



# USAID Regional Governance Activity (RGA) in Colombia, 2015-2019: Midline Report<sup>1</sup>

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## Acronyms

ASOCOMUNAL - Municipal Association of Junta Councils  
BACRIM - Criminal Bands  
CAQDAS - Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software  
CBPS - Covariate Balancing Propensity Score  
CDA - Centro Democrático Alternativo  
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  
JEP – Special Jurisdiction for Peace  
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

## RGA Program Background

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.<sup>2</sup> The RGA program began at a time of great optimism and continues as the implementation of the peace accord signed with the FARC in 2016 advances amid difficulties. Negotiations were initiated between the Government and the ELN but face substantial uncertainty.

The RGA program is being implemented by Management Systems International (MSI), a TetraTech Company. The program consists of five components, two of which we were tasked to evaluate, and that provide the basis for the present midline evaluation:

2. Improved financial management and performance of targeted municipalities;
4. Increased citizen participation for enhanced transparency and accountability;

The RGA also aims to increase the inclusion of women and vulnerable groups through a set of 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.

## Theory of Change

Based on the theory of change advanced by USAID, the RGA program should increase municipal capacity and legitimacy, which were lacking in Colombia's conflict-affected regions, at least at the outset of the RGA. As capacity and legitimacy increase, consequently, the population should become more supportive of the government and less supportive of illegal armed groups. These interventions and expected outcomes fit within the USAID Colombia mission's 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). Some elements of the RGA's theory of change may take time to achieve, so it may be premature to expect substantial changes in outcomes in the short run as a result of RGA programming.

## Evaluation Methods

We conducted a "matching" exercise before the baseline data collection that identified a set of control municipalities that were similar to the treatment municipalities in all possible ways except that treatment municipalities would receive the RGA intervention and the control municipalities would not. In the baseline we demonstrated that the municipalities were

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<sup>2</sup> This research was made possible through 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.

indeed balanced. If the matching approach was successful at baseline then at this stage (the midline) and the endline stage, 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 account for competing explanations and other potential interventions in the region).

In this midline, we conducted a very similar set of evaluation activities. We conducted 7,007 citizen surveys; 466 elite interviews, of which 106 were with local government officials and 360 were with community elites; 20 focus groups; and administrative data collection and analysis. We conducted the data collection in the same areas as we did with the baseline, and in the survey, we attempted wherever possible to identify the same people. We were able to conduct repeat surveys with a large proportion (48 percent) of the initial respondents who participated in the baseline. However, as with most panels, it was difficult to re-contact some subjects in various areas. For those subjects who we could not re-survey, we re-sampled based on a sampling strategy discussed below.

### **Evaluation Findings**

We report on our midline evaluation activities by comparing measures at this point in time to those same measures at baseline and identifying any differences that emerge. Our objective is to understand whether the treatment communities have changed at midline due to the RGA relative to the control municipalities. We, therefore, examine differences between treatment and control in the midline results. Any differences in conditions that exist across the groups of municipalities relative to the baseline represent the evaluation of the impact of the RGA program. Across the midline, the results yield very few statistically meaningful relationships. We also attempt to report equally on the qualitative information and learn appropriate lessons.

This midline analysis provides several key findings on anticipated outcomes of the two RGA program components being evaluated:

- At the midline, treatment municipalities have demonstrated some improvements in fiscal performance relative to control municipalities.
- Since the baseline, trust in institutions has slightly declined across the municipalities of study. However, the survey data and community interviews offer suggestive evidence that RGA municipalities have sustained higher levels of citizen trust in government. Community elite interviews also indicate slightly more positive perceptions of local governments in treatment than in control municipalities.
- Relative to other outcomes, RGA programming is associated with influence over cultures of payment of taxes, which can help boost support for public revenues and works.
- Corruption continues to be an entrenched problem in Colombia's political system. RGA programming in the short-term is not associated with clear improvements.

- Citizen perceptions indicate declines in service provision across different institutions and public services. The prices are high for the services people receive, and RGA does not yet appear to have had an impact on improving service provision.
- Royalty revenues generally improved since the baseline, and it appears that RGA municipalities received systematically more royalty revenues than control municipalities, suggesting likely RGA impact.
- The peace process with the FARC has alleviated fears in some municipalities and, as a result, created greater openings for civic organizing and political participation—two enabling factors for RGA programming to meet its goals.
- Although security is not anticipated to be directly affected by RGA activities, RGA programming is not associated with substantially reduced perceptions that armed groups can move freely in treatment areas relative to controls. The FARC is perceived to move freely, though this could be due to the demobilization. BACRIM and criminal actors persist as substantial security threats in some areas.
- There are several national-level contextual factors that could shape effectiveness of the program, including the conclusion of the peace agreement with the FARC, the transition in presidential administrations, and the reform of tax laws and royalty distribution formulas. However, because these factors do not vary sub-nationally, we are unable to observe how they may affect RGA activities and outcomes.
- The theory of change anticipates that some elements of RGA are likely to shift more rapidly than others, and this is what is observed. This includes outcomes that result from relatively simple institutional changes or that are directly affected by RGA training and assistance, such as improved fiscal administration and promote tax payment cultures.
- Other outcomes are slower to be influenced and detected, since they are slower-moving and depend on lengthier implementation and governing processes and greater citizen awareness, such as municipal service provision. We anticipate a greater likelihood of observing treatment effects in these downstream processes and indicators at the endline of the project.

### **Evaluation Recommendations**

- RGA-style programs can generate early gains in the areas of improved fiscal administration and promote tax payment cultures. These program elements should be emphasized early in future programs to help achieve later downstream outcomes, such as boosting trust and combatting corruption.
- Because service provision is a more slow-moving implementation activity, communications strategies should focus on encouraging realistic expectations among the public about immediate improvements in quality of life.

- Anti-corruption and levels of citizen oversight show little improvement so far and may merit increased emphasis in ongoing RGA programming.
- RGA programming depends on local social leaders, who face increasing risks of violence in the post-peace agreement period. The security concerns of these leaders should be addressed so they can more safely and fully participate in the program.
- RGA-region level, descriptive evidence suggests that programming and improvements in conditions are visible in the Norte (Antioquia and Córdoba) and Catatumbo regions for ratings of mayors, municipal engagement, as well as improved services, and Cauca and Valle del Cauca for tax cultures. Future programming could better address the needs of these regions with ongoing governance and development issues.
- Given some of the mismatches between oversight activities and royalty-based projects, going forward, USAID and MSI may want to more strongly emphasize citizen oversight and participation in regions with higher levels of royalties.

## Introduction

This midline evaluation<sup>3</sup> report begins with a brief description of the Colombia Regional Governance Activity (RGA), the evaluation approach, and the findings, and then it reports the results of the midline follow-up data collection that occurred in the fall of 2017. Michael G. Findley (University of Texas at Austin), Oliver Kaplan (University of Denver), Ana Marrugo (American University), Alejandro Ponce de Leon (University of California, Davis), Daniel Walker (Independent Data Scientist), and Joseph K. Young (American University), who are affiliated with AidData, implemented the impact evaluation. The midline evaluation activities occurred between July 1, 2017 and January 10, 2018, with the complete set of data fully delivered January 15, 2018.

### The RGA Program as Articulated by USAID

The Colombia Regional Governance Activity (RGA) funded by the 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), a TetraTech Company, 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;

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<sup>3</sup> The baseline evaluation activities are all reported in the baseline report and annexes available through USAID or from Findley at the contact information above.

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. The improved electoral process to limit state capture at the sub-national level.

Based on the theory of change advanced by USAID, the RGA program should increase municipal capacity and legitimacy,<sup>4</sup> which were lacking in some of Colombia's conflict-affected regions, at least at the outset of the RGA. From RGA's task order, the purpose of the RGA is to improve sub-national governance in 40 conflict-affected municipalities of Colombia. Municipal capacity to effectively deliver services to citizens plays a key role in building the legitimacy of the state at the local level. Given that the lack of state legitimacy at this level contributes to conditions that foster or perpetuate conflict, increased legitimacy will contribute to minimizing conflict. These interventions and expected outcomes fit squarely within the USAID Colombia mission's 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). It is worthwhile mentioning that the RGA's theory of change involves several steps that may take a reasonable amount of time to achieve. Therefore, it may be premature to expect substantial changes in outcomes in the short run as a result of RGA programming.

Although RGA activities are occurring at the national and subnational levels, we are only evaluating 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.

Because we articulated the theory of change at length in the baseline report, we only provide an abbreviated discussion in this report, and discuss these components in Annex 2.

### **Context: Leading up to the Midline**

Between the baseline and midline data collection activities, several events occurred in Colombia directly related to the RGA program and its desired outcomes. On June 22, 2016 the Colombian government and the FARC guerrilla reached an agreement on the third point of the agenda regarding the end of armed conflict, which included a bilateral ceasefire.<sup>5</sup> By the end of August, President Juan Manuel Santos submitted the final agreement to the Colombian Congress for its approval and, on the second day of September, a referendum

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<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/23/world/americas/colombia-farc-peace-deal-rebels-cease-fire-santos.html>

was announced so that the Colombian people could ratify the agreements. The resulting political campaign was one of the most polarizing the country had seen. The referendum was officially called on October 2, 2016 and gave the government and the opposition 32 days for intense campaigning. By a slim margin, the opposition party, the Alternative Democratic Center (Centro Democrático Alternativo - CDA), lead a campaign that defeated the referendum, with 50.2% of the votes against the agreement (abstention was high, at 62.6%).

The Colombian government discussed modifications with the CDA and, after including some amendments, signed a new agreement with the FARC that was ratified in late November 2016 via a legislative act in Congress. Many viewed this procedure as deepening the national government's existing legitimacy and governability crisis. After the agreement was ratified, the Congress began debates to approve the laws required for their implementation. Major debates arose around the transitional justice system (Justicia Especial Para la Paz, or JEP) and finally, at the end of November 2016, the law was approved with substantial modifications.

While agreement continued to be debated in Congress, numerous major corruption cases emerged as a result of the Odebrecht corruption scandal, which spread from Brazil to affect virtually all Latin American countries. In Colombia, the scandal involved members of Congress and even the presidential campaign of Juan Manuel Santos. The anticorruption czar was found guilty of demanding payments to stop investigations, and a corruption cartel was uncovered within the Supreme Court of Justice.

Simultaneously, in neighboring Venezuela, the country's political and economic crisis worsened and citizens occupied the streets to demand a change in government. The political and economic crises have moved thousands of Venezuelans to flee their country, with many arriving in the Colombian border areas of Arauca and Norte de Santander (which are also RGA treatment areas).

Since the end of 2016, the government announced new peace dialogues with the ELN guerrillas that effectively started in February 2017. After four rounds of conversations, a cease-fire began on October 1 and was to last until January 9, 2018. On January 10, three attacks against oil platforms and one against a group of navy infantry were attributed to the ELN and the government negotiation team suspended the fifth round of dialogues temporarily.

## **Context: Progress towards Implementation of Peace with FARC**

Over one year after the peace agreement was signed between the Colombian Government and the FARC rebels, guerrilla ex-combatants have laid down their weapons and gathered in 26 rural transition zones (Zonas Veredales de Transición y Normalización) where they began the process of demobilization and reintegration into civilian life (some of which are in or

nearby RGA municipalities).<sup>6</sup> The Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia documents the progress in implementation.<sup>7</sup>

The legislative path to implementation has been uneven, especially with regard to the transitional justice system. Some of the political parties that initially backed the agreement have now distanced themselves from it. Nevertheless, some important bills and laws were passed, such as the one that establishes the agreement as a frame of reference for public policy and obliges civil servants to comply with the agreement for the next 12 years, as well as the law regulating the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP). The Constitutional Court has also endorsed the law creating the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Non-Repetition, which cleared the way for FARC participation in the 2018 elections. One of the most significant shortcomings has been the failure to pass the law on the special transitory electoral districts for peace, which would have created 16 new seats in the House of Representatives for victims of the conflict, drawn from rural and conflict-affected areas.

Security-wise, since the agreement was signed, national security figures have improved, but there is evidence that insecurity has increased in some rural areas. An estimated 1,000 FARC members abandoned the peace process and organized dissident fronts, many in coca-growing regions. The criminal band (BACRIM) known as the Gaintanista Self-Defense Forces (AGC) has expanded its presence and is competing with ELN fronts in some regions to control former FARC territories. Right-wing armed groups have begun to target demobilized FARC members, and NGOs have also reported a surge in killings of social leaders advocating for land and human rights.<sup>8</sup> One of the main efforts to address this issue has come from the Office of the Attorney General. A Special Investigations Unit has been established whose focus is on investigating and prosecuting criminal organizations and their support networks.

Ex-combatant reintegration has been led by the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and supervised by the National Reintegration Council. Of the 14,178 names of FARC-EP members presented by the organization, not more than 12,500 have been accredited to participate in the peace process, allowing them to receive legal, economic and productive benefits.<sup>9</sup> The agency has helped former FARC members to obtain national identity cards, open bank accounts and has registered them in subsidized health and pension systems. The Ministry of Labor has trained 5,200 individuals in solidarity economics over the past three months. FARC members are pursuing several income-generating initiatives, such as cooperatives, productive projects, and a humanitarian demining organization.

Political reintegration has been successful insofar as FARC was able to register before the National Electoral Council as a legal political party, known as the People's Alternative Revolutionary Force (FARC). There were 78 candidates campaigning for legislative elections in March 2018 and presented their presidential candidate. Finally, their presidential candidate

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<sup>6</sup> <http://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2017/05/24/hacking-for-successful-peace-implementation-in-colombia-part-1/>

<http://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2017/07/25/hacking-the-reintegration-of-farc-rebels-in-colombia/>

<sup>7</sup> "Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia", 27 December 2017.

<sup>8</sup> <http://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2017/05/02/protect-the-people-to-protect-the-peace/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/03/opinion/farc-colombia.html>

Rodrigo Londoño AKA Timochenko quit the campaign. In the legislative elections FARC only got 0.34% of the votes but they hold 10 places in Congress as agreed in the accord.

Challenges to the reintegration process include that many of the transition zone camps were not ready on time, inadequate educational infrastructure, and poor access to health services. Also, a National Reintegration Plan is still pending.

There has been only moderate progress on important crosscutting issues of the peace agreement, such as gender and ethnic inclusion. Technical working groups have been established in the National Reintegration Council and in the National Commission on Security Guarantees and female former FARC-EP members have developed their own strategy for reintegration. In Cesar, Chocó and La Guajira, dialogue between Indigenous authorities and FARC representatives has resulted in specific reintegration processes for former FARC-EP members from indigenous communities. Both women and ethnic groups within the country are still pushing for the implementation to include a strong gender and ethnic approach.

## Evaluation Approach and Questions

The full evaluation design is described more fully in the baseline report. We review the basic evaluation framework here along with some additional comments here and in Annex 3, especially on the re-sampling strategy for adapting to the challenge of respondents whom we could not survey a second time. There were also a few additional modifications to the baseline, including how data was collected in Arauca, where the certain security challenges were encountered during the midline fieldwork.

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 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 a baseline, and now a midline, and (later) an endline evaluation, all of which rest on a carefully selected comparison of municipalities, we seek to draw conclusions about changes within given municipalities across contexts, changes in municipalities over time, and joint comparisons across contexts and over time. These different types of changes are tracked at the level of intermediate outcomes and overall mission objectives.

