

EVALUATION DEPARTMENT

Report 8 / 2020 **COUNTRY EVALUATION BRIEF**

Colombia



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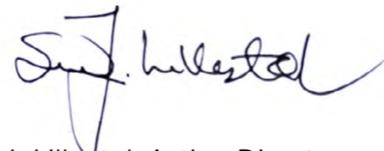
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ABBREVIATIONS

The purpose of this Country Evaluation Brief is to present relevant knowledge about donors' development efforts in Colombia. The brief systematises relevant findings from existing evaluations of development interventions in the country. The idea is to present the findings to the reader in a succinct and easily accessible format.

Readers who want to explore key issues in depth can access the underlying reports through the reference list. At our website, you can also find a set of short "Evaluation Portraits" summarising the key contents of those documents.

The Country Evaluation Brief was researched and produced by Particip GmbH.

Oslo, November 2020



*Siv J. Lillestøl, Acting Director,
Evaluation Department*

Main Findings

The report draws on findings presented in 25 evaluations and reviews published since 2015 of major donor-funded programmes and projects in Colombia.

- Colombian **OWNERSHIP** of the development processes, or lack thereof, appears to determine the success rate of most programmes. Where the programme approach was developed in close collaboration with local actors, programmes are found to have a higher chance of achieving what they set out to do. The opposite is true where local context and active participation of stakeholders were not integral elements of the programme.
- Where **HUMANITARIAN AID** paid attention to the different contexts of the internally displaced population, and people were provided with assistance according to their specific situation and needs, the programmes are found to be more successful than where everybody was treated the same.
- **DONOR INFLEXIBILITY** with regard to the start and end of the financial year and unrealistic procurement requirements is found to slow the pace of many programmes. Programmes that tuned their timeline to the Colombian calendar, and where procurement rules were adapted to the realities on the ground, had a higher chance of reaching their goals in the expected time.
- **HIGH TURNOVER**, low capacity and/or low priority on behalf of local government agencies, in combination with weak horizontal and vertical communication between the various public institutions, reduced the sustainability of a number of programmes.
- **GENDER** was a cross-cutting issue in nearly all programmes, but few programmes managed to transform the deep-rooted gender disparities. Successful programmes challenged the prevailing culture by recruiting new influencers such as male groups, to work for increased gender equality.
- **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE** (GBV) in Colombia is widespread. Programmes that addressed GBV acknowledged that the problem was structural and cultural, and confronted harmful models of masculinity to challenge the patriarchy.
- While **DONOR CO-ORDINATION** platforms exist in Colombia, these are not found to be adequate when it comes to systematising knowledge-sharing and incentivising real collaboration.

Key Facts Colombia

Estimated population: 49,648,685

(World Bank 2020; 2018 data)

Population under the age of 15: 23.1%

(World Bank 2020; 2018 data)

Urban population: 80.8%

(World Bank 2020; 2018 data)

Urban population growth (annual %): 1.9%

(World Bank 2020; 2018 data)

Human Development Index (HDI): 79 (of 189)

(UNDP 2020; 2019 data)

Gender Inequality Index (GII): 94 (of 162)

(UNDP 2020; 2018 data)

Poverty headcount ratio at USD 1.90 a day (2011 PPP): 3.9%

(World Bank 2020; 2017 data)

Adult literacy rate: 95.1%

(World Bank 2020; 2018 data)

Life expectancy at birth (male/female): 77 (74/80)

(World Bank 2020; 2017 data)

Child mortality rate (under 5, per 1000 live births): 14

(World Bank 2020; 2018 data)

Net ODA received (% of GNI): 0.3%

(World Bank 2020; 2017 data)

Corruption Perception Index rank: 96 (of 180)

(Transparency International 2020; 2019 data)

Internally Displaced Persons (new displacements in 2018 due to conflict and violence): 145,000¹

(World Bank 2020; 2018 data)

Mean years of schooling: 8.3

(UNDP 2020; 2018 data)

Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, PPP (current international USD): 14,480

(World Bank 2020; 2018 data)

GNI growth (annual %): 0.7%

(World Bank 2020; 2018 data)

GNI per capita growth (annual %): -0.8%

(World Bank 2020; 2018 data)

GINI index: 50.4

(World Bank 2020; 2018 data)

1 At the end of 2018, UNHCR had registered 7.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Colombia. While the ongoing violence continues to make persons become internally displaced, the total figure represents an accumulation of IDPs over several decades, and many of these are not likely to return to where they once came from (UNHCR 2020).

