

## ENTREPRENEURIAL POTENTIAL OF POST- CONFLICT FORMER COMBATANS FROM TALLAMBI, COLOMBIA

### POTENCIAL EMPRENDEDOR DE ANTIGUOS COMBATIENTES POSTERIORES AL CONFLICTO DE TALLAMBI, COLOMBIA

Martha Lida Solarte Solarte<sup>1</sup>  
Claudia Magali Solarte Solarte<sup>2</sup>  
Gloria Alicia Rivera Vallejo<sup>3</sup>

#### Abstract

The research arises from the participation in the research project called: Entrepreneurship in the Colombo - Ecuadorian border integration zone as part of post-conflict context of universities: UNIMINUTO regional Pasto and Universidad Politécnica Estatal del Carchi – Ecuador, as part of the VII call for the development and strengthening of research at UNIMINUTO, this project was selected among 250 projects at a national level. The objective of the research is to characterize the productive entrepreneurship among the former combatants in Tallambi – a town in Cumbal. The project is part of the positivist paradigm, the approach is quantitative in nature, and the type of research is descriptive. Data collection was carried out through the application of surveys to the groups of ex-combatants. The sample of the study are 128 former combatants who are located in Tallambi- Cumbal in Nariño- Colombia. Results indicated that the majority of ex-combatants are young, aging between 26 to 30 years old, therefore, they are of productive age for developing different types of entrepreneurship, and as a conclusion it is noted that the majority of former combatants are interested in creating businesses.

**Keywords:** Former combatants, entrepreneurship, enterprise, post-conflict

#### Resumen

La investigación surge de la participación en el proyecto de investigación denominado: Emprendimiento en la zona de integración fronteriza Colombo - Ecuatoriana como parte del contexto posconflicto de las universidades: UNIMINUTO regional Pasto y Universidad Politécnica Estatal del Carchi - Ecuador, como parte de la VII convocatoria el desarrollo y fortalecimiento de la investigación en UNIMINUTO, este proyecto fue seleccionado entre 250 proyectos a nivel nacional.

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<sup>1</sup> Economist, Master in Marketing, Full-time professor-researcher, member of the GICAEF research group of Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, Pasto Regional Center. Colombia, [msolartesor@uniminuto.edu.co](mailto:msolartesor@uniminuto.edu.co). <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3418-4664>

<sup>2</sup> Public Accountant, Master in Marketing, PhD Student in Management Administration, Director of the Management and Competitiveness research group, Business Administration Program, Universidad CESMAG, Pasto. Colombia, Email: [cmsolarte@unicesmag.edu.co](mailto:cmsolarte@unicesmag.edu.co). <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8844-2070>

<sup>3</sup> Business Administrator, Master in Education from Diversity, Full-time Research Professor at Universidad CESMAG. Associate Researcher in the Management and Competitiveness research group of the Faculty of Administrative and Accounting Sciences, Universidad CESMAG, C classification from Colciencias. Email: [garivera@unicesmag.edu.co](mailto:garivera@unicesmag.edu.co). <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7568-7466>

El objetivo de la investigación es caracterizar el espíritu empresarial productivo entre los excombatientes en Tallambi, un pueblo de Cumbal. El proyecto es parte del paradigma positivista, el enfoque es de naturaleza cuantitativa y el tipo de investigación es descriptivo. La recolección de datos se realizó mediante la aplicación de encuestas a los grupos de excombatientes. La muestra del estudio son 128 excombatientes que se encuentran en Tallambi- Cumbal en Nariño- Colombia. Los resultados indicaron que la mayoría de los excombatientes son jóvenes, con edades entre 26 y 30 años, por lo tanto, se encuentran en edad productiva para desarrollar diferentes tipos de emprendimiento, y como conclusión se observa que la mayoría de los excombatientes están interesados en creando negocios.

**Palabras clave:** Excombatientes, emprendimiento, empresa, postconflicto

### Introduction

The article is the result of the research project “Entrepreneurship in the Colombo - Ecuadorian border integration zone as part of the post-conflict context”, whose general objective is to characterize productive entrepreneurship among the ex-combatants from Tallambi - municipality of Cumbal.

