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BEST PRACTICES

Civil Society in the Borderlands

In Colombia's borderlands, communities face the reconfiguration of the armed conflict and the Venezuelan migration crisis. Amidst those challenges civil society organisations have to find ways to support local communities. CONPEACE's Civil Society Workshop in Cúcuta brought together members of civil society from along the border in November 2018 to share best practices to mitigate the "border effect", and promote peace and development.

The following graphic highlights the diversity of participants involved in this cross-stakeholder workshop.



Border Effect

The phenomenon whereby the distance from the centre and transnationality of vulnerable borderlands intensifies instances of insecurity.

Initiatives to reinforce local social and economic stability

- **Use alternative channels of information**

WhatsApp groups, word-of-mouth, and home visits are an effective way to guide migrants and inform local communities about assistance routes. Individuals are also empowered to replicate what they have learned within their communities.

- **Creating alliances between local cross-border communities**

Bottom-up initiatives are an effective response to the absence of the state. For example, the Bari indigenous communities from Colombia and Venezuela have combined efforts to claim recognition as binational citizens in the Catatumbo region.

- **Implementing agro-development projects**

Cacao crops and other agricultural activity can strengthen the local economy and reduce reliance on illegal economies.

- **Propelling strategic alliances between private companies and local government**

Bringing in private sector funding and support for development projects allows for the strengthening of local economies.

Grassroots expertise to identify and assist border-dwellers

- **Learning from local organisations**

Leveraging local knowledge is an efficient, astute way to provide support and gain legitimacy among local communities. The Church, for example, has successfully identified people in need and offered appropriate and holistic assistance.

- **Increasing the visibility of the efforts of social movements and community-led mechanisms**

Partnering with small, local organisations offers the possibility to meet the needs of certain populations that fall through the cracks of larger interventions. This has been the case with the UNHCR, who has partnered with local health-related organisations that give support and legal help for Venezuelan migrants with HIV, cancer, and other high-risk diseases.

Effective responses for mitigating the effects of migration

- **Hosting streamlined *jornadas***

These events hosted at border crossings by state institutions allow migrants to efficiently register and obtain documents, and means that they don't have to navigate complicated bureaucratic processes.

- **Empowerment of migrants with dignifying experiences**

Preventing *asistencialismo* is important. Humanitarian aid in the form of cash handouts, for example, empowers people to invest in long-term solutions to their problems.

- **Cross-stakeholder coordination of projects**

Clear communication between the government, international organisations, and civil society initiatives helps generate long-term solutions for beneficiaries without duplicating efforts. The UNHCR, for example, successfully partners with local organisations and contractors to increase their influence in border regions.

CONPEACE

Hosted at the University of Oxford's Changing Character of War Centre, CONPEACE focuses on changing security landscapes in marginalised spaces, especially during transitions from war to peace. Founded and directed by Dr Annette Idler, CONPEACE's interdisciplinary research bridges the gap between marginalised communities and political power centres, using bottom-up methodology based on extensive fieldwork, theoretical frameworks on non-state order and regular cross-stakeholder fora.

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