

H i C N Households in Conflict Network

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Towards Sustainable Return Policies for the Displaced Population: Why Are Some Displaced Households More Willing to Return than Others?

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HiCN Working Paper 07

February 2004

Acknowledgements: The authors acknowledge and appreciate funding from USAID for this project. Comments from Jairo Arboleda, Fernando Calado, Diana Gruszczynski, Myriam Hernández, Isabel Lavadenz, Fabio Lozano and Jolyne Sanjak are greatly appreciated.

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1. Introduction

Civil wars and violence reverses economic development by imposing high economic and social costs (Collier et al, 2003). Countries at war confront a permanent loss of around two percent of GDP (Knight et al, 1996) and incomes, after a war of seven years of duration, are around 15 percent lower than had the war not happened (Collier, 1999). Moreover, the adverse economics of civil wars persist over time. After the end of the conflict, inflated military spending carry out, the loss of social capital is difficult to recoup, high mortality rates prevail and the psychological damage of war are large and highly persistent (Collier et al, 2003). The recognition of conflict as a key development issue has lead to a surge in the literature on conflict and conflict prevention.

The increasing attention on conflict prevention has not been paired with an interest in peace building. However, adequate peace building is essential to achieve a sustainable peace and avoid laying the foundations for the next clash. Conflicts are difficult to end because circumstances that arose during this period increase the risk of a new war. After a civil war takes places, countries fall in the conflict trap and the risk of war ignition is ten times higher in the post conflict period than before the war started (Hegre et al, 2001). Angola and Afghanistan are typical examples of recurrent conflicts (Collier et al, 2003). Building a solid post conflict period requires, therefore, to identify mechanisms to allow countries to escape this conflict trap, otherwise, the only policy choice is to prevent matters from getting worse.

Conflicts today are mostly civil wars. As a result, attacks on civilians have increased dramatically and, by the end of 1990, 90 percent of victims from armed conflicts were civilians (Cairns, 1997). One of the most striking evidence of the raising attacks against civilians is the increasing numbers of displaced and refugee population. Near 34.8 million people were forced to seek asylum in other country or within the national borders by 2002 due to civil conflicts; 21.8 million of them were displaced population¹ (USCR, 2003). Attempts to end internal conflicts and eradicate the sources that originate them

¹ The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (1999) describes a displaced person as anyone who has been forced to migrate within the national boundaries, leaving aside her residence or her habitual economic activities because either her life, her physical integrity or her freedom have been either violated or threatened by situations such as armed conflict, generalized violence, violation of human rights, and any other situation that may alter public order.

will have to be built upon a better comprehension of the dynamics of displacement. Understanding the forces driving displacement, the characteristics of the displaced population, and the determinants of their desire to return can contribute greatly to craft adequate post conflict policies.

The purpose of the paper is to identify the determinants of the desire to return of the displaced population in Colombia. The analysis of the dynamics of displacement can convey important information to understand internal wars, however, few studies examine this issue in detail because, for obvious reasons, data on this group is difficult to gather. We use a large data set from displaced households in Colombia with complete information about the triggers and actors responsible of displacement, its socio-demographic characteristics, land issues and the desire to return. Although the conflict in Colombia may seem highly idiosyncratic, as in any other country, the general pattern of a long-standing social conflict based on highly unequal access to valuable resources together with the availability of large rents from the extraction of natural resources is similar to what one observes in other countries. Therefore, we believe the results of this paper will be of wider applicability and relevance for other countries that have to deal with large numbers of displaced population.

We find the desire to return of the displaced population is influenced by economic opportunities in the reception and origin site, socio-demographic characteristics of the household, how traumatic the displacement process was and public policies. Landowners, households working on agricultural labor and people with a dense web of social networks (that seemingly makes them feel protected) are willing to return to the place of origin. Vulnerable groups (e.g. female headed households, households with high dependency ratios and ethnic minorities), households better-off in the reception sites and families that faced traumatic events before displacement, like homicide and death threats, are less inclined to return. Lastly, public policies, such as heightened security and social investment, appear to render the original village more attractive and, as a consequence, increase the desire to return.

The structure of the paper is as follows. In section 2, the out-migration process of the displaced households is thoroughly described and a theoretical and econometric model

for the desire to return is developed. Section 3 describes the data utilized and discusses some results provided by descriptive statistics. The determinants for the desire to return are analyzed in section 4 and, lastly, section 5 concludes.

2. The Desire to Return

2.1. A Theoretical Model for the Desire to Return

Forced displacement entails a long process that starts when violence erupts, includes involuntary migration and partially concludes when households decide whether to return, resettle in a different location or stay in the current place of residence. Every stage is the result of particular circumstances of the conflict, local conditions and socio-demographic characteristics. Yet all stages are deeply connected and, therefore, cannot be analyzed separately. The purpose of this section is to describe the whole out-migration process, understand how this process determines the characteristics and preferences of the displaced population as well as to develop a theoretical model for the desire to return of this population.

Aggressions against the civil population are a consequence of war and not an accidental by-product of the civil conflict (Cairns, 1997). Deliberate attacks to civilians seek to depopulate territory in order to obtain the loot or to reduce the fighting capacity of the enemy. In some African countries, raiding of civilians may be used by the State as a substitute for fighting (Azam and Hoefler, 2002). Displacement in Colombia, on the other hand, is mainly caused by rebel groups. Clearing territory is a war strategy to expand control areas and appropriate valuable land (Reyes and Bejarano, 1998). Forcing out population is also instrumental to impede collective action, to damage social networks as well as to intimidate and control the civil population (Henoa et al, 1998).

