UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

INDIGENOUS FEMALE YOUTH IN COLOMBIA

- Resisting the Powers of Internal Armed Conflict

Master's Programme in
Social Work and Human Rights
Degree Report 30 Higher Education Credits
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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to investigate how the vulnerabilities of indigenous female youth in the Colombian region of Vaupés are expressed in terms of intersections of ethnicity, class, age and gender, ways in which these youth exert resistance to the power structures within the internal armed conflict, and how these youth experience their life situations. This qualitative research is based on multi-sighted ethnographic approaches entailing numerous data collection sources. Results of this research indicate that its targeted population suffers from discrimination, oppression and numerous vulnerabilities. Still, these youth exert a substantial amount of individual and collective non-organized hidden resistance in ways that may undermine political, economic and patriarchal power structures within the region. Research results show that the cultures of the indigenous ethnicities constitute and enable such resistance among the indigenous female youth of Vaupés.

Acknowledgements

Division of Research Work among the Authors of this Study

The authors are indicated in alphabetical order. The work of writing this thesis has been divided among the authors as follows. Maria Andersson has had primary responsibility for providing the theoretical framework for the study. Rebecca Summerton has carried out the ethnographic study in Colombia in 2012, composed and critically analyzed the methodological approach of the study, had primary responsibility for compiling the study's background research material, performed the interviews, focus groups and workshops, compiled the data from official and personal documents, conducted the writing up of the study, and been responsible for all translating, logistics and contact work. Both authors have contributed equally to planning interviews, focus groups and workshops, conducting participant observation in Mitú, compiling remaining empirical results, and carrying out the analysis of results.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

During the past five decades, Colombia has suffered the most extreme violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in all of Latin America (Dugas, 2012). The almost 50 year long internal armed conflict is already one of the longest lasting in Latin American history, constantly increasing the seriousness of the country's on-going humanitarian crisis (UNICEF, 2010). Only in the past decade, 40,000 victims have lost their lives (UD, 2009a). The actors of the conflict include state law enforcement forces, successors to right-wing paramilitary movements, and leftist guerrillas (Dugas, 2012).

The quality of life of the Colombian people has been seriously affected by the conflict with children and adolescents often among those most severely impacted. Increasingly, they are the most likely to be subjected to recruitment by illegal armed forces for use in conflict or other forms of exploitation, such as the frequently encountered gender-based violence (UNICEF, 2010). Recruited children are not only deprived their childhood, they are also transformed into both perpetrators and victims of violence.

Even though much research has examined the armed conflict of Colombia, the oppression of indigenous peoples has only recently been recognized. Although the Colombian Constitution legally established the rights of indigenous peoples in 1991, indigenous peoples still suffer constant violations of their human rights. Lately the problem has accelerated so greatly that many analysts have labeled the repressive situation in Colombia as an act of genocide (Zuluaga & Jones, 2006).

There is not only one form of power present in the armed conflict; there are infinite forms. Power related to the conflict is found in all relationships encountered in and between all levels of society. However, power cannot exist without resistance (Foucault, 1978). Resistance can be considered actions conducted by persons in subordinate positions to power as response to this power in such ways that may undermine it (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009).

There is considerable research concerning ways in which power relations affect the life situations of youth in situations of armed conflict (e.g. OSRSG/CAAC, 2012; Saab & Taylor, 2009; Save the Children et. al, 2010; Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan, 2008; UNICEF, 2010; Zuluaga & Jones, 2006). Nonetheless, little is known about ways in which youth in situations of armed conflict experience their situations, how their vulnerabilities are expressed, and the ways in which they might exert resistance. There is even less research about these dynamics in the specific context of the long-standing illegal armed conflict in Colombia.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the ways in which indigenous female youth in the Colombian region of Vaupés experience their life situations and exert resistance in the context of Colombia's internal armed conflict. The study's ambition is to contribute to both new theoretical perspectives and new empirical

material within this area. The study has an indirect normative ambition of providing material that can potentially be utilized in ways that contribute to improving the conditions for female indigenous youth in situations categorized by armed conflict.

The following research questions guide this study:

- How do indigenous female youth of Vaupés experience their life situations in a region permeated by the power structures encountered within the internal armed conflict?

- How are the vulnerabilities of these youth expressed in terms of intersections of ethnicity, class, age and gender?

- Do indigenous female youth demonstrate resistance to the power structures encountered in their region? If so, in which ways is this resistance expressed?

- How do professionals in organizations that work with vulnerable youth in Colombia interpret the life situations of these youth in the context of the internal armed conflict? In what ways do the professionals' perspectives provide additional insights to an understanding of these youth' life situations?

Definitions of Core Terminology

The core terminology that will be used in this study is defined as follows:

In this study the terms *youth* and *young people* refer to all individuals under the age of 30. Within this population the terms *children* and *adolescents* specifically refer to minors under the age of 18 while the term *young women* includes individuals ranging from 19 to 30 years of age. The terms youth and young people will be used interchangeable, as will the terms children and adolescents.

Indigenous communities and peoples are those groups which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed in their countries or territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories. They often form non-dominant sectors of society and are generally viewed as preserving, developing and transmitting their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity to future generations, in accordance with their own cultural patterns. On an individual basis, an indigenous person is one who belongs to these indigenous populations through self-identification as indigenous and who is recognized and accepted by these populations as one of its members (Martinez Cobo, 2012).

Internal armed conflict refers to the use of armed force within the boundary of one state between one or more armed forces and the acting government, or between such forces (La Haye, 2008).

Guerrilla movements are small independent forces taking part in irregular fighting, typically against state forces (Oxford Dictionaries, 2013). In Colombia, the largest guerrilla movement is Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo (Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia – People's Army), FARC-EP.

In this study, *state paramilitary forces* refer to groups of civilians organized by the State of Colombia to function like, or in aid of, the military unit. *Sub-state paramilitary forces* refer specifically to right-wing illegal armed forces that emerged after the demobilization of the state paramilitary forces (Pardo Rueda, 2008). By demobilization is meant the dissolution of military troops (Dictionary.com, 2013).

Internally displaced persons are 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 (IDMC, 2013).

Sexual exploitation of children means that one or several adults take advantage of minors by dominating, forcing, manipulating or misleading them into servitude. The children's bodies are considered objects used to satisfy the desires of adults. *Commercial sexual exploitation* refers to the sexual exploitation of children in return for benefits or promises of benefits of any kind, including payment or in-kind profits such as shelter or protection, whether directly to the child victims or to third parties. There are six recognized forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children (ECPAT Colombia, 2012a; ECPAT Colombia, 2012b).

- *The utilization of children by armed forces* refers to children involved in armed conflict who suffer the trauma of war through sexual abuse by police, soldiers or guerrilla members (ECPAT Colombia, 2012a).

- The *utilization of children in prostitution* refers to the marketing of sexual activity of any kind with minors in exchange for money, goods or services. This includes the supply of children, negotiation, and contact or 'encounters' of child sex businesses in streets, clubs, brothels or similar facilities (ECPAT Colombia, 2012a).

- *Sex trafficking* includes the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. Child sex trafficking is accomplished by means of threat or use of force, deception, abduction, abuse of power or a young person's position of vulnerability or other forms of coercion (ECPAT Colombia, 2012a).

- *Early or servile marriage* refers to the sale of youth, disguised in legal marriage, for sexual and domestic servitude by adults in superior economic positions (ECPAT Colombia, 2012a).

- *Sexual exploitation of children associated with travel and tourism* consists of the sexual abuse of children by adults who travel from one city to another. Offenders make use of facilities offered by the tourist industry to sexually interact with children in exchange for payment (ECPAT Colombia, 2012b).

- *Child pornography* refers to the production or possession of materials such as photographs, negatives, slides, magazines, books, drawings, films, videotapes or computer files representing children as involved in explicit sexual activities for erotic or commercial purposes (ECPAT Colombia, 2012a).

Theoretical Framework – Prior Research and Theoretical Grounds

This study builds on theoretical perspectives from three areas of research, namely 1) research on life situations and resilience of youth in situations of armed conflict, 2) theories on power and resistance, and 3) theories on intersectionality as a means of understanding vulnerabilities. This chapter aims to provide an overview of theoretical and empirical research results from these areas that are relevant for this study. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the ways in which concepts will be used for analyzing the research findings of this study.

Research on Youth in the Context of Armed Conflict

A number of recent studies have addressed issues related to the situations of youth in armed conflict (Cortes & Buchanan, 2007; Henshaw & Howarth, 1941; Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan, 2008). In the following the dimensions of this work that are relevant for this study will be discussed.

Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan (2008) examine *resilience* and the dynamic processes that foster resilient outcomes in youth affected by armed conflict. Displaying certain similarities with resistance as described in this study (see 'Theories of Power and Resistance' section), Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan (2008) define resilience as *the attainment of desirable social outcomes and emotional adjustment, despite exposure to considerable risk* (2008:317). Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan (2008) argue that *protective factors and processes* that *foster* resilient outcomes in youth must be identified in order to understand resilience among young people in contexts of armed conflict. Furthermore, these authors argue that resilience must be viewed as a dynamic process rather than as a personal trait. Individuals' characteristics do not act as sole predictors of resilient outcomes; such characteristics are channeled through environmental and psychological mediators. These environmental mediators include characteristics of family and peer relationships, the availability of supports and resources in major settings and institutions as well as in the dynamics that operate at higher levels of society. For this reason, resilience must be analyzed by understanding the protective factors within the young person's social ecology; that is, a person's nurturing physical and emotional environment. Social ecology includes, and extends beyond, genetic predispositions on an individual level, immediate family on a micro level, community settings on a meso level, and cultural and political belief systems on a macro level (Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan, 2008). Protective factors can be described as influences that modify, ameliorate or alter a person's response to some environmental hazard that may lead that person to a maladaptive outcome (North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2011). Protective processes, in these terms, refer to often exogenous variables whose presence is associated with desirable outcomes in populations deemed at risk for mental health and other problems (Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan, 2008).

Cortes & Buchanan (2007) present a narrative analysis of Colombian child soldiers who did not show trauma-related symptoms after experiencing armed combat. They identified six themes which indicated strengths and resources that seemed to facilitate

the ability of young people to resist against the effects of armed conflict. The majority of these themes are related to characteristics of the individual: a sense of agency; social intelligence, empathy, affect regulation, shared experience, caregiving features, community connection, a connection to spirituality, a sense of future, hope and growth, and morality.

In addition to these individual characteristics, Bowlby (1969) has analyzed child protection on micro level by examining how attachment relationships help children cope with difficult circumstances. Attention to such relationships is crucial in understanding how young people cope with conflict-related stress. For example, a study of children during the British evacuations of World War II (Henshaw & Howarth, 1941) concluded that, for young children, evacuation and the subsequent family separation caused more emotional strain than exposure to air raids. By this is meant that social support and caregiving mental health thus promote and sustain youth resistance.

Research on meso-level protective factors among youth affected by armed conflict suggests that childcare facilities characterized by caring relationships between staff and youth promote positive mental health outcomes in youth (Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan, 2008). Activities that offer structure and help youth to make sense of their life situations have been shown to be important for coping with difficulties and promoting well-being (Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan, 2008). For example, Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan (2008) concluded that rituals and religious practices followed by religious youth affected by armed conflict may provide a sense of belonging, which promotes integration into society. Apart from educational and religious institutions, access to healthcare, good nutrition, shelter, mental health services, and social and legal services are all important meso level forces involved in promoting well-being of young people (Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan, 2008).

Political dynamics at the macro level are critical since such dynamics determine whether aid such as social services and military protection is provided to civilians during conflict; by shaping the demands placed on individuals, families and communities to secure basic needs for youth and keep them safe, macro level dynamics exert influence on the functioning of community mesosystems and microsystems. The cultural and historical meaning of conflict-related experiences has been linked to its psychosocial impact. While political ideologies may strengthen individuals in a struggle for survival, such ideologies may also perpetuate group tensions and foment ethnic divisions and violence. In situations of internal armed conflict, dynamics at macro level may be at the very root of the conflict itself. Ways in which young people have been strengthened on macro level include programs that build upon strengths inherent in cultural beliefs and community processes that traditionally protect and support youth (Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan, 2008).

Given the fact that women and girls comprise a significant proportion of the civilians living in areas categorized by armed conflict, these people are confronted with significant risks and threats to their physical, psychological, and social well-being. Sexual violence against women and girls is among the most traumatic and most common abuses of armed conflict. Haeri & Puechguirbal (2010) affirm that there are significant correlations between armed conflict and rape, forced prostitution, sexual slavery, and other abuses against women and girls. Sexual violence may be used by

armed forces to shame, punish, intimidate, or simply to destroy the solidity and essence of a community. Whether young women are assaulted as a deliberate military strategy or individually targeted, the consequences for victims of sexual violence are severe and long-lasting, sometimes enduring for an entire lifetime (Haeri & Puechguirbal, 2010).

Most humanitarian reports and documents describe women as harmless victims in need of protection, regardless of the numerous different roles that women can play in times of war. However, women frequently display remarkable strength and fortitude by adopting new roles and taking on new responsibilities when confronted by the disruption of war (Haeri & Puechguirbal, 2010). This may mean taking direct part in the conflict as a combatant, leaving home to find employment to care for children and family, or finding a new role in community life. War-time events make clear that women are not intrinsically helpless or vulnerable. Rather, it is the pre-existing peacetime social inequalities, which are further reinforced by conflict, that result in many of women's vulnerabilities in situations of armed conflict. In other words, their vulnerability is a product of historical, political and cultural factors. It is the plurality of women's roles, responsibilities, and challenges that shape the way in which women experience and handle armed conflict (Haeri & Puechguirbal, 2010).

There is thus considerable research on the mental health consequences of armed conflict on youth. However, ways in which these forms of vulnerabilities arise have not been discussed. Such relations can readily be analyzed according to an intersectional perspective of examining ways in which the categories to which an individual belongs carry vulnerabilities that become perceptible in the intertwining of such categories. An intersectionality perspective also becomes useful when analyzing possible causes for individuals' and groups' vulnerabilities to structural oppression and discrimination.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality emerged as a theoretical perspective within social science as a critical reaction to 'traditional' feminism that did not take aspects such as ethnicity and class into consideration when discussing oppression of individuals and groups. The theory has been widely disseminated both in academic research and current policy debates about discrimination due to ethnicity, gender, age, class, sexuality and disability (Eriksson-Zetterqvist & Styhre, 2007).

Intersectional analysis concerns the ways in which people's inherent experiences, opportunities and identities are understood according to their different positions in society. More specifically, the aim of an intersectional perspective is to underline the specific situations of oppression created in the intersections of power relations based on factors such as ethnicity, gender, age, class, sexuality and disability and how these are intertwined. In intersectional debates, these factors are commonly referred to as 'categories'. A core premise of intersectionality is that identities cannot be understood separately or isolated from each other. Thus single categories are not sufficient to properly explain how inequalities arise or why specific individuals or groups are more subjected to oppression than others. By this is meant that individuals whose identity reflects several different categories that in specific contexts may be viewed as 'less desirable' are more likely to be subjected to discrimination or abuses of power than

individuals whose identity reflects only one of these categories. Similarly, individuals whose identity reflects several categories that in this context are viewed as 'more desirable' are likely to obtain more power than those with only one 'desirable' factor. For example, an individual of a 'less desirable' gender, ethnicity and sexuality would be more vulnerable than an individual to whom solely one of these categories applies (de los Reyes & Mulinari, 2005). In this study, vulnerability refers to individuals' susceptibility to physical or emotional hardship.

Favorably complementing the intersectionality perspective, Cornell (2008) explains how groups and individuals are situated within various hierarchies of society. These hierarchies stem from groups' and individuals' abilities to adapt to variations and changes within power constellations in society. Power constellations are constantly changing. Different groups of men are positioned in relation to each other, and it is within men's struggles to achieve masculinity that different forms of perceived masculinity take shape. For example, Cornell (2008) refers to the constructed *ideal picture of the hegemonic masculinity* that serves as a comparison and norm for men in their creations and developments of masculinity, provoking change within this discourse. Hooper (2000) claims that this hegemonic masculinity has more status then all femininities and that explanations of how men manage to maintain this status and monopoly of power in decision-making is still lacking research. Brah & Phoenix (2004) and Lykke (2003) have examined the intersectionality found within power structures and shown the ways that different power asymmetries interact and collaborate in constructing individuals' identities. By this is meant that individuals can have different, multiple and changing identities which both create and are created through interaction with each other. These identities can be understood in terms of power relations between and within gender, class, age, sexuality, ethnicity etcetera (de los Reyes et. al 2002).

Such power relations thus create hierarchies within society that groups and individuals can perceive as 'natural'. An example is a perception of how some people are worth more than others and therefore deserve more power than others (de los Reyes & Kamali, 2005). This kind of hierarchy creates the concept of *'We and Them' thinking*; a division between the included, 'We', and the excluded, 'Them', in which the included feel superior to the excluded. This form of divisional hierarchy is constructed through discourses and takes place in all societies; offering those with higher status more power to freely express themselves and influence society (Kamali, 2008). In this context, advanced linguistics can be regarded as power (Mattson, 2011).

De los Reyes and Kamali (2005) argue that power constellations based on the 'We and Them' division are created through the following steps: First, the dichotomy 'We' and its contrast 'Them' are created due to social inequalities. This urges and creates a 'We and Them' thinking encountered in all levels of society. Second, stereotypical images are produced to enhance the polarization. By this is meant that 'We' describe 'Them' as opposites of 'us'. Third, justifications of these inequalities generate the perception of how 'We' deserve more power and influence than 'Them'; creating both inclusion on the one hand, and exclusion, discrimination and stigmatization on the other (de los Reyes & Kamali, 2005).

Both 'included' and 'excluded' groups and individuals tend to identify themselves according to the categories to which they belong and in accordance with the prevailing

expectations and prejudices that apply to each category. This contributes to individual's perceptions of themselves and others, and to their understandings of how they are expected to behave (Mattson, 2011).

Mattson (2011) highlights the importance of examining how an intersectional perspective differentiates between *how* individuals and groups are created, presented and understood, and not only whether differences between groups *exist*. For example, gender, ethnicity, class and culture are categories that can create a feeling of belonging and solidarity between and within these groups. Common standards and values permeate these groups and are reinforced through similarities in for example language, religion, and nationality. The sense of belonging encountered within 'less desirable' categories often embodies a collective perception of marginalization in society (Mattson, 2011).

Thus an intersectional perspective focuses on how individual's and groups' vulnerabilities express themselves differently depending on how the categories to which they belong are intertwined. Such vulnerabilities contribute to visualizing structural discrimination and oppression. While an intersectional perspective is useful for gaining insights into ways in which vulnerabilities are expressed, this perspective does not show how youth express *resistance* to such vulnerabilities. It is necessary to draw in theoretical tools to understand the forms of power that reinforce vulnerabilities, the ways in which these power structures impact on young peoples' lives, and the forms of resistance displayed by these youth.

Theories of Power and Resistance

Foucault (1978) claims that power arises in the discourses that shape people's beliefs. In other words, power should not be viewed as something static that one individual or group has and another does not. Instead, power should be viewed as a constantly changing process of interplay of unequal and variable relationships. There is not only one form of power; there are infinite forms, and these contextual forms of power are found in all relationships encountered in and between all levels of society. Even though power relations are non-subjective in these ways, they are often consciously created in discourses and societal structures emphasizing the fact that power is also pre-eminently exercised with intentions to reach predicted goals. In this course of action resistance develops naturally and therefore validates the statement that where there is power there will be resistance. Power and resistance are interdependent. That is, neither of them can exist without the other (Foucault, 1978).

Similarly to Foucault (1978), Luke (2005) discusses how states exercise power to control people in numerous different ways in which these civilians are not aware that they are being controlled. For example, states use power to control agendas and marginalize certain 'undesired' topics and to influence civilians' desires and aspirations. However, a person's *'real interests'* are in this context distinct from the desires perceived by the individual. Luke (2005) claims that people's desires risk being manipulated by external actors, such as the state, and that an individual's real interests are specific to her person and that her perceived desires may not be compatible with her real interests. This contributes to civilians' beliefs that they are acting according to their

own interests while they in fact may be acting according to those of the state. Power can in these terms make people believe in externally construed 'truths' which are not necessarily *their* truths. This way in which power is intertwined with social and cultural patterns of behavior assigns a form of invisible structural power to society in which individuals voluntarily conform the norm of the state. Luke (2005) argues that real knowledge is free from this form of power.

Lilja & Vinthagen (2009) suggest that discourses are created as results of repetitive behavior over time; behavior which has often been affected by power structures in similar ways as those demonstrated above. In order to resist structural power relations, these discourses must be modified. Discourses can only be modified, however, if the behaviors that created them are altered. Such actions are referred to as *deconstructing discourses*. The altered behaviors, the so-called non-normative behaviors, may either strengthen or weaken the prevailing discourses (Lilja &Vinthagen, 2009).

Similar to power, resistance takes shape in numerous ways; it can be open, spontaneous, deliberate, subtle or unconscious (Foucault, 1978). Lilja & Vinthagen (2009) define resistance as actions conducted by a person or a group in a subordinate position to power – or by an affiliate of this person or group – as response to this power in such ways that may undermine it. Ways in which resistance is shaped and reshaped is of particular interest to this study. Individuals who resist existing power structures contribute to the creation of divisions in society which in term allows new discourses to take shape (Foucault, 1978).

Different Forms of Resistance

Researchers' interest for the ways in which individuals and groups express resistance has increased over the past decade. While social science research has previously focused its attention to power, researchers now know that power cannot exist without resistance. Even though research on resistance continues to expand and is steadily gaining broader grounds, there is a need for further research within the area. By analyzing resistance one can identify and observe power relations; by emphasizing the roles of various forms of resistance one can gain additional knowledge of how acts of resistance, in turn, affect society (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009).

Research on resistance reflects differing opinions about what the phenomenon should include. Some scientists claim that resistance is demonstrated through mobilized movements of collective identity and underline the fact that resistance therefore is conscious and strategic. Others argue that resistance can also manifest itself unconsciously on an individual level. For this latter phenomenon, Lilja & Vinthagen (2009) refer to Scott's concept of 'hidden transcripts' (Scott, 1992) and discuss how some researchers argue that this form of resistance may be a decisive determinant to what influences societies on long-term bases. Lilja & Vinthagen (2009) further suggest that resistance must be studied on both collective and individual level in order to fully understand changes and discourses in society. The reason for this is that resistance is claimed to constantly exist in endless ways; in fact, resistance permeates humanity more than most people are aware of (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009).

Resistance can be divided into two main categories; organized resistance and non-organized resistance. *Organized resistance* often displays itself through politically conscious actions performed by social movements. This form of resistance does not serve as a theoretic ground for this study; accordingly it will not be further discussed in this section. *Non-organized resistance*, on the other hand, is arguably more widespread and will be extensively discussed in the following section (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009).

Non-Organized Resistance

Non-organized resistance, or 'everyday resistance' as expressed in colloquial terms, generally takes shape on an individual level. This form of resistance is expressed towards the power structure from which the individual wishes to distance herself. Such resistance is typically hidden; rarely explicitly stated and can be viewed as the opposite of formally organized and explicit confrontation. In other words, those who perform this hidden resistance rarely seek to draw attention to their distancing actions. In fact, everyday resistance does not require conscious intention or awareness of this resistance in order to practice it. Even though this form of non-organized resistance is realized on individual level, perceptions against power structures are generally shared within a group of people who possess similar beliefs. For this reason, the everyday resistance practiced by individuals is often created and further developed through groups of people who resist the same or similar power structures. Due to its hidden nature and the fact that this concept has no clear structures, it is often difficult to distinguish everyday resistance from an individual's actions or personality traits (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009).

Scott's (1992) research on resistance has been pioneering due to the author's descriptions of the different forms of resistance. As previously mentioned, Scott (1992) calls the most common form of resistance, the everyday resistance, *hidden transcripts*. In practice, these hidden transcripts may be manifested as irony, gossip, confusion, ineffective work, theft, stupidity or illness etcetera. Strategies such as the use of symbolic signals and coded language, the use of contempt, and the telling of myths and disparaging stories about the rulers, as well as stories that express loyalty to one's own group, may start to take shape among the resistors (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009).

These forms of resistance are especially practiced when the subordinates' safety and basic needs depend on a regime to which they resist. This especially applies to patients, prisoners, soldiers, citizens in dictatorships, serf peasants, slaves, children, refugees, minorities, and unemployed or low-wage workers. In other words, these are the people who afford to lose and who therefore dare to conduct open struggles with the rulers. Those whose existence depends on the relationship between them and the rulers must find alternative ways to protect themselves, to minimize domination or exploitation and to gain advantages or mobilize future rebellions. These are also the ones who adapt a strategy of playing double roles; they appear loyal to the rulers and representatives while they secretly resist. Hidden transcripts are not formally organized nor are they a formally pronounced confrontation. This technique of resistance is a matter of trying to minimize the risk of attention or to creatively redefine resistance in ways to undermine power relations and their impacts (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009).

Lilja & Vinthagen (2009) reflect upon whether hidden transcripts can be considered starting points for more organized resistance movements. Scott (1992) claims that by

studying hidden transcripts one can discern the emergence of organized resistance. Thus collective resistance often precedes organized resistance. It is first when hidden resistance has grown strong enough or when an informal leader takes the initiative that a movement can take shape and cause a revolt (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009).

Everyday resistance thus often concerns resistance to the discourses that create hierarchical ideals and stereotypes regarding identity norms. In these cases the strategy for resisting is often to attempt to undermine the power structure by further developing or strengthening one's identity position and thus rise to a stronger position in the societal hierarchy of power. Resistance is versatile, malleable and mobile. The importance of analyzing the individualized hidden transcripts lies within the amplitude of the concept; everyday resistance is undoubtedly the most extensive form of resistance and is exceptionally more prevalent than conscious and strategic resistance. Lilja & Vinthagen (2009) argue that if one wishes to understand not only revolts and revolutions but also resistance hiding in the periphery – ready to take shape and develop into something bigger – one must also study those who revolt in their perceptions of the power structures to which they are subordinate (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009).

Summary and Synthesis of Theoretical Perspectives

This study focuses not only on how differences *exist* between groups, but also ways in which marginalized individuals and groups experience, understand, and *resist* these differences. This section will summarize the above presented theoretical perspectives in relation to the purpose and research questions and describe how this study will use these perspectives in more concrete terms.

The point of departure for the theoretical perspectives of this study is that the three perspectives – theories of youth in areas of armed conflict, intersectionality, and theories of power and resistance – complement each other in fruitful ways. Combining these perspectives provides insights and understandings about how the female indigenous youth of Vaupés experience their situations in a context of internal armed conflict, the ways in which their vulnerabilities are created and expressed, and ways in which these youth may resist the various power structures encountered within their life situations.

Relevant prior research on youth in the context of armed conflict provides a platform for the study and will be used in the following ways. Perspectives on *protective factors* as facilitators for demonstrating resilience will be utilized through examining whether the indigenous female youth access protective factors or processes within their social ecologies that may enable resistance. Specifically, potential protective factors and processes will be studied on all levels of the young indigenous females' social ecologies, that is, on individual, micro, meso, and macro levels. Perspectives on *attachment relationships* will be used by examining how the young indigenous females perceive the importance of such relationships in order to cope with difficult circumstances. Similarly, these young persons' attachment relationships will be studied in relation to their abilities to express resistance. Prior research on gender-based sexual abuse will be utilized by investigating whether there are similar correlations between armed conflict and sexual assault of women in Vaupés and, if so, how such sexual abuse

is expressed. Perspectives on vulnerability will be adopted by observing and analyzing possible vulnerabilities among indigenous female youth that have derived from cultural gender inequalities. Views on plurality of women's roles and responsibilities will be utilized by examining whether the indigenous female youth of this study alleviate possible vulnerabilities by searching for or engaging in altered roles.

Intersectionality provides a means for understanding how vulnerabilities are created and reinforced. This theoretical perspective will be utilized by studying whether the indigenous female youth are subjected to oppression or discrimination due to the *categories* to which they belong, namely categories of females, ethnic minorities, youth, and lower class. An intersectional perspective will also be used for examining ways in which the indigenous female youth perceive their identities on individual and group levels. The perspective of *'We' and 'Them' thinking* will be utilized by examining ways in which such youth may experience exclusion from the mainstream society. Specifically, social inequalities will be studied by exploring ways in which these youth experience their cultures in relation to those of non-indigenous ethnicities. Finally, the concept of *hegemonic masculinity* will be used to study ways in which machismo is demonstrated in the region of Vaupés and how the indigenous female youth experience and are affected by this machismo. More specifically, gender roles will be examined in a wide range of social contexts, such as societal, familial and individual contexts, in order to discover ways in which power relations are displayed and in order to understand how the indigenous female youth of this study are affected by these relations.

Theories about power and resistance are the theoretical perspectives used for understanding ways in which the indigenous female youth of Vaupés demonstrate resistance to existing power structures within their region. The theoretical perspective of *hidden transcripts and non-organized resistance* will be utilized by thoroughly examining ways in which the indigenous female youth handle difficult situations. More specifically, everyday actions carried out by these youth as a means of resisting and distancing themselves from disadvantages within the existing power structures will be studied and observed.

The perspective of *deconstructing discourses* will be implemented in this study by observing whether the young indigenous females exercise any form of repetitive non-normative behavior. If such behavior is encountered, the researchers of this study will examine and investigate whether this non-normative behavior may contribute to modifications within relevant existing power discourses in the Vaupés region; specifically whether such behavior may contribute to modifications within political, economic, and patriarchal power structures. Non-normative behavior that contributes to the modification of discourses is of importance to this research as such behavior is a way of expressing resistance. Finally, following Luke (2005), perspectives on *real interests* will be utilized by examining whether female indigenous youth act in accordance with the wills of the Colombian government, the state law enforcement forces or the left-wing guerrilla movements that are encountered within the region of Vaupés and, if so, whether these external actors contribute to the young females' understandings of whether they are acting according to their *own* free wills.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Methodology refers to the research techniques that are applied in a study, that is, the way in which data collection and analysis is carried out in a systematic approach to convey knowledge and gain deeper understandings within a field. The selection of data, planning and analytical instruments reflect the framework of the process of carrying out a study (Bryman, 2008), which will be described below.

Methodological Grounds

Methods of social research are closely tied to different visions of how social reality should be studied; that is, methods are linked with the ways in which researchers understand the connection between different viewpoints about the nature of social reality and how it should be examined. This section aims to describe the methodological grounds of this study. First, qualitative research and ethnographic research approaches will be introduced and defined. Next, planning and implementation of these approaches as conducted in this study will be described: specifically, the way in which this study has taken shape, how sampling and preparations have been carried out, and ways in which data has been selected, analyzed and interpreted will be examined and discussed. Following, ethical considerations relevant to this study will be described and discussed. The chapter concludes with a critical methodological analysis of this study's research approaches.

