

Evaluation of Peace, Conflict and Development (PCD) Research Support in Countries and Regions affected by Violent Conflict.

Colombia case study

Commissioned by the Peace, Conflict and Development (PCD) program - International Development Research Centre (IDRC).



Clotilde Gouley

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Channel Research is pleased to submit the Colombia case study report, presenting the findings the field visit that took place in July 2008. This report is part of the evaluation of the Peace, Conflict and Development (PCD) Research support in countries and regions affected by violent conflict, commissioned by the Peace, Conflict and Development Program of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

Please address all communications concerning this report to:

Annina Mattsson
mattsson@channelresearch.com
45 route des Marnières
1380 Lasne – Belgium
Phone: +32 633 65 29
Fax: +32 2 633 30 92

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1 Background of the evaluation/study

1.1 Contextualized need for the evaluation/study

Despite widespread research activities in conflict-affected regions of the world, there has been limited attention paid to the actual process, methods and challenges of conducting research in these contexts. There is substantial literature on research methods in general, but few address the ethical and methodological challenges of researching in societies experiencing violent conflict. Yet, researchers working in such circumstances often face difficulties connecting with the mainstream research community and do not receive adapted support, in terms of research design and ethics, required by these specific contexts.

Recognizing the non-linearity of conflict, and the complexity of conflict situations and peace dynamics, IDRC aims to proactively impact these situations through its support to applied research and policy-influence. IDRC works in partnership with institutes, universities, policymakers, civil society organizations, as well as networks of researchers. For over a decade, through its Peace, Conflict and Development Program (PCD), IDRC has supported applied research and capacity-building on peace and conflict research in Latin America and the Caribbean, in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, – often with a view to advancing global norms and learning on cross-regional analysis of peace and conflict processes.

PCD is a thematically focused research program that remains responsive to the priorities of Southern partners and also seeks to develop south-south research programs and networks. The four broad thematic areas covered by PCD are the following¹:

- Democratic Processes in Governance and Peacebuilding;
- Political Economy of Peace and Conflict;
- Security and Insecurity;
- Violence, Trauma, Justice and Reconciliation.

Over the past three decades, IDRC has supported more than 200 development research activities in Colombia². IDRC has contributed to improving Colombian research capacity in a broad range of areas, including health, agriculture, natural resources development, peace and conflict issues, and policy related to the economy, information and communication technologies. In the area of social violence and conflict, IDRC/PCD supports several local research institutes and regional and international networks that are working to improve social dialogue, peace and reparation. IDRC local partners disseminate research results and are organizing workshops with the objective of influencing policymakers.

¹ IDRC, "PCD: Our Approach to Programming", http://www.idrc.ca/peace/ev-84919-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html, consulted on the 15th of March 2009.

² IDRC, "IDRC in Colombia", http://www.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/11889350821Colombia_eng_web.pdf, consulted on the 15th of March 2009.

This evaluation/study should shed light on lessons learnt regarding the challenges of conducting research in contexts such as Colombia, and on the adaptability and responsiveness of IDRC/PCD's modalities to conflict situations.

1.2 Intended users and uses

According to IDRC's *Evaluation Guidelines*, "an evaluation user is one who has the 'willingness', 'authority', and 'ability' to put learning from the evaluation process or evaluation findings to work in some way. The primary intended users are those particular individuals or groups who are affected by the outcome of the evaluation, are in a position to make decisions about the evaluation, and intend to use the evaluation process or findings to inform their decisions or actions."³

The intended users of this evaluation are PCD program staff (primary intended users), IDRC senior management, IDRC program staff and PCD's partners (secondary users). The audience⁴ of the evaluation also include other agencies/donors working in conflict contexts.

The evaluation seeks⁵ to improve PCD (and other IDRC)'s programming approach (project and program identification and development, programming modalities, monitoring, reporting and evaluation) in contexts of active conflict where IDRC/PCD is already present. Building on lessons learnt from previous and current programming experience, it also assesses how, when, and under what conditions PCD could expand programming.

The evaluation also aims to increase PCD partners' understanding of the value, utility and reach that research might have in contexts of conflict, as well as clarifying PCD and IDRC's role, and the expectations of what PCD and IDRC can and cannot do to support partners in conflict contexts.

1.3 Objectives and evaluation/study questions

As stated in the revised Terms of Reference (ToR)⁶, the main objective of this evaluation is to identify the factors (conditions and programming modalities) that facilitate or hinder the research process for PCD-supported projects in countries and regions affected by violent conflict, and the advantages and disadvantages of PCD programming modalities in achieving PCD objectives in those conflict settings.

This evaluation is not an accountability evaluation, but should be considered as a **learning exercise**. Four specific objectives guide the evaluation which focuses on:

³ IDRC, "Identifying the Intended User(s) of an Evaluation", *Evaluation Guidelines*, p1.

⁴ "It is important to distinguish between the intended audience and the user(s) of an evaluation. An audience is a group, whether or not they are the client(s), who will or should see and may react to an evaluation. The audience is interested in the evaluation but has a more passive relationship with it than the primary intended user(s)." *Ibid*.

⁵ For more details on the intended uses of the evaluation, see ToR here attached, p 29.

⁶ The ToR have been adjusted following the methodological workshop that was held in Ottawa on the 29th and 30th of April 2008 with IDRC staff and Channel Research team.

- 1) **The Conflict Context:** Get a better understanding of what conditions (security, research infrastructure, community of researchers, etc.) need to be in place, especially when a return to violence seems imminent, so that 1) PCD can feasibly support research and 2) partners can feasibly conduct research in line with PCD's program objectives. Each case study here Colombia outlines the actual conditions the researchers are working in and sheds light on lessons learnt.
- 2) **“What Happened” - the Partners’ and PCD’s Intents and Achievements:** Build a body of learning around the contributions PCD supported research can make in influencing policy, building research capacities, and increase domestic ownership of peace processes while taking into account the prevailing environmental conditions surrounding the research process and ethical considerations.
- 3) **The “How”- Programming Modalities:** Increase learning around the strengths and weaknesses of PCD programming modalities and its relationships to its research partners in contributing to the achievement of PCD objectives in countries and regions affected by violent conflict.
- 4) **Forward Thinking:** With a better understanding of prevailing conditions, challenges and opportunities surrounding PCD supported research as well as PCD's programming modalities: explore the implications (in terms of resources, security, institutional risks, policy influence, how we partner, etc.) of potential expansion of PCD programming into countries and regions affected by violent conflict.

1.4 Values and principles guiding the evaluation/study process

This evaluation is guided by the **international recognized standards** for evaluation quality, which include impartiality, independence, credibility and usefulness⁷.

Given the complexity and high sensitivity of the conflict context, the evaluation has been conducted with a **conflict-sensitive approach**, at two different levels:

- First, attention has been paid to the *interaction between the evaluation process itself and the research process*, and/or context: e.g the possibility of visiting communities involved in the research project has always been assessed together with the researchers, trusting their judgement on the negative unintended effects it could have on the research process itself or on the visited communities and interviewed people.
- Secondly, the evaluation examines the *interaction of the research process with the context setting*, including policy influence, but also unintended negative and positive effects of the research process.

⁷ OECD DAC (1991), *DAC principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance*, Paris, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/31/12/2755284.pdf> and OECD DAC Evaluation Network, *DAC Evaluation Quality Standards* (for test phase application) (2006), <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/34/21/38686856.pdf>, consulted on the 15th of March 2009.

2 Methodology

2.1 Case study approach

According to Robert Yin (2003), “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. In other words, you would use the case study method because you deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions – believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study”⁸.

This report reflects the findings of the Colombian case study. Through a detailed contextual analysis of three IDRC/PCD funded research projects, this case study aims to understand what is achievable in contexts which are similar to the Colombian one. The selected projects are:

- **Reparation for internal displacement in Colombia (reference 102865):**
This research project was granted support in the context of a research competition on Gender justice in conflict and post-conflict societies, jointly organised in Colombia and Guatemala in 2004-2005 by PCD and the Gender Unit. Its main objective is to “*identify and analyse the different perceptions, expectations and social practices of Colombia's internally displaced on issues of reparation and their relation to the construction of public policies that are differentiated along gender, generational and ethnic lines*”⁹. The research team initially included researchers from the Universidad de San Buenaventura (Cartagena) and the Non Governmental Organization (NGO) Volver a la Gente. Due to contingencies, the partnership between the University and the NGO fell apart and only the researchers from the Universidad de San Buenaventura continued to be involved, with the support from other professors specialized in for example gender issues.

- **Forced migration of Colombians: a comparative study on fear, historical memory and public representations in Colombia, Ecuador and Canada. Phase II (ref. 104027):**
This is the second phase of a complex inter-institutional and inter-regional research project on forced migrations of Colombians. The general objective is “*to carry out a comparative study of two-types of forces migration of Colombians: internal displacement in Colombia and refugees from Colombia in Ecuador and Canada, and identify how social fears, historical memory and public representations of internally displaced people and refugees influence the reconstruction of their life projects and integration in a new social environment*”¹⁰. This research work follows a previous phase of a large and complex project developed by a network of Canadian and Latin American institutions, including the University of British Columbia (UBC), the NGO Corporación Región (based in Medellín) and the Latin American Faculty of

⁸ Yin, Robert K. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3rd ed., Applied social research methods series, vol.5, London: Sage Publications, p13.

