

SPECIAL REPORT

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Measuring Collective Impact: Creating a Framework for Assessing Multiple Peacebuilding Projects in Colombia

By *Diego Benitez*



A celebration takes place in Bogotá's Bolívar Square after a peace accord was signed with FARC rebels on September 26, 2016. (Photo by Federico Rios Escobar/New York Times)

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Summary

- Practitioners, policymakers, and funders want better evidence of the results of peacebuilding programs, especially of the collective outcomes of multiple programs tackling similar issues. But the available metrics seldom provide the right kind of information with which to gauge broad social impact.
- Tailored measurement frameworks capturing interpersonal-level information across multiple projects can inform the peacebuilding field of changes associated with resilience and social cohesion.
- Building on its experience in the Central African Republic, USIP's Initiative to Measure Peace and Conflict (IMPACT) developed a shared measurement framework across five projects and organizations focused on reconciliation in disparate regions in Colombia.
- IMPACT was successful in establishing a shared monitoring framework that reported on interpersonal levels of trust, taking a step forward in discovering how a group of projects can collectively influence peacebuilding outcomes.
- Future collaborative impact efforts must strengthen the backbone support role to focus on strengthening communication between participating organizations while decreasing financial incentives that encourage competition and isolation.



UNITED STATES
INSTITUTE OF PEACE
Making Peace Possible

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**EDUCATION &
TRAINING**

ABOUT THE REPORT

This report explores an initiative in Colombia that piloted a shared measurement framework across multiple peacebuilding projects. The report explains how the USIP-funded Initiative to Measure Peace and Conflict Outcomes (IMPACT) model was used to ascertain the collective impact of five projects focused on reconciliation in the wake of Colombia's 2016 peace agreement. The report discusses lessons learned and how the initiative might be adapted to future peacebuilding efforts.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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The views expressed in this report are those of the author alone. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Institute of Peace. An online edition of this and related reports can be found on our website (www.usip.org), together with additional information on the subject.

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**UNITED STATES
INSTITUTE OF PEACE**
Making Peace Possible



People form the word “Peace” in Spanish during a gathering in Bogotá’s Bolivar Square on September 26, 2016.
(Photo by Jennifer Alarcon/AP)

Introduction

As the demand for new peacebuilding efforts throughout the globe continues, the need to understand what has been accomplished in prior efforts becomes more pressing. Peacebuilders implementing programs in regions of conflict are keen to avoid past mistakes while drawing on lessons about what has worked well. At the same time, funders and policymakers are demanding greater impact from the peacebuilding projects they support; they want cost-effective approaches that offer a bigger bang for the buck.

In response to these demands, organizations competing for common pools of funding claim that they are already having an impact, and to prove it they cite an array of output metrics, such as the number of program locations, the number of people reached, and the amount of money invested. These metrics, however, do not provide enough or the right kind of information to determine if programs are fostering broader social change. Organizations, particularly those working in isolation, find it difficult to measure changes in opinions and attitudes across a wide geographic area or shifts in levels of trust that underpin social cohesion and thus enhance the prospects for peacebuilding success.

No single organization, no matter how large, can solve these complex problems by itself. To satisfy the calls for greater impact, peacebuilders must act on the need to collaborate and communicate with one another. While there is often a consensus in favor of working together, the peacebuilding field has been slow to develop strategies to measure how collective responses can address specific social problems and achieve greater impact than individual, piecemeal endeavors.

Policymakers, donors, and practitioners understandably want evidence of a program's impact. They increasingly want to see not only how an individual project fared, but also the collective results of multiple projects targeting similar issues.

While the results of a group of projects cannot be understood until they have begun to be implemented, the groundwork can be laid for measuring impact during the project design stage, before implementation. Throughout that stage, considerable thought needs to be devoted to designing not only the various phases of implementation, but also the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks that will be used to assess the effect of the project. This

requires time to review goals, clarify objectives, and identify indicators that can be used to measure progress. It also means developing a theory of change (ToC), or logic model, that helps reveal and track how a project moves the needle from Point A to Point B. A ToC reveals the assumptions being made by a project's designers about how the project will accomplish its intended goals. Unless the logic that underpins project activities is clearly articulated, a project will inevitably suffer from, among other things, a lack of direction.

This need for clarity at the project design stage is all the more acute when multiple peacebuilding organizations, each pursuing its own project, are working on common agendas. Funders that are tackling similar peacebuilding issues need a better understanding of how individual projects can build on one another's success and be grouped together to achieve results.

Since 2015, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) has been contributing to efforts to enhance such understanding through its Initiative to Measure Peace and Conflict Outcomes (IMPACT). First in the Central African Republic, then (as described in this report) in Colombia, and currently in eight other countries, USIP has been deploying and refining an initiative that examines how a common agenda and a shared measurement system can help ascertain the results of collective efforts. In Colombia, the IMPACT team collaborated with five peacebuilding organizations to build internal capacity in order to track changes over time; to develop indicators that measure programmatic outcomes such as levels of trust, cooperation, and willingness to engage across lines of division; and to design a shared measurement system that field teams could use on a regular basis. USIP functioned as a "backbone organization," supporting a common agenda, providing funding for activities, and communicating progress. By building capacity to collect information and working collaboratively across implementers, IMPACT examined how shared monitoring frameworks could capture rigorous evidence of reconciliation-based approaches in Colombia.

Much work remains to be done in advancing peacebuilders' ability to measure collective impact, but USIP's experience in Colombia provides valuable lessons and insights for future programming. This report examines the efforts taken to develop a shared agenda, the process of designing a common monitoring framework, and how USIP's IMPACT initiative can inform the role a backbone organization can play. It begins by exploring the genesis of the recent interest in collective impact and current discussions among peacebuilders and others on how best to measure it. After briefly describing the status of the peace process in Colombia when the IMPACT project began, the report then offers a closer look at the primary pillars of the collective impact framework that USIP and five partner organizations in Colombia developed and the evidence of collective outcomes that it helped generate. Drawing on an examination of the major challenges encountered during the project and the lessons learned from efforts to address

them, the report provides suggestions for how future iterations of the IMPACT approach might increase peacebuilders' understanding of how collective efforts can lead to greater impact.

How to Measure Collective Impact?

Policymakers, donors, and practitioners understandably want evidence of a program's impact. They increasingly want to see not only how an individual project fared, but also the collective results of multiple projects targeting similar issues. But in most cases, the kind of information they need is not available. The lack of baseline data, a ToC, and a monitoring framework severely impedes an organization's ability to measure outcomes, or changes across time. It also limits the organization's ability to share success stories and inform the field of what it has accomplished and how it has done so. The ability to acquire future funding is also impaired, because donors prefer to fund projects that can prove their worth. Furthermore, individual projects working in isolation cannot be expected to solve large-scale social issues; the funding is simply too limited and the issues are too large.

The term *collective impact* entered many researchers' vocabulary thanks to an article published in 2011 in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Written by two consultants on foundation-supported social programs, the article reviewed the successful results of Strive, a Cincinnati, Ohio-based nonprofit, that "brought together local leaders to tackle the student achievement crisis and improve education throughout greater Cincinnati and northern Kentucky."¹ Strive had spearheaded collective efforts by a wide range of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), corporations, and government bodies aimed at improving education outcomes. The authors identified five conditions required for an effort to be considered a "collective approach": a common agenda; a shared measurement system; continuous communication; mutually reinforcing activities; and the presence of a backbone support organization to help plan, manage, and facilitate the efforts of participating organizations. The article argued that by working collaboratively on a shared agenda with common measurement systems and communication to reinforce learning, participating organizations could better understand how to achieve and measure collective outcomes.

Although the case study focused on educational reform, peacebuilders recognized that the challenges of measuring collective impact looked much the same in their field. In order to understand collective impact, the article argued, organizations must coordinate their efforts and feed into a shared system that can measure and aggregate individual results to reveal collective outcomes. Furthermore, funders must play a far more expansive role: "It is no longer enough to fund an innovative solution created by a single nonprofit or to build that organization's capacity. Instead, funders must help create and sustain the collective processes, measurement reporting systems, and community leadership that enable cross-sector coalitions to arise and thrive."²

But what does collaboration of this sort look like in the peacebuilding field? The call for greater alignment and collaboration across organizations, agencies, and funders is not a new one, and various groups have taken deliberate steps to address these gaps in recent decades. For example, the Washington, DC-based Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP) was founded in 1999 to support collaboration in the conflict resolution field. With more than 120 member organizations active in 153 countries, it has helped strengthen communication and collaboration via online platforms and

formal gatherings. Through various efforts—including a Global Strategic Partnerships platform and an annual PeaceCon event that gathers a diverse group of peacebuilders to share lessons and insights—the AfP has looked to “build coalitions in key areas of strategy and policy to elevate the entire peacebuilding field, tackling issues too large for any one organization to address alone.”³

More recently, the consulting firm FSG and the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions launched an initiative that maintains an online forum for gathering collective experiences in the field. The Collective Forum is described on its website as “an expanding network of like-minded individuals coming together from across sectors to share useful experience and knowledge and thereby accelerating the effectiveness, and further adoption, of the collective impact approach as a whole.”⁴ It thus serves as a gathering space for individuals looking for resources on collective approaches and provides a virtual venue to communicate and share information. The Collective Impact Forum’s Initiative Directory organizes projects from across the globe to provide an up-to-date resource for individuals and organizations looking for case studies on collective-impact initiatives.

