

Working Paper

**THE INTERNALLY DISPLACED POPULATION IN COLOMBIA:
A preliminary characterization**

**Author:
Adriana Carolina Silva Arias¹**

Abstract:

This document studies some of the characteristics of Internally Displaced Population (IDP's) in Colombia. Then, it reviews and retakes some analytical axes of traditional migration theories, proposing from each theory a theoretical analysis by IDP's case. Later, specifically is characterized forced displacement for Colombian case since the information of the 2005 Census. According to data, the internal refugees did not have an age pattern, displays low levels of schooling and higher social vulnerability.

Key Words: Internal Migrations, Internally Displaced Population, Migration Theories, Colombia

JEL Classification: J61, N36, R23

1. Introduction

The violence in Colombia had its origins from the Republic with the breaking of the Spanish colonialism. In this way, the history of armed conflict and violence are linked to a long historical chain of violence; which began from 1839, few years after the definitive liberation of Spain in 1819 (Sanchez *et al*, 2003).

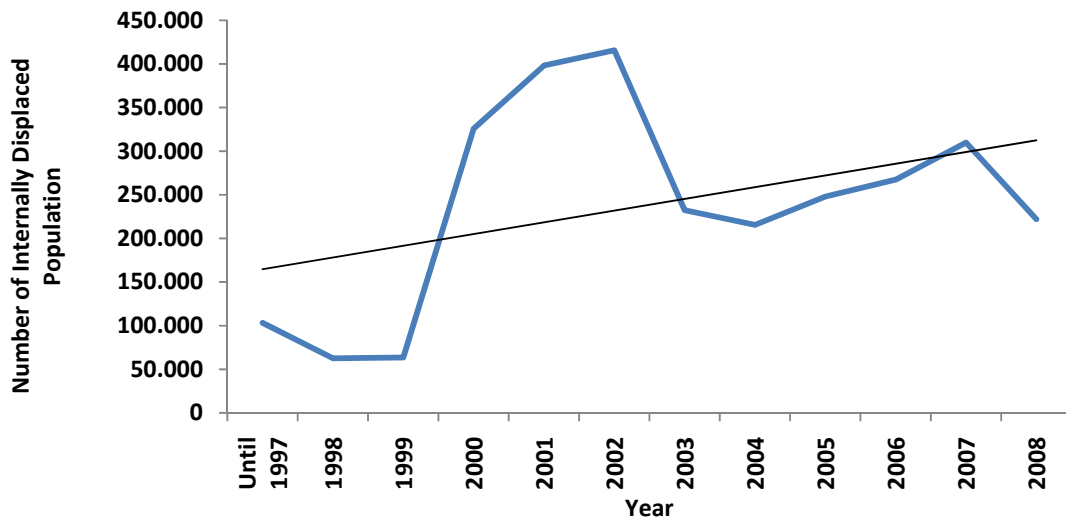
Then, although the civil conflict in Colombia is not new, the armed conflict was intensified since the end of the XX century, which has adopted as military strategy the attack on the civilian population. Actually, it has been reflected on the increase of the Internally Displaced Population (IDP's) in the country (Figure 1).

The perception on volume and geographical incidence of forced displacement varies according to methodology and information sources. However, the two main statistical sources in this field are *Acción Social* (as the official source) and *Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento - CODHES* (NGO), which have always shown an

¹ PhD Student of Population Studies, El Colegio de México – Colmex, asilva@colmex.mx

increase of IDP's in Colombia although divergences between the numbers (Ibáñez and Vélez, 2003; Ibáñez and Querubín, 2004).

