Paving the Path to Peace: Unpacking Civil Society's Role in Peacebuilding in Colombia through Rodeemos el Diálogo Case

Ingrid Tatiana Restrepo Rojas

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MA

Erasmus Mundus Human Rights Practice and Policy Masters

Programme

School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg
Pedro Arrupe Human Rights Institute, Deusto University
School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Roehampton
Department of Social Sciences, University of Tromsø – Arctic
University of Norway

March 22, 2023

Dissertation Module (30 ECT)
Supervisor: Gorka Urrutia Asua

Spring semester 2023

Abstract

This dissertation analyses the contribution of civil society to peacebuilding in Colombia, focusing on the case study of Rodeemos el Diálogo (ReD). Employing a qualitative method with a deductive approach, including interviews and analysis of organisational experiences, the research investigates ReD's local, national, and international peacebuilding strategies, considering different conflict phases and contextual factors. By utilising the comprehensive conceptual framework of Thania Paffenholz and Christoph Spurk about the seven functions of civil society in peacebuilding, this study validates and emphasises the relevance and effectiveness of these functions. It also reveals correlations and interdependencies that have yet to be addressed in the literature.

The findings demonstrate that ReD's initiatives play a vital and positive role in peacebuilding in Colombia. The organisation prioritises monitoring, advocacy, socialisation, and social cohesion over facilitation, protection, and service delivery. The functions are found to be interdependent, with additional relationships identified beyond the conceptual framework. The effectiveness of these functions varies based on geographical level, contextual factors, and conflict phases.

This research contributes to human rights and sustainable peacebuilding by providing insights for civil society organisations to achieve a positive impact. It is relevant for internal and external actors working on peace-related issues, as it clarifies and validates conclusions drawn in prior studies. Furthermore, it adds to the existing literature by reinforcing the approach to researching the role of civil society at local, national, and international levels.

Keywords: peacebuilding, civil society, Colombia, peace, human rights.

Wordcount: 17.479

Acknowledgements

The future is unpredictable, and there are moments when we think we have certainty, but life proves us wrong. This reality is evident in the pursuit of peace, love, and life itself.

I sincerely thank my parents and brother, who have been my greatest source of strength. Without them, I would not have been able to come this far or achieve what I have accomplished up to this day. To my beloved boyfriend, I have nothing but words of love and gratitude for his unwavering support and for being by my side during joyful and challenging times.

I also want to express my deep appreciation to the members of Rodeemos el Diálogo who actively participated in and contributed to my research. Their willingness to share their voices and valuable stories enriched my work. I want to thank my supervisor, who consistently provided feedback, guidance, and encouragement throughout this writing journey.

Last but not least, I thank my new and old friends, especially those who have always been there to lend an ear and engage in endless and meaningful conversations.

Abbreviations

RED	Rodeemos el Diálogo- Spanish Embrace Dialogue- English
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional - Spanish The National Liberation Army - English
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo- Spanish Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army - English
JEP	Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz - Spanish Special Jurisdiction for Peace - English
NGO	Organización no gubernamental- Spanish Non-Governmental Organisation- English
IACHR	Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos (CIDH)- Spanish Inter-American Commission on Human Rights- English
CS	Sociedad Civil- Spanish Civil society- English
CSO	Organización de la Sociedad Civil- Spanish Civil Society Organisation- English
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1. Problem statement and relevance

Colombia is home to the longest-running internal conflict in the Western Hemisphere, involving stakeholders such as the state, guerrilla groups, and paramilitary forces. Despite several attempts to end the conflict, it was not until September 2016 that the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP in Spanish) signed a peace agreement, formally declaring an end to decades of violence. Nevertheless, implementing the accord has been fraught with challenges, leading to disagreements and polarisation in the country, and some see it as illegitimate.

In Colombia, civil society has formed and organised to achieve a certain level of participation in the different phases of the conflict. As a result, numerous civil society organisations and movements in Colombia participate in peacebuilding from other sectors and perspectives. This organised civil society has developed dynamically and is highly mobilised and involved. However, although some organisations in Colombia have engaged in different negotiation spaces and advocated for peace in various stages of the conflict, they have encountered limitations due to contextual factors, lack of coordination and absence of common strategies that make it difficult to measure the extent to which civil society in Colombia has influenced or contributed to peace.

Peacebuilding is a multifaceted process that encompasses various actors and approaches. Civil society is acknowledged as a crucial actor in promoting peace, justice, and human rights. Its central role has been identified as providing support for peace efforts. Despite the significant attention given to the role of civil society in peacebuilding, there needs to be more empirical research to support this assumption. As Paffenholz (2009, p.2) argues, "despite this ever-growing emphasis on the role of civil society in peacebuilding, little systematic research has been undertaken to support this assumption empirically". The role of different social actors in facilitating peace efforts has been extensively studied.

Although there is evidence that civil society efforts have positively influenced various conflict and post-conflict environments, their potential, influence, and effectiveness have yet to be acknowledged. These aspects are often scattered and occasionally misunderstood. Further research is therefore needed to explore the appropriateness and relevance of civil society

participation at different stages of peacebuilding. Identifying priorities for policy development and future planning can be beneficial in this respect (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006). Moreover, it is vital to understand the contextual factors that may explain when and how civil society actors can effectively contribute to conflict transformation (Barnes, 2009).

Furthermore, it is crucial to examine the types of organisations that have effectively promoted an open, representative and sustainable civil society and their experiences. This includes exploring how external support can influence these organisations and identifying strategies to foster open groups, movements, and networks (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006).

1.2. Aim and research questions

This study aims to examine the role of civil society in facilitating peacebuilding at local, national and international levels. The researcher chose a case study approach to accomplish this objective, focusing on the civil society organisation Rodeemos el Diálogo (hereinafter ReD) due to its distinctive organisational and mission strategies. This research is relevant for both internal and external actors working on peace-related issues since it has the potential to provide clarity and validate some of the conclusions drawn in prior studies.

In this regard, this study seeks to address the question of how civil society can contribute to and influence peacebuilding in Colombia. By examining key concepts and previous approaches related to the topic, such as contribution, motivation, coordination, collaboration, effectiveness, and need, the research aims to understand (i) the extent to which ReD has implemented strategies for peacebuilding, taking into account the different phases of the conflict and contextual factors and (ii) how ReD has carried out peacebuilding actions at the local, national and international level.

1.3. Methodology

To answer the research question and objectives outlined, it is crucial to provide information on the methods used by the researcher. This study adopts a qualitative method with a deductive approach, meaning the research is based on a conceptual framework applied to the analysed material.

Considering the time and resources available for this research, the analysis is focused on a case study. The researcher chose a case study as a beneficial strategy for a master's level

project because a case has a relatively limited scope and is, therefore, suitable for smaller research projects (Furseth et al., 2013). Moreover, case study methods offer a detailed investigation of a specific manifestation of a phenomenon, allowing the researcher to make inferences about the phenomenon of interest while providing insights into the experiences and human relationships related to a particular topic (George & Bennett, 2005).

Primary data was the main source of information for this research. The researcher conducted nine interviews to gain detailed insight into the respondents' perspectives. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they allowed for similar questions to be asked of each participant while also providing the opportunity to ask follow-up questions based on individual experiences (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

The selection criteria for the interviewees were that they had been or were members of the organisation for more than a year and were involved in the development and implementation of strategies. Additionally, the selection aimed to gather information from the three geographic levels of the organisation, resulting in two interviewees working at the local level (Pasto and Cali), five at the national level (main office in Bogotá), and two part of the international team (UK). The interviews were conducted in Spanish, and as a native Spanish speaker, the researcher personally translated them for the purpose of this dissertation. The interviewees' names are not disclosed to maintain their anonymity. However, the fourth chapter will provide general information about the interviewed individuals.

As part of the data collection process, information from the conference organised by ReD in March 2023 in collaboration with the Institute of International Relations and Political Studies of the National University of Colombia, Chevening Alumni and with the support of the University of Winchester, UK, was included in this study. This conference focused on celebrating the 10th anniversary of ReD. It addressed critical issues related to peacebuilding, such as achieving total peace, implementing the 2016 peace agreement and the culture of dialogue to draw out the lessons learned from civil society.

Furthermore, during the autumn semester of 2022, the researcher completed an internship at the organisation's United Kingdom office and supported the team. During this experience, the researcher met some team members and stakeholders, participated in formal and informal meetings and dialogues, and attended private and public events. This four-month experience in the organisation also provided some input for this research.

A qualitative analysis of the interview information was conducted for data processing by using "Good Tape" and "Delve" software for transcription and coding, respectively. For this data analysis, coding was done using thematic analysis, where the data is examined to extract the main topics and identify repetitions, frequencies, patterns and connections between codes (Bryman, 2016). This coding work was deductive, as the labels were created based on the chosen conceptual framework.

In order to develop the contents mentioned, the present document is divided into six parts: This chapter provides an introduction, rationale and methodology for the topic of the study; the second chapter reviews previous research on the role of civil society in peacebuilding; the third chapter looks at the case study of ReD and its context within the armed conflict and peace process in Colombia; the fourth chapter presents and offers a discussion of the main findings of the study; the fourth provides the main conclusions; and the last chapter set out policy recommendations.

1.4. Delimitations

Civil society in Colombia is characterised by its dynamism and diversity, and conducting in-depth analysis and research on civil society as a collective actor proves to be complex and is beyond the scope of this research. Therefore, this study focuses on ReD as a specific and representative case study of civil society organisations.

This study adopts the perspective of "positive peace" to understand peacebuilding instead of "negative peace". "Positive peace" is a sustainable, comprehensive, and enduring state based on social justice, equality, protection of human rights, and economic and social development (Galtung, 1969). On the other hand, "negative peace" simply means the absence of violence or conflict.

Considering the selected case study, the analysis period of this research spans from the organisation's establishment in 2012 to 2022.

2. Literature Review: Exploring the Role of civil society actors in promoting peace

This literature review analyses the intersection of two distinct areas of inquiry. Firstly, how the conceptualisation of civil society as an active agent has been studied within the political,

philosophical, peace, and human rights fields. Secondly, how the role of civil society in promoting peacebuilding and human rights has been conceived in prior research, particularly in the context of conflict management and peacebuilding.

2.1. Conceptualising civil society actors

In the context of this research, it is essential to provide a comprehensive overview of the different approaches to the concept of civil society. This overview aims to clarify the different types of actors and activities that belong to this group. Furthermore, to fully understand civil society and its importance for peacebuilding, it is necessary to address the various interpretations of the concept and its corresponding manifestations.

There has yet to be a consensus on a particular concept of civil society; instead, different approaches have been developed depending on the field or the contextual conditions. On the one hand, according to ideas such as those of Gramsci and Habermas, civil society is the space where citizens gather to discuss common public goals, restrain the state, and protect rights in the public sphere (Spurk, 2010). Similarly, Putnam (1993) defines civil society as voluntary institutions that enable individuals to develop strong social relationships that counteract the possibility of manipulation by the State.

Some conceptualisations of civil society began to emphasise the role of civil society as a group isolated and separated from the market. Price (2003, p. 508) states that "the term civil society, in general, is commonly employed to refer to a third system of agents, namely, privately organised citizens as distinguished from government or profit-seeking actors".

At a late stage, in the 1970s and 1980s, there was a shift in the relationship between civil society, the state, and borders. In the field of international relations, a global concept of civil society emerged due to various factors, such as increased interconnectivity, travel and telecommunications, transnational links between peace and human rights organisations across countries, and the strengthening of human rights agencies and instruments (Kaldor, 2003). In Latin America, in particular, the concept of civil society gained importance in the struggle against dictatorships, and some social movements contributed to the resistance (Pinkney, 2003).

In this regard, new conceptualisations of civil society emerged, as exemplified by Kaldor (2003), who defines civil society as a process through which a consensus emerges that enables

negotiation, struggle against, and debate with authorities. The critical distinction Kaldor makes is that these centres of authority go beyond the national sphere to include international institutions, organisations, and corporations (Kaldor, 2003).

Similarly, some scholars have extended the definition of civil society to include the transnational level. A notable example is Tarrow (2005), who has studied various forms of transnational social movements and international activism. In his analysis, he explores the relationship between the influence of global actions and their impact at the national and local levels.

Furthermore, Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1999, p.2) are among the most cited authors who coined the concept of Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs). They defined them as "relevant actors working internationally on an issue who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services" (Keck & Sikkink, 1999, p.2).

Various definitions have attempted to synthesise the above mentioned concepts and incorporate critical perspectives to complement existing concepts. One example is the one proposed by Spurk (2010), which defines civil society as follows:

> A sphere of voluntary action that is distinct from the state, political, private, and economic spheres, keeping in mind that, in practice, the boundaries between these sectors are often complex and blurred. It consists of a large and diverse set of voluntary organisations – competing with each other and oriented towards specific interests – that are not purely driven by private or economic interests, are autonomously organised, and interact in the public sphere. Thus, civil society is independent from the state and the political sphere but is oriented toward and interacts closely with them. (Spurk, 2010, p.8).

