

GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

**GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE TOWARDS COLOMBIAN UPROOTED
WOMEN IN THE NORTHERN BORDERLAND OF ECUADOR
A CASE OF HUMAN SECURITY AND SECURITIZATION**

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

Through a gender, conflict, borderland and security approach, this thesis aims at explaining the high levels of gender-based violence (GBV) towards Colombian forced migrant women in the northern borderland of Ecuador, specifically the province of Sucumbíos. It claims that the combination of historically low levels of human security in the province of Sucumbíos with a national policy of securitization of forced migration increases the possibility of Colombian women to experience GBV in this area. Furthermore, it points out that GBV experienced by this group is not an isolated case but it's part of a continuum of violence and of gender inequalities towards women, exacerbated during conflict and displacement. In consequence, this thesis aims at proving that the division between conflict zones and peace zones - away from the violence of the conflict zone - is blurred if one takes into consideration certain approaches such as gender and human security, which reveal different gendered insecurities and GBV in the so-called peace zone.

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I. Introduction

Nowadays, internal conflicts are one of the major causes of massive forced migration. In many conflicts, the systematic invasion of society's private sphere through the use of gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most common tools of war. Warring forces use GBV to bring an environment of terror and to blur the division between sites of violence and sites of peace. Furthermore, the loss of social regulations during and after conflict, augment the number of cases of GBV in the zone of conflict or close to it, the resulting social mores sometimes condone GBV. In consequence, civilians – men and women – have become the main target of conflict and the most affected by it. This has brought up new ways to conceive of conflict and new challenges for communities, governments and the international community (IC) in their humanitarian response. Among the latter is the protection of the massive number of civilians that flee from their country of origin to neighboring countries looking for protection, where many have experienced GBV.

Often, neighboring countries don't have the capacity (or will) to provide uprooted population with the needed protection. The majority of the uprooted population arrive to the borderlands of the neighboring countries; areas which are frequently defined by the low levels of human security (HS) and lack of rule of law. Even if borderlands have always been at the center of the national security strategy, they have often been excluded of the national development agenda. States have often used the term "security" to mean a series of geostrategic practices focused on ensuring the integrity of a nation's borders; this conception misses many, if not most, of the factors conducive to what is normally thought important for the population for living in a secure environment at the borderlands. In addition, partly as a consequence of this conception, many borderlands have passed through a process of securitization, which sees migration flows as a threat to national security and where it's the strategic task of the borderlands to stop these flows for the sake of national stability.

The low levels of HS and the process of securitization of forced migration has caused many uprooted population fleeing GBV – especially women – to continue experiencing GBV in the host community – even if its manifestation has changed. The lack of livelihood opportunities and rule of law place forced migrant women in a position of vulnerability to experience domestic violence, forced labour, sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Furthermore, the need to control migration flows in environments already prone for gendered insecurities, increases the likelihood of forced migrant women to experience the GBV mentioned before.

This puts into question the extent to which zones that are away from the sites of conflict are really zones of peace – providing a haven from gendered insecurities for the uprooted population – or if they are part of a continuum of violence towards women before, during and after conflict.

With a gender, conflict, borderland and security approach, this thesis seeks to analyze the exodus of population caused by the Colombian conflict to the northern borderland of Ecuador – specifically the province of Sucumbíos. The thesis has as objective to prove that the securitization of forced migration within a national security strategy in Ecuador, without an appropriate policy of HS implemented in the northern borderland, has a direct impact in the likelihood of Colombian uprooted women to experience GBV in Sucumbíos. It aims at questioning the distinction between sites of violence from sites of peace and points out that the position of vulnerability of Colombian women to experience GBV in Colombia and in Ecuador's northern borderland is part of a continuum of violence manifested before, during and after conflict. Even if it's true that Colombian men also experience GBV caused by the conflict and its effects, this thesis is going to focus specifically in the different types of GBV committed to Colombian women in Colombia and in Ecuador for the fact of being women.

Methodology

This thesis analyses the Borderland of Ecuador as a region, which with its own characteristics increases the probability of uprooted Colombian women to continue experiencing GBV in the host community. To accomplish its goal, it has conjugated different theoretical approaches that complement each other and together describe the reality of the northern borderland of Ecuador: Forced migration and gender studies, conflict studies, and borderland and security studies.

Given that it doesn't exist one borderland but different borderlands with Colombia, this thesis has focused on one part of the borderland – the Sucumbíos province – to present the reality and GBV of this specific area.

To have a comprehensive picture of Sucumbíos and the GBV in this area, this thesis has a descriptive and analytical approach, combining quantitative and qualitative information. The thesis has a gender and human security approach in the information gathering and in the interpretation and analysis of the information. For the complexity of the subject, there are no official statistic data about GBV in the borderland. However, the thesis has gathered data that indirectly shows the level of GBV in the borderland. It's noteworthy that because of economic constraints, there aren't many studies on the subject and the majority of studies conducted in the area, have been sponsored by the UN system and governmental organizations.

In the same way, a qualitative research has taken place to complement the second-hand information. Given time constraints as well as the characteristics of the context, the thesis couldn't conduct a focus group methodology. However, from the 6th to 22nd of January 2009, 27 interviews were conducted with different stakeholders in Quito and Lago Agrio. From these interviews: four were conducted to members of forced migrant organizations – two men and two women; three to women's movement organization – one interview was conducted to seven women from the *Federación de Mujeres*; two to members of the host community; three to governmental institutions; seven to national and international NGOs; two to academics; and six to international organizations. For security reasons, the names of the people interviewed have been changed and in some quotations the name of the organization is omitted.

Finally, it's noteworthy that a participant observation methodology was also implemented; mainly in the county of Lago Agrio.

II. Theoretical Considerations: Security and Gender-based Violence in the Borderlands

1. Conflict and post-conflict within a gender-based perspective

In most international relations studies, gender hasn't often been taken into consideration in conflict analyses (Jacobs, Jacobson, and Marchbank 2000). The perception of conflict as part of the masculine domain has left aside the role of women in conflict and the consequences of it in their lives. However, many analyses have proven that, as much as men, women have an active role in conflict as combatants and as agents of peace, and as much as women, men are also victims of the conflict violence.¹ Furthermore, many analyses have proven that conflict affects differently men and women and that the experiences during and after conflict are gendered. Gender studies and other critical studies have also contributed to conflict analysis by providing a new approach to the dichotomy between conflict and peace zones, by showing how conflict invades the private sphere, and by introducing the concept "continuum of violence".

With the end of the cold war, international studies optimistically predicted the end of wars and a sustained period of peace between states. During the 1990s, it didn't take too long to understand that conflicts didn't reach their end but were changing their nature: the majority of conflicts are now within states rather than between states (Duffield 2007, 116). In addition, thanks to the introduction of new variables in conflict studies, these conflicts exposed to the world 'new strategies'² of war, that were not taken into account in the past and where an increasing number of victims aren't part of the military or the militia. According to different studies, 90% of casualties in contemporary conflicts are civilians (Gros 2006; Munkler 2003). And from this number, 80% of casualties are women and children.³ Since men, because of

¹ Even if it's true that the main casualties of conflict are women, there is also a tendency to portrait women as mere victims of conflict and men as its perpetrators. The perception that "man does and women is" portrays men as the perpetrators of war and suggests that in war women have only a passive role. These stereotypes are detrimental to understanding the complex construction of fighting forces in conflict and war dynamics (Turshen 1998, 1; Cockburn 2004, 24). The fact that women are only seen as victims of conflict violence constitutes a denial of women's active role in conflict and post conflict settings. Furthermore, it denies seeing men also as victims of conflict and of GBV.

² Many authors speak of 'new strategies of war', such as rape or child soldiers, as it that didn't occur in the past. However history shows that these strategies were already used in war times, as in WWII or the Colonial wars. They are new, if at all, only by the fact that traditional conflict analysis didn't take them into account.

³ For more information, please visit Women war peace organization. UNIFEM. <http://www.womenwarpeace.org/node/18>, (consultation 20 April, 2009).

gender roles, are generally more involved in conflict and mobilized⁴ by it, civilian casualties are usually women and children (Hauchler and Kennedy 1994 in Cockburn 2004, 35). Furthermore, gender intersects with a class factor, and poor women are the least able to run away from the conflict zone (Cockburn 2004, 35), and are therefore the most affected by it.⁵

For this reason, gender and conflict studies have coined the term ‘gender-based violence’ or GBV to describe how gender differences are a contributing factor to the way conflict is experienced. In order to understand what GBV means, one should understand that gender refers to the socially produced differences between being feminine and being masculine. Gender studies challenge the biological determinism involved in differentiating men and women as a dichotomy and explain how a socialization process constructs a gender identity, which has different impact in the life of men and women and in the way to experience conflict (Holmes 2007, 2, 41, 171). What differentiates GBV from other types of violence in peace and conflict times is that its reach and manifestation changes according to the gender of the person. The risk factor to experience GBV in conflict situations is the fact of being men or women (Ricco 1997, 5). Much of the violence experienced by women in conflict and post-conflict settings has a gender factor behind, such as sexual assaults, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, human trafficking and forced labour. Furthermore, socio-economic violence is also viewed for many researchers as a form of GBV (Cockburn 2004; Indra 1999).

Conflict and gender studies have tried to understand why is it that civilians, especially women, are increasingly the targets of armed conflicts through the use of GBV. To understand this phenomenon one has to rethink the concept of “conflict zone”. Traditional conflict analyses held that “conflict zones” were spaces confined to battlefields where victims were male soldiers who fought enemy forces. Nowadays a conflict zone doesn’t uniquely cover civilian and public places, such as supermarkets, community spaces and towns (Gros 2006; Munkler 2003). Contemporary conflicts blur the distinction between battlefield and private places by invading intimate places such as people’s homes, rendering civilians, men and women, the main casualties of war (Giles and Hyndman 2004a, 3).

⁴ Even if women are also mobilized by conflict as combatants, men are generally more mobilized by national military forces, popular militias, political police forces, armed gangs, etc. In addition, men are more able, with sufficient warning, to flee the conflict zone; whereas women, encumbered by dependents are more likely to stay in situ (Cockburn 2004, 35).

⁵ It’s noteworthy that behind gender, there is also a class and ethnic factor that increases the vulnerability of some women and men. Gender can hide other categories of oppression such as race and ethnicity, or vice versa. Women of lower classes, such as peasants, displaced women and women living in cities’ peripheries are the most affected by violence.

The invasion of conflict to the private sphere has been a highly gendered practice. Hyndman and Giles argues that “it has occurred on the finest spatial scale: that of the human body, a site always marked by relations of gender, class...caste, religion, and geographical location” (2004a, 5). Shifting to the private sphere also means the use of different weapons, such as rape. Many authors have pointed out the incidence of rape as being perhaps the most marked gender difference occurring in conflict and the greatest distinction in the way in which men and women experience violence (Amnesty International 2004, 1; Turshen 1998, 158). Men and women are tortured and die differently in conflict times because of physical and culturally ascribed differences (Cockburn 2004, 35). Despite the increasing number of men victims of sexual assault as a form of GBV, intended to humiliate, weaken, demoralize and “feminize” them, rape continues to be a gendered weapon where women and girls are the main casualties (Ward et al. 2007, 37). In many conflict situations the rape of women is systematically used as a tool of war to conquering a nation, rewarding soldiers, and as a means of destroying the social fabric of the conquered population (Hansen 2001, 56).

The new conflict analysis have shown how the invasion of the private sphere is one of the most common and successful tactics used in conflict, given that it creates a state of terror and insecurity. Conflict disrupts the most intimate spaces, as the household and the body, dissolving the limits between private and public, between battlefield and people’s bodies. Because of gender division, women have been traditionally confined to the private sphere. Using rape or any other crime committed to women’s bodies as a tool of war also suggests that conflict has entered the most intimate and private places of people, which its violence is everywhere and no place and nobody is protected from it.⁶

By occupying the public and private spheres, conflict zones lose their precise delimitations. Therefore, it creates a blurred division between peace zones and war zones. Peace zones are often defined as zones outside and far from the line of combat. However, when war zones invade the private sphere of societies, a peace zone can no longer be conceived as merely a place away from the front line. Hence, places falling under the traditionally definition of “peace zones” under the dichotomy peace/war zones, may in fact be within the conflict zone. As Giles and Hyndman point out “sites of war and peace are ultimately linked; both can be sites of violence” (2004a, 4) and issues related to conflict and practices of war can no longer be viewed as issues located elsewhere, located and affecting only the regions in the official

⁶ As aforementioned, men do also experience rape and GBV in certain conflict contexts, in which this violence does have the same effect in society on the perception that violence is everywhere and nobody is protected from it.

“war zone”.

This false dichotomy further explains why the so-called peace zones are not necessarily zones of security for the population.⁷ Internal characteristics of the peace zone, such as delinquency, urban violence and sexual assaults are symptoms of daily life and might create an insecure and violent environment for certain groups and even the whole society (Rainero, Rodigou, and Pérez 2006, 6). Hence, instead of understanding security/insecurity and peace/war as a dichotomy with well-defined borders or as to different settings, one might see them within a *continuum of violence*.

- *Continuum of violence*

The concept “continuum of violence” helps in analysis of how violence goes beyond the dichotomy peace zone / conflict zone. These analyses are useful in arguing that a marked division between the different stages of conflict - pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict - doesn't permit to accurately understand violence and specifically GBV in a society (Cockburn 2004). Using the concept coined by Johan Galtung; “structural violence”,⁸ scholars argue that gender inequalities – social, political and economic – are forms of structural violence that are exacerbated during conflict (Giles and Hyndman 2004a; Indra 1999). Gender inequalities are also a consequence of the unequal power relation between men and women.⁹ Even if men and women may experience GBV, because of historically gender inequalities, women are more prone to experience it (Ricco 1997, 5). Gender inequalities place women more at risk to human rights violations before, during and after conflict. Hence, rather than seen GBV as a static and isolated phenomenon that manifests itself during conflict, it's seen as a structure of violence that flows through a continuum and transforms itself according to the different stages of conflict. It's not that violence against women emerges during conflict; rather, GBV used in pre-conflict times adapts to a new scenario and new forms of violence are expressed during conflict and post-conflict situations:

...Battering and marital rape, “dowry” burnings, honor killings, and genital mutilation in peacetime; military rape, sequestration, prostitution, and sexualized torture in war. No wonder

⁷ In this context security is defined as human security: a human rights approach that understands insecurity as a threat to human integrity and realization (Rainero, Rodigou, and Pérez 2006, 6). For a deeper debate about human security, please read the section on this subject below.

⁸ Galtung makes a distinction between personal and structural violence. Where personal violence is inflicted directly to an object and fluctuates over time; structural violence is more stable, doesn't inflict direct violence to an object, and is based in structures of inequality and social injustice (1969, 171-175).

⁹ Gender relations as power relations have been understood as “a central feature of patriarchy, a social system in which men have come to be dominant in relation to women (Holmes 2007, 2).

women often say, ‘War? Don’t speak to me of war. My daily life is a battlefield enough’ (Cockburn 2004, 43).

Different types of GBV, in the context of armed conflict, intensify already existing attitudes and behaviors of pre-conflict settings in the private sphere (Kelly 2000, 60). During conflict the levels of domestic violence rapidly increase,¹⁰ following the general spread of violence in the whole society. High levels of domestic violence suggest that women aren’t only exposed to violence committed by enemy forces but also by their close relatives. During displacement violence against women also intensifies because of changes in daily norms as well as changes in gender roles. Uprooted people have to face geographical dispersal of friendship and solidarity networks, the deformation of home life and the change of gender roles (Cockburn 2004, 39). For example, many women become the only household providers and men feel they have lost their role as providers and domestic violence is an expression of it (Giles and Hyndman 2004a, 3-4; Kelly 2000, 5).

This is also the case of sexual assault, where different factors during and after conflict may intensify its extent and impact. Conflicts, emergencies and displacement weaken norms regulating social behavior and “traditional social systems often break down” (IASC 2005, 4). Thus practices related to GBV that wouldn’t occur at such a high level before conflict and displacement may then take place. Even where sexual violence is not used as an explicit military tactic by armed forces, implicit permission may exist (Cockburn 2004, 30-31). Not notifying the cases, not punishing the perpetrators and failing to support the victims perpetuates the invisibility of GBV and increases the risk of women to experience some type of human rights violation caused by conflict and post-conflict situations. As Kelly points out, “limited protection available to women and implicit toleration are replaced by condoning and even [creating] an outright policy of sexual violence...[thus] it increases the frequency of opportunistic and planned assaults within or close to the conflict zone” (2000, 5). Sexual assaults take place in every phase of displacement, demonstrating that there is a continuum of GBV since they are manifested also in zones located away from the geographical battlefield¹¹ (Blanchard 2003, 1301; Gagnon 2008, 158).

¹⁰ Domestic violence is characterized as a pattern of coercive behavior that is used by a person against family or household members or dating partners to gain power or control over the other party in a relationship. This behavior may include any of the following: physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional and psychological intimidation, verbal abuse and threats, stalking, isolation from friends and family, economic control. For more information, please visit The Main Coalition against Domestic Violence Webpage: <http://www.mcedv.org/domviolence/index.htm>

¹¹ It’s noteworthy that “perpetrators of violence against women often stay close, continuing to threaten women in the post-civil-war or post-state-terror rebuilding process” (Blanchard 2003, 1301).

Displacement may cause as much of a threat as formal conflict (Handrahan 2004a, 434). Displaced women are particularly at risk because they don't have the traditional means of protection, are in settings where human rights violations regularly occur and have little power in their new place of residence (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children 2006, 15). Besides domestic and sexual violence, uprooted women are also prone to experience other types of GBV, such as human trafficking¹² and sexual exploitation. Many women, boys and girls, struggle to find access to resources and livelihood means. Given the lack of opportunities, many find prostitution, or sex trade for food, to be a viable solution (Handrahan 2004b, 434). Displaced populations are particularly prone to experience human trafficking (and sexual exploitation), given that they lack a clear and durable legal status in the host country and access to economic, social and civil rights (UNHCR 2007a, 6). This type of GBV demonstrates again that violence persists in "security" or "peace" zones and is an expression of the continuum of violence before, during, and after conflict. Hence, being away of the battlefield isn't a guarantee of security for uprooted women.

2. Security and the Borderlands

Borders have always been conceived as symbols of power and as constitutive to the very existence of a state. Borders are portrayed by the state as solid, rooted and durable entities that are altered only under exceptional circumstances such as war or state disintegration. However, a border has never been only a geographical line dividing two countries. A border has always been part of a *borderland*, a zone that is defined by the interactions of the social groups living at the border of a country.

Alejandro Grimson introduces the concept 'fronterization' to explain how human relations and historical processes constitute borderlands, by those of which the diverse border elements are constructed by the local and neighbor population. Borderlands are created through the relations and exchanges – material and symbolic – between those at each side of the border, beyond the territorial borders imposed by two states. Even if borders have been portrayed as static, a borderland is never a fixed object. It's an unstable object based on human relations, constantly disputed and reconfigured in different forms (2003a, 17).

¹² According to the UN Convention against transnational organized crime (known as the Palermo Convention), and its supplementary protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, human trafficking is defined as: *The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat of use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability...for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include...the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery...* (ILO 2005, 9)

Following this argument, borderlands are characterized by their human mobility. Borderlands are transit zones for products, goods and services. Both sides take advantage of monetary fluctuations and comparative advantages in products and services. As a consequence of the material exchanges, symbolic exchanges and relations with “the ones at the other side of the river” are always taking place. The mobility of informal sellers, smugglers, sexual workers, carriers, day laborer and mobile employees, but also families and ethnic groups living in both sides, constitute the identity and reality of a borderland.

