

Sexual and Reproductive Rights of
Internally Displaced Women (IDW):
The Embodiment of Colombia's Crisis.
CSWE-Barbados January 10-12/07

Mónica M. Alzate
Ph.D., Assistant Professor
School of Social Work
The University of Oklahoma
USA- mmalzate@ou.edu

Abstract

- Over 3 million Colombians are internally displaced persons (IDP), the second largest displaced population in the world after Sudan. In most studies on IDP, even those focusing on internally displaced women (IDW), these women are treated as if their plight were an isolated phenomenon. Through document analysis and key informant interviews carried out in the three largest Colombian cities in 2003, this paper uses Cabal, Lemaitre, and Roa's (2001) sexual and reproductive rights (SRR) framework to demonstrate that the situation of IDW is an integral reflection of Colombia's chronic cultural, political and socio-economic crisis. The effects of violence, discrimination, oppression and poverty within the Colombian society are evidenced as each one of the following rights is discussed: (a) The right to health and to reproductive health; (b) the right to decide the number and interval of children combined with the right to privacy; (c) the right to physical integrity and to be free from violence; (d) the right to be free from sexual exploitation; (e) the right to education. A holistic understanding of the current humanitarian emergency, this paper argues, is essential to improve the lives of IDP. Concrete short-term recommendations to meet some of the needs of IDP and other vulnerable populations are offered.



Largest at-risk group in the World



3 Million in Colombia



- 80% of IDP lives in extreme poverty
- 22% access medical services

Guerrilla

Paramilitares

FARC

ELN

AUC

Drugtraffic

**Cultivate/
Process**

**Transport
drugs**

Smuggle Arms

Displacement:

**Strategy of war, not
just a consequence !!!**





•Women

55%

•15% Illiterate (5%)

• Low or no income

Who are IDW in Colombia?

Ethnic Minorities IDW



• Half of the minorities IDP is IDW

• Afro-Colombians 33% (25%)

• Indigenous 11% (2%)



Escultura
Ofrenda de Paz
Medellín - Colombia
www.tufotovideo.com
Tel: 2180962



- Inadequate attention to SRH
- Most are of reproductive age

• Limited and deficient knowledge of family planning.

Maternidad
1995. Bronce

Plaza de Botero
Maternidad
Medellín - Colombia
www.tufotovideo.com
Tel: 2180962



- 1 in 5 has been raped
- GBV frequently reported



- 4:100 is HIV + : Atlantic region (1:175 = 0.6%)
- Adolescents (13-19 years):
 - Highest pregnancy rate 30% (20%)
 - 81% of IDP, no contraception.

Millennium Development Goals “MDG”



Task force on education and gender equity



Access to SRH services & information



Women's empowerment



Development Process

Sexual and Reproductive Rights Framework

- The right to health and reproductive health
- The right to decide the number of children and the right of privacy
- The right to physical integrity
- The right to be free from sexual exploitation
- The right to education

Health and Reproductive Health

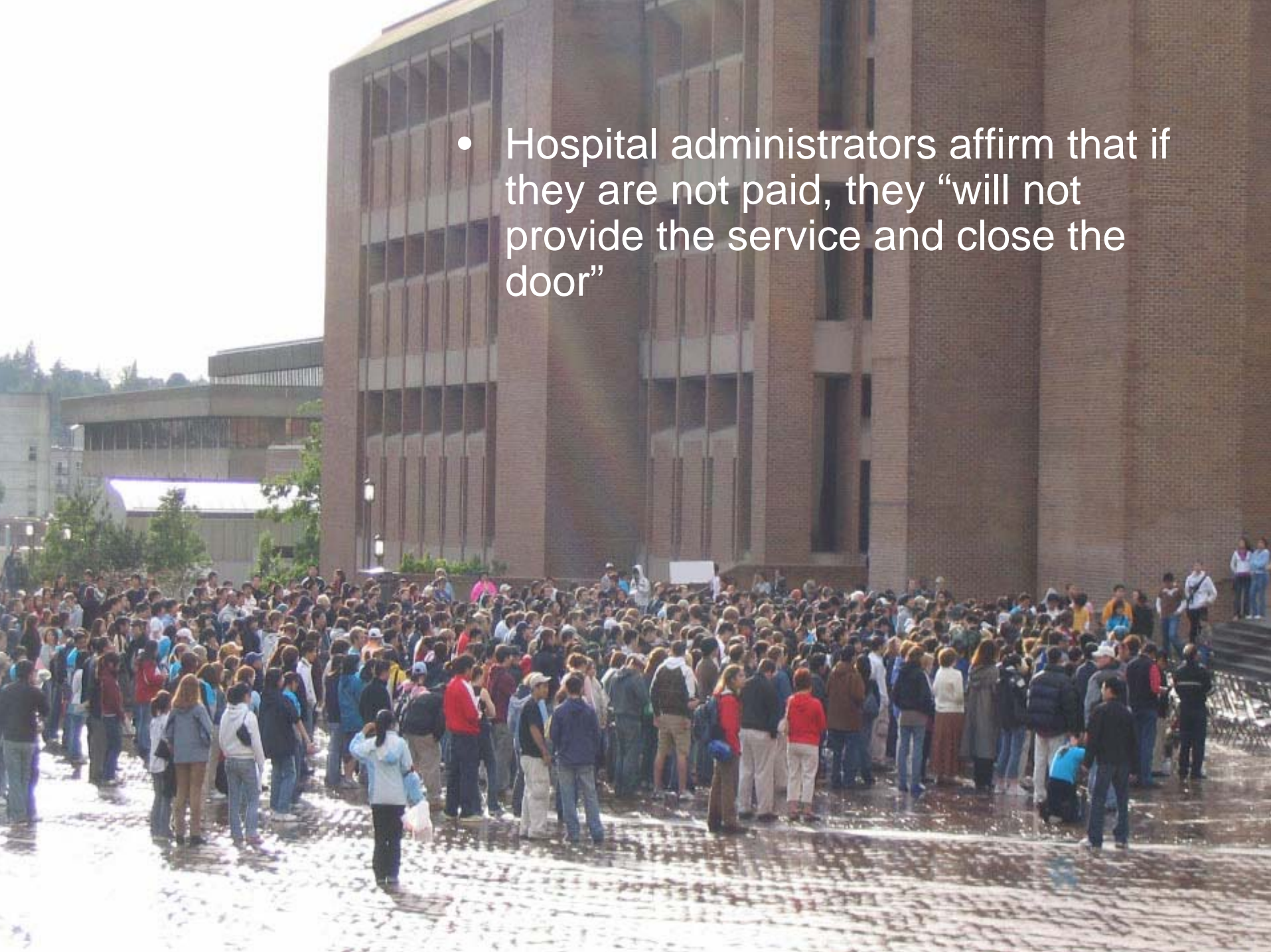
```
graph TD; A[Health and Reproductive Health] --- B[Lack of material resources]; A --- C[Structural barriers]; A --- D[Socio-cultural factors & religious beliefs];
```