Nariño, a department in Colombia, has been affected by the armed conflict, resulting in forced displacement of families, which has led to the loss of cultural and social identity. Thus, young people who joined armed groups since they were children, lost a lot of time in violent activities that hindered their life project and made difficult their reintegration into civilian life; on the contrary, the ranks of the guerrilla were strengthened by young and inexperienced workers in the labor force that could be controlled according to criteria set by these ranks.

Better opportunities in major cities and armed conflicts intensification increased rural-urban migration, but the inability of organized urban planning limited the coverage and security of public goods and appropriate formal employment opportunities, as organized crime groups look for new members who need to meet basic needs on a daily basis (Cortés Sánchez, 2018).

In this sense, Tallambi, located in Guáitara’s border area, faces diverse situational problems such as high levels of unemployment, informal economy, basic subsistence economy with little innovation and lack of industrialization of enterprises, lack of associativity and absence of a technological component that prevents this area from going hand in hand with the rest of the country.

In this context, 90% of the members of that guerrilla can read and write; 57% received basic primary education; 21% high school; 8% vocational education, and the last 3% higher education. Only 11% of the respondents do not have any type of education. In that vein, it is concerning that a 77% do not have a dwelling to live in. This data is undoubtedly vital to thinking about what should be a priority for productive reintegration projects (Gómez, 2017, p. 1).

More broadly, the role of the external environment implies a strong need to consider the current situation of many programs in the context of conflict, to avoid, particularly, the creation of incentives that discourage future productive activities just because the compensation is being provided (Desai, 2016).

This picture is evident when examining the conditions encountered by a person in the process of reintegration: unemployment, economic short-termism, social inequality, and constant provision of illegality from the ex-combatants former groups or emerging illegal armed gangs.

In this context, many of the reintegrated ones are linked to the armed groups due to fear or attraction to weapons, due to a social and political ideal, due to their physical integrity and due to the economic situation, they prefer to receive a salary that comes from illegality, since solving the

social and economic conditions of their families is essential. Gomez (2017) says so when explains that 46% said that they did not have any children, while 54% had at least one child. Among the guerrillas with descendants, 86% have between one, two and three children” (p. 1).

Similarly, Gómez (2017) states that the types of projects in which the former combatants would like to participate are: 60% properly use of the available resources (trees, shrubs, soil, animals, water) in order to organize self-sustaining, profitable production that contributes to the good living of farmers, and that reduces environmental pollution and therefore contributes to health; 39%, in housing construction and housing improvement programs, and 37%, in construction and maintenance of roads and schools, among others. Less than 30% are interested in tourist guidance, substitution of illicit crops, humanitarian demining and mining activities.

In this regard, the signing of the peace agreement introduces great challenges for young and adult former combatants, as they are of productive age, and they themselves have left arms, for this reason they need support from government as well as public and private entities through a strategic university-enterprise-state articulation focused on income generation programs, that promote productive entrepreneurship in order to improve their quality of life, by making them active subjects within this process.

This research sought to analyze how productive entrepreneurship can facilitate the reintegration of working age population. For the ex-combatants, this type of entrepreneurship provides them with concrete opportunities to make a living, which prevents them from returning to their former life, thus they can play a productive role and be appreciated by society, encouraging their acceptance within the community.

Similarly, the Colombian Government will seek to link the demobilized to productive projects or to training or education programs that make it easier for them to access to productive employment. In addition, by fostering the entrepreneurial culture, identifying business ideas and guidance towards existing sources of funding in the market, and improving the quality of life will result in the development of communities at the local and regional levels.

### **Theoretical framework**

There are various types of entrepreneurship, which according to Alcaraz (2015), "can be classified according to the type of social action they carry out, such as technological, academic, tourism, sports, social, environmental and business entrepreneurship" (p. 5).