Figure 1. Number of Internally Displaced Population in Colombia

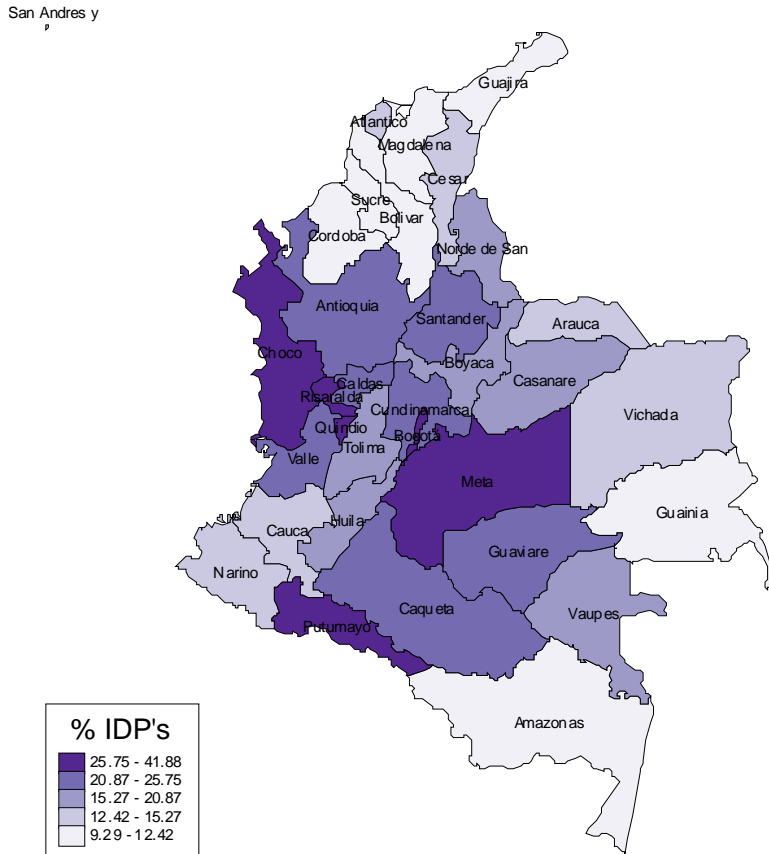


Source: SIPOD - Information System of Internally Displaced Population, Acción Social. Author's own calculations.

According to official data provided by *Acción Social*, as institution responsible in Colombia for coordinating the National System for Integral Attention to the Displaced Population-SNAIPD, the number of forced displaced population in Colombia was 2.872.503 people until the end of 2008, which belonged to 648.470 households.

Therefore, the internal refugees represented 6% of the Colombian population, placing Colombia as the first country in the world in terms of magnitude of internal refugees. Thus, IDP's is distributed almost everywhere as shown in Map 1.

Map 1: Distribution of Internally Displaced Population (IDP's) in Colombia by department (2005)



Source: 2005 Census – Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (Dane).
Author's own calculations.

In addition, the IDP's living conditions in the reception municipalities have been precarious, being generally worse than the urban poor (Ibáñez and Velásquez, 2008). Thus, the forced displacement is one of the major social problems in Colombia that draws attention; because after the physical survival reached by internal refugees, it is important to reconstruct the characteristics of forced displacement in the destination zone. Therefore, the objective of this document is review of some studies and stylized facts about the characteristics of IDP's in Colombia.

This working paper is organized as follows. After exposing some analytical approaches taken to traditional theories about the migration for the study of forced displacement, so presents a characterization of the internal refugees in Colombia and in the last part presents some final remarks.

2. Review of some theoretical approaches on forced displacement

Since the little evidence about theoretical frameworks for forced migration, this section takes traditional migration theories to characterize the conditions under which the IDP's came to destination zones. This characterization is useful for the empirical analysis of forced displacement.

In this sense, the migration have traditionally been studied from economic rationality, but these theories have not incorporated the individuals who make migration decisions involuntarily, because it takes as central assumption that all migration is voluntary (Sassen, 1995).

Therefore, this type differ from other types of migration because is an involuntary migration decision, it is inside from a country and has direct relationship to the armed conflict (Lopez, 2000, p. 15 quoted by Palacio, 2004, p. 34).

In this sense, it is worthwhile to cite the concept of displacement defined by the Colombian Congress in the Law 387 of 1997 according with requirements from Interamerican Institute of Human Rights (1995), which defines the Internally Displaced Population (IDP's) as:

"People who are forced to migrate within their national territory, abandoning his place of habitual residence or economic activities, because their life, physical integrity, safety or personal freedom have been violated or are directly threatened, at any the following situations: internal armed conflict, internal disturbances and tensions, generalized violence, massive violations of human rights, offenses of international humanitarian law or other circumstances arising from the above mentioned that may dramatically alter or disturb public order" (author's translation).

So, although the migratory flows have already been studied analytically from the rationality of the traditional migration theories, none of these theories take the migratory event based on a forced decision that involves just the survival rationality (Castles, 2003).

However, with the aim of showing some of the analytical research lines for the study of forced displacement as a research problem, I analyze this phenomenon in light of some traditional migration theories; because even if the forced migration is not configured as core of these theories, I use these for the understanding of the phenomenon of forced displacement as a particular type of migration.