As recognition of the need for greater collaboration has continued to grow, organizations from small to large, national and international, have proposed strategies to promote and structure collaborative efforts. The US State Department’s “Stabilization Assistance Review,” a report produced by the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, proposes a framework for maximizing the effectiveness of US government efforts to stabilize conflict-affected areas. The report underscores the importance of sequencing, collaboration, and unity of purpose across lines of effort in order to consolidate gains: “More important than dollars spent is having a singular, agreed-upon, strategic approach to unify efforts in support of a consolidated local impact executed through sequenced and contextual assistance.”⁵ It recognizes that in order for stabilization efforts to have greater impact, the United States should seek to align its resources and work collaboratively with local partners to peaceably manage conflict.

For its part, USIP in 2015 began piloting the Initiative to Measure Peace and Conflict Outcomes in the Central African Republic (IMPACT-CAR). IMPACT-CAR was launched as an attempt to operationalize the discussions on collective impact raised in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* article. USIP looked to develop and test an approach for demonstrating the aggregate impact of a combination of projects working on broader conflict dynamics. In the Central African Republic, IMPACT was specifically designed to “assess the extent to which US government-supported peacebuilding programs . . . improved community-level social cohesion and increased engagement between citizens and national-level institutions.”⁶ IMPACT-CAR created a shared measurement framework to gather data on activities across a group of US government-funded peacebuilding projects by focusing on similar information across projects while contributing to a shared learning agenda through quarterly reports and workshops. Funded by the US Agency for International Development’s Center for Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance, IMPACT-CAR marked a departure from the standard method of monitoring and reporting for individual isolated projects and tested a model of a shared measurement framework that aggregated results from a group of related projects. In doing so, USIP improved its knowledge on how gathering and sharing information between organizations strengthens collaboration. The process also revealed ways to aggregate information for a better understanding of results and strengthened USIP’s commitment to support new collaborative approaches that advance collective-impact efforts.



Dissident members of the FARC militant group on patrol in Colombia on August 30, 2018. (Photo by Federico Rios/New York Times)

IMPACT IN COLOMBIA

Emboldened by the accomplishments of IMPACT-CAR and keen to continue to advance its work on collective impact, USIP decided to adapt the IMPACT model for use in Colombia in 2016, where the government and the FARC rebels were negotiating a peace agreement after more than fifty years of fighting.⁷ For this iteration, IMPACT was adjusted to focus on a measurement framework designed to gauge a thematic outcome—namely, reconciliation—and develop appropriate measurement tools.

There were two key differences between the versions of IMPACT implemented in the Central African Republic and Colombia: the extent of USIP's involvement in design and USIP's role as a funder. In CAR, the projects IMPACT supported were funded by the US government and had been designed earlier in Washington by participating organizations without USIP's involvement. This meant that USIP's effort to implement a monitoring framework was an additional layer of work not planned for during the project design stage. Although ultimately IMPACT-CAR provided valuable lessons, some of its challenges were rooted in USIP's absence during the initial design stage. In contrast, in Colombia, USIP was the grant provider, which allowed it to influence the design process from the start. This did not mean that local organizations were unable to drive their individual strategies; indeed, the entire effort was reliant on their local expertise. Rather, USIP's

involvement helped ensure that participating organizations would adhere to established guidelines, among them a conditional agreement to contribute to a rigorous data collection effort.

As Colombian peace negotiations entered their final stages in the summer of 2016, local organizations looked to support reconciliation projects and contribute to the national peace process. USIP decided that the time was ripe to leverage its long-standing relationships in Colombia and its network of local and national peacebuilders to provide funding for local reconciliation efforts throughout the country.

THE CONTEXT: COLOMBIA'S PEACE PROCESS IN 2016

After nearly five decades of conflict, Colombia signed a long-awaited peace deal with the FARC in 2016. Although the accord was initially met with skepticism by much of the public (when the deal was put to a referendum, it narrowly failed to pass), it symbolized a historic moment in Colombian history and a unique opportunity to strengthen the role of Colombia's civil society as brokers of peace. Colombia's accord was influenced to some extent by "victims' delegations" comprised of ordinary Colombian citizens who were part of the peace negotiations in Havana, Cuba. (This was first time in peace negotiations that victims were given a seat at the table.⁸) The victims of the conflict have primarily been poor rural populations made up of small-scale farmers, Afro-Colombians, or indigenous communities who have been caught in the cross fire between warring parties. Throughout the negotiation process, and as part of a consultative effort, mechanisms were established to receive feedback from citizens and organizations across the country. The final agreement included language establishing a structure that seeks reparations for victims of the conflict as part of a "comprehensive system for truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition."⁹ This system echoed civil society's concerns about the need to address victims' rights, ensure accountability, and help facilitate reconciliation.

USIP had been active in Colombia for almost ten years before the peace negotiations began, supporting local dialogues between communities in conflict and seeking to enhance the mediation and facilitation capacities of local organizations and individuals, thus empowering them to broker peace and foster reconciliation. In particular, USIP had sought to strengthen the role women play as peacebuilders in Colombia. The Colombian Network of Women Mediators, established with funding and training from USIP, enables women mediators to work as agents of change by engaging divided communities and creating space for dialogue and communication.¹⁰ To build capacity and strengthen the network, USIP provided online training and workshops focused on preparing mediators for a role as peacebuilders. They have had to navigate a bloody and complex conflict.¹¹ Depending on the region of the country, victims may have been affected by left-wing guerillas pressing for political reform, right-wing paramilitary groups, or elements of organized crime looking to profit from the illicit drug trade. The protracted conflict between the police or military and illegal armed actors has shaped an environment in which the process of mediation and dialogue becomes local, personal, and complex.

For USIP, supporting reconciliation efforts at a critical time in Colombia's peace process was a key objective. USIP saw the peace agreement (which, after its initial rejection by voters, was revised and ratified by Congress in November 2016) as an opportunity to provide funding in support of locally led reconciliation efforts.

At the same time, USIP also saw the chance to adapt its IMPACT model and use it to measure the collective results of multiple efforts to foster reconciliation. Before proceeding, however,

it was necessary to understand how reconciliation has been defined and to review previous efforts. To this end, a 2015 USIP report titled “Reconciliation in Practice” proved helpful.¹² The report examined a group of 277 projects working to improve reconciliation and social cohesion outcomes in almost fifty conflicts across the globe and identified indicators related to reconciliation such as trust, social cohesion, and group harmony. The report encouraged the use of a ToC to examine a project’s underlying assumptions and informed IMPACT’s approach to measuring reconciliation-based outcomes as part of a shared measurement framework.

GETTING STARTED

In the summer of 2016, USIP convened a workshop in the Colombian capital, Bogotá, that brought together actors from across civil society to discuss their peacebuilding approaches. Attendees ranged from small local NGOs conducting efforts in specific regions to larger national NGOs with programming in locations across the country. The workshop’s aims were to learn about innovative peacebuilding activities and individual methodologies and to develop a better understanding of challenges implementers face when seeking to demonstrate results. Most organizations attended in part because of their long-standing relationship with USIP and in part because they hoped the workshop would provide avenues for funding. Indeed, grant funding was announced as part of an incentive to participate. As the workshop progressed, however, the participants’ interests broadened; they learned about IMPACT’s goals and embraced the opportunity to share their experiences with others who were committed to peace.

The IMPACT model of a shared measurement framework was presented as a method to improve capacity to track the results of hard-to-measure concepts, such as reconciliation. To identify a common agenda, USIP encouraged participants to reflect on how their activities led to successful outcomes and to draft ToCs that captured their efforts in the field. The focus of a ToC process is to define the conditions required to bring about a given outcome. It requires planners to think in backward steps from long-term goals to the short-term changes that would be needed to cause a desired change.¹³ At the workshop, the process of drafting ToCs helped participants reflect on their (higher-level, typically aspirational) goals and on their (specific, achievable, and goal-supporting) objectives and identify how those objectives were linked to activities. Through this process, participants gained a better understanding of how the projects achieve desired results.

Working together, participants identified common themes and agreed upon four ToCs that reflected, albeit to differing degrees, the participants’ work. Each ToC touched on activities focused on dialogue and memory-gathering.

- **ToC 1:** Improving levels of trust by bringing together members within a community to conduct memory-gathering activities.
- **ToC 2:** Improving perceptions of others by bringing people together from across lines of division to share their memories and experiences of the conflict.
- **ToC 3:** Improving social cohesion by bringing communities together from across lines of division to collaborate on shared challenges.
- **ToC 4:** Increasing levels of awareness within a broader population by documenting and sharing the memories of victims.



A man reads a newspaper whose headline reads “Agreement Signing” in Spanish the day after the government signed a peace agreement with FARC rebels. (Photo by Ariana Cubillos/AP)

The four ToCs established a common agenda and laid a foundation for developing measurable objectives. By examining each ToC, IMPACT developed indicators for individual projects that measured outcomes such as levels of trust and engagement across lines of division. Information for these indicators was gathered through surveys and reporting structures that will be discussed in detail later in the report.

