens' standard of living, the alternative of violent crime will continue to be an option for the inhabitants of many regions of the country.

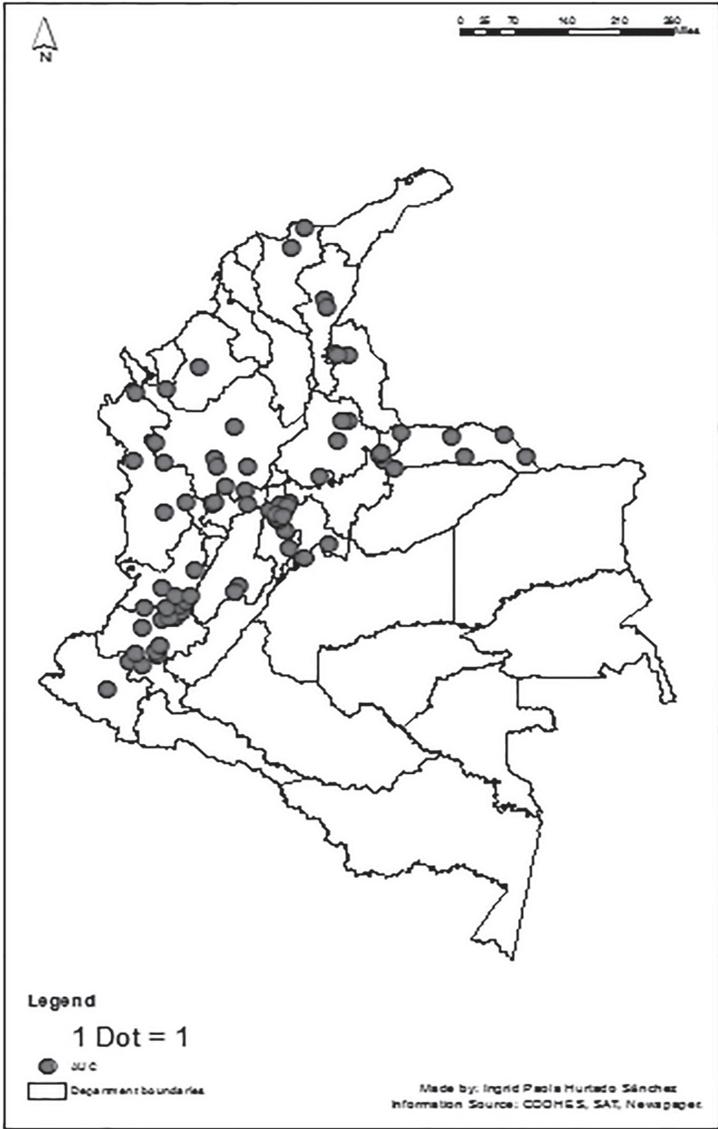
Post-demobilisation groups consolidate international support through developing a profitable business model that involves a number of different actors. Guerrilla groups take care of growing and harvesting the drugs. Organised criminal groups [*oficinas de cobro*] are responsible for transporting precursors, weapons and coca paste and ensuring the upkeep of laboratories. Finally, combos and gangs supply the social and territorial control necessary for the transit of merchandise, engage in other criminal activities that generate additional profits, and also pressure and co-opt public officials and members of the security forces in order to guarantee that their business can continue uninterrupted. It is worth noting that, as mentioned above, when members of criminal franchises are captured and neutralised, the number of new recruits also increases. The worrying territorial expansion evidenced by these maps leads one to question whether the strategy of pursuing the sources of group leader financing can eventually end with the control a new boss acquires once the previous one has been captured and the ensuing power vacuum. The PDGs' capacity to adapt is their main advantage, as the territorial evolution evident in the following maps demonstrates.

### **Final thoughts: reintegration as an indispensable component of a transition towards peace**

The proliferation of PDGs evidenced in the previous section requires that the State seek effective solutions that take account of the pressure that a scenario of demobilisation by FARC members could exert on urban and rural populations. In this context, the institutional support given to former combatants is as important as a response to criminal networks and the challenging social situation in regions where PDGs exercise control. This section aims to offer some suggestions on reintegrating former combatants that may be relevant to the institutional response after an eventual agreement between armed actors in Colombia.