For the treatment municipalities selected by USAID and GOC, we used spatial matching techniques to identify the most appropriate comparison municipalities. That is, we used 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 accounted for possible confounders and non-random selection into treatment, which should enable more accurate identification of any unique causal impacts of the RGA. In addition to these statistical matching techniques, we consulted Colombian experts to

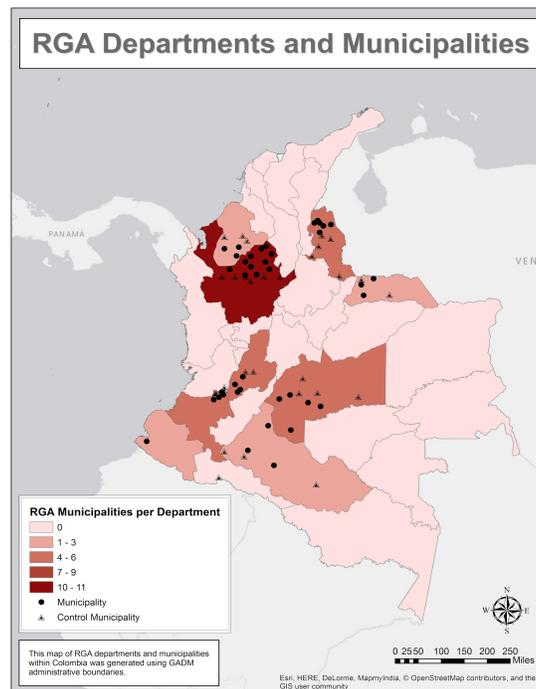
consider logical comparisons, examined maps, and identified relative features that make municipalities appropriate comparison units.

## Municipality Sampling

The final set of treatment and control municipalities are illustrated below in Figure 1. (The treatment municipalities alone are displayed in Annex Table A1.)<sup>10</sup> In the annex, we discuss the matching methodology for selection of control municipalities, including all variable used in the analysis (See Table A2). The result of this exercise was the successful selection of a set of control cases that are statistically balanced across numerous different dimensions. Table A3 lists both treatment and the originally planned control municipalities included together.

We have been able to collect data in most municipalities. Security concerns prevented us from collecting baseline data in Arauca, though we were able to collect midline data for Arauca with a shortened survey instrument, with a separate section at the end of this report dedicated to the Arauca findings. The security report in Annex 10 details the security challenges faced and associated sampling adjustments. Annex Tables A4 and A5 show the final distribution of municipalities surveyed along with the number of surveys, interviews, and focus groups collected.

**Figure 1: Treatment and Control Municipalities**



<sup>10</sup> USAID has worked extensively in many of the municipalities previously. Thus, the RGA intervention is not 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.

## 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.<sup>11</sup> The survey firm Cifras y Conceptos carried out the data collection. Ahead of midline data collection, we revised the instruments and worked with the firm to develop all training procedures. Before both baseline and midline, we conducted pilot surveys based to refine questions for the final data collection. The evaluation team also made site visits to several municipalities during both the baseline and midline. For the midline, site visits occurred in Córdoba Department (Planeta Rica and Tierralta municipalities), where the evaluation team 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 the baseline, security challenges prevented us from operating in all municipalities (see discussion in baseline report), so the final count of surveys ended up being 6,389. In the midline, we attempted to compensate for the previous shortage of baseline surveys. As such, in the midline, we surveyed additional respondents in Arauca, and in total surveyed 7,007 respondents for the midline.

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, though the surveys are not fully representative of the rural areas as we were constrained in the number of rural areas we could capture.<sup>12</sup> For the midline, we sought to generate a panel of repeat respondents through several sampling approaches. We first attempted to survey the same individuals as in the baseline, which ultimately accounted for 49% of the midline sample. If that was not possible, then we checked whether the individual previously surveyed had moved to another municipality or department and tried to survey them there if possible. If that was not possible, we asked to survey someone else in the same household. Failing that, we resampled new respondents from the same municipalities but in different houses. The full distribution of sampling and resampling, along with percentages in each category, is reported in Annex Table A4. Table A8 shows the breakdown of those surveyed across numerous demographic dimensions.

As with the baseline, in the midline we also collected data from other sources. In addition to the citizen survey, we also attempted to conduct interviews with three government officials in each mayoral office, six 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

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<sup>11</sup> To facilitate learning about this particular program and comparisons 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 identify every specific overlapping question here but aligned many of them.

<sup>12</sup> The issue of urban/rural representativeness within municipalities was discussed with USAID ahead of the baseline, and it was clear that USAID could not support a larger evaluation that would be representative of the rural areas within municipalities. As such, USAID encouraged the evaluation team to sample from some centros poblados, though not in a representative way.

were able to conduct 465 elite interviews (106 with government officials and 359 with community elites). We coded all interview material as discussed in Annex 3.

We also conducted focus groups to better understand citizen perceptions, including their views on municipal spending and oversight, and general governance and security conditions in the municipalities. The focus group questions were adapted from the citizen questionnaire. Through the survey firm Cifras y Conceptos, we conducted 20 focus groups for the baseline and repeated those focus groups for the midline, though not with the exact same set of individuals. As such, the focus groups do not constitute their own panel, but rather a new sample but within the baseline set of municipalities. See Annex 5 for more details on the focus group selection.

Finally, we also collected information from publicly available sources and included those indicators as appropriate to compare to 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. Observations for some indicators vary in coverage from about 40 to 70 municipalities since we were not able to acquire data for all the municipalities in the sample.

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

To interpret the results, we begin by plotting the quantitative data in figures and providing visual interpretation. In most cases, this involves comparing changes in control from baseline to midline, and then changes in treatment from baseline to midline, and then comparing across control and treatment. To contextualize these comparisons, we also estimated statistical regression models comparing outcome indicators in treatment municipalities to outcomes in control municipalities at the midline (which essentially produces a difference-in-means estimate), and then control for the baseline values (Glennester and Takavarasha 2013), clustering survey respondents, where appropriate, on municipalities. Throughout, we refer to these results as “statistically meaningful” (or not) based on whether the regression analyses suggest that the results could not have occurred by random chance. Given the small number of municipalities, these regressions provide a difficult test, and so the visual interpretation is all the more important as well as supplementing with the qualitative data. (The full set of regression results is reported in Annex 8, Table A16.) Given that not many of the relationships are “statistically meaningful” we only draw attention to these analyses in the cases where they are.

To map the theory of change to specific empirical tests, we included Table A18 in Annex 8, which connects the components to the measures to the hypotheses to the final results. In the final column, we bolded those results that were statistically meaningful (taking into account the size of the effect and the numbers of observations, which results we can be more confident in).

Before turning to the midline findings, we note two challenges that shape our analysis (discussed further in Annexes 7, 9, and 10). First, due primarily to security concerns, the

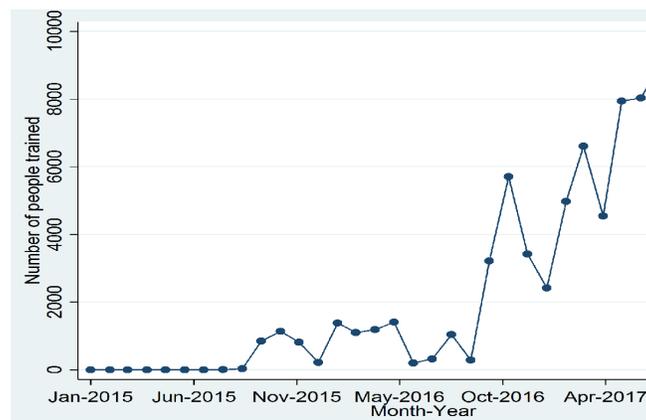
implementing partner was not able to begin operations in all 40 treatment municipalities at the same time. As such, we have attempted to quantify the heterogeneous implementation efforts across municipalities by considering variation in the data on MSI’s activities as well as through USAID’s MONITOR tracking data. Second, the security conditions prevented us from conducting all evaluation activities in all treatment and control municipalities. Because of improved security conditions, data coverage is more comprehensive for the midline than it was for the baseline. In Annex 10, we provide a full security report from Cifras y Conceptos that details all alterations to planned data collection activities.

## Implementation of the RGA

The evaluation team interfaced with MSI staff to discuss their program activities and data resources, and ensure a mutual understanding of RGA. MSI staff provided us with their comprehensive database on RGA training activities. The data contain entries for attendances/ participations by different individuals for different aspects of the program for components 2 and 4. After an initial review of the data, we met with the MSI team at their headquarters office in Bogotá on November 30, 2017 to contextualize the results.

Up to the time of this analysis, the database contains 70,736 total training attendances for components 2 and 4 (8,330 of these occurred among individuals from outside of the treatment municipalities).<sup>13</sup> As of the middle of 2017, trainings were continuing on an increasing trend (Figure 2).<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 2: MSI Self-Reported Activities 2015-2017 (Aggregated)**

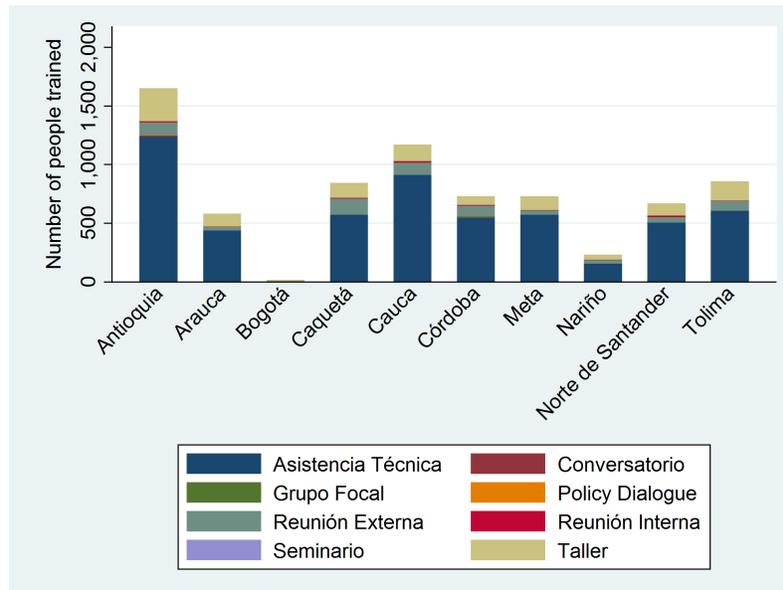


<sup>13</sup> The program trainings started in June 2015, but some of the early data on trainings from 2015-16 was not yet added to the database by the time of this study.

<sup>14</sup> The database undercounts the participation of vulnerable populations since these characteristics are self-reported and attendees do not always list their ethnicity, victim status, or sexual orientation when registering their attendance at events. Additionally, youths have participated in different activities, including in oversight committees (veedurías). But, as minors, they cannot sign their names or officially vote. MSI staff recounted one instance when students organized themselves to press for improving the quality of food of their high school cafeteria.

As displayed in Figure 3, most content was delivered via either technical assistance, an ongoing form of training for municipal staff; or workshops (talleres), which are mostly directed at citizen participation (especially, the “Hagamos control ciudadano”/ “Let’s do citizen control” program). Policy dialogues are largely held for Component 1 of the program.

**Figure 3: Form of training**



In addition to the individual trainings, MSI also conducted 20 large-scale projects or “donaciones” during the summer of 2017. MSI held a call for proposals (convocatoria) to select local organizations such as associations of women, youth groups, and local NGOs for projects in areas such as trainings in participation, social oversight, and development plans, as well as artistic and cultural activities to educate the public about the aforementioned subjects. Because the “donación” organizations are local and from the “territories,” they tend to reach more people.

MSI staff also noted success with certain citizen oversight committees (veedurías). Some veedurías have worked to improve healthcare for rural residents. Since there are often long waits for hospital visits, one veeduría has helped schedule and prioritize appointments, so people do not have excessive waits or miss appointments. A veeduría also prodded a municipality to buy an electric plant to power the local hospital. As one staff person commented, some of the mayors want veedurías because it gives them better oversight of public policy implementation in the municipality (“the veedurías become their allies”).

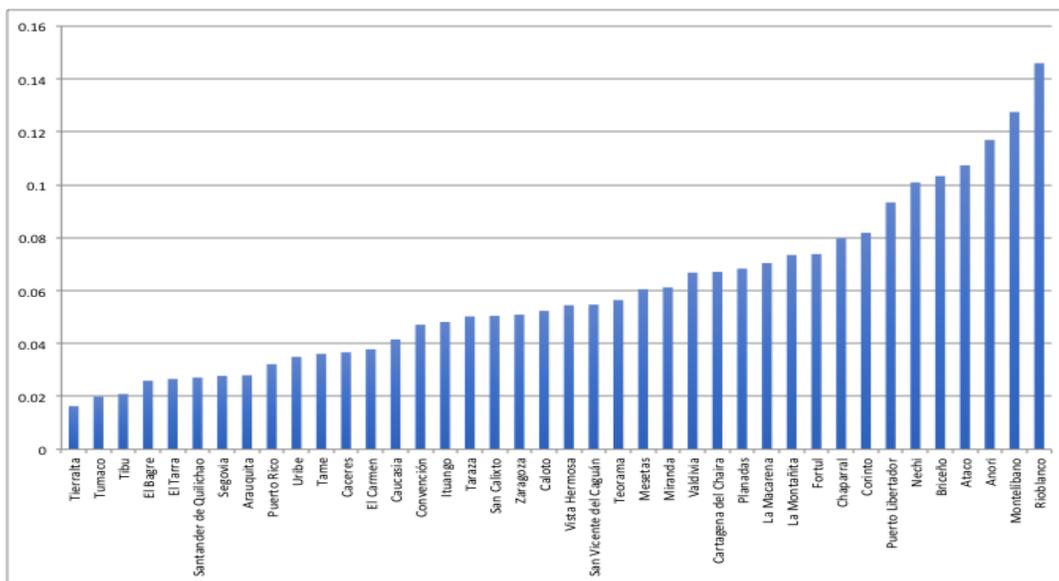
MSI did diagnostics for each municipality to adapt improvement plans and RGA programming to local conditions, since some municipalities have greater needs than others. These needs contributed to a heterogeneity of RGA treatments across municipalities and

departments.<sup>15</sup> Variations in programming also resulted from variation in the receptivity of different municipalities to the program. Here, we briefly review the accounts provided by MSI staff about their ability to implement programming across the RGA treatment areas.

Municipal administrations in the municipalities of Rioblanco, Chaparral, and Planadas in the department of Tolima have been very willing to cooperate with the RGA program. They have implemented various donación programs, have high levels of citizen participation, and do a rendición de cuentas every two weeks. In Chaparral, the administration began a radio program called “La Carreta” with the help of RGA staff to train and inform the village juntas councils (it has been so successful that Planadas is copying it).

By contrast, the mayor of Tumaco in Nariño who was elected in 2015 was not receptive to MSI. The administration would not work with MSI, so they did more work on citizen participation. A new mayor was inaugurated in April 2017 and has been more receptive to RGA programming. See Figure 4 below for a distributional graph by municipality, mapping per capita attendance at RGA activities.

**Figure 4: Per capita Attendances at RGA Activities 2015-2017, by Municipality**



Security has affected some program activities, but in most cases, work was able to continue unimpeded. During the period, there were bombings of police stations and killings of police in some coastal areas due to the BACRIM’s “plan pistol” operations. MSI had to stop work at some moments, and in some cases had to base their staff in neighboring municipalities due to insecurity. USAID approved a branding waiver for MSI for Norte Santander and

<sup>15</sup> A per capita analysis (of intensity of trainings per person) is more appropriate for Component 4 (public participation) than Component 2 (Royalties and administration) because Component 2 usually involves continued training with the same municipal staff members.

Arauca not to have to signal that the program is associated with the U.S. due to security concerns (in these departments, historical armed conflict also has depressed participation of women). Only in one instance, in Teorama, Norte Santander, were MSI staff stopped by armed actors and told not to come back.

MSI staff reported that the peace process has been positive, as people can “breathe easier” in former FARC areas. For now, there are not visible effects of FARC dissidents. In some municipalities, such as Uribe and Mesetas in Meta, mayors had to deal with FARC transition zones (ZVTNs) while also working with the RGA program. The imposition of these transition zones by the national government was viewed as a type of unfunded mandate that put an additional financial strain on the municipalities.