Building on the workshop, USIP designed a request for proposal (RFP) that encouraged participating organizations to apply for grant funding by designing projects focused on one or more of the ToCs. This marked a shift from the approach employed in the Central African Republic, where USIP was unable to participate during the project design stage. This notable change allowed USIP to develop strong relationships and work collaboratively with partners from the outset. Partnering with organizations was a critical step in building trust, buy-in, and support for ongoing data collection efforts; it also helped set the stage for USIP’s role as a backbone organization.

SELECTING PROJECTS AND SUPPORTING PARTNERS

After an RFP period that ran from May to September 2016, five organizations were invited to participate. USIP distributed a total of \$265,000 in grant funds among grantees for a one- to

two-year period. The criteria for selection required an organization to have participated in the introductory workshop in Bogotá, to design a peacebuilding project using one or more of the ToCs drafted during that workshop, and to agree to do its best to adhere to a data collection process that included gathering participant survey data and completing monthly reports. USIP dedicated a team of staff members—the IMPACT team—to “accompany” applicants, helping them identify issues and answer questions throughout the application stage and afterward serve as support for logistics, communications, M&E, and technical needs throughout the funding life cycle.

The five organizations selected to participate were the Association of Women from the East (Asociación Regional de Mujeres del Oriente, AMOR); the Center for Investigation and Popular Education (Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular, CINEP); the Colombian Interdisciplinary Team of Forensic Work and Psychosocial Assistance (Equipo Colombiano Interdisciplinario de Trabajo Forense y Asistencia Psicosocial, EQUITAS); the Corporation of Research and Social and Economic Action (Corporación de Investigación y Acción Social y Económica, CLASE); and Shout Against Forgetting (Grito Contra el Olvido). Each organization conducted one project, and the five projects were located in different parts of the country. The projects employed unique methodologies, ranging from the use of forensic science to document the circumstances of victims’ disappearance to facilitating direct dialogues and activities between divided communities.

As the funder and convener, USIP was uniquely positioned to collaborate with organizations on designing shared measurement systems and building capacity where needed. Serving as the backbone organization, USIP looked to strengthen internal capacity, support project design, and develop data collection frameworks for more rigorous evidence gathering. Through monthly telephone calls, emailed reports (including visualizations and infographics of reporting data), data sharing, and feedback loops that gathered opinions and challenges, the IMPACT team encouraged partners to adhere to a common measurement framework that informed how projects made progress toward objectives. The organizations were quick to note how in the past they often had to follow agendas prescribed by funders or agencies, which had provided little guidance or technical support. In contrast, USIP’s effort focused on collaboration and depended on local expertise. This steady accompaniment was a shift away from the common top-down, donor-driven structures. The backbone role helped support a rigorous data collection effort to allow partners, in the short term, to nurture a culture of reporting and reflection, and over the long term to benefit from an increased capacity to track results throughout their projects.

ADOPTING A COMMON TOOLBOX AND ENCOURAGING CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION

To accommodate differences between project designs and maintain the integrity of a collective framework, IMPACT included a standard set of metrics and indicators that tracked changes connected to individual ToCs. In broad terms, the monitoring framework gathered evidence examining the effectiveness of individual interventions across regions and contexts while consistently tracking a common cluster of indicators, thus providing a view of aggregate results. Among the common indicators being tracked were changes in levels of trust with local and national government officials, and changes in levels of trust with the police and military. This approach helped inform each project about the metrics that mattered most to individual organizations while

grouping results through a standard set of indicators across all projects. The set of instruments designed to gather data included three basic tools: a participant survey, an observation protocol, and a diary template. Each was informed by previous efforts in Colombia and elsewhere to measure reconciliation and social cohesion. Data collection methodologies from various social science disciplines—including psychology and anthropology—were reviewed to inform the final design of the instruments. (The three basic tools are described in box 1.)

Box 1. Data Collection Tools Used

- **Participant Survey.** The participant survey provided a baseline account of attitudes and opinions prior to project implementation, particularly on issues related to trust at the local and national levels. To enable analysis by subgroups, the survey included demographic questions about levels of education, age, and employment. Gathering baseline evidence is a critical component in the process of understanding changes over time, but it is often a component missing in peacebuilding projects. Organizations were instructed to survey each participant before activities began and after they had finished. Although there were variations in the survey tool depending on the design of each project (some organizations added questions while others removed them), a standard set of indicators was included in each survey across all five organizations.
- **Observation Protocol.** The observation protocol tool compiled data at the programmatic level. This tool, designed for project implementers, collected details such as location of activities, number of participants, and date of events, and it logged observations on a Likert scale measuring levels of interaction, engagement, and respect for and tolerance of others. Alongside the diary template, the observation protocol tool was standardized with no variance across all projects.
- **Diary Template.** The diary template was a qualitative tool designed to gather feedback from implementers on their perceptions of overall program-related developments. Project leads were asked to reflect on recent activities and respond to open-ended questions related to primary challenges, lessons learned, and unexpected outcomes. In order to reduce the reporting burden, programs were asked to use this toolkit only twice a month.

All three data collection instruments were embedded into Google Form templates and stored within Google Drive. This system provided a convenient cloud-based portal to review monitoring data and conduct real-time assessment of progress. Google Drive also made it easy to access data in the field (internet access permitting) and to organize and analyze the data in Excel-like spreadsheets (Google Sheets). Google Drive was chosen as the information platform for two main reasons. First, all partners were familiar with its general functionality and had active Gmail accounts and reliable access to the internet (those in Bogotá had the most reliable connection). Second, Google Drive cost nothing to use. Together in Google Drive, these three tools provided a cross-cutting account of activities before, during, and after implementation and formed the core of a shared measurement system. The IMPACT team focused on easy-to-use tools, but designing a shared framework required continuous guidance and communication.

USIP worked to develop trust and build a level of exposure between each organization to allow projects to share successes and reveal challenges. The additional involvement of USIP experts with years of on-the-ground experience and strong local networks in Colombia provided the IMPACT team with access to a broad network of peacebuilders. This also deepened levels of trust with local partners and decreased the length of time partners may have ordinarily required to engage with otherwise unknown individuals. To remain in touch while overseas the IMPACT team utilized digital platforms, including Skype, WhatsApp, Zoom, and Mailchimp. Partners soon began to rely upon the IMPACT team's expertise and call on team members as needed throughout their work. Subsequent workshops in Bogotá opened a space for face-to-face interactions where teams were able to discuss achievements, share experiences, and identify ways to collaborate on future endeavors. Communication efforts were central to motivating data collection and encouraging participation from project staff.

Shared Data: Individual Report Cards

As noted above, IMPACT offered USIP the opportunity to provide support to reconciliation efforts during a critical time in Colombia's history and a chance to dive deeper into operationalizing theories of collective impact. This initiative functioned under the assumptions that organizations were willing and able to implement a monitoring framework, that they would do so consistently, and that the data collected would provide insights into what a group of projects can say about higher-level outcomes or lasting change. These assumptions were tested throughout each project with varying success.

The following report cards illustrate data gathered through IMPACT's shared measurement framework. Each project-specific report card (presented in no particular order) provides a brief description of the project, frequency of data collection, location of activities, demographic data, amount of USIP financial support, average duration of activities, and changes in levels of trust, a key indicator for social cohesion. In addition, selected quotes from diary templates showcase how this tool captured information that, while anecdotal in nature, added to the richness of evidence. The sixth and last report card aggregates data from all five projects.

Readers will notice that outcomes vary for each project. For instance, in some cases, levels of trust increase, whereas in others they decrease. The report cards do not, however, explain why

such differences occurred. An additional evaluative effort, diving deeper into the extent of change and uncovering causal relationships between a project's activities and its outcomes, would be required before any conclusions can be drawn. As it is, the evidence does not reveal underlying reasons for apparent differences. But the fact that these differences were captured can be viewed as an achievement in itself. Each report card was produced using data captured through a shared measurement system. By making the process of collecting evidence more rigorous and by increasing the amount of evidence collected, the IMPACT initiative is a step forward on the path to producing the kind of rich and reliable evidence that can allow collective results to be analyzed in depth.

ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN FROM THE EAST (AMOR)

AMOR's project took place in the western department of Antioquia, historically a region with a strong right-wing paramilitary presence. This project offered psychological support and solidarity to victims of the conflict, conducted advocacy efforts, and documented victims' memories of missing loved ones as a method to reduce anxiety, mitigate trauma, and contribute to a national registry of missing persons. This project also sought to bridge divides between victims and victimizers. Program staff collected messages from victims to share with jailed offenders.

AMOR maintained a strong commitment to IMPACT's objectives and obtained a high frequency of data reporting throughout the course of its programming. Levels of trust increased during the project in all six categories, from local to national—an outcome unique among the five IMPACT projects. Compared to the other four participants in this project, AMOR recorded the highest level of change. Endline results show the greatest change occurring in levels of trust between participants and the police. The observation protocol data show that registered activities included interactions between state authorities and participants, which may offer a clue as to why and how change in levels of trust occurred. Of note, AMOR did not have any turnover of staff during the project's life cycle. A sustained staff presence in good standing with the local community, together with reconciliation activities designed to enable productive interactions between victims and members of the local police force, may have contributed to improved levels of trust.

