

DDR AND CHILD SOLDIER ISSUES

A MONTHLY REVIEW
SEPTEMBER 2016

USAID supports the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Colombia through the **Recruitment Prevention and Reintegration (RPR) Program**. The RPR Program provides institutional strengthening for the Government of Colombia (GOC) to support legal, social and economic reintegration services to demobilized adults and disengaged children, as well as to prevent new recruitment.

The GOC supports demobilized adults through its **Colombian Reintegration Agency (ACR)**. The DDR initiatives of the ACR aim to fulfill the following objectives: 1) Create conditions for demobilized ex-combatants to become independent citizens, 2) Strengthen socio-economic conditions in receptor communities, and 3) Promote reconciliation.

Children and adolescents who disengage from illegal armed groups, recognized as victims, receive special attention through programs and policies led by the **Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF)** through its Specialized Assistance Program, which aims to reestablish and guarantee rights with special emphasis on protection, education and health.

This monthly review, produced by IOM, provides a summary of news related to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) in Colombia, along with statistics on ex-combatant adults and disengaged children.

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KEY DEVELOPMENTS

GOC and FARC sign peace accord ahead of October 2nd plebiscite

On Friday, September 23rd, the FARC ratified the peace accord during their Tenth Conference. The week-long event marked their last such conference as an armed guerrilla group.¹ Three days later, on Monday September 26th, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos and FARC leader and chief negotiator Rodrigo Londoño (alias 'Timochechnko') signed the final peace accord in Cartagena de Indias.

Plebiscite details emerge

In the second half of September, President Santos released the question for the October 2nd plebiscite vote: Do you support the Final Accord for ending the conflict and building stable and sustainable peace?² Aggressive campaigning for both "yes" and "no" votes led up to the October vote. Despite a previous law released earlier this year stating that public officials would not be allowed to use state resources for plebiscite campaigns (Law 1806), President Juan Manuel Santos noted that, according to the wording of the legislation, public officials indeed may use state resources for their campaigns as long as they are resources equally available to all officials, and that their use does not impede normal work responsibilities.³

FARC begins releasing minors within its ranks

On Saturday, September 10th, the FARC guerilla group began releasing child soldiers to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the first such act since the May 15th agreement to do so between the GOC and FARC negotiators in Havana.⁴ A total of thirteen children were released in the course of the day.⁵ As set out in Joint Communiqué #97 from the parties in Havana,⁶ the transfer teams comprised representatives from the ICRC and two delegates from social organizations. Once the children were identified and evaluated for immediate health concerns, a reception team of representatives from UNICEF - with IOM support - received the minors. More than 6,000 children have disengaged from illegal armed groups in Colombia over the last 14 years, with 60% of those exiting from the FARC.⁷

¹ <http://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/farc-ratifies-colombia-peace-deal-declares-war-over>

² <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/plebiscito-de-paz-esta-es-la-pregunta-que-se-respondera-en-las-urnas/491718>

³ <http://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/acuerdos-de-gobierno-y-farc/funcionarios-podran-usar-recursos-publicos-en-campana-de-plebiscito-ML4926493>

⁴ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/farc-entregaron-ocho-menores-de-edad-al-cicr-y-unicef-articulo-654134>

