

DDR AND CHILD SOLDIER ISSUES

A MONTHLY REVIEW
NOVEMBER 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

Both chambers of Colombian Congress pass peace accords

On Thursday November 24th, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, and lead FARC negotiator Rodrigo Londoño (former alias, 'Timochenko') signed for a second time a set of peace accords to end the more than half-century long internal conflict. This revised version of the accord emerged after 40 days of extended negotiations in Havana following the October 2nd plebiscite surprise upset by the NO campaign. While several mechanisms for ratifying the new set of accords remained at the President's disposal – including a second plebiscite – Santos opted to hand over the accords to Congress, where the likelihood of a positive vote was much more certain. On November 29th and Wednesday, November 30th, the Senate and House of Representatives held special sessions in order to vote YES or NO on the accords. By 9:00 p.m. on Wednesday, the accords had passed both Chambers of Congress, with a total vote of 205 YES and 0 NO. The primary opposition party, the *Centro Democrático*, along with a small contingent of conservative representatives, abstained from voting, although they voiced their opposition during both sessions.¹

GOC-FARC negotiators release new peace accord

On Saturday, November 12th, President Juan Manuel Santos and leaders of the GOC and FARC negotiating teams announced that a new peace accord had been reached in Havana. The text of the new accord was published early Monday morning.² President Santos emphasized that the new accord includes significant content from the NO representatives, and Chief GOC negotiator, Humberto de la Calle, asserted that the revised document was indeed better than the original version. Meanwhile, Chief FARC negotiator Iván Márquez estimated that, overall, 65% of the NO recommendations were integrated into the new version, with 65% included in the justice mechanism, 90% of suggested revisions made on the themes of gender, and 100 changes total between rural development, anti-drug policies, victims, and the end of the conflict. While ample changes were made, several core aspects of the accord remained fixed – i.e., those elements that comprise the essence of what the peace accord sets out to accomplish: the transition of the FARC from an armed guerrilla group to political organization.³

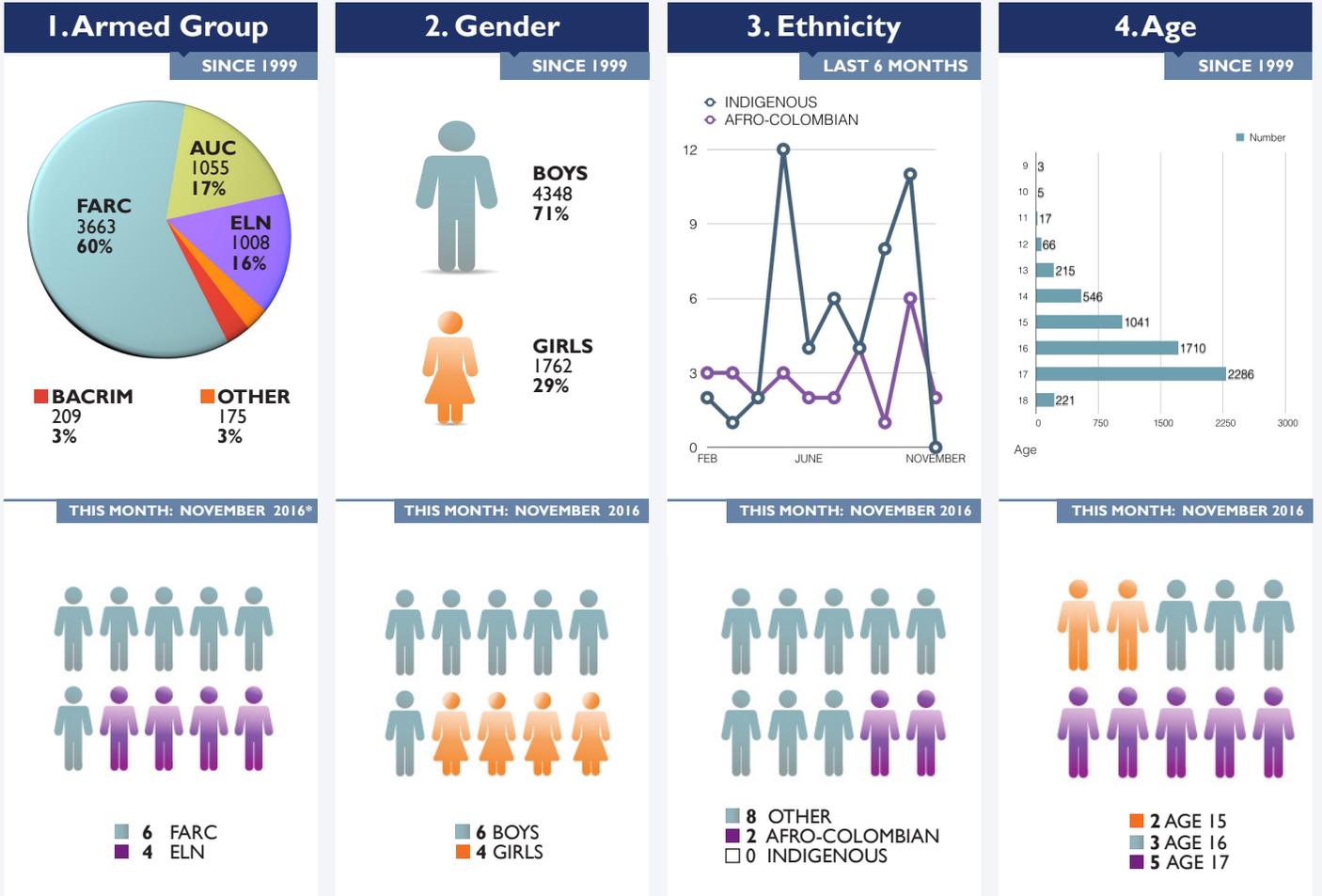
¹ <http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/proceso-de-paz/refrendan-nuevo-acuerdo-con-las-farc/16763099>

