

Enhancing access to education and health services in the areas of implementation of the peace agreements

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Review of Norwegian support to the project -
 Enhancing access to education and health services in the areas
 of implementation of the peace agreements, focusing on rural
 education and reincorporation of ex-FARC, implemented by the
 Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Colombia

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| CRC | Colombian Red Cross (CRC) |
| ETCR | Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación / Territorial Spaces for Training and Reintegration |
| FARC | Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia / Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia |
| FEM | Flexible Education Models |
| FUCEPAZ | Fundación Colombiana de Ex-combatientes y Promotores de Paz / Colombian Foundation of ex-combatants and Peace Promoters |
| ICRC | International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) |
| MEF | Modelos de Educación Flexibles |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| NRC | Norwegian Refugee Council |
| NorCross | Norwegian Red Cross |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| UNAD | Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia |
| ZTVN | Zonas Veredales Transitorias de Normalización / Transition Zones |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

This report reviews the new application and budget from the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and provides recommendations for the project *Enhancing access to education and health services in the areas of implementation of the peace agreements* (referred to as the Project henceforth). The review focuses on the Project's objectives, results framework, budget and reporting on results so far, taking into account the overall goal of reincorporation and reconciliation, logistical challenges and enhancing sustainability.

The review uses documentary analysis to assess the extent to which the Project is achieving its objectives (effectiveness) and whether these results are being achieved with effective use of resources (efficiency). It also addresses the project's sustainability and discusses whether there could be increased efforts to foster local ownership and continued education options for basic education graduates who complete the programme.

There are three main limitations of this report. Firstly, its heavy reliance on project documentation. Secondly, due to time constraints, interviews with stakeholders could not be conducted. Lastly, analysis of cost efficiency was beyond the scope of the review.

FINDINGS

Project design and approach

The project has three main activities: providing flexible education pathways for youth and adults (including ex-FARC members), advocacy to influence the design of the national rural education plan and reducing access barriers to healthcare through the reactivation of community health structures.

Overall, the project design is sound and is evidenced by detailed, current and relevant data supporting the rationale for its overarching approach and activities. The proposed planned activities are logical, realistic and should lead to the achievement of the specified goals and outcomes. Strengths of the design include its approach to gender mainstreaming and the consideration and inclusion of other marginalised groups (namely indigenous, Afro-Colombian and rural communities), proposed advocacy activities and education pathways. It would be useful however, to understand course content, general principles of the curriculum and how this also contributes to the wider project objective around the peace process. This is crucial as content can either support the peace process or embed tensions and contribute to future conflict.

The health component and its activities were not as clearly explained and defined as the education component. This requires more detail.

The biggest challenge relating to design is the results framework and is discussed below.

Results Framework

The results framework largely revolves around quantitative indicators which measure project achievements but not project results i.e. its impact. To have a more holistic and nuanced view of the Project's impact, the results framework for the new application needs a more balanced set

of qualitative and quantitative indicators across both its education and health components. More concrete outputs supported by clear, measurable and disaggregated indicators is also important and this should be supported by detailed and varied sources of evidence. This will allow the Project to effectively document its successes in progress reports and other documentation.

Achievements and results to date

NRC have demonstrated a strong and responsive understanding of what is needed in order for the Project to succeed. Implementation against milestones were well reported and detailed. Sufficient explanation was provided in the event of milestones not being met, although the vast majority of targets were met or overachieved (particularly in the initial Phase). This could be attributed to the solid cooperation between the different project partners and the MoE, sound planning and understanding of contextual need. It would be beneficial for the Project to document what they feel contributed to this overachievement in the form of lessons learnt to support wider programming in other conflict/post-conflict affected areas supported by Norway.

In the penultimate progress report covering May – October 2018, there were some more significant setbacks due to delays in signing MoUs thus the more recent phase of the Project has been behind target in a number of areas such as teacher/tutor training, delivery of gender based training, delivery of education materials and cash transfers. In the latest progress report (Nov 2018 – May 2019) the project demonstrated significant successes as it implemented activities from the previous phase and the most recent phase despite increased security risks.

Risk analysis and management

The Project has developed an in-depth, detailed and comprehensive risk assessment which addresses numerous types of risk (economic, political, natural hazards, conflict specific and medical), its relevance to different departments and the likelihood of occurrence. This was accompanied with prescriptive mitigating actions which are regularly updated.

Overall, risk analysis and management are strong, demonstrating a sound understanding of the context in the departments and Territorial Spaces for Training and Reintegration (ETCRs – Spanish acronym) the Project operates in. However, the specific risks and mitigating actions relating to gender and climate change need development. In future reporting, it would be beneficial for the Project to report on which risks have occurred and whether mitigating actions were sufficient.

Cross-cutting issues

The Project addresses all of the relevant cross-cutting issues – human rights, women's rights and gender equality, climate and the environment - to varying degrees in the new application. This builds upon their approach in previous phases which is generally strong. The Project's approach is in line with the 2013-2014 Report to Storting (White Paper 25), Norway's Humanitarian Strategy as well as Norway's Women, Peace and Security (2019 - 2022) as well as wider policy frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The strongest component of cross-cutting issues in the new application is around gender. Many of the strategies outlined in the application specifically address ways in which to strengthen the gender perspective within the Project, increase women's' participation and ensure that girls' and women's sexual and reproductive health and rights are safeguarded.

In terms of human rights and the inclusion of marginalised groups, there is mention of persons with disabilities in the new application albeit brief. There is no concrete strategy to address the specific needs of this sub-group.

Budgets and costing

General assessment of budget expenditure and budget documents demonstrated inconsistencies in how budgets were reported on and significant underspend in some instances.

In the new application, project costs overall appear to be in line with budgets shared from previous phases. Administrative costs account for approx. 6.5% of total costs which is appropriate. The budget template however lacked sufficient detail to assess budget distribution among different activities and inputs. It also did not provide any detail on unit costs. The lack of supporting commentary/narrative to justify costs also meant it also was not possible to address cost realism. It is therefore not possible to conclude on the reasonable use of financial resources for the Project and requires further scrutiny from the Embassy.