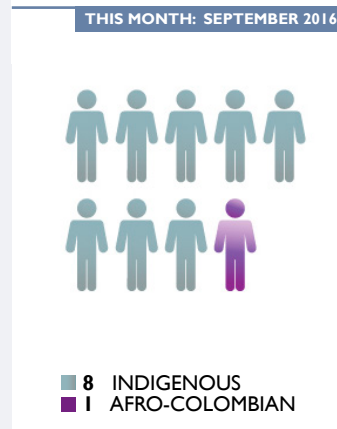
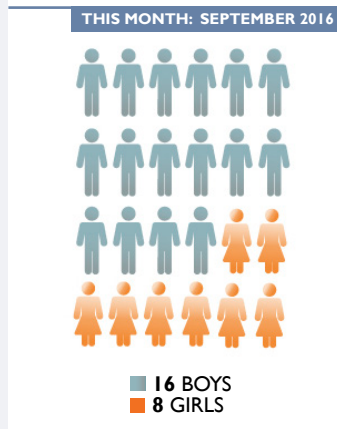
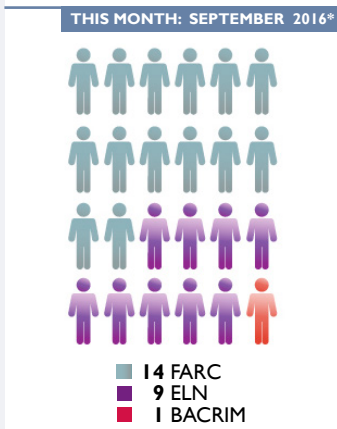
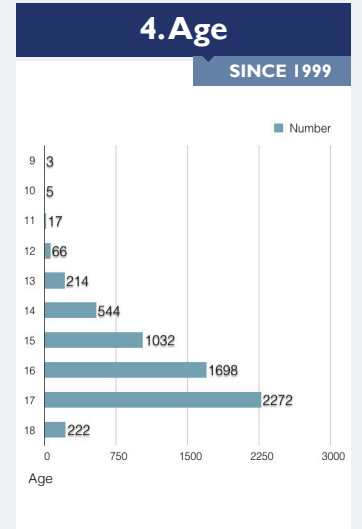
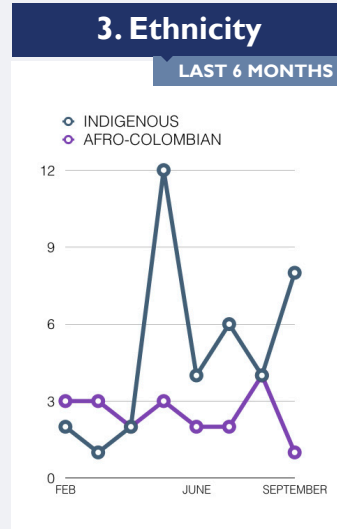
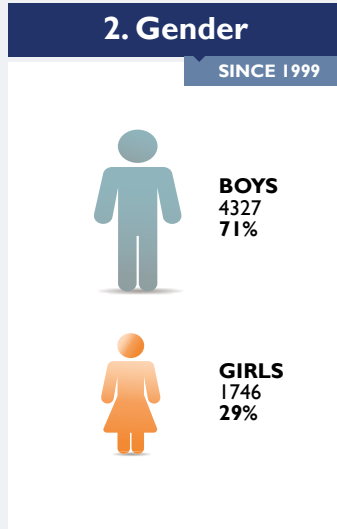
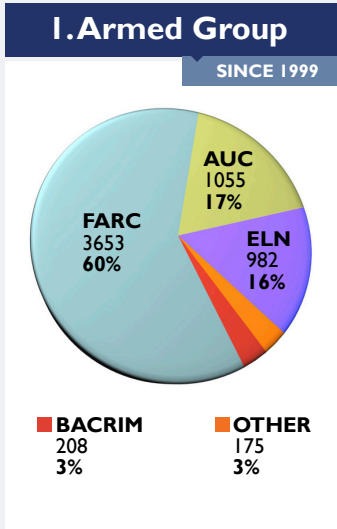
⁵ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/farc-entregan-segundo-grupo-de-ninos-al-cicr-articulo-654168>

⁶ <https://www.mesadeconversaciones.com.co/sites/default/files/comunicado-conjunto-97-ingles-1473441264.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.icbf.gov.co/portal/page/portal/Observatorio1/datos/tablero1>