Therefore, the research question is what differences exist in living condition between migrants forced with other migrant groups in the destination zones?

One difference is in terms of the expected benefits of the migration decision. Thus, neoclassical theory assumes the decision to migrate as a function of income differentials

between the region of origin and destination, adjusted for the probability of getting a job at the final destination (Sjaastad, 1962; Todaro 1969, Harris and Todaro, 1970).

Another theory that also incorporates only the economic benefit is the new economics of migration, which adds to the fact that migration decisions are not always rooted exclusively in the motivation of individual actors, because sometimes this decision involved groups of individuals such as households, families or communities; in order to diversify their income portfolio and thus minimize the economic risk of the social group (Stark, 1991, Durand and Massey, 2003).

This limited view of the decision to migrate includes only the expected income of the individual or the social group. For that reason, it would not fit the case of IDP's, because they decide to migrate for surviving and move to the second order to the economic consequences of migration decision.

However, from the neoclassical or new economic theory of migration, if the expected benefit was taken as the highest opportunity cost of staying at home due to the imminent threat to their life and integrity in the pushing zone, the benefits of migration decision would be the highest compared with the cost to stay there.

But other theories also are related to economic benefits; specifically those that refer to the greatest opportunities in labor markets. Such is the case of the theories of segmented labor markets and global systems; the first one considers that migration would be due to pull factors of labor toward the most advanced societies, to the inflation or to the dualism inherent in the modern occupational hierarchies; the second will simply add that as a result of disruptions and dislocations of capitalism, the international migration now arise because labor markets are also global (Massey and Espinosa, 1997).

For the case of forced displacement, pull factors could be related to the IDP's welfare for the displacement are related to a more secure place and not so much with labor factors. Nevertheless, labor markets to which they face could be heterogeneous and the segmented labor lines could vary by region and forms of productive organization in the destiny areas, as mentioned Giorguli and Gaspar (2008) in the context of international migrants.

A second distinguishing aspect is social capital available at the time of arrival. This framework incorporates the theory of social capital in which the value of networks and social ties influence the costs and benefits of migration (Massey and Espinosa, 1997).

From this perspective, Durand and Massey (2003) mentioned that people uses social capital because after it becomes in other ways of capital, to improve or to maintain their position in society, but added that these networks could be both positive and negative consequences for individuals (p. 31).

As a result, the IDP's are people who not prepare well in advance of their departure, suddenly runaway, with fear, without belongings, often without documents and traumatized by witnessing the murder of relatives and neighbors (Meertens, 2006). In consequence, in the short run they could not have established strong social networks with destiny areas to compensate the deficiencies in human capital or in economical resources.

Thus, the assimilation and integration theories are identified the disadvantages in economic integration and assimilation of migrants, because they are unskilled labor and spatially segregated [as IDP's], who are driven by social networks, which in turn creates barriers to structural assimilation of immigrants (Alba and Nee, 1997).

From this approach, which could happen is that social networks influence on forced migration as denominated Portes and Zhou (1993) the downward assimilation, which is related to the population stand in the low status in society due to racial discrimination, polarized labor markets and urban subcultures.

In addition, the cumulative causation theory, which considers that migration, alters the social context within which migration decisions are made later; because it turns enable additional movements of new populations (Massey, 1990).

As follows, according to this theoretical approach forced migrations move and expand the networks, which affect the regional distribution of human capital and the social meaning of work (Massey and Espinosa, 1997).

In this manner, one could consider that the flows of displaced people weren't always around the family group or community, because as mentioned Salcedo (2006) could also occur from various forms as: short / long distance, direct / by stages, permanent / return, among many other ways.

Furthermore, from this analytical framework, we should consider too the cultural, regional imbalances by depopulation and abandonment of productive land in the geographic pushing areas of IDP's.

As for the networks and relationships of migrants, from the transnational theory the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain diverse relationships which link the origin countries whit receiving countries (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007).

In this context, a question about this theory is transnationalism in the same country? There are meanings taken up by other authors as translocal (Ayora, 2008) or transterritorial (Moran, 1997) concepts, to use this theory in the context of the same nation-state. It this sense, forced displacement could be rethought as well as IDP's as subjects who want maintain ties to their homelands due to their continued desire to return.

However, according to the conceptualization of transnational or translocalism, it refers to the occupations and activities that require regular and sustained social contacts through the local or territorial boundaries, which would establish social and cultural networks between places of origin and destination (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007).