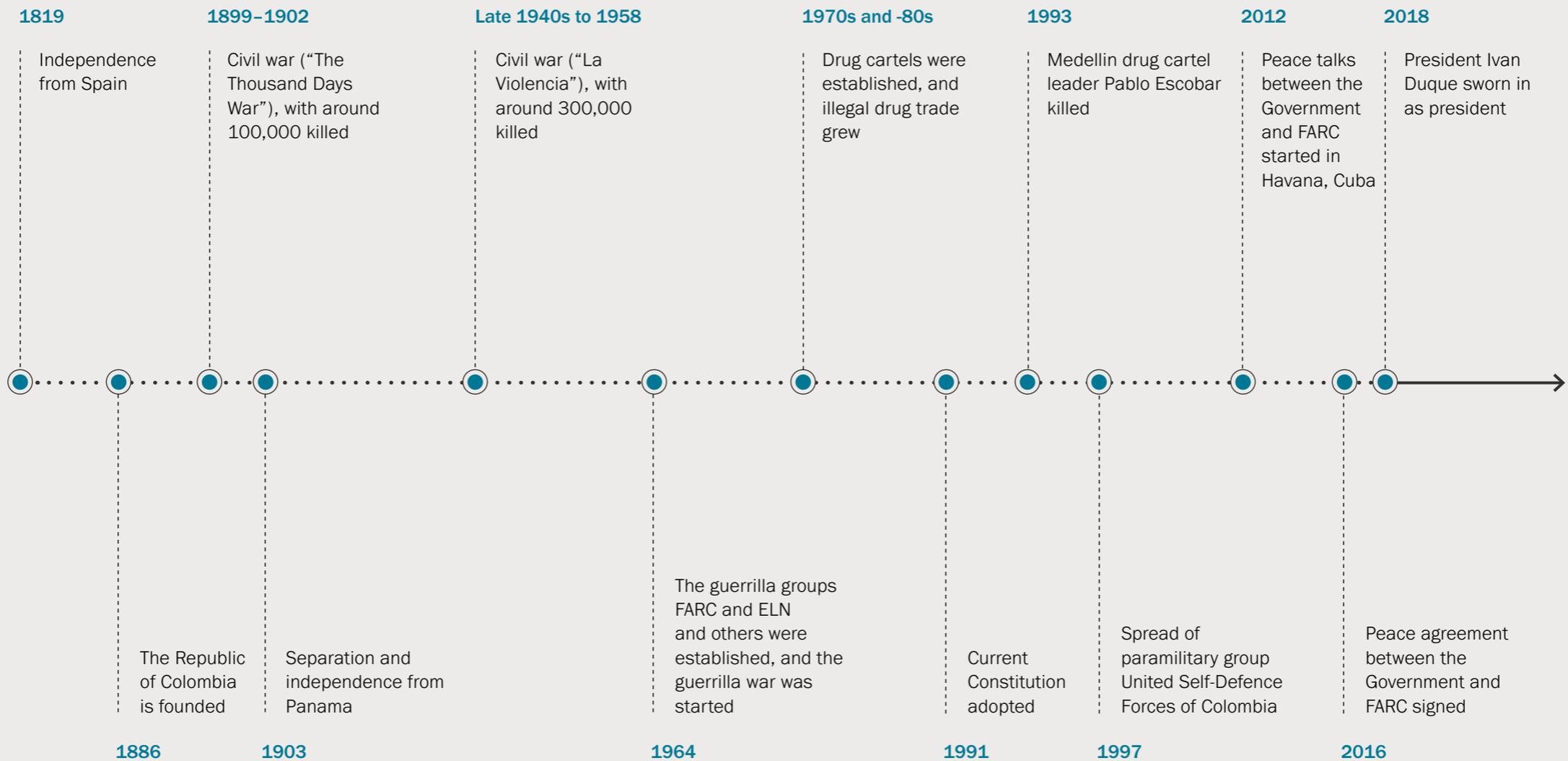


Colombia



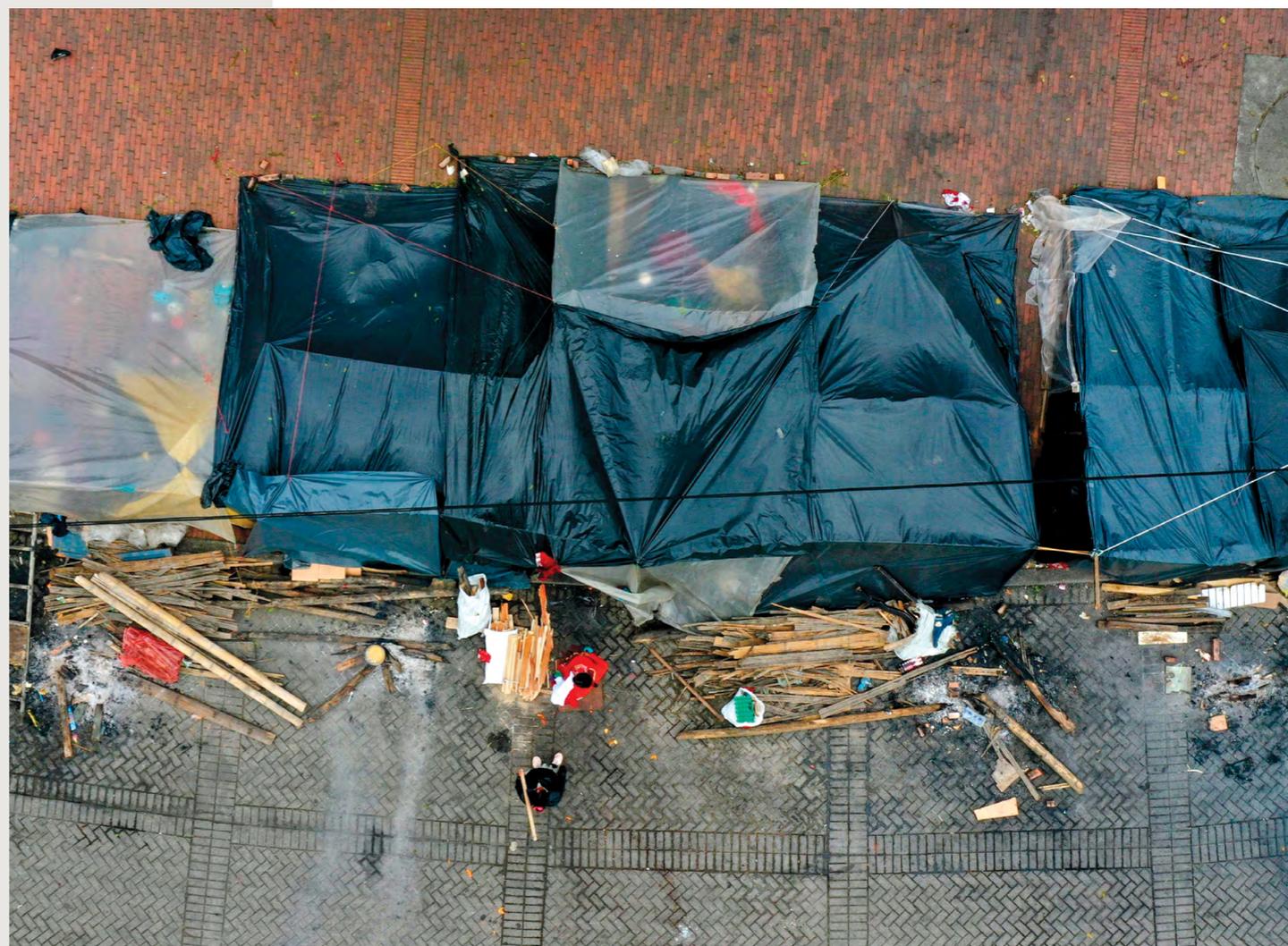
- Atl: Atlántico
- Cun: Cundinamarca
- DC: Distrito Capital
- Mag: Magdalena
- Qui: Quindio
- Ris: Risaralda

Key Events



Introduction

While Colombia has the second highest income per capita in the Andean region and has achieved steady economic growth in recent years, it is one of the countries in the world with the highest levels of inequality. Eight decades of political violence, drug-related crime and internal armed conflict have left the country with the highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world



*Aerial view of a makeshift camp of indigenous Embera displaced by the conflict. Bogota, August 2020.
Photo by Raul Arboleda / AFP / NTB*

The violent conflicts that have riven Colombian society are both a consequence and cause of continued inequality. Between 2012 and 2016, Norway and Cuba facilitated peace talks between the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), one of the existing guerrilla groups. In recent years, most donors have targeted their development assistance for Colombia at supporting the various elements of the peace process, and, after 2016, implementing the ambitious, yet vulnerable, peace agreement. Also, the country's rich natural environment makes it vulnerable to climate change, so mitigation, forestry conservation and green growth development are also a focus for Official Development Aid (ODA)².

As a result of the violence and political unrest in neighbouring Venezuela, Colombia hosted more than 1.8 million Venezuelan migrants at the beginning of 2020 (UNHCR 2020b). In March 2020, the Government declared a Health Emergency (Resolution 385) due to Covid-19 and followed up with a lockdown and enforced preventive isolation of the entire population. Colombia is one of the oldest democracies in Latin-America. Elections are held to determine political leadership. Congress holds the government to account, and the High Courts protect laws and decisions from being unlawfully changed.



*Climate mitigation, forestry conservation and green growth development are an important focus for development assistance, protecting Colombia's rich natural environment.
Photo by Pedre Szekely / Flickr*

² The CEB uses the term ODA in accordance with the official OECD-DAC definition: "ODA flows to countries and territories on the DAC List of ODA Recipients and to multilateral development institutions are: i. Provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies; and ii. Concessional (i.e. grants and soft loans) and administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as the main objective" (OECD 2019).

Country Context

The peace agreement signed by the Colombian government and the largest guerrilla group FARC at the end of 2016 still holds, although with serious gaps in its implementation. Its biggest threat is the state's inability to provide protection for community leaders and former FARC combatants.



Participants arrive at the National Meeting of Indigenous Guards to discuss the threats they are exposed to, including murders. Toribo, October 2019. Photo by Luis Robayo / AFP / NTB

The inability of the Colombian state to provide equal opportunities for its entire population is one of the underlying causes of the armed conflict.

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More than half of Colombia's exports derive from petroleum. The country has focused on developing an export-oriented agroindustry in recent years and has entered into free trade agreements with the US, Canada, the EU and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), in addition to a number of Central American and South American countries.

Despite its relatively large economy, the poverty rate stands at 27 per cent (World Bank 2019b). The inequality is largely geographic, with some areas where the development of public services is remarkably scarce. For instance, in 2017 99 per cent of the urban population but only 86 per cent of the rural population had access to basic drinking water, (UNICEF/WHO 2019). The inability of the Colombian state to provide equal opportunities for its entire population is one of the underlying causes of the armed conflict that has split the country for several decades. The conflict has

been waged primarily in rural areas characterised by weak institutions, corruption, impunity, and expansion of illicit crop cultivation. There were two larger guerrilla groups: the FARC, which became a political party in 2017, and the National Liberation Army (ELN), which has been operating amid a plethora of paramilitary and criminal armed groups.