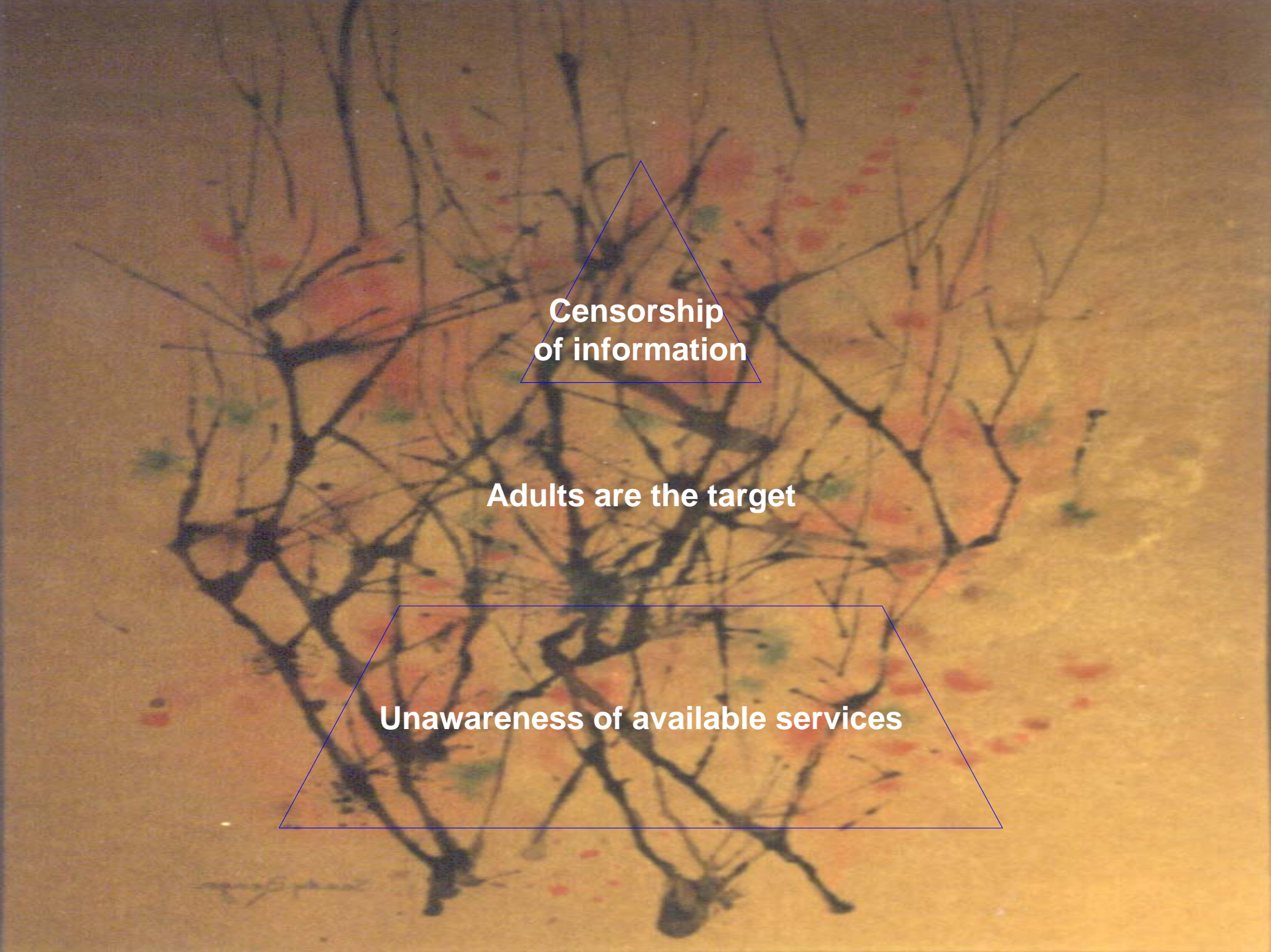
Lack of material
resources

Structural barriers

Socio-cultural
factors &
religious beliefs

- Hospital administrators affirm that if they are not paid, they “will not provide the service and close the door”