Qualitative Research

Many writers on methodological issues find it helpful to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research (Bryman, 2008). This section will outline the main features of qualitative research, which is the research strategy that has been chosen for this study.

Qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than numbers in the collection and analysis of data. This form of research can be construed as a research strategy that predominantly emphasizes an inductive approach to the relationship between theory and research, in which the emphasis is placed on the generation of theories. It rejects the practices and norms of the natural scientific model and of positivism in particular in preference for an understanding of the social world through an examination of how the world is interpreted by its participants. Qualitative research implies that social properties are outcomes of the interactions between individuals, rather than phenomena 'out there' and separate from those involved in their constructions. This research method therefore views social reality as a constantly shifting, emergent property of individuals' creation (Bryman, 2008).

This study's research questions aim to gain an understanding of the social world as viewed by the target group. Consequently, qualitative research approaches guide this study. This study is based on ethnographic research approaches as the researchers have strived to be immersed in the social setting of Mitú. The choice of carrying out an

ethnographic study has created possibilities of observing and listening, which has contributed to gaining an appreciation of the culture of this social group. Bryman (2008) observes how qualitative researchers employing *ethnography* (see below) typically engage in a substantial amount of qualitative interviewing. Moreover, the collection of qualitative data is often carried out by language-based approaches such as discourse and conversation analysis as well as qualitative analysis of texts and documents. These strategies of data collection have been viewed as essential in order to gain an understanding of the problem area.

Ethnographic Research Approaches

A characteristic of ethnography is the involvement of the researcher in the social life of those he or she studies. This draws attention to the fact that the researcher immerses himself or herself in a group, often for an extended period of time, observing behavior, listening to conversations, and asking questions. Typically, ethnographers gather further data through interviews, interactions with subjects, participant observations and the examination of documents. Ethnography often refers to a study in which participant observation is the prevalent research method but that also has a specific focus on the culture of the group in which the ethnographer is immersed (Bryman, 2008).

In terms of participant observation, one important issue is the kind of role the researcher adopts in relation to the social setting and its members. *Participant-as-observer* means that the researcher is a fully functioning member of the social setting in which its members are aware of the researcher's status as a researcher. The researcher is engaged in regular interaction with people and participates in their daily lives. *Observer-as-participant* refers to the researcher's role as mainly an interviewer. There is some observation but very little of it involves any participation (Bryman, 2008).

Undertaking ethnographic research comes with the risk of 'going native'. Going native refers to a scenario where the ethnographers lose their sense of being researchers and become wrapped up in the world views of the people they study. The continuous immersion of ethnographers in the lives of the people they study, connected with the commitment to seeing the social world through their eyes, lie behind the risk and actuality of going native. The researcher may find it difficult to develop a social scientific angle on the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2008). Therefore it is crucial for researchers to frequently evaluate their own professional roles.

This study's research approach in relation to ethnography and participant observation will be further discussed in the following section (see 'Selection of Data').

Planning and Implementation

This research concerns young indigenous female's life situations in a region categorized by internal armed conflict. The study entails a detailed and intensive analysis of this specific context where the emphasis has been upon an in-depth examination of youth vulnerability and ways in which young persons may express resistance. The selection of data, planning and analytical instruments reflect the framework of the process of carrying out a study (Bryman, 2008), which will be described below.

Ethnographic Research as Starting Point for this Study

In order to gain a background understanding of the situations of vulnerable youth in the context of the Colombian internal armed conflict, an ethnographic study was conducted in Bogotá from March to July 2012. This section will cover the way in which this research was carried out and discuss ways in which this ethnographic study has shaped and designed the current study.

The ethnographic background study was carried out through qualitative interviewing and participant observation in Colombia's leading national organization for countering child sex trade, ECPAT Colombia – Fundación Renacer, which is the Colombian branch of the international organization End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT International). The way of coming in contact with this organization was through active searching on the internet focusing on organizations in Colombia that in various ways are engaged in issues regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of vulnerable children and youth of Colombia. The study used a multi-sighted ethnographic approach including interviews with ECPAT Colombia Professionals as well as structured and non-structured interaction with vulnerable Colombian youth between the ages of five and 18. All youth were victims or at high risk of becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation of minors in at least one of the six recognized forms of child sex trade: the utilization of children by armed forces, utilization of children in prostitution, sex trafficking of minors, forced early or servile marriage, sexual exploitation of children associated with travel and tourism, and child pornography (ECPAT Colombia, 2012a). These forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children are often intertwined and many of them directly apply to this study.

The ethnographic study was carried out at multiple different sights, namely: 1) two live-in youth rehabilitation centers of which one was encountered in urban settings and one in rural such, 2) two urban youth prevention centers in areas categorized by immense poverty and widespread child prostitution, 3) legal court settings, 4) health centers, 5) youth' home localities in slum areas and 6) sites (such as hotels) associated with commercial sexual exploitation of children. The interactions with vulnerable youth were of both structured and non-structured nature. Structured interactions included the conduction of activities, workshops, focus group and one-on-one sessions in which human rights in relation to child sex trade was extensively explored and discussed with the youth, legal processes in which young victims' cases were tried in court, and educational sessions with staff of businesses in which commercial sexual exploitation of children is frequently encountered. Non-structured interactions embodied conversations and discussions with the youth as well as on-going participant observations. In all forms of interactions with these youth, a *participant-as-observer* role, as previously described, was undertaken.

Four main observations and insights from the ethnographic study were useful in shaping the current study. First, no youth were victims of solely *one* form of exploitation; multiply forms interacted in the creation of their vulnerability, such as economic, labor, sexual, physical, emotional and psychological exploitation. Second, not only female youth are victims of commercial sexual exploitation; young males are also frequently victimized. However, there are somewhat different problematics between the genders, indicating that they should not be studied as a group but separately. Third, young

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people's vulnerabilities tend to be intertwined in their life situations and are therefore often connected to aspects such as their young age, poor home conditions, social networks and lack of legal guardians. Fourth, youth are not only victims, they also resist. For example, the vast majority of sexually exploited children demonstrated clear resistance to emotional relationships with staff as a means of personal protection.

Sampling of Empirical Study – Courses of Action

The empirical study of indigenous female youth in the Vaupés region was conducted during a ten day period in April 2013 in the village of Mitú which is the capital of the south-eastern Colombian region. This specific location was selected due to its relevance reflecting the simultaneous presence of armed conflict and high percentage of indigenous population. The researchers of this study came in contact with the respondents in Mitú through the referral by ECPAT Colombia, as mentioned above, to the human rights organization Asociación Defensa de Niños Internacional DNI – Colombia (DNI). DNI was selected due to its relevance and experience of working with indigenous females in the Vaupés region. Administrators of DNI were contacted six months prior to conducting this study and agreed to cooperate in the realization of this research by providing appropriate research material and relevant contact information required for data collection among indigenous female youth of Vaupés and professionals with experience of working with this population. Consequently, these professionals were able to provide further means of coming in contact with additional Vaupés female youth and supplementary local professionals relevant to this research.

Most sampling in qualitative research entails purposive sampling of some kind. Such sampling is essentially strategic and entails an attempt to establish a good correspondence between research questions and sampling (Bryman, 2008). The researchers of this study have sampled on the basis of wanting to observe, carry through conversations with and interview people who have experiences and perspectives that are relevant to this study's research questions, that is, both professionals in organizations that work with vulnerable youth in Colombia and youth of the Vaupés region.

This study uses an ethnographic approach in order to observe vulnerable Colombian youth and the social setting of Mitú as well as individual interviews, focus groups and workshops in order to enable in-depth descriptions and interpretations of research participants' experiences and knowledge. In addition, information has been gathered through the examination and analysis of official documents deriving from ECPAT Colombia and personal documents compiled by DNI. Specifically, the official documents include reports, statements and brochures, while the personal documents include records from activities carried out with a group of indigenous female youth from Vaupés as well as a professional's field diary from Mitú. These documents have provided supplementary knowledge on child recruitment into armed forces and subjective experiences of the life situations of the indigenous female youth of Vaupés. Combining interviews and focus group methods, which entail a limited number of subjects, with workshops, embodying larger numbers of participants, has allowed the researchers to simultaneously gather relevant information from a fairly large number of subjects and explore in-depth experiences with a portion of these participants. Besides on-going observations, nine semi-structured interviews have been conducted with

professionals working with youth at risk in Colombia and professionals engaged in the situations of young people in the Vaupés region. Moreover, three individual interviews, two focus groups and two workshops have been carried out with youth of Vaupés and complemented by the conduction of one focus group with female former residents of Vaupés. The ambition has been to achieve variation in terms of the participants' ages, experiences and ways of participation within the region as well as, in terms of interviews with professionals, to achieve gender balance.

Overview of Research Data Collection Sources

This study has involved multiple sources for ethnographic data collection. In all, 94 indigenous youth of Vaupés and ten professionals with experience of working with vulnerable youth in Colombia have participated in this study. A total of 79 of the 94 indigenous youth participants are female and eight of the ten professionals are either natives from the Vaupés region or have been living in the region for a substantial amount of time. In addition, a significant amount of vulnerable Colombian youth has been studied and observed within ECPAT Colombia in 2012, as previously discussed.

On request, all interviews and focus groups have been conducted in locations selected by the participants, and workshops have been conducted in the participants' school and living environments. All interviews, focus groups and workshops conducted in Mitú have been carried out simultaneously with on-going observations of indigenous female youth and continuous analyses of official and personal documents in April 2013. The time frame for each interview, focus group and workshop has depended on the participants' positions, knowledge, experiences and availability.

This fairly broad and inclusive group of research participants has contributed to the obtaining of the amount of qualitative data that has been necessary in order to present valid research findings. Following, the sources for ethnographic data collection that have been utilized in this study will be presented.

- The careful reading of 16 *scientific journals* and *reports* has provided valuable information on previous research within the area of youth in situations of armed conflict. These scientific journals and reports have been complemented by varying sources of data which will be described in the following section. This collected information has been used for the 'Background' section of the study.

- *Observations* of vulnerable Colombian youth have been conducted in Bogotá, Colombia, from March to July 2012. In addition, observations of indigenous female youth and their everyday lives have been carried out in Mitú, Colombia, in April 2013.

- 12 *individual interviews* have been carried out. Three of these interviews have been conducted with indigenous female youth of Vaupés between the ages of 21 and 26. The remaining nine individual interviews have been conducted with professionals with relevant experience of working with vulnerable youth in Colombia, namely: two ECPAT Colombia employees, the Coordinator for DNI's project with indigenous youth in the Vaupés region, a DNI Field Worker

residing in Vaupés, a local indigenous Traditional Leader, an employee within the Vaupés Health Sector, and three indigenous employees of Mitú's Social Services whose distinct professional titles will not be revealed due to the risk of identification (see additional information in the 'Ethical Considerations' section). Eight of the interviews have been conducted in Mitú while four have been carried out in Bogotá. All interviews have lasted for between 30 minutes and three hours.

- Three *focus groups* have been carried out with indigenous females of Vaupés. One has been conducted in Bogotá with two indigenous female former residents of Vaupés aged 37 and 39. Another one has been conducted in Mitú with two 17 year old indigenous female youth, and yet another one has been carried out in Mitú with three 13 and 14 year old indigenous female youth of Vaupés. These focus groups have lasted for between 30 minutes and one and a half hour.

- Two *workshops* have been carried out in Mitú with indigenous youth of Vaupés. One workshop with the theme *the effects of gender-based violence* has been carried out with a high school class of 15 indigenous males and 14 indigenous females of Vaupés between the ages of 12 and 16 during one hour's time. Another workshop with the theme *everyday life and ways of handling difficult situations* has been carried out with 60 indigenous female youth of Vaupés between the ages of eight and 20 during 45 minutes time.

- *Official documents* including reports on the life situations of youth recruited into the legal and illegal forces of Colombia have been extensively examined and analyzed. These documents have been provided by ECPAT Colombia.

- *Personal documents* in the form of a Mitú field diary kept by a DNI professional and a significant amount of material from activity sessions conducted by DNI with indigenous female youth of Vaupés have been carefully examined and analyzed.

In addition, numerous informal conversations have been carried out with indigenous people in Mitú, Vaupés. For example, informative conversations have been carried out with a professional worker of a preparatory education facility. In the following, the ways in which research data have been acquired will be discussed specifically in relation to each source of information.

Data Collection – Research Review, Field Studies and Document Analysis

This section will review the ways in which relevant information has been acquired from existing literature and the ways in which data has been obtained through on-going observations, interviews, focus groups, and workshops.

Compiling Background Research Material

The 'Introduction' and 'Background' sections of this study are based on careful reading of *scientific journals and reports* as well as numerous additional documents and reports. More specifically, the literature review is based on 16 scientific journals and

complemented by 17 published documents, 11 reports, two government investigations, two internal educations within ECPAT Colombia – Fundación Renacer, and numerous assorted articles and information available on the internet (see 'Bibliography' for detailed information). The scientific journals have been gathered from scientific databases available at the Gothenburg University library, specifically Social Services Abstracts, the SAGE Handbook on Social Work Research, KVINNSAM which provides scientific articles on gender research, and GUNDA which is a university library catalogue. The sampling approach for identifying articles is based on keywords which summarize the subject of this study. These keywords are: Colombia, internal armed conflict, armed conflict, conflict, FARC, paramilitarism, paramilitaries, paramilitary, indigenous, females, and youth. These keywords helped define the boundaries of the chosen area of research. After identifying the keywords, electronic databases of published literature were searched for previously published work within the area. The sampling frame for selecting relevant articles has mainly been based on subheadings and the content of their abstracts. The focus has been on recent articles from 2000. To confirm the authenticity of the chosen articles, all bibliographies at the end of these articles have been reviewed. These bibliographies have then provided further relevant references that have been utilized in several cases. All complementing sources of data have been accessed through the bibliographies of the scientific journals, provided by ECPAT Colombia – Fundación Renacer or provided by Asociación Defensa de Niños Internacional DNI – Colombia.

The initial stage of analyzing the scientific journals and reports included a thorough reading of all abstracts and subheadings. The following step involved reading all introductions and conclusions, which helped to specify the content of the articles. A final step in analyzing the articles included close reading of the remaining content and mapping out this content in order to get in-depth knowledge of the material. In the selection process several articles were rejected due to irrelevance within the area of this literature study.

Carrying out Observations

Furthermore, data has been obtained through ethnographic measures such as observing behavior and carrying out qualitative interviewing on individual and group level. There are wide varieties of approaches to both observation and interviewing in social research. The observations of this study aim to complement the understanding gained through interviewing. For this reason, the researchers of this study conducted observer-as-participant roles as this form was more accurately linked to the research purpose.

In order to register as much information as possible within the specific field, all *observations* have been unstructured. This method of observation has allowed the researchers to study behaviors and actions in their natural setting and in the actual time of their occurrences. The researchers of this study have made sure that people and events have been observed at different times of the day and different days of the week. The reason for this has been to avoid drawing inferences about certain behavior or events that are valid only for certain times. As the focus has been on young indigenous girls of Vaupés, such research participants have naturally been the main subjects of observation. As behavior is influenced by contextual factors, it has been important to ensure that observations have been carried out in a variety of settings and environments.

Due to armed conflict security reasons, all observations of this study have been carried out in the village of Mitú and not in the rural parts of the region. Observations have been continuously registered and documented as daily notes.

Testing Interview Guides and Conducting Interviews

Besides observations, *interviews* have been an important source of data for this study (see appendix for interview guides). The two most important forms of qualitative interviews consist of unstructured interviews and semi-structured interviews. Questions may not follow on exactly in the way outlined on the schedule, and questions that are not included in the guide may be asked as the interviewer picks up on things said by interviewees. Thus in semi-structured interviews the interviewer follows a script to a certain extent but the interviewer does not follow the script to the letter. The interview process is therefore flexible. This study has a fairly clear focus and has therefore been well suited for semi-structured interviews, leaving space for both specific issues and relevant information that have come up along the way. Using unstructured interview forms would have risked losing specific pieces of data that the research questions of this study attempt to address (Bryman, 2008).

Interview guides were designed and implemented in order to facilitate the carrying out of semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups. The questions and topics were formulated in a way that would help in answering the research questions of this study, as well as increasing its validity. There has been a certain amount of structure on the topic areas, which has contributed to making the interviews and focus groups flow reasonably well. Information of a general kind (such as age, gender) and a specific kind (such as occupation, experience) has been noted as such information may be useful for contextualizing people's answers. What is crucial is that questioning allows the researchers to gain an understanding of ways in which participants view their social world and that there is flexibility in conducting of interviews and focus groups.

In order to discover any possible difficulties concerning the content and structure of the interview guides, the interview guides were discussed with one of the professional research participants who is a key informant of the study. These analyses led to a few adjustments of the interview guides in order to facilitate the gaining of data. One adjustment that was made included minimizing the structure of the interview guides in order to leave more space for interview subjects' own interpretations of the topic. Another adjustment included adding and reformulating a few questions. Due to the similar nature of the topics discussed in interviews, focus groups and workshops, the conduction of interview guide testing also facilitated a few adjustments of the workshop guides. The ambition of carrying out discussions on the interview guides was to detect possible difficulties concerning their contents and structures in order to facilitate the process of collecting data from research participants.

All interviews of this study have been subject to recording and conducted on individual level in order to facilitate the interpretation and analysis of them. All recordings have required the agreement of the participant. The informed consent of participants was reached by an informed consent agreement between both participants and researchers. This agreement informed the participants of the purposes of the research and its

background, as well as the subjects' right to participate on a voluntary basis (see also the 'Ethical Considerations' section below).

Carrying out Focus Groups and Workshops

In order to acquire the greatest possible amount of information, interviews were complemented by focus groups and workshops (see appendix for focus group and workshop guides). The reason for this was twofold; while it on the one hand was reasonable to assume that the targeted population of youth would feel more comfortable in sharing their knowledge and experiences in a group in which they felt comfortable, focus groups and workshops have enabled reaching a broader population. By this is meant that the nature of the data collection conducted with youth was dependent on the participants' personal requests and on the size of the various social groups in which research information has been obtained.

Bryman (2008) describes the *focus group* technique as a specific form of group interview in which there are several participants, there is an emphasis in the questioning on a particular fairly tightly defined topic and the emphasis is upon interaction within the group and the joint construction of meaning. A focus group generally contains elements of two methods: the group interview in which several people express their opinions on a number of topics; and a focused interview in which participants are selected because they are known to have been involved in a particular situation and are questioned about that involvement. In this study, the focus groups were conducted with two to three female youth per session in order for discussions to flow reasonably well. The ambition with focus groups was to reveal how the group participants viewed the specific issues in which they were confronted; for this reason a limited number of subjects was discussed during each session. In order to facilitate the extraction of its participants' views and perspectives a crucial aspect has been to provide a fairly unstructured setting; the researcher who conducted the focus group sessions, commonly called the facilitator, had to find the balance between guiding each session on the one hand and not becoming too intrusive on the other. This way of conducting focus groups has contributed to the researchers' understandings about why the participants feel the way they do. All focus groups were recorded in order to facilitate the interpretation and analysis of them. Similar to individual interviewing, recordings of focus groups have required the agreement of all the participants.

Differing from focus groups, the *workshop* technique provides a means of interacting with a fairly large group of subjects. A *participatory workshop* is an organized event in which a group of people are brought together in order for the facilitator to seek the participants' opinions, extract their knowledge and provide participants with practical skills they may use (Northumbria University, 2012). The participatory workshop technique, as utilized in this study, emphasizes the immersion within a specifically defined topic. The emphasis has been upon participants' individual and collective construction of meaning. The workshops conducted in this study have been carried out in two distinct manners: through group discussions in which several participants express their opinions as implemented in the workshop concerning *the effects of gender-based violence*; and through individual reflection in which group participants process their construction of meaning on a primarily individual basis as implemented in the workshop about *everyday life and ways of handling difficult situations*. The conduction

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of workshops contributed to the researchers' understandings of how a larger group of participants feel on the one hand and why they feel the way they do on the other. Workshops were not recorded due to the complexity of analyzing findings within such large groups. Instead, all information acquired through workshops has been continuously registered and documented in written form throughout the sessions. In order to not interfere with the facilitator's interaction with the participants during the course of the conduction of the group discussion workshop, an external professional was utilized for taking notes throughout the sessions.

Examining and Analyzing Official and Personal Documents

Finally, information has been gathered through careful examination and analyses of *official and personal documents* including reports, statements and brochures, a DNI professional's field diary from Mitú and materials from activities conducted by DNI with indigenous female youth of Vaupés. Specifically, the reports, statements and brochures include findings attained by ECPAT Colombia on recruited young people's life situations in the Colombian armed forces. The field diary comprises the given professional's personal thoughts and reflections during a three year period of time, from 2010 to 2012, concerning everyday life in Mitú and the situations of its indigenous female youth. The activity material consists of exercises performed by indigenous youth regarding ways in which they perceive themselves and their cultures. Bryman (2008) labels these types of documents *official* and *personal documents*. When analyzing such documents, Bryman (2008) accentuates four criteria that must be fulfilled: *authenticity*, *credibility*, *representativeness*, and *meaning*. Authenticity refers to that the material must be genuine and of unquestionable origin; credibility concerns whether the information is free from error and distortion; representativeness underlines the importance that the material is typical of its kind; and meaning applies to whether the evidence is clear and comprehensible. In order to authorize the utilization of the official and personal documents selected for this study, careful consideration has been taken to ensure that these documents fulfill these four criteria. The utilization of official and personal documents have supplemented observations, interviews, focus groups and workshops by providing in-depth understanding of how professionals may interpret the life situations of female youth in the context of the internal armed conflict and additional insight into how these youth may understand their origins and identities. Similar to observations and workshops, findings accumulated through the examination of official and personal documents have been registered and documented as notes.

The following section will present ways in which the acquired data has been processed, analyzed, and interpreted according to the purpose and research questions of this study.

Data Processing, Analysis, and Interpretation

This section will describe the ways of processing, analyzing and interpreting the collected data as well as highlight key concepts relevant to the study's credibility, namely reliability, validity, and prior understanding.

All data accumulated through interviews, focus groups, workshops, observations, and official and personal documents have been processed in similar ways and gained

according to certain methodological and disciplinary conventions and principles. Primarily, structured listening to the recorded interviews and focus groups, thorough reading of notes from workshops and observations, and in-depth analysis of official and personal documents took place. The information supplied was then transcribed in order to facilitate the analysis and interpretation of data. Following, the transcribed information was by necessity translated from Spanish to English (see 'Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research' section for further information on translating processes). It has been crucial that the purpose and research questions of this study have permeated the process of analyzing, interpreting and clustering data.

Content analysis is an approach to the analysis of accumulated data as a means of generating information. Such analysis seeks to present findings in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable order. Qualitative content analysis, as utilized in this study, refers to an approach to documents that emphasizes the roles of the researchers in the construction of meaning of and in research findings. There is also an emphasis on allowing themes to emerge out of data and on recognizing the significance for understanding meaning in the context in which findings are being analyzed. Qualitative content analysis becomes applicable to many different forms of unstructured information (Bryman, 2008) and is therefore appropriate for the analysis of this study's transcripts of semi-structured interviews and focus groups as well as the daily notes from observations, workshops and official and personal documents.

There have been several phases in the selection of accumulated data for the qualitative content analysis of this study. The first step has included reading and rereading daily notes and transcripts of respondents' statements. Decisions about what accumulated data would be presented have been based on whether the suggested piece of information contributes to answering the research questions of this study. Consequently, all data that profoundly contributed to answering the research questions were selected and sorted into five distinct themes: 1) characteristics of the village of Mitú and the region of Vaupés, 2) indigenous cultures and gender aspects associated with such cultures, 3) perceptions of individual and group identities, 4) the internal armed conflict's effects on individuals and groups, and 5) the utilization of youth in the armed forces. A coding frame in which these themes were associated with the given numbers above was designed in order to facilitate this process. Similarly, a coding schedule in which records were kept of which research participant had provided each piece of selected information was designed in order to facilitate the identification of the respondents in the presentation of research findings. More specifically, a letter was allocated to each respondent in order to tell them apart. Finally, the presentation of research findings has been introduced in the previously mentioned order of themes; one theme at a time.

The analysis of the data presented in this study has been based on a narrative such. Narrative analysis is a term that covers a fairly wide variety of approaches that are concerned with the search for and analyses of the stories people employ to understand their social worlds. Such analysis entails a sensitivity to the connections in people's accounts of past, present and future events; to people's sense of their place within those events; to the stories they generate about them; and to the significance of context for the unfolding of events and people's sense of their roles within them. In other words, it is the ways in which people organize and conceive connections between events and the

sense they make of those connections that provide the raw material for narrative analysis, that is; the focus of attention shifts from 'what actually happened?' to 'how do people make sense of what happened?' (Bryman, 2008). The reason for basing this study's analysis of data on a narrative such has been due to the focus on highlighting the participants' perspectives as revealed in the telling of their life stories rather than the actual facts of their lives.

Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research

The terms reliability and validity are not used to the same extent in qualitative research as in quantitative such. Reliability and validity in qualitative research can be seen as different kinds of measures of quality, which are achieved according to certain methodological and disciplinary conventions and principles (Bryman, 2008).

Bryman (2008) argues that *external reliability* concerns the degree to which a study can be replicated. This is a difficult criterion to meet in qualitative research, since it is impossible to 'freeze' a social setting and the circumstances of an initial study to make it replicable in the sense in which the term is usually employed. The researchers of this research are aware that this study therefore does not fully achieve this criterion of external reliability. However, the purpose of this research is not to replicate its findings. *Internal reliability*, on the other hand, relates to whether members of the research team agree about what they see and hear. This study applied measures of internal reliability by initially interpreting visual observations and translated transcripts of accumulated data on an individual basis, thereafter comparing interpretations and understandings, and finally reaching an agreement on what may be the general essence of the collected data (Bryman, 2008).

Bryman (2008: 376) suggests that validity in qualitative measures may refer to whether 'you are observing, identifying, and measuring what you say you are.' *Internal validity* in qualitative research means whether there is a good match between researchers' observations and the theoretical ideas they develop. The internal validity can be strengthened by this ethnographic research since the participation in the social life of a group has allowed the researchers to ensure a high level of congruence between concepts and observations. *External validity* refers to the degree to which findings can be generalized across social settings (Bryman, 2008). It is not possible to draw generalized conclusions on the basis of this study. However, it is reasonable to assume that the resistance carried out by female indigenous youth in the region of Vaupés, as examined in this study, can be fruitfully used as a basis for identifying and analyzing expressions of female youth resistance to armed conflict in other settings.

Collecting data in one language and presenting the findings in another has required translation-related decisions. Such decisions have a direct impact on the validity of the study. Birbili (2000) clarifies that certain factors specifically affect the quality of translation in those cases where the researcher and the translator are the same person, as in the case of this study. Such factors include the autobiography of the researcher-translator, the translator's knowledge of the language and the culture of the people under study, and the researcher's fluency in the language of the write-up. Birbili (2000) considers the risk of losing certain information in the process of translating an 'unsolvable problem' due to the fact that words may exist in one language and not in

another, concepts may not be equivalent in different cultures, and idiomatic expressions and statements may display differences in grammatical and syntactical structures between the language of data collection and the language of write-up. In addition, statements or expressions for which there is a direct lexical equivalence might carry 'emotional connotations' in the language of data collection that will not necessarily occur in the language of the write-up (Birbili, 2000).

In order to minimize translation-related problems during the analysis of this study's research findings, certain techniques have been utilized. First, back translation has been conducted. Such back translation has included the identification of equivalents by first translating items from Spanish to English, and then independently translating these items back to Spanish and consequently comparing the two versions in Spanish language. Such back translation has been conducted until consonance was achieved. Secondly, in those occasions where the two languages have not offered direct lexical equivalence, the emphasis has been upon achieving *conceptual* equivalence, especially when utilization quotations. By this is meant that participants' words have been translated 'freely' rather than 'literally'. Even though a literal translation perhaps could have implied increased justification of participants' statements, such practice would have reduced the readability of the text and decreased the understanding of the context. Birbili (2000) declares that obtaining conceptual equivalence is greatly facilitated in cases in which the researcher-translator is fluent in the two languages and possesses an in-depth knowledge of the culture in which data is collected; only then can the researcher fully grasp the essence that an expression carries and ensure that the cultural meanings of statements are made explicit to the readers of the research report. Even though the researcher-translator of this study fulfills these criteria, and despite the fact that measures have been taken in order to minimize translation-related issues, the researchers of this study are aware that this cannot completely eliminate the problem.

Prior Knowledge

The researchers' prior knowledge and understanding within the field can support and assist the carrying out of the study, as well as create certain problems. For example, prior knowledge may facilitate the initial interactions with the participants of studies like this one and contribute to an understanding of their culture. At the same time, prior knowledge influences the ways in which researchers view the world and may therefore cause misunderstandings and prejudices. In order to gain an understanding of the subjects' ways of viewing their social settings, it is essential for the researchers to understand that their own interpretations of these settings must be placed in a relevant context in which the participants' views have accurately been taken into consideration (Thurén, 2007). An ambition of this study has been to revise and extend prior understandings, which has been made possible by the ethnographical approach. Permeating this study is an awareness that prior knowledge and understanding might affect the interpretations that the researchers make.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues arise at a variety of stages in social research. This section deals with the concerns about ethics that have arisen in the course of conducting this study.

An awareness of ethical principles and the complex nature of concerns about ethics in social research is crucial. It is only if researchers are aware of the issues involved that they can make informed decisions about the implications of certain choices. One of the main concerns lies within the ethical issues that arise in relations between researchers and research participants in the course of carrying out a study of this kind. Bryman (2008) discusses how ethical principles have usefully been broken down into four main areas; whether there is *harm to participants;* whether there is a *lack of informed consent;* whether there is an *invasion of privacy*; and whether *deception* is involved. Each area will be shortly discussed in the following section.

Research that is likely to *harm participants* is regarded by most people as unacceptable. Harm can be expressed in a number of ways such as physical harm, harm to participants' development, stress, and loss of self-esteem. The *BSA Statement of Ethical Practice* emphasized that researchers should 'anticipate and guard against consequences for research participants which can be predicted to be harmful' and 'carefully consider the possibility that the research experience may be a disturbing one' (Bryman, 2008: 118). The researcher should also try to minimize disturbance both to subjects themselves and to the subjects' relationships with their environment. Further discussions of the issue of harm to participants include statements that the records and identities of individuals should be maintained as confidential. This also means that care needs to be taken when findings are being published to ensure that individuals are not identified or identifiable (Bryman, 2008).