⁹ IDRC, 2007. Project Approval Document: Funding and Appraisal - 102865; Universidad de San Buenaventura – Seccional Cartagena and Corporación Volver a la Gente, 2005. Propuesta de investigación.

¹⁰ IDRC, 2007. Project Approval Document: Funding and Appraisal – 104027.

Social Sciences (FLACSO) in Ecuador between December 2004 and December 2006. Their activities have also been well articulated to other networks such as the Colombian National Network on Forced Displacement (REDIF)¹¹

- **Engendering reintegration programs for ex-combatants in Colombia: a study of experiences between 1990 and 2003 (ref. 102072).**

While the four decade old armed conflict in Colombia has been the subject of considerable research work, the gender perspective has only recently been gaining ground. The Institute for Regional Studies (INER) of the Medellín-based Universidad de Antioquia has gathered a team of senior and young researchers to carry out this study and analyze experiences of women in reintegration in Colombia between 1990 and 2003. The general objective is *"to undertake a gender sensitive and retrospective study of reintegration processes for ex-combatants in Colombia between 1990 and 2003 with a view to formulating a series of conclusions and recommendations that might inform and help direct future reintegration policies and programs for female combatants"*.¹²

The evaluation particularly examines whether the goals and objectives of the selected projects have been or are hampered or enhanced by the context in which they are carried out. The case studies try to highlight commonalities and context-specific elements in the challenges faced by the researchers who conduct field work in conflict areas, and to what extent IDRC/PCD's modalities are adapted to these situations and provide the researchers with apt support.

2.2 Sources and data collection method

In order to prepare the field visit and to acquire background on the research projects, the consultant first gathered data through a **desk review of key documents**. These sources included IDRC/PCD's internal documents, reports, articles and papers sent by the research teams, as well as recent articles or UN agencies and NGO's reports on the Colombian conflict context.

During her field visit in Colombia from the 3rd to the 9th of July 2008, the consultant has conducted several **in-depth personal and group interviews** with the researchers involved in the three selected research projects. The consultant has met the researchers in Bogotá and Medellín, and other institutions that are well aware of the research process (but not involved) in Cartagena. The semi-structured interviews helped the consultant to gain insight on which challenges the researchers face in conflict-context such as Colombia, how the researchers perceived the research-public policy articulation in Colombia, what the research teams perceive as strengths and weaknesses of IDRC's modalities and other key issues as defined in the ToR of this study. A phone interview with the Program Officer for Latin America was also conducted.

Due to time constraints, the consultant had to focus the field visit meetings on the research team, and could not interview many external stakeholders who could have

¹¹ Red Nacional de Investigadores sobre Desplazamiento Interno Forzado.

¹² IDRC, 2007. Project Approval Document Funding and Appraisal rev 2007-12-21.

also brought interesting conclusions for instance on the use of the research findings, the risks to the informants or on the conditions of working in the regions where the research projects unfold. This has been possible on two occasions. In Medellín, the researchers from Corporación Región helped the consultant to organize a small **workshop** with victims from internal displacement that have participated in the research process. As mentioned above, the consultant also visited Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) in Cartagena which were not directly involved in the research projects, but could bring interesting insight on the working conditions in the region where the research took place, and on the possible uses of the research findings.

2.3 Validity of the evidence

In order to ensure the validity and credibility of the findings, the consultant has applied the data triangulation method, commonly used for evaluation and qualitative research in social sciences. For instance, the researchers' assertions have been compared to the Program Officers' perceptions, and when possible, they have been verified with documental review of primary or secondary sources.

2.4 Limitations

As stated in the guiding principles of IDRC's Evaluation Unit, the "*evaluation should be an asset for those being evaluated. Evaluation can impose a considerable time and resource burden on partner organizations (...)*"¹³. Whereas this evaluation does not aim to evaluate IDRC/PCD's partner organizations against results and is strictly orientated towards learning, the process required time from their staff and from the researchers. The evaluation team has taken these parameters into account when planning and conducting the field visit.

The short duration of the field visit (from the 3rd to the 9th of July 2008) has been a serious limitation to getting a deep insight on each research project. Some of the researchers were not available during this time period, and the tight time schedule did not allow the consultant to conduct long and deep individual interviews. Group interviews have sometimes been preferred, not because they were methodologically more appropriate, but because the schedule did not allow for individual interviews.

All the Research Team Leaders had received an e-mail from PCD to inform them about the study, but some of the partners mentioned that they had not been properly informed on the purposes of the consultant's visit and that it led – initially – to some confusion and even a defensive attitude from the researchers (who thought that the objective was to evaluate their research project with an accountability perspective).

Although some of the researchers first seemed reticent to participate in this study, they have all shown a high degree of interest and have been very cooperative. Although it was made clear that the study primarily addresses IDRC/PCD's staff with a view to gathering lessons learnt on their research-support modalities, the interviewed researchers expect feedback from this process, both in English and in Spanish.

¹³ IDRC, Guiding Principles of IDRC's Evaluation Unit, http://www.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/12095810441Evaluation_Unit_Guiding_Principles.pdf

3 Evaluation findings

3.1 Researching on conflict in the Colombian conflict context

3.1.1 Conflict research in Colombia: how to deal with unpredictability

As highlighted by Trish Silkin and Barbara Hendrie, "*the unique context of every internal war, and the institutional actors that converge around this context, create both the potential and the demand for particular kinds of information, especially when humanitarian programmes involving international donors are under way. De-contextualising research in war zones from the specific context in which it occurs, in order to derive general guidelines, can thus be problematic.*"¹⁴

The Colombian Constitution promulgated in 1991 generated optimism and hope for new political peace processes. Dialogue, negotiation and reinsertion processes were then initiated with various armed groups (e.g the *Movimiento 19 de Abril, M-19*, a section of the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), *el Movimiento Patria Libre*, a section of the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Indigenous Political Movement Quintín Lame). Nevertheless, hopes soon vanished and the political scenario got more and more polarized. At the same time, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) were increasing their activity. The paramilitaries (United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC)) also strengthened their activity, and established alliances with the political elites, until they declared a unilateral cease-fire in 2002 and entered into formal peace talks with Uribe's government. However, in the last few years, Colombia has seen the emergence of new armed groups such as demobilized combatants into regrouped into criminal gangs that control specific communities and illegal economic activities, holdouts who have not demobilized and the emergence of other new armed actors¹⁵. Uribe administration's based its response to this situation on its "Democratic Security" politics, which is based on the idea that only a military victory will put an end to it. It is worth mentioning that in Colombia, the official discourse claims that there is no conflict, but only terrorist or insurgent groups which generate the cycle of violence.

The civilian population has been the main victim of the Colombian conflict, and among those victims are the professors of universities, well-known researchers, social workers and human rights defenders. It is estimated that the protracted internal armed conflict in Colombia has created more than 3 million victims of forced displacement. Two of the IDRC/PCD supported-research projects referred to in this report seek to provide policymakers with evidence for better decision making in the fields of restorative justice and internal and international displacement. The third one focuses on the reintegration process of women ex-combatants.

Unpredictability is one of the major challenges that researchers face in conflict contexts, and Colombia is no exception. As we will see in the next sections, the

¹⁴ Silkin, Trish, Hendrie, Barbara, 1997. "Research in War Zones of Eritrea and Northern Ethiopia, *Disasters*, Volume 21, Number 2, Blackwell Publishing, June 1997, pp. 166-176 (11).

¹⁵ Sixth Quarterly Report of the Secretary General to the Permanent Council on the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OEA), 1 March 2006.

Colombian national political context and related changes have triggered consequences on the research process. The research team on Reparation for internal displacement in Colombia (reference 102865) had to constantly review and adjust the content of its publication to update their findings. Even at the writing stage, the researchers cannot distance themselves from the present situation and events because in a conflict-context most of these events have a political significance that cannot be ignored when publishing on the conflict. On the other hand, the researchers have to avoid falling in the "event-pitfalls"¹⁶ as described by one of the researchers, meaning that they always need to find a balance between the need to respond to a particular conjunction of events and the need to keep in line with the research trajectory.

The security conditions are highly context-specific, evolve and change rapidly. Regarding the impact the security or political conditions had on the research processes, it is difficult to draw general conclusions in Colombia or to describe general trends as they are highly volatile and depend on the local context. All research teams repeatedly adjusted their research agenda and work plan, due to local events related to the armed conflict. For instance, the research process on reparation for internal displacement (ref. 102865) was delayed by an "armed strike" (*paro armado*) organized by the FARC in March 2006. In conflict contexts, electoral periods also generate obstacles for the research process. Flexibility and adaptability vis-à-vis the research agenda (e.g postponing deadlines of reports) are necessary for uncertain times: according to the research teams, IDRC/PCD offer the research the space and time frame to adapt to these circumstances.

Despite the high level of research activity on conflict and violence in Colombia, little attention was paid to the associated methodological and ethical challenges of conducting research, and especially field and action research in this context. Some interesting initiatives can yet be mentioned. In 2003, the International Conflict Research institute (INCORE) of the University of Ulster, together with the United Nations University for Peace and the Governance Programme (Faculty of Social Sciences) of the Colombian University of the Andes organized an international workshop in Bogotá on the issues associated with researching violent societies such as Colombia¹⁷. On the other hand, the *Red Nacional de Investigadores (REDIF)* organized in August 2005 in Bogotá a thematic seminar on the ethical and methodological challenges of conducting research on forced displacement in Colombia. This event led the researchers to produce a book gathering well-documented articles on these issues¹⁸.