As borderland people compose the borders, borders also compose borderland people’s imaginaries, practices and feelings (Grimson 2003b, 13). Borderlands are social and political scenarios, where the interests of the state and relations and problems between neighboring countries are manifested (Pacheco and Salazar 2008, 7). The relations between borderlanders and ‘innerlanders’ – population and central power authorities (the state) – also constitute the borderland’s dynamics and identity. This is why it’s important to understand how the intervention of the state – or lack of it – in the borderlands has affected the political, economic and cultural identity of the borderlands and their relations with ‘the ones at the other side’ (Grimson and Vila 2002, 74; Espinosa 2008, 26, 207). It’s unrealistic to believe that the relations between the local and neighboring population aren’t affected by the national relation between the neighboring countries. Hence, the challenge is to understand how the borderland populations interact economically and socially despite and within national politics.

Even if borders have always been an important element in the national security policy of a state, the borderland, as a zone in itself, has often not been taken into account in national development strategies. This neglect has often the effect of jeopardizing the HS of the population. As Simali and Amutabi point out, “states have relied excessively on control through state agencies and customs and immigration personnel and they have allocated few resources to borderland development” (2005, 204). In consequence, many borderlands lack well-constituted public institutions, rule of law and a strong democratic society (Espinosa 2008, 29).

Therefore, while some types of violence have been overvalued in a national security strategy, security agents have ignored internal violence and insecurities in the borderland. For the sake of national security, the HS of the people living at the borders has been neglected (Espinosa

2008, 35), which explains the low levels of development¹³ in many borderlands. Following the same argument, threats by external agents have been always taken into account, but by the same token, the violence committed by internal borderland actors to certain groups living in the borderland has often been forgotten.¹⁴

The lack of rule of law, as an expression of the low levels of HS, makes the borderland a site of violence. As a consequence of the lack of rule of law and of monopoly of violence, the borderland population has to face private violence. Being at the periphery of the state's development strategies and far away from central power has led borderlands to develop separately from the states. The low presence of the state has led the population to find or to accept other non-state actors as providers of services and protection (Espinosa 2008, 28, 29). This double violence effect is particularly detrimental to groups that have suffered social inequalities and don't have the means to buy or acquire protection.

The historical lack of the rule of law at the local level and of a national security strategy for borderlands has made borderlands prone to social exclusion and prone to develop shadow economies based on illicit flows (Duffield 2002a, 1054). It's important to stress out that shadow economies cannot be defined as external forces acting in the name of global criminal networks, given that many of the illicit traffic activities involve borderland population and have existed for centuries (Van Schendel 2005, 55; Abraham and Van Schendel 2005, 4-5). However, in many conflict situations, subversive forces take advantage of these zones to “establish trans-border connections with the grey world of the arms, (drug trafficking), money laundering and international criminal syndicates” (Duffield 2002b, 157).

Furthermore, one of the most important elements in analyzing shadow economies is that systems of illicit flows create their own groups of authority, that aim to become a recognized force in the borderland society. These groups create their own codes of economic and social regulations and become the “providers of protection” to the population (Duffield 2002a, 1056-1059), in exchange of goods and services, which may increase human rights violations and be a threat to the HS of the population.

¹³ Development is defined in terms of human development. In other words, development is more than economic growth, “[it] is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests”. For more information, please visit <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev/>.

¹⁴ One of the most controversial examples of this is the case of “las muertas de Juarez” where young women in Juarez city – a borderland separating Mexico from the United States – are systematically killed. Between 2001 to 2003, 251 female homicides were committed. For more information please visit: http://sepiensa.org.mx/contenidos/1_lasmuertas/muertal.htm

The analysis exposed above shows that the violence, (in) security, and fear of threats in a borderland must be analyzed as a complex problematic that is determined by different factors. An analysis of the borderland as a site of violence must conjugate different theoretical elements – HS, gender studies and securitization theory – to understand its social dynamics and its ‘fronterization’ process.

- *Human security – a people-centered approach to security*

Under a realistic perspective security has been traditionally defined in international relations as the security of the nation and the state. For a long time it was a common belief that if a nation was secure from external threats people were secure inside the state’s borders. However with the shift in war from interstate to intrastate conflicts, there has also been a shift from studying security from the national to the individual level. The consequences of the ‘new strategies of war’, crime and hunger, have shown that these are the real threats for the vast majority of the population and not military invasion by neighboring countries as the traditional security framework used to state (McCormack 2008, 115). As Owen points out “there is little doubt that (in and of itself) the traditional state-based security paradigm is failing in its primary objective...to protect people” (2004, 374). Because of limitations in the way security is traditionally conceived, scholars and policymakers have proposed the term Human Security (HS) to broaden the scope of international security, to demonstrate that security is more than military defense of the state territory (Paris 2001, 87) and to show that a people-centered approach was needed for the security of individuals and groups that might be ignored by a traditional security framework.

A HS approach provides a people-centered approach to security by analyzing how low levels of development and lack of rule of law increases insecurity and loss of dignity of the population. The 1994 UNDP Human Development Report, which launched the concept HS, states that security has “forgotten the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives” (United Nations Development Programme 1994, 22). It defines HS as freedom from fear and freedom from want with four specific characteristics: universal, independent, easy to ensure through early prevention and people-centered (Hoogensen and Vigeland Rotten 2004, 157). With a rights-based approach to security, HS underlines how the enjoyment of basic human rights regardless the location and the situation of the population is the basis of security (Giles and Hyndman 2004b, 307).

Those states, who have a HS approach, focus on people rather than territories; focus on

human development rather than solely on their national boundaries. However it's important to point out that it's not that security stops to include military security. On the contrary, foreign policy, economic development and military security are intertwined for the safety of the people (King and Murray 2001, 585, 586). According to UNDP, HS guarantees safety from chronic threats – e.g. hunger – and protects people from hurtful disruption in daily life – e.g. internal conflict – in the household, local and community level (Paris 2001, 90). Furthermore, the concept seeks to strengthen people's agency so they can take charge and control their own lives. (Commission on Human Security 2003, iv).

HS has been criticized by scholars as being a false holism, because of the lack of a precise definition and the extension of its scope.¹⁵ Given that the concept encompasses everything from political and personal security to health and environmental security, there is little guidance on what exactly should be prioritized in policy-making (Hoogensen and Vigeland Rotten 2004, 156), how should it be put into practice and what should be included in research studies.

Furthermore, McCormack argues that the aim of HS to emancipate and empower people from developing countries cannot be accomplished because of incongruence in the concept. HS places the state as the main responsible to provide security to its citizens, but at the same time potentially consents powerful states and IO to intervene and regulate weaker states.¹⁶ Thus, “whilst the HS framework problematizes the relationship between the state and its citizens, the framework replaces this relationship with relationships with other states or international agencies that lack accountability, effectively further disempowering citizens in weak or unstable states” (2008, 113). In other words, the IC through a HS speech might curtail people's agency, because citizens of a weak state don't have the means to control or hold to account IO and powerful states (McCormack 2008, 114,118). In consequence, people that are already in environments of underdevelopment and lack of rule of law, without human rights guarantees, may see a decrease in the power to act collectively for their own rights, might, in other words, be less empowered.

¹⁵ Human security has also been criticized as being an opportunity for NGOs, development agencies and middle power states to shift attention away from conventional security issues by linking human security to human development and to capture some of the financial resources associated with military security and foreign policy (King and Murray 2001, 588; Paris 2001, 88)

¹⁶ By placing the individual as central focus of security where the state is responsible of it, considering security from a global perspective rather than only from a nation's individual perspective and exposing under-development as a global threat, the international community and powerful states create a moral justification to intervene in states that fail or are not willing to provide security to their population (Duffield 2007, 111-116; King and Murray 2001, 588). This is what many authors have named as the manipulation of human security and of “the responsibility to protect”.

Another problem in the process of providing HS is that different humanitarian and development programs routinely ignore gender issues when designing their programs¹⁷ (Handrahan 2004b, 431) and might unwittingly fail to protect and assist displaced women that have experienced and are experiencing GBV (Gozdziak 2008, 186). Many programs don't implement a rights-based approach,¹⁸ don't favor empowerment activities, and in many situations the uprooted population is being kept dependent of handouts delivered, hence curtailing their agency (Kumin 2008, 222; Rajasingham-Senanayake 2004, 159). Because of their condition, forced migrants are in an unequal power relation with these institutions. In consequence, the forced migration population loses autonomy and develops high dependency on them (Indra 1999, 18). Hence, the HS discourse in humanitarian and development programs instead of providing security to individuals might actually increase the insecurity of its beneficiary population because of incongruence in their actions.

In order to understand the benefits of having a HS perspective, it's important to make a distinction between HS as a normative approach and HS – people-centered approach – as a research category. Throughout the text, 'HS' will serve to discuss how under a normative approach IO might curtail the agency of displaced population as individuals of rights, but also 'HS' will be used as a research category to criticize the traditional security perspective by asking: security for whom?

As aforementioned, many scholars have criticized the concept for not having a well-defined target. However, HS is an important concept to analyze the security and dignity living of people, especially for those that find themselves in a position of vulnerability as uprooted people. Following Paris' argument, HS might be employed as a distinct branch of security studies. Paris proposes to see the concept as a category of security studies that is concerned with military and non-military threats that affect the survival of societies, groups, and individuals, "in contrast to more traditional approaches to security studies that focus on protecting states from external threats" (Paris 2001, 96,102). This research category aims at analyzing how low levels of development might increase the insecurity of people, as crime,

¹⁷ During the past years, researches and policymakers have tackled this discordance by creating diverse tools and conventions. Examples of this are the "Convention 1325" adopted by the UN Security Council in 2000 about the impact of war on women and their contribution to conflict resolution and the "Women, Girls, Boys and Men: Different Needs – Equal Opportunities" toolkit developed by IASC in 2007. Despite of this progress, there is still a gap between policies and their implementation. In many contexts 'refugee' is still a homogenous label, without taking account gender, ethnic and generational differences.

¹⁸ A rights based approach is a conceptual framework, founded in the principles of participation and empowering women and men and their communities to boost change and respect for human rights (UNHCR 2008, 38).

GBV, disease and hunger. Confining HS as category of analysis has the advantage of eliminating the “problem of deriving a clear hypothesis from the concept itself” and of presupposing any particular normative agenda (Paris 2001, 101)

- *Human security from a gender perspective*

A realistic perspective assumes that the security of a community is entrusted to the state and largely constitutes in keeping outside of its boundaries foreign and dangerous threats (Blanchard 2003, 1289). However, following the lines of HS, a gender perspective challenges the “tacit territorial assumption of state security” by questioning whether rendering secure the boundaries of a nation actually brings security to the population inside them (Giles and Hyndman 2004b, 307). As mentioned above, citizens of different states live day-to-day with internal threats that aren’t directly linked to foreign threats; on the contrary they are produced within the boundaries of the organ that is responsible to provide security to its population. Providing security by militarizing the state’s boundaries might be done sometimes at the expense of the expenditure on public services (Cockburn 2004, 32) and might be the cause of higher human rights violations.

This argument has led different scholars to ask: who is being secured by these security policies? If one takes the security definition of realistic studies,¹⁹ one should ask from what threats and by which means is security achieved (Blanchard 2003, 1289,1291). Traditional approaches to security focus on the use of military force to ensure sovereignty and territoriality (Natalie Hudson 2009, 55). Many national security policies don’t take into account the insecurities and needs of specific groups such as uprooted people, minorities and even the population that is situated in a borderland; thus leaving these groups with no protection to insecurity threats. Furthermore, a feminist critical approach questions traditional security policies by asking, to what extent it provides security and protection to women in times of war, but also in times of peace (Blanchard 2003, 1290). The majority of gender relations operate at a community and individual level; in consequence an interstate level of analysis within a realist perspective blinds scholars and policymakers to the effects of national security in the life of women (Goldstein 2001, 53).

¹⁹ The realist approach to security perceives war and peace in terms of “1) territorial states operating as autonomous actors, 2) states rationally pursuing their own interests and 3) an anarchic system of sovereign states” (Goldstein 2001, 53).

As aforementioned, women under structures of gender inequalities are more exposed to GBV in war and peace zones. A militarized security strategy might silence women's security problems – i.e. domestic violence and sexual exploitation – providing little or no recognition to these insecurity problems encountered by women in times of conflict and peace (Hansen 2001, 57,59). In consequence, Hansen argues that “rather than seeing the state as a provider of security, it's important to (analyze) how the state has often constituted a threat to its citizens” (2001, 57). In many situations, states have been the problem as much as the solution by being the direct perpetrators of human rights violation or by condoning actions that increase the position of vulnerability and rights violations of certain groups. For this reason many gender studies scholars, introduce in the HS approach the concept ‘gendered insecurities’,²⁰ to expose how national security under a realistic perspective has been a homogenized approach that has forgotten the specific characteristics and needs of different groups, in this case women, thus incrementing their insecurity within national borders²¹ (Blanchard 2003; Tickner 1992; Giles and Hyndman 2004a).

- *The process of securitization and insecurity*

The development of globalization, the end of the cold war and the uptick in internal conflicts, have affected the ways in which states conceive borderlands as part of the security of a state. States' major fear is no longer the invasion of neighboring countries. Rather, states fear that terrorism and transnational crime pierce their boundaries. In this context, migration flows are no longer seen as beneficial to the economy but as a threat to national security and a state's stability. The traditional view of security – i.e. protecting national boundaries from external threats – continues to be the main objective; it's only that the perceived threats have changed. However, this change has not been automatic. A process of securitization has taken place to provide a meaning to migration flows as a security threat and borderlands as fertile sites for national instability. New discourses as well as new technologies for security have been developed in order to securitize borderlands and to be able to control them from external threats.

Securitization refers to the speech act of labeling something as a security issue; it's only by thinking of an issue under the ‘security’ label that it becomes part of its scope (Waeber 2004,

²⁰ It's noteworthy that the human security approach needs also to be engendered by asking security of which individual? It needs to include men and women to be truly humane (Truong, Wieringa, and Chhachhi 2007, xviii; Heidi Hudson 2005, 155)

²¹ The homogenous approach to security has also forgotten to include other variables of inequality that varies over time and context such as class, ethnicity, nationality and sexuality (Heidi Hudson 2005, 161).

9). An issue is presented within a security discourse as an existential threat to the state, its society and its community. In the past, the referent object of security was the threat of foreign states invading national territory. However, securitization theory shows that foreign states are no longer the major fear of the state and that security may have different referent objects, from the economic and environmental sphere to the military and societal sphere, as long as it has gone through the process of securitization (C.A.S.E. Collective 2006, 453).

Under a successful securitization process, anything can be securitized. However, why would a referent object be securitized? Many states use securitization as a strategy of action. Securitizing an issue permits security agents to implement actions and extreme measures outside the normal and democratic sphere (Williams in C.A.S.E. Collective 2006, 453). Therefore providing the power to security agents to take decision-making policies in the name of the whole society (Taureck 2006, 53-54). By becoming a security issue legitimizes extraordinary measures to handle it to block the threatening development. These measures might reduce human rights guarantees of a certain social group for the sake of national security.

Another key element in the securitization theory is that securitization is an intersubjective and socially constructed phenomenon (Buzan et al. 1997, 28). Securitization is a social process of transforming an issue into a perceived threat to the security of the individual, the community and the state (Stritzel 2007, 377). In other words, securitization involves people and social interactions to succeed. An effective securitization analysis needs to approach securitization as an audience-centered process, context-dependent and power-laden. Securitization is a process and may only take place within a configuration of circumstances between the social context, the audience disposition to accept it as such²² and the power games between the speaker and the audience (Balzacq 2005, 171-172).

Furthermore, securitization isn't simply a linguistic act. Besides this act, there's a technocratic aspect, where securitization is as much a question of security technology – ID cards, institutional knowledge, devices and practices – as it is of dramatic speech (Natalie Hudson 2009, 57). The practices of security are decisive to understand how a state manages to control its borderlands and put under surveillance an issue or a group of people (Bigo 2000, 174,176; Hammerstad 2009, 11).

²² It's only when the audience accepts the issue as a security threat, that "the securitizing agent can obtain permission to override rules that would otherwise bind it" (Buzan et al. 1997, 23).

Securitization not only affects dynamics at the national level, but at all the levels of a society. Securitizing an issue at the interstate level creates unease at the individual and collective level and changes social dynamics to address the issue. Security measures create a perception of insecurity at the state level, so the fact of securitizing different objects only increases the levels of (in)security in a society. As Bigo points out, securitization doesn't counter insecuritisation, on the contrary the former enlarges the latter (Bigo 2000, 174). A particular context of national security at the state level is reflected at the community level, in this case the borderlands, and affects the daily lives of individuals and its community. Hence, securizing an issue that involves a group of people might increase the likelihood of this group to experience human rights violations committed at the state level but also at the community and individual level.

- *The securitization of migration and forced migration movements*

The proliferation of internal conflicts and massive migration movements has led to a process of securitization of migration. This process was reinforced and consolidated after the 9/11 terrorists attacks, where external agents threatened the national security of one of the most powerful states. During the last decades, migrants have increasingly been associated with organized crime and terrorist networks. By becoming the scapegoats and in order to remedy declining political legitimacy, they have been pictured as a threat to the states' stability (Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002, 22; C.A.S.E. Collective 2006, 453; Huysmans 2000, 752, 758).

One of the major consequences of criminalizing migration has been the progressive deterioration of the distinction between economic migrants and uprooted people. Uprooted people, including refugees, have been seen as criminals, terrorists, and abusers of the system, and thereby as a danger to state's stability. The difficulty to define who is in need of international protection and who isn't, as well as the securitization of the issue, has shifted the focus of states and the IC from the needs of this social group in the host community to the question of the distinction between "genuine" and "false" asylum-seekers (and therefore a threat to national security) (Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002, 28).

Because of its political implications, states try not to make direct formal links between security and asylum (Wong 2005, 89). Asylum has been connected with other issues that are traditionally seen as threatening to a state, such as international terrorism and organized crime networks. These issues have been invoked in order to avoid providing international

humanitarian aid and to elude negative human rights appraisals. Following this rationale, states aim to portray their actions as a security response to external threats, by arguing that it's for the sake of the state and the security of its population the need to close the borders and reduce asylum-seekers quotas, and not because of a will to reject forced migration flows.

The insertion of the forced migration phenomenon as a security issue is developed not only by state policy-makers and the media, but also by the IC (Hammerstad 2009, 2). For example in the 70's UNHCR stated that:

We must attempt to reduce complex political questions in the minds of nations into simple moral and humanitarian components for the heart to answer (In Hammerstad 2009, 1).

20 years later the former High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata argued that:

Population displacement...has gone beyond the humanitarian domain to become a major political, security and socio-economic issue, affecting regional and global stability (Ogata 1994).

Seeing refugees as victims of insecurity, but also as a source of instability and conflict continues in present times (Hammerstad 2009). In consequence, under a normative approach to HS, and their "responsibility to protect"²³, IO operate humanitarian and development programs for the sake of global security and the stability of states.

The securitization of forced migration by the states and the IC has deteriorated the protection of uprooted people in host communities. As Huysmans points out, decision-making and policies in the area of asylum are shifting from the humanitarian and human rights approach to a traditional national security approach (2000, 760). There has been a shift from the question "do they need assistance?" to "are they refugees...migrants, are they a national threat?" This increases the perception in society of uprooted people as a threat to their community and individual security. Thus, strategies of securitization of forced migration at a national level make the inclusion of uprooted people more difficult in host communities that have incorporated a securitized perspective of this social group. Furthermore, because the access to the asylum system is becoming limited and troubled, many people who could qualify as refugees use the assistance of smugglers to get into a host country (Wong 2005, 76). These factors deteriorate the protection of uprooted people and increase the probability of this social group to experience human rights violations during displacement and settlement in a host community.

