

APRIL 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

MOVING CLOSER TO BILATERAL CEASEFIRE WITH FARC

GOC and FARC delegations in Havana issued a joint statement on April 14, stating that they are close to reaching agreement on the “ending the conflict” agenda point, which involves guarantees for the safety the FARC, laying down of arms and ending hostilities through a final, bilateral ceasefire.¹ FARC leaders recognized the “important progress” made and affirmed that they are “almost ready.”²

PEACE TALKS WITH ELN TO BE HELD IN MAY

Formal peace talks with the ELN are to begin in May, as announced by the ELN on April 7,³ and confirmed by the ELN and the GOC on April 24.⁴ Ecuador will be the initial epicenter for the talks, one of the five host countries along with Brazil, Chile, Cuba, and Venezuela.⁵

ELN RELEASES HOSTAGES, CONTINUES ARMED ACTIONS

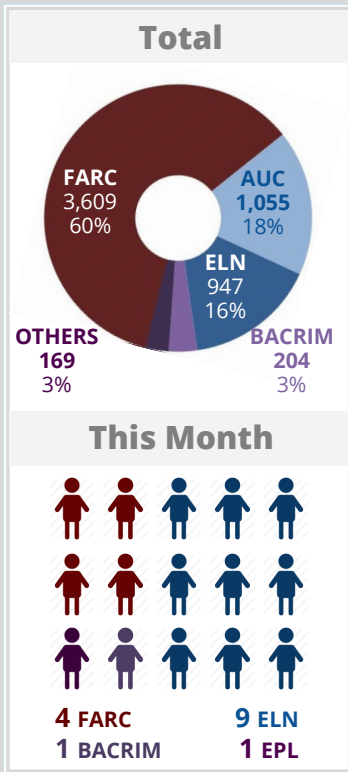
President Santos demanded that hostages be freed before formal talks can begin.⁶ The ELN released a police officer and local politician,⁷ but continued armed actions – including attacks on police in Norte de Santander and Cauca,⁸ a kidnapping in Chocó,⁹ and recruitment of children in Nariño.¹⁰ Santos ordered that the military offensive against the ELN be maintained continue until the guerrilla stops kidnapping and attacking oil infrastructure and releases all hostages.¹¹

GOC: armed forces will maintain offensive stance until ELN demonstrates a real commitment to peace.

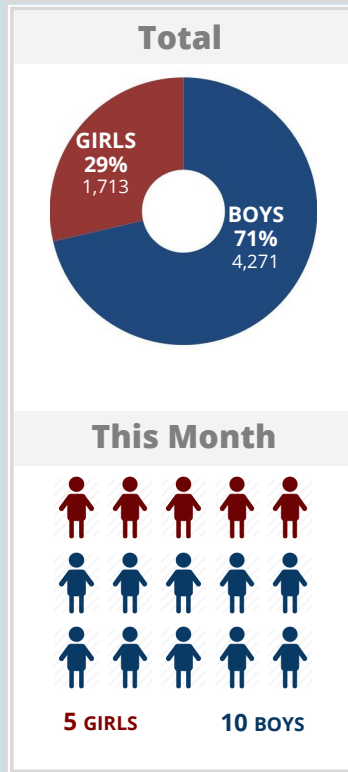
FIGURES & TRENDS

Disengaged Children & Adolescents (5,984)