Since 2017, the peace agreement has been gradually implemented, although much is yet to be done. The areas of the peace agreement with the largest progress have been "End of Conflict" and "Implementation, Verification and Endorsement". Transitional justice laws have been adopted, and a special mechanism for implementing transitional justice, JEP (Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz), has been established. Another important operational peacebuilding mechanism is the Truth Commission (CSIVI 2018a).

There are several actors that monitor the implementation of the peace agreement. The Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement (CSIVI) – formed by three persons from the government and three from the FARC, with the

guarantor countries Norway and Cuba as observers – formally verifies the implementation of the peace agreement. The Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies (University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA) carries out the monitoring and documentation on behalf of the CSIVI (Kroc 2020). In addition, the UN Security Council established a Verification Mission in Colombia in 2017 (UN 2020a) that monitors two sections of the peace agreement, covering the political, economic and social reintegration of the former FARC combatants and the implementation of security guarantees. The Colombia country office of the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights (UNCHR) follows the implementation of the victims' rights.

However, the implementation of the peace agreement is not without problems. The aspects of the agreement relating to “*Political Participation*”, “*Agreement on victims of conflict*”, “*Comprehensive Rural Reform*” and “*Solution to the problem of illicit drugs*” are complex and controversial areas that have seen a low degree of implementation (UN Post-Conflict Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Colombia 2018b). One of the most contentious issues remains the land rights situation. The peace agreement lays a foundation for structural

transformation through land restitution, redistribution and land use, where a new multipurpose cadastre – an official register of the quantity, value, and ownership of real estate, used in apportioning taxes – is being established. The implementation of land-related commitments in the peace agreement shows significant lags, particularly in legislative and institutional terms, given a number of regulatory and political barriers (CSIVI 2018a).

The state remains weak in a number of areas, and this causes delays in the implementation of the peace agreement. While FARC has laid down its arms, other groups have moved into some communities, causing armed struggles that have led to continued forced displacement. Although a gender-sensitive approach was included in the peace agreement, implementation on the ground remains insufficient. Furthermore, assassinations of, and threats against, human rights defenders and community leaders continue, especially of members of the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities who live in areas where their traditional lifestyle is threatened by large industrial projects, such as the extraction of oil and minerals.

After the signature of the peace agreement the Colombian civil society reported increased killings of



President Juan Manuel Santos and head of the FARC guerilla, Timoléon Jiménez, during the signing of the peace agreement, November 2016. Photo by Luis Robayo / AFP / NTB

social leaders at local level, including more women than in earlier years, for protecting natural resources that are threatened by economic development actions such as mining or industrial agriculture (Oxfam 2019). These extrajudicial killings continued (Amnesty 2020) despite the lockdown to prevent Covid-19. The Government launched several mitigating packages to assist the most vulnerable people during the lockdown, but many people nevertheless fell outside of these packages and found themselves without means to sustain their basic needs during the lockdown.

Donor Engagement

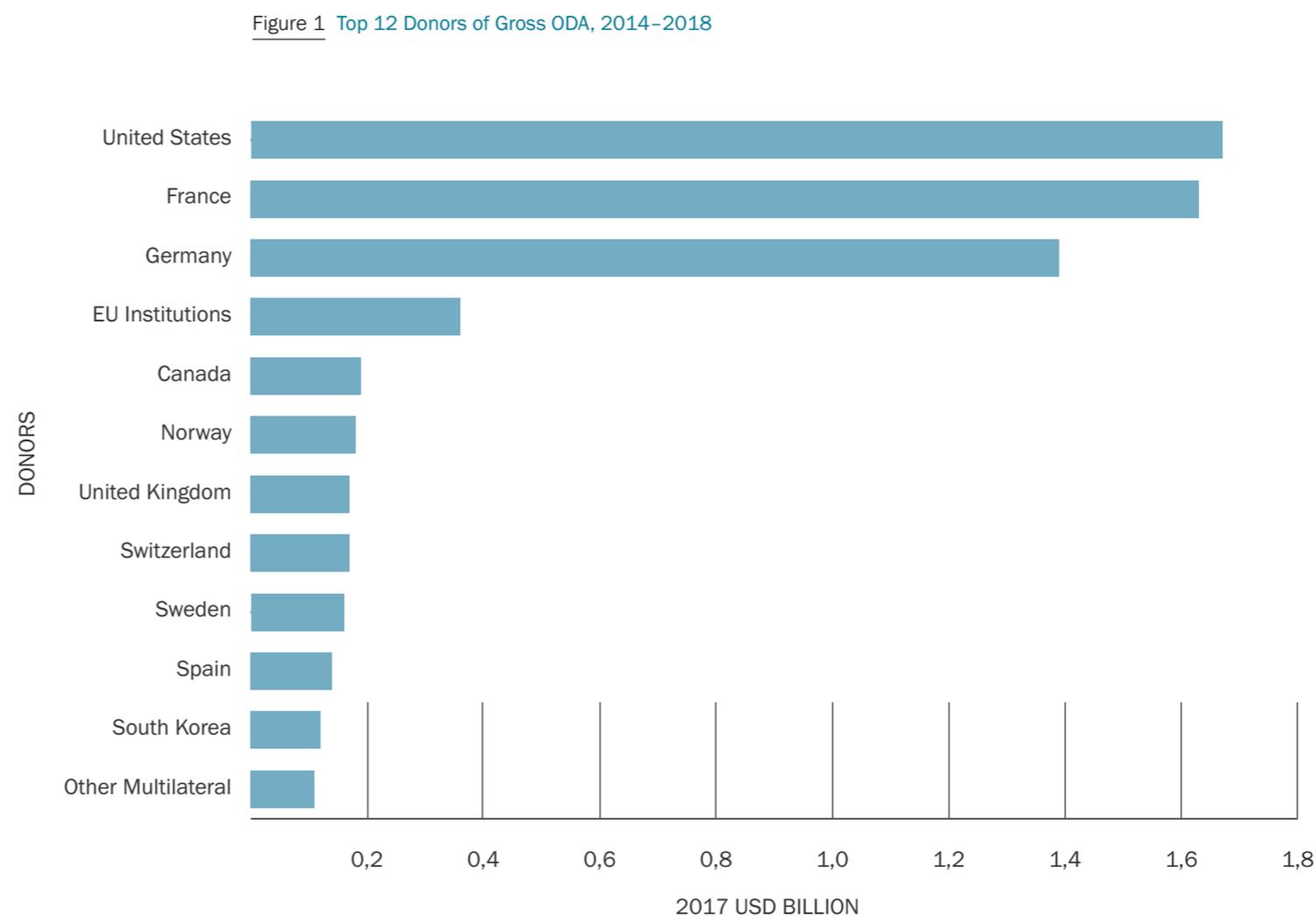
Colombia, which is classed as an upper-middle income country, would normally not be eligible for ODA from many traditional bilateral donors. However, it attracts a fair share of foreign aid, mainly due to its protracted internal armed conflict, its high numbers of IDPs and its many biologically important areas, including parts of the Amazon Basin.



*Aerial view of illegal deforestation at the Natural National Park in La Macarena, Meta Department, September 2020.
Photo by Raul Arboleda / AFP / NTB*

The country is on its way to become the 37th member of the OECD – hence, many of the traditional bilateral donors have other relations with Colombia, such as free trade and investment.