A careful designed strategy to appropriate assets, extract natural resources at ease and prevent civilians from rising up need to target specific groups of the population. Attacks to the civil population are therefore not random. Econometric evidence for Colombia indicates landowners, young individuals and civilians that play an active role in the society, and may oppose armed actors, are more likely to be terrorized (Kirchhoff and Ibáñez, 2001).

Once families are the victims of violent events, they must decide whether to stay in the place of origin or flee to seek refuge. The decision to displace, although not entirely voluntary, is also shaped by the characteristics of the household. Some households may be more inclined to opt for displacement. Kirchhoff and Ibáñez find families that are better off, have access to social services and with older household heads are less inclined to displace. In fact, while some households migrate to prevent being the victim of an attack, others flee after the attack takes place. The process leading to both types of displacement and the determinants variables diverge. Socio-demographic characteristics appear to play a stronger role in preventive displacement because households are able to discern better benefits and costs from forced migration and choose the lesser of two evils.

As a result of the process described above, displaced households constitute a particular group of the Colombian population. Figures reveal displaced are landowners, used to be involved in land production and participate actively in the community in a greater proportion than the mean of the Colombian population. Moreover, as a consequence of displacement, these families have more female household heads and greater dependency ratios than the urban poor (Ibáñez y Querubin, 2003).

The displaced population is, therefore, the outcome of a “perverse” self-selection process. On the one hand, armed groups purposively target particular groups of the population. On the other hand, some households are more inclined to opt for displacement. The decision on whether to return to the place of origin is, therefore, partially determined by the causes that lead to involuntary migration and by the migration process itself. This selectivity bias may pose problems when estimating the desire to return of the displaced population.

When deciding whether to return to their place origin, displaced families face a similar process to migrants. Households compare different alternatives – return, resettle or stay - and select the alternative with larger net benefits. The desire to return, although it only reflects the intention of the household and not a decision, entails a similar process to migration. Yet the desire to return is also influenced by particular circumstances of the displacement process such as violence endured before fleeing, armed groups dominant in the region and the traumatic events the family faced. The next paragraphs develop a theoretical model to explain the desire to return of the displaced population.

Households are willing to return to the place of origin when the expected utility from returning is greater than the utility from staying at the reception site. Choices are based on many dimensions influencing household welfare. First, households examine violence levels in both sites, analyze whether the original sources of displacement prevail and evaluate the risk the family will face upon returning. Second, displaced families compare the economic opportunities and access to state programs in both places. Third, migration costs are assessed. The migration process to return demands economic and social investments such as transportations costs and lost of hardly acquired privileges in the reception site. Lastly, socio-demographic characteristics shape preferences of the household.

The expected utility of returning to the place of origin depends on the probability of being the victim of a violent attack and the state dependent utilities. The probability that household i is the victim of an attack, P_{A_i} , depends on whether the household owns land l_i , participates actively in the community c_i and other household characteristics² Z_i ,

$$P_{A_i} = P(l_i, c_i, z_i).$$

The household utility from returning to the origin site is determined by consumption of a numeraire good, x_i , violence levels in the region (e.g. armed confrontations between rebel groups and State forces), V , household characteristics and whether the household was victim of an attack, A_i . When the household is victim of an attack, A_i is equal to one otherwise is equal to zero. The expected utility of the household is represented by

$$P_{A_i}(l_i, c_i, z_i)U(x_i, V; H_i | A_i = 1) + [1 - P_{A_i}(l_i, c_i, z_i)]U(x_i, V; H_i | A_i = 0).$$

Households generate income, y_i , from their investments in land and social capital. Other wealth of the household is represented by W_i . Income is spent in the consumption of the numeraire good. The budget constraint of household i is equal to

$$y_i(l_i, c_i) + W_i \geq px_i.$$

The indirect utility of household i from staying in the origin site is equal to

² For example, rebel groups may target young people because they may be more inclined to oppose their actions.

$$V_o(A_i, V, p, W_i; H_i).$$

Utility in the reception site has a similar structure than utility in the origin site. However, the probability of being terrorized in the reception site is assumed to be zero since families migrated in order to prevent further attacks. We also assume land is no longer a productive asset. Most displaced households leave their villages and land to save their life. Therefore, land is either abandoned, sold or in hands of rebel groups. The utility of household i from staying in the reception site is given by

$$U(x_i, L_i; H_i | A_i = 0).$$

where L_i represents time spent on leisure activities.

Families in the reception site earn income from working and assistance received through government. The budget constraint of household i is equal to

$$g_i + w_i(T - L_i) \geq px_i.$$

where w_i represents wage, T is total time available and g_i represents government transfers. The indirect utility from staying in the reception site is

$$V_r(p, g_i, w_i, T; H_i).$$

The household decides to return when the indirect utility from returning to the origin site is greater than the indirect utility from staying in the reception site.

$$V_o(A_i, V, p, W_i; H_i) > V_r(p, g_i, w_i, T; H_i)$$

2.2. Estimation Strategy

The model described in the previous section can be estimated using a random utility model. As stated before, household i chooses to return if the expected utility from returning ($U_{i,or}$) is larger than the expected utility from staying in the reception site

($U_{i,rec}$)

$$U_{i,rec} \geq U_{i,or}.$$

The expected utility for household i from settling on place j is composed by a deterministic component (v_{ij}) and a random term (ε_{ij}) that includes variables unknown to the researcher or impossible to measure

$$U_{ij} = v_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

where $j=or$ denotes the decision to return to the origin site and $j=rec$ represents the decision to stay on the reception site.