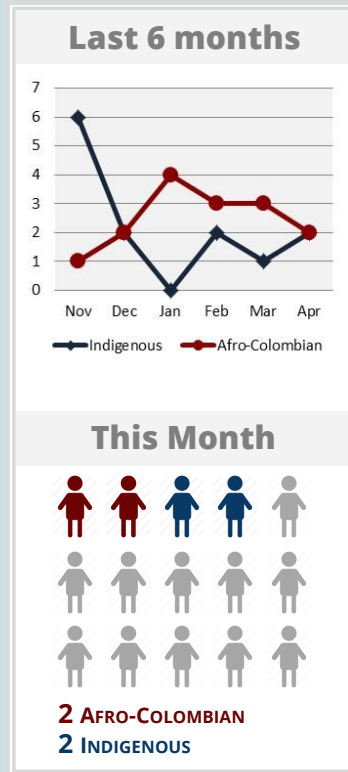
1. ARMED GROUP



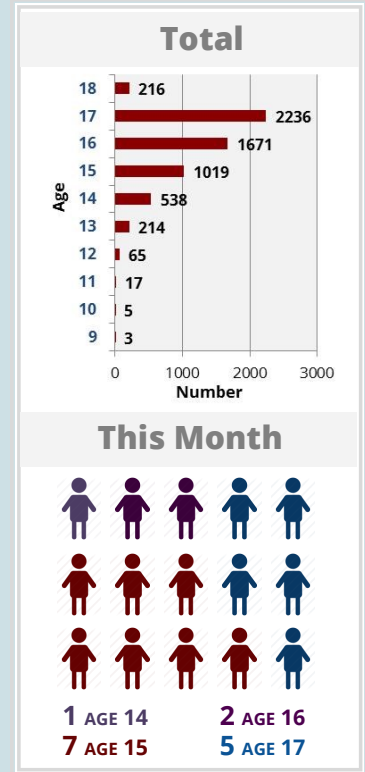
2. GENDER



3. ETHNICITY

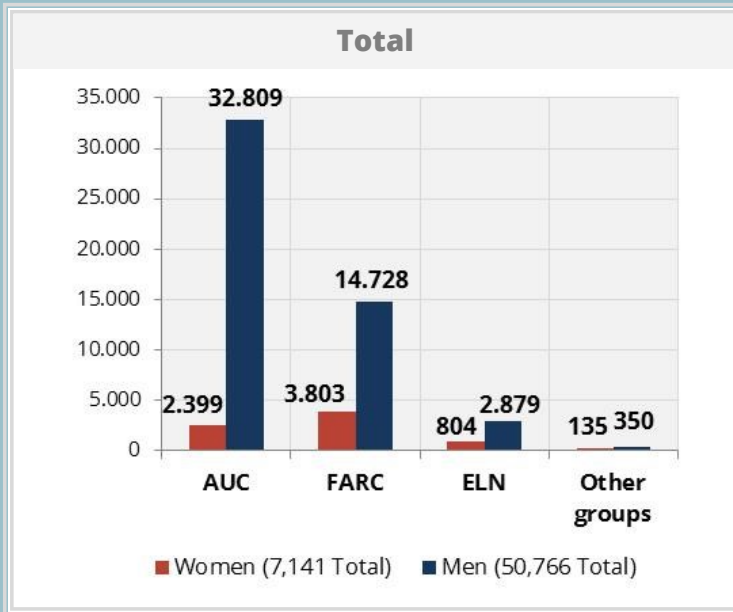


4. AGE

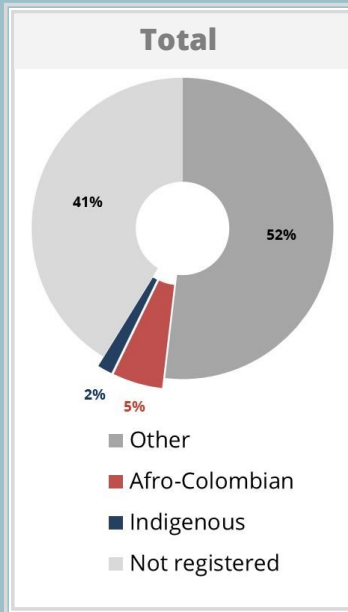


Demobilized Adults (57,907)

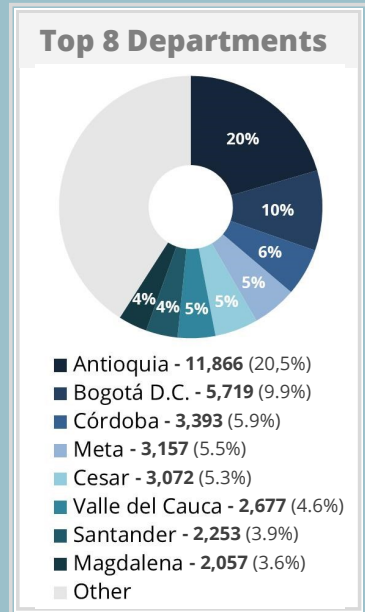
ARMED GROUP & GENDER



ETHNICITY



AREA OF RELOCATION



Data up to April 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 (RUI)