Selected Diary Entry

Some people who did not believe in this project because of the many false promises that have never been fulfilled, have recovered their sense of hope after participating in our psychosocial support sessions. They are now open to the possibility of knowing something about their loved ones and feel less forgotten. This has motivated others to request joining the project.

AMOR

Project description:

A project led by women aiming to create reconciliation commissions that contribute to the search, identification, and dignified delivery of remains of missing persons to family members. The project included memory gathering activities and symbolic gestures to the victims of forced disappearances conducted by reconciliation commissions in each municipality.

Antioquia, Colombia

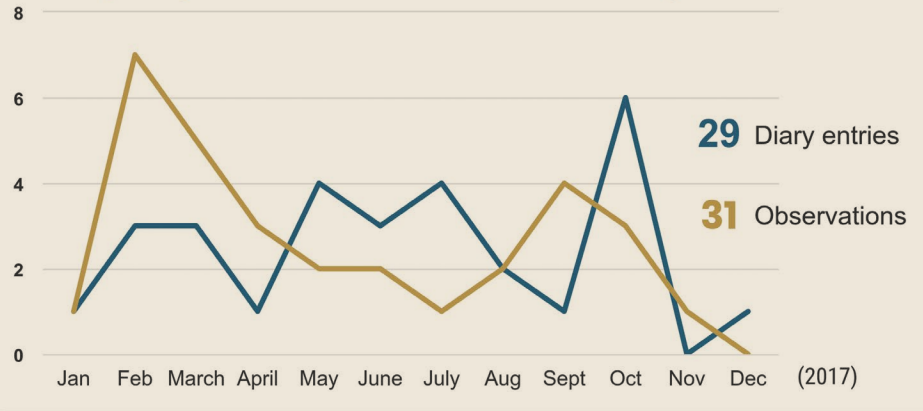


USIP support
\$25,000

IMPACT

Initiative to Measure Peace and Conflict Outcomes

Frequency of data collection activities utilizing IMPACT toolkits

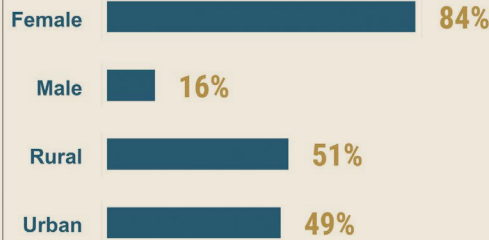


Demographics¹

Average # of Participants per activity:



of activities lasted 3 hours or more

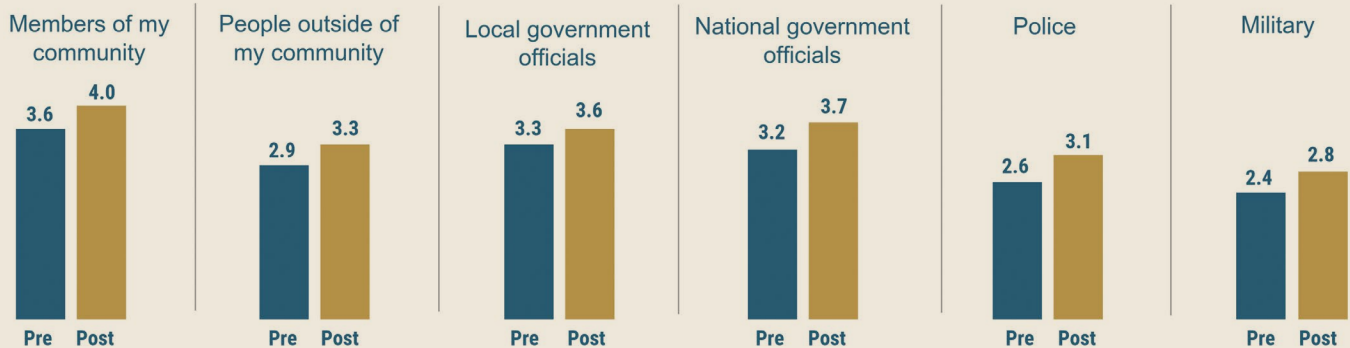


Identified as victims of the conflict



Reported not having finished primary studies

Pre- and post-project levels of trust ^{N = 77²}



¹ Demographic data sourced from baseline survey. N=77

² This number represents a panel of participants responding to both pre- and post-project surveys.

CORPORATION OF RESEARCH AND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ACTION (CIASE)

CIASE implemented its project in the southwestern department of Valle del Cauca, a region with a historic FARC presence and home to large indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. CIASE's project focused on bridging historical divides between rural-indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and urban women through group discussions and shared activities. As evidenced in its reporting frequency, CIASE preferred to use the diary template rather than the observation protocol. In a move unique to this project, CIASE staff rarely contributed to the diary template and instead invited various participants to make entries, the goal being to help build internal knowledge and gather feedback from different voices. However, this may have limited CIASE's ability to gain a better understanding of internal project-related developments. Responses were often linked to individual experiences of participants and not directly to CIASE's programmatic work. While rich in detail, the diary template did not provide insight into internal programmatic challenges. In addition, staff capacity remained an issue throughout this project, as it was limited to one supporting staff member who implemented all activities throughout the project life cycle.

Baseline results for CIASE revealed the lowest levels of trust across all projects. Regional and historical factors may have influenced outcomes. Among the participants were indigenous communities living in active conflict zones where acts of violence between the FARC, the Colombian military, and right-wing paramilitaries were common. Moreover, Valle del Cauca is known to be a large coca-producing region (coca is the prime ingredient used in making cocaine), and elements of narcotrafficking may have added to levels of mistrust. Historical land disputes and issues of autonomy between the state and indigenous authorities have traditionally fueled tensions, lowering trust between indigenous communities and local and state actors. However, endline results showed increases in levels of trust at the local or interpersonal level and with national government officials. The interpersonal increases may have been a result of collaborative activities that exposed participants to different communities throughout the region.

Selected Diary Entry

The role of women in constructing peace is fundamental. Through participation in the different trainings and workshops, women have experienced a radical change in their lives and have the necessary tools and adequate preparation to become mediators to help others find pathways to peace and reconciliation.

CIASE

Project description:

A project led by women and focused on increasing levels of trust within local communities. This project invited participants to share collective memories and enhance their awareness of events that occurred throughout the Colombian conflict. It explored how women mediators can increase intergroup levels of trust while strengthening civil and political engagement in support of local reconciliation efforts.

Valle del Cauca, Colombia

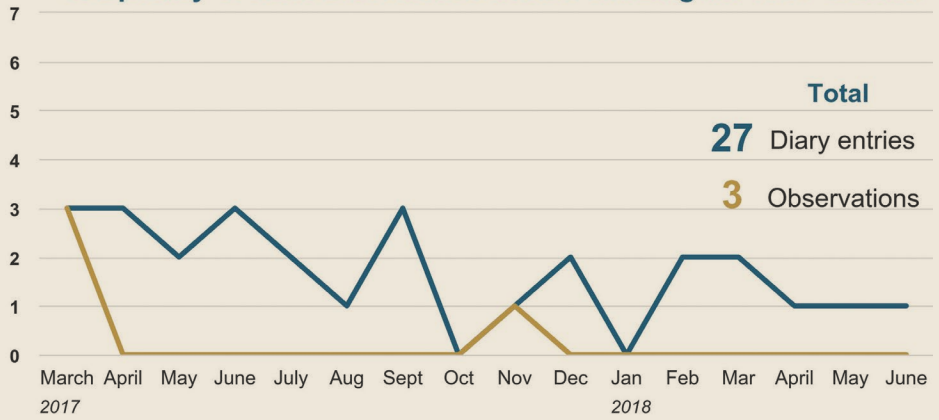


USIP support
\$60,000

IMPACT

Initiative to Measure Peace and Conflict Outcomes

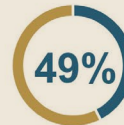
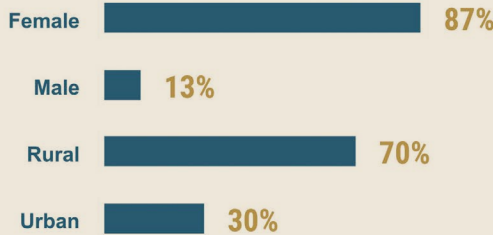
Frequency of data collection activities utilizing IMPACT toolkits



Total
27 Diary entries
3 Observations

Demographics¹

Average # of participants per activity:

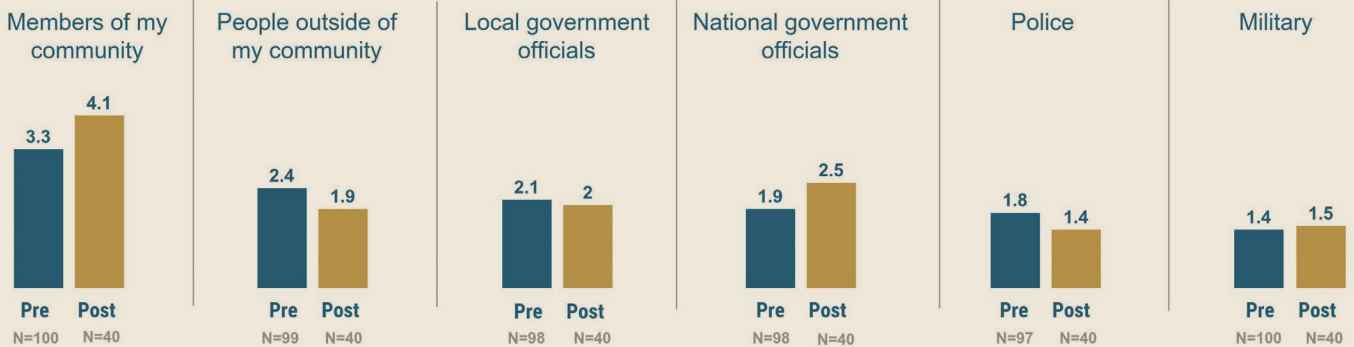


Identified as members of indigenous communities



Reported having completed high school

Pre- and post-project levels of trust³ N=100



¹ Demographic data sourced from baseline survey. N=101

² Based on three recorded observations utilizing IMPACT tools.