The deterministic component for household i for settling on site j is determined by the perceptions of security of household i on place j (S_{ij}), economic conditions for household i on place j (O_{ij}), migration costs for household i (C_i) and socio-demographic characteristics for household i (Z_i). The expected utility for household i from settling on place j is equal to

$$U_{ij} = \beta_j S_{ij} + \delta_j O_{ij} + \gamma_j C_i + \alpha_j Z_i + \varepsilon_{ij}.$$

The household decides to return when the expected utility from returning is greater than the expected utility from staying in the reception site

$$Pr ob(return) = Pr ob(U_{i,or} > U_{i,rec}).$$

If the random term is normally distributed with mean zero, the probability of return for household i is defined as

$$Pr ob(return) = \Phi[\beta_{ort} S_{or} - \beta_{rec} S_{rec} + \delta_{ort} O_{or} - \delta_{rec} O_{rec} + (\gamma_{ort} - \gamma_{rec})C + (\alpha_{or} - \alpha_{rec})Z]$$

where Φ represents the cumulative function for the normal distribution. Subscripts are eliminated without loss of generality.

The following paragraphs describe the variables we will utilize to approximate each component of the utility function. The actors responsible of displacement (i.e. guerrilla or paramilitary groups), the trigger of displacement (i.e. death threats, selective homicides) and the homicide rate in the origin site approximate the perceptions of security in the

origin site (S_{ret}). Perceptions of security in the reception site are proxied by its homicide rate.

The economic conditions in the origin and reception site (O_{ret}, O_{per}) are represented by access to labor markets in both villages. The variables that illustrate access to labor markets are wage labor, independent labor and agricultural labor. The economic conditions in the origin site (O_{or}) are also determined by access to land, structure of land tenure and land plot size. On the other hand, education of the household head indicates the capacity to compete on labor markets of the reception and, therefore, approximates economic conditions on the reception site (O_{per}). Lastly, local government investment per capita may provide evidence on the economic opportunities in the origin and reception site.

Migration costs (C_i) are represented by relocation within the department, participation in farmers' organization and the length of displacement. Relocation within the department implies lower moving costs if return takes place and, most importantly, the possibility of keeping a constant link with the place of origin. Participation in organizations reduces, as well, the costs of returning because its members can receive support during the process. On the contrary, the length of displacement increases migration costs. Families with long periods of displacement are adapted to the reception site and have earned social prerogatives, such as access to labor markets and education, that may disappear upon returning to the origin site.

Socio-demographic characteristics (Z_i) include household size, gender of household head, number of children below 14 years of age, number of adults above 60 years of age, education of household head and ethnic kingship. The structure of the household may determine the desire to return. For example, female household heads, in particular women whose husband was assassinated, may prefer to remain in the reception site to access government help.

This model allows us to establish the magnitude of influence of many determinants over the desire to return. The probability of return is estimated using a household survey that

contains information for 32.093 displaced households. The data, descriptive statistics and results of the econometric estimations are described in the following sections.

3. Data and descriptive evidence

To estimate the model described above, we use information from a household survey applied to the displaced population by the Catholic Church. The data contains information for 32.093 households and near 150.000 people. The survey elicits information to identify the causes and actors responsible of displacement, household characteristics, land tenure, access to labor market and education before and after displacement as well as the different needs of the displaced population. The questionnaire also includes information with respect to participation in organizations and willingness to return of the displaced households.

The information system – named RUT after a biblical character – is maintained by the Bishop’s Conference since 1997. The detailed questionnaire is applied to displaced households that request assistance in any of the 3,764 parishes of the Catholic church. The questionnaire is administered by employees of the church who receive special training for this.

It is important to discuss three advantages of RUT’s information system over the other two sources of displaced population in Colombia³. On the one hand, RUT’s system has been implemented since 1997 (covers a longer period of time) and includes households displaced since 1980 (it does not concentrate exclusively on recently displaced population). Second, the RUT questionnaire provides relatively detailed information on household characteristics, nature of displacement and economic activities which the other sources do not provide. In this sense, RUT data constitutes an excellent source for statistical and econometric analysis of displacement. Analytical studies of internal displacement usually face data restrictions which do not enable any detailed analysis at the household level of the different variables that affect displacement and return. In this

³ The two other sources on the internally displaced population in Colombia are Red de Solidaridad Social – RSS (the government agency in charge of providing support to the displaced population) and CODHES (an NGO).

sense, RUT data constitutes an excellent source for analyzing at a micro level the determinants of the desire to return. Third, church priests and employees establish a very important trust (almost “confessional”) relationship with the displaced households and as a result the information provided tends to be quite accurate.

However, since RUT’s outreach is more limited than that of RSS (the system covers presently about 32,000 households) it is important to establish the possible regional biases of the sample. As discussed, RUT only includes households that request assistance from the Catholic Church and, as a result, RUT data may be concentrated in departments where the church’s presence is more active than in others. Table 3.1 illustrates the regional composition of RSS and RUT data according to expulsion and reception departments. Since RSS is present in the whole national territory (through the different government institutions) looking at regional differences between RUT and RSS may indicate the selection bias present in RUT’s data.