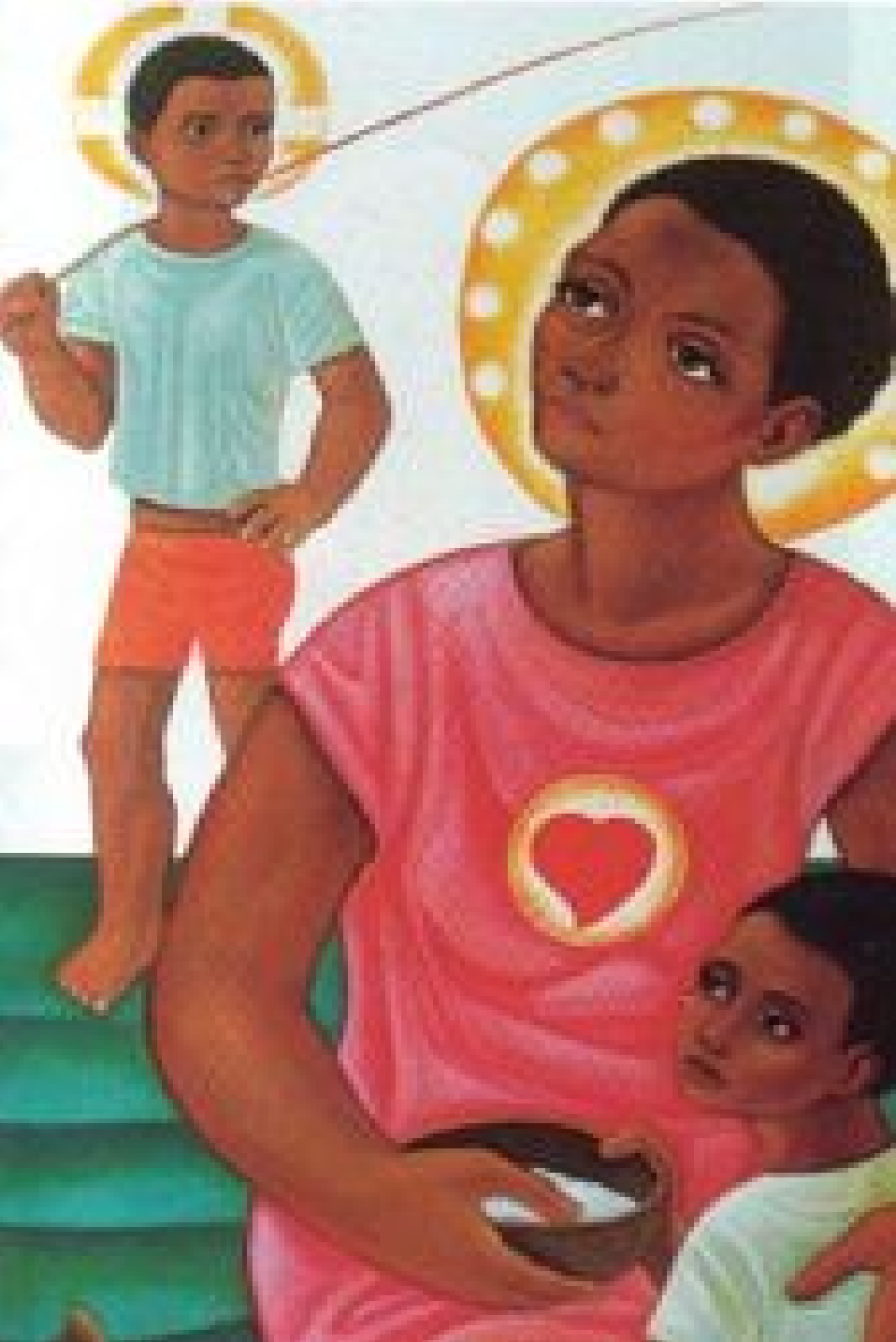




**Censorship
of information**

Adults are the target

Unawareness of available services



- For many Afro-Colombian IDW, “their bodies belong to their partners... they do not accept using an IUD”



- IDW seemed surprised to find out that “they are citizens with rights within their families, communities, and especially due to their situation as conflict-included IDP”

The Right to Decide the Number of Children and the Right to Privacy

```
graph TD; A["The Right to Decide the Number of Children and the Right to Privacy"] --- B["Problems of services:"]; A --- C["Inequitable accessibility of abortion:"]; A --- D["Maternal mortality:"]; B --- B1["•Availability"]; B --- B2["•Affordability"]; B --- B3["•Adequacy"]; B --- B4["+"]; C --- C1["•Second cause of maternal mortality"]; D --- D1["•104/100000 live births"]; D --- D2["•Has increased among 15-19 year olds 1993-2003"]; D --- D3["•Three times higher among ethnic minorities"];
```

Problems of services:

- Availability
- Affordability
- Adequacy

+

Inequitable accessibility of abortion:

- Second cause of
maternal mortality

Maternal mortality:

- 104/100000 live births
- Has increased among
15-19 year olds 1993-2003
- Three times higher among
ethnic minorities