In this sense, Toca (2010) states that business entrepreneurship is an interdisciplinary activity based on different theories of varied disciplines such as administration, economics, engineering, history, sociology and psychology; this is how the economy approaches the creation of companies from the role of the entrepreneur (what), the human sciences focus on personal aspects (who and why), and the administrative and management sciences focus on the process (how). This demonstrates the complexity and current importance of business entrepreneurship (p. 49).

In this context García (2015) defines business entrepreneurship "as those individual and/or collective, formal and legal actions that are carried out autonomously to initiate business opportunities with commercially accepted goods, techniques and/or services" (p. 46).

From this perspective, through the creation of productive units, business entrepreneurship allows people in the reintegration process to obtain economic support for them and their families: to do this, they are provided with tools regarding productive and educational issues to face this new stage of life and recognize the need to strengthen their businesses and personal projects.

On the other hand, Duarte and Ruiz (2009) state that business entrepreneurship corresponds to the production of goods and services.

Also, in the development of all kinds of entrepreneurship, according to (Parra, Mesa & Correal, 2009, cited in Duarte & Ruiz, 2009), it is essential to carry out an innovative idea that can be consolidated as an enterprise through several generations. Although a single idea is not enough, it is necessary to generate several ideas that may become business ventures (García, Paz y Cantillo, 2019; Castro, 2017).

On the other hand, if business entrepreneurship is approached from the viewpoint of the subject, according to (Héller, 2010 cited in García, 2015) “it is the individual willing to take risks to start an entrepreneurship” (p. 49). In the case of the former combatants who become entrepreneurs, they are willing to take social action that allows them to use resources, develop skills and enhance their leadership to achieve their objectives.

It is important to consider that business entrepreneurship can also be approached from different perspectives. Gámez (2009), in his “approach to entrepreneurship models”, described this variable from different approaches, the author concluded that the economic school offers an understanding of the entrepreneurial phenomenon from the actions of the individual to maximize profit and achieve well-being.

From an individual approach, according to Urbano and Toledano (2011) business entrepreneurship is a way of thinking, reasoning and acting linked and aroused by the search for business opportunities.

On the other hand, a relevant and popular indicator that reflects the level of the business entrepreneurship rate is the Total Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) Rate, this indicator measures the percentage of the adult population (18 to 64 years old) who are nascent entrepreneurs or owners and managers of a new business (León & Huari, 2014, p. 60).

From the economic perspective, the entrepreneur can be defined as the person who plans, executes and develops a business project, in order to take advantage of market opportunities or meet self-income generation needs, hence the GEM methodology specifies the existence of two types of entrepreneurship: opportunity driven entrepreneurship and necessity driven entrepreneurship. (León & Huari, 2014, p. 61).

On the other hand, decision-making as a transcendent action (Aktouf, 2001) is the most authentic manifestation of the entrepreneurial mindset in which the manager delegates functions and authority so that the assigned actions are fulfilled. To explain the entrepreneurial mindset, Pérez (1997) states that it is necessary to understand that it relates to motivation, and this motivation is the consequence of three different types of impulses, two of them, extrinsic and intrinsic depend on the environment and from two different characteristics, which are often opposed to the environment.

From a cultural perspective (Geertz, 1997), “from the perspective of anthropology entrepreneurship, it is a process which seeks a transformation of the will of human development” (p. 90).

In this way, this results in what would be called decision-making as a transcendent action, becoming the most authentic manifestation of the entrepreneurial mindset, in which the entrepreneur delegates functions so that the assigned actions are fulfilled. As well as the dynamics of knowledge and power (Aktouf, 2001, p. 92).

### Methodology

The project is framed in the positivist paradigm since an objective reality is considered, which according to Quijano (2009) can be known through observation, experimentation and reasoning in order to formulate, through the inductive method, general laws that relate the causes to their effects and explain the phenomena observed, and then it will be verified empirically according to those laws.

The quantitative research approach is used because the study proposes alternative solutions to the population of young and adult former combatants from the Guáitara's border area based on the diagnosis obtained, therefore, it is required a frame of reference given by quantifiable and measurable units of analysis through the application of statistical analysis resources.