As table 3.1 suggests, RUT data overestimates the importance of Bolivar, Meta, Valle del Cauca and Guaviare as expulsion and reception departments and underestimates the importance of Antioquia, Magdalena and Sucre with respect to RSS data. As mentioned above, this can be due to a stronger presence of either the church or the state in some departments. Even though the bias is not significant, RUT data is not a representative sample of the displaced population, an issue which must be kept in mind when looking at statistical inference based on this data set.

Table 3.1: Regional Composition of RSS and RUT data.

Departament	% Expulsed Population		% Received Population	
	RSS	RUT	RSS	RUT
Antioquia	17.18	13.59	14.00	7.84
Atlántico	0.09	0.06	5.30	2.40
Bogotá	0.03	0.06	6.41	4.21
Bolívar	12.45	20.35	8.24	24.02
Boyacá	0.33	0.25	0.42	0.41
Caldas	1.15	1.68	0.64	1.82
Caquetá	4.65	5.07	2.53	2.21
Cauca	2.97	1.45	1.99	0.00
Cesar	6.47	4.85	5.02	4.23
Córdoba	4.45	3.22	5.22	2.98
Cundinamarca	1.69	0.89	2.04	2.59
Choco	5.46	7.10	3.23	6.25
Huila	1.01	0.94	2.01	2.92
Guajira	1.30	0.19	1.87	0.00
Magdalena	6.57	2.52	4.73	0.83
Meta	3.11	7.21	2.85	9.30
Nariño	1.64	1.15	2.95	5.01
Norte de Santander	3.55	1.95	2.92	0.80
Quindío	0.12	0.20	0.68	0.66
Risaralda	0.53	0.69	1.25	2.64
Santander	3.43	2.03	5.06	2.19
Sucre	6.24	2.86	9.18	2.70
Tolima	4.19	5.03	1.97	3.54
Valle del cauca	3.30	6.15	5.62	7.11
Arauca	0.94	0.35	0.49	0.00
Casanare	0.88	0.79	0.64	0.41
Putumayo	5.04	4.63	2.21	0.07
Amazonas	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00
Guainia	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.00
Guaviare	0.91	4.04	0.37	2.83
Vaupés	0.05	0.23	0.00	0.01
Vichada	0.22	0.44	0.11	0.00

Source: authors calculations based on RUT and RSS

3.2 Characteristics of the displaced population

The purpose of this section is to present some descriptive statistics on the characteristics of the displaced population as well as on the nature of the migration process based on RUT data, to get a first glance at the displaced population and at the possible differences between households that are willing to return and those who are not. Table 3.2 shows household level characteristics (average) for the total RUT sample of 32,030 households in the first column and illustrates the differences in these characteristics between households willing and not willing to return in columns 2 and 3. It is important to highlight the fact that only 11.42% of the displaced households want to return. Identifying the characteristics that differentiate this group of households from those

households not willing to return is the first step towards understanding the variables that influence the decision to return.

For the overall sample, we note that in more than half of the cases, displacement occurred in reaction to an specific event, either a direct threat (43%), an assassination (8%), armed confrontations in the immediate surroundings (7%) or disappearance and torture of individuals and abduction of child soldiers (5%). This is what we define as “reactive displacement” as opposed to preventive displacement which does not occur as the result of a direct attack to the household but to prevent an eventual attack. Not surprisingly, those households not willing to return exhibit a higher percentage of reactive displacement, more specifically direct threats or the assassination of a family member. These types of actions, as opposed to armed confrontations that are not targeted directly to the household, discourage return since household members may fear being the victims of a direct attack again.

It is interesting to note that the large majority of those who have been involuntarily displaced remain in the same department (60%) and that 26% stay in the same municipality. This contradicts the widespread view of all the displaced population moving to Bogota (Colombia’s capital city) and other large towns. Households willing to return exhibit a higher percentage of intradepartmental and intramunicipal displacement. Households that moved to a municipality near their site of origin will incur in lower costs if they decide to return and, in many cases, this also allows them to occasionally look after their land or their assets which may increase the likelihood of return.

Involuntary displacement is attributed in similar proportions to guerrilla and paramilitary groups. Even though the paramilitaries were responsible for the majority of displacements before 2000, the guerrilla has been increasingly involved in this phenomenon. The fact that households willing to return exhibit a higher proportion of displacement attributed to paramilitary groups is not easy to explain and deserves a more detailed analysis.

Finally, the data reveals that recently displaced households are more willing to return than households that have been displaced for a longer period of time. While the mean duration of displacement is 297 days in RUT sample, those households willing to return

have been displaced for 149 days on average. This is not surprising since as time passes, displaced households may adapt to the new conditions at their reception site and, as a result, their willingness to return is lower.

Household characteristics for the displaced population indicate that the mean household size is 4.9 and that 38% of displaced households are female-headed. This high share is likely due to the fact that in many cases of displacement the male head of household is killed or abducted. It is interesting to note that while there doesn't seem to be any difference in the size or age composition of households that want and do not want to return, female headed households are less willing to return. Something similar happens with ethnic minorities (which only account for 3% of displaced households), which together with female-headed households constitute vulnerable households and are less willing to return. Finally, 24% of the displaced households participated in some form of organization at their place of origin, suggesting that as a part of their war strategy, guerrilla and paramilitary leaders may target those whose departure would do the most damage to the web of social relations in a given locality. However, these households are more willing to return since they can obtain support and cooperation from their organization in the case of an eventual return.