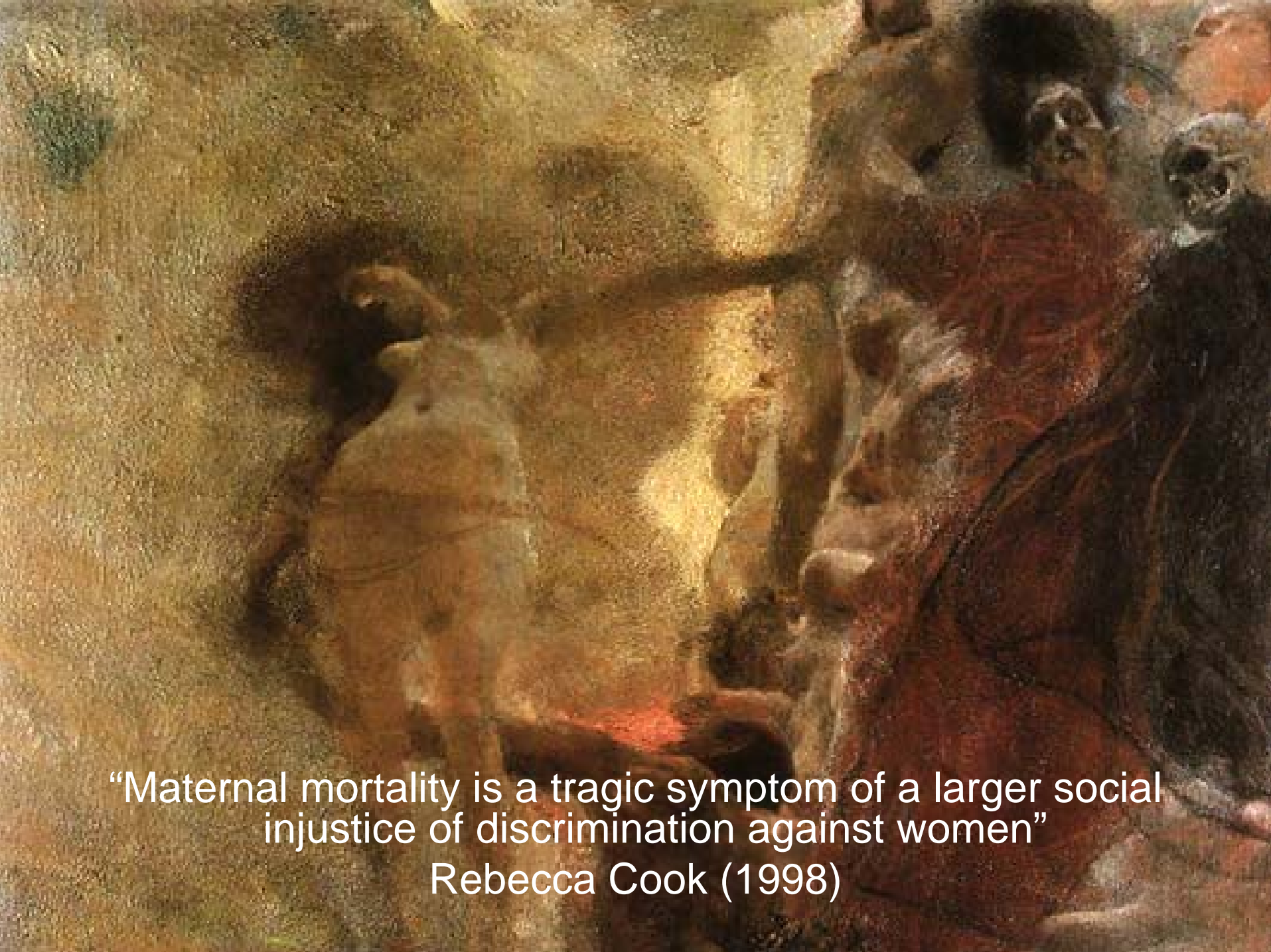


- “Women did not know that they had the right to refuse sexual relations with their partners”

Plaza de Botero
Adán y Eva
Medellín - Colombia
www.tufotovideo.com
Tel: 2180962



- 55% ever-married women, 15-49 years of age between 1995-2005 experienced at least one unintended pregnancy



“Maternal mortality is a tragic symptom of a larger social injustice of discrimination against women”
Rebecca Cook (1998)

The Right to Physical Integrity and to be Free from Violence

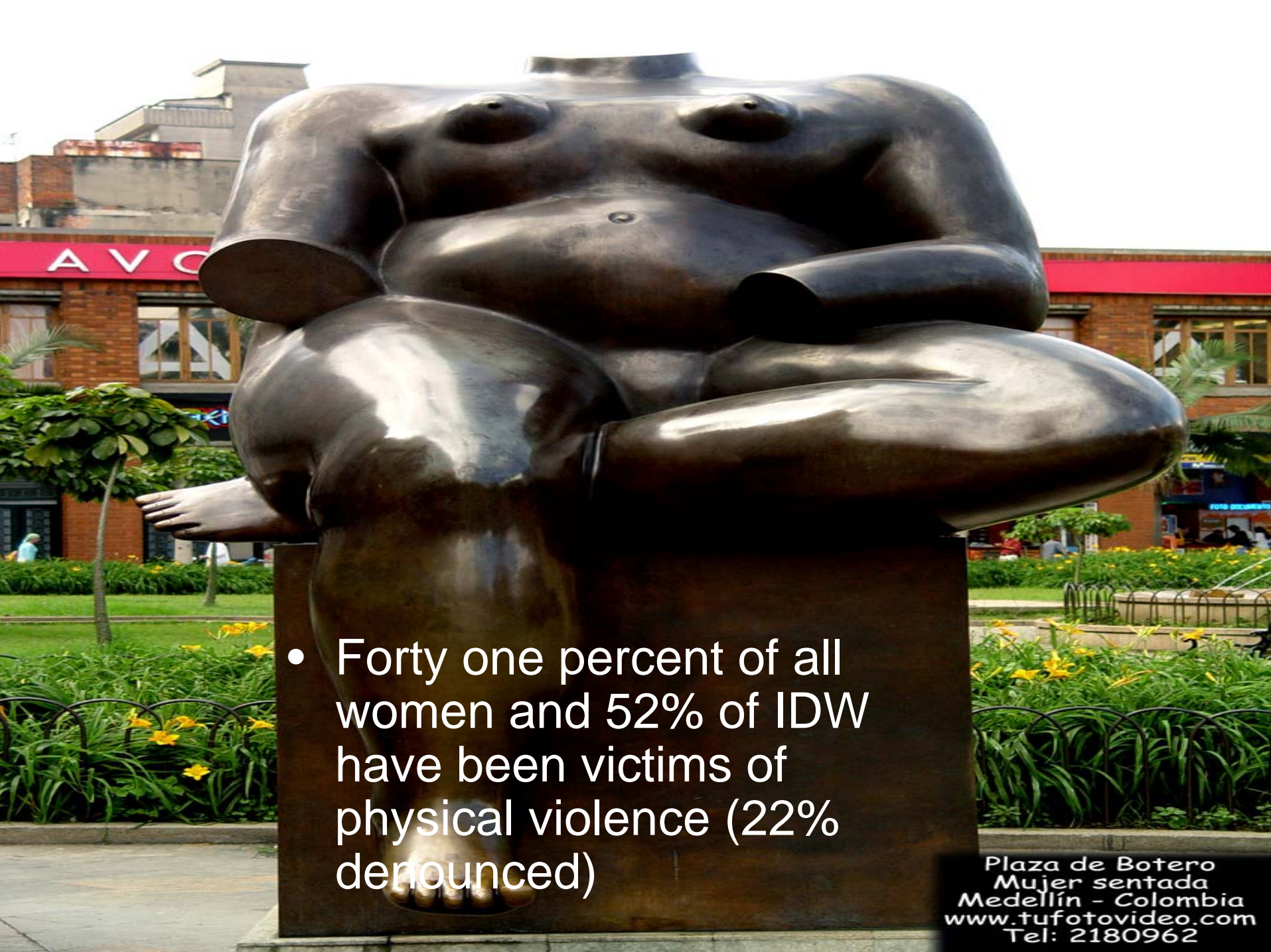
```
graph TD; A["The Right to Physical Integrity and to be Free from Violence"] --- B["Intimacy of homes"]; A --- C["Public world"]; B --- B1["•Domestic violence"]; B --- B2["•Rape within marriage"]; C --- C1["•Sexual violence"]; C --- C2["•Armed conflict"];
```

