Colombia is a land of many contrasts. On the one hand, it boasts steady economic growth, a burgeoning urban middle class, resource wealth, and stable, internationally oriented economic policy. However, the country is also marked by extreme social inequality that has been fuelling armed conflict for more than 50 years, a conflict which has had an enormous impact on the people of Colombia.

After more than four years of negotiations, the Colombian Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) signed a peace agreement in November 2016. FARC-EP, South America’s oldest and largest guerrilla movement, laid down its weapons and re-established itself as a political party. A bilateral ceasefire has also been agreed between the Colombian Government and the second-largest guerrilla group, Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), in official negotiations that have been ongoing since February 2017.

Despite initial achievements over the first year since the peace agreement with FARC-EP was signed, the government’s peace policy has a long way to go. The country’s regions and in particular the many local stakeholders have a key role to play in the implementation and consolidation of stable and lasting peace. In this context, the goal of promoting social well-being is seen as a collective task—one that requires the involvement of all the stakeholders representing Colombian society. It is for this reason that local civil society stakeholders need to be fully involved in the drafting of official policies and in efforts to bring about peace.

In order to achieve this collective well-being, action is needed to build, promote and strengthen the capacity of institutions and of individuals and their organisations to shape their own future role. This process should be as open and inclusive as possible and should harness and promote innovative forms of intervention.

The ForPaz programme was commissioned with this objective in mind. It is based on a delegated cofinancing agreement between the European Union and BMZ and is an integral component of the ProPaz/GIZ programme. The other components of ProPaz are ‘Regional Peacebuilding’, ‘Criminal Justice and Historical Truth’ and ‘Victim Compensation and Land Restitution’ (see separate ProPaz fact sheet).

Objective

The main objective of ForPaz is to help build peace at regional level and from there at national level.
Method

There are five areas of activity designed to help establish and strengthen peacebuilding capacity.

The goal of the first of these is to improve the capacity of local government bodies by through training in territorial and development planning processes and advice on resource management.

The focus of the second is on strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations. This involves working with partner organisations to develop mechanisms for participation and advising them on how to draw up, administer and implement initiatives and campaigns designed to encourage participation in policymaking.

The purpose of the third area of activity is to support the process of sustainable conflict transformation. This involves analysing the dynamics of territorial conflict, promoting dialogue between stakeholders and helping to implement conflict transformation measures.

The fourth area of activity was established to strengthen the capacity of regional peace and development programmes (PDPs) and therefore give them a greater say in policymaking. Strategies are being devised to help shape development and peace processes and to identify, communicate and replicate examples of good practice.

The role of the fifth area of activity is to help the National Planning Department (DNP) draw up regional planning and territorial development policies. The focus here is on exchanging knowledge and experience in development planning and territorial development.

Results

Over the first six months of 2017, ForPaz held planning workshops in all seven of the regions listed above in order to define a series of capacity building measures. The workshops identified areas in which support was needed to implement the peace agreement. ForPaz also aims to strengthen public institutions and civil society organisations, including indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups, to ensure that they are able to participate in local and regional policymaking. These stakeholders have already taken steps to improve their capacity in relation to territorial development planning and to engage in the participatory planning processes of the regionally focused development plans (PDETs) that were initiated as part of the commitment to comprehensive land reform set out in the peace agreement.

Furthermore, the National Planning Department (DNP) has initiated the process of drafting recommendations for the next national development plan and of drawing up a general territorial development policy.

The National Network of Regional Peace and Development Programmes (Redprodepaz) has made some initial progress in its drafting of sustainability strategies for regional peace and development plans, especially with regard to finance, accounting, occupational health and the exchange of knowledge and experience, for example by setting up the Escuela Desarrollo y Paz (school for development and peace).

Regional peace and development program

ForPaz's work is based on the results obtained and lessons learned from the regional peace and development programmes (PDPs). These civil society initiatives have been supporting participatory peace and development processes since 1995 in order to bring about sustainable forms of human development.

At present there are 27 PDPs covering up to 600 of the country’s local authorities. The methods used and lessons learned by the PDPs are coordinated and systematised by the national network (Redprodepaz), which passes the information on to the national government to help it design new development plans and policies.