² <https://www.mesadeconversaciones.com.co/>

³ <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/lo-que-no-cambio-en-el-nuevo-acuerdo-de-paz/505349>

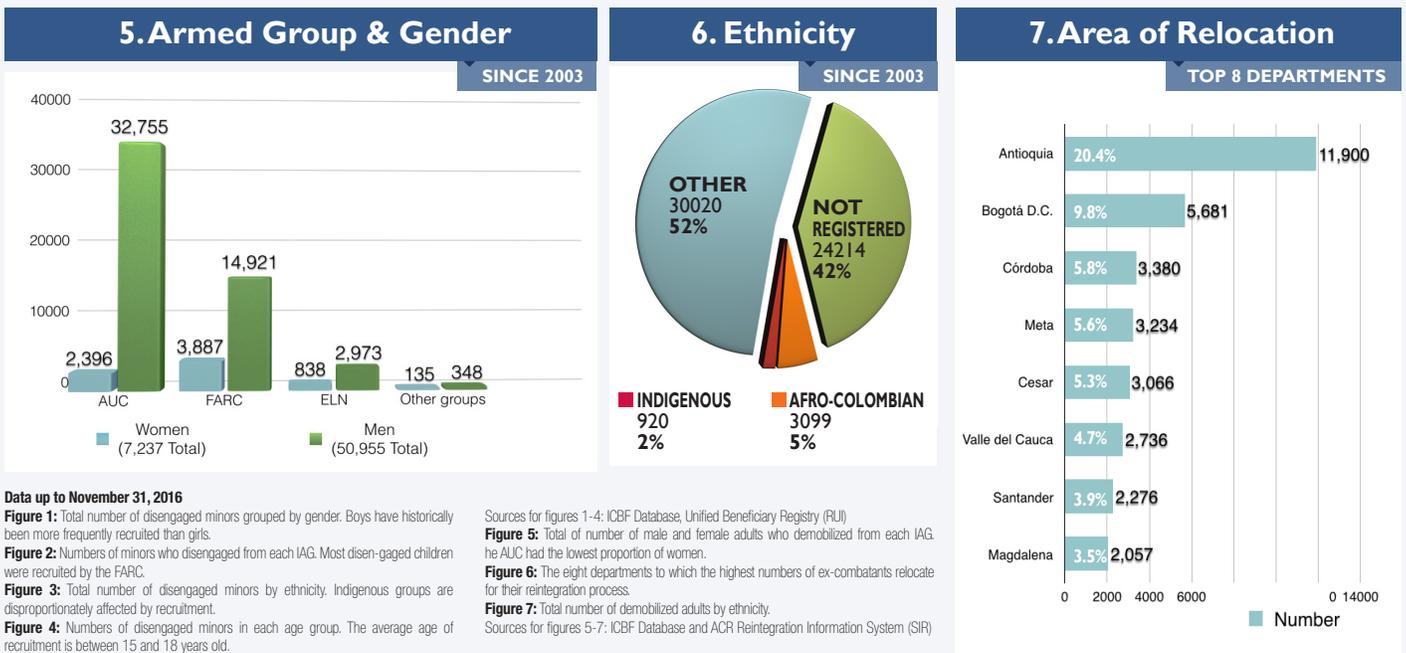
FIGURES & TRENDS

Disengaged Children & Adolescents TOTAL 6,110



* These data are estimates based on the information available

Demobilized Adults TOTAL 58,253



Data up to November 31, 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

Confrontation between FARC guerrillas and Colombian Army prompts deliberations by the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism

The November 13th confrontation between members of the 37th Front of the FARC and GOC armed forces in the Santa Rosa municipality in the south of the department of Bolívar resulted in two guerrilla deaths and one capture.⁴ This event marks the first time that the Tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (MM&V) was called on to investigate the potential breach of the bilateral ceasefire agreement; convened on August 29th and comprises representatives from the FARC, the GOC, and the United Nations. On Wednesday, November 30th, the MM&V released their findings in which they determined that the break in the ceasefire resulted from errors on both sides. On the part of the guerrilla, the MM&V found that the individuals had not notified the appropriate authorities of their movements on this day. For their part, the armed forces of Colombia did not verify that the individuals that they opened fire on were in fact the ELN members that they had suspected.⁵

Monitoring and Verification Mechanism begins operations

The Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (M&VM) comprises representatives from the GOC, the FARC, and oversight by the United Nations, and began operations in eight regional sites on November 7th.⁶ Both the GOC and the FARC have reiterated their support for the bilateral ceasefire in effect until the end of the year, which had been extended in the wake of the plebiscite upset last month. The FARC gathered in transitional pre-grouping points (PTT), which are where the M&VM will first begin its operations.

FARC dissident group threatens in Vaupés

In the first half of November, the Office of the Ombudsman announced concerns related to actions of FARC dissidents operating in the department of Vaupés, including the First Front “Armando Ríos” and the “Uriás Cuellar” company. They have identified risks of forced displacement, threats, extortion, recruitment and use of minors, targeted homicides, and the installation of antipersonnel mines. The zones in which the illegal activity is located suffer from high levels of poverty and school desertion by children, and poor transportation, health care services, and human resources.⁷

