

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND EDUCATION IN COLOMBIA: VOICES OF YOUTH



Report

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Acronyms

CAC	Colombian Armed Conflict
CdP	<i>Cátedra de Paz</i>
CEV	<i>Comisión de la Verdad</i>
JEP	<i>Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz</i>
MEN	Ministry of Education
SIVJRNR	<i>Sistema Integral de Verdad, Justicia, Reparación y No Repetición</i>
TJ	Transitional Justice
UBPD	<i>Unidad de Búsqueda de Personas dadas por Desaparecidas</i>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education can play an essential role in reconciliation, peacebuilding, and transitional justice (TJ). To understand how schools, students, and teachers navigate lessons about justice, peace, and violence in Colombia, this study focuses on youth voices—capturing their experiences and opinions across Bogotá/Cundinamarca, Antioquia, and Norte de Santander. We present the perspective of youth through an analysis of qualitative and quantitative data collected in 12 secondary schools during the 2022 academic year. We conducted a non-random survey with 1790 students (grades 9 to 11). We followed the survey with interviews with 191 students, 31 teachers, and 17 school staff.

We explore the following questions: To what extent are notions of TJ implemented in educational institutions across urban and rural areas in diverse regions of Colombia? How do students and teachers understand and engage with concepts related to TJ and peacebuilding? We view the relationship between education and TJ as complex and multifaceted, where students not only learn about TJ content but also where education and schools promote TJ ideals.

This report is structured in three parts. We first provide an overview of the research methodology, key aspects of the Colombian context, and relevant literature on youth, education, and transitional justice. We then present key findings based on students' knowledge, attitudes, and actions as three distinct dimensions of their relationship to conflict and peacebuilding. We conclude with policy recommendations for schools and government entities.



We highlight our key findings around knowledge, attitudes, and actions:

Knowledge

- **Approximately half of the students reported knowing little or nothing about the Colombian Armed Conflict (CAC).** 51.1% acknowledged knowing nothing or little about the CAC, while 48.1% responded knowing some or a lot about the topic.

- **In general, students were not familiar with TJ institutions.** The vast majority of students were either unfamiliar with the three main transitional justice institutions or had heard of them but did not know what they did: 87.6% for the *Comisión de la Verdad* (CEV); 78.0% for the *Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz* (JEP); and 63.6% for the *Unidad de Búsqueda de Personas dadas por Desaparecidas* (UBPD).
- **Schools play an important role in educating about the CAC, peacebuilding, and TJ.** The majority (73.7%) mentioned schools as a source where they learn about the CAC. Other important sources included the internet (59.3%), media (59.6%), family (55.6%), social media (43.8%), and TV (31.9%).
- **Despite students' lack of formal knowledge about TJ, the majority supported underlying TJ principles.** For example, students expressed support of measures like providing reparations to victims (82.4%), seeking truth (86.8%), and creating transitional justice institutions (81.7%), among others. However, there was greater disagreement regarding TJ measures related to non-punitive justice (only 24.5% supported seeking alternatives to jail).
- **Trust in teachers.** Most students (62.4%) reported that they trusted their teachers, a high percentage compared to other actors and institutions.

Attitudes

- **Students see peacebuilding as a structural and multidimensional process.** Students agreed or strongly agreed that providing quality education (89.3%), work opportunities (89.3%), reducing inequality (86.0%), ending corruption (95.2%), and dialoguing with armed groups (85.5%) would be necessary for peacebuilding.

Actions

- **Discussion of topics in school.** The majority (71.7%) reported that they currently discuss topics related to the CAC, peace, and TJ in schools at least once a month, and that they view this as important.
- **Students view themselves as civic actors.** Most said they would vote (81.7%) or participate in peaceful protests (53.8%). However, the majority reported that they were not likely to join a social or political cause (57.6%) and that they were not likely to contact a public official (69.8%).

We conclude the report with **policy recommendations**. In summary, it is crucial to:

- **Foster student participation.** Develop student agency and involve students in peacebuilding initiatives and relevant decision-making processes within schools; and spread knowledge about youth participation initiatives beyond classrooms like the *Consejo de Juventudes*.
- **Develop skills toward peace and justice.** Offer professional development programs for teachers and staff on peace, justice, transitional justice and on providing skills for socio-emotional support to students.
- **Integrate lessons about peace, TJ, and the CAC in the curriculum.** This will help students understand the historical and socio-political context of the conflict, as well as the importance of TJ in Colombia.
- **Promote and strengthen programs in partnership with organizations to provide additional resources,** for example, engaging with local and national museums of memory.
- **Document and share best practices about education on peace, TJ, memory, and the CAC across regions and schools.** Highlight positive examples of activities to inspire other schools to adopt similar practices.
- **Facilitate global dialogue about efforts to promote reconciliation and peace.** Share best practices in schools with other regions and countries through national and global networks in multiple languages.

PART I: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Overview of the Research Project

In countries affected by violent conflict, education systems play an important role in fostering reconciliation and the longer-term construction of peace. In particular, education systems are crucial for transforming injustices and inequalities across different social groups. In Colombia, where the armed conflict has been ongoing for more than six decades, schools play a fundamental role in the transmission of knowledge, skills, and attitudes for civic engagement. Education is essential for understanding the contested past, responding to a legacy of human rights violations, and for promoting reconciliation.

The objective of the research study entitled “Education for Transitional Justice, Reconciliation, and Peacebuilding in Colombia,” was to explore how students, teachers, and school staff understand concepts of conflict, peace, and transitional justice (TJ). As part of this project, we sought to investigate not only what schools were already teaching regarding TJ and peace but also ongoing and related activities for the promotion of these two goals. Specifically, we aimed to analyze the relationship between TJ and peacebuilding from the perspective of students, teachers, and staff, and the extent to which the broader TJ institutions and initiatives in Colombia were being implemented at the school level. The study sought to answer the following questions: To what extent are notions of TJ implemented in educational institutions across urban and rural areas in diverse regions of Colombia? How do students and teachers understand and engage with concepts related to TJ and peacebuilding?

In this policy report, we focus on the important role of youth in promoting peace and TJ amidst ongoing conflict in Colombia. We highlight the voices of students whose perspective is generally not heard within policy reports and political decisions made at the local and national levels. We focus on the education sector in light of its importance for broader social transformation and the TJ process.

We view schools and students not as passive recipients of broader public policies around these topics but as important actors in the construction of peace and justice.

Research Methods

We conducted a mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) sequential research study in 12 secondary schools during the 2022 academic school year. We included both public and private schools in urban and rural areas, in three different regions of Colombia: Bogotá/Cundinamarca, Antioquia, and Norte de Santander. First, we carried out a non-random census survey with 1790 students from ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades, where we asked them questions about the Colombian armed conflict, peacebuilding, TJ, civic engagement, and school practices. Following the survey, we conducted interviews with a diverse group of 191 students to include variation by school, region, gender, and grade of participants. In addition to interviewing students, we also conducted interviews with 31 teachers and 17 school staff, including principals, coordinators, and counselors. To complement the survey and interview data, the research team also conducted more than 150 hours of observations in social studies classes and school activities related to the project.

Education, Youth, and Transitional Justice

Transitional justice (TJ) has emerged as a global institution in the past few decades (Teitel, 2003). TJ refers to legal mechanisms and also political, social, and cultural processes aimed at addressing a legacy of mass human rights violations (Minow, 1998). The goals of TJ are to recognize victims, to develop civic trust in the medium-term, and to foster reconciliation and strengthen democracy in the long-term (De Greiff, 2012). Examples of TJ processes include international and national trials and tribunals, truth commissions, and memory sites in Rwanda, Chile, South Africa, the former Yugoslavia, Guatemala, and Peru, among others. The process of transition is also intended to support peacebuilding efforts (Laplante, 2008).

Education systems play an important role in promoting TJ and peacebuilding more broadly (Bellino et al., 2017; Cole, 2007; Davies, 2017; Ramírez-Barat & Schulze, 2018). Education systems serve to foster reconciliation and new civic values and to construct a unified national identity following violent conflict (Minow, 1998; Russell, 2020). Different aspects of education, ranging from the curricula to pedagogy, contribute to the peace-building process.

We view schools not only as important spaces for learning about the concepts related to TJ but also as sites of social transformation and civic engagement. Whether and how the violent past is remembered, silenced, or omitted is a contentious issue that teaches younger generations how society has decided to deal with its difficult past, which has implications for strengthening democracy and protecting human rights (Ramírez-Barat & Schulze, 2018).

Youth play an important role in promoting peace and TJ. Children and adolescents are key stakeholders in TJ processes due to their vulnerable social position. Their testimonies and unique views on the conflict can inform the work of TJ institutions, civil society organizations, and child protection agencies aiming to defend young citizens' rights, as well as their physical and socioemotional well-being and security (Ramírez-Barat, 2012). Recent studies have emphasized the often marginalized but critical perspective of youth in the peacebuilding process (Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015; Berents & Mollica, 2020). Since 2015, the United Nations has recognized the important role of youth as active participants in peacebuilding through the passage of the *UN Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security* (Berents & Mollica, 2020). Relatedly, youth also have the potential to play an important role in TJ processes but are often marginalized and portrayed as passive recipients rather than as active and engaged stakeholders (Parrin et al., 2022). In our study, we seek to highlight the voices of students to highlight their lived experiences and perspectives on TJ through a youth-centered approach.



We see the relationship between education and TJ as complex and multifaceted, where students not only learn about the content of TJ, but also where education and schools function to promote ideals around TJ. We propose the CPS [*Como, Para, Sobre*] Framework to understand the relationship between education and TJ that examines education *como*, *para*, and *sobre* (Russell et al., Forthcoming). First, education *como* TJ – or education as a modality of TJ – includes the ways education policies serve as a form of TJ. For example, through mandates to establish schools, train teachers, or create scholarships for conflict-affected regions or changes to the content of the school curriculum. Second, education *para* TJ – or education for TJ – includes the use of education to foster outcomes related to TJ, such as reconciliation, peace, or social transformation. Third, education *sobre* TJ – or education about TJ – refers to the teaching of specific content related to transitional ideas or institutions, such as the truth commission or a special tribunal.

THE COLOMBIAN CASE

After more than six decades of internal armed conflict involving numerous guerrilla groups, paramilitary organizations, and official forces, and more than a dozen attempts at peace negotiations with different armed groups (Pizarro, 2017), the Government of Colombia signed a peace agreement in November 2016 with the oldest guerrilla group FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*). The Agreement focused on ensuring the rights of those identified as victims of the armed conflict (*Alto Comisionado para la Paz*, 2016; Krystalli, 2024). The negotiations centered around five points, including comprehensive rural reform, political participation, the end of the conflict, the solutions to the problem of illicit drugs, victims, and verification of implementation.

The peace agreement established a TJ system: the Integrated System for Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Non-Repetition (*Sistema Integral de Verdad, Justicia, Reparación y No Repetición* – SIVJRNR). The system includes three institutions that began their work in 2017: the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (*Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz* – JEP), an entity established to prosecute crimes committed during the armed conflict; the Truth Commission (*Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, de Convivencia y la No repetición* – CEV), an extra-judicial body focused on finding the leading causes of the armed conflict;



and the Unit for the Search of Presumed Disappeared Persons (*Unidad de Búsqueda para Personas dadas por Desaparecidas* - UBPD), an organization focused on finding victims of forced disappearances. Specifically, TJ institutions have a mandate of 15 to 20 years to deal with acts committed before December 31, 2016 (the day in which all members of the armed group demobilized). The Peace Agreement brought a diverse set of transitional constitutional, legislative, and institutional reforms aimed at achieving peace and facing past abuses committed during the armed conflict. The agreement reframed peace not merely as the cessation of hostilities, but as a comprehensive process aimed at addressing the root causes that have perpetuated the conflict (Piccone, 2019).

One of the remarkable features of the Colombian TJ system is that each institution has interpreted the transitional justice principles to develop distinct pedagogical strategies aimed at fostering reconciliation and societal change. In addition to creating pedagogical materials, the transitional justice institutions have conducted educational activities, workshops, webinars, school events, and teacher training programs to strengthen citizens' understanding of the work and outcomes of TJ mechanisms and processes. In addition, these institutions aim to address and prevent the recurrence of large-scale human rights violations.¹ To contribute to peacebuilding and reconciliation, the JEP, CEV, and UBPD have been implementing education initiatives in school communities since 2022. For instance, the CEV created an ecosystem of pedagogical materials to be used by school communities and society as part of their policy recommendations.²

¹ Some examples are “*La Escuela Abraza la Verdad*” (CEV); “*Justa-mente: aprendiendo de Justicia y Reparación*” (JEP); “*Círculo de Saberes Creativos*” (UBPD).