3.1.2 *Research and public policy agendas in Colombia*

Colombia has a long tradition of research activity in social sciences, not only through its universities, but also through NGOs (e.g Corporación Región), social organizations and research centres (e.g *Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular -CINEP*) and State agencies (e.g *Departamento Nacional de Planeación*) which have documented social and political processes and generated high quality as well as great volumes of

¹⁶ "Trampa del acontecimiento".

¹⁷ IDRC is following up the process and will provide funding for INCORE to undertake an initial exploration of the state-of-the art of the challenges and opportunities for improving the evaluation of research in violently divided societies (interview with IDRC staff).

¹⁸ Bello A., Martha Nubia, 2006. *Investigación y desplazamiento forzado*, REDIF, Bogotá: Colciencias, 232 p.

knowledge. As mentioned earlier, many social workers, researchers and professors have been victims of the conflict.

Institutional and public policy agendas also need to be taken into consideration when designing research. Whereas those agenda can induce a positive effect in drawing attention (and thus resources) to key issues analysed in the research, their evolution may also have negative secondary effects on the research process. For instance, when internal displacement started to increasingly draw attention, some areas or communities became a focus of attention and have been "*over-visited*". Due to the "fatigue" of the research subjects, repeatedly interviewed by several institutions, the researchers had to adjust and make changes to the activities they had planned to carry out.

Another example is the impact that the Justice and Peace Law (Law 975, 2005)¹⁹ had on the research process on restorative justice. The Justice and Peace Law (*Ley de Justicia y Paz*) is a controversial law, approved in 2005, that governs the demobilization process of illegal armed groups in Colombia. Critics warned that the Uribe administration's "*transitional justice framework*"²⁰ was focusing on disbanding the paramilitaries' military structure, without tackling the issue of their political and economic influence in Colombian society and their links to organized crime. It provoked strong reactions and opposition from international human rights organizations that in addition considered the law to be inadequate in protecting and respecting the rights of the victims of human rights abuses. Given this context, a political act followed by a high level of social mobilization, researching these issues, including reparations for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), became extremely complicated and politically sensitive²¹.

3.1.3 How to "*permeate filters*": necessary institutional networks

All interviewed researchers agree that due to the multiplicity of actors, the density of local organisations involved, the high level of mistrust and the existing "*filters*"²² to getting access to local communities, anyone who intends to conduct field research in conflict areas in Colombia needs to call on **mediation** or **intermediaries**. Hence the linkages of the researchers and partner organisations to regional networks and root organisations, and their ability to mobilise these resources are fundamental. **Building trust** with local actors is a time consuming process that requires a lot of sustained efforts, political sensitiveness and a thorough understanding of the local context. The researchers of the project on internal displacement (project 102865) explained that it took them three years to establish a reasonable level of trust with local actors.

Transparency on the objectives of the research and the funding sources is another key issue when getting involved in a conflict area. As an example of best practice, before entering in Choco and Soacha (project reference 102865), the researchers had produced a booklet to explain the objectives of the research, the process and which institutions or donors financed the research. The Canadian funding, if not an asset, is at least perceived by local actors as a neutral element (in opposite to other donors'

¹⁹ http://www.cdh.uchile.cl/anuario04/6-Perspectivas_regionales/Ley1_975.pdf

²⁰ International Crisis Group, 2007. *Colombia's New Armed Groups*. Latin America Report n°20.

²¹ See in this report the section on Ethical challenges of researching in conflict areas in Colombia, p 16.

²² Interview with researchers of the project on restorative justice (reference 102865).

support perceived as politically biased, such as the United States which have been and are criticized for their support to the Colombian government and the implementation of the Plan Colombia).

Establishing **alliances** with local actors is a key process to generating trust and getting access to the remote research areas and informants. The research team on reparation for internal displacement stressed the role of the Church, and that being affiliated to the catholic university of Cartagena constituted an advantage²³. Indeed, the Church in those areas benefits from a legitimate status, is well respected by local actors and armed groups, and is an influent actor who can facilitate access to informants and local networks. Building alliances with representative from the Catholic Church was thus one of the strategic options that the research team chose in order to gain not only access to those research areas but also **legitimacy** and **capacity of influence**²⁴.

Being part of a well-known and recognized institution such as Corporación Región in Medellín and the surrounding area has also often made easier the confidence building exercise between the researchers and their hosts, local informants and research subjects. Corporación Región has produced several papers on the issues related to their research work on forced displacement and the ethical and methodological implications of doing it from an NGO²⁵. They refer for example to the difficulties of maintaining distance with the research subjects, who are mainly men and women who have suffered human rights violations and the consequences of the conflict. They underline the necessary feedback to the communities who participate in the research process.

3.1.4 Reliability of official data in Colombia

In a conflict context such as Colombia, propaganda and distortion of information is a common fact. Therefore the reliability and validity of data constantly needs to be questioned and assessed. In Colombia, the official statistics over the past few years have been subject to strong criticism. For instance, Colombia's National Bureau of Statistics (DANE)'s independence and the quality of its statistics have been put into question. Two directors of DANE have resigned reporting instances of inappropriate pressure from the part of the government. IDPs statistics in Colombia are also very controversial, official sources being criticized for underestimating the figures and being exclusive of some groups of the population who were displaced because of the conflict.

²³ Interview with researchers of the project on restorative justice (reference 102865).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Bello A., Martha Nubia, 2006. *Investigación y desplazamiento forzado*, REDIF, Bogotá: Colciencias, 232 p.

3.2 On "What Happened" – The Partners and PCD's Intents and Achievements

The following sections identify and analyze specific methodological and ethical issues confronting researchers doing field work in the violent context of Colombia, where the subjects of the research are directly affected by the conflict and its consequences (e.g. Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), forced migrants and women ex-combatants).

3.2.1 *Adapting the methodology to the conflict context*

a) The theory of change in the research projects

None of the research proposal presents an explicit theory of change, clearly described and articulated around supported assumptions – neither is it a requirement from IDRC/PCD for proposal writing which nonetheless stresses the importance of policy influence. Nevertheless, fragmented and implicit elements of theory of change can generally be found in each proposal, such as the expected positive results that the research and its products are expected to generate. As required in IDRC guidelines for writing a project proposal²⁶, each proposal presents a section on "results and dissemination". Expected results and impacts described in this section are generally not explicitly articulated and linked to key assumptions that would explain the change process²⁷. They commonly reflect expected **outputs** –here defined as the products which results from the completion of the research process, e.g publication–rather than **outcomes** –intended short-term and medium-term effects of the outputs. Due to time constraint and to the restrictions of the ToR, this study does not aim to assess the theory of change of the projects (which could be done in an evaluation of the research project). Yet some elements can be highlighted.

The theories of change centre around different levels of analysis, whether changes efforts focus primarily on individuals, groups or social structures. In conflict context, these different levels interact and have complex linkages. The proposal of the project on reparation for internal displacement in Colombia (ref. 102865) explains the chain of expected changes that the research process might generate at all three levels, and also identifies some interactions between each level (individual, group and structure). The project is based on the assumption that building knowledge on restorative justice and victims rights will contribute to raise displaced persons' consciousness on the political value of their social representation regarding the reparations. This should then enhance their ability to communicate and articulate their demands, generating a collective process.

Innovative knowledge on rights and reparations should also enable a shift in attitudes and perceptions from the local, regional and national public institutions, which often lack information to take appropriate decisions on the issues of reparations for displaced persons. Policy influence based on research findings was thus a strong component of this research framework (ref. 102865). In terms of achievements, the research project has contributed to create new spaces for thinking and exchanges among scholars, social leaders, civil society organizations, cooperation agencies, international organizations and public officials who could influence the design of

²⁶ IDRC, Guidelines for Writing a Project Proposal, http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-57070-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html#appendices

²⁷ See the discussion on the challenges of building a theory of change for research process in complex conflict settings, in the section "3.4 Forward Thinking" of the present report, p 22.

public policies more compliant with the results of academic research. It has especially generated opportunities for national actors to participate in regional events, participating in decentralizing knowledge and fostering dialogue between national and regional actors. Through articles, publications and seminars, it has sensitized local, regional, national and international actors to a new approach and critical issues about restorative justice and reparations in Colombia²⁸. The research findings have been disseminated through a large network of key actors, including the National Commission of Reparation and Reconciliation, international NGOs and agencies of the United Nations such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Opening spaces for discussion, creating dialogue and consequently favouring conditions for peace processes is also the challenge taken up by the project on engendering reintegration programs for ex-combatants in Colombia (ref. 102072). Such initiatives, of bringing women who have fought in opposite armed groups in a same place in order to discuss and share their experiences, are part of the peacebuilding process that the civil society hopes for. Most of the researchers stressed the fact that policy influence should not only restrictively be considered from a top-down approach but also from a bottom-up approach, including the influence on the communities or research subject themselves (individual and collective levels).

