USAID Regional Governance Activity (RGA) in Colombia, 2015-2019: Baseline Report[1]

Authors

Michael G. Findley
Associate Professor, University of Texas at Austin
Member, AidData Research Consortium
p: 512.547.9137 e: mgfindley@gmail.com

Oliver Kaplan
Assistant Professor, University of Denver
p: 303.871.2377 e: oliver.kaplan@du.edu

Alejandro Ponce de Leon
Ph.D. Student, University of Texas at Austin
p: 0375292110 e: poncedeleoncalero@utexas.edu

Joseph K. Young
Associate Professor, American University
Member, AidData Research Consortium
p: 850.284.7192 e: jyoung@american.edu

8 December 2016

[1] We thank María Camila Alarcón, Bethany Albertson, Erin Kearns, Nathalia Rojas, Natalie Southwick, Daniel Walker, Thomas Zeitzoff, and staff at the USAID mission and implementing partner Management Systems International for their helpful collaboration and assistance.

Table of Contents

Acronyms

ASOCOMUNAL - Municipal Association of Junta Councils
BACRIM - Criminal Bands
CAQDAS - Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software
CBPS - Covariate Balancing Propensity Score
CDCS - Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CEDE - Centro de Estudios sobre Desarrollo Económico
CONPES - The National Council for Economic and Social Policy
DCOF - Displaced Children and Orphans Fund
DNP – Department of National Planning
ELN - The National Liberation Army
FARC - The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
GOC - Government of Colombia
IED - Improvised Explosive Device
IR - Intermediate Results
JAC - Juntas de Acción Comunal
LGBTI - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and/or Intersex
LWVF - Leahy War Victims Fund
MSI - Management Systems International
RGA - Regional Governance Activity
SENA - Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje
USAID - United States Agency for International Development
VOT - Victims of Torture Program

Executive Summary

The Colombia Regional Governance Activity (RGA) funded by USAID Colombia Mission, in partnership with the Government of Colombia (GOC), aims to improve sub-national governance in 40 conflict-affected municipalities of Colombia over the period 2015-2019.[2] The RGA program comes at a time of great optimism in light of the recently signed and ratified peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC, as well as amidst negotiations between the Government and the ELN.

The RGA program is being implemented by Management Systems International (MSI) and consists of five primary components, of which we have been tasked with evaluating 2 and 4:

1. Improved decentralization to enhance operational capacity of departmental and local governments;
2. Improved financial management and performance of targeted municipalities;
3. Improved normative, institutional, and procedural frameworks for development and maintenance of secondary and tertiary road infrastructure;
4. Increased citizen participation for enhanced transparency and accountability;
5. Improved electoral process to limit state capture at the sub-national level.

The RGA program is also tasked with addressing the inclusion of women and vulnerable groups through a set of cross-cutting activities designed to address gender, ethnic and racial barriers to participation, including strengthening the capacity of the GOC to respond to the needs of these populations. In particular, the RGA will engage government and civil society actors to emphasize inclusion and enhance relationships, leverage legal and policy frameworks designed to protect women and vulnerable populations, and enhance existing resources in the area.

Based on the theory of change advanced by USAID, the RGA program should increase municipal capacity and legitimacy, which are currently severely lacking in Colombia's conflict affected regions. As capacity and legitimacy increase, it is implied that the population should become more supportive of the government and less supportive of illegal armed groups, and levels of violence should decrease while stability and individual well-being increase. These interventions and expected outcomes fit squarely within the mission goal of making Colombia more capable of successfully implementing a sustainable and inclusive peace through the intermediate goals of more effectively delivering services prioritized by citizens (IR 1.1) and increasing citizen participation in democratic processes and governance (IR 1.2). All intermediate and end results advance the objectives outlined in the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS).

The RGA treatment municipalities comprise a sector of the Colombian population that feels excluded and left behind. The residents are characterized by pessimistic outlooks on the future, with low levels of confidence in and low perceptions of the legitimacy of state

[2] This research was made possible through generous support from USAID Colombia provided via cooperative agreement AID-OAA-A-12-00096 between AidData at the College of William and Mary and the USAID Global Development Lab. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of AidData, USAID, or the United States Government.

institutions. The 40 municipalities chosen for the RGA program were considered insecure, lacking in trust and legitimacy, lacking in public financial management, and citizen oversight.

Using a "matching" exercise, we identified a set of control municipalities that were similar to the treatment municipalities in all possible ways except for the difference that treatment municipalities receive the RGA intervention and the control municipalities do not. A central goal of the baseline is to demonstrate that balance in addition to elucidating the state of the municipalities across numerous different dimensions. If the matching approach is successful, at the midline and endline stages any differences that emerge between treatment and control municipalities should be attributable to the RGA intervention and not to other potentially confounding factors to the extent that we can observe information about competing explanations.

Based on numerous observable indicators, the control municipalities achieved an extremely high degree of balance. The results of this baseline evaluation thus largely confirm the reasons these municipalities were chosen. The results of citizen surveys, citizen focus groups, elite interviews, and other desk research all offer evidence in support of this conclusion and confirm that the observable baseline conditions in the treatment and control municipalities are largely similar and challenging. This evaluation thus provides the benchmark estimates against which the midline and endline evaluations can assess the impact of the RGA intervention.

Apart from the balance across treatment and control, among the main findings about the state of affairs in the treatment and control municipalities:

- **Citizen oversight.** Despite references to the importance of local Citizen Oversight Committees (Veedurías Comunitarias) to ensure accountability of local development projects, baseline data indicate extremely low levels of awareness about and participation in these organizations.

- **Corruption-royalties nexus.** One of the largest social problems reported by citizens is government corruption. Relatedly, citizens report negative attitudes about the royalties program, as there appear to be discrepancies between royalties revenue and the level of municipal spending on development projects. This combination could present a possibly challenging "resource curse" if royalty and development funds are mismanaged.

- **Elite-mass consensus on Governmental Performance and Insecurity.** In most cases, the perceptions of the public correspond with the perceptions of the community elites and municipal government elites about governmental performance and challenges with security.

- **Optimism despite challenges.** Despite the many challenges faced by the RGA treatment and control municipalities, there is a moment of optimism and hope for improved services with the arrival of the new mayoral administrations.

- **Perseverance of vulnerable populations.** Extensive data on vulnerable populations was collected and analyzed, including on ethnic minorities and women.

The data indicate that their perceptions of social conditions do not significantly differ from the general population. However, there are some perceptions of greater insecurity and state neglect among these populations as well.

The baseline report thus paints a picture of a set of treatment and control municipalities that are broadly similar in many respects, which include high insecurity, low capacity, low engagement and yet optimism of citizens and elites, even potentially among vulnerable populations

Introduction

This baseline evaluation provides a basic description of the Colombia Regional Governance Activity (RGA), the evaluation approach, and the findings. Michael G. Findley (University of Texas at Austin), Oliver Kaplan (University of Denver), Alejandro Ponce de Leon (University of Texas at Austin), and Joseph K. Young (American University) who are affiliated with AidData implemented the impact evaluation. The baseline evaluation activities occurred between January 15, 2016 and May 31, 2016, with final data fully delivered August 31, 2016.

The official start date of the evaluation team was June 22nd, 2015. First, a survey research team in Colombia was identified and hired. In consultation with this local firm, Cifras y Conceptos, we began the process of identifying control municipalities to compare to the treatments (discussed below). Next, mayoral elections were held on October 25, 2015. To provide a baseline assessment that allows for these new mayors and governance in municipalities to be settled, in consultation with USAID we delayed the initial surveys and focus groups until the first half of 2016.

The RGA Program as Articulated by USAID

The Colombia Regional Governance Activity (RGA) funded by USAID Colombia Mission, in partnership with the Government of Colombia (GOC), aims to improve sub-national governance in 40 conflict-affected municipalities of Colombia over the period 2015-2019.

The RGA program is being implemented by Management Systems International (MSI) and consists of five primary components:

1. Improved decentralization to enhance operational capacity of departmental and local governments;
2. Improved financial management and performance of targeted municipalities;
3. Improved normative, institutional, and procedural frameworks for development and maintenance of secondary and tertiary road infrastructure;
4. Increased citizen participation for enhanced transparency and accountability;[3]
5. Improved electoral process to limit state capture at sub-national level.

[3] Kaplan (2013), among others, calls for greater citizen participation, suggesting this intervention may be key to cementing a post-agreement peace.

Based on the theory of change advanced by USAID, the RGA program should increase municipal capacity and legitimacy,[4] which are currently severely lacking in Colombia's conflict affected regions. As capacity increases, perceptions of legitimacy should increase, citizens should shift their support away from illegal armed groups and toward the government, and levels of violence should decrease while stability and individual well-being increase. These interventions and expected outcomes fit squarely within the mission goal of making Colombia more capable of successfully implementing a sustainable and inclusive peace through the intermediate goals of making citizen prioritized services more effectively delivered (IR 1.1) and increasing citizen participation in democratic processes and governance (IR 1.2). All intermediate and end results advance the objectives outlined in the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS).

RGA activities are occurring at the national and subnational levels but we are evaluating only the subnational components, as per USAID direction. The impact evaluation specifically addresses questions relating to the extent to which the RGA has an impact on two of the five total component objectives: (2) Improved financial management and performance of targeted municipalities and (4) Increased citizen participation for enhanced transparency and accountability.

Theory of Change & Activities as Articulated by Implementing Partner (MSI)

In pre-implementation planning, MSI provided additional ideas on the theory of change that is guiding the implementation of their programming. In the following section, we included much of their conceptualization to illustrate how the implementing partner is steering its programming, since this also guided our selection of survey/interview questions and data gathering/analysis.

Causal Impact of the RGA

In causal words, the RGA aims to have an effect: "by increasing the *capacity of municipalities* and departments to deliver services, the governance will improve while trust, credibility and legitimacy will be built." A more detailed description of the logic behind the theory of change states:

> RGA will seek to build trust between citizens and institutions through efficient and effective management of public investment, improved local government capacities and improved access to public services, knowledge and understanding gained from learning how the state works and greater clarity and ownership of differentiated roles and responsibilities of different actors. This should lead to greater confidence in public authorities, creating more credibility, legitimacy and better governance conditions.

[4] By capacity, we mean the ability of the municipality to implement preferred policies (Young 2013). By legitimacy, we mean the compatibility of the results of governmental (municipal) output with the value patterns of those individuals or group affected (Stillman 1974). Legitimacy is different than public support. Legitimacy relates to whether citizens view their government as having *the right* to govern. Support is more about a citizen's assessment of the current government and how well a municipality is governing.

Social oversight efforts for public financial management are a key element in generating trust and legitimacy, which is why RGA will work with departmental and municipal elected officials and their staffs in complying with the duty to provide citizens with information on government activities and operations, so citizens may exercise their lawful right to oversee public matters. Publicizing the actions carried out by administrations is the best mechanism to build credibility and trust, creating an environment of accountability.