³ Pre- and post-project levels of trust represent unmatched responses.

SHOUT AGAINST FORGETTING (GRITO CONTRA EL OLVIDO)

This project took place in both the capital city, Bogotá, and in the northwestern department of Antioquia. Activities focused on gathering and documenting the memory of participants as a therapeutic healing approach. Public events were designed to allow victims to share their memories and ranged from theatrical performances to mural paintings and public displays of images in mobile galleries. Participants were encouraged to write poems and short stories related to lost family members and to share them during public outdoor vigils. Information captured in the diary template revealed that the majority of participants were relatives of victims killed by right-wing paramilitaries and state forces. This violence may have reflected overall levels of trust, particularly at a time when victims groups were mobilizing as part of the national peace process. Indeed, the lowest levels of trust at baseline and endline were with the military, police, and national government officials, respectively. National divisions between competing political parties throughout the peace negotiations led to a failed referendum and may have affected trust at the local level for this project. Victims of state crime saw right-leaning conservatives' viewpoints as an impediment to achieving justice and bringing an end to the conflict.

Regarding data collection, Grito's efforts were inconsistent. A sharp reduction in reporting occurred throughout the later phase, with a significant decrease in data collection starting in September 2017. This project suffered significant staff turnover during its implementation and this persisted throughout its life cycle. Changes in staff required renewed buy-in and training, which slowed the overall data collection effort. In addition, achieving a sense of community with the other four participating organizations proved difficult with such heavy staff rotation. Nevertheless, Grito remained strongly committed to providing services to its beneficiaries and often, through project activities, displayed solidarity with other victims of state crimes. This may be reflected in the interpersonal levels of trust, where "members of my community" saw the only increase across all categories.

Selected Diary Entry

We learned the ability to listen to others and their unique stories without necessarily having these stories [influenced] by what we consider to be the best way to recount an event. We learned that the ways of relating, as well as the ways of understanding the concepts of peace and reconciliation, are inextricably linked to each individual story.

Grito Contra el Olvido



Project description:

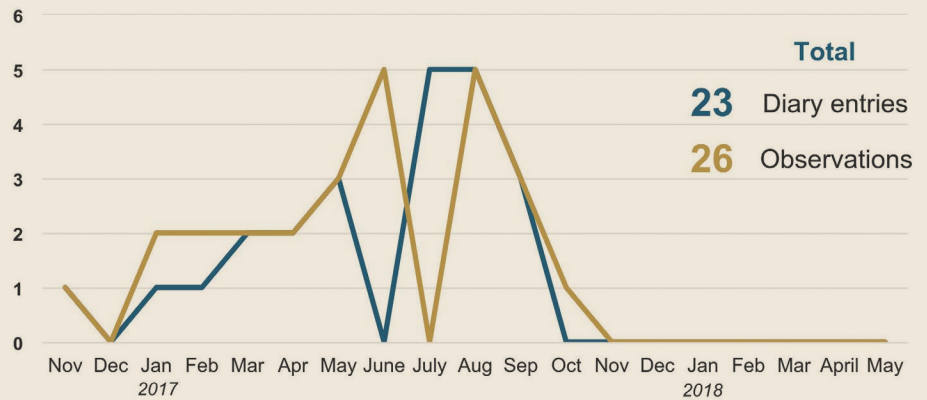
This project documented victims' memory of the Colombian conflict to contribute to national peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts. It provided psychological services and facilitated dialogues and therapeutic activities to strengthen participants' roles as agents of change.

Bogota & Antioquia, Colombia

USIP support
\$60,000



Frequency of data collection activities utilizing IMPACT toolkits



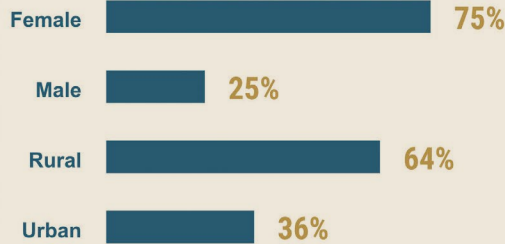
Total
23 Diary entries
26 Observations

Demographics¹

Average # of participants per activity:



of activities lasted half a day

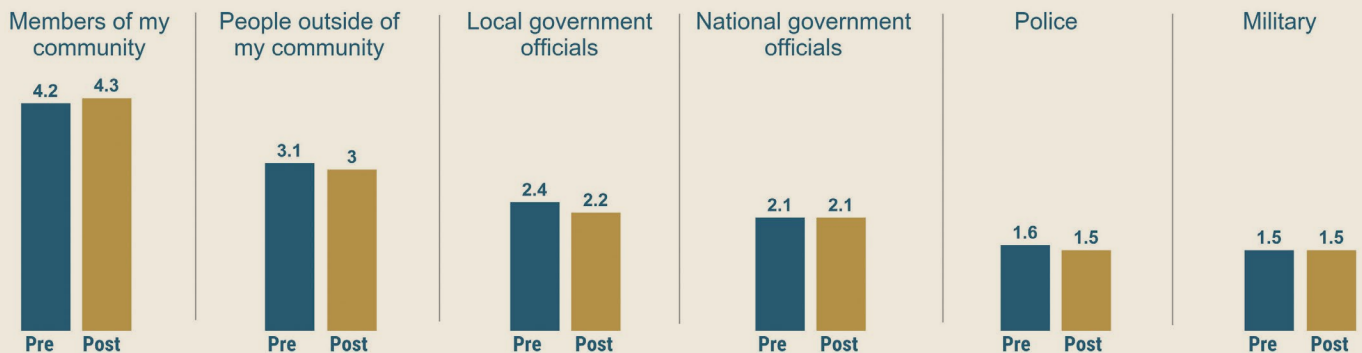


Identified as victims of the conflict



Reported having graduated from college

Pre- and post-project levels of trust N= 28²



¹ Demographic data sourced from baseline survey.

² Based on matched results of pre- and post-project survey data.

CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION AND POPULAR EDUCATION (CINEP)

This project took place in Bogotá. It brought together civil society actors from different parts of Colombia to share experiences on reconciliation-based activities. CINEP convened representatives from across civil society from public, private, local, national, and religious organizations to document reconciliation-based approaches and inform national reconciliation efforts. In regard to data collection, although CINEP is well recognized for having strong data gathering methodologies (it houses an up-to-date historical archive of publications related to human rights abuses), staff shortages and turnover affected data collection efforts.

Endline studies revealed minor changes in levels of trust across all categories. Demographic data related to levels of education and urban residency with frequent exposure to a large state presence may provide clues on levels of trust. The majority of participants lived in the capital city and held college degrees, with half participating as representatives of NGOs. This participant pool differed from those of the other participating projects in the IMPACT initiative, where beneficiaries primarily resided in rural areas and viewed themselves as victims of the conflict. Of note, due to high drop-off rates, few participants responded to the survey both at the start of the project and at its end. Staff turnover and limited capacity led to inconsistent data collection efforts. CINEP's frequency of reporting also fell sharply in December 2017. Despite the challenges, CINEP's methodology of organizing roundtable discussions on timely peacebuilding issues with key stakeholders from across civil society was widely praised and was copied by another participating organization.

Selected Diary Entry

Participants gained a broad vision of how truth commissions work from the perspective of commissioners themselves. They also gained a greater understanding of opportunities to support the peace process. Participants had the opportunity to think about the lessons learned about truth and reconciliation in other countries and contexts. The discussions allowed participating organizations to share their greatest doubts in regard to the truth commissions and the peace process in Colombia.

CINEP

Project description:

This project convened national, regional, and local organizations to participate in roundtable discussions as part of public consultation processes. The initiative documented reconciliation activities and strengthened dialogue and exchanges between disparate actors. Regional and national organizations engaged with each other to discuss unique approaches to strengthening social cohesion and reconciliation.