Although this definition covers various issues addressed in the literature; however, it does not elaborate deeply on the actors that comprise the broad concept of civil society. Therefore, in line with Spurk's definition, Paffenholz (2013) enumerates the groups that can be identified within civil society: (i) special interest groups, (ii) faith-based organisations, (iii) traditional and community groups, (iv) researchers and research institutions, (v) service delivery organisations often registered as a non-governmental organisation both locally and

internationally, (vi) social and political movements –locally and internationally–, (vii) business associations and (viii) networks.

2.2. Civil Society in Peacebuilding

There is extensive research on peacebuilding and conflict resolution regarding the role of civil society. This actor has been widely identified as essential in reducing violence and creating the conditions necessary for sustainable peace (Paffenholz, 2009).

The role of civil society, in general, has been well studied, especially in the areas of development, conflict management, conflict resolution, and international relations. Scholars have focused on non-governmental organisations as powerful actors in global civil society because these organisations promote social change, fight for justice, and, in most cases, advocate for human rights. However, they have acknowledged that some civil society actors can also harm peacebuilding and state-building. For instance, some authors, such as Marchetti & Tocci (2009), argued that civil society actors contribute to the securitisation of conflict and can ignite conflict in its violent stages.

The World Bank and the United Nations (2018) stated that civil society organisations, similar to other actors, have limitations, and their role might not be consistently positive or effective. Some individuals may transition from civil society to work in state institutions, or vice versa, which can improve relationships between state institutions and communities. However, such career changes may also affect perceptions of independence. In cases where civil society organisations are not sufficiently independent or represent only a limited interest group, they may cause more harm than good if there are no countervailing forces to balance their influence.

Nonetheless, given the increase of conflict from the 1990s to now and the international community's intense efforts to achieve sustainable peace, scholars and practitioners have focused on the potential of civil society's role in peacebuilding. There is a prevailing view among policymakers and practitioners that civil society plays a crucial role in promoting and maintaining peace. This has led to a significant increase in peacebuilding efforts by civil society organisations over the last decades (Paffenholz, 2013). Consequently, the international discourse and practitioners have shifted their focus from discussing whether civil society can contribute to peacebuilding to exploring the most effective ways to harness its capacities.

Through this research, it has been observed that civil society's contribution to peacebuilding has been considered from various angles, including local, national, and international perspectives. Moreover, the effectiveness, unique roles, and tactics in promoting peace depend on the specific contextual factors and challenges they face.

John Paul Lederach is one author who has explored the importance of civil society at the local level. His argument focuses primarily on dividing people affected by conflict through leadership roles. More specifically, this approach consists of three levels of leadership: Level I, which refers to the top level of leadership; Level II, which refers to the middle-range level; and Level III, which includes grassroots leadership (Lederach, 1997).

Level I contains the very visible leaders of the government or opposition movements. This level is fundamental because of their positional power, influence, and decision-making authority (Lederach, 1997). The 'top-down' or 'trickled-down' approach to peace is found at this level.

The second level includes individuals who do not necessarily have public recognition but are respected in strategic areas. In addition, this level includes networks of individuals, groups or institutions, such as heads of organisations, ethnic groups or leaders of territories who are well known within and outside their regions. These leaders usually have relationships with counterparts in the conflict (Lederach, 1997). Lederach refers to this approach as the "middle-out" approach, which he considers a critical area for creating an infrastructure to achieve and maintain peace. He even mentions several strategies at this level, such as problem-solving workshops, conflict resolution training, and peace commissions (Lederach, 1997). This author suggests that the middle level has the potential to strengthen relationships and support the infrastructure for sustainable peace, as middle-level leaders are strategically placed to interact with top leaders but also with local communities.

In the third level, the masses represent the grassroots of society. These leaders work on a day-to-day basis because they are directly involved in the communities and are, therefore, very aware of the needs and problems of the territory, such as human rights violations. This approach has a bottom-up perspective, with Lederach (1997) emphasising the importance of grassroots leaders and others being able to work from the community at the village level.

As Paffenholz (2014) mentioned, Lederach's approach not only provides an early comprehensive framework to suggest a shift to the local level but also has significant

influence within the field. This shift from international to local actors that Lederach's theory emphasises, has been identified by Paffenholz as the most significant contribution of the conflict transformation school. Although Paffenholz offered some criticisms of Lederach's approach, she acknowledged the importance of endowing local actors with agency as a recognised principle in both research and peacebuilding practice (Paffenholz, 2014).

Besides exploring the role of civil society from different angles, some practitioners have focused on examining the strategies and functions of civil society in peacebuilding. Such research shows the importance of understanding the actions of civil society in promoting sustainable peace and peaceful societies. One of them are Paffenholz & Spurk (2010), who have outlined the seven functions of civil society in peacebuilding to understand and examine the intersection between civil society and peacebuilding. The seven functions are (i) protection of citizens, (ii) monitoring for accountability, (iii) advocacy and public communication, (iv) socialisation, (v) social cohesion, (vi) intermediation and facilitation; and (vii) service delivery.

Throughout her extensive career, Thania Paffenholz has emphasised the role of civil society in strengthening democracy and peacebuilding, as it can promote good governance, advance human rights, and uphold the rule of law (Paffenholz, 2013). However, she mentioned also that it is crucial to acknowledge that the functions and responsibilities of civil society may differ depending on the stage of the conflict and may not carry the same weight and effectiveness throughout all conflict phases (Paffenholz, 2006).

On the other hand, Barnes (2009) conducted a categorisation of the functions of civil society working towards peace, delineating eight points: (i) waging conflict constructively (ii) shifting conflict attitudes; (iii) defining the peace agenda (iv) mobilising constituencies for peace; (v) reducing violence and promoting stability; (vi) peacemaking/conflict resolution; (vii) community-level peacemaking; (viii) changing root causes and building cultures of peace. Despite the distinct terminology used by Barnes and Paffenholz in their respective categorisations, their frameworks share several similarities in practical application. Barnes (2009) stressed the role of civil society in issues of injustice, creating conditions for peace, mediation, and consolidation but also the prevention and working on healing and reconciliation (Barnes, 2009).

Therefore, the fact that civil society has a role in peacebuilding is agreed upon; however, literature and cases have determined that monitoring the impact of civil society in peacebuilding still needs to be improved. Recently, researchers have studied civil society participation in monitoring the implementation of peace agreements. Ross (2017) outlined different modalities of engagement and concluded that civil society has relevant advantages in monitoring tasks through local knowledge, access, expertise and capacity. Furthermore, Molloy and Bell (2019) suggested that involving civil society in such mechanisms increases the legitimacy of the implementation process.

Some authors, such as Barnes (2009), mentioned how significant it is to achieve a systemised approach to collaboration between non-governmental organisations or people who have an interest or influence over a particular situation, either among a domestic or international audience. For this reason, "much more can be done to strengthen civil society capacities in this area [peace] by fostering networks to mobilise rapid responses" (Barnes, 2006, p.46). Besides that, it is essential to operate at different levels to facilitate engagement, specifically where civil society serves as a "boundary partner" that bridges various levels (Barnes, 2006).

As a final point, the World Bank and United Nations (2018) have highlighted the significance of civil society organisations acting as mediators and creating platforms for dialogue, particularly in situations where such avenues for dissent may be restricted.

2.3. Analytical framework: Seven functions of civil society in peacebuilding

The analytical framework adopted in this dissertation is based on Thania Paffenholz and Christoph Spurk's proposed seven functions of civil society in peacebuilding, as presented in the literature review. This approach has significantly contributed to the understanding of civil society's role as a crucial political actor and its potential to facilitate peacebuilding. Paffenholz's contributions have been particularly significant in peacemaking, peacebuilding, and human rights. This conceptual framework has allowed for analysing specific case studies, as exemplified in conflicts in Guatemala, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Afghanistan, Israel and Palestine, Cyprus, Bosnia and Turkey.

The seven functions of civil society are:

Protection: This function involves directly protecting affected populations from attacks by the state or other groups that generate violence and encroach upon their freedoms (Paffenholz &

Spurk, 2010). Despite the state's obligation to protect its citizens, this remains an essential function for civil society. This function includes, among others, "international accompaniment, watchdog activities, the creation of "zone of peace" humanitarian aid and civil society activities for human security" (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010, p.67).

Monitoring: This role involves overseeing state and authority actions to exert control over their behaviour, serving as a mechanism for holding governments accountable. Such monitoring is typically carried out to reduce human rights abuses, ensure compliance with agreements, prevent corruption, or prevent the misuse of public resources (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010).

Advocacy: The articulation of interests of the most vulnerable groups and the creation of communication channels to raise awareness and put them on the public agenda are part of this function (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010). According to Paffenholz's proposal, there are three types of advocacy: discreet and behind-the-scenes advocacy carried out by respected individuals, professional advocacy by civil society organisations through specific actions, and advocacy involving massive mobilisation of interest groups (Inclusive Peace, 2021).

In group socialisation: This function is focused on "inculcating a culture of peace especially within divided societies; the objective is to promote attitude changes within society by developing peaceful conflict and reconciliation" (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010, p.70). Moreover, it seeks to contribute to the formation of citizens by fostering habits such as tolerance, mutual trust, and commitment to democratic values (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010). To achieve adequate socialisation, it is relevant to complement formal and informal spheres (Inclusive Peace, 2021).

Social Cohesion: This function aims to strengthen the bonds between citizens, similar to the previous function. However, it emphasises developing social capital and facilitating peaceful coexistence among adversarial groups (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010). It also recognises the importance of building bridges that consider all lines of conflict rather than only the most obvious ones (Inclusive Peace, 2021).

Facilitation: This function portrays civil society as an actor capable of negotiating with the state and diverse interest groups to establish or define certain relationships (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010). This function differs from social cohesion, as its facilitation focuses on acting

as an intermediary in a specific issue, such as providing humanitarian aid or negotiating a peace agreement (Inclusive Peace, 2021).

Service delivery: This function entails directly providing citizens services, such as shelter and basic services, to the most vulnerable individuals (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010). Combining it with other functions is important to prevent this function from being mistaken for a development project. In fact, Paffenholz suggests that service delivery can serve as an entry point for carrying out other functions (Inclusive Peace, 2021).

As mentioned in the literature review, this conceptual framework extends beyond defining the role in implementing the seven functions. In addition, Paffenholz's studies suggest the importance of considering that the effectiveness of civil society actions depends on the phase of the conflict in which they take place, including phases of the war, armed conflict, windows of opportunity for peace negotiations, or post-conflict contexts following large-scale violence (Paffenholz, 2009) as well as contextual factors.

This study aims to analyse the role of ReD as a case study in the peacebuilding efforts of Colombia. The analysis will focus on the organisation's implementation of the seven peacebuilding functions, its operation during different conflict phases, the contextual factors influencing its functioning, and its actions across various geographical levels.

3. Case Study Selection

3.1. Colombia: internal armed conflict and progress for peace

The internal conflict in Colombia is one of the most complex, protracted and deadly conflicts in the Western Hemisphere. It is a multi-layered and complicated issue that has affected different aspects of Colombian society for over five decades. The internal conflict in Colombia has been shaped by a number of different actors, including left-wing guerrilla groups, right-wing paramilitary organisations, drug cartels and the Colombian government forces, all of which have been responsible for various acts of violence and human rights violations throughout the conflict.

The conflict has had a devastating impact on Colombian society, resulting in thousands of deaths, forced displacements, disappearances, kidnappings and other human rights violations. According to the Colombian Truth Commission's final report (2022), it is estimated that nearly nine million people were victims of the armed conflict between 1985 and 2018.

Paramilitary groups are responsible for the highest percentage of crimes, followed by guerrilla groups and then state actors (Truth Commission, 2022).

