PROINTCAME: Integrating IDPs and host communities

Context

Colombia has endured over 50 years of armed conflict – a legacy of violence that has spawned a complex mix of economic, social, political and cultural disruptions, resulting in a devastatingly high number of IDPs. According to Colombia’s Unit for integral attention and reparation for the victims, there were more than 7 million in 2018. Whether they fled on their own or as a group, IDPs all share the same fate of having left behind their villages and land in order to seek refuge in larger communities or provincial capitals. Several waves of paramilitary and guerrilla demobilisation have since paved the way for IDPs to return to their home communities. The first to disarm were the paramilitaries, followed by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas who signed a peace deal with the Colombian Government in 2016. Better conditions for economic growth in the regions concerned have also opened up new income opportunities for those refugees that remain, albeit in mostly informal and often precarious work or in founding micro startups.

To increase levels of income and employment amongst the victims of this conflict, the Colombian Government has launched funding programmes to boost the local economy. New sources of income are thus now being tapped in the coffee, cocoa, livestock and dairy farming sectors by strengthening value chains and promoting urban microbusineses.

And these government-backed initiatives are already producing results: After weathering the critical startup phase, a great many producer groups and microenterprises are now becoming more economically stable. To accelerate and intensify these dynamics, and also raise income levels and create new jobs, PROINTCAME offers a range of support measures that cater specifically for producer groups and microenterprises. Project activities are further underpinned by capacity building measures that empower municipal authorities and organised producers to apply for project funding and to implement projects. PROINTCAME is operating in the departments of Meta und Caquetá.

Objective:

Income and employment amongst IDPs and host communities in the departments of Meta and Caquetá are improved.

Method

Raising income. Expanding and consolidating value chains enables producer groups to boost business and income. Targeted communication between producer organisations and government agencies at local and regional level, and also with other institutions that work with the local population, is paramount here.

Securing and promoting employment. Making private and family-run microbusinesses more competitive leads to more jobs and higher incomes. As it unfolds, inter-institutional cooperation pieces together an employment promotion strategy that matches the population’s specific needs. What counts here is being able to identify any professional or personal deficits that stand in the way of ‘decent work’. Once these are aligned with the employers’ current demand for labour, job-seeking IDPs can be equipped with the right kind of skill sets.

Strengthening institutions and producer groups. The programme advises municipal authorities and organised producers on state-subsidised projects designed to stabilise the economy. Establishing a close institutional and social mutual support network is a key component of its remit.

Private sector. Fostering dialogue between microenterprises and medium to large-scale companies opens up opportunities for employment and trade while dialogue events on corporate social responsibility (CSR) add greater depth to the peace process.

The programme leverages the results of cooperation to produce a ‘tool box’ that systematically collates those PROINTCAME methods that have proved their worth.

Commissioned by: German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

German contribution EUR 4,000,000

Lead executing agency Colombian Presidential Agency for International Cooperation (APC-Colombia)

Implementing organisations Various

Project area Meta, Caquetá

Scheduled overall term 2018-2020
Results

Initial success has been achieved in the Meta region where the programme is assisting some 25 producer groups – including a women’s organisation that specialises in natural cosmetics – to improve the manufacturing and marketing of coffee and cocoa products and also the methods used for producing honey. Furthermore, 100 microenterprises are undergoing training that will enable them to upgrade their administrative processes and also give them better market access. Out of these enterprises, the programme will select the 60 most promising business models meriting additional support.

As part of its efforts to support jobless IDPs, Cauca is pioneering a unique brand of cooperation between the tax authority, the local employment agency, the Universidad de Amazonia, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and PROINTCAME. Here some 150 job seekers are undergoing skills training coupled with psychosocial counselling while medium to large-scale companies are being sensitised to the benefits of employing IDPs, including tax breaks and assistance with the recruitment process.