² Applying these recommendations is particularly relevant, considering the extent to which the armed conflict has impacted the formal education sector. In their Final Report, the CEV identified over eight hundred cases from 1986 to 2021 where schools, students, teachers, and staff were negatively impacted by the conflict. According to their findings, schools were often sites of forced recruitment and attacks, and served as overnight shelters by various armed groups. The presence of guerrillas, paramilitaries, and state forces posed threats to the lives, integrity, and right to education of children and adolescents over many years. <https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/pedagogia>

Additionally, the institution planned a set of one-day TJ education campaigns with civil society organizations. The strategy, “*La Escuela Abraza la Verdad*,” promoted conversations around truth, justice, reparation, and non-repetition and pedagogies to teach about these topics in class. Similarly, in 2022, the criminal judicial body of TJ, the JEP, in partnership with the non-governmental organization Educapaz, structured the “*Justamente: Aprendiendo de Justicia y Reparación*” education program, which focuses on providing an educational tool for high school teachers in Colombia.³

Notably, these educational initiatives complement the work on peace education that the Ministry of Education (MEN) has promoted for over two decades. In the early 2000s, the Ministry of Education framed the work in schools “as one of the paths to achieve peace” (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2004, p. 3)

The educational focus was set on strengthening students’ knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes toward peaceful coexistence, conflict resolution, and democracy. Through the curricular *sancocho*⁴ of peace pedagogies (Nieto SÁCHICA, 2021)—materialized in the 2004 curricular guidelines for Civic Education (Competencias Ciudadanas), the 2013 School Convivencia Law (*Ley de Convivencia Escolar*), and the 2015 peace cross-curricular requirement (*Cátedra de Paz - CdP*), among other local initiatives within a decentralized system—schools have been tasked with enhancing everyday practices and procedures that prioritize social cohesion through respect for differences and a constructive view of conflict. Furthermore, autonomy, responsibility, self-regulation, and moral decision-making have been identified as key attributes of the good citizen who embraces a peace culture (Romero-Amaya, 2024).

³ <http://www.jep.gov.co/justamente/forms/allitems.aspx>

⁴ Diego Nieto (2021) uses the soup metaphor to highlight the myriad of peace and peacebuilding practices and approaches in the education sector in Colombia. This, as Nieto illustrates, becomes yet another barrier to improving or scaling up curricular decisions for conflict transformation in schools. The lack of coordination among the numerous initiatives results in each organization or institution working independently or even competing “with others to get hold of a share of this field of interventions” (p. 134).

However, such a pedagogical approach mainly focuses on shaping students' conduct and interpersonal relations, rather than promoting a historical understanding of structural violence, inequality, and injustice that is still prevalent in the perpetuation of the armed conflict (Romero-Amaya, 2024).

Parallel to the pedagogical initiatives undertaken by the institutions of SIVJRNR, the MEN, along with various civil society organizations, leads strategies and projects framed within the context of peace education. For instance, the MEN is currently updating curricular guidelines across different subjects. In the case of social studies, the new curricular guidelines will include recommendations from the Commission for the Teaching of History in Colombia (*Comisión Asesora para la Enseñanza de la Historia de Colombia - CAEHC*), which highlight the need to update and enhance the history curriculum to cover key historical events, to foster critical thinking, and to promote engagement with historical memory.

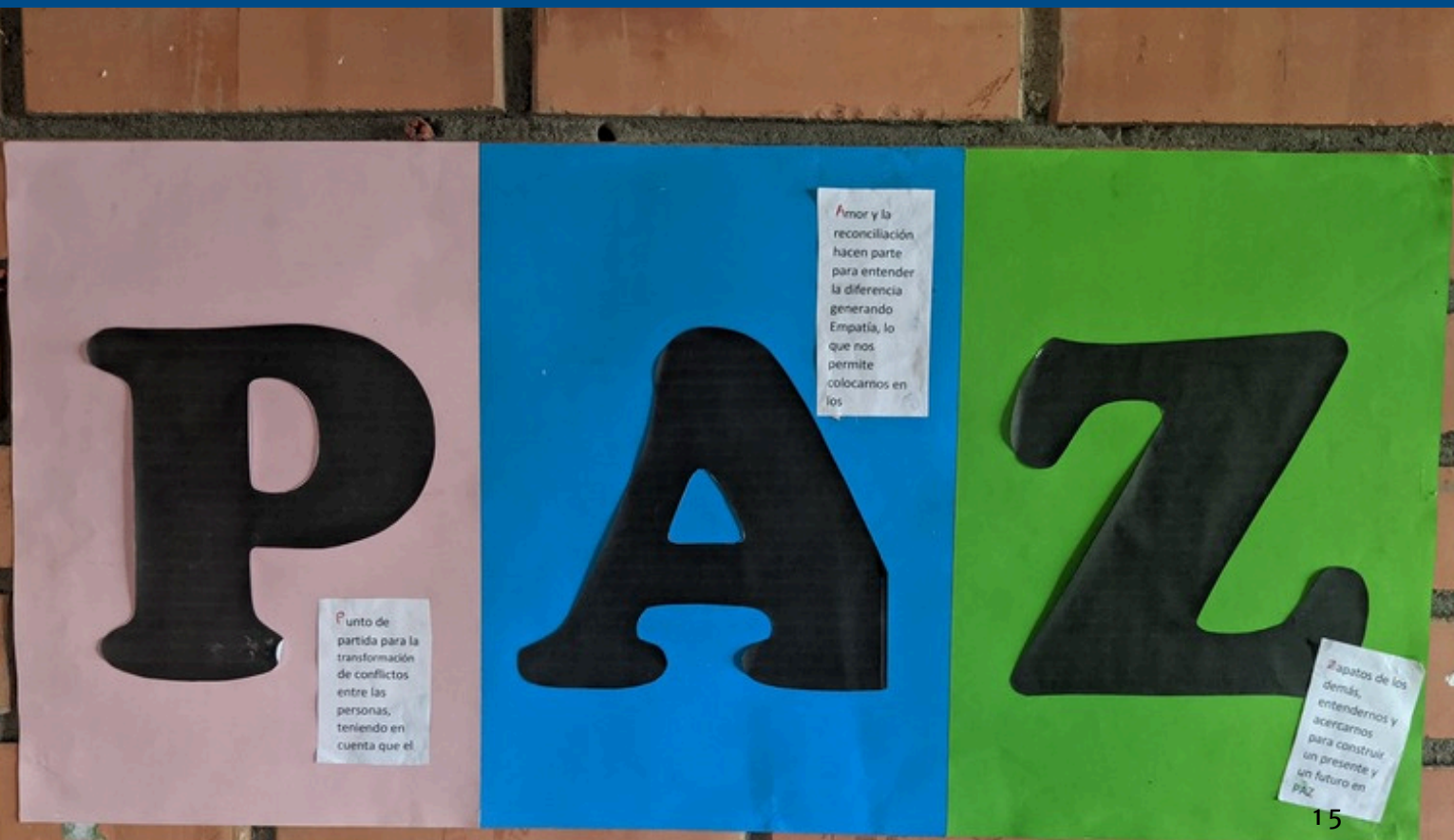
Likewise, the current government (2022-2026), through the MEN, is promoting the national adoption of the Citizenship, Reconciliation and Socioemotional Education Training CRESE (*Educación Ciudadana, para la Reconciliación y Socioemocional*), a contribution of the National Program of Education for Peace (*Programa Nacional de Educación para la Paz - Educapaz*).⁵ CRESE training promotes the development of six thematic areas of work, including historical memory and reconciliation, in all schools across the country. At the local level, community organizations, public institutions, education departments, non-governmental organizations, and international development agencies are collaborating on peacebuilding initiatives, which engage in pedagogical conversations with both schools and other sectors of the population.

⁵ Educapaz is an alliance of organizations and individuals, formalized in 2016 within the framework of the Peace Agreement. It was established with the intention of promoting collective action 'between the State, civil society, social organizations, and the private sector, for the consolidation of peace in Colombia' (Educapaz, 2024). Educapaz specifically aims to foster comprehensive and quality education for rural areas, and to promote citizenship education, reconciliation, and a socio-emotional approach, integrated into the CRESE training.

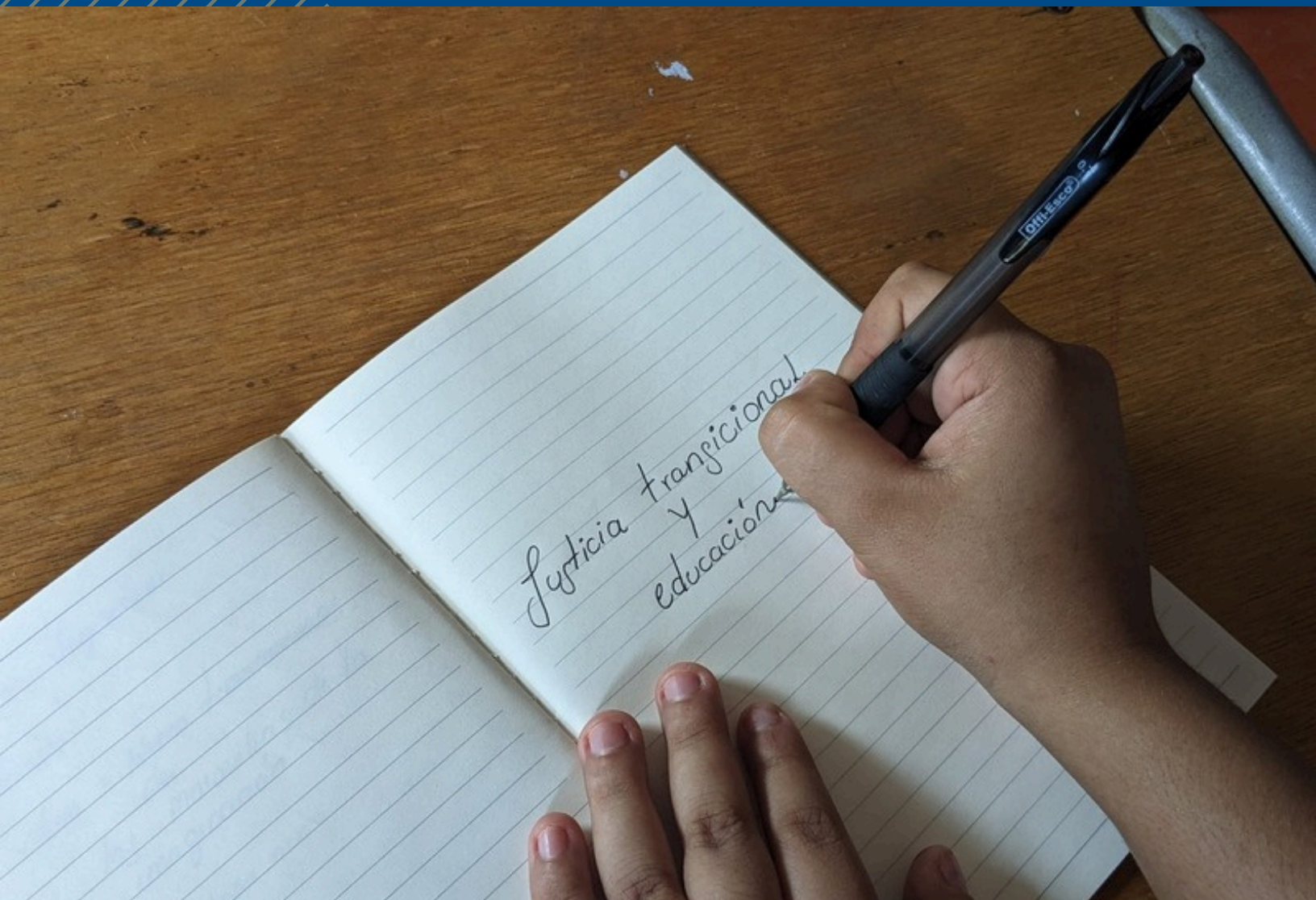
Contribution and Structure of Report

While there are relevant theoretical and empirical studies on the relationship between education and peacebuilding, in our study we highlight the relationship between education and transitional justice and privilege the voices of youth and educators across different school contexts. In addition, we highlight the unique case of Colombia, where the TJ institutions have implemented educational initiatives since 2022 to educate the public and teach about the transition.