²³ In current times, UNHCR is trying not to link the refugee issue with security issues to avoid states and individuals' perception of refugees as a threat, by naming it "responsibility to protect". However in practice it is still treated as a security issue.

- *The need for controlling borderlands*

Borders must be visible to show to the world the state's sovereignty, and controlling them is a need to reflect a solid state within the rule of law (Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002, 25; Van Schendel 2005, 39-41). Controlling the borders has always been part of the national security agenda. With the securitization of migration it's only the threat that has suffered a transformation. As Grimson points out the states have gone from the obsession of controlling the space to the obsession of controlling the flows (2005, 99), but border control remains the focus of the security strategy.

The multiplication of economic flows has destabilized the notions of sovereignty, territoriality and security (Bigo 2000, 171). In consequence, the securitization of borders is redefined; the fear of crime, the fear of weakening and porous borders, and thereby of a loss in sovereignty, creates the need to build barriers to stop human flows (Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002, 25; Grimson 2005, 99). Border control has become another element of the security continuum connecting terrorism, international crime and migration (Huysmans 2000, 760).

According to Bigo the securitization of migration and borders has blurred the distinction between external and internal security (2000, 172-189). Borders have always been the limiting point between external and internal security. External security tackles external threats outside the borders and military forces are its main security agents. Whereas internal security tackles threats that might destabilize the rule of law within the limits of the state and police forces are its main security agents. However with the new security context, the limiting point – the borders – has become the main objective of control of these two forces. The securitization of the borders and immigration has intermingled internal and external security, and thereby the duties of their respective security agents.

This common objective has changed the perception of the border as a limiting point to the border as a security zone. Securitization of migration implies a change in control methods. Where before borders had a bureaucratic role in controlling the flows – economic and human – entering and leaving the country, nowadays border control is the main security strategy to block external threats – transnational crime networks and terrorists – from entering and becoming internal threats. Furthermore, the control methods not only reach those entering the country, but those who have already settled in this region (Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002, 30).

Borders have been transformed into a security object that needs a special approach and measures to reduce the threat and impact of the state's major enemies.

III. Linking the Theory with the context of the Northern Borderland of Ecuador

The different concepts and approaches analyzed in the theoretical part provide a better understanding of the dynamics of the northern borderland of Ecuador, specifically the province of Sucumbíos and of the complex social phenomenon of GBV in the area. The approaches of gender and conflict studies, borderlands and fronterization, and critical security studies create a comprehensive theoretical framework to explain the high levels of GBV towards Colombian uprooted women in Sucumbíos.

1. Gender and conflict studies: Seeing conflict from a gender perspective allows approaching certain aspects of it that are not commonly analyzed in traditional conflict studies. It extracts aspects of conflict that affect principally women and helps understanding that these aren't isolated cases but are part of the structural violence of gender inequalities, which places women more at risk before, during and after conflict. Second, it helps to understand that the borders between conflict and peace zones aren't so delimited as traditional international and conflict studies argue. On the contrary, its borders are fragile and the so-called peace zones may be also sites of violence for the population. Through the concept *continuum of violence* one can understand that GBV aren't isolated phenomena in a war zone or refugee camp; on the contrary, it's part of a structure that transcends the dichotomy of conflict and peace. Hence security zones attributed to forced migrants might be legitimately classified as sites of violence for certain groups inside of it if other categories, such as gender, are taken into account.

Having a gender and conflict studies framework allows understanding that the GBV experienced by Colombian uprooted women in Sucumbíos isn't an isolated phenomenon, but is part of a continuum of violence during the conflict and displacement in Colombia and settlement in the Ecuadorian borderland; caused by structures of gender inequalities and manifested in different types of GBV. Second, this framework proves that there isn't a dichotomy between peace zones and conflict zones; hence the distinction between the Colombian borderland as a site of violence and the Ecuadorian borderland as a site of peace is blurred and Sucumbíos might actually be a site of violence for women looking for international protection if one has a gender approach the moment of analyzing the borderland.

2. Borderlands and the fronterization process: The borderland analysis provides a framework for explaining how is it that the border has had such a supreme importance in the

national security strategy while being almost excluded from the state's development strategy. It provides also an explanation of the use of private violence and the development of shadow economies, where on occasion the only providers of protection are non-state groups. Furthermore, the fronterization process helps understanding how the borderlands are constituted by the mobility of its population and the relations with the ones in the other side. A borderland analysis also shows how borderlands are political scenarios where the national politics are manifested among the population. This scenario helps to explain how uprooted women, already in a position of vulnerability, might increase their probability of experiencing GBV in the host community.

The northern borderland of Ecuador is of extreme importance in the national security agenda. Hence while the government has focused on controlling the borders to stop external threats, historically it has abandoned the human development of the borderland. A borderland analysis explains how the lack of rule of law in the area has allowed the Colombian irregular forces to rest and stock up in Ecuadorian territory, how private violence is commonly used in the area, and how it has allowed the proliferation of shadow economies and illicit flows as the drug and arm business, but also human trafficking and sexual exploitation networks that affect directly Colombian uprooted women. Finally the concept of *fronterization*, showing that borderlands aren't fixed objects, helps analyzing how the national political relation with Colombia and the arrival of forced migrants has changed, at the local level, the relations between Ecuadorians and Colombians at both sides of the borderland, breaking up the solidarity networks between these two populations and thereby increasing the possibility of Colombian uprooted women to experience GBV.

3. A human security approach: HS as a category of research contributes important elements to the analysis of forced migration movements to host communities, in particular in the case of women. First, it provides a people-centered approach to security by analyzing how low levels of development and lack of rule of law might increase the insecurity of people, and shows how violence threats and security needs differ from gender to gender. Second, it proves that a national security strategy based only in the militarization of state borders neglects the security of specific groups at the community and individual level, in this case of women, and increases gender insecurities. Finally, the criticisms of the normative approach of HS help to analyze whether HS is being implemented as a rights-based and people-centered approach or whether it's curtailing the agency of the people in need of international protection.

Having a HS framework allows to analyze how the Ecuadorian state has prioritized a national military security strategy in detriment of the security of people and how this fact has had a direct impact in the life of women and in the cases of GBV in the borderland. It gives the framework to understand how the high levels of poverty and the historical lack of rule of law, combined with a military strategy in Sucumbíos increases the likelihood of Ecuadorian women as well as Colombian uprooted women to experience GBV. Furthermore, a HS framework helps in understanding that prioritizing a national military security in the borderland has created certain gendered insecurities at the community level – as shown by the cases of GBV committed by the security authorities – that are hidden in this security strategy. Finally, analyzing HS used under a normative approach, allows explaining how the work of the IC in the northern borderland is partly curtailing the Agency of Colombian forced migrants by becoming an intermediary to the Ecuadorian state and basing their intervention in hand-out deliveries and short-term aid. The lack of agency of these uprooted women increases the likelihood that they sooner or later experience GBV.

4. A securitization approach: The fact that states, under a traditional view of security, portrait migration flows as a security threat and borderlands as fertile sites for national instability, have a direct impact in the cases of GBV experienced by uprooted women. First, securitizing migration allows security agents to implement security technology, control methods and extreme measures outside the normal and democratic sphere that could produce or abet GBV. Second, it creates the image of migrants, including forced migrants, as criminals and abusers of the system. This affects the asylum and humanitarian aid system, making it limited and troubled and encouraging people to use the assistance of smugglers to get into the host country. Third, it helps analyzing how reinforcing surveillance over a specific group to guarantee national security might create securitization at the local level and discrimination to the securitized group of people. Finally, it helps explaining how a securitization process affects at the local level the perception of forced migrants and the coexistence among the borderland population and those groups that are defined by the official language as terrorists or delinquents.

The high levels of GBV in Sucumbíos can also be explained under a securitization process framework. The securitization process explains the implementation of controlling methods, outside the democratic sphere, which targets only the Colombian population, and explains the high levels of GBV committed by the security authorities. It also explains why the Ecuadorian asylum system has become troubled and why uprooted Colombian people find alternative

methods to get into Ecuador or prefer to stay in the country without the appropriate documentation, which increases the likelihood of women to experience GBV by human trafficking networks. Furthermore, a securitization framework describes how a new process of fronterization has taken place in Sucumbíos, changing the perception of Colombians from brothers to delinquents and members of irregular forces. This explains the perception that Colombians bring insecurity to the area and the discrimination to uprooted Colombian women, which are by default seen as ‘prostitutes’ in an already sexist society that discriminates and abuses sexual workers. These prejudices have also a negative effect in the solidarity networks between the host community and the uprooted population and in the organization of Colombian women that prefer to make their presence invisible in a discriminatory environment. Thus, having a direct effect in the likelihood of Colombian uprooted women to experience GBV.

IV. Case Study: GBV Towards Colombian Uprooted Women in the Northern Borderland of Ecuador – specifically in the province of Sucumbíos

1. Context analysis of Colombian uprooted women in Ecuador's northern borderland

During the last 40 years, Colombia has lived an internal armed conflict between the government, guerrillas and paramilitary groups,²⁴ which has produced three millions of IDPs in the country. However, it's in the last decade, with the implementation of the *Plan Colombia*²⁵ and the *Plan Patriota*²⁶ that violence has intensified in the northern and southern regions of the country. As a consequence of this, more than 300.000 Colombian citizens have been forced to flee from their country looking for international protection.

The development of the conflict in the Colombian borders has blurred the national limits of the conflict and some of its effects have trespassed to the neighboring countries. This is the case in Ecuador. However, while Colombia perceives that its conflict has regionalized – which is why it demands Ecuador to get involved in the fight against terrorism – Ecuador perceives the presence of the Colombian conflict in its territory as a spill-over effect – which is why it demands the Colombian government to control its borders and fight the conflict within its territory. These two different ways of perceiving the conflict has brought a number of diplomatic tensions between the neighboring countries and has affected directly to the population running away from the conflict. Partly as a strategy to not get military involved in the conflict, Ecuador has developed a humanitarian response to receive the Colombian displaced population in its territory (Ceballos 2007a).

Out of the five bordering countries with Colombia, Ecuador is the one receiving the largest amount of displaced population. Since the year 2000, 2.300 Colombians have crossed the border every 6 months, a rising tendency given that 60% of applications for asylum were

²⁴ Guerrillas: ELN and FARC. Paramilitary groups: AUC and Aguilas Negras (Black Eagles)

²⁵ In 1999, under the government of Andrés Pastrana, the Colombian government – with the economic and political support of the United States, launched the *Plan Colombia*. In it's beginning, the *Plan* was conceived as a development plan, with the objectives of social and economic revitalization. The focus of the original *Plan* wasn't the war against drug trafficking, military aid and fumigation of coca crops. However, because of the US pressure in the fight against drug trafficking, the final version of the *Plan* focused on drug trafficking and strengthening of the military in the northern and southern regions of Colombia. The *Plan Colombia* has been very criticized because of its environmental side effects, the destruction of legal crops and human rights violations; causing the displacement of the population.

²⁶ As a response to the failure of the *Plan Colombia* in the fight against drug trafficking and with the objective to militarily eliminate the guerrillas in the country, the Colombian government – with the support of the US government – launched in 2004, a military counterterrorism campaign called *Plan Patriota*. As part of the war against terror, the Plan seeks to eliminate the guerrillas by targeting the FARC in the southern region of Colombia. *Plan Patriota* has been very criticized because of the human rights violations caused to civilians; causing the displacement of the population.

made in the last years.²⁷ The number of registered refugee and asylum seekers in Ecuador between 2000 and 2006 reached 13,448 and 44,451 respectively (UNHCR 2007b, 7), but the government and UNHCR estimate that the total number of persons in need of international protection is close to 135,000²⁸ and out of this number 44% are women (El Comercio 2009d; Cruz 2007, 34). This shows that less than a half of Colombian uprooted people has a legal status in the country. In fact, only 30% of the asylum-seeking applications are accepted in Ecuador.²⁹ Furthermore there's a significant difference between genders, while 46% of male asylum-seekers applications were accepted in 2006, only 28% of female applications were accepted (Túpac-Yupanqui and Rovayo 2006, 111) This has become as what many analysts call it a *grey zone*,³⁰ which includes the people that for some reason haven't applied to the status of refugee in the country³¹ and the population who were denied asylum status called *negados*.³²

Even if Colombian forced migration is settled in every Ecuadorian city, there is a considerable agglomeration of uprooted Colombians in the northern zone of the country that borders with Colombia. Of the estimated 135.000 Colombians in Ecuador, the half has settled in the northern borderland of Ecuador, 35% comes from the Department el Putumayo in Colombia, and of all the Colombian asylum-seekers, 87% lives in the northern border of Ecuador (UNHCR 2006; Bilsborrow and CEPAR 2006, 37; Pacheco and Salazar 2008, 30).³³ In fact, Lago Agrio – capital of Sucumbíos – is the second city in Ecuador (after Quito) to host the largest number of Colombian refugees and asylum seekers.³⁴ It's noteworthy that the vast majority of Colombians aren't planning to leave the country if the violence in Colombia

²⁷ Ecuador receives as well a considerable amount of Colombian migration. However, given the characteristics of the conflict, it's very difficult to differentiate pure Colombian migration from pure Colombian forced migration.

²⁸ Until 2008 UNHCR used to state that the number of people in need of international protection was of 250.000, however after an assessment in 2008 the official number has been reduced to 135.000. However, NGOs and many refugee organizations continue to state that the number reaches 250.000 (Santiago Ruiz Jan 2009).

²⁹ It's noteworthy that at the moment the government with the support of UNHCR is implementing a Mobile registration process of refugees, which aims at registration 50.000 people in need of international protection living at the northern borderland. This process will give more civil rights to the population, hence could reduce the levels of GBV of some uprooted women living in Sucumbíos.

³⁰ For this reason, this thesis will use the term 'refugee' only to describe the population in need of international protection that has obtained the relevant legal status in the host country, in this case Ecuador. To analyze the reality of Colombian displaced population in need of international protection in the northern border of Ecuador, this thesis will use forced migration and uprootedness³⁰. The concepts will be used interchangeably given their similarity.

³¹ Because they are afraid of either Ecuadorian authorities' abuses and deportation, or identification by Colombian Guerrilla and Paramilitary groups working in Ecuadorian territory, or because of a lack of information in what is involved in the process and finally because of finding difficulties to obtain all the legal papers required by the Ecuadorian government before obtaining asylum (Camacho 2005, 37; Rivera et al. 2007, 142);

³² *Negado* has become a category of identification between Colombians (Rivera 2007: 86). The majority of people whose visa has been denied rest in Ecuador. They are a segment of the population in need of protection that needs to be addressed in terms of human rights.

³³ In the provinces of Esmeraldas, Carchi, Imbabura, Sucumbíos y Orellana.

³⁴ Lago Agrio is the capital of the province of Sucumbios. According to the Refugee office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lago Agrio received 20,31% of all the asylum petitions (UNIFEM 2007: 35).

isn't finished. According to Bilborrow and CEPAR, 5 of every 6 forced migrants have no intention to return to Colombia or leave Ecuadorian territory (2006, 107).

The presence of the Ecuadorian State, as provider of services and security to its population, has been historically weak in Sucumbíos. Even if the extraction of petroleum in Sucumbíos represents 40% of the Ecuadorian GDP, the levels of HS in the zone are very low. In Sucumbíos, where 61% of its population is rural, the levels of poverty reach 89% and the levels of malnutrition to 42.5% (Movimiento de Mujeres de Sucumbíos 2007, 8-9). The lack of rule of law in the area has led to high levels of crime, constant presence of Colombian irregular forces and illicit flows of arms, drugs and people. Furthermore, with the implementation of the *Plan Colombia* and the *Plan Patriota*, the borderland has been very affected by side-effects, such as the spill-over of the fumigation of coca crops in Colombian territory, the arrival of a large number of uprooted population to the borderland and the increase in violence (Cruz 2007; Movimiento de Mujeres de Sucumbíos 2007).

Given the characteristics of the province – high human mobility, low levels of HS, lack of rule of law and the proximity to the conflict – Sucumbíos is a zone prone to GBV. It's noteworthy the Sucumbíos is historically characterized by being a masculine zone, given the presence of petroleum employees and the military forces. Many women have moved to and continue to go to the region to work in the sex industry. This masculine zone creates special gender relations and increases the likelihood of women to experience GBV, regardless the nationality of the women. Furthermore, the lack of rule of law creates an environment of impunity, condoning cases of GBV. Cases of Ecuadorian and Colombian women that have experienced domestic violence, labour exploitation, sexual exploitation and human trafficking are reported in the area; however many of them aren't punished. For this reason, the Ecuadorian women living in Sucumbíos have organized themselves in the *Movimiento de Mujeres de Sucumbíos* to fight and defend their rights for more than 20 years, mostly in themes related to domestic violence. However, because of the characteristics of displacement, Colombian women aren't so well organized as the Ecuadorian women and are in a higher position of vulnerability to experience GBV.

From the Colombian uprooted population arriving to the border, 57% are men and 43% are women (Rivera 2007: 43). From this number 16% of the women arrive without a partner (Young 2005: 25). Many of them arrive to Ecuador running away from the guerrilla, from the forced recruitment of one of their children, from murder of relatives, or from GBV committed

to them or to their relatives (Camacho 2005: 48). Before arriving to Ecuador, many Colombian women have already experienced different GBV – committed by all the conflict armed forces (Amnesty International 2004).

Different types of GBV have been denounced in Sucumbíos. The characteristics of the borderland has made easier for trafficking and sexual exploitation networks to develop, increasing the cases of women – especially Colombian uprooted women – to experience GBV. This is intensified by the fact the majority of Colombian women aren't in a regular position; hence they find economic activities in the informal sector, where the work conditions are difficult to control (Young 2005: 17). Furthermore, the levels of domestic violence in Ecuadorian-Colombian household as well as Colombian-Colombian household are very high.

In addition, since the increased diplomatic tensions between the Colombian and Ecuadorian governments,³⁵ Ecuador is implementing certain security practices that could indirectly increase the probability of Colombian women to experience GBV, such as: difficulties to enter to the host country, the militarization of the borderland, the increase of migration controls to the Colombian uprooted people already residing in Ecuador and the deportation of Colombian citizens without a legal status in the country. There have been many cases of forced migrating Colombian women that have experienced GBV involving the security authorities.

2. The continuum of GBV to Colombian uprooted women in Sucumbíos

As mentioned before, GBV is part of the continuum of violence that manifests in pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict settings because of structural gender inequalities. During the past years, academics and human rights activists have exposed to the world that violence against women in the Colombian conflict is common-used as a weapon of war by all armed groups. On the other side, many studies have shown how Colombian uprooted women in Ecuador are prone to experience human rights violations because of their gender. However, these aren't two separate phenomena committed against Colombian women. In fact, they are part of a

³⁵ The tensions between the governments of Colombia and Ecuador started with the implementation of the *Plan Colombia*. However, the diplomatic relations were broken when in March 2008 the Colombian government had a military operation in Ecuador's territory where 17 FARC members were killed, including Raul Reyes, the second highest-ranking member of FARC.

continuum of violence committed to Colombian women during and after conflict: a continuum that makes difficult to distinguish the sites of war from the sites of peace.