The United States (US) is the largest bilateral donor of development assistance to Colombia. This is just one of many relations between the two countries. For more than two decades, the US has had a large army presence, has extensive collaboration on drug control, and has had a free-trade agreement since 2006. France and Germany have been the second and third largest bilateral donors, respectively, after 2014 (Figure 1). France has granted loans to support national public policies in the areas of decentralisation, social protection, climate and territorial development, accompanied by technical assistance and from delegated resources from the European Commission (Latin America Investment Facility) (AFD 2020). Germany has mainly focused its ODA on peacebuilding and conflict prevention, environmental policy, and the protection and sustainable use of natural resources (BMZ 2020). All other donors have placed strong emphasis on government and civil society as the main areas of intervention.



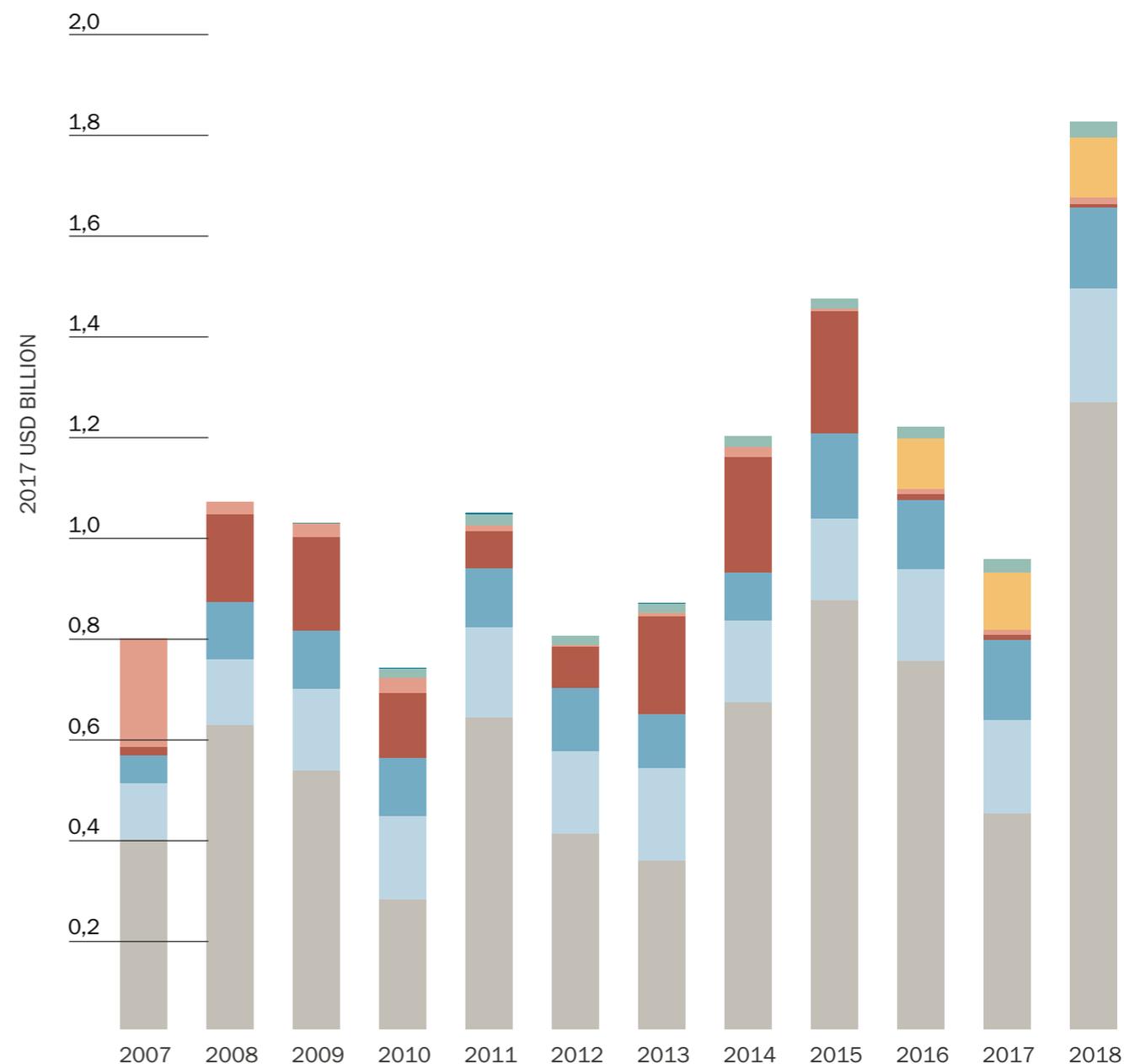
The category "Other Multilateral" includes the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and, of lesser financial expression the Global Fund, the Climate Investment Funds (CIF) and the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID).
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) Aid Activity database data 2020

Figure 2 shows how aid flowing into Colombia has fluctuated over the recent decade. While channels such as Civil Society (CSO)³ and Multilateral Organisations have maintained a stable level, the Public Sector has fluctuated widely as a channel for ODA. In 2010 the Public Sector engagement was nearly at the same level as CSOs, but by 2018, the Public Sector was by far the biggest channel, having grown to more than five times the level of 2010.

- Public Sector
- Civil Society Organisations
- Multilateral Organisations
- Other
- Not reported
- Private Sector Institutions
- Teaching institutions, research institutes or think-tanks
- Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)

³ The report uses the term civil society organisations (CSO) in line with the OECD DAC definition: “CSOs can be defined to include all non-market and non-state organisations outside of the family in which people organise themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain” (OECD 2011). CSOs thus include non-governmental organisations and international non-governmental organisations.

Figure 2 Total ODA by Channel, 2007–2018



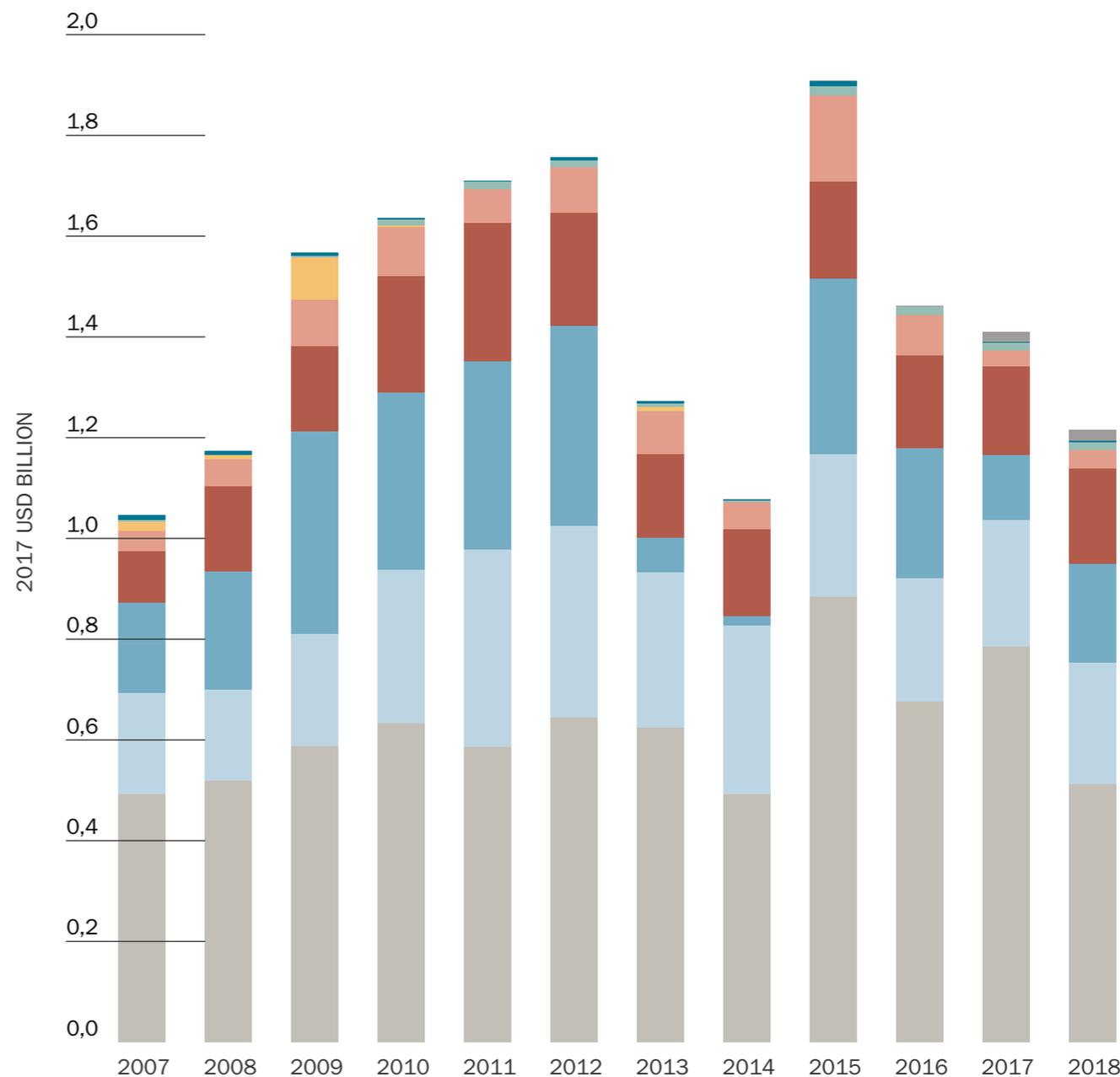
Source: OECD CRS Aid Activity database data 2020