PEACE PROCESSES

The wait for ELN release of Odín Sánchez continues

After announcing on Friday, November 4th that they planned to release Odín Sánchez in the following week to a humanitarian commission, the guerrilla group still retains the hostage in custody. Sánchez is an ex-representative of the U Party who became a prisoner of the ELN six months ago when he exchanged himself for his brother, who had fallen gravely ill after three years as a hostage of the guerrilla group. Confronting rumors that Sánchez had died in captivity, the ELN later released two Twitter announcements on November 25th asserting that he remains alive and that the guerrilla group has been unable to hand him over because of the increased Army presence in Chocó. The GOC has preconditioned the start of the public phase of negotiations on the release of this particular hostage, while the ELN have effectively done the same with two commanders currently incarcerated in Medellín that they want on the peace negotiation team.⁸

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

Argentina offers technical support in the search for Colombia's disappeared

In the third week of November, representatives from the Human Rights Office and the Genetic Profile Bank in Argentina participated in a technical exchange between the two countries in order to support the GOC's search for and identification of disappeared persons. This particular project – the “Legal-Scientific Cooperation for the Implementation of a Genetic Profile Bank of Disappeared Persons in Colombia” - was approved in August of last year. Colombia's Inter-Institutional Forensic Committee of the Genetic Profile Bank of Disappeared Persons in Colombia will have representatives from the following institutions: the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences, the Technical Investigation Body of the Attorney General's Office, and the Criminal Investigation Unit and INTERPOL within the National Police of Colombia.⁹

⁴ <http://nacionesunidas.org.co/blog/2016/11/17/comunicado-de-prensa-del-mecanismo-tripartito-de-monitoreo-y-verificacion-mm-v/>

⁵ <http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/proceso-de-paz/farc-y-gobierno-violaron-cese-del-fuego-en-muerte-de-guerrilleros-en-bolivar/16763205>