After 40 years of conflict, violence in Colombia is considered part of daily life. Violence has taken all spaces of society, where the political violence perpetrated by the Colombian military forces, the guerrillas and paramilitary groups mixes with drug-related violence and common delinquency. Violence is present through all social, economic and political spheres, making it difficult to differentiate the sites of violence from the sites of peace. In many contexts terror has become a form of social control (PADH Jan 2009); a strategy to destroy the social fabric and taking over community control in the public but also in the private sphere, leaving no space for the construction of safe social bonds and no distinction between war and peace zones (Meertens 1998, 133, 136). Thus conflict invades all the spaces of Colombians and disintegrates the definition of private space as safe space.

Even if women and men are exposed to guerrilla and paramilitary abductions for military service,³⁶ personal threats and extortions (*vacunas*), women, because of their gender³⁷, are more exposed to sexual slavery, sexual exploitation and rape³⁸(Amnesty International 2004; Defensoría del Pueblo 2008). It's noteworthy that GBV is a practice used by all armed groups³⁹ in Colombia to humiliate the communities that support the enemy, to punish community members for trying to transgress their traditional gender role⁴⁰ or because they maintain an emotional relationships with a member of the opposite group. In the case of women, the guerrilla and paramilitary groups try to control the most intimate aspects of the life of women by imposing invasive norms and intervening in family or communitarian divergences as a way of giving "protection" to the community (Amnesty International 2004).

³⁶ It's noteworthy that women are active actors in the armed conflict. In 2004, as many as 45% of FARC ranks may be women and girls. However they are also victims of GBV. FARC impose them strict rules on sexual relationships and forbid pregnancy forced contraceptive and abortion (UNIFEM 2004, 2).

³⁷ Gender intertwines class – peasants, displaced and poor women – and ethnic background. The most affected by the Colombian armed conflict are from ethnic groups that have been traditionally discriminated, such as the indigenous in the Putumayo and the African-Colombians in the Chocó region³⁷; two regions that share its border with Ecuador (Defensoría del Pueblo 2008).

³⁸ The most common GBV used by Colombian armed groups are kidnappings, sexual exploitation, sexual slavery, forced abortion, forced use (or not use) of contraception methods, and sexual punishment. (UNIFEM 2004, 2).

³⁹ From the violations whose perpetrators are known, 78% of them are attributed to the state and 22% to the guerrillas and paramilitary groups (MTMCA 2007, 11).

⁴⁰ For example for girls and women the use of skirts, and for boys the use of long hair, are prohibited in many communities where guerrilla or paramilitary groups are present.

Furthermore, it's also a strategy to create women's displacement to disintegrate women's agency, participation and organization⁴¹ (UNIFEM 2004, 2; MTMCA 2002, 11).

GBV constitute an integral part of the Colombian armed conflict. However, by considering it as part of the private sphere, it has been ignored (MTMCA 2007). One of the major obstructions in tackling GBV perpetrated by the conflict actors is the slight importance the Colombian state attributes to it. Official data doesn't reflect the degree of GBV in the country – many cases of rape that have conducted to the death of women are not notified as such. Few perpetrators are ever judged as guilty for using GBV as a tool of war.⁴² It's extremely difficult for the victim to find medical assistance and psychological support after having experienced GBV (Amnesty International 2004, 2).

Therefore even if it could be that GBV isn't an open arm of the Colombian conflict, there is an implicit permission to use it. Not notifying the cases, not punishing the perpetrators and failing to support the victim perpetuates the invisibility of GBV and increases the risk of women to experience some type of GBV caused by the conflict. An implicit toleration during pre-conflict is replaced by condoning and even creating a permissive environment for sexual violence. Under this environment of impunity to women's rights violations, many Colombian women enter in the cycle of displacement. According to the Ombudsperson office approximately 58% of IDPs are women; and out of this percentage, 20% have experienced some type of GBV (2008, 43-44).

Sucumbíos borders with one of the most conflict-affected and violent regions of Colombia: El Putumayo. In a 2005 study, 36% of the women in Putumayo revealed being physically abused by their partners.⁴³ Another study highlights that 11,1% of the sample has been forced (or a member of his/her family) to have sexual relations,⁴⁴ and 17,9% pointed out that sexual aggression was the determinant caused for displacement (Pacheco and Salazar 2008, 32-33). If one understands that 35% of the uprooted population in Ecuador comes from this region (Pacheco and Salazar 2008, 30), one can infer that an important part of Colombian displaced women in Sucumbíos has already experienced GBV before arriving to Ecuador. In fact

⁴¹ Even if there isn't official evidence that the government has been implicated in the murders of women's activists, there is evidence that high functionaries from the state have threatened women's movements members because the latter's accusation implicate them in human rights violations against women

⁴² In 2006, the "Instituto de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses" informed that none of the 19.592 *dictámenes sexológicos* — mandatory reports in cases of sexual aggression — registers as aggressors demobilized populations, paramilitaries, guerrilla members or public forces (MTMCA 2007, 21)

⁴³ 15.3% has been kicked, 9% raped and 6.5% has been threatened with a gun.

⁴⁴ The study was conducted to 504 persons, where 36.7% of the sample was from the El Putumayo region.

according to HIAS Quito, from the number of torture cases assisted by this institution, 90% of them are related to sexual violence:

La violencia de género no es solo de ahora, viene del pasado, desde Colombia. El tema de la tortura, abuso y esclavitud sexual, reclutamiento forzoso, es vivido por muchas colombianas... Son víctimas durante el conflicto, en el desplazamiento y aquí⁴⁵ (HIAS Quito & Lago Agrio Jan 2009).

Colombian women and men answered that violence (89%) and fear of violence (61%) were the main reason to leave the country (2006, 26). The majority of women stated that reasons to flee away from Colombia are children recruitment and murder of family members (Camacho 2005; Túpac-Yupanqui and Rovayo 2006). Few women stated GBV as a reason to flee Colombia. But as Sara Duarte points out, many don't speak out because they don't perceive it as GBV or as a reason to ask for asylum. But others don't speak out because of the intimate character associated to rape and other kinds of GBV and the stigmatization of victims of this type of violence in societies with unequal gender relations. This is why, the violence committed to the male partner – e.g. in the interviews for the refugee status – is more visible than the one committed to the woman: “Me tuve que acostar con uno para que no maten a mi marido, pero mi marido no lo sabe”⁴⁶ (Refugee woman quoted by Sara Duarte Jan 2009). As Duarte points out, many women prefer to keep silent than to experience social exclusion and humiliation.

According to Carlos Cisneros, from the Human Mobility Commission of the Ecuadorian Ombudsperson office, the direct conflict violence as well as the structural violence experienced in Colombia, increase the possibility of Colombian displaced women to experience GBV in Ecuador (Jan 2009). GBV is part of a continuum of violence that intensifies during displacement. The Ecuadorian northern border scenario is not an exception to it. In fact, many women looking for a peace zone in the province of Sucumbíos might continue to experience GBV as the aftermath of conflict. However, as one can see below, GBV in Ecuador expresses differently because its context has changed: domestic violence, forced labour, human trafficking and sexual exploitation are all expressions of GBV in Sucumbíos.

⁴⁵ *GBV isn't from now; it comes from the past, from Colombia. The cases of torture, of sexual abuse and slavery, of abductions, is lived by many Colombian women...They are victims during the conflict, during displacement and here (HIAS Quito & Lago Agrio Jan 2009).*

⁴⁶ *I had to sleep with one of them to stop the killing of my husband, but my husband doesn't know (Refugee woman in interview with Sara Duarte Jan 2009)*

- *Domestic violence*

Pre-conflict GBV-related behaviour increases during conflict and its aftermath. During conflict and uprootedness the norms that regulate daily life are destabilized, increasing the intensity of domestic violence. According to Tupaq Yupanqui and Rovayo, 50% of the refugees have been IDPs in Colombia before arriving to Ecuador. (2006, 112) UNHCR believes that Colombians settled in Lago Agrio have been IDPS in Colombia for an average of five years before arriving to Ecuador (Lago Agrio Jan 2009).

Domestic violence is produced under an unequal relationship of power.⁴⁷ Many uprooted Colombian women establish relationships with Ecuadorian men to obtain security, economic support and to regulate their legal situation in Ecuador. Even if not all these relationships are abusive, many cases have been reported. As Mayra, member of CEA, points out: “muchas mujeres colombianas nos involucramos con ellos, pensando que vamos a poder legalizarnos, pero a cambio sufrimos maltratos, somos violentadas y chantajeadas”⁴⁸ (Jan 2009). Psychological violence is a very common expression of domestic violence. Ecuadorian male partners sometimes threaten their Colombian partners to report them to the police to be deported if she doesn't accept the conditions in the relationship or if she speaks out the violence lived in the household (Camacho 2005, 73). Thus, the male partner assures the silence of the woman, prevents her from starting a legal procedure and/or withdraw the accusation. This intensifies when women don't have the traditional means of protection, such as solidarity networks, to report and face domestic violence. This shows that the unequal power relations between genders generate the silence and toleration of the violence, maintaining its continuum.

Because of a change in gender roles, there have also been reports of cases of domestic violence committed by Colombian male partners. Many Colombian women have become the sole household providers, hence some Colombian men feel they have lost their male role and domestic violence is an expression of this feeling.⁴⁹ “la mujer Colombiana es más recursiva por lo que se le hace más fácil acceder al ámbito laboral; pero esto trae un vuelco en las

⁴⁷ For more information, please visit The Main Coalition against Domestic Violence Webpage: <http://www.mcedv.org/domviolence/index.htm>

⁴⁸ *We get involved with them thinking we are going to be able to legalize our status. Instead of that we suffer bad treatment; we are abused and blackmailed (Jan 2009).*

⁴⁹ From the IDP households in Colombia women are the sole household provider of 39% of them (Defensoria del Pueblo 2008, 43-44).

relaciones de género que acarrea separaciones y violencia”⁵⁰ (Carlos Cisneros Jan 2009).⁵¹ In addition, it has been noted that Colombian women who experienced GBV as a weapon of war, in the aftermath experience domestic violence because their Colombian partner use this violence as a way to express his frustration and feeling of humiliation (Camacho 2005, 73).

- *Labour exploitation*

Many uprooted Colombian women in Ecuador (29%) are head of households (Bilsborrow and CEPAR 2006, 34). As aforementioned, even if women have a partner, many become the sole providers because of change of roles and easier access to work. The fact of being the main responsible of the household in adverse circumstances exposes them to human rights violations as labour exploitation.

Even if Colombian women have more access to work than men, they are also more discriminated and exploited⁵² (Sara Duarte Jan 2009). Uprooted women have difficulties to find regular jobs – regardless of their legal status in the country; consequently the majority gets involved in the informal sector as agriculture and domestic work (HIAS Quito Jan 2009); which has less labour controls, low income and countryside location, all of these are factors that increase the probability of labour exploitation.

The majority of people interviewed pointed out that uprooted people in Sucumbíos suffer from a labor exploitation problem, mainly when they are in an irregular situation. The most common types of exploitation are: long working days, deduction of salary or no salary. Furthermore, many Colombian female and male youngsters that arrive to Sucumbíos without any family, are consequently exploited by a ‘host family’ that has offered them shelter and food in exchange for domestic work with no payment (RET & HIAS Lago Agrio Jan 2009).

Sexual harassment and labour abuses are also very common in irregular and informal jobs⁵³ (JRS Jan 2009). According to HIAS Lago Agrio, Colombian women are sexually harassed in their working place, specifically because of their nationality (Jan 2009). Many host community men believe that because of Colombian women’s stereotype as “guapas y

⁵⁰ *Colombian women are more resourceful, which makes it easier for them to find a job; but this brings a change in the gender relations that brings separations and violence (Ombudsperson representative Jan 2009)*

⁵¹ It’s noteworthy clarifying that it’s not that the women are more resourceful, but that the labour offer is greater, such as working in the domestic service or in bars as waitresses.

⁵² It’s easier for women to find a job in the informal sector as waitresses, sexual workers and domestic laborers.

⁵³ Thus, men are also exploited by their employers by being forced to work long hours at jobs with high physical intensity.

fáciles”,⁵⁴ uprooted women have to ‘pay them back’ sexually when they have found them a job (Interview Jan 2009). Given the power relation of inequity many Colombian women are sexually harassed in their work place.

Even when uprooted women are recognized as refugees by the Ecuadorian state, many don’t know their rights. As the representative of ASELER points out “no se las paga, no se las afilia, se las bota sin indemnización” (Jan 2009).⁵⁵ The majority of Colombian uprooted women don’t report labour exploitation because of the corruption of the judiciary sector and the abuses committed by the same authorities (Camacho 2005, 60). On the contrary, as Juan Robles points out - member of ASOREC in Lago Agrio - many decide to look for jobs where they might get exploited but earn more money, such as waitresses in bars or brothels (Jan 2009).

- *Sexual exploitation*

The levels of sexual exploitation in Sucumbíos have always been high giving the concentration of male population: oil workers, military forces, Colombian guerrilla and paramilitary members. Many organizations use the term *solteros geográficos*⁵⁶, to explain how this group behaves like single men, after having spent a long period of time in Sucumbíos far away from home (UNIFEM Jan 2009). In a study conducted by the National Association of sexual workers,⁵⁷ 70% of sexual workers stated that oil workers are their main clients; moreover that migration police and military forces members are also common clients (Alvarez Monsalve 2008, 5, 33). According to Carlos Cisneros, “los militares y las petroleras hacen peticiones expresas de ‘carne fresca’ para sus fiestas...adolescentes de 12 a 14 años; obviamente esto no sale a la luz”⁵⁸ (Jan 2009).

The sexual exploitation of women between 14 - 22 years old working in bars and brothels is a constant element of the borderland⁵⁹ (Alvarez Monsalve 2008, 64). There are extensive networks that take advantage of the context and the position of vulnerability of women – especially Colombian – to exploit them (Cruz 2007, 34).⁶⁰ Out of 400 female sex workers

⁵⁴ *Beautiful and easy*

⁵⁵ *They are not paid, they have no social security, they can be fired without compensation (Jan 2009).*

⁵⁶ Geographical single men

⁵⁷ A study conducted by the National Association of Sex workers to 254 women where 88 were Colombian,.

⁵⁸ *The military forces and the oil companies ask expressively for “fresh meat” for their parties...youngsters of 12 to 14 years old; Obviously this doesn’t get public (Jan 2009).*

⁵⁹ However, in the majority of cases they have Ecuadorian ID cards, proving their ‘majority of age’

⁶⁰ There have been cases in Ecuador where Colombian women are forced to work in prostitution by guerilla or paramilitary members as payment for former debts (Camacho 2005, 81)

registered in the province of Sucumbíos, 50% are under age and 70% have the Colombian nationality (IOM 2007, 13). Out of this group, 40% have already a child (Cruz 2007, 34).

Sexual exploitation networks are present all along the borderland, which use different forms of deception methods to convince the girls. Many of these networks use ‘marriage’ to take indigenous girls out of their communities and then sexually exploit them (CNNA 2008, 86). Many have dropped out of school and have being lured to work in prostitution by deception, being told that they are going to be sent to Spain or other parts of Ecuador for better working opportunities (IOM 2007, 13-15).

Sexual exploitation doesn’t only take place in bars and brothels. Because of the lack of job opportunities in the northern borderland of Ecuador, many uprooted women strike up transactional sex with host community men – as landlords, oil workers and military forces – to maintain their jobs, to be able to keep their home or to fulfill their family’s basic needs (UNFPA Lago Agrio Jan 2009). The majority of them don’t consider themselves as sexual workers and transactional sex is just a way of survival (UNIFEM Jan 2009). In many cases forced migrant women don’t see their situation as a violation of their rights, but as a solution to their economic problems (Camacho 2005, 81; IOM 2006, 13).

- *Human trafficking*⁶¹

The Ecuadorian Northern borderland – specifically Lago Agrio – is known as an origin, transit and destiny zone for trafficking. Trafficking networks take advantage of the geographical permeability of the border and its different cross paths without vigilance (‘Coordinadora de la Red de Protección Integral’ Jan 2009). Because of the complexity of the subject, there is a lack of precise information about the number of human trafficking cases in Ecuador or in the borderland and knowledge about the dynamics of the trafficking networks. Hence, the number of cases available is probably a small indication of a hidden phenomenon in the country (CNNA 2008). Even if in Ecuador there are also cases of human trafficking for labour exploitation, drug business and smuggling of arms, this thesis is going to focus in human trafficking for sexual exploitation.

According to ISAMIS,⁶² it has been reported cases of Colombian displaced women exploited in the northern borderland and other bigger cities by trafficking networks⁶³ (Jan 2009). Even

⁶¹ It’s noteworthy that it’s difficult to make a distinction between cases only of sexual exploitation and cases of human trafficking for sexual exploitation and, given that some of the Colombian women sexually exploited are already residents in the country and have a legal status, and could therefore not be counted as cases of human trafficking.

if the governmental organizations, IO and NGOs have registered the majority of cases as Ecuadorian internal trafficking, there's a considerable number of Colombian women trafficked into Ecuador. Between 2007 and 2008, out of the 102 cases assisted by counter-trafficking organizations, 96 cases were for sexual exploitation and 32 were Colombian women (IOM 2009). In Lago Agrio, ISAMIS has provided support to 13 women in 2008, with a large majority of Colombian women (Jan 2009).

While counter-trafficking organizations have registered and denounced the cases mentioned above, no official information regarding trafficking has ever been recorded in the zone. The CNNA report stated that the national special police force for children and youngsters intervened in 46 cases related to trafficking in 2007; none of them in the province of Sucumbíos. Furthermore, the police didn't register any case of sexual exploitation in this province (2008, 84, 86). This could be linked to the fear from reprisals from the exploitation networks if they speak out; leaving Colombian uprooted women in a position of vulnerability to experience trafficking. Furthermore the lack knowledge makes impossible to have comprehensive response to the phenomenon (Movimiento de Mujeres de Sucumbíos 2007, 24).

- *GBV committed to Colombian uprooted women by security forces members*

One of the most constant human rights violations experienced by Colombian uprooted women in the province of Sucumbíos are the unjustified detentions and deportations committed by the security forces. As Juan Robles from ASOREC points out,

Las mujeres son abusadas por la policía sin importar su status. Las autoridades aprovechan de su condición, ya que 'apetecen' de mujeres colombianas. En los mismos controles de frontera se las amenaza, se las lleva presas, no las dejan pasar, y muchas son abusadas. Aunque se hacen denuncias en la fiscalía, no hay resultado⁶⁴ (Jan 2009).

Many security forces take advantage of the irregular situation and vulnerable position of Colombian uprooted women in Ecuador and the environment of impunity, and start a relation

⁶² ISAMIS is conducting a counter-trafficking project since 2006.

⁶³ As the common cases of trafficking, many Colombian women were promised to have better jobs and incomes in Ecuador's dollarized economy. In most of the cases, they are conscious of the risk they are taking but rationalize their decision by the promises of an increased of income and livelihood conditions and the fact that the risk is less than staying close to the conflict. It's important not to forget that these women need to obtain rapid results and economical improvement in a short period of time. In addition to that, family members are pressuring many of these women to take risks and find better opportunities elsewhere (IOM 2007, 4). These factors influence women to take risky decisions such as hiring smugglers to cross the border and in the journey become victims of human trafficking (Young 2006).

⁶⁴ *Women are abused by the police regardless of their status. Authorities take advantage of their condition, because they 'desire' Colombian women. Even in the border controls they are threatened, they aren't allowed to enter (the country) and many are abused. Even if they denounce the crimes, there are no punishments (Jan 2009)*

of unequal power, asking for extortions and sexually harassing the women. This is one of the strongest GBV experienced by Colombian forced migrants, because those who are supposed to protect them are the ones committing the crimes. This hinders the women from starting a legal process and limits the action of uprooted women to denounce these violations.