We also made a site visit to observe the data collection procedures used by Cifras y Conceptos and gain a view of program implementation from the ground. During the visit, the evaluation team met with MSI’s implementation team from the department of Córdoba (September 29, 2017) in Montería, Córdoba. The conversation with the MSI staff helps to contextualize their work and provided valuable insights into both the successes and challenges they faced in implementing the RGA program. The staff’s perceptions and insights about their effectiveness are vital for assessing the strength of their program treatments and program effects.

As mayors began their new terms in 2015, MSI helped municipalities including Montelíbano, Puerto Libertador, Tierralta, and others with their development plans since new municipal staff did not have backgrounds in administration and needed training.

MSI also educated citizens about veedurías and how to work more cooperatively during projects in areas such as health, education, environment, and water, as opposed to criticizing them afterward. Since some administrations previously viewed the veedurías as “pests,” that “they are coming to bother us” and slow their initiatives, MSI worked to change attitudes. MSI conducted “transversal activities” with municipalities to unfreeze royalty funds and boost public investment. They also stimulated public participation to break the stigma that only elites have a right to be involved in planning. They strengthened the juntas comunales in veredas to better work with officials to plan projects. MSI staff noted that, although paramilitaries and guerrillas previously used threats and violence to influence past administrations, today security has improved. They feel RGA has helped break the fear and stigma of participation.

MSI also reported some successes encouraging the involvement of women and vulnerable populations in municipal governance activities (see Annex Figures A1-A6). In Puerto Libertador, women initially did not attend the veeduría because there had previously been high levels of violence and perceived danger in participating. So, MSI did a first rendición de cuentas (public accounting) for women, and nearly 100 women participated. To address the needs of the youth population and address the growing problem of drug consumption, MSI created five “participatory spaces” with 550 youth and developed a mental health diagnostic to treat drug consumers as patients, not criminals.

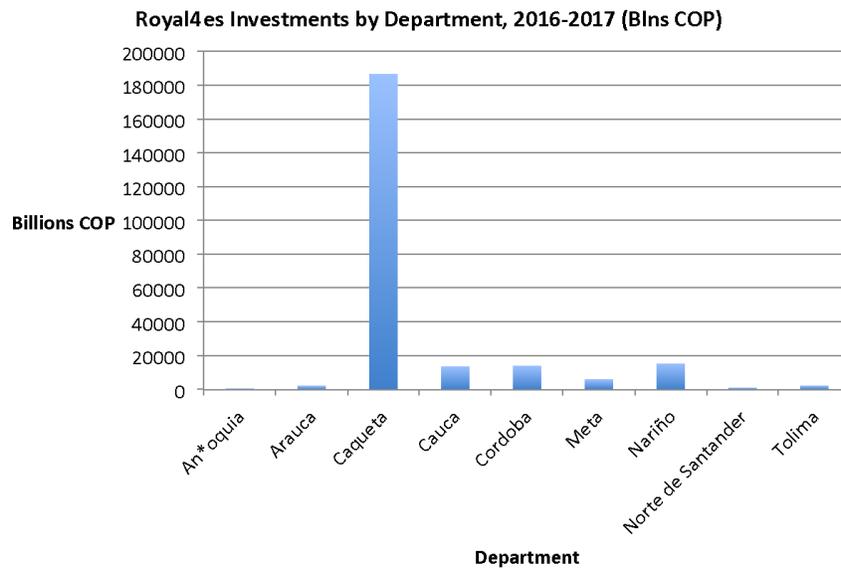
MSI staff also noted that ethnic minorities have greater deficits in public participation. In Puerto Libertador MSI trained 22 Indigenous cabildos (governing councils) and helped a

resguardo in Montelibano complete a Plan de Vida (life plan) for the community. Since the participation of Embera Katío Indigenous women is limited for cultural reasons, including that they often do domestic work in the home, MSI held a special training for them, and nearly 500 women participated.

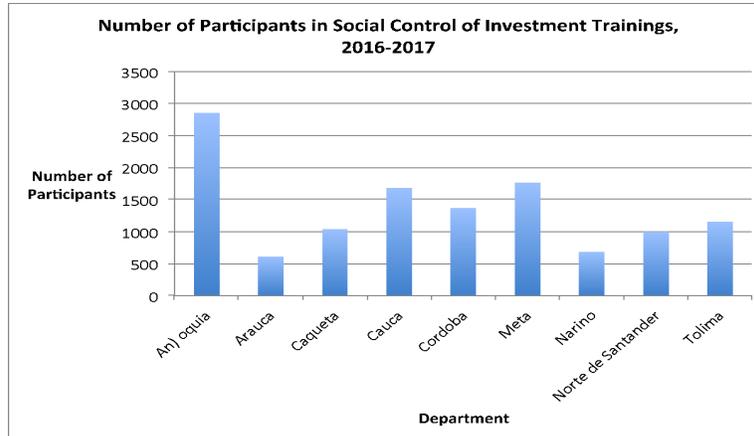
We also examined the indicators of program implementation progress from MSI's Project Management Plan (PMP). The initial indicators through the midline show that implementation has varied across departments and RGA regions. According to Figure 5, the department of Caquetá far outpaces other departments as being the main focus of recovering royalty revenues from the national government's royalties system (Sistema General de Regalías) and putting those revenues to use for public works projects.

Figure 6 shows the number of people who participated in trainings for social control of investments and Figure 7 shows the number of citizen oversight committees and estimated amounts of funds “protected” (overseen) by those committees in each department. The data suggest that citizen oversight activities are relatively efficient at protecting revenues in Tolima while relatively less efficient in Antioquia (or higher revenue projects per oversight committee). Comparing royalties’ projects with oversight activities, in some departments, there appears to be a mismatch between citizen oversight and spending on projects.

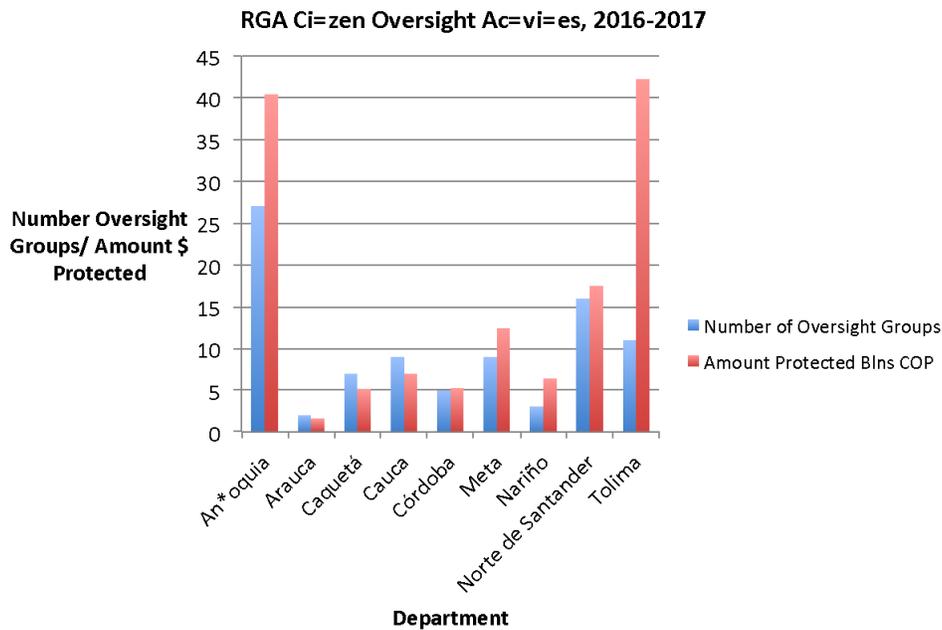
**Figure 5: Royalties Investments by Department, 2016-2017**



**Figure 6: Number of Participants in Social Control of Investment Trainings, 2016-2017**



**Figure 7: RGA Citizen Oversight Activities, 2016-2017**



Overall, the MSI staff felt empowered—that they were having positive impacts, and that their work has gone better than expected. However, they also raised questions about sustainability of their efforts. They wondered whether trainings would need to be conducted for each new term. They noted that many municipalities do not have cultures of turning over information and that they need better hand-offs (“empalme”) to incoming administrations.

The data on program implementation suggest several conclusions. First, the variation in programming across RGA geographies suggests there has been a heterogeneous application of the treatment to date. If the theory of change is correct, this may predict differential impacts being observed from location to location. Second, given some of the mismatches between oversight activities and royalty-based projects, going forward, USAID and MSI may want to more strongly emphasize citizen oversight and participation in regions with higher levels of royalty investments.

## Findings: Midline Conditions of the RGA

Our midline assessment describes security, governance, and social conditions on the ground in both treatment and control municipalities mid-way through the RGA program. The data also provides an initial evaluation of whether the RGA program has begun to have impacts. It will also later serve as a basis of comparison with the information collected for the endline.

The midline data confirm that the RGA program is targeted at municipalities with high needs across the areas of fiscal capacity, corruption, social participation, and insecurity and fear. In what follows, we report on the conditions that comprise the overall theory of change: public financial management and citizen participation as causal mechanisms, trust in and legitimacy of the government as intermediate outcomes, and sustainable and inclusive peace as a final outcome. We then discuss the conditions of vulnerable populations as they relate to the RGA program—an essential element of *inclusive* peace. Annex 8 contains many additional results, and we reference it throughout this document.

### Context: Security and Violence

Security and violence are contextual factors that affect the ability of RGA to function but also that could be considered long-term outcomes of the program. Indeed, as the original tasking indicated “the purpose of the RGA is to improve sub-national governance in 40 conflict-affected municipalities of Colombia. Municipal capacity to effectively deliver services to citizens plays a key role in building the legitimacy of the state at the local level. Given that the lack of state legitimacy at this level contributes to conditions that foster or perpetuate conflict, *increased legitimacy will contribute to minimizing conflict* [emphasis added].” It is important to note that the RGA is not specifically tasked with shorter-term conflict reduction. Put differently; if the RGA program plays out according to the theory of change, then violence will hopefully be reduced over the long-term. For purposes of the evaluation, however, security and violence should primarily be considered as short-term contextual factors that affect participation in the program and perceptions of program success. As discussed below, across all of the information gathered from the midline survey, a central conclusion is that people perceive mixed success with some increase in security as relates to armed political groups, while also perceiving a decrease in security as relates to private criminal groups.

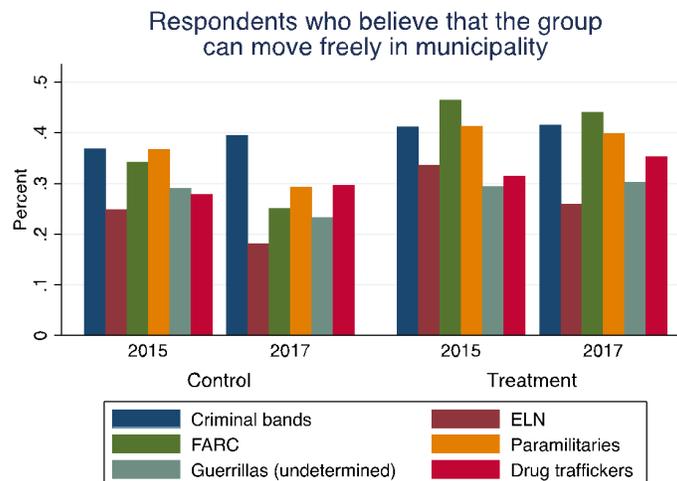
Elites, survey respondents, and municipal administrators all recognize the importance of improving security to achieve sustainable and lasting peace. Respondents continue to be

concerned about the risks posed by illegal armed groups. However, we noted that civilians perceive some general sense of wellness and safety since the ratification of the peace agreement. For them, things have “pacified” due to the recent demobilization of FARC members. As a citizen from Miranda (Cauca) commented, “I’m not anxious about them [FARC] throwing a bomb [at us anymore]” The vast majority of the municipal cabinet members shared this perception, and argued that their municipalities are safer now than in previous years.

We again asked citizens whether different groups can move freely in their municipalities. According to the results in Figure 8, across all municipalities sampled, approximately 30 percent of respondents still reported that either FARC, BACRIM (criminal bands), or paramilitaries could move freely in their municipality, with the FARC result being statistically significant meaning that the treatment municipalities are different not just by chance. That is, we can have relatively high confidence that the treatment municipalities are systematically different from the control municipalities when it comes to FARC movement, meaning that FARC has relatively greater presence in treatment than in control<sup>16</sup>

Optimistically, survey respondents in both control and treatment generally observed declines in the ability of any remaining FARC dissidents (since the peace agreement has been signed and the FARC is not technically an illegally armed group any longer) or suspect as well as ELN insurgent groups to “move freely” from baseline to midline. However, they also reported the FARC and ELN have a relatively greater presence in treatment municipalities, a pattern that appears to hold even in the midline results, with the FARC maintaining a greater presence and less of a decline over time. The ELN decrease could be related to the peace process that was ongoing during the period of the midline survey.

**Figure 8: Groups move freely by treatment and control group – Baseline vs. Midline**



<sup>16</sup> In the baseline, this question refers to the FARC armed group. We slightly changed the phrasing of the question for the midline to account for the fact that by mid-2017 the FARC had demobilized and disarmed as part of the peace process while also recognizing that respondents could still perceive activity by some dissident fronts.

On a cautionary note, respondents reported a slightly greater ability of drug traffickers and criminal bands to move freely in their municipalities. In the focus groups, for example, civilians declared they were alarmed by the increased presence of BACRIM and paramilitary organizations that claim to be policing the community. As a citizen in Tierralta (Córdoba) declared:

Here we have armed groups that take care of everything. They clean [the town] of crooks. They are the ones in charge of that. Therefore, you can leave a chair there [outside], and no one will steal it. They are the ones in charge of our security. They are the ones who have the town like this.

Criminal bands are described as the “people who are out there” (Valdivia, Antioquia). They are considered as having some relative control over local order, as they are claimed to “know everything we do, whether good or bad” (Vista Hermosa, Meta). These organizations are demanding “vacunas” (ransoms) to local vendors on a weekly basis, critically affecting local economies, as “All commerce has to contribute.” Municipal cabinet members are well aware of the presence of these armed groups and feel the issue should be addressed directly by the national government. Many of them argued that their local police do not have the right resources to do anything about this re-structuring of the criminal organizations, noting that “The cops have done their job as best they can” (Valencia, Córdoba). Some of them also suggested that they needed to establish better inter-agency communication with the national and departmental entities. As a secretary of the municipality of La Uribe said, “People are afraid of the paramilitaries and, probably, many people believe FARC dissidents may organize. [We believe that the latter] is not the case, but we cannot assure total security for our people.”

Statistical analysis of perceptions of armed actor control shows that the control group saw greater reductions in armed actor control relative to treatment municipalities, and both had a similar decrease in homicide rate (see Annex Figure A8). To reiterate, presence of armed groups is not a short-term objective, but provides important context as well as the earliest indications of whether longer-term conflict reduction (as stated in the original tasking) is being achieved. This suggests that trends in armed actor control are not related to program treatments or a possible unexpected adverse effect of treatment, which again would not be an early expectation of programming, but is nonetheless useful contextually as well as to gain any of the earliest possible insights into longer term effects. Answers from community elites, local government representatives, and focus groups show as well that the negative perceptions of security conditions are guided by phenomena as criminal bands, new paramilitary groups, and common delinquency more than guerrillas.