In what follows, we provide an overview of the main findings from the surveys and interviews with students, educators, and school staff. We provide an overview of the **knowledge, attitudes, and actions** regarding the CAC, peacebuilding, and TJ from the perspective of students. We highlight key trends across the schools and regions, as well as student voices and experiences. We close the report with key policy recommendations for actors at the school, sub-national, national, and global levels.



PART II: FINDINGS



1. DEMOGRAPHICS

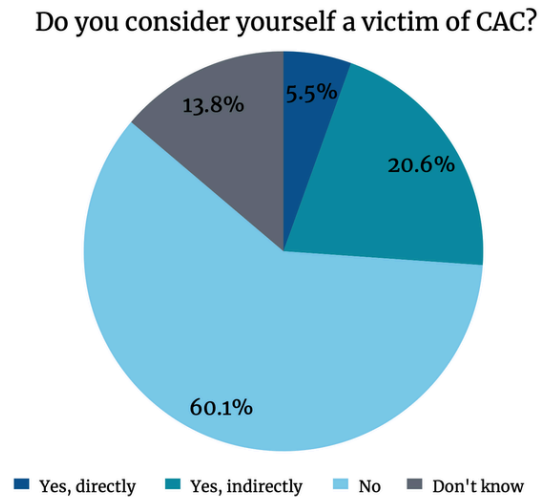
This section describes the demographic characteristics of the students we surveyed through non-random surveys conducted in three different regions of the country. The data includes information on students' country of origin, socioeconomic strata, and perceptions on their identity as victims (or not) of the Colombian armed conflict (CAC), both at the individual and familial levels.

A total of **1790** students enrolled in ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades participated in the survey on transitional justice and education. 56.2% were women, 43.1% were men, and 0.7% identified as another gender identity. The country of birth of most of the students is Colombia (84.4%); the remaining students were born in Venezuela (14.3%) or other countries (1.1%). The majority of participants mentioned living in socioeconomic strata 1 (26.3%), 2 (26.7%), and 3 (14.2%). The rest reported living in stratas 4 (5.1%), 5 (2.4%), and 6 (7.9%). In addition, it is important to note that some of the students expressed not knowing their socioeconomic stratum (16.5%). In some cases, this is because students live in rural areas, where homes are not assigned a socioeconomic stratum, or in Venezuela.



Given that victims of the CAC are essential actors in the transitional process, we highlight in **figure 1** that 26.1% of the students who participated in the surveys identified as a victim of the CAC (20.6% indirectly and 5.5% directly) and 60.1% did not identify as a victim. Moreover, 13.8% of participants responded that they did not know if they were victims or not of the CAC.⁶

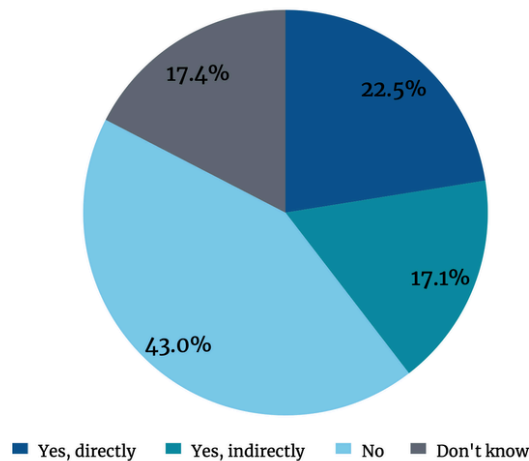
Figure 1. Identification as a victim of the CAC



Regarding their families, as shown in **figure 2**, the number of victims increases: 39.6% of the students identified **their families as victims** (22.5% directly and 17.1% indirectly), while 43.0% said that their families are **not victims**, and 17.4% expressed not knowing.⁷ Moreover, considering the impact that forced displacement has had on Colombian society, we delve further into this form of victimization. 20.5% of students indicated that their families have been displaced, while 64.9% said that their families have not suffered forced displacement; 14.6% do not know.

Figure 2. Family experiences of victimization

Do you consider your family victim of CAC?



⁶ These percentages were calculated with respect to the total number of students who answered this question. Nine students (0.5%) did not respond to this question.

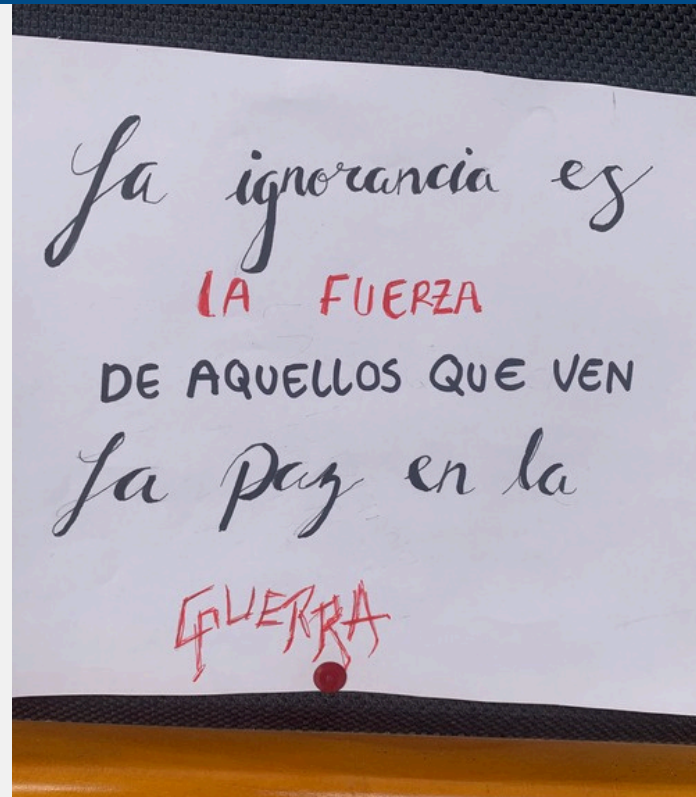
⁷ These percentages were calculated with respect to the total number of students who answered this question. Five students (0.3%) did not respond to this question.

2. KNOWLEDGE

“”

The war that developed in Colombia aims to take power from left to right. They are political factions with different ideas, but neither of them did it right, because they both wanted power and not in a good way, not winning the people over [...] People know that, and it's something that we have lived in Colombia. In towns like this one, they lived it a lot. And Colombia is a violent country and violence here is normal. For example, they kill a man over there. And what will people say? Who knows what he was doing. And we normalize it. Why? Because we've already lived that in Colombia and it's already normalized. We see violence as something normal, when that shouldn't be the case.

(Pedro,⁸ G10, public school, Antioquia)



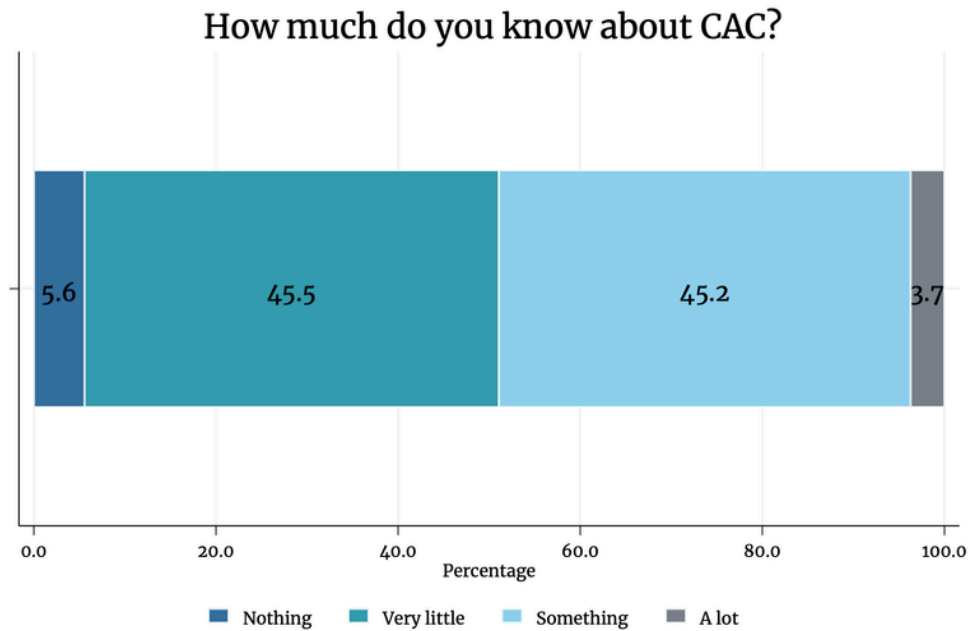
Students' perceptions about their knowledge of the Colombian armed conflict (CAC) are crucial for understanding their role in peacebuilding. This section analyzes what students know and how they approach issues related to conflict, peace, and justice. Section 2.1 reports on students' perception of their knowledge about the CAC, while section 2.2 focuses on how they understand peace. Finally, section 2.3 explores students' definitions of justice, as well as their knowledge of transitional justice in Colombia.

2.1. What do students know about the armed conflict?

Understanding the perspective of students regarding what they know and how they learn about the CAC can contribute to enriching pedagogical practices in schools. Figure 3 shows that 51.1% of students reported that they know little or nothing about the CAC, while 48.9% said they know some or a lot about the topic. Few students situated themselves in the extremes: only 5.6% said they know nothing about the CAC and 3.7% said they know a lot.

⁸ All names are pseudonyms.

Figure 3. Students' perceptions about their knowledge of CAC



We find some differences in students' perceptions of knowledge by background characteristics (see table 1). On average, we observed that male students reported knowing more about the CAC than female students; eleventh graders reported knowing more about the conflict than their peers in ninth and tenth grades; and students living in higher strata mentioned knowing more about the CAC than students living in lower strata. Similarly, students who identify as victims said they know more than their peers, and students in Bogotá and Cundinamarca or those living in urban areas reported knowing more about the topic as compared to other regions and areas.

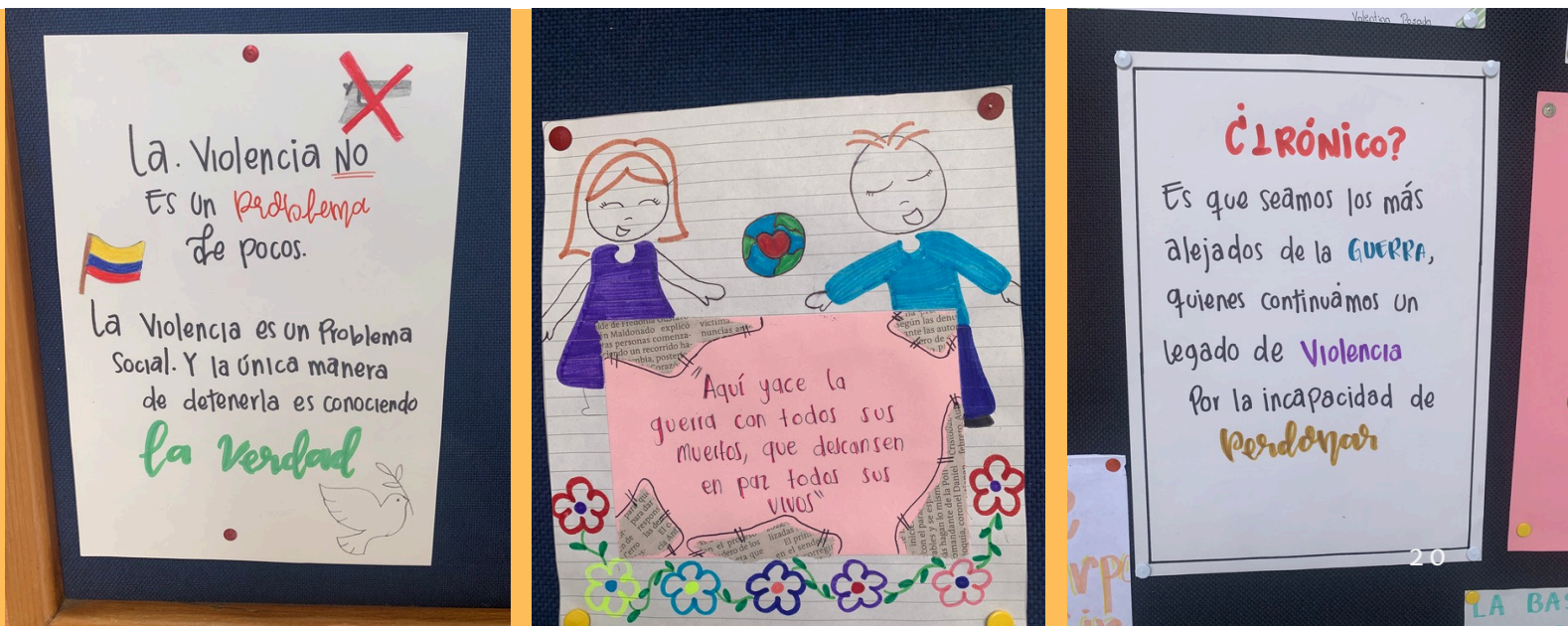




Table 1. Significant results about knowledge of the CAC⁹

 Perceived knowledge about the CAC was greater for	 As compared to
Male students* Students in 11th grade*** Students living in higher strata*** Students who identify as victims*** Students whose schools are located in urban areas** Students in Bogotá/Cundinamarca**	Female students Students in 9th and 10th grade Students living in lower strata Students who do not identify as victims Students whose schools are located in other areas ¹⁰ Students in other regions