This research will be descriptive, since it details properties, characteristics and profiles of people, objects, processes or phenomena that are subjected to analysis in order to collect, measure and evaluate data on various concepts, called research variables. For this research, information on the needs of the former combatants groups will be collected in order to propose alternative solutions within the scope of entrepreneurship and post-conflict.

Data collection will be carried out through the application of surveys to the ex-combatants groups from the Colombo-Ecuadorian border, Tallambí (128).

### Results and discussion

Once the data was tabulated and analyzed, the following results were found:

#### Demographic Information

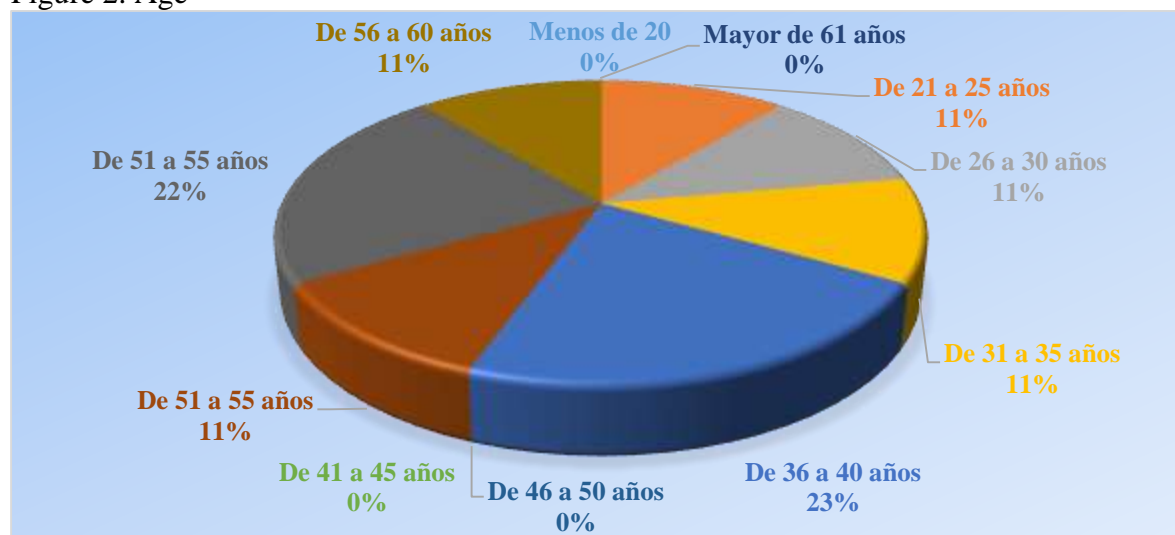
Figure 1. Gender



With regard to the people surveyed, it is observed that 56% are male and 44% female. It is analyzed that the male population is the most oriented to carry out business activities; because women are mostly engaged in household activities.

Various demographic, social, cultural, political and religious factors influence women's lives and their economic activities, productivity potentials and capacities. More importantly, the nature and scope of factors that hinder women vary according to age, education, family type, household income level, caste, ethnicity, rural-urban settlement and women's marital status. Therefore, each factor could be a constraint or an enabler (Jabeen et al., 2020).

Figure 2. Age



According to Figure 2, 22% are perceived to be older females between the ages of 51 and 55; 11% of men are in the same range; similarly, 23% are male people aged 36 to 40, and 11% of the ages of women ranges between 21 to 25 years old and 26 to 30 years old; in the case of men, 11% represents the oldest age range which is 56 to 60 years old and the youngest with a range of 31 to 35 years.

It is important to take into account the age range of the people in the reintegration process because the life project and the evolutionary process differ from a young person and an adult, since their needs are different, the adult seeks more safety through the economic activity that he performs through the creation of productive units, in contrast, a young person wants recognition, affiliation or identity, and therefore, the risk is the greatest motivation to start a business.