### **Impact: Trust and Legitimacy**

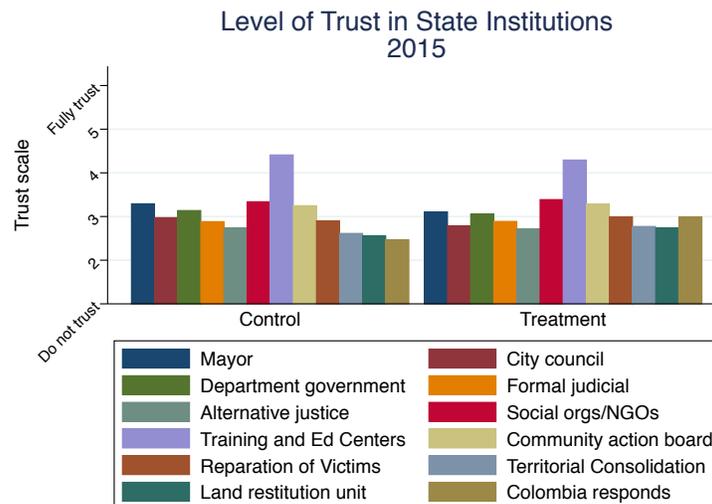
Our interviews, surveys, and focus groups do not show significant changes in levels of trust in government nor in non-government institutions either across municipalities or between baseline and midline measurements. However, interviews show that at the midline participants had additional information with which to judge mayoral offices so that factors

such as corruption and unfulfilled promises stand out. Trust and legitimacy were measured as well through trust in armed actors, institutions involved in conflict resolution, and impact of illegal armed actors in municipal performance. In general people trust more legal institutions and turn to them, or other citizens, to solve disputes. Surveys and community elite interviews show the community is slightly more aware of the impact illegal armed groups have on municipal performance.

Data indicate that people have mixed levels of trust in most state institutions. In both the baseline and midline evaluations, training and education centers, such as SENA, stand out as being the most trusted institutions, as reported in Figures 9 and 10. Overall, the results in these figures show a slight decline in trust across institutions in Colombia from baseline to midline, rather than improvement. Colombia Responde is among the institutions with the lowest levels of trust, according to the survey data.<sup>17</sup> It is likely that increasing trust in institutions is a process that will take time, especially given the low baseline from which most trust levels began.

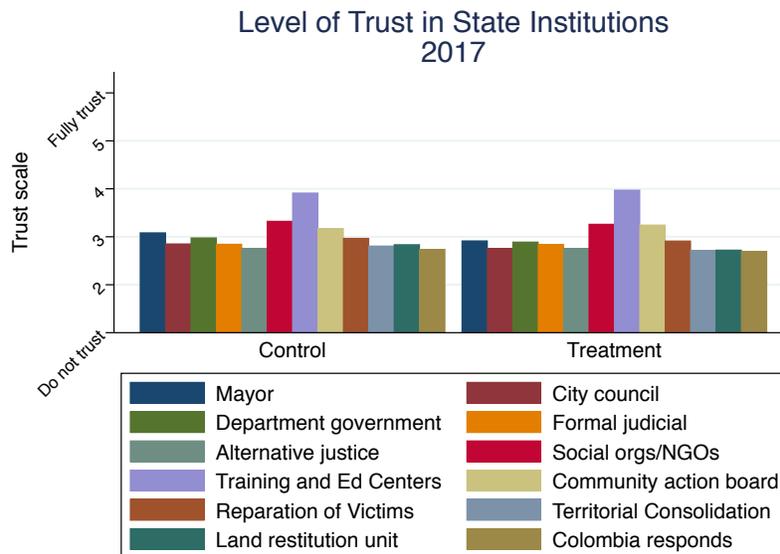
If there were differential effects, there is suggestive evidence here, and from the interviews, that trust in treatment municipalities decreased less, or perhaps increased marginally, relative to control municipalities, though these results are not statistically meaningful in most cases. Since the theory of change expects slow changes in confidence, it may still be too early to assess whether and how RGA programming affects trust. Of course, these data only represent household perceptions. Government and community elites shared their thoughts through the interviews.

**Figure 9: Level of Trust in State Institutions – Baseline**



<sup>17</sup> 3,771 respondents (or 28% of the total in the baseline and midline) did not answer this question suggesting a large number of people are unaware or do not have an opinion of the program. Further, the Colombia Responde and RGA municipalities do not perfectly overlap. Finally, we asked about Colombia Responde in its own right and did not explicitly connect it to USAID or any broader international cooperation efforts.

Figure 10: Level of Trust in State Institutions – Midline



In focus groups and interviews, the mayor’s office was the center of the discussion about trust and legitimacy in state institutions. As in the baseline, corruption was a frequent reason to distrust local government. Nevertheless, in the midline, participants had new standards against which to judge mayors’ trustworthiness given they had been now in office for a longer period. Focus group participants, for instance, complained about absent mayors and there was a widespread feeling of being given false hopes during the past electoral campaigns about more inclusive and open governments. In Miranda (Cauca), a participant argued, “When mayors are doing politics they make promises. They would go to hell and give anything to the devil, and then when they are in office, they’ll throw holy water to the devil so that it never comes back.”

Based on the interview and focus group data, we also found that the prime factors that increase citizen trust in the mayor’s office remain to be the same as in the baseline: their close relationship with the community and their human qualities. Given that, at the time of the midline, mayors had been in office for a more extended period, one of the main reasons to trust them was the visibility of public investment rather than past performance. Similarly, municipal officials declared to have more positive perspectives about the trust that citizens have in the administration. As in the baseline, most of them believe that citizens are trusting their administration, although a sizeable number also said that they are not sure about this. Positive sentiments are reflected in comments such as the following by a mayor’s team member in Puerto Libertador:

Trust has been recovered, thank God. People have placed great trust in the mayor, we have become very close to the community, we are going to the countryside. One of the great virtues of our government is all that we have shared with people. I have

enjoyed going to all the veredas without security problems. That generates confidence in the community.

Many of the mayoral representatives believed the lack of confidence in the local administration was due to a generalized distrust in the national government. “We have given the community spaces to participate. But the distrust is evident, not only toward the current local administration but also toward the government. There’s distrust in the State and everything related to it.” (Teorama, Norte de Santander). Likewise, cabinet members declared that citizens lack knowledge about administrative processes and the financial and administrative limitations of mayors, negatively affecting their perceptions about the local administration.

Community elite interviews also suggest that there is a slightly more positive perception of local governments in treatment than in control municipalities. In treatment municipalities, 67% of the references coded for the “trust and legitimacy” category, reflect positive perceptions. In control municipalities, only 58% of the coded references are positive.

To understand citizens’ perception of armed actors, we first asked citizens about levels of support for various legal and illegal armed actors (government army, government police, and illegal armed groups). The results show slight decreases in trust in the public forces (See Annex Figure A9). In most cases, these declines are seen in the treatment and not in control groups. Again, the theory of change suggests a time lag for increasing trust, so these declines in trust might be expected in the short run given the shifting expectations among the public toward public institutions in the wake of the peace process with the FARC.

Second, we asked people who they would turn to in the case of a dispute. Respondents largely reported they would turn to neighbors and government institutions rather than illegal armed groups, a result that is largely consistent with the baseline (See Annex Figure A10). 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 A11, there are some modest changes in these views, but none are statistically different from baseline to the midline.

In sum, as stated by RGA, a key hope is that by increasing the capacity of municipalities and departments to deliver services, the governance will improve while *trust, credibility and legitimacy will be built*. With that said, building trust can be a slow process. Although trust in institutions has slightly declined across the municipalities of study, the survey data and community interviews suggest RGA municipalities have sustained higher levels of citizen trust in government. Citizens trust administrations insofar as they feel mayors and their teams are committed to the well-being of the community. Qualitative data shows that the engagement of mayors is gauged by the amount of time they spent in their municipalities or public appearances, and by the number of “visible” public works (road improvement, parks, community centers, etc.). One of the challenges is that citizens may have expectations about government performance that are different from government capabilities. Similarly, corruption and patronage, pervasive forces across many Colombian institutions, still negatively affect citizen’s trust of mayoral performance in some municipalities.

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

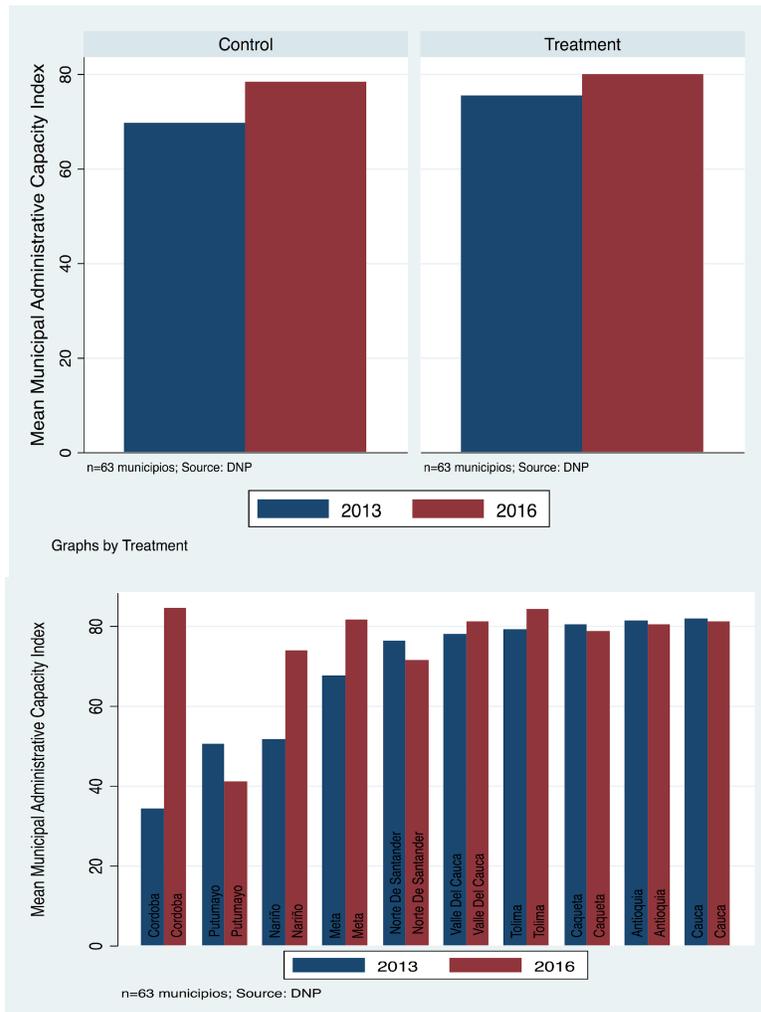
In this section, we consider a number of factors related to Component 2, including specifics about fiscal management, taxation, royalties, and service provision. Based on the theory of change, it is likely that any treatment effects should be observed earlier in the areas of municipal capacity, taxation, and royalties, but later in areas of service provision, which may require a better fiscal environment. Overall, the results of the midline suggest general improvements across most Component 2 indicators, though the improvements appear to occur in both RGA and non-RGA municipalities. Using administrative data, fiscal performance as well as royalty funds appear to be increasing in RGA municipalities relative to control. In some attitudes about taxation as well as in the royalties' administrative information, there is weak evidence that RGA municipalities are improving more than non-RGA municipalities, though this evidence is mixed and not statistically strong. We simply highlight the possibility here as the beginning of an upward trajectory to be followed through to endline.

Before turning to specifics, we first consider some basic data on administrative capacity. According to the Department of National Planning (DNP) administrative capacity index, a component of the Integral Performance Index, the treatment and control municipalities are similar at both midline and baseline.<sup>18</sup> See Figure 11 also for a departmental breakdown. Statistical analysis suggests that the increase in treatment municipalities is potentially meaningful with a statistical test that approaches conventional levels of significance. The DNP data show that the municipalities in the departments of Córdoba, Putumayo, and Nariño all had significantly lower capacities than the other RGA municipalities, but this changed somewhat by 2016 such that Córdoba increased to the highest capacity department. Nariño also increased in capacity quite substantially though Putumayo (a control municipality) decreased substantially.

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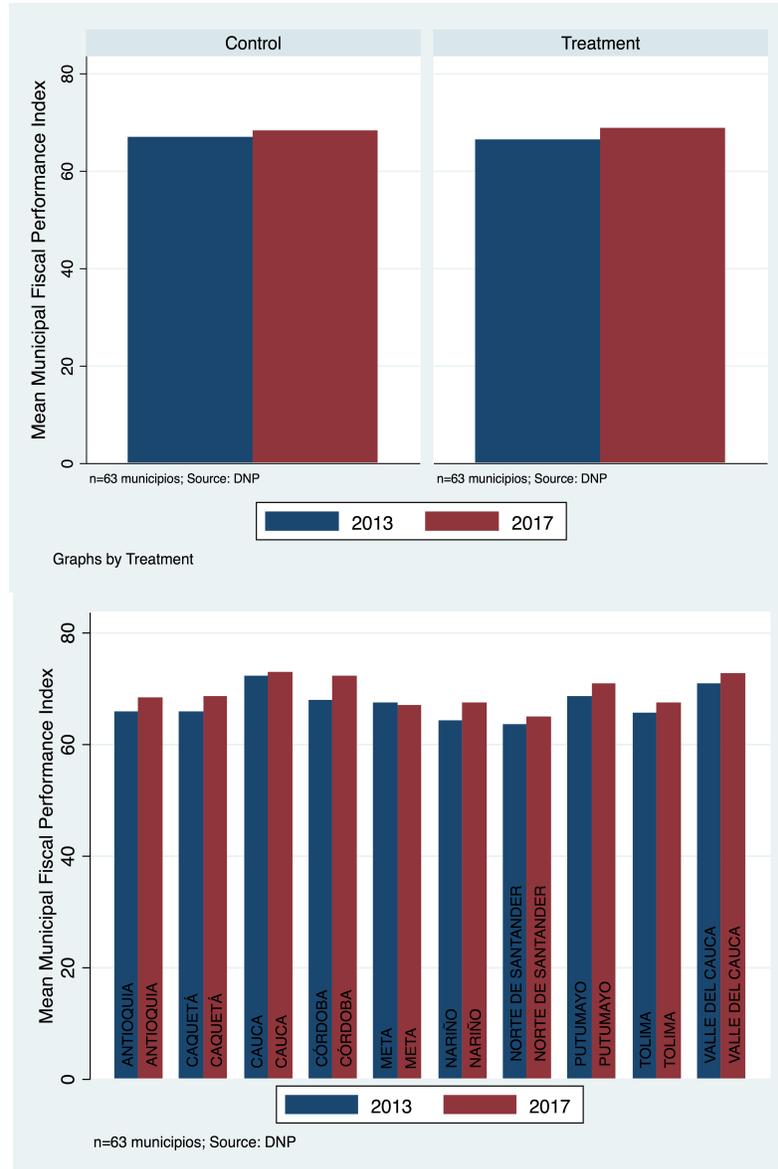
<sup>18</sup> For the endline analysis we also plan to use the Integral Performance Index (Disempeño Integral) to more broadly assess final impact of the program.

Figure 11: Mean Administrative Capacity at Baseline and Midline



At the midline, the municipal fiscal performance index shows that treatment municipalities have better fiscal performance than control municipalities. This contrasts with the baseline, which suggested that treatment and control municipalities were overall quite similar. These results suggest a positive impact of the RGA program with respect to fiscal performance. See Figure 12 also for the departmental breakdown

Figure 12: Mean Fiscal Performance at Baseline and Midline for Treatment and Control, and then by Department



A specific measure of fiscal accountability includes public accounting activity (rendiciones de cuentas). According to Annex Figures A12 and A13, they were balanced across treatment and control at baseline, and increased in both control and treatment, though more so in treatment.

We also analyze the extent to which municipalities find themselves running deficits from baseline to midline. Annex Figures A14 and A15 show this information by treatment and control and then by department. As with much of the other data, treatment and control are

relatively well balanced at baseline and continue to be balanced at midline. The levels of deficits are also similar at baseline and midline, with perhaps a mild decrease in treatment municipalities though one that is not statistically meaningful.

