

The Impact of COVID-19 in Reincorporation

This snapshot explores the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the process of reincorporation. On 6 March 2020, Colombia reported its first case of COVID-19 coronavirus within what has since been declared a global pandemic. The crisis has exacerbated existing inequalities and needs, and the preventative measures applied, including curfews, lockdowns and self-isolation, have been felt across all corners of the country. The [second reincorporation snapshot](#) discussed the economic and security challenges that need to be tackled in 2020. The current crisis emphasises the need for urgent attention towards these same issues but also shows new opportunities and examples of co-responsibility and solidarity by FARC ex-combatants.

The exacerbation of existing challenges

FARC ex-combatants in the process of reincorporation are a vulnerable population, with limited, if any, economic independence, and a high proportion of children, pregnant mothers, elderly and disabled people living within the former Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation (ETCR) and New Grouping Areas (NAR). The current health emergency highlights the need for their basic needs to be met particularly with respect to adequate drinking water, living conditions and access to medical care.

According to the National Council for Reincorporation (CNR), just over a third of FARC ex-combatants have access to an aqueduct with the remainder relying on other facilities and systems in order to receive clean water. However, as of mid-April, some in the regions continue to report issues mostly due to equipment failures or because they live in NAR within communities who are facing the same challenges.



In addition, the food supply is also affected by restrictions and the need to renegotiate with providers. Should an individual present with symptoms of COVID-19, the majority of the former ETCR and NAR do not have access to facilities for self-isolation due to shared or rented accommodation, in many cases with shared bathrooms. A little more than 85% of ex-combatants are within Colombia's health system, but although medical resources have been promised, there remain delays in kits and face masks arriving to the former ETCRs.

Security is an ongoing concern with armed groups and dissidents taking advantage of travel restrictions and lockdowns to target individuals and groups. Since the start of the year, 22 of those in the reincorporation process have been killed, 7 of them since the virus arrived in Colombia. Some measures are being put in place, and actions taken following early warnings from the Ombudsman Office. In a recent interview with *El Espectador*, Emilio Archila – the Presidential Advisor for Stabilisation and Consolidation in Post-conflict Colombia – explained that ex-combatants have available 1 member of the public forces for every 16 of them, (compared to 1 in 500 for the general population) and 340 of those in the reincorporation process have specific protection schemes in place. However, in April 2020, so serious was the threat to three families in the NAR in La Blanquita de Frontino, Antioquia, that the army evacuated them to the nearby former ETCR Llano Grande in the middle of the pandemic.



Supporting the wider community

Despite these challenges, many of those in the reincorporation process have been actively working to support the wider community. In Cali, FARC ex-combatants have been volunteering to help distribute supplies to those most vulnerable. Thousands of face masks, which are in short supply across the world, are being produced in many areas, including Anorí and Icononzo, for donation to nearby hospitals and those most in need.

In addition, although productive projects continue to involve a minority of FARC ex-combatants, more continue to be approved during the pandemic. The current climate is challenging for all businesses but those manufacturing products - such as beer, coffee, honey and hammocks - have been adapting and are now offering them on demand for home delivery. ECOMUN, the cooperative of the FARC that arose from the 2016 Peace Agreement, has launched an initiative for exchanges between providers in rural former ETCR and NAR and charitable organisations in urban settings to allow individuals to purchase them at cost price, with the option to make a donation.

Embrace Dialogue stands in solidarity with all at this difficult time of a global pandemic and celebrates the commitment and solidarity shown by FARC ex-combatants, who are contributing to the needs of Colombian society more widely. We urge the Colombian government to ensure that their basic needs and those of their communities are being met. Finally, we reiterate our call for improved responses by the state to the ongoing threats made to ex-combatants and their families to ensure that all Colombians have the opportunity for a healthy life, free of violence.