Figure 1: The toll of Colombia's Armed Conflict
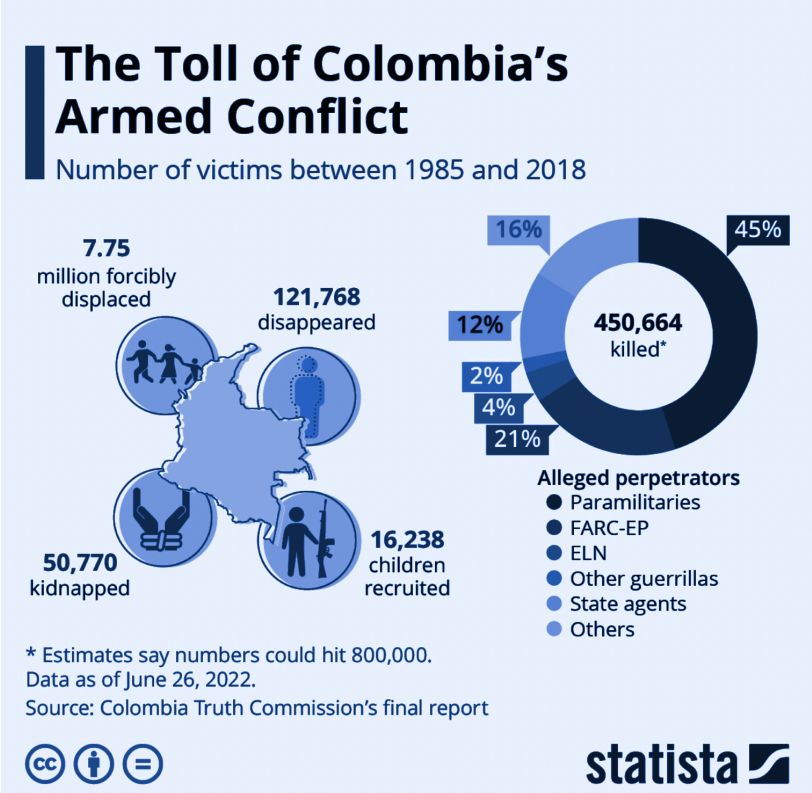
Source: Statista (2021)

The state has made many attempts to negotiate with armed groups since the 1990s. Despite these attempts, many negotiations ultimately failed due to the armed groups' mistrust, intransigence and failure to abide by the agreed terms or cease their violent activities. As a result, the Colombian government has relied heavily on military force and state repression to combat the threat posed by these groups. However, this approach has been criticised for violating human rights.

However, there have been some positive developments in recent years. For example, the peace agreement signed in 2016 between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP −which was founded in 1964 as a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla group. The agreement provides for several measures to address the root causes of the conflict and provide justice for the victims. The agreement included six neuralgic points of the causes of the conflict: (i) comprehensive rural reform, (ii) political participation, (iii) ending the conflict, (iv) solving

the problem of illegal drugs, (v) victims of the conflict, and (vi) implementation, verification and endorsement (University of Edinburgh, 2016).

The ratification of this peace agreement was seen as a significant step towards resolving the conflict. However, due to the shortcomings of the state in implementation and the persistence of economic, social and political factors that perpetuate war and inequality, there have also been negative impacts. One critical issue is that some former combatants who signed the final agreement have kept their weapons. In addition, dissidents have emerged, and historical cycles of violence continue as these actors fight for control of territories previously occupied by FARC-EP (Rodeemos el Diálogo, 2023).

The escalation of armed attacks by various groups in recent years has worsened the situation in several regions of Colombia to levels comparable to the period before the peace process in 2022. This has led to widespread violence and death threats against individuals, including human rights defenders, journalists, former FARC fighters, indigenous and Afro-descendant representatives and other activists (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

In 2022, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported around 400 alleged violations of International Humanitarian Law and other humanitarian norms. Over 50% of these alleged violations were related to homicides, threats, sexual violence, use of explosive devices with indiscriminate effects, recruitment and participation of children and adolescents in hostilities, arbitrary deprivation of liberty, and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, among other serious conduct (ICRC, 2023). In addition, a specific issue that reflects this situation is the recording of 515 victims of explosive devices, the highest figure in the last six years (ICRC, 2023). Hence, it is evident that there is a pressing need to continue addressing the underlying causes of the conflict.

The signing of the peace agreement in 2016 was a crucial step towards resolving decades of conflict in the country. However, there are still significant challenges that need to be addressed in order to fully implement the measures outlined in the agreement. Furthermore, progress in negotiations with other armed groups is necessary to achieve sustainable peace in the country.

3.2. Understanding Colombia's Civil Society: Characteristics and Composition

Unlike other countries in the region, Colombia has struggled with the problem of violence due to its protracted internal armed conflict. In this context, civil society has played a crucial role in protecting human rights, fighting corruption and promoting social justice. Civil society is widespread in the public sphere, with various organisations and movements advocating for change. These initiatives have emerged from both informal civil society movements and organised civil society.

Civil society's interest in peace processes in Colombia has been particularly active. Since the first attempts at dialogue in the 1980s and 1990s, civil society sought to (i) promote favourable public opinion for possible peace processes, (ii) facilitate dialogue between the parties directly involved in the conflict –this action was essentially carried out by leaders of the Catholic Church and intellectual leaders– and (iii) monitor compliance and violation of agreements reached in peace attempts, especially violations of International Humanitarian Law by armed actors (García, 2013).

Despite its efforts, civil society encounters obstacles when it comes to exerting significant influence on decision-making. Particularly noteworthy is the exclusion of civil society representatives from participation in the negotiations. This situation differs markedly from previous cases, such as in Northern Ireland (1994-98), where their presence at the negotiating table gave them authority, or in Mali (1996), where direct participation was facilitated (Zambrano, L., & Isa, 2013). Another issue is that civil society, despite its dynamism, lacks sufficient adaptability and coordination. As a result, its activity has been reactive and situational, distanced from the political structures and even questioning their legitimacy (Rettberg, 2006). Furthermore, Colombian civil society is characterised by regional fragmentation, which is a significant obstacle to achieving peace (Zambrano, L., & Isa, 2013).

These restrictions were evident even during the negotiation phase of the peace agreement signed between the Colombian state and the FARC-EP guerilla in 2016. Although massive events were organised to gather initiatives, there was no active participation or dialogue with the negotiators. However, after discussing the first point of the agreement, the government opened a dialogue with civil society in which victims, women, organisations and ethnic groups could participate (Alliance for Peace, 2019). The main mechanisms and spaces for civil society participation were (i) official consultation forums, where proposals from civil

society on the agreed points were received; (ii) direct visits by organisations and experts on each of the issues discussed and consultations with academics on the points to be negotiated; (iii) it was agreed to create a technological platform that would allow easy access and participation by any citizen via the internet (Valencia & Villarreal, 2020).

It is striking that in this negotiation process, civil society itself sought these participation scenarios. This was undoubtedly relevant, considering that civil society's inclusion in peace agreements is necessary for a solid implementation since it increases accountability and legitimacy (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010). However, what has happened since the implementation of the agreement has been fraught with uncertainty as public efforts to implement the peace agreement were considerably weakened by the government of former President Ivan Duque, in which political will to implement the agreement was very low. This has represented a challenge for civil society in terms of resources and a favourable political environment, limiting the effort of articulation and complementarity among different civil society expressions to generate counterweights that favour long-term processes (Alliance for Peace, 2019).

The election of Gustavo Petro in 2022 as president has brought significant changes to the political landscape for the peace accord in Colombia. His political platform and rhetoric are aligned with the implementation of the accord. Additionally, the government is now prioritising the implementation of the accord and is even opening up spaces for negotiations with other armed groups, such as the ELN and the FARC-EP dissidents. Given this potential political will and the fact that Colombian civil society is highly mobilised, there is an opportunity for civil society to have a greater influence and participation in peacebuilding efforts.

3.3. An Exploration of the Colombian Experience: Rodeemos el Diálogo (ReD) case

According to what has been said so far, civil society in Colombia is characterised by its dynamism and activity, although it lacks coordination and integration. The diversity within civil society allows for both formal and informal organisations. In recent decades, numerous initiatives have been developed with the aim of promoting peace. However, there have also been criticisms of agendas that may overlook genuine community needs, as well as concerns about organisations that depend on funding from international donors or the state, which could lead to potential conflicts of interest. Despite these challenges, certain groups have

managed to overcome these problems while making an important contribution to achieving peace. Formal organisations, in particular, are recognised for their technical capacity in this regard.

This study focuses on ReD as a case study. Initially established in 2012, ReD began as a gathering of Colombians and individuals with ties to Colombia living in London who wanted to demonstrate their support for the negotiations between the FARC-EP and the government called by former Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos. They sought to promote these efforts through appropriate means while remaining visible in British society (Cousins, 2014).

As the peace negotiations progressed, ReD expanded its activities and presence in Colombia in 2014, and subsequently formalised its status as a non-profit foundation in Colombia. Hence, as its website states, ReD is "a transnational and non-partisan network of Colombians and friends of Colombia. Based in Colombia and the UK, [ReD] has held academic, cultural and advocacy events so that people can learn about the progress of peace negotiations and implementation of the Peace Agreement" (Rodeemos el Diálogo, n.d). Despite its humble beginnings, the team has grown into a larger network that operates in different cities in Colombia and abroad. ReD has been present in Bogotá since 2014, in Cali since 2017 and in Pasto since 2019. Currently, the organisation has over 100 members in Colombia, the UK and various countries around the world (Canada, Slovenia, Germany, USA, Denmark and Spain) who volunteer in different areas (Rodeemos el Diálogo, n.d).

The organisation has focused on working towards a "spontaneous peacebuilding" approach that differs from the liberal model. It is not based on social change theories or fixed timelines but rather on the spontaneity and power of human imagination to identify opportunities within obstacles (Gómez, 2022). ReD, therefore, supports peace-building efforts in Colombia by creating spaces for dialogue. In particular, the organisation seeks to use dialogue to help Colombians cultivate a critical awareness of what is happening and find their own voice for peace. The two main objectives of the organisation are (i) to understand and support developments in the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement and negotiations with other armed groups involved in the conflict and (ii) to promote, encourage and develop spaces for dialogue and reconciliation through ReD initiatives at local, national and transnational levels.

Taking into account the characteristics of the functioning of civil society in Colombia, the specific aspects of the organisation and knowledge and links to the organisation, ReD was

chosen as a case study to analyse the role that organised civil society has played and should play in peacebuilding.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section relies on the information provided by the interviewed individuals during the data collection process and the insights gathered from events, conferences, workshops, and practical experiences conducted in 2022 throughout the internship. As a result, most of the findings are referenced in a general manner, with a few direct quotations from the interviewees. Therefore, the following table presents the individuals' data:

Table 1: List of interviewees

Geographical level	Place	Person	Gender	Profile
International	United Kingdom	Interviewee 1	Male	Researcher
International	United Kingdom	Interviewee 2	Male	Co-founder
National	Bogotá, Colombia	Interviewee 3	Female	Director
National	Bogotá, Colombia	Interviewee 4	Female	Researcher
National	Bogotá, Colombia	Interviewee 5	Female	Coordinator
National	Bogotá, Colombia	Interviewee 6	Female	Coordinator
National	Bogotá, Colombia	Interviewee 7	Female	Researcher
Local	Pasto, Colombia	Interviewee 8	Male	Coordinator
Local	Cali, Colombia	Interviewee 9	Male	Coordinator

Source: own elaboration

4.1. Analysing ReD's implementation within the Framework of Seven Functions of Civil Society in Peacebuilding

4.1.1 Protection

Whilst ReD does not primarily focus on protecting civilian populations through humanitarian aid, as this is ultimately the responsibility of the state, it has been found that the organisation has indirectly contributed to the protection of civilians in specific instances. This is due to their recognition of the fundamental role that civil society plays in empowering vulnerable populations and communities.

During Colombia's protests in 2021, ReD provided legal advice, reported, and supported victims of police violence. Another method of indirect protection was through external reports and communications, which created a protective umbrella for victims. ReD has also engaged with experts in the field to provide recommendations and guidance on implementing protective measures in conflict zones and developing prevention routes to protect against possible violations of human rights or International Humanitarian Law. For instance, workshops were conducted with young people in 2023 to educate them on how to respond when there is a potential infringement or violation of human rights.

Furthermore, as reported by an interviewed member, the organisation is currently collaborating with the University of Winchester to identify non-armed spontaneous civil protection strategies in two areas with high levels of armed conflict: Nariño and Norte de Santander. This research project aims to indirectly protect civilian populations by generating knowledge and disseminating good practices for safeguarding vulnerable communities, thereby empowering resistance processes for preventing human rights violations in these territories.

There have been instances where some members of ReD, either individually or as a community, have provided assistance to individuals or leaders in imminent danger. As Paffenholz & Spurk (2010, p.68) argued in their framework, "in exceptional cases, civil society might take up some elements of protection interventions when it concerns their own communities". In ReD, such assistance has been more organic in nature rather than following a specific organisational strategy. An example of this was the case of a threatened social leader who was helped to escape to Ecuador, with some members of ReD contributing their own resources and networks to make it possible.

While ReD, in some instances, has assisted individuals who are threatened, protective functions do not constitute their primary focus. This is due to the highly complex and sensitive nature of the issue, which requires specific skills and resources beyond what the organisation currently possesses. However, as noted by some interviewees, the goal is to acquire these capabilities to implement future initiatives eventually. The implementation of such actions requires more human and financial capacity, as pointed out by Paffenholz (2010b), who affirms that the work of civil society organisations usually depends on external resources to carry out this function.

According to Paffenholz (2010a), the effectiveness of professional protection work is high when combined with monitoring and advocacy campaigns. This was effectively observed in the case of ReD, as some of its communications indirectly protected the population. Through monitoring situations, it was possible to access and understand the presenting risks. However, it was found that this function may also be linked to the socialisation function, as awareness of how to establish protection measures has been generated through education for peace and training, even creating consciousness of the need to protect oneself in violent environments when working towards peace. This could be a way to provide a preventive measure of protection.