The implicit theory of change in the third project on forced migration in Ecuador, Colombia and Canada is implicitly link to the specific institutional context where it takes place, the NGO Corporación Región. The researchers' concept of changes generated by the research process also appears at both the public space (State and civil society) and community/individual levels. Their theory of change is clearly linked to the role the NGO has taken in the region regarding the dynamics of violence in urban settings, "shared knowledge" being a key word. The researchers, through their specific institutional background and the legitimacy they gained on the topics they analyze in their research, participate in several public debates and dialogue spaces (such as the Comité Local de Atención a la Población Desplazada) at the local and regional levels; this allow them to have an impact on public policy. For instance, through their research findings, they contributed to negotiate a municipal agreement that guarantee some protection and practical measures for the forced displaced population in Medellín. They also participated in the design of the Development Plan of Medellín, doing advocacy work to defend the rights of the displaced population. In Ecuador and Canada, the research also had some significant impact both with the civil society and public institutions (e.g Canadian Council for refugees and the Canadian Ministry of Migration).

Including the theory of change into the project proposals would facilitate the common understanding (between IDRC and the research teams) of the objectives of the research process and its possible capacity to influence policy and contribute to peace building (e.g through knowledge generation and the promotion of a culture for peace). It would also help to set out the assumptions and hypothesis of the research project. Considering the complexity of the conflict contexts, building the theory of change would strengthen the relevance of the research project, as it would outline clearly the expected outputs (and outcomes, if one uses the evaluation vocabulary).

²⁸ Interview with researchers of the project on restorative justice (reference 102865).

b) Tailor-made data collection method in conflict context

The conflict context characteristics in Colombia have implications for the design and operation of data collection methods. The researchers need to go beyond the traditional data collection methods in social sciences and to develop creative and appropriate tools for socially and politically sensitive contexts characterized by a high degree of insecurity and uncertainty. The research team on restorative justice (ref. 102865) stressed the need to adapt to local situations and the need for flexibility in the data collection protocol, depending among other factors on the degree of responsiveness and openness from local governmental actors to the research needs. For example, the team faced some difficulties in the region of Santa Marta, where local State actors were not interested in the research, and thus not keen to participate in the research process. The paramilitary presence and its link to the local political authorities represent a serious challenge for the research project and a severe limitation for its capacity to influence policy.

Field work methods needed to be constantly adjusted, each field visit benefiting from the feedback from the previous visits, and constituting lessons learnt for the following field visits.

The *talleres de memoria* (memory workshops) organized in the project on forced migration of Colombians (ref. 104027) form an example responding to the ethical and methodological challenges of researching in the context of fear and violence. They emphasize the need to combine the academic requirements with the local reality. Those workshops use adapted techniques meant to help the participants to share their individual and collective memories. In a context where the victims have been silent for years, such methodology is particularly relevant and shows a high degree of conflict-sensitivity.

The team composition is another important aspect which is essential to consider in the methodological design phase. Some researchers might indeed not be able to conduct some interviews (due to their political engagement, link to a specific area or gender identity for example) in specific circumstances.

c) Risks and coping strategies

▪ *Risks to the researchers*

Researchers in sensitive conflict areas face personal risks. The research team on reparation for internal displacement (ref. 102865) had to deal with the issue of security threats to one of the research team members, a university professor well-known for her work on social consequences of violence in Colombia. The professor, who received kidnapping threats, had been forced to leave the country and live in exile for a year (in 2007). She received support from a human rights organisation which helps victims of the conflict. The research team decided to keep a low profile and did not require IDRC/PCD's support. They later informed the Program Officer and recognize that IDRC/PCD showed a high level of understanding and solidarity. These kinds of threats to well-known professors or researchers are common in Colombia, especially towards committed action researchers who develop their work on, around, and in the conflict.

As part of preventive measures, the research team which experienced this situation advises to strengthen communication and dialogue efforts with the local communities and actors. Calling for mediation of legitimate actors in the conflict area where the researchers intend to work is another one. Those actors can advise the researchers on

when to go or when not to go to identified research areas. As one of the researchers put it, "*the context talks by itself and decides of what to do. The reality of the local situation imposes the conditions.*" The researchers on engendering reintegration programs for women ex-combatants (ref. 102072) was at risk when visiting displaced communities in the conflictive area of Bucaramanga, and agree that the best protection they could get comes from the communities themselves²⁹. The research process in conflict areas thus need to allocate enough time to the preparation phase in order to establish the necessary linkages with local actors and ensure their security.

▪ *Risks to the informants*

The anonymity of informants, "fully informed consent" from the informants and the confidentiality of data gathered are rules of thumb when researching on conflict and in the Colombian conflict-context. In the research on the reintegration of women ex-combatants, the risk that the information could be used to identify women ex-combatants was real and the team took all the necessary preventive measures (such as techniques to hide the informants' face in the videos). Anonymity is sometimes difficult to preserve as the informants themselves express the need to be recognized, give names and name places so that their testimony can be used to reconstitute the historical memory of human rights violations.

In general, interviewed researchers comment that they never heard of threats against their informants for participating in the research process. One case has been mentioned, in the project on gender perspective for the reintegration process (reference 102072), when the informants, a few years after having participated in the research process, received threats and faced security issues³⁰. The risks faced by the informants do indeed continue much longer after the research process has ended, which also raise the issue of the protection and storage of data.

3.2.2 Ethical challenges of researching in conflict areas in Colombia: political significance and unintended consequences

Researchers working in conflict zones are or might be confronted to several ethical challenges that need to be taken into consideration by the researchers, IDRC/PCD and its partners at all the research phases: when designing the research, when assessing the research proposals, when following-up the research process and when disseminating the findings of the research.

As demonstrated by the implications of the Peace and Justice Law on the research project on internal displacement (ref. 102865), conducting research in conflict area has a political significance. The researchers highlighted the fact that they themselves are involved in the conflict dynamics and that the line between the researcher and its research subjects often blurs: "*We had to take a position on the Peace and Justice Law*"³¹. In a context such as Colombia, highly polarized, there is no such thing as

²⁹ Interview with the researchers from the project reference 102072.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ The researchers consider that this law is not conducive to social peace in Colombia because it does not address the issue of demobilization in its whole dimension and it consolidates the "exception regime" in Colombia (referring to the amnesty process). Interview with researchers of the project on restorative justice (reference 102865).

neutrality of the researchers: they cannot ignore their emotional, political and cultural sensitivity.

Concepts and vocabulary have a political significance in conflict context. We will further see in this report the implication of using the terminology "*internal armed conflict*", hence considering the State as an actor of the conflict, and not restricting the research to "*the violence generated by illegal armed groups*" (and thus getting in line with the Colombian Government's denial of an internal armed conflict in Colombia).

It is crucial that the researcher is aware not only of the political context within which the research project unfolds, but also of the effects (intended and unintended) of his research findings and positions, especially in highly polarized context such as the Colombian one. Some academics talk about the "*pitfall of neutrality or impartiality of the researcher*". For example, as previously highlighted in this report, alliance building in the Colombian scenario requires a high level of political sensitivity and sound judgment. Building alliances for research purpose might be perceived as a political act, or as a position in favour of this or that group³². Some groups do consider themselves as the only representative of the victims and deny the other groups' legitimacy. These political divisions have an impact on the research process, as the researchers must pay very careful attention to the groups they include or exclude from their references. This might be seen as political act.

In the section on risks, we have also mentioned the risks to the informants and the coping strategies used by the researchers to protect the personal security of the participants to the research process and to prevent retaliation. The risk of generating false expectations is another ethical and methodological challenge that the researchers from the three projects in Colombia had had to deal with. The researchers from these projects are very experienced and very knowledgeable of the context they work in: no issue or event has thus been reported regarding these risks in the course of the research processes. Bringing feedback to the communities is one of the coping strategies that has been used by the researchers (all projects) and can be considered as a necessary ethical practice.

3.2.3 *Capacity-building*

As previously asserted, the researchers from the three Colombian projects are well-known senior researchers with a long trajectory in academic work in Colombia on conflict related issues or social sciences in general. In that sense, IDRC/PCD's capacity-building with these researchers was limited because most of them were already high level academics. They all recognized the need to involve younger researchers in order, among other reasons, to guarantee the sustainability of the research. In Colombia, there is an important gap between Bogotá and the other regions' opportunities for access to knowledge. Promoting capacity-building of researchers from universities or institutions outside Bogotá has thus been perceived as a very positive element of IDRC/PCD's partnership strategy. Especially in conflict context such as Colombia where some areas are kept isolated, these efforts to build partnership with "decentralized" institutions is very important as it offers young researchers the opportunity to get involved in high level academic work.

³² The researchers gave the consultant concrete examples but asked not to be quoted or specifically referred to.

3.3 On the "How" – Programming Modalities

3.3.1 Assessing institutional partnership

In Colombia, IDRC/PCD's partnership with NGOs has resulted in two opposite situations: in a problematic relationship that resulted in the end of the partnership (with *Volver a la Gente*) and in a successful experience (with *Corporación Región*). Although it is difficult to draw general conclusions from only two different experiences, a series of lessons can be identified.

