CURRENT SITUATION
A historic peace accord ended the 50-year armed conflict between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in 2016. Following the terms of the agreement, in 2017, more than 10,000 FARC combatants surrendered over 8,000 weapons and consolidated into 26 encampments, transitioning to civilian life. Implementing the accord — which means cementing the agreement into national legislation and ensuring its provisions reach all corners of the country equitably — remains difficult.

Preventing further violence hinges on effective collective reintegration and reincorporating former combatants into society, compensating victims and returning their lands, and addressing the socioeconomic disparities and political exclusion at the root of the conflict. The government has also continued to pursue peace negotiations with a smaller insurgency, the National Liberation Army (ELN).

USIP’S WORK
Since 2008, the U.S. Institute of Peace has helped prepare Colombia for a political solution. Because violence in the country is rooted in exclusion, the Institute prioritizes inclusive, grassroots initiatives — working at the community level to address the core of Colombians’ disputes and each department’s distinct conflict dynamics. USIP brings these successes to the national level, scaling solutions to help enable lasting peace. Recent work includes:

Engaging Women in Conflict Prevention
USIP helped develop and supports a grassroots network of 30 Colombian women from 12 departments who prevent and mitigate disputes between ex-combatants and victims, reduce tensions among ethnic groups, foster communication between citizens and government, and advocate for human rights and women’s rights through dialogue and mediation.
**Promoting Inclusive Peace Processes.** The Institute strives to ensure that every sector realizes its ownership in peacebuilding processes and can communicate those stakes to leaders. When the Colombian government considers the rights of women, youth, the LGBTQ community, Afro-Colombian and indigenous populations, it creates a more sustainable foundation for peace.

USIP has provided formal and informal advice to negotiators, special envoys, and the international community throughout negotiations on how peace processes and the implementation of agreements can be strengthened to support these vulnerable populations.

**Convening Key Leaders.** Since 2012, the Colombia Peace Forum has ensured that policymakers and opinion leaders in both Colombia and the U.S. have a sound understanding of Colombia's internal armed conflict and its peace processes. The forum creates an exchange among participants — including academics, Colombian specialists, government officials — on an array of topics from victims’ rights to the role of women in reconciliation. It fosters collaborative, creative analyses that address the challenges of the accord’s implementation, including how parties fulfill their commitments, especially to those most affected by the conflict: women, victims, ethnic communities, and ex-combatants.

**Strengthening Civil Society Organizations.** The Institute has supported Colombia’s robust civil society organizations since 2011, most recently helping ensure they can monitor and implement the accord. The Institute has provided grants and technical support to several civil society organizations — including human rights organizations, ecumenical groups, women’s and youth organizations, and Afro-Colombian and ethnic communities.

For example, the Institute has supported the Citizens’ Commissions for Reconciliation in 10 of the country’s 32 departments; these commissions create models for citizen involvement in peace and reconciliation efforts and foster constructive and community-based dialogue among local authorities, companies, and communities. Through grants and micro-contracts, USIP helps these organizations develop and monitor their peacebuilding initiatives.

**Supporting Inclusive Security Reforms.** In collaboration with local partners, USIP has contributed to important research and policy recommendations focused on strengthening and democratizing security and justice in rural areas previously administered by the FARC. The Institute has presented its findings to the Colombian government and police and facilitated dialogue between those entities and leading civil society organizations to promote deeper appreciation of public considerations into policy and strategy development processes.

**Engaging Youth.** The Institute builds on prominent youth engagement in the Colombian peace process through its Generation Change Fellows Program (GCFP). Also active in Africa and the Middle East, GCFP cultivates youth leaders’ capacity to build bridges across differences and contribute to positive social change. Through a competitive application process and rigorous training, the program creates cohorts of young peacebuilders who implement the program's peacebuilding strategies, then pass on their knowledge to others who can teach the next group of youth — creating an international community of young leaders.

**Measuring the Progress of Peace.** In 2014, USIP launched the Initiative to Measure Peace and Conflict Outcomes (IMPACT) to develop simple, but rigorous, data-collection tools to monitor peacebuilding programs and assess progress toward meaningful objectives, like reducing violent incidents, resolving disputes, and increasing trust in local government.

In Colombia, the IMPACT team works with five local peacebuilding organizations to support innovative programming and identifies best practices to measure success. Unlike other monitoring techniques, IMPACT is simple, cost-effective, scalable, and applicable for a wide range of organizations.

**Generation Change Fellows in Action**

Generation Change Fellow Adriana Combita facilitated four trainings with imprisoned military personnel in Bogotá. Adriana engaged 16 men on themes including conflict resolution, leadership, mediation, and peacebuilding. She also leads similar training for imprisoned FARC, ELN, and paramilitaries with other Colombian Generation Change Fellows. Adriana is helping rewrite Colombia’s national narrative, as people confront their roles in a violent past and reimagine their future.