



An Roinn Gnóthaí  
Eachtracha agus Trádála  
Department of  
Foreign Affairs and Trade

# Experience sharing on peacebuilding between Ireland and Colombia

Sonja Hyland  
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# Background - Colombia



Conflict between Government of Colombia & FARC since 1960s

Multiple efforts at peace over period of decades, interspersed with increased security response to FARC

220,000 killed, 80% civilians. 6.4 million IDPs (2<sup>nd</sup> in the world). 2<sup>nd</sup> largest numbers of civilians killed & maimed by landmines.

Political violence/terror, paramilitary activity, TNCs, narcotics, human rights abuses

# Peace process timeline



2010: Juan Manuel Santos elected President of Colombia, secret contacts with FARC

Nov 2012: Start of formal talks between Gov & FARC in Havana. Cuba & Norway co-guarantors. Chile & Venezuela also involved.

2015/2016: Various missed deadlines for final agreement

Sep 2016: Peace agreement signed in Cartagena, Colombia

Oct 2016: Referendum on peace agreement. No: 50.2%

# Meanwhile, back at the Irish Embassy in Mexico .....



2014: Presentation of credentials and support for UN, NGOs and think-tanks

2015: Link with IFIT – the year of phone calls and shouting into the Dublin wind. Meeting between Irish SG and Colombian HCP

Jan 2016: DFAT/Embassy mission to Colombia. Recommendations on lessons learning programme. Funds secured.

June 2016: Programme started

# On the one hand .... On the other



Ireland mixed record – the three bird watchers

No Embassy, no money, no human resources, limited HQ engagement, ‘yellow-pack Ambassador’

Eamon Gilmore role as EU Special Envoy

Thoughtful allies, externally and internally (DFAT, EU, UK, IFIT, Brain Trust, Min Post Conflict, ICG, INGOs and domestic NGOs)



# What did we do – the substance



Jan 2016: Scoping mission and Eamon Gilmore seminar

June 2016: Business for peace delegation

## RENEGOTIATION AND RESIGNATURE

Nov 2016: Women in peacebuilding delegation

Jan 2017: Secondment of advisor to Ministry of Post Conflict

Feb 2017: Official Visit of the President of Ireland to Colombia

June 2017: Reintegration of prisoners visit

## DECISION TO OPEN EMB ASSY

Sep 2017: Policing reform visit (to Ireland)

Oct 2017: Reconciliation and reincorporation of ex-combatants visits

Nov 2017: 'No' camp visit to Ireland, followed up with IFIT 'Foro de Irlanda'

# After up, comes down



Autumn 2017: British Embassy pulls out of experience sharing programme

March 2018: Elections. 'No' camp wins

May 2018: President Ivan Duque takes office

Spring/Summer 2018: Dissolution of Ministry of Post Conflict, Irish advisor departs

# Fast forward to today .....



Embassy opened in Jan 2019

‘Foro de Irlanda’ members – Rafael Guarín, Presidential Advisor on Security

Head of Brain Trust: Juanita Goebertus, Member of Congress

Ambassador Milton’s courtesy calls: High Commissioner for Post Conflict and Stabilisation & High Commissioner for Peace asked for experience sharing with Ireland

Themes: Reincorporation, local and rural development, political participation

June 2019 – new visit



# Lessons learnt



Learn your own lessons learnt

No to assumptions, yes to humility and honesty

Luke warm champions are still champions

No neat endings – working together is a process without an end point

Creative disruptors + pragmatic systems people = sustained impact

Start small, medium or big or not at all