The function of protection from civil society is more relevant during war and armed conflict (Paffenholz, 2010a). This can be evidenced in the case of ReD, as its interventions have been particularly during moments when the population is at risk of violence. However, it is crucial to bear in mind that throughout the conflict, some peaks of violence make the function very much needed.

4.1.2 Monitoring

The creation of early warning systems and reporting of human rights abuses are features of this function (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010). In this regard, several interviewees have noted that ReD does not have a specific focus on human rights. However, the organisation has undertaken work related to this field, as it is impossible to address peacebuilding without considering human rights. Consequently, over the years, topics related to this field have been incorporated, making the team a more multidisciplinary entity capable of reporting and monitoring peacebuilding issues.

During the investigation, it was found that ReD documented cases of human rights violations against young people and students, monitoring the incidents that occurred during the protests in Colombia in 2021[1] to prevent future similar situations. Committees for coexistence between youth and the police were established at the time. The findings obtained were

---

[1] The 2021 protests in Colombia were initially sparked by a proposed tax reform that aimed to increase taxes on middle-class and low-income households, which were perceived as disproportionately affecting those who were already financially vulnerable. The proposed reform led to widespread demonstrations across the country, with protesters calling for economic justice, political accountability, and an end to police brutality. The government's response to the protests was criticised, as there were reports of excessive use of force by the police and military, and several protesters were killed. The protests lasted for several months and ultimately resulted in the withdrawal of the proposed tax reform and resignation of the Minister of Finance (Crisis Group, 2021).

presented to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) representatives, who carried out working visits, as well as to oversight and control bodies, such as the Attorney General's Office, to initiate investigations. In addition, specific cases of human rights violations were monitored for months after the protests. Instead of generating early warnings or preventive actions, ReD carried out real-time monitoring, preparing reports with data on victims and cases.

On the other hand, in line with one of the organisation's missions, ReD has focused on monitoring the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement, with particular emphasis on aspects such as the reintegration of former combatants, the Truth Commission, the search for missing people, and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP). Based on the collected interview data, it was found that the organisation's primary function has been to provide support in implementing the agreement and to verify public entities' information against the organisation's actions and knowledge. In the case of the JEP, ReD participated in the national monitoring system established by the entity to oversee the sentencing and opening of macro-cases.

Currently, ReD also monitors negotiations with the ELN and other dissident groups. Such monitoring is carried out with the purpose of informing civil society about the progress of the negotiations, as well as the associated challenges and recommendations.

The most important and frequently mentioned strategy for monitoring, according to the individuals interviewed for this study, has been the publication of "snapshots" to compile information that is intended for dissemination to both state entities and armed groups, as well as to the general public and international community. These snapshots are published directly on the organisation's social media channels to raise awareness of the specific issue being addressed. This strategy is significant in accordance with Orjuela's (2010) assertion regarding the significant role of civil society in gathering information on human rights violations and situations that may escalate into violence, as well as in disseminating such information to a national and international audience.

The researcher identified one relevant aspect of the organisation, which is the large number of its members who are volunteers. Many of these volunteers also hold formal positions in other organisations or state entities, such as the Ombudsman's Office or the High Commissioner for Peace Office. This contributes to the effectiveness and accuracy of the monitoring efforts.

Therefore, these activities are closely related to the previous protection function, due to monitoring aims to support and protect persons who have been victims of violence. This is in line with Paffenholz and Spurk's (2010) suggestion that monitoring is a prerequisite for the protection and advocacy function.

In terms of conflict phases, in the case of ReD, this function is important in all conflict phases, but the monitoring activities carried out vary according to the context in each phase. For example, monitoring tends to focus on human rights in violent phases, while it tends to focus on compliance and follow-up in the negotiation and implementation phase (Paffenholz, 2010b).

4.1.3 Advocacy

Advocacy is considered one of the core functions of civil society in peacebuilding, as it must work to give greater weight to the voices of the most marginalised in the public agenda (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010). Several members of the organisation have noted that this strategy has been relevant in promoting dialogue and negotiation, which in turn has enabled ReD to have a greater impact on peacebuilding at different stages of the conflict and during its existence.

The organisation's advocacy work has mainly taken place discreetly in private, although it has also undertaken some public actions. The latter included issuing statements and writing specific letters to key actors in peace processes. For instance, ReD sent direct letters to heads of state and leaders of armed groups to ask for their support in resolving tensions when negotiations were on the verge of collapse. Many of these letters were also published in the main national media, sometimes as a result of ReD's media management efforts.

Similarly, ReD is known to organise public events and dialogues aimed at informing, engaging in dialogue and, to some extent, promoting the cause of sustainable peace through dialogue. During data collection, it was found that these events have been successful in mobilising people around certain issues and even attracting new members to the team. However, much of the organisation's work focused on building relationships and talking to key actors in private. The organisation's focus on private advocacy can be analysed from the perspective of the individual actors involved in the conflict:

Government: ReD has held bilateral meetings with government decision-makers to inform them of what is working well and to draw attention to aspects that need attention. According to some interviewees, during the negotiation process and the socialisation of the peace agreement, the need for peace education was emphasised, and discussions were held on how to create an environment conducive to peace. Such was the insistence on the need for this education that the government originally intended for ReD to conduct those training on the field, however, as the organisation was not formally constituted in Colombia, it was not possible to implement it since there were concerns about the lack of resources and capacity.

However, later in 2016, the organisation carried out a peace education campaign and promoted the "YES" vote in the plebiscite in more than 50 municipalities in the country, meeting with mayors, civil society and even officials to promote the agreement. In addition, although ReD is a non-partisan organisation, it has reached out to Congress officials for their perspectives and suggestions for monitoring and overseeing the implementation of the peace agreement. For example, in 2017, ReD participated in the "Ojo a La Paz" strategy, which aimed to monitor the implementation of the peace agreements and the debates in Congress on their approval. Interviews also mention ReD's effectiveness when the organisation signed agreements with candidates running for public positions and the inclusion of issues in government development plans, as in the case of Cali (a mid-size city in Colombia).

Civil society: ReD has been actively involved in the "Total Peace" initiative and Truth Commission roundtables, where different organisations meet to continue negotiation talks. ReD has also partnered with national initiatives and organisations to advocate for their causes jointly. During its participation in the ELN negotiations, ReD conducted surveys of the population to understand how civil society interpreted the negotiations with the ELN. Barnes (2002) sees these actions as a crucial function of civil society during negotiations.

Additionally, some members have acted as mediators in dialogue and conversation tables at a national level in the previous government. ReD also participates in the "Defendamos la Paz" movement, which disseminates and gives visibility to issues important to ReD. Furthermore, ReD is a member of the "Nariño Decide" platform, which brings together various social, environmental, and cultural organisations. Moreover, ReD has advocated particularly with the peace education programme for schools that includes in its contents political youth advocacy strategies. It is essential to highlight that participation in advocacy activities depends on the

members' training and preparedness to engage in different levels. ReD has gained visibility and established relationships with other organisations, which has increased the organisation's advocacy space.

International actors: From an international perspective, according to people interviewed, the organisation has maintained a close relationship with the British Parliament and has been able to influence which resources or initiatives the British government should prioritise in its policy, according to the identified needs. ReD has also participated in the Catatumbo humanitarian table, leveraging international support. Meetings have been held with British parliamentarians and members of the Catatumbo humanitarian table, urging them to pressure the previous government to sign the humanitarian agreement proposed by the table. Since ReD began in the United Kingdom and had a direct relationship with the ambassador, it generated an ability to influence and send direct messages to the negotiating table. Additionally, letters and statements have been sent to the regional offices of the UN verification mission.

Overall, the advocacy function has been relevant, as evidenced by the continued momentum and drive of the organisation. Advocacy efforts have been directed towards civil society, government, and armed groups. However, much of this work remains invisible and unknown to the public due to the sensitivity of these moments. Moreover, "for specific types of advocacy, the lack of capacities for both managing successful campaigns and specialised knowledge can become limitations (Paffenholz, 2010b, p.389).

As Paffenholz (2010a) argues, advocacy combined with monitoring tasks and support from international networks can increase its effectiveness. Additionally, advocacy strategies are typically aimed at protecting individuals in violent contexts.

Paffenholz and Spurk (2010) argue that advocating is significant in different phases of a conflict, and it has been found to be relevant in all stages. However, certain problems may vary in their importance during specific moments. This conclusion applies to this case study, as they advocate for holding those responsible for violent acts accountable during the violence phase, seeking spaces for civil society in negotiation processes during windows of opportunity; and calling for the implementation of agreements, such as the 2016 agreement with the FARC-EP, during the de-escalation phase of violence.

Paffenholz (2010b) has noted that civil society's engagement in advocacy efforts tends to wane after the signing of peace agreements. However, this assertion may not apply to ReD's case, due to the specific characteristics of the Colombian conflict. Despite signing the peace agreement and the subsequent implementation stage, violence has persisted, and new negotiation spaces with other armed groups have emerged. Therefore, ReD has needed to continue to engage in advocacy efforts

4.1.4 Socialisation in-group

During the data collection process, it was found that socialisation is one of the functions people feel most represented by and can easily relate to in ReD's work. The organisation has sought to create changes in specific groups such as schools, companies, prisons, and the organisation itself through peace education projects throughout different phases of conflict.

This function is understood as the socialisation of the culture of peace in society, so individuals deal with conflicts constructively while fostering group identity consolidation (Paffenholz, 2010b). In this sense, it was found that ReD has sought to generate internal and external dialogues. Additionally, there has been a focus on working on reconciliation issues, as it is very difficult to advance in reconciliation without dialogue mechanisms. In fact, some members mention that previously, even within academia, reconciliation was viewed as separate from peacebuilding, and it has only recently been given importance as part of ReD's strategies. This is related to Paffenholz & Spurk's (2010) assertion that this function aims to promote attitude change through the development of peaceful conflict resolution and reconciliation.

Regarding this function, it was found that ReD has done immense work in pedagogy for peace and the promotion of dialogue culture through training projects. This peace education process has directly impacted the protection of civilians and communities that have been victims of human rights violations in the most affected territories in the internal conflict. In fact, some of the interviewed individuals commented that communities have been very grateful as it is a way for them to feel part of the country's dynamics.

These capacity-building processes have been carried out within public schools –and on some specific occasions, private schools –prisons, companies, trade unions, youth groups, ex-combatants, and government entities. The most frequently mentioned projects related to

this line of work by the interviewees are the "Generation V+", the Community of Pedagogical Practices, and the "Non-Workshops". The work carried out in schools was significantly highlighted during the interviews, as educational institutions are usually the best spaces to carry out this function of socialisation (Paffenholz, 2010b).

The researcher found that promoting the principles of ReD (honesty, self-criticism, generosity, respect, solidarity, and co-responsibility) has been, as they call it, "an ethical compass" for the organisation's work both internally and externally. This demonstrates that these principles set the tone for internal and external dialogues and the actions or influence the organisation seeks to have. Some members have learned about the culture of peace and dialogue through their experience in the organisation and have applied it to their work as peacebuilders and their personal lives. In fact, as stated by Interviewee 2 (2023), "the greatest contribution of ReD to the culture of peace are the members who have stayed in the organisation for more than two or three years as volunteers". This, in a way, demonstrates the organisation's attempt to create human capital from the inside.

In this sense, education or pedagogy for peace in various spaces has been one of the organisation's most important strategies. It has been found that this intervention is not intended to be carried out massively, but instead, there is a conviction to carry it out in a more dedicated and micro manner. This approach contradicts, to some extent, the statement by Paffenholz & Spurk (2010, p.71) when they mention as a weakness that "most culture of peace activities are often too sporadic, lack coordination, and fail to create a critical mass movement for change," and their assertion that in several studies conducted, most strategies for peace education have not been effective (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010).

In the approach proposed by Paffenholz, there is no mention of the relationship between this function and others. Nevertheless, according to the findings of this research, a positive correlation between socialisation and social cohesion can be established (this will be further developed in the next section), and it is also considered a precondition for the protection function. This is because awareness has been created through the workshops about the need for self-protection and the protection of individuals in the face of conflict.

Paffenholz (2010a) notes that this function has limited effects during times of conflict and war. However, there is no clear explanation regarding this function's role during negotiation and violence de-escalation. As a result of this research, some limitations were found during

periods of violence, particularly concerning public order issues. Nevertheless, during periods of opportunity for negotiations and implementation, the role of ReD has remained consistent, adapting to milestones for peace.

4.1.5 Social Cohesión

ReD employs an approach of using dialogue as both a means and an end. The organisation carries out specific activities involving multiple actors to generate a lasting impact on the social fabric. It is important to note that the success of these activities is not solely measured in terms of the number of workshops or events held but rather in the social and cultural changes that can occur in the long term. However, it should be noted that this study did not identify the effectiveness of these strategies in the long term.