In order to achieve the criteria for confidentiality, this study identifies its research participants only in terms of positions within the community and age. In this study, the professional research participants will be referred to according to affiliations or organizations, as well as their positions within these organizations. For example: 'ECPAT: Professional A', 'ECPAT: Professional B', 'DNI: Professional A', 'DNI: Professional B', 'Traditional Leader', 'Health Sector: Professional', 'Social Services: Professional A', 'Social Services: Professional B', 'Social Services: Professional C', and 'Preparatory Education Teacher'. The youth participants of this study will be referred to as 'Youth: XX' where 'XX' will be replaced by the participants' ages in cases in which youth have agreed to share such information. Research findings deriving from official and personal document will be referred to as 'ECPAT: Official Documents', 'DNI: Field Diary', and 'DNI Material: XX'. Material gathered from conversations carried out with youth within ECPAT Colombia will be referred to as 'ECPAT Youth'. In terms of referring to the interviewees in contexts other than quotations, they may also be referred to simply as 'ECPAT: A' 'ECPAT: B' 'DNI: A', 'DNI: B', 'Social Services: A' etcetera.

Nevertheless, it is recognized that this measure may not entirely eliminate the possibility of identification. One example concerns the role and identity of the DNI Professionals working in Mitú, Vaupés, who have been two of the main professional informants of this study. It has been clear that referring to these professionals as Coordinator and Field Worker within the DNI project would not protect the confidentiality of their identities. However, in discussions with these interviewees, these participants explicitly expressed that they preferred to be identified in these roles rather than more vaguely referred to in non-specified manners.

Bryman (2008) explains that the principle of *informed consent* means that prospective research participants should be given as much information as might be needed to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to participate in a study. In voluntary participation, as actualized in this study, subjects should not be under the impression that they are required to participate. Participation in sociological research implies a responsibility for the researchers to fully explain, in terms meaningful to participants, what the research is about, who is undertaking it, why it is being undertaken, and how its findings will be disseminated.

Furthermore, prior to this study, the subjects agreed to the carrying out of observations and were well informed about what the observations aimed to achieve. The researchers of this study have therefore conducted overt research roles. Nevertheless, implementing the principle of informed consent in ethnographic research may cause certain difficulties. While observing, the researcher is likely to come in contact with a large amount of people, and ensuring that everyone has the opportunity for informed consent is not practicable as it would be extremely disruptive in everyday contexts. Also, even if all research participants in the specific setting are aware that the ethnographer is a researcher, it is doubtful whether they all are similarly informed about the nature of the research (Bryman, 2008).

As an attempt to avoid this form of lack of informed consent, prior to the study the administrators of ECPAT Colombia – Fundación Renacer and Asociación Defensa de Niños Internacional DNI – Colombia were well informed about what the interviews and observations aimed to achieve. This gave them plenty of time to inform other research participants about the study to the extent they found desirable. During the initial stages of immersing in the social context of Mitú, further subjects of the study were informed about its purpose and agreed to participate. In order to not further victimize the targeted population; the indigenous female youth of Vaupés were informed that the ambition of this study was to explore the ways in which this population may express resistance to any major difficulties in their lives. In addition, interview and focus group participants were informed that the sessions would be recorded, that no one but the researchers would listen to the interviews, that the interviews would be transcribed but all identifying information would be removed, and that parts of the interview were likely to be used in the publication of the study. All interview, focus group, and workshop participants were informed that notes would be taken, all identifying information would be removed, and that the information they shared would be likely to be used in publication of this study. Similarly, the participants that provided the official and personal documents were informed about these aspects. The ambition of these actions has been to achieve informed consent without disturbing the research subjects' everyday contexts in a way that may be harmful to participants.

The third area of ethical concern relates to the issue of the degree to which *invasions of privacy* can be condoned. This area is very much linked to the notion of informed consent even though the research participants do not invalidate the right to privacy entirely by providing informed consent. For example, when participants agree to be interviewed, they may refuse to answer certain questions on whatever grounds they feel are justified. These refusals can be based on a feeling that certain questions delve into

private realms, which respondents do not wish to make public, regardless of the fact that the interview is conducted in private (Bryman, 2008).

Deception occurs when researchers represent their work as something other than what it is. Bryman (2008) discusses the *SRA Guidelines* which state that it is the duty of social researchers not to pursue methods of inquiry that are likely to infringe upon human values and sensibilities. To do so, whatever the methodological advantages, would be to endanger the reputation of social research and the mutual trust between social researchers and society which often is necessary for adequate research. Clarifying the researchers' open roles in terms meaningful to all participants has been an important aspect of ethical principles. It is crucial to acknowledge that ethical issues cannot be ignored as they relate directly to the integrity of a piece of research and the participants that are involved in this research. There is no doubt that these four areas form a useful classification of ethical principles in and for this study.

Critical Methodological Analysis

This study's research approaches have contributed to gaining greater understandings of how research participants experience their life situations and ways in which these participants display resistance to the power structures encountered in the specific context of internal armed conflict. Selecting ethnography as research approach for this study has been constructive as its research findings have been based on an involvement in the social lives of vulnerable Colombian youth for an extended period of time, both in March-July 2012 and in April 2013. For this reason, the elected research method has been well suited to the purpose of this study. Throughout the conduction of this research, the researchers have conducted open, explorative roles which have been crucial in order to gain the amount of valuable information that has been necessary for carrying out this study. Furthermore, the researchers' roles in participant observation have not created any significant problems; even though it is unreasonable to claim that going native can be completely eliminated in ethnographic research.

The literature review presented in the 'Background' section of the study shows that the main focus of researchers in this area has been upon accurately describing the contextual problems of indigenous youth and ways in which power relations affect the lives of youth in situations of armed conflict. The outcome of articles has been reasonably broad due to the relatively extensive search options included in this study. For example, it is reasonable to assume that combining English articles with Spanish such has provided valuable further dimensions, such as first-hand information, to this section of the study.

The ethnographic research that has been conducted with ECPAT Colombia – Fundación Renacer during an initial stage of this research contributed to valuable antecedent knowledge of ways in which Colombian youth are exposed to vulnerabilities in the face of the country's internal armed conflict. Such information has been utilized to shape and design this study and has served as an enhancement to the empirical study carried out in Mitú. This strategic way of conducting a study has been implemented in order to reach a satisfactory and holistic understanding of the social contexts in which youth at risk of recruitment into the armed forces find themselves. In addition, observations of such

youth in the village of Mitú have been continuously conducted and accompanied by the taking of daily notes during a ten days' time. This has provided the researchers with the possibility of gaining a fundamental understanding of the research participants' social contexts. Furthermore, observations have provided a complementary approach to ways in which information has been accumulated through interviews, focus groups, workshops, and official and personal documents.

By making a number of questions in the data collection guides slightly more 'open', the participants were left with more space to freely interpret the questions and topics and report statements that may have been of greater importance to them. It is likely that this may also have affected the result of the findings of this study. Still, the fact that semi-structured techniques of data collection were selected assured that the topics being covered were accurately linked to the area.

The researchers of this study claim that there have been both advantages and disadvantages linked with the way in which the data collection has been carried out. The fact that all interviews and focus groups were carried out in environments selected by the interviewees' has been viewed as contributing to a secure and informal atmosphere. It is reasonable to assume that this may have contributed to the participants' willingness to share their experiences. A possible disadvantage encountered in the process of conducting interviews and focus groups was the way in which these participants were selected. All youth who have participated in these two forms of data collection have been selected by a current professional worker of an organization working directly with these youth. The researchers of this study are aware that this may risk being viewed as a biased selection. In order to avoid such biased selection and increase the study's reliability, additional information was collected through workshops carried out with a broad variety of youth selected by the researchers. Complementing these ways of data collection with the gathering of information from official and personal documents is likely to have increased the amplitude of this study's research findings as such information entails an inclusion of data gathered during a prolonged period of time.

The researchers of this study are aware that not informing the youth participants that this research specifically focuses on resistance to the power structures encountered within the internal armed conflict may risk being viewed as not fulfilling the criteria for informed consent. However, providing such information has been regarded as essential in order to achieve the ethical principle of avoiding harm to participants. Moreover, the researchers of this study affirm that the way in which the purpose of the study has been explained to these participants has been undertaken in terms meaningful to them. Similarly, they have been given as much information as has been needed in order to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate.

The inevitable translating of empirical research findings from one language to another has had certain impact on the validity of the study. All quotations have by necessity been translated into English which implicates that literal presentations of quotations have not been achieved. Nevertheless, all collected data has been transcribed as accurately as possible and conceptual equivalence has been achieved. It is therefore reasonable to claim that the essence of all translated research findings have remained the same.

CHAPTER 3: BACKGROUND – COLOMBIA'S INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT AND INDIGENOUS YOUTH

Achieving peace and promoting social and economic development are the two main challenges facing Colombia. The country's violence and internal armed conflict stem from a complex interaction of economic, social, historical, and political factors (Solimano, 2000). It is difficult to find reliable statistics on the suffering from violence in Colombia; however, what is clear is that the scale of hardship has been and remains huge. Children, adolescents, females, and indigenous populations are particularly affected by the conflict and constantly subjected to violations of human rights (UNICEF, 2010; Zuluaga & Jones, 2006).

This section will focus on perspectives on the internal armed conflict in Colombia, its emergence and implications on civil society. Specifically, the impact of conflict on women, youth and indigenous peoples will be analyzed and discussed. First, a brief history of the conflict and its actors will be presented. Second, social conditions as result of armed conflict will be discussed and examined with an emphasis on structural consequences of armed conflict on society and the vulnerability of women and youth. Third, a presentation of how indigenous youth are especially vulnerable in the context of Colombia's armed conflict will be provided and followed by a discussion on the rights of indigenous children and their current situations. Finally, ways in which indigenous youth in the Vaupés region are affected by the internal armed conflict and ways in which the rights of this population are promoted will be examined and discussed.

Perspectives on Colombia's Internal Armed Conflict

Similar to many Latin American countries, Colombia evolved as a highly segregated nation, split between the traditionally rich families of Spanish descent and the vast majority of poor Colombians. In a country where the presence of the state has always been weak, the result was a grinding war on multiple fronts; with left-wing insurgents on one end and the political spectrum and right-wing paramilitaries on the other – and with the civil population caught in the crossfire between the two. Human rights advocates have blamed paramilitaries for massacres, disappearances, forced displacement and cases of torture, while left-wing guerrilla movements are primarily responsible for assassinations, kidnapping and extortion (Solimano, 2000; Pardo Rueda, 2008; Saab & Tyler, 2009).

Conflict Shaping a Nation

While claiming that war has been present at many stages of Colombian history is not entirely precise, it can be argued that war has formed the country and helped it become what it is today. Colombia has been at war during more than half of its existence and both internal and external conflict can be tracked back to the colonization period when

Colombia was ruled by Spanish colonial elite. However, it was through the means of arms in continuous wars that lasted for fifteen long years that the nation achieved its independence in 1810. Nine national civil wars occurred in the nineteenth century, as well as no less than seventy revolts, insurgencies, uprisings, coups, and partial confrontations. During half of the nineteenth century Colombia found itself in some kind of war. In the twentieth century the country spent sixty years at war, including the conflict with Peru in 1932 and the participation of Colombian military forces in Korea in 1950 and 1951 (Pardo Rueda, 2008). Unlike the experience of countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, which achieved peace after the end of the Cold War, the Colombian armed conflict has not only lasted, it has also sharply intensified in the post-cold war era (Solimano, 2000).

The Cold War and lags of internal liberal-conservative violence from the fifties have been identified as triggers to the emergence of Colombian Marxist guerrillas in the 1960s (Pardo Rueda, 2008). In 1958 the Liberal party and the Conservative party formed the National Front power-sharing arrangement concentrating power in elites, excluding other parties, such as the Communist party, which came to last for nearly twenty years (UD, 2009a). When the military struck down a peasant rebellion in the beginning of the 1960s, the left-wing responded by establishing the guerrilla movement Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo (*Revolutionary Armed Forces of* Colombia - People's Army) FARC-EP in 1964 and took control over large parts of rural Colombia. Shortly thereafter another guerrilla movement, Ejército de Liberación Nacional (*National Liberation Army* – ELN), gained influence over urban parts of the country (Utrikespolitiska Institutet, 2013). The emergence of these insurgent forces occurred after a particularly rough period of Colombian history known as *La Violencia* (Gentry & Spencer, 2010) and was claimed by left-wing guerrilla movements to be based on the lack of opportunities for many Colombians to participate in political life and dissatisfaction over the distorted distribution of resources (UD, 2009a). Additional guerrilla movements emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s drawing the government into extended military campaign and introducing the nation to revolutionary war (Pardo Rueda, 2008).

The Nature of Revolutionary Wars

Revolutionary wars are not comparable, neither in motivation nor in their developments or in the components that comprise them, to civil wars. These are the kind of wars that emerge from the rise of communist movements, articulated and guided by specific theories and for the purpose of replacing not the government, as in military coups or civil wars, but of replacing the liberal capitalist state by a socialist such (Pardo Rueda, 2008).

Specifically two events changed the scene of national security in Latin America which spread revolutionary wars across the continent. One was the rise to power of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 and the second one was when the character of the Marxist-Leninist regime was revealed in many parts of Latin America in 1962 and a policy of promoting revolutions in other countries was adopted for defense. The internal armed movements have since this period proven to be the preferred routes of destabilization of nations. (Pardo Rueda, 2008). Nonetheless, the Colombian revolutionary war has escalated and

currently counts for the longest and most geographically extended armed conflict in Latin American history (Solimano, 2000).

Left-Wing Guerrilla Movements vs. Paramilitary Movement

The reasons for Colombia's revolutionary war are likely to be as many as actors participating in the conflict. However, factors such as ideological incentives against social injustice and political marginalization have been identified as determinants to the emergence of conflict within the nation. Inequality, distinct regional differences, social and economic injustice and political exclusion paved the way for weak government institutions. Left-wing guerrilla movements were established as an attempt to claim what they believed were their rights (UD, 2009a). Most left-wing guerrilla movements have similar programs; they claim to represent the rural poor against Colombia's wealthy classes and oppose U.S. influence in Colombia, the privatization of natural resources, multinational corporations, and rightist violence (UNRIC, 2013). Among Colombian guerrilla movements, FARC, which is on US and European lists of terrorist organizations, represents one of the largest guerrilla movements in the world (Saab & Taylor, 2009).

The armed conflict was initially a strong ideological embossed struggle to seize power. Since the 1980s, however, the conflict has escalated with the onset of drug-trafficking, kidnappings and acts of terrorism. During the past five decades the number of social actors involved in the armed conflict has expanded from solely involving the guerrilla movements and the legal armed forces to include drug cartels and right-wing armed paramilitary forces, which has increased the density of the conflict (Solimano, 2000).

Sub-state paramilitary movements emerged in Colombia due to a reaction to the manifestation of violence realized by the guerrilla movements and the government's inability to solve the problems of public order and social conflicts in the country. The paramilitaries were born as a phenomenon of self-defense. However, the paramilitaries have not been – nor are – organized citizens against common crime or groups of people who spontaneously battle delinquency. Instead, Colombian paramilitaries represent forces that exercise a form of conservative violence with the aim of maintaining an established socio-political order. Although a kind of spontaneous local citizen vigilance existed during the initial stages of Colombian paramilitarism, the phenomenon soon came to extend beyond local operation and altered into armed actors with intense nationwide presence. Not surprisingly, the paramilitary forces were well structured, had clearly and explicitly defined functions and centralized command (Rey Garcia & Rivas Nieto, 2008). However, these legitimate forms of defense should not be idealized as they soon shifted to formulate less legitimate such. In such an environment, the line between armed state law enforcement forces, such as paramilitaries, and criminal movements, such as guerrillas, appears to break down. The political agenda of the Colombian paramilitary forces therefore not only distinguishes them from criminal groups but also shapes their behavior (Saab & Taylor, 2009).

Illegal Activities shape Organized Crime

The main sub-state paramilitary force in modern Colombia, the recently demobilized Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (*Self-Defense Forces of Colombia* – AUC), and

FARC derive the majority of their revenues from criminal activities, including kidnapping, extortion schemes, and the protection, production, and trafficking of Andean-grown narcotics such as cocaine. Colombia is the single largest exporter of this narcotic in the world, supplying approximately 80 percent of the world's cocaine. The economic benefit from this illegal traffic has almost solely been made by government officials and armed insurgents. However, paramilitary and guerrilla movements differ in the level and form of their participation in the international drug trade. After the fall of the Cali and Medellín drug cartels in the early 1990s and the following disorganization of the drug market, AUC and FARC found themselves in a unique opportunity to expand their illegal activities. The paramilitaries used the new environment to intensify their participation in the Colombian drug industry and international trafficking while FARC remained primarily focused on the domestic production of cocaine and strengthened its link to international criminal organizations to transfer and distribute drugs (Saab & Taylor, 2009). Indications show that FARC itself supplies more than 50 percent of the world's cocaine and more than 60 percent of the cocaine entering the US. The economic benefit FARC makes from this is estimated to reach between an annual USD 500 million and USD 600 million (UNRIC, 2013). Although FARC, which currently consists of 9,000 combatants, has become increasingly involved in massacres and violence against civilians, the majority of its violence is directed against Colombian military personnel, bases, or equipment (Saab & Taylor, 2009).

The past decade has witnessed a dramatic change in the position of sub-state actors in Colombia (Saab & Taylor, 2009). After military pressure from the government lead by President Álvaro Uribe, AUC agreed to demobilization negotiations in 2002. In July 2003, under an agreement known as Ralito I, the Government of Colombia and representatives of AUC set the goal of demobilizing the paramilitary force by December 2005. Many AUC members chose to demobilize as individuals due to favorable benefits assured by the government; a person electing to demobilize would be handed over to the Program for Humanitarian Assistance to Demobilized Persons of the Ministry of Defense which would provide immediate humanitarian assistance for the demobilized person and his family, ensure that the individual would not be accused of human rights violations, and provide supportive processes of reintegration into society (Porch & Rasmussen, 2008). This process resulted in successful demobilization of over 40,000 former fighters to a total cost of USD 39 million (Human Rights Watch, 2008). However, new criminal organizations known as 'successor groups' of right-wing paramilitaries have taken shape and can now be held accountable for human rights violations very similar to those committed by AUC. These successor groups, also known by the Government of Colombia as neo-paramilitary groups or BACRIM (Bandas Criminales Emergentes – Emerging Criminal Gangs), have over time consolidated into six main organizations with current presence in 24 of Colombia's 32 provinces (Brodzinsky, 2010).

Despite paramilitary and neo-paramilitary involvement, FARC's long-term goal remains the destruction of the Colombian state and its replacement by a FARC-controlled government. According to public FARC statements, once the organization reaches its target of recruiting and arming 30,000 combatants it will initiate a final offensive against the regular armed forces and take over the organs of the national government. While FARC's military structure supports its image as a guerrilla army

designed to confront an official national military, the movement still terrorizes uncooperative rural civilians in its areas of control (Saab & Taylor, 2009). The most violent zones of Colombia today are those in which two or more actors are in conflict, specifically those with simultaneous guerrilla and paramilitary successors' presence (Solimano, 2000). The country's internal armed conflict, currently dominated by the two extremes of FARC and state law enforcement forces, influences social conditions in numerous ways which will be discussed in the following section.

Social Conditions as a Result of Armed Conflict

The Colombian conflict does not only affect participating actors, civilians in all levels of society become victimized. Indigenous female youth are a particularly vulnerable population. This section will focus on perspectives on how civilians are affected by Colombia's internal armed conflict.

Structural Consequences of Conflict on Colombian Society

Violence and armed conflict are not only a constant source of distress for the people, such violence also destroys different forms of capital, such as human, social, physical and natural capital, impairs the creation of wealth and worsens citizens' quality of life. Violence in Colombia has political, social, and economic determinants. Its causes are many and complex. Violence has historical roots and is associated with poverty, economic inequality, and social exclusion. Examinations of trends of different forms of violence, however, are subject to widespread underreporting; particularly those of social violence, such as sexual assault of women and children (Solimano, 2000).

If using homicide rates as a means for measuring violence levels in Colombia, one can conclude that there has been an increment over the past decades; officially reported figures increased from 15 to 92 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants between the years of 1974 and 1995. Violence has particularly grown in the post 1985-period, although more recently homicide rates in large cities have begun to decline. Rural violence is mainly experienced along the agricultural and natural resource frontiers as found in Vaupés, among other regions of Colombia (Solimano, 2000).

Due to the complexity of the conflict, the Government of Colombia tends to consider all forms of opposition against the existing ruling social order as suspicious. Social movements, such as political parties, trade unions, human rights defenders, peasant organizations, journalists, student activists and even teachers are therefore often portrayed as traitors or adherents of guerrilla movements or other terrorist organizations. As a consequence, members of such social movements are at constant risk of threats and persecution and have commonly been subjects of arrests, attacks and massacres (Jansson, 2007).

The humanitarian crisis in Colombia, which is currently one of the most severe humanitarian crises in the world, is a consequence of the protracted conflict and is aggravated by structural problems, such as poverty, inequality and the links between armed forces and illegal activities, affecting millions of people each year (OSRSG/CAAC, 2012). Left-wing guerrilla movements continue to commit violations

of international humanitarian law and serious violations of human rights, such as massacres, attacks on civilians, forced recruitment of children, forced displacement, abductions and sexual violence against women and girls, are frequently occurring. The number of internally displaced people is constantly growing and currently accounts for between three and five million Colombians; and each year 200,000 new internally displaced people are forced from their homes, among which the majority are indigenous peoples and women with their dependent children (UD, 2010).

As a simultaneous cause and consequence of the conflict, Colombia demonstrates a very segregated society with huge gaps between the rich and the poor. All documented Colombian citizens are allocated into six different social segments; so-called *estratos*. While estrato one encompasses the poorest population in society, estrato six comprises the wealthy upper class – the homeless without resources have been allocated to the sub-class considered as estrato zero. The social inequalities between these segments inevitably call for an increment of violence and urge on-going conflict between its diverse actors (Jansson, 2007).

Weak State Presence Victimizes Inhabitants of Rural Colombia

Rural Colombia, which to a great extent is inhabited by people of low estratos, is extensively controlled by left-wing guerrilla movements, particularly in the south and east where the presence of the state is weak. To date, FARC has maintained a predominantly rural, peasant base which membership tends to include a fair amount of women, younger recruits, peasants and individuals with generally low levels of education. FARC profits from kidnappings, extortion schemes and an unofficial 'tax' it levies in the countryside for social services and 'protection' of civilians; contributing to the force's extended control over civilians. A 2008 International Crisis Group report notes that FARC's control of population and territory in rural areas has allowed it to dictate terms for coca growth, harvest, and processing, which further weakens the state and steps up the force's control of civilians (UNRIC, 2013). Solimano (2000) affirms that segments of the Colombian population, especially young people in rural areas, are fighting or deriving their income from occupations associated with the armed conflict such as coca growth. In addition, hundreds of people become victims of landmines deployed by guerrilla movements each year; causing severe disabilities and deaths among Colombian peasants. Even though the majority of landmine victims are soldiers, 35 percent are estimated to be civilians (UD, 2009b). Particularly indigenous women and children have been identified as severely affected by the conflict (UD, 2010).

Unfair Treatment of Women in the Context of the Internal Armed Conflict

Even though violence in some form affects the majority of the population, it increasingly affects some groups disproportionately. Even though the majority of the victims who lost their lives to the conflict are men, an estimated 70 percent of all surviving victims are women. One of the most frequently committed crimes against women in the context of conflict is sexual violence and assault (UD, 2010).

Governmental data show that more than 80 percent of victims of sexual crimes are girls and young women (Jansson, 2007). Statistics from 2009 indicate that nearly one in five

women living in areas with the presence of *any* of the conflict's many actors have experienced sexual assault by at least one of the participating actors. In the past ten years approximately 500,000 women have been victimized – 100,000 of these are likely to have been subjected to rape. Nearly 14 percent of these women claim to have been raped by members of the illegal armed forces while two percent claim they have been raped by the military. Recent findings show that sexual violence against women and girls from indigenous peoples is steadily increasing (UD, 2010).

Social problems related to gender are closely linked with the ideals of machismo which are deeply rooted in the Colombian society. Very commonly, both men and women live in accordance with these norms and only exceptional cases demonstrate women who rebel against them (Jansson, 2007). Consequently, few women report crimes committed against them and the number of unreported cases of gender based violence is therefore immense. One of the main reasons for not reporting crimes is the widespread lack of knowledge of human rights. The fairly insignificant number of reported cases of violence combined with a lack of information has led to certain ignorance of the problem. Thus the rule of law continues to be weak and impunity continues to reign. Impunity, more than any other factor, has been the reason for prolonging the human rights crisis in Colombia (UD, 2010).

Women are constantly recruited by Colombia's armed forces and currently account for between 25 and 50 percent of the illegal armed forces' members. Some of these women are as young as eight years old. These young girls are exposed to many difficulties of military life and are forced to do the same work as grown men. They are taught to use weapons, obtain information and take part in military operations. Frequently, they are injured and killed as any other soldier (Save the Children et. al, 2010).

Children and Youth – the Big Losers of the Conflict?

Children under the age of 18 account for approximately 40 percent of the Colombian population and represent a group that is severely affected by the armed conflict; particularly vulnerable are indigenous and afrocolombian children (UD, 2010). For youth, armed conflict represents a fundamental alteration of the social ecology and infrastructure which supports healthy child development by severing families and extended social networks, interrupting services systems and feeding deep ethnic and territorial divides (Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan, 2008).

The control that the armed actors of Colombia's conflict have over youth is greater than merely territorial. As an expression and metamorphosis of the conflict, the uprising of new illegal armed forces, intimately related with the demobilized paramilitary movements, continues making children and adolescents in urban areas, over which the forces have influence, victims of violence. In its report in 2006, the International Committee of the Rights of the Child manifested its concern on the fact that children remain victims of torture and cruel and degrading treatment. The Committee noted that even though members of the illegal armed forces are primarily responsible, state representatives, specifically members of the military, are also involved in maltreatment of children. These forces exercise control over young people's daily lives and often control communal and cultural environments including commerce, trends, leisure,

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activities, public transportation and the possibility to circulate freely. Armed forces are also those who resolve all types of conflicts, enforce punishment and 'bring justice on their own accord'. To earn acknowledgement and acceptance of their methods by the people, they often carry out populist type of actions such as handing out groceries and other merchandise to the people. However, armed forces regularly exercise political and judicial power by executing selective assassinations, peremptory threats, social cleansing, and expulsion of persons they deem as undesirable. In addition, these forces control the frequently occurring illegal businesses such as the distribution of psychoactive substances and prostitution in young girls and women. In fact, the armed forces are the primary actors involved in sexual exploitation of Colombian children; operating as pimps, traffickers and abusers (Save the Children et. al, 2010).

Young Girls – Frequent Victims of Sexual Abuse

Sexual violence reiterates in the armed conflict, and such violence is perpetrated both by illegal armed forces and by state law enforcement forces. The Committee of the Rights of the Child has particularly expressed its concern about the growing number of young girls that are victims of sexual violence. Among these, there is an alarmingly high number of reports of rapes committed by members of the military and a substantial amount of cases concerning other forms of torture and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment committed by state representatives (Save the Children et. al, 2010).

A perverse combination of protection and privileges gives a powerful incentive for children to have and keep having sexual relations with soldiers and guerrilla members. In exchange for money, protection or to avoid being punished, the girls are repeatedly violated. It may appear that these sexual relations are not forced, but forced relations are very likely in a context where armed actors have the authority of life or death over those who are under their command (Save the Children et. al, 2010). Impunity remains a problem in these cases of sexual violence, particularly in cases of sexual violence related to the armed conflict (Human Rights Watch, 2012).

Children in the Illegal Armed Forces – Recruitment and Victimization

The illegal armed forces continue to extensively recruit and utilize children. The Committee of the Rights of the Child points out that vulnerable groups, such as indigenous peoples, are at higher risk of being recruited by the armed forces. Currently, more than 11,000 children fight in Colombia's armed conflict; comprising one of the highest numbers of child soldiers in the world (Save the Children et. al, 2010). According to the United Nations, the average age for child recruitment into the illegal armed forces is slightly under 13. However, research findings indicate that this age is constantly decreasing (UD, 2010).

Youth who join the illegal armed forces do so after being forced by a wide range of economic, cultural, social, and political pressures (Barenbaum, Ruchkin & Schwab-Stone, 2004). Illegal armed forces are using a series of methods and actions of recruiting children that are clearly identified with the crime of human trafficking; for example by promising salaries, economic compensations, food or physical protection, or by threat to the child's personal or family integrity and security. Some are coerced to join at gunpoint or join out of fear; others join to escape domestic violence, loneliness

or communal oppression (Human Rights Watch, 2003). Political, economic and social factors also encourage recruitment. The lack of opportunities for work and studies combined with incentives to improve quality of life stimulate youth to enroll in these illegal armed forces. Findings confirm that children are contacted in streets, establishments or communities and consequently moved under coercion, threat or deceit to military camps (Save the Children et. al, 2010). Saab & Taylor (2009) have identified the four most common reasons for joining FARC: forced recruitment (20 percent); the allure of weapons and uniforms (20 percent); false promises of a salary and good treatment (16 percent); and ideological convictions (12 percent) (Saab & Taylor, 2009).

Regardless of how children are recruited, child soldiers are victims, and their participation in conflict bears serious consequences for their physical and emotional wellbeing (OSRSG/CAAC, 2012). The children of illegal armed forces must face terrible risks; not only as soldiers but also as spies, messengers, servants and sexual slaves. Contrary to their expectations, children are confronted with constant violence. In some cases the minors are used in front line of fire with state law enforcement forces, resulting in death or severe injury. They are commonly subjected to abuse and most of them witness death, murder and sexual violence. Some of them, particularly girls, feel forced to have intimate sexual relations with guerrilla members as this implies the receiving of benefits such as food and better living conditions (Save the Children et. al, 2010). Quickly, the children realize that the only way of survival is practicing absolute obedience. Many participate in killings and some are forced to participate in the killings of other children or family members due to the fact that armed forces tend to believe that once children have committed these crimes there is no way for them to return to their homes. Most children recruited into the illegal armed forces suffer severe psychological disorder (OSRSG/CAAC, 2012).

Complexities of Former Child Soldier Rehabilitation

Since 1999 a total of 4,900 former child soldiers have received assistance through governmental demobilization and protection program. However, many children are assumed to have left the forces without registration and have for this reason not received adequate rehabilitation or support (UD, 2010). For the youth who have received such support, their rehabilitation processes have often been challenged by the young persons' deeply rooted dependency on hard drugs, such as cocaine. Rehabilitations are further complicated by the fact that many youth leave the illegal armed forces while still standing responsible for extremely brutal human rights violations. Former child soldier reintegration into society therefore reflects an additional aspect of the complex process of seeking atonement; healing the wounds of the community and negotiating with the young persons' families to accept the return of their children. However, this has implications in terms of need for resources and appropriate designs for psychosocial programs and other reintegration programs (OSRSG/CAAC, 2012).