The **five actors** that students identified most often¹¹ as the participants of the CAC included: guerrillas (94.0%), paramilitaries (74.7%), drug traffickers (49.6%), the government (39.8%), and politicians (34.5%).

Regarding the sources through which students learn about the CAC, **73.7% of students mentioned schools as a source of learning about this topic.**¹² Students also identified the internet (59.3%), the media (56.9%), and their families (55.6%) as the sources they engage with to learn about the CAC. Among the least frequently mentioned sources, students mentioned friends (19.1%), memory sites (18.5%), literature (17.8%), and personal experiences (8.1%).

⁹ The differences reported in this figure are based on hypothesis tests with respect to demographic characteristics. For the purpose of analysis, we built a binary variable representing knowledge of conflict, where “knowing about the CAC” corresponds to students who reported knowing “something” or “a lot” about the CAC. Asterisks represent significance levels: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001. Not all statistically significant results are reported in this table.

¹⁰ For this analysis, we refer to schools located in urban areas as those located in the *cascos urbanos* [urban centers] of Bogotá, Medellín, or Cúcuta. We group all other schools, located in rural areas or smaller towns, under the category of other areas.

¹¹ In this question, students had the possibility of selecting multiple options instead of only one. The percentage reported for each actor corresponds to the percentage of students who selected that option.

¹² In this question, students had the possibility of selecting multiple options instead of only one. The percentage reported for each source of learning corresponds to the percentage of students who identified that option as one of the sources through which they learn about the CAC.

Interview data also shows the multiplicity of sources that students use to learn about the CAC. Students commonly mentioned schools as a privileged space to discuss the topic, especially because these topics are included in the social studies curriculum for ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade. Daniel, (G11, private school, Norte de Santander), commented that “in social studies class they make us watch informational videos, they show us real experiences of people who went through those experiences,” among other activities related to the subject. Similarly, students usually referred to their families as resources where they learned about conflict, in many cases because of their direct experiences. Such was the case of Ana (G11, private school, Norte de Santander), who shared how she learned about the armed conflict: “Primarily from my family, because my paternal grandfather..., well, my dad had to take over the company because some paramilitaries kidnapped him and killed him [my grandfather]. So my dad grew up telling us that story to me and my siblings, to my cousins, for us to truly see the perspective.”

2.2. How do students define peace?

In the process of transition between conflict and peace, each society builds their own meaning of what peace means and the elements they consider essential for constructing peace. For the students who participated in the survey, peace was related to *convivencia* [living together], security, justice, and the absence of violence. For example, for Diana, an eleventh grader in Bogotá, peace specifically meant calm and trust: “Feeling safe in a space, being able to express your opinions and thoughts in the right way and for them to be received respectfully [...] Beyond there not being violence or arms, [it’s] like a feeling of calm” (G11, private school, Bogotá/Cundinamarca).



Students also associated peace with the possibility of enjoying social equality conditions. José (G11, public school, Norte de Santander) shared that “peace to me is where we all have the same equality, I mean, to be treated in the same way.”

Similarly, Javier (G10, private school, Antioquia), conceived of peace as constituted by “some vital minimums, a minimum of wellbeing,” which at the same time requires a certain level of basic security for all, “[...] of a minimum where you know that you can go out to the street and will not get home with a bullet in the stomach, knowing that I can go out and I won’t be mugged, I won’t be kidnapped.” Students like José and Javier emphasized the relationship between security, equality, and wellbeing with peace.

Figure 4. Word cloud with students’ definition of peace



In the word cloud (**figure 4**), convivencia, absence of violence, freedom, justice, and security are the concepts that students mention most frequently when defining peace. Regarding the actors who can contribute to peacebuilding, students consider the government (62.3%) and citizens (58.5%) as the main actors who can contribute to this goal; the third most commonly mentioned actor is the international community with 42.0%.¹³



¹³ In this question, students had the possibility of selecting multiple options instead of only one. The percentage reported for each actor corresponds to the percentage of students who identified that option as one of the actors who can contribute to peacebuilding in Colombia.

2.3. How do students define justice?

Similarly to peace, every society gives a particular meaning to the concept of justice. According to the students who participated in the survey, justice is related to traditional definitions, such as enforcing the law, but also to ideas more closely related to TJ, such as reparations for victims and the search for truth.

Figure 5. Word cloud about students' definition of justice



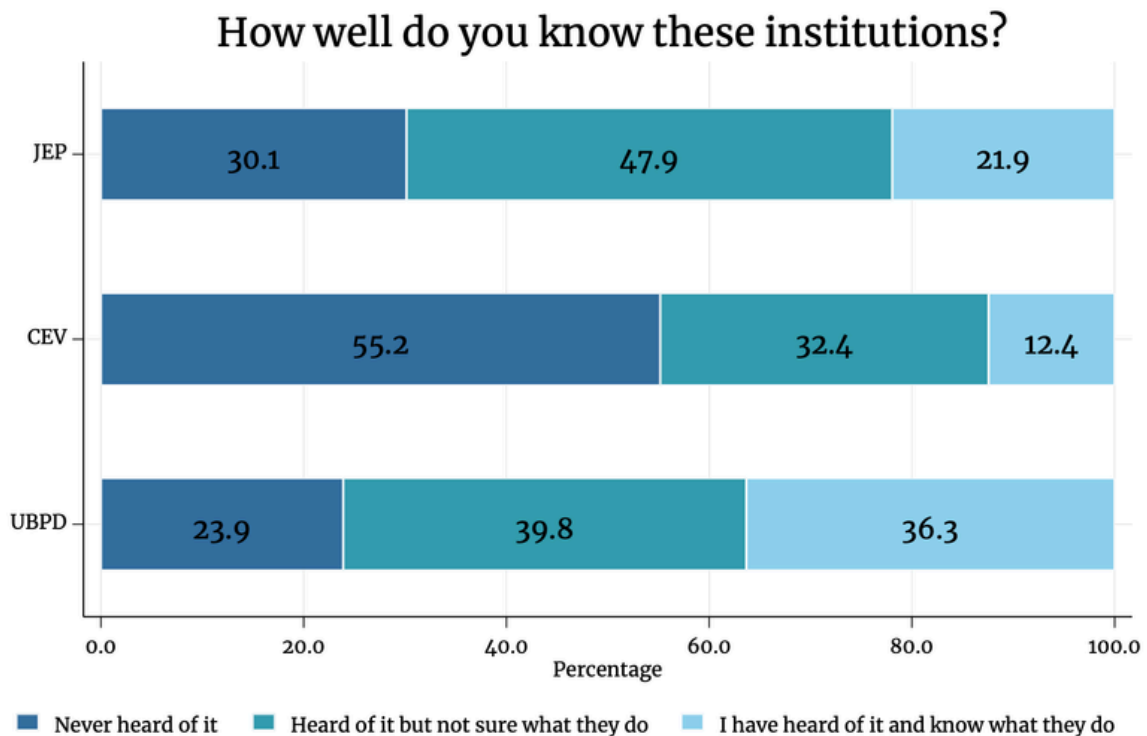
The word cloud (figure 5) shows that students define justice in terms of enforcing the law, truth, punishment, and social and economic equality. This suggests a tension between a traditional view of justice, linked to punishment and retributive justice, and a more restorative view of justice that prioritizes truth and reparations. In interviews, while some students refer to justice in terms of “making a person pay for something they know they did wrong” (Samuel, G11, public school, Bogotá/Cundinamarca), their definitions do not seem to be limited to the notion of punishment. In fact, they suggest putting a stop to the reproduction of violence. For Diego (G11, public school, Antioquia), for example, “justice would be [...] to put the people who have attempted, who have killed, have done bad things, to make them pay, but not in a way that leads to more violence.” Similarly, for Amelia, (G10, private school, Antioquia), “justice is not hurting the other, or that the other feels good hurting me, it’s something equitable, something that can help us, but without causing harm.” From this perspective of justice, students add that justice should incorporate restorative acts. Carlos (G9, public school, Antioquia) considers justice to be: “ a value within which [...] there is recognition of victims’ rights and there can be a solution to perpetrators.” For Amelia (G10, private school, Antioquia), “justice is not to punish, justice is knowing the truth.” These interviews reveal students’ awareness of different ways to conceptualize justice that go beyond the traditional punitive approach.

2.4. How much do students know about TJ institutions?

The institutions that make up transitional justice models vary across different countries and they account for the priorities and particularities of the models. For the students who participated in the survey, the functions and roles of TJ institutions (JEP, CEV, and UBDP) in Colombia are not always clear. Both survey and interview data confirm this finding.

Dilan (G11, public school, Norte de Santander) commented in his interview regarding TJ: “I’ve heard about it, but I don’t really know what it is.” In the survey data, **figure 6** similarly shows how students express having “heard of these institutions, but not know what they do” (JEP 47.9%, CEV 32.4%, and UBDP 39.8%); some of them even mentioned that they had “never heard of it” (JEP 30.1%, CEV 55.2%, and UBDP 23.9%). It is important to highlight, however, that 36.3% of students said that they “have heard of and know what they do” with regard to the UBDP, and 21.9% with regard to the JEP. In contrast, even though the CEV was culminating their work and sharing the final report at the time of data collection, most of the students (55.2%) said they had never heard about it.

Figure 6. Knowledge of TJ institutions in Colombia



3. ATTITUDES



Building peace across these generations, we must change starting from school [...] with youth being more empathetic towards the other. [...] We must start to think about common wellbeing. To me that is peacebuilding, I mean, not literally that we come with little sticks to do it and to build peace. No, peacebuilding is when we learn to understand the other and be one, literally.

(Amelia, G10, private school, Antioquia)

This section focuses on students' attitudes towards peacebuilding, reconciliation, and transitional justice processes in Colombia. In section 3.1, we analyze which actions are considered necessary to contribute to peacebuilding. Section 3.2 discusses reconciliation, highlighting students' opinions about what can contribute to reconciliation in the country and the role that transitional justice institutions and practices can play in these processes. Finally, section 3.3 centers on the actors, entities, and individuals that students trust, emphasizing attitudes with respect to people and organizations.



3.1. Attitudes towards Peacebuilding

To understand students' perspectives regarding peacebuilding in Colombia, we asked them what would be necessary to reach that goal. Responding to this question, some students shared reflections about the complexity of peace and its connection to other social processes. For example, Natalia (G11, private school, Antioquia) connected the absence of peace in Colombia to inequality and hunger. Remembering a song that says "there are still things for rich and for poor, but not for everyone," she explained that "social difference and inequality that exists in this country, it doesn't allow us to build peace because while there is someone rich, very rich, who is having caviar for breakfast, there is someone who is really poor." To Natalia, such level of inequality "is what kills people, what causes guerrillas to exist, what causes paramilitaries to exist." Through this type of connection between actors of conflict and inequality, students like Natalia suggested that, just as the conflict has social and economic roots, peacebuilding must also be a multidimensional process.