Regarding municipality performance, we asked local government officials and community leaders whether they thought the performance of the mayor’s office had improved or worsened over the past two years. Municipality performance is a key anticipated outcome of RGA from the program’s accompaniment and training of municipal officials, in particular approaches that help generate revenue and provide public services. Overall, there is a positive or at least neutral image of the performance of the municipalities. As expected, there are isolated cases of members of local government who believe things have worsened. Two of those cases refer to weak planning capacity and the other two refer to lack of resources and difficulties in proposing projects to the national government. See Table 1.

**Table 1: Change in municipality performance – Cabinet members**

<b>Change in muni. Performance</b>	<b>Coded references</b>
Positive	74
Negative	4

Positive views about municipality performance were toned down when we asked cabinet members about specific obstacles to the local administration performance. Many agreed that lack of economic resources, adequate human resources, and trouble navigating national laws and requirements were the main problems. Some comments illustrate these sentiments and Table 2 summarizes the overall patterns:<sup>19</sup>

“The municipality doesn’t have enough resources to satisfy all the needs of the people.... It also falls short in administratration. We need help from the central government” [Mayor’s Office representative, Hacarí, Norte de Santander].

“We need more staff aid the people in this municipality. There are 26,000 people and we only have 20 staff in this office...” [Mayor’s Office representative, Fortúl, Arauca].

“We have no training on the changes in requirements for administrative processes with the national government. We make a lot of mistakes because we don’t have adequate knowledge...” [Mayor’s Office representative, Teorama, Norte de Santander].

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<sup>19</sup> In the Annex, we report kinds of international assistance these leaders felt could be useful.

**Table 2: Obstacles to municipality performance -Cabinet Members**

	<b>Coded References</b>
Lack of resources	64
Unprepared or insufficient personnel	30
National laws and requirements	25
Communication with community	12
Updated data	4
Opposition	3
Infrastructure	3
Reception of displaced people	2
Armed groups	2

To evaluate municipality performance we also asked community leaders how they thought the local administration had changed in the past two years. Table 3 shows that many have a positive perception of the changes in their municipalities. Those changes are visible public works and increased community participation, as the following answers illustrate:

For me it has been very good because since I've been president of the local committee this has been one of the few administrations that has included us in their accountability exercises, in their productive projects and in everything else they have done... [Community leader, Puerto Rico, Caquetá].

The past administration didn't do projects like this one has. The mayor has done projects in the whole region and they are all good. He is a trustworthy man who has a lot of leadership. He has focused many problems [Community leader Chitagá, Norte de Santander].

This administration has generated a greater number of participatory mechanisms. It has worked more with the community and has included it in planning its political projects and how they are going to achieve them [Community leader Villa Rica, Cauca].

Consequently, those who believe conditions have worsened in the past two years see a decreased participation of the community and perceive the government as corrupt and inefficient. As some the following statements show:

It is bad. People like me who have direct contact with communities are the ones that know their needs. We are the representatives of the local committees and we are not heard. When we demand that they [local administration] listen to our needs we are ignored. How can they know us if they never go to our neighborhoods? [Community leader, Pradera, Valle del Cauca].

“Terrible. If we had it bad before, now we are worse because unfortunately they [local administration] are dedicated to making money for themselves. The town has seen no development. It is worse now” [Community leader. San martin, Meta].

The current mayor is temporary because the former mayor was suspended from office... She ended up implicated in something she had done with a past administration... They appointed mayor has been here for a year... and if you want to talk to him he is never there. He hasn't done any public works. There was money for some works but they were never executed [Community leader. Sardinata, Norte de Santander].

**Table 3: Change in municipality Performance – community leaders**

<b>Change in municipality performance – community leaders</b>	<b>Coded references</b>
Positive changes	163
No change	25
Negative changes	94

The responses about municipality performance show that community leaders and cabinet members remain positive about their municipalities. However, when details are offered, it is clear that mayoralities struggle to achieve positive changes. The struggle to gain citizen’s trust is even greater when positive perceptions depend on mayoral spending (i.e., works or infrastructure).

## **Taxes**

Administrative data on taxes, surveys, interviews and focus groups provide a complex but possibly optimistic view of RGA impact on taxation. While official data show little change between baseline and midline or differences between control and treatment municipalities, surveys and interviews suggest that in treatment municipalities perception about taxation shows an advancement in “payment culture”, as well as in the capacities of mayoral offices to collect taxes. The treatment and control groups appear fairly evenly balanced at the midline for overall municipal revenue, though the statistical results reveal a meaningful statistical difference between control and treatment, where treatment municipalities have higher revenue than controls, suggesting possible RGA impact. (See Figure 13.) The statistical analysis confirms no meaningful differences between treatment and control municipalities.

To consider a different type of tax-based revenue, Figure 14 shows mean municipal property revenues by treatment and control groups. Revenues are balanced at both baseline and midline, although the levels of municipal revenues increase from around 13-14% to approximately 20% in both groups.

Figure 13: Mean Total Municipal Revenue by Treatment group, 2013 and to 2016

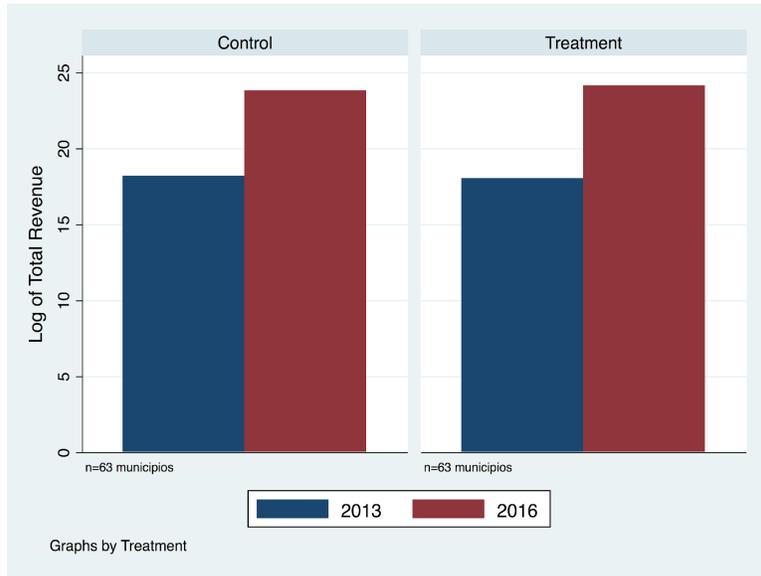
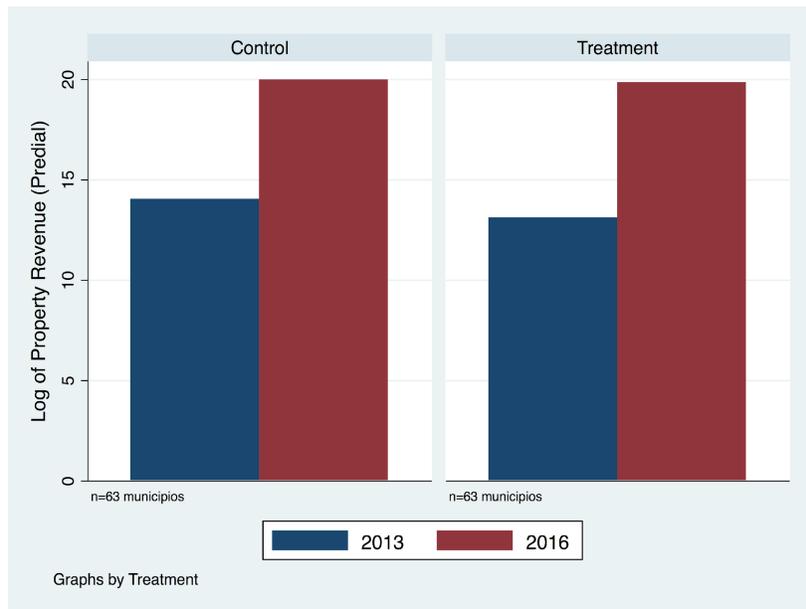


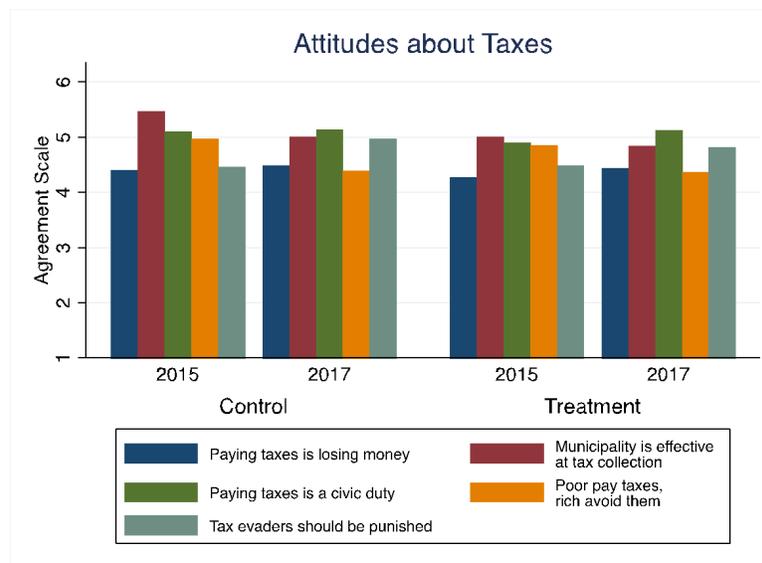
Figure 14: Mean Municipal Property Revenues by Treatment group, 2013 to 2016



When it comes to perceptions and declared intentions, however, the results are slightly different, and point to the possible beginning of RGA impact. When we asked citizens about

taxes in the baseline and midline surveys, the results show some positive changes. At baseline, they said they believe that municipalities are generally effective at collecting taxes and think paying taxes is “a civic duty.” They also indicated that while they desire a just tax system, they evinced skepticism. They viewed tax policies as widely unfair, as many agreed with the statement that the “poor pay taxes and the rich avoid them.” Results at the midline are largely consistent as shown in Figure 15, but demonstrate some small increases for the treatment group that do not readily appear for the control group, though this result is not statistically strong. There are positive trends in the responses, “the municipality is effective at tax collection,” and, “paying taxes is a civic duty.” Conversely, there are negative effects related to the last response: “tax evaders should be punished.” These results suggest that some citizen attitudes about taxes are changing, perhaps due to the RGA’s intervention.

**Figure 15: Attitudes about Taxes across Control/Treatment**



Interviews with municipal cabinet members yielded evidence consistent with the surveys and show a slight, and positive, difference between control and treatment municipalities. When asked about their opinions in tax collection, the majority of respondents in control municipalities pointed to the critical constraints to effective tax collection while respondents in treatment municipalities claimed that tax collection has improved and that they were doing well. Interestingly, the latter group referred to the constitution of new municipal agencies (offices within the current secretaries, secretary of finance, or an inspection unit, chiefly) designated to tax collection as a key to their success. They also believed that their administration was doing well by reaching out to civilians and making deals with them – such as interest deduction or scheduling payments. Furthermore, municipal cabinet members sustained that citizens are learning about the importance of paying taxes and that this is conducive to the establishment of “an outstanding payment culture” (Caloto, Cauca). All of these processes are intertwined, as a cabinet member from the municipality of Convención (Norte de Santander) declared, “Citizens are finding out about the importance of paying their taxes, and that has been achieved because we have a person making the receipts, reaching out, and making payment agreements with the people.”

In control municipalities, on the other hand, cabinet members primarily complained about two things: First, that there is still a lack of "tax culture" or "culture of payment." Civilians are used to not paying on time, of not knowing why they have to pay, or of not prioritizing paying taxes. We do not have a culture of paying [taxes]," confirms a cabinet member from Ortega, "There are still many people who are in debt." Second, most of the properties lack documents that prove ownership. Many of these properties are still registered as part of the public domain, and thus there is no legal mechanism to tax those properties. This is prominent in more rural municipalities, "The legalization of the property is low or almost null. If there are no properties, nothing can be taxed" (Mapiripan, Meta). Cabinet members also recommended legalizing properties and teaching townspeople about the importance of paying taxes. Similarly, many of them argued that they "are raising awareness and guiding the community to pay their dues and recognize it as a form of investment in the same community" (Milán, Caquetá). They noted this would take a while.

While each of the types of data do not yield a consistent story, the survey and qualitative evidence point towards some possible positive changes. In treatment municipalities, citizens are aware of the importance of paying taxes for their general wellbeing. This transformation in their system of values is also recognized by the cabinet members, who claim that citizens are learning about the importance of paying taxes and slowly coming to their office to pay their dues. Results also indicate that there is a change in what in these communities call a "payment culture"—how people understand and assume the importance of paying taxes. These changes may be attributable to the RGA's intervention and are a first step towards the consolidation of an efficient tax collecting system. However, these changes in values do not necessarily translate into changes in behavior. If these attitudinal changes persist, we might expect increases in municipal revenues for the RGA municipalities in the endline.

### Royalties

The royalties (*regalias*) system allows municipalities to access national level natural resource funds to apply toward development projects. We analyze administrative data on royalties' revenue and spending finding some differences across departments, treatment and control municipalities, and in the baseline and midline. Interviews with mayoral office representatives show some of the obstacles local administrations face when navigating the new system. However, they recognize, as well, the benefits of having standardized processes.

Based on administrative data (see Figure 16), municipalities on average received more royalty revenues than control municipalities, which contrasts with the baseline. The analysis indicates that these results are also statistically meaningful, indicating likely RGA impact in generating higher royalty revenues. There are also some increases in royalty revenues across departments. An examination of the departments (Figure 16 shows that Tumaco (the only municipality in Nariño) was a significant outlier at baseline and still received the largest share of royalties at midline. However, Tumaco saw a large decline in royalties from baseline to midline due to poor management of projects as well as attacks against oil pipelines by the FARC and ELN rebel groups.<sup>20</sup> Other departments saw gains in royalty revenues at midline.