Figure 5: Total of 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

ELN

Calls for participation and support

The GOC chief negotiator called on the private sector, unions and citizens to actively participate in shaping discussions with the ELN.¹² According to an ELN leader, success of the talks will depend on clarifying paramilitary activities and preventing their repetition.¹³ The ELN also called on civil society, the Catholic Church and the National Ombudsman's Office to monitor violence against civilians.¹⁴ The Catholic Church will advise the peace talks and, according to one bishop, will help with the release of hostages.¹⁵

FARC

Discussions on last agenda point

The GOC and FARC continued discussing the "End of Conflict" agenda point, and began discussions on "Implementation, verification and legalization of accords." The delegations will continue their work on May 4.¹⁷

GOC and FARC delegations issued a joint statement emphasizing a "productive and intense" round of negotiations.¹⁶

GOC ready to ensure security of FARC

The GOC and FARC continue to discuss security for demobilized FARC members. The head of the National Protection Unit explained to the FARC how the Unit operates, and its protection plans for FARC and their families in areas where the group will concentrate for demobilization.¹⁸ The actual security scheme for the guerrilla group has not yet been confirmed.¹⁹

El Salvador to verify disarmament

El Salvador was the first country to receive a formal invitation by the UN to participate in verification of FARC disarmament and the final ceasefire. The President of El Salvador accepted the invitation,²⁰ and emphasized his government's support for the peace process in Colombia.²¹

FARC elite units at the negotiating table

The leader of one of the FARC's most elite and hostile units arrived in Havana on April 22, accompanied by the International Red Cross and the Government of Norway, a guarantor country.²² Although not an official negotiator, the arrival of alias "El Paisa" sends a message of unity among the FARC.²³

All FARC commanders have now been involved in the peace process.

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR PEACE

Representatives of the U.S. and Colombian governments gathered to discuss the strategy to implement the second phase of "Plan Colombia," known as "Peace Colombia," with an initial investment of 450 million dollars.²⁴ Although the resources have not been yet approved by the U.S. Congress, members of the Senate have recognized and supported the peace dialogues.²⁵ Moreover, the UK Minister of Foreign Affairs²⁶ and the EU Foreign Affairs Council²⁷ announced increases in funds for peacebuilding.

INSTITUTIONAL PROGRESS

POLITICAL ACCORDS TO FACILITATE THE PEACE REFORMS

On April 15, the GOC reached an agreement with Colombia's political parties to promote reforms related to the status of opposition parties, amendments to the electoral system and financing of political campaigns. A draft bill²⁸ was discussed in Congress to accelerate implementation of peace agreements, which will need congressional approval.²⁹ "We have to be ready to make the reforms required by the peace accords," stated Colombia's High Commissioner for Peace.³⁰

Nine months of sustained de-escalation: closer to the bilateral ceasefire

Peace negotiation with the ELN and the search of a complete peace

According to this recent report by the Conflict Analysis Resource Center, bilateral de-escalation measures have achieved a complete reduction in the conflict between the FARC and the GOC over the past nine months. This period registered the lowest number of victims killed or wounded in the last 51 years.³¹

Kyle Johnson, senior analyst of the International Crisis Group outlines the main challenges and risks posed by the peace dialogues with the ELN: increase of hostilities, possible recruitment of FARC members, and actual involvement with illegal economies. If these trends continue, it will become a spoiler for peace.³²

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3. "Primera mesa de diálogo con el Eln empezaría en mayo en Ecuador". *El Tiempo*, April 8 2016, <http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/proceso-de-paz/dialogos-con-el-eln-empezarian-en-mayo/16557875>
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7. Ibid.
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