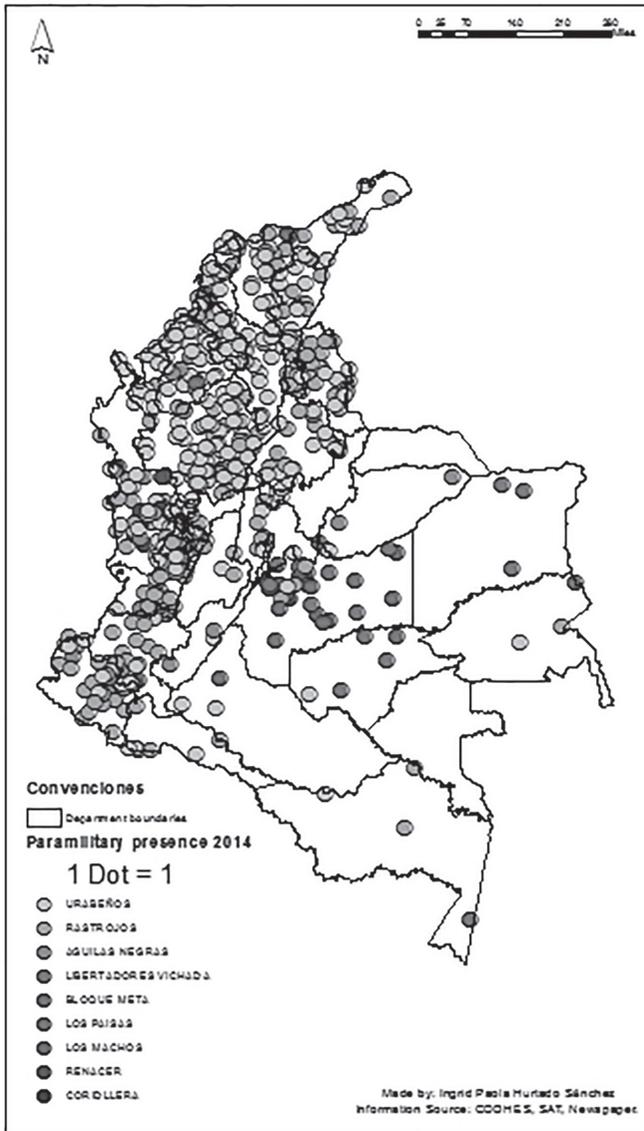
If reintegration into civilian life is not carried out in a dignified manner, then former combatants will have few viable alternatives for continuing with their lives outside the armed group. Likewise, an individual with experience in using violent means becomes an attractive target for recruitment by criminal networks that value the ability of former combatants to carry out criminal activities. This suggests that, in addition to the forced recruitment of children and young people, recidivism by former combatants is one of the main factors behind PDGs' permanence, growing strength and expansion.

According to the Colombian Agency for Reintegration (Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración – ACR) which is in charge of returning former combatants from the illegal armed groups to civilian society, out of 56,171 demobilised



Map 5.3. Paramilitary presence in 2002

Source: CODHES 2014



Map 5.4. Paramilitary presence in 2014  
 Source: CODHES 2015

individuals in the country, 46,806 have started a reintegration process that includes psychosocial advice, orientation on education issues and vocational training components. Nonetheless, the figures show that 12,186 individuals abandoned the programme due to absence for a period of over six months, losing their benefits, or voluntary withdrawal. If this number is added to the 24,434 individuals who did not even start the reintegration process, this could suggest that some 36,620 individuals are not participating in any kind of State reintegration process following their demobilisation.

*Table 5.2. Total number of targeted population and non-targeted population in the programmes carried out by the Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración, 2013*

<b>Targeted population</b>	
Active	23,041
Monetary benefits suspended	289
Inactive	4,035
Finished components	1,051
Completed	3,321
Total	31,737
<b>Non-targeted population</b>	
Absent for six or more months	10,302
Deceased	2,973
Lost benefits	1,985
Withdrew voluntarily	49
Total	15,159

*Source: ACR. Datos SIR, up to 31 December 2013*

Even if this figure is compared only with the total number of AUC members who demobilised between 2004 and 2006, as shown in the previous section, the intended beneficiary population of the government's reintegration programme is not even large enough to cover the former combatants from that demobilisation process.

In a possible post-conflict scenario with the FARC guerrilla, it is worrying that the continued existence of a prosperous business such as drug trafficking or mining may be more appealing to a former foot soldier than a life of struggle with no sustainable employment and the potential for rejection by society.

Although it is true that the six million victims of the Colombian armed conflict should receive full reparation from the State and other armed actors who have violated their rights, those who lay down their weapons also require

guarantees in civilian life such that they do not decide to return to criminal activity. Towards that end, the focus on transitional justice proposed by the government of Juan Manuel Santos should strengthen the implementation not only of the Victims' Law but also the reintegration process. Ignoring the needs of former combatants based on an exclusionary perception of their role in society can only prolong the conflict that continues to be fuelled by PDGs. Many demobilised individuals were also initially victims of the armed conflict, and joined armed groups due to coercion or a lack of alternatives in contexts where their rights went ignored. As such, their inclusion in society should be considered to be a function of their participation as citizens and rights holders.

In conclusion, internal forced displacement in Colombia remains one of the most pressing manifestations of the humanitarian crisis created by the multiplicity of actors in the armed conflict. Their adaptive capacity in relation to lucrative illegal businesses and their social and territorial control over traditionally excluded and vulnerable populations has generated new forms of criminal organisations that threaten the sustainability of any peace initiative in the country. Their existence also raises questions as to whether a cessation of hostilities will immediately lead to the end of generalised violence and forced migration. The path to post-conflict thus leads through a transition that guarantees the rights of victims and former combatants in a pragmatic and complementary scenario. This is one of the most pressing challenges for building peace in Colombian society.