Survey findings confirm this complex understanding of peacebuilding (see figure 7). Most of the students agreed or strongly agreed that peacebuilding requires quality education (89.9%), job opportunities (89.3%), reducing inequality (86.0%), ending corruption (95.2%), dialoguing with armed groups (85.5%), guaranteeing the political participation of different actors (73.4%), and offering opportunities to former combatants (75.4%). The combination of such diverse elements suggests that students conceive of peacebuilding as a process that encompasses social, political, and economic issues.

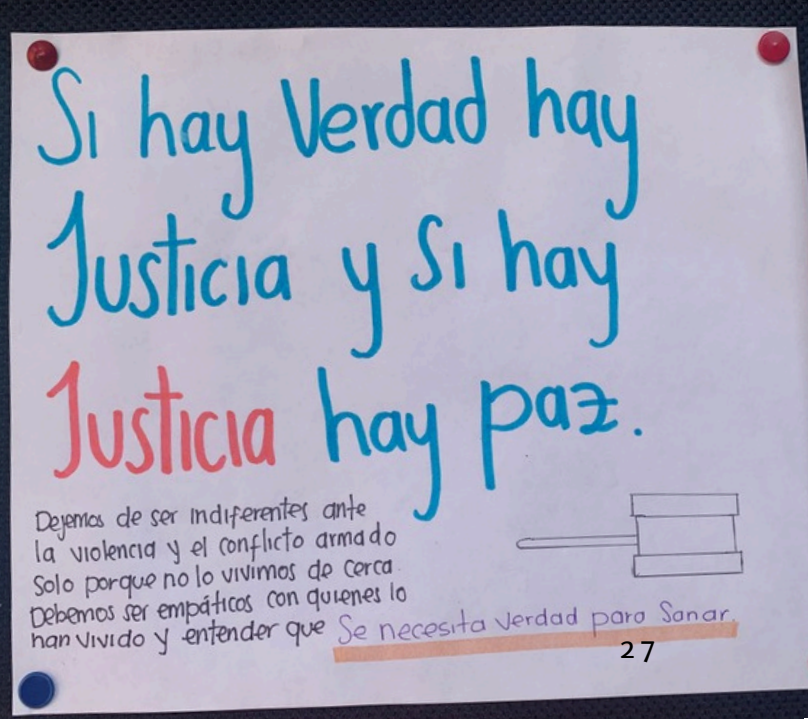
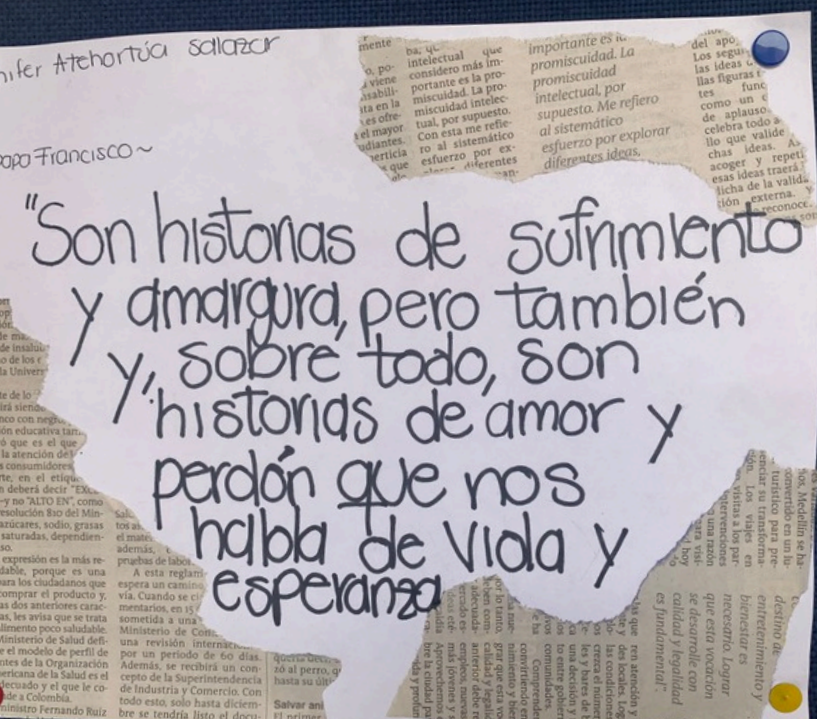
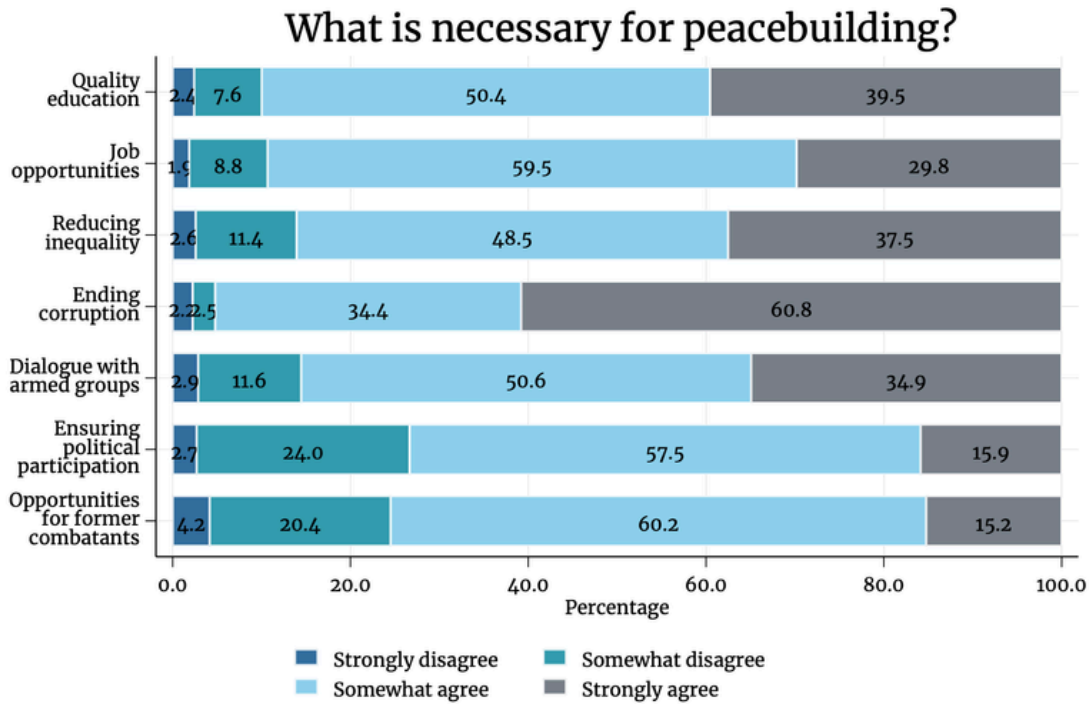




Figure 7. Elements necessary to peacebuilding



To further analyze students' perceptions on peacebuilding, we developed an index that groups all elements reported in **figure 7**. This index incorporates a view of peacebuilding as a structural issue that encompasses education, job opportunities, and equality, along with negotiations among actors of armed conflict, and political participation. The results indicate that students' perceptions of peacebuilding vary depending on their profile. On average, as compared to their peers, the perception of peacebuilding as a structural issue was greater for female students, for students living in higher strata, for those who identify themselves or their families as victims, for those who reported knowing about the CAC, and for those who live in urban areas or in Bogotá/Cundinamarca (see **table 2**).

Table 2. Perceptions on peacebuilding index¹⁴

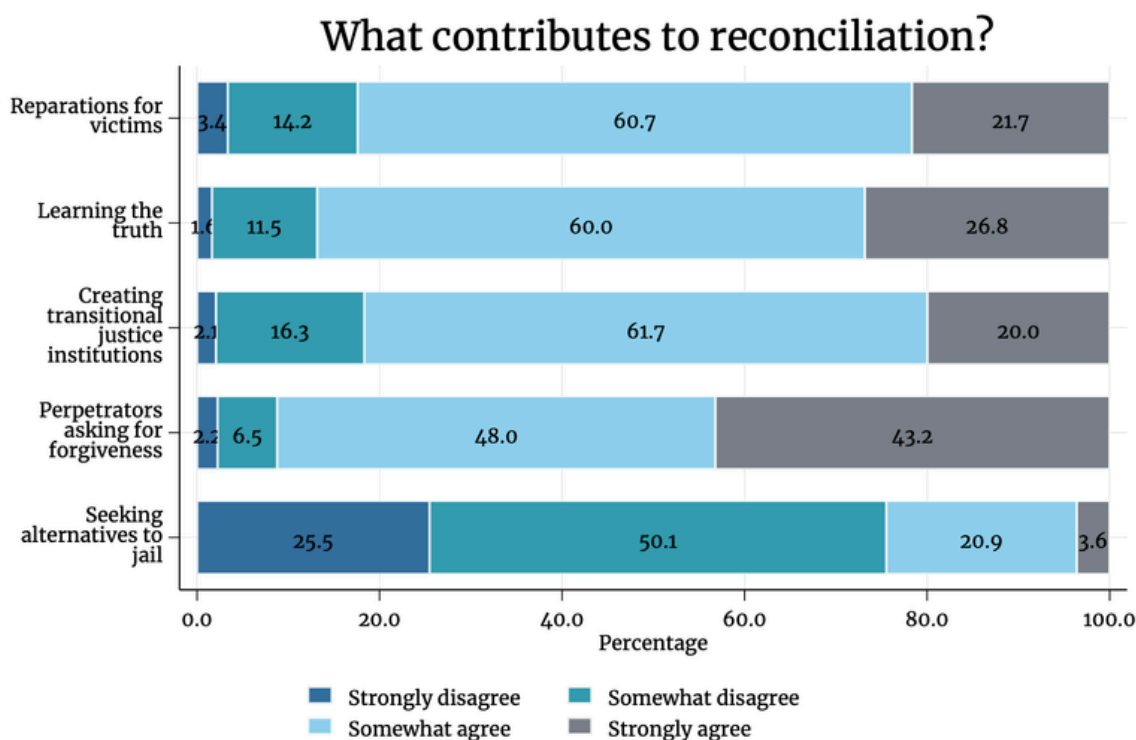
 Higher perception of peacebuilding as a structural issue	 As compared to
Female students** Students living in higher strata*** Students who identify as victims*** Students whose families are victims*** Students who reported knowing about the CAC*** Students whose schools are located in urban areas** Students in Bogotá/Cundinamarca**	Male students Students living in lower strata Students who do not identify as victims Students whose families are not victims Students who reported not knowing much about the CAC Students whose schools are located in other areas Students in other regions

3.2. Attitudes towards Reconciliation and Transitional Justice

To understand students’ perspectives on transitional justice principles and their potential contribution to reconciliation, we asked them about their opinion regarding reparation measures, truth, forgiveness, and models of non-punitive justice. **Figure 8** shows that the majority of the students agreed or completely agreed that offering reparations to victims of conflict (82.4%), knowing the truth (86.8%), creating transitional justice institutions (81.7%), and asking for forgiveness (91.2%) are actions that contribute to reconciliation. With respect to the possibility of seeking forms of justice different from jail, in contrast, we find that only 24.5% of students thought that this action could contribute to reconciliation. This contrast between students’ support of some TJ measures and their rejection of seeking non-punitive forms of justice highlights the complexity of students’ relationship to TJ. These results show the importance of strengthening students’ understanding of the work of TJ institutions and of the intention behind alternative forms of justice. Students’ positive reception of principles of reparation, truth, and reconciliation offers a foundation upon which to begin this work.

¹⁴ The differences reported in this figure are based on t tests with respect to demographic characteristics. For the purpose of analysis, we built a mean index of elements that are relevant for peacebuilding. Asterisks represent significance levels: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001. Not all statistically significant results are reported in this table.