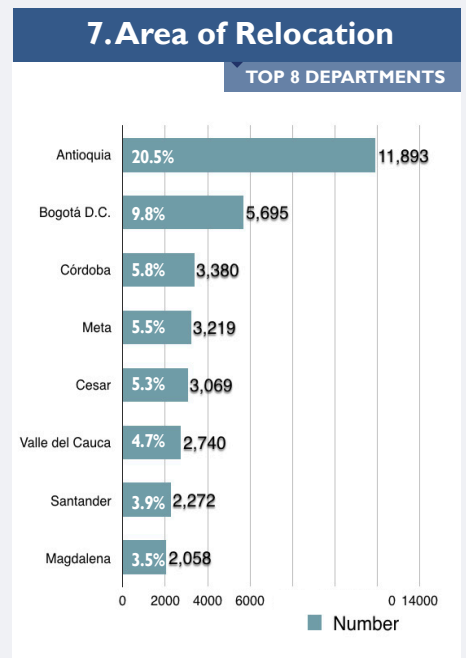
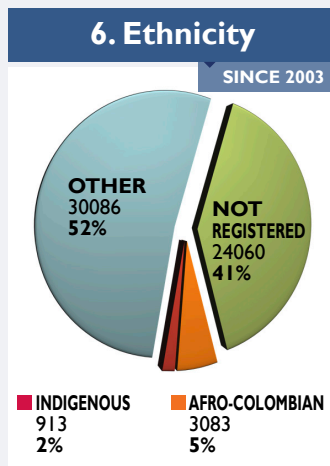
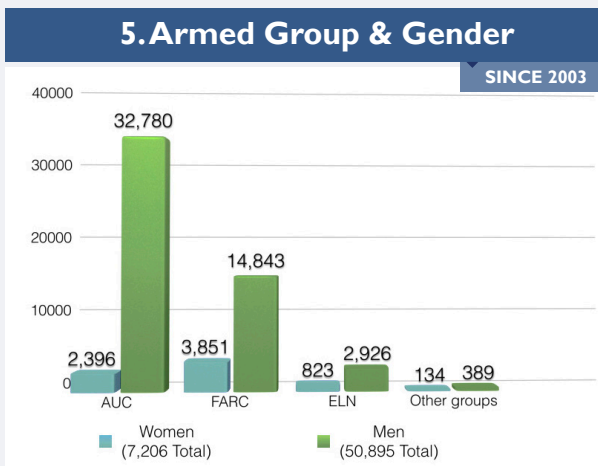
FIGURES & TRENDS

Disengaged Children & Adolescents TOTAL 6,073



* These data are estimates based on the information available

Demobilized Adults TOTAL 58,142



Data up to September 30, 2016

Figure 1: Total number of disengaged minors grouped by gender. Boys have historically been more frequently recruited than girls.

Figure 2: Numbers of minors who disengaged from each IAG. Most disengaged children were recruited by the FARC.

Figure 3: Total number of disengaged minors by ethnicity. Indigenous groups are disproportionately affected by recruitment.

Figure 4: Numbers of disengaged minors in each age group. The average age of recruitment is between 15 and 18 years old.

Sources for figures 1-4: ICBF Database, Unified Beneficiary Registry (RUJ)

Figure 5: Total number of male and female adults who demobilized from each IAG. The AUC had the lowest proportion of women.

Figure 6: The eight departments to which the highest numbers of ex-combatants relocate for their reintegration process.

Figure 7: Total number of demobilized adults by ethnicity.

Sources for figures 5-7: ICBF Database and ACR Reintegration Information System (SIR)

PEACE PROCESSES

FARC holds Tenth Conference, support for accords “unanimous”

The FARC tenth conference took place September 17-23. FARC negotiator, Luciano Marín Arango (alias “Iván Márquez”), announced “total support” for the content of the peace accords released on August 24th, developed between GOC and FARC negotiators in Havana over the past four years. The conference took place in Llanos del Yará in the municipality of San Vicente del Caguán, Caquetá. Core objectives of the conference included the following: ratify the peace accord, establish both the name and the structure of the political organization that will replace the armed guerrilla one,⁸ and if time allows, select the new Secretariat of the political party and develop its emerging strategy.⁹ “Márquez” later stated in interview that the previously vocal dissidents of the First Front did not have a strong influence on the decisions made at the Tenth Conference.¹⁰