Even if sexual work isn't penalized in the Ecuadorian legislation, the authorities use it as an excuse to detain women – especially Colombian forced migrant women. Migration police asks for small extortions and illegally charge for documents. It's also very common to ask for sexual favors in exchange for not deporting them to Colombia. According to Alvarez-Monsalve, 32,2% of sexual workers has been extorted by the police with an average of 227 USD per detention in Sucumbíos (2008, 25, 27). The same study points out that only 1,6% have given sexual favors to security forces.⁶⁵ However, according to Mayra Vélez member of CEA, “las jóvenes colombianas que trabajan en la prostitución son chantajeadas por las autoridades...han habido denuncias a policías de haberlas violado...Les obligan a tener sexo para no deportarlas”⁶⁶ (Jan 2009). Furthermore, according to ASELER in the 2007 UNHCR's focal points in Lago Agrio, out of 20 participants – in its majority women – around 90% answered that they have been asked to perform sexual favors to the authorities (Jan 2009). It's noteworthy that in many cases if women don't accept the authorities' imposition, they continue to be harassed, are imprisoned and in extreme cases arbitrarily deported (Camacho 2005, 56-57).

A representative of UNFPA argues that many uprooted Colombian women don't perceive these acts as violations to their rights or as GBV, but as a survival means: “los favores sexuales a la policía y los militares son muy frecuentes y para muchas familias son una garantía para poder conseguir material para comercializar o simplemente poder trabajar”⁶⁷ (Jan 2009). Furthermore there are “no witnesses” or “crime scene traces”, leading to an environment of absolute impunity⁶⁸ (Sara Duarte Jan 2009).

Deprivation of liberty is another human rights violation committed to Colombian forced migrants. According to Alvarez Monsalve, 51,6% of the sex workers questioned in the sample

⁶⁵ It's important to further investigate the extension of 'sexual favors' practices taking place in the borderland, given that even if this study shows only few cases, the majority of the people interviewed stated the contrary.

⁶⁶ *The Colombian female youngsters that work in prostitution are blackmailed by the authorities...there have been cases of youngsters raped by the police...they are forced to have sex to not be deported (Jan 2009).*

⁶⁷ *Sexual favors petitions by the police and the military forces are very common and for many households this is a guarantee to have access to products to commercialize or simply to be able to work (Jan 2009).*

⁶⁸ It's noteworthy that there have been also reported cases of men being forced to 'offer' 'sexual favors'. As an indigenous form the Putumayo stated: “aquí solo se está hablando de cuanto se les mete, se les viola a las mujeres, pero a los hombres les pasa lo mismo, solo que no somos capaces de denunciar...los hombres también pagan vacunas (favores sexuales) (UNFPA Jan 2009). It should be worthy to further investigate the GBV committed to men.

had been at least once detained for one to three days (2008, 26). Many of the people interviewed point out that uprooted women – regardless of their legal status in the country or the work they perform – are detained between Friday and Sunday when nobody nor even the Colombian forced migrants organizations can intervene in their case. Consequently, these women spend between three to four days in jail (UNFPA, CEA, ASOREC). As stated by Juan Robles, member of ASOREC “la policía coge presas por tres a cuatro días a las muchachas durante el fin de semana, dime si en ese tiempo no son abusadas ahí adentro?”⁶⁹ (Jan 2009).

According to the sexual workers who participated in the study coordinated by Alvarez-Monsalve, there is a “persecution” by the Migration Police to Colombian women. When the police carry out raids and the detainees don’t “justify” their presence in the country – by money or sexual favors – they are arbitrarily detained and deported out of the country (2008, 27). This shows the unequal relation of power, which is intensified whenever the person at issue is Colombian. Furthermore, if the woman is a victim of trafficking, in the majority of cases deportation leads to a revictimization process (ASOREC Quito, ISAMIS, Fundación Esperanza Jan 2009).⁷⁰

The host community knows uprooted women won’t denounce their cases; hence they have an implicit permission to violate women’s rights. (HIAS Lago Agrio Jan 2009). As Margarita Juarez, member of the *Frente de Mujeres de Sucumbíos*, points out, “No es fácil denunciar, por esta razón las colombianas soportan más” (Jan 2009).⁷¹ This creates a gender power game, where the women are sunken in a continuum of violence in a supposed peace zone. All these forms of GBV in an environment of impunity are part of a continuum of violence that goes from the Colombian conflict zone to the Ecuadorian borderland and blurs the distinction between sites of war and sites of peace.

⁶⁹ *The police detain the girls between three to four days during weekends, tell me whether that time aren’t they abused?* (Jan 2009)

⁷⁰ According to Manos Unidas and ASOREC Quito, both forced migrant associations in Ecuador, there has been an improvement in the relations between uprooted population and the authorities, by awareness-raising campaigns and human rights trainings (Jan 2009). However, according to the same organizations the levels of GBV committed to women and the impunity to these cases are still very high (ASOREC Lago Agrio Jan 2009).

⁷¹ *It’s not easy to denounce, because of this Colombian women put up with more*” (Jan 2009)

3. Analyzing the reasons for the continuum of GBV to Colombian uprooted women in Sucumbíos

The continuum of violence experienced by Colombian uprooted women doesn't have the same intensity and manifestation in every region of Ecuador that receives Colombian forced migrants. GBV incidence depends on the context. Hence the dynamics of GBV in Quito or Guayaquil will never be the same as those in the northern borderland. However, the social dynamics between borderlands also differ: it's not the same to be an uprooted Colombian woman in Esmeraldas than in Sucumbíos. The latter is characterized by a different spectrum of GBV and by the high levels of incidence affecting also the host community, compared to other regions of the country. This puts into doubt whether this region could be considered a peace zone for women fleeing the Colombian conflict and why the borderland – specifically Sucumbíos – is a favorable place for GBV and women's rights violations to take place.

The northern borderland of Ecuador is a region of particular interest given that it conjugates high levels of social inequity and exclusion, weak state institutions and the proximity to the Colombian conflict along with its illicit activities (Movimiento de Mujeres de Sucumbíos 2007, 24). Sucumbíos has specific characteristics that generate an environment of gendered insecurities for many Colombian uprooted women: the mobility of its population, the low levels of HS and the lack of rule of law; each one of them has a direct impact in the possibility of Colombian uprooted women to experience GBV. Furthermore, the proximity and intensification of the Colombian conflict in the southern part of Colombia, and the securitization and militarization of the Ecuadorian northern borderland intensifies the GBV already taking place in Sucumbíos (PADH Jan 2009).

- *Human mobility*

Sucumbíos is configured by the mobility of people from Colombia to Ecuador and vice versa and of people coming from other regions of Ecuador. It's a young province and its biggest cities have been funded by companies⁷² that came to the region to extract natural resources and by inhabitants of other provinces of the country that came as part of the Ecuadorian government policy to colonize the rainforest. These movements of people were characterized by been conducted mainly by men and even if nowadays women are also present in the region, it's still a region predominately ruled by men.

⁷² The cities of Lago Agrio and Shushufindi were funded in 1972, while the province was only funded in 1989 (Pacheco and Salazar 2008, 72).

As a borderland, Sucumbíos is defined by the social interactions with its Colombian counterpart, the Putumayo Department. Through goods and services exchanges both populations have benefited from the two economies and their monetary fluctuations. Furthermore, it has created a process of fronterization by creating brotherhoods, mixed marriages and business relationships between both borderlands (Espinosa 2008, 88).⁷³ It's noteworthy that four ethnic groups – Sionas, Secoyas, Cofanes and Kichwas⁷⁴ – are living in both sides of the river that also share social and cultural transfrontier exchanges. The process of fronterization has pushed the two populations to share economic, social and cultural elements and to create social-living interactions beyond the territorial borders imposed by the two states.

For more than 20 years the populations at the borderlands have taken advantage to exchange “illegal” services and products. It's esteemed that along the borderlands there are 30 illegal border crossing of arms and the majority are in Sucumbíos. During the economic crisis in the 90s many Ecuadorians worked in the coca fields in Colombia and nowadays part of the Colombian drug business passes through Ecuadorian territory. Furthermore, Sucumbíos is known as a zone where Colombian irregular groups come to rest, to find entertainment and to stock up. The borderlanders have been in contact with the guerrilla to provide them with food, clothing and other services (Espinosa 2008, 17, 261, 331). The presence of irregular groups as well as illicit flows has created a shadow economy in Sucumbíos that involves the groups mentioned before, people from the community and in some cases security forces members, in the business of arms, drugs and human trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Following these lines, human mobility is also linked to gender relations and GBV. With the arrival of oil companies, many Colombian as well as Ecuadorian women also migrated temporarily to the province to work in the sexual business.⁷⁵ As it still is a zone mainly with ‘geographically single’ men, the presence of sexual workers is stronger in Sucumbíos, especially in Lago Agrio, than in other borderlands of Ecuador. In consequence, many women

⁷³ For example the majority of the region's milk production is sold to Colombia and Colombians take advantage of the dollarized economy to work and sell Colombian products in Sucumbíos (Espinosa 2008, 265).

⁷⁴ The Ecuadorian borderland experiences a process of “kichwization” in the amazonic territories. Some of them live in both sides of the border-river, however kichwas – originally from Ecuadorian territory – are more numerous in Ecuador than in Colombia (Pacheco and Salazar 2008, 75)

⁷⁵ The male ratio to female was 3,4:1 until 1980 (Pacheco and Salazar 2008, 77). This is why in a very simplistic way, some believe that: “la ciudad de Lago Agrio fue formada por petroleros y prostitutas” (Authorities conversation with UNIFEM Jan 2009). Thus, it was created the stigma of women – especially Colombian women – as “easy” and “prostitute” that remains until these days.

– Colombian and Ecuadorian – mobilize to Sucumbíos.⁷⁶ But the demand of sexual workers also increases the trafficking of Colombian women for sexual exploitation (ISAMIS Jan 2009). This type of shadow economy, which profits of the human mobility of the region, creates also a fronterization process of gender inequality and GBV in both borderlands. Furthermore, the predominant presence of men for more than 35 years in the borderland, has made invisible the needs of women and has directly affected in the social construction of what means to be women and the gender relations that must to take place. As stated by the representative of UNFPA-Quito, in Sucumbíos GBV is “naturalizada en la sociedad y manifestada en la cotidianeidad”⁷⁷ (Jan 2009).

- *Mobility and Colombian uprooted people*

It’s noteworthy that the mobility of products, services and humans has a direct impact on the uprooted people – especially women – in the way in which asylum is experienced. Colombian forced migrants are continuously travelling in Sucumbíos and to other parts of Ecuador. According to a study conducted by IOM, the average time of residence of Colombian displaced population in the border provinces of Esmeraldas and Sucumbíos is of one year and a half and, since the study was conducted, they have at most spent six months in the latest place of residence; and 11% of Colombian households changed homes within the host community because of violence, threats, feeling of persecution and insecurity (2006, 20-23). In Bilsborrow and CEPAR, 14,3% of Colombians forced migrants, answered that they intended to move within Ecuador within 6 months and 11,4% between 6-12 months (2006, 30). Even if the figures are from 2006, it let infer that this social group is constantly moving within the northern border region and other parts of the country.

It’s noteworthy that an important number of people rest at the borderland, because they don’t have the economic means to move to other places, because of the lack of documentation and also because of the similarity to and short distance from their original homes. (UNHCR Jan 2009). In the case of women, it has been noticed that they move when they have a male partner, if not, the majority stays in Sucumbíos (HIAS Lago Agrio Jan 2009). However, the fact of being in a host community that is in constant movement, of being changing homes within the host community because of insecurity, and of constantly having the perception of

⁷⁶ Mobility is the main characteristic of the sexual work in the province. In the study conducted by the national association of Sexual workers, 80,3% of the women – Colombian and Ecuadorian – were in the provinces less than 3 weeks (Alvarez Monsalve 2008, 11).

⁷⁷ “Has become natural in the society and has daily manifestations.”

their current home as temporal, don't give them incentives to create bonds with the host community. Furthermore it slows the process of organizing themselves as a collective and to become individuals with social support to claim for their rights.

Additionally, the constant mobility of irregular forces to Ecuadorian territory has a direct impact in the creation of solidarity and support networks among the Colombian population.⁷⁸ Many uprooted Colombians are afraid that the others may be part of Colombian irregular groups – because of the mobility of these groups in the borderland – and that they could recognize them (Rivera et al. 2007, 77).⁷⁹ Because of fear, many Colombians prefer not to have relationships with people of their same nationality and prefer to hide within the community to avoid any reprisal from the armed groups (IOM 2006, 21). Because of this, the social networks of this group are very weak and sometimes inexistent (HIAS Lago Agrio Jan 2009). Therefore the probabilities to experience human rights violations are very high and their mechanisms to respond to these violations are very weak. Colombian women often find themselves alone to tackle GBV.

- *Human security*

As many borderlands, Sucumbíos was for a long time left out of Ecuador's development strategies. For many years the Ecuadorian northern borderland was seen as a matter of national security and as a source of natural resources. Even if it's true that the northern borderland is nowadays in the government's agenda, for many years the security of its population was totally neglected; which is reflected in the low human development and HS conditions of the population, especially Colombian forced migrants looking for a refuge zone. These conditions, with the already unequal gender relations, generate a propitious environment for women's rights violations and GBV. Furthermore it shows how certain types of violence in the so-called peace zones create gendered insecurities and are sites of violence for the Colombian uprooted women.

Even if Sucumbíos is one of Ecuador's richest provinces, because of petroleum resources, the province is known for its great deficiencies in basic services and high levels of poverty.

⁷⁸ Displaced Colombian population live in constant fear regardless of its gender. Bilsborrow and CEPAR found that 12% of the population in need of international protection feels persistently threatened in Ecuadorian territory. The fact of being so closed to the border creates the feeling of being almost in Colombia, with its actors and its violence (Rivera et al. 2007, 77, 146).

⁷⁹ According to Juan Robles, there are always infiltrators from Colombian irregular groups in workshops and activities organized by Colombian uprooted organizations (Jan 2009).

Because of this, the majority of people interviewed for this study believe that Sucumbíos has been completely abandoned by the Ecuadorian state (UNFPA, ASELER, Juan Robles, Raquel López, Mayra Vélez). In the Census 2001, Sucumbíos reported a poverty rate of 80%, where women are nine points poorer than men.⁸⁰ Unemployment reaches up to 10,6% and underemployment to 66,3% (The national average is 9,8% and 47,4% respectively). It's noteworthy that given the demand of male workers in petroleum activities and the poor job supply for women, women is 8 points more unemployed than men – 15,5% women and 6,9% men – and 15 points more underemployed than men – 71,8% women and 56,1% men (Movimiento de Mujeres de Sucumbíos 2007, 34). These numbers don't only show the feminization of poverty in this region, it also show the gendered insecurities of women that have to find livelihood activities in the informal sector, where there is no labour controls and are higher exposed to GBV.

In the case of health services, the regional supply is below the national average,⁸¹ (IOM 2006, 29; Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio e Integración 2009). Furthermore, because of security issues much of the health personnel refuses to work in the province (Margarita Juarez Jan 2008). Regarding education, 70% of primary schools only have one professor for the first six years⁸² (IOM 2006: 35 and Camacho 2005: 25). Furthermore, the fumigations of coca crops in Colombia, has affected the whole province by destroying food crops, contaminating the water and affecting the health of the population (Movimiento de Mujeres de Sucumbíos 2007, 28).

One could continue to present data that shows how the borderland is already a structurally violent zone for the borderlanders by not providing for their basic needs; which increases their possibility of getting involved in illegal and informal activities; hence could increase the probability of women to experience GBV.

The low levels of HS in the southern borderland of Colombia⁸³ as well as in the northern borderland in Ecuador make it extremely difficult for Colombian forced migrants to find a

⁸⁰ This is because a portion of male population is involved in petroleum activities.

⁸¹ The number of beds in hospitals is half the national average (IOM 2006, 30).

⁸² Some teachers have refused to attend some schools for security reasons given their location, increasing the abandon and closing of schools (IOM 2006: 35 and Camacho 2005: 25). In consequence, the average level of schooling (5.8 years for men and 5.3 for women) doesn't reach the national median (7.3 years)

⁸³ It's noteworthy that the Colombian government has also abandoned El Putumayo from its Development policies and it's only with the intensification of the armed conflict to the south that the government has started to intervene in the southern borderland of the country. Nariño and Putumayo are the most poor and less developed departments of Colombia (Pacheco and Salazar 2008, 35). In consequence, the Colombian borderlanders already experienced structural violence, which is incremented with the displacement and settlement in the host community.

livelihood activity in the host society. The majority of the Colombian forced migrants settled in Sucumbíos (92%) live under the poverty line (Rivera et al. 2007, 24). This is 12 percentage points over the rest of the northern borderlanders. In 2005, 52,5% of Colombian uprooted households was in a nutritional risk situation, and food insecurity doubled that of Ecuadorian households. Regarding employment, 53% of the Colombian population living in the northern border works in the informal economy and the unemployment rate is of 24% (26% men and 21% women) (IOM 2006, 41), three times more than the local community. This data proves how structural violence in the host community has a negative impact in the dignity living of uprooted population to become individuals of rights and could bring up more tension between populations in the fight for resources. Furthermore it shows how the low levels of human security, forces Colombian displaced women to find survival mechanisms in illegal activities or in the informal sector, thus creating the conditions for this population to continue experiencing GBV in the host community.

- *The lack of rule of law*

As many states, Ecuador has focused in external violence and insecurities – committed by guerrilla, paramilitaries and drug-traffickers – while internal violence – committed by military forces, oil workers, host community – has been undervalued in the northern borderland of Ecuador (Espinosa 2008, 19). Because of its low levels of HS, Sucumbíos is known as a zone of violence without rule of law, which affects not only Colombian forced migrants, but also the Ecuadorian population (IOM Protection Division Jan 2008). The violence in Sucumbíos caused by the lack of rule of law, is an element that affects directly the levels of GBV and exposes Colombian women to violations of their rights.

The UN 2004 Interagency report stated that homicides were the second cause of death in the Province of Sucumbíos (Equipo País 2004, 22). In fact, in 2004 the homicide rate was of 50 per 100.000 inhabitants. Furthermore, according to the information of the Ombudsperson office, Sucumbíos has the highest number of formal complaints for rights violations⁸⁴ in the northern region. It's noteworthy that the majority of formal complaints are made against oil companies and police forces (Cruz 2007, 30). This data could be a sign of the rights violations committed to Colombian women by the authorities. If the same actors are violating the rights of the local population, it's normal to think that they would violate the right of people that are in a more vulnerable position as Colombian uprooted women.

⁸⁴ Consumer's rights, legal security and property rights

Having prioritized a national security agenda at the expense of the HS of the borderlanders has had a direct impact in gendered insecurities and in the protection of women in Sucumbíos, including Colombian uprooted women. Out of the 3 provinces of the northern border region, Sucumbíos has the highest sexual violence rate (22.5%). In the past years, Sucumbíos hasn't had an agenda to prevent and tackle GBV. It's only in 2006 that the provincial government started a plan to reduce domestic violence and la *Comisaría de la Mujer y la Familia* was settled.⁸⁵ However, according to UNIFEM, the personnel of *la Comisaría* don't have a full understanding of the law 103⁸⁶ and cultural and family values are prioritized among them (Jan 2009). Furthermore, the province doesn't count with disaggregated information sorted by the characteristics of the perpetrators and the victims or about the different kinds of GBV committed in the province despite the high levels of GBV in the province. Finally, there aren't public services at the local level to tackle GBV committed to women. It's noteworthy that *la Comisaría* is located in Lago Agrio, while the other counties lack this entity⁸⁷ (Movimiento de Mujeres de Sucumbíos 2007, 23). This information shows how GBV has been left aside from the policies of the province, consequently has permitted Colombian uprooted women looking for refuge to continue to experience violations of their rights.