Given the above, in general transnational or translocalism theory doesn't work to explain the generalities of forced displacement dynamics, because in most cases they don't have strong relationships with push zones, given the total breakdown of the origin areas (Meertens, 2006).

According to Meertens (2006) an exception would be the indigenous and Afro-Colombian IDP's, because these are communities engaged in preserve their cultural identity, so they reach to keep in touch with the origin areas. In this way, communities would have generated ways to preserve life without giving up their territories (Bello 2006, Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). These peculiarities show the heterogeneity of the dynamics surrounding the event of displacement according to ethnic enclaves.

In summary, although there is not a specific migration theory that takes account the complex process of forced displacement, this first part of theoretical background took some analytical elements to differentiate the benefits of migration (neoclassical, new economics of migration, segmented labor markets, global systems) and social capital (social capital, assimilation and integration, cumulative causation, translocalism) of forced displacement, which differentiate IDP's from other migrants.

3. Characterization of Internal Refugees in Colombia

This section identifies some of the characteristics of Colombian IDP's. This paper reviews some general historical and demographic view, as well as the role assumed by the government and other institutions of civil society to face it.

3.1 A brief history about forced displacement in Colombia

In general, migrations are in the form of waves and correspond to a very specific situation of the origin places (Durand and Massey, 2003), which in IDP's case is armed conflict. Therefore, although forced displacement is not a new phenomenon, there are differences between the old and the recent waves of forced displacement.

Then, changes in the characterization and dynamics of forced displacement in Colombia came from the first wave of forced displacement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, generated mainly by partisan political violence in the One Thousand Days War (Guerra de los Mil días). Followed by the second wave of forced displacement in mid-twentieth century, which was generated during the bipartisan violence; on this time the country suffered a major demographic transformation becoming the majority of

population in urban zones, a phenomenon which is attributed in part to the size of the IDP's. The third wave of forced displacement occurred since end of the twentieth century until today, which is considered the most intense in volume of IDP's due to the increase of armed conflict in Colombia (Rueda, 2003).

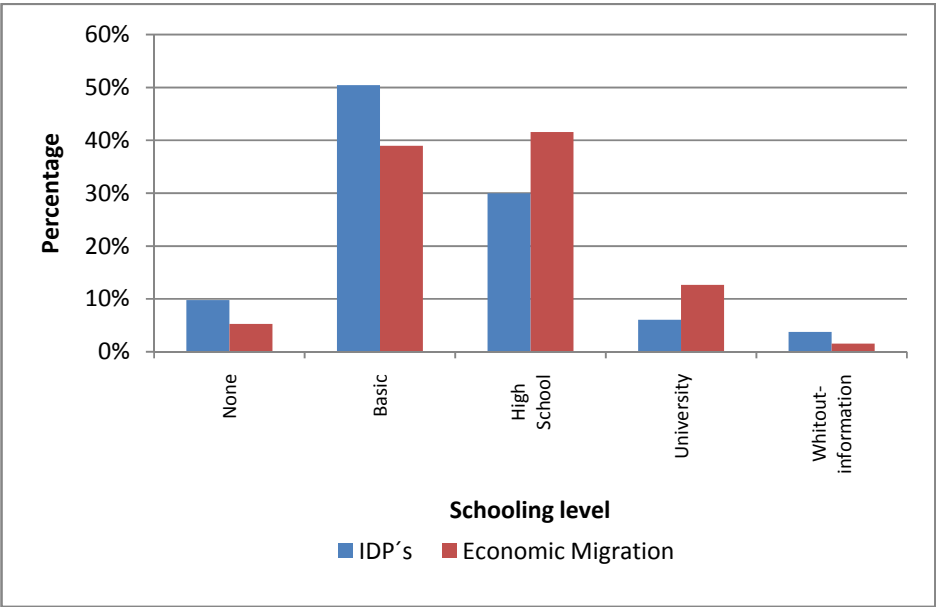
3.2 Characterization of Internally Displaced Population (IDP's)

This section reviews the general characterization of Colombian IDP's alignment with the historical elements to provide the volume and intensity of the phenomenon of forced displacement in Colombia as an important object of study.

Thus, in order to characterize some general demographic elements of forced displacement, according to the conceptual framework of certain stylized facts that have been identified in the literature as well as secondary sources are taken to characterize the IDP's in Colombia.