In 2005, the University of San Buenaventura (Cartagena) established a partnership with the NGO *Volver a la Gente* in order to submit a research proposal to IDRC/PCD on reparation for internal displacement in Colombia. A few months after the beginning of the research process, the lead researcher noticed that the NGO was not fulfilling its obligations in accordance with the research time schedule and administrative requirements. Hence both the University of San Buenaventura and IDRC/PCD began to investigate why the NGO was not fulfilling its commitments, and based on their findings, concluded that it was necessary to put an end to the partnership. It was a delicate process that has had an effect on the research process itself: the research team had to replace the three initial researchers from the NGO, and to a certain extent had to redesign some parts of the research methodology. The lead researcher insisted on the fact that during this process the research and academic imperatives have always prevailed over the administrative imperative, meaning that IDRC/PCD put efforts to preserve the research team from potential negative effects of these institutional issues. No generalisation can be done from this unfortunate experience, but it shows the importance of a scrupulous initial institutional assessment (with field visit to the potential partners, when possible), and not only from an administrative perspective.

On the other hand, the experience with the NGO *Corporación Región* has been much more fruitful. *Corporación Región* has engaged in thinking about the ethical challenges and social and political implications of conducting research in Colombia from the institutional framework of the NGOs³³. As stated by a Luz Amparo Sánchez Medina in her article on the ethics of research in an NGO, "*being a researcher of a Non Governmental Organization defines a very particular way of working and has direct consequences on the relationships between research, ethics and politics*"³⁴. The ethics of research in an NGO such as *Corporación Región* thus appears on two levels.

On the one hand, it is implicitly but strongly linked to the ethics of action of the NGO with the local communities where they implement their programs and projects. Indeed social research is fully part of the institutional strategy of *Corporación Región*, as an element of its interventions which aim to strengthen local capacity and citizenship rights in Medellín. One of the objectives of the NGO is to generate knowledge and "*to contribute to a greater understanding of urban and regional issues in relation to the internal armed conflict, the process of citizenship and the evaluation of social policy*"³⁵. The research process on forced migration thus benefited from the solid

³³ Luz Amparo Sánchez Medina, "Reflexiones sobre ética en investigación social desde una organización no gubernamental" en Bello A., Martha Nubia, 2006. *Investigación y desplazamiento forzado*, REDIF, Bogotá: Colciencias, pp 125-142.

³⁴ Ibid, p 128 [consultant's translation]: "*Es decir, ser investigadores de una Organización No Gubernamental define de manera particular nuestro qué hacer y tiene implicaciones directas en la relación investigación, ética y política*".

³⁵ *Corporación Región*, Plan Trienal de *Corporación Región* (2004-2006).

experience of the NGO in these fields and was easily (implicitly) linked to "engaged research" and policy influence. The objective of the research to capture the perceptions of social actors in context and to building trust with them, as a result of shared knowledge, was thus fully coherent with the institutional vision of action-research and intervention area at large. Nevertheless this institutional context also has some counterparts: its political and social engagement in a conflict context can also increase the risks, as both the NGO and the research's objectives might be perceived by powerful local armed actors as opposite to their own interests.

On the other hand, the ethics of research on forced migration had to be defined explicitly in the very specific context of the research process. The team dedicated time to thinking of the meanings and implications of the necessary collective "informed consent" they would need from the participants to the research process. They organized "community consultation processes" in order to invite their research subjects to participate in the research, both on a collective and individual manner. More than just a formal process to guarantee the right to (non) participation to the research and the way to participate, it became a real confidence-building exercise. The team was well aware that this "informed consent" needed to be constantly revised and ensured that the participants' right to "change their mind" was always guaranteed.

In violent and conflict contexts where the participants take risks in order to provide the researchers with sensitive information, feedback is extremely important. This was part of the initial design of the research methodology (project on forced migration). In the workshop organized in Medellín with participants of the research, they stressed that the research process had allowed them "to talk and to express their perceptions and fears" in a context where silence usually rules. The research team explained that they have been invited to present the results of their findings in many more events than what they had foreseen, demonstrating that there is a great interest in their research.

Most universities, and not only in Colombia, tend to be characterized by a high degree of administrative complexity which generates additional challenges for the partnership with IDRC/PCD. Very often, establishing the partnership with these universities is a time-consuming process. In that sense, the contractual issues with NGOs are much easier to implement, the chain of interlocutors kept more limited and the communication lines more direct and fluid. On the other hand, partnerships with universities are desirable because of the high quality level of their researchers and the solid reputation that some of these universities have gained for decades. As previously mentioned, in spite of the administrative difficulties it implies, in Colombia the institutional partnership with universities outside of Bogotá was very positive. Considering partnership with decentralized institutions is especially important in conflict countries where isolated areas might encounter difficulties to get access to quality knowledge and funding for research.

3.3.2 Strengths and weaknesses of IDRC/PCD assessed by the research teams

a) Flexibility: a common qualification across the interviews

All the interviewed researchers pointed out that one of the main qualities of IDRC/PCD is its flexibility. "Flexibility" has different meanings, depending on the researchers' experiences and expectations. On the one hand, flexibility refers to IDRC/PCD staff's understanding of the difficult conditions the researchers work in Colombia, and its ability to adapt to unpredictable circumstances. IDRC/PCD is

flexible for instance in that it allows research teams to adjust their research schedule, deadlines and even regarding the subject itself of the research when necessary. For instance, it gave the researchers of the project on engendering reintegration program (ref. 102072) the opportunity to re-orientate the initial subject on women combatants to women *ex*-combatants when the team faced difficulties in finding women combatants willing to talk about their experience.

On the other hand, flexibility relates to IDRC/PCD's openness to ambitious research proposals, in terms of contents and institutional settings for the partnership. Interviewed researchers on repeated occasions compared IDRC with other funding agencies where a more orthodox approach of research and research support mechanisms prevails. In contrast, IDRC offers the researchers an opportunity to present audacious and original proposals: e.g. alliance between the NGO and the University of San Buenaventura (institutional originality); comparative study on forced migration in Colombia, Ecuador and Canada (ambitious research scope); or research on *ex*-combatant women (audacious because of the sensitivity of the issue in the midst of the internal Colombian conflict).

The research team on engendering the reintegration program for *ex*-combatants much appreciated the openness of IDRC/PCD, compared again to other institutions, on such sensitive issues as the characterization itself of the situation in Colombia. In Colombia, the terminology around the conflict is very politically charged. It was important for the team to focus the study on the "*internal armed conflict*", hence considering the State as an actor of the conflict, and not restrict it to "*the violence generated by illegal armed groups*" (and thus getting in line with the Colombian Government's denial of an internal armed conflict in Colombia, only referring to the brutality of the FARC "*terrorists*").

b) Administrative workload

Although there are no administrative issues specifically related to the projects implemented in conflict contexts and that the following comments might apply to IDRC in general, it might be useful for IDRC/PCD to take them into consideration for the projects they support in contexts such as Colombia.

In the first place, it is important to take into consideration that, due to time constraints and/or their unavailability, the consultant could not meet all the persons in charge of the administrative issues in the different IDRC/PCD's partner institutions in Colombia (especially at the universities). Feedback on these reported issues mainly come from the lead researchers who also often have to deal with the administrative aspect of the partnership, as main point of contact between IDRC/PCD and the research team.

According to its Colombian partners, IDRC/PCD's flexibility is sometimes balanced by its "*formalism*" or "*administrative rigor*"³⁶. All the lead researchers mentioned that preparing the technical and financial reports required by IDRC/PCD is a time-consuming process. They also put forward that local partners often lack the capacity and resources to deal with IDRC/PCD's administrative duties, and that it has been complicated for some of the local partners to respond to IDRC/PCD's administrative or financial procedures. It has been suggested that IDRC/PCD introduce, before the actual research process starts, an induction training for the administrative staff of the different local partners, so that they can manage more effectively the corresponding

³⁶ This was mentioned in the interviews with the researchers from all the projects.

tasks. Such training has been organized by IDRC/PCD in Uruguay in order to strengthen the administrative capacity of local partners (university and NGOs from Honduras) and yielded positive results³⁷.

c) Research support and level of feedback on research process and results

Researchers in Colombia all agree that it is important for them to benefit from an academic accompaniment by IDRC/PCD's Program Officers. They expect the Program Officer to provide them with methodological and conceptual support and to take advantage from his or her "outsider's view" on the research findings. In some cases, the researchers emphasized the high level of academic support they received, in the proposal writing phase and also in the research process. But on the other hand, some researchers also expressed their disappointment regarding the lack of feedback on the reports they regularly send to IDRC/PCD.

Most of the interviewed partners and researchers have the impression that the level and modalities of IDRC/PCD's follow-up process depend on the personality and professional background of the Program Officer in charge. Researchers have sometimes felt that a change in Program Officer also implies a new type of partnership, and consequently different requirements and expectations (e.g more/less administrative workload or better/less academic support).

d) A strong demand to generate more linkages between IDRC/PCD supported research projects

One of the commonalities in the interviews is the strong demand for IDRC/PCD to generate more opportunities for the research teams to interact. Some researchers have suggested that IDRC/PCD generate a researchers' network or an "interactive or collaborative learning platform" where the researchers could gather and share information, knowledge, research activities and findings. The researchers expressed the need for greater collaboration between research projects in the same area and at the national level, but also between research programs (for example with Globalization, Growth and Poverty program or Women's Rights and Citizenship program) and between projects conducted in different countries and continents. Some researchers felt that the lack of exchange between projects is also related to the fact that IDRC/PCD focuses more on the results of the research than on the research process itself. Interregional workshops have been organized or are foreseen by IDRC/PCD in other continents (e.g in Cairo, Egypt or in India), but it has not yet occurred in Latin America.