Indigenous Youth – A Particularly Vulnerable Population

The Constitution of Colombia, ratified in 1991, affirms through its article 13 that all people are born free and equal before the law, receive the same protection and treatment by the authorities and enjoy the same rights, freedoms and opportunities without discrimination on grounds of sex, race, national origin or family, language, religion or political or philosophical opinions (Constitución Política de Colombia, 1991). Yet, such rights are not being practiced equally by all Colombian citizens.

Rights of Indigenous Children and Youth

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989 and ratified by Colombia through Law 21 of 1991, defines the main principles on human rights for all persons under 18 years of age: the best interests of the child, the right to life, survival and development, the right to non-discrimination, and the right to freedom of opinion (MCSICC, 2012). The convention represents the minimum list of rights that should be guaranteed to all children and adolescents. Similarly, it raises philosophical and ethical measures that states, societies and families must take towards children and defines the responsibilities of each body (OHCHR, 2013).

The rights of indigenous children in this instrument are specified both in the preamble to the CRC and its Article 30. The preamble affirms that states must 'take due account of the importance of the traditions and cultural values of each people for the protection and harmonious development of the child'. Article 30 of the CRC states the following.

> *In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.* OHCHR, 2013.

The preamble of the CRC is a good basis for strengthening and maintaining the multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural character of the Colombian nation, leading to recognize that indigenous children are essential to the prevalence of their people. The importance of Article 30, meanwhile, lies in the evidence of serious and persistent discrimination suffered by minorities and indigenous peoples. In addition, article 17 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), which has yet not been ratified by the State of Colombia, specifically articulates that states are obliged to take measures to protect indigenous youth from economic exploitation and from any labor likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the education of children. Besides the previously mentioned articles numerous national laws, such as the Political Constitution of Colombia (1991), clearly define and affirm similar inherent rights of the country's indigenous peoples (MCSICC, 2012).

Colombian Indigenous Youth in its Context

The indigenous peoples of Colombia are very diverse populations. The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia – ONIC) specifies that indigenous peoples are most commonly found in the 102 nationally recognized indigenous villages throughout the country; in which no less than 65 languages are practiced (ONIC, 2013). According to the National Consensus of 2005, indigenous peoples of Colombia represent between three and four percent of the country's population; 46 percent of which are under the age of 18 (MCSICC, 2012). The region of Vaupés demonstrates the highest percentage of indigenous populations in Colombia with 85 percent of its inhabitants belonging to between 19 and 27 indigenous ethnicities (MCSICC, 2012; Government of Colombia, 2007). Poverty highly affects Colombian indigenous ethnicities and an estimated 70 percent of the country's indigenous populations are currently living in poverty (UD, 2010).

Despite multiple adverse conditions and extreme cases, it is argued that a lot of indigenous youth grow up in harmony with nature and themselves and display a surprisingly early development and autonomy compared with urban non-indigenous youth (MCSICC, 2012). However, the indigenous populations of Colombia remain exposed to innumerable inequalities that contribute to their extremely vulnerable situations and violations of human rights; indigenous youth are particularly affected in numerous ways.

Violations of Human Rights – Children without Education, Nutrition and Health

Regarding the right to education, peoples belonging to indigenous territories tend to suffer from restricted educational coverage and low educational standards. This leaves large percentages of the indigenous populations without valid education and unprepared for higher education studies; estimations by the Government of Colombia indicate that nearly 30 percent of the indigenous populations over the age of 15 are illiterate (UD, 2010). In addition, schools in indigenous territories have been subjected to attacks, occupations and direct incursion of illegal armed forces to recruit children. This contributes to high dropout rates and contravenes the rules of International Humanitarian Law (MCSICC, 2012).

In terms of the right to food, the percentage of malnutrition among indigenous children is more than twice as large as that of non-indigenous populations. Regarding chronic malnutrition, the most affected region in Colombia is specifically that of Vaupés. Due to these communities' locations in remote rural areas, the Colombian indigenous peoples are the most disadvantaged in the country in terms of access to potable water, basic sanitation and good hygiene practice as the provision of these services is very low (MCSICC, 2012). This inevitably leads to poor health conditions.

Indications show that regions inhabited by indigenous populations have the worst health indicators in the country (UD, 2010). According to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the indigenous infant mortality rate in 2010 was at around 45 children per 1,000 live births while the national average measured approximately 24 per 1,000 live births. Specifically in Vaupés, death rates for Acute Diarrheal Disease in children under

five years of age are alarmingly high where it measures 235 per 100,000 live births in 2010, while the national rate in that year was only approximately five (MCSICC, 2012).

Suicide Among Youth – A direct Consequence of Violence

Indigenous child and adolescent mortality, however, is also associated with violence, armed conflict and suicide. Colombian indigenous youth suicide is most frequent in areas in which the armed conflict is present. Problems such as consumption of alcohol and psychoactive substances, sexual exploitation of minors, forced pregnancies at young ages, mutilation, attacks on schools, forced displacement and recruitment by armed forces are permanent threats to indigenous childhood; particularly to young girls.

Vaupés, Colombia
Ecoturismo Colombia, 2013

Youth subjected to such violations of their right to protection possess a 'learned helplessness' in which the constant presence of death replaces hope and optimism with vulnerabilities and deep helplessness (MCSICC, 2012).

The Vaupés Region – Indigenous People in Context of Conflict

The region of Vaupés, located in southeastern Colombia on the border to Brazil, is characterized by an intense presence of left-wing guerrilla movements. The region's geographic location, categorized by jungle terrain and crossed from east to west by three major rivers; the Vaupés, the Apaporis and the Papunahua, combined with the weak presence of the state and the absence of terrestrial communication channels has facilitated the occupancy of illegal armed forces in the region – particularly FARC – and thus illegal businesses of all kinds, including drug trafficking and coca cultivation in some municipalities (Government of Colombia, 2007).

In relation to the intensity of the confrontation and the presence of illegal armed forces in Vaupés, it should be noted that FARC has had an authoritarian presence for decades, particularly in rural parts of the region. After FARC's occupation of Mitú in 1998, state law enforcement forces have increased their manpower; prompting changes in ways of operation and gradually strengthened their territorial control (Government of Colombia, 2007). However, the presence of armed conflict still highly influences the populations.

Similar to the majority of Colombia's indigenous peoples, many indigenous peoples of the Vaupés region are currently facing a food crisis. FARC controls the local populations' means of acquiring food by placing landmines on the roads to cultivable lands and rivers which restrains people's right to freely move around the municipalities. Moreover, the inhabitants of Vaupés claim that no productive alternatives to cultivation are being provided by the government (Government of Colombia, 2007).

Shortages of food, shifting organizations of the school system and displacement are all factors that contribute to a constant increment of indigenous populations in municipalities and large cities (MCSICC, 2012). In the region of Vaupés, the Government of Colombia (2007) has noted an increase of forced displacement of over 300 percent between 2003 and 2004. The main reasons to displacement are combats

between state law enforcement forces and FARC as well as forced recruitment by the illegal guerrilla movements. The displacement in this region is essentially internal; most of the displaced people originate from the northern Vaupés and arrive in Mitú.

The Government of Colombia (2007) has expressed certain objectives for improving the situations of indigenous peoples in Vaupés. One objective is to direct or reinforce the military effort to control the three rivers running through the region; leaving FARC with poor terrestrial communication channels in dense vegetation. Specifically concerning the village of Mitú, the government communicates the need to design a risk prevention policy directed at the young populations with the goal of redefining their means of entertainment, preventing alcohol-related violence and suicides, proving education on sexual and reproductive health, and promoting educational and economic opportunities. Ultimately, the Government of Colombia (2007) pronounces that the region's wealth in minerals such as gold, platinum, emerald and titanium must not be raided by illegal armed forces. However, FARC threat to the population has, however, not been completely neutralized indicating that the state territorial control is inadequate.

Promoting the Rights of Vaupés' Indigenous Youth

The organization Asociación Defensa de Niños Internacional DNI – Colombia (DNI) has been promoting the rights of indigenous girls and women in Mitú, Vaupés. The organization is the Colombian branch of Defense for Children International (DCI), founded in 1979, which is an impartial, non-religious human rights organization serving as a consulting member of the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. DCI can currently be found in 47 countries worldwide (DNI Colombia 2012a; DNI Colombia, 2012b).

Since 1985 the Colombian branch of the organization has been working according to the international organization's principles of defending and promoting the rights of the child with an emphasis on young indigenous peoples affected by the country's internal armed conflict, juvenile justice, indigenous youth, and prevention of violence against children, adolescents and youth. DNI's overarching vision is that children and young people are able to enjoy and exercise their human rights in a fair and caring society. Within the framework of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, DNI supports indigenous female youth in accepting and recognizing the fact that they are subjects entitled social rights. The organization's ways of reaching its goals include defending and promoting the rights of the child, political and social advocacy, strengthening institutions and civil society, and promoting local organization and leadership among children, adolescents and youth (DNI Colombia, 2012a).

With financial support from the European Union Delegation in Colombia and in collaboration with the organization Humanidad Vigente (Active Humanity), DNI has been carrying out the project 'Aporte a Niñas Rurales' (Contributions to Rural Girls) with 40 girls and 25 young women from Vaupés since 2010. The project is based on the pillars awareness, research, communication and advocacy, and the ambition is to empower female youth to become full and equal members of society. Through a strategy of promoting knowledge and dialogue, the organization has been conducting group sessions with this young population in the village of Mitú to jointly identify

social, political and organizational protection mechanisms which may support these youth in the midst of the social impact of armed conflict affectations (DNI Colombia, 2012a).

CHAPTER 4: INDIGENOUS FEMALE YOUTH OF VAUPÉS IN A CONTEXT OF CONFLICT

This section presents the ethnographic research findings of this study as indicated by four main themes: the internal armed conflict in rural and urban Vaupés; life situations of indigenous female youth; the internal armed conflict as expressed in Mitú; and life in the armed forces – recruitment and retreat. The section will include several extensive quotations that illuminate the research questions. The inclusion of relatively long quotations aims to provide a fuller sense of the research participants' ways of thinking, the emotions that they convey, and the atmospheres they have experienced. In addition, observations will serve to complement these quotations.

The Internal Armed Conflict in Rural and Urban Vaupés

Mitú is a small village remotely located in the middle of the deep Vaupés jungle. There are no roads leading to Mitú and the only way of accessing it is by light aircraft. The village is still not appropriately developed; the roads are full of holes, the water is of bad quality, and the 24 hour electricity that was installed in the village only two years ago frequently comes and goes (Observations, April 2013).

Framed by the Vaupés River, Mitú may appear as a typical idyllic village of rural Colombia. Taking a closer look, one will realize that this village suffers from grievous history. The main street running alongside the river, the one that could have been a beautiful boardwalk, is abandoned by the habitants and conveys an eerie feeling of insecurity. This is where FARC guerrilla forces first arrived in the last occupation of Mitú; shooting up at the sleeping village and throwing smoke bombs towards the state force headquarters. Even though fifteen years have passed since this event, one can still distinguish bullet holes in the walls of the concrete buildings and large parts of what used to be the main square remains in ruins. People do not seem to notice that the village is covered with soldiers; soldiers and police that patrol every street of the village in trucks and on motorbikes, appear in every restaurant, every shop, and on every corner of the village (Observations, April 2013).

> *During the time I have spent here in the region I have seen how the conflict right away installed itself very aggressively in the region.* Health Sector: Professional.

'Health Sector: Professional' narrates how the FARC guerrilla's first occupation of Mitú took place in the 1980's. After this occupation there was a period of almost a decade in which the guerrilla backed off from the village and kept to very specifically defined areas of Vaupés recuperating strength. FARC expanded their forces by bringing more people who were not indigenous and who were not from the region to the jungle. During this time, the indigenous peoples did not take part of the conflict very much and experienced a lot of fear of the conflict raging in their region; a larger fear than the one they experience today. In the mid 1990's FARC showed a progressive advance towards the indigenous peoples. The presence of the guerrilla became more permanent in the

communities and the guerrilla's approaches changed; FARC took advantage of the deeply rooted inequalities the indigenous peoples experienced and started showing certain solidarity with the ethnic minorities. The guerrilla started gaining acceptance among the people and the indigenous now considered joining the forces as an opportunity for a better life. The recruitment of indigenous people increased dramatically; the FARC forces did no longer consist of unknown soldiers but also of sons of the communities – and there were a lot of them (Health Sector: Professional).

On November 1 1998 FARC returned to Mitú with 1500 guerrilla members. A large number of guerrilla members surrounded the village while approximately 500 guerrilla fighters went to attack against the unprepared village. With only 120 soldiers and police to protect the village, Mitú was partially destroyed and large parts of the village were left in ashes, including the police station, the courts, and the Palace of Justice. The attack lasted for 72 hours before FARC abandoned the village – taking more than half of the village's soldiers and police with them as captives. *'After the occupation of Mitú in 1998 things have really changed. It is not what it used to be'* (Former Resident: 39).

The military entered Mitú in 2005 as a means of protecting the village from FARC. However, the military entered with the intention of stabilizing themselves in the village and started using the *same* methods as used by the guerrilla; the military gained power and influence within the village as a means of recruiting people to their forces. This created a critical situation for the two armed forces because the FARC guerrilla movement could no longer count on the indigenous in their forces – and neither could the military. *'Then what happened to the indigenous in the communities was that one could have a brother in FARC and a cousin in the military'* (Health Sector: Professional). This created a situation of confusion and insecurity for the indigenous families which had never before experienced doubts on where they belonged. The internal armed conflict started to express itself within the indigenous' communities and homes. *'There had never been this strong... There had never before been killings for these causes'* (Health Sector: Professional). However, people did not join the armed forces for ideological reasons; rather they joined as attempts of resisting the hopelessness that permeated the communities and exchanging their difficult life situations for promising opportunities (Health Sector: Professional). Vaupés became a region of war, experiencing dense guerrilla presence in its rural parts and immense military presence in Mitú.

> *Soldiers are on every corner and keep track of everything. Why are they there? Because this is the jungle, and they make sure the guerrilla doesn't enter the village. They take care of the village and the people – and make sure there won't be another occupation of Mitú. Soldiers are everywhere, and they protect us from the guerrilla. They make sure they don't come in; they're all over the place. If the guerrilla comes – they kill them. The soldiers protect us.* Former Resident: 37.

'DNI: A' narrates that one can witness strange looking people, who seem to be unknown to the inhabitants of the village, observing various parts of Mitú as if they were waiting for someone. Inhabitants say that they are from the guerrilla and claim that there are camouflaged guerrilla members among the people. *'Who are they? What attracts them here? Mining? Who knows'* (DNI: Field Diary).

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Life Situations of Indigenous Female Youth

Vaupés is home to approximately 27 different indigenous ethnicities that all have their own beliefs, practice their own customs, and speak their own languages. This number used to be even higher; due to occidental influences many of these peoples have lost their native languages and are therefore no longer considered as authentic ethnicities. Nevertheless, large parts of the Vaupés jungle are by Colombian law prescribed to the indigenous peoples as collective property (DNI: Professional B; Social Services: Professional C).

> *This jungle is a territory that is definitely worth exploring. A lot of people may say that there is nothing in the jungle, but what do they mean by nothing? One can find everything here! One just needs to know what brings opportunities. There is heaps of stuff in the jungle: food, medicine…* DNI: Professional B.

A significant threat to the Vaupés' jungle and its indigenous inhabitants is that of the mining industry. 'DNI: B' explains that the mining industry produces a lot of money and that the indigenous peoples of Vaupés frequently are offered compensation for exploiting their territories. *'We know that this is not true. Sure, it brings a lot of money but this money doesn't stay here. It goes straight to the banks that need to restore their economy because they are in crises'* (DNI: Professional B). The economically powerful countries are the ones that gain the profit from this industry and the indigenous people – who often take on the role as industrial workers of the business – are left with temporary incomes and an exploited jungle. This is a huge threat to the ecosystem in Vaupés. Many indigenous women from rural parts of the region attest that money is not useful for them because what they need are cultivations; with access to land they can make their own living (DNI: Professional B).

> *Many women say 'if we don't have this land then what will we do with our children? If they give us money we will have to leave the community for a village'. These women are conscious of this because they are mothers: it is not a game, food is something that needs to be there at all times and one must take care of it with love in order for their children to be healthy and grow the way they should.* DNI: Professional B.

In the face of the mining industry, alcohol is one of the largest threats to the indigenous people; when one is drunk, he or she is very easy to dominate. The ones who want make the profit from the mine industry, such as the Government of Colombia and various multinational businesses, often abuse this by giving the indigenous leaders alcohol as a means of getting them drunk enough to sign the papers they need to access their territories. Professional L points out that this happens even though many indigenous are illiterate. *'They put an 'X' and that's it. Meanwhile the government claims that they consulted all the indigenous. It's a lie!'* (DNI: Professional B).

'DNI: A' affirms that there is a lot of mistrust between the indigenous peoples and the government and that there has hardly ever been confidence between the two. In addition, the Colombian authorities display very strong racism against the indigenous.

For example, a young indigenous mother expresses that illness is a huge threat to the indigenous due to the fact that they are not taken seriously and are often forced to wait for months before they get treatment (Youth: 26). *'I have seen people discriminate against the indigenous in horrible ways; these attitudes are still deeply rooted in people and happen on an everyday basis'* (DNI: Professional A). Exposing what is happening to the indigenous peoples to the public can be very dangerous due to the fact that the President's family is the owner of the vast majority of the nation's Medias of production and communication. *'What is happening is simply too strong in terms of violations of rights. Real opposition does not exist'* (DNI: Professional A). Similarly, the interviewee expresses that the image the indigenous of Vaupés have of the conflict is the one shown in media. Still, research findings of this study indicate that many indigenous possess an understanding of that their ethnicities commonly are subjected to discrimination.

> *The laws still don't cover the understanding and the wellbeing of the indigenous, especially of the females. They cannot guarantee measures for supporting this population according to the norms. They take advantage of their abilities.* Traditional Leader.

Due to electoral fraud the indigenous population of Vaupés does not fully participate in political decision-making and therefore has little influence over their situation. Voters are given money or other rewards for voting in a particular way indicating that elections have nothing to do with political participation. *'There is simply no construction of citizenship; people haven't really captured the concept of human rights, of living in a social state of rights'* (DNI: Professional A). Every election in Mitú, local or national, is chaotic; the vast majority of vote buying is handled by force, by obligation or schemes of subordination (DNI: Professional A). Others avoid voting as a means of expressing resistance to the Colombian government.

> *The truth is… no, I would not vote. What can I say? There are persons who… For example the President, who created this conflict there in Mitú. Mainly they're looking for… well let's say, how to win over and end the indigenous people. And for that reason I wouldn't like to do it. Thanks to them there was this occupation in Mitú in '98.* Former Resident: 23.

The Indigenous Females in their Cultural and Historical Contexts

The indigenous have a particular conception of nature that differs from non-indigenous populations. Cultures of non-indigenous peoples commonly comprise the perception of the human being as the central actor in nature and that this actor dominates over the outdoors. In contrast, the indigenous populations often consider the human being as a *part* of nature in which he or she only counts for a piece of it along with all the other beings. For example, the indigenous of Vaupés believe that oil is the blood of mother earth and that extracting it means dissolving her spirit (DNI: Professional A). Much of what they believe and do has to do with nature.

Culturally, the women are the haven of the home and the center for a sustainable life.

> *The woman offers life by offering the world her food; she is like a tree. A tree is the only existence that can convert air, wind and water into life. No*

other element can convert this into life; the tree generates flowers and fruits, which generates people. We get edible material, medicine plants, absolutely everything from the tree. This tree will never ask for anything in return – she simply gives. One can do whatever he wants with her; construct a home, produce paper, make millions of things and she will still not ask for anything in return. This is the role of a woman in her home; she is the center. Social Services: Professional B.

It is the woman who teaches her daughters everything they will need to know about the elements women reproduce; the sons tend to learn more from their fathers. A mother will teach her daughters about a woman's pain as well; daughters who see their mother crying will feel her pain. *'She feels this pain and then she hides it again – just like her mother'* (Social Services: Professional B). A mother does not give her children the confidence to talk about absolutely everything that happens to them because she does not have the capacity to pass this on to her children. Similarly, she is not expecting her daughters to talk with her about what is private (Health Sector: Professional). A group of young indigenous women were asked to compose a real scale drawing of the typical indigenous woman. Observing the final product one can note that the woman had been portrayed without a mouth (DNI Material). 'DNI: A' explains that this is because the indigenous women 'do not talk'. *'Something has to happen from very deep down in order for these children to feel that their parents are there for them'* (Social Services: Professional A).

> *I trust my mom more because she is the one who gives me advice. But I don't tell her, like, the things that I do. … I talk very little with her, only a few times. … If I talk to my dad, well, my dad is very angry. So he tells me off or hits me. I feel very, like, very insecure in this. … I go and talk maybe with my grandmother and tell her that she can't tell anyone. I feel better doing that, because she is old; she helps me.* Youth: 13.

Indigenous youth reportedly will often talk about facts but not feelings. 'Social Services: A' explains that this may have to do with the matter that indigenous people are not very affective. *'They hardly hug each other, don't show affection, and don't tell their parents they love them…'* (Social Services: Professional A). The interviewee describes that the indigenous' ways of showing affection may include bringing back good fish and feeding their families with good food. *'It is not like one wakes up in the morning and tells her dad that she loves him or gets back home from school and says hi mom I missed you'* (Social Services: Professional A). Their feelings in parent-child relationships are very different from occidental such. *'But then we cannot say that they do not love their children only because they do not hold their hands'* (Social Services: Professional A). An indigenous girl illustrates that her family is the greatest thing God has provided her with and that she truly loves her family very much (DNI Material: 12).

Machismo – Women's Perspectives

The social and cultural differences between the indigenous men and women are large and can be noted in numerous different ways (Observations, April 2013). 'DNI: B' describes how machismo is a way in which the indigenous cultures take shape through

their customs. *'Men don't have a conception of machismo; they expect women to do certain things only for being women, especially in partner relationships'* (DNI: Professional B). The interviewee explains that men and women each have certain rules and prohibitions and that the sexes complement each other. For example, men must clear up the land in order for women to cultivate. The job of the man is to protect the family and the job of the woman is to take care of the children and the home. The Health Sector professional notes that this is a huge burden for the women who find themselves subjected to extreme gender inequality; women are almost hidden by their men. *'They don't question it. Instead they make excuses and believe that the men don't have time. People learn it and reproduce this culturally every day'* (DNI: Professional A). 'Social Services: B' explains that the fact that women do not question this may be influenced by the indigenous way of living for the day; differing from occidental cultures the indigenous do not plan ahead (Social Services: Professional B). *'Indigenous females are invisible; they don't count'* (DNI: Professional A).

> *I will tell you about the indigenous females; they feel very beat up. The women feel somewhat less than the men, smaller than the men, because the men are the bosses of the household.* Traditional Leader.

Women also face a higher risk of losing their cultures than men do. This is because due to patrimony whereby the indigenous territories belong to the men. 'DNI: B' reveals that the indigenous cultures are exogamous such which means that when women marry men from other ethnicities they must leave their territories for those of the men. To the women, this accompanies a loss of language and ethnic customs, which hinders her from passing her culture on to her children; they will adopt the culture of the man and learn his language (DNI: Professional B).

Women suffer from the dominant masculine culture on an everyday basis. 'DNI: A' exemplifies that men may forbid their women to participate in social gatherings; if they go anyways they risk being abused upon return to the home. The interviewee claims that there are a lot of things that women do not do because of their husbands; they are simply not autonomous. *'The machismo is something so natural, so very deeply rooted within us. It is hard to disrupt; the macho culture is very strong'* (DNI: Professional A).

> *A woman who attends a local shop roughly told me her story. She said she did not have a partner relationship with her boyfriend. … I asked her if she liked to live like that and if she was happy and she said that she wasn't happy but 'what can I do if he is responding with everything and hasn't kicked me out of the house or treated me badly by physically abusing me'.* DNI: Field Diary.

Domestic violence is often a consequence of drunkenness. The 'chicha', which used to be a traditional drink for celebrations, is now being spiked with distilled liquor and consumed by both men and women as a means of quick intoxication. *'Drunkenness is always a risk for the girls and women since they express what they really think while drunk'* (DNI: Professional B). In general, men will not like what the women have to say which is often how a conflict starts; women are frequently mistreated which creates a lot of fear (Social Services: Professional A; DNI: Professional B). *'The women of today are abused; humiliated. They are raped – and they are not allowed to speak'*

(Traditional Leader). 'Social Services: A' underlines that there is generally more domestic violence in indigenous families than in non-indigenous such.

> *There was a girl who was constantly abused by her father, but luckily she had enough sense to ultimately cut all contact with him. She had several children; but they were children of her father. ... There are even fathers who abuse their daughters during the first week of their lives.* Health Sector: Professional.

'DNI: A' states that the macho culture is *very* abusive and that women keep making excuses for their men's abusiveness; both the physical and the psychological. Traditional Leader remarks that beating a mother almost kills her family. This influences the children and shapes future generations. *'A daughter must be treated well as a girl and as an adolescent, because later she will become a woman and a mother.'* Traditional Leader.

The Internal Armed Conflict as Expressed in Mitú

Child recruitment into FARC's illegal armed forces is a constant threat to community life in rural Vaupés and many indigenous youth from rural Vaupés demonstrate resistance to such recruitment by leaving their communities for Mitú. Others move to Mitú in order to access middle school education. Due to families' necessities of accessing cultivable territories some youth are forced to go alone and must live as school interns (DNI: Professional A). It is very difficult for these girls to manage on their own since they have no income and no access to cultivable land (Observations, April 2013). In addition, the quality of education in indigenous regions is very poor compared to the rest of the country, which contributes to why these young people's level of comprehension during lectures is very low. Moving to Mitú affects them in every possible way; they have to leave their traditions and routines behind, they experience a cultural loss, and a linguistic loss. Their lives change completely (DNI: Professional A). *'Basically, my parents took me here, dropped me off, and left. ... Sometimes I feel like crying'* (Youth: 17). A young girl narrates how she was influenced by moving to Mitú.

> *Before I moved, it was all dangerous, because there… Well, especially when there were parties they (authors' note: FARC) would come and bribe people with anything. They would try to bring the people with them; it happened all the time. They tried to convince us; it wasn't really by force. As far as I know, and based on what I have seen, they haven't taken people by force. And then, well, right now, it happens now and then, but since I don't live there anymore I can't really tell you what the situation is like now. But a group of them would come. Like as a routine I think. They would enter the community and a lot of times they would come just to check it out. They don't come to Mitú in the same way since the military is there and, yeah. So it's not <u>as</u> dangerous in that way; I haven't seen them come to Mitú as much. They have come, but not a whole lot.* Former Resident: 23.

'DNI: B' suggests that in a way people are very secure in Mitú compared to in the communities; there are communities in which FARC presence is a lot more intense and the child recruitment a lot more obvious. Youth still face these risks upon returning home by the end of the year: *'There aren't a lot of alternatives; there really aren't a lot of options'* (DNI: Professional B). However, the problem changes in Mitú. The actor of the war is not the guerrilla; it is military (Health Sector: Professional).

Moving to Mitú – Difficulties and Implications

Families that move to Mitú will find that there are less work opportunities for men than for women. Culturally, men work with hunting and fishing while women take care of the home. In Mitú, however, the military controls the men's access to work by regulating people's right to move around freely (DNI: Professional A).

> *People can't run around in the jungle because they (authors' note: FARC) have placed mines all over the place. My family can't go wherever they want to; they must always follow the orders of the military. For example, one can't go fishing anymore; the soldiers will think that the fishermen are from the guerrilla and kill them – especially at night because they confuse us with guerrilla. It's very risky. My dad can't hunt. One can't walk wherever he wants; I need to be where they tell me to.* Former Resident: 39.

Similarly, there are no opportunities for women to cultivate. The indigenous families that move to Mitú are affected badly by this; suddenly they do not live in the same certainty and this affects them both psychologically and economically: *'I am a civilized woman. I am a woman who is very worried because I have no way of making a living'* (DNI Material). 'DNI: A' announces that this new situation disrupts the family picture and that many men cannot handle not being the natural head of household. In addition, there are no sources of employment in Mitú and between 80 and 90 percent of its inhabitants are unemployed. As a means of resisting demanding economic situations, some offer services such as washing police and military uniforms. The interviewee adds that the Vaupés region can hardly be considered as part of the estrato system. *'The indigenous in Vaupés wouldn't even be in estrato one. I don't think one can really talk about estratos in Vaupés because conditions simply don't exist; there are no living standards'* (DNI: Professional A).

To make matters worse, the merchandise in the region is often three times as expensive as in the rest of the country. This is because everything enters by air and prices are claimed to be regulated according to the gasoline rate. Even though the Chamber of Commerce supposedly monitors the prices within every Colombian region, this seems to be lacking in Vaupés. *'The situation is tough because since the government is still not working the people are left with no income and suicides and atmospheres of hopelessness are once again increasing'* (DNI: Field Diary). The insecurity of not being able to feed themselves affects the indigenous a lot; this turns into extreme malnutrition and complete generations can be lost. *'If one would like to typify, one could say that this is genocide drop by drop, bit by bit, because the generations are dying'* (DNI: Professional A).

Enfermedad Blanca – the White Disease

The militarization of civil life in Mitú is intense; among its total population of 15,000 inhabitants, more than half are non-indigenous soldiers (DNI: Professional A). 'Social Services: B' reports that the occidental culture expressed by the military has had a huge impact on young women; many have started to view the non-indigenous as something better; something that offers more opportunities and something that is more attractive. This is what 'Social Services: B' refers to as *Enfermedad Blanca* (the White Disease). People who have been infected by Enfermedad Blanca are the ones who have fallen for a non-indigenous culture and do everything within their power to become part of this culture and resist their own. *'Their thoughts have gone through impressive revolution'* (Social Services: Professional B).

> *The indigenous look at the whites and say that they want to be like them. Then they buy the same stuff as them, and they all end up looking the same. The traditional dances, the ones my parents danced, don't exist anymore. But in the communities things are still the same – it's cool. In Mitú things are different. When we moved to Mitú we found stuff that we had never had, like ice cream, coca cola, candies, cookies… To me these things were very beautiful; different. So people changed a lot when they moved to Mitú.* Former Resident: 39.