⁶ <http://nacionesunidas.org.co/blog/2016/11/04/mecanismo-tripartito-inicia-verificacion-del-cese-al-fuego-en-terreno/>

⁷ <http://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/alerta-por-frente-disidente-de-las-farc-en-el-vaupes-DN5348500>

⁸ <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/eln-dice-odin-sanchez-esta-vivo-articulo-667376>

⁹ <http://uriel.mininterior.gov.co/dependencias/direcci%C3%B3n-de-derechos-humanos?page=2>

The UK pledges additional funding for the peace process

The Prime Minister of the UK, Theresa May, announced during President Santos' early November official State Visit that her government would increase its contribution to prosperity programs in Colombia to up to £27 million, with a further £7.5 million from the government's Conflict, Security and Stability Fund (CSSF) allocated to support the Colombian peace process. Roughly £2.5 million of the CSSF funds will be dedicated specifically to support demining through the United Nations Trust Fund.¹⁰

INSTITUTIONAL PROGRESS

After signing of the new accord, Congress to decide on referendum

On Thursday, November 24th, the GOC and the FARC signed the revised set of peace accords after 40 days of re-negotiations followed the plebiscite. Congress worked on the referendum for the new accord in special sessions during the last week of November. The referendum was required to begin implementing the contents of the peace accord between the GOC and the FARC.¹¹ President Santos also announced that Thursday, December 1st, will be "D Day," catalyzing the formal start of the processes supporting the laying down of FARC arms, reintegration of FARC members, and conversion of the guerrilla group into a political party. On December 6th, the FARC will begin moving all members from their current pre-grouping points to the 27 transitional points and zones; they will have 30 days to complete this process.¹²

Constitutional Court Magistrate Calle finds Legislative Peace Act constitutional, but retains public referendum requirement

On Monday, November 28th, Constitutional Court Magistrate María Victoria Calle proposed that the Legislative Peace Act is constitutional and that the mechanism does not replace the constitution. The Act (1) reduces required sessions for approving constitutional reforms from eight to four, (2) reduces the ordinary laws required to implement the peace accords with the FARC from four to two, and (3) accords "special powers" to the President. The Court still has to rule over whether or not Article 5 will remain in the Act, which requires popular referendum – lost in the October 2d plebiscite - for its validity.¹³ Thus, the Legislative Peace Act is not currently valid. Next steps in this domain are uncertain."

DIVERSITY ISSUES

LGBTI Community representatives address the FARC in Havana during revision of peace accords

Unexpectedly, the theme of the "gender ideology" was arguably the lynchpin in the NO campaign win in the October 2nd plebiscite. Part of the argument emerged from the religious community, which suggested that the peace accords attacked traditional notions of family arrangements – namely, a definition of marriage that limited the union to a man and a woman. A result of the November 2nd meeting between LGBTI community and FARC leaders was a list of proposals that asked accord authors to maintain the concept of a "tailored approach to gender" to acknowledge the differential impact that the armed conflict has had on women. They also asked that the final document preserve its commitment to protecting the human rights of all minority groups, and to addressing the socioeconomic origins of the armed conflict. Absent from the recommendations were calls for re-defining the family, same-sex marriage, and other specific rights sought by members of the LGBTI community.¹⁴ Towards the end of the month, and after the final accords had been released, *Semana* published a point-by-point analysis of changes to the final accords on the theme of gender.¹⁵

Indigenous Wayú community receives recognition as victim of armed conflict

This month, the GOC Land Restitution Unit certified 362 hectares for the indigenous community Wayú through the land restitution program in the municipality of Barrancas, in the department of La Guajira. This marks the first time that a tribunal has recognized the territorial rights of this particular indigenous people, and that the Wayú have been collectively recognized as a victim of the armed conflict; it is the culmination of a 23-year-long effort on the part of the community for this recognition. The original displacement occurred in 1993 and mining exploitation along with armed group aggressions kept these individuals away from their territories until now.¹⁶

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-pledges-new-support-for-colombian-peace-process>

¹¹ <http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/proceso-de-paz/retencion-e-implementacion-del-acuerdo-de-paz-con-las-farc/16759703>

¹² <http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/proceso-de-paz/que-sigue-luego-de-firma-de-nuevo-acuerdo-de-paz-con-las-farc/16758434>