Figure 3. Place of birth

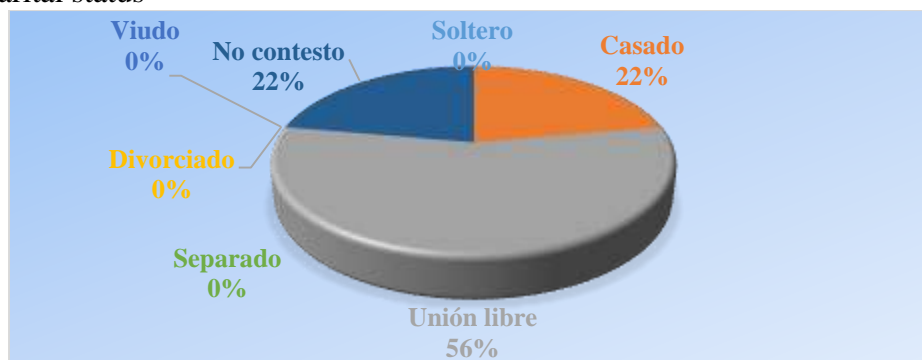


56% of the respondents answered that although they were born in different places in Nariño and Colombia, they considered themselves to be from Cumbal because there they began a new way of life. And 44% say that they were indeed originally from the municipality of Cumbal. In this sense, according to the Development Plan of the municipality of Cumbal (2016 -2019):

Cumbal is located in the south west of the Department of Nariño, it is characterized by having 93% of the indigenous population belonging to the Pastos ethnic group; who maintain their habitation and exploitation, as a natural area of their economic and cultural activities. While the remaining 7% is a mixed community. Taking into account the 2015

DANE Census in Cumbal, there is a total population of 37,635 inhabitants of which 8,428 live in the Urban Zone and 29,207 in the Rural Zone. According to gender, the population is distributed as follows: 50.08% are men and the remaining 49.9% are women (p. 26).

Figure 4. Marital status

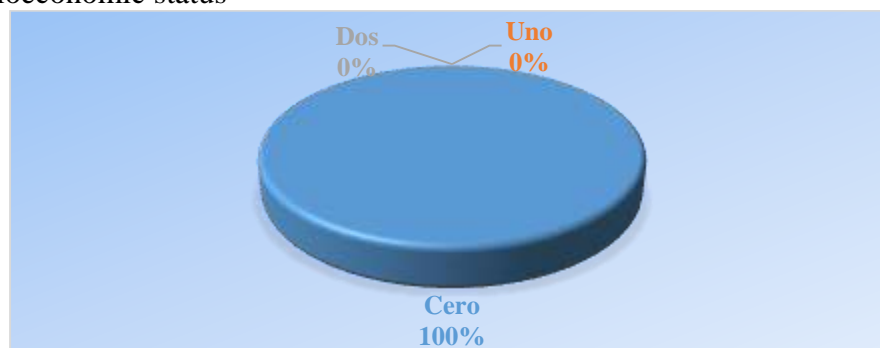


Of the total number of people surveyed, 56% said they lived in a free union and only 22% were married, from this perspective it is important to take into account the gender mainstreaming, in which women are protected by the laws regarding the heritage, since this legal precept has some problems, it requires proposals to be promoted by experts, social organizations and intergovernmental bodies, which counteract discrimination and make progress in compensation of the rights and reinterpretation of the particular dynamics in these social sectors and populations, in relation to reintegration.

In this sense, the public policies for women and gender equity are created due to the concern of the existing problems in the municipality, these policies have been directed towards the protection of women's rights, in accordance with the plan of government led by current mayor Eduardo Frey Valenzuela, in order to be included in the municipal development plan 2016-2019, with a view to ensure the full exercise of the rights and equal enjoyment of goods, services and resources by both women and men. (p. 88).

