**Summary Report**
# Evaluation of International Assistance Programming in Colombia, 2011-12 to 2017-18

### Why is it important?

This evaluation was conducted to provide an evidence-based, neutral assessment of international assistance in Colombia to Canadians, Parliamentarians, Ministers, Central Agencies, Global Affairs Canada management, partners and beneficiaries.

It aims to contribute to informed decision-making, to support policy and program improvements and to advance departmental horizontal learning.

- **Evaluation Period:** 2011-12 to 2017-18

- **Total international assistance disbursements** 2011-12 to 2017-18: $298 million, with an average yearly disbursement of nearly $43 million.

- **Data Collection Methods:**
  - key stakeholder interviews (n=96)
  - focus groups with project beneficiaries (n=23), including a total of 227 participants (130F/97M)
  - site visits (n=7 projects)
  - project review (n=39 projects)
  - project financial analysis
  - document and literature review

- **Evaluation Completed:** October 2018

### What the evaluation assessed:

Global Affairs Canada's international assistance programming in Colombia between 2011-12 and 2017-18, with a focus on projects supported by the bilateral development program alongside a purposive sample of projects supported through partnership programming (KFM), humanitarian programming (MHI), and peace and stabilization programming (START/PSOPs).

### The evaluation questions that were asked:

**Responsiveness and Agility**
- To what extent has international assistance programming responded to evolving needs and opportunities in Colombia?

**Results, Gender Equality and Sustainability**
- To what extent has international assistance programming contributed to expected development outcomes in areas of sustainable economic growth, children and youth and peacebuilding?
- How has programming contributed to gender equality results and the empowerment of women and girls?
- Is there evidence that results have been sustained in areas where support has ended? What is the likelihood that the results achieved will continue?

**Program and Policy Coherence**
- To what extent has coherence across international assistance programming improved? Across other areas of departmental engagement?

# What the evaluation found

## Responsiveness and Agility

- Global Affairs Canada programming was responsive to an evolving Colombian context. Early and long-term support was provided to key areas of the Colombia peace process and niche sectors were selected where few donors were active. As new needs and opportunities emerged, Canadian expertise in areas such as rural economic development and cooperatives was leveraged.
- Approaches to international assistance were aligned with good practices for donor engagement in middle-income countries and fragile states. This included increased efforts to engage in policy dialogue and advocacy, to leverage private sector resources and to test new modalities for financing.
- A focus on state-building was central. Projects included strategies to accompany the state in fragile and conflict-affected areas.

## Results, Sustainability and Gender Equality

- Significant results were achieved at a project-level across children and youth, sustainable economic growth. Support for the implementation of the 2016 peace accord yielded early results in areas of transitional justice and humanitarian de-mining.
- A key factor for project success was the ability to bring together private and public sector to collaborate in new and innovative ways.
- Projects that were successful in demonstrating both financial and social viability achieved high levels of uptake by private sector actors, increasing the prospects for sustainability and impact. In certain areas, increased conflict and insecurity posed risks for the long-term sustainability of initiatives.
- Projects contributed to strengthening civil society organizations, such as agricultural cooperatives and women's rights groups.
- A significant contribution to policy dialogue was made in areas of child protection, rural education, rural women's economic development and gender equality. The department played a convening role in bringing stakeholders together and enabling implementing partners to participate in policy dialogue efforts.
- Support for gender integration increased over the evaluation period, leading to improved gender analysis and reporting.
- Some projects developed good practices and innovative models to promote gender equality and women's rights. Notable results in the area of sexual and gender-based violence were achieved across all international assistance streams. However, significant barriers for gender equality remained.

## Program and Policy Coherence

- Some strong examples of coherence across international assistance programming and areas of mutual interest for international assistance, trade, and diplomacy streams were identified.
- Collaboration was often driven by external events or personal initiative and supported by informal systems of communication and information exchange.
- Corporate planning and reporting tools did not effectively support cohesive international engagement.
- Challenges in communicating a coherent "Canada message" made it difficult for external stakeholders to obtain a clear picture of Canada's overall engagement in Colombia.

# Summary of Recommendations and Management Responses

**Recommendation 1:**
Continue to provide guidance and regular training for staff, implementing agencies and partners on how to align projects with the *Feminist International Assistance Policy* .