Figure 8. Actions that contribute to reconciliation in Colombia



Considering that the items reported above are related to overall principles of transitional justice, we created a mean index that groups these questions under one single measure.¹⁵ This index represents students’ attitudes towards principles of transitional justice and our analysis shows that, in general, students agree that these principles contribute to reconciliation. However, we find some differences in students’ average attitudes by characteristics, such as gender, victim identity, knowledge of conflict, and region, among others. As we summarize in **table 3**, we find that, on average, female students, students living in higher strata, in urban areas or in Antioquia, those who identify as victims or whose families are victims, and those who reported knowing more about the CAC, report a higher level of support to transitional justice principles compared to their peers.

¹⁵ To maintain the internal consistency of the index, we excluded the item about alternatives to jail when building the index.

Table 3. Attitudes towards principles of transitional justice index¹⁶

 Higher support of transitional justice principles	 As compared to
Female students*** Students living in higher strata*** Students who identify as victims*** Students whose families are victims*** Students who reported knowing about the CAC*** Students whose schools are located in urban areas*** Students in Antioquia***	Male students Students living in lower strata Students who do not identify as victims Students whose families are not victims Students who reported not knowing much about the CAC Students whose schools are located in other areas Students in other regions

During our interviews with students, we were able to confirm that, despite not being familiar with many terms and details about transitional justice processes, there are related ideas that students know and mention as elements that are fundamental for the reconstruction of the social fabric. Lorena (G11, private school, Bogotá/Cundinamarca), for example, summarized some of these principles in her reflection on reconciliation: “I think reconciliation is forgiveness, I think that’s something very important. Not so much like accepting an apology, because I think that’s something very difficult and you can never put yourself in someone else’s position to know whether to forgive or not. But the regret, and also the reparation to victims, but also non-repetition, I think that all fits within reconciliation.” In these kinds of reflections, students link forgiveness, regret, empathy, and other concepts close to their realities with principles related to transitional justice, such as reparation and non-repetition.

3.3. Trust

Trust is a fundamental aspect of transitional justice and peacebuilding in Colombia. For this reason, it is important to understand who or which entities students trust. On the question of how much they trust different actors and institutions, the options that students identified most frequently¹⁷ as trustworthy actors include: their teachers (62.4%), their classmates (55.2%), church (53.9%), and TJ institutions (53.4%).

¹⁶ The differences reported in this figure are based on t tests with respect to demographic characteristics . For the purpose of analysis, we built a mean index of perceptions towards actions that contribute to reconciliation. Asterisks represent significance levels: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001. Not all statistically significant results are reported in this table.

¹⁷ In this question, students had the possibility of selecting multiple options instead of only one. The percentage reported for each actor corresponds to the percentage of students who selected that option.

On the other hand, the actors that students trust the least are: the government (11.5%), the police (25.8%), and the media (27.0%).

It is important to note the trust students expressed in their teachers. During interviews, we were able to verify that this trust is connected to the support that many youth receive from their teachers. For example, when we asked Karol (G10, public school, Antioquia) what she liked most about her school, she answered, “what I like about my school: my teachers. How they teach, the way they care about students; you normally think that teachers come to get paid, to deliver lessons, but some teachers are devoted not to their subject, but to their students: that they’re okay, that they eat, that they truly worry about having a future.” In Norte de Santander, Carmen (G11, public school), also referred to her teachers and school administrators when sharing her experience at school: “I’ve felt a lot of support from everyone. A few months ago I had a small emotional problem and I received a lot of support from the principal, from my closest teachers, and truthfully on that front I feel very supported.” Reflections like these suggest a close and trusting relationship between teachers and students.

During our classroom observations and interviews with teachers, moreover, we noticed that teachers know their students well and talk about them with affection. Francisco, a philosophy teacher at a public school in Antioquia, for example, mentioned that his students “come with a lot of strength, with the capacity to be amazed, to discover the world and everything around them, to discover the others with an overwhelming energy. And that is amazing, it’s cool.” Criticizing the excessive use of sanctions in school, which “makes that magic they have to explore the world die a little,” Francisco highlighted the value of “exploring the knowledge that they [students] have and putting it in dialogue with my knowledge. In the end it’s not a vertical relationship, but a horizontal one, because I can learn from them and they can learn other things from classes [...] And that’s important: to have that encounter [...] It’s like the possibility of connecting and meeting in a space, in the classroom space.” For Francisco, questioning and transforming vertical relationships in the classroom is a chance to educate youth who are critical and to transform society, as “we have to begin by questioning that and establishing another kind of relationship.” These results highlight the central role that teachers play in fostering social trust, as well as the importance of schools as spaces for social transformation.

4. ACTIONS



“”

Well youth, we're new to this topic. We first need to listen to our ancestors, understand what is happening, and act in the right way. So that we don't generate more conflict here in Colombia.

(Raúl, G10, public school, Norte de Santander)

This section explores actions related to the learning and teaching of the CAC and civic engagement. These data incorporate students' opinions on the importance they give to learning about the CAC, how they are currently learning about the CAC in schools, and their views on engaging in social action and future civic engagement. Section 4.1 looks at students' opinions on learning about the CAC, while section 4.2 explores how the CAC is currently being taught from students' and teachers' perspectives. Finally, section 4.3 considers students' thoughts on their likelihood to engage in different types of social action in the future.

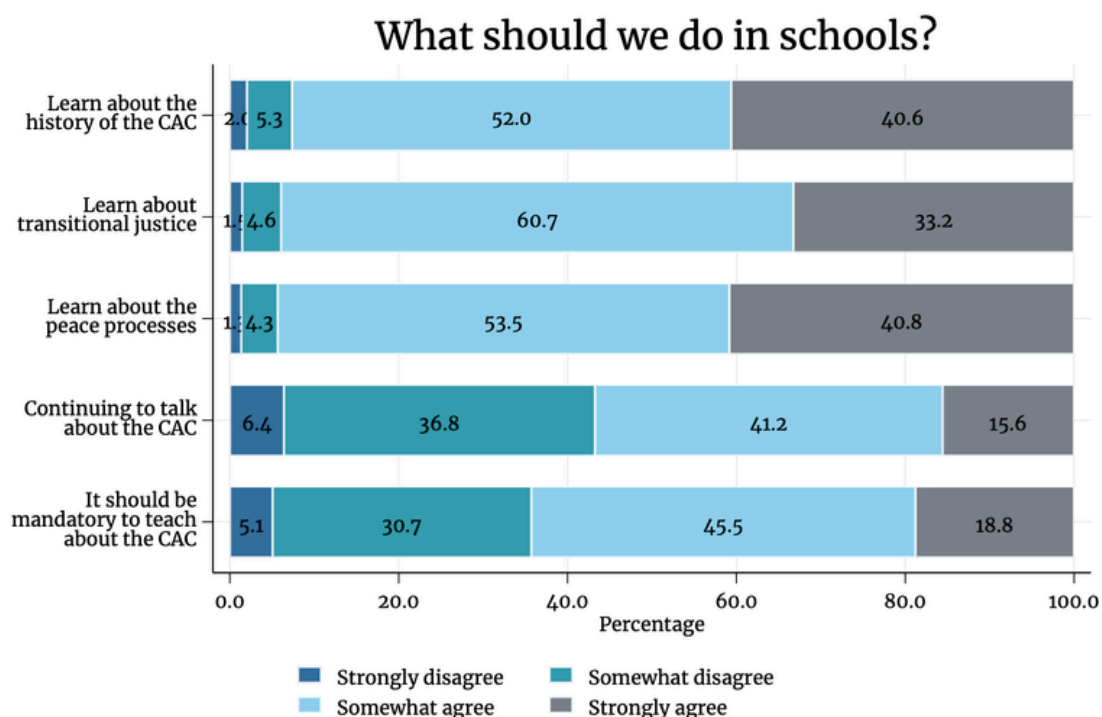
4.1. Importance of Learning about the CAC

The data below presents students' opinions on learning about the CAC. Surveys demonstrate that students believe schools should be teaching about the CAC, although questions arise about the extent to which schools should engage in speaking about the subject. When students were asked about the importance of learning about the CAC, the vast majority (92.6%) reported that they believed students should learn about the CAC in schools. Participants also agreed with statements that students should learn about TJ (93.9%) and that they should learn about the peace processes that have taken place in Colombia (94.3%).

Questions about continuing to talk about the CAC and mandating schools to teach about it garnered more disagreement. In particular, 43.2% of students said they disagreed or strongly disagreed with continuing to speak about the CAC, and 35.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed that it should be mandatory to teach about the CAC.



In interviews, several students shared their perspective on the importance of teaching about the CAC. Many students spoke about the relevance of the CAC to the current reality in Colombia, with one student, Isabel, from Cúcuta mentioning: “We should keep talking about it, because in reality I think that will never end [...] I think we should keep talking about it [...] from all angles, from all issues, from all opinions” (G10, public school, Norte de Santander). Similarly, when another student from Cúcuta was asked if students should learn about the CAC in classes and at what age, he replied that children should learn about it, in particular, that “they could start from the age of ten so that they start seeing the real world” (Ramón, G10, public school, Norte de Santander). Students highlighted in the interviews the importance of learning about these topics from an early grade, considering the diversity of opinions and narratives about the CAC.

Figure 9. Students’ perceptions of what schools should do



To analyze students’ perceptions of the relevance of learning about the CAC, we built a factor index that groups the items in **figure 9**. Because the items in **figure 9** to the relevance of learning about the CAC, the peace processes, and TJ in schools, the resulting index represents students’ views on the importance of engaging with these topics in schools. We found that students’ perceptions differed by background characteristics. **Table 4** summarizes some of these differences. On average, female students, students living in higher strata, those who identify as victims or whose families are victims, those who reported knowing more about the CAC, and students living in Antioquia had higher perceptions of the importance of learning about the CAC, TJ, and peace processes than their peers.

Table 4. Significant results regarding students’ perceptions of the importance of learning about the CAC, TJ, and peace processes¹⁸

 Support for the importance of learning about CAC was higher for	 As compared to
Female students*** Students living in higher strata*** Students who identify as victims*** Students whose families are victims*** Students who reported knowing more about the CAC*** Students in Antioquia***	Male students Students living in lower strata Students who do not identify as victims Students whose families are not victims Students who reported not knowing much about the CAC Students in other regions

4.2. What Are the Schools and Teachers Already Doing?

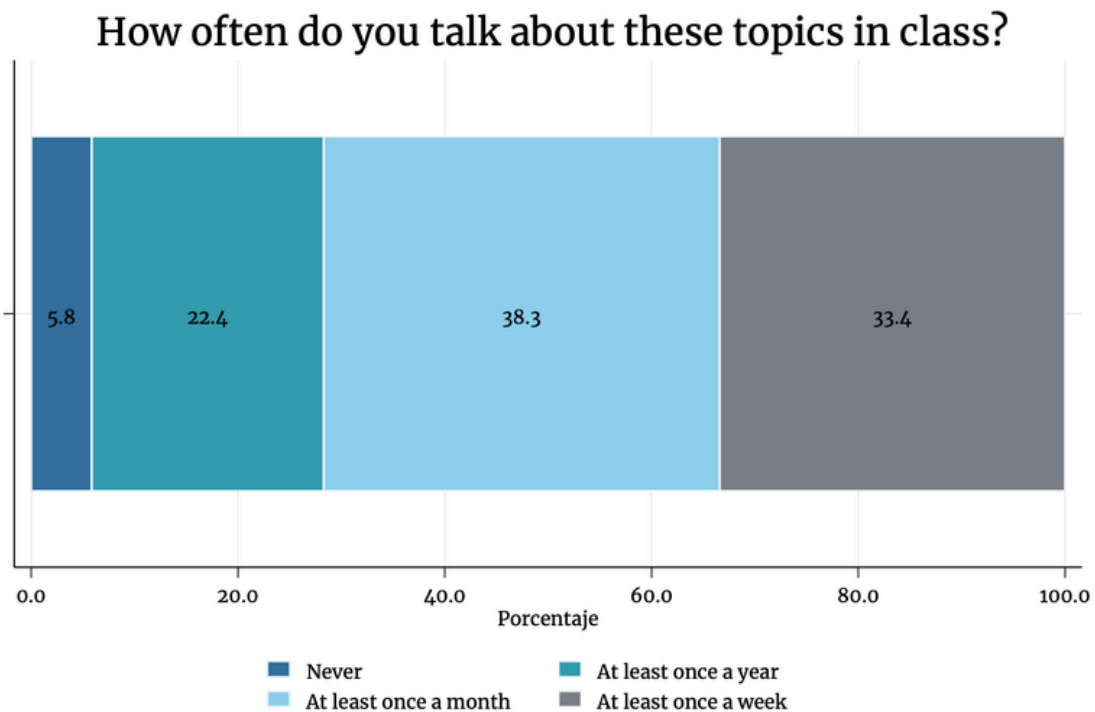
This section highlights the current and ongoing learning processes about the CAC for students. Students were asked how often they speak about themes related to the CAC, and what materials are used to teach about the CAC. We find that schools are already engaged in teaching about topics related to the CAC, peacebuilding, and TJ in an ad-hoc manner to varying degrees. Teachers apply different strategies to deliver these lessons. For example, Elisa, a social studies teacher at a public school in Sumapaz, a rural zone of Bogotá, explained that she uses guides, videos, and online resources. She also makes her own materials compiling relevant

¹⁸ Differences reported in this figure are based on hypothesis tests by background characteristics. For analysis, we constructed a factor index that groups together all the items reported in figure 9, along with an item asking students whether teachers should not avoid speaking about the CAC in class. Asterisks represent levels of significance: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001. Not all statistically significant findings are reported in this table.

information. Along the same lines, Gustavo, a social studies teacher at a private school in Cúcuta, explained that he uses a variety of sources to teach about these topics: “I use a lot of videos from the JEP, from links I follow on Twitter about the boom of the Truth Commission.”