As mentioned by some interviewees, ReD has reached and impacted even those who are apathetic to achieving lasting peace. In this sense, ReD has engaged in dialogues with peace signatories, demobilised from previous peace processes, and aimed to sensitise civil society at large, mobilising young people to understand how to engage in dialogue with conflict actors. This purpose aligns with the views of Paffenholz (2010a, p. 427), who asserts that "the social cohesion depends on the effectiveness of conflict resolution workshops, dialogue projects and exchange projects".

The relationship-oriented cohesion for peace, which involves bringing members of conflicting groups together to foster relationships and promote peaceful behaviour, is what ReD has accomplished in this regard (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010). The most significant contribution in this sense is the involvement of indifferent sectors and organised civil society in listening to and engaging with one another on the armed conflict and the possibilities for peace. However, it was possible to identify that ReD has yet to take action to approach the other types of social cohesion mentioned by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010) as more effective. On the one hand, outcome-oriented cohesion for peace seeks to bring representatives or members of conflicting groups together to develop collaborative strategies for peacebuilding. On the other hand, outcome-oriented cohesion for businesses and development work aims to bring together these groups to develop initiatives that go beyond peacebuilding.

One of the most recognised and frequently mentioned initiatives by ReD during interviews and in the researcher's participation in the organisation is the 300 breakfasts for peace. These

breakfasts were able to bring together diverse actors who would not otherwise sit down to talk or would not coincide in the same space, including homemakers, employees, businesspersons, academics, students, former combatants, military members, with no objective to agree on anything, simply to dialogue. Initially, these spaces were conceived as something minimal, but today the impact of these spaces is still being analysed by the organisation. In fact, many people who are now part of ReD, and some who were interviewed for this research and whom the researcher met during the internship, joined through these breakfasts.

Another example found during the data collection process are the dialogue spaces that ReD has achieved between social leaders, representatives of victim collectives and former members of armed groups, where they engage in dialogue seeking a degree of truth, forgiveness and reconciliation. One example of this was the meeting between the victim leader Bertha Fries and the last commander of the FARC-EP, Rodrigo Londoño, in 2022 (Gómez, 2022).

As mentioned by one of the interviewees, "it has been a way of making actors reflect on the traces, wounds, and indelible events generated by violence, as people in some way manage to understand a common horizon, and through this, a step towards reconciliation is achieved" (Interviewee 5, 2023). This aligns with the conceptual framework used, as Paffenholz (2010b) mentions that people-to-people activities seek to unite young people, professional groups, and communities to change their attitudes and perception of the other as an enemy, and specialised NGOs usually implement these activities.

One example found during the research was that, amidst the polarisation experienced in Colombia prior to the plebiscite, where campaigns were promoting both the "yes" and "no" vote for the peace agreement, ReD fostered various spaces with young militants from the political party "Centro Democrático" –a party against the peace agreement– and young members of ReD, in order to engage in dialogue and understand opposing positions. Another scenario that emerged was a relationship between two young people from very different socioeconomic backgrounds who attended one of the peace breakfasts and began to promote youth training processes, generating a chain of peace promoters and thereby demonstrating the possibility of social cohesion.

Another example is that two young people of the same age, one the daughter of a commander in the FARC-EP and the other the daughter of a kidnap victim, engaged in dialogue and became close, achieving this transformation by seeing the person from a different perspective. These are among many examples of bringing together victims and victimisers. They are associated with the objective of the function of social cohesion, which is aimed at helping groups learn how to live together in peaceful coexistence (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010).

While ReD has contributed to bridging social sectors, there is evidence that attitude change does not necessarily translate into behavioural change, as noted by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010). Social cohesion should have a longer-term impact. The interviewees highlighted the importance of becoming knowledge and emotional replicators and conducting follow-ups on activities to analyse their impact. It is worth mentioning that the conceptual framework asserts that the lack of effectiveness in social cohesion is due to the dispersed, fragmented, and short-term nature of the activities (Paffenholz, 2010b).

Even though the authors do not mention any correlation with other functions in the conceptual framework, the findings of this case study suggest that the socialisation function could be a precondition for social cohesion, since a foundation of openness and awareness for dialogue with adversarial groups is laid by fostering group socialisation through peace education, which could lead to longer-term results.

Regarding the phases of conflict, Paffenholz (2010a) asserts that social cohesion activities usually occur during windows of opportunity and periods of de-escalation in violence. This is in line with the strategies ReD has implemented.

4.1.6 Facilitation

Some members of ReD have participated in negotiation spaces, demonstrating the facilitating role that the organisation has played in finding a negotiated solution to the armed conflict and bringing to the table the issues of interest to civil society. However, these occasions have been sporadic and have also depended on the role of certain leaders within the organisation who have gained recognition in the political spectrum. The fact that the organisation promotes dialogue in a non-partisan way makes this function easier, as it is not linked to ideologies or political positions.

During several interviews, it was mentioned that specific members of the organisation, particularly those in higher positions, have had the opportunity to participate in critical spaces of negotiations with armed groups. For example, in the peace negotiation attempt with the ELN in 2018, civil society organisations were invited to the table in Quito, Ecuador, where ReD members participated. Additionally, some members attended preliminary meetings to disarm the FARC-EP in 2017. In these spaces, difficult conversations were held on forgiveness and reconciliation.

The participation in negotiations with both the FARC-EP and the ELN demonstrates ReD's role as a facilitator, specifically in the possibility of finding a negotiated solution to the armed conflict and bringing to the table the issues concerning civil society. An example of this has been ReD's participation in meetings with peace negotiators from the ELN. Civil society participation is a crucial point on the current agenda and a significant flag for the ELN in this process.

As one of the interviewees stated, "it is not only the message, but who conveys the message" (Interviewee 7, 2023). ReD has an expertise in dialogue that is different and generates trust because it focuses on listening to communities, not just imposing actions or projects. However, the facilitator role has been even more discreet than advocacy, as few interviewees could give examples or experiences of this type. Generally, it was mentioned that those with high-level profiles carry it out.

Linked to the above, Paffenholz (2010b) points out that this function has a relationship with the advocacy function and, according to what was observed in the research, there is a direct link between advocacy work and gaining access to negotiation spaces, given that informal advocacy work often contributes to specific issues on the negotiation agenda (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010).

In terms of conflict phases, the conceptual framework suggests that the facilitator role is vital during windows of opportunity to achieve peace and after established negotiations, and this has been evidenced in ReD's case, where it has –on a few occasions–served as a facilitator in negotiation spaces with the FARC-EP and ELN throughout the conflict.

4.1.7 Service delivery

One common point in the data analysis was that initially, participants believed that ReD did not carry out this function. However, during the conversation, some topics emerged that pointed to providing services to fill gaps and provide technical capacity. ReD has yet to be characterised as an organisation that immediately reacts to humanitarian situations in the regions.

Some examples include providing legal support to victims of the 2021 strike and assisting victims with submitting reports for the opening of cases and investigations related to macro-cases under the jurisdiction of the JEP. Victims often lack the knowledge and resources to pay for such advisory services. Another example is the peace education project "Generation V+", which began in partnership with the Truth Commission in specific territories. Over time, ReD has developed technical expertise to enable communities to take ownership of these processes and ensure sustainability.

In addition, one of the most frequently mentioned strategies in the interviews, in this case, is the so-called "non-workshops" on peace education that are held in schools in the most vulnerable areas of the country, where students cannot afford such training. ReD goes to schools to teach peace classes free of charge. Furthermore, training on dialogue and conflict resolution has been provided to young people to enable them to become peace facilitators. For example, in 2019, workshops on dialogue and understanding were held in the "Buen Pastor" women's prison in Bogotá.

Regarding economic support, ReD has implemented concrete strategies such as the solidarity fund created to implement breakfasts for peace, so that the most vulnerable could attend these spaces, covering transportation and meals. As for emergency support, cases have been very specific. There was a trend of the "baby boom" of demobilised FARC-EP members with the advancement of negotiations. They began to see the possibility of becoming parents, considering that pregnancies were prohibited in the FARC-EP. ReD supported these demobilised individuals at that time by sending diapers and other necessary supplies.

Regard to the phases of conflict, as Paffenholz & Spurk (2010, p.74) emphasise, "during armed conflicts, the provision of aid and services by civil society actors (mainly NGOs) increases as state structures are destroyed or weakened". In the case of ReD, these actions
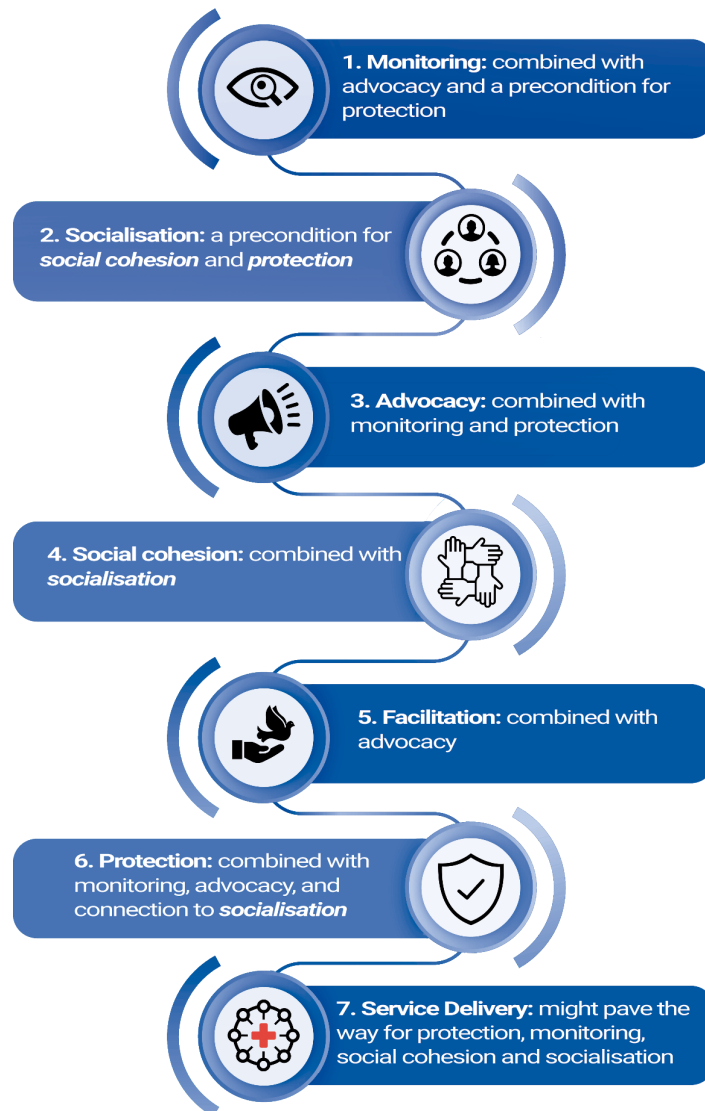
have been ad hoc, but it could be understood that they are indeed executed as emergency measures in situations of violence. Additionally, participation in the "baby boom" is a type of action that occurs in the de-escalation phase of violence and might pave the way for socialisation and monitoring.

The service delivery function is attributed to civil society only when the related actions allow entry points for other functions (Paffenholz, 2010b). Therefore, in other cases, this function has paved the way for the execution of other actions such as protection, monitoring, and social cohesion, especially with support from donors who often allocate resources for these activities (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010). However, in the case of ReD, as these actions are organic and sporadic, it is difficult to determine their effectiveness in facilitating other functions.

In sum, according to the analysis of the collected information, the interviews revealed that the organisation prioritised monitoring, advocacy, socialisation, and social cohesion respectively while being less relevant in facilitation, protection, and service delivery. Similarly, the analysis revealed that many functions are effective when carried out interdependently, as proposed by Paffenholz (2010a). Moreover, additional relationships were identified in this analysis that were not originally addressed in the conceptual framework. These include (i) the correlation between protection and socialisation, as peace education indirectly safeguards the civilian population and (ii) the positive correlation between socialisation and social cohesion, as fostering group socialisation through peace education establishes a foundation of openness and awareness for dialogue with adversarial groups, potentially yielding long-term outcomes. (Figure 2).

Regarding the phases of the conflict, it was found that the operation of the functions varies depending on the phase of the conflict, considering that there are different needs and spaces for the action of civil society.

Figure 2: Relevance and relations of the seven functions of CS

1. Monitoring: combined with advocacy and a precondition for protection

2. Socialisation: a precondition for *social cohesion* and *protection*

3. Advocacy: combined with monitoring and protection

4. Social cohesion: combined with *socialisation*

5. Facilitation: combined with advocacy

6. Protection: combined with monitoring, advocacy, and connection to *socialisation*

7. Service Delivery: might pave the way for protection, monitoring, social cohesion and socialisation

Source: own elaboration

4.2. Contextual factors

As Paffenholz and Spurk (2010) suggest, analysing and understanding functions in their context is crucial when examining a specific case. The environment in which civil society carries out its activities is vital for determining effectiveness or operability in peacebuilding. It allows for analysing external factors that influence organisations' capacity to act or exert influence (Paffenholz et al., 2010). Therefore, this section primarily examines the political and electoral context, violence, international funding and the pandemic, as these were the most frequently mentioned topics during the interviews.