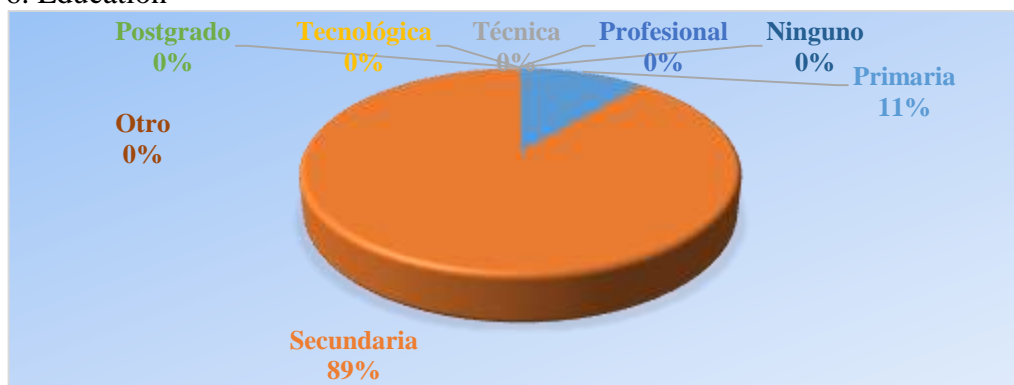
### Socio-economics

Figure 5. Socioeconomic status



According to figure 5, 100% of the surveyed people live in rural areas, therefore the socioeconomic status is the lowest (zero). There is low coverage and housing deficit affecting vulnerable people, victims of conflict in urban and rural areas as well as the former combatants.

Figure 6. Education



In Figure 6, it is interesting to note, that 89% of the population of former combatants responded that they reached high school education level and only 11% reached primary education. However, when corroborating the information, it was found that only 33% actually earned a high school's diploma, 22% only reached ninth grade, and 45% only reached primary school. Therefore, it is necessary to consider that:

Education and training help people to strengthen and escape poverty by providing them with the skills and knowledge to increase their production, income and wealth. The technical skills are significant, as seen in the relationship between technical skills and the empowerment of young people in specific areas. This demonstrates that the government should promote entrepreneurship training and education through appropriate policies. (Ogundele, Akingbade, & Akinlabi, 2012, p. 154).

Likewise, with regard to the level of training required, the government will need to invest more to introduce "soft skills" in the curriculum in order to complement the technical skills of graduates (De Silva, 2019).

Figure 7.

Occupation before setting up a business



In the figure above, it is noted that 45% of women responded that before creating a company they were engaged in household duties, 33% of men were engaged in agriculture, 11% were unemployed and another 11% were employed. In this regard:

It is therefore more efficient to approach public policies aimed at promoting employment creation rather than policies aimed at delivering direct financial benefits (Gutiérrez, 2016, p. 44, cited in Camacho & Rodríguez, 2019).