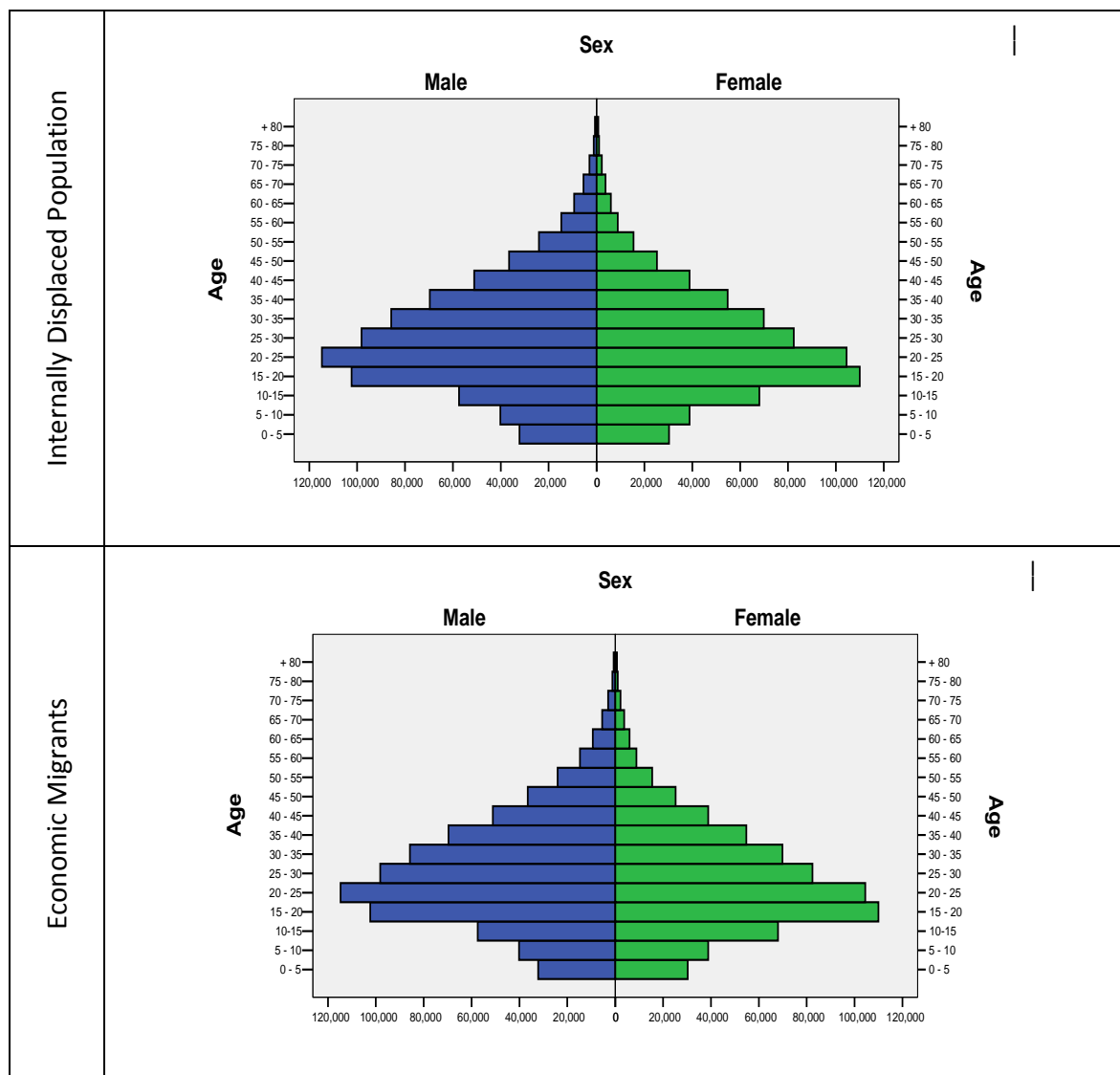
A first feature is the differential in schooling level among IDP's and economic migrants (as comparing group) according to 2005 Colombian Census, which identified that the IDP's had disadvantages in terms of educational level attained (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Schooling level of Internally Displaced Population (IDP's) and economic migrants in Colombia (2005)



Source: 2005 Census – Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (Dane). Author's own calculations.

Figure 3. Population Pyramid for IDP's and economic migrants in Colombia (2005)



Source: 2005 Census – Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (Dane).
 Author's own calculations.

Regarding the age distribution, Figure 3 evidences the difference between IDP's and economic migrants age composition; showing a higher proportion of infants and older

adults, compared to economic migrants who are in productive ages (between 15 and 40 years old).