The abandonment of the northern border region by the Ecuadorian state has generated few well-constituted public institutions. This has had a direct impact in the cases of GBV, where the legal system lacks the efficiency and will to punish the perpetrators. In the case of domestic violence, in the year 2006, 483 formal complaints were made in Sucumbíos, and none of them had a case resolution or sentence (Cruz 2007, 33). The corruption and sexism in the legal system creates an environment of impunity for the perpetrators making invisible the cases of GBV. As the women's Federation states: "La mujer puede ir golpeada, pero si el marido no asume la responsabilidad no pasa nada. Los hombres manejan el sistema judicial y aunque en el examen medico demuestre la violencia, no existe ninguna sanción"⁸⁸ (Jan 2009). Furthermore, even if the Ecuadorian constitution stipulates that every woman who experienced domestic violence may ask for protection, regardless of her legal status in the country, there have been cases of deportation when denouncing the violence (Camacho 2005,

⁸⁵ It's noteworthy that the first *Comisaría de la Mujer y la Familia* opened in Ecuador in 1994 (Morrison and Biehl 1999, 113)

⁸⁶ Law against domestic and family violence.

⁸⁷ In 2000 the *Federación de Mujeres de Sucumbíos* opened a shelter for women victims of domestic violence. During 2006, it assisted 63 women (Movimiento de Mujeres de Sucumbíos 2007, 23).

⁸⁸ *The woman can go (to the police office) beaten, but if the husband doesn't assume the responsibility nothing happens. Men rule the judiciary system and even if the medical exam proves the violence, there isn't any sanction (to the perpetrator) (Jan 2009).*

75; CEA Representative). This also occurs in the cases of sexual exploitation. However, to this one has to add the factor that in many cases the police is also involved in this type of crime. As a person working in themes related to sexual exploitation points out: “Es muy difícil trabajar con la policía porque muchos policías son clientes del cabaret”⁸⁹ (Jan 2009). Thus, many Colombian uprooted women prefer to keep silence than to start a legal procedure.

As aforementioned, borderlands suffer from the abandonment of the state, but also of the proliferation of actors using private violence. One of the major problems of the lack of rule of law is the power sexual exploitation networks – and other delinquency ones – have in Sucumbíos by the use of private violence. The use of private violence by different actors is an element that increases the insecurity of women – especially sexual workers – exposing them even to death (Alvarez Monsalve 2008, 64). For example a person working with women to tackle HIV, describes how sexual workers are in a major risk if the owners of the brothels or the clients found out that they have HIV or any other STD: “Si una mujer tiene una ETS o VIH, la matan. No te sacan del trabajo, como en Quito, sino te matan. Por el temor a la discriminación, pero sobretodo por el temor a la muerte las mujeres no asisten a los servicios para ver si tienen VIH”⁹⁰ (Jan 2009). This case shows how certain characteristics of the borderland, such as the use of private violence, increases the possibility of women – especially uprooted women that don’t have a legal status in Ecuador – to experience rights violations that may even conduct to their death.

Furthermore, many local authorities and civil society members in the province have been threaten to death for wanting to enforce the rule of law and the respect for women’s rights. For example, an organization working directly with victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation stated: “Directamente no se puede trabajar por las amenazas. Antes se trataba de hacer seguimiento a los bares y cabarets, pero cómo puedes hacerlo si empiezan a amenazarte?”⁹¹ (Jan 2009). Following the same lines, in 2007 the superintendent of police was killed in the city park of Lago Agrio by a Colombian-Ecuadorian network, because she was monitoring certain cases of sexual exploitation in some brothels: “la Intendente quería

⁸⁹ *It’s very difficult to work with the police, given that many policemen are clients of the ‘cabarets’ (Jan 2009)*

⁹⁰ *If a woman has any STD or HIV, they get killed. They don’t fire you, as in Quito, they kill you. Because they fear discrimination, but mostly because they fear death, women don’t visit the centres to find out whether they have HIV (Jan 2009)*

⁹¹ *Because of threats, you cannot work directly. Before we used to try to monitor bars and cabarets, but we started to get threats. How can you work on this if you are being threat to death? (Jan 2009).*

regular el trabajo sexual y el contrabando de gas.⁹² La Pantera, un ecuatoriano dueño de un chongo, contrató a dos colombianos y la mandó a matar”⁹³ (Mayra Vélez Jan 2009).

Again, these cases of private violence distort the definition of a peace zone – any place at a distance from the salient conflict zone – as a safe zone; especially for women and gendered insecurities. Furthermore, the rule of private violence creates a society ruled by fear, which prefers to be silent given that not even the authorities are able to buy or acquire protection. The statements of the different people interviewed prove this fear: “No hay cómo denunciar, nos prohíbe el miedo y el terror. Si habla la persona, muere la persona”⁹⁴ (Margarita Juárez Jan 2009), “no se denuncia no porque no se quiere sino porque no se puede. Si amenazan hasta al alcalde, entonces quién protege a la población? El estado? Nosotros aconsejamos a la población mejor no denunciar”⁹⁵ (JRS Jan 2009). For this reason, the civil society organizations working with women’s rights, prefer not to get involved in direct activities to tackle sexual exploitation networks, but prefer to work indirectly with the women and the community⁹⁶ (Jan 2009). But as Raquel López points out: “De que vale estar preparados en derechos humanos, si vivimos sin poder decir nada?”⁹⁷ (Jan 2009). The fear in a society that prefers to be silent increases the possibility of Colombian uprooted women to continue to experience GBV in Sucumbíos. The rule of private violence creates an environment of impunity where Colombian uprooted women are more exposed to experience GBV.

This is intensified in regions where there is a strong presence of irregular groups from Colombia. The low presence of the state has let to the control of certain parts of the borderland by irregular armed forces. According to the gathered information, the FARC control the borderland of the Putumayo County.⁹⁸ Many organizations working in the region, but also in other parts of the province, state that irregular groups from Colombia are always infiltrated in the programs related to Colombia population, and even if they don’t use the force, they intimidate the organizations by taking pictures and asking for ID documents

⁹² In June 2007 the Superintendent of Police was killed for 400 dollars. A year later, the murderers have been sentenced to 25 years of prison. However, la “Pantera” is still a deserter. The ex-governor of Sucumbíos had an important role in the capture of the murderers and to try to enforce some rule of law after the murder of the Superintendent. However, he had to resign because of threats to him and his family (Mayra Vélez Jan 2009; El Comercio 2007; El Mercurio 2008; Roca 2008)

⁹³ *The superintendent of police wanted to regulate sexual work and the gas trafficking. The Panther, the owner of a brothel, hired some Colombians to kill her* (Mayra Vélez Jan 2009).

⁹⁴ *It’s impossible to denounce, we are inhibit by fear. If the persons speaks out, the person dies* (Margarita Juárez Jan 2009)

⁹⁵ *One doesn’t denounce because one doesn’t want, but because one can’t. If even the Mayor is threaten, so who protects the people? The state? We advice the people not to denounce* (JRS Jan 2009).

⁹⁶ It’s noteworthy that when the investigation regarding sexual work in the province was taking place, one of the owners of the brothels “reminded” to the research group how the superintendent of the police has died for trying to put “things in order” in the sexual work business (Alvarez Monsalve 2008, 9)

⁹⁷ *For what is worth to know your rights if we cannot say anything?* (Jan 2009).

⁹⁸ To see a map of the province, please refer to Annex IV

(Different organizations Jan 2009). Álvarez-Monsalvez points out how the research group was threaten during the investigation on sexual work in Sucumbíos: “el equipo fue ‘escortado’ por paramilitares motorizados, quienes hicieron evidente su presencia, llegando a permanecer en la vía a fin de asegurarse que los vehículos en los que el equipo viajaba, no retornaran a la zona”⁹⁹ (2008, 8). These facts increase the fear and the silence of the host community. As Juan Román points out:

Todos saben de su presencia, pero nadie habla. A nadie le impresionó lo de Reyes¹⁰⁰. A la gente no le gusta hablar de estos temas. Porque puede que la persona al frente tuyo esté metida en algo. No vayas por la calle preguntando...mientras no pises sus terrenos, no pasa nada¹⁰¹ (Jan 2009).

But it also proves how the irregular forces of the Colombian conflict exert some control on portions of Ecuadorian territory and its population. Between May and October 2008, there were 11 cases of Colombian citizens being persecuted in Ecuador by Colombian irregular forces (ASELER Jan 2009). This blurs the definition of conflict zones / peace zones and breaks the image of Sucumbíos as a peace zone. This is one of the major factors that explain why Colombian uprooted women are submerged in a continuum of violence from Colombia to Ecuador.

- *The role of the international community in providing human security to the population*

In an environment where the state doesn't provide security to the population, the IC has the responsibility to intervene and protect the people. The IC has been present in Sucumbíos since the conflict started to affect this region. Even if other actors have also given services to the population – as it's the case of oil companies to the nearby communities¹⁰² – for a long time the main actor for the province's development has been the IC.¹⁰³ It's only with the new

⁹⁹ *The team was escorted by paramilitaries in motorcycles, imposing their presence, to make sure the team won't return to the zone (2008, 8).*

¹⁰⁰ The 1st of March 2008, The Colombian armed forces bombed a FARC's camp in Ecuadorian territory, killing high-level guerrilla leader Raúl Reyes and 24 others.

¹⁰¹ *Everyone knows about their presence (in the zone), but nobody speaks about it. This is why nobody was amazed with the death of Reyes. People don't like to speak about those subjects. Don't go around asking about (those subjects)...if you don't get into their businesses nothing happens (Jan 2009).*

¹⁰² Many oil companies have signed certain agreements with the communities, which in exchange of health and education services provide the permission and support to extract oil in the indigenous community's territory. This is the case of Petroamazonas and the Shuar community Yamanunka in the county of Shushufindi. In exchange of increasing the production by construction two drilling platforms, Petroamazonas provides eight scholarships, educational material and environmental compensation up to USD 350.000 for agricultural projects. However there have been some disputes with and within the community; the community denounces cases of corruption between the company and the leaders of the community in detrimental of the environment and the community (Petroamazonas 2008; El Comercio 2008).

¹⁰³ In the past, religious missions have taken the role of the state by providing basic services. Nowadays Sucumbios counts with 16 NGOs (national and international) that provide different services to the population (IOM 2007, 34, 44).

Ecuadorian government that the state has tried to get more involved on the development of the borderland, but until 2007 the IC was the one providing different services to the population (Interview Jan 2009). Even if this aid has been crucial for the development and the safety of people, it has also brought a problem in accountability and in the empowerment of people.

The refugee system in Ecuador depends highly in UNHCR's funds and personnel. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNHCR are the entities in charge of analyzing the petitions for asylum; they determine jointly the refugee status of the population (Bilsborrow and CEPAR 2006, 7). Furthermore, in many of the activities related to refugees, UNHCR finances 80% of the government's budget (UNHCR 2009). Even if thanks to their presence in the country many refugees have had access to the refugee system and its benefits, it's also worrying that there isn't a durable institution from the state in charge of the refugee process. As Sara Duarte points out, "Sin el Acnur¹⁰⁴ se acaba el sistema de refugio en el Ecuador. Qué es lo que quiere el Acnur? Legitimar su presencia o que exista un sistema de refugio independientemente de ellos?"¹⁰⁵ (Jan 2009).

The fact that UNHCR has such an important role in all the phases of asylum in Ecuador creates a problem of accountability. States are responsible to protect people in need of international protection. UNHCR as an intermediary in the process selection, in humanitarian, livelihood and integration activities,¹⁰⁶ inhibits the possibility of people to demand directly to the state their rights, thus curtailing their agency. This has been the case in Lago Agrio. As aforementioned, Sucumbíos has low levels of HS because of the abandonment of the Ecuadorian state in providing social services. Hence, the population has relied almost exclusively on the aid of IO and national NGOs working in the area. UNHCR has been attending the uprooted people since 2000, while it's only at the end of 2008 that a government office arrived to the region to assist this population (UNHCR 2008). Furthermore, the government office is still a registration office, while the majority of social services given to the uprooted population are still channeled by IO and NGOs. Furthermore, as UNHCR works so close with the government, the aid distributed are only for the uprooted Colombians that

¹⁰⁴ Acnur is acronym of UNHCR in Spanish.

¹⁰⁵ *Without UNHCR the Ecuadorian asylum system doesn't exist. What does the UNHCR want? Legitimize their presence in the country or a sustainable system independent of UNHCR? (Sara Duarte Jan 2009).*

¹⁰⁶ It's noteworthy that the other agencies, while aren't part of the selection process, do have an important role in humanitarian, livelihood and integration activities, which also work as intermediaries between the state and the uprooted people.

have been recognized as refugees or for the asylum-seekers; therefore the *negados* don't count with reliable aid. However, As Santiago Ruiz points out, not because UNHCR has denied your petition, you are not in need of international protection (Jan 2009).

One of the major reasons that curtail Colombian women's agency is the lack of durable solutions provided by the projects of the IC. According to Túpac-Yupanqui and Rovayo – as well as the majority of people interviewed – the work of the IO isn't oriented to strengthen and empower the uprooted population (2006, 67). Even if the strategies of these organizations include empowerment and participatory decision-making activities, in practice often this doesn't happen. According to the beneficiary population, IO don't clarify how much aid they have the right to and under what parameters it's distributed; they conduct subjective need assessments, and qualifying to aid depends of “convincing” the organization than the real need of receiving aid (Rivera et al. 2007, 90, 145). As Mayra Vélez, member of CEA argues: “No somos agentes de derechos... yo voy y pido pero no participo”¹⁰⁷ (Jan 2009). This information shows the process of qualifying for aid is rather unstable and subjective. Thus, forces migrants don't know for sure whether they will, or will continue to, receive aid; which increase their exposure to rights violations.

The majority of Colombian households declared that they received humanitarian aid soon after the arrival, some continued to receive after a year, but rarely continued beyond that time.¹⁰⁸ This isn't coherent to the needs of the Colombian uprooted population who are planning to stay in Ecuador¹⁰⁹ and whose four main concerns are: access to work, legal documents, voting rights and the right to travel freely within Ecuador. Furthermore, forced migrant women prefer activities that help them to be self-sustained than to receive assistance (Bilsborrow and CEPAR 2006, 97, 100, 104, 107). However, according out of all the organizations, only 11% works with labour issues (Túpac-Yupanqui and Rovayo 2006, 66). Clearly, this shows a gap between the programs and the needs of the population.

Another key problem is the work the IC conducts in activities related to GBV. It was only in 2004 that the UN system saw the necessity to have a gender approach in its activities in

¹⁰⁷ *We aren't individual of rights. I go there, ask for aid but I don't participate* (Jan 2009).

¹⁰⁸ It's important to point out that nowadays the IC is implementing long-term projects in social services where the host community and the uprooted population – refugees, ‘negados and asylum-seekers’ are both beneficiaries.

¹⁰⁹ According to Bilsborrow and CEPAR, 5 of every 6 forced migrants have no intention to return to Colombia or leave Ecuadorian territory (80%) and only 1 of 12 expects to return (claiming, though, to not knowing when) (2006, 107).

Ecuador. Nowadays gender is supposed to be mainstreamed in all of them.¹¹⁰ However, because of corruption, lack of rule of law and the security of the staff, the system doesn't directly tackle GBV¹¹¹ and the work of sexual exploitation networks (UNHCR Lago Agrio; IOM Protection Jan 2009). As a person working in the UN system stated, "Nos han dicho que como ONU no nos metamos en temas de explotación sexual"¹¹² (Jan 2009). For this reason the majority of programs assists the uprooted women that have already been victims of trafficking or sexual exploitation. Furthermore, IC doesn't implement activities to find durable livelihood solutions, to empower them to get organized as a group, thus to claim for the respect of their rights and reduce their likelihood to experience GBV.

It's impossible to conceive a durable solution to improve the life conditions of Colombian forced migrants, if only an external aid is supplied and the agency of this population isn't boosted (Túpac-Yupanqui and Rovayo 2006, 123). Furthermore, it's impossible to break the continuum of violence towards Colombian uprooted women if the projects targeted to this group don't encourage them to become individuals of rights and don't find them durable solutions. As HIAS Quito stated, "hay que trabajar las capacidades de las mujeres, que están dormidas por la violencia"¹¹³ (Jan 2009).

This is why some Colombian forced migrants have organized themselves to try to change the Agenda of the IO and to find solutions for the *negados*. In Sucumbíos there are 8 Colombian economic and forced migration associations integrating men and women. The two associations interviewed stated that Colombians that have come to Ecuador fleeing from the conflict don't plan to return to their homeland: "Aquí no estamos de paso, aquí tenemos que permanecer y hacer nuestro proyecto de vida". Hence, their main objectives are integration, durable solutions and actions against discrimination and xenophobia. Many of these organizations are working closely with UNHCR, the government and other IO in mobile registration process, which seeks to regulate the situation of 50.000 Colombian citizens living in the northern borderland (Santiago Ruiz UNHCR Jan 2009). However, these organizations don't have an agenda to tackle GBV.

¹¹⁰ The IC budget shows that out of the 129'603.928 USD, only 1'325.945 USD are confined for gender-based activities (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio e Integración 2009).

¹¹¹ IOM implemented in the province of Esmeraldas a pilot project called 'zonas seguras', which had as objective to tackle GBV.

¹¹² *They have told us that as UN we cannot approach themes of sexual exploitation (Jan 2009).*

¹¹³ *We have to work with the women's capacities that are asleep because of the violence (Jan 2009).*

- *The militarization of the northern borderland*

As a response to the low levels of HS, the high levels of violence, and the intensification of the Colombian conflict in its northern border, the government of Rafael Correa launched in 2007 *El Plan Ecuador*.¹¹⁴ With a long-term strategy, the Plan states that it aims at strengthening HS and human development of the northern borderland of Ecuador, by intertwining economic development, social protection and infrastructure and military security.¹¹⁵ (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio e Integración 2009). Furthermore, the plan comprises a gender approach in all its activities (UNIFEM Jan 2009).

Even if the Plan Ecuador emphasis development through a HS approach, in practice the plan doesn't have an operational framework, which is reflected in its low implementation: "Creíamos que el Plan Ecuador era una luz que venía a la provincia, lamentablemente es más propaganda que acciones" (Margarita Juárez Jan 2009). Furthermore, even if the plan states that all its axes are implemented in the same proportion, gradually the plan has become militarized. The threat of the Colombian conflict trespassing the Ecuadorian border and the violation of the territory by Colombian armed forces, has led the Ecuadorian government to prioritize the militarization of the borderland over development projects.

At the end of 2008 the responsibility of the Plan Ecuador was mainly transferred to the Minister of Defense, which underlines the new militarized approach in detrimental of a HS approach as the *Plan* used to state (ASELER Jan 2009). As the representative of the UN system points out: "Es preocupante la mudanza del plan Ecuador al Ministerio de Defensa. La respuesta del Ecuador, de una mirada con desarrollo preventivo, de paz y derechos humanos, pasa a una mirada más militar como es el Plan Colombia..."¹¹⁶ (Jan 2009).

It's noteworthy that the militarization of the northern borderland has gradually been increasing since the beginning of the century. Following the international Agenda after 9/11 and using as argument the need to tackle organized crime and drug trafficking, the focus has been on militarizing the northern borderland rather than in incrementing HS. In 2003, the

¹¹⁴ *Plan Ecuador* replaced UDENOR, a specific governmental program conceived to alleviate the effects of *Plan Colombia*. However in November 2007, the President Rafael Correa abolished UDENOR given its inefficiency (El Unvierso 2007). *Plan Ecuador* is the first specific response to the negative effects of *Plan Colombia*.

