

Forum Budapest – Presentation Unité/BMI

- **Who we are?**

BMI ist a faith based NGO from Switzerland, one of the 27 Organisations from Switzerland sending volunteers to L/A/A.

„We places ourself at the service of the integral liberation of disadvantaged persons in L / A / A.

Our skilled persons consciously adopt a simple lifestyle.

They share life together with the people an try to be present also in difficult situations.“

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- **Who are our partners?**

Over long years of cooperation, solid relationships have grown between partner organizations and the BMI. They are built on trust, mutual appreciation and the respect of differences.

We are cooperating with catholic dioceses they share with us the vision and the goals and they are effective actors in the civil society of their region. And we are cooperationg with local mostly faith based NGO's.

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- **The Situation at the pacific coast of Columbia**

The Pacific Region of Columbia (north-western part of Columbia - from Tumaco to Quibdo) traditionally is community land and was used for self-sustained agriculture.

Today this region is very much influenced through violence.

In one part is now Coca-production, in an other they have found Minerals and the third on where we are working will be used for Palm Oil Production.

Three armies there are present: the official columbian army, the well known guerilla-group FARC an private armed groups.

(FARC is in the buisness of Coca; the armed groups are engaged through the Palm Oil industry to distroy the local people and to abandnan them and to destroy theire villages.)

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- **The Program of our Partner in this Situation**

The Catholic Diocese uf Quibdo is stongly engaged for the people living in this aera. Most of them are Afrocolombianos and indigenous Indios.

The Catholic Diocese (our partner since over 20 years) has developed a Human Right-Programm which is executed by a Comission ,Life, Justice and Peace'.

Aims are:

- to support the communities in their struggle for their homeland
- to support expelled communities to return
- and to give support through lobbying and advocating (court, recompensations etc.)

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Thanks to this support expelled communities can return to their homeland and/or are able to resist the pressure to move.

Regrettably, the continuing pressure on the territories of the rural population living there repeatedly leads to new expulsions.

Steps toward a process of forgiveness and reconciliation are difficult as long as the laws and processes of the Government are more to the advantage of the perpetrators than the victims.

We are convinced, that there can be no talks of a lasting peace as long as further regions are involved in a real and existing armed conflict.

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- **The Volunteers (of BMI and AGEH)**

are present as socio-pastoral workers, as social worker and as peaceworker.

- They live in or are regularly visiting villages that are living in danger because of the armed conflicts

- They support and empower the communities to return and to resist

- They do memory work (writing down stories of the villages, registering the situation before conflicts that the next generation has the possibility to go back to their roots

- and they offer non-violent trainings to the affected people.

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- **Lessons learnt**
 - cooperation with the relevant actors is of decisive importance as a foreign institution you need a relevant partner in the field
 - through the presence of people from abroad ist the population and are basic organisations in conflict areas protected.
 - to bring an outside view can detense the situation (f. exp. new ideas to solve the situation, other reading matter about conflicts,) we call this ‚productiv foreignness‘.
 - but this presence in a polarized environment involve also dangers: in every village there are informants for the army and for the guerillas; there are cases of traumatizing cooperants as a result of a report about atrocities and murders.
 - such a engagement is possibly because we are in a strong network for peace in columbia of NGO's (Europeans and locals).

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- **Networking**

This engagement is only possibly because we are in a strong network for peace in columbia of NGO's (Europeans and locals):

 - Good coordination exists between the private donor-agencies present in Columbia and the Swiss Departement for Development and the Departement of Foreign affairs.
 - We are part of a Programm called „SUIPPOL“ – that brings the swiss-NGO's and the Swiss-Government in Columbia together.
 - We are strongly in contact with organisations of Women, Indigeneous and Afroamericanos.
 - And we take also part of a supporting group in Switzerland – making lobbying and advocating.