When students were asked about the extent to which they discussed topics related to the CAC, peace, and TJ in their classes, the majority reported discussing the topics regularly (see **figure 10**). 33.4% reported that they discuss these topics at least once a week, 38.3% reported that they discuss these topics at least once a month, and 22.4% reported discussing the topics at least once a year. Only 5.8% said they never discussed these topics in class. Hence, this demonstrates that in most classrooms there is already discussion of these topics.

Figure 10. Students’ perceptions on the frequency with which they discuss issues related to the CAC, peacebuilding, and TJ in class



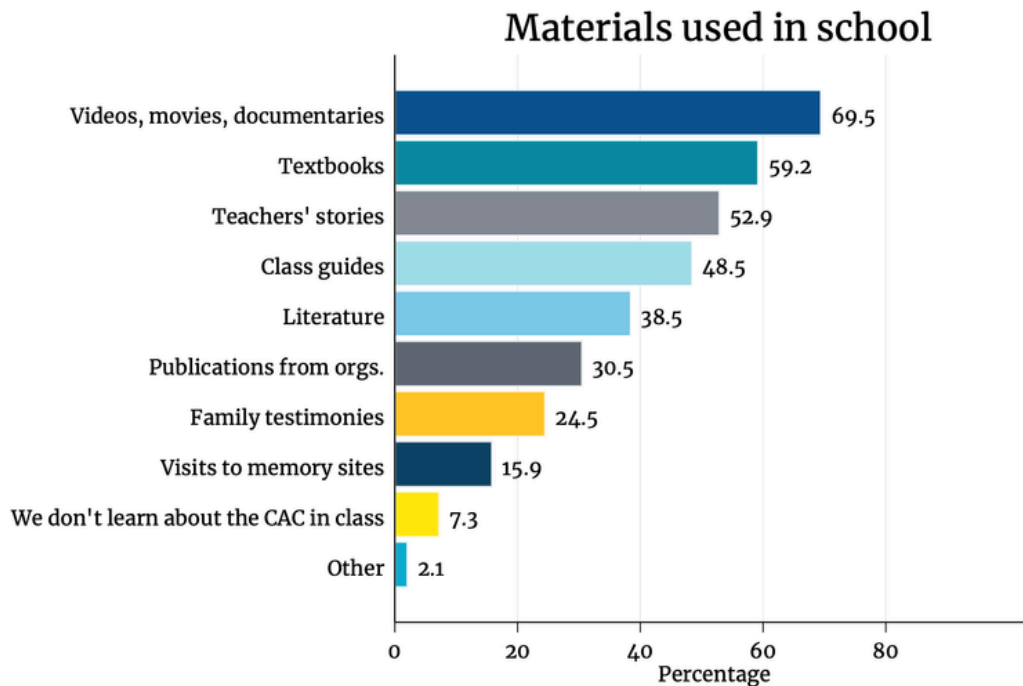
Additionally, teachers shared in interviews how they currently teach about topics related to the CAC. Many teachers mentioned *Cátedra de Paz*, with Jorge, a coordinator at a private school in Medellín, stating that they discuss the CAC as part of the *Cátedra de Paz*. He explained that this is “a transversal project that links all

the subjects in science and social studies properly.” However, Jorge was critical about it because at times the content “becomes like a tired and external discourse”.

Not only do teachers introduce the *Cátedra de Paz* in classrooms, but also in extracurricular activities and workshops. For instance, Esteban, a coordinator of a school in Chengdú mentioned that since *Cátedra de Paz* is integrated as a transversal project, “teachers are in charge of leading these types of projects and implementing them in classes or in extracurricular activities, in an *izada de bandera* [flag raising ceremony], for example, workshops” (public school, Bogotá/Cundinamarca). While collecting data in 2022, our research team participated in some of these extracurricular activities and special events, including workshops with guest speakers and reflections around truth in the context of *La Escuela Abraza la Verdad*.

Figure 11 demonstrates the range of materials and sources students mentioned that teachers use to teach about these topics. The most commonly mentioned materials include videos, movies, or documentaries (69.5%), school textbooks (59.2%), personal histories of teachers (52.9%), and class workbooks (48.5%). Less common were family testimonies (24.5%) and visits to memory sites (15.9%).

Figure 11. Materials used to learn about these topics

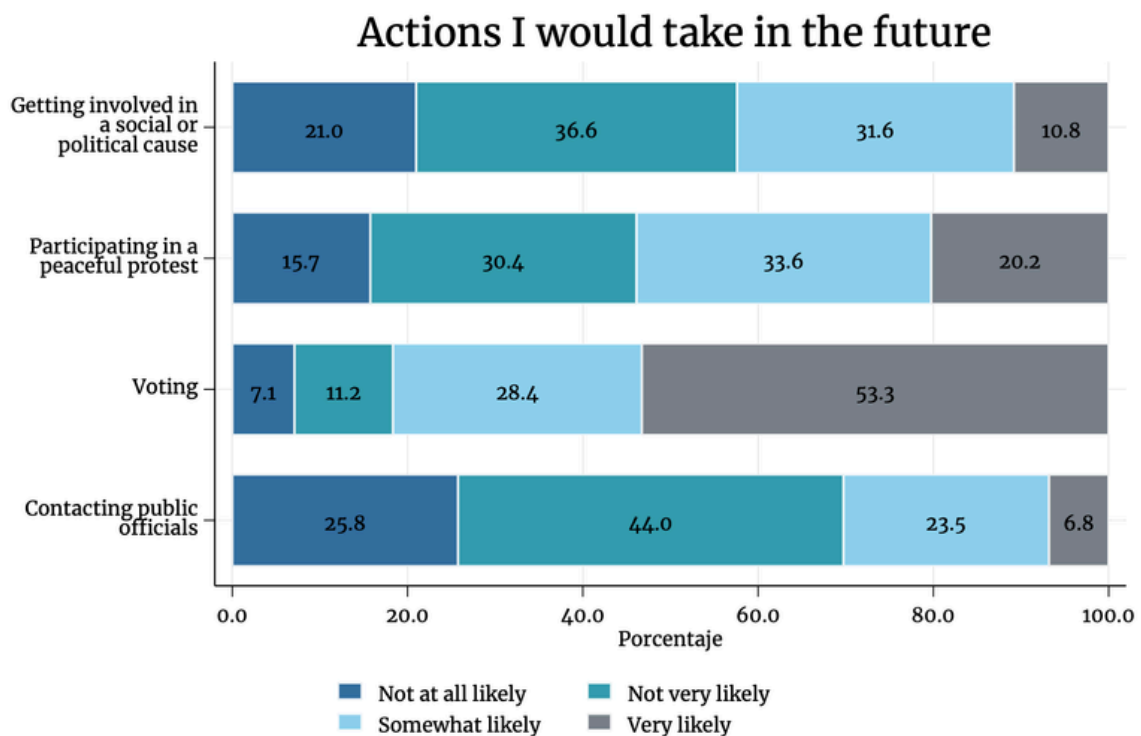


4.3. Future Civic Engagement

Learning which avenues students see as possible actions for participation is fundamental to understanding their views on civic participation. Regarding students' perceptions of their future civic engagement, students were asked several questions about their potential plans to vote, participate in a protest, join a social or political group, or contact a public official. Overall, students expressed positive opinions about their expectations for voting and a more mixed response to their openness to protesting based on the nature of the protesting action. Students were fairly split on the idea of joining a social or political group, and of the questions asked, contacting a public official was one of the least likely actions that students said they would take.

When asked about voting, the majority of students (81.7%) said that they were likely or very likely to vote in an election. For protesting peacefully, the majority (53.8%) said that they would be likely to participate in a protest. However, most also said that they were not likely to join a social or political cause (57.6%) and that they were not likely to contact a public official (69.8%) (see **figure 12**). Of the items shown here, this question garnered the largest negative response regarding civic engagement, which points to a lack of trust and sense of efficacy regarding government institutions.

Figure 12. Actions students would take in the future



During the interviews, several students expressed diverse ideas on the role of youth in civic engagement in Colombia. For some, the most significant action that youth can take is studying: “Study, study, and study. That’s what we can do. Because [...] before, young people almost didn’t have a voice because they didn’t know what they were doing, they didn’t know how to read. That is what happened to my stepdad, to my grandparents” (José, G11, public school, Norte de Santander). For this student, educating himself and prioritizing school is essential to supporting the future of Colombia.



From this perspective, attending school is already a form of civic engagement and a contribution to social transformation. When young people study topics related to the CAC, peace, and justice, they can develop further interest in their country. For Paulina, a student at a private school in Medellín, the key was in fostering such interest and doing so first for herself, and then to “help youth who are [...] like lost” (G9, private school, Antioquia). For some students, peacebuilding starts in school.

In addition, students expressed that all youth should be involved in their communities. For instance, Natalia, a student in Antioquia explained that “we [the youth] carry the heaviest weight [...] it depends on us to elect who will govern us, who will represent us, who will decide what they’ll do with the money from our taxes” (G11, private school, Antioquia). However, in order to play an effective role as youth, other students talked about the importance of seeking verified and trustworthy information. For example, Alejandro, a student in Bogotá, discussed how after engaging in the interview for our research, and attending presentations during the *Semana de Colombia* that his school organized, he became more informed and interested in these topics. The reason was that “as you get informed, you say ‘I don’t want this country to be like this when I grow up’ so you’ll act so that that doesn’t happen [...] The greatest role we have as young people [is] to understand” (G9, private school, Bogotá/Cundinamarca).

On the other hand, some students interviewed had a more direct approach to involving themselves in politics, saying that the role of youth in the country’s development is to become interested in what is happening in the country: “There are people who are very uninterested, who [say] ‘ah, I don’t like politics,’ [...] and if I want to achieve something with other people, I first need to achieve it with myself” (Paulina, G9, private school, Antioquia).

To analyze students' expectations for their future civic engagement, we built a factor index that groups the items reported in **figure 12**, along with other related items.¹⁹ This index represents students' perceptions of how likely it is for them to engage civically in the future. We found that, on average, students' future civic engagement varied by background characteristics. Specifically, we found that female students, those living in higher strata, and students in eleventh grade have a higher future civic engagement as compared to their peers (see **table 5**). Students who identify as victims or whose families are victims, as well as those who reported knowing more about the CAC, also had a higher future civic engagement index than their peers. The following table summarizes some of these differences.

Table 5. Significant results regarding students' future civic engagement²⁰

	Higher future civic engagement		As compared to
Female students*** Students living in higher strata** Students who identify as victims*** Students whose families are victims*** Students who reported knowing more about the CAC*** Students in 11th grade*	Male students Students living in lower strata Students who do not identify as victims Students whose families are not victims Students who reported not knowing much about the CAC Students in other grades		

¹⁹ In addition to the items listed in figure 12, the future engagement factor index includes the following items: convincing others to get involved in political or social issues, collecting signatures for a petition, making political content viral on social media, making graffiti as a form of protest, blocking a street to protest, organizing an event centering around a social or political issue, and contacting public officials through social media.