Table 3.2: Characteristics of the displaced population

	Total Sample	Wants to return	
		No	yes
Nature of displacement			
Reactive Displacement	60.71	61.61	54.49
Due to direct threat	43.07	43.94	36.99
Due to assassination	8.36	9.14	3.01
Due to armed confrontation	6.65	5.85	12.20
Due to disappearance/ torture	1.34	1.45	0.56
Intradepartmental	60.07	56.99	83.93
Intramunicipal	25.57	22.46	49.75
Expelled by guerrillas	46.25	47.25	39.46
Expelled by paramilitaries	45.21	43.08	59.60
Duration (days)	297	316	149
Household characteristics			
Household size	4.91	4.90	4.94
Children < 14 years	2.14	2.16	2.04
Persons 14-60 years	2.54	2.53	2.61
Female headed households	37.96	39.13	28.87
Ethnic minority	3.08	3.20	2.13
Part. in organization	23.90	22.32	36.14
Current sector of employment (household head)			
Wage employed	9.88	10.44	5.19
Self employed	19.12	19.90	13.04
Agriculture	18.48	17.25	28.13
Unemployed	31.55	30.55	39.76
Original sector of employment (household head)			
Wage employed	6.71	6.78	6.28
Self employed	11.45	11.67	9.79
Agriculture	31.61	30.44	41.17
Unemployed	36.36	36.92	31.18
Land access & tenure			
Had access to land before	60.01	57.47	79.69
Individual ownership	53.88	54.21	52.04
Collective ownership	8.9	6.95	18.93
Rental	13.45	13.43	13.55
<i>Colonato</i>	3.97	4.11	3.22
No. of observations	32030	28372	3658

Source: authors calculations based on RUT data

Even though not all of the households heads report on their current or past employment status, of those who do, 32% were unemployed at the time of registration while about 18% and 19% had been able to obtain self or agricultural employment respectively and 10% had wage employment. Comparing to their original employment status, we note that, in the aggregate, displacement was associated with some decrease in unemployment (from 36% to 32%). However, this result must be interpreted with caution. In the first place, the unemployment rate of the displaced population is still significantly higher than the national average. Secondly, displaced household heads usually find a job in the informal sector which is usually associated with low quality jobs. Finally, it is important to highlight some possible problems with RUT's employment information. The

employment status is determined by each individual surveyed and as such, RUT's employment categories might not coincide with standard employment definitions. Another important issue is that RUT's questionnaire does not give any information with respect to the quality of employment.

Another important element is that the share of households in agricultural employment dropped significantly (from 32% to about 18%), suggesting that those employed in the primary sector will find it particularly difficult to obtain employment in agriculture at their destination and thus make use of and preserve their skills. Consistent with the hypothesis of low portability of agricultural skills -or the difficulty of acquiring the means of production that are needed to usefully apply these skills- in the destination, the share of households originally employed in agriculture among those wanting to return is much higher than among those who are unwilling to do so. More interestingly, the share of those who have obtained an agricultural job among those who want to return is higher than among those who do not, in marked contrast to what is observed for wage jobs or self-employment, suggesting that it is more difficult to effectively respond to the needs of the displaced who have been employed in agriculture than those who had other jobs. Finally and as one would have expected, the unemployment rate in the reception site is higher among those households willing to return while those households not willing to return experienced a higher unemployment rate at the place of origin.

The lower panel of Table 3.2 provides information for land access and land tenure before displacement. The notion that land ownership increases the likelihood of being displaced is supported by the fact that about 60% of displaced households had access to land before having had to leave their place of origin, a percentage that is much higher than the share of land owners in a nationally representative sample. With 22 ha on average, the area abandoned was relatively large although the median abandoned area was, with 7 ha per household, much smaller (due to some outliers). This suggests that tenants of small land plots are common displacement targets.

While about half of the abandoned land was held under individual ownership, 13% had been accessed under rental arrangements, 9% under collective ownership, and 4% under *colonato*. Land tenure appears as an important determinant of the desire to return. Almost

80% of households willing to return reported access to land before displacement while only 57% did among those households not willing to return. This supports the view that land constitutes an important asset for displaced households, specially for those working in agriculture, which encourages return (households want to recover their abandoned land plots). It is of interest to note that those who held land collectively were more likely to want to return whereas individual tenure or land rental does not seem to affect significantly the desire to return. Collective property seems to highlight the importance of collective and social action in motivating return which was also suggested by the fact that households that belong to an organization are more willing to return.

The descriptive statistics discussed above do not control for different factors that might influence the desire to return. In this sense, it is very important to establish the differences between households willing and not willing to return in a regression framework which establishes causal relationships between the different variables of interest.

4. Econometric results

The model described in section 2 is estimated using RUT data. Different probit regressions are estimated with the purpose of establishing the impact of municipal characteristics and land tenure on the desire to return, as well as the differentiated effect of reactive and preventive displacement and the effect of different lengths (days) of displacement. Finally, we also estimated regressions to establish the impact of Decree 2007⁴, which was designed to protect and enforce land property rights, on the desire to return. Departmental controls were included in all the regressions.

The first estimations try to establish the impact of land tenure on the desire to return and assess the effectiveness of Decree 2007. The first regression considers land tenure without distinguishing between the different tenure structures. The second regression includes a dichotomous variable for households that had access to land in their place of

⁴ Decree 2007 was promulgated in October 2001 with the purpose of preventing land expropriation by the different actors involved in Colombia's internal conflict. The decree established that in the presence of displacement risk, INCODER, the government agency in charge of land and agricultural issues, must make an inventory of the land plots in the municipality and must prohibit all land sales or transfers until the risk of displacement disappears.

origin and were displaced after the promulgation of decree 2007. The third regression disaggregates land tenure in its different tenure structures. The results of this first set of regressions are illustrated in Table 4.1

A higher desire to return is associated with the possession of assets in the place of origin. Access to land increases the probability of willing return while land size does not affect the desire to return. The abandonment of land, as discussed above, constitutes a significant economic cost for displaced households and, as such, influences the desire to return.

