



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE FINAL REPORT OF THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT "*Cultivating educational and cultural paths favourable to peace in Colombia from the Magdalena Medio*". Implemented by: Corporación Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio -CDPMM - Catholic Agency for Overseas Development - CAFOD. **Funded by:** European Commission's Fund for Non-Governmental Organisations and Civil Society - CAFOD - CDPMM.

Final Evaluation Period: 01/03/2018 to 31/05/2021

Introduction

The project was implemented through the Call for Proposals on the Theme of 'Civil Society Organisations for Peacebuilding and Development in Colombia', Lot 4: Peace Education and Culture, CAFOD and CPDMM. The project was supported by the strategic alliance with CINEP and the Colombian Ministry of Education (MEN) and at the municipal level with the participation of an important number of actors from the education, participation and social development sectors. It had a duration of three years - March 2018 to February 2021, with an extension until 31 May 2021 and was geographically located in 9 municipalities of the Magdalena Medio sub-region.

This evaluation uses the logical framework methodology as a framework for analysis of the results and indicators, and in light of the achievements, a balance is made of the goals and coverage reached.

The general objective of this evaluation is to demonstrate the impacts generated by the project, taking into account especially the perspective of the target groups, the beneficiaries, and the sustainability of the project. Specifically, the evaluation focused on:

- Evidence of project achievements, through the criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability, impact and quality.
- Review of documents and products achieved within the framework of the project, together with the analysis and synthesis of viable ideas and suggestions provided by key project actors.
- Investigation of the external and internal factors related to the achievement of the objectives, measures aimed at achieving sustainability of the results proposed by the actors based on their experience.
- Making recommendations on how to ensure the sustainability of the project, including the sustainability of the accompanied organisations.

The evaluation methodology adopted the Project Cycle Management approach, using both qualitative and quantitative mixed methods. This approach sought a process of critical analysis of all the actions and results of the programme, in order to determine the relevance of the methods used and the validity of the objectives set, the efficiency in the use of resources and the impact in relation to the women beneficiaries. Among the tools used were focus groups, semi-structured interviews and online surveys.

The primary information was collected from 434 individuals and 12 individuals from State entities, representatives of the Delegation of the European Union and the implementation team (CDPMM-CAFOD). In total 446 individuals provided primary information. Of the participants, 41.1% were men and 58.9% were women. This sample included people from all the municipalities in which the project was carried out. Of the total number of participants, 7.9% were from Arenal, 24.5% from Santa Rosa, 4.5% from Cantagallo, 8.6% from Morales, 6.9% from Norosí, 11.9% from San Pablo, 21.4% from Simití, 6.9% from Tiquisio and 7.4% from Yondó. As for the schools, the sample used included 28 of the 34 schools in which the project was carried out, which means that the sample included representatives of 82.4% of the schools in which the project was carried out.



It is important to mention that the tools were structured around the three strategies of the programme: (i) EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGY FOR PEACE; (ii) LOCAL PEACE AND RECONCILIATION INITIATIVES (iii) PROMOTION AND SOCIAL ADVOCACY/ACTION.

Findings

The development objective of this project has been to contribute to the individual and collective construction of a culture of peace and reconciliation in municipalities affected by the armed conflict in order to favour the recovery of the social fabric and sustainable territorial development in the framework of the post-peace agreement in Colombia. This is aligned with the specific objective of the call which is to support actions for sustainable territorial development and local governance in a post-peace agreement context in Colombia.

The project deals exclusively with the theme of Peace Education and Culture, its strategies and activities were aimed at promoting changes in behaviours and practices of educational communities (students, parents and teachers), local government bodies and civil society organisations, with an important emphasis on strengthening the capacities of young men and women, teachers and families around citizen coexistence and peace building from a human rights and social and gender equity approach.

The most significant result of the project, beyond the indicators foreseen in the logical framework matrix, has been to maintain the theme of Education for Peace and the construction of a culture of peace in organisational, institutional and community scenarios, in a difficult context in which acts of violence contradict the political discourse committed to the implementation of a sustainable and long-lasting peace. The project managed to maintain a work dynamic on the different fronts, territories and with the populations with which the actions were planned, despite the difficulties and restrictions imposed by the pandemic, ensuring that reflection on the need for a culture of peace reached homes, touched parents, young people, the educational community, as well as the municipal coordination spaces/structures and social organisations present in the municipalities.