Furthermore, the Census 2005 showed that approximately 50% of the IDP's in Colombia was female. Similarly, female household heads of IDP's had risen, because they represented 27% in 2001, rising to 35% in 2005.

Another dimension of gender refers to the proportion of widows or separated women who represented a higher proportion than in other populations, because the armed conflict have had a differentiated process of mortality by sex and have implied violent processes of family separation (Ibáñez and Vélez, 2003;. Ibáñez and Querubín, 2004).

In addition, a survey from Profamilia² in 2005 showed that 64% of IDP's women had suffered to all kinds of intimidation, in specific 18.3% suffered physical violence and 3.7 % sexual violence.

Another feature of IDP's has been a more high percentage of ethnic minorities due to the armed conflict has occurred in areas that traditionally have been occupied by ethnic groups, which has led to an arising displacement of afrocolombian and indigenous communities (González, 2002; Vélez and Ibáñez 2003; Querubín and Ibáñez, 2004).

In the same way, the estimations of IDP's size of households, the Profamilia data showed that contrary to national and global context, IDP's households have tended to increase their size. So, households in average had 4.9 members in 2001 and 5.7 in 2005, who were under 15 years old 35 % during 2005. This high proportion of children was evidenced also in the population pyramids presented in Figure 3, which would increase the vulnerability of IDP's due to face a more high economic dependence inside household.

In this sense, IDP's households appear to exhibit an attempt to increase the income earners for their economic survival, because labor participation rates were higher than those of natives, but they showed lower occupation rates and higher rates of unemployment among the different migration's types (Ibáñez and Vélez, 2003).

Therefore, forced displacement is one of the main social problems in Colombia, because after physical survival reached leaving their homelands by the violence, it is relevant to reconstruct the socio-demographics characteristics of barriers for their economic survival.

² Non-profit institution that implements programs to improve sexual and reproductive health of women and men, youth and teenagers Colombians, and simultaneously this institution develops social programs for the poor, vulnerable and excluded population.

3.3 Attention Policies for Colombian IDP's

About the policy formulation for IDP's, it has been significant progress since 1995. However, it has been addressed to "urgency" and "emergency" to short term attention (Bonilla, 2004).

As well, everything seems to be an institutional mosaic setting on the context of humanitarian aid to displaced communities (Salcedo, 2006); these aids would be subject to the identification as IDP's.

In this way, while this bureaucratic system of humanitarian aid has been expanded and the budget constraints have been increased, the IDP's has participated more of the informal activities for their own survival (Salcedo, 2006).

Moreover, the mistrust has been permeated by discrimination and stigmatization among IDP's and government, community and themselves, which has hindered the consolidation of new social ties (Meertens, 2006).

Therefore, policies addressed to attend basic needs on the short run, have not been enough to the stabilization and reintegration of IDP's. In consequence, the invasions and occupation of uninhabited areas is a mechanism through which these communities have demanded a citizen in their own country (Salcedo, 2006).

4. Concluding Remarks

Colombian IDP's has been living in emergency and they have been most vulnerable among the vulnerable populations. Their insertion on the labor market is precarious, because their skills, abilities and knowledge were specific to rural areas. Furthermore, emotional, social and material uprootedness may limit their potentials for recovering.

In this way, Roberts (1995) pointed out that forced displacement implies a change in life experience, where necessarily those changes affect IDP's relationships with their family, society and the State. So given the complexity and multidimensional nature of forced displacement, it requires a sophisticated theory and a broader investigation that incorporates multiple perspectives and analytical levels (Massey et al, 2000).

Thus, this working paper takes up traditional theories of migration for validating some analytical elements which could provide theoretical analysis about the precarious living conditions of IDP's.

Like this, although in principle they would not have forced the displaced as the main motivation to join other local systems, the new dynamics of the duty and inequalities in

the structure geopolitical influence in their ideology and culture, and perpetuate poverty traps.

This particular type of internal migration should question that internal migration might become a factor to balance growth and development among different geographical areas, because it would deteriorate the living conditions of displaced and native population. As a result, forced displacement has not contributed to a lower population pressure, in reason to many areas have presented imbalances that threaten its development (Garcia, 2007).

Therefore, this document presents a general theoretical and empirical characterization of Colombian IDP's, which require more complex analysis in the future, which are suggested to research. Finally, according to theoretical and empirical, the IDP's is between "the memory of paradise lost and the tragedy of an uncertain present".

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