## Information about the enterprise or business created

Figure 8. Enterprise or business name

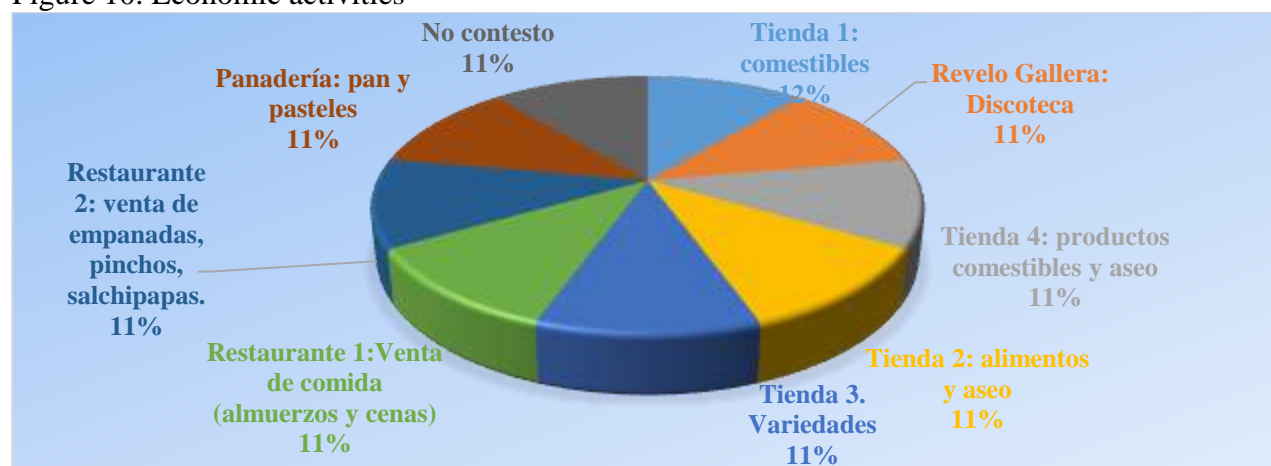


Figure 9. Business operation start date



Figures 8 and 9 show that 45% of the people surveyed answered that they created stores between 2000 and 2009, 22% affirm that their businesses are restaurants created in 2000, 11% a bakery that started operating in 2011 and the other 11% a disco that started in 2014.

Figure 10. Economic activities



The economic activities that have developed each of the aforementioned commercial establishments are: 34% of the stores are dedicated to groceries and cleaning and only a store with 11% is dedicated to varieties such as stationery and other decorative elements.

Similarly, in the case of restaurants, 22% are dedicated to sell lunch, dinner and fast food; and in the case of the bakery, 11% are dedicated to the sale of bread and pastry in general. As for entertainment with 11%, there is only one nightclub.

These businesses have been created as an economic stimulus for business plans or "plan semilla", which consists of a monetary stimulus granted by the Colombian Reintegration Agency and Standardization (ACR), to finance a business plan that allows ex-combatants to have their economic reintegration. The ACR pays the money to the provider, financial entity or operator according to the disbursement instructions letter signed with the ex-combatant. This benefit has two modalities, the first so-called entrepreneurship, which consists in the use of capital for the acquisition of business units. The second one is strengthening, which involves the investment of the capital granted by the ACR to business units that are at least 12 years old (Gil, 2016).

Figure 11. Emergence of the idea for the creation of the enterprise or business



According to the figure above, to create an enterprise or business, 50% of the people who own the businesses say that they were motivated by a business opportunity and the other 50% say that they did it out of necessity, therefore, it should be taken into account that:

The causal relationship goes from conflict to entrepreneurship: it is the resilient private economic activity, self-employment, which is driven by intensity, and not the private economic activity that attracts more conflict. Secondly, and more speculatively, if financed, some of the business activity can become a strong leverage for economic development, as soon as the conflict is reduced in a specific area, even though the conflict continues in other areas of the country (Ciarli, Kofol, & Menon, 2015)

Figure 12. Decision-making for the creation of the enterprise or business



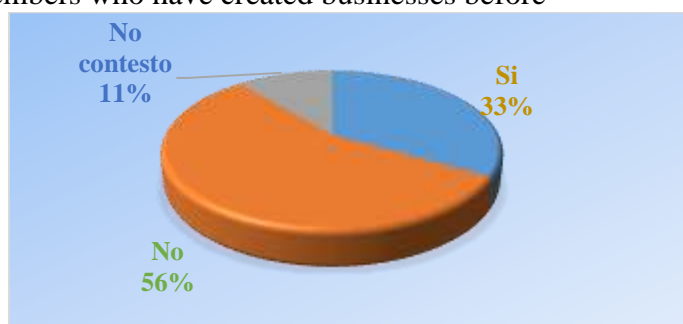
As for Figure 13, 45% of respondents say that the decision to create an enterprise arose from an individual decision and the other 44% made the decision guided by their families.

In this respect, it is important to emphasize that the State can also rely on other alternatives to promote the employment inclusion of the demobilized and former combatants and thus contribute to the satisfaction of their personal and family needs. This is the case, for example, of

granting microcredits to the demobilized so that they themselves create their own micro-enterprise based on knowledge acquired during the days of technical-professional education or higher education or based on their own knowledge and skills previously acquired (National Commission of Reparation and Reconciliation, 2010, p. 13).