Specific Causal Theory for Component 2: **Improved Financial Management and Performance of Targeted Municipalities**

RGA's subnational governments will strengthen their capacity in public financial management, development planning and administration. With RGA's support, territorial entities will have a better fiscal performance and will increase the relevance and quality of response to population's demands, thus improving governance. In other words, the problem the RGA faces can be stated as: "if municipalities do not have favorable conditions to increase public investment, the needs of the people will remain unmet; consequently, both the credibility and legitimacy of the state will be increasingly affected. This is one of the driving forces for conflict in Colombia." There are two main results:

> Result 2.1. Municipal management capacities to budget plan and execute spending strengthened
> Result 2.2. Municipal fiscal capacity increased to give authorities latitude for public investment
>
> (See Annex 2 for Component 2 illustrative activities.)

Specific Causal Theory for Component 4: **Increased Citizen Participation for Enhanced Transparency and Accountability**

RGA will create awareness and strengthen citizens with information and tools, so that they take an interest and participate in and advocate for the public agenda. RGA will help municipal leaders and citizens improve their understanding and capacity to exercise their rights and responsibilities. RGA will aim to expand social oversight and improve service delivery in health care, education, roads and water, among others. There are two main Results:

> Result 4.1. Municipal budgeting, planning and spending more transparent and accountable
> Result 4.2. More active oversight of municipal spending and investment by NGOs and media
>
> (See Annex 2 for Component 4 illustrative activities.)

Cross-Cutting Activities to Address Women and Vulnerable Populations

As articulated in the SOW, the RGA aims to address the inclusion of women and other vulnerable populations. The implementing partner is tasked with:

- Implementation of a customized analytical framework to best understand and work within the diverse and complex environment in the 40 municipalities;
- Engagement of GOC and civil society actors (including women, men and vulnerable populations) in RGA activities that emphasize inclusivity, in particular, inclusion in local government initiatives;
- Combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches to enhance relationships between government actors and their constituents, particularly vulnerable populations, to overcome the obstacles for women and vulnerable groups to access and receive fair treatment by municipalities and their service delivery mechanisms;
- Leveraging of existing legal and policy frameworks that were created to protect the rights of women and vulnerable populations and provide them with access to resources; and
- Enhancing existing resources, organizations and individuals already working to address the needs of women and vulnerable populations in Colombia.

Evaluation Approach and Questions

The evaluation consists of a quasi-experimental design that uses spatial matching techniques to (1) determine site selection for interviews, surveys, focus groups, and administrative data collection, (2) structure the data analysis of municipalities receiving USAID assistance relative to control municipalities, and (3) provide new and underutilized types of data for analysis of impact. The matching design enables a rigorous comparison of a balanced set of control and treatment municipalities. For the survey/interview instruments, we supplement existing techniques with list experiments that are designed to elicit accurate answers to sensitive questions. With baseline, midterm, and endline evaluations, all of which rest on a carefully selected comparison of municipalities, we generate conclusions about changes within given municipalities over time, changes in municipalities across space, and joint comparisons. These different types of changes are tracked at the level of intermediate outcomes and overall mission objectives.

Methods

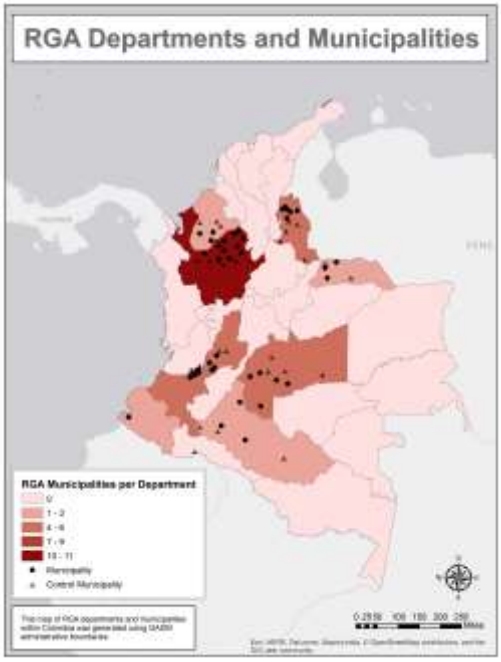
For the treatment municipalities selected by USAID and GOC, we use spatial matching techniques to identify the most appropriate comparison municipalities. That is, we use matching techniques to create a sample of control and treated units that are – in expectation – equally balanced on all observable covariates that could affect the success of the RGA. By balancing, we account for possible confounders and non-random selection into treatment, and more accurately identify any unique causal impacts of the RGA. We thus compare changes in the municipalities (within those not receiving USAID assistance, within those receiving USAID assistance, and in both) to assess the causal impacts. In combination with these statistical techniques, we consulted Colombian experts on logical comparisons, examined maps, and identified relative features that make certain municipalities more appropriate controls. We now turn to a more detailed discussion of the municipality sampling to explain how we will be able to make appropriate conclusions about the effects of the RGA at the midline and endline evaluation stages.

Municipality Sampling

USAID and GOC jointly identified 40 municipalities, from an original set of 58 that were placed on the government's national territorial consolidation plan, to receive the RGA. The GOC provided the baseline set, all of which have a history of violence and weak local capacity. GOC at some level operates in the other 18 locations. As the RGA-intervention municipalities were already selected, the impact evaluation is quasi-experimental and focuses on the selection of a useful set of "control" municipalities to compare to the "treated" RGA municipalities. The final set of treatment municipalities is displayed in Appendix Table A1 and Appendix Figure A1.[5] In the appendix we discuss the matching methodology for selection of control municipalities, including all variable used in the analysis. The result of this exercise was the successful selection of a set of control cases that are statistically balanced across numerous different dimensions. Figure A2 displays a map with both treatment and the originally planned control municipalities included together.

[5] While choosing the sample of treatment municipalities from the set of territorial consolidation areas makes sense from the perspective of targeting well, it has some downsides. One in particular is that USAID has worked extensively in many of these municipalities previously. Thus, the RGA intervention will not be a clean, first-time intervention. While we used matching to identify control municipalities that were similar, USAID has had an overall stronger historical presence in the treatment areas, thus making for a less than optimal balance across these municipalities. See Figure A3. Given the selection process, the impact evaluation will need to take this into account during the analysis at the midline and endline evaluation stages.

Figure 1: Treatment and Control Municipalities



Security concerns prevented us from collecting data in some locations. The final number and set of municipalities thus changed from our initial selections.[6] The security report in Annex 8 details the various challenges faced and the associated adjustments made. We note here that the largest complications occurred within Arauca Department where, despite various attempts to engage, we ultimately were not able to conduct full evaluation activities there. Annex Table A4 shows the final distribution of municipalities in which we were able to conduct surveys and other data along with the number of surveys, interviews, and focus groups collected. Finally, in some areas with security challenges we conducted some interviews even when we could not conduct surveys. Annex Table A5 details those locations.

Data Collection

Most of the data collection occurred at the municipality level and entailed conducting household perception surveys, interviews with elites, focus groups, document review, and collecting other observational data. The survey, interview, and focus group questionnaires are located in Annex 4.[7] The survey firm Cifras y Conceptos carried out the data collection. Ahead of baseline data collection, we developed all the instruments and worked with the firm to develop all training procedures. We conducted a pilot based on which we refined

[6] All changes due to security updates were communicated to the mission, and we worked together to identify suitable alternate data collection strategies.

[7] We note that to facilitate learning about this particular program and comparison with other USAID activities, we attempted to align our survey with another evaluation survey being conducted on Colombia Responde (Steele and Shapiro 2012). We do not here identify every specific overlapping question but note that we aligned many of them and have been in touch with the other evaluation team in order to share data in ways that could facilitate cross-evaluation learning.

survey questions for the final data collection. The evaluation team also made site visits to several municipalities in Cauca/Valle del Cauca Departments – Florida and Miranda in particular; also Caloto, Corinto, and Santander de Quilichao briefly – and observed interviews, focus groups, and survey data collection.

The within-municipality sampling procedures are detailed in Annex 6. We originally planned to conduct 7,000 surveys at the baseline, midline and endline surveys for a total of 21,000 surveys. In this baseline, security challenges prevented us from operating in all municipalities (see discussion below), so the final count of surveys ended up being 6,389. Surveys were conducted in the municipality centers (Cabeceras) as well as other smaller population centers (Centros Poblados) around the municipality, which capture a rural component.

Within each household, we solicited information from a random adult using the survey firm's randomization procedure.[8] By so doing, we attempt to balance the sample of those surveyed as well as possible. Table 1 shows the breakdown of those surveyed across numerous demographic dimensions.

Table 1: Survey Summary Statistics

	Variable	***Obs***	***Mean/%***	***Std. Dev.***	***Min***	***Max***
Gender	Women	6,389	0.683	0.465	0	1
Age		6,389	42.348	15.587	18	91
Marital Status	Not Married (long) With partner	2,233	34.97			
	Not married (short) With partner	450	7.05			
	Separated, divorced	416	6.51			
	Widow(er)	405	6.34			
	Single	1,741	27.26			
	Married	1,141	17.87			
Race	Palenquero	25	0.39			
	Raizal	30	0.47			
	Afro-Colombian	1,035	16.20			
	Indigenous	418	6.54			
	Roma or Gypsy	95	1.49			
	White/Mestizo	4,784	74.90			
Religion	Catholic	4,842	75.81			

[8] We conducted the survey with any adult and not just registered voters. We did this because any adult could engage in dissent, violence, or otherwise, which the project hopes to reduce.

	Christian	1,176	18.41			
	Protestant	31	0.49			
	Agnostic/Atheist	31	0.49			
	African	2	0.03			
	Other	76	1.19			
	None of the Above	229	3.59			
Education Level	Preschool	64	1.08			
	Basic Primary	2,251	37.99			
	Middle and High School	2,627	44.33			
	Technical	469	7.91			
	Technological	165	2.78			
	University	312	5.26			
	Grad/Master's/PhD	38	0.64			
Number of Children		6,389	1.057	1.302	0	20

According to the summary statistics, the survey sample contains a high proportion of women (68%) relative to men as well as unmarried households. The sample closely corresponds to the ethnic profile of the country as a whole, although the sample population of Afro-Colombians is slightly lower than census statistics while the population of Indigenous groups is slightly higher. The sample exhibits generally low levels of educational attainment, as 83% of the sample only had a high school degree or less. We also considered some of these summary statistics divided by treatment and control conditions and report those in Annex Table A8 and note here that the treatment and control municipalities are fairly evenly balanced.