**Agreed:** The Colombia Program will continue to regularly convene staff, implementing agencies and partners in Colombia to exchange information, updates and good practices around the implementation of the *Feminist International Assistance Policy*, with an emphasis on development innovation. The Canadian Foreign Service Institute (CFSI) will work with the Colombia Program to address identified corporate training gaps and pilot new courses and other learning tools where appropriate.

**Recommendation 2:**
Develop an advocacy and policy dialogue strategy with clear objectives, associated tools and training.

**Agreed:** The Colombia Program will enhance its efforts to explicitly communicate and prioritize its advocacy and policy dialogue objectives through a Program level strategy, in consultation with implementing partners in Colombia and other international engagement streams (notably trade and diplomacy). The International Assistance Policy Coordination Division (PVP) will share related guidance, tools and training, as developed, to support the Colombia Program in their policy dialogue and advocacy efforts.

**Recommendation 3:**
At a whole-of-Mission level, continue to strengthen formal systems for knowledge and information sharing and identify mechanisms to incentivize collaboration.

**Agreed:** The Colombia Mission (BGOTA) will further strengthen its knowledge and information sharing across international assistance streams, and international engagement streams. This will include formalization of policy/programming coherence mechanisms as well as additional collaboration as identified through the integrated country framework (ICF) planning process. The South America division will promote greater information sharing and exchanges across all three streams at the Colombia Mission and headquarters.

**Recommendation 4:**
Develop an integrated whole-of-Mission communication strategy to ensure a coherent and consistent "Canada message."

**Agreed:** The Colombia Mission will more explicitly communicate its whole-of-Mission activities and priorities in Colombia through an integrated communications strategy. The Public Affairs Branch (LCD) will support the Colombia Mission in developing an integrated, whole of Canada message and strategy that tells the full picture of Canada's engagement in Colombia.

**Recommendation 5:**
Review process for roll-out of integrated country framework (ICF) and assess how the ICF can be better used to foster the coherence of Canadian engagement.

**Agreed:** Foreign Policy Planning Division (POL) will complete a review of the effectiveness of the ICF process with a "lessons learned" approach, with a view to providing consolidated recommendations aimed at improving the ICF approach for the 2019-20 planning cycle. The Colombia Mission will continue to engage with POL and others involved in the ICF pilot process to share lessons, opportunities and challenges of the ICF process roll-out on the ground.

# Considerations for Horizontal Learning

**Programming in middle-income countries**

1) Middle-income countries can provide opportunities to test innovative ways of delivering and financing development assistance, such as results-based financing and partnerships with private sector actors. When piloting new initiatives, it is important to capture and disseminate early learnings.

2) Programming in middle-income countries requires shifting more time and resources to policy dialogue activities. Staff requires support and training to build the necessary skills and competencies.

**Programming in fragile and conflict-affected states**

3) Programming in fragile and conflict-affected states requires the use of iterative and adaptive approaches for project implementation. Systems for feedback and continual learning are important. The flexibility allowed through contracting mechanisms, results-based management frameworks, and local funds should be maximized.

4) There is an implicit need for projects to address issues of trauma when working in fragile and conflict-affected regions. Good practices include the integration of psycho-social support components, with ear-marked budgets, in projects across all sectors.

5) In areas of protracted crisis, humanitarian agencies can have a deep knowledge of the local dynamics of conflict and the trust of affected communities. Mechanisms to share information and collaborate on projects can help development partners better identify and meet the needs of targeted groups.

**Feminist International Assistance Policy**

6) Strengthening the use of *Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security* in development programming to complement the *Feminist International Assistance Policy*, in Colombia and other conflict-affected states, could help to promote synergies and coherence across international assistance programming in areas such as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

7) In culturally conservative contexts, it can sometimes be more effective to approach feminism indirectly by demonstrating the social and financial viability of initiatives. Actively engaging boys and men can help to promote gender equality.

**Coherence**

8) Individuals' initiative and willingness to collaborate can be effective in fostering coherence. However, there is a need to balance informal practices with formal mechanisms and incentives for maintaining and strengthening coherence across programming streams. Tools such as the integrated country framework and the integrated conflict analysis have the potential to foster coherence if all business lines are meaningfully engaged in their development.

9) A mix of corporate governance structures, distinct work cultures, and frequent staff mobility creates challenges for departmental coherence at a country level. The role of the Head of Mission (HoM) is key to fostering and incentivizing coherence across all lines of business.