Specifically, the project reports in its results that 60% of young people, women and social leaders of civil society organisations (CSOs) and local communities have put into practice the soft skills, transforming their behaviour to promote a culture of peace with gender equality, citizen coexistence, social solidarity and care for the environment, established through two measurements with the Knowledge, Skills & Behaviours (KSB) instrument. 73% of the schools that participated in the project have integrated strategies, methodologies and practices favourable to a culture of peace with gender equity, citizen coexistence, social solidarity and care for the environment into their institutional education plans and institutional improvement plans (PMI), and finally, all civil society organisations benefiting from the project's technical and financial assistance improved their Organisational Capacity Index (OCI) and report achievements in their organisational strengthening plans and work plans, which include local cultural and pedagogical initiatives for the promotion of a culture of peace, reconstruction of memory and reconciliation in municipal and neighbourhood spaces.

At the end of the project, lessons learned during the three-year implementation period have been systematised and shared through various events for the exchange of experiences with social organisations, state entities and organisations in the region.

The specific objective of strengthening the capacities of young people, CSOs, communities and local public institutions in nine municipalities of Magdalena Medio, to promote and foster processes of education and a culture of peace, citizen coexistence, social solidarity in harmony with the environment that transform individual and collective behaviour, from a rights and gender equity approach, has been achieved, given that the three indicators show a positive change. The project reached 80.8% of the target of young people, women and social leaders of CSOs and local communities who put into practice the soft skills transforming their behaviours to promote a culture of peace with gender equity; we also note that 104% of the target was met in terms of the percentage of schools that integrated strategies, methodologies and practices favourable to a culture of peace with gender equity, citizen coexistence and social solidarity into their institutional educational plans and institutional improvement plans. Finally, 100% of the target was achieved in terms of CSOs that participated in the project and improved their OCI index by the end of the project.

Evaluative concepts



- (i) Relevance: This evaluation found that despite the difficulties of the context, the European Union's programme proposal for this call and the project as a whole have been relevant, both in the scope of its results and in the methodological and pedagogical proposal, being sufficiently flexible to adapt to the new reality imposed by the Pandemic since the second year of implementation. The project maintained a permanent dialogue with CSOs, social leaders, educational communities and local authorities in order to keep the project's strategies active, responding to the most felt needs, providing technical assistance, accompaniment and financial support, as well as facilitating spaces for reflection and analysis from various perspectives, which facilitates processes of local strengthening and political coordination in a framework of dialogue between different actors.

- (ii) Effectiveness: The implementation of the project has accumulated significant results, as it is an execution of activities that gives continuity to a strategic work that the CDPMM has been carrying out for some time with the Colombian Ministry of Education (MEN), Education Secretariats and the schools in a commitment to Education for Peace, innovation in pedagogies and local initiatives, as well as the empowerment of communities and the full exercise of citizenship through participation in local bodies where efforts, resources and actions for territorial peace take shape. The three lines of action show changes at the personal, organisational and community levels. The immediate effects are perceptible in the narratives of the direct beneficiaries, in the reflections that mothers, fathers and caregivers have expressed in the evaluation and are related to a critical look at traditional forms of upbringing, a renewed look at the values of active listening, the appreciation of the diverse expressions of young people, the recognition of the problems of the school and the importance given to their participation in the construction of solutions to these problems. At the level of the schools, teachers and directors recognise the benefits of the strengthening strategy, the support of the training process and the capacity to integrate the themes and actions of the project into their educational plans, as well as into ongoing initiatives such as the Cátedra para la Paz [a government-mandated peace curriculum]. In short, the methodologies, materials and technical assistance are valued as a relevant, real and effective contribution to the challenges they face on a daily basis in the school environment and their integration with the community.
 At the level of CSOs, the revitalisation of their work plans, the encouragement of organisational strengthening plans and access to fresh resources to carry out their local work agendas on peace issues make the difference between postponing or closing down their actions and keeping their goals alive in times of pandemic and reduced or no funding.

- (iii) Efficiency: The Corporación Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio (CPDMM) and CAFOD in the three-year period of the project have implemented a process of permanent programmatic and budgetary monitoring through territorial coordination, the team of technical advisors and the feedback received at different moments of the life of the project by the Delegation of the European Union, which has facilitated timely decision-making in relation to the planned implementation in each period. The project budget has been executed in accordance with the annually planned budget and in compliance with the legal accounting regulations in Colombia and the specific requirements of the European Union. In the same way, a permanent accompaniment was provided to the four organisations that received resources for strengthening, and at the same time the internal development of accounting procedures in accordance with these same requirements. For the implementation of the project, the CDPMM had a team of professionals distributed in the three [geographical] areas, which facilitated the simultaneous projection of actions and ensured permanent support and technical assistance to the what was happening at municipal level, which increased efficiency in the management of time and operating costs. On the other hand, in the context of the pandemic, it was able to make use of all the technological tools and adapt to the new conditions, even in areas with low connectivity, it was possible to provide support using the strategies developed by the schools to work with teachers, families and young people through guides and materials that were distributed through the same channels used by the schools. Finally, in terms of coverage, the project exceeded the expected goal by 141%, as it managed to reach 4,958 people from different audiences, reaching 7,013 people, understandably due to the increased dissemination that could be achieved using virtual media for the work agenda of the last year of implementation.