Considering the underspend across previous phases, it is crucial that the Embassy follows up on this and requests for more details, unit costings and information addressing the underspend before approving any additional funding for this new phase. Any future budget templates used should also include additional space for detailed notes and commentary to support budget line estimates.

Sustainability

The Project has a strong working relationship with government and its partners as evidenced throughout project documentation. The current sustainability approach largely revolves around capacity building at different levels throughout the system. This is underpinned by the assumption that this will support transfer of ownership once the Project funding ceases.

As a whole, the approach to sustainability lacked a variety of interconnected approaches and almost solely focuses on capacity building. Whilst capacity building at multiple levels is crucial and highly beneficial, this alone does not guarantee a sense of ownership and the ability for different actors to take on the Project after funding ceases. There was also no clear exit strategy or approach for financial considerations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The review concluded with the following recommendations:

Project design and approach: The Project should provide more detail on the course content (beyond mention of literacy and numeracy), general principles of the curriculum and how this also contributes to the wider project objective around the peace process. This is crucial as content can either support the peace process or embed tensions and contribute to future conflict.

The health component and its activities were not as clearly explained and defined as the education component and also requires more detail.

Improved results framework: The results framework requires further development to support more well-rounded reporting and internal monitoring of the Project. This includes consistent

disaggregated data, a variety of data verification sources, the inclusion of more qualitative indicators to measure impact, and more concrete, measurable indicators.

Gender programming: Gender is one of the stronger components of the Project but requires further development particularly with regard to high dropout rates in the ex-FARC community and wider challenges such as gender violence. The risks identified relating to gender are adequate though the mitigating actions should be further strengthened. Furthermore, with regards to dropout among women in the education component, future reporting should include more detail around contributing factors and what mitigating actions have been put in place to address this.

Disability: Though the Project provides some disaggregated data relating to disability, the application lacks a more detailed approach to supporting people with disabilities. It is therefore recommended that Project develops a specific strategy to support those with disabilities and then reflect this in an updated Results Framework with an additional indicator in addition to disaggregating data and figures by disability (in addition to gender).

Climate change: Though not directly related to project activities, the risk associated with climate change and the environment requires further detail and a more comprehensive mitigating action.

Sustainability: The Project needs to develop an explicit and focused exit strategy which clearly outlines how the Project has built on previous activities such as working with community leaders and how they intend to transfer ownership of the project in the long-term, beyond capacity building. It should also address how the Project will systematically measure advocacy efforts and involve the new government moving forward.

Financial reporting: The Embassy should encourage consistent reporting on budget forecasts and actuals as well as narrative reporting to complement budget documentation. This is to ensure any discrepancies are accounted for and to enable better assessment of the Project's use of resources.

Considering the underspend in previous phases, (some of which is accounted for in the penultimate phase due to delay in timelines), there is a need for closer scrutiny to reassess the Project budget in more detail to assess whether the requested USD \$65 million is appropriate.

It is also recommended that any future budget templates for applications should include additional space for detailed notes and commentary to provide context and support for budget line estimates and to assess cost realism.

Interviews and follow up visits to the Project: This recommendation is two-fold. Firstly, to address the more qualitative aspects of the Project and to assess the impact of the Project beyond the quantitative indicators. This is important for the Project not only to document its successes and challenges but in order to refine its activities and approach in each phase to maximise impact. It would also provide the Embassy and Norad with crucial project learning to inform programming more widely in other conflict-affected areas.

Secondly, visits and discussions with MoE/Colombian officials would be beneficial to get a sense of the current level of ownership and appetite to continue supporting this initiative towards 2021 and beyond. This is key in light of political developments and sustainability considerations.

1 INTRODUCTION AND PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

This brief report provides an assessment of the new application and budget from the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and provides recommendations for the project *Enhancing access to education and health services in the areas of implementation of the peace agreements* (referred to as the Project henceforth). The review focuses on the Project's objectives, results framework, budget and reporting on results so far, taking into account the overall goal of reincorporation and reconciliation, logistical challenges and enhancing sustainability.

The review assesses the extent to which the Project is achieving its objectives and whether these results are being achieved with effective use of resources. It also addresses the project's sustainability and discusses whether there could be increased efforts to foster local ownership and continued education options for basic education graduates who complete the programme.

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has worked in Colombia for over 20 years and receives some of the highest level of official funding from Norway, with a stated total of NOK 135.7 million between 2016 and 2018.

Under the current cooperation agreement COL-17/0014 the Norwegian Embassy in Bogotá has disbursed a total of NOK 44,785,000 to the Project and NRC has submitted a new application for approximately NOK 64.779.744 to continue the Project for the period from April 2019 to April 2021. The Project has been financed mainly under the chapter post 153.78 Regional Allocation for Latin America (new chapter post 159.77). After the restructuring of the Norwegian cooperation budget, possible future funding will come from the chapter posts of Education (161.70) and Health (160.70).

The Project was developed after the signing of the final peace accords between the Colombian Government and the guerrilla group FARC in November 2016, in order to contribute to the reincorporation of ex-combatants from FARC and reconciliation with the local communities around their gathering zones. NRC already had a broad and operative presence across Colombia and the Project was the first reincorporation initiative to reach all gathering zones. Its main area of work is education. From 2018, a smaller health component was included, implemented through the Norwegian Red Cross (NorCross).

The main objectives of the new application were stated as follows:

The Project will support local integration of rural communities and FARC ex-combatants settled in Territorial Spaces for Training and Reintegration (ETCR) by addressing the needs for relevant education and improved access to health services.

The project will:

- Support youth and adults in the areas of implementation of the peace agreements to access and remain in the education system
- Contribute to and advocate for the development of a Special Plan for Rural Education, in line with the peace agreements signed between the Government and FARC

- Enhance the capacities of rural communities and FARC ex-combatants on healthcare to foster reincorporation processes in the territories and reduce barriers to healthcare

2 METHODOLOGY

The review aimed to address the following questions:

- Effectiveness: To what extent is the Project achieving its objectives?
- Efficiency: Are results achieved with reasonable use of resources?
- Sustainability: Could more be done to foster local ownership and continued education options for people graduating from the basic education offered by the Project?