Bogotá,
Colombia



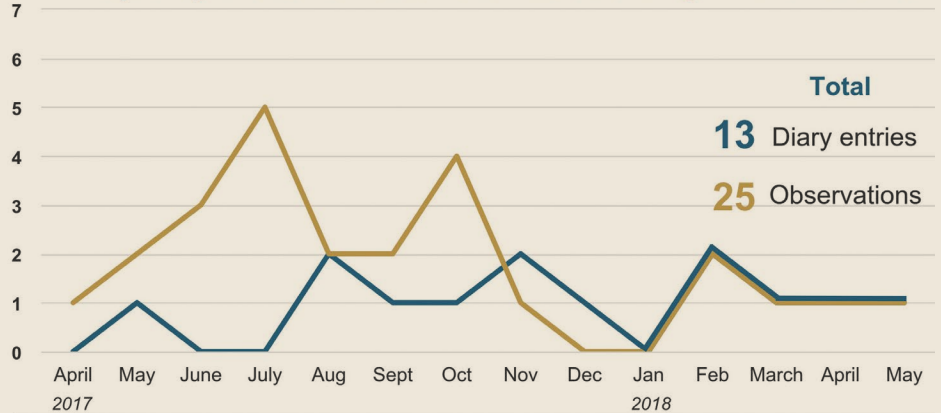
USIP support

\$60,000

IMPACT

Initiative to Measure Peace and Conflict Outcomes

Frequency of data collection activities utilizing IMPACT toolkits



Demographics¹

Average # of participants per activity:



24



68%

of activities lasted half a day

Female **53%**

Male **47%**

Rural **3%**

Urban **97%**

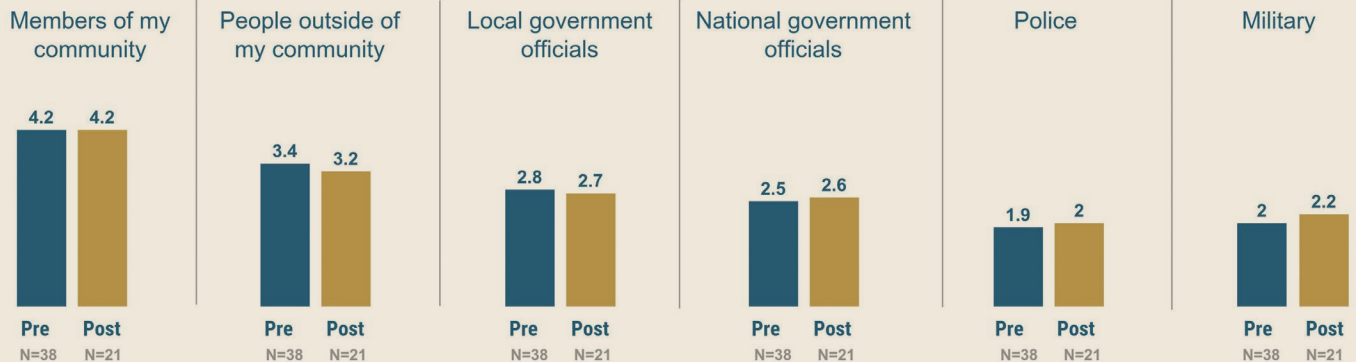


Identified as representatives of NGOs



Reported having graduated from college

Pre- and post-project levels of trust²



¹ Demographic data sourced from baseline survey, N=38

² Pre- and post-project levels of trust represent unmatched responses.

COLOMBIAN INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM OF FORENSIC WORK AND PSYCHOSOCIAL ASSISTANCE (EQUITAS)

This project took place in the department of Caldas, in northwestern Colombia, an area reported to have a strong paramilitary presence. EQUITAS designed its project using a psychosocial and forensics approach. The project conducted interviews with families of disappeared victims and documented the circumstances surrounding victims' disappearance. It also collected personal items, including pictures, identification cards, and personal articles of each victim, to create a personal narrative and a more substantial pool of evidence for future forensic efforts. EQUITAS recorded climatic conditions at the time of disappearance to help identify geographical changes in the region, such as changes in the direction and flow of local streams and rivers—information that may be useful in the future in locating the remains of the disappeared.

Endline results indicated a decrease in or no change across all levels of trust. Of note, levels of trust with people outside the community showed the greatest decrease. This project was directly affected by violence and severe climatic conditions during its implementation, and required additional time to conduct activities. The paramilitary presence in the region alongside heavy rains forced the project to pause activities and move to a different location. Decreased levels of trust within this population may be better understood through a contextual analysis that may reveal patterns in participants' perceptions of others from communities outside their own. As with other IMPACT projects, due to high drop-off rates, many individuals surveyed at the end of the project were not the same people as those surveyed at the outset.

Selected Diary Entry

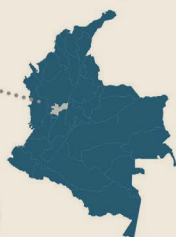
Participants had the possibility of looking in the mirror and discovering that they have valuable information to support the search process. When encountering larger institutions, it is assumed that only professionals are capable of advancing the search [for missing persons] and this downgrades the participation of family members and makes them feel irrelevant. However, the objective of this project is to value and enhance the participation of family members. They are people who know the victims better than the researchers and possess a fundamental geographical knowledge of the region, which is of great value in the search for their loved ones.

EQUITAS

Project description:

A project that documented the memories of victims of the Colombian conflict. It looked to utilize data to inform future forensic science approaches that support the identification of potential grave sites. This process utilized a sequenced approach of interviews, data gathering, and documentation to strengthen a national reconciliation effort and pioneer new technologies in search of missing persons. Ultimately, it aimed to allow families to seek reparations and provide closure surrounding the case of their missing relatives.

Caldas, Colombia

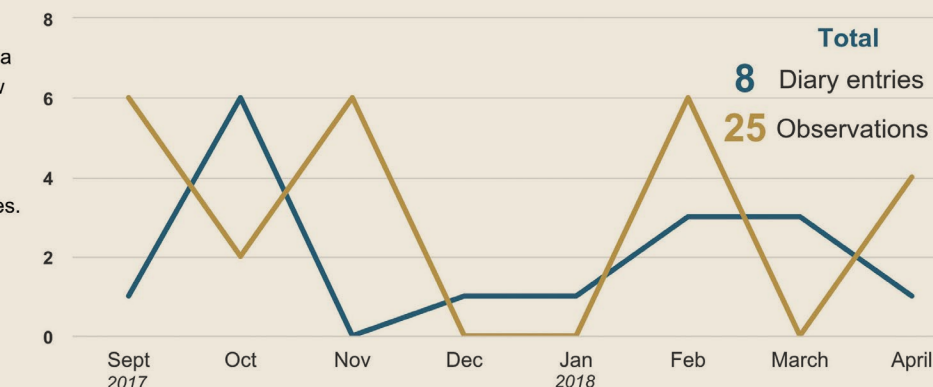


USIP support
\$60,000

IMPACT

Initiative to Measure Peace and Conflict Outcomes

Frequency of data collection activities utilizing IMPACT toolkits



Demographics¹

Average # of participants per activity:

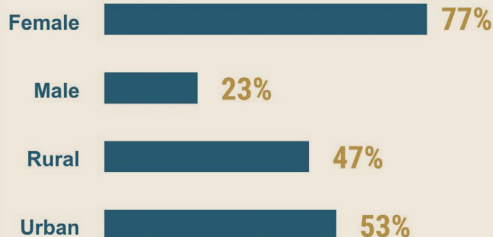


27



60%

of activities lasted half a day



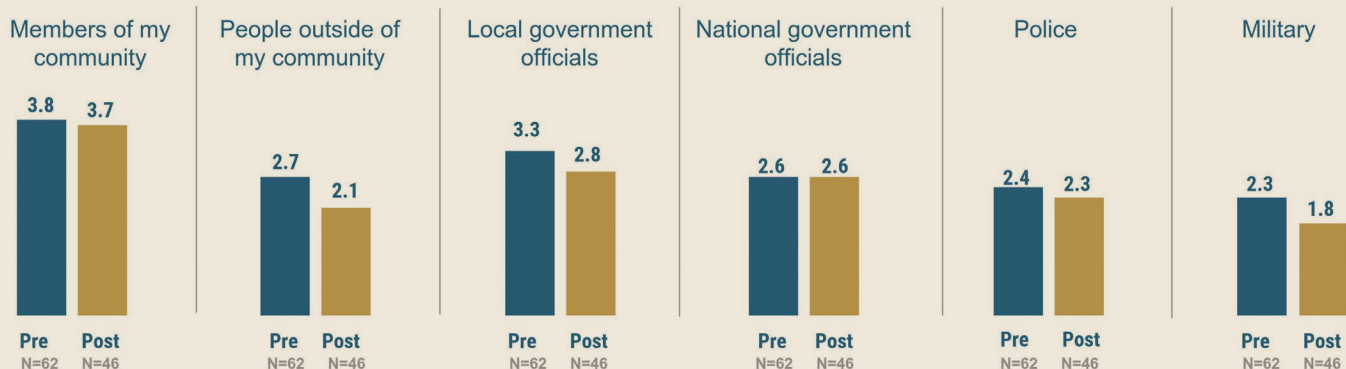
100%

Identified as victims of the conflict

41%

Reported not having finished primary studies

Pre- and post-project levels of trust² N = 62



¹ Demographic data sourced from baseline survey. N=62

² Pre- and post-project levels of trust represent unmatched responses.