In addition to the citizen survey, we also attempted to conduct interviews with 3 government officials in each mayoral office, 6 elites within the community (e.g., within social accountability organizations), and focus groups. We were not always able to achieve that coverage given that some leaders would not agree to meet or were otherwise difficult to contact. In total, we were able to conduct 438 elite interviews. We coded all interview material as discussed in the Annex.

We also conducted focus groups to better understand citizen perceptions, including their views of municipal spending and oversight, and general governance and security conditions in the municipalities. Cifras y Conceptos conducted 20 focus groups for the baseline. The focus group questions were adapted from the citizen questionnaire. To select the municipalities where focus would be conducted, we selected one pair of municipalities in each of the five RGA regions (excluding Sur/ Tumaco), for a total of 10 municipalities. In each region, we first randomly selected a treatment municipality. If the treatment municipality was only matched with one control municipality, we selected the corresponding control municipality. If there were multiple matched control municipalities within the cluster

of the selected treatment municipality, we randomly selected the control municipality among the group of possible controls in that cluster. In each municipality, Cifras y Conceptos staff conducted two separate focus groups. Cifras y Conceptos convened approximately 15 people to attend each session and facilitated the group discussion. The responses were recorded, organized, and then translated into English. Due to security concerns, we needed to change the set of focus group municipalities and the final composition was:[9]

Catatumbo Region: Tibú (treatment); Sardinata (control)
Cauca/Valle Region: Miranda, Cauca (treatment); Florida, Valle del Cauca (control)
Central Region: Vistahermosa, Meta (treatment); San Martín, Meta (control)
Norte Region: Puerto Libertador, Córdoba (treatment); Valdivia, Antioquia (treatment); Planeta Rica, Córdoba (Control); Dabeiba, Antioquia (Control)
Sur/ Nariño: 2 focus groups in Tumaco, Narino (treament)

Finally, we also collected information from publicly available statistics and included those indicators as appropriate to establish the baseline conditions. Specifically, we collected administrative data on indicators of interest from national government agencies and directly from municipalities, including site visits and on-the-ground observations. For some indicators, we were not able to acquire data for all the municipalities in the sample, so there is variation from about 40 to 70 municipalities depending on the indicator, which we report. The data complement and largely corroborate the findings from the survey and focus group data.

One goal of the baseline is to identify that control and treatment municipalities are not significantly different from each other. Across a wide variety of administrative data that we consider, only two indicators are different from each other (dependence on national government transfers and administrative capacity), which suggests we identified a comparable set of controls and for these two exceptions, we will account for them in midline and endline impact calculations.

In sum, we have an enormous amount of data collected across a variety of sources. In the findings sections below, we synthesize the data to provide supporting evidence and illustrative material. All data have been anonymized for security reasons and will be made fully available to USAID first and, once approved by USAID, to the public.

Challenges to Address

Before turning to the findings, we note several factors that will need to be taken into account at the midline and endline stages as well as challenges faced in conducting the baseline. We provide an extended discussion of these points in Annex 3. First, due to security concerns, the implementing partner has not been able to begin operations in all 40 treatment municipalities at the same time and at midline and endline stages we will need to account for heterogeneity of the interventions. Second, the data on historical USAID financial contributions across municipalities point to a tendency of continuity of programming. We

[9] See Annex Table A3 for the original planned list of focus group municipalities.

attempted to balance treatment and control municipalities on this dimension (see Annex Figure A3) but there was not an extensive set of possible control municipalities with substantial USAID operations. Thus the groups are imbalanced in this regard. Third, the security conditions prevented us from conducting the evaluation in all treatment and control municipalities. In Annex 8, we provide a full security report from Cifras y Conceptos that details all changes made to the original design. Finally, with the recent signing of the peace agreement, violence levels have been reduced in some areas and it may be the case that other areas will be eligible for increased funding. Given the agreement is a structural change, it should have impacts across many or most municipalities. We will address this issue at midline and endline by evaluating whether these changes affect treatment and control municipalities uniformly and, if not, we will account for the differences in our analysis.

Findings: Baseline Conditions at the Beginning of the RGA

Our assessment of the baseline conditions help to characterize the security, governance, and social conditions in both treatment and control municipalities. This provides a sense of the extent of the challenges the RGA program is seeking to address, and to establish a baseline for comparison at the midline / endline stages.

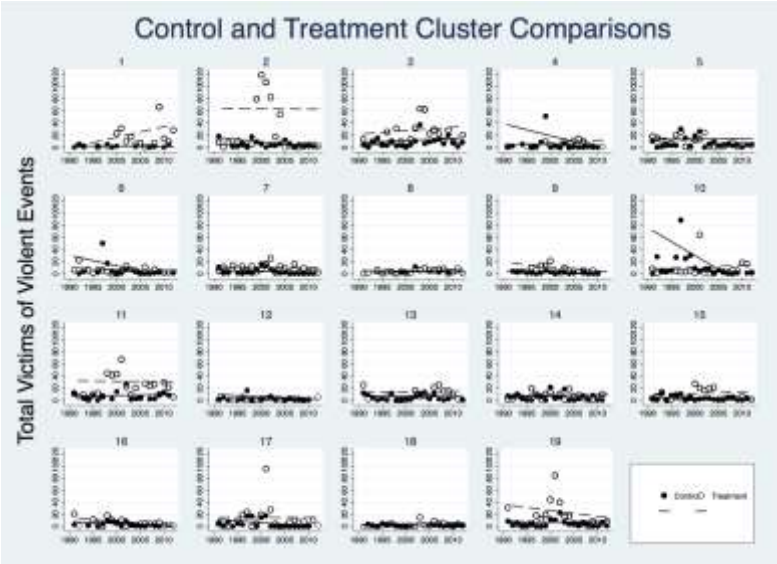
The data reveal that treatment and control municipalities face low fiscal capacity, high levels of corruption, low levels of social participation, and pervasive insecurity and fear. The RGA program is thus targeted at municipalities with high needs across all of these areas, and the midline/endline will reveal whether the program has any effects. In what follows, we report on the conditions that comprise the overall theory of change: security as a final outcome, trust and legitimacy as intermediate outcomes, public financial management and citizen participation as mechanisms. We then discuss the conditions of vulnerable populations as they relate to the RGA program. Throughout, we provide a summary of baseline conditions in this document with an extensive exposition of results and discussion in Annex 7.

Security and Violence

Security and violence are central outcomes that the RGA program seeks to affect. Elites, survey respondents, and municipal administrators, all recognize the importance of improving security to achieve sustainable and lasting peace. Respondents are concerned about the risks posed by FARC and ELN insurgent groups as well as general crime and homicides.

Figure 2 demonstrates heterogeneity in levels of violence (as measured by casualties) across municipalities, with nearly all having at least some violence, and many having substantial violence. The sub-figures also show that most of the treatment-control clusters are fairly similar in violence levels, both substantiating the matching approach employed and also providing a similar baseline comparison from which we will analyze improvements (or not) at midline and endline.

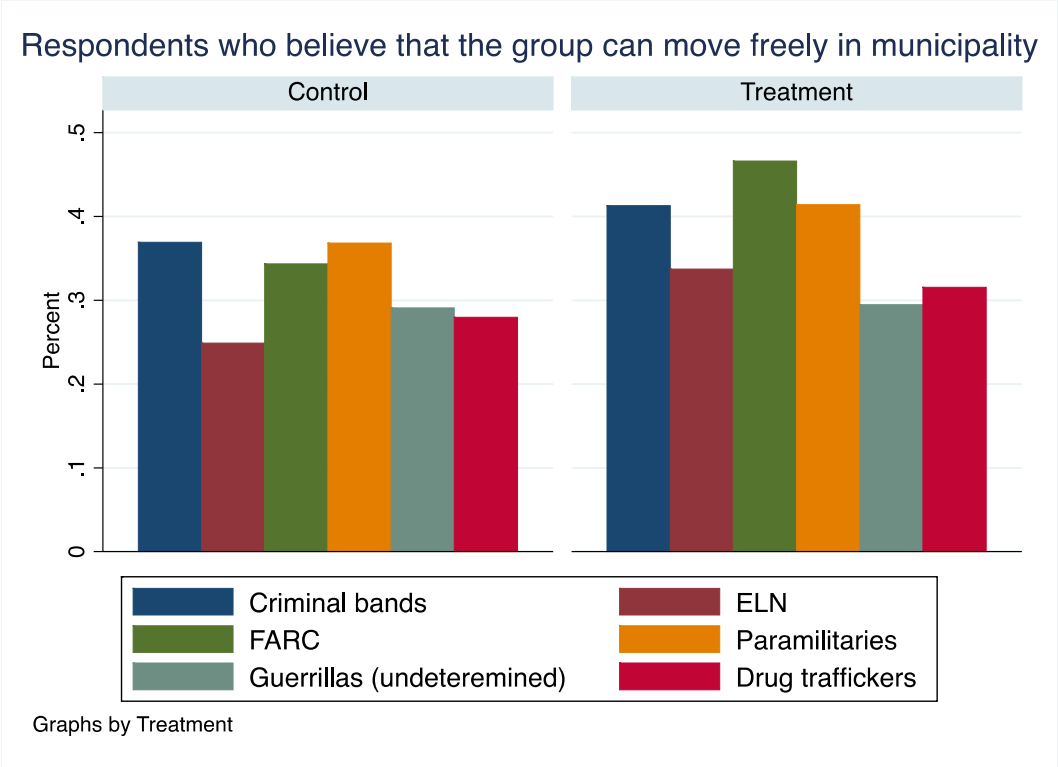
Figure 2: Casualty Levels across Control & Treatment Clusters



According to national police data, homicide rates in our treatment and control municipalities averaged around 50 per 100,000 in 2015, which is tremendously high. (See Annex Figures A6 and A7; estimates calculated based on project municipal populations for 2016) Statistical tests demonstrate that the two groups are statistically indistinguishable and therefore comparable. As a comparison, the overall homicide rate in Colombia in 2014 was 27.9 and El Salvador, which many observers see as one of the most violent countries in the world, had a rate of 64.2 in 2014. Focus group participants emphasized the danger posed by criminal groups being as much if not more of a concern than more politically-motived armed actors. According to a resident of Planeta Rica, Córdoba, "Criminal bands are doing more harm to the country than the guerrillas themselves" (PlanetaRica1_28-04-16).

Apart from direct levels of violence, the various armed groups in Colombia also pose threats via their abilities to control the population. While territorial control is difficult to measure, one indirect way is to ask citizens whether these groups can move freely in the municipality. As Figure 3 shows, when asked whether FARC/ELN have the ability to move freely in the municipality, survey respondents reported the insurgent groups have relatively greater presence in treatment municipalities. While we sought balance on levels of insecurity, there are slight differences in the mixes of the particular armed groups exercising control across the treatment and control municipalities. Across all municipalities sampled, more than 30% of respondents reported that either FARC, BACRIM (criminal bands), and paramilitaries could move freely in their municipality.