A Resident Co-ordinator Office co-ordinates the 25 UN agencies represented in Colombia. The former government encouraged the establishment of funds (administered by the UN, EU, IDB and WB) in order to co-ordinate the co-operation around and after the signing of the peace agreement. In practice, these (and the UN fund in particular) are the main arenas for co-ordination among donors and between donors and the Government. Donors also have a dedicated co-ordination mechanism with revolving leadership in place (“Grupo de Cooperantes Colombia”, GruC), with Norway as the lead in 2020.

- Social Infrastructure & Services ■ Economic Infrastructure & Services
- Commodity Aid / General Programme Assistance
- Production Sectors ■ Multi-Sector / Cross-Cutting
- Action Relating to Debt ■ Unallocated / Unspecified
- Humanitarian Aid ■ Administrative Costs of Donors

“Social Infrastructure and services” comprise i) Education, ii) Health, iii) Population Policies/Programmes & Reproductive Health, iv) Water Supply & Sanitation, v) Government and civil society.
 “Multi-Sector / Cross-Cutting” comprise i) General Environment Protection, ii) Multisector aid, iii) Urban development and management, iv) Rural development, v) Disaster Risk Reduction, vi) Multisector education, vii) Research/scientific institutions.
 “Production Sectors” comprise i) Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, ii) Industry, Mining and Construction, iii) Trade Policies and regulations, and iv) Tourism.

Figure 3 Total ODA by sector, 2007–2018



Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) Aid Activity database data 2020.

Evaluation Findings

Most evaluations are directly or indirectly related to the peace process and implementation of the peace agreement. Peace, human rights, governance, and gender equality go hand in hand. While most programmes are found to be relevant, sustainability was low in cases where there was also a low degree of national and local ownership.



*Supporters of president and presidential candidate Juan Manuel Santos raise their hands with the word »Peace« written on them during a peace event in Bogota, June 2014.
Photo by Diana Sanchez / AFP / NTB*



De-mining was one of Norway's three focus areas in facilitating the peace talks, together with transitional justice and women's participation and a gender perspective. Photo by HALO Trust / UNDP / Flickr

Multilateral evaluations are somewhat over-represented in this evaluation brief (see Methodology section), so findings presented here might not be representative for all ODA going into Colombia, but rather represent the multilateral ODA to Colombia, with a small balance provided from six bilateral programmes and three civil society programmes.

Peacebuilding Prior to the Peace Agreement

Prior to the signing of the peace agreement in 2016, a large amount of aid was aimed at supporting and facilitating the ongoing peace process and preparing for the necessary reforms. Norway had chosen three focus areas for their facilitation of the peace talks: women's participation and a gender perspective; transitional justice; and demining. This was the first time Norway worked with a systematic focus-based approach on peace negotiations, and the evaluation of its contributions to the peace process (Norad 2018) finds that the approach achieved positive results. The focus areas worked as anchors for Norway's work. In addition, being a guarantor country with a constant presence in Cuba, Norway's facilitation team provided multiple and continuous support to the negotiating parties at various levels. The Colombian peace process

went through several crises, in which guarantor countries Norway and Cuba played a role in reducing tensions and helping to move the process forward. The evaluation finds that Norway has made a noticeable contribution to the Colombian peace process by providing knowledge and capacity-building, generating conditions to build trust between the negotiating parties, and providing international diplomatic support and logistics. The evaluation also points to some "blind spots" in the facilitation. It indicates that Norway could have assisted the negotiating parties in clarifying the gender references in the draft peace agreement, and in better communicating what "the gender perspective" entailed; it could have done more to help Colombians better understand the peace agreement more generally ahead of the plebiscite; and it could have prepared for a scenario in which the initial peace agreement was rejected in the plebiscite. A number of development actors supported the peace negotiations through different processes leading up to the talks in Havana. One thematic area of importance was women's rights and the gender perspective. Among others, UN Women and Sweden (UN Women 2018a) had a project to integrate the agenda of women's rights and their voices and leadership into the social and political processes of peacebuilding, and to strengthen the transitional justice processes with a gender focus.

Economic empowerment activities are found to be of great relevance, where women developed self-esteem and confidence, and strengthened their leadership abilities. Joint communication from women's and men's organisations managed to challenge the patriarchy.

Transitional justice has been an integral part of the Colombian peace process for many years. This is a technical and complicated area, and many donors have supported the transitional justice process, from designing feasible measures to explaining the system to the public. In an evaluation commissioned by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) is found to have had an important impact on the design of Colombia's transitional justice system, in terms of laws, the constitution, and in contact with relevant authorities in charge of implementing the agreed measures (SIDA 2018).

There are several conflict lines in Colombia beyond guerrilla war. One is petroleum exploitation, dating from the beginning of the last century. In parallel with the income generation it has created, substantial local socio-environmental conflicts have emerged. To mitigate these conflicts, the National Petroleum Agency established the "Territorial Petroleum Strategy

2015–2019". An evaluation was carried out at the midway stage of the strategy implementation to identify progress, strengths and weaknesses (UNDP 2017a). It finds that labour issues were among the main concerns of the communities, and, where alternative income generation activities were developed, the level of conflict decreased. The evaluation recommends that multi-stakeholder teams should be established at local level, and that petroleum companies should establish a negotiating table where the transport companies and other sectors of the petroleum industry would participate, together with the national government, to build consensus and facilitate negotiations in the regions.

Implementation of the Peace Agreement

From 2017, a substantial part of the funds has gone to the support of the implementation of the comprehensive peace agreement. Due to the importance most donors give to the ongoing peace process in Colombia, this Country Evaluation Brief includes the monitoring of the implementation of the peace agreement (CSIVI 2018a). Although not a programme evaluation as such, the document includes detailed descriptions of all aspects of the

From 2017, a substantial part of the funds has gone to the support of the implementation of the comprehensive peace agreement.



