The State of Implementation of the Colombian Peace Agreement

On 9th July 2020, Embrace Dialogue and the Kroc Institute held a public dialogue to discuss 'The Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies' Fourth Report on the state of implementation of the 2016 Final Peace Accord', examining the period December 2018- November 2019. The Kroc Institute is responsible for the technical verification and monitoring of the implementation of the agreement through the Peace Accords Matrix (PAM) Barometer Initiative. It is the first time a university-based research centre has played such a direct role in supporting the implementation of a peace agreement, and the first time that researchers have measured implementation in real time. This snapshot presents reflections on the public dialogue and the findings of the Kroc Institute's report.

Challenges to implementation

The Colombian peace agreement is one of the most comprehensive in the world, with a differential approach that takes account of particular groups disproportionately affected by the armed conflict. The biggest challenges to the agreement identified by the Kroc Institute are delays in its implementation and the failure of the Colombian government to recognise the existing interdependence between the six points contained in the agreement.

Delays are particularly evident in the ethnic and gender components, where only 11% and 4% respectively had been implemented up to November 2019. Commitments at the local level, such as a protocol on how to include women and Afro-Colombian communities in the programme for illicit crops, are still pending. There is also a clear lack of coordination between institutions, particularly in rural areas. In the case of reincorporation for example, progress has been made through both the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalisation (ARN) and the design and implementation of development plans with a territorial focus (Plan de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial, PDET). However, despite mostly operating in the same territories, these initiatives are not articulated.

Overall, the lack of institutional coordination, structural reforms and security and protection guarantees, has harmed the impact and progress of initiatives seeking to implement the agreement. The impact on reincorporation becomes even more evident when considering that 2019 was the most fatal year for ex-combatants since

the signing of the peace agreement. The insecurity ex-combatants face, the majority of whom now live outside the former Territorial Training and Reincorporation Areas (antiguos Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación, ETCRs), is exacerbated by the disjointed implementation of security and protection mechanisms. These are contained within points 2 (political participation) and 3 (end of the conflict) of the peace agreement. There has also been limited participation of civil society organisations in the National Commission of Security Guarantees
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Moving forward together

Studies conducted by the Kroc Institute have demonstrated that the risk of dissident groups growing stronger decreases over time when a strong implementation is in place. The same holds true when the situation reverses. Other contexts have also shown that the initial polarisation that tends to follow peace agreements often converts into increasing public support as implementation progresses. This offers hope for the Colombian case.

Colombia is significantly underutilising a powerful tool: a transformative agreement that will positively impact the livelihoods of all its citizens. Implementation is a long process and the results will not be seen for at least 15 years. Managing the expectations of citizens and supporters of the peace agreement, whilst ensuring tangible progress is made in implementing the different components, is critical for success. The government and corresponding agencies need to ensure implementation is systematic and comprehensive, as a fragmented operation by security bodies and agencies will only lead to a fragmented peace.

Above all, those implementing the peace agreement must ensure the process is not re-victimising those it should be protecting. The lack of articulation between existing systems and those organisations that have been created as part of the agreement, has led to victims often having to retell their stories to different entities, multiple times over the years. This requires them to unnecessarily re-live their pain, potentially deepening their trauma. The implementation of point 5 (focused on victims) has experienced one of the biggest advancements, in part due to the realisation of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparations and Non-Repetition. This has already led to some joint initiatives for collecting testimonies by the corresponding institutions - the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Truth Commission, and the Unit for the Search of the Disappeared. All operate independently from the government, but

still, government support is critical for victims to be effectively supported in the way they deserve.

A key message of the report is that transformative, lasting and inclusive peace requires far more than coordinated efforts between the government, civil society, international organisations and ex-combatants. We, as individuals, have the power to speak up, ask questions, and engage in dialogue, and it is co-responsibility by all at local, national and international levels that makes the idea of peace a reality.

Embrace Dialogue urges the Colombian government to implement the agreement in a coordinated and comprehensive manner that represents those voices historically silenced, such as women and ethnic minorities. We ask for institutional measures to be put in place to guarantee the safety and protection of social leaders and ex-combatants. We also call on all Colombians and friends of Colombia to engage in transformation on the road to peace.