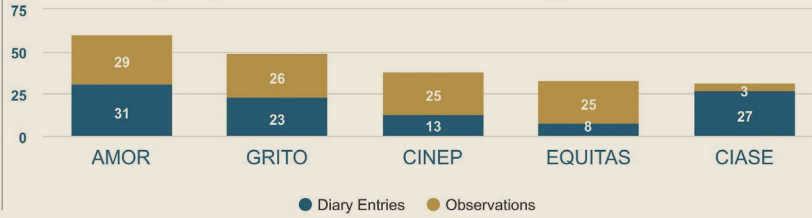
Project Location: department, organization



IMPACT

Initiative to Measure Peace and Conflict Outcomes

Frequency of data collection activities utilizing IMPACT toolkits



Total USIP support:

\$265,000
2016 - 2018

Average # of participants per activity:



Gender

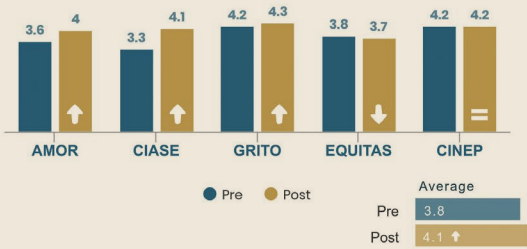


Rural & urban

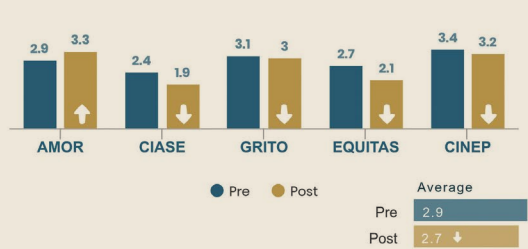


Pre- and post-project levels of trust

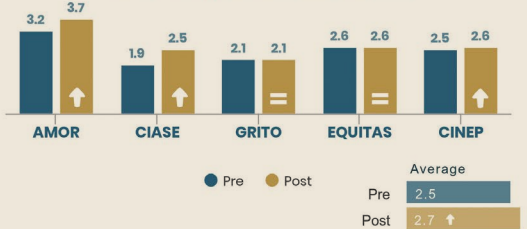
Members of my community



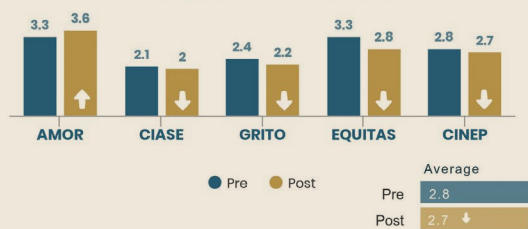
People outside of my community



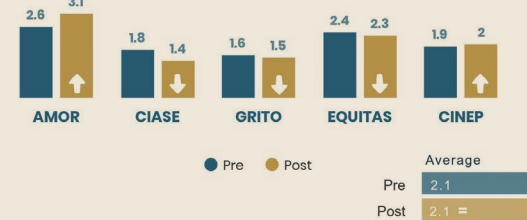
National government officials



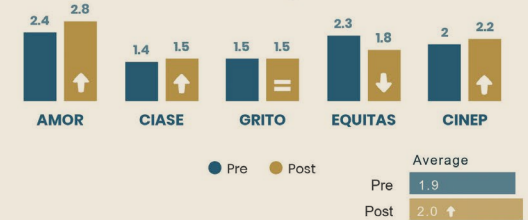
Local government officials



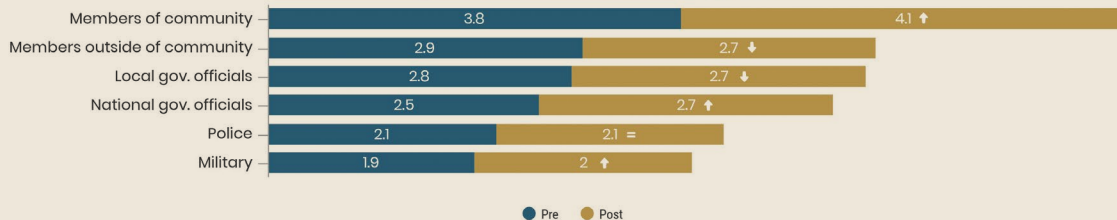
Police



Military



Average levels of trust across categories



SHARED DATA: A COLLECTIVE REPORT CARD ON LEVELS OF TRUST

The report card on page 24 aggregates individual outcomes for levels of trust across all five projects. An aggregate report can be used as a tool to highlight progress or changes toward a particular indicator or objective. In this infographic, changes in pre-project and post-project levels of interpersonal trust are compared across all projects.¹⁴

The data on levels of trust showed some potentially significant increases for some organizations in specific categories and decreases for others. To understand the reasons for these variations, organizations will need stronger evidence of programmatic outcomes. IMPACT takes one step toward building that evidence base. Comparing data from a shared measurement framework can help stakeholders understand outcomes of different program methodologies designed for specific populations.

Take, for instance, AMOR. Working in the northwestern department of Antioquia with victims of conflict whose family members were forcibly disappeared by armed actors, AMOR designed projects that brought participants together to discuss experiences, organized discussions with local and national authorities, and aligned its project with a national effort to catalog cases of forced disappearance in a national missing persons registry.¹⁵ The frequency of AMOR's data collection and perhaps also the variety of ways AMOR collected data—including panel surveys (providing longitudinal data), robust diary entries, and activity observations—gave stakeholders a much better understanding of how AMOR's project increased levels of trust across all categories.¹⁶ This is particularly encouraging given that AMOR was smaller in size and capacity and received less funding than the other organizations. In contrast, CIASE's project, while successful in capturing changes across categories of trust, gathered less evidence to explain how and why changes occurred. This decrease in volume of data limited information that might otherwise substantiate linkages between successful outcomes and program activities.

Although data collection efforts were mixed, IMPACT's focus on strengthening the evidence base for stakeholders and organizations was fruitful. All organizations established baseline and endline measures, and each organization measured indicators relevant to social cohesion and reconciliation, which in almost all cases was a pioneering effort. For the M&E field, results may suggest that evidence for disparate programming in remote locations can be aggregated through a shared monitoring framework that includes a mix of standardized indicators and tailored data collection tools.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

For USIP, the primary achievement in Colombia was building capacity to collect outcome-level data on a shared agenda (the focus of which was reconciliation) through a common measurement framework. This experience improved USIP's knowledge of data collection approaches and reinforced the value of a flexible, human-centered framework to gather information on endeavors involving multiple projects, multiple organizations, or both. USIP's IMPACT team worked in partnership with five organizations to assess their level of understanding and commitment, maintained consistent communication with them, and provided continuous support to address issues throughout the two years of implementation. These ongoing feedback loops were coupled with analyses and capacity building. This endeavor was not straightforward, however, and the results were not easily obtained.

This section discusses some of the key challenges the projects faced and the lessons learned about how to address them. Both the challenges and the lessons may inform future components of a collective-impact framework.

MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES

Challenges. Throughout the initial RFP phase and during workshops in Bogotá, USIP focused its efforts on supporting individual organizations. Projects had been developed in isolation, and the task of designing a mutually reinforcing sequence of activities was not included in the broader IMPACT design. Although the organizations were invited to share lessons and come together for annual workshops to communicate results and learn from one another, their activities were conducted independently and in isolation from one another. As a result, a critical component for a collective model was missing. At best, the data collected could provide information about a project's individual beneficiaries, but it could not explain how together the five participating organizations successfully addressed a common agenda on a specific issue. In other words, the data do not explain how they advanced reconciliation efforts across Colombia. The organizations agreed to the reconciliation process, but activities remained uncoordinated and were implemented in isolation throughout different regions.

Lesson Learned. Planning for a common agenda requires significant collaboration to identify the pertinent issues to be resolved, how individual actors can contribute to resolving them, and a planning process for sequenced activities that build on the strengths of each participating organization. Implementing a common agenda requires substantial buy-in and greater levels of trust between agencies to overcome inherent biases that prevent data sharing or collaboration. USIP's RFP encouraged organizations to compete for similar funding. This forced organizations to design projects showcasing their experience and qualifications so that they looked superior to those of others, thereby reinforcing isolation and competition. Planning ahead to sequence activities, aligning them to funding that leverages the specialization of programs, and requiring collaboration throughout are vital ingredients of collective impact. Looking ahead, USIP's role as a backbone organization should include overseeing a detailed process that leverages individual abilities and sequences activities collaboratively. A greater focus on management and facilitation for this role is required.

BASELINES AND ENDLINES

Challenges. To improve the monitoring and assessment of projects at baseline and endline, measures had to be arranged prior to project implementation. Although this is not a new concept for the peacebuilding field, it took time for organizations to prepare surveys and agree to common definitions of specific terms. There was a great need to establish clear guidelines, resolve definitional issues, adjust overall timelines, and clarify responsibilities for baseline and endline efforts.