'DNI: B' notes that the indigenous are no longer feeling proud of what they are; they are ashamed and want to view themselves as something different. *'Culturally, the compliance is very strong and the identity condition very torn; it is sunken into mental blankness and presumed almost like slavery'* (DNI: Field Diary). A group of indigenous teenage girls were asked to first draw a picture of an indigenous girl from before and then one of an indigenous girl of today: The prior illustrated a happy girl with dark messy hair who was wearing traditional brown and black clothes made of natural material, traditional face paint, and handmade jewelry. By her side she had various typical indigenous instruments such as cooking supplies, firewood, a woven basket, a hatchet, and a machete. The latter picture demonstrated a serious, modern young girl with blond, straight hair with red highlights who was wearing a short colorful top with the word 'love' printed on it, tight blue jeans held up by a wide belt, 'Havaianas' flip-flops, modern non-handmade jewelry, nail polish, and headphones leading to an iPod stuck into her pocket. She was carrying a small, modern purse and by her side she had a bag of make-up, a schoolbook, a Coca-Cola, and a bag of chips. This girl did not look anything like how one would imagine an indigenous girl (DNI Material). An indigenous teenage girl, appearing almost identical with the previously described modern girl, expresses how she rejects this new way of indigenous thinking: *'It bothers me that the indigenous women think they are white and lose their rights and their cultural identity. It bothers me that they are not proud to be indigenous'* (Youth: 14). Two young women articulate the uncertainty that this may bring to indigenous families:

> *I am very worried about what is happening to us. I want to understand it more deeply. Then have a positive goal and mediate between the women and children.* DNI Material: XX.

> *I am a little confused; I feel like I am missing something I need to know about how to raise my children, culturally, and in the world of today.* DNI Material: XX.

'Social Services: B' explains that the indigenous' current concept of evolutionary development is to be well off economically. It is no longer about having good land cultivations, which used to be the indigenous measures for good development; the larger the land cultivation, the richer was the community. Today the factors are economical; the more money one has and the nicer one's house is – the richer one is. *'This is not an indigenous way of thinking. Today, the advice fathers give their daughters is this: study, work, find a white husband, go live somewhere else – and get us out of here'* (Social Services: Professional B). Simply, the indigenous cultures are going lost with the large amount of occidental cultures that are entering the region (Social Services: Professional C).

> *A few of the girls have said to me 'I don't speak my language'. I ask them 'but what ethnicity are you?' 'I am mestiza' they respond. 'And you father?' 'Siriano'. 'And your mother?' 'Tuyuca'. 'And you?' 'I am mestiza'. Now they do not consider themselves indigenous! Not all; some. Simply because they feel bad being indigenous because they want to be like the models they see on television... they want to have their bodies, they want to have nice clothes, a good cellphone, nice shoes...* Social Services: Professional B.

It is in this state of abandoning the indigenous cultures that new windows open and let new things in. DNI's Field Diary reveals that youth are adopting the worst parts of the non-indigenous ways of life and mentalities, such as those of indolence. The 39 year old Former Resident illustrates how the indigenous girls are more rebellious today. *'Before they did what they were told, they don't anymore. They go out whenever they want, with different guys and stuff, and adults can't control this anymore'* (Former Resident: 39). The indigenous youth' traditional cultural and intellectual development has been set aside and replaced by things that do not belong in their culture; things that people from occidental cultures are teaching them. However, the desire of adopting this new culture often contributes to a perceived hopelessness among indigenous youth; they simply cannot become something they are not. Psychologically, this generates a sensation of not really belonging to either culture and many indigenous youth therefore experience a feeling of emptiness (Social Services: Professional B). 'DNI: A' proclaims that turning to drugs to resist feelings of empty spaces is relatively common among indigenous youth; it is simply easier to fill that empty space with chicha, glue, or marijuana.

> *The girls from this region are very strong and I would wish their behavior would change because a lot of times the girls from here let themselves be taken by addiction and it can get very ugly. I would like this to improve, that's what I think.* Youth: 14.

In the nationwide division of the armed conflict, many indigenous girls will look for other ways of living their lives. In the face of this, the indigenous families are falling apart and the children are often left alone (Social Services: Professional B). The Traditional Leader points out that a lot of traditional family dynamics the way they used to be have been destroyed by the indigenous' acceptance of western influences. *'A*

woman can say yes, I will learn new things and yes, I will learn other languages but she remains from Vaupés; she will always be from Vaupés' (Traditional Leader). However, today there is a new tree growing within every young woman; a new tree that is completely dependent (Social Services: Professional B).

Attracting Soldiers

The armed conflict has generated huge disturbances in the lives of the young indigenous women. In Mitú, one of the biggest risks for female youth stems from the presence of the state law enforcement forces (Health Sector: Professional; DNI: Professional B).

> *Living in areas categorized by war is difficult. 'Peace', in that sense, is just something that we can imagine. Girls find themselves in complicated situations with the soldiers. The war has changed. Today, it does not have the same consciousness as before; it has changed. Their intentions have changed. They have no understanding for our families. When girls go with soldiers that are not good for them, a new internal conflict takes place; the one within the girl and her family.* Traditional Leader.

Sexual violence reiterates the armed conflict, and it is perpetrated both by the illegal armed forces and by the state law enforcement forces (ECPAT: Professional A). 'Social Services: B' explains that the masculine images that many indigenous girls are looking for, such as those of tall, white, men on motorcycles who are willing to take girls on rides, often are found within the state forces. The girls want someone who will treat them to things on their conditions – and the soldiers and the police often use this by deceiving the girls. In general, indigenous girls are very credulous and will as readily believe in anything the soldiers say. 'Social Services: B' clarifies that their credulity often has to do with their beliefs from childhood.

> *If you talk with their parents and grandparents, then what will their stories be? I'll give an example about dogs. My mom used to say 'don't kick the dog'. 'Why mom?' I would ask her. 'Because they used to be people... they would gossip a lot about other people's businesses so they were punished and transformed into dogs. When you die the dogs will be waiting for you on the other side of the river. If you have been yelling at a dog, this dog will tell the rest of the pack that you are bad – and they'll take you across the river and there they will make fun of you; laugh at you and kick you, and they will treat you just the way you treated the dogs...'* Social Services: Professional B.

Children believe in this type of indigenous legends from a very young age, so when a soldier tells a girl that he will dress her in nice clothes and give her all the glamorous things she has never had – she will truly believe him (Social Services: Professional B). 'DNI: A' adds that indigenous girls do not distinguish between different non-indigenous people or who these people may be; to the indigenous girls a non-indigenous male means status. The interviewee argues that this may be related to the young girls' desires of belonging to a culture that displays less machismo and more affection than what is generally found in the indigenous cultures.

A lot of girls as young as 13 or 14 are getting pregnant by the soldiers; they enjoy them for two or three months and then exchange them for a new girl. The place is filled with soldiers and young girls get pregnant all the time – even my sister counts for one of them. She was a very smart girl, studied, hardworking… Former Resident: 37.

However, not all indigenous female youth who search for soldiers do so to resist the machismo encountered within the indigenous cultures. 'Social Services: A' remarks that indigenous female youth frequently look for soldiers and police to whom they can sell their bodies as a means of resisting poverty. To facilitate the process, many consume alcohol prior to conducting such acts. The interviewee underlines that these youth do not call this prostitution simply because they do not know what prostitution means. *'They consider themselves girlfriends of public actors who are good people because they give them clothes, shoes, and beautiful illusions…'* (Social Services: Professional A). A Former Resident confirms this and manifests that *'people must make sacrifices to buy the stuff they need'* (Former Resident: 39). 'ECPAT: A' suggests that this way of viewing prostitution is common among young victims. However, the fact that an aspect of exchange is present confirms that this is, in fact, commercial sexual exploitation.

> *Well the girls want money, and they will give their bodies for it. They don't know what they are destroying or how they are destroying themselves. They do not know what they are doing to themselves or the consequences this brings. Ultimately, this is not only abusing the girl but also her mother and her family. Fathers of families do not like to see this. Girls end up pregnant, which didn't happen in the same way before the soldiers came. Girls go out at night a lot more these days. They say they are studying but we all know that they are not; when we go out to look for them we find them in the streets. That is putting themselves out there and that is serious because violence is constantly increasing.* Traditional Leader.

DNI's Field Diary indicates that violence and murders of females have increased in Mitú. For example, a girl who had been living in another city disappeared within a week upon returning to Mitú and was found dead four days later with signs of physical and sexual abuse on her body. These cases are rarely promptly investigated. *'A dead girl can be found every now and then and… Well I haven't been there in a while, but things have definitely changed for the worse'* (Former Resident: 39). Numerous indigenous female youth confirm that the ones who rape girls and young women are authorities; mainly soldiers (Workshops; Focus Groups). An adolescent shares her story for the first time:

> *Once when I went out to do some work with a few colleagues, I met a man who… well, who tried to rape me. This is a problem that I… This is… Well. I was passing this store right, and there I could save myself from this man and he was like 'no I wasn't trying to do anything I was just helping her with whatever' and they asked me if it was true but I couldn't, like, I couldn't say a word.* Youth: 17.

Consequently, many young indigenous girls are left alone with a child. 'DNI: B' notes that these children are the children of the war. 'Social Services: B' explains that the war the indigenous of Vaupés are currently experiencing contributes to the fact that the

indigenous are dying; the children of today are mestizos – and that is what their mothers want them to be. The indigenous home is falling apart because the indigenous girls are no longer looking to reproduce within their ethnicity. These children lose their cultural heritage and are constantly affected socially. This contributes to a huge amount of children growing up with a feeling of rejection; they are not accepted by the indigenous cultures for not having a father and they are excluded from occidental cultures for not being 'white' (Health Sector: Professional).

Winning the War by Winning the Women

> *I would say that the girls and young women of Vaupés find themselves involved in the war almost without noticing it. There are a lot of military forces, a lot of police, and a lot of guerrilla – but this is like something that the indigenous consider normal: the military and the police form part of the state which means that the people do not question them.* DNI: Professional B.

'DNI: B' observes that violence against women reiterates armed conflicts all over the world; there are coups against women, attacks against women, and sexual abuse of women. Attacking the women is the best way to destabilize a society; if there are no women there are no families and the society becomes a divided one. *'Wars are always about attacking the women. If you win the women you win the war'* (DNI: Professional B).

While the police and the military are intended to be in Mitú to protect the people, this state force protection is somewhat questionable. *'Women's security in this country… Well, it's non-existing. No, it's almost as if it were non-existing. … They use women's bodies as a weapon in war'* (DNI: Professional A). Being a victim of rape by a person who is there to protect the people means a lot of shame and the girls and young women will generally not talk about it – especially in cases where the victim herself approached her abuser. In the face of the strong machismo demonstrated in the indigenous' cultures, girls are frequently held responsible for the actions of their abusers (Workshops; Focus Groups). *'She shouldn't be walking alone she should be walking with someone, she should be walking accompanied. She knows that there can be problems'* (Youth: 14). In addition, many young girls express that they are afraid to talk about these things because that would include remembering what happened and the risk of being punished. *'Sometimes you are just too scared to say these things so then it is just better to avoid it and remain silent forever'* (Youth: 17).

'Social Services: B' adds another dimension to the protection aspect by claiming that the way in which the military is supposed to be protecting the people goes against the indigenous' cultural beliefs. The interviewee describes how the indigenous people traditionally express resistance to external harm by wearing a necklace; this necklace will protect their souls and health and everything that has to do with the essence of life. However, since this is not protection according to non-indigenous peoples, soldiers have been sent for 'real' protection. *'These soldiers are here for protection against what? Against other people; physical protection against other people. They protect people by attacking other people, by killing. This is not protection'* (Social Services: Professional

B). The interviewee goes on describing how the indigenous were never violent before the non-indigenous came and how the only protection they needed was the one provided by their necklace. Still, they are forced to live under the protection of the state every day. *'But what are the soldiers protecting? They are raping indigenous girls. This is not protection – this is intolerance'* (Social Services: Professional B).

> *I wish the girls in Mitú would be more responsible and stick more to their parents because the girls from here prefer to be in the streets instead of with their parents.* Youth: 15.

Resisting Difficult Situations – Attitudes and Strategies

All indigenous people of Vaupés are thus directly or indirectly affected by the internal armed conflict and everyone expresses distinct resistance to it. 'Social Services: B' suggests that people commonly back off. *'They don't say anything, nor do they reflect about it, sometimes not even in their own thoughts; they stay put'* (Social Services: Professional B). Others may react by crying or looking for a family member to turn to; each and every one express different behavior according to the situations they have experienced (Social Services: Professional B).

> *In the past the women were the ones who had it all; they were the ones with the knowledge. Today, they are mythically petrified: they are resistant, but silent, still, passive, immobile, resistant yes, but dying. They are <u>very</u> tolerant and <u>very</u> patient.* Health Sector: Professional.

'Social Services: A' declares that girls and young women who have been directly affected by the armed conflict are clearly receptive but tend to be very silent. 'DNI: A' explains that women talk about the difficulties they encounter, including rapes, even though it rarely happens in first person. That is, the female youth discuss their situations even though the one who has been victimized never is part of the discussion (DNI: Professional A). An indigenous adolescent girl reflects upon ways in which they may discuss very difficult situations:

> *Well first, I think… Um, I keep it a secret. And later when I can't take it anymore I might tell a friend. … I wouldn't tell my friends everything, only some things; not a lot, just some. The things I would tell them would be the nonsense one does, the small things; I would tell them about these. The things I would never tell anyone are the very personal things; no one can know about these, I don't tell them. … But I feel like I want to tell someone what is happening to me so that someone will know what I am going through and so that maybe they can help me. When I talk about stuff I feel better because it is like I feel that I've removed the weight that keeps me down. Sometimes, at very rare occasions, I would talk to my parents, but that's really not very often and it would have to be something very serious, because I am scared to tell my parents because maybe they'll yell at me or hit me or I don't know. … A lot of times parents would know better what to do, but a lot of times it is sad because no one helps us.* Youth: 14.

'Social Services: A' explains that young indigenous women sometimes consider turning to alcohol an only option for truly expressing themselves and their feelings. Nonetheless, research findings indicate that youth who participate in dynamic activities find purpose and meaning of actively altering their life situations. For example, youth who participate in empowering sessions conducted by the organization Asociación Defensa de Niños Internacional en Colombia, DNI, claim to experience increased levels of personal strength and augmented abilities to collectively resist difficult life situations (Focus Groups; Workshops). In addition, 'DNI: B' points out that a new way for youth to express themselves has started to take shape in the form of theater and artistic activities. The interviewee claims that these new projects are very important and argues that the benefits from such activities are significant: youth who have participated in these projects have gained not only additional abilities to express themselves but also noticeable personal strength. In addition, interviewee claims that these youth have demonstrated tendencies of collectively resisting difficult life situations. 'DNI: B' adds that there are also women and girls who organize themselves through movements to get their voices heard; some participate politically or take part in one of the 18 regional organizations for indigenous peoples. The ones who participate are often the ones who have been empowered through education or who experience support from their surroundings, for example the ones who have been allowed to freely express their opinions from a very young age (DNI: Professional B). *'Today, women are participating in reunions. I think men could also learn to like strong women, and I think this is starting to happen'* (Traditional Leader).

In terms of sexual abuse, 'Social Services: A' claims that indigenous girls are very strong and know how to carry social burdens in a way rarely encountered among occidental girls. *'The girls are very strong and similarly carry their pain and move on with their lives. In occidental cultures, one can see that girls are affected, cry, and are sad; I have never seen an indigenous girl who has shown this in such a way'* (Social Services: Professional A). The interviewee suggests that indigenous girls rarely consider anything enough of a reason for not moving on in life; in general, indigenous girls keep resisting hardships and move on. Initially they may become very passive, and once this phase passes they move on by dedicating themselves to aspects concerning long-term goals such as family and education. *'This has to do with their very strong personalities. I have not noticed in any way that the indigenous girls would be hiding their pain and purposely choosing to show strength as a means of hiding their feelings'* (Social Services: Director). Many indigenous girls and young women express that they live for their children, their homes, and the future of their families (DNI Material; Former Resident: 39).

> *I am an indigenous woman; I am a fighter despite my difficulties and problems at home. The only consolation I have is that of my five children, they are my strength, my support and for that I fight for them. I understand the needs that I have, but I'm still happy*. DNI Material: XX.

> *I am an entrepreneur with a lot of desire to work; I am a fighter – with the ambition of reaching my goals*. DNI Material: XX.

I consider myself cheerful, but in a similar way I sometimes feel sad. I like to work, I consider myself intelligent but often do not use it as it should, but either way I try to move forward as best as I can. DNI Material: XX.

The Health Sector Professional affirms that indigenous female youth rarely share personal concerns, such as troublesome childhoods, maltreatments, or similar deep feelings, with another person. The interviewee claims that their way of alleviating pain and sadness is by conversing about daily activities and small matters with other females during a working day. *'They do not dedicate themselves to deeper discussions. In this way they have a very particular lifestyle'* (Health Sector: Professional). Numerous indigenous girls imply that they handle difficult situations by focusing on their everyday lives (Workshops, Focus Groups).

First I feel like, I don't know… I ask myself 'why I am sad?' and then I go to my friends because they try to make me feel better; they try to make me laugh and stuff like that. I always turn to the ones who make me laugh. Youth: 14.

I think that I am never alone because all my friends have felt bad too, so they have solutions. They get me psyched by getting me to do other things, like 'come on, let's go play' and stuff like that. Youth: 14.

'Social Services: B' shares the story of 14 year old girl who was recently subjected to extreme sexual abuse by the military. The victimized girl reacted very calmly; she had a distanced look in her eyes and did not reflect about her horrible experience. She did not cry and she did not move; she did not show any signs of consciousness about what had happened to her. She simply stated that she had been a victim of sexual abuse. *'She did not follow the patterns one can find in most children who have been victimized in similar ways'* (Social Services: Professional B). It was not until she had been united with her mother and her father that she started reflecting about what had happened to her; mainly with her mother. 'Social Services: B' articulates that indigenous girls' demonstrate very calm ways of handling these situations and often cry in their homes. In many cases, they do not allow themselves to interact with men again. The process of understanding that not all men are the same is long and mentally agonizing. *'But things have happened to these girls; the process must be gradual and one can never say that men as a whole are completely good'* (Social Services: Professional B). During this process one can note certain characteristics in the victimized girls' behaviors; many do not want to return to their education, others stop eating, and some may not leave their homes (Traditional Leader). Some youth may use their religion as a personal haven to alleviate pain and sadness; others may get cured, tell their stories, or confess (DNI: Professional A). 'Social Services: B' adds that some may attend traditional events to pray or to get traditional healing; others take care of themselves by consuming traditional foods means to express resistance to harm by people from other cultures. Indications show that young indigenous girls are aware of that they are not expected to share deep feelings or notably show emotions.

Well I try to control my temperament and not show a lot of anger. It is like what my friends say; that even with all this anger you still have to be polite. I listen to music, like to turn to another world and tell myself that things

aren't like that. I don't know, through music I... like, look for a solution. Youth: 14.

Music is important because when we feel sad we listen to it and get in a better mood and feel better about what we are. DNI Material: XX.

Well I have a lot of problems in my home that make me very stressed and I... well I cry. This is my way of getting these things out of my system. I cry and cry until it passes and I say 'well yeah, life goes on'. Youth: 17.

Indigenous female youth have generally proven to be aware of their strengths. However, they are also aware of that they must become even stronger and look for new opportunities in order to better resist difficult situations in life. A girl who is asked about how she can best do this responds *'I must keep challenging the obstacles and learning from my mistakes, and working on personal stuff and ways of relating with people'* (Youth: 17). 'DNI: B' suggests that youth must have their dreams crystal clear in order to focus solely on achieving their goals. The interviewee adds that most of their dreams include leaving the region due to the fact that opportunities simply do not exist in Vaupés. *'If you ask them what they want to be when they grow up a lot of them will say police officer. This is like something imaginary, as in an attempt to solve the problem'* (DNI: Professional B).

Education is very important to the indigenous female youth; they find significance and meaning in going to school. In general, most of their goals include graduating from high school and continuing to university (Observations, April 2013; Focus Groups; Workshops). 'DNI: A' adds that another frequently occurring dream is that of simply leaving Vaupés; leaving the region is commonly considered equal to success (DNI: Professional A).

My dreams are to finish school; no matter what. I want to keep studying to become someone very important in my life. Youth: XX.

My dream is to go off and study, that would be a good opportunity for us indigenous to show who we are and share our culture. Youth: 26.

I am very important in my life because I need to prepare a lot of important things for my future to be able to improve it. Youth: 13.

Indications show that 300 indigenous youth graduate annually from high school in Mitú (DNI: Professional A). The vast majority of these graduates have been proven to be males; one of the high schools in Mitú authenticates that last year's graduates were represented by 27 males and only seven females. The reason for this is high percentages of pregnancies at young ages (Preparatory Education Teacher). Nonetheless, only three or four of the total number of 300 graduates continue to get a higher education. There are university scholarships specifically for persons belonging to indigenous minorities. However, one must speak their native language and have their linguistic abilities documented in order to access these economic grants. This creates certain difficulties as the youth of Vaupés are increasingly losing their language due to the immense occidental influence. The indigenous youth of Vaupés who make it to university hardly

ever graduate due to the extremely bad quality of preparatory education in Mitú – they simply are not prepared. *'The percentage of people who quit is high. The situation is very difficult; very difficult'* (DNI: Professional A; Former Resident: 23). A lot of youth who leave Mitú to study in Bogotá find themselves staying in the city in search for opportunities besides studying (DNI: Professional B). A former resident of Vaupés expresses how she is limited by economic difficulties. *'The only thing that could keep me from achieving my goals is my economic situation. That is really the only thing that would keep me back. Besides that, I can do anything'* (Former Resident: 23).

'Social Services: C' discusses ways in which indigenous girls view their abilities to bring on change and claims that the self-image the indigenous women used to have was very strong due to her responsibilities. Today, a young and pregnant indigenous woman will not cultivate. Interviewee claims that the indigenous woman used to have all these strengths due to her cultivating job and that she now has lost some of this strength. Similarly, the interviewee concludes that this may have influenced why the indigenous women of today are so silent. *'She used to do all these things that brought her strength. I think this is also why she today, when she sees the guerrilla, she will pick up a gun'* (Social Services: Professional C).

Life in the Armed Forces – Recruitment and Retreat

A lot of girls turn to the armed forces due to social problems: because they are not allowed to speak, they are humiliated, abused, raped, or because they find themselves at risk within their families. No matter what they are resisting or escaping from, one of the main reasons for joining the forces is for having seen other models for life. The indigenous girls and young women do not want to stay in their homes or in their communities; they want to look for new lives with new jobs and leave their old ones behind. However, they are simultaneously being drawn into false promises such as those of a better life and a better economy. The situation is hard for them because they do not know what awaits them away from home (Health Sector: Professional; Traditional Leader; Social Services: Professional C).

Both the state law enforcement forces, such as the police and the military, and the illegal armed forces, such as FARC, recruit children. *'This is not an issue of will, nor consciousness. This is pure damage'* (ECPAT: Professional A). The majority of recruited children are recruited at a very young age and most of them are from regions in which illegal armed forces are present. Political, economic and social factors encourage recruitment. The lack of opportunities for work, education and incentives to improve quality of life contribute to children and youth being cooped by the illegal armed forces (ECPAT: Professional B).

Most children are recruited in one of the following five ways: by *deception*, *direct recruitment*, *obligation*, *threats*, or *kidnapping* (ECPAT: Official Documents). Deception refers to false promises such as the offerings of jobs, three meals a day, protection, or a better economy. Direct recruitment applies to the cases in which children choose to go by 'free will'. Obligations concern cases in which a person, commonly a member of one of the armed forces, uses his or her position of power to command someone else to join the forces. Threats refer to those declared by members

of the armed forces and may include the threat or act of killing the prospective recruit's family. Kidnappings refer to the recruitment of children using physical force (ECPAT: Professional A; Social Services: Professional C; Traditional Leader). *'Especially in some regions children disappear without a trace and their families are never given any answers to what may have happened to their child'* (ECPAT: Professional A).

Recruitment into FARC – Life Situations with the Illegal Armed Forces

The vast majority of Vaupés youth who are recruited into the illegal armed forces are contacted and recruited by FARC while in their home communities in rural parts of the region. Commonly, such recruitments are 'public' and take place in front of everyone. FARC often know when there are community events or reunions and use this as an opportunity for youth recruitment. FARC members show up at community reunions or dances and wait until people are drunk enough to make promises to members of the guerrilla. Indications show that in practice this works as if it were forced recruitment; FARC members convince young people to go with them back to the forces and the drunken adolescents agree. *'The guerrilla members take the youth in a state of drunkenness and when they wake up they are off somewhere at some front and are like and why the heck am I here? Because when you were drunk you agreed to coming with us'* (DNI: Professional A). From there, there is no going back. A Former Resident tells her story about what happened to her in her home community.

> *When I was fifteen and went to visit my parents it happened to me. They came to me and offered me money; they came and asked whether I would like to go with them and be with them or if I preferred the military; if I was with the military or with them. It was all a little deceitful. Because to choose between the military and them… The ones who have gone with the guerrilla have gone, I mean, they're gone. I had friends there in the community who joined the guerrilla, but they always had this idea of going with them. So they didn't need to force them either. They knew the risks they were facing but they always… Well let's say, it was like their dream, to go join this… horrific world. So it didn't happen by force at all. Various people from my community have joined.* Former Resident: 23.

Even though FARC mainly operate in rural Vaupés, there have been occasions when they have recruited youth from Mitú. DNI's Coordinator highlights that guerrilla members once entered the student housing section of one of the schools in the village and kidnapped nine children; the youngest of which was nine years old. *'This boy was the bravest because he jumped out of the canoe and saved himself. Nobody ever knew what happened to the rest of the children'* (DNI: Professional A).

The utilization of children and youth in the illegal armed forces serve for mainly four purposes; 1) *as pure actors of the war*. In some cases these minors are used in front line of fire resulting in death while engaging in fights with other forces; others are used as intelligence agents. Such agents must provide the forces into which they have been recruited with information about other legal or illegal forces. Such information frequently concerns these other forces' weak points, patterns of movement, and coming plans; 2) *for narcotics trafficking*. Children who are utilized for this purpose are forced

to transfer, sell, and produce drugs; 3) *for servant, household and cleaning purposes* in which children are forced to wash uniforms, clean units, cook, and perform other domestic work; and 4) *for sexual relations*. Even though this task applies for both girls and boys, the situation is somewhat more complicated for girls. When girls enter FARC the officials choose between them and purchase them. Even though the girls often have a say, they commonly cooperate since being with an official implies the right to certain privileges and 'protection'; when a child is with an official she does not need to work hard. In exchange for protection or to avoid being punished, the girls are repeatedly raped and abused (ECPAT: Official Documents).

> *The forces send children between them all the time and they pay each other in weapons and drugs for sexually exploiting them. A good weapon can cost rapes by a whole camp, and if a kid returns empty handed they do something to his family. They know everything about you*. ECPAT Youth: 17.

'ECPAT: A' explains that no matter the child's main task, the vast majority of recruited children are initially utilized as objects of severe physical and sexual abuse. Oppressing children in these ways during the initial stage of recruitment clearly underlines who possess the power. Subsequently, physical and sexual abuse reiterates a young person's life within the forces (ECPAT: Professional A).

Girls and young women are often used to attract and recruit men to the forces. They are forced to visit communities to drink and sleep with men in order to attract them to the force. Once these men are recruited the girl will be sent off to the next community. *'They are lures. They utilize them for this exact purpose; as lures to attract men'* (Health Sector: Professional).

Numerous children never make it out of the illegal armed forces and are killed by soldiers. Those who manage to leave the illegal forces generally do so either by escape or rescue by the state law enforcement forces (ECPAT: Professional A). 'Social Services: A' announces that indigenous former child soldiers possess an incredible strength of resisting their difficulties in very distinct ways. Similar to the ways in which young indigenous victims of sexual abuse manage their situations, indigenous former child soldiers possess a mentality of leaving their experiences behind and moving on with life.

> *There was this one girl who was recruited by the forces when she was an adolescent, here in Mitú, she is indigenous and now she is a young woman. The first time she told me her story she talked about it as if it were something very good; something enjoyable. She mentioned that sometimes she didn't understand certain things and that sometimes she didn't want to eat the food; but that was it. The rest seemed like it had almost been enjoyable. She showed me the scars she had on her body and told me about situations that had almost killed her. But she told me her story in a very natural way; as if it had been the most normal thing. ... The main difficulties she has experienced with all this has been that due to what she had lived through she has sometimes found herself a little behind in terms of personal development, and that she has been very monitored by the legal forces since*

they know that she has been with the guerrilla and therefore must protect her. ... Today she always tells me that her life is very normal and very beautiful and that she is very happy. I'm thinking that if this would have happened to me, my life wouldn't exactly be all that normal. Social Services: Professional A.

'Social Services: A' describes that this is the kind of strength that can be found in the indigenous youth of today. *'In contrast, non-indigenous people tell us that this has been something very tough for them and that they have a hard time moving on'* (Social Services: Professional A). Regardless of mental capacities to move on, youth who leave the illegal armed forces frequently do so as victims of abuse and commercial sexual exploitation; with sexually transmitted infections, pregnancies and abortions, drug addiction, and physical injuries including those from landmines and combat. A significant amount of youth are arrested by state law enforcement forces upon abandoning the illegal armed forces due to the crimes they have been pressured to commit; others have nothing to return to due to exclusion in society (ECPAT: Official Documents; ECPAT: Professional A; ECPAT: Professional B).

Joining the Legal Forces – Life with the State Soldiers

Ways in which the indigenous girls and young women are lured to the legal armed forces differ from ways in which youth are recruited into the guerrilla. While the majority of youth recruited by FARC are contacted in rural parts of Vaupés, most young girls who go with the legal forces do so after encounters with soldiers in Mitú. The 'Enfermedad Blanca' is what makes the Vaupés' girls attract themselves to soldiers and police; they often consider finding a white man and having a mestizo baby as a better option than reproducing within their ethnicity (Health Sector: Professional). The falling in love is reportedly extremely large among the youth of Mitú. Even though the cases of girls going with the soldiers are very rare, the ones who go do so as a means of resisting current difficult life situations and due to the fact that they truly believe in the soldiers' promises (DNI: Professional B). Indigenous girls and young women drop out of school and go with them, assuming they've found someone who could be a responding husband. *'They are fooled. But this is where the women, mainly youth, agree to go with them. What they don't think about is that this (authors' note: obtaining a responding husband) really happens in <u>very</u> rare occasions'* (Social Services: Professional C). Generally, when people go with soldiers this signifies problems, but here it is more evident because this is a village, everything is in a smaller scale and it becomes more apparent (Social Services: Professional A).

> *I see their view of the white soldiers as a rural American Dream. Girls think they will leave Mitú for a better life but instead of living a better life… These men, both the military and the police, are poor people. They are of low resources and do not live well in the cities. What the girls will find out is that they will not live an as wonderful of a life as they had thought. They end up living under similar circumstances to those they experience here. It is a powerful collision.* Social Services: Professional A.