More vulnerable households show a lower desire to return. The probability of return decreases when the household has a large number of members younger than 14, when the household is female-headed or when the household belongs to an ethnic minority. As was mentioned in the preceding section, more vulnerable households might prefer staying in the reception site where it might be easier to access government aid.

Employment opportunities in the reception site as well as a higher human capital stock are associated with a lower probability of return. Good employment opportunities imply higher costs of returning (households must give up these employment opportunities) and discourage return. Likewise, more educated households are less prone to return. This implies that more favorable conditions in the reception site decrease the probability of return. However, it is important to highlight the fact that households working in agriculture either at the origin or reception site are more willing to return since these households cannot easily access the labor market in the cities and are accustomed to developing their agricultural activities and skills in their site of origin.

Length (duration) of displacement exhibits a negative relationship with the desire to return. Displaced households, even though they face precarious conditions in the reception site, manage to adapt as time passes which decreases their desire to return.

Social networks in the site of origin play an important role in the return decision. Participation in peasant organizations increases the probability of return in 4% (an effect similar to that of land tenure). Peasant organizations can provide support to the displaced

households that desire to return by providing security and economic assistance to its members.

The expulsion actors as well as the different expulsion triggers play a determinant role in the desire to return. Quite strikingly, expulsion by paramilitaries or guerrilla groups is associated with a higher desire to return in comparison to displacement caused by other groups. On the other hand, reactive displacement is associated with a lower probability of return. This type of displacement was originated by a direct and targeted attack to the household and the possibility of facing another attack as well as the psychological impact this kind of aggression produces decreases the incentives to return.

Lastly, households that migrated within their department (intradepartmental displacement) are more willing to return. Proximity to the place of origin and to its social networks mitigates the costs of returning. However, this result must be interpreted with caution since the causality between these variables is not easy to establish. Households might be more willing to return since they displaced within their department or on the contrary, households might decide to migrate to a municipality within the department because they are willing to return in the near future.

Regression (2) in Table 4.1 shows the results when a dichotomous variable that identifies land tenant households that displaced after the promulgation of Decree 2007 is included. The results described above do not change and there is evidence of a positive and significant impact of Decree 2007 on the desire to return. However, this result might be capturing other time effects that occurred after October 2001 and affected the desire to return and not necessarily the effect of the decree. On the one hand, the decree has only been applied in one municipality. Secondly, starting in August 2002 the actual government assigned a particular importance to return programs supported in higher levels of security which might increase the incentives to return from this date onwards. The Decree 2007 dummy might be capturing this factor. However, it is also possible that even though the decree has only been applied in one municipality, its promulgation has effectively discouraged the violent appropriation of rural land plots.

The effect of the different land tenure structures is analyzed in regression (3) of Table 4.1. Again, the results discussed above do not change. The results suggest that all the

different tenure structures except informal possession increase the probability of return. Collective property exhibits the higher coefficient, followed by rental and private property. In fact, collective property exhibits a coefficient twice as high as that of private property.

Table 4.1. Probability of return – Land Tenure (aggregate and differentiated tenure/property structures) and impact of Decree 2007.

Variable	Probability of Return					
	(1)		(2)		(3)	
	Marginal Effect	p> z	Marginal Effect	p> z	Marginal Effect	p> z
Intradepartmental Displacement	0.0708	0.00	0.0708	0.00	0.0707	0.00
Length of Displacement (Days)	-0.0001	0.00	-0.0001	0.00	-0.0001	0.00
Reactive Displacement	-0.0187	0.00	-0.0180	0.00	-0.0165	0.00
Household size	-0.0004	0.67	-0.0003	0.78	-0.0005	0.64
Children < 14 years	-0.0024	0.08	-0.0025	0.07	-0.0023	0.10
Persons > 60 years	-0.0029	0.37	-0.0030	0.34	-0.0036	0.27
Female Head	-0.0218	0.00	-0.0222	0.00	-0.0213	0.00
Household Head Education	-0.0032	0.00	-0.0032	0.00	-0.0031	0.00
Household Head Age	0.0007	0.00	0.0007	0.00	0.0007	0.00
Ethnic Minority	-0.0320	0.00	-0.0301	0.00	-0.0279	0.00
Wage employment-Reception site	-0.0374	0.00	-0.0359	0.00	-0.0345	0.00
Self Employment-Reception site	-0.0317	0.00	-0.0298	0.00	-0.0285	0.00
Agriculture- Reception site	0.0193	0.00	0.0232	0.00	0.0234	0.00
Land Tenure	0.0434	0.00	0.0363	0.00		
Private/Individual Property					0.0511	0.00
Collective Property					0.1223	0.00
Rental					0.0521	0.00
<i>Colonato</i>					0.0299	0.00
Individual Property*hectares	0.0000	0.32	0.0000	0.34	0.0000	0.29
Land Tenure*Decree 2007			0.0258	0.00		
Peasant Organization	0.0351	0.00	0.0378	0.00	0.0271	0.00
Expelled by Guerrilla	0.0172	0.00	0.0123	0.00	0.0120	0.00
Expelled by Paramilitaries	0.0429	0.00	0.0403	0.00	0.0370	0.00
Expelled by Government	0.0070	0.63	0.0056	0.70	-0.0005	0.97
Wage employment-Site of Origin	0.0092	0.20	0.0084	0.24	0.0075	0.30
Self Employment-Site of Origin	0.0107	0.07	0.0091	0.12	0.0084	0.15
Agriculture- Site of Origin	0.0094	0.02	0.0079	0.05	0.0073	0.07
Number of Observations	29,640		29,640		29,640	
Pseudo-R2	0.1816		0.1829		0.1875	