Concerning the national political and electoral context, since its inception in 2012, ReD has operated under the framework of three national governments: Juan Manuel Santos, Iván Duque, and the current government of Gustavo Petro. During the first government, with the peace announcements and negotiations, there was a broader space for civil society, and peace initiatives began to emerge, among them ReD. As one of the team members mentioned, the organisation was a novelty, as it was bringing something new by supporting the negotiations through dialogue.

It was striking that some interviewees mentioned that during the Santos government, there was more space for civil society, and the citizens were more open to discussing peace (*socialisation* and *social cohesion*). This government had openness and communication with social organisations, especially towards the end of the term, through the High Commissioner for Peace. There was an attempt to include different civil society organisations to accompany the process to integrate them and transmit what was happening in the negotiation so that they could be multipliers of what was being signed in Havana (*socialisation* and *social cohesion*).

With the arrival of Duque in 2018, the space for civil society working on peace issues was reduced, as most interviewees mentioned. According to the findings, ReD tried to align itself with the international community's sentiment for peace implementation, maintaining activities in Colombia but with solid support from London through *advocacy* and *monitoring*. During this period, ReD only had one interaction with the Duque administration, specifically for participation in the dialogue table with civil society, which had no significant impact or follow-up. The organisation had several attempts to establish communication with the government, but it was unsuccessful. Although ReD did not have an activist or radical position, it was considered part of the progressive civil society in opposition to the government. At this point, the strategy was to create a counterbalance through *monitoring*, *advocacy*, and *socialisation*.

It has been thought that the space for civil society expands when there are democratic governments. However, as Paffenholz et al. (2010) mention, in many cases, it is not enough, as the ideological stance is a relevant aspect of the participation of this sector, and factors such as clientelism and personalism in the political spectrum can be disabling factors for civil society's participation. This is applicable in Colombia during the Duque administration since, from his campaign, he opposed the agreement signed, which meant that he had no political will to prioritise peace in his government, and therefore, there was no space for civil society.

Nevertheless, from the perception of several interviewees, most peace initiatives remained regardless of this limitation.

In the current government, which began in August 2022, there has been a paradigm shift as it is aligned with the principles and values that ReD has sought to promote. This government has spoken about dialogue and the implementation of peace. During the months of this government, ReD has had several approaches and direct communication because many current public officials were part of the social movement (*advocacy*). Additionally, within a more open government framework on the issue of peace, there is an opportunity for people to feel more willing to listen to what the government has to say (*socialisation* and *social cohesion*).

This more open attitude of the government has made the organisation focus less on monitoring and highlighting what needs to be done. ReD does not need to constantly call for action or denounce (*advocacy* and *monitoring*), as communications are more framed in motivating the dialogue that the government wants to have, the implementation of the agreement, and making recommendations and suggestions.

However, according to some people interviewed, the government has yet to allow civil society organisations to be intermediaries (*facilitation*). From what has been observed, the understanding of dialogue differs from that of the organisation (*social cohesion*). Nevertheless, in a way favourable to civil society, this context now makes these formal and informal organisations demand the change the new government wants to foster.

In sum, it has been found that although there have been national political and electoral contextual factors that have influenced the organisation's activities at different times, according to the information gathered, ReD understands that peacebuilding is a political matter, and identifying as a non-partisan organisation allows for a more neutral position in various environments. Although challenges have arisen due to the political and electoral context, no direct attacks or persecutions against team members have been reported.

About the local political and electoral context, changes in local governments have been relevant in terms of their influence on the territories (*advocacy*), as shifts in ideology, whether left or right, can close doors to organisations in the regions and interrupt participation processes, particularly in Nariño. Moreover, during election periods, opportunities arise, particularly in the territories, to engage in dialogues with political candidates to identify their

stances and positions regarding peace-related issues, thus attempting to include implementation priorities in their proposals (*advocacy*).

It was found that violence has also been a significant disabling factor of ReD's activities. For instance, the 2021 protests led to an increase in documented cases of human rights violations due to the peaceful protests turning violent, particularly in Cali and Pasto (*monitoring*). As Paffenholz et al. (2010, p.410) emphasise, "violence can be a central motive for civil society organisations to advocate for peace".

Moreover, the interviews showed difficulties for teachers and students in conducting peace pedagogy workshops in environments affected by armed conflict and with the presence of armed actors. These environments represent a danger to the workshop facilitators (*protection*) and the individuals they seek to engage in dialogue. Sometimes, individuals do not participate in conversations or share their experiences due to security concerns. This hinders ReD's objective in those territories from pursuing socialisation. A violent context can make organisations a target of violence, undermining civil society's ability to support peacebuilding (Paffenholz et al., 2010).

It was found that another issue that influences the location and effectiveness of civil society is the relationship with donors and sources of funding. International cooperation significantly impacts how social policies and initiatives are developed in Colombia, and organisations typically can only function with this type of income. However, what was found in ReD is that its leaders are aware of the influence that these external actors can have as a new form of "postcolonialism", and for this reason, the organisation has functioned mainly through volunteering since its creation, with both high-level profiles and individuals beginning their professional careers.

Nevertheless, it was also found that the organisation has had more donor-funded projects in recent years than at the outset. This is primarily because "even though NGOs work with volunteers, many activities would simply not take place without donor money" (Paffenholz et al., 2010). Moreover, it is worth mentioning that political and electoral factors and violence have naturally affected donor engagement. When there was an opening for peace, the opportunities for new initiatives and projects were much more significant than when there were physical obstacles to intervention.

Throughout the research, it was possible to identify, although unrelated to the conceptual framework used, that the pandemic was a relevant factor in ReD's actions. Despite being an unpredictable context, it significantly influenced at least a year and a half of ReD's activities since the organisation is mainly composed of volunteers and, therefore, they dedicated more time to the organisation. This fact strengthened *monitoring* and *advocacy* by proliferating events, documents, and statements.

This study's results underscore the external environment's significant influence on civil society's efficacy and functionality in promoting peacebuilding. Specifically, for ReD, government changes and election periods were found to have the most significant impact, followed by instances of violence, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and finally, the role of external donors.

4.3. Local, national and international level

4.3.1 International actions

This research has found that the conceptual framework refers to international actors such as regional organisations or donors. In the analysed case study, it is essential to note the work carried out by the ReD UK team at the international level, which deserves to be thoroughly analysed. Additionally, it is imperative to highlight that the team mainly comprises Colombians who live and study abroad, making them a predominantly an academic team.

It is important to note that ReD was created in the United Kingdom to support the dialogues that started in Colombia in 2012. From the analysis of the information obtained from interviews, workshops and conferences, it was identified that from the outset, the role of the team established in the UK has been clear. This team has played a crucial role in establishing bridges between what is happening in Colombia and those with limited knowledge of what is happening in the country, such as Colombians abroad and foreigners.

Furthermore, at specific moments, support has been provided to monitoring efforts from the international level, as in the case of the Truth Commission mentioned by one of the interviewees. In this case, ReD provided help collecting testimonies from victims of exile and members of the Colombian diaspora in the UK for the international chapter of the Truth Commission's final report, launched in July 2022. This type of support is expected in organisations and groups working from abroad to monitor conflict situations, give

recommendations to decision-makers, and provide information to human rights organisations or groups seeking to have an impact (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010).

Based on the analysis conducted and the organisation's experience, it was found that advocacy work from the ReD team in the United Kingdom has been relevant, mainly due to the influence they have tried to exert through the British government. The ReD team has been invited to parliamentary meetings to discuss the peace process in Colombia and the state of implementation of the agreement. According to the interviewed individuals, ReD has provided information to help define policy on Colombia, intervention, and cooperation roadmaps.

A clear example of the effectiveness of advocacy was when the Colombian government cut 90% of the budget allocated to the Truth Commission, and ReD went to Parliament to exert pressure and prevent the cuts. This situation resulted in the publication of statements that various important media outlets in Colombia picked up. These actions are relevant because international advocacy for specific issues allows for pressure on governments and mobilising support for peacebuilding (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010).

In line with this, one of the most highlighted themes during the data collection was the importance of seeking conversations in English, as it helps to consolidate and visualise the problems in Colombia and thus influence to some extent, the actions of international organisations and governments. The interviewees see that windows of opportunity have arisen to tell the British government and other agencies where they should focus their resources. It is interesting to observe that the advocacy that has been carried out from the UK through the British government is perceived as effective, considering that reports to Parliament have been sent directly to the Colombian government or even to offices of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia. These tasks at the international level have been carried out by the team in the UK, and Paffenholz et al. (2010) point out that the influence of the diaspora of civil society depends mainly on the level of education and relative economic capacity, as well as having tools to create proximity to power in other countries.

Although the high academic level of individuals at the international level is an advantage for the organisation's functions, there is tension between those individuals in the territories –generally activists– and those with higher levels of education residing abroad (Paffenholz et al., 2010). This situation can be observed in the case of ReD, as some integration and

communication difficulties have been encountered due to language barriers and educational differences. It is important to note that the fact that individuals are abroad can generate legitimacy issues when cooperating with individuals in a conflict-affected country (Paffenholz et al., 2010).

Although the team has had influence in the UK, where most members abroad are located, recent contacts have been made with the Belgian government to discuss the importance of total peace and seek support for specific issues in Colombia. This connection might be an opportunity to build a broader ReD abroad.

Additionally, ReD UK has created the "Critical Dialogues of Reconciliation", organised spaces that promote dialogue from a multicultural and interdisciplinary perspective around the theme of reconciliation. In these spaces –in which the researcher participated– experts and non-experts are invited to dialogue on specific topics, generating an exchange of perspectives and opinions. These spaces can be seen as socialisation and social cohesion actions because they seek to create a culture of peace, dialogue, and reconciliation, trying to impact different groups. However, it can be analysed that due to the audience of these dialogues, there is a risk of "preaching to the converted", meaning that participants already have a positive attitude towards the ideals or principles the organisation promotes (Paffenholz, 2010b).

Within the research, a correlation between the international and local levels of the organisation was identified. Through the advocacy function from abroad, resources have been mobilised from universities and cooperation agencies for projects mainly executed locally. One example is the partnership with the University of Bristol for the memory collection project aimed at reflecting the conflict's impact on marginalised communities (University of Bristol, 2019). Through these actions, the voices not heard in the territory are elevated to an international level. In addition, the project mentioned in the previous section to identify non-armed spontaneous civil protection strategies ultimately supports protection actions in the territories, often related to supporting transnational organisations and networks directly and indirectly (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010). However, according to observations, the protection function has yet to be a priority for the ReD UK team.

Furthermore, there is a relationship between the international and national levels as they interact permanently to strengthen advocacy actions because the organisation's leaders are located at these geographical levels. This relationship between the national and international

level allows internal conflicts to be put on the international agenda and thus ensure constant support (Paffenholz, 2010b).

4.3.2 National actions

It is essential to highlight that the Bogotá office began operating in 2014, after the London group, and that ReD Colombia is formally constituted as a non-profit organisation, which to some extent centralises management in the city and allows for broader coverage of ReD's functions.

During the interviews, the researcher found that advocacy is a recurrent action in ReD Bogotá. Among the most mentioned strategies during these spaces are encounters, conversations, and dialogues with Congress to understand their perspectives and proposals and to provide political oversight, follow-up, and legislation regarding issues related to peacebuilding and the implementation of agreements. Likewise, high-level members of the organisation have been able to participate and have an impact from different roles with the Colombian government, specifically with members of the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace. Some people even ended up working there as a result of this advocacy.

In Bogotá, the advocacy work has been carried out along specific lines, such as education, where there is coordination with the Ministry of Education, "EducaPaz", and the Truth Commission. A topic mentioned repeatedly during the interviews is the participation of ReD in different civil society spaces, such as the "Mesa por la Verdad" –a platform composed of 28 social organisations.

At the national level, it was found that a monitoring effort has been made, focusing on triangulating information from different sources, such as government entities and organisations, on topics of interest to the organisation, such as the implementation of the peace agreement and monitoring of negotiations.

Moreover, the organisation has facilitated various dialogues that were once considered improbable for social cohesion, as previously mentioned. It was found that most of these dialogues have occurred in national settings, particularly in Bogotá. Additionally, the organisation has developed and promoted specific peace education programs to foster a culture of peace in the country. These spaces have involved forming partnerships with different stakeholders and training individuals from private companies, public schools, and

women in prisons. One notable initiative was a course to provide dialogue skills training for young people, aiming to turn them into facilitators. These peace education programs have been implemented in Bogotá, Cali, Pasto and nationally, thereby expanding their coverage and impact.