Intimacy of homes

- Domestic violence
- Rape within marriage

Public world

- Sexual violence
- Armed conflict

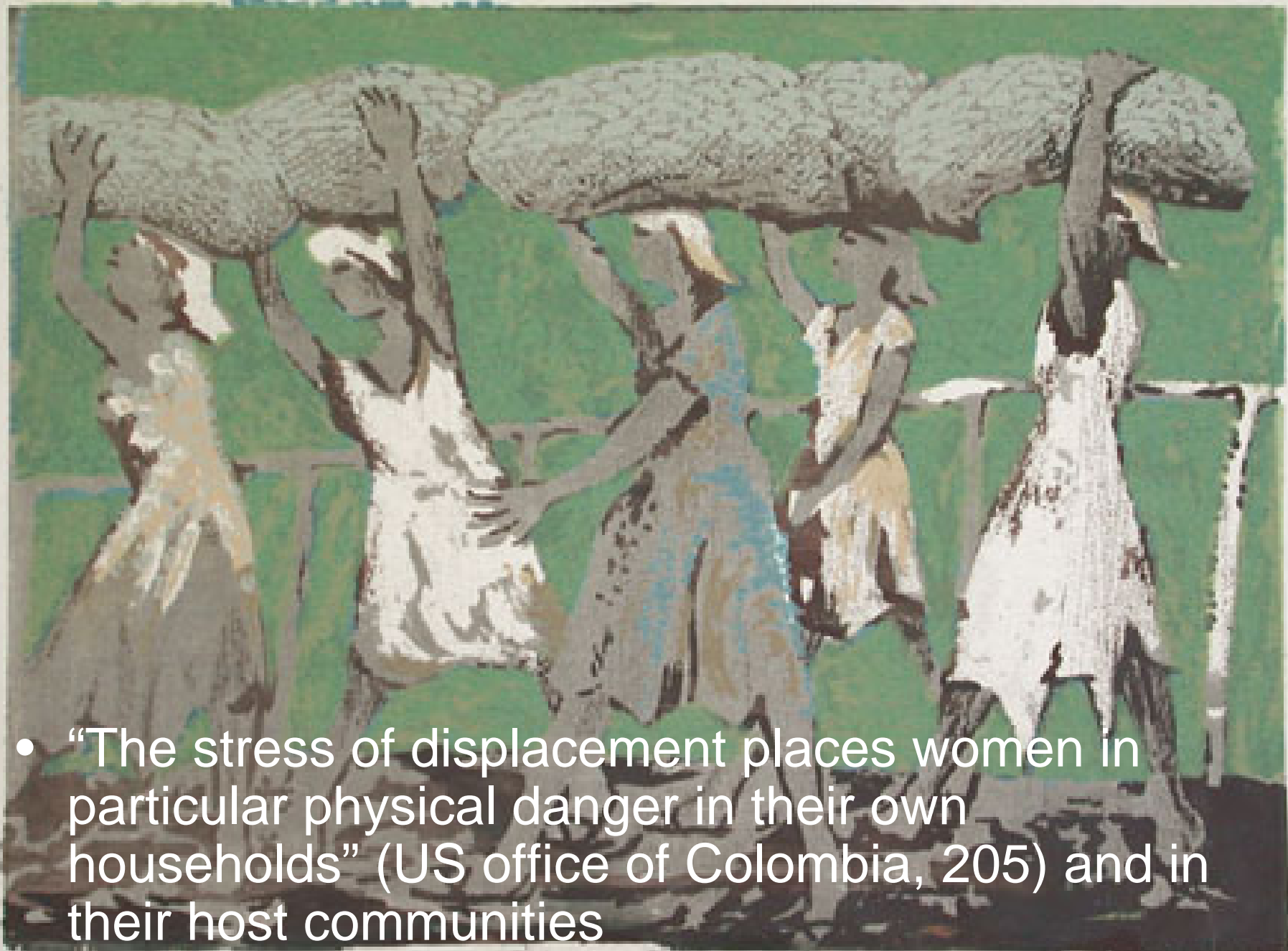


- Forty one percent of all women and 52% of IDW have been victims of physical violence (22% denounced)

Plaza de Botero
Mujer sentada
Medellín - Colombia
www.tufotovideo.com
Tel: 2180962



- 20% of all women and 52% of IDW have experienced domestic abuse



- “The stress of displacement places women in particular physical danger in their own households” (US office of Colombia, 205) and in their host communities

- During a violent conflict situation, “... it feels as if (rape) is inevitable, and this restricts all sorts of rights”





- “An [indigenous woman] was raped. Her husband... hit her because she had been raped” (MTMCA, 2002).

The Right to be Free
from Sexual Exploitation

```
graph TD; A["The Right to be Free from Sexual Exploitation"] --- B["Coercion"]; A --- C["Prostitution (gendered behavior)"]
```

Coercion

Prostitution
(gendered behavior)



“Young IDP fall prey to adult male IDP leaders who demand sexual ‘favors’ as a condition of help for their families”



AWARY



- Prostitution is young IDW's best economic alternative in tourist sites
- Young internally displaced men may join armed groups or engage in drug trafficking

Sexual Exploitation

Generalized Poverty

No real
possibilities for
social mobility

Aggravated hardships of IDP



The Right to Education

```
graph TD; A[The Right to Education] --> B[Empowerment]; A --> C[•Illiteracy]; B --> B1[•Home]; B --> B2[•Communities]; B --> B3[•Sexuality]; C --> C1[•Myths and misinformation]; C --> C2[•Ways of knowing]; C --> C3[•Inadequate materials];
```