Figure 3: Groups move freely by treatment and control group



In the surveys of local elites, most also reported that illegal armed groups were present in their municipalities. (See Annex Tables A9, A10 and A11.) Of those who reported presence of an armed group, 34% even stated that their presence "defines the local order" and 19% said that they generate more violence. A member of a non-profit in Arauquita, Arauca stated during a focus group that "We have a presence [armed groups] in this region. Maybe in rural areas they are a form of authority and they might create local order through the establishment of their social norms. Whether it is norms, violence, or order, these actors certainly are an impediment to empowering municipal governments. They are also an impediment to the current mayor's office."

Most of the community elite respondents reported that the presence of armed actors affects the management of the municipality (see Annex Tables A13 and A14.) Many cited these actors' ability to impede public works, and threaten and limit the mobility of government officials. One elite respondent claimed that:

> Armed actors obstruct the organizational processes of communities—starting new projects and improving roads. They extort and steal from the peasants. All of this hinders the development of the municipality. -Member of Indigenous Council. Tierralta, Córdoba

Many rural residents more generally feel they cannot travel safely from their homes in centros poblados to the municipal seats. As a Sardinata focus group participant noted, "Security has worsened… One month ago, there was nobody in the streets at 8pm and even earlier. They have intimidated people with pamphlets." However, in places such as Vista Hermosa, Meta, some improvements in security were noted, "There was high violence eight years ago, but now it is calm. The FARC guerrilla is behaving very well right now" (Vistaherm2_13-04-16). Elites and mayoral staff as well as citizens were generally hopeful

about the future with many of them citing security improvements. (See Annex Tables A20 and A21 in particular.)

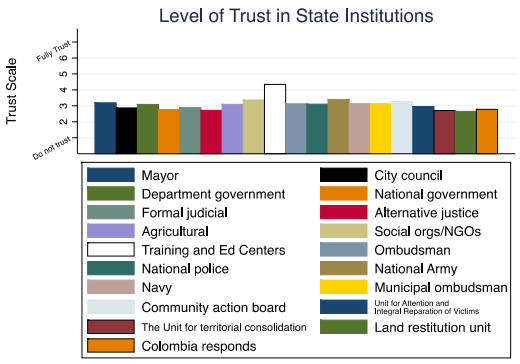
Violence is clearly high in the surveyed municipalities and many people have been affected by the poor security. Still, based on our surveys and interviews, many people are hopeful that things are getting better, but there is a lot of room for improvement. Addressing security will allow people to engage in everyday activities such as traveling to the city center.

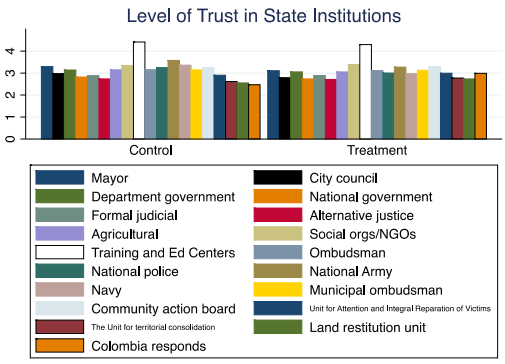
Trust and Legitimacy

We find throughout our interviews, surveys, and focus groups that people have mixed levels of trust in most state institutions. Training and education centers, such as SENA, standout as being the most trusted institutions. This is consistent with the observation by USAID that, "The SENA (National Training Service) is an important national actor whose work with communities has had an important effect in terms of establishing the presence of the national government" (USAID 2011). To probe these results more deeply, we included additional questions about SENA in the focus groups and participants indeed spoke enthusiastically about its services, including the following definitive comment: "SENA is excellent in everything" (Dabeiba_11-08-16). However, not all can afford its courses or they may not necessarily lead to gainful employment (Valdivia_10-08-1). Staff from Cifras further suggested that SENA may be a node for providing additional state services beyond simply vocational training where state institutional presence is weak.

The national government and Colombia Responde are among the institutions with the lowest levels of trust. Figure 4 shows these results by treatment and control and shows very similar trust levels across the two types of municipalities. Figure 4 most starkly shows that trust in Colombia Responde is near the lowest of all institutions. While citizens view their institutions with some legitimacy, the results suggest there is great room for improvement if programs such as RGA are to be effective. With that said, 1713 respondents (or 27%) did not answer this question suggesting a large number of people are unaware or do not have an opinion of the program. Because the Colombia Responde and RGA municipalities do not overlap completely, it's understandable that many respondents would be unaware and may misattribute such that this result should be viewed with caution.

Figure 4: Level of Trust in State Institutions





Given the difficulty of gauging trust in non-state armed actors, we considered several additional data points to understand how citizens feel about armed actors. First, we asked citizens about levels of support for various armed actors (government army, government police, and illegal armed groups) and find the army enjoys the highest levels of trust while illegal armed actors are least trusted (See Annex Figure A17). Second, we asked people who they would turn to in the case of a dispute. Respondents largely reported they do not consider turning to illegal armed groups, and instead turn to neighbors, police, and judicial institutions, all part of the formal institutional state structure (See Annex Figure A18). Third, we asked how citizens perceive the effect of the presence of illegal armed groups on municipal performance. According to the results in Annex Figure A19, citizens largely believe armed actors have a negative impact on municipal performance.

Among focus group accounts, participants expressed distrust in formal local politics due to perceptions of corruption. A Planeta Rica participant noted the deleterious effects of widespread nepotism, "If you are not friends with a politician, you are not getting there by meritocracy" (PlanetaRica2_28-04-16). Similar sentiments of widespread exclusion from local politics were expressed by a resident of San Martín, who said, "Politics is the dirtiest thing there is. … The ones who won say 'you didn't win so you have no right'" (SanMartin1_14-04-16). As a Vista Hermosa participant observed, this has produced a system of adverse selection of politicians that pushes would-be do-gooders out, "I was a Councilman and did not want to come back because one wants to do things but there is no budget" (Vistaherm2_13-04-16).

We also asked municipality government elites whether they believed citizens trusted the administration, and why or why not. Annex Tables A24 and A25 show that most believe citizens are trusting, although a sizeable number also said that since the new mayoral terms were just beginning it was too early to tell. Both positive and negative sentiments were expressed by the municipal elites:

> Yes, the community is confident of the current municipal administration. We saw it when the mayor was elected. In Segovia, a Mayor usually was elected with only 2,800 votes. Our current mayor won with 7,200 votes. Thus, the community does support the administration. – Segovia, Antioquia.

> There is widespread distrust in public administrations because of what has happened historically: all the acts of corruption, all acts of negligence. The state is slow and

> inefficient, and I think the community does not trust its leaders… As public employees, we have to change the stigma that society has towards public administration. – Ataco, Tolima.

We also asked the community elites about whether they trust the current mayor and the mayor's office, and why. Annex Tables A27 and A28 show that the vast majority of community elites trust the mayor's office. However, both positive and negative perspectives were expressed:

> Yes, I am confident that together we will do something good for the town. I am confident because the [mayoral officials] want [to work for the municipality], that you can trust, that won't refuse to meet [with you when you go to their offices]. - Member JAC. Amalfi, Antioquia.

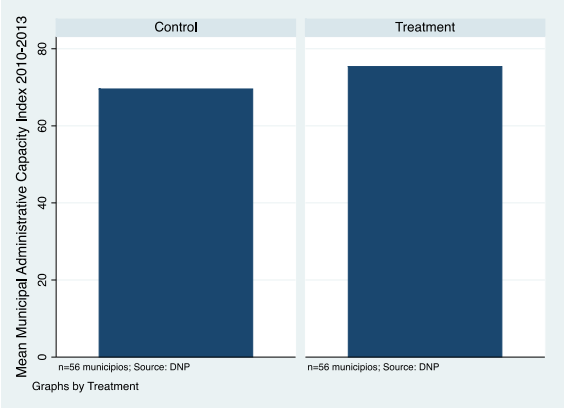
> No. I think the mayors in this town always try to appropriate resources for their personal benefit, so the money never reaches the communities and is poorly invested [...] I don't trust him, and that is why we examine his projects in depth. – City councilmember. Mesetas, Meta.

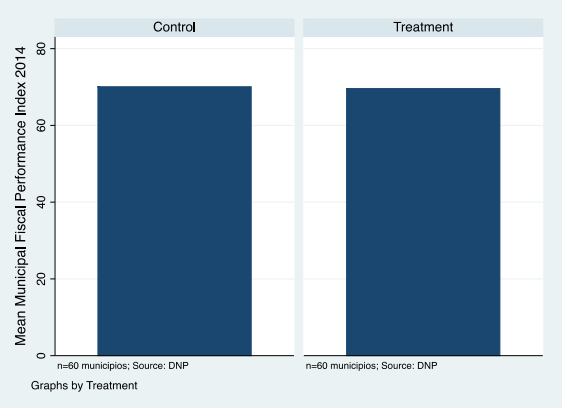
In sum, the evidence points to moderate levels of trust by citizens, and higher levels of trust among the elites themselves. Importantly, there do not appear to be differences in trust levels across the set of municipalities in treatment and control.

Component 2: Capacity to budget, plan, execute, and enable public investment

Before turning to specific discussions of taxes, royalties, and service provision, we first consider some basic data on administrative capacity. According to the Department of National Planning (DNP) administrative capacity index 2010-2013, treatment and control municipalities are somewhat different in their administrative capacity, which a statistical test shows is significant and therefore an imbalance we will account for at midline and endline. Generally, capacity ranges from 70 to 75% on this index. A consideration of the municipal fiscal performance index, on the other hand, suggests that treatment and control municipalities are similar. See Figure 5 and also Annex Figures A21 and A23 in which we break down the results by department.

Figure 5: Mean Administrative Capacity (Left Pane) and Fiscal Performance (Right Pane) by Treatment group, 2013





A specific measure of fiscal accountability includes public accounting activity (rendiciones de cuenta), which according to Annex Figures A24 and A25 are balanced across treatment and control, though it varies across departments. Putumayo, Norte de Santander, and Córdoba had the fewest accountings whereas Valle del Cauca, Meta, Tolima, and Caquetá had the most. It is also useful to consider the extent to which municipalities find themselves running deficits. Annex Figures A26 and A27 show this information by treatment and control and by department. As with much of the other data, treatment and control municipalities are relatively well balanced and yet we observe wide variation across departments. In particular, Tumaco (Nariño) and Puerto Asís (Putumayo) appear to face distinct revenue situations from the other municipalities, with far great deficits.