The language issue has been mentioned in several occasions in the interviews. Latin American researchers do not all speak English and thus feel limited in their access to knowledge. They recognize the facilities provided by IDRC/PCD in terms of access to the virtual library, but regret that there is not more information available in Spanish: "*We often feel excluded from the academic debates that are mostly taking place in English*"³⁸.

³⁷ Phone interview with Markus Gottsbacher, IDRC, Program Officer Latin America, 12/08/08.

³⁸ All project Officers for Latin America are fluent in Spanish, and this comment does not relate to the communication lines between them and the researchers. It rather show the lack of documentation available in Spanish in the virtual library (in response to IDRC/PCD staff comment on the first version of the report).

e) IDRC's institutional identity, such as perceived by the research teams in Colombia

The researchers do not always have a clear idea on the linkages between IDRC and the Canadian government or its diplomatic representation. Some do expect from a Canadian institute to bring them support in terms of consular services (e.g. for visas) and others expect a greater support in terms of political commitment in line with the Canadian foreign policy's position on issues such as the demobilization process. They also expect to benefit from the mobilization capacity of such an international research centre, for example to help the researchers convince key stakeholders to participate in the research process or participate in the events organized by the research team.

3.4 Forward Thinking

Colombia is often referred to as a complex conflict setting in which the humanitarian crisis requires a very specific response. What characterizes Colombia is its immense social and institutional capacity, which paradoxically creates the need for greater caution for those who gets involved in issues related to the armed conflict.

What does policy influence mean for IDRC/PCD? This question has been raised by the researchers from all three IDRC/PCD supported-projects in Colombia. The researchers expressed their concerns regarding the difference of what "policy influence" means to IDRC/PCD and to them. Their perception is that IDRC/PCD has a restricted definition of policy influence, meaning that the research process need to feed decisions at the State level, whereas in their understanding, policy influence encompasses a much broader area and potential targets. For example, the researchers on engendering reintegration programs mentioned that the achievement in terms of "being influential" could not be assessed in the State sphere but rather at the level of women groups. They stressed the fact that they have a limited access to powerful actors who participate in the decision-making process, and that it is the objective of the research process. This differs from one project to another, as the project on restorative justice was more engaged with State actors.

Recognizing that there was no common position on the notion of policy influence, IDRC conducted in 2005 a strategic evaluation in order to find a common language, to discover what is meant by "policy influence", what are the key factors in the research-to-policy process, and in what contexts IDRC/PCD-supported research has had such influence³⁹. Researchers from the projects in Colombia did not seem to be aware of IDRC's internal debates on policy-influence nor on its position on a common definition and its implication for the research process.

³⁹ IDRC, 2005. "Influence of IDRC-supported research on policy process", *Evaluation highlight*.

4 Annexes

Annex 1. List of Acronyms

AUC	United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia / <i>Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia</i>
CINEP	Research and Public Education Center / <i>Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular</i>
DANE	Colombia's National Bureau of Statistics / <i>Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística</i>
DDR	Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration
ELN	National Liberation Army / <i>Ejército de Liberación Nacional</i>
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia / <i>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia</i>
FLACSO	Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences / <i>Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales</i>
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IESCO	Institute for Contemporary Social Study / Instituto de Estudios Sociales Contemporáneos - Universidad Central de Bogotá
INCORE	International Conflict Research institute (University of Ulster)
INER	Institute for Regional Studies of the Medellín-based Universidad de Antioquia / <i>Instituto de Estudios Regionales</i>
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PCD	Peace, Conflict and Development Program
REDIF	National Researchers Network on Forced Internal Displacement / <i>Red Nacional de Investigadores sobre Desplazamiento Interno Forzado</i>
ToR	Terms of Reference
UBC	University of British Columbia
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Annex 2. List of people interviewed

Date and place of interview	Name	Position	Research Project (if relevant)	Institution
04/07/08, IESCO, Bogotá	Sandro Jimenez	Researcher	Reparation for internal displacement in Colombia (102865)	Universidad de San Buenaventura, Cartagena IESCO
04/07/08, IESCO, Bogotá	Martha Nubia Bello	Researcher	Reparation for internal displacement in Colombia (102865)	Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá
04/07/08, Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá	Donny Meertens	Researcher Gender specialist	Reparation for internal displacement in Colombia (102865)	Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá
05/07/08, Bogotá	Patricia Ramirez	Researcher	Engendering reintegration program for ex-combatants in Colombia (102072)	Universidad de Antioquia
05/07/08, Bogotá	Luisa Dietrich	Comparative Politics specialist	Engendering reintegration program for ex-combatants in Colombia (102072)	Universidad de Antioquia
05/07/08, Bogotá	Adriana Ruiz	Research assistant	Engendering reintegration program for ex-combatants in Colombia (102072)	Universidad de Antioquia
05/07/08, Bogotá	Ana Cristina Monroy	Researcher (communication audiovisual)	Engendering reintegration program for ex-combatants in Colombia (102072)	Universidad de Antioquia
05/07/08, Bogotá	Luz Piedad Caicedo	Part-time researcher Anthropologist	Engendering reintegration program for ex-combatants in Colombia (102072)	Universidad de Antioquia
05/07/08, Bogotá	David Enrique Valencia	Researcher (lawyer)	Engendering reintegration program for ex-combatants in Colombia (102072)	Universidad de Antioquia

Date and place of interview	Name	Position	Research Project (if relevant)	Institution
05/07/08, Bogotá	David Enrique Valencia	Researcher (lawyer)	Engendering reintegration program for ex-combatants in Colombia (102072)	Universidad de Antioquia
05/07/08, Bogotá	María Eugenia Vásquez	Researcher	Engendering reintegration program for ex-combatants in Colombia (102072)	Fundación Mujer y Futuro
07/07/08, Corporación Región, Medellín	Martá Inés Villa Martínez	Researcher	Forced migration of Colombians: a comparative study on fear, historical memory and public representations in Colombia, Ecuador and Canada. Phase II (ref. 104027)	Corporación Región
07/07/08, Corporación Región, Medellín	Pilar Riaño Alcalzá	Researcher	Forced migration of Colombians: a comparative study on fear, historical memory and public representations in Colombia, Ecuador and Canada. Phase II (ref. 104027)	Corporación Región
12/08/08 Phone interview	Markus Gottsbacher	Program Officer – PCD – Latin America		IDRC
10/03/09, Phone interview	Colleen Duggan	Senior Program Specialist, Evaluation Unit Ex-program officer – PCD – Latin America		IDRC
12/03/09, Phone interview	Alberto Florez-Mallagon	Ex-program officer – PCD – Latin America		University of Ottawa
Interviewed people who have participated in the research process (informants, subjects of the research, contacts who helped the research team to get access to some area, NGO which also work in the same regions, etc)				

Date and place of interview	Name	Position	Research Project (if relevant)	Institution
07/07/08, Corporación Región, Medellín	Workshop with victims from forced displacements, who have participated as "research subjects" in the research on forced migration (Corporación Región).			
08/07/08, Fondation Terre des hommes, Cartagena	Véronique Henry	Delegate	Fondation Terre des hommes has not been directly associated with the research project on engendering reintegration program for ex-combatants in Colombia, but has worked for many years in the same area and is well aware of the challenges of working in this region.	Fondation Terre des hommes - Cartagena
08/07/08, Plan International, Cartagena	Shirley Navarro Pérez	Regional Program manager	Working in the same areas as the project on engendering reintegration program for ex-combatants in Colombia.	Plan International
08/07/08, Plan International, Cartagena	Eliana M. Restrepo Chebair	National Program manager	Working in the same areas as the project on engendering reintegration program for ex-combatants in Colombia.	Plan International

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4.2 Annex 4. Terms of Reference

Evaluation of Peace, Conflict and Development (PCD) Research Support in Countries and Regions affected by Violent Conflict

REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE (April 2008)⁴⁰

1. Background:

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC)'s Peace, Conflict and Development (PCD) program initiative has a long history of involvement in countries experiencing active violent conflict or war-to-peace transitions, including Guatemala, Colombia, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Kashmir, Sudan, Uganda, and South Africa. In many cases, PCD initiated programming during a time of war-to-peace transition, but the violent conflict did not always cease. In fact, PCD's name change from "Peacebuilding and Reconstruction" in 2005 is a recognition that "the peace-to-conflict is not linear, and frequently sees recidivism to violence and uneasy, unstable and partial peace". Currently, PCD is "programming in select contexts marked by armed violence (Palestine, Colombia), and will carefully consider engagement in additional such contexts"⁴¹.

With this in mind, PCD wants to learn more on how PCD-supported research can be effectively conducted, managed and communicated in environments in which the effects of violent conflict have a significant impact upon the research process. This evaluation was first outlined in the 2005-2011 Prospectus. Also, the 2003 external review for the program initiative, then called Peacebuilding and Reconstruction (PBR), noted: "While the review found no research ethics problems in any of the projects reviewed, there is a need for PBR to develop guidelines, procedures, or "lessons-learned" addressing the particular ethical challenges of research programming in conflict-prone areas."⁴² This evaluation will address some of those ethical challenges as well.