In order to answer the questions above, the following were reviewed through documentary analysis:

- The results framework, including baseline, objectives and indicators
- Risk analysis and management, including the Project's sustainability, local ownership, and exit strategy
- The inclusion of cross cutting issues, e.g. human rights, gender perspective, fight against corruption and the environment, including if risks that could have a negative impact on these cross-cutting issues have been identified and if adequate mitigation measures have been included
- The budget, including structure, level of detail, administrative costs, realism and cost-effectiveness
- Project reports to date, including documentation of results
- Where relevant, the review identifies areas which require follow-up, including recommendations to the Embassy on field visits and further evaluations/reviews as well as recommendations to NRC regarding how this project can be strengthened.

2.1 LIMITATIONS

Firstly, the main limitation of the review was the reliance on project documentation. Whilst the documentation shared was quite balanced, this could have been supplemented by external, objective data e.g. interviews, to support a more well-rounded view of the project's performance to date.

Secondly, with the desk-based nature of the review and time limitation, it was not possible to interview stakeholders. The review therefore recommends follow up visits comprising of interviews with beneficiaries, project partners and stakeholders to gain their insights and perceptions of the project and its impact thus far. This could act as an additional rich source of data to support broader assessment of the project.

Finally, another limitation of this review was the assessment of cost efficiency. To do so, it would have been necessary to conduct a detailed scrutiny of accounts, mapping of spending to the results achieved, and the identification of alternative costed intervention models for comparison. This was beyond the scope of this review, and the documentation provided did not

allow such an assessment. In this regard, the review therefore focused on general assessment of budget expenditure and triangulation of information with the proposal and progress reports.

3 FINDINGS

In this section, the review aims to address the question of effectiveness through analysis of the project design, results framework, risk registers, progress reports, application, inclusion of cross cutting issues and other related documents. Efficiency is assessed through analysis of budgets and financial reports of previous and current applications. Lastly, sustainability is assessed through project applications and progress reports.

3.1 PROJECT DESIGN AND APPROACH

The overall outcome of the Project is to support the re-integration of 3,146 youth and adults from rural communities and 1,611 FARC ex-combatants settled in Territorial Spaces for Training and Reintegration (ETCRs) by providing flexible and relevant education pathways and improved access to health services. Direct and indirect beneficiaries of the Project include teachers, school agents, local education and health authorities and neighbouring communities involved in the implementation of the peace agreements. Specific outputs revolve around 3 main areas (or 'results' as specified in the application):

1. Providing a variety of opportunities for young people (those in school, out of school and those who have never attended school) and adults to engage and remain in education. Pathways provided include flexible education models led by FUCEPAZ and the National University of Open and Distance Learning (Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia, UNAD), adult education models, vocational training and gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting theme.
2. Advocacy and engagement to ensure that the interests and needs of conflict-affected and displaced rural populations are taken into consideration during the development of a Rural Education Policy by the MoE, other education decision makers and stakeholders and the government.
3. To certify the health knowledge of ex-combatants and reduce access barriers to healthcare through the reactivation of community health structures with trained and/or certified ex-combatants' and community workforce.

Consortium partners (NorCross, FUCEPAZ, UNAD, CRC and ICRC etc) all bring the necessary extensive experience required to execute the project effectively and have specific expertise in working with displaced people, local communities and within the education and health sectors. The overall approach builds upon each organisation's previous track record, experience working in this sector (and experience in Central and South America specifically) and consultation with key stakeholders during the design process.

The proposed project approach provides a well-rounded approach to addressing the challenges faced in re-integrating ex-FARC members into civilian life. The identified pathways in which to do this effectively – through education, health and jobs is clearly presented. The selection of

these pathways is supported by relevant and current data from previous project phases and other external sources. This demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the context, the need for the intervention and rationale for the approach. The scope and beneficiary numbers are also clearly presented.

Strengths of the project's design include the approach around gender mainstreaming and consideration of other marginalised groups (namely indigenous, Afro-Colombian and rural communities). In terms of advocacy and community engagement, the approach is solid with good examples of its intended approach, particularly in hard to reach communities. The Project also demonstrates strong consideration of the flexibility needed in delivery through the variety of education programmes it offers via UNAD and builds upon UNAD's expertise. Progress reports reveal this even further. What is not mentioned however, is the kind of content that will be taught to students beyond mention of literacy and numeracy. It would be useful to understand course content, general principles of the curriculum and how this also contributes to the wider project objective around the peace process. This is crucial as content can either support the peace process or embed tensions and contribute to future conflict. There is promising content on the gender aspect such as the Golombiao (UNICEF) and Colombia Joven strategies/programmes.

In terms of improvements, the approach to the healthcare component could be better explained with more concrete details around the approach. The review found that the approach was less detailed than the education component. In Result 3 (relating to the health component) it is stated that it will "support the reconciliation process between people in reincorporation processes and host/neighbouring communities". It does not state how, however. Additional detail would be useful here.

The biggest challenge regarding project design is around the ways in which progress and impact will be measured. This is discussed at length in the subsequent section (Section 3.2). There are a number of challenges with how outcomes and outputs are defined and measured in the results framework and this requires significant work. What also isn't clear is what the Project's internal monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process will look like, what the feedback mechanisms will be and how the Project will facilitate learning to ensure it is adaptive and flexible to beneficiary feedback and the Project's changing needs. A variety of M&E tools will provide a rich source of data for triangulation to evidence the Project's impact and any areas for improvement. Whilst this does not appear to have been an application requirement, this additional information would be useful.

In terms of project inputs, the proposed planned activities are logical, realistic and these should lead to the achievement of the specified goals and outcomes. Evidence from previous phases as presented in subsequent sections, demonstrate the Project's previous track record in achieving (and surpassing) intended targets and outcomes. This should be read with caution however considering the nature of the results framework and its shortcomings in measuring impact.

Specific analysis of sustainability, cross-cutting issues and budget are discussed in subsequent sections.

3.2 RESULTS FRAMEWORK

The current results framework for the new application describes the Project's key outputs, outcomes and intended impact but there is no clear theory of change (including assumptions) underpinning this.