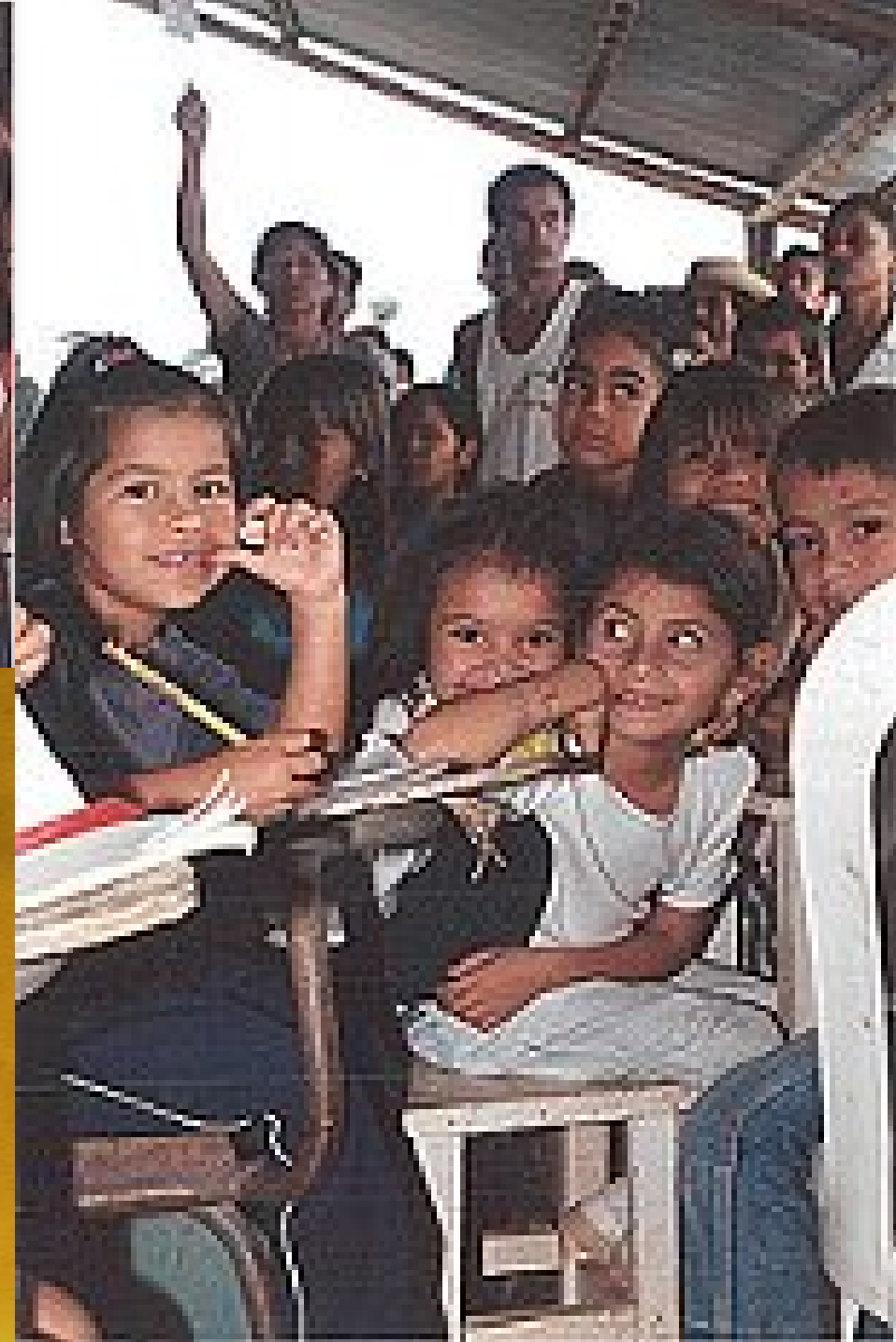
Empowerment

- Home
- Communities
- Sexuality

- Illiteracy
- Myths and misinformation
- Ways of knowing
- Inadequate materials

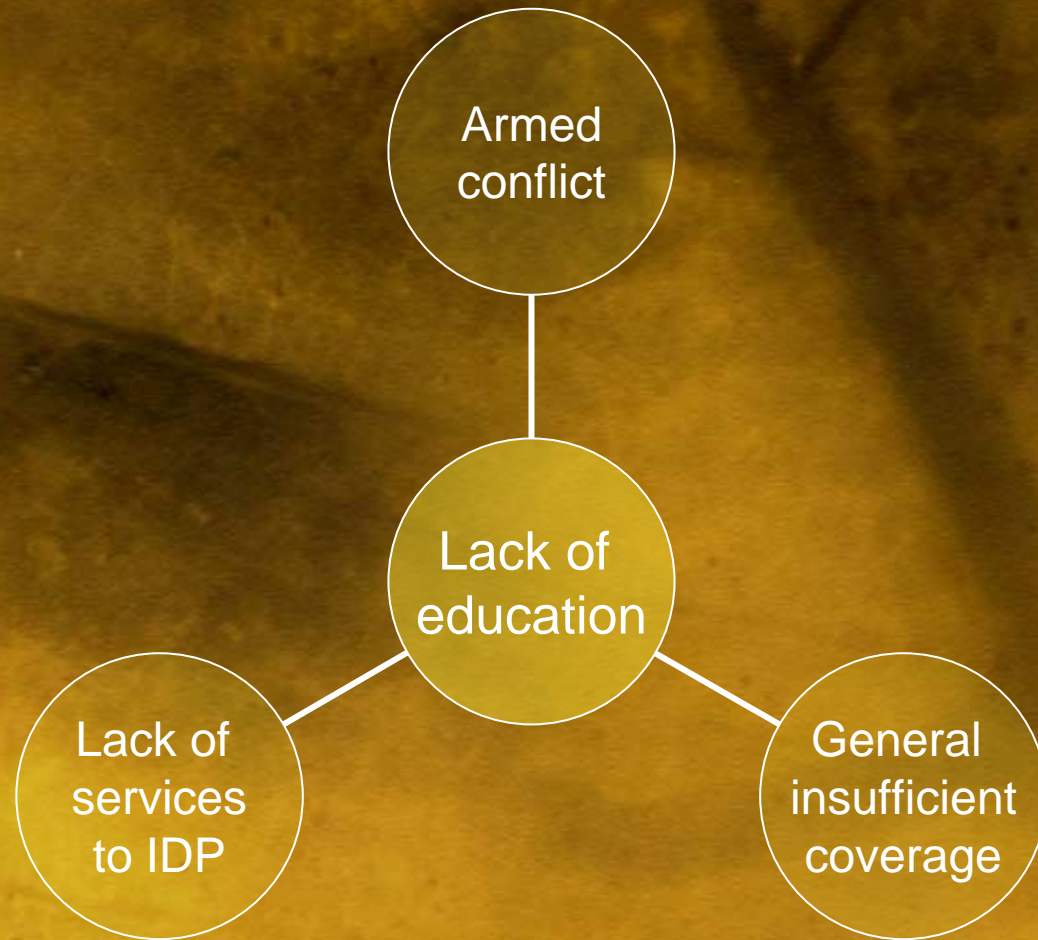


- 6:10 are enrolled in schools
- 2 finish elementary school
- 1 finishes high school