Photo by Marte Lid / Norad

implementation. The analysis presented in this report finds that the peace process has been resilient, overcoming difficulties, tensions and crises throughout the first two years of its implementation. It concludes that the most important challenges that remained after two years were the lack of adequate security guarantees for social leaders, human rights defenders, and former FARC combatants and their families. It highlights that many communities remained at risk of being attacked by illegal armed and criminal groups. It further concludes that an answer to the security threats would require a comprehensive response with a strong territorial dimension. The state needs greater legitimacy in the different geographical areas with conflicts, civilian unrest and a high density of IDPs. This could be achieved if the state strengthened its authority against illegal actors, while protecting and promoting human rights. In parallel to this, the state should also provide public goods and services effectively and equitably to people in communities in need. And, not least, the state should guarantee its citizens a full democratic right to participation. Another fundamental priority should be to fulfil the commitment of the state to the families that have voluntarily decided to grow substitutes to illicit crops. Further, the report recommends that the former FARC combatants should be socially and economically reintegrated into society more quickly. Another

recommendation is for authorities to strengthen the integrity of the transitional justice mechanisms. Lastly, the reparation of victims must continue to be the centre of the peacebuilding process.

While most evaluations assess programmes that support the peace process in general, some programmes were designed to address specific parts of the peace agreement. The UN Post-Conflict Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Colombia⁴ (2018) is found to respond quickly to the most pressing stabilisation needs in the post-conflict territories prioritised by the national government. Nevertheless, the evaluation sees a need to refocus the Fund to deliver a more articulated, integrated and forceful intervention in the unstable municipalities. For stabilisation actions to have more impact and sustainability, especially in generating more confidence in the state, the evaluation recommends that the national government should be co-financing the Fund. One lesson learnt is that greater impact could be achieved if the programme approach was defined together with civil society and people on the ground. The evaluation concludes that, to achieve sustainability, there must be ownership of the Fund's

⁴ After the evaluation, the fund name was changed to "The UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Sustaining Peace".

interventions at community level as well as at local and national government levels.

The US is the largest donor to Colombia, and also supports the Colombian peace process in a variety of ways. Their "*Transforma*" programme helped lay the groundwork for the implementation of the first chapter of the peace agreement on rural development and reform (USAID 2018a). However, this is one of the areas of the peace agreement where implementation has not come very far. The evaluation finds that the programme has been effective in improving the local presence of some of the institutions that were set up for the post-conflict period. However, it has not managed to engage the national government to take part in the programme to the extent that was expected. The programme promoted collaboration among local actors, particularly through small infrastructure projects and other resources that were otherwise unavailable. It faced challenges due to a changing political environment.

In many conflict-ridden areas of Colombia, youth find themselves in a situation where their only opportunities to escape poverty are linked to either involvement in the armed conflict, the illicit economy or other forms of violence. One programme that received a very positive

evaluation for addressing this unfortunate situation was the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and Canadian investment in 23,000 vulnerable young people in the “Growing Together” programme in the Department of Nariño (UNDP 2017b) in the west of the country. The evaluation finds that participants of the programme considered it an opportunity for social transformation, especially oriented towards youth leadership, development of productive initiatives for the economic strengthening of the community, and enhancement of relationships based on gender equity. According to the report, the families that participated in the programme perceived that the intervention allowed them to become strengthened, increase their participation in society, and increase their social recognition. From the perspective of community leaders and institutions, the programme represented contributions for social inclusion where it was possible to enhance the development of young people in direct benefit to their communities and their families. The participants in the programme suggested that the programme be replicated in other places in the country as a model for social change in high-risk territories affected by armed conflict.

Human Rights

It is difficult, perhaps even artificial, to differentiate between the thematic areas of peacebuilding, governance, human rights and gender equality, as these areas are intrinsically woven together in the implementation of the peace agreement. Nevertheless, some donors have labelled their programmes as human rights, although the contents of these are similar to the peacebuilding programmes and to the governance interventions.

The largest US stand-alone human rights activity programme in the world is in Colombia (USAID 2018b). The prohibition on US projects to work with former FARC combatants posed serious challenges and restricted the programme from adequately addressing this increasingly critical segment of the population at risk of human rights violations. While the programme incorporated activities that adequately responded to national institutional challenges, the evaluation finds that there were certain strategies that could be strengthened, particularly with regard to illegal mining, targeting Afro-Colombians, and providing protection of human rights leaders and defenders.

Country Programmes

Several large donors to Colombia have comprehensive multi-year country programmes that cover several sectors, themes and levels of society, and that have been going on for a long time. The UNDP country programme for the period 2015–2019 focused on four areas: Inclusive and sustainable growth; inclusive governance for urban and rural development; inclusive and sustainable governance; and transition to peace (UNDP 2019). The UNDP is found to have played a bridging role between the Government and affected communities with FARC presence that contributed to reincorporation and community dialogue processes critical for stabilisation and peace. However, the evaluation identifies areas for improvement, such as the lack of consolidation of lessons learnt from the community level; the absence of a comprehensive programme for reducing rural poverty; and the lack of projects involving private sector development. Overall, the territorial presence of the UNDP is identified as a key factor in the organisation’s contribution to development and the peace process in Colombia. However, the UNDP is found not to utilise its position to its fullest.



Former FARC guerrillas are driven to a new reintegration zone in July 2020 after being evacuated from their former reincorporation area, after a series of 11 deadly attacks of demobilized FARC members since the signing of the peace treaty in 2016. Photo by Joaquin Sarmiento / AFP / NTB

Psychosocial assistance to IDPs is found to have a very positive effect, and is recommended to become a permanent component of all resettlement programmes.

The evaluation of Canada's country programme (Global Affairs Canada 2018) notes that the programming was responsive to the evolving Colombian context. Significant results were achieved at a project-level across key target areas, including rural education for children and youth, sustainable economic growth, and peacebuilding initiatives. Some projects developed good practices and innovative models to promote gender equality and women's rights. The evaluation identifies examples of effectively co-ordinated and complementary international assistance initiatives, and collaborations across areas of mutual interest for development, diplomacy and trade sectors are also identified. Such coherence is not found to be systematic, however, but rather driven by external events or personal initiative. The evaluation further finds few formal mechanisms to systematise knowledge-sharing and to incentivise collaboration.

Humanitarian Assistance

With nearly eight million IDPs, much humanitarian aid to Colombia is provided in the context of settlement and resettlement. One evaluation (US Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration 2016) looks at an early implementation of the Victims' Law – one of the first elements agreed on during the peace

negotiations. The evaluation identifies some valuable best practices. In order to build capacity of government officials, the implementers have developed a process where they used guidance tools and followed up the government trainees over time. Psychosocial assistance to IDPs is found to have a very positive effect, and is recommended to become a permanent component of all resettlement programmes. Further, having existing IDPs provide personal guidance and advice to new IDPs is found to be very effective. Lastly, referring IDPs to existing local services for mental health, education and health services avoided overlap of service delivery and is found to be both effective and efficient. Another evaluation of a resettlement project (UNDP-UNHCR 2016) finds that different IDP categories of returnees, relocated IDPs, and those who integrate in urban locations had separate problems and challenges that needed separate solutions. Urban local integration is identified as very complex, and therefore often requires national efforts to find sustainable solutions. The evaluation further finds that there should be a differential approach to indigenous communities, based on their identity and governance systems.



*Women's rights activists protest against gender violence at the National University in Bogota in November 2019.
Photo by Raul Arboleda / AFP / NTB*

Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) in Colombia is widespread. Actors who seriously want to tackle GBV in Colombia acknowledge that the problem is structural and cultural, and that a transformative approach is necessary. One programme (UN Women 2018b) is found to have contributed to improved care for victims of violence in the department of Meta and Cauca by improving co-ordination between public institutions, incorporating GBV in the public management agenda with a public budget for care, and strengthening women's organisations to supervise the positioning of violence in departmental and municipal policies. The programme had a communication component that strategically recruited influencers such as male groups to propose social and cultural transformation by rejecting GBV. The programme reflected on harmful models of masculinity and made a significant contribution to overcoming GBV by generating information and knowledge about the inherent problem. The programme included joint work between women's and men's organisations that together challenged the patriarchy in a way that is found to have had a positive effect.