The girls start understanding this as they start realizing that things are not working out the way they had expected (Social Services: Professional B). The men are soldiers (the majority of them are professional soldiers) and they will pass through numerous places in the region or in the country and cannot – and commonly *will* not – bring the girls with them. So the girls end up staying behind in the city and find themselves in a complete new and unknown situation in a culture very different from their own (Health Sector: Professional). Indigenous women who go to new cultures and learn new customs end up leaving what is *theirs* behind; they start to lose their culture, their language, and their ancestry (Social Services: Professional C). A woman who left Mitú for a big city expresses how she has been affected by the change of setting.

> *When I first left Mitú for Bogotá, I was like lost, lost from the village and the community and everyone there, including my family. I did not talk with my parents for fifteen years; they thought I was dead. There weren't phones, today there are cell phones. I came to Bogotá because my parents gave me the permission to. But I didn't like it at first. My family thought I was a weird person, I felt like a very odd person. Now I like it better. I am Tucana and I should speak Tucano – but now I can't remember it anymore. Today I look at my cousin and wish I could speak it like she does, but I have a lot of difficulties with the pronunciation. My daughter asks me why I don't talk like my cousin. She [authors' note: daughter] doesn't speak Tucano either; she speaks Spanish.* Former Resident: 39.

'Social Services: A' notes that pregnant girls who go to live with soldiers who have promised them a good life in a new region almost always end up alone, stuck in a new region, without help or support by anyone (Social Services: Professional B). The soldiers do not protect them and commonly reject their children (Health Sector: Professional). 'Social Services: A' mentions that even though there are ways of binding the father to his child, soldiers rarely agree to taking paternity tests; leaving the women alone with their children.

When serious things like these start happening, the young women usually resist these 'new' difficulties by attempting to return to their territories, their families and their communities – sometimes leaving their children behind. *'What happens is that they lose their identity in this new occidental world and will search ways of finding it again by coming back'* (Social Services: Professional C). 'Social Services: B' points out that there have been cases in which the girls or young women have gone with the legal forces and come back, cases in which they have gone with the legal forces and stayed in the city, and cases in which they have gone from the legal forces to the illegal such (Social Services: Professional B). In reality, very few youth stay in their new contexts. In cases where they do, however, practical issues such as not being able to purchase the return ticket are often principal reasons for not returning (Social Services: Professional C; Health Sector: Professional). Women who return to their communities with their children face a new situation of exclusion and are forced bring their children up alone (Health Sector: Professional).

> *It is sad to see how white children come back to this village – little blondes with light eyes – and are not accepted into the communities; because they are mestizos, they are not pure.* Health Sector: Professional.

These children are not rejected for being the children of soldiers; they are rejected for being mestizos without fathers. For this reason the young indigenous women with mestizo children often do not want to come back to their communities because there she will be rejected. In addition, these young women will not be considered good wives because culturally the more children women have, the better they are. These women will often come back with one – without a father (Social Services: Professional A).

> *I would like to go back to Mitú but my dad won't let me. I can't go because my children are white and that means a lot of bad as well. I am indigenous with a white man and white children. This will cause problems for them and problems between my children and the indigenous. Due to my children's safety I cannot go back with them. For this reason I haven't gone back; I haven't gone back for twenty years.* Former Resident: 39.

Even though the cases in which young indigenous girls and women go off with soldiers are very rare, the cases leave a clear wound in the indigenous culture (Social Services: Professional A; Health Sector: Professional).

> *This is what happens: people who are 'stuck' in their own culture take off, but when they encounter difficulties – because they do – they come back to their territories. They must understand their feelings of what it means to them to be indigenous. All these things; their culture, their language, their customs, their families, their food, their territories and their communities – all these things make them feel safe. Everything that comes with their culture makes them feel safe.* Social Services: Professional C.

> *How can this cycle be broken? The women are the ones who have these ideas. One can simply accompany the girl, one cannot tell her 'this is bad, this is not how thing should be done'; she will simply back off from that person. … As long as the conflict remains the same, the indigenous will remain exploited and our culture will die. And we think we are the problem; they claim that the indigenous are not allowing Colombia to develop. But they are exploiting us; we are the ones used for satisfying their needs of the mine industry, of the coca growth… And they make us think that we are the problem! … I believe that the ideology for creating an armed force is false. All of this could have been solved without arms. Armed forces should be the last way out, not <u>even</u> the last way out. Arms are just a means to reach economic achievements; nothing else. Dividing a country in this way is the most absurd thing in the world. A country with so much cultural wealth, a country with so much ancestral wealth, is being such a poor country because of its ideological divisions. I just cannot accept it. A divided country is one without a common closure.* Social Services: Professional B.

Summary of Results

The quality of life of the indigenous peoples of Vaupés has been seriously affected by social dynamics causing and reinforcing the vulnerabilities of this population. Political, economic and patriarchal power structures permeate society and contribute to the

vulnerabilities of the indigenous populations. The constantly increasing globalization contributes to the exploitation of the indigenous' territories, negatively influencing the sustainable development for many of these peoples. Findings of this research indicate that the indigenous populations are subjected to structural discrimination and oppression by the external actors present within the social ecologies of these peoples.

The Colombian government, state law enforcement forces and the left-wing guerrilla movement FARC are reinforcing the indigenous people's vulnerabilities by upholding the social inequalities to which the populations are subjected. Due to extensive positioning of land mines in the region the indigenous people can no longer move around freely and their labor opportunities are thus restricted. The lack of access to cultivable land contributes to that many indigenous people find themselves enduring a lot of hunger. Consequently, indigenous youth are constantly at risk of facing recruitment into the armed forces.

Research findings of this study show that the indigenous female youth are subjected to additional vulnerabilities as these youth are suffering extreme violations of their human rights. The increased militarization of Mitú has resulted in identity shifts within the indigenous cultures and augmented levels of sexual assault against female youth; hindering reproduction within the indigenous ethnicities and thus generating identity loss. Evidence underlines that the indigenous female youth frequently are subjected to gender-based violence by actors of these forces and that these youth possess considerable risks of being lured into the legal forces.

In addition, the quality of young people's education is low and the young indigenous people's opportunities are therefore restricted. In the face of lacking education, the female youth tend to experience additional vulnerabilities due to pregnancies at young ages and the consequent interruption of education. In addition, the young indigenous females are discriminated against in the face of the strong machismo displayed in the patriarchal cultures encountered within the indigenous ethnicities of Vaupés. As a result of machismo and the traditions it entails, the indigenous females are constantly subjected to acute cultural loss and gender-based violence.

Nonetheless, findings also confirm that these youth demonstrate hidden resistance to the social dynamics causing and reinforcing their vulnerabilities. The young indigenous females of this study have proven to demonstrate resistance both through individual and collective means; even though conscious acts have been encountered among this population, the vast majority of demonstrated resistance seems to be carried out as unconscious acts.

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CHAPTER 5: EMERGENCE OF VULNERABILITIES AND RESISTANCE AMONG INDIGENOUS FEMALE YOUTH – CONCLUDING ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study entails gaining an understanding of the ways in which vulnerabilities of the indigenous female youth of Vaupés are expressed in terms of intersections of ethnicity, class, age and gender as well as ways in which these youth exert resistance to the power structures encountered in the context of Colombia's internal armed conflict. The three perspectives of theories of youth in areas of armed conflict, intersectionality and theories of power and resistance will be analyzed according to research findings indicated by this ethnographic research. Specifically, research findings concerning ways in which the young indigenous females' vulnerabilities are created and expressed and ways in which these youth exert resistance to the power structures encountered within their social ecologies will be complemented by perspectives from previous research on youth in situations of armed conflict. This will be followed by an analysis of how these three perspectives compose an insight about how the indigenous female youth of Vaupés experience their life situations in the context of armed conflict. This chapter will conclude with a discussion concerning implications of the results indicated by this ethnographic research.

Indigenous Female Youth of Vaupés – Life Situations Permeated by Vulnerabilities and Resistance

As presented in this study, previous researchers have measured and outlined *protective factors* facilitating young people's abilities to handle situations of armed conflict. Such protective factors can be found on individual, micro, meso, and macro level of a young person's social ecology and include a sense of future and hope, caregiving features and affection, a sense of belonging, good nutrition, community connection, educational institutions, military protection to civilians during conflict, and programs that build upon strengths inherent in cultural beliefs and community processes that traditionally protect and support youth (Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan, 2008; Cortes & Buchanan, 2007). Bowlby (1969) has identified *attachment relationships* as crucial for young persons' abilities to cope with difficult circumstances and conflict-related stressors.

Haeri & Puechguirbal (2010) provide evidence that young females in situations of armed conflict frequently are confronted with significant risks and threats to their physical, psychological and social well-being; one of the most prevalent such threats being sexual violence. In addition, sexual violence may be utilized by armed forces to shame, punish, intimidate, reduce the strength or destroy the essence of a community. However, young females in situations of armed conflict also display remarkable strength and fortitude by adopting new roles and taking on new responsibilities. Young women are not intrinsically vulnerable; instead, it is the pre-existing social inequalities that contribute to the creation of further vulnerabilities among this population (Haeri & Puechguirbal, 2010).

The Vulnerabilities of Indigenous Youth in Vaupés

Findings of this study indicate that even though the human rights of indigenous youth are well developed in official Colombia documents, the exercise of these rights is not nearly as clear. The analytical tool of intersectionality provides an understanding for the different forms of inequalities and situations of oppression that the indigenous female youth of Vaupés are exposed to (Eriksson-Zetterqvist & Styhre, 2007). Even though the intersectionality perspective suggests that vulnerabilities become clear in the intertwining of categories to which a person or group belongs, one can note that the indigenous populations of Vaupés also experience inequalities merely due to their core identity; these populations are subjected to discrimination solely because they belong to ethnic minorities.

Further research findings indicate that the indigenous peoples of the Vaupés region constitute a less privileged group in society and are structurally discriminated against by the Colombian government and other authorities in such as health and education. Even though the international Constitution guarantees self-governance of the indigenous, the findings of this study indicate that such autonomy is not accessible to the indigenous populations of Vaupés. The indigenous peoples also lack access to cultivable land, which continues to further marginalization.

Due to the instable situation in the Vaupés region, state law enforcement forces have been sent to Mitú as a means of protecting the local population. Even though such protection to civilians during conflict has been identified by Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan (2008) as a protective factor facilitating young people's abilities to handle situations of armed conflict, the tenor of the military presence in Mitú has been questioned by the people. The discrimination against the indigenous and lacking implementation of measures for supporting this population has created certain mistrust among the indigenous towards the Colombian state. Findings of this study have shown that such mistrust contributes to a perception of polarization between the indigenous peoples and state representatives; creating a *'We and Them'* concept concerning a division between the 'included' and the 'excluded' in which the indigenous people tend to consider themselves the 'excluded' due to their lower level of status within the societal hierarchy of power (de los Reyes & Kamali, 2005).

Following an intersectionality perspective by combining ethnicity with economic class one can distinguish a clear reinforcement of the indigenous' vulnerabilities. Besides lack of access to cultivable land, indigenous people in Mitú experience poverty due to the high prices of merchandise in the village. The indigenous find themselves living in terrible conditions without sufficient access to food or potable water, resulting in vulnerabilities such as malnutrition among the population. In addition, many suffer from a cultural and linguistic loss after having left their customs and traditions behind them.

The following section will discuss how vulnerabilities among the indigenous female youth of Vaupés are expressed in terms of intersections of ethnicity, class, age and gender. A point of departure is that these vulnerabilities are directly caused or reinforced by the power structures encountered within the internal armed conflict which permeate this population's current life situations.

Vulnerabilities of Female Indigenous Youth of Vaupés

Research findings of this study indicate that the military presence in Mitú tends to reinforce the already existing vulnerabilities of the female indigenous youth in ways that become particularly evident when combining ethnicity, low economic class, young ages, and the female gender. Many of the indigenous female youth of this study experience that their economic situations are preventing them from developing in desirable ways. Indications show that this has forced many of these youth to adopt alternate approaches to making a living, including begging and prostitution. Besides becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation, victimized youth experience physical and emotional harm to both themselves and their families; introducing high levels of anxiety. Research findings show that ways of handling such anxiety frequently includes turning to alcohol or drugs which further damages the indigenous home.

Among indigenous female youth in rural parts of Vaupés, such vulnerabilities become eminently apparent in the ways in which the indigenous experience recruitment into FARC. The lack of opportunities has been identified as a principal reason for joining these illegal forces, underlining the fact that the indigenous rarely join due to ideological reasons. Due to the indigenous' instable economic positions, remaining 'neutral' is a difficult matter for this population; they frequently find themselves under the impression of having to choose between the legal and the illegal armed forces. While all forms of armed force recruitment tend to destabilize indigenous families, *simultaneous* illegal and legal force recruitment has proven to further augment the level of conflict between and within the indigenous families; exposing the population to extreme domestic vulnerability. Similarly, it has been proven that those who have been recruited find themselves in the worst circumstances where they are subjected to numerous violations of their human rights. Girls and young women are particularly exposed due to their vulnerability to gender-based violence.

These vulnerabilities underscore the need of including an additional section of the intersectionality perspective to the targeted population of this study, namely gender (Eriksson-Zetterqvist & Styhre, 2007). When examining how gender and ethnicity are intertwined, it become clear that the machismo culture encountered within the indigenous ethnicities accentuates the indigenous males' attempts to attain the ideal picture of what Cornell (2008) calls *hegemonic masculinity*; subjecting the indigenous females to extensive gender-based inequalities. The assigned gender roles within the indigenous cultures contribute to the physical and emotional victimization of the indigenous women. The fact that the indigenous men rarely are consciously aware of the occurrence of female victimization and the lack of women who question their roles contribute to the intense difficulty of breaking this cycle. These dynamics underline how deeply machismo is rooted in the indigenous cultures. In the face of the indigenous males' control over indigenous females, there are indications that besides being subjected to various forms of abuse, the indigenous females are experiencing grave linguistic and cultural loss due to the cultural tradition of women having to abandon their territories for those of their men. In addition, research findings of this study indicate that the indigenous men and women in Vaupés are passing an acceptance of this hegemonic masculinity on to their children, subjecting young girls to similar disturbing experiences and further complicating the alteration of this cycle.

Findings also show that indigenous youth of low economic class are largely affected by what has been addressed to as the Enfermedad Blanca (the White Disease) due to the young indigenous' desires to obtain and practice occidental lifestyles. Due to already existing vulnerabilities encountered within the indigenous ethnicities and the indigenous' situations of poverty, occidental cultures are frequently viewed as 'better' alternatives and more appealing ways of life. Youth are particularly exposed to such views since they find themselves in the stage of life in which they are defining their futures and searching for the most appealing ways of constructing a living. However, young indigenous' intentions to shift over from the less desirable societal position of *'Them'* to the more including *'We'* have proven to impinge upon family life, induce controversy within the indigenous ethnicities, and engender identity loss.

When examining gender in the face of the Enfermedad Blanca research findings show the ways in which the indigenous female youth perceive the ideal picture of hegemonic masculinity. Research findings have proven that young indigenous females tend to attract themselves to the form of masculinity perceived in non-indigenous men with the expectation that these men will live up to the young females' ideal pictures of future husbands. Indications show that lack of affection displayed within the indigenous cultures may be a constituent factor to why female youth search for alternate sources of attachment relationships. Due to high levels of credulity among indigenous youth, the young females tend to believe in and trust the soldiers and police who are supposedly protecting them from harm. However, the indigenous female youth of Vaupés often find themselves victimized by members of state law enforcement forces; suffering physical abuse and sexual assault by members of these forces. Due to deeply ingrained habits inculcated in indigenous youth from a very young age, these girls and young women rarely express or discuss disturbing experiences with a third party; introducing additional vulnerabilities to the life situations of these youth.

When examining the ways in which young indigenous females' sections of ethnicity, low economic class and young age are intertwined, findings of this study have shown that one of the most distinguishable vulnerabilities is that of lacking quality education. Due to the necessity of migrating to Mitú in order to access high school education, many youth experience a loss of culture categorized by self-sustainability. For this reason, youth must often adopt non-indigenous ways of making a living, accentuating the need for an income while attending suitable and adequate preparatory education according to occidental standards. However, the comparatively poor quality of such education in Vaupés contributes to the fact that these indigenous youth rarely are prepared for mainstream university education and frequently drop out within the first semesters of attending higher education. In addition, this study's research findings have indicated that many indigenous youth experience exclusion from access to the university education grants set aside for indigenous peoples due to the requirement of speaking a native language. This contributes to the young indigenous people's lack of necessary skills in order to become fully functioning members of the occidental society on the one hand, and their loss of necessary skills for returning to their 'traditional' indigenous lifestyles on the other. This situation contributes to a perception of exclusion from the indigenous *and* the non-indigenous cultures. Consequently, the young indigenous' potential protective factor of experiencing a sense of belonging goes lost. Here again, one can observe how de los Reyes & Kamali's (2005) concept of 'We and

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Them' is expressed. Again, when adding gender to this understanding, one can observe that the young indigenous females are exposed to further vulnerabilities due to the frequently occurring pregnancies at young ages and thus the compulsion of abandoning schooling before having graduated from preparatory education. In addition, it has been shown that the indigenous female youth of this study do not consider their abilities to bring on change as strong.

Similar to those who leave the region in search for opportunities, the indigenous female youth who go with soldiers to military life experience further vulnerabilities due to the complex nature of transferring to an unknown social setting, frequently resulting in a loss of culture, language, and identity. Findings of this study have indicated that young women who have gone with soldiers often experience difficulties when attempting to regress to their cultures and return to their home region. Additional problems are encountered in the face of the increasing amount of mestizo children without fathers found within the indigenous ethnicities. Regardless of whether these mestizos are products of rape or broken relationships, mestizo children and their mothers experience exclusion from both occidental and indigenous cultures; creating a new vulnerable generation of children growing up with a sense of rejection.

As informed by an intersectionality perspective, the research findings of this study have demonstrated that those who belong to several of the four categories of ethnic minority, low economic class, young age, and female gender suffer from high levels of vulnerability and risk experiencing subordinate positions in society. Even though all indigenous people of Vaupés have proven to suffer from structural discrimination, young indigenous females tend to suffer from the conflict in ways distinct to the rest of the indigenous people. Findings have shown that the indigenous female youth, to whom all four examined categories of the intersectionality perspective apply, are primary victims of the internal armed conflict as expressed in the Vaupés region. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that winning the war by winning the women is, in fact, what is happening in Vaupés.

In the following, ways in which young indigenous females express resistance to such power structures will be described and analyzed.

Power Structures – Permeating Social Ecologies

Certain power structures, such as political, economic and patriarchal power structures, permeate all societies. In Vaupés, however, these structures are constantly reinforced by the on-going internal armed conflict, continuously exposing the indigenous female youth of this study to difficult life situations. The ways in which these power structures influence and affect this targeted population are found in every level of their social ecologies. The external actors who shape and reinforce these power structures, such as the Colombian government, state law enforcement forces, and left-wing guerrilla movements, are found on macro level of the targeted population's social ecologies and are, similarly, the ones who are at the root of the internal armed conflict. The political ideologies these power structures represent tend to maintain group tensions and generate ethic divisions within society in ways that directly impinge on the life situations of the indigenous female youth of Vaupés.

These macro level power structures influence the distribution of welfare and the ways in which communities function on meso and micro level as well as ways in which youth function on individual level. A well-functioning community requires an effective meso system categorized by individuals' access to institutions, such as education and healthcare institutions, that promote integration into society. However, the power structures at macro level impede the functioning of such supportive community institutions. In Vaupés the meso system is categorized by lacking access to education and healthcare and non-regulated prices for commerce, hindering auspicious conditions and prosperity for the indigenous populations. In addition, the contiguous presence of macro system actors in the Vaupés region implies a disruption to the tradition indigenous ambience, contributing to the so-called Enfermedad Blanca among the native Vaupés habitants as earlier discussed.

Nonetheless, the internal armed conflict is not only present on macro and meso level; it also plays an important role at the micro level of the indigenous people's social ecology. The effects of these power structures become visible in the form of disturbed attachment relationships among the indigenous female youth and can be encountered within both families and communities. Frequently, attachment relationships are complicated by aspects concerning familial division and lack of trust due to the presence of armed conflict, machismo, and indigenous customs unfavorable to the female population. Consequently, this causes vulnerabilities on all four levels of the indigenous female youth' social ecology – including the individual such.

As noted earlier, the external actors who reinforce the power structures encountered at macro level – the Colombian government, state law enforcement forces, and left-wing guerrilla movements – strongly impact upon the life situations of the indigenous female youth of this study on all four levels of their social ecology, contributing to further marginalization of this population. The fact that these youth have not demonstrated an awareness of that this form of control is being exercised implies that they are unlikely to be aware of how such control limits their abilities to act according to their own free wills. Consequently, this ascribes a form of invisible structural power to the indigenous society in which the population voluntarily adapts the norm of the government, the state law enforcement forces, or the left-wing guerrilla movements.

Resisting the Powers of the Internal Armed Conflict

Despite the fact that these external actors contribute to the lack of what Luke (2005) refers to as *real interest* among the indigenous female youth of Vaupés, this young population has shown tendencies of certain receptiveness to acting according to what may, in fact, be the real interests of this specific group. Findings of this study indicate that even though not all indigenous female youth are aware of the connection between their acts and their real interests, many have demonstrated both individual and collective strategies of attempting to improve their life situations. These acts have not been influenced by the norm of the external actors and are therefore likely to feature the real interest of the indigenous female youth of this study. These youth have actively attempted to achieve this real interest by demonstrating resistance to the existing discourses on political, economic and patriarchal power structures within their region. Research findings of this study indicate that the everyday resistance exerted by the

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indigenous female youth of Vaupés expresses itself in the form of *hidden transcripts* (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009).

Individual Resistance – Hidden Transcripts – among Indigenous Female Youth

The everyday resistance to the power structures within the Vaupés region as expressed by the indigenous female youth is carried out mainly on individual level and in the form of hidden transcripts (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009). As noted in the section on theoretical perspectives, hidden transcripts refer to a form of resistance that is covert in its character and not necessarily exerted as a conscious intention of resisting (Scott, 1992). This resistance tends to be practiced in comparable ways by many of these female youth. Similar to Lilja & Vinthagen's (2009) suggestion that this form of resistance commonly is 'hidden'; findings of this research indicate that the indigenous female youth of Vaupés tend to practice this form of resistance unconsciously and rarely seek to draw attention to their distancing actions. A distinct way in which these youth attempt to undermine the political, economic, and patriarchal power structures to which they are subjected on a broader societal level is by *joining the illegal armed forces* as an attempt to improve their life situations. Due to the lack of opportunities for indigenous peoples, this option is one of the few perceived avenues to improve living standards.

In contrast, some indigenous female youth demonstrate *resistance to recruitment* by the left-wing guerrilla movement FARC encountered mainly in rural Vaupés by migrating to Mitú. However, this way of resisting existing power structures leads to the inevitable encounter with new vulnerabilities. In the face of the immense militarization of Mitú, the indigenous youth are faced with new understandings of the implications of belonging to ethnic minorities. Findings of this research indicate that due to the indigenous' insubstantial economic situations in urban areas, occidental stimuli encountered among non-indigenous soldiers and police appear more attractive. Here, the media contributes to the indigenous' perceptions of occidental lifestyles as more appealing than the indigenous ones, causing young indigenous females to start comparing aspects of their cultures with those of non-indigenous ethnicities. As a means of resisting the 'less appealing' aspects of the indigenous cultures such as poverty, machismo and lack of physical affection, the indigenous female youth initiate a process of *personal occidentalization* in which interactions with non-indigenous members of the state law enforcement forces are frequently occurring. This resistance is additionally reinforced by many young indigenous females' acts of abandoning reproduction within the indigenous ethnicity and replacing this with inter-ethnic reproduction, extending their resistance to the indigenous' inequalities over future generations.

An additional way in which the indigenous female youth utilize the presence of the state law enforcement forces for managing difficult economic situations is seen in the ways in which these young females *perform services in exchange for economic or in-kind compensation*. Findings of this research show that such services may include washing of military and police uniforms, as well as prostitution. In the case of prostitution, females frequently intoxicate themselves prior to performing their services as a way of enduring and facilitating the acts. Findings show that the profit often comprises in-kind resources which may support the females and their families; in other cases the young females' benefits include temporary affective and emotional satisfaction. In these cases, this conforms a way in which young females resist the indigenous' ways of showing

affection. Similarly, research findings of this study indicate that additional ways of resisting vulnerability due to feelings of emotional emptiness include turning to alcohol and drugs.

Thus many indigenous female youth are forced to leave their communities due to the intrusion of illegal forces only to experience mental and physical abuse by the legal forces in Mitú. Findings of this research have confirmed that young indigenous females possess an ability of carrying pain and burdens within them. However, this ability does not mean that these young indigenous females do not *feel* or manage pain; in fact, research findings prove that they are taught to hide them from the public from a very young age and therefore tend to remain silent. Many withdraw from civilization and resist the experienced discomfort by avoiding conscious reflection about the matter. Others have reported that they resist by absorbing the pain they are experiencing and soothing their feelings by passively listening to music or crying until they feel well enough to return to engagement in social life. Still others focus on everyday matters. Such dedication to everyday activities has shown to be many young indigenous females' approach to resisting pain and discomfort caused by harmful incidents. They may turn to available meso level protective factors such as traditional indigenous events and healing, as well as networks of friends or colleagues who are able to encourage them to talk about facts instead of feelings and to focus on more pleasant matters. In general, this study indicates that very few within the indigenous female population of Vaupés share their persistent experiences of discomfort with other persons; those who do tend to consult very close family members, frequently mothers or grandmothers.

Research findings of this study also indicate that the vast majority of the targeted indigenous female youth demonstrate resistance to their overarching situations by caring for their families. The young females frequently express this form of resistance by focusing on long-term goals that may contribute to their real interest of improving their overall life situations and those of their children. Such focus is eminently facilitated by the fact that most indigenous female youth of this study tend to be aware of and value their skills and capabilities, reinforcing Haeri & Puechguirbal's (2010) suggestion that women in situations of conflict tend to take on new roles and responsibilities. Resisting difficult life situations by focusing on the future of their families does not only underscore the importance of family; it also accentuates that many of the indigenous female youth plan ahead when such planning concerns the achieving of real interests. Concrete ways in which indigenous female youth express this form of long-term resistance include hard domestic work, persistent care for nature, concentrated efforts to earn a living, high educational ambitions, and an impressive capability of learning from mistakes, challenging obstacles, and enduring existing miseries. These forms of exerting resistance are highly facilitated by many young indigenous females' perceptions of the indigenous woman as strong and capable.

Even though the indigenous female youth of Vaupés find comfort in their families and friends, research findings of this study demonstrate that a frequently occurring way of resisting their overarching difficult life situations is by *leaving the region as an attempt to abandon the difficulties encountered within their ethnicities*. The indigenous people who have never left Vaupés tend to consider leaving the region as succeeding in life, based on perceptions that life in non-indigenous cultures would entail better futures that

include possibilities of obtaining higher education. For this reason, some young indigenous female youth exert resistance to their existing life situations by searching for opportunities to attend university educations in larger cities or by escaping with members of the state law enforcement forces. Frequently, the desire of becoming someone important in life can be identified as the point of departure for such actions. However, upon encountering difficulties in these new and unknown settings, the indigenous female youth tend to regress to the perceived protection of the indigenous cultures and therefore frequently return to Vaupés. Research findings of this study indicate that their indigenous cultures provide them with perceived security and the essential protective factors these youth require. In addition, these young females commonly possess a desire to show the world who the indigenous peoples are and what their cultures are about; indicating that despite the fairly persistent will to abandon their cultures, the indigenous cultures are, in fact, important to the female youth of Vaupés.

When the young indigenous females' ways of exerting individual resistance start shifting towards collective acts performed by a larger proportion of this population, these acts will start a process of *deconstructing discourses* on the political, economic and patriarchal power structures encountered within the Vaupés region (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009). Individual forms of resistance that have shown tendencies of persistent and repetitively behaviors among a relatively large amount of the young indigenous females mainly concern those regarding resistance to their overarching life situations. It would be legitimate to assume that existing discourses would be somewhat modified if these behaviors would continue to intensify and become slightly more persistent. The following section will discuss and analyze forms of collective resistance exerted by the indigenous female youth of Vaupés.

Collective Resistance – Hidden Transcripts – among Indigenous Female Youth

As demonstrated in the previous section, the indigenous female youth of Vaupés are active subjects who despite having subordinate positions to the power structures encountered within their social ecologies also exert resistance to these power structures. Ways in which such individual resistance is exercised and expressed in the form of hidden transcript (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009) has been presented and analyzed. However, this group of females also exerts *collective* forms of such resistance. Such collective forms of resistance derive from common interests among the young indigenous females in which all practitioners of this collective resistance experience similar concerns against similarly perceived ways in which the existing power structures affect their life situations. Alike the ways in which the indigenous female youth of this study exert individual resistance, the collective forms of resistance displayed by this population tend to be exerted unconsciously.

Research findings of this study indicate that due to the immense inequalities to which the indigenous female youth of Vaupés are subjected, these youth experience certain mistrust against the Colombian government, the state law enforcement forces, and the left-wing guerrilla movements. Indications suggest that such mistrust may be experienced due to these external actors' direct or indirect authorization for the internal armed conflict to proceed and exacerbate the life situations of the indigenous peoples in the Vaupés region. Findings of this research report that this mistrust is further absorbed due to the young indigenous females' understandings that their peoples are not taken

seriously by the external actors and rarely consulted for their opinions in matters directly influencing their populations. There also appears to be a clear lack of trust in educated peoples belonging to higher positions in the societal hierarchy of power. These perceptions have proven to be shared by many of the indigenous female youth of this study. Similarly, these shared understandings have contributed to these populations' acts of distancing themselves from external actors, prominently distinguished in their absence of general election participation. These distancing actions represent an initial phase of collective resistance exerted by the indigenous female youth of Vaupés to the existing power structures encountered within their region.

One of the most prevailing ways of exerting collective everyday resistance to the existing power structures is expressed in the ways in which these young females carry out conversations and discussions with each other. These conversations commonly concern all aspects of their daily life situations *except* subjects regarding oppression; the young indigenous females' ways of resisting such hardship entail filling their life situations with discussions on more pleasant matters. Communal resistance is also exerted by groups of indigenous female youth who attend self-strengthening activities such as the empowerment sessions directed at indigenous females and provided by the organization Asociación Defensa de Niños Internacional DNI – Colombia. Similar self-strengthening group events have been identified in theater sessions and artistic activities; reinforcing Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan's (2008) suggestion that activities that offer structure and help youth to make sense of their life situations are important for handling difficulties and promoting well-being.