¹¹⁵ 1) Institutional strengthening for peace and development, 2) Reinvigorating the economy and increasing employment, 3) Improving the basic social infrastructure, 4) Sustainable management of natural resources, 5) Administration of justice and control of illicit activities and products, 6) Human rights, humanitarian assistance, and sheltering refugees, 7) Protection of national sovereignty and the integrity of the state

¹¹⁶ *It's worrying the change of responsibility of the Plan Ecuador, now transferred to the Ministry of Defense. The Ecuadorian response has changed from a preventive, peaceful, and human rights-based approach to a militarized approach similar to the Plan Colombia (Jan 2009).*

military and police budget increased 40% and 30% respectively from the former year, reaching to 3,4% of the GDP (Cruz 2007, 30; Index Mundi 2008). Even if in 2005, the military expense was reduce by 2% of the GDP - 659,639 millions usd – in 2007 and 2008 it increased to 2,8% of the GDP - 1.492,300 millions usd and 1.737,900 millions usd respectively (Ministerio de Defensa Nacional 2006; El Comercio 2009a). In addition, with the need to secure the state boundaries to defend the sovereignty, in 2009 the government has taken the decision to reinforce its boundaries with 15 new military detachments (7 in Sucumbíos), 13.000 soldiers and around 3.500 policemen. In the northern borderland there are currently 17 military detachments with 7000 soldiers, and eight police units with 3.541 policemen (El Comercio 2009b; El Comercio 2009c). It's noteworthy that the Ecuadorian government militarized its border at the expense of social welfare spending. In 2008, the national social welfare spending was usd 891 millions (El Hoy 2008); almost the half of what was expended in Military forces.¹¹⁷

It's doubtful whether a policy of militarization of the northern borderland rendering secure the borders for the sake of national security actually secures the borderlanders. For many, the militarization of the borderland without a HS strategy has brought more insecurity at the local level. As Margarita Juárez from *el Frente de Mujeres de Sucumbíos* points out: “Seguridad no es poner militares, porque no sabemos si son guerrilla o militares. Seguridad es que el gobierno incremente microempresas, buscando trabajo para que las personas vivan dignamente. Eso es seguridad”¹¹⁸ (Jan 2009). However, this can show a difference between gender insecurities and the security differences between men and women. While the majority of women living in Sucumbíos – Colombian and Ecuadorian – pointed out that militarization increased the insecurity of the border, the interviewed men – Santiago Ruiz, Juan Román and Juan Robles – stressed out how militarization was rendering more secure the province: “Ojalá que existiera más militares, esto trae más seguridad para colombianos y ecuatorianos”¹¹⁹ (Juan Robles Jan 2009). Men are more prone to be abducted or killed by irregular forces in Sucumbíos. Militarization has reduced the number of killings and abductions, which is why many people have favored it, however it has brought other gender insecurities.

Because of this, it's important to analyze to what extent a militarization policy provides security and protection to women – especially Colombian uprooted women – in Sucumbíos.

¹¹⁷ The government spent per person 126 USD in the military forces and 72 USD in social welfare.

¹¹⁸ *Security isn't having more military forces, because we don't know if they are guerrilla or military forces. Security is a government that provides with micro-enterprise, giving jobs to the people to live decently. That is security (Jan 2009).*

¹¹⁹ *I wish there were more military forces, which brings security to Colombians and Ecuadorians (Juan Robles Jan 2009).*

Given that the majority of gender rights violations occur at the local level, the national policies don't take into account how militarizing the northern borderland can create gendered insecurities in the life of women. As aforementioned, the major clients of sexual workers, along with oil workers, are the military and the police forces. Furthermore, the demand of 'sexual favors' by the security forces and arbitrary deportations to women are constant in Sucumbíos. Finally, it's extremely difficult for Colombian uprooted women to denounce the cases, given that the ones supposed to protect them and investigate the cases are the ones committing the crimes. According to a person working in the UN system, many military forces are also involved in the business of sexual exploitation: "En el canton de Putumayo hay ocho prostíbulos, de los cuales dos son asociados con los destacamentos militares de la zona y uno es dueño un militar...Estos son prostíbulos para civiles y militares"¹²⁰ (Jan 2009). With the information about sexual exploitation in the other chapters, one can infer that military forces, along with other 'geographical single men', are also violating the rights of women. Hence, this information shows how a national security policy can affect negatively the life of women at the local level and how this policy can extend the GBV experienced by Colombian uprooted women in a supposed peace zone.

The government of Rafael Correa has stressed out the need to secure the national boundaries for the security of the people, especially those living at the borderlands (El Comercio 2009b). However, it's noteworthy that increasing security through a military strategy hasn't change the reality of women to experience GBV. Since the militarization of the northern borderland, many studies have pointed out the extent of GBV towards Colombian uprooted women in Sucumbíos – Camacho 2005, Cruz 2007, Alvarez Monsalve 2008 – and this thesis isn't an exception. Hence, a national policy based in militarization doesn't take into account the conditions of specific groups, which increases – in the case of women – their exposure to GBV; thus incrementing the insecurity of this group within national boundaries.

- *The securitization of Colombian forced migration flows in the northern borderland*

Ecuador – especially its northern borderland – has for many years received Colombian forced migration caused by the conflict. As a political strategy to not get military involved in the Colombian armed conflict, Ecuador has shown to the world its humanitarian action by becoming the first country (in terms of number) to receive Colombian forced migration

¹²⁰ *In the Putumayo county, there are eight brothels, of which two are related to the military detachments in the region and one is owned by a military man...These are brothels for civilians and military forces (Jan 2009).*

(Rivera et al. 2007; Ceballos 2007b, 306). However, due to Ecuador's opposition to the *Plan Colombia*, the fumigations of Coca plantations effects in Ecuadorian territory, the deteriorated political relation between the neighbor governments¹²¹ and the increasing economic migration of Colombians to Ecuador, the government has taken certain policies that reflect a new position of the Ecuadorian government involving a securitization process of forced migration flows, with its discourses and technologies.¹²² In day-to-day politics, Ecuador has securitized the Colombian uprooted flows, portraying them as a threat to national security by bringing delinquency to the country.¹²³ This has a direct impact in the relations between the host community and the Colombian uprooted population and in the probability of Colombian women to continue to experience GBV.

One of the major consequences in the securitization of migration flows has been the decrease in the number of accepted asylum-seeker petitions.¹²⁴ The media from 2000 to 2006 of asylum-seeker petitions refused by the state has been of more than 30%, a number that hasn't been reduce in this last years (Ceballos 2007a, 173) While in 2000, 50% of the petitions were accepted, in 2005 less than 30% were accepted and another 30% didn't receive any answer; which shows that 2/3 of the uprooted population live in the country without a legal status (Túpac-Yupanqui and Rovayo 2006, 110).

This tendency has been followed by a military response – as shown in the section above. The Colombian migration flows have been associated to delinquency movements. In consequence, repressive military and police measures must take place to prevent the narco-business and contain the Colombian armed conflict, but also to stop Colombian migration flows¹²⁵ (Ceballos 2007b, 303; Espinosa 2008, 40).

But to better control the borders, the Ecuadorian state has put into operation new security technologies to stop the Colombian migration flows. Through a security discourse, where

¹²¹ Since the Colombian military forces didn't respect the Ecuadorian sovereignty in the bombing to a FARC camp in March 1st 2008, de diplomatic relations between these two countries have been broken.

¹²² Even if the current President, Rafael Correa, has a more open policy towards people in need of international protection that his antecessors, many of the security policies continue to be the same. One of the most positive actions of this government is the mobile registration process, implemented with the support of UNHCR, to regulate the situation of 50.000 Colombian citizens living in the northern borderland. Since March 2009 the process has been implemented in the province of Esmeraldas. Even in Sucumbios the process started in June 2009 (UNHCR 2009). It's still too early to analyze what are the effects of the process in the northern border region.

¹²³ It's interesting to point out that as a national political strategy, Ecuador doesn't identify the FARC as a terrorist group as Colombia and the United States of America.

¹²⁴ While the number of refugee petitions increases because of the intensification of the conflict, the number of positive answers for asylum decreases.

¹²⁵ An example of this is how the free movement in the official cross border points – Rumichaca bridge in Sucumbios – has been partially closed down since 2002 (Cruz 2007, 30).

Colombians were pictured as the cause of the delinquency in Ecuador and as threat to national stability, in 2004 the government of the ex-president Lucio Gutiérrez established the requirement of the *pasado judicial* for any Colombian seeking to cross the border¹²⁶ as a way to combat insecurity and delinquency in the country (Rivera et al. 2007, 54). If a Colombian citizen doesn't have the *pasado judicial*, s/he will not have the right to enter into Ecuadorian territory.¹²⁷ At the beginning of 2008 President Correa eliminated this request, however at the end of this same year the government restored this measure by stating: “la seguridad nacional se ha visto gravemente afectada, debido a la incursión, principalmente de colombianos, que en algunos casos pasan a hacer parte de asociaciones con fines delictivos”¹²⁸ (El Universo 2008).

This mechanism not only violates the Andean Region Treaty of free circulation, but it goes against humanitarian criteria. The demand for this certificate is a violation to the fundamental rights of any population in need of international protection, such as the presumption of innocence and the principle of *non-refoulement* (Rivera et al. 2007, 54). Colombian Asylum-seekers running away from the conflict are exposed to huge dangers when they are taken back again into the Colombian border. Furthermore, as Sara Duarte points out, “la política de seguridad y control no quita presencia de paramilitares y grupos irregulares, solo limita el acceso a los pobres y a los que necesitan protección internacional”¹²⁹ (Jan 2009).

This security measure increases the probability of women to keep experiencing GBV in Ecuador. The securitization of the border through military forces and the migration policy restrictions has created fear of passing through official migration points (Rivera et al. 2007, 54). In consequence many uprooted Colombian women try to find illegal mechanisms to enter to Ecuadorian territory to flee from the violence, such as hiring smugglers, increasing significantly their probability to experience human rights violations, such as human trafficking (Young 2006, 26).

As mentioned before, the control methods of migration flows not only reach those entering the country, but those who have settled in the region, in this case Sucumbíos. The politics of securitization has contributed to a discrimination and exclusion process that inhibits the

¹²⁶ A certificate of the penal background

¹²⁷ It's noteworthy that this measure is applied only for Colombian citizens and not other nationalities asking for asylum in Ecuador, which shows the securitization of the Colombian flows.

¹²⁸ *The national security has been extremely affected because of irregular raids, principally composed of Colombians, that in some cases are associated with delinquency activities (El Universo 2008).*

¹²⁹ *The policies of security and control don't eliminate the presence of paramilitaries and irregular groups. It just limits the access to the poor and to those who need international protection (Jan 2009).*

practice of basic rights for the Colombian uprooted people already in Sucumbíos¹³⁰ (Túpac-Yupanqui and Rovayo 2006, 80). For example, the Ecuadorian government doesn't allow asylum-seekers to work. Furthermore, since 2004 any person that has obtained the refugee status needs to obtain a working visa that costs 300 dollars (Camacho 2005, 45); a sum that the majority of this group cannot afford to pay. This factor slows the integration process into the host community of Colombian refugees and asylum-seekers, increases the unemployment rate of this population and hence increases their probability to human rights violations described in other sections; women (even more so when they are household providers) have to find a livelihood in the informal or illegal sector, where they are exposed to sexual and labour exploitation and even human trafficking.

Securitization also allows security agents to implement extreme actions for the sake of national security. This has favored abuses by migration authorities and has limited the rights of the uprooted population in Sucumbíos. Deportation has become a technology of security against Colombian uprooted people, which is continuously increasing. The shadow report on the convention of the Rights of all Migrant Workers, stated that during the period 2000-2006 in Ecuador, 93,5% of deportations were made between 2003 and 2006 (2008 85-86). This information proves how there has been a control and restriction policy of migration flows in Ecuador, especially to its neighboring countries; a policy that demonstrates the securitization of borders and migration. Given that deportation is treated as an extreme measure, many of them violate the most basic rights of the individuals¹³¹ (Túpac-Yupanqui and Rovayo 2006, 85, 87).

It's noteworthy that during 2007, from the detentions conducted to Colombians in Ecuador, 75,8% were women, whereas only 24,2% were men; and in 2008 68,7% and 31,3% respectively. In the case of deported people, the average during 2007 and 2008 were 73,8% women and 26,2% men (Pacheco and Salazar 2008, 90). This data doesn't only proves the securitization of migration flows and the violation to human rights, but a specific gender discrimination policy where women, because of their gender, are disproportionately affected. Even if there isn't specific information about deportations in Sucumbíos, the fact that 1/3 of the Colombian uprooted population lives in this region and that the majority of migration

¹³⁰ Other examples that contribute to an exclusion process the interdiction for refugees to open bank accounts and the 2008 policy of not allowing refugee Colombian women to have access to the bono solidario (governmental monetary program to compensate the elimination of subsidies in the economy to mothers with more than one child and adults above 65 years old, which are under the line of poverty) (Sara Duarte Jan 2009).

¹³¹ The deportation process is done without a lawyer and a legal process, without taking into account the rights of a person for having a en Ecuadorian partner or child (Túpac-Yupanqui and Rovayo 2006, 85, 87).

security forces are in this area, shows how the securitization process has exposed Colombian uprooted women in Sucumbíos to experience GBV committed by the authorities, as sexual favors, arbitrary deportations and detentions.

Finally, it's noteworthy that the turn to securitization and migration control of the migratory policies and procedures has also had a direct impact in the humanitarian protection system. As aforementioned, UNHCR assists the Ecuadorian state with the selection process of asylum petitions; hence it also has a security approach to analyze the asylum-seeking petitions.¹³² Because the process depends of the funding and assistance of humanitarian actors such as UNHCR, they become judges of who needs international protection and who doesn't, rather than focusing in providing information, facilitating the insertion process and assistance, and advocating for the human rights of the displaced population (Rivera et al. 2007, 45, 90, 146). The need to divide 'genuine' and 'false' asylum-seekers causes a change of perspective, instead of being seen as a group in need of international protection Colombians are seen as a group aiming to outwit the system. This is detrimental for many uprooted women. As many interviewed, Sara Duarte points out that:

El sistema no busca brindar protección a la mujer, sino evitar el fraude. Desde el 2006 se reconoce el género como razón para pedir refugio, pero las entrevistas que se hacen por separado,¹³³ no es para ver si la mujer a sufrido GBV, es para ver que no haya fraude. Además al buscar el fraude no son sensibles con las mujeres y la violencia que han vivido”¹³⁴ (Jan 2009).

- *The effects of the securitization process in Sucumbíos*

A securitization process can only be effective if a configuration of circumstances between the social context and the audience disposition to accept it as such takes place. As mentioned above, the lack of rule of law and the intensification of the Colombian conflict near the northern borderland has transformed this region into one of the most dangerous places in Ecuador. These conditions have been perfect for the implementation and acceptance of the securitization of forced migration flows. However, the securitization of these flows at the interstate level has had an impact in the relations between the borderlanders at each side of the Putumayo River. Furthermore, the national politics between Ecuador and Colombia has had a

¹³² It's interesting to point out that UNHCR has changed its language, calling the uprooted people 'people in need of international protection' to 'people with possible need of international protection' (Sara Duarte Jun 2009). This suggests that UNHCR has also implemented a security agenda.

¹³³ The interviews are done in the majority of cases to the head of the family, which because of gender roles is mainly the men. This is why women aren't interviewed, hence making invisible possible cases of GBV.

¹³⁴ *The system doesn't look for providing protection to women, but to avoid fraud. Since the year 2006, Ecuador recognizes GBV as a reason for asking for asylum, but the interviews that are done separately, aren't to protect the women but to avoid fraud. Furthermore, given they are looking for fraud; they aren't sensitive with the women and the violence they have gone through* (Jan 2009).

direct impact in the fronterization process, where the political problems between the countries are manifested in people's imaginaries, feelings and actions at the borderlands. As Juan Robles points out, "con la pelea de Uribe y Correa estamos mucho peor... Ellos son los que promueven la discriminación y la xenofobia"¹³⁵ (Jan 2009).

Since the implementation of the *Plan Colombia* and its effects in Ecuador, Colombia has become in the imaginaries of the people a national security threat, creating fear at the local level (Espinosa 2008, 24, 31).¹³⁶ As aforementioned, securitization brings along insecurity. Hence, the increase of militarization in the northern borderland – especially in Sucumbíos – has brought tensions in the relationships between the borderlanders and has limited the capacity – of the authorities and of the host community – to be neutral in the face of the Colombian conflict and the people fleeing from it. While before there was a brotherhood between Colombians and Ecuadorians, even with the lack of rule of law, low democracy and levels of HS, nowadays the borderland is conceived as a war zone, which has changed the borderlanders' relation, has divided families and has broken the commercial exchanges (Movimiento de Mujeres de Sucumbíos 2007, 28). This has many effects in the lives of uprooted Colombian women living in Sucumbíos, such as discrimination and stigmatization. Furthermore, it has broken up the solidarity networks that existed between the borderlanders. In places where there is lack of rule of law, solidarity networks are extremely important to tackle gendered insecurities. The fact that the solidarity networks are broken up increases the probability of uprooted women to experience GBV.

The Colombian conflict and the effects in the northern borderland have changed the relationship between two populations from solidarity to mistrust. The Ecuadorian perception is that Colombians – migrants and forced migrants – reproduce the model of violence in Ecuador and just for the fact of being Colombian they are part of an irregular group (RET Jan 2009). The host community portrays them as a violent population. As Raquel López, teacher in Lago Agrio, stressed out about the Colombian population: "De la plata que te deben, ni les menciones, si le sigues molestando, te matan...Ellos nacen así"¹³⁷ (Jan 2009).

¹³⁵ *With the fight between Correa and Uribe we are much worse. They are the ones provoking discrimination and xenophobia feelings (Jan 2009).*

¹³⁶ It's important to highlight that until the implementation of the *Plan Colombia*, the national threat was Peru, hence the southern borderland was the one militarized and securitized.

¹³⁷ *If they owe you money, don't ask them to give back. If you keep in asking, they will kill you...they are born like that (Jan 2009).*

One of the major effects of the national speech about Colombians as delinquents and the implementation of the *pasado judicial* requirement to control the flows is that this is reflected in the attitudes towards Colombians of the host community at the local level. The local authorities as well as the community members treat Colombian forced migrants as delinquents. As the representative of JRS, also member of the Afro Ecuadorian movement, ironically points out: “Nosotros los negros damos gracias a los colombianos, el estigma del ladrón se ha trasladado de los negros a los colombianos”¹³⁸ (Jan 2009).

This is detrimental to the uprooted Colombian women living in Sucumbíos, which is already a violent environment for women. While Colombian men are perceived as thieves, Colombian women – because of the prejudices about foreigner women coming to Sucumbíos – are seen as prostitutes¹³⁹ (Mayra Vélez Jan 2009). According to Rivera et al, the stigma of prostitution is felt day to day in the relation between refugees and the host community (2007, 85). This explains many of the violations of the rights of uprooted Colombian women committed by the authorities and the host community members, who, living in a sexist society, believe that all women who break the canon of “being women” – as being a foreigner women – is a prostitute and that the women working in the sexual business aren’t individuals of rights. This has been seen in the cases of sexual exploitation and of trafficking in Sucumbíos where women aren’t treated as victims but as prostitutes as a function of their nationality (Carlos Cisneros Jan 2009). Thus the host community’s perception of Colombian women as prostitutes increases the probability of this group to continue to experience GBV in the supposed peace zone.