- (iv) Impact and sustainability: The direct impact of the project can be seen in the strengthening of the various social actors in the territories: CSOs, Educational Communities, Leaders and in instances such as the Municipal



Committees for School Coexistence, the Territorial Councils for peace, reconciliation and coexistence and in the capacities that have been installed as a result of this and other projects in relation to the capacity for context analysis, reflection on their individual and collective role in peace-building, local development planning and the strengthening of alliances and political advocacy, so that the results already have a level of sustainability as they are capacities that are translated into short and medium-term practices and action plans. The same happens at the level of social sustainability, to the extent that groups of leaders have been strengthened to assume the role of facilitators of local development, and peace and reconciliation managers, with commitment and motivation to give continuity to the work. In the political sphere, the sustainability of regional peace agendas and the proposals that are being constructed in inter-institutional spaces will depend to a large extent on the capacity to analyse the contexts and the development of operative agendas for political advocacy, defining short-term objectives in the face of the processes, which means outlining short- and medium-term objectives, in terms of guaranteeing programmes and projects that respond to the priorities identified in these scenarios. On the other hand, as both the Mesa Nacional de Educación Rural (MNED, National Roundtable for Rural Education) and the Colombian Ministry of Education (MEN) have pointed out, the project has left a series of accumulated lessons and lessons learned that must be taken up again quickly. On the one hand, on the part of the MNED, the document systematising rural education experiences in five Territorially Focused Development Programme (PDET) zones will be a valuable tool for dialogue with state entities and the MEN, and a contribution to a contextualised view of the needs and challenges of rural schools in peace-building contexts. On the other hand, the MEN foresees that through the regional roundtables that are being set up, a state of the art of peace education initiative at the national level can be established.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Throughout the three years of project implementation, the following good practices and lessons learned have been identified, which in turn have been pointed out by the different actors interviewed as part of this Evaluation.

- a) Flexible and participatory understanding of territorial realities: From its design, the project is based on the recognition of the diversity of each of the territories, and it is recognised that the scope of the results proposed in the framework of each strategy depends to a large extent on the context and cultural factors in which the project is developed, as well as on the particularities of the subjects that participate in the processes, the development of a territorial approach has been fundamental. These elements should be documented and systematised for replication in spaces such as the Regional Roundtables to be implemented by the MEN to identify policy guidelines in the field of human rights and peace education.
- b) Focusing of the project and permanence of the technical teams in the area: The work of CDPMM has been disseminated across the Magdalena Medio region, reaching more and more municipalities, this expansion responds in the first instance to the humanitarian crises that have occurred, to subsequently develop medium- and long-term projects, thus a work map with wide coverage has been configured. However, at the same pace, funding resources and the size of the operational team have not increased, which has led to a permanent review of the focus of this type of project and the level of dedication required in many cases in remote or high-risk areas for the team of professionals. Therefore, achieving a balance between the scope of action, coverage and available resources is an ongoing challenge on which progress continues to be made, in order to find mechanisms to sustain the work based on strengthening local capacities.
- c) Incorporation of the gender and differential approach: Although the gender approach has been incorporated into the project's actions since the formulation phase, care has been taken all along to ensure that there is a careful record of the number of men and women, adults and young people who participated in each day. At the same time, a reading of the needs of young and adult women has been made, incorporating topics such as sexual and reproductive rights, sexual violence within gender violence, human rights and women's rights. However, a deeper understanding of the implications of gender equity is required, for example when talking about opportunities for participation, equity in access to development resources, leading to a transformation in gender roles and the social valuation given to each specific gender. On the other hand, the exercise of parents' schools opened up a horizon of possibilities to address gender issues in the family environment, based on the question of the patterns of upbringing and the role of socialisation in the family that leads to the perpetuation of unequal relationships and differential opportunities for one or the other.