Yet another form of collective resistance has been demonstrated in young indigenous females' active participation in regional organizations for indigenous peoples. Research findings of this study specify that youth who attend these forms of group activities have proven to demonstrate increased levels of personal strength, improved skills to express themselves and augmented abilities to collectively avoid and handle difficult life situations. These collective forms of hidden resistance contribute to developing a parallel culture, which consequently becomes out of reach for monitoring by the external actors encountered within the Vaupés region. These ways of exerting resistance are noticeable examples of ways in which the indigenous female youth of this study have started to weaken and deconstruct the existing discourses in which their normative behavior is situated. In such endeavors of achieving social change, the power structures created and reinforced by the Colombian government, state law enforcement forces and left-wing guerrilla movements are subject to undermining.

Even though tendencies of deconstructing discourses (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009) have been encountered in the previously described ways in which the young indigenous females exert non-organized resistance, such deconstruction becomes particularly distinguishable in *organized* resistance. While carrying out this research on non-organized resistance among indigenous female youth of the Vaupés region, the researchers of this study have discovered certain tendencies towards organized resistance among the targeted population. Such resistance is explicitly encountered in these young people's active participation in political movements. Still, research findings of this study affirm that few indigenous female youth currently practice this form of organized resistance; those who partake in political movements tend to be those who

have been encouraged to freely express their opinions from a very young age – urging to weaken existing discourses such as those on machismo and hegemonic masculinity (Cornell, 2008).

This section has discussed and analyzed ways in which indigenous female youth of Vaupés exert individual and collective resistance as a means of achieving their real interests of improving their life situations. Numerous research findings indicate that ways in which young indigenous females exert resistance to their overarching hardships in life include consciously distancing themselves from the indigenous cultures. However, permeating this study's research findings concerning the ways in which this population resists short-term difficulties are cultural processes and traditions inherent to the indigenous ethnicities. In other words, when facing concrete difficult situations, the indigenous female youth of Vaupés commonly turn to their indigenous cultures as a means of resisting experienced pain. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that this population's real interests of improving their life situations cannot be achieved by abandoning the indigenous cultures or questioning their ethnic identities. Instead, these real interests can perhaps first be reached when the young indigenous females of Vaupés recognize that their possibilities for improving their life situations may be embedded within the cultures of their indigenous ethnicities and the protective factors and attachment relationships that can be found in these cultures.

Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this study has been to investigate the ways in which indigenous female youth in the Colombian region of Vaupés experience their life situations, as well as how their vulnerabilities are expressed in the intertwining of ethnicity, class, age and gender. Moreover, the purpose has been to discover whether, and if so how, these youth exert resistance to the power structures encountered within their region. Multiple methodological approaches and sources of data have been used to provide extensive information and insights in order to gain in-depth understandings of the subject.

The quality of life of the Colombian people has been seriously affected by the internal armed conflict, with indigenous children and adolescents among those most severely impacted. The analytical tool of intersectionality provides an understanding for the various forms of inequalities that these youth are exposed to. These young people's vulnerabilities have been shown to be directly caused or reinforced by the power structures present within these individuals' social ecologies. There is not one form of power present in the internal armed conflict; there are infinite forms. While the political, economic and patriarchal power structures encountered in the Vaupés region constantly *reinforce* the severity of the internal armed conflict, they are similarly constantly *strengthened* by the on-going conflict; continuously exposing the indigenous populations to structural discrimination, group tensions, ethnic divisions and difficult life situations. The ways in which these power structures influence and affect the indigenous peoples permeate every level of their social ecologies. Research findings of this study indicate that even though the international Constitution guarantees self-governance of the indigenous peoples, such autonomy is not accessible to the indigenous populations of Vaupés. Instead, the indigenous people find themselves experiencing terrible living conditions without possibilities to oppose.

The indigenous populations tend to experience mistrust against the external actors within their region due to the immense inequalities to which these populations are subjected. Such mistrust may have derived from the external actors' direct or indirect authorization for the internal armed conflict to proceed and exacerbate the life situations of these peoples. The mistrust in people belonging to higher positions in the societal hierarchy of power is further absorbed due to the indigenous people's perceptions of not being taken seriously by external actors. Consequently, this mistrust contributes to a perception of polarization between the indigenous peoples and the external actors; creating a 'We and Them' concept (de los Reyes & Kamali, 2005) concerning a division between the 'included' state representatives and the 'excluded' indigenous populations.

Due to the instable situation in the Vaupés region, state law enforcement forces have been sent to Mitú as a means of protecting the indigenous populations. However, the tenor of the military and police presence in Mitú is questioned by many indigenous people. The contiguous presence of such law enforcement forces in the Vaupés region has shown to imply a disruption to the tradition indigenous ambience, contributing to the so-called Enfermedad Blanca ('White Disease') among the native Vaupés habitants.

Research findings of this study indicate that the military presence in Mitú and its accompanied Enfermedad Blanca tend to reinforce the already existing vulnerabilities of the indigenous populations in ways that become particularly evident in the intersections of ethnicity, low economic class, young ages, and the female gender. Indigenous female youth turn to non-indigenous cultures due to their perceptions that occidental cultures entail opportunities that cannot be found within their current life situations categorized by poverty, inadequate education systems, machismo and limited ways of expressing affection and closeness etcetera. Similarly, indications show that these youth perceive non-indigenous men in accordance with the ideal picture of hegemonic masculinity (Cornell, 2008). However, these young females' intentions to adopt occidental lifestyles have not only subjected them to sexual, physical and mental victimization; such actions have also proven to impinge upon their family lives, induce controversy within the indigenous ethnicities, and engender culture and identity loss.

While armed force presence clearly destabilizes indigenous societies, *simultaneous* legal and illegal force presence has proven to further augment the levels of anxiety and conflict within the indigenous communities. Young people's openness to armed force recruitment has been shown to create extreme domestic and communal vulnerabilities.

Drawing on an intersectionality perspective, the research findings of this study have demonstrated that the indigenous female youth of Vaupés, who belong to the four categories of ethnic minority, low economic class, young age and female gender, suffer from vulnerabilities in more extensive ways than the rest of the indigenous people. Accordingly, findings of this study show that these youth are primary victims of the internal armed conflict as expressed by the power structures within the Vaupés region.

Nonetheless, research findings indicate that the indigenous female youth of this study demonstrate individual and collective strategies for achieving their potential real interest (Luke, 2005) of improving their life situations. These young females' ways of exerting everyday resistance to the political, economic and patriarchal power structures within the Vaupés region are carried out mainly on individual levels and in the form of hidden

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transcripts (Scott, 1992). Such resistance tends to be exerted unconsciously. More ways in which the indigenous female youth of this study exert individual resistance to political, economic and patriarchal power structures on a societal level may include both joining the illegal armed forces and resisting such recruitment. Many of those who resist recruitment adopt a form of occidentalization in which these youth seek alternate ways of living within non-indigenous cultures, as noted earlier. Others may resist by carrying out prostitution in exchange for economic or in-kind compensation. Findings of this study have shown that when subjected to specific difficult situations, many indigenous female youth withdraw from social life and dedicate themselves to soothing activities. In general, these youth tend to resist deep reflection about difficult matters by focusing on everyday activities; these youth commonly avoid discussing feelings with networks of friends or family. Some resist pain by dedicating themselves to elements inherent to the indigenous cultures, which tends to provide a protective feeling of belonging.

Furthermore, findings of this research indicate that non-normative repetitive resistance expressed by many may undermine the power structures that create and reinforce the vulnerabilities of the indigenous female youth. Even though such repetitive resistance can be exerted on an individual level, such resistance is mainly expressed collectively. For example, the young indigenous females of Vaupés exert such resistance by carrying out conversations and discussions within groups of youth, attending self-strengthening activities and events, and participating in regional organizations. These collective ways of exerting resistance may potentially contribute to deconstructing the political, economic and hierarchal discourses encountered within the Vaupés region.

Many indigenous female youth exert resistance to their difficult life situations by focusing on their families and thus attempting to improve their life situations by strengthening family ties. Others attempt to improve their living conditions by focusing on long-term goals, frequently including acquiring a higher education. Indications show that such goals stem from a desire of abandoning the difficulties experienced within their ethnicities. Thus some youth exert resistance by leaving the region and abandoning the indigenous cultures. Still, indications show that the indigenous cultures provide their youth with the conditions they need to maintain personal strength and a sense of belonging. Result findings from this study thus show the extensive importance of the cultures within the indigenous ethnicities; the protective factors that enable resistance among the indigenous female youth of Vaupés derive from their cultures and ethnicities.

There is considerable prior research on ways in which power relations affect the life situations of youth in situations of armed conflict. However, little is known about ways in which these youth *experience* their situations. Similarly, not much research has been conducted on ways in which these young people's vulnerabilities are shaped or on how these youth might exert resistance. There is even less research about these dynamics in the specific context of the illegal armed conflict in Colombia. Nonetheless, a number of prior research results display certain similarities with the findings of this study.

Findings of this study are consistent with the research of Haeri & Puechguirbal (2010) and others in confirming that there are significant correlations between armed conflict and sexual abuse of women. Similarly, findings also correlate concerning how sexual violence against women by participating actors of armed conflict is likely to destabilize the community in which such abuse is being carried out. Further similarities between

this study and the research of Haeri & Puechguirbal (2010) are expressed through the understanding that young women in situations of conflict are not intrinsically helpless or vulnerable; their vulnerabilities derive from social inequalities and are *reinforced* by conflict. Similarities are also encountered in the ways in which young women in situations of armed conflict tend to display remarkable strength by adopting new roles and taking on new responsibilities as a means of handling their situations (Haeri & Puechguirbal, 2010). Such roles are explicitly displayed in ways in which the indigenous female youth of this study express resistance.

Similar to the research of Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan (2008), findings of this study indicate that young peoples' *protective factors* serve as facilitators for handling and resisting difficult life situations. However, as previously discussed, the protective factors that are accessible to the indigenous female youth of Vaupés tend to slightly differ from those examined by Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan (2008). Similarly, while the importance of *attachment relationships* as described by Bowlby (1969) has been identified among the young indigenous females of Vaupés, the nature of such attachment relationships within the indigenous ethnicities is distinct to the ways in which attachment relationships commonly are expressed in non-indigenous cultures.

Even though this study displays certain similarities to the research conducted on youth *resilience* by Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan's (2008), it is reasonable to claim that the research of this study has contributed to the provision of valuable findings within a relatively unexplored area of research, namely ways in which indigenous female youth express *non-organized resistance* to situations of conflict. That is, the concept of resistance, as utilized in this study, does not entail *emotional adjustment to risk* as targeted by Stichick Betancourt & Tanveer Khan's (2008) research concerning resilience; instead the purpose of this study has been to examine ways in which *individuals conduct actions to power in ways that may undermine it*, which is the essence of Lilja & Vinthagen's (2009) definition of resistance. Thus the aim of this study has been to contribute to both important new theoretical perspectives and valuable new empirical material within this relatively unexplored research area.

The research findings of this study have demonstrated that the indigenous female youth of Vaupés who belong to four examined categories of the intersectionality perspective, namely ethnic minority, low economic class, young age and female gender, suffer from immense and extensive vulnerabilities. However, the ways in which these vulnerabilities are created and expressed have proven to not solely depend on these four categories; the permeating aspect and root cause of these vulnerabilities is the instable situation of armed conflict to which the indigenous female youth of Vaupés are subjected. For this reason, the researchers of this study accentuate the need of *adding a new category* that reflects vulnerabilities in an intersectionality perspective. In order to fully understand the vulnerabilities of the indigenous female youth of this study and those of people in similar situations to these youth, a category of *'armed conflict'* must be incorporated into an intersectionality perspective as their social context constitutes such a strong part of their life situations. Although this category does not focus on aspects of inherent identity, it is essential in order to accurately grasp and understand the ways in which vulnerabilities of individuals and groups in situations of armed conflict are intertwined with ethnicity, class, age, and gender.

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW, FOCUS GROUP AND WORKSHOP GUIDES

Interview Guides

Interview Guide 1 – Indigenous Female Former Resident of Vaupés, 23 years old

Interview conducted in Bogotá, March 2013

Background Information

1) Age? Ethnicity?

Life in Vaupés

2) Where did you live? For how long?
3) How would you describe your life there?
   - What would you say was the best about your life in Vaupés? What was the most difficult?
4) What are the main opportunities and threats to the indigenous female youth of Vaupés?
   - What are the risks these youth face within the region?
   - How do you view these young people's security?
5) While you were living in Vaupés, did you notice any tendencies of indigenous female youth fighting for their rights or for avoiding abuse? What kinds of actions were taken? Did you notice any specific thoughts among the girls about possible ways of avoiding abuse?
6) How did you view your capability of making your own decisions while living in Vaupés?

Life in Bogotá

7) Why did you come to Bogotá?
8) What are you doing here?
   - Education? Work? Free time?
9) What would you consider the best about your life Bogotá? What is the most difficult?
10) How do you view your capability of making your own decisions here in Bogotá?
11) Have you had the opportunity to vote? Would you vote? Why or why not?
12) Would you go back to Vaupés?
   - What would your life be like today if you were still in Vaupés?

13) What are your dreams? Would anything keep you from achieving them?

14) Is there anything you would like to add?

Guía de Entrevista 1 – Mujer Indígena ex Residente del Vaupés, 23 años

Entrevista realizada en Bogotá, marzo 2013

Antecedentes

15) Edad? Etnia?

La Vida en el Vaupés

16) ¿Dónde vivía en el Vaupés? ¿Por cuánto tiempo?
17) ¿Cómo describiría la vida allá?
   - ¿Qué describiría usted como lo mejor de su vida en el Vaupés?
   - ¿Qué fue lo más difícil?
18) ¿Cuáles serían las oportunidades y cuáles serían las amenazas para las niñas y mujeres indígenas que viven en Mitú?
   - ¿Cuáles son los riesgos por los que podrían pasar las niñas y mujeres indígenas en el departamento?
   - ¿Cómo ve la seguridad de las mismas?
19) Cuando vivía en el Vaupés, ¿se daba cuenta o veía niñas o mujeres que luchaban de alguna manera para que no fueran maltratadas? ¿Qué tipo de acciones llevaban a cabo? ¿Pensaban de alguna manera de cómo intentar parar ese maltrato?
20) ¿Cómo veía su capacidad para tomar sus propias decisiones mientras vivía en el Vaupés?

La Vida en Bogotá

21) ¿Por qué vino a Bogotá?
22) ¿A qué se dedica actualmente en la ciudad?
   - ¿Educación? ¿Trabajo? ¿Ratos libres?
23) ¿Qué describiría como lo mejor de su vida en Bogotá? ¿Qué es lo más difícil de vivir en la ciudad?
24) ¿Cómo ve su capacidad para tomar sus propias decisiones en Bogotá?
   - ¿Ha tenido la oportunidad de votar? ¿Votaría? ¿Por qué? ¿Por qué no?
25) ¿Volvería al Vaupés?
   - ¿Cómo imaginaría su vida en el Vaupés hoy en día, si aún estuviera allá?

26) ¿Cuáles son sus sueños? ¿Hay algo que la detenga de lograrlos?

27) ¿Quiere añadir algo?

Interview Guide 2 – Indigenous Female Youth of Vaupés A, 21 years old

Interview conducted in Mitú, April 2013

Background Information

    28) Age? Ethnicity?

Life in Vaupés

    29) Tell me about your everyday life?
- Tell me about something that is very important to you?

    30) How would you describe the typical young indigenous women?

    31) What is the best and worst thing about living in Mitú?

    32) How would you solve a very difficult situation?
- How would you solve an individual problem?
- How would you solve a problem concerning the indigenous female youth as a whole?

    33) What kind of things do you talk with your families about?

    34) What kind of things do you talk with your friends about?

    35) If you would get *one* wish granted, what would it be?

    36) Is there anything you would like to add?

Guía de Entrevista 2 – Mujer Joven Indígena del Vaupés A, 21 años

Entrevista realizada en Mitú, abril 2013

Antecedentes

37) Edad? Etnia?

La Vida en el Vaupés

38) ¿Cuénteme de su vida diaria?
- ¿Podría hablarme sobre algo que sea muy importante para usted?

39) ¿Cómo describiría la joven indígena típica?

40) ¿Cómo resuelve una situación muy difícil?
- ¿Cómo resolvería un problema personal?
- ¿Cómo resolvería un problema que afecte específicamente a las jóvenes indígenas?

41) ¿Sobre qué tipo de cosas hablaría con su familia?

42) ¿Sobre qué tipo de cosas hablaría con sus amigas/amigos?

43) Si le concedieran un sólo deseo, ¿cuál sería?

44) ¿Quiere añadir algo?

Interview Guide 3 – Indigenous Female Youth of Vaupés B, 26 years old

Interview conducted in Mitú, April 2013

Background Information

    45) Age? Ethnicity?

Life in Vaupés

    46) Tell me about your everyday life?
       - Tell me about something that is very important to you?
    47) How would you describe the typical young indigenous women?
    48) What is the best and worst thing about living in Mitú?
    49) How would you solve a very difficult situation?
       - How would you solve an individual problem?
       - How would you solve a problem concerning the indigenous female youth as a whole?
    50) What kind of things do you talk with your families about?
    51) What kind of things do you talk with your friends about?
    52) If you would get *one* wish granted, what would it be?

    53) Is there anything you would like to add?

Guía de Entrevista 3 – Mujer Joven Indígena del Vaupés B, 26 años

Entrevista realizada en Mitú, abril 2013

Antecedentes
1) Edad? Etnia?

La Vida en el Vaupés
2) ¿Cuénteme de su vida diaria?
   - ¿Podría hablarme sobre algo que sea muy importante para usted?
3) ¿Cómo describiría la joven indígena típica?
4) ¿Cómo resuelve una situación muy difícil?
   - ¿Cómo resolvería un problema personal?
   - ¿Cómo resolvería un problema que afecte específicamente a las jóvenes indígenas?
5) ¿Sobre qué tipo de cosas hablaría con su familia?
6) ¿Sobre qué tipo de cosas hablaría con sus amigas/amigos?
7) Si le concedieran un sólo deseo, ¿cuál sería?

8) ¿Quiere añadir algo?

Interview Guide 4 – ECPAT Professional A

Interview conducted in Bogotá, July 2012

Background Information

1) Experience? Professional title?

Youth Recruited into the Armed Forces

2) Which are the armed forces of Colombia?
   - Legal armed forces?
   - Illegal armed forces?
3) How are youth generally recruited into the armed forces of Colombia?
   - Into the legal armed forces?
   - Into the illegal armed forces?
4) Are some youth more likely to be recruited that others? What determines vulnerabilities to recruitment?
5) What are the main tasks of recruited youth?
   - Within the legal armed forces?
   - Within the illegal armed forces?
   - What are their life situations like?
   - How are youth physically affected within the armed forces?
   - How are youth psychologically affected within the armed forces?
6) How do youth leave the forces?
   - What are the implications?

7) Is there something you would like to add?

Guía de Entrevista 4 – ECPAT Profesional A

Entrevista realizada en Bogotá, julio 2012

Antecedentes

8) ¿Experiencia? ¿Título profesional?

Jóvenes Reclutados a las Fuerzas Armadas

9) ¿Cuáles son las fuerzas armadas de Colombia?
   - ¿Fuerzas armadas legales?
   - ¿Fuerzas armadas ilegales?

10) ¿Cómo son reclutadas las personas en las fuerzas armadas de Colombia?
   - ¿En las fuerzas armadas legales?
   - ¿En las fuerzas armadas ilegales?

11) ¿Hay jóvenes que son más propensos a ser reclutados a esas fuerzas? ¿Qué es lo que determina esa vulnerabilidad al reclutamiento?

12) ¿Cuáles son las labores principales que los jóvenes reclutados deben cumplir?
   - ¿En las fuerzas armadas legales?
   - ¿En las fuerzas armadas ilegales?
   - ¿Cómo son sus situaciones de vida?
   - ¿Cómo son afectados físicamente dentro de esas fuerzas armadas?
   - ¿Cómo son afectados psicológicamente dentro de esas fuerzas armadas?

13) ¿De qué manera abandonan las fuerzas?
   - ¿Cuáles son las implicaciones de abandonarlas de esa manera?

14) ¿Quiere añadir algo?

Interview Guide 5 – ECPAT Professional B

Interview conducted in Bogotá, July 2012

Background Information

15) Experience? Professional title?

Youth Recruited into the Armed Forces

16) Which are the armed forces of Colombia?
    - Legal armed forces?
    - Illegal armed forces?
17) How are youth generally recruited into the armed forces of Colombia?
    - Into the legal armed forces?
    - Into the illegal armed forces?
18) Are some youth more likely to be recruited that others? What determines vulnerabilities to recruitment?
19) What are the main tasks of recruited youth?
    - Within the legal armed forces?
    - Within the illegal armed forces?
    - What are their life situations like?
    - How are youth physically affected within the armed forces?
    - How are youth psychologically affected within the armed forces?
20) How do youth leave the forces?
    - What are the implications?

21) Is there something you would like to add?

Guía de Entrevista 5 – ECPAT Profesional B

Entrevista realizada en Bogotá, julio 2012

Antecedentes

1) ¿Experiencia? ¿Título profesional?

Jóvenes Reclutados a las Fuerzas Armadas

2) ¿Cuáles son las fuerzas armadas de Colombia?
   - ¿Fuerzas armadas legales?
   - ¿Fuerzas armadas ilegales?
3) ¿Cómo son reclutadas las personas en las fuerzas armadas de Colombia?
   - ¿En las fuerzas armadas legales?
   - ¿En las fuerzas armadas ilegales?
4) ¿Hay jóvenes que son más propensos a ser reclutados a esas fuerzas? ¿Qué es lo que determina esa vulnerabilidad al reclutamiento?
5) ¿Cuáles son las labores principales que los jóvenes reclutados deben cumplir?
   - ¿En las fuerzas armadas legales?
   - ¿En las fuerzas armadas ilegales?
   - ¿Cómo son sus situaciones de vida?
   - ¿Cómo son afectados físicamente dentro de esas fuerzas armadas?
   - ¿Cómo son afectados psicológicamente dentro de esas fuerzas armadas?
6) ¿De qué manera abandonan las fuerzas?
   - ¿Cuáles son las implicaciones de abandonarlas de esa manera?

7) ¿Quiere añadir algo?

Interview Guide 6 – Coordinator for DNI's Project in Mitú

Interview conducted in Bogotá, March 2013

Background Information
1) Experience? Professional title?

Social Factors
2) How do you view the indigenous families' general economic situation?
   - To which 'estrato' do the indigenous peoples of Vaupés belong?
   - What are their incomes like? What are their expenses? Is it sufficient? If not, how do they manage this?
   - Are there any opportunities for receiving financial support, food rations etc.?
   - Who regulates the prices of merchandise in the region?
   - How do you view the indigenous' opportunities for improving their quality of life?
3) How do you view of social conditions in Vaupés?
   - Home conditions?
   - What importance does religion have for the indigenous female youth in their everyday lives?
   - How does being indigenous influence Access to benefits?
   - Is there confidence between the indigenous and the government?
   - Do the indigenous generally vote in elections?
   - How do you view the governments influence on Media production?
4) How do you view the machismo in Colombia?
   - How are the indigenous female youth affected by machismo?
5) Is there any formal or informal organization among the indigenous of Vaupés in which they can collectively support each other? If so, by whom are these organizations managed and how are decisions taken?
6) How do you view the young indigenous females' capability of making their own decisions?
   - Is there anything that would keep the indigenous female youth back from achieving their goals? If so, what?

Conflict and Resistance
7) What are the main opportunities and threats to the indigenous female youth of Vaupés?
   - What are the main risks these youth face within the region?
   - How do you view these young people's security?
   - Would you say they are following any specific safety precautions?

8) In which ways are the indigenous female youth affected by the armed conflict?
   - Would you say that these youth find themselves forced to take sides in any way between the illegal and the legal armed forces encountered in Vaupés?

9) Have you noticed any tendencies of indigenous female youth fighting for their rights or for avoiding abuse? What kinds of actions are taken? If you have not noticed any concrete actions, have you noticed or seen any form of 'hidden resistance'?
   - How do they talk with each other about difficult situations and/or vulnerabilities?
   - Are they aware of their limitations? If so, how?

Development

10) How has DNI's work influenced the indigenous girls and females? How have their situations improved by participating in your project?
    - What has been key to achieve such improvements?

11) Have you noticed any significant development within the region during the time you have been working in Mitú? What do you think the region will be like in 10 years?

12) Is there anything you would like to add?

Guía de Entrevista 6 – Coordinador/a del Proyecto de DNI en Mitú

Entrevista realizada en Bogotá, marzo 2013

Antecedentes

13) ¿Experiencia? ¿Título profesional?

Factores sociales

14) ¿Cómo ve la economía general de las familias indígenas?
   - ¿En qué estrato se encuentran los indígenas del Vaupés?
   - ¿Cuáles son sus ingresos y cuáles son sus gastos? ¿son suficientes sus ingresos para sus gastos? Y si no, ¿cómo hacen para cubrirlos?
   - ¿Existe la oportunidad de recibir algún apoyo financiero, raciones de alimentos   etc.?
   - ¿Quiénes regulan los precios de las mercancías en la región?
   - ¿Cómo ve las oportunidades de las indígenas del Vaupés para mejorar su calidad de vida?

15) ¿Cómo ve las condiciones sociales en el Vaupés?
   - ¿Condiciones del hogar?
   - ¿Qué importancia tiene la religión para las indígenas en el manejo de sus situaciones sociales?
   - ¿Cómo influye el hecho de ser indígenas para tener acceso a beneficios?
   - ¿Diría que hay confianza entre los indígenas y el gobierno?
   - ¿Cree que los indígenas generalmente votan o que votarían en las elecciones?
   - ¿Cómo ve la influencia del gobierno sobre los medios de comunicación?

16) ¿Cómo ve la influencia del machismo en Colombia?
   - ¿Cómo cree usted que se encuentran afectadas las indígenas por el machismo?

17) ¿Existe algún tipo de espacio/organización formal o informal entre los indígenas del Vaupés dónde ellos se soporten colectivamente? Si existe, ¿quién/quienes manejan ese espacio y como toman decisiones?

18) ¿Cómo ve la capacidad de niñas y mujeres del Vaupés para tomar sus propias decisiones?
   - ¿Ve algo que les detenga a las niñas y mujeres del Vaupés en lograr sus sueños?

Conflicto y resistencia

19) ¿Cuáles serían las oportunidades y cuáles las amenazas de niñas y mujeres indígenas que viven en el Vaupés?

- ¿Cuáles son los riesgos por los que podrían pasar las niñas y mujeres indígenas en el departamento?
- ¿Cómo ve la seguridad de las mismas?
- ¿Siguen algunas precauciones de seguridad?

20) ¿Cómo ve que las indígenas son afectadas por el conflicto?
- ¿Opina que se ven obligadas a tomar partido de alguna manera hacia las fuerzas legales o las ilegales que se encuentran en el Vaupés?

21) ¿Se ha dado cuenta o ha visto niñas o mujeres en el Vaupés que luchan de alguna manera para no ser maltratadas? ¿Qué tipo de acciones llevan a cabo? Y si no ha visto acciones concretas, ¿se ha dado cuenta o ha visto otros tipos de 'resistencia oculta'?
- ¿Cómo hablan entre ellas de sus situaciones y/o su vulnerabilidad?
- ¿Son conscientes de sus limitaciones? ¿Cómo?

Desarrollo

22) ¿Cómo ha afectado a las niñas y mujeres del Vaupés el trabajo que hace DNI? ¿En qué medida se han mejorado sus situaciones?
- ¿Que ha sido clave para poder alcanzar esos logros?

23) ¿Ha visto alguna diferencia significativa en el desarrollo de la región durante los años que ha trabajado en Mitú? ¿Cómo se imagina la región en diez años?

24) ¿Quiere añadir algo?

Interview Guide 7 – Field Worker of DNI's Project in Mitú

Interview conducted in Mitú, April 2013

Background Information

25) Experience? Professional title?

Social Factors

26) Is there any formal or informal organization among the indigenous of Vaupés in which they can collectively support each other? If so, by whom are these organizations managed and how are decisions taken?

27) How do you view the young indigenous females' capability of making their own decisions?

- Is there anything that would keep the indigenous female youth back from achieving their goals? If so, what?

Conflict and Resistance

28) What are the main opportunities and threats to the indigenous female youth of Vaupés?

- What are the main risks these youth face within the region?
- How do you view these young people's security?
- Would you say they are following any specific safety precautions?

29) In which ways are the indigenous female youth affected by the armed conflict?

- Would you say that these youth find themselves forced to take sides in any way between the illegal and the legal armed forces encountered in Vaupés?

30) Have you noticed any tendencies of indigenous female youth fighting for their rights or for avoiding abuse? What kinds of actions are taken? If you have not noticed any concrete actions, have you noticed or seen any form of 'hidden resistance'?

- How do they talk with each other about difficult situations and/or vulnerabilities?
- Are they aware of their limitations? If so, how?

31) Is there anything you would like to add?

Guía de Entrevista 7 – Trabajador/a de Campo del Proyecto de DNI en Mitú

Entrevista realizada en Mitú, abril 2013

Antecedentes

32) ¿Experiencia? ¿Título profesional?

Factores sociales

33) ¿Existe algún tipo de espacio/organización formal o informal entre los indígenas del Vaupés en dónde ellos se soporten colectivamente? Si existe, ¿quién/quienes manejan ese espacio y cómo toman decisiones?

34) ¿Cómo ve la capacidad de niñas y mujeres del Vaupés para tomar sus propias decisiones?
   - ¿Ve algo que detenga a las niñas y mujeres del Vaupés en lograr sus sueños?

Conflicto y resistencia

35) ¿Cuáles serían las oportunidades y cuáles serían las amenazas de niñas y mujeres indígenas que viven en el Vaupés?
   - ¿Cuáles son los riesgos por los que podrían pasar las niñas y mujeres indígenas en el departamento?
   - ¿Cómo ve la seguridad de las mismas?
   - ¿Siguen algunas precauciones de seguridad?

36) ¿Cómo ve que las indígenas son afectadas por el conflicto?
   - ¿Opina que se ven obligadas a tomar partido de alguna manera hacia las fuerzas legales o las ilegales que se encuentran en el Vaupés?

37) ¿Se ha dado cuenta o ha visto niñas o mujeres en el Vaupés que luchen de alguna manera para no ser maltratadas? ¿Qué tipo de acciones llevan a cabo? Y si no ha visto acciones concretas, ¿se ha dado cuenta o ha visto otros tipos de 'resistencia oculta'?
   - ¿Cómo hablan entre ellas de sus situaciones y/o su vulnerabilidad?
   - ¿Son conscientes de sus limitaciones? ¿Cómo?

38) ¿Quiere añadir algo?

Interview Guide 8 – Mitú Social Services Professional A

Interview conducted in Mitú, April 2013

Background Information

    8) Experience? Professional title?