PEACE PROCESSES

ELN announces that they are ready to begin peace talks, releases civilian hostage

The ELN announced on Wednesday, September 28th, that they were ready to begin moving forward with the peace talks that had formally been announced on March 30th, but that have to-date been stymied by concerns on both sides. The announcement came two days after the signing of the peace accord.¹¹ They released a civilian hostage the following day to the ICRC in rural Arauca.¹²

ELN pledges no offensive attacks leading up to plebiscite

On Sunday, September 25th, the commander of the ELN guerrilla group, Israel Ramírez Pineda (alias ‘Pablo Beltrán’), announced that the group would cease offensive actions leading up to and during the October 2nd plebiscite, but it would still be prepared to conduct defensive operations if attacked.¹³ This announcement came on the heels of a request by the Electoral Observation Mission in Colombia, saying that it was “urgent” that the ELN declare a unilateral ceasefire beginning this past weekend and lasting until after the plebiscite.¹⁴

ELN announces “armed strike” September 12-15

The ELN guerrilla group announced an armed strike in six departments in Colombia: Arauca, Boyacá, Casanare, Santander, Norte de Santander and Vichada. The strike began at 6:00am on Monday the 12th and restricted any transport, commerce, and related activities for 72 hours in order to commemorate the 36 year anniversary of the Domingo Laín front of the ELN. While the guerrillas encouraged civilians to enjoy time with their families at home, the ELN also warned that they would “act against those who sabotage or ignore the strike order.” The Office of the Ombudsman notes that the situation is particularly troubling in the department of Arauca, where ELN presence is strongest, and where four violent acts have occurred over the last two weeks.¹⁵

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

More than 20 countries contribute \$80 million to Colombia demining initiative

The United States and Norway convened a coalition of more than 20 countries to contribute \$80 million to eradicating antipersonnel mines in Colombia by the year 2021. The Global Initiative for Demining Colombia received a \$36 million pledge from the United States, with another \$22 million from Norway. Colombia ranks second globally for presence of land mines, second only to Afghanistan, and has registered 11,000 victims of these explosive artefacts since 1990, affecting 700 of the country’s 1,100 municipalities. The GOC plans to grow the 2,500 force of demining technicians to 10,000, which would make it the largest demining brigade in the world.¹⁶

⁸ <http://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/acuerdos-de-gobierno-y-farc/decima-conferencia-guerrillera-de-las-farc-sobre-proceso-de-paz-FD5005968>

⁹ <http://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/acuerdos-de-gobierno-y-farc/nuevo-secretariado-de-las-farc-CB5012499>

¹⁰ <http://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/acuerdos-de-gobierno-y-farc/ivan-marquez-jefe-de-delegacion-de-farc-habla-del-plebiscito-y-el-fin-de-la-guerra-XE5017347>

¹¹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-colombia-rebels-eln-idUSKCN11Y2YE>

¹² <https://www.icrc.org/es/document/colombia-liberacion-de-un-civil-en-poder-del-eln>

¹³ <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/plebiscito-por-la-paz-eln-declara-cese-al-fuego-para-votaciones/495054>

¹⁴ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/moe-pide-cese-unilateral-del-eln-garantizar-jornada-ele-articulo-656771>

¹⁵ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/maxima-alerta-paro-armado-del-eln-articulo-654239>

¹⁶ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/comunidad-internacional-destina-u80-millones-desminado-articulo-655497>