Apart from the administrative data, we considered whether community elites believe that the administrative capacity of the current mayor's office has improved over the last two years along with a question about what they consider is being done right or wrong. Annex Figure A28 shows that most community elites are neutral (grey bars), believing that the municipality leaders are too new. Still a number of respondents reported positively (green) and cited a number of factors including that the administration is more receptive, better managed, executes better, and is more inclusive. Only a few responses cited negative aspects, and primarily reported that there was no sitting mayor, which hampers the administrative capacity. The following quotes are illustrative of what these community elites said:

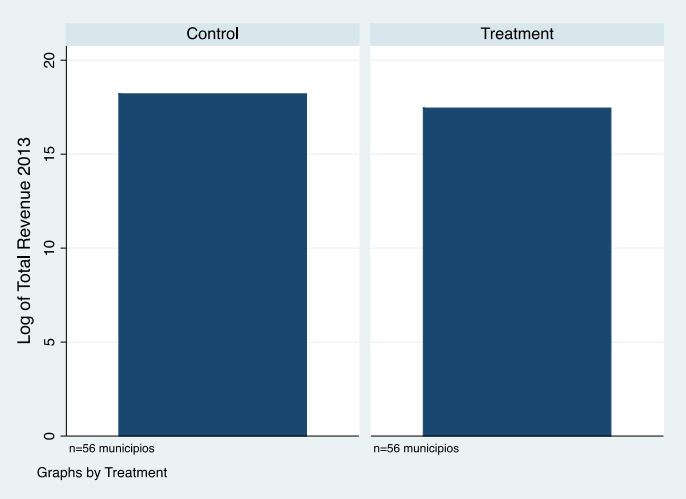
> The mayor has been in office for a very short period of time [...] but the outcomes are quite satisfactory. We can see that the municipal government has reached out to the communities, and we believe that these four years [of government] are going to be great. [...] I think the mayoralty is taking into account the suggestions of communities. – Member JAC. Planadas, Tolima.

> The administrator we currently have is a very capable of managing [the municipality]. Although he has spent very little time [in office], he has been a good manager, and I think that we have seen his ability to lead [the community]. - Member Non-Profit. Arauquita, Arauca.

Taxes

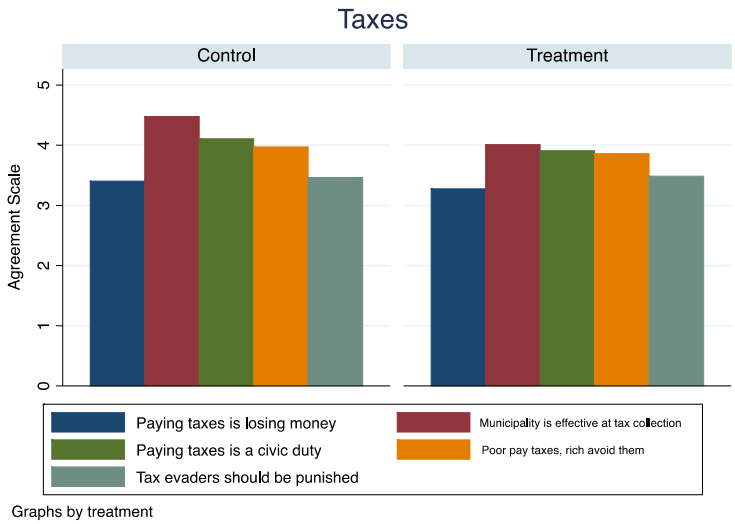
We report administrative data on taxes and other revenues as further indicators of municipal performance. Considering property revenues by treatment and control municipalities, we find treatment and control groups are evenly balanced even if there is substantial variation across departments. The treatment and control groups are also statistically balanced on all forms of municipal revenue. See Figure 6 and Annex Figures A30 and A32 for these figures.

Figure 6: Mean Total Municipal Revenue by Treatment group, 2013



Survey respondents reported that municipalities are generally effective at collecting taxes and think paying taxes is "a civic duty." Although they desire a just tax system, they also evince skepticism. They view tax policies as widely unfair; many agreed with the statement that the "poor pay taxes and the rich avoid them" (See Figure 7 and Annex Figures A33 and A34). Qualitative accounts largely substantiate the mixed set of responses, though respondents largely lean towards a negative view of tax capacity and collection in the municipalities.

Figure 7: Attitudes about Taxes



Citizen focus group participants generally felt that tax revenues were put to poor use or misappropriated. As a Florida resident stated, "They collect the taxes but you don't see the works or what they invest in" (Florida_30-03-16). A participant from Vista Hermosa noted that limited tax capacity is associated with limited formalization of property rights, which impedes tax assessments and therefore the provision of public goods, "Few pay property tax here because most of us are in urban properties and don't have legal titles. People need roads and schools in their neighborhoods, but they don't pay taxes because they have no papers" (Vistaherm2_13-04-16).

When we asked similar questions to leaders in mayoral offices as reported in Annex Tables A30, A31, and A32. We found that over half of those interviewed believe that the municipalities are ineffective at collecting taxes and largely place blame with taxpayers who will not pay, though almost an equal number report that the municipality simply does not have sufficient capacity or organization to collect taxes. In cases where leaders report effective tax collection, they attribute it to better tax collection policies or the creation of incentives for payment, both of which emerge with greater municipal capacity.

To illustrate, leaders reporting ineffectiveness said:

> "I believe that tax collection is the Achilles heels of any Colombian municipality, as the general community does not pay the corresponding taxes. Therefore, the municipality has to use different tools to attain resources in order to provide services" (Segovia, Antioquia). Another official said, "The culture of our region is a culture of non-payment of duties or taxes. We have been working on this matter. But every time we go to the communities and invite them to pay their obligations, we must make a very big effort. Surely the collection itself has increased somewhat, but it is not enough" (Valencia, Córdoba).

By contrast, some leaders noted examples of improvements in tax collection, saying:

> "We had several issues with the tax collection. First, the municipality of San José del Fragua did not have any software to track payments of the industry and trade Tax. As such, we were using an Excel spreadsheet. Right now we are buying a new management software. Second, we had been updating the list of establishments in the municipality. We still have to do that job" (San José del Fragua, Caquetá).

We also asked mayoral elites whether they think the current administration is making good use of public funds. The results in Annex Table A33 perhaps unsurprisingly show that the elites believe the government is in fact making good use of public funds.

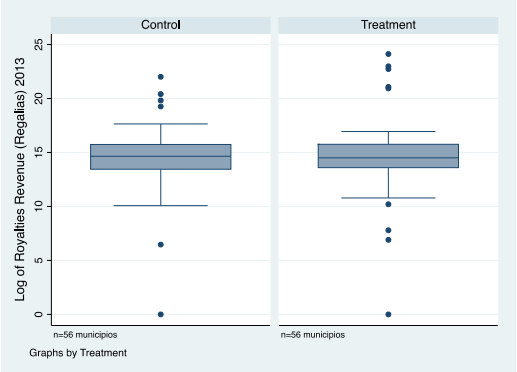
Taken together, the evidence is mixed but largely points to an ineffective tax system in spite of some (expectedly) positive thoughts form the mayoral offices about the use of public funds.

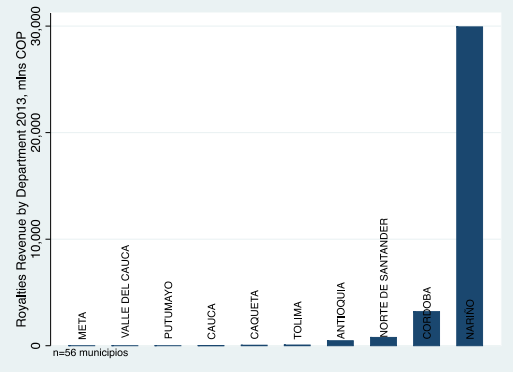
Royalties

Colombia's royalty system is also an important source of revenue for many municipallities. The royalties (regalía) system allows municipalities to access national level resource funds to apply toward development projects. Based on administrative data (see Figure 8), mean municipal royalties (regalías) revenues for 2013 based on transfers to municipalities as shares of natural resource revenues varies across municipalities. Control municipalities are on average slightly more dependent on royalties revenues than treatment group municipalities. However, the treatment and control groups exhibit statistical balance on this indicator according to a statistical test (t-test) of differences in means. Despite balance across treatment and control, an examination of the departments (Figure 8) shows that Tumaco (the only municipality in Nariño) is a large outlier in terms of royalty revenues. This is consistent with news reports about Tumaco's royalties, as the municipality receives substantial revenues from its oil production and shares an oil pipeline with Putumayo.[10]

Figure 8: Mean Municipal Royalties Revenues (Regalías) by Treatment (Left Pane) and Department (Right Pane), 2013

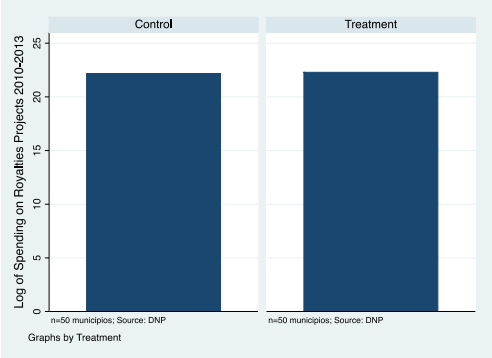
[10] See, for examples: http://nariño.gov.co/2012-2015/index.php/es/prensa/4981-narino-se-destaca-a-nivel-nacional-entre-los-departamentos-con-mas-proyectos-aprobados-con-recursos-del-sistema-general-de-regalias-durante-el-ocad-pacifico-realizado-hoy-en-tumaco-fueron-aprobados-12-proyectos-para-el-departamento-de-narino and http://diariodelsur.com.co/noticias/nacional/regal%C3%ADas-tumaco-se-reducen-en-6-mil-millones-por-atentados-105057

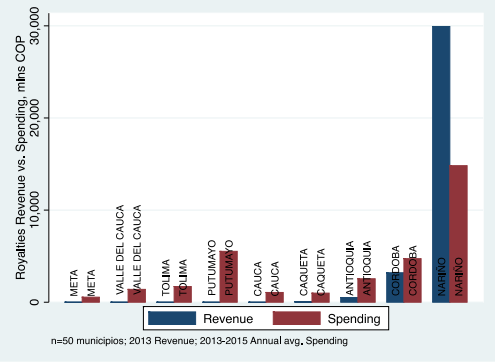




We also calculated the amount of spending on royalties projects. The results again show balance across treatment and control (See Figure 9), though with variation across specific departments.

Figure 9: Mean Municipal Spending on Royalties Projects by Treatment and Department, 2010-2013





Based on interviews, leaders in mayoral offices blame the national government for not providing sufficient royalty resources. See Annex Tables A34, A35, and A36. Over half of municipality leaders reported not receiving sufficient royalty funds. The challenges of the royalty system are manifold it appears, and both citizens and leaders reveal negative attitudes and preferences with respect to royalties.