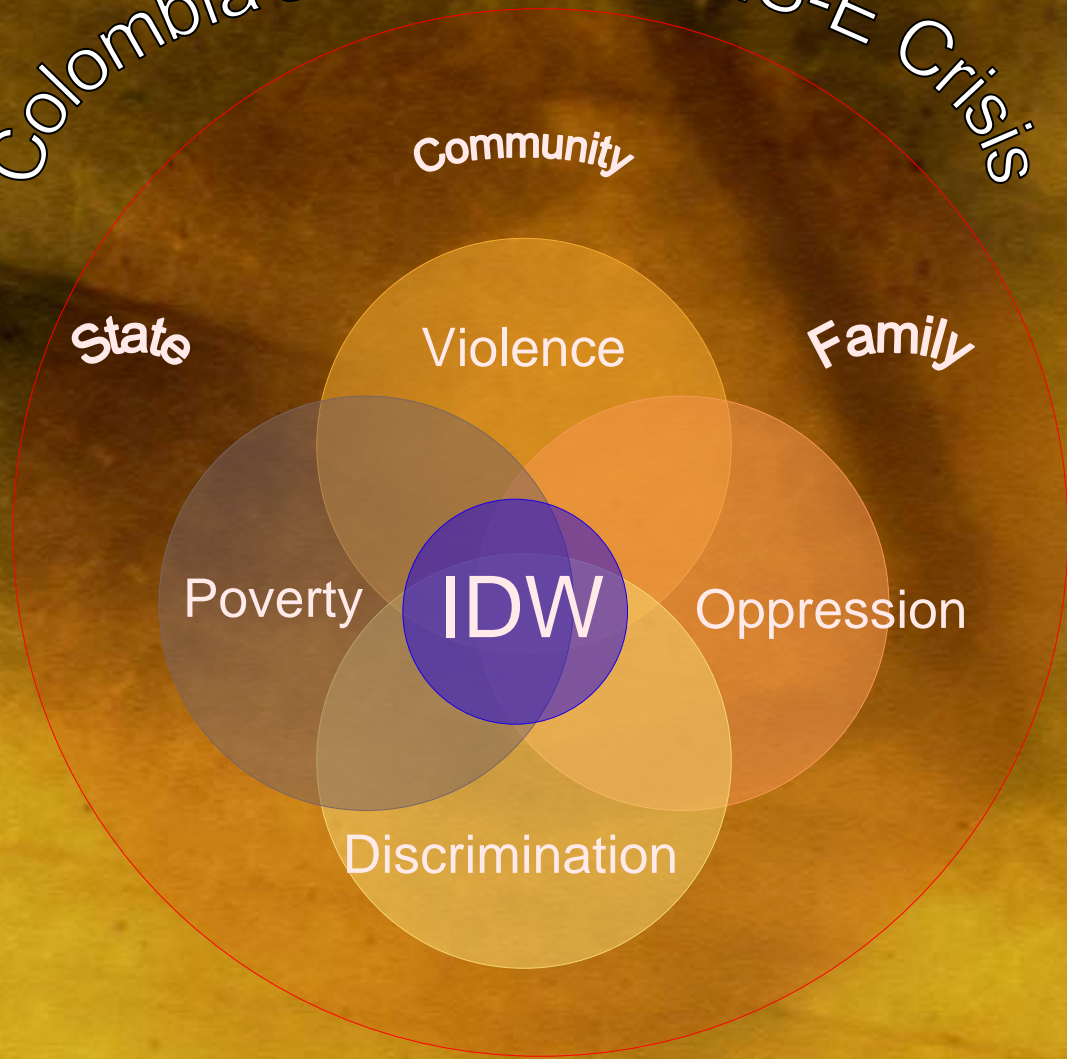


- Teachers of displaced children have been victims of violent threats (UN Special Rapporteur on Education, 2003)