Overall, for the education component, the results framework lacks sufficient detail and specificity in order to effectively evaluate the Project holistically, particularly in terms of the outputs described and indicators chosen (see 3.1.1 for more detail). This is also the case for previous iterations of the results framework from earlier phases. The data verification sources are also not clear (the NRC data system was mentioned in some instances but left blank in many cases), does not include data periodicity and availability, nor does it state who will collect and report on the output data. It is therefore difficult to assess whether the NRC data system mentioned is based on robust data sources and what exactly the data system involves. Even so, a variety of data sources is crucial in providing sound evidence of the Project's impact.

In addition to this, there is an imbalance between the quantitative and qualitative indicators chosen which hinders a more complete assessment of the Project's impact. Many of the indicators revolve around quantitative data measuring attendance and/or participation in different activities but do not measure actual results or impact from the activities undertaken such as training. In future, it would also be useful to highlight any underlying assumptions underpinning the results framework/theory of change.

With regards to the health component of the results framework implemented by Norwegian Red Cross (NorCross), whilst there is more detail in terms of numbers, beneficiary targets, data verification sources and other additional comments, indicators are also largely quantitative and focus on attendance/participation as opposed to more qualitative indicators assessing impact.

Below are more specific comments on the different areas of the results framework.

3.2.1 Detailed commentary on outputs and indicators for the Results Framework

For the education component, the overall impact statement is: *Implementation of peace agreement in Territorial Spaces for Training and Reintegration and neighbouring communities fostered through peacebuilding and social cohesion approach*. This statement is too broad and not specific enough about the impact that the Project itself will achieve through its different activities and outputs. For example, the impact statement could refer to specific elements of the peace agreement such as clauses 1.3.2.2. and 3.2 as it did in other project documentation. In other project documents such as Progress Report 2 (Jan 2017-April 2018) more specific and tailored outcome statements have been used, e.g. *Ensure all children and young people who have dropped out of school or never attended, classified as illiterate and/or affected by the FARC conflict acquire the necessary skills and competencies needed to remain in the education system and contribute to the peace process*.

The indicator for the overall outcome statement refers to the percentage of beneficiaries whose opinion on the process and social cohesion was positive. This indicator is not specific enough, does not state a benchmark to which it would be compared, and it does not state how this information will be collected.

Outcome 1 refers to the number of out-of-school children and youth in conflict affected areas who access and remain in the education system. The corresponding indicator refers to the number of boys and girls who access and remain in education after 6 months of enrolling. One

recommendation would be to separate this indicator as it measures two separate things: access and retention. Secondly, the outcome should be rephrased to describe the intended result i.e. increased access and retention of boys and girls in education. The targets at baseline and end line, among ex-FARC communities and neighbouring communities are all at 70% without explanation or a corresponding absolute figure i.e. a specific number of beneficiaries. It is expected that the target at end line would be different to baseline (i.e. higher) and there would be some variation among the ex-FARC community and neighbouring communities. In the case that these figures are justified, the Project should provide some commentary in the comments column to support this. To strengthen this indicator (as well as the others) it would also be useful to have all indicators and beneficiary target numbers disaggregated by gender or other relevant variables (age, disability, geographic area/department etc). Furthermore, the Project should ensure that when reporting on quantitative indicators, that percentages are accompanied by figures/number of beneficiaries.

Outputs 1.2 – 1.4 describe beneficiaries receiving materials, training and technical support. The related indicators focus on the number of cash transfers received, teachers trained, and technical meetings conducted. These indicators could be supported by more qualitative indicators, for example, measuring the effectiveness of the protection against sexual abuse and exploitation training. This could be evidenced by participant evaluation forms.

Output 1.5 states ‘women participating in the project are better aware of the gender dynamics and have better access to job training’. This output is measuring two very different and distinct things – increased awareness of gender dynamics and better access to job training - and should therefore be separated. Likewise, the corresponding indicator only measures direct beneficiaries. It does not actually measure increased awareness of gender dynamics nor does it measure better access to job training. This is particularly important in light of relatively high dropout rates among ex-FARC women at 26% (see Progress Report 3 – May 2018 to Oct 2018) and feedback from female beneficiaries suggesting that education courses offered by SENA do not have a gender focus and actually reinforce gender stereotypes around what women can/should do e.g. courses in sewing versus courses in agriculture for men.

Outcome 2 and its related outputs refer to advocacy and the incorporation of recommendations from the education communities/technical groups into official Ministry of Education (MoE) policy. There needs to be stronger connection between the process of consultation and the actual incorporation of community recommendations. Advocacy efforts should be tracked more systematically and similar to other indicators should be supported by qualitative data.

Outcome 3 and its related outputs refer to ‘individuals and communities enhance their capacities on healthcare to foster reincorporation processes in the territories’. As mentioned earlier, almost all of the inputs (namely 3.1-3.3) focus on participation and attendance in training but do not measure its impact/result/outcome. This is particularly pertinent for Output 3.3 which addresses psychosocial support for host communities but only measures attendance in workshops. Assessing the relevance and impact of this activity is crucial to support other indicators, outputs and outcomes and measure long-term impact for beneficiaries.

In summary, to have a more holistic and nuanced view of the Project’s impact, the results framework for the new application needs a more balanced set of qualitative and quantitative indicators across both its education and health components. More concrete outputs supported by clear, measurable and disaggregated indicators is also important and this should be

supported by detailed and varied sources of evidence. This will allow the Project to effectively document its successes in progress reports and other documentation.

3.3 ACHIEVEMENTS AND RESULTS TO DATE

Despite the challenges outlined in the section above, many of the Project milestones in previous phases, covered in Progress Report 2 (Jan 2017 – April 2018) were comfortably achieved (with many exceeded) and the majority were achieved within the specified timeframe as stipulated in the Education Plans accompanying the main application.