- d) Spaces for the exchange of experiences: The spaces for the exchange of experiences at local, regional and national level are recognised as an opportunity to enrich the territorial and programmatic work, through the sharing of knowledge management strategies, pedagogies, advocacy actions on public policies, peace building. These spaces are a requirement for social dialogue not only in the sense of multi-sectoral dialogue, but they also opened up the possibility of learning about experiences from other countries in the continent, which can lead to the construction of proposals for joint actions. Specifically, the project organised meeting and exchange spaces around four thematic axes: Gender, Culture and Peace; Territorial Peace Councils, Rural Education and Care of the Common Home (Environment). Throughout the exchange sessions, there was the possibility of sharing learning and making collective knowledge that comes from experiences and organisational reflections, which lead to identifying the factors that have facilitated certain social changes in some communities, in order to develop capacity in others.
- e) Systematisation in the processes of project documentation, monitoring and coordination: An excellent practice of the project was its capacity to document, organise, archive and make accessible the information on the implementation of the project to all the territorial coordinating bodies, making the exercise of programmatic and financial monitoring an integral task with sufficient and quality information for decision-making throughout the project. The organisation of the information facilitates the understanding of the administrative, contracting and financial monitoring processes on the one hand, and on the other hand, in the face of each of the achievements, there is easy access to the history of the planning, internal meetings, documentation of each activity, annexing means of verification which saves time when it comes to preparing reports or in this case, giving an external view of the project.
- f) Transparency and accountability: As mentioned above, the project developed mechanisms to provide transparency in all processes of contracting and evaluation of products and services. It complied with all the procedures for the elaboration and presentation of narrative and financial reports to be presented to the donor and socialised with the different stakeholders. At the same time, it provided personalised advice to each of the organisations responsible for the implementation of project resources, through the third-party grants for organisational strengthening of CSOs.

Finally, the evaluation came up with the following recommendations from the evaluation findings:

- Within the framework of the project, there is a high level of complementarity between the different work strategies and a good level of innovation in terms of methodologies and pedagogy in human rights, values for citizenship and peace, however, given the complexity of the project and the variety of work areas/strategies and areas of implementation, more spaces for methodological and experiential exchange of inter-programmatic character were required, which were not possible due to several factors including the confinement enforced due to the pandemic from March 2020.
- In terms of the training strategy, beyond the planned topics, which were positively received by teachers and young people, the inclusion of topics such as substance abuse prevention, management of social networks, self-care and prevention of infection by Covid19, healthy lifestyles, among others, were a success, as they respond to the needs felt by the target population. It will be necessary following the end of the project to resume the systematisation processes that lead to the construction of illustrative cases of the most significant pedagogical experiences in at least some of the participating schools, as well as to identify the elements that distinguish the process in educational institutions located in rural areas in contrast to those located in urban areas.
- For future projects, a theme focused on strengthening the social and organisational fabric of young people in the Magdalena Medio region could be included, based on the results achieved in the school spaces, which could lead to strengthening the articulation of the schools with the municipal structures/spaces, although through the Municipal School Coexistence Committees, other opportunities for participation and advocacy can also be explored for young people who often leave school with a lack of educational and employment opportunities.
- Specifically with regard to the European Union, the development of a theme of cooperation aimed at working with young people on peace-building issues that includes an articulating axis of life projects and citizenship with effective opportunities for higher education, entrepreneurship and youth innovation could have a high impact, perhaps through tools such as AFT's, which would involve a call for proposals with a special line of funding to third parties, taking into



account other organisational criteria with fewer administrative requirements so that youth organisations that are formed with greater difficulty can have access to resources.



The full external evaluation, available in Spanish, also has the following references, specifically regarding CAFOD's role:

In addition, the project included a strategy for building alliances with key actors with whom the Corporation [CPDMM] has maintained a historical dialogue and which opens up opportunities for recognition and joint actions between local, national and international actors in terms of pedagogy and peacebuilding and reconciliation experiences; this was especially strengthened with the role played by CAFOD in accompanying the exchange meetings.

In this same logic, visits were made to all the IEs to advance the baseline (1st measurement) with technical advice from CAFOD; additionally, during these visits, accompaniment and advice was given to strengthen the School Coexistence Committees and the routes used so far to respond to cases of violence or abuse that are detrimental to the rights of children and adolescents, resulting in progress in work plans for school coexistence committees in 31 of the 34 beneficiary IEs.

Internally, in the first year, CAFOD provided training to develop the team's communication skills in order to be able to collect, produce and disseminate audiovisual material to report on the project's progress.

Likewise, an exchange of experiences and good practices in education and culture of peace was achieved, focused on the construction of memory and re-signification, advocacy and participation; this in different scenarios, some with the participation of representatives of CAFOD partners in Colombia, Peru and Central America, participants of other CAFOD projects in Colombia, representatives of the four organizations selected in the second implementation and the Educational Institutions that were part of the project.

Finally, after the exchange of good practices and experiences in peace building, carried out the first year in different international scenarios, in the second year the exchange focused on youth experiences and at the end of the project with the participation of local and departmental CSOs, official entities and CSO counterparts of CAFOD Latin America, it was possible to disseminate the methodologies, experiences and lessons learned, while strengthening youth participation with specific activities such as the youth exchange of experiences in education and culture of peace.