The research findings indicate that facilitation activities have been predominantly conducted by high-ranking individuals based in Bogotá. This highlights the significance of having well-known and respected leaders acknowledged by both conflicting parties to ensure the effectiveness of national-level civil society facilitation processes. Legitimacy and credibility are crucial factors contributing to the success of such processes (Paffenholz, 2010b). However, a limitation arises as the same individuals have carried out these activities. As Paffenholz (2010b) suggests, it is crucial to create space for other mediators at the local level since the relevance of this function at the local level is high.

Although the organisation's actions in the protection and service delivery functions have been sporadic, they have mainly been conducted nationally due to the greater availability of human and financial resources to address these needs.

The researcher found a relationship between the national and international levels, especially in advocacy. As Paffenholz and Spurk (2010) mentioned in their conceptual framework, advocacy functions can be assumed at the national or international level. However, it is typically a function of national-level organisations. This articulated advocacy seeks to elevate the advocacy capacity from the national to the international level, and "here national groups often worked hand-in-glove with diaspora groups" (Paffenholz, 2010b, p.387).

Regarding the interrelationship between the national and local levels, as proposed by Paffenholz (2010b), national and local organisations tend to articulate especially for monitoring issues related to implementation and human rights. From the interviews, the researcher identified that the organisation's capacity at the central level is relevant for local-level actions, as it provides technical capacity for monitoring functions in particular.

4.3.3 Local actions

Firsthand experiences of everyday violence and peace challenges are prevalent locally. As mentioned previously, ReD has offices located in Pasto and Cali. The interviewees'

perceptions highlight the value of ReD's territorial teams while revealing the need to strengthen and expand its existing territorial presence.

Regarding protection, the researcher identified that ReD Pasto and ReD Cali have taken protective measures to address the needs of conflict-affected individuals requiring immediate assistance. These actions have been carried out on a more personal level rather than institutional, as protection is not a strategic focus of ReD's work, and therefore, limited capacity exists. Despite this, ReD thinks of bringing awareness and making sure that something is in the place where needed, and this level of attention provided in terms of protection is broader at the local level than at other levels, naturally due to the proximity to the territories. While some actions are not directly executed, the organisation has attempted to bring in experts to provide vulnerable individuals with prevention and protection strategies against potential human rights or IHL violations. Furthermore, a project aimed at protecting unarmed civilian populations is currently being initiated, which seeks to significantly impact the departments of Nariño and Norte de Santander, especially in rural areas.

Based on the collected data, it can be analysed that both offices have carried out important work at the grass-roots level, mainly focusing on advocacy with local governments and electoral candidates to include peace-related issues in government programs and territorial development plans. In the case of Pasto, the organisation has participated in the "Nariño Decide" platform, a space for citizen democratic exercise that has generated debates, information, and the consolidation of strategic territorial issues (Open Government Partnership, 2019). In this space, the organisation has been able to participate actively and has successfully monitored compliance with agreements in these territories.

On the other hand, ReD has worked collaboratively with the "Casa de Memoria" in Nariño, documenting human rights violations and political and social violence. In the case of Cali, the first territorial headquarters, spaces have been created with different actors in the territory, organisations, and territorial entities to influence and promote the implementation of the agreement. As a result of this work, ReD Cali received a peace award, which opened political spaces for the organisation in the region. Additionally, ReD has participated in the reconciliation spaces of the district development plan of the city as well as in the construction of the human rights policy.

Within the framework of the 2021 national strike, dialogue tables were held between local organisations and actors, and ReD was invited to mediate in these spaces. However, this invitation was declined due to a lack of security guarantees, which underscores a limitation not only for implementing protection measures in the field but also for the safety of the ReD team itself.

Regarding monitoring from the territories, ReD also visits communities to listen to and understand their situations and problems and make them visible through the organisation's available mechanisms. According to the interviewees, ReD has also been expanding beyond the municipal seats of the more urban areas. However, this has led to security problems for those who visit. It was found that ReD has also attempted to monitor human rights violations, for example, during the Nariño strike, with reports submitted to oversight bodies and the IACHR for investigation of these violations, as mentioned in the previous section.

It was observed that this monitoring has a positive effect, as stated by a local-level interviewee: "many people who are not involved in politics have approached us and said: hey, I saw that you posted an interview with so-and-so, I watched it, found it interesting, learned more, and now I might know whom to vote for" (Interviewee 8, 2023).

One of the service delivery actions mentioned in the previous section is related to the local level, with support from the national level, to accompany a victim organisation from a municipality in the region called La Tola to present their case as victims before the JEP. However, some interviewees mentioned that this support was provided, but it was not possible to contribute with further legal and psychosocial follow-up by ReD due to capacity constraints and the responsibility this entails. The interviewees highlighted that this was done, but it was not a function of the organisation nor aligned with their work priorities.

At this geographic level, relationships have been built with different actors in the territory, such as community action boards and the "Casa de la memoria" in Nariño, to mobilise some socialisation actions. The researcher identified that the culture of peace through peace education projects has been prioritised in rural areas where even communities have requested workshops to understand what happened with the peace agreement, not only in Pasto and Cali but in many municipalities across the country. Although useful for advocacy purposes, other spaces have also strengthened meetings between other organisations and candidates from different political parties. In this sense, it could be observed that the organisation can

effectively perform this function. As Paffenholz & Spurk (2010, p.70) note, "every national and local association that practises peaceful coexistence and decision-making has the capacity to contribute to this function". However, in this case, it is observed that this level of socialisation has been based on education for peace, but it was not obvious in the information collected that there was a work of dialogue between counterparts and social cohesion.

In this way, the analysis revealed that there is a close relationship between the local and international levels mainly because the information is provided from the territories to the international team about certain conflict situations that are only known on a day-to-day basis. That information allows monitoring tasks and advocacy to be more effective internationally. As Orjuela (2010) mentions, information can influence how actors act, especially in putting pressure at the global level or managing cooperation resources and funds.

As Paffenholz et al. (2010) point out, civil society at the local level can make use of the diaspora to generate a particular type of influence through a "boomerang effect" that is even a term referred to by Keck and Sikkink –mentioned in the literature review–, where civil society in the territory uses international networks to influence other states who in turn influence their own government and context (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). This situation was observed in the case of ReD but within the same levels of the organisation, not with external organisations.

Nonetheless, in the researcher's previous experience within the organisation, it was found that there is a communication challenge between these two levels because, although information is provided, the people and methods for implementing actions are different, as the local level has a more fieldwork-oriented perspective, while the international level has a more academic vision.

The relationship between the local and national levels is mainly in providing information, as local actors usually can collect data on human rights violations and territorial dynamics and communicate them to national and international audiences (Orjuela, 2010). Although, as Paffenholz (2010b) mentions, legal issues regarding recognising or implementing rights for victims or vulnerable people are typically addressed at the national level, in the case of ReD, it was observed that this is usually done jointly between the local and national levels. Moreover, it was observed that communication and coordination are more dynamic between these two levels due to language, time zones, and other organisational issues.

In conclusion, at the international level, advocacy and monitoring, followed by socialisation, are the most commonly executed functions, whereas social cohesion and protection are considered less important. Facilitation and service delivery do not receive prioritisation. At the national level, all functions are implemented, with advocacy, socialisation, social cohesion, monitoring and facilitation being the most relevant. Service delivery and protection are of lesser priority. Advocacy, monitoring and socialisation functions are most prevalent at the local level, followed by protection and service delivery. In contrast, social cohesion activities have a lower priority level, and facilitation is not performed at this level (Figure 3). Hence, it was possible to identify that the effectiveness of the functions has depended on the interdependence and relationship between the local, national, and international levels.

Figure 3: Relevance of functions by geographical level
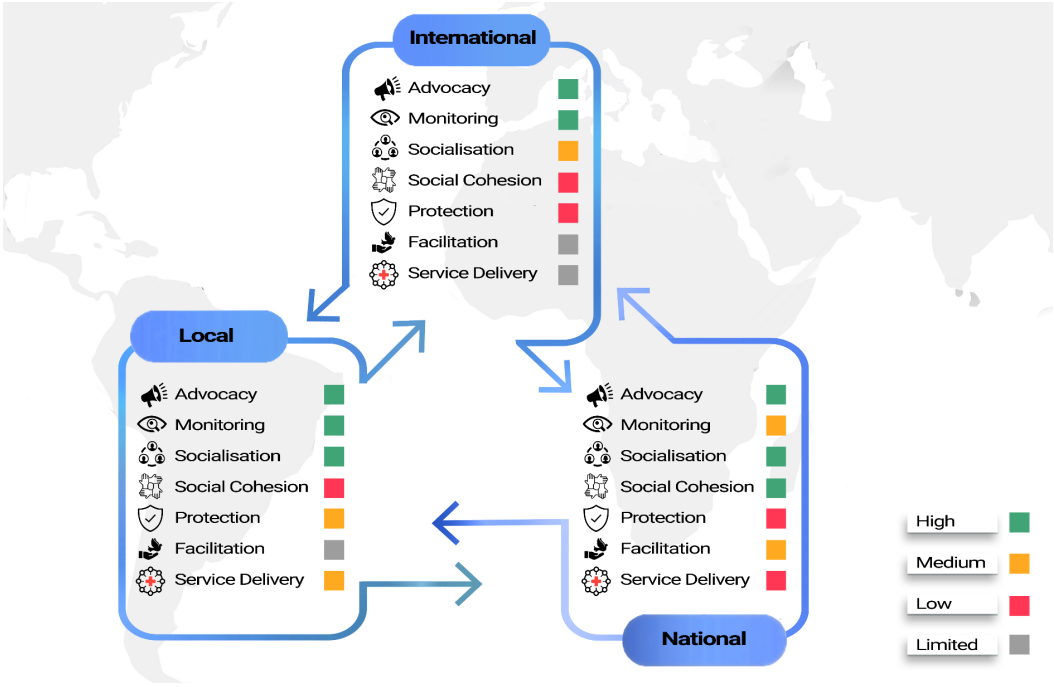
Source: own elaboration

5. Conclusions

This research aimed to analyse the role of civil society in peacebuilding in Colombia, using the case study of the organisation Rodeemos el Diálogo (ReD). The researcher could draw significant insights and answer the research questions by analysing key concepts related to the topic, including contribution, motivation, coordination, collaboration, effectiveness, and need. The findings reveal that ReD's initiatives make a vital and positive contribution to

peacebuilding in Colombia, and that the dynamic interdependence between local, national, and international levels is essential for its success and effectiveness.

It was possible to understand that the organisation prioritised monitoring, advocacy, socialisation, and social cohesion over facilitation, protection, and service delivery. The functions were found to be interdependent, with additional relationships identified beyond the conceptual framework. The operation of functions varied depending on the phase of the conflict, with civil society needing to address different spaces accordingly.

The analysis reveals that the priority and effectiveness of functions vary by geographical level. Advocacy and monitoring are the most executed functions at the international level. In contrast, at the national level, all functions are implemented, with advocacy, socialisation, social cohesion being the most relevant. Advocacy, socialisation, monitoring functions are most prevalent at the local level. Moreover, contextual factors shape the effectiveness of civil society in peacebuilding, and the study's findings indicate that these factors have a hierarchical impact, with changes in government being the most influential, followed by election periods, violence, the pandemic, and the role of external donors –the organisation has sought not to be dependent on external funds.

This deductive analysis employed the comprehensive conceptual framework of the seven functions of civil society in peacebuilding proposed by Thania Paffenholz and Christoph Spurk. This approach enabled the examination of the actions and strategies of ReD from a conceptual, theoretical, and critical perspective. Consequently, the study's results demonstrate that beyond questioning whether civil society should have a role in peacebuilding, as addressed in the literature, emphasis should be placed on the relevance and effectiveness of these functions. This topic has yet to be systematically studied, and few case studies have been conducted on the matter. The categorisation of functions has proven valuable for this research, as it provides a conceptual framework that can be applied to specific case studies, as intended within the scope of this work.

The ReD case study enabled the researcher to validate some patterns exposed in Paffenholz and Spurk's analytical framework, not only due to the organisation's characteristics as a formal non-profit organisation but also because of its voluntary nature, which has led to informal civil society features. Additionally, the case study allowed for a critical perspective on some of the authors' claims and identified some correlations and interdependencies not

previously addressed in the conceptual framework, which could be helpful in future studies or research utilising the same framework.

The methodology employed in this study allowed for close and direct communication with ReD team members, which made it possible to gain a deep understanding of their strategies and reach the findings presented in this work. Moreover, prior experience within the organisation played a critical role in the research. It enabled an immersion in the organisation's daily reality, including interaction with team members and key stakeholders in Colombia and London.