¹³ <http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/justicia/ponencia-en-la-corte-constitucional-mantiene-vivo-el-fast-track-para-proceso-de-paz/16760835>

¹⁴ <http://www.elspectador.com/noticias/paz/comunidad-lgbti-no-estara-excluida-del-nuevo-acuerdo-de-articulo-663719>

¹⁵ <http://www.semana.com/hacion/articulo/la-formula-del-nuevo-acuerdo-para-el-enfoque-de-genero/507070>

¹⁶ <http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/gobierno/wayus-son-reconocidos-como-victimas/16744396>

Indigenous women and girls rights campaign gains traction

November 25th marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Among the activities surrounding this day, the IOM/USAID-supported campaign “I am committed to the lives of indigenous women and girls” gained new momentum. The initiative was originally presented in a June event on themes of justice and sexual violence among indigenous communities. The re-launch of the campaign during a late November forum – the 3rd National Congress on the Special Indigenous Jurisdiction – served to shed light on the ongoing sexual violence suffered by indigenous women and girls, the relationship between forced recruitment by illegal armed groups and sexual violence, and a deeper understanding of justice processes and the reintegration of indigenous ex-combatants.¹⁷

FURTHER READING

FARC militia members likely to pose a distinct challenge for implementing peace accords

FARC militia members – also covered under the terms of the final peace accord – distinguish from standard FARC members in that they have typically lived within urban centers and maintained the appearance of ordinary civilians. Some have argued that they should not be included in the FARC process of laying down arms because their involvement in the guerrilla group is far less military in nature. Others have noted the particular challenges related to the demobilization of militias, not least of which are the following: (1) their previously hidden identity as insurgents may still be useful to the FARC, and thus analysts express concerns that the FARC may not want to identify all of them to the GOC; (2) militia members may be less ideologically motivated overall, and may wish to pass over to narcotrafficking groups, which would be a much riskier option if their identity as former FARC affiliates were made known; and (3) more than just lacking ideological and political adherence to the FARC, these militia members have potentially been narcotraffickers masquerading as members of illegal armed groups to serve their own individual profit goals, moving from one to the other as the political security climate changes.¹⁸

The impact of land mines on peacebuilding in Colombia

Semana magazine released an in-depth special report on antipersonnel mines in Colombia. The authors date the presence of these artefacts of war in Colombia back to 1970: while the military found them useful to protect their physical infrastructures, the ELN and the FARC used them to protect illicit crops and to wage an offensive against the formal armed forces. For years, these devices served as an ideal weapon of war for all sides – including the paramilitaries – in that they accorded armed action without having to risk the lives of individual soldiers. However, the 1997 Ottawa Treaty subsequently prohibited the use of mines in war or under any other conditions because of their capacity to indiscriminately kill. While the Colombian Army decommissioned their mines, other illegal armed groups did not, and they remain a significant threat to Colombian civilians to this day and a financially costly component of the peacebuilding project currently underway in the country.¹⁹

Specific challenges in negotiating with the ELN

On November 2nd, Foundation Nuevo Arco Iris released a report analyzing the specific challenges and difficulties in negotiating with the ELN. In the piece, analyst Julio Cesar Arenas noted that the negotiations immediately suffered from a more tenuous start than did the preliminary discussions with the FARC. Arenas cites overzealous GOC efforts to frame the ELN dialogs within its experiences with the FARC along with ELN internal dissidence and loose organization as core sources of this tension. He also notes that the October 2nd plebiscite outcome undermined positive momentum that had been building between the ELN and the GOC. Additionally, the inability or lack of will on the part of the ELN central command to manage armed aggressions emerging from its various fronts has exacerbated attempts to dialog amid ongoing confrontations between guerrillas and the Colombian armed forces.²⁰

¹⁷ <http://nacionesunidas.org.co/blog/2016/11/30/yo-me-comprometo-con-la-vida-de-las-mujeres-y-la-ninez-indigena/>

¹⁸ <http://www.verdadabierta.com/procesos-de-paz/farc/6476-milicias-modificacion-al-acuerdo-final-dificil-de-implementar>

¹⁹ <http://minas.semana.com/index.php#index>

²⁰ <http://www.arcoiris.com.co/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/RETOS-Y-DIFICULTADES-DE-LA-NEGOCIACION-CON-EL-ELN.pdf>