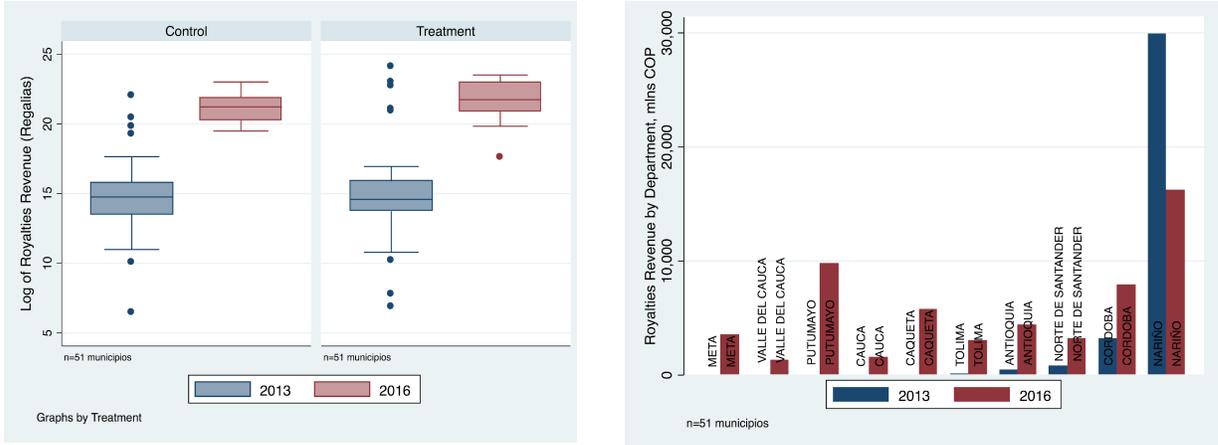
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<sup>20</sup> [http://caracol.com.co/radio/2017/10/27/economia/1509105348\\_541385.html](http://caracol.com.co/radio/2017/10/27/economia/1509105348_541385.html)

<http://diariodelsur.com.co/noticias/nacional/regal%C3%ADas-tumaco-se-reducen-en-6-mil-millones-por-atentados-105057>

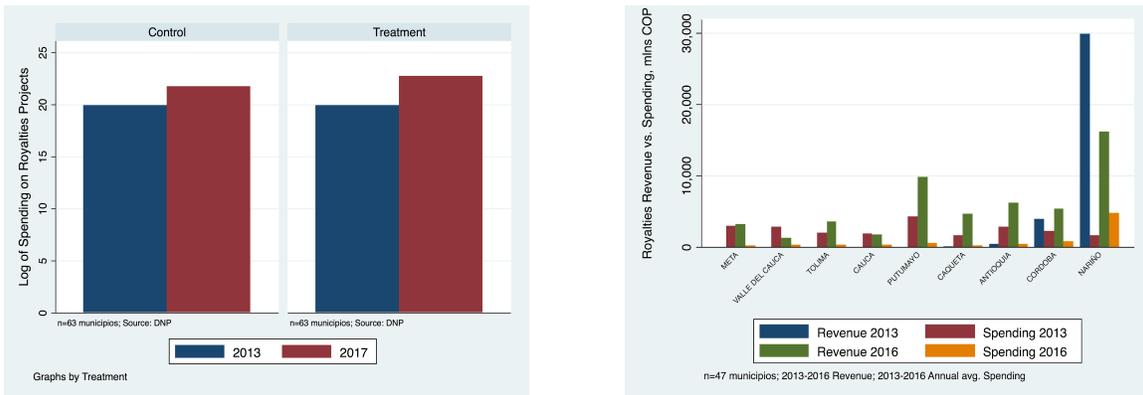


**Figure 16: Mean Municipal Royalties Revenues (Regalías) by Treatment (Left Pane) and Department Revenue (Right Pane), 2013 to 2016**

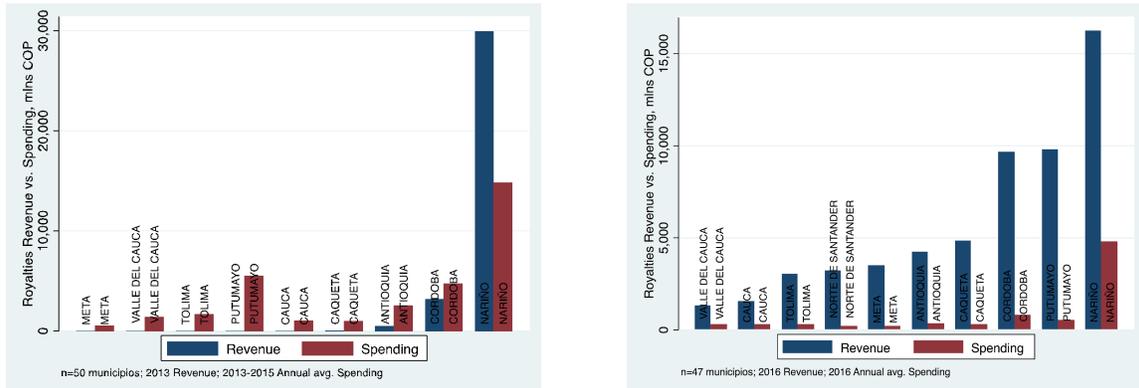


We also calculated the amount of public spending being financed by mining royalties at both midline and baseline. This provides an indicator of how much royalties a municipality is receiving, along with what they intend to do with the resources. For the baseline, spending on royalties was balanced across treatment and control (See Figure 17). At midline, we observe less spending in both treatment and control with relative balance. Looking at royalty revenue vs. spending over time similarly demonstrates variation across specific departments (See Figures 17 & 18), with Nariño highest among the departments, both at baseline and midline. Most departments experienced increases by midline.

**Figure 17: Mean Municipal Public Spending Financed by Mining Royalties by Treatment, 2010-2013 to 2017**



**Figure 18: Mean Municipal Public Spending Financed by Mining Royalties by Department, 2010-2013 to 2016**



In the interviews, functionaries of the mayors’ offices criticized the new royalties system. Cabinet members in oil and mining boomtowns protested about how “[The distribution of resources] is very unfair for the municipalities that extract [natural resources], since very little of that money arrives here” (Yarumal, Antioquia). They also argued that the new system forces them to restructure their budgets compared to past administrations as they now receive fewer resources than what they used to. In this regard, a cabinet member from Valencia (Córdoba) said:

Due to the budget cuts made [by the national government] to the municipality and other territorial entities, we have been severely affected, since the [rate of] execution of projects will decrease, compared to the last administration and the budget they had. But I think it's important to continue working with what we have.

Many of the cabinet members claimed that they did not receive a fair amount of royalty revenues to operate fully, an important though only part of a municipality’s funding. They also complained that the new system demanded too much paperwork and that it was not effective for implementation purposes. Some of them consider it a constraint: “Now, I think we have to abide by too many protocols and procedures to be able to execute the projects” (Anorí, Antioquia). Still, cabinet members claimed it is a reasonable system, as they now know what is required to have their projects approved. We noted that cabinet members in treatment municipalities also consider that while there is more paperwork, it is easier to get institutional support with this new system. Overall, our results show that cabinet members are still learning how to navigate the new system. Due to the delayed implementation of the RGA in some municipalities, some local government offices may not have any experience at all with the system, so these quotes represent those who have engaged at some level.

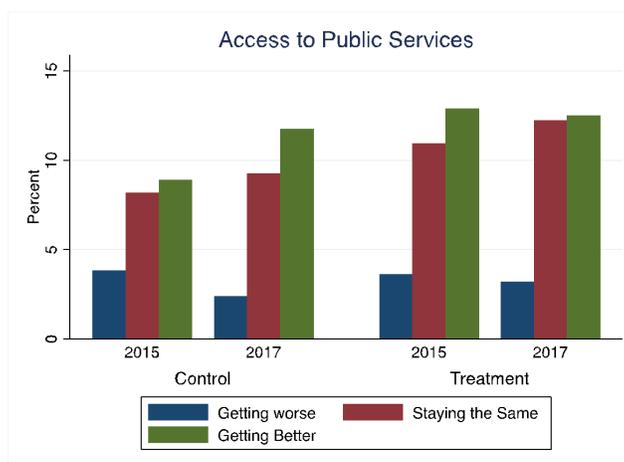
In sum, royalty revenues generally improved since the baseline, including more royalties received in treatment relative to control, indicating that RGA may have had some impact in improving fiscal management and capacity, thereby enabling access to more royalty funds. There are few differences among RGA and control municipalities in terms of public projects financed by the royalties, however. These trends could be attributable to shifting *regalias* regulations at the national level, as well as the short time frame that municipal administrations have had thus far to acquire and appropriate royalty revenues since they entered the office. In our interviews and focus groups, we noticed that those municipalities that did not receive royalties before the new system and that are receiving support from the program could navigate it with more ease. They also argue that the new system is inconvenient but clear since it provides strict guidelines on how to apply for royalties. Those municipalities that do not receive support on this matter have not been able to navigate the new system effectively. As we noted since the baseline, and in the words of the municipal personnel, technical support for cabinet members is fundamental to the future development of these municipalities.

### Service provision

Based on the theory of change, improvement in service provision due to the RGA may take some time as the basic public management systems are improved and greater resources flow into the municipalities. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, there do not appear to be many changes in service provision in our midline results. Both RGA and non-RGA municipalities increased their municipal expenditures, but the RGA municipalities increased theirs to a statistically greater degree, suggesting likely RGA impact in boosting not just revenues but also spending, which is likely to go to service provision at least to some extent. See Annex Figures A20 and A21. Ratings of, and access to, services also do not increase or decrease more in RGA areas relative to non-RGA areas nor they change substantially from baseline to midline.

Figure 19 shows survey respondents' views of access to public services (generically defined) and whether services are getting worse, staying the same, or getting better. The results suggest that access is not getting better in the treatment group whereas it is in the control group. An increasing number in both groups reports that access is staying the same. The same holds for specific education and health services, which RGA does not directly program but may come about indirectly through better fiscal management and capacity (see Figures A22 and A23.) When taking into account the general upward trend, this suggests that the RGA intervention is not improving perceptions of access.

Figure 19: Access to Public Services – Baseline to Midline



As we noted in the baseline report, in all the municipalities, citizens share a general sense that the quality of service provision could improve. In the focus groups, citizens complain mostly about those services that are urgent: health, water, and electricity. When we talked to the community leaders, on the other hand, their most pressing concerns were the quality of the water, energy, and sanitary services. The interviews and focus groups indicate that aging infrastructure, population growth, and neglect of rural areas are the most significant challenges for the provision of water and energy. As a community leader in Caucasia argued:

...the population has grown in recent years, and the sewage system and public lighting are no longer adequate. The town has overgrown and administrations don't plan for the future... (Community leader, Caucasia, Antioquia)

When it comes to focus groups, our results point to a perceived decline in service provision across different institutions and public services. Citizens state that they pay high prices for the services they receive. Results from the interviews and focus groups are consistent with what was noted in the baseline: access to essential services is not getting better. In municipalities where privates provide crucial services, and that also rely on the provision of external services, there seems to be little space for the cabinet members to make things better. Many of them do recognize the material constraints in which their municipalities operate and hope to receive more economic support from the national level.

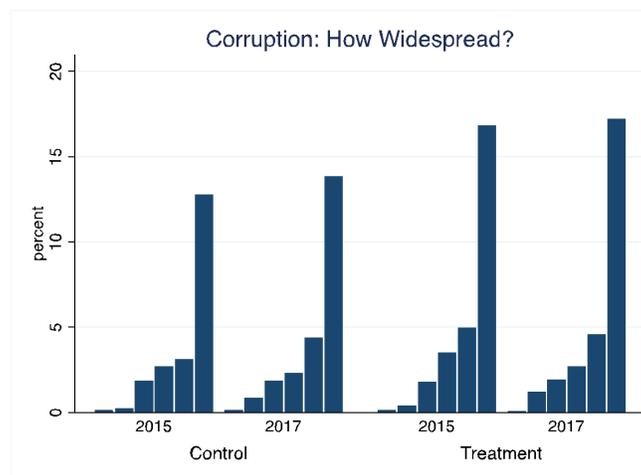
In sum, service provision has not been positively affected by RGA programming at the midline. Service provision is also perhaps a relatively slow-moving outcome, in which improvements are perhaps only likely to be observed after improved municipal management, budgeting, revenue generation, and oversight processes have taken hold.

## Impact: Component 4: Transparent and accountable municipal budgeting, planning, spending with civil society and media oversight

According to Component 4, RGA will create awareness, strengthen citizens' capacity with information and tools so that they take an interest, participate, and advocate in 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 areas such as water and sewer services, roads, and improving parks and public spaces, among others.

To understand changes in outcomes related to Component 4, we considered several pieces of information. We first analyzed citizen perceptions of corruption among the municipal leadership because it is an indicator of whether citizens feel like exercising their rights and responsibilities will be efficacious. It also speaks to the issue of whether social oversight among citizen groups is working. As Figure 20 demonstrates, residents perceive corruption to be widespread, with some increase from baseline to midline. Since corruption is a sensitive topic and may be underreported by respondents, these results may understate levels of corruption.

**Figure 20: How Widespread is Corruption by Department (Left Pane) and Treatment (Right Pane)?**



Focus group participants, however, did indicate that corruption was a concern for local governance in their municipalities. They also stressed that it is a country-wide problem that runs through all government levels. As one focus group participant remarked, “Corruption is what has destroyed this country. We have so much money that there is even some left to be stolen. If we didn’t have money, no one would steal.” (Vista Hermosa, Meta)

In interviews with community leaders, corruption also emerged in conversations in relation to royalties, tax collection, and investment. Lack of knowledge and secrecy around public finances were declared to be the main reasons why corruption has a pervasive problem:

“We know that there is plenty of money coming from royalties. For example, they tell us there are 300 million pesos for community projects, or roads, mainly for people in rural areas. But we have to wait for the money to come and when it does, it is not enough... the national government sends the money, but we never receive it. It gets lost along the way [...] we end up with so little. There are 60 homes here, and resources arrive for 12 of them at the most” (Community leader, Chaparral, Tolima).

In general, citizens appear to perceive the whole political system as corrupt, of which mayors, their staffs, and their activities are a part. Thus, electing different candidates or political parties or encouraging political participation by public officials are not seen as solutions for corruption.

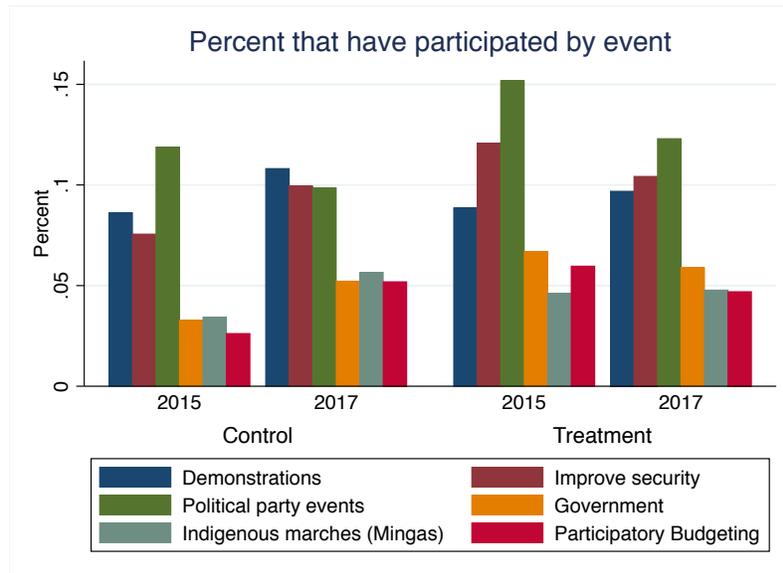
In sum, corruption remains pervasive across the areas of study, including in RGA program areas. Political clientelism and a lack of trust and transparency combine to limit the ability of citizens to verify politicians’ management of public resources. It appears, at least at the midline stage, that the RGA program is not substantially altering perceptions of corruption relative to the comparison municipalities.

### **Political Participation**

Levels of political participation are generally high across the sampled municipalities. The strength and quality of the engagement, however, exhibit room for improvement. Considering participation in various political, cultural, and social events, citizens reported being involved in some different kinds of events (See Figure 21 and Annex Figure A25 for overall trends, as well as trends separated by treatment and control). RGA programming is anticipated to mainly affect particular forms of participation, such as participatory budgeting and participating in government activities.

There was increased involvement in sporting events but reductions in most other kinds of participation. This contrasts with expectations from the theory of change, where participation should increase faster in the treatment group than the control group. It suggests that RGA programming may not be effectively encouraging citizen participation in key activities of the municipalities. A notable exception, perhaps, is the decrease in demonstrations in the RGA municipalities, compared to a decrease in the controls. To the extent that RGA is encouraging more formal political participation, and less taking to the streets, then the RGA may be having some effect in this regard.

**Figure 21: Percent of People That Have Participated in Event – Baseline vs. Midline**



In our qualitative research, we examined the causes of this reduction. First, we asked community leaders whether it was easy for people to participate in politics in their municipality. Most believe it is easy to participate in electoral politics, perhaps underscoring why RGA is focusing on different less-common forms of participation. Most of them also underscore the importance of the peace agreement, as it helped create a safer environment for participation. The problem, however, is the conditions of this participation. People still distrust politics and politicians. Community leaders and citizens suggested that to participate, they either become part of patronage network, use their vote for immediate benefits, or abstain because they do not feel their voices are heard or their votes count. The following comments illustrates this situation:

People like to participate but, because of the corrupt system, in Colombia, things turn out as they do. Positions are almost never filled with people with the adequate professional profile. They are not qualified, and they get named because they have connections. They get elected with the help of the people, but once they assume office, they forget about us. They do not go back to the neighborhoods. I've also heard they pay 50 or 100 thousand pesos for the votes (Community leader, Tumaco, Nariño).