Conflict and Resistance

    9) From your experience, how are the indigenous female youth affected by the internal armed conflict?
- How are they physically affected?
- How are they psychologically affected?
- How does the armed conflict influence their everyday lives?

    10) In which ways do the indigenous female youth demonstrate resistance the effects of the conflict?

    11) Is there something you would like to add?

Guía de Entrevista 8 – Servicios Sociales de Mitú Profesional A

Entrevista realizada en Mitú, abril 2013

Antecedentes

12) ¿Experiencia? ¿Título profesional?

Conflicto y Resistencia

13) ¿Cómo ve que las jóvenes son afectadas por el conflicto armado interno?
    - ¿Cómo son afectadas físicamente?
    - ¿Cómo son afectadas psicológicamente?
    - ¿Cómo diría que el conflicto armado influye en el día a día de las jóvenes?
14) ¿Cómo ve que las jóvenes resisten los impactos de este conflicto?

15) ¿Quiere añadir algo?

Interview Guide 9 – Mitú Social Services Professional B

Interview conducted in Mitú, April 2013

Background Information

16) Experience? Professional title?
17) In which ways are you in contact with the indigenous female youth of Vaupés?

Conflict and Resistance

18) How do you consider the indigenous female youth affected by the internal armed conflict?
   - Physically?
   - Psychologically?
19) What are the reasons for recruitment of indigenous female youth into the armed forces of the conflict?
20) In what ways do these indigenous female youth handle situations they find very difficult?
   - How do they alleviate pain when experiencing feelings of weakness?

21) Is there something you would like to add?

Guía de Entrevista 9 – Servicios Sociales de Mitú Profesional B

Entrevista realizada en Mitú, abril 2013

Antecedentes

22) ¿Experiencia? ¿Título profesional?
23) ¿De qué manera se pone en contacto su organización con las indígenas jóvenes del Vaupés?

Conflicto y Resistencia

24) ¿Cómo ve qué las indígenas jóvenes son afectadas por el conflicto armado interno?
- ¿Físicamente?
- ¿Psicológicamente?
25) ¿Cuáles son las razones por las cuales las indígenas jóvenes terminan reclutadas por las fuerzas armadas del conflicto?
26) ¿Cómo ha visto que las indígenas jóvenes manejan situaciones con serias dificultades para ellas mismas?
- ¿Cuáles son las formas en las que ellas alivian el dolor cuando se sienten muy débiles?

27) ¿Quiere añadir algo?

Interview Guide 10 – Mitú Social Services Professional C

Interview conducted in Mitú, April 2013

Background Information

28) Experience? Professional title?
29) In which ways are you in contact with the indigenous female youth of Vaupés?

Conflict and Resistance

30) How do you consider the indigenous female youth affected by the internal armed conflict?
    - Physically?
    - Psychologically?
31) What are the reasons for recruitment of indigenous female youth into the armed forces of the conflict?
32) In what ways do these indigenous female youth handle situations they find very difficult?
    - How do they alleviate pain when experiencing feelings of weakness?

33) Is there something you would like to add?

Guía de Entrevista 10 – Servicios Sociales de Mitú Profesional C

Entrevista realizada en Mitú, abril 2013

Antecedentes

34) ¿Experiencia? ¿Título profesional?

35) ¿De qué manera se pone en contacto su organización con las indígenas jóvenes del Vaupés?

Conflicto y Resistencia

36) ¿Cómo ve qué las indígenas jóvenes son afectadas por el conflicto armado interno?
- ¿Físicamente?
- ¿Psicológicamente?

37) ¿Cuáles son las razones por las cuales las indígenas jóvenes terminan reclutadas por las fuerzas armadas del conflicto?

38) ¿Cómo ha visto que las indígenas jóvenes manejan situaciones con serias dificultades para ellas mismas?
- ¿Cuáles son las formas en las que ellas alivian el dolor cuando se sienten muy débiles?

39) ¿Quiere añadir algo?

Interview Guide 11 – Mitú Health Sector Professional

Interview conducted in Mitú, April 2013

Background Information

40) Experience? Professional title?

Conflict and Resistance

41) From your experience, how are the indigenous female youth affected by the internal armed conflict?
    - How are they physically affected?
    - How are they psychologically affected?
    - How does the armed conflict influence their everyday lives?

42) In which ways do the indigenous female youth demonstrate resistance the effects of the conflict?

43) Is there something you would like to add?

Guía de Entrevista 11 – Profesional del Sector de la Salud de Mitú

Entrevista realizada en Mitú, abril 2013

Antecedentes

44) ¿Experiencia? ¿Título profesional?

Conflicto y Resistencia

45) ¿Cómo ve que las jóvenes son afectadas por el conflicto armado interno?
 - ¿Cómo son afectadas físicamente?
 - ¿Cómo son afectadas psicológicamente?
 - ¿Cómo diría que el conflicto armado influye en el día a día de las jóvenes?

46) ¿Cómo ve que las jóvenes resisten los impactos de este conflicto?

47) ¿Quiere añadir algo?

Interview Guide 12 – Indigenous Traditional Leader

Interview conducted in Mitú, April 2013

Background Information

39) Experience? Professional title?

Social Factors

40) How are the indigenous female youth affected by machismo?
41) Is there confidence between the indigenous and the government?
42) Is there any formal or informal organization among the indigenous of Vaupés in which they can collectively support each other? If so, by whom are these organizations managed and how are decisions taken?
43) How do you view the young indigenous females' capability of making their own decisions?
    - Is there anything that would keep the indigenous female youth back from achieving their goals? If so, what?

Conflict and Resistance

44) What are the main opportunities and threats to the indigenous female youth of Vaupés?
    - What are the main risks these youth face within the region?
    - How do you view these young people's security?
    - Would you say they are following any specific safety precautions?
45) How do the indigenous female youth solve serious problems?
46) In which ways are the indigenous female youth affected by the armed conflict?
    - Would you say that these youth find themselves forced to take sides in any way between the illegal and the legal armed forces encountered in Vaupés?
47) Have you noticed any tendencies of indigenous female youth fighting for their rights or for avoiding abuse? What kinds of actions are taken? If you have not noticed any concrete actions, have you noticed or seen any form of 'hidden resistance'?
    - How do they talk with each other about difficult situations and/or vulnerabilities?
    - Are they aware of their limitations? If so, how?

48) Is there anything you would like to add?

Guía de Entrevista 12 – Sabedor Indígena

Entrevista realizada en Bogotá, abril 2013

Antecedentes

1) ¿Experiencia? ¿Título profesional?

Factores Sociales

2) ¿Cómo cree usted que las indígenas se encuentran afectadas por el machismo?
3) ¿Diría que hay confianza entre los indígenas y el gobierno?
4) ¿Existe algún tipo de espacio/organización formal o informal entre los indígenas del Vaupés en dónde ellos se soporten colectivamente? Si existe, ¿quién/quienes manejan ese espacio y como toman decisiones?
5) ¿Cómo ve la capacidad de niñas y mujeres del Vaupés para tomar sus propias decisiones?
   - ¿Ve algo que detenga a las niñas y mujeres del Vaupés en lograr sus sueños? ¿Qué?

Conflicto y Resistencia

6) ¿Cuáles serían las oportunidades y cuáles serían las amenazas de niñas y mujeres indígenas que viven en el Vaupés?
   - ¿Cuáles son los riesgos por los que podrían pasar las niñas y mujeres indígenas en el departamento?
   - ¿Cómo ve la seguridad de las mismas?
   - ¿Siguen algunas precauciones de seguridad?
7) ¿Cómo resuelven problemas graves?
8) ¿Cómo cree usted que las indígenas son afectadas por el conflicto?
   - ¿Opina que se ven obligadas a tomar partido de alguna manera hacia las fuerzas legales o las ilegales que se encuentran en el Vaupés?
9) ¿Se ha dado cuenta o ha visto niñas o mujeres en el Vaupés que luchen de alguna manera por sus derechos o para no ser maltratadas? ¿Qué tipo de acciones llevan a cabo? Y si no ha visto acciones concretas, ¿se ha dado cuenta o ha visto otros tipos de 'resistencia oculta'?
   - ¿Cómo hablan entre ellas de sus situaciones y/o su vulnerabilidad?
   - ¿Son conscientes de sus limitaciones?

10) ¿Quiere añadir algo?

Focus Group Guides

Focus Group Guide 1 – Indigenous Female Former Residents of Vaupés

Focus group conducted in Bogotá, March 2013

Participants: *Two indigenous female former residents of Vaupés aged 37 and 39*

Background Information

9) Ages? Ethnicities?

Life in Vaupés

10) Where did you live? For how long?

11) How would you describe your lives there?
   - What would you say was the best about your lives in Vaupés? What was the most difficult?

12) What are the main opportunities and threats to the indigenous female youth of Vaupés?
   - What are the risks these youth face within the region?
   - How do you view these young people's security?

13) How did you view your capabilities of making your own decisions while living in Vaupés?

Life in Bogotá

14) Why did you come to Bogotá?

15) What are you doing here?
   - Education? Work? Free time?

16) What would you consider the best about your lives Bogotá? What is the most difficult?

17) How do you view your capabilities of making your own decisions here in Bogotá?

18) Have you had the opportunity to vote? Would you vote? Why or why not?

19) Would you go back to Vaupés?
   - What would your lives be like today if you were still in Vaupés?

20) What are your dreams? Would anything keep you from achieving them?

21) Is there anything you would like to add?

Guía de Grupo Focal 1 – Mujeres Indígenas ex Residentes del Vaupés

Grupo focal realizado en Bogotá, marzo 2013

Participantes: *Dos mujeres indígenas ex residentes del Vaupés de 37 y 39 años*

Antecedentes

    22) ¿Edades? ¿Etnias?

La Vida en el Vaupés

    23) ¿Dónde vivían? ¿Por cuánto tiempo vivieron allá?

    24) ¿Cómo describirían la vida en ese lugar?
- ¿Qué describirían como lo mejor de sus vidas en el Vaupés? ¿Qué era lo más difícil?

    25) ¿Cuáles serían las oportunidades y cuáles serían las amenazas de niñas y mujeres indígenas que viven en Mitú?
- ¿Cuáles son los riesgos por los que podrían pasar las niñas y mujeres indígenas en el departamento?
- ¿Cómo ven la seguridad de las mismas?

    26) ¿Cómo veían sus capacidades para tomar sus propias decisiones mientras vivían en el Vaupés?

La Vida en Bogotá

    27) ¿Por qué vinieron a Bogotá?

    28) ¿A qué se dedican actualmente?
- ¿Educación? ¿Trabajo? ¿Ratos libres?

    29) ¿Qué describirían como lo mejor de sus vidas en la ciudad? ¿Qué es lo más difícil?

    30) ¿Cómo ven sus capacidades para tomar sus propias decisiones en Bogotá?
- ¿Han tenido la oportunidad de votar? ¿Votarían? ¿Por qué? ¿Por qué no?

    31) ¿Volverían al Vaupés?
- ¿Cómo imaginarían sus vidas en el Vaupés hoy en día si aún estuvieran allá?

    32) ¿Cuáles son sus sueños? ¿Hay algo que les detenga de lograrlos?

    33) ¿Quieren añadir algo?

Focus Group Guide 2 – Indigenous Female Youth of Vaupés A

Focus group conducted in Mitú, April 2013

Participants: Two indigenous female youth of Vaupés aged 17

Background Information

1) Ages? Ethnicities? Personal histories?

Everyday Life in Mitú

2) What are the biggest opportunities for and threats to the indigenous female youth who live in Vaupés?
3) What is the best and worst thing about living in Mitú for indigenous girls?
4) What do you do during your free time?
   - What do you do at night?
   - What do other indigenous girls do during their free time?
5) What are the biggest risks the indigenous female youth face in Mitú?
   - How do you distinguish between a 'good' and a 'bad' guy?
   - Which boys in your surroundings would typically be 'good' and which would be 'bad'?
6) How do you view 'machismo' in Vaupés? What does this machismo imply?

Difficulties and Ways of Handling Difficult Situations

7) What does having a baby at a very young age mean for the girl?
   - What are the reasons for young pregnancies in Mitú?
8) How do you handle difficult situations?
   - How do you alleviate pain, fear, and anger?
   - What to do you to feel better?
9) How do you view the young indigenous females' networks of support?
10) What does 'personal strength' mean to you?

Human Rights and Dreams

11) How do you view human rights?
    - From your experience, would you say that human rights apply?
12) How do you view the concept of freedom of expression?
    - Would you say that it applies to the indigenous female youth of Vaupés?
13) What are your dreams and what do you have to do to achieve them?
    - Would anything keep you from achieving them?

14) Is there anything you would like to add?

Guía de Grupo Focal 2 – Mujeres Jóvenes Indígenas del Vaupés A

Grupo focal realizado en Mitú, abril 2013

Participantes: *Dos mujeres jóvenes indígenas del Vaupés de 17 años*

Antecedentes

34) ¿Edades? ¿Etnias? ¿Historias Personales?

La Vida Cotidiana en Mitú

11) ¿Cuáles serían las oportunidades y cuáles serían las amenazas de las jóvenes indígenas que viven en el Vaupés?

35) ¿Qué es lo mejor y lo peor de la vida en Mitú para las jóvenes indígenas?

36) ¿Qué hacen en sus ratos libres?
  - ¿Qué hacen por las noches?
  - ¿Qué hacen las demás jóvenes indígenas en sus ratos libres?

37) ¿Cuáles son los riesgos por los que pasarían las jóvenes indígenas en Mitú?
  - ¿Cómo distinguen entre un chico 'malo' y un chico 'bueno'?
  - Entre los hombres en su entorno cercano, ¿quiénes serían los 'buenos' y quiénes serían los 'malos'?

38) ¿Cómo ven el 'machismo' en el Vaupés? ¿Qué implica este machismo?

Dificultades y el Manejo de Situaciones Difíciles

39) ¿Qué significa para una chica tener un bebé a una edad muy temprana?
  - ¿Según su percepción, cuáles son las causas de los embarazos tempranos en Mitú?

40) ¿Cómo manejan las situaciones difíciles?
  - ¿Cómo alivian el dolor, el miedo y la ira?
  - ¿Qué hacen para sentirse mejor?

41) ¿Cómo ven las redes de apoyo de las jóvenes indígenas?

42) Para ustedes, ¿qué es 'la fuerza personal'?

Derechos Humanos y Sueños

43) ¿Cómo ven los derechos humanos?
  - Hablando de sus experiencias, ¿dirían que los derechos humanos se aplican a sus realidades?

44) ¿Cómo ven el concepto de libertad de expresión?
  - ¿Ustedes dirían que se aplica a las jóvenes indígenas del Vaupés?

45) ¿Cuáles son sus sueños y qué deben hacer para lograrlos?
   - ¿Hay algo que les detenga de lograrlos?

46) ¿Quieren añadir algo?

Focus Group Guide 3 – Indigenous Female Youth of Vaupés B

Focus group conducted in Mitú, April 2013

Participants: Three indigenous female youth of Vaupés aged 13, 14 and 14

Background Information

47) Ages? Ethnicities? Personal histories?

Managing Difficult Situations

48) How do you handle very difficult situations?
49) How do you face serious problems?
50) How do you alleviate pain?
51) How do you alleviate fear?
52) How do you alleviate anger?

53) A scenario:

One day you will be walking down the same street as always, but this time you will face an unpleasant surprize. In various occasions, men who cross your route will give you rude and nasty comments and one of them will approach you with bad intentions. Finally, he will leave you alone and take off.

- How would you feel?
- What would you do?

54) Is there anything you would like to add?

Guía de Grupo Focal 3 – Mujeres Jóvenes Indígenas del Vaupés B

Grupo focal realizado en Mitú, abril 2013

Participantes: Tres mujeres jóvenes indígenas del Vaupés de 13, 14 y 14 años

Antecedentes

55) ¿Edades? ¿Etnias? ¿Historias Personales?

El Manejo de Situaciones Difíciles

56) ¿Cómo manejan situaciones muy difíciles?

57) ¿Cómo enfrentarían un problema grave?

58) ¿Cómo alivian el dolor de tristeza?

59) ¿Cómo alivian el miedo?

60) ¿Cómo alivian la ira?

61) Un escenario:
Un día se encuentran caminando por la misma ruta de siempre, pero esta vez se van a encontrar con una desagradable sorpresa, aunque en varias ocasiones los hombres con quienes se cruzan les dirán frases groseras, esta vez uno de ellos se les acercará con malas intenciones. Sin embargo después de un tiempo, el hombre las dejará en paz y se irá.

- ¿Cómo se sentirían?
- ¿Qué harían?

62) ¿Quieren añadir algo?

Workshop Guides

Workshop Guide 1 – The Effects of Gender-Based Violence

Workshop conducted in Mitú, April 2013

Participants: *High school class of 29 adolescents, 15 males and 14 females, between the ages of 12 and 16.*

Background information about participants:

Write your age and gender in a small corner of the paper in front of you.

Instructions to participants:

Think of a girl you know who is about your age. It must be a girl you love a lot. It could be for example a friend, a sister or a cousin, but she must be someone you love a lot. Do not tell anyone who the girl you are thinking about is.

Now draw this girl as detailed as you can on the paper in front of you.

When participants are finished drawing, facilitator starts the exercise:

This girl who is drawn on your paper, who you love so much, will have something happen to her: This weekend, she will go out for a walk. She will be walking down the same street as always, but this time she will get an unpleasant surprize. In various occasions, men who are crossing her route will give her rude and nasty comments and one of them will approach her with bad intentions.

How would knowing this happened to the girl you drew make you feel? *Participants write their answers on the back of the paper marked with the number '1' and then discuss their answers within the group.*

Discussions are likely to indicate that the girl does not feel good. Facilitator continues giving instructions:

So she feels bad. Softly start wrinkling your paper.

When the papers are wrinkled, facilitator continues:

Now straighten out your papers again. Look at them closely. How has your friend changed? *Participants discuss their answers within the group. Facilitator continues:* So now that you see her changed like that, what may this mean for *her*? *Participants answer the question and discuss it within the group.*

Facilitator continues the story:

After this happens to the girl you drew, she will remain quiet, with a lot of fear but with an urge to talk with someone about it. However, she doesn't and remains silent.

How do you think remaining silent, with a lot of fear, and with the urge to talk with someone about what happened to her, will make her feel? *Participants write their answers on the back of the paper marked with the number '2' and then discuss their answers within the group.*

Discussions are likely to indicate that the girl does not feel better. Facilitator continues giving instructions:

So she does not feel good. Wrinkle your paper a little bit more.

When the papers are wrinkled, facilitator continues:

Now straighten out your papers again. Look at them closely. Now how has your friend changed? *Participants discuss their answers within the group. Facilitator continues:* Now how does your friend feel? *Participants answer the question and discuss it within the group. Facilitator continues:* Have her feelings changed after remaining silent, with a lot of fear, and with the urge of talking with someone about what happened? *Participants write their answers on the back of the paper marked with the number '3' and then discuss their answers within the group. Facilitator deepens the discussion:* Do you think this happens in real life? *Participants discuss the question within the group.*

Facilitator continues the exercise:

What would the girl you drew do if this happened to her in real life? *Participants write their answers on the back of the paper marked with the number '4' and then discuss their answers within the group.*

Facilitator continues:

If what you think what your friend would do in a situation like this would make her feel *better*, straighten out your papers and make them flatter. If you think what your friend would do in a situation like this would make her feel *worse*, wrinkle your papers a little more.

Facilitator continues the story:

Five years will go by, and the girl you drew will be thinking about other things; things that will make her happy.

How do you think your friend feels now? *Discussions are likely to indicate that the girl feel better, is happy, etc. Facilitator continues giving instructions:*

Now that your friend feels good and is happy: Straighten out your papers all the way, until they look like new again. *Participants are likely to disagree and argue that it will not work. Facilitator insists that participants straighten out the paper. Participants are likely to say that it is impossible.*

Facilitator continues:

So if you cannot straighten out your papers completely, and the girl cannot look like she did before this happened to her; what may this mean for her feelings? *Participants answer the question and discuss it within the group. Facilitator continues:* If you were to wait five more years, would you be able to straighten out your paper then? *Participants are likely to answer that they would not. Facilitator continues:* Will you ever be able to straighten out your paper completely? *Participants answer the questions and, after instructions from the facilitator, relate their answer to the feelings of the girl. Facilitator continues:* What would you say to the girl you drew? *Participants write their answers on the back of the paper marked with the number '5' and then discuss their answers within the group.*

Facilitator keeps asking questions and the participants discuss them within the group.:

How can these things be avoided?

Do you think what happened to your friend was her fault?

Can anyone be held responsible for what happened to your friend? If yes, whom?

What can boys and men do to avoid that this happens to someone else's friend?

What can you do to avoid having this happen to *you*?

Facilitator concludes the workshops:

What did you learn from this exercise?

How did you like it?

Guía de Talles 1 – Los Efectos de la Violencia de Género

Taller realizado en Mitú, abril 2013

Participantes: *29 adolescentes, 15 hombres y 14 mujeres entre 12 y 16 años, del octavo grado.*

Antecedentes de los participantes:

Escribe detrás de la hoja tu edad y si eres hombre o mujer.

Instrucciones para participantes:

Piensa en una niña de más o menos tu edad. Tiene que ser una niña a la que quieras mucho. Puede ser por ejemplo una amiga, una hermana o una prima, pero tiene que ser una niña a la que quieras mucho. No le compartas esta información a nadie.

Ahora dibuja esa niña tan detallada como sea posible.

Cuándo los participantes terminen, inicia el ejercicio:

A esa niña que está en tu hoja dibujada, esta niña a la que tú quieres tanto, algo le va a pasar. El fin de semana, ella va a ir a caminar por la ruta de siempre, pero esta vez se va a encontrar con una desagradable sorpresa, pues en varias ocasiones los hombres con quienes se cruzará van a decirle frases groseras y uno de ellos se le acercará con malas intenciones.

¿Cómo te sentirías al saber que esto le pasó a quien dibujaste? *Los participantes dan sus respuestas y se pide que las escriban detrás de la hoja con el No. 1 y después se les pide sus reflexiones.*

Las discusiones suelen indicar que la niña no se siente bien. Siguen las instrucciones:

Así que se siente mal. Arruguen un poco la hoja.

Cuándo estén arrugadas, seguimos:

Ahora alisa otra vez la hoja y mírala bien. Describe en qué ha cambiado la persona que dibujaste? *Discuten sus respuestas entre ellos. Siguen las instrucciones:* Ahora que la ves así cambiada ¿qué significa para *ella*? *Los participantes comparten sus respuestas.*

Sigue la historia:

Después de esto la niña se quedó callada, con mucho miedo pero con ganas de hablar con alguien, sin embargo no lo hizo.

¿Cómo crees que se siente la persona que dibujaste al quedarse callada, con mucho miedo y con ganas de decir lo que le pasó? *Se pide que escriban por detrás de la hoja las respuestas con el No 2. Los participantes dan sus respuestas.*

Discusiones suelen indicar que la chica no se siente mejor. Siguen las instrucciones:

Así que no se siente mejor. Arruguen un poco más fuerte la hoja.

Cuándo estén arrugadas, siguen las instrucciones:

Ahora alisa otra vez la hoja y mírala bien. ¿Cómo se ve ahora la persona que dibujaste? *Ellos dan sus respuestas. Se les pregunta:* ¿Ahora cómo se siente esa persona? ¿Sus sentimientos cambiaron después de quedarse callada, con miedo y con ganas de hablar? ¿Cómo? *Se pide que escriban sus respuestas por detrás de la hoja con el No. 3. Los participantes comparten sus respuestas. Siguen las instrucciones:* ¿Ustedes creen que pasa esto en la vida real? *Los participantes discuten la pregunta.*

Sigue el ejercicio:

¿Qué haría la persona que dibujaste si eso le pasara en la vida real? *Se pide que las escriban detrás de la hoja con el No. 4. Ellos dan sus respuestas.*

Siguen las instrucciones:

Si ustedes creen que con lo que haría se sentiría *mejor*, alisen un poco más sus hojas. Si ustedes creen que con lo que haría se sentiría *peor*, arruguen más sus hojas. *Dependiendo de las respuestas individuales entonces se orienta alisar o arrugar más el papel.*

Sigue la historia:

Pasarán cinco años y la persona que dibujaste estará pensando en otras cosas que la hacen feliz.

¿Ahora cómo se siente la persona que dibujaste? *Probablemente las respuestas son que se siente mejor, está feliz etc. Siguen las instrucciones:*

Así como se siente mejor y está más feliz: Alisan completamente la hoja hasta lograr dejarla como nueva. *Los participantes suelen decir que no se puede. Se insiste en que la alisen con todo lo que puedan. Los participantes suelen decir que es imposible.*

Sigue el ejercicio:

Así como no se puede alisar la hoja completamente, la niña no puede volver a ser lo que era antes de este incidente; ¿esto qué significa para la persona que dibujaste? *Los participantes dan sus respuestas y discuten la pregunta entre ellos. Siguen las instrucciones:* Si ustedes esperaran otros cinco años, ¿entonces podrían alisar la hoja? *Los participantes suelen decir que no. Seguimos:* ¿Llegará algún día en el que se pueda alisar la hoja completamente? *Los participantes dan sus respuestas y las relacionan a los sentimientos de la niña. Siguen las instrucciones:* ¿Qué le dirías a la persona que dibujaste? *Se pide que escriban sus respuesta detrás de la hoja con el No. 5 y después discuten sus respuestas.*

Siguen las preguntas y los participantes las discuten entre ellos:

¿Cómo se puede evitar que esto suceda?

¿Creen que lo que le pasó es culpa de ella? ¿Es solo su responsabilidad?

¿Quiénes serán los responsables?

¿Qué pueden hacer los niños para evitar que eso le suceda a otra amiga?

¿Cómo se puede evitar que esto te pase a *ti*?

Se acaba el ejercicio:

¿Qué aprendieron de este ejercicio?

¿Qué opinan de este ejercicio?

Workshop Guide 2 – Everyday Life and Ways of Handling Difficult Situations

Workshop conducted in Mitú, April 2013

Participants: 60 indigenous female youth aged 8 - 20.

Purpose of the workshop:

Explore how indigenous female youth experience their everyday life and ways in which they handle difficult life situations.

Contribute to young indigenous females' reflections about their life situations and ways in which they handle difficulties.

Method:

1) Background information on occupation and age was collected.

2) Workshop topics were given to each young female. Such topics were selected according to age.

3) Workshop topics were discussed individually or collectively depending on the young females' requests.

4) Discussions on each topic were carried out with those who wished to share their reflections.

The following topics were discussed:

If you were President of Colombia, what would you decide, and why?

If you had the power over Mitú for a full day, what would you decide and why?

What would you like to improve for the girls of Mitú?

If you were granted three wishes, what would they be?

Who has the most power in your surroundings? Why do you think these people powerful?

Would you vote in elections? Why or why not?

Do you think that all the girls who study with you make their own decisions? In what situations do they and in what situations do they not?

In what situations do you feel safe and why?

In what situations do you not feel safe and why? How do you handle these situations?

What is violence? How many forms of violence can you think of? What are they?

What are you scared of and why?

What do you think is the most dangerous about going out alone at night?

Why do you think people drink alcohol?

When you grow up, would you prefer to live on the countryside or in a city? Why?

Order the following words according to what importance they have to you, starting with the most important: economy, security, education, and health.

What is the most important to you and why?

What are your dreams? How can you achieve them? What do you need to reach your goal?

What are you most proud about?

What bothers you and why?

What makes you sad and why? How do you alleviate sadness?

How do you handle serious problems?

Who talk more: men or women? Why do you it is this way?

What is the best and worst part about being a woman and why?

Do you think that girls and boys have the same opportunities? Why or why not?

How do you view yourself ten years from now? What will you be doing? Where will you be and with whom?

Guía de Taller 2 – La Vida Cotidiana y Las Formas de Manejar Situaciones Difíciles

Taller realizado en Mitú, abril 2013

Participantes: *60 mujeres jóvenes indígenas de entre 8 y 20 años.*

Objetivo del taller:

Investigar cómo las jóvenes indígenas experimentan sus vidas cotidianas y las formas en las que ellas manejan las situaciones difíciles de sus vidas.

Contribuir a la reflexión de ellas sobre sus situaciones de vida y las formas en las que se manejan las dificultades.

Metodología

1) Se recogió información general sobre sus ocupaciones y sus edades.

2) Se le dio cada joven los temas del taller. Estos temas fueron seleccionados según la edad de las mujeres.

3) Los temas del taller se discutieron de forma individual o colectiva dependiendo de los deseos de las jóvenes.

4) Las discusiones sobre los temas se llevaron a cabo con las que querían compartir sus reflexiones.

Los siguientes temas fueron discutidos:

Si fueras el presidente de Colombia, ¿qué decidirías? ¿Por qué?

Si tuvieras el poder sobre Mitú durante un día completo, ¿qué decidirías? ¿Por qué?

¿Qué desearías mejorar para las niñas en Mitú? ¿Por qué?

Si te concedieran tres deseos, ¿cuáles serían?

¿Quienes poseen más poder en tu entorno? ¿Por qué crees que es así?

¿Votarías en las elecciones? ¿Por qué? ¿Por qué no?

¿Crees que todas las niñas que estudian contigo en el colegio toman sus propias decisiones? ¿En qué situaciones lo hacen y en cuales no lo hacen?

¿En qué situaciones te sientes más segura? ¿Por qué?

¿En qué situaciones te sientes más insegura? ¿Por qué?

¿Qué es violencia? ¿Cuántos tipos de violencia conoces? ¿Y cuáles son?

¿De qué tienes miedo? ¿Por qué?

¿Qué crees que es lo más peligroso al salir sola por la noche?

¿Por qué crees que la gente toma alcohol?

Cuándo seas grande, ¿preferirías vivir en el campo o en la ciudad? ¿Por qué?

Ordena en orden de importancia para ti, las siguientes palabras: Economía, Seguridad, Educación, Salud.

¿Qué es lo más importante en tu vida? ¿Por qué?

¿Cuáles son tus sueños? ¿Cómo puedes hacerlos realidad? ¿Que necesitas para lograrlo?

¿De qué te sientes más orgullosa? ¿Por qué?

¿Qué te molesta? ¿Por qué?

¿Qué te entristece? ¿Por qué?

¿Cómo se pueden enfrentar los problemas graves?

¿Quiénes crees que hablan más: los hombres o las mujeres? ¿Por qué?

¿Qué es lo mejor y lo peor de ser mujer? ¿Por qué?

¿Crees que las niñas y los niños tienen las mismas oportunidades? ¿Por qué sí o por qué no?

¿Cómo te ves en 10 años? ¿Qué estarás haciendo? ¿Dónde estarás? ¿Con quién estarás?