In a country where GBV is already widespread, experiencing reoccurring crises does not make the

A gender perspective and early recovery of victims of GBV should become integral complements to all humanitarian aid in Colombia.

situation for vulnerable women and girls any better. In 2014, UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA and UNICEF, through the UN Central Emergency Response Fund, carried out a six-month gender project as part of a larger humanitarian operation that did not already have a gender component (UNDP 2015b). The main purpose of the short-term project was to protect the indigenous and Afro-Colombian women and youth at risk of gender-based violence who were displaced in the departments of Chocó and Nariño. The project constructed temporary community spaces and supported the local ethnic authorities to provide psychosocial care for victims of GBV, focusing on the health sector, security forces and justice operators. Activities were carried out by local partners with long experience and presence in the field. According to the report, these implementing partners were flexible and able to adapt their responses to fit with different needs of each community. In turn, this led to local ownership of the intervention that was identified as an important success factor of the project. The evaluation finds that the project has identified a constructive way to tackle GBV in the middle of a crisis situation. A crucial factor for the success was that the project managed to separate protection needs of victims of GBV from the context of emergency or crisis caused by the conflict. The report concludes that humanitarian recovery alone

could never ensure the structural changes needed to overcome the existing embedded gender inequalities, and a gender perspective and early recovery of victims of GBV should become integral complements to all humanitarian aid in Colombia.

Private Market Development and Food Security

Lack of legal income opportunities characterises many conflict-affected areas in Colombia. The UNDP imported a supplier development initiative from Mexico, and adapted it to the conflict situation in Colombia, attempting to integrate supply networks into commercial flows to improve the productivity of microenterprises owned by poor people in conflict-ridden areas (UNDP 2015c). The evaluation finds that 70 per cent of the participating suppliers increased their sales. The single action that helped most companies was to learn to keep simple daily accounts. Another UNDP project set out to ensure that sustainable Colombian agro ecosystems were preserved through the protection and management of agricultural biodiversity and traditional knowledge (UNDP 2015a). The project was aimed at harmonising policies to promote conservation of biodiversity. The evaluation finds that the results of the demonstration activities had a high probability



Environmentalists urging to investigate crimes against the Amazon, demonstrating outside the Colombian prosecutor's office in Bogotá, as a prelude to criminally denounce deforestation in the Amazon in September 2018. In 2017, the Amazon lost a territory almost equivalent to Hong Kong.

Photo by Raul Arboleda / AFP / NTB

of being replicated at low cost. It concludes that the project was a model of co-existence and tolerance, where management mechanisms were shared between local institutions, communities and their organisations, generating effective economic models for the sustainable and strategic use of ecosystems.

Environment

In the portfolio of assessed evaluations, only two had the environment as their primary goal. One programme implemented between 2013 and 2018 followed the objective of protecting human health and the environment locally and globally from threats arising from unsound polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) (UNDP-GEF 2018). According to the evaluation, the programme managed to develop a national infrastructure for the chemical elimination of the highly-toxic PCBs, thanks to the consistency of the co-ordination between the project and the UNDP Country Office and the committed participation of companies from the electronics sector in the implementation of the measures. For the efforts to become sustainable, however, the report recommends that enforcement should be strengthened.

The second project, “Sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity in dry ecosystems to guarantee the flow

of ecosystem services and mitigate deforestation and desertification processes” (UNDP-GEF 2017), operated in the Caribbean region and the Andean Valley of the Magdalena River. Prior to the project, the level of information and knowledge about the state of biological diversity of dry forests was low. The evaluation finds that the project provided up-to-date information on biodiversity, ecosystem services and social and institutional dynamics that allowed territorial actors to make decisions regarding the preservation and management of these ecosystems.

Many evaluations conclude that the programmes have not succeeded in contributing to any real changes in the unequal relationship between men and women.

Cross-Cutting Issues

There are four overall cross-cutting issues in the programmes that have been evaluated: peacebuilding, governance, human rights, and gender equality. These four issues are highly intertwined and difficult to separate. Donors might label their interventions differently, but eventually their approaches boil down to the same key focal points.

The deep-rooted inequalities and the structural discrimination of women, along with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender population, make the cross-cutting issue of gender equality appear compulsory, but at the same time very complex. The systemic exclusion of these groups from access to decision-making and economic opportunities is often compared with the exclusion of indigenous and afro-Colombian people. Therefore, many programmes focus on inclusion of all these excluded and marginalised groups, which makes the required intervention logic of the programmes highly complex. Many evaluations conclude that the

programmes have not succeeded in contributing to any real changes in the unequal relationship between men and women. Some evaluations find that local implementing partners that had been asked to carry out projects with a gender perspective did not know what to do (i.e. WFP 2017, UNDP-EU 2017).

In their education programme, Save The Children (2017) finds that gender differences were such a deep-rooted part of children's life that gender inequality could not be addressed in isolation. Even though gender inequality is a reality in the whole country, the way it manifests itself differs according to ethnic groups, geographic area and social belonging. Save the Children thus concludes that new learning has to be linked to cultural knowledge and practices, promoting commitments to the promotion of citizen respect and social inclusion, and new practices for the entire community, not just the school.

Lessons

The main finding cutting across all evaluations is that donors cannot replace the Government. Although the programmes are all found to be highly needed and relevant, results were poor where there was lack of ownership, priority, willingness, or capacity on the part of the authorities.



*Indigenous move rocks to block the Pan American Way, Cauca Province, March 2019. Farmers and indigenous people protest about lands assignation and other issues.
Photo by Ernesto Guzman / EPA / NTB*

There seems to be mutual agreement between donors and aid programme implementers in Colombia on what the important issues are, and where overseas development aid is needed. In the portfolio of the evaluations under study, all programmes except two explicitly or implicitly supported the peace process and the implementation of the peace agreement. The evaluations find that the programmes were highly relevant. Many programmes are also found to have achieved their objectives.

Nearly all evaluated programmes had gender equality either as main objective or as a cross-cutting issue. There are some programmes that have successfully succeeded in challenging traditional gender discriminating patterns (i.e. UN Women 2018a and b) by tackling the challenges from a structural and cultural angle, and by using different influencing actors such as men's organisations to pass on messages against the ruling "macho" culture and persistent gender inequalities.

GBV is another area that many programmes attempted to tackle, and one short-term initiative can serve as a model for how to transform traditional patterns (UNDP 2015b). Female IDPs at risk of GBV were made less vulnerable through processes whereby

they received adapted psychosocial care, engaged in income-generating activities, and had access to safe community spaces. The project was carried out in close collaboration with local authorities, security forces and justice actors, and managed to transform the way local communities looked upon and treated women at risk.

Common findings for most of the selected evaluations from Colombia are that results stood a higher chance of being sustainable where the local authorities had collaborated. Furthermore, programmes that managed to design their approaches and activities in communication with, and in line with, local communities and civil society, and that were flexible to adapt approaches to fit with the local context and reality, are found to be more effective and more sustainable than programmes where stakeholders were treated as passive recipients (WFP 2017, UNDP 2015b).

This was also true for the implementation of the peace agreement. Programmes that supported processes that had thorough government backing – for example, the establishment of necessary institutions for the transitional justice system – are regarded as successful.

Programmes that managed to be innovative and adaptive to overcome in-built rigidities achieved

what they set out to do to a larger extent than very rigid programmes. One valuable experience arose from a programme where demanding international procurement standards would have hindered progress, due to the economy being based on the informal sector in the areas of operation. The programme entered into a system of small grants for local farmers, administered through agreements with local organisations, thus avoiding the standstill that would have resulted from demanding international procurement standards (UNDP 2015a). Overall, programmes that promoted innovation and thinking outside the box were overall more successful than programmes that did not invest in innovation.