We also asked local government representatives about changes in political participation in the last year. Paradoxically, most of the interviewees, in control and treatment municipalities, claimed that political participation had increased. While in treatment municipalities 33% of the references coded as “increased political participation” referenced new or strengthened oversight groups, this was true for 6% of the references coded for the same category in control municipalities. At least qualitatively, this indicates some potential RGA-related boost in participation and oversight. Social media interactions and voter turnout were offered as the main indicators of this presumed increase in participation. When asked about

participation and accountability, a representative from the Mayor's Office in Puerto Asís (Putumayo) declared:

[Political participation] has increased compared to 2016 due to our social media strategy. We have accounts for the mayor's office and of the mayor himself... Facebook and Whatsapp are the most popular ones. Other media like radio and "perifoneos" are used in rural areas.

In sum, while there have been some decreases in participation (typically an undesirable RGA outcome save for perhaps demonstrations), and generally not much change, participation levels (not trends) remain high across all RGA and comparison municipalities. There is also a disconnect between what citizens do and what local governments perceive. Social media has become an indicator of engagement, but it might be giving a wrong impression of substantive political participation. Additionally, even if more oversight committees and other participatory spaces have been created, especially in treatment municipalities, it has not necessarily meant that people will use them or perceive them as useful oversight mechanisms. The relationships between juntas de acción comunal and local administrations display similar problems (See Annex Table A14).

### **Citizen Oversight – Veedurías**

Citizen oversight is the prime mechanism to reduce patronage, clientelism, and corruption within state entities. In focus groups, however, we noted that citizens still had relatively little knowledge about oversight committees and few of them declared having participated. Citizens often referred to overseers as members of "the clique," or as individuals who are trying to gain personal benefits from public investments. The following exchange between focus group participants in Vista Hermosa, Meta, expands on this matter:

Participant 1: Here in Vista Hermosa, veedurías are the same people of the JAC and those who are supposed to execute the work. If they turn in mediocre construction, who is going to say anything?

Participant 2: The truth is that they call people to meetings to set up the veeduría and then the day of the meeting they change the date and say that the meeting already happened.

Participant 3: They only let people they know participate but not the people that want to work.

Among community elites, there were better perceptions of oversight groups, perhaps because many of them were part of JACs or participated in some form of oversight. Nevertheless, few of them declared participating in a formal oversight committee (with a personería jurídica). There was not a significant difference in community leaders' responses between treatment and control municipalities. In the former, 63% of the coded references of participation in oversight groups corresponded to "reasons not to participate" and in the later 60% of the references were coded in that same category. Community leaders did not participate in oversight committees mainly because they believe it requires special skills and

training that they do not have or because they felt that it would have little impact. As one leader in Valdivia stated:

We don't participate because we don't know how. We need more training as leaders and as communities [...] They elected me to the JAC because they felt I was a good person, but honestly, I did not have the knowledge to do it. Community leaders are regular people. We are not highly educated [...] So we don't know about *veedurías* or their importance (Community leader, Valdivia, Antioquia).

Although results from the survey and interviews suggest a decreased level of violence, security is still a concern for social leaders who want to participate in oversight activities. Local government representatives identified ill-intended or groundless complaints to the municipality as one of the obstacles in their work with communities. As a government member in Ortega expressed, "There are different kinds of demands. In these communities, there are a lot of ill-intended comments. Most complaints we receive are from people who want to disturb or hinder our work. People ask things from the administration because they want to know what is going on in their town, or how the budget is being invested."

To be sure, there were some positive perspectives on citizen oversight and engagement. Local governments see citizen oversight committees as a way to address the challenges of groundless critiques and aimless demands. As people become more interested in public affairs and better informed about the mayor's work with communities, it becomes easier for mayors and their staffs. As a member of the mayor's office in Montelíbano said, "Now oversight is done by the community. Participation has increased, so people are more involved in the projects."

In sum, according to respondents' accounts, citizen oversight committees are still weak and require additional nurturing to effectively fulfill their oversight roles. Both limited knowledge of committee procedures and threats of violence have impeded participation in the committees. RGA approaches for boosting participation should continue to focus on training and educating citizens while taking local security conditions into account.

## Vulnerable Populations

Consistent with USAID's policies on vulnerable populations, we analyzed conditions of these groups as a result of RGA programming as improving the situation of vulnerable populations is an essential component for achieving both sustainable and *inclusive* peace.<sup>21</sup> The implementing partner was contracted to specifically "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 is to accomplish these aims through the three approaches of "legal/policy changes, capacity-building, and support for civil society initiatives." Addressing the needs of

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<sup>21</sup> "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."

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.

In this midline, we examine a variety of vulnerable populations – ethnic minorities, indigenous, Afro-Colombian, as well as other smaller minority groups – for a number of relevant factors. 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.<sup>22</sup> Many of the vulnerable populations report similar results as the majority populations in Colombia across the categories of victimization, service ratings, drug activities, and perceptions of municipal receptiveness.

The results from the midline sample suggest that for vulnerable populations, there are not many differences relative to the rest of the population, which could be viewed positively or negatively. In some ways, equal treatment is important, though in other ways vulnerable populations may need additional attention. Most measures indicate similar levels of program treatments for vulnerable populations. We also identify some key differences for vulnerable populations, while noting that the number of individuals in the sample from vulnerable populations is small and may not generalize to other vulnerable populations in Colombia.

We considered how perceived responsiveness by municipal authorities to citizen demands varies by ethnicity. Results in Figure 22 illustrate that there is little variation across ethnicities, as most respondents express low to moderate responsiveness from their municipalities. And comparing baseline to midline, there are not large differences. Note that some of the bars fluctuate in height, but the number of observations in these categories is fairly low and, as such, the changes are not meaningful statistically.

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<sup>22</sup> 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.

Figure 22: Municipal Responsiveness and Ethnicity

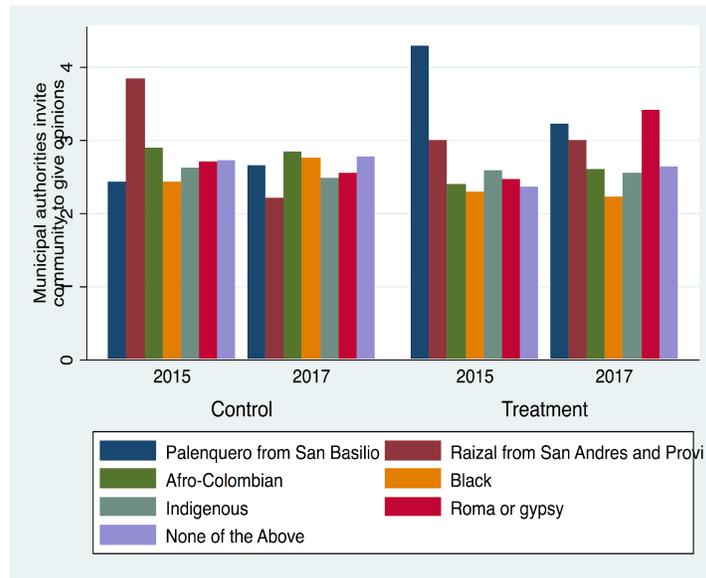
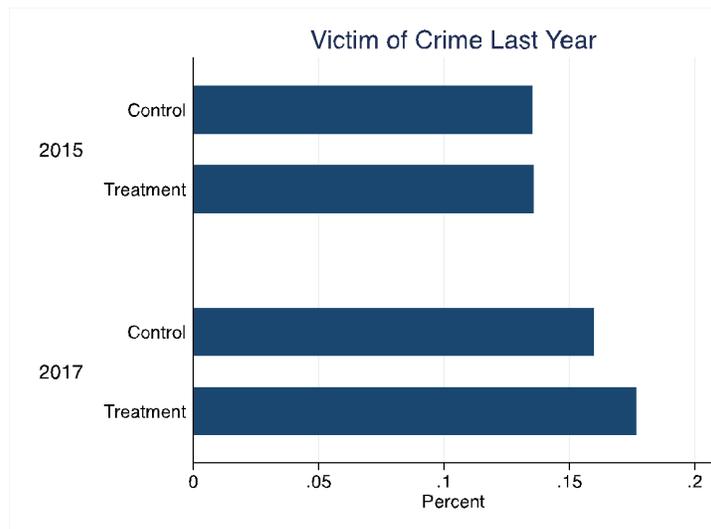


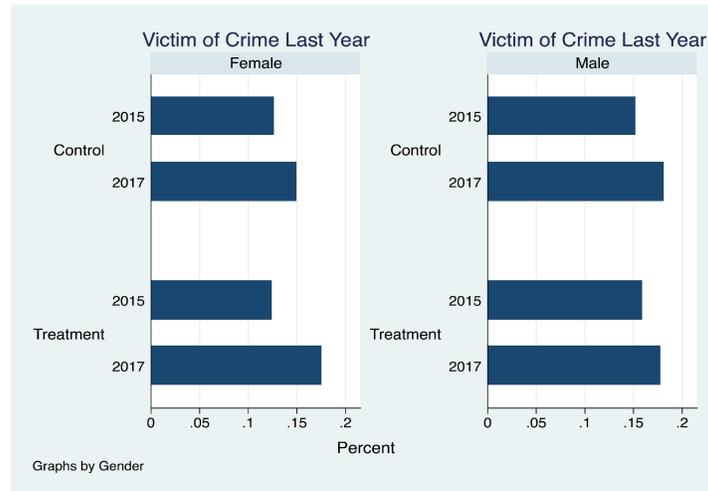
Figure 23 shows that being a victim of a crime is on the rise in both treatment and control groups but likely unrelated to treatment.

Figure 23: Victim of Crime Last Year – Baseline vs. Midline



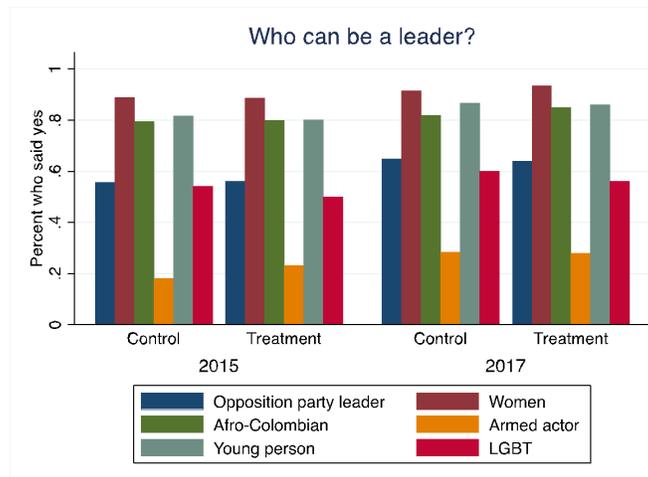
Looking specifically at men vs. women, we observe that both men and women experience increases in reported victimization, though women appear to experience even greater levels than men (See Figure 24).

Figure 24: Victim of Crime Last Year



We considered a number of other factors, as well. In asking about fears of travel at night, women and two ethnic groups – the Palenquero and Raizal – report being more afraid to travel at night (See Figure 33 in the appendix). On the potentially positive side, in the survey we asked “who can be a leader?”, and respondents at midline reported that women and Afro-Colombians could be leaders at higher rates than at baseline. The rates declined for armed actors, which is likely a positive development. Concretely, the survey data indicate that, across treatment and control and over time, most people support the idea of young people, women, opposition party members, or Afro-Colombians as able to be a leader in the community (See Figure 25). Only the Armed Actor category receives less than majority support. Consistent with accounts of “politiquería” (politicking) in focus group comments.

Figure 25: Who Can Be a Leader? – Baseline vs. Midline



Although focus groups and interviews did not include explicit questions about vulnerable populations, they did elicit some relevant comments. Some of them refer to gender violence

in discussions about current security problems. A participant of the focus group held in Vista Hermosa (Meta) expanded:

I am part of a network of women in Vista Hermosa so we meet with police to talk about how we can solve the problem of violence in families. It is sad to see a woman beaten by her husband and then seeing him released from prison almost immediately. A week later he is doing the same...

Similarly, a community leader from Tibú (Norte de Santander) maintained:

In the last two years, we have had moderate levels of violence. We can't say it is safe, but you don't see as many violent crimes. Now insecurity is about theft and intra-familial violence because people are still machistas and women don't say anything

Other remarks concerning vulnerable population had to do with the organizing potential citizens saw among Indigenous groups. A community elite in member in Florida, Valle, recognized that Indigenous groups are still more affected by violence and that they are better organized to defend themselves, "...other groups started emerging, taking things from peasant and in the rural areas. Peasants organized their community watch, while the indigenous cabildos the Indigenous Guard." Another community leader in Santander de Quilichao, Cauca, also recognized the effectiveness of the Indigenous guards in controlling violence in the municipality "The Indigenous Guard does rounds at night everywhere, they control the access of motorcycles to the municipality, they help with security for small businesses."

In sum, vulnerable populations are receiving similar levels of RGA programming as the general population. Women and Afro-Colombians are also increasingly viewed as capable of holding leadership positions. Further, with improving security conditions, communities and governments can increase their focus on addressing gender-based concerns.

### **Arauca: Midline as Baseline**

The department of Arauca has faced especially severe security concerns in recent years, a critical contextual factor in understanding broader success, and is therefore analyzed separately because of the limited ability to collect information at the baseline. These midline results should, therefore, be treated as something of a baseline.<sup>23</sup> We hope to be able to later detect changes between the endline and midline to make inferences about the program in Arauca. Consequently, at endline, we will provide a fuller comparative analysis of Arauca and associated changes.

Here we provide a few illustrative results that demonstrate the state of affairs in Arauca, though these results are based on a small sample. The midline data set can be used to compute additional descriptive or cross-sectional comparisons. While Arauca has been

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<sup>23</sup> We could pool the control and treatment municipalities in Arauca with the other control and treatment municipalities in Colombia for purposes of cross-sectional comparisons.

plagued by ELN violence, the midline results suggest views in Arauca do not differ much from the rest of the RGA treatment and control municipalities in Colombia.

As Figure 26 shows, support in Arauca for the Army and formal justice institutions was moderate and compares favorably to other regions of the country. Support is a little higher on average for nonstate services and alternative justice in the treatment group but a little lower for the Army and formal justice in the treatment group. Figure 27 illustrates a similar phenomenon related to crime and victimization as compared to other parts of Colombia. Over 20% of the respondents in the treatment group report being the victim of a crime but that number drops to a little over 15% in the control group. Figure 28, which shows a number of views on paying taxes, is quite similar to the results for the rest of Colombia, suggesting Arauca may not be different even given the high levels of violence.