This evaluation also reflects IDRC Centre-wide programming and policy. In recent years, IDRC has become increasingly concerned about reflecting on the complexities of supporting researchers and their research institutions in politically difficult environments, including contexts where there is unstable peace or risks of recidivism to political violence. In 2005, the Centre examined its involvement in countries in transition⁴³. The transition study invited Centre staff to assess the prospects for change in transition contexts and to consider "the wider political, research and institutional environments [...and] to think strategically on how changing contexts may impact programming and require responsiveness and flexibility"⁴⁴. This concern is, in part, a reflection of the Canadian Foreign Policy community's increasing humanitarian, military and development assistance in conflict contexts and "fragile states".

This calls for more careful reflection on the conditions in which the diverse types of research support typically provided by IDRC is appropriate and viable, as well as determine how, when, and under what conditions PCD's programming can extend to

⁴⁰ The ToR have been adjusted following the methodological workshop that was held in Ottawa on the 29th and 30th of April 2008 with IDRC staff and Channel Research team.

⁴¹ PCD Prospectus 2005-2011, p. 17.

⁴² Brynen, Fox-Decent, and Brown, 2004

⁴³ Smyth, Nancy and Maggie Gorman (2005). Corporate Assessment Framework: Strategic Intelligence Performance Area "Understanding Local Realities in Countries in Transition", Policy and Planning Group, IDRC.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 35

additional countries where conflict is ongoing. The broader topic of IDRC support of research in conflict settings will be explored as part of IDRC's next environmental scan; and the PCD evaluation will feed into this Centre-wide discussion. The Evaluation of PCD Research Support in Countries affected by Violent Conflict will also explore questions of security and risk management to staff and project partners, which is a key concern for IDRC. Finally, the evaluation will explore some of the ethical issues involved in supporting peacebuilding research in violent conflict contexts. This evaluation should assist PCD in managing the tension between the need to be responsive in areas affected by violent conflict and being realistic in terms of both financial and human resources and political capital required.

Principles and Approaches to Programming

The **International Development Research Centre (IDRC)** is a public corporation created by the Parliament of Canada in 1970 to help developing countries use science and technology to find practical, long-term solutions to the social, economic, and environmental problems they face. Support is directed toward developing an indigenous research capacity to sustain policies and technologies that developing countries need to build healthier, more equitable, and more prosperous societies.

In carrying out its mission, IDRC provides funds and expert advice to developing-country researchers working to solve critical development problems. IDRC:

- **funds applied research** by researchers from developing countries on the problems they identify as crucial to their communities. Most projects supported result from direct exchanges between the Centre and developing-country institutions;
- **provides expert advice** to those researchers;
- **builds local capacity** in developing countries to undertake research and innovate.

Peace, Conflict and Development (PCD) is an IDRC program initiative which supports research *for* specific peacebuilding processes, as well as research *on* key peacebuilding challenges. PCD mainly responds to requests from research institutes, universities, policymakers, South-South and North-South networks, and civil society organizations. PCD encourages multidisciplinary approaches, encompassing economics, political science, anthropology, law, and social and gender analysis, as well as participatory/action research and other qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

PCD aims:

- to generate evidence-based findings that can be used to inform policy and programming decisions on root causes of violent conflict, the prevention of conflict, and equitable and sustainable development
- To build domestic ownership of peace processes
- To open spaces for discussion and dialogue
- To influence global policies and practices
- To build capacity for more rigorous, methodologically creative, and collaborative research.

2. Objectives:

General Objective:

The main objective of this evaluation is to identify the factors (conditions and programming modalities) that facilitate or hinder the research process for PCD-supported projects in countries and regions affected by violent conflict, and the advantages and disadvantages of PCD programming modalities in achieving PCD objectives in those conflict settings.

Specific Objectives:

1. On the Conflict Context: Get a better understanding of what conditions (security, research infrastructure, community of researchers, etc.) need to be in place, especially when a return to violence seems imminent, so that 1) PCD can feasibly support research and 2) partners can feasibly conduct research in line with PCD's program objectives.
2. On "What Happened" - the Partners' and PCD's Intents and Achievements: Build a body of learning around the contributions PCD supported research can make in influencing policy, building research capacities, and increase domestic ownership of peace processes when taking into account the prevailing environmental conditions surrounding the research process and ethical considerations.
3. On the "How"- Programming Modalities: Increase learning around the strengths and weaknesses of PCD programming modalities and its relationships to its research partners in contributing to the achievement of PCD objectives in countries and regions affected by violent conflict.
4. Forward Thinking: With a better understanding of prevailing conditions, challenges and opportunities surrounding PCD supported research as well as PCD's programming modalities: explore the implications (in terms of resources, security, institutional risks, policy influence, how we partner, etc.) of potential expansion of PCD programming into countries and regions affected by violent conflict.

3. Users and Uses of the Strategic Evaluation:

Primary Intended Users:

- PCD program staff

Secondary Users:

- IDRC senior management and IDRC program staff
- PCD's partners
- Other agencies/donors working in conflict contexts

Uses

PCD program staff can use the evaluation to:

- Learn how to improve its programming approach (project and program identification and development, programming modalities, monitoring, reporting and evaluation.) in contexts of active conflict where PCD already programs;
- Build on previous and current programming experience to assess how, when, and under what conditions PCD could expand programming;
- Identify PCD's comparative advantage in supporting the management and dissemination of research in conflict contexts, including capacity building;
- Assess how and when can PCD-supported research can influence policy, and what particular capacities PCD can/should be supporting in such environments;
- Identify the ethical issues surrounding programming in conflict contexts, as well as assess security and risks for PCD staff and its project partners.

IDRC senior management and other IDRC program staff can use the evaluation to:

- Learn about programming in conflict contexts with a wide variety of programs, IDRC's comparative advantages, and "lessons learned" from PCD's experience;

- Assess security and risks for IDRC staff and its project partners with any project in a conflict context;
- Assess how IDRC can/should address the particular challenges of working in a conflict context, including risks to IDRC's partner organizations, in particular when expanding programming into countries affected by violent conflict.

PCD partners can use the evaluation to:

- Increase their understanding of the value, utility and reach that research might have in contexts of conflict;
- Assess the utility of different programming modalities and better understand the strengths and limitations of PCD;
- Clarify PCD and IDRC's role, and the expectations of what PCD and IDRC can and cannot do to support partners in conflict contexts.

Other agencies/donors working in conflict contexts can use the evaluation for:

- Reflection on their own programming in conflict contexts.
- Get a better understanding of PCD's comparative advantage in programming in countries and regions affected by conflict.

4. Range of Issue and Evaluation Questions to be Considered

Specific objective 1: On the Conflict Context

Get a better understanding of what conditions (security, research capacity, institutional strength, ethical considerations etc.) need to be in place, especially when a return to violence seems imminent, so that 1) PCD can feasibly support research and 2) partners can feasibly conduct research in line with PCD's program objectives.

Lead questions: What kind of challenges and opportunities did the conflict context present to the research project? What kinds of dynamics were present at the political and institutional level? What were the capacities on the ground?

Range of potential sub-questions:

- What is/was the nature of the conflict context at the time of the research? Did PCD staff and/or partners conduct a conflict and/ or risk assessment as part of the project design process?
- Was the timing of the research assessed in terms of the political context, the policy environment, etc.?
- Did the conflict context change significantly during the course of the research? If so, did this affect the research process and how?
- Was there an assessment of the sustainability of the project's objectives and/or sustainability of the institution/network?
- Did the research project encounter potential or actual ethical and/or security risks, including: risks to the researchers, including differential risks to team members in regions with varying levels of conflict, and interference or pressure by political or armed entities; risk to the research participants, including participants' right to maintain anonymity, informed consent, the safe storing of data, and the use of tapes/filming.
- Are there particular issues regarding institutional risks that are particular to conflict context, including institutional fragility, uncertain resource flow,

excessive workloads, and staff turnover? How are these addressed by PCD and PCD's partner organizations?

- What kinds of challenges, if any, are present in getting country clearance for a project, and what is the effect on the research project?

Specific objective 2: On "What Happened" - the Partners' and PCD's Intents and Achievements

Build a body of learning around the ways in which PCD research partners adapt to the prevailing environmental conditions in conflict settings and address ethical considerations, and what contribution PCD-supported research can make in these conditions to influencing policy, building research capacities and increasing domestic ownership of peace processes.

Lead questions: What did the research partners and PCD set out to do (intents)? What actually happened? Why did it happen that way? What were PCD and its partners' coping strategies? In which ways did the research partners and PCD develop and adapt research questions, methodologies and approaches, capacity building and dissemination in a conflict setting? Are there particular strategies which were more successful?

