

# ABC Colombia

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Working for Peace and Human Rights in Colombia

## Colombia: Violence Against Women, Girls and the LGBTQI+ Community – Its Causes and Consequences



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Cover Photograph: Wayúu Indigenous women



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The report is dedicated to all the women that participated in the conference, as well as the many others who have courageously dedicated their lives to upholding the rights of women and the LGBTQI+ community in what is the most dangerous country in the world to defend human rights. You will find dedications to social leaders throughout the report.

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*Mujeres Sembrando Vida*

*Jóvenes en Defensa del Territorio Cinturón Occidental Ambiental*

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# Foreword

*It is with a deep sense of responsibility and hope that I present this report on women and violence. This document is a culmination of extensive research, heartfelt testimonies, and collaborative efforts aimed at shedding light on the multifaceted issues faced by women in various regions, particularly Indigenous, rural, and Afro-Colombian communities.*

*The stories and data contained within these pages are more than mere statistics or case studies; they are a stark reminder of the ongoing struggles and the resilience of women who endure the brunt of conflict, displacement, and systemic discrimination. The narratives of Indigenous women from Cauca and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, for instance, highlight the intersection of territorial control, illicit economies, and the resulting gender-based violence that permeates their daily lives. These women, often marginalized and silenced, have bravely come forward to share their experiences, not just as victims, but as active agents of change and peace.*

*Among the many compelling recommendations in this report, two stand out for their potential impact. Firstly, the emphasis on feminist psychosocial support is crucial. This recommendation advocates for a relational space of emotional support between women, creating secure bonds of recognition and support for those who have experienced various kinds of victimization. This approach is vital for validating the voices, concerns, emotions, and truths of women, fostering a non-judgmental space where they can freely express their experiences and participate actively in justice processes.*

*Secondly, the call for comprehensive and transformative reparations within the framework of feminist restorative transitional justice is of paramount importance. This recommendation underscores the need to acknowledge women's experiences and respond to their needs effectively, addressing the structural obstacles that hinder access to justice and reparations for women and girl victims of sexual violence. Implementing these measures could significantly reduce gender gaps, improve social, political, and economic conditions for women and girls, and promote and respect women's human rights.*

*As you delve into this report, I urge you to consider the profound implications of its findings and recommendations. Let this document serve as a catalyst for meaningful change, inspiring collective action to address and eradicate violence against women and girls in Colombia. Together, we can pave the way for a more just and equitable society where every woman, regardless of her background or circumstances, can live free from violence and oppression.*

Sincerely,

**Reem Alsalem**

Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls

# Executive Summary

The conference “*Colombia: violence against women, its causes and consequences*” took place in Bogotá on 7 and 8 February 2023 with UN Special Rapporteur for women and violence, Reem Alsalem. Women’s and LGBTQI+ organisations and grassroots women leaders from diverse communities across Colombia discussed the lived experiences of women and girls; their successes and difficulties in influencing decision makers; their challenges in resisting armed actors, especially in relation to the recruitment of children; and how they are attempting to bring about structural change in discriminatory, racist attitudes and violence against women, girls and the LGBTQI+ community. The report looks at how women in their diversity develop strategies for resistance, projects for transformative change, peacebuilding and creating access to justice for women and the LGBTQI+ community. The final section of the report looks at the Colombian government’s policies and the international community’s response to these issues.

Women described the violence they suffer as a continuum in time, space and interconnectedness: violence perpetrated in both the public and private spheres; violence that is political, conflict-related, physical, spiritual, emotional, cultural and social violence that impacted territory as well as women’s bodies. Women were acutely aware that they were targeted because they were at the forefront of mobilisation processes to protect rights and biodiverse territories of geostrategic and economic interest, because they were in leadership positions, that patriarchy and racism played its part in how women were targeted, especially when asserting ethnic-territorial rights, because they were Black, Indigenous, or just because they were women or LGBTQI+ persons who challenged the gender roles allocated to them.