Source: authors calculations based on RUT data

The violent events associated to reactive displacement are more traumatic than the events that trigger preventive displacement. As a consequence, households that displaced reactively might be less willing to return due to the fear of suffering another attack. With the aim of establishing such differences we estimated separate coefficients for employment status, household head education and land tenure variables differentiating on whether displacement was reactive or preventive. The results of these regressions are

reported in Table 4.2. The first column reports the effects of the different variables included in the regression without any interaction, while columns (2) and (3) report the results of interacting employment, education and land tenure variables with dummy variables for reactive and preventive displacement.

The results reveal that economic variables have a higher effect on the desire to return for those households that displaced preventively. Firstly, wage or self-employment in the place of origin is associated with a higher probability of return for preventive displacement but has no effect on households that displaced reactively. In addition, the effect of land tenure on the desire to return is higher for households that displaced preventively with respect to those that displaced reactively. However, work in agriculture at the place of origin is an important determinant of the desire to return, especially for those households that displaced reactively. Agriculture workers face dire conditions in their reception sites due to their impossibility to adapt to urban labor markets, and are willing to return even if the risks at their place of origin remain high.

Secondly, access to the labor market and education level (which reflect advantages at the reception site) are more important for preventive displacement. It is possible that reactive displacement, which occurred to save the household member's lives, leads households to experience an undesirable but inevitable situation.

To summarize, economic and labor variables, except agricultural work, do not affect the desire to return of those households that displaced reactively. The extreme violent events that generated reactive displacement discourage return even if economic conditions in their place of origin are favorable.

Table 4.2. Probability of Return. Reactive and Preventive Displacement

<i>Variable</i>	Marginal Effect	p> z 	Interactions			
			Reactive		Preventive	
			Marginal Effect	p> z 	Marginal Effect	p> z
Intradepartmental Displacement	0.0720	0.00				
Length of Displacement (Days)	0.0000	0.00				
Household size	0.0001	0.94				
Children < 14 years	-0.0028	0.04				
Persons > 60 years	-0.0010	0.75				
Female Head	-0.0215	0.00				
Household Head Age	0.0007	0.00				
Ethnic Minority	-0.0299	0.00				
Household Head Education			-0.0023	0.00	-0.0035	0.00
Wage employment-Reception site			-0.0161	0.06	-0.0425	0.00
Self Employment-Reception site			-0.0318	0.00	-0.0268	0.00
Agriculture- Reception site			-0.0079	0.19	0.0407	0.00
Land Tenure			0.0294	0.00	0.0430	0.00
Individual Property*hectares			0.0000	0.42	-0.0001	0.08
Wage employment-Site of Origin			-0.0073	0.35	0.0269	0.02
Self Employment-Site of Origin			-0.0021	0.75	0.0305	0.00
Agriculture- Site of Origin			0.0113	0.03	0.0269	0.02
Land Tenure*Decree 2007	0.0245	0.00				
Peasant Organization	0.0370	0.00				
Expelled by Guerrilla	0.0089	0.01				
Expelled by Paramilitaries	0.0413	0.00				
Expelled by Government	0.0044	0.75				
Number of Observations	32028					
Pseudo-R2	0.1877					

Source: authors calculations based on RUT data

Displaced households that register at the government agency in charge of providing aid and support to the displaced population (RSS) can only receive aid and assistance during the first 3 months following displacement. It is interesting then, to analyze the desire to return for different lengths of displacement. In addition, as time passes it is likely that displaced households get accustomed to the conditions in the reception site and this might eventually discourage return. To establish the differences in the desire to return according to the length of displacement, the coefficients for the education and labor variables were estimated separately differentiating between households that have been displaced for more and less than 3 months. The results in Table 4.3 show in the first column, the marginal effect of the different variables included without interactions. Columns (2) and (3) report the marginal effect when education and labor variables are interacted with a

dummy variable for households that have been displaced for less and more than 3 months respectively.

The results in Table 4.3 suggest that the effect of labor conditions in the place of origin, which positively affect the desire to return in those households that have been displaced for less than 3 months, disappears or even changes its sign for households that have been displaced for a period greater than 3 months. This supports the argument discussed above which suggests that as time passes, the economic conditions in the reception site and their possibly negative effect on the desire to return outweigh the economic and labor conditions in the site of origin since households might become accustomed to the new conditions in which they have to live.

Lastly, an interesting result has to do with the differential effect of work in agriculture at the reception site for the different lengths of displacement. While work in agriculture does not affect the desire to return for households that have been displaced for less than 3 months, as time passes and the length of displacement exceeds 3 months, work in agriculture has a significant and positive impact on the desire to return. This results seems to suggest that the lack of humanitarian aid for those households that have been displaced for more than 3 months generates big difficulties for all displaced households, especially for those households dedicated to agricultural activities. Bad economic conditions and the impossibility to find a job that matches their skills might explain the greater desire to return of these households.