In Phase 1 of the Project (Jan 2017-April 2018), targets achieved largely revolved around undertaking surveys to understand the need among beneficiary communities, preparing and delivering the education programme, developing technical working groups, working closely with government structures, training of tutors and providing support in the various ETCRs. Where milestones were not achieved, such as carrying out surveys, the delays were relatively minor (e.g. 2 months), there was clear explanation around any setbacks, resulting actions were sufficient and did not impact overall project timelines significantly. Other examples of activity changes include having to re-prioritise rebuilding and improving infrastructure for schools in ETCRs in the first 6 months due to delays in government funding. These changes were supported and validated by the technical committee comprising of the MoE, Fundación Colombiana de Ex-combatientes y Promotores de Paz (FUCEPAZ) and NRC. The activities were then carried out in the subsequent phase once funding was received. Another example is the Project prioritising infrastructure support based on need in Cauca, Nariño, Caquetá and Meta, but prioritising education materials and support in the remaining departments rather than the initial plan to support infrastructure in all departments.

In terms of delivery of the education model, the Project appears to be on track generally. Despite this, the disparity in gender dropout was not addressed in project reporting. This dropout rates were stated as 8% of men versus 22% of women. As stated earlier, more qualitative reporting on the factors contributing to this is key in order to develop new ways of supporting those enrolled on the Project through different education activities.

During Phase 2 (reporting period - May 2018-October 2018), due to delays in signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) many of the key activities were not undertaken though the Project did attempt to deliver as many activities as possible despite this challenge. The introduction of teacher bonuses to the Project (in light of the distance, rurality and higher risk) to improve retention in the ETCRs in this phase onwards is commendable and the Project has made clear the potential sensitivity around this and addresses this as a risk accordingly.

Of particular concern in this phase is the impact of the new presidency on the peace process as a whole thus directly affecting NRC's work. With the rise in killings since the peace agreement was signed and the new political participation of a reformed FARC, this needs to be closely monitored and reported on further including any anticipated/associated risks. The 'excessive' mobility of ex-combatants within and outside of demobilisation zones/ETCRs due to the different dynamics of the reintegration process and the lack of compliance with the implementation of the Peace Agreements also requires close monitoring. This has direct impact on Output 3.1 where ex-combatants with health profiles have to keep moving to look for economic activities in different territories. Notwithstanding, a strategy at the national level has been created to reach all those with a registered health profile.

In the latest progress report (Nov 2018 – May 2019) the project demonstrated significant successes as it implemented activities from the previous phase and the most recent phase. Though there were still some delays in activities due to increased security risks, the Project has surpassed most of its targets. There was also more detail around causes of dropout for the education component (economic and security challenges), though this still did not address gender disparities in dropouts from previous reports.

Overall NRC have demonstrated a strong and responsive understanding of what is needed in order for the project to succeed. Implementation against milestones were well reported and detailed. Sufficient explanation was provided in the event of milestones not being met, although the vast majority of targets were met or overachieved. This could be attributed to the solid cooperation between the different project partners and the MoE, sound planning, flexibility and understanding of contextual need. As mentioned in the previous section, more qualitative reporting would strengthen the Project's ability to document its successes. It would also be good for the project to document what they feel contributed to this overachievement in the form of lessons learnt to support wider programming in other conflict/post-conflict affected areas supported by Norway.

3.4 RISK ANALYSIS AND MANAGEMENT

3.4.1 Risk management in previous phases

The Project has developed an in-depth, detailed and comprehensive risk assessment which addresses numerous types of risk (economic, political, natural hazards, conflict specific, medical etc), its relevance to different departments and the likelihood of occurrence. This was accompanied with prescriptive mitigating actions which are regularly updated.

The initial interim progress report stated that security threats in the departments of Meta and Guaviare were being monitored. The risk assessment correctly identified that security risks would be highly likely in these two areas and that its impact would be severe. Further elaboration on whether the prescribed precautions were adequate and if the Project feels the need to add any additional measures to ensure the safety of staff should be stated. Likewise, for other departments such as Cauca and Nariño where severe/critical security risks were also identified and where ex-FARC members/leaders have recently been killed. The latest progress report (Nov 2018 to May 2019) continued to highlight security risks as impeding some activities and timelines particularly in Cauca and Meta. These security risks were mainly related to killings and fighting among dissident groups. The Project's mitigating actions (including modifications to education delivery and access restrictions in particular departments) were in place to minimise impact on activities whilst prioritising safety for staff and beneficiaries.

There were no significant unanticipated risks highlighted though more reporting on the political climate and how it directly affects ETCRs, ex-combatant movement and project delivery would strengthen this. Political risk remains a key threat to the Project's sustainability.

In terms of reporting and lessons learned, it is important to understand how the risks identified in previous phases have/have not played out and how effective previous risk management strategies have been and/or how these strategies have been modified.

3.4.2 Risks addressed in the new application

The Project has demonstrated a growing understanding of the contextual needs and challenges facing the Project as implementation progresses. This is evident in the additional six risks in the latest application (compared to the previous iteration) which revolve around cross-cutting issues such as genuine female participation in community level gatherings, degradation of land, human rights concerns e.g. ex-FARC beneficiaries being targeted by paramilitary or other armed groups and corruption. The new risks have been assigned relatively low scores (max 8 and minimum 2) by the Project suggesting these risks are manageable. The review suggests more consideration for mitigating actions relating to these new risks.

The risk around the degradation of land and corresponding action (“Within the Social Science subject Environmental Education topics are included”) is not sufficient and would require a more concerted effort to ensure that this risk is minimised.

The main risk associated with gender in the new application is: *Potential negative impact from a G&D-SGBV perspective due to new roles of men and women during the reincorporation phase. Domestic violence might increase because men might feel threatened by women’s stronger role in the community or households.* This was assigned a score of 8 (Probability 4, Impact 2). The mitigating action - *Ensuring that activities for both men and women are understood and accepted by the community (Continuous assessments will be carried out)* is not comprehensive enough and fails to pre-empt/address some of the wider issues faced by women in these circumstances and the ripple effects from interventions with a heavy focus on gender/gender component, particularly in conflict/post conflict affected areas. In light of earlier comments raised on the experiences of women studying with SENA, this is vital.