Violence against women in Colombia is intersectional and cannot solely be attributed to a patriarchal system. It has to be understood in terms of historical and structural oppressions, whereby patriarchy, homophobia, and transphobia intersect with racism, the legacies of colonialism, and classism – attitudes that are embedded structurally in society, in the economy, in the justice systems and in government institutions.

## New Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Strategies

Organisations and communities from across Colombia spoke of the prevalence of the more recent conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) strategy of “*enamoramiento*”, whereby

armed actors (legal and illegal) deliberately set out to make young girls fall in love with them. This disproportionately impacts Afro-Colombian and Indigenous girls from poor rural areas. This modality of CRSV uses seduction and coercion and frequently results in pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases and uses the girls as informants. Girls are marked and stigmatised by such experiences and forced to be silent due to fear of reprisals, harmful social norms, impunity, and safety concerns. Armed actors use this strategy of “romantic love” not only to silence girls, but also to co-opt communities and tie whole families into the conflict in new ways.

## Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking Networks

Structural racism, the colonial legacy, patriarchy and poverty create insecurity for Black and Indigenous girls and young women, making them easy targets for sexual exploitation and trafficking networks. In Cartagena, for example, sexual exploitation and the disappearances of young Black women and girls are linked to sex tourism run by criminal networks involving local, national and international actors, including armed groups. These networks also traffic drugs, arms, and people. Civil society organisations (CSOs) at the conference spoke of tourist packages that are part of a network of sexual exploitation of girls, particularly Black girls. In 2020, the Human Rights Ombudsman’s office highlighted the vulnerability of children and adolescents in and around the city of Cartagena to sexual exploitation, recruitment, “purchase”, instrumentalisation, and disappearance by organised criminal gangs and illegal armed groups, including the Clan del Golfo, the Sinaloa Cartel and other paramilitary/criminal groups.<sup>1</sup>

Impunity is a major issue, and for years women’s organisations have been calling for the state to conduct an in-depth investigation into sexual exploitation, kidnapping and trafficking in Cartagena. Whilst some people from the lower ranks in these networks have been prosecuted most have not, and there is a legal vacuum when it comes to bringing the mid- and higher-ranking authors of these crimes to justice.

Furthermore, whilst the Colombian criminal code (Article 188A) identifies trafficking for sexual exploitation and child sex tourism as a crime, the definition of trafficking is inconsistent with international law.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, child trafficking for sexual exploitation and sex tourism is

typically investigated and prosecuted under the ‘induction into prostitution law’, with the prescribed penalties not commensurate with those of human trafficking.<sup>3</sup>

### **LGBTQI+ Persons Instrumentalised by Armed Actors**

In the conference, it was explained that there was a common cause between the feminist and LGBTQI+ movements, as members of both groups could be ‘punished’ for failing to conform to the gender norms imposed upon them by society. In the context of the conflict, LGBTQI+ persons were targeted by armed actors who subjected them to public acts of violence, torture, humiliation and abuse. These acts served a dual purpose as they were performed with high levels of cruelty to generate fear and thereby make it easier for the armed groups to control the community, and LGBTQI+ persons were easy targets as armed actors sought to align with heteropatriarchal attitudes they believed the community held. There was little or no support for LGBTQI+ persons from the local community and no possibility of reporting to the police, due to a well-founded fear that they themselves would become the victims.

For sustainable peace for LGBTQI+ persons it will be essential to involve them fully, equally and meaningfully in the implementation of the 2016 Peace Accord, and ensure their participation along with other CSOs in talks taking place under *Paz Total* (President Gustavo Petro’s Total Peace Policy), aimed at engaging all armed actors in peace talks.