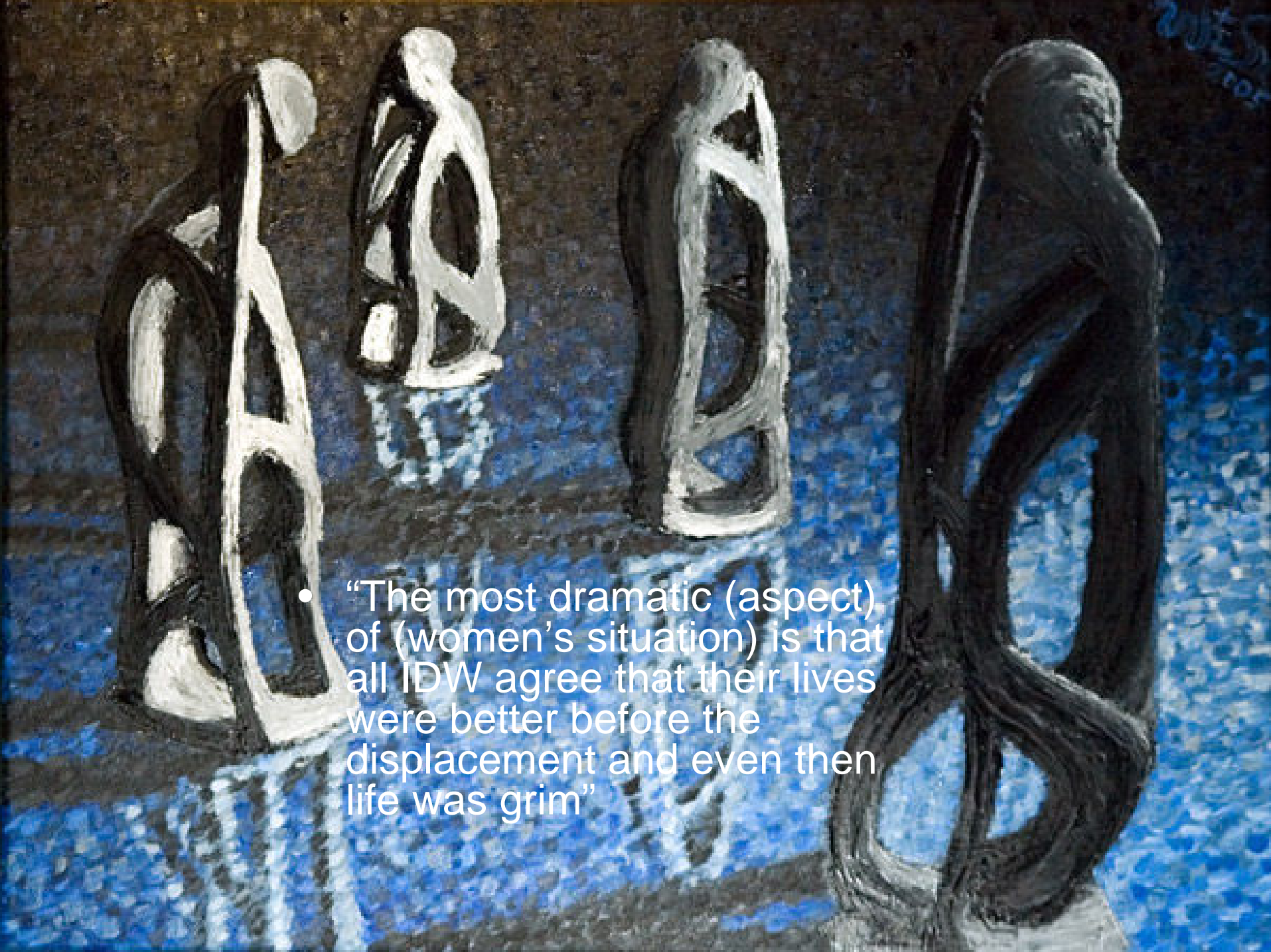


- “Basic education is essential in the context of reproductive rights” (Cabal, Lemaitre & Roa, 2001)

Colombia's Chronic C.P.S-E Crisis



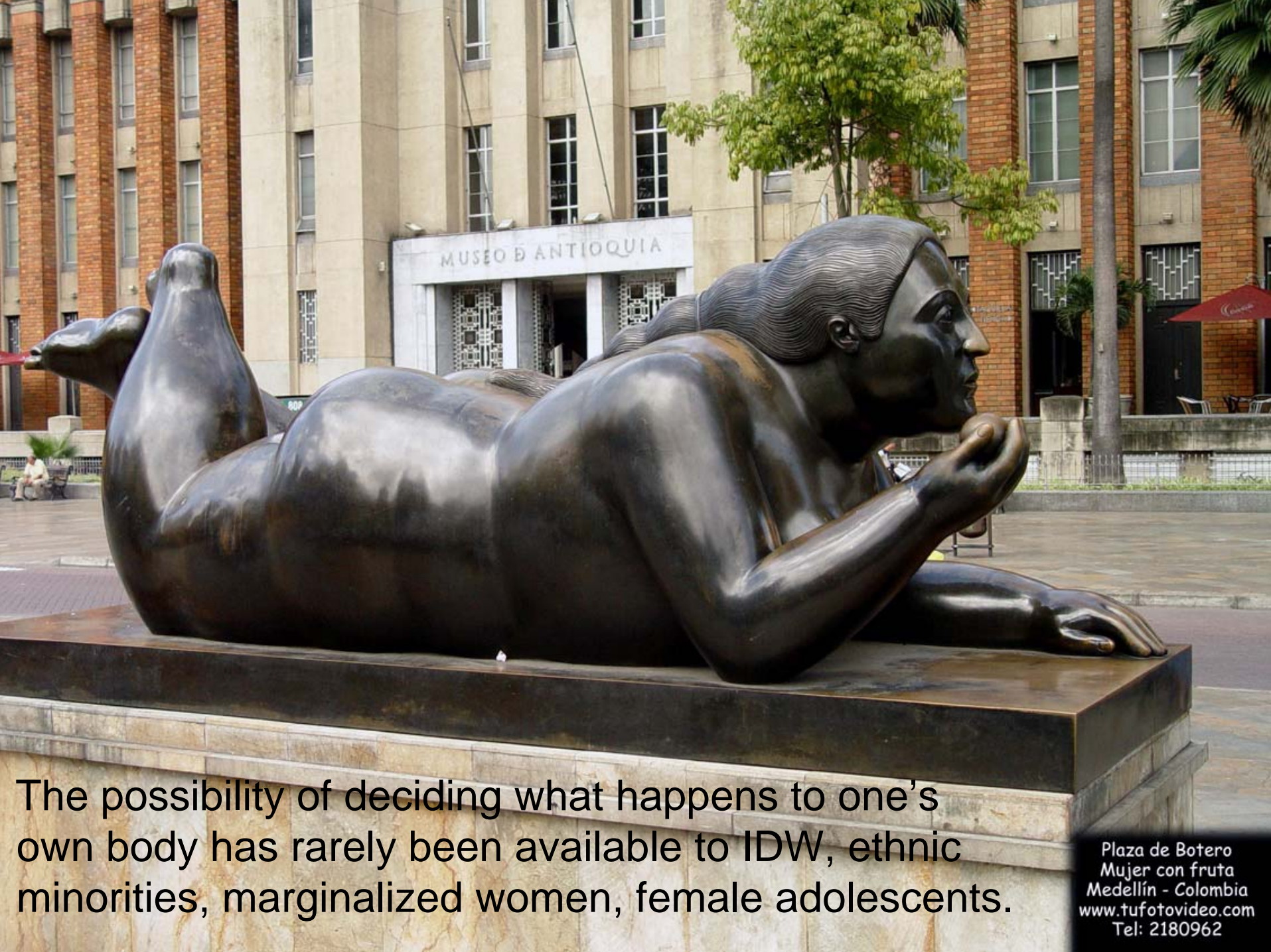
Reproductive Rights Framework



- “The most dramatic (aspect) of (women’s situation) is that all IDW agree that their lives were better before the displacement and even then life was grim”



- Women "... must have a conviction that they are entitled to be treated as primary decision-makers over their own bodies and their reproductive capacities" (Petchesky, 1998)



The possibility of deciding what happens to one's own body has rarely been available to IDW, ethnic minorities, marginalized women, female adolescents.

Plaza de Botero
Mujer con fruta
Medellín - Colombia
www.tufotovideo.com
Tel: 2180962

This Paper Will Be Published

Journal *Disasters* of the
Overseas Development Institute (ODI) -
United Kingdom.