**Figure 26: Ratings of State and Non-State Services in Arauca Alone**

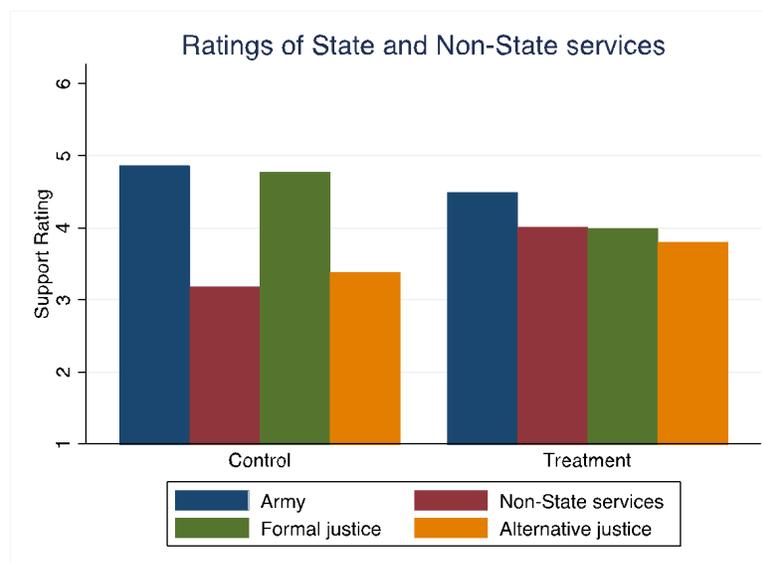


Figure 27: Victim of Crime Last Year in Arauca Alone

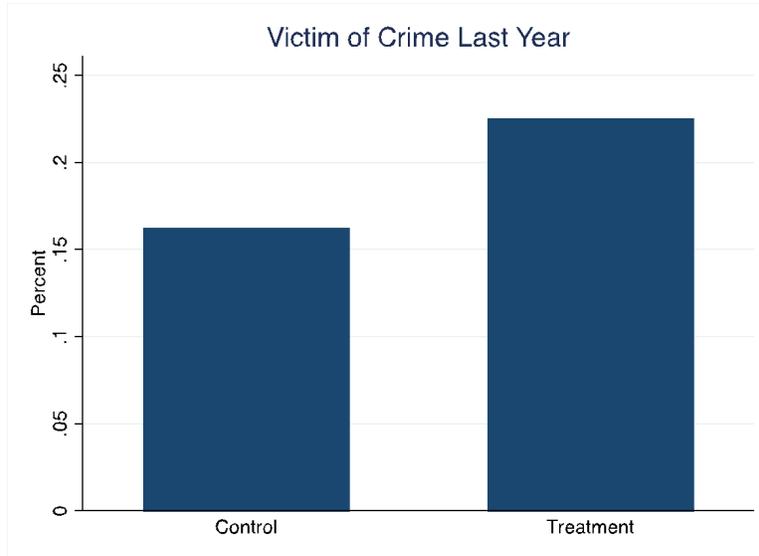
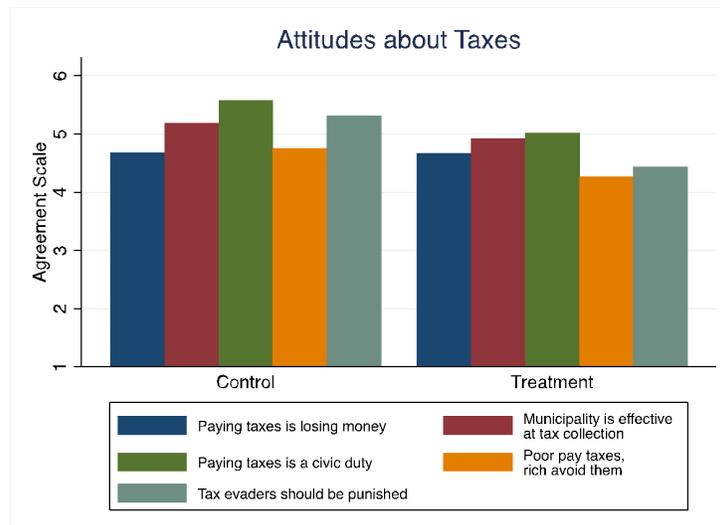


Figure 28: Attitudes about Taxes in Arauca Alone



Given the sensitive security situation, we did not conduct any focus groups, nor did we interview municipal elites. We did, however, talk to one secretary of Puerto Rondón’s mayoralty and interviewed community leaders of most of the municipalities. But this is, by any standard, not representative. Given the reduced number of interviews, it is difficult to make definitive statements about particular trends in the department of Arauca. However, something that reoccurred as a theme was repeated negative comments about the new royalties system. Across all interviews, the participants complained about the lack of

resources that their municipality received. They also believed that the national government has “forgotten” about them and does not make any investments in the region.

As a community leader in Arauquita (Arauca) attests, “We are an oil producing department since 1985, and with those resources we had been able to pave our roads. But unfortunately, the current management has not been able to bring resources from the national level.” Community leaders also cited the lack of communication between local and national authorities and argued that the royalties are getting “lost” in transit (from the national to the local). A community leader from Puerto Rondón, for example, argues that “As for the royalties, they hardly reach a municipality...they get lost in the process, [and we receive] few resources because they do not really arrive.”

The lack of royalty resources draws attention to the challenges of carrying out effective municipal governance. The municipal elite from Puerto Rondón commented on this specifically, a message also communicated by a number of community elites. The mayoral office leader noted that because they are not receiving resources, they “make municipalities like this (those that suffer from limited resources) a little difficult to operate” though notes that it is still possible to “make strategic alliances, and manage our funds properly [...] but it has not been easy” (Mayor’s office, Puerto Rondón). A community elite commented on the consequences of the need to make alliances to attain resources, saying: “We rarely see the mayor because she is always [trying to make alliances with the national government] [...], because we are a little forgotten and also left [behind] (Community leader, Puerto Rondón).”

Other community elites echo these concerns: “...the resources are limited. How to solve problems? How to solve the needs of the community? Before [the new royalties system] there was not so much control. the mayor is working on that.” (Community leader, Arauquita). On the more general lack of resources, in part due to the royalties, another community elite noted: “What happens is that if the people do not have enough to pay for public services, the less they will have to pay taxes, the community scarcely has enough to achieve survival and there is no industry here, no large businesses or large companies, then the taxes that go out, go to the center. The situation in the country has got us screwed.” (Community leader, Saravena)

As these examples attest, there is broad (even if not necessarily representative) concern about the royalties funds. Despite this negative sentiment, we received a few positive comments, including about safety. A community leader in Arauquita provided hope noting, “[t]he progress has been great because, after the peace process, the municipality has been safe, something that hasn’t been seen for the past 25 years.” Moving to endline, royalties and the fiscal situation more generally will be key indicators to track.

## Broader Regional Dynamics

Although our primary goal has been to investigate the program’s impact on treatment and control municipalities, some regional dynamics may be of interest. We also conducted a sub-national, regional analysis of trends in RGA impacts across the different RGA regions. We calculated differences-in-differences for the municipal mean values within each region for

key outcome indicators from the survey from baseline to midline (comparing relative treatment group versus control group changes by region). Although these results are not statistically significant given the small intra-regional samples of municipalities, they provide some initial insights into where RGA programming seems to be having stronger or weaker effects. Table 4 shows the shifts in outcome indicators by regions that might be attributable to RGA activities. (Because of the small number of municipalities in the Sur region and the lack of baseline data for Arauca, the results for these regions are displayed but not analyzed more deeply).

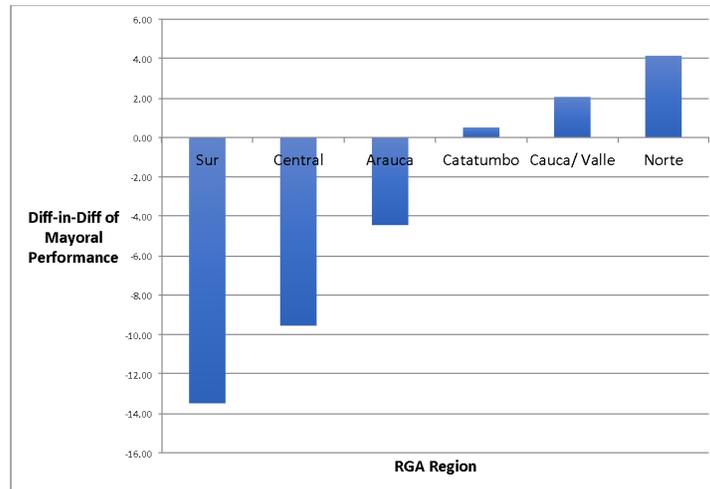
The Norte region saw the highest improvement in citizens' ratings of trust in the mayor's office, whereas the Central region saw relative declines in performance (apparently) related to RGA. (See Table 4 and Figure 29.) The Catatumbo region is far above the other regions in terms of RGA-associated (apparent) shifts in municipal engagement with the population, as gauged by increases in perceptions of municipal authorities inviting the community to express their opinions and taking citizens into account in decision-making. The Cauca/ Valle region saw the greatest RGA-associated improves in the local cultural of paying taxes as indicated by the municipality being higher rated in effectiveness in collecting taxes and perceptions that paying taxes is a civic duty, with Catatumbo all seeing improvements. In terms of improvements in public services provision, Catatumbo and Norte saw the largest (apparent) RGA-associated improvements in the provision of electricity and water services.

Table 4: Regional Analysis of Relative RGA-Associated Changes in Key Outcome Indicators

Outcome Indicator	Arauca	Catatumbo	Cauca/ Valle	Central	Norte	Sur
Confidence in Mayor's office	-4.45	0.51	2.06	<b>-9.54</b>	<b>4.13</b>	<b>-13.50</b>
Municipio invites community to express opinions	4.63	<b>7.31</b>	-2.19	-6.57	2.89	<b>-12.15</b>
Municipio takes community into account for decision-making	4.72	<b>7.73</b>	-4.28	<b>-6.51</b>	3.99	-4.92
Municipality is effective in collecting taxes	2.45	<b>4.61</b>	<b>4.82</b>	<b>-8.71</b>	-4.13	<b>-8.76</b>
Paying taxes is a civic duty	1.33	0.51	<b>4.80</b>	<b>-9.35</b>	-4.80	<b>-10.96</b>
Access to electricity	-0.07	0.01	0.00	<b>-0.02</b>	0.00	<b>0.01</b>
Access to water	-0.15	<b>0.05</b>	0.01	-0.14	<b>-0.03</b>	<b>-0.02</b>
Know RGA	-0.02	-0.01	-0.03	0.01	<b>0.02</b>	<b>-0.08</b>
RGA in village/ municipio	-26.65	<b>50.58</b>	12.93	-28.76	-0.64	<b>-32.80</b>
RGA beneficiary	<b>1.80</b>	-0.25	<b>0.58</b>	0.06	<b>0.62</b>	<b>-0.50</b>

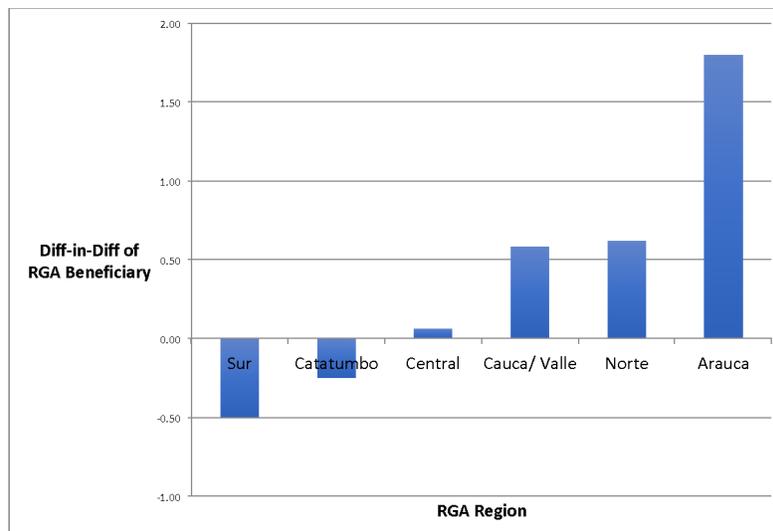
Based on differences-in-differences analysis; cell values indicate the relative improvement of treatment to control municipalities within each reach, based on the scales for the different survey questions. High and low values for each indicator are shaded as bold.

**Figure 29: Regional Differences in Mayoral Performance**



As far as awareness of the RGA program, we assessed surveys responses on whether citizens know of RGA, whether they know it is operating in their village or municipality, and whether they are an RGA beneficiary (See Figure 30). Citizens generally reported greater awareness of the program in the Catatumbo and Norte regions (in treatment relative to control municipios) relative to other regions.

**Figure 30: Differences-in-Differences of Being an RGA Beneficiary, by RGA Region**



## Overall Synthesis & Recommendations

### Synthesis

The RGA treatment and control municipalities comprise a sector of the Colombian population that largely reports negative conditions and a mixed 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 midline evaluation indicate mixed, though overall little, RGA impact to date. The program is still in its early phases in some municipalities and further developed in others. However, and the theory of change is also slow-moving and requires time for program effects to be realized.

So far, the findings tell a story that is consistent with some of the expectations of the theory of change. Revenues have initially increased, likely because increasing funding is a relatively rapid task to accomplish. Also per expectations, other downstream elements of the theory of change—such as starting programs, providing services, addressing corruption, and improving governance—show mixed results to date and have moved more slowly. If the theory of change is correct, increases in revenues and subsequent increases in municipal capacity and oversight should generate larger gains in these areas at the endline analysis.

### General Conclusions

- Although security is not anticipated to be directly affected by RGA activities, RGA programming is not associated with substantially reduced perceptions that armed groups can move freely in treatment areas relative to controls. The FARC is perceived to move freely, though this could be due to the demobilization. BACRIM and criminal actors persist as substantial security threats in some areas.
- Since the baseline, trust in institutions has slightly declined across the municipalities of study. However, the survey data and community interviews suggest RGA municipalities have sustained higher levels of citizen trust in government. Community elite interviews also indicate slightly more positive perceptions of local governments in treatment than in control municipalities.
- Corruption continues as an entrenched problem in Colombia's political system. RGA programming in the short-term is not associated with clear improvements remedying corruption.

### Component 2 Conclusions

- At the midline, treatment municipalities have demonstrated some improvements in fiscal performance relative to control municipalities.
- Relative to other outcomes, the RGA programming is associated with greater influence over cultures surrounding payment of taxes, which can help boost for public revenues and public works.

- Royalty revenues generally improved since the baseline, and it appears that RGA municipalities received systematically more royalty revenues than control municipalities, suggesting likely RGA impact.
- Citizen perceptions illustrate declines in service provision across different institutions and public services. The prices are high for the services people receive, and RGA does not yet appear to have an impact to improve service provision.

### Component 4 Conclusions

- The peace process with the FARC has alleviated fears in some municipalities and, as a result, created greater openings for civic organizing and political participation—two enabling factors for RGA programming to meet its goals.
- Participation levels (not trends) remain high across all RGA and comparison municipalities.
- Although there are some positive examples of citizen oversight committees, many committees are still weak or absent. Both limited knowledge of committee procedures and threats of violence have impeded participation in the committees.

### Recommendations

- Since awareness of the RGA program remains low, MSI and USAID should continue promotion campaigns to increase awareness and understanding of RGA among the broader population.
- There are divergences in perceptions of RGA programming between local elites and the general citizenry. To boost trust and legitimacy, local elites may be encouraged to play a greater role in sharing information about RGA with the general public.
- RGA-style programs can generate early gains in the areas of improved fiscal administration and promoting tax payment cultures. These program elements should be emphasized early in future programs to help achieve later downstream outcomes, such as boosting trust and combatting corruption.
- Because service provision is a more slow-moving implementation activity, communications strategies should focus on encouraging realistic expectations among the public about immediate improvements in quality of life.
- Anti-corruption and levels of citizen oversight show little improvement so far and may merit increased emphasis in ongoing RGA programming.

- RGA programming depends on local social leaders, who face increasing risks of violence in the post-peace agreement period. The security concerns of these leaders should be addressed so they can more safely and fully participate in the program.
- RGA-region level, descriptive evidence suggests that programming and improvements in conditions are visible in the Norte and Catatumbo regions for ratings of mayors, municipal engagement, as well as improved services, and Cauca and Valle del Cauca for tax cultures. Future programming could better address the needs of these regions with ongoing governance and development issues.
- Given some of the mismatches between oversight activities and royalty-based projects, going forward, USAID and MSI may want to more strongly emphasize citizen oversight and participation in regions with higher levels of royalties.
- RGA approaches for boosting participation in citizen oversight committees should continue to focus on training and educating citizens while taking local security conditions into account.

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