Citizen focus group comments show that there are substantial concerns among citizens related to the royalties system. They point to problematic management of royalty resources by municipal governments. As a resident of Puerto Rico, Meta explained royalty funds are insufficient to make up for the harm caused by extractive industries, "The royalties do not compensate for the [coal] pollution they produce" (PuertoL1_29-04-16). Further, as a resident from Florida noted, when royalty revenues are available, they are quickly misappropriated, noting that "The royalties come and they are stolen" (Florida_30-03-16). A similar sentiment was expressed by a resident of San Martín, Meta, noting a previous mayor "took all the oil royalties and did nothing with them, and even left the mayor's office in debt… Corruption has made the people distrust the mayor's office" (SanMartin1_14-04-16).

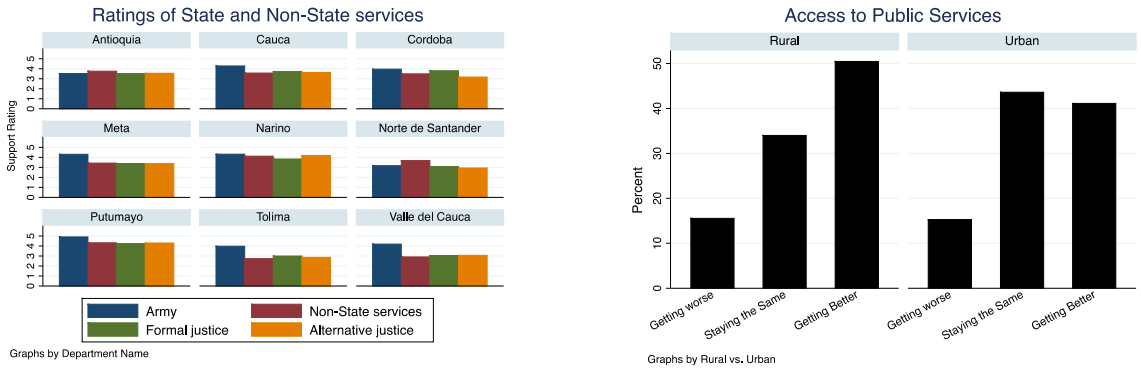
Residents also reported having little knowledge of the functioning of the royalty system, "I have a little insight [on royalties]. The royalties that are given to the municipality are juicy, but millions have had to be spent on oil spills. One time, they told us teachers we were getting a library for each school, but suddenly, it vanished" (Tibu2_27-04-16). One person noted how unaccountable use of royalties lead to perceptions of unfairness, saying, "It is not fair that they do not ask us or they don't take us into account" (Tibu1_27-04-16).

Service provision

A broad consideration of administrative data reveals that treatment and control groups are well balanced in their overall municipal expenditures, even if there is substantial variation across specific departments. See Annex Figures A41 and A42. To consider one specific sector in which municipal governments provide services, administrative data show that the presence of health workers is largely balanced across treatment and control, though with considerable variation across departments. See Annex Figures A43 and A44. The presence of health workers varies greatly across municipalities, as Antioquia and Tolima have over six times the number of health workers per capita of Nariño.

From a different perspective, we asked citizens in the survey to rate the quality of various state and non-state services. Citizens rate particular services remarkably high, especially the army, though there is considerable variation across department in their ratings of different institutions (Figure 10, left pane). Moreover, Figure 10 (right pane) shows survey respondents' views of access to public services. More precisely, people are asked whether these service provisions are getting worse, staying the same, or getting better. Annex Figures A46, A47, and A48 show these results across answers and whether the respondent is urban or rural and within general services, education, and health. Overall, over 80% of people feel service results are getting better or staying the same. Only about 15% feel things are getting worse. These results run counter to the interview data but suggest people are hopeful that things will get better.

Figure 10: Ratings of State and Non-State Service and Access to Public Services



Qualitative focus group discussions with citizens, however, reveal substantial dissatisfaction with service provision. Various citizens expressed negative sentiments, such as, "Another thing that is happening is that we have very bad health services. They send doctors to do their rural year but they are not well prepared and they don't diagnose their patients

correctly. A woman from a close-by village went to the hospital complaining of colic and she was told that it could be a stomachache…. she had peritonitis and she was referred to Cali… the wife died due to the negligence of doctors who are not properly trained. We are lacking staff who is highly trained" (Miranda, Cauca).

When community elites were asked if provision of services is effective, those elites are generally in agreement—that it is not. Only 1.3% see the government as "very effective" and 32.6% saying "effective", with 41% choosing that they are "ineffective". Over 30% of respondents view this as the most serious problem for the municipality. See Annex Table A38. Community elites commented on these issues, noting for examples:

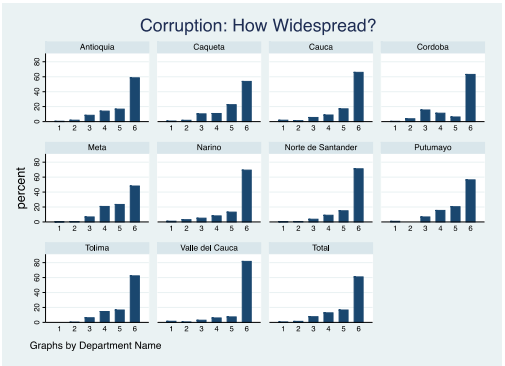
> This neighborhood was built thirty-five years ago we and still do not have access to clean water, nor do we have a sewer system. We only have energy [which is privatized and not good]. I think this is because the municipality does not have the financial resources - Member JAC. Amalfi, Antioquia.

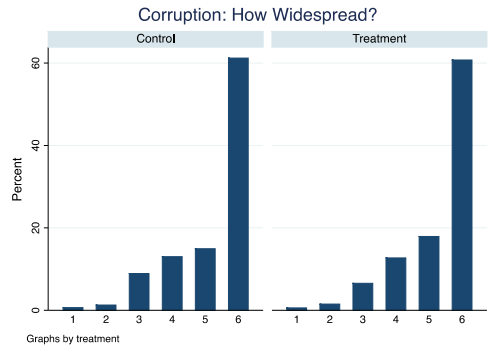
When community elites were asked if they see security issues in their municipality that are not being addressed by the police and the mayor's office, a majority said "Yes." See Annex Table A39. Crime and drugs topped the reasons for why. See Annex Table A40.

Component 4: Municipal budget, planning, spending more transparent / accountable and more active oversight by NGOs / media

As a first step towards characterizing Component 4, we consider the extent to which citizens perceive corruption among the municipal leadership. As Figure 11 demonstrates, residents perceive corruption to be widespread and this result is largely balanced across control and treatment municipalities (right pane), and also similar across departments (left pane). Corruption is typically considered a sensitive topic to discuss with citizens, and respondents typically underreport corruption. The results in these figures demonstrate remarkably significant concern with levels of corruption in municipality governments. If corruption is underreported due to sensitivity, then the situation may be even more dire.

Figure 11: How Widespread is Corruption by Department (Left Pane) and Treatment (Right Pane)?





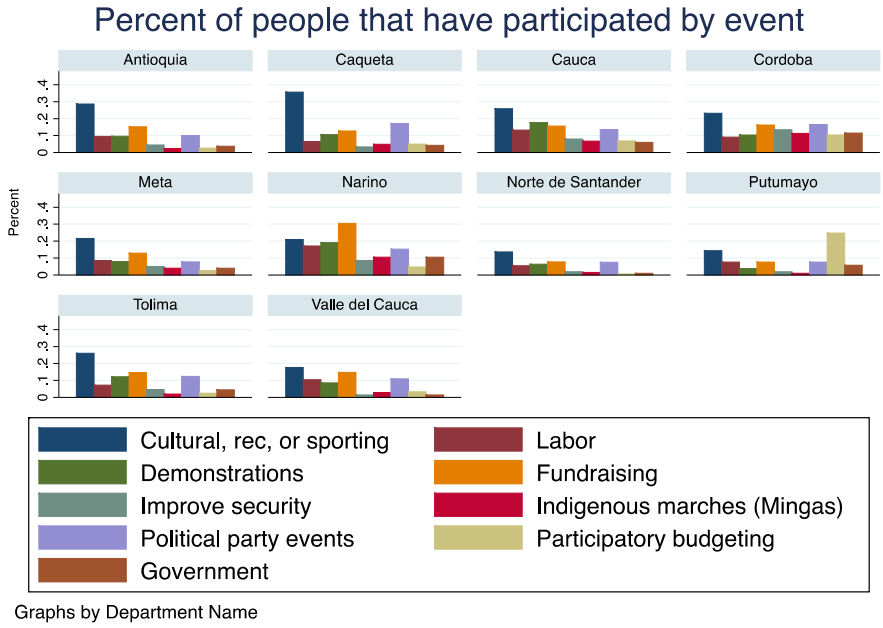
The trust vacuum discussed above paints a picture of corrupt politics that results in the under-provision of public goods. It is no surprise then that participants in focus groups gave accounts of crumbling public services. Politics is characterized by many promises during campaigns but then little follow-through in terms of service provision, "Mayors here promise everything, and when they take office they forget about the neighborhoods, and everything goes into their pockets" (PlanetaRica1_28-04-16). As a resident of Vista Hermosa noted, decrepit sewer systems have contributed public health problems, "In my neighborhood the sewer system does not work, the wells are busted, and that caused the epidemic that we had" (Vistaherm1_13-04-16). A person in Planeta Rica reported that the lack of health services was so severe in the municipality that "a woman cannot give birth here anymore" (PlanetaRica1_28-04-16).

Political Participation

Levels of political participation are generally high across the sampled municipalities. The strength and quality of participation, however, exhibit room for improvement. Voter turnout rates average around 60% with good statistical balance across treatment and control groups. When compared to the US and other Latin Democracies without compulsory voting, this number represents a comparable level of political participation.

Considering participation in various political, cultural, and social events, citizens reported participating most frequently in cultural, recreational, and sporting events followed by political events and fundraising activities. The residents of the departments of Cauca and Nariño participate in social and political activities at relatively higher rates. The greatest participation deficits are found in Meta and Norte de Santander (See Figure 12 and Annex Figure A54 for overall trends, as well as trends separated by treatment and control).

Figure 12: Percent of People That Have Participated in the Event



As a city councilmember in Tierralta, Cordoba said, "People in this town like politics. We are fans of politics. It is a traditional custom, it is part of our history." The downside of this apparent ethic of participation is that some feel it is too easy. As a member of the JAC in Anorí, Antioquia claimed, participating in politics is, "Very easy. Too easy. People let themselves be bought [by politicians]. They aren't really participating; they are just being bought out. Politics, in the municipality, are about giving and taking." This description of clientelism was common in focus groups and interviews. In the community elite survey, for example, 50% of participants cited clientelism as the reason for participation in politics. Moreover, most community elites report meeting with the local government and also feel that the local governments are responsive to their needs and receptive to their ideas. But as a member of the JAC in Chaparral, Tolima noted, "They are receptive. They do listen to your request, they will take note, but that's it. Most of the time they will not implement your recommendations."