International Development Bank approves Sustainable Colombia Fund

The Sustainable Colombia Fund, first announced at the beginning of December last year, was approved by the International Development Bank (IDB) towards the end of September. This fund represents a 15-year, multi-donor plan to stimulate development and prosperity in Colombia over the long-term, and targets three overarching areas of the Colombian economy: sustainable agriculture, forestry management, and sustainable infrastructure. Sustainable Colombia is a pay-for-results initiative and will require evidence of reduced deforestation and incorporation into a monitoring system for tracking improvement in the other areas. The IDB has supported Colombia's economic and social development for 55 years in the amount of \$21 billion; the current project roster includes nearly \$2.4 billion in project work.¹⁷

European Parliament sends members to monitor plebiscite

On September 27th, the European Parliament announced that it would be sending a delegation of 14 members in order to accompany and monitor the October 2nd plebiscite. Spokespersons stated that the delegation was consistent with the history of the European Union as an active defender of human rights. The delegation met with parties in favor of and against the peace accords, and operated under the principle mandate to visit polling stations and offer an assessment of the referendum outcome.¹⁸

Canada pledges additional 21 million Canadian dollars to Colombia peace process

Canadian Chancellor Stephane Dion announced on September 26th that the country would pledge \$21 million to Colombia's peace process in addition to the \$57 million that it has already committed, totaling 78 million Canadian dollars dedicated to supporting the crucial materials that Colombia will need in the areas most affected by the armed conflict. The funds are designated for projects related to demining, protecting the rights of persons in conflict-affected regions, improving the public forces capabilities, establishing the special jurisdiction for peace, and supporting the exit of women and minors from the ranks of the FARC, among other initiatives.¹⁹

INSTITUTIONAL PROGRESS

President Santos announces respective roles of the National Police and Army in transitional zones

On Monday, September 5th, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos announced the roles of the National Police and the Colombian Army in the transitional zones where the FARC will eventually gather to lay down their arms. The National Police will create units dedicated to peacebuilding initiatives, while the army will have specially trained soldiers deployed to ensure ongoing conditions of security and completion of various protocols. National Police officers will be responsible for maintaining citizen security in the transitional zones. The army is also in the process of training 28 battalions to patrol and maintain security in the transitional zones.²⁰

GOC and FARC representatives form peace process oversight committee

Towards the beginning of the month, the GOC and the FARC set up a joint committee comprising three members from each group in order to mediate disputes related to the peace process: the Implementation, Tracking, and Verification Commission for the Final Peace accord and Resolution of Differences. The GOC, will maintain the final say over the differences brought before this committee, which has a mandate through 2019, with an option to extend for up to a total of 10 years.²¹

DIVERSITY ISSUES

Women of the FARC to have equal opportunities in the political arena

Minister of the Interior Juan Fernando Cristo called on the FARC to support the ascension of the women in their group who want to run for Congressional seats. Cristo underscored the importance of the inclusion of gendered approaches in the final set of peace accords, noting that women have a crucial role to play in the post-conflict scenario in Colombia. His statements occurred during a "Café de Paz" conversation with women in Neiva, Huila, which was one stop of Minister Cristo's Pedagogy for Peace tour intended to promote support for the peace accords ahead of the October 2nd plebiscite.²²

¹⁷ <http://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/el-banco-interamericano-de-desarrollo-aclaro-que-apoyo-no-esta-ligado-al-plebiscito-FY5032654>

¹⁸ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20160927/PR44273/european-parliament-delegation-to-observe-colombia%E2%80%99s-peace-deal-referendum>

¹⁹ <http://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/acuerdos-de-gobierno-y-farc/canada-anuncia-21-millones-de-dolares-adicionales-para-posconflicto-en-colombia-CY5054271>

²⁰ <http://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/paz-y-derechos-humanos/asi-sera-el-dispositivo-de-las-fuerzas-militares-en-las-zonas-veredales-XH4922176>

²¹ <http://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/colombia-launches-committee-oversee-peace-process>

²² <http://www.mininterior.gov.co/sala-de-prensa/noticias/mujeres-de-las-farc-tendran-igualdad-de-oportunidades-en-listas-para-aspirar-congreso>

