

Education as a Strategy for Reincorporation

Access to education for ex-guerrillas and their families, who are in the process of reincorporation, is key for the promotion of social justice and equality in Colombia. This snapshot explores the progress and challenges of education in some of the areas of reincorporation where former members of the FARC guerrilla have decided to rebuild their lives with their families.

The newly formed villages (former Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation), as well as the New Reincorporation Areas (NAR) are spaces where ex-FARC members have formed new families and rebuilt existing family ties. According to [figures released by the first socio-economic census of the FARC carried out by the National University of Colombia](#) in 2017, 90% of respondents had basic literacy skills, only 57% had completed their primary education and 54% had at least one child.

These findings reveal two pressing issues. The first, is that adults who have not completed primary education therefore require secondary education and a skills certificate that recognises the roles performed by ex-FARC members during the conflict. Secondly, as the majority of former guerrillas' children live in rural areas where access to education provision is limited, it is essential to guarantee access to comprehensive community-based learning programmes that address the needs of local communities and their territories.

Progress: the support and coordination of international organizations

Various entities have worked together to guarantee access to education as stipulated in the peace agreement. For instance, the [programme Arando la Educación](#) (Cultivating Education) emerged from an alliance between the Norwegian Refugee Council (CNR), the National Open and Distance University (UNAD) and the Colombian Foundation of Ex-Combatants and Peace Promoters (FUCEPAZ) in partnership with the Colombian Ministry of Education.



This programme seeks to support literacy programmes in primary and secondary schools by sending teachers to the newly formed villages to give on-site classes. Since the project started in 2017, more than 3,000 ex-guerrillas have participated and around 300 have graduated. Strengthening Communities for Peace is another joint project by the Colombian and Norwegian Red Cross aimed at offering healthcare skills certification programmes. Due to this programme, many ex-guerrillas who used to perform nursing and dentistry tasks in the FARC have obtained technical certificates to certify this.

A Differential Approach

In April 2019, the Comprehensive Reincorporation Programme was launched by the UN Peacebuilding Fund, which coordinates the efforts of the Colombian Government, the UN and the National Reincorporation Council (FARC component). The programme seeks to promote women's economic development and empowerment through productive projects, as well as the creation of childcare spaces for children under the age of 5. Focusing on this age group, the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF) and the Reincorporation and Standardisation Agency (ARN) have financed the construction of Integral Development Centres in five of the newly created villages.

Challenges for the education process

Despite advances in primary, secondary and technical education, ex-FARC members still encounter difficulties when accessing university education and the labour market. Meanwhile, the childcare projects only started in 2019 and are mainly focused on early childhood development due to an increase in births since the signing of the peace agreement.



The lack of educational opportunities in rural areas means that a large part of the school-age population must walk long distances to access educational facilities. For example, in the village Héctor Ramírez located in Montañita, Caquetá, there is only one primary school, which means that students in years 6 to 9 have to walk roughly one hour to reach the nearest secondary school. Those who want to continue their studies from year 9 onwards have to attend schools in urban areas.

Consequently, one of the strategies implemented by ex-members of the FARC as part of their reincorporation process has been the development of their own education scheme that connects their ideological principles, rural practices and local knowledge. In fact, the village Héctor Ramírez and the local popular library Alfonso Cano, alongside the Faculty of Psychology at the University of La Sabana in Bogotá are consolidating an alternative education model which integrates regular classes with after-school training programmes to complement the children's learning.

Embrace Dialogue recognises that education as a tool for reincorporation continues to present challenges. Education provision for ex-FARC members requires greater coordination among different national and international entities, as well as more effective government support to manage the quality and coverage of education in rural areas. As part of the peace agreement, education impacts both the ex-FARC guerrillas and their families and rural communities in general.