Range of potential sub-questions:

- What kind of change in the environment is envisioned in the project (i.e. the project's theory of change)? For example, would change occur through individual change? Institutional change? By addressing root causes? By withdrawing resources for the conflict, etc?
- How did the suggested research methodology take into account the conflict context? Was the methodology adapted or modified if the context changed? What is PCD's role in developing the methodology? The research partners' role?
- Were there difficulties in accessing and collecting primary and secondary data? Did the research methodology include gender and/or generational analyses, multidisciplinary or comparative approaches, and/or worked with marginalized communities?
- Were there risks highlighted (institutional, personal security, objectives maybe not attainable), and if so, in which ways were these handled by PCD and its partners?
- During the course of conducting the research, what were the other practical, financial, political, methodological and ethical challenges related to the conflict context? These could include risks and challenges associated with potential unintended uses of research findings, for example.
- Was there an aspect of capacity building (individual or institutional) build within the research project, and what was the research partners' and PCD's role in developing that capacity building element?
- What has been PCD's role in dealing with research ethics challenges from the outset of the project? How have ethical challenges (if present) affected the research process?
- How was the research team composed? Has the conflict context affected the research composition? If it was composed of researchers both in and outside of the conflict context, was there a different level of risk between the researchers?

- How was the research disseminated and communicated? Were policymakers part of the target group? What kinds of challenges and opportunities in dissemination and policy influence were present because of the conflict context? What political sensitivities existed, and how were those dealt with?
- Were there unintended consequences of the research process?

Specific objective 3: On the “How”- Programming Modalities:

Increase learning around the strengths and weaknesses of PCD programming modalities and its relationships to its research partners in contributing to the achievement of PCD objectives in countries and regions affected by violent conflict.

Lead questions: What are the different programming decisions that PCD and its partners make regarding research taking into account a context of violent conflict? What modalities seem more successful, and under what conditions? What can PCD learn about this?

Range of potential sub-questions:

- How do PCD criteria for involvement in conflict contexts fare in terms of feasibility and flexibility in conducting, managing and disseminating research, especially considering the potential “instabilities” in the context?
- How does the research team assess the strengths and weaknesses of PCD’s programming approach?
- What kind of programming modalities were considered and chosen by PCD partners and PCD staff (e.g. supporting an institution inside or outside of the conflict zone, composition of research team, research project vs. research support project, working in networks, capacity building, etc.). What adaptations have been/need to be made in design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of results? Does it differ from programming in any other contexts, and if so, how? What modalities seemed to be more successful, and under which circumstances?
- To what extent did PCD partners and PCD staff act with flexibility and responsiveness under changing circumstances? What institutional tools, mechanisms or constraints (e.g. financial constraints, institutional policies, etc.) were taken into consideration?
- During the course of managing the research, what practical, financial, political, methodological and ethical challenges came up? How were they dealt with? Are there particular strategies which were more successful?

Specific objective 4: Forward Thinking

With a better understanding of prevailing research conditions as well as PCD’s programming modalities, explore the implications (in terms of resources, security, institutional risks, policy influence, how we partner, etc.) of potential expansion of PCD programming into countries and regions affected by violent conflict.

Lead questions: What conclusions can be drawn from how external dimensions affect the research process? What are the manageable factors, through the partnership between PCD and its research partners? What are the strengths and weaknesses of PCD programming approaches to research in conflict settings? What lessons can be

drawn in terms of the opportunities, challenges, and obstacles to potentially expanding PCD's programming into context of violent conflicts where it has not previously programmed significantly?

5. Methodology

The evaluation will consist of two components:

- Four case studies that examine the challenges and opportunities of PCD's programming in countries or regions affected by violent conflict;
- A fifth paper consolidating case study findings and providing strategic forward planning on the feasibility of expanding PCD's programming, both in countries where it already programs and in new countries/regions.

Case Study Sampling:

Case study countries/regions are selected to reflect:

- Significant recent PCD involvement: several projects ongoing or approved in those regions since the start of the 2005-2011 PCD Prospectus
- Balanced geographic coverage to the extent possible
- Selected case study countries/regions: **Colombia, Palestine/Middle East, East Africa, and Sri Lanka**
-

Case study projects are selected based on:

- Ongoing or approved in current Prospectus period
- Research was managed or conducted, all or in part, in a country or region with violent conflict
- Projects that present learning opportunities on the development, conduct, management and dissemination of research in conflict contexts
- NOTE: A list of selected projects will be available to the selected consultants once hired

Evaluation Methodology:

The evaluation methodology and instruments will be developed in discussion with PCD staff and the consultants, and this will be the focus of a methodology workshop (to be held before the start of the evaluation – date TBD).

Case study authors are expected to use qualitative methods as the primary source of data collection, including semi-structured interviews with staff, partners and beneficiaries. Document review of key project documents will also be critical to gain an in-depth understanding of the research problem and of PCD/PCD partners' perceptions of how peace can best be supported through research. The case study methodology will include a desktop review of relevant project documentation, interviews with relevant PCD staff, project leaders and relevant stakeholders.

A final workshop will bring together relevant project participants to discuss the draft report and exchange experiences and insights gained from conducting, managing and dissemination research in conflict-affected countries.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Consultants Will:

- Be available for a Methodology workshop (before the beginning of the study, date TBD) **and** a Results workshop (date TBD, after the study is completed) in Ottawa
- Develop and use high quality methods:
 - Well done surveys, interviews that follow protocols, outputs that are insightful and well-written; these instruments/methods should be detailed in the workplan developed by the author for review by the evaluation manager.
 - Conduct all communications including interviews with respect for our partners and their work.
- Produce high quality outputs:
 - Workplan (with instruments/methods, survey questions, etc.)
 - Iterative process with report draft
 - Full report and a short summary/brief of findings
- Be resourceful:
 - Search for:
 - Additional documentation
 - Additional potential interviewees
 - Get general information on:
 - The case study organization
 - Its other donors
 - Its other projects
 - On capacity development and organizational capacity

Evaluation Manager (PCD):

- PCD will provide:
 - A list of case study project
 - An initial list of contacts and documents (Project Completion Reports, project proposals, etc.)
 - Support on travel logistics
 - Input on workplan and drafts of report
 - Background documentation

7. Expected Outcomes and Outputs/Report Requirements for Complete Evaluation:

- Participation of all consultants in a methodology workshop with PCD staff and other consultants (early 2008);
- Four case studies, 20-25 pages in length each;
- A 25-30-page paper to consolidate case study findings and provide strategic forward planning assessing the feasibility of expanding PCD's programming, both in countries where it already programs and in new countries/regions.
- A total of five briefs (2-4 pages each) on studies – one for each of the four case studies and a fifth summing up the findings of the consolidating/strategic planning paper;
- Participation of all consultants in a results workshop with IDRC staff, project partners, and other donors.

9. Estimated timeline and activities (in 2008 – dates TBD with availability of hired consultants):

Case Study Authors (Per Case Study – 4 case studies total)

Activity	Timeline (by month from beginning of contract)	Billable days per activity
Methodology workshop	1 st month	Days, as follows: -1 day of workshop -1.5 days in transit
Workplan	Submitted in 2 nd month	2 days for workplan development
Background research	2 nd month	3 days
Field Work	3 rd month	7 days, as follows: -5 days in field -2 days in transit
Writing report and summary/brief	3 rd and/or 4 th month	6 days
Submission of report and brief/summary	5 th month	
Revision of report and brief/summary	6 th month	2 days
Participation in results workshop and submit final report	8 th month	2.5 days, as follows: -1.5 days in transit, -1 day of workshop
Total Billable Days per Case Study:		25 days

Author writing consolidating/strategic planning paper

Activity	Timeline (by month from beginning of contract)	Billable days per activity
Methodology workshop	1 st month	Days, as follows: -1 day of workshop -1.5 days in transit
Workplan	Submitted in 5 th month	3 days for workplan development
Developing and Writing report and summary/brief	5 th and 6 th month	20 days
Submission of report and brief/summary	End of 6 th month	
Revision of report and brief/summary	7 th month	2 days
Participation in results workshop and submit final report	8 th month	2.5 days, as follows: -1.5 days in transit, -1 day of workshop
Total Billable Days:		30 days

10. Quality of the Evaluation Report

The quality of the evaluation report produced by the evaluators will be judged by IDRC’s Evaluation Unit on four internationally recognized standards: utility, feasibility, accuracy, and propriety. A copy of IDRC’s Evaluation Guideline 3 “Formatting Evaluation Reports at IDRC” and Evaluation Guideline 4 “Quality Assessment of IDRC Evaluation Reports” will be provided to the evaluator/ evaluation team.

4.3 Annex 5. Biography of the consultant

Clotilde Gouley

Mrs Clotilde Gouley holds a Master degree in International Conflict Analysis from the University of Kent at Canterbury, England. She specializes in evaluation of peacebuilding interventions and natural resource (oil and mining) conflicts. Over the past 7 years, she has carried out long term research projects and short-term consulting assignments on these conflict-related issues.

Mrs Gouley has worked four years for an NGO in Peru (2002-2006), conducting research on mining conflicts, and now works as an associate consultant with Channel Research (Belgium), covering issues in peacebuilding, conflict-sensitivity, community relations and Social Impact Assessment (in Colombia, Guatemala, Peru and New Caledonia). She combines strong research experience (desk studies and field research) and expertise in a range of analytical and participatory methodologies, such as risk, stakeholder and conflict mappings.

As a researcher, she took part for example in the Project "Conflict and Collaboration in the management of natural resources in Latin America and the Caribbean", led by the United Nations University for Peace and financed by IDRC. As a consultant, she took part in studies and evaluations related to conflict, human rights and peacebuilding in Latin America (for example in Colombia with the Swedish Agency for International Development (Sida) and in Africa (Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo with the OECD).

Mrs Gouley is a French national and speaks fluent French, English and Spanish.