Overall, risk analysis and management are strong, demonstrating a sound understanding of the context in the departments and ETCRs the Project operates in. However, the specific risks and mitigating actions relating to gender and climate change need further development. In future reporting, it would be beneficial for the Project to report on which risks have occurred and whether mitigating actions were sufficient.

3.5 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

The Project addresses all of the relevant cross-cutting issues – human rights, women’s rights and gender equality, climate and the environment - to varying degrees in the new application. This builds upon their approach in previous phases. The Project’s approach is in line with the 2013-2014 Report to Storting (White Paper 25), Norway’s Humanitarian Strategy as well as Norway’s Women, Peace and Security (2019 - 2022). The strongest component of the application in this regard relates to gender. Many of the strategies outlined in the application specifically address ways in which to strengthen the gender perspective within the Project, increase women’s’ participation and ensure that girls’ and women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights are safeguarded.

Across project documentation, comprehensive census/survey data and evidence is presented and used to describe the nature of the challenge across the different departments but also how issues around gender manifest specifically within FARC (e.g. number of female ex-combatants, dropout rates etc) and reintegrating female ex-FARC members back into civil life through education and health components/activities. In previous phases, the Project was able to collect very specific data relating to women e.g. number of pregnant women and number of lactating

women which enabled the Project to address their specific needs to ensure their participation. This included allowing mothers to bring their children with them to classes and registering school-age children from ex-FARC members in nearby schools, when available and/or validated by local teams.

The new application demonstrates awareness around some of the issues faced by women in the previous phases of the Project. These issues revolve around the provision of formal vocational and technical training by the SENA, its lack of gender focus and gender bias in course provision; lack of support regarding political participation, articulation with the governmental institutions, cooperative management, exchanges of experiences; lack of teachers and distance being a factor in increasing dropout. NRC has addressed this by submitting a proposal to the Norwegian Embassy to complement the gender component. The review did not have access to this new proposal.

As mentioned in the Phase 2 progress report, a gender-based violence prevention and mitigation strategy is being established at the community level. This strategy corresponds to Output 3.4 which addresses the definition of inclusive roles for women and men and is primarily focused on women ex-combatants in their transit to the civil life. Specific gender training for this is being designed for field teams to ensure gender mainstreaming in each of the activities. This represents important progress as previously there was no apparent strategy to involve male ex-FARC members in gender sensitive training and activities and therefore meant the gender approach was not as comprehensive as it could have been.

In terms of human rights and the inclusion of marginalised groups, there is mention of persons with disabilities in the new application albeit brief. The educational needs assessment carried out by NRC and FUCEPAZ in March and April 2017 identified 1,568 former FARC-members who have a disability (1,180 men and 388 women), of whom 631 with physical disability and 73 people over 60 years old. However, there is no concrete strategy to address the specific needs of this sub-group. With regards to killings and attacks, the progress reports have highlighted this as a serious risk and have mitigations in place.

The NRC has a robust anti-corruption policy. The use of cash transfers and financial support (such as teacher bonuses) in the Project could support low-level corruption, however the Project has not reported on this being an issue as yet and the policy document addresses what would be done in such circumstances (see page 22 of NRC Anti-Corruption Handbook).

Climate change was only mentioned in one of the additional risks highlighted at the end of the new application and very briefly. The corresponding mitigating action could have been more well-thought through to show a deeper consideration of this issue.

3.6 SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability in the new application does not vary significantly to the approach stated in the application for Phase 2. Its main components include capacity building, including technical training to leaders, local authorities, public ministry officials, health committees and agencies, and other relevant entities. The Project expects its approach to increase a sense of ownership and self-management capacity in the communities, thus allowing for the Project consortium to progressively reduce involvement and transfer responsibilities to community leaders. Where further support is necessary, NRC has stated that it will search for new partners and/or funds to continue activities or processes that are still pending.

Strengths of the current approach include the strong working relationship the Project appears to have with the MoE, education secretariats, Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD), project delivery partners as well as the technical committees established to support the Project and the wider peace agreement. In previous phases of the Project, any unanticipated changes to the implementation plan were validated and approved in what appears to be an efficient working mechanism. Result 2 in the current application helps to support this further through advocacy and representation of marginalised groups in the development of public policy through a variety of well-thought out activities such as community engagement and sensitisation on Rural Reform, the development of locally made advocacy materials and the involvement of local government. This is also reflected in the results framework (Outcome 2).

The initial phase of the Project (see Progress Report 2 (Jan 2017-April 2018) involved a community leaders component which was promising but there is little information on how this was built upon for the next phase of the Project. More systematic measures of advocacy, its effects and ownership of different partners is crucial to ensure the Project operates in a sustainable way. Strengthening community and institutional support is crucial to strengthen sustainability and foster local ownership particularly in light of government changes.

As a whole, the approach to sustainability lacked a variety of interconnected approaches and almost solely focuses on capacity building. There was also no clear exit strategy. Whilst capacity building at multiple levels is crucial and highly beneficial, this alone does not guarantee a sense of ownership and the ability for different actors to take on the Project after funding ceases. This requires a proactive and concerted effort/plan to transfer ownership in a more tangible way through developing new or bolstering existing structures to support community level implementation as well as at the institutional level to complement new skills acquired. In this regard, visits and discussions with MoE/government officials would be beneficial to get a sense of the current level of ownership and appetite to continue supporting this initiative towards 2021 and beyond. Furthermore, measuring more qualitative evidence in the results framework (or other project monitoring and evaluation activities) such as changing attitudes and/or tangible forms of support from communities/beneficiaries in the different ECTRs would support evidencing project sustainability in this area.

Financially, though cash transfers are necessary and important for project implementation, a contingency plan needs to be in place to address this and other direct financial support to beneficiaries and how this will affect them once funding ceases.

3.7 BUDGET AND COSTINGS

In order to address the question of efficiency, the review assessed budget documents and financial reporting. As mentioned in the Limitations section (2.1) this assessment was limited to general assessment of budget expenditure and triangulation of information with the proposal and progress reports. Brief findings are presented below.

3.7.1 New application

In the new application, project costs overall appear to be in line with the budgets shared from previous phases. Administrative costs account for approx. 6.5% of total costs which is appropriate.