We asked focus group participants specifically about local juntas de acción comunal (community action boards). Focus group accounts indicated moderate levels of confidence in the local juntas, as a Miranda resident noted, "The community action board is the regular channel. If there is a necessity they meet and then they call the community" (Miranda_31-03-16). However, some characterized the juntas as being insular and primarily responsive to "the clique ("rosca")" that "never communicates anything and meet among themselves" (Florida_30-03-16). Despite these challenges, participants expressed desires for stronger community organizations, as they are seen as a necessary ingredient to petition for public goods, "People are very lazy… We have to be more organized because if a town is organized, things are done the way they are supposed to. We cannot continue like a loose wheel. This municipality should have streets of porcelain by now" (Tibu1_27-04-16).

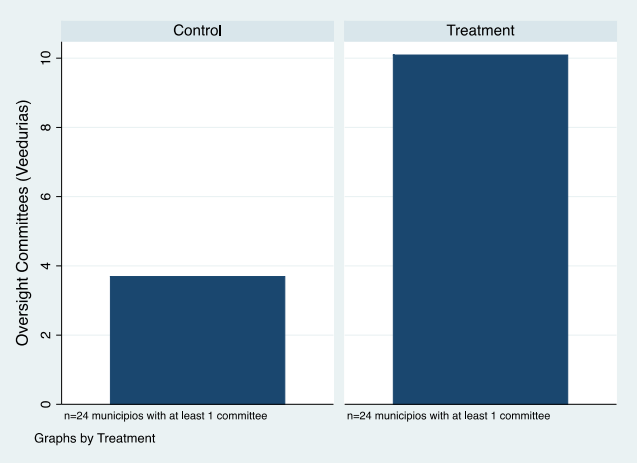
In sum, the quantitative and qualitative data indicate that there is a basic foundation for political participation, but that there is room to improve the depth and quality of participation. Improving deep involvement in decision-making, oversight, and local government, could be helpful for stimulating political participation more generally.

Citizen Oversight – Veedurías

According to the survey data on participation in social organizations, few respondents reported participating in the kinds of participatory budgeting for citizen oversight activities that are a cornerstone of the RGA program. (See Figures A53 and A54.) One encouraging exception is Putumayo, which exhibits relatively high engagement in participatory budgeting.

We examined administrative data on citizen oversight committees and also asked municipality leaders about citizen oversight and participation. According to the collection of lists of charters (personerías jurídicas) of citizen oversight committees (veedurías ciudadanas), the committees are more prevalent in treatment municipalities. See Figure 13. However, there is wide variation in the presence of the committees across municipalities. Despite what appears to be a large difference, the treatment and control groups exhibit statistical balance on this indicator according to a statistical test of differences in means. Many people think citizen oversight is a valuable tool but question implementation and whether citizens are trained to carry it out.

Figure 13: Mean Number of Oversight Committees (Veedurías) by Treatment group



We further asked community elites whether they run citizen oversight operations. Results show that most do not, but those that do cite the goal of generating transparency and accountability whereas those who are not involved in citizen oversight point to non-receptive mayors as the reason for abstaining. As a member of the JAC in Montelibano, Cordoba said, "It motivates me to see that things can be done right, that public resources are invested well, [...] that they will not be diverted, and they produce results." By contrast, a member of the Senu indigenous community in Buenavista, Cordoba noted that "the mayoralty does not allow us to conduct an oversight because they don't inform us [how to do it]."

Citizen oversight was generally a popular topic in focus group discussions but people were skeptical about efficacy. As a citizen from Taraza, Antioquia stated, "For me, the effectiveness of the citizen oversight committees must be called into question, because many of them are formed while the project is being executed…. Although overseers do receive some training [in this matter], they are not always prepared to be overseers."

In sum, citizens view oversight committees as important, yet their presence and functioning vary from one location to another. The results speak to the need of more training for citizens about the functioning of oversight committees and greater awareness among municipal officials about the importance of well-run oversight committees.

Vulnerable Populations

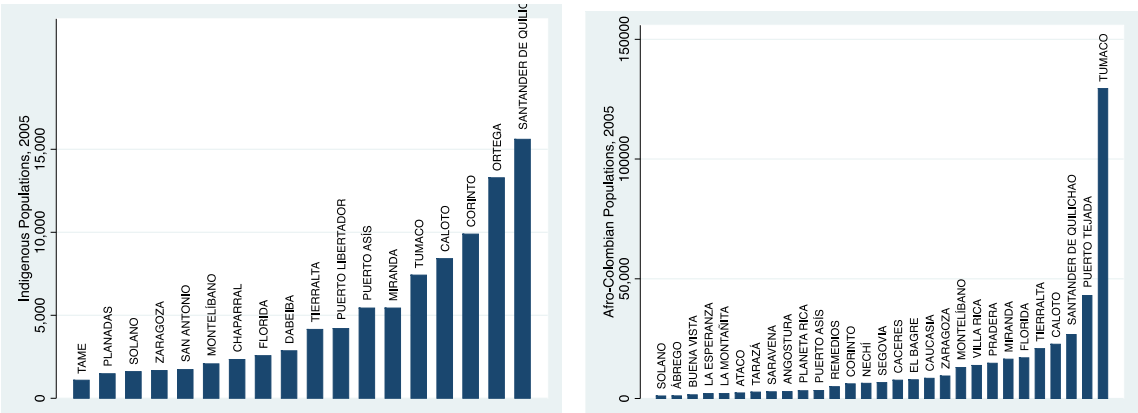
Consistent with USAID's policies on vulnerable populations, we were tasked with examining the conditions of vulnerable populations in the regions of study. In the future we will evaluate how these populations are affected by RGA programming.[11]

[11] "Gender And Vulnerable Populations Integration Strategy Regional Governance Activity," MSI, August 21, 2015.

The implementing partner was contracted to "enable better service delivery outcomes for vulnerable populations and women and empowerment and engagement of citizens" as well as "address gender, ethnic and racial barriers to participation." RGA programming was designed to accomplish these aims through the three approaches of "legal/policy changes, capacity-building, and support for civil society initiatives." Addressing the needs of vulnerable populations and assessing whether programming is meeting their needs is essential for ensuring that the overall goal of the RGA of not just sustainable peace, but *inclusive* peace is achieved.

We examine the baseline conditions of a variety of vulnerable populations – ethnic minorities, indigenous, Afro-Colombian, as well as other smaller minority groups. We disaggregate results by gender and, per other USAID-Colombia guidance on vulnerable populations, also examine conditions for victims of displacement (especially children) and other war victims, as well as the disabled.[12] Variation across these vulnerable populations is not immense in our sample. Considering victimization, service ratings, drug activities, and perceptions of municipal receptiveness, many of the vulnerable populations report similar results as the majority populations in Colombia.

Figure 14: Indigenous and Afro-Colombian Populations by Municipality, 2005 (>1,000 group members)

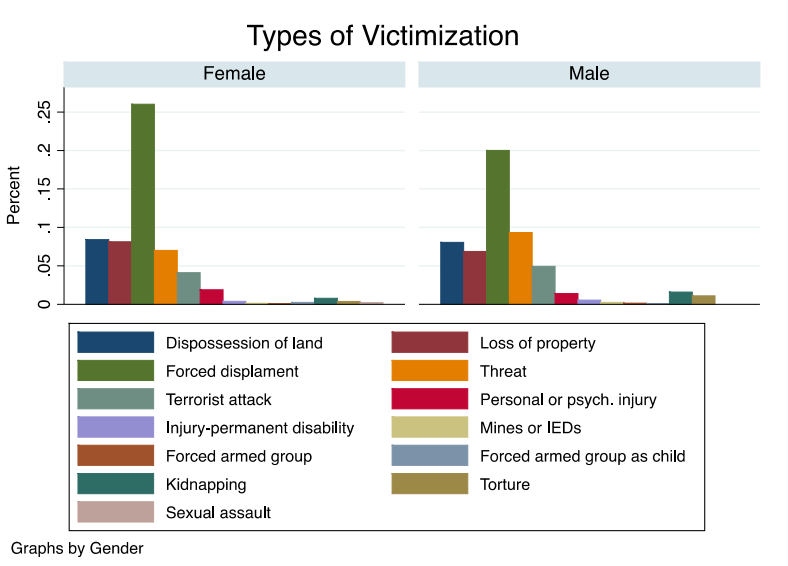


We first examined types of victimization by gender and show relative rates of victimization by a variety of different categories. Figure 15 shows these results and demonstrates that there are some differences, especially with forced displacement where men report being victimized less, whereas threats, terrorism, kidnappings, and torture appear to be used against men more. The relative differences are not as large as with forced displacement. We note that sexual assault reports are incredibly low and they, in particular, may be subject to

[12] The portfolio comprises five congressionally directed programs: Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF); Leahy War Victims Fund (LWVF); Victims of Torture Program (VOT); Disability Program; and Wheelchair Program. USAID. 2013. "Increasing Self-Reliance Within Vulnerable Populations." USAID Vulnerable Populations Briefer, Fall 2013.

reporting biases.[13] Of course, reporting biases are likely present with many of these types of victimization though perhaps not as stark as with sexual assault.

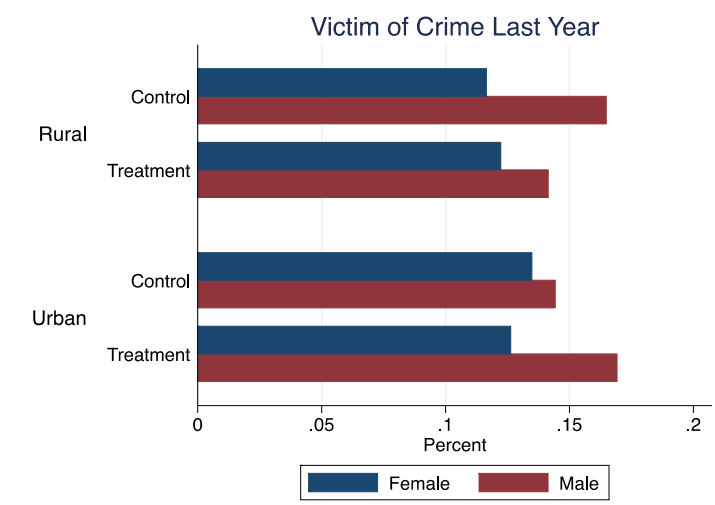
Figure 15: Types of Victimization



In addition to these types of victimization, it is useful to consider to what extent citizens were victims of ordinary crime, rather than political violence. Figure 16 shows the distribution for men and women, separated out by urban and rural. Urban men in the treatment group report the highest levels of victimization similar to men in the rural areas in the control group. Women report the lowest levels of victimization across the sample but especially in rural areas of control group municipalities.