²⁰ Differences reported in this figure are based on hypothesis tests by background characteristics. For analysis, we constructed a factor index that groups together 11 different items related to future civic engagement. Asterisks represent levels of significance: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001. Not all statistically significant findings are reported in this table.

In Summary

This study sought to understand the knowledge, attitudes, and actions that youth have around the CAC, peacebuilding, and TJ. Together, these elements shed light on where students stand and how schools are educating for TJ. We find that, even though students do not feel confident in their knowledge of the CAC and are unfamiliar with the TJ system, they understand and support peacebuilding and TJ ideas. Schools are key sites for the social appropriation of TJ processes, and they are already taking steps towards setting the ground for youth to understand and transform their contexts. Our findings are an invitation to recognize the value of youth voices, understand the challenges they face, and strive to strengthen their agency as civic actors.

PART III: RECOMMENDATIONS



We provide the following recommendations based on the analysis of the survey, interview, and observation data collected across 12 schools. We shared our preliminary findings with a group of teachers and school administrators from each of the 12 participating schools during a two-day workshop held in Medellín in July 2023. During this workshop, participants reviewed initial findings from their respective schools and provided comments and feedback. As a group, we generated and co-constructed recommendations for the school, sub-national, and national government and policy levels in Colombia and other conflict-affected contexts. The recommendations below emerge from findings from the mixed methods analysis and the suggestions generated from the workshop.

School Level

Our study points to the critical role of schools within the broader peacebuilding and TJ processes in Colombia. We recognize the importance of schools as sites for learning about the CAC, peace, and TJ, as well as spaces to navigate difficult and contested conversations. Schools have the potential to offer safe psychological and socio-emotional support to students, particularly those affected by conflict and violence. Recognizing the impact of the school environment on well-being, it is essential that these institutions foster inclusive atmospheres. Schools can serve as vital spaces for navigating complex conversations and fostering understanding and peace among the school population.

In light of this and acknowledging that actions must be tailored to specific contexts, we recommend the following for educators and staff in schools:

Foster student participation. Involve students in peacebuilding initiatives and relevant decision-making processes within the school. Encouraging students to take active roles in these efforts can cultivate leadership and responsibility toward building a peaceful society.

- Capitalizing on existing “*manuales de convivencia*” and “*comités de convivencia*” to infuse restorative justice and conflict resolution elements within everyday school activities. This includes an obligation to co-construct the *manuales* alongside students and with the school community.
- Making students aware of their role in promoting *convivencia* requires recognition by educators and staff of the students’ agency and their contribution to TJ processes within and beyond schools.

- Supporting and guiding student civic engagement beyond the classroom by supporting the development of student civic participation and avenues for involvement, for instance through the “*subsistema de participación de juventudes*” [youth civic participation subsystem] or the “*Consejo de Juventudes*” [Youth Council].

Develop skills toward peace and justice. Offer professional development programs for teachers and staff on how to handle sensitive topics about peace and justice, as well as on providing socio-emotional support to students.

- Support teachers in implementing an active and youth-centered and engaged pedagogy to teach about these topics (for example, by using examples and cases from other contexts or through role-playing). Relevant examples are available in the curriculum from Facing History and Ourselves.²¹
- Provide teacher professional development for teaching about the conflict, peacebuilding, and transitional justice and other sensitive and politicized topics.



Integrate lessons about peace, TJ, and the CAC in the curriculum. This will help students understand the historical and socio-political context of the conflict, as well as the importance of TJ in Colombia.

- To incorporate a focus on peacebuilding and TJ in the *proyecto educativo institucional - PEI* [institutional education project].
- To integrate topics transversely across different school subjects and academic activities beyond social studies classes. This also involves introducing active and critical discussion of these topics and initiatives to support the goals of TJ in school-wide assemblies, events, and extracurricular activities through collaborations between teachers and staff.
- To engage in arts, theater, and photography to teach about peace and justice.

²¹ See <https://www.facinghistory.org/>

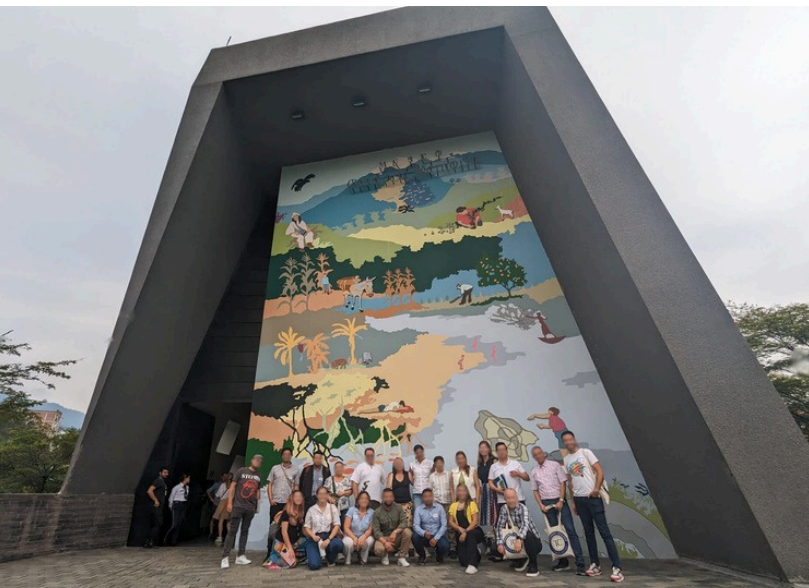
- To commemorate and recognize the importance of local and national symbolic days and use this as an opportunity to discuss these topics as a community. For example, introduce relevant conversations and celebrate the *Día Nacional de la Memoria y Solidaridad con las Víctimas del Conflicto Armado* [National Day of Memory and Solidarity with the Victims of the Armed Conflict], *Día Internacional al Derecho a la Verdad* [International Day for the Right to the Truth], *Día de La Diversidad Étnica y Cultural* [Day of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity], among others.

Create spaces to work with families and communities to teach and discuss topics related to the CAC, peace, and TJ.

- To create spaces to educate families and the community about the CAC, peace, and TJ (i.e., to capitalize on existing spaces such as the *Escuela de Familias* or create new opportunities for family engagement).

Establish programs with community organizations to provide additional resources for students and teachers. Through experiential learning, use the resources available in the communities around the school by engaging with local and national museums of memory as spaces of learning (i.e., *Museo Casa de La Memoria* [House of Memory Museum], *Centro de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación* [Center of Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation], etc.) to teach about topics related to the CAC, peace, and TJ.

- Collaborate with local and national museums to co-construct local sites of memory within school spaces.
- Build connections with entities and organizations working on issues related to conflict, peace, and TJ (i.e., JEP, UBPD, CNMH, allies of the former CEV, etc.) to strengthen a two-way collaboration between schools and organizations, and to ensure that pedagogical materials reach the schools, and acknowledge the potential of schools as sites of knowledge production.



National and Sub-National Levels: Governments and Policy

While we view schools as important sites of social transformation, the support of sub-national and national governmental entities and non-governmental organizations supporting these areas of instruction is critical for schools to successfully incorporate these topics into their curriculum and pedagogy. We recommend *Secretarías de Educación* [Departments of Education], the Ministry of Education, and other relevant governmental and non-governmental entities to:

- **Allocate resources to teachers' professional development.** Provide teacher professional development on TJ and peacebuilding to discuss sensitive and controversial topics, especially for the *Programa de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial - PDET* [Development Program with a Territorial Focus] and in conflict-affected regions and schools. This includes offering teachers professional development to properly address students' psycho-social needs, especially for those impacted by the CAC.
- **Mainstream discussion on TJ and peace** with age-specific approaches into education policy and curricular guidelines.

Document and share best practices across regions and schools. Highlight positive examples of activities and initiatives to inspire other schools to adopt similar practices.

- Share exemplary models recognizing differences across urban, rural, and regional realities.
- Distribute resources for teaching on these topics in a centralized and easily accessible database. These resources can be taken from the CEV, the CNMH, and other relevant non-governmental organizations.
- Create a network through a virtual resource hub for teachers in public and private schools to share resources, best practices, and their diverse experiences across different types of schools, regions, and urban/rural areas.
- Create alliances with other organizations to discuss best practices and ways to support teachers and schools effectively.
- Share resources across national teacher networks including the *Red Nacional de Educación para la Paz* and *Red de Aliados de la Comisión de la Verdad*.

Global Level

The findings from our study in Colombia carry relevance for students, teachers, and schools in other conflict-affected and post-conflict contexts. We recommend the following:

Facilitate international dialogue about efforts to promote reconciliation and peace in their communities.

- Share findings from best practices in Colombian schools with other countries and through global networks, such as the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and the Education in Conflict and Crisis Network (ECCN).
- Create links and networks with schools in other conflict-affected and post-conflict countries to share resources, experiences, and advice.

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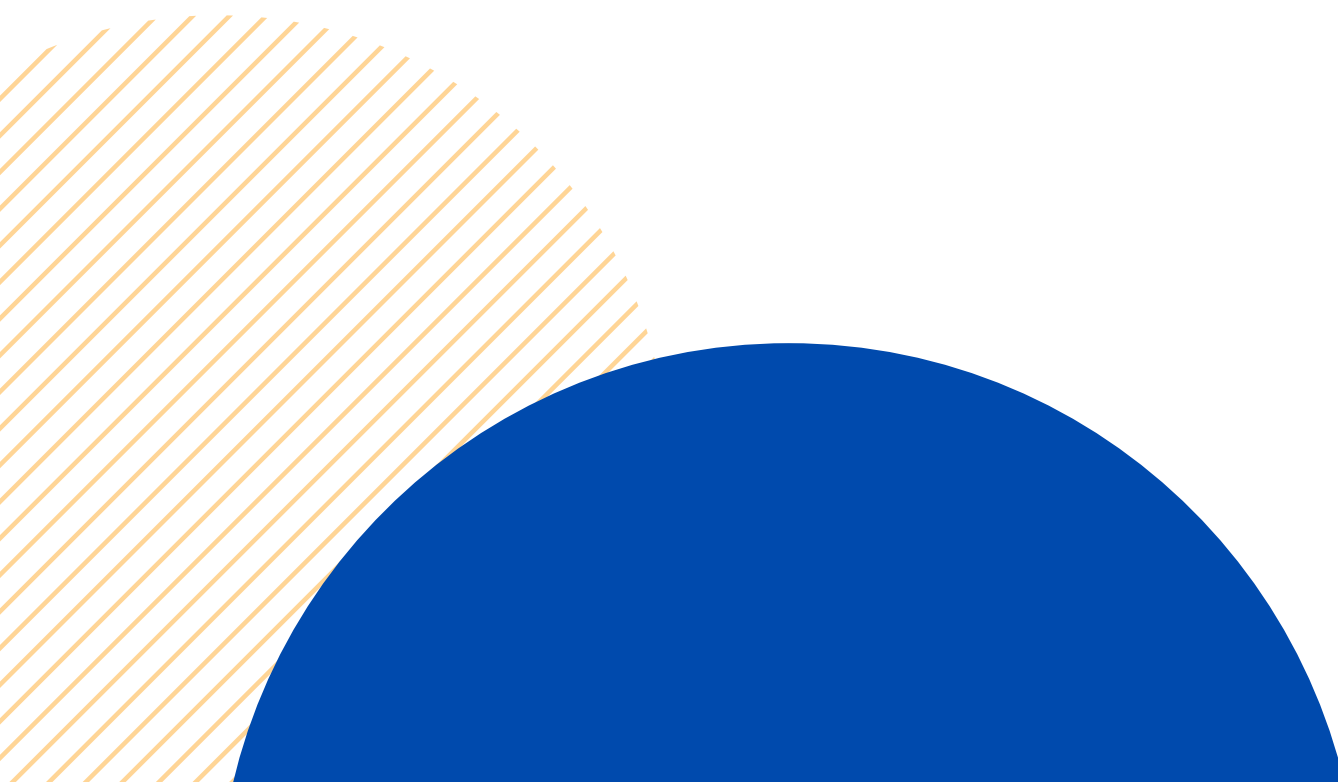
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