The budget template however isn't detailed enough or organised in such a way that allows analysis by activities or output. The budget is generally organised according to cost type (personnel, admin, project materials etc) which is likely to have overlaps across activities. Though there are columns relating to output the figures stated there are nominal. The main observation here is that Output 1 which has the majority of activities has received the larger proportion of funds, as would be expected. With no unit costs, commentary or narrative supporting the budgeted figures it is very difficult to ascertain whether funds have been adequately distributed across outputs or whether budget lines have been sufficiently budgeted for. Assessment of cost realism is beyond the scope of the review.

In future, it is crucial that the Embassy requests additional information in initial budgeting documents by requesting detailed information on unit costs and a column/section to provide notes for budget lines to support the figures stated. This would be helpful in adequately assessing realism and cost effectiveness.

3.7.2 Previous phases

In the original budget for Phase 1, administrative costs also accounted for 6.5%. The adjusted financial report from 2017 shows significant underspend (budget vs. actuals, \$10,000,000 vs. \$5,076,051). The costs which were much lower than anticipated included the support materials for the Afro-Colombian education package including *Juego Cartillas Ciclos Afro*. Much of the training, tutor support, teaching assistants and other pedagogical assistance as well as UNAD related costs were also much lower than anticipated. Though there were some initial setbacks such as the delay in the MoE/Colombian government's initial contribution, it is not clear why figures were so low. The underspend has not been clearly explained or addressed in any project reporting/documentation, therefore it isn't possible to conclude whether the underspend is reasonable. It also isn't possible to make inferences about future budgeting and spending based on this information gap and the issues raised above. In any future reporting, it is crucial that the Project provides a supporting narrative document or commentary to explain any discrepancies or unanticipated over/under spend. This requires more scrutiny from the Embassy also.

The latest interim budget report (covering November 2018 to May 2019) showed a total underspend of just under \$6million (approx. 20%) and reasons for this have been shared. The narrative report states that under the education component NRC underspent by 1.264.014 NOK due to delays in activities. The Project also reported that an agreement was reached with NorCross that the money will be utilised to implement Output 3.2 which deals with the reactivation of community health structures. This has not affected project impact due the approved extension until 31 December 2019.

4 CONCLUSION

4.1 EFFECTIVENESS

The Project design and approach is generally sound with particular strengths in its approach to inclusion and advocacy. The health component would benefit from more detail however. In general, planned activities are logical, realistic and build upon a solid track record from previous phases. In the initial phases, the Project can be said to be achieving its objectives. In many instances, the Project outperformed its quantitative targets. Where there have been setbacks, these have been accounted for and largely not affected Project timelines. Better qualitative reporting across the education and health components of the Project (in the results framework, progress reports and other documents) would enable the assessment of project effectiveness rather than solely quantitative project achievements. In the penultimate progress report covering May – October 2018, there were some more significant setbacks due to delays in signing MoUs thus the more recent phase of the Project has been behind target in a number of areas such as teacher/tutor training, delivery of gender based training, delivery of education materials, cash transfers etc. The most recent progress report (Nov 2018 to May 2019) demonstrated the Project achieving significant results and overachievement of targets despite security challenges.

Risk management overall was strong demonstrating in-depth knowledge and understanding of the needs of the Project. Cross-cutting issues and related risk around gender, persons with disabilities and climate change could be strengthened by developing more comprehensive mitigating actions.

4.2 EFFICIENCY

Assessment of cost efficiency was beyond the scope of the review. However, general assessment of budget expenditure and budget documents showed some inconsistencies in how budgets were reported on and significant underspend in some instances. Whilst some underspend was explained others were not addressed. The budget templates also lack sufficient detail in order to assess cost realism and budget distribution across outputs. It is therefore difficult to conclude on the reasonable use of financial resources for this Project and requires further scrutiny from the Embassy.

4.3 SUSTAINABILITY

The Project has a strong working relationship with government and its partners as evidenced throughout project documentation. The current sustainability approach largely revolves around capacity building at different levels throughout the system. This is underpinned by the assumption that this will support transfer of ownership once the Project funding ceases. The review recommends that the sustainability approach should be developed further to foster more local ownership of the project. This will require a proactive and concerted effort/plan to transfer ownership in a more tangible way through developing new or bolstering existing structures to support community level implementation as well as at the institutional level to complement training received. Considerations for the financial sustainability of the Project particularly with regards to cash transfers and teacher bonuses are key.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the review of the results framework and other project documentation, the following is recommended:

Project design and approach: The Project should provide more detail on the course content (beyond mention of literacy and numeracy), general principles of the curriculum and how this also contributes to the wider project objective around the peace process. This is crucial as content can either support the peace process or embed tensions and contribute to future conflict.

The health component and its activities were not as clearly explained and defined as the education component and requires more detail.

Improved results framework: As suggested earlier, the results framework needs further development to support more well-rounded reporting and internal monitoring of the Project. This includes consistent disaggregated data, a variety of data verification sources, the inclusion of more qualitative indicators to measure impact, and more concrete, measurable indicators. Qualitative reporting in particular would enable better analysis of the education need, progress and how this provision can be improved to support better retention, particularly where dropout is high. It would be useful to probe on which monitoring and evaluation tools the Project uses to support data gathering also.

Gender programming: Gender is one of the stronger components of the Project but requires further development particularly with regard to high dropout rates in the ex-FARC community and wider challenges such as gender violence. The risks identified relating to gender are adequate though the mitigating actions could be further strengthened. Furthermore, with regards to dropout among women in the education component, future reporting should include more detail around contributing factors and what mitigating actions have been put in place to address this.

Disability: Though the Project provides disaggregated data relating to disability, the application lacks a more detailed approach to supporting people with disabilities. It is therefore recommended that Project develops a specific strategy to support those with disabilities and then reflect this in an updated Results Framework with an additional indicator in addition to disaggregating data and figures by disability (in addition to gender).

Climate change: Though not directly related to project activities, the risk associated with climate change and the environment requires further detail and a more comprehensive mitigating action.