### **Migrants**

As a transit country for global migrants, women and girls generally enter Colombia illegally, crossing from one country to another on foot. They suffer immense degrees of intersectional physical, mental and sexual violence. Women and girls are often deliberately left by smuggling gangs at points where trafficking gangs operate and are persuaded by false promises to go with the traffickers, where they are subsequently sexually exploited or enslaved in other ways. Even if women do not go with the traffickers, they are forced to accept employment conditions that violate their rights due to their lack of family and community support networks and uncertain legal status. The latter creates a barrier to seeking institutional support, which results in impunity for those perpetrating the abuse. Xenophobia has also become a driving factor behind the violence migrants experience.

Additionally, there is discrimination in relation to a range of sexual and reproductive health services and voluntary abortion. These services are particularly important given the abuse that migrant girls and women suffer on their journey. One survey identified that the main barrier to abortion access was not a lack of a legal framework, as this does exist, but instead the attitude of medical staff to migrants – even in the case of rape of minors.

### **Economic Interests, Violence and Marginalisation of Women**

Indigenous, peasant and Afro-Colombian communities continue to be victimised because their territories are located in biodiverse regions that are strategic for the expansion of extractive economies, as well as illicit economies such as gold and coca - economies that sustain the armed conflict. In this situation, the violence that occurs to women’s bodies is framed within a logic that requires an understanding of the relationship between economic dynamics and the presence of armed groups, the interests they serve and how they operate.

Indigenous, peasant and Afro-Colombian communities’ territories have been militarised, including by some multinationals who not only hired special army units (*Batallones Energéticos, Mineros y Viales*) to protect the expansion of their operations, but have also financed the activities of right-wing paramilitary groups, who killed and threatened those in dispute with the company.<sup>4</sup> The State, legal and illegal armed groups, and national and multinational companies have allegedly colluded to appropriate and control territory and violated communities’ fundamental rights.

Damage to territory has also harmed communities whose worldview sees territory as much as an integral part of the community as the people who inhabit it. This impact takes a heavy toll on indigenous women, whose role includes the spiritual well-being of the community and the territory. Therefore, they are frequently at the forefront of resisting the operations of extractive companies. For this reason, companies often create conditions that deliberately exclude women when seeking to obtain approval for extractive projects in ethnic territories, “...companies summon male leaders to negotiations late at night, in places that are not appropriate for women, or offer international trips to “learn” from other experiences...”<sup>5</sup>





There is a common cause between the feminist and LGBTQI+ movements, as members of both groups can be ‘punished’ for failing to conform to the gender norms imposed upon them by society.”

Also highlighted was how colonial dynamics of plunder, uprooting of identity, extermination, mockery and structural racism, dating back to the European invasion of the 15th century, impact violence today. Analysis of violence against women cannot be detached from this understanding. It is necessary to identify how practices of violence have been recycled from a colonialism that hierarchised life, placing Indigenous Peoples in places of inferiority and normalising violence against them. The normalisation of this violence means that it does not translate into real, integrated, and timely decisions for prevention and guarantees of non-repetition.

The historical response to rural Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations is the militarisation of their territories, which is a paradoxical situation in the sense of the isolation in which many of these communities remain, where the construction or expansion of roads, educational institutions, job opportunities, hospitals, cultural incentives, etc., never reach them. A purely armed response increases their exposure to risk. The perpetuation of situations such as lack of schooling, feminisation of poverty, unemployment, among other forms of violence, are closely related to previous violence that put women in broad cycles of victimisation, where each oppression is connected and closely related to their racial and gender condition and geographical origin.

In places like La Guajira, the whole of the supply chain for the Cerrejón coal mine is militarised. This includes the

port, railway line and the coal-mine complex, affecting about five municipalities. The use of force, militarisation and hegemonic masculinity to address security problems reinforces relationships of patriarchal domination and subordination in society. Norms that define masculinity in terms of domination and aggression fuel violence towards women, publicly and domestically, and towards other men. Demilitarisation and a shift to human security is essential to building inclusive and sustainable peace. Security also includes a range of other factors: imagery around masculinity, changing the daily environment of structural violence, the economic and social situation in the regions, the sociocultural practices of discrimination against