Lesson Learned. Early on, USIP focused on articulating goals and designing ToCs and objectives, but organizations should also have a basic understanding of how baseline measures increase the rigor of evidence and inform practitioners about the results of their programming. Establishing a baseline was a new experience for organizations. Capacity building was critical, as was providing guidance regarding implementation, the need for unique identifiers for

surveys, and the importance of data privacy and data storage. Efforts must focus on providing instructional material with basic step-by-step descriptions on designing, implementing, and analyzing pre- and post-project surveys in advance. Participating organizations also need help in understanding how this activity will improve the rigor of evidence in the future.

TURNOVER

Challenges. Turnover affected operations for three out of the five organizations. With every transition, the IMPACT team needed time to gather buy-in, strengthen commitments, review toolkits, and deliver a basic introduction to IMPACT’s objectives. Turnover also resulted in lower rates of reporting, because new personnel required time to transition into the organization and needed clarity around the implementation, frequency, or sequencing of certain data collection tools.

Lesson Learned. Plan for turnover. Redundancy measures can ensure stopgaps are in place to support monitoring efforts and preserve knowledge. Having additional staff prepared for turnover will ensure consistency and mitigate negative effects. Support staff should have access to monitoring tools and a basic understanding of how and when to implement them. This can be facilitated through the provision of instructional materials, including visuals (for example, diagrams, charts, timelines) and step-by-step tutorials.

COMPUTER LITERACY

Challenges. Partners experienced a learning curve when using Google Forms. This was their first time designing, gathering, and analyzing programmatic data through a cloud-based system. While Google was a familiar platform, working with Google Forms required a basic understanding of how to design and distribute questionnaires, modify access for staff, locate files, and upload data. Computer literacy and capacity-building efforts were necessary to assist implementers in gaining familiarity with the software.

Lesson Learned. Identify appropriate technology and dedicate time for capacity-building workshops. Although IMPACT utilized Google Drive as the main platform for data collection, future iterations must provide additional training and accompaniment to ensure partners are fully engaged and familiar with all aspects of the data collection software and monitoring framework. This may be achieved through individual assessments and one-on-one discussions in which areas of need can be identified, with trainings being designed subsequently. Organizations with limited capacity and training resources must pay particular attention to remedying poor computer literacy.

ONLINE CONNECTIVITY

Challenges. Internet connection throughout the country was limited, and it varied depending on the region. Conscious that they might not always be able input data online, implementers downloaded and printed out PDF versions of each form and traveled with them to the field. This required additional labor to enter data manually. As a result, survey data was occasionally found to have duplicate entries or incorrect ID codes, which resulted in inefficiencies and delays when conducting analysis.

Lesson Learned. Review and test platforms for offline data collection. Currently, Google Forms does not support offline use; however, data collection software—including Kobo Toolbox, from the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative—collects offline data that syncs with a central database

when online. These tools were not used in Colombia but may prove useful with future projects located in remote regions.

COMMITMENT TO MONITORING

Challenges. During the RFP stage, participating organizations did not regard data collection as a vital objective. Conducting work on social justice and human rights issues was their primary motivation. Generating buy-in for monitoring frameworks required additional efforts to communicate the importance of tracking progress and monitoring outcomes.

Lesson Learned. Take time to socialize the value of M&E. Projects should be required to have a dedicated M&E staff person with clearly articulated roles and responsibilities. A discussion on monitoring must occur throughout the project design stage, and allocating M&E resources must be standard procedure. This should be reflected in the project's budget. Best practice suggests that 3 to 5 percent of a project's budget be allocated toward M&E. This percentage may sometimes be too high or too low, but providing a significant line in the budget for M&E ensures that staff reflect on its role and allocate appropriate resources for this activity.

FEEDBACK LOOPS

Challenges. The way in which data should be used to adjust course or improve programming within organizations was unclear. Ideally, through steady data collection efforts, organizations would have an awareness of progress and adjust course as necessary; however, organizations viewed the IMPACT team as responsible for analyzing and reviewing information and shaping it to provide actionable insights. This may be an appropriate role for a backbone organization to play, but the IMPACT team had limited capacity to conduct a thorough analysis for each organization. In turn, the team expected organizations to review and reflect on information they collected. This resulted in a learning gap whereby projects did not make full use of their information.

Lesson Learned. The role of a backbone organization must encompass ensuring that organizations review and reflect on their data. To accomplish this, review sessions must be scheduled as part of a learning framework that includes discussions on how information can be used to improve programming. Without such sessions, organizations will miss out on critical learning opportunities. Furthermore, collective-impact efforts must share actionable information relevant for project-level decision making.

Looking Ahead

Its experience with IMPACT in Colombia and the Central African Republic has strengthened USIP's commitment to supporting collective-impact initiatives that gather collective results for programming in conflict regions. USIP is also keen to draw on the lessons learned in the two countries.

As IMPACT has demonstrated, a great opportunity for funders lies in playing the role of a backbone organization. IMPACT is currently supporting a new stream of USIP grant funding for youth-led programming across eight countries. Participants in this USIP program, which is designed to create partnerships and foster collaboration among young leaders from across the globe, have begun to implement youth projects in their local communities.¹⁷ Lessons learned

from IMPACT in Colombia and the Central African Republic have prompted USIP to revise its grantmaking approach to align grant-funded projects with a common data collection framework that connects activities to objectives and aggregates standardized streams of information across projects to uncover underlying patterns. Through a shared measurement framework, USIP hopes to expand its knowledge of collective results for greater learning. However, while IMPACT's contributions have informed programming, challenges remain.

Sequencing mutually reinforcing activities across and between vast regions of the world remains difficult, particularly because disparate regions face disparate social challenges. And peacebuilding organizations continue to implement solutions for large problem-sets in isolation. The practice of competing for funding incentivizes independent initiatives and disincentivizes coordinated programming. The underlying challenge is not an absence of will to collaborate, but rather an absence of funding strategies that encourage inter-dependent strategies for peacebuilding. The two-part process of designing programming that strategically seizes on the expertise of individual organizations to address a common social need and then coordinating the strategic in phases remains a challenge—but also an opportunity. Funding agencies can seize on the chance to reinforce local partnerships and work across sectors to address a peacebuilding need. They can facilitate activities across organizations to overcome barriers and maximize effectiveness, as was the case with the Strive program in Cincinnati. Reviewing different examples in different sectors can help advance the cause. Indeed, the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* article about an education program has had a concrete influence on a number of peacebuilding initiatives, including IMPACT.

In the Central African Republic, IMPACT aggregated data across multiple agencies and organizations funded by the US government to reveal patterns related to their common peacebuilding activities. In Colombia, IMPACT focused on a thematic stream of work and aggregated data related to changes in trust at the individual level. Looking ahead, USIP's IMPACT model for collective outcomes could be adapted to uncover collective results for a wide range of programming, from arts-based projects to religious programs to efforts to counter violent extremism.

IMPACT provides a collaborative methodology with monitoring frameworks to help the peacebuilding field gain a better understanding of program results. According to an independent evaluation commissioned by USIP, “the organizations understood at the end of the process the advantages of capturing and processing data. In that sense, there was—in general—a level of affirmation by organizations in terms of raising awareness about the importance of applying measurement systems within the execution of projects.” The evaluation also revealed additional significant challenges organizations faced while implementing data collections tools. Some have been mentioned in the prior section of this report, but the overall judgment by participating organizations was that the IMPACT initiative allowed them to “identify program approaches that appear to reduce violence; discover the theories of change underlying their projects; develop indicators that measure results; and develop simple data collection initiatives.”¹⁸

Much remains to be learned, not least about how to produce the evidence that substantiates claims of collective impact. Nonetheless, IMPACT's shared measurement strategy is a promising step forward in the quest to measure collective efforts and thereby demonstrate how they can be aggregated to generate deeper insight into cause and effect of peacebuilding activities.

Notes

1. John Kania and Mark Kramer, "Collective Impact," *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (Winter 2011), www.ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact. Also see Strive Partnership, "Collective Impact: Stronger Together," www.strivetogether.org/what-we-do/collective-impact.
2. Kania and Kramer, "Collective Impact."
3. "About AfP," Alliance for Peacebuilding, 2019, allianceforpeacebuilding.org/about-us.
4. "About Us," Collective Impact Forums, 2019, www.collectiveimpactforum.org/about-us.
5. Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, "*Stabilization Assistance Review: A Framework for Maximizing the Effectiveness of U.S. Government Efforts to Stabilize Conflict Affected Areas*" (Washington: US Department of State, June 2018), www.state.gov/reports/stabilization-assistance-review-a-framework-for-maximizing-the-effectiveness-of-u-s-government-efforts-to-stabilize-conflict-affected-areas-2018.
6. Andrew Blum and Ruben Grangaard, "Collaborative Design in Peacebuilding: Lessons from the Central African Republic," Special Report no. 425 (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, April 2018), www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2018-04/sr_425_blum_grangaard_final.pdf.
7. FARC is the acronym for Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia).
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