Sustainability: The Project needs to develop an explicit and focused exit strategy which clearly outlines how the Project has built on previous activities such as working with community leaders and how they intend to transfer ownership of the project in the long-term, beyond capacity building. It should also address how the Project will systematically measure advocacy efforts and involve the new government (as much as realistically possible) moving forward.

Financial reporting: The Embassy should encourage consistent reporting on budget and actuals as well as narrative reporting to complement budget documentation. This is to ensure

any discrepancies are accounted for and to enable better assessment of the Project's use of resources.

Considering the underspend in previous phases, (some of which is accounted for in the penultimate phase due to delay in timelines), there is a need for closer scrutiny to reassess the Project budget in more detail to assess whether the requested USD \$65 million is appropriate.

It is also recommended that the Project any future budget templates for applications should include additional space for detailed notes and commentary to provide context and support for budget line estimates and to assess cost realism.

Interviews and follow up visits to the Project: This recommendation is two-fold. Firstly, to address the more qualitative aspects of the Project and to assess the impact of the Project beyond the quantitative indicators. This is important for the Project not only to document its successes and challenges but in order to refine its activities and approach in each phase to maximise impact. It would also provide the Embassy and Norad with crucial project learning to inform wider programming in other conflict-affected areas.

Secondly, visits and discussions with MoE/Colombian officials would be beneficial to get a sense of the current level of ownership and appetite to continue supporting this initiative towards 2021 and beyond. This is key in light of political developments and sustainability considerations. In addition to this, measuring more qualitative evidence (through interviews for example) measuring changing attitudes and/or tangible forms of support from communities/beneficiaries/institutions would support the sustainability plan.

6 REFERENCES

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7 ANNEXES

7.1 ANNEX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE

**Terms of Reference
for
Review of Norwegian support to the project
Enhancing access to education and health services in the areas of implementation of the
peace agreements, focusing on rural education and reincorporation of ex-FARC,
implemented by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Colombia**

1. Background

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has worked in Colombia for more than 20 years and is one of the Norwegian NGOs that receives the most official funding from Norway in this country, with a total of NOK 135.7 million between 2016 and 2018 according to official statistics.

Under the current cooperation agreement COL-17/0014 the Norwegian Embassy in Bogotá has disbursed a total of NOK 44,785,000 to the project Enhancing access to education and health services in the areas of implementation of the peace agreements (hereafter referred to as the Project). NRC has submitted a new application for NOK 61 million to continue the Project for the period from April 2019 to April 2021.

The Project has been financed mainly over the chapter post 153.78 Regional Allocation for Latin America (new chapter post 159.77). After the restructuring of the Norwegian cooperation budget, possible future funding will come from the chapter posts of Education (161.70) and Health (160.70).

The Project was developed after the signing of the final peace accords between the Colombian Government and the guerrilla group FARC in November 2016, to contribute to the reincorporation of ex-combatants from FARC and reconciliation with the local communities around their gathering zones. NRC had already a broad and operative presence in Colombia and the Project was the first reincorporation initiative to reach all gathering zones. The main area of work is in education. From 2018 a smaller health component was included, implemented through the Norwegian Red Cross.

The following are the main objectives included in the new proposal:

The Project will support local integration of rural communities and FARC ex-combatants settled in Territorial Spaces for Training and Reintegration (ETCR) by addressing the needs for relevant education and improved access to health services.

The project will:

- Support youth and adults in the areas of implementation of the peace agreements to access and remain in the education system
- Contribute to and advocate for the development of a Special Plan for Rural Education, in line with the peace agreements signed between the Government and the FARC

- Enhance the capacities of rural communities and FARC ex-combatants on healthcare to foster reincorporation processes in the territories and reducing barriers to healthcare

2. Purpose and use

As part of the Grant Management Rules and the Grant Scheme Rules for the Regional Allocation to Latin America, expert guidance or external appraisal shall always be sought for applications for grants of NOK 50 million or more before the agreement is entered into under Grant Management Regime I (project and programme support).

The review should provide recommendations to 1) inform future activities of NRC in relation to the Project and 2) inform decisions regarding future funding to the Project.

3. Objectives and review questions

The objective of the review is to assess the new application and budget from the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and give advice on possible adjustments for the project Enhancing access to education and health services in the areas of implementation of the peace agreements, based on objectives, theory of change, budget and reporting on results so far, taking into account the overall goal of reincorporation and reconciliation, the challenging logistics, and the need for coordination with central and local governments for the initiative to be as sustainable as possible.

This would include assessment of:

- Effectiveness: To what extent is the Project achieving its objectives?
- Efficiency: Are results achieved with reasonable use of resources?
- Sustainability: Could more be done to foster local ownership and continued education options for people graduating from the basic education offered by the Project?

More concretely the following should be assessed:

- The results framework, including baseline, objectives, indicators and theory of change
- The risk analysis and management, including the Project's sustainability, local ownership, and exit strategy
- The inclusion of cross cutting issues, e.g. human rights, gender perspective, fight against corruption and the environment, including if risks that could have a negative impact on these cross-cutting issues have been identified and if adequate mitigation measures have been included
- The budget, including structure, level of detail, administrative costs, realism and cost-effectiveness
- The reporting so far, including documentation of results
- The need for follow-up, including recommendations to the Embassy on field visits and further evaluations/reviews as well as recommendations to NRC regarding how this project can be strengthened (if relevant).

4. Methodology

The consultant shall conduct a desk review based on project documents provided by the Embassy as well as relevant context information obtained from open sources. If more information is needed phone interviews could be considered with relevant partners.

5. Quality standards

All findings and conclusions must be backed by reference to evidence (source) and their magnitude/representativeness commented. Ethical standards related to matters such as confidentiality and sensitivity must be observed.

The consultant may refer to the OECD/DAC evaluation quality standards for guidance:

<https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/qualitystandards.pdf>

6. Time frame

The review shall comprise a maximum of 10 days' work, preferably within the period of 12-28 June 2019.

7. Reporting/deliverables

The following reports shall be submitted to the Embassy:

- Draft report by 21 June, with the possibility for the Embassy to give comments and ask follow-up questions
- Final report by 28 June, including a short summary of main findings and recommendations. The report should not exceed 20 pages (excluding annexes).