One of the limitations of this case study is that, by focusing on a single organisation, it is difficult to draw general conclusions that could apply to a larger sample. Additionally, the researcher found some limitations when analysing ReD's actions in different conflict phases. It was identified that the organisation has mainly operated in phases of low violence, as it was founded due to peace talks. This difficulty in making a detailed comparison of each phase hindered the ability to arrive at broader general conclusions applicable to civil society.

This study is relevant for the practice of human rights since, although ReD does not focus on protecting human rights, its work in peacebuilding is closely related to this area in practice. The findings of this study contribute to civil society, both formal and informal, to achieve a positive impact on human rights and sustainable peacebuilding. Additionally, this dissertation contributes to the literature, as it identifies relationships between functions of the conceptual framework used, which had not been previously considered and presents a new approach for research at local, national, and international levels.

6. Recommendations

This study provides policy and practice recommendations involving the various actors involved in peacebuilding in Colombia.

Rodeemos el Diálogo (ReD)

One recommendation is to strengthen strategies related to facilitation, as civil society organisations can have a more significant influence in this function, as evidenced by ReD's success in specific moments. As shown by other cases, local-level facilitation is essential. Therefore efforts should focus on training individuals on the ground to have the capacity or potential for mediation and conflict resolution between communities and armed groups.

Moreover, to maximise the impact of their advocacy efforts at all levels, it is recommended that the organisation develop a more defined advocacy strategy that includes strengthening skills necessary to influence public policy decision-making beyond issuing statements and making calls to action.

Another aspect in which ReD could strengthen itself is by monitoring spaces that have generated social cohesion to go beyond. The suggestion is to maintain and follow up on strengthening those relationships between those on opposite sides so that they can impact peace initiatives or even translate into other long-term development projects. This way, the organisation could shift from a relationship-oriented cohesion to an outcome-oriented cohesion.

While ReD has carried out some sporadic service delivery actions, it has yet to be proven that these actions open up space for other functions. Therefore, it is recommended to avoid focusing on service delivery activities because it can be a distractor of energy for the execution of other civil society functions (Paffelholz, 2010b).

ReD has carried out some organic and sporadic protection functions that have demonstrated significant effects on vulnerable individuals, especially at the local level. Therefore, it is recommended to strengthen these actions in the territories where needs are directly present. However, the most relevant aspect, according to this study, is the protection of organisation members, especially those on the front line of conflict, as performing protection and monitoring actions in violent contexts carries risks.

One of the findings and contributions of this study is that the effectiveness of civil society functions could be enhanced by collaboration from local, national, and international levels, as the teams at these three levels have different capacities, information, and contexts. Therefore, ReD should strengthen the relationships between the different levels to improve communication and take advantage of differences to create more coordinated strategies that can undoubtedly impact peacebuilding. Similarly, ReD must consider the relationships between functions, as this will make their work more effective.

According to the researcher's analysis, there is potential for expansion at different levels. At the international level, it is suggested to involve the diaspora in the UK, not just academics, in order to strengthen socialisation and social cohesion actions. At the national and local levels, it is recommended to have a presence or offices in other parts of the country.

ReD is an organisation that does not depend on external financial resources but rather on the work of volunteers. However, to implement the above recommendations, it is vital to seek resources to strengthen the team regarding peacebuilding skills while ensuring security conditions for their work and to implement projects fostering socialisation and social cohesion. This does not mean creating a dependence on donors or falling into "NGOization." Instead, as Paffenholz et al. (2010, p.422) state, "donor support enabled organisations to make efficient use of voluntary and professional staffs and to link local actors with international partners and donors".

Civil society in Colombia

For other organisations and civil society groups in Colombia working on peace-related issues, the researcher recommends analysing their activities using the conceptual framework of the seven functions to identify how they contribute to peace, what has been done well, and what can be improved. Additionally, it is suggested that organisations strengthen relationships from local and national to international alliances not solely focused on funding but on organisations working towards the same goals to create a boomerang effect and strengthen international networking. Some authors, such as Barnes (2009), have emphasised the significance of achieving a systematic approach to collaboration between non-governmental organisations or individuals who have an interest or influence over a particular situation, whether among a domestic or international audience. Moreover, operating at different levels to facilitate engagement is essential, specifically where civil society serves as a "boundary partner" that bridges various levels (Barnes, 2006).

One of the risks facing civil society, especially in Colombia, is speaking within the same bubble of civil society. Therefore, the recommendation is that, in the pursuit of building peace, organisations should create effective networks with each other to generate more impact but also seek and create diverse and challenging spaces where opposing sides can dialogue and engage, avoiding "preaching to the converted".

Civil society organisations can learn from ReD to strengthen the organisation's human capital. ReD has not only built strategies towards external audiences but has also been a space for the construction and consolidation of a team of peacebuilders who work voluntarily without monetary interests. This, in turn, makes the work of civil society more transparent and organic.

Government

The Colombian and local governments are urged to create spaces for dialogue and participation with both formal and informal civil society to contribute to peacebuilding from the local to the global level. It is recommended to define dialogue spaces beyond simple terms and a few meetings to actively listen and provide accurate follow-up to proposals and initiatives presented by civil society.

Donors

International donors should exercise caution when imposing requirements on donations, as organisations often face an overwhelming burden of accountability for the resources received, leading to limitations in the impact of their primary strategies. It is advisable to provide more flexibility in defining thematic lines of intervention, allowing civil society to work on issues that require local knowledge rather than being limited by an externally imposed agenda.

Bibliography

Books

Barnes, C. (2006). *Agents for change: Civil society roles in preventing war & building peace.* The Hague: European Centre for Conflict Prevention.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*. Oxford university press.

Furseth, I., & Everett, E. L. (2013). *Easier said than done: Choosing a suitable research design and method. In Doing Your Master's Dissertation: From Start to Finish*. SAGE Publications.

George, A. L., & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. mit Press.

Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1998). *Activists beyond borders: Advocacy networks in international politics*. Cornell University Press.

Lederach, J. P. (1997). Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies. *Washington, DC: USIP*.

Paffenholz, T. (Ed.). (2010). *Civil society & peacebuilding: a critical assessment* (pp. 43-64). Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Pinkney, R. (2003) Democracy in the Third World, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Putnam, R. D. (1993). Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Rettberg Beil, B. A. (2006). Buscar la paz en medio del conflicto-un propósito que no da tregua: un estudio de las iniciativas de paz en Colombia (Desde los años 90 hasta hoy). Universidad de los Andes.

Tarrow, S. (2005). *The new transnational activism.* Cambridge university press.

Book chapters

Orjuela, C. (2010). Sri Lanka: peace activists and nationalist. In T. Paffenholz (Ed.), Civil Society and Peacebuilding - A Critical Assessment (pp. 297-320). Colorado and London: Rienner.

Paffenholz, T., & Spurk, C. (2010). A Comprehensive Analytical Framework. In T. Paffenholz (Ed.), Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment (pp. 65-76). Boulder, CO, and London: Rienner.

Paffenholz, T., Spurk, C., Belloni, R., Kurtenbach, S., & Orjuela, C. (2010). Enabling and Disenabling Factors for Civil Society Peacebuilding. In T. Paffenholz (Ed.), Civil Society & Peacebuilding- A Critical Assessment (pp. 405-424).

Paffenholz, T. (2010a). Conclusion. In T. Paffenholz (Ed.), Civil Society and Peacebuilding - A Critical Assessment (pp. 425-430). Colorado and London: Rienner.

Paffenholz, T. (2010b). What civil society can contribute to peacebuilding. In T. Paffenholz (Ed.), Civil Society and Peacebuilding - A Critical Assessment (pp. 381-404). Colorado and London: Rienner.

Paffenholz, T. (2013). Civil Society. In R. Mac Ginty (Ed.), Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding (pp. 347-359). London: Routledge.

Spurk, C. (2010). Understanding civil society. In T. Paffenholz (Ed.), Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment (pp.3-29). Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Articles

Barnes, C. (2002). *Owning the process: Public participation in peacemaking* (No. 13). Conciliation Resources.

Barnes, C. (2009). Civil society and peacebuilding: Mapping functions in working for peace. *The international spectator*, *44*(1), 131-147.

DeJonckheere, M., & Vaughn, L. M. (2019). Semistructured interviewing in primary care research: a balance of relationship and rigour. *Family medicine and community health*, *7*(2).

Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of peace research,* 6(3), 167-191.

Gómez-Suárez, A. (2022). Colombia, diez años de construcción de paz con las FARC (2012-2022): retos para la reconciliación y avances desde la no violencia. Revista d'Humanitats, (6), 14-14.

Kaldor, M. (2003). The idea of global civil society. International affairs, 79(3), 583-593.

Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1999). Transnational advocacy networks in international and regional politics. *International social science journal*, *51*(159), 89-101.

Marchetti, R., & Tocci, N. (2009). Conflict society: understanding the role of civil society in conflict. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, *21*(2), 201-217.

Molloy, S., & Bell, C. (2019). How Peace Agreements Provide for Implementation. *PA-X Report (University of Edinburgh, Political Settlements Research Programme 2019)*.

Paffenholz, T., & Spurk, C. (2006). Civil society, civic engagement, and peacebuilding. *Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction*, *36*(2006), 10-55.

Paffenholz, T. (2009). Civil society and peacebuilding: Summary of results for a comparative research project. The Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding. Retrieved from https://www.sfcg.org/events/pdf/CCDP_Working_Paper_4-1%20a.pdf

Paffenholz, T. (2014). International peacebuilding goes local: analysing Lederach's conflict transformation theory and its ambivalent encounter with 20 years of practice. *Peacebuilding*, *2*(1), 11-27.

Price, R. (2003). Transnational civil society and advocacy in world politics. *World politics*, *55*(4), 579-606.

Ross, N. (2017). Civil society's role in monitoring and verifying peace agreements: seven lessons from international experiences. *Studies*.

Valencia-Agudelo, G. D., & Villarreal-Miranda, K. D. (2020). Participación de la sociedad civil en el proceso de paz con las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-FARC-ep-(2012-2016). Entramado, 16(2), 238-250.

Zambrano, L., & Isa, F. G. (2013). Participation of civil society in the Colombian peace process. NOREF: Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre.

Websites

Alliance for Peace (2019). Sociedad Civil y Construcción de Paz. Retrieved from:https://alianzaparalapaz.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/DOCUMENTO-FINAL-ipti.pdf

Colombian Truth Commission. (2021). Final Report. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3ZrcjqW

Cousins, P. (2014). 'Rodeemos el Diálogo': Peacebuilding in the Time of Negotiations. Peace Practitioners. Retrieved from https://peacepractitionersblog.wordpress.com/2014/05/12/rodeemos-el-dialogo-peacebuilding-in-the-time-of-negotiations/.

Crisis Group. (2021). Pandemic Strikes: Responding to Colombia's Mass Protests. Retrieved from https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/colombia/090-pandemic-strikes-responding-colombias-mass-protests

García Durán, M. (2013). Participación de la sociedad civil en los procesos de paz: comparación entre Filipinas y Colombia. Retrieved from http://www.indepaz.org.co/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/P [source in spanish]

Human Rights Watch. (2023). Colombia: Events of 2022. In World Report 2023. Retrieved from: https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/colombia.

Inclusive Peace. (2021). Webinar: Civil Society and Peacebuilding [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ERUNZMV-Jw

International Committee of the Red Cross. (2023). Colombia: Retos Humanitarios 2023. Comité Internacional de la Cruz Roja. Retrieved from: https://www.icrc.org/es/document/colombia-retos-humanitarios-2023

Open Government Partnership. (2019). Nariño, Colombia. Open Government Partnership. Retrieved from https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/narino-colombia/commitments/NR0003/

Rodeemos el Diálogo. (2023, March 18). On the verge of the start of the peace process between the FARC-EP dissidents and the Colombian government. Retrieved from: https://rodeemoseldialogo.org/ad-portas-del-inicio-de-proceso-de-paz-entre-las-disidencias-de-las-farc-ep-y-el-gobierno-de-colombia/

Rodeemos el Diálogo. (n.d.). Who we are. Retrieved from https://uk.rodeemoseldialogo.org/who-we-are/

Statista. (2021). How Many Victims Has Colombia's Armed Conflict Claimed? [Chart]. Retrieved from: https://www.statista.com/chart/27758/colombia-armed-conflict-number-of-victims/

The University of Edinburgh. (2016). Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace. Peace Agreements Database. Retrieved from: de https://shorturl.at/nGUWX .

The University of Bristol. (2019). The memories of marginalised communities need to be part of peacebuilding and transitional justice in Colombia. Retrieved from https://www.bristol.ac.uk/policybristol/policy-briefings/the-memories-of-marginalised -communities-need-to-be-part-of-peacebuilding-and-transitional-justice-in-colombia/

World Bank & United Nations. (2018). Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict. World Bank Group. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337.

Dissertations

García-Durán, M. (2005). *To what extent is there a peace movement in Colombia? an assessment of the country's peace mobilisation, 1978-2003* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Bradford).