The surveillance over a specific group to guarantee national security might create securitization and discrimination at the local level. Many borderlanders feel insecurity at entering in any type of relationship with Colombians, thus producing actions of discrimination. For example, in 2003 the local radio in Sucumbíos sponsored a campaign asking the population not to hire Colombians, because they were responsible for the violence and for taking the jobs of the population in the northern border region (Camacho 2005, 61). Furthermore, there have been reported cases of Colombian households being “kicked out” of their homes because the landlord doesn’t want to have Colombians in his or her property (ASELER Jan 2009). In the school there is still discrimination to the children and youngsters – and in some they aren’t accepted because of their nationality – because the educational

¹³⁸ *We, the black people are very thankful with Colombians. The stigma of being a thief has been transferred from the blacks to the Colombian people (Jan 2009).*

¹³⁹ The majority of people interviewed agreed that there is a stereotype of women as prostitute.

system “no hace la diferencia refugiado y criminal, todos son vistos como delincuentes o narcotraficantes y prostitutas”¹⁴⁰ (RET Jan 2009).

The family and cultural bonds have also suffered from the violence and the stereotypes against the Colombian population. If before they were a group sharing cultural values beyond the borders imposed by the state, nowadays many of these relationships have broken up. People identify not as part of a similar group but as part of two different nationalities: Colombians and Ecuadorians. As the member of FONAKISE points out: “No son como ecuatorianos, los colombianos no se sabe si son buenos o malos. De gana hemos abierto nuestras puertas a los colombianos”¹⁴¹ (Jan 2009).

The new *fronterization* process has been detrimental for the organization of Colombian uprooted women in Sucumbíos.¹⁴² It’s important to point out that Sucumbíos is a province known by the capacity of women to get organized and fight for their rights for more than 20 years.¹⁴³ However, because of discrimination and stereotypes, Colombian and Ecuadorian women work separately in the fight against GBV. Even if a member of the *Frente de Mujeres de Sucumbíos* stated that between Colombian and Ecuadorian women the only thing that separate them is a river (Margarita Juarez Jan 2009), CEA isn’t officially part of Sucumbíos women’s movement and the associations of the movement integrate a small percentage of Colombian women. However, according to UNIFEM this small number isn’t because they are Colombians but because of the personality they have (Jan 2009). Thus, leaving aside the needs of the Colombian uprooted women in Sucumbíos.

Furthermore, even if the 2007 *Agenda de las Mujeres de Sucumbíos* promoted by the women’s movement in Sucumbíos states the negative impacts of the *Plan Colombia* in Sucumbíos – such as the effects of the fumigation of Coca plantations – and the need to strengthen the relations between the Colombian women and the Ecuadorian women

¹⁴⁰ They don’t see the difference between refugees and criminals. For many of them, all are delinquents, drug dealers and prostitutes (RET Jan 2009).

¹⁴¹ They aren’t like Ecuadorians, we don’t know whether Colombians are good or bad. We shouldn’t have opened our doors to Colombians (Jan 2009).

¹⁴² At the national level there are only few associations of Colombian women; in Sucumbíos there’s only one: “Asociación Colombo-Ecuatoriana – CEA”. By the support of the Colombian consulate, 15 Colombian women have organized themselves to work mainly in self-esteem workshops and sexual rights. Even if they acknowledge The GBV in the country, they don’t work directly with this subject, mainly because of their size and low political impact (Mayra Vélez Jan 2009).

¹⁴³ Six women associations, compiling grassroots organizations, are part of the women’s movement. For more information, please refer to *Agenda de las Mujeres de Sucumbíos* 2007.

organizations¹⁴⁴ (2007, 27-31), none of the chapters describes the reality of Colombian women in the province or mentions Colombian women as a group that needs special attention in the borderland.¹⁴⁵ “No se muestra diferenciación de cómo afecta a unas más que otras. Las ecuatorianas tienen tantas necesidades ellas mismas, están también en una situación de supervivencia, que buscan cubrir sus necesidades primero”¹⁴⁶ (UNIFEM Jan 2009).

The non-inclusion of the reality of Colombian women in the borderland in the Agenda of the Women of Sucumbíos manifests the invisibility of the problematic and the GBV experienced for many Colombian women in the borderland. Furthermore, it shows how the securitization process with its effects – stereotypes and discrimination – has managed to cause Colombian uprooted women also to feel insecure in Sucumbíos and to try to make themselves invisible.¹⁴⁷ ASOREC as well as CEA state that “a las mujeres colombianas les cuesta organizarse, porque están invisibilizadas y escondidas”¹⁴⁸ (Jan 2009). By not organizing themselves they don’t construct solidarity networks. They are more prone to experience GBV and the mechanisms to respond to this violence are very weak. Hence, the probability of Colombian women to continue to experience GBV in the supposed peace zone is very high.

¹⁴⁴ It’s noteworthy that in November 2008 and March 2009, the organizations of women of the Northern borderland of Ecuador and of the Southern Borderland of Colombia organized, with the support of *Fundación Esperanza*, two gatherings to discuss the life of women in both sides (Fundación Esperanza Jan 2009).

¹⁴⁵ Even if the women’s organizations in Sucumbíos perceive that the Colombian uprooted women are affected by GBV because of their conditions as forced migrants, they also have the perception Colombian women are “hot” and that “they like it”, which is why they start working in prostitution and then they get exploited (interviews with the women’s organizations members Jan 2009).

¹⁴⁶ The Agenda doesn’t differentiate how the conflict affects more ones than others. The Ecuadorians have so many needs, they are also in a survival situation, that they look first for satisfy their needs (UNIFEM Jan 2009).

¹⁴⁷ Because of this insecurity perception, many women limit themselves to two spaces: work and home, avoiding communication and contact with other people (Camacho 2005, 72). Thereby fear has a negative impact in the life of Colombian in need of international protection to reconstruct their lives, adapt to the community, and construct their identity as individuals of rights (Rivera et al. 2007, 146).

¹⁴⁸ *For the Colombian women, it’s hard to organize themselves, because they aren’t visible and are hidden (Jan 2009).*

V. Conclusion

As has been argued throughout this thesis, GBV isn't an isolated phenomenon that is manifested during conflict or displacement. GBV is part of a continuum that manifests in different forms and in different contexts, and it is intensified during conflict and displacement. The continuum-of-violence conception breaks up the dichotomy between sites of violence and sites of peace, by proving that in some contexts it's difficult to make a difference between these sites, because even if some gendered insecurities disappear, others – manifested in another form of GBV – appear. However, just as not every conflict uses GBV as a weapon of war, not every host community or refugee camp has high levels of GBV towards women. Some sites, more than others, are scenarios of violence and of gendered insecurities to women even if in the day-to-day are seen as sites of peace.

This thesis aimed at researching why Colombian women experience a continuum of violence from the GBV generated by the Colombian conflict – which is one of the causes why they are forced to flee to neighboring countries – to the northern borderland of Ecuador – where different types of GBV towards Colombian women are taking place. The analysis of the northern borderland of Ecuador – specifically the province of Sucumbíos – wanted to show how the securitization of Colombian forced migration without an appropriate policy of HS in Sucumbíos, increases the possibility of uprooted Colombian women to continue experiencing GBV, even if the latter is manifested differently. In consequence, the northern borderland of Ecuador couldn't be considered as a site of peace away from the conflict zone; on the contrary it's a site full of gendered insecurities that place Colombian uprooted women in a major risk to continue experiencing GBV.

As explained in the theoretical framework, borders have always been an important element for national security. However, borderlands have been historically excluded from the national development strategies, which explains the few social services in the area, the low levels of human security and the lack of rule of law. In Sucumbíos the low levels of HS and lack of rule of law have converted this area in a site of violence for Ecuadorian and Colombian women. The feminization of poverty and the lack of economic opportunities make women more prone to experience labour and sexual exploitation. The use of private violence and the deficiency of the judiciary system create an environment of impunity for GBV as human trafficking, sexual exploitation and domestic violence. This is intensified in the case of Colombian uprooted women, that given the characteristics of displacement – the lack of

livelihood opportunities, loss of solidarity networks and change of daily life – make them more prone to experience GBV.

It's noteworthy that Sucumbíos has been historically a masculine zone configured by geographical single men. This has increased the demand of sexual work and has developed sexual exploitation networks. Furthermore, a masculine zone has created special gender relations where men are in a more powerful position than women. This masculine zone has created an environment that condones GBV towards women. This is proved by the high levels of domestic violence without punishment, the high levels of sexual harassment committed by the authorities and the host community, and the cases of sexual exploitation.

To this, one has to add the securitization process of Colombian forced migration flows that the northern borderland has experienced. This has not only created stereotypes about Colombians as 'delinquents', 'prostitutes' and the cause of national instability. It has created new technologies of control as the requirement of the *pasado judicial* and the militarization of the borderland. Even if the new government has created the *Plan Ecuador* to implement a HS strategy in the northern borderland – and is in the process to regulate the legal situation of 50.000 Colombians – a militarized policy is still prioritized. This has a direct impact in the levels of GBV to Colombian uprooted women, which operate at the community and individual level and aren't brought into light in the national security strategy. Many women use smugglers to get into Ecuador and are in the country in an irregular situation. The cases of deportation don't decrease and are much higher when the person is a woman. Many of the security forces living in the northern borderland are perpetrators of GBV towards Colombian women, often in the form of demands of 'sexual favors' and of sexual exploitation. This increases the gendered insecurities of the borderland, because those who are the ones supposed to protect are the ones committing the crimes.

The IC has tried to cover the abandonment of the Ecuadorian state by providing social services and HS to the population – Colombians as well as Ecuadorians – in the northern borderland. However some of its actions have in fact curtailed the agency of Colombian uprooted women by not promoting sufficiently activities to create livelihood means – making the women dependents of humanitarian aid and hand-out deliveries – and by not having a strategy to empower women as a social group. In the same way, many organizations from the IC have been affected by the process of securitization by becoming actors in deciding whether the person deserves the refugee status instead of providing humanitarian aid. This has also

created a problem of accountability, given that in many aspects the IC has taken the role of the state. Finally, even if the IC conducts some activities to tackle GBV, these activities don't attack directly the grassroots of GBV; the majority are activities of prevention or with women that have already suffered GBV. All of this affects the process of Colombian uprooted women to become individuals of rights and to get organized to claim for their rights. Thus increasing their possibility to experience GBV.

In an environment lacking of rule of law, solidarity networks are very important to counter GBV. However, given the high levels of human mobility, the securitization process, the lack of rule of law and the low levels of HS in the borderland, it's difficult to create these networks. The high levels of mobility of the host community and of the same Colombian uprooted population don't create the incentives to create solidarity networks. The lack of economic opportunities and the presence of Colombian irregular forces in Ecuador are factors explaining why Colombian uprooted women don't have the time to construct this networks and why are afraid of getting involved with people of their own nationality, that might have a connection with irregular combat groups. Finally, the national speech about Colombians has had an impact at the local level, changing the process of fronterization. This has created an environment of insecurity and has excluded the Colombian population in the northern borderland. The securitization process has broken the solidarity networks between both sides of the borderlands and has created different stereotypes that are detrimental to the organization of women. This explains why the organized Colombian uprooted women don't work together with the movement of women of Sucumbíos. As a consequence, the reality of Colombian uprooted women isn't taken into consideration in the fight of GBV in the province. Hence, increasing the possibility of forced migrant women to experience GBV.

The information above shows how the characteristics of the northern borderland of Ecuador increase the probability of Colombian uprooted women to continue experience GBV in the host community. This thesis has proved that Sucumbíos – because of the low levels of HS and its securitization process – cannot be considered as a site of peace for Colombian uprooted women. However, this is just a start for further research on the subject. It's important to have additional research on whether the registration process project to regulate the Colombian population in Ecuador and on whether the implementation of the *Plan Ecuador* with its HS perspective, has an impact in reducing the levels of GBV in Sucumbíos. Furthermore, additional research needs to be done on the Agenda of the IC to tackle GBV, its results and the problem of accountability and securitization process. Finally, it's important that new

research takes place on the role of the Colombian and Ecuadorian women's movement in the fight against GBV towards Colombian women in a traditional masculine zone.

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VII. Anexes

- *Anex I – Acronyms*

| | |
|----------|---|
| ASOREC | Colombian Refugees Association |
| ASELER | Legal Guidance and Services for Refugees |
| AUC | Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia |
| CEA | Colombian Ecuadorian (Women) Association |
| CNNA | Consejo Nacional de la Niñez y Adolescencia |
| ELN | Ejército de Liberación Nacional |
| FARC | Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia |
| FONAKISE | Federation of Kichwa Nationalities Organizations in Sucumbíos |
| GBV | Gender-based violence |
| HIAS | The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society |
| HIV | Human immunodeficiency virus |
| HS | Human Security |
| IASC | Inter-Agency Standing Committee |
| IDPs | Internal Displaced Persons |
| IC | International Community |
| IO | International Organizations |
| ISAMIS | Iglesia de San Miguel de Sucumbíos – Lago Agrio |
| JRS | Jesuit Refugee Service |
| MTMCA | Mesa de Trabajo Mujer y Conflicto Armado |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| RET | Refugee Education Trust Foundation |
| STD | Sexually transmitted disease |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |

- *Annexe II – List of Interviews*

Colombian displaced population Associations in Ecuador

1. Santiago Ruiz – ASOREC – Quito
2. Juan Robles – ASOREC – Lago Agrio
3. Mayra Vélez – CEA – Lago Agrio
4. Esperanza Sanchez – Manos Unidas – San Lorenzo

Women's movement organization

1. Margarita Juarez - Frente de Mujeres de Sucumbios
2. Seven women of the Federación de Mujeres de Sucumbios
3. Asociación de Mujeres de Nacionalidad Kichwa de Sucumbíos

Host Community

1. Raquel López – Teacher in Lago Agrio
2. Juan Román – Youngster living in Lago Agrio

Academic Institutions

1. Programa Andino de Derechos Humanos (PADH) – Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar – Quito
2. Sara Duarte – Expert in women and refugee issues.

Governmental Organizations

1. Coordinadora Red de Protección Integral – Consejo Nacional de la Niñez y Adolescencia — Lago Agrio
2. Carlos Cisneros – Defensoría del Pueblo – Comisión de Movilidad Humana – Quito
3. Defensoría del Pueblo – Comisión de la Mujer, Niñez y Adolescencia – Quito

National and International NGOs

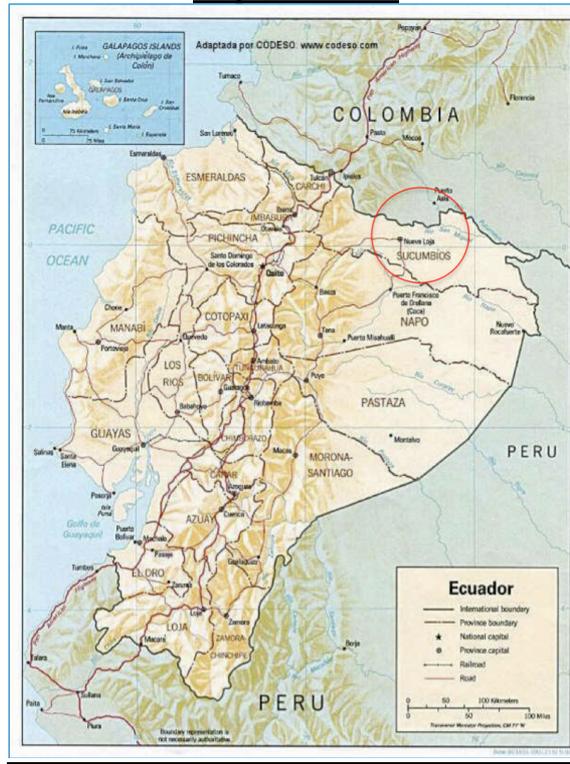
1. ASELER – Quito
2. Fundación Esperanza – Quito
3. HIAS – Quito
4. HIAS – Lago Agrio
5. ISAMIS – Lago Agrio
6. RET – Lago Agrio
7. Servicio Jesuita para Refugiados (JRS) – Quito

International Organizations

1. UNFPA – National Office for HIV-Aids – Quito
2. UNFPA – Lago Agrio
3. IOM – Human Trafficking Division – Quito
4. IOM – Protection Division – Quito
5. IOM – Lago Agrio
6. UNHCR – Quito and Lago Agrio

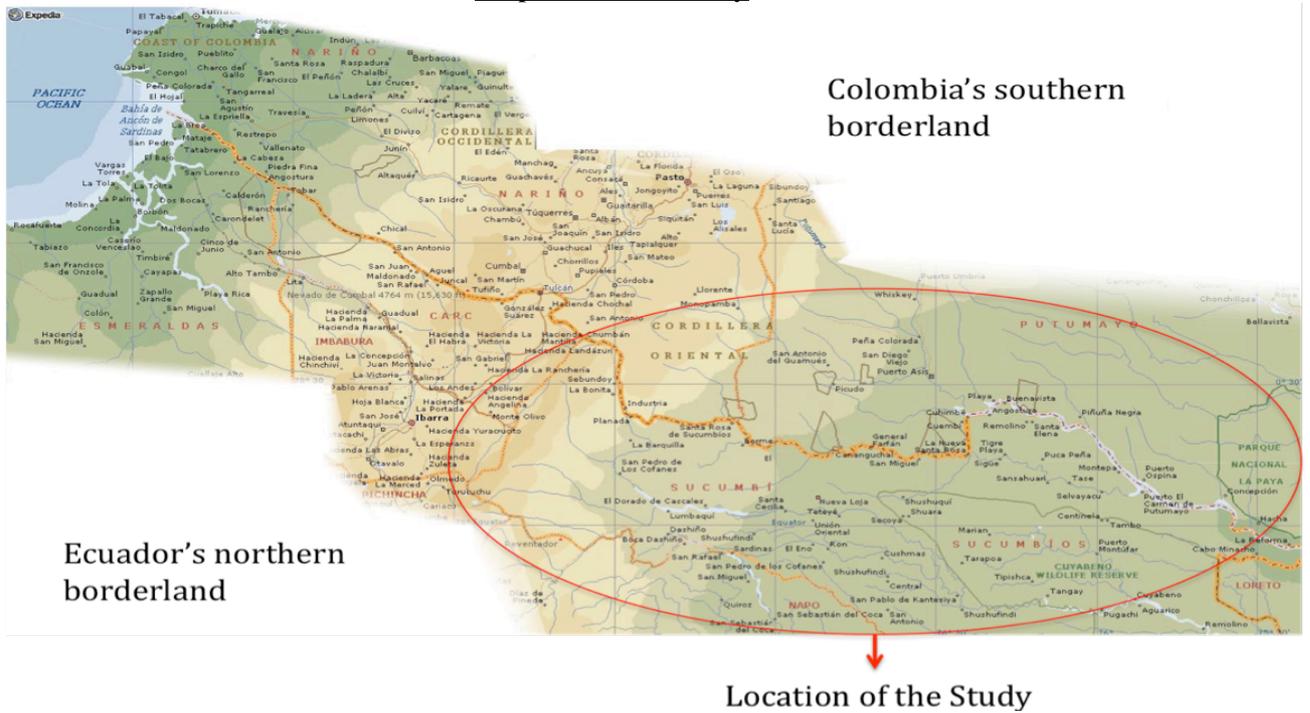
- *Annexe III – maps of the area*

Map of Ecuador



Zonu: <http://www.zonu.com/ecuador mapas/m ecuador rel91.htm>

Map of the case study



Salud y Desplazamiento: <http://www.disaster-info.net/desplazados/mapas/fronteracolomboccuador.jpg>