Figure 16: Victim of Crime Last Year

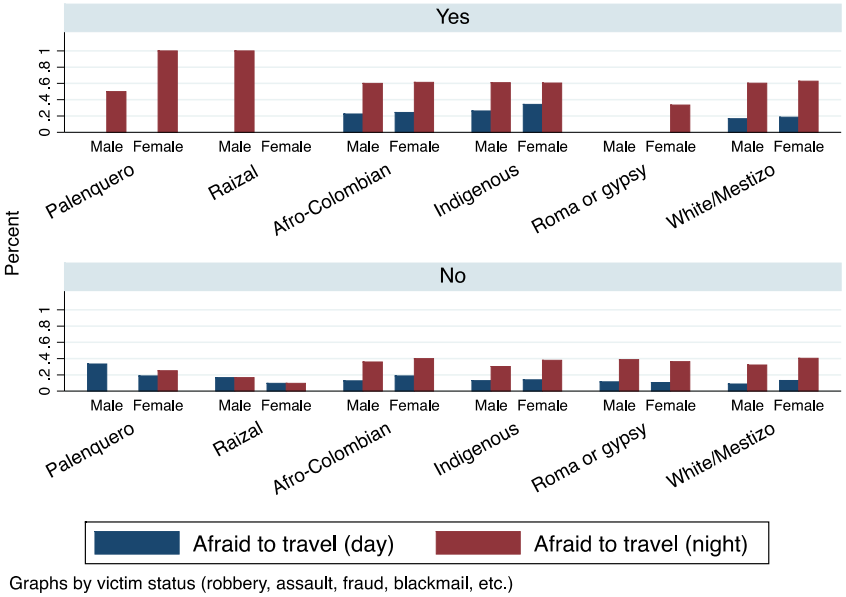
[13] See, for example, http://www.coha.org/the-silences-of-sexual-violence-commission-faces-truth-deficits-in-colombia/



Next, we consider how perceived responsiveness by municipal authorities to citizen demands varies by ethnicity. We found that there is little variation across ethnicities, as most respondents express low to moderate responsiveness from their municipalities.

Fourth, we considered security perceptions, based on whether some vulnerable populations are more likely to report being afraid to travel to the city center at day or night varies. In general, women are much more afraid of traveling at night (See Figure 17). Individuals who have been victimized (top graph of the figure), are also more afraid of travel by day or night. There is less variation across ethnicity.

Figure 17: Afraid to Travel by Ethnicity, Gender, and Time of Day



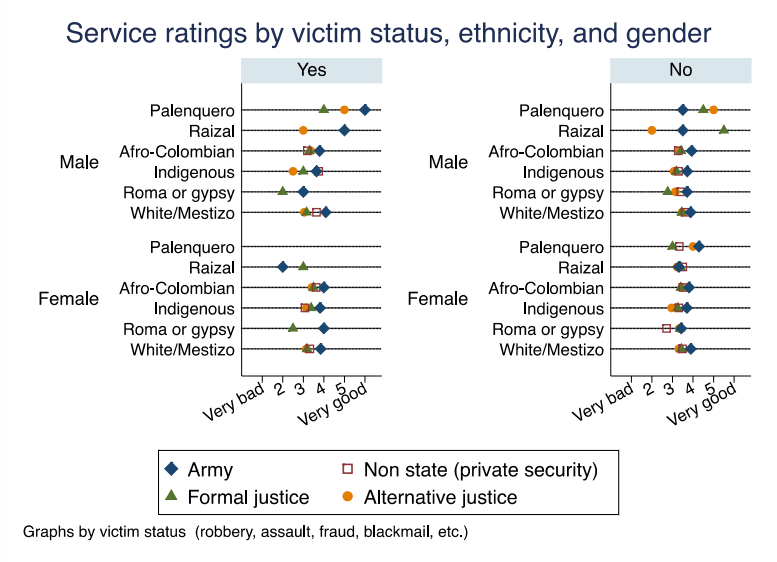
Graphs by victim status (robbery, assault, fraud, blackmail, etc.)

Fifth, we consider ratings of social services by ethnicity and gender. (See Figure 18). Results show some differences, such as Palenquero men supporting the army or other institutions at much higher rates (although there are relatively few Palenqueros in the sample). Many of the results do not differ much across gender or ethnicities.

Finally, we consider perceptions of the legality and production of drugs and coca among vulnerable populations, displayed by ethnicity in Annex Figure A64. The results show generally unfavorable views of the drug economy and strong inclinations toward legality. The results are largely similar across groups though they do show some small variation.

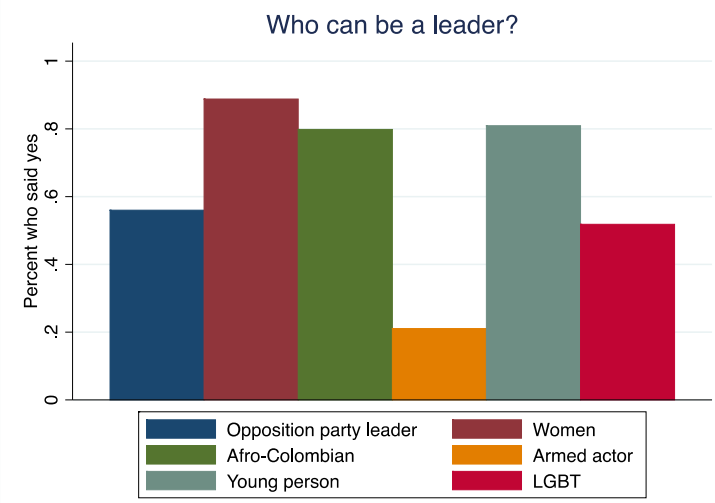
In sum, we examined perceptions on key issues such as victimization that might be influenced by gender, ethnicity, urban vs. rural and other characteristics that make an individual vulnerable. With some exceptions, Colombians in the sample perceive these issues similarly.

Figure 18: Service Ratings by Victim Status, Ethnicity, and Gender



The survey data also indicate that discrimination varies across different social groups. This could be cause for concern for incorporating these sectors into RGA participatory roles in the future. In particular, large proportions of respondents reported they would not accept either LGBT individuals or armed actors (ex-combatants) as leaders in their communities (Figure 19). Consistent with accounts of "politiquería" (politicking) in focus group comments, high levels of hostility toward members of opposition political parties were also reported. This suggests entrenched political cleavages that may impact the levels of trust and the effectiveness of local governance.

Figure 19: Who Can Be a Leader?



We also specifically conducted focus groups in certain municipalities with high proportions of minority populations, including Tumaco (Nariño) and Dabeiba (Antioquia). For these focus groups, we included additional questions tailored to the unique challenges faced by Afro-Colombians and Indigenous groups and their unique forms of organization and social participation. These populations report feeling disproportionately affected by the conflict and suffering from high levels of insecurity.

An individual from Dabeiba said "Those that have suffered most from the conflict are the indigenous people" while another underscored a feeling of exclusion, "I accept the indigenous and black people but the Spanish have screwed over all of us" (Dabeiba_11_08_16). One participant in Tumaco told a story about meeting Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos at a Consejo de Seguridad (security meeting) and noted he told the President "It seems absurd to me that we're talking about what happens in Tumaco, when every day police officers are collecting the dead, the media doesn't show this, the shootouts, the extortion taxes."

The Afro-Colombian community councils (consejos comunitarios) are an important organizational form. As one respondent said, "They are more organized and participate in the Community Action Board, they have better participation and connection with the administration" (Tumaco2_27_07_16). However, despite the high level of community organization, some noted the community councils have had difficult relationships with the mayor's office and that "They [the council leaders] said that they couldn't get anything done with the mayor's office. There was a project with cacao but it was with another entity, an international organization, because the people said the mayor's office didn't do anything" (Tumaco2_27_07_16). As on participant continued, "The municipal government has always kept us a bit isolated, they don't give us the value we deserve because nobody has a better sense of the sector's needs" (Tumaco2_27_07_16).

Residents also reported many unmet needs in Tumaco. When asked where the municipal government should invest, participants offered several respondents. One simply said, "There's too much need, so many things are lacking," while another pointed to the sewer

system, and the third said, "[They should invest] in the pedestrian bridges and stoplights because everyone wants to go at the same time, there was one but now it's gone" (Tumaco2_27_07_16).

Overall Synthesis

The RGA treatment and control municipalities comprise a sector of the Colombian population that largely report negative conditions and a not terribly optimistic outlook on the future. The 40 municipalities chosen for the RGA program were considered insecure, lacking in trust and legitimacy, lacking in public financial management, and citizen oversight. The results of this baseline evaluation – explicitly comparing those municipalties to a set of similar controls – largely confirm the reasons these municipalities were chosen. The evaluation provides the benchmark estimates against which the midline and endline evaluations can judge the impact of the RGA intervention. It also suggests a few implications:

• Promote awareness and involvement in the Citizen Oversight Committees (Veedurías Comunitarias). Baseline data indicate extremely low levels of awareness of and participation in local Citizen Oversight Committees to ensure accountability of local development projects. This appears to be a special need for Tumaco, where royalties revenues are high but participation in oversight committees is low.

• Expectations about security and future development programming are associated with perceptions of trust in public institutions, especially the police.

• Ensure that programming reaches vulnerable populations. Large proportions of the population in RGA treatment and control municipalities feel excluded from the peace process with the FARC and future implementation of post-conflict and development programming.

• Should the RGA program result in increased royalty spending and accountability, local public policies should focus on job development and anti-poverty programs, as residents cited unemployment, under-employment, poverty, and hunger as most serious problems.

References

Kaplan, Oliver. 2013. "Can Colombia build on its democratic opening?" CNN.com Global Public Square, November 19, 2013. http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2013/11/19/can-colombia-build-on-its-democratic-opening/

Kaplan, Oliver and Enzo Nussio. 2015. "Community counts: The Social Reintegration of Ex-combatants in Colombia." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* DOI: 10.1177/0738894215614506

Steele, Abbey and Jacob Shapiro. "State-building, Counterinsurgency, and Development in Colombia." USAID Impact Evaluation. 25 May 2012.

Stillman, Peter G. "The concept of legitimacy." *Polity* (1974): 32-56.

USAID. 2011. "USAID/OTI's Initial Governance Response Program in Colombia: A Final Evaluation," April 2011.

"USAID Colombia Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2014-2018: A Path to Peace" June 13, 2014. Accessible here: http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1862/USAID%20Colombia%20CDCS.pdf

Young, Joseph K. "Repression, Dissent, and the Onset of Civil War." *Political Research Quarterly* (2013): 516-532.