Likewise, the family plays an important role in formal areas, both in the development of entrepreneurship aspirations and in terms of economic and moral support (Minialai, Bossenbroek, & Ksikes, 2018).

Figure 13. Family members who have created businesses before



As for Figure 13, 56% of respondents say they do not know that other family members have created businesses and 33% say that they do know that other members of their family started businesses.

According to testimonies of entrepreneurs, it is stated that "a positive experience gained in the family encouraged the idea of continuing on the path of independence" (Solarte, Solarte & Arcos, 2017, p. 80)

### Conclusions

Most of the former combatants are young, since they are between 26 to 30 years old, therefore, they are of productive age to develop different types of entrepreneurship.

Most of the former combatants earn incomes less than a current legal minimum wage, although it is low, the costs of the rural area where they live, allow them to afford the necessary expenses.

Considering that Tallambi is an area characterized by the wealth of its farmland suitable for agriculture, most of the former combatants are engaged in this activity.

Most of the former combatants have received different types of training from entities such as SENA, the Colombian Agency for Reintegration and Standardization, Universidad de Nariño among others; thus the continuous technical training is highlighted, in addition this population is motivated to access some training or education for their future job performance, especially in agriculture.

Many former combatants have an entrepreneurial spirit and would like to create a microenterprise to increase their income and improve their quality of life.

With regard to the productive capacity, the ex-combatants aim at carrying out projects to consolidate their sustainability, by developing marketing lines, thus strengthening relations with the population who belong to Tallambí.

It is important for the former combatants that, at least, have knowledge of basic accounting and problem-solving skills arising from business education, this should be a prerequisite. This will ensure that not only do they possess the required competence and know how to exhibit good business practice, but they will also appreciate the importance of liability in their business

transactions. For example, a good business practice is the ability to manage financial inflows and outflows through the separation of family and business expenses (Anosike, 2018).

It is possible for the former combatants to create social enterprises without the need for subsidies and social investors, the support that other companies have received to establish themselves commercially should not be overlooked when assessing the potential of the social enterprise in the tourism sector, taking into account regulatory environments and, the contingency of social benefits in business results (Biddulph, 2018, p.16).

In this ecosystem, universities play an important role in the phases of a life project, creation of social capital, creation of productive SMEs (small and mid-size enterprises) with a global vision and productive chaining. This proposal supported by Public Private Partnerships-PPP and Corporate Social Responsibility-CSR processes, in the long term, can continue the process and contribute to the growth and development of populations affected by the conflict (Mendieta & Mejía, 2017).

Organizations, within the framework of post-conflict, should pay attention to relations with interest groups, such as victims, individual and collectives; internally displaced persons, refugees and returnees; demobilized and ex-combatants; historically discriminated minorities and populations, and members of the armed forces and private security companies (Gil, 2016, cited in Salas, García & Azuero, 2020).

Of the population of entrepreneurs the majority believes that they should expect greater results from the negotiating tables that discuss this issue, have greater clarity and information on this, considering that the Government should implement well-defined and clear policies, which will make it easier for the employer to understand how to execute job recruitment procedures. Based on this, it would be possible to make the decisions in order to establish the most convenient strategies to contribute to employability in the post-conflict context and / or with contributions to promote entrepreneurship. (García, Duran & Martínez, 2018).

Both business activity and the creation of new enterprises have a positive effect on the productive efficiency of the regions. In addition, the stock of human capital and the promotion of technological innovation act as catalysts that have a favorable influence on economic activity in general and, in particular, on productive efficiency. In fact, the great importance of the promotion of knowledge in economic growth and, in particular, in productive efficiency is confirmed (Rico & Cabrer, 2019).

The opportunity structure of the entrepreneur resides in the structure of the social network in which he/she participates to take advantage of the conditions that surround him/her towards the formation of cooperative rationality systems that become feasible and viable business units, that is, the Socio-economic contacts accumulated are used in the social capital of the network and in this way, it is provided the mechanisms for identifying opportunities, access to resources or simply emotional support for economic entrepreneurship (Torres, 2017).

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