Table 4.3. Probability of Return. Length of Displacement below and above 3 months.

<i>Variable</i>	Marginal Effect	p> z 	Interactions			
			< 3 months		> 3 months	
			Marginal Effect	p> z 	Marginal Effect	p> z
Intradepartmental Displacement	0.0672	0.00				
Household size	-0.0003	0.79				
Children < 14 years	-0.0023	0.09				
Persons > 60 years	-0.0026	0.42				
Female Head	-0.0213	0.00				
Household Head Age	0.0007	0.00				
Ethnic Minority	-0.0313	0.00				
Household Head Education			-0.0030	0.00	-0.0031	0.00
Wage employment-Reception site			-0.0313	0.00	-0.0317	0.00
Self Employment-Reception site			-0.0241	0.00	-0.0174	0.01
Agriculture- Reception site			0.0024	0.65	0.0643	0.00
Wage employment-Site of Origin			0.0520	0.00	-0.0480	0.00
Self Employment-Site of Origin			0.0405	0.00	-0.0386	0.00
Agriculture- Site of Origin			0.0520	0.00	-0.0424	0.00
Land Tenure	0.0353	0.00				
Individual Property*hectares	0.0000	0.42				
Land Tenure*Decree 2007	0.0244	0.00				
Peasant Organization	0.0358	0.00				
Expelled by Guerrilla	0.0132	0.00				
Expelled by Paramilitaries	0.0345	0.00				
Expelled by Government	-0.0023	0.87				
Number of Observations	29640					
Pseudo-R2	0.1899					

Source: authors calculations based on RUT data

The inclusion of the homicides rate and social investment per capita in the origin and reception sites does not influence the most important results found in the preceding regressions, as can be seen in Table 4.4. However, the importance of labor conditions in the place of origin decreases significantly. Before controlling for the homicides rate, employment opportunities at the place of origin increase the probability of return, but once the homicides rate is included these labor variables become statistically insignificant. It is possible that violence in the region outweighs any economic attractiveness, except land tenure, in the place of origin.

However, as can be seen from the results, higher social investment per capita in the reception site is associated with a lower probability of return (even when controlling for the homicides rate) while social investment at the place of origin has no effect on the desire to return. On the other hand, a high rate of homicides in the place of origin, which signals the persistence of violence, while associated to a negative coefficient is not

statistically significant. A higher homicides rate in the reception site, as expected, increases the probability of return.

Table 4.4. Probability of Return. Municipal Characteristics

Variable	Marginal Effect	p> z
Intradepartmental Displacement	0.0625	0.00
Length of Displacement (Days)	0.0000	0.00
Reactive Displacement	-0.0166	0.00
Household size	-0.0004	0.67
Children < 14 years	-0.0023	0.10
Persons > 60 years	-0.0041	0.21
Female Head	-0.0215	0.00
Household Head Education	-0.0032	0.00
Household Head Age	0.0008	0.00
Ethnic Minority	-0.0347	0.00
Wage employment-Reception site	-0.0365	0.00
Self Employment-Reception site	-0.0329	0.00
Agriculture- Reception site	0.0154	0.00
Land Tenure	0.0438	0.00
Individual Property*hectares	0.0000	0.34
Peasant Organization	0.0364	0.00
Expelled by Guerrilla	0.0244	0.00
Expelled by Paramilitaries	0.0458	0.00
Expelled by Government	0.0043	0.78
Wage employment-Site of Origin	0.0084	0.26
Self Employment-Site of Origin	0.0068	0.26
Agriculture- Site of Origin	0.0073	0.08
Social Investment per capita (-3)-Origin	-0.0004	0.27
Social Investment per capita (-3)-Reception	-0.0005	0.08
Homicides Rate- Origin	-0.0000	0.33
Homicides Rate- Reception	0.0003	0.00
Number of Observations	29,046	
Pseudo-R2	0.1866	

Source: authors calculations based on RUT data

From the regression results, five important conclusions can be drawn. First, land tenure provides an incentive to return. Second, more vulnerable households seek to establish themselves at the reception site and exhibit a lower desire to return. Third, economic opportunities in the place of origin encourage return while economic opportunities at the reception site decrease the probability of return. Fourth, once one controls for the persistence of violence at the place of origin, the effect of economic variables, except that of land tenure, disappears. Finally, the sense of community and collective action can increase the sense of security at the place of origin and increase the desire to return as the results for collective property and participation in peasant organizations suggest.

5. Conclusions

Any policy aimed to return displaced population should be targeted rightfully to ensure a successful and sustainable resettlement. Results of the paper indicate the desire to return is influenced by particular characteristics of the household and the displacement process. In that respect, agricultural employers, in the origin and reception site, families with access to land or households with a dense social web in the origin are more inclined to return to their village. On the other hand, vulnerable families, such as households with one parent, with female heads or large dependency ratios, prefer to settle on the reception site. Also, when displacement is caused by distressing events, families are less willing to return.

Return programs should be particularly targeted to households with access to land, agricultural employers or families with strong links to collective actions organizations. Such households are less equipped to face the conditions of urban areas. Return programs should also focus on recently displaced households. As the displacement period increase, households adapt to the reception site and, therefore, may rather settle in the new place of residence than face an uncertain situation in their villages of origin. On the other hand, vulnerable households or families that flee after being the victim of a violent event reveal a lower disposition to return. Policies for this group of the displaced population should concentrate on supporting the settlement process in the reception place.

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