Afro-Colombians and indigenous leaders express concerns related to the peace accord over land holdings

Leaders of Afro-Colombian and indigenous organizations have expressed concerns this month that the land reform component of the final set of peace accords promotes an extractive model of resource exploitation, which is a model that has historically disadvantaged these two population groups in Colombia. The peace accords do include an annex addressing ethnic rights, which both acknowledges the disproportionate suffering of these groups throughout the long history of the war and also guarantees rights to these communities moving forward, including the right to prior consultation, a practice which calls for informed consent and approval for development projects on ancestral lands. Nonetheless, bureaucratic backlog for claims to communal land ownership coupled with private competition for now communal lands could result in damage to environmental and human rights in certain regions of the country rich in natural resources.²³

FURTHER READING

Private sector support for the peace process builds

The Future Colombia forum took place in Cartagena during the first full week of September and included speakers from a range of national and international private interests who convened to discuss the topic of the role in the private sector in a post-conflict Colombia. United States Ambassador Kevin Whitaker noted that, traditionally, the weak inclusion of the rural productive sectors has undermined the country's stability. Meanwhile, Peter Schechter, director of the Adrienne Arsht Latin American Center of the Atlantic Council asserted that it would not be possible for the GOC to manage the peacebuilding process alone, and that all of civil society – including the private sector – would be required to ensure stable and durable peace. UBS Head of Philanthropy Advisory Silvia Bastante emphasized the importance of linking institutional and private sector initiatives in particular to those communities who have been historically most marginalized in the country.²⁴

Confrontations continue among various armed actors

The European Commission for Humanitarian and Civil Protection reports that clashes continue in disputed areas of the country, with various non-FARC armed groups fighting either between each other or with the Colombian army. As a result of these encounters, civilians have experienced displacements, killings, and threats, with some of the more intense events occurring in the municipality of Litoral del Río San Juan in the department of Chocó.²⁵

Opposition to peace accords ground NO campaign in three principle concerns

In September, La Silla Vacía released a series of analyses on the NO vote campaign for the October 2nd plebiscite, noting that they largely emanated from three concerns. First are concerns over the transition of the FARC from an illegal armed group to a legitimate political party. Opposition leaders fear the FARC will select a presidential candidate to use as a “Trojan horse” in order to gain executive power quickly and in a way that evades restrictions imposed by the accords. Others are concerned that a FARC political presence would allow Venezuela and Cuba to insert a new form of unwelcome socialism into Colombia's political theater.²⁶ Some of the most widespread opposition to the accords relates to the proposed justice mechanisms – namely that the FARC will not serve jail time (but will instead serve some form of “confinement”), that confession of war crimes and contributions to reparations will reduce sentences, and that political crimes such as rebellion are eligible for amnesty. NO vote advocates suggest that the removal of jail time equates to a form of amnesty and rewards those who have victimized the country for the last 50 years.²⁷ Finally, other detractors worry that the land reform package included in the final set of accords will give new life to a now largely dormant law that allows government expropriation of lands - legally held but deemed unproductive - in order to redistribute these lands to the rural populations who do not have any, or who do not have sufficient lands to subsist.²⁸

²³ <http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Afro-Colombians-Indigenous-Fear-New-Pitfalls-In-Peace-Deal-20160925-0011.html>

²⁴ <http://www.ideaspaz.org/publications/posts/1406>

²⁵ <http://ercportal.jrc.ec.europa.eu/ECHO-Flash/ECHO-Flash-List/yy/2016/mm/9>

²⁶ <http://lasillavacia.com/historia/los-temores-del-no-4-el-castrochavismo-58133>

²⁷ <http://lasillavacia.com/historia/los-temores-del-no-3-que-no-se-acabe-la-guerra-58130>

²⁸ <http://lasillavacia.com/historia/los-temores-del-no-2la-expropiacion-de-tierras-58017>