Weaknesses

Lack of true ownership on behalf of national, regional and local authorities is identified as a hindrance to effectiveness and sustainability in several evaluations. There appears to be an in-built resistance within some parts of the Colombian authorities to fully implement the peace agreement (CSIVI 2018a). Also, development programmes which to a large extent overlap and coincide with the Peace Agreement are facing resistance to changes that would radically transform Colombian society. Lack of institutional

ability, willingness or priority – locally at municipal level, regionally at departmental level, and at national level – is addressed in nearly all the evaluations across the different thematic areas. In some cases, eager programme implementers are found to compensate for the lack of Colombian ownership by working on behalf of Colombian public institutions and thereby improving the public service delivery, but at the same time undermining the public institutions' ability – or incentives – to improve service delivery themselves (i.e. US Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration 2016, USAID 2018b). At other times, the lack of attention, priority or capacity within the public institutions is found to lead to significant delays and a slow pace of implementation (i.e. UN Post-Conflict Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Colombia 2018a, USAID 2018a).

Only one evaluation questions the relevance of the project – a USAID-financed peace programme (USAID 2018a) in which the interpretation of US statutes prohibited support to former FARC combatants. With 14,000 former FARC combatants, the likelihood of inadvertently conferring a benefit upon them was high and threatened to paralyse activities.

Lack of knowledge management is mentioned as a hindrance to sustainability in some programmes (i.e.

WFP 2017, UNDP 2017a, UNDP 2017c, USAID 2018a, UN Women 2018a). This weakness is identified within the implementing agency, between the implementing partners, and in and between targeted local, regional and national institutions. Recurrent challenges were high turnover, a culture of compartmentalisation, and lack of systems thinking around knowledge management.

There are also other recurrent challenges. Some donors are found to be rigid and inflexible to such a degree that it affected the implementation and effectiveness of their supported programmes. Sometimes, the project cycle differed too much from the cycle of the implementing Ministry, causing significant delays in the start-up of the project (i.e. UNDP 2015a). Other evaluations report that strict international standards for procurement hindered or significantly slowed the implementation of programmes in rural areas where informal economy is the rule (i.e. USAID 2018a).

Every programme focused to some extent on gender, but many are found not to have succeeded in making any changes. In some instances, one might suspect that gender was said to be a cross-cutting issue simply because this has become a mantra in the world of aid, without the programme owners really knowing

Lack of knowledge management is mentioned as a hindrance to sustainability in some programmes.

how to address the structural gender differences in Colombia. By not addressing the deep-rooted structural and cultural gender discrimination, development programmes implicitly contribute to the continuation of traditional practices.

Gaps

The programmes assessed by available evaluations are not fully representative of the total aid portfolio in Colombia. There are, for example, large programmes on climate mitigation that have not yet been evaluated or where the evaluation reports were not made public. Another important issue is that aid is only one small area of international collaboration in Colombia. Security and trade are two other large areas that are not looked at here.

The Kroc Institute that monitors the implementation of the peace agreement recommends increased attention to the complex and politically sensitive areas “Comprehensive Rural Reform” and “Solution to the problem of illicit drugs” (CSIVI 2018a). The same is the case for the protection of community leaders and former FARC combatants. As mentioned under weaknesses above, implementing programmes without

local ownership can be futile. If something does not work, doing more of it is not likely to work better. There also seems to be potential to identify innovative ways of assisting local actors working in support of the peace agreement in the territories.

Looking Ahead

The peace process is fragile, and it is important that donors do not create unnecessary obstacles. The US ban on providing assistance to former FARC combatants is an obstacle that might lead to the donor doing harm instead of supporting the process (USAID 2018a, USAID 2018b).

The peace negotiations clearly showed that there is a need for transforming the traditional “macho” culture into one where every citizen can enjoy the same rights and levels of freedom. Identifying practical and strategic gender needs in the planning process of all humanitarian and long-term interventions ought to be carried out to avoid interventions upholding the ruling discriminatory and victimising inequalities.

Donors ought to fine-tune their requirements according to the local context, such as adapting the time span of the programmes and the procurement rules to local

conditions, and applying the flexibility needed in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of their programmes.

Large challenges loom ahead when Colombia opens up after the Covid-19 lockdown. With the Colombian economy being hard hit, in tandem with its trading partners, the long-term economic effects could be large and lasting. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that there were 8.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Colombia at the end of March 2020 (OCHA 2020), including the Venezuelan refugees. To mitigate this situation in an effective way, the need for coherent donor co-ordination continues to be core. Donors should strive to find ways of further fostering collaboration and mutual understanding with each other and the Colombian authorities at all levels to avoid carrying out interventions that are hampered by lack of priority or ownership. In sum, it seems that renewal, contextualisation and co-ordination are needed from the donors’ side, and true ownership is needed from the Colombian authorities’ side. For this to happen, donors and the Colombian authorities must have a truly common agenda, which historically does not appear to be have been fully in place.

Methodology

This country evaluation brief presents the synthesised main findings of 25 evaluations and reviews published since 2015 of major donor-funded programmes and large projects in Colombia.



A man dries cocoa on his farm in the township of La Paz, January 2016. Photo by Dominic Chavez / World Bank / Flickr



*In the fields of Buga.
Photo by Charlotte Kesl / World Bank / Flickr*

The evaluations reviewed were identified through a systematic search of global development co-operation databases, websites and report databases of individual multilateral and bilateral donors and CSOs. That way, about 67 evaluations were found, and subsequently narrowed down to 25. The selection was made to ensure that: a) the main sectors and areas of development co-operation are covered; b) a good balance between different sources and channels of ODA exists; c) the evaluations are of a high scientific quality. Colombia, being a higher middle-income country, does not attract much bilateral development assistance for service delivery, but rather receives thematic aid directed at peacebuilding, good governance, respect for human rights and rule of law, or climate mitigation. It has proved difficult to find evaluations from bilateral aid, as these evaluations

either are not published or interventions have not been evaluated. Likewise, there is a vast foreign civil society engagement in Colombia. However, very few CSOs publish evaluations of projects and programmes online. Due to this, multilateral institutions are over-represented in the evaluations that are the basis for this country evaluation brief. However, the thematic areas of concentration of multilateral aid appear to be aligned with the thematic focus of both bilateral donors and CSOs. Due to the relevance for donors, a few documents have been included that are not “evaluations” but that nevertheless include important lessons for donors engaging in Colombia.

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Abbreviations

AFD	Agence Française de Développement	OECD CRS	OECD Creditor Reporting System
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development (Germany)	OECD/DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
CSIVI	Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement	PCBs	Polychlorinated biphenyls
ELN	National Liberation Army	PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
EU	European Union	SIDA	Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	UNHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
GBV	Gender-Based Violence	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
GNI	Gross National Income	UNDP-GEF	UNDP Global Environmental Finance
GruC	Grupo de Cooperantes Colombia	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
ICTJ	International Centre for Transitional Justice	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
IDP	Internally Displaced Person	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
ODA	Official Development Assistance	US	United States (of America)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
		USD	US-Dollar
		WFP	UN World Food Programme
		WHO	World Health Organization

Commissioned by

The Evaluation Department

Carried out by

Particip GmbH

Written by

Kirsten Sandberg Natvig

Supported by

Stephanie Disch, Jörn Dosch (Team Leader), Isabell Breunig
(Project Manager)

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EVALUATION DEPARTMENT



Norwegian Agency for
Development Cooperation

www.norad.no
post-eval@norad.no

Cover photo: Luis Robayo / AFP / NTB
*A Colombian police officer guards the streets of
the town of Pie de Pato, department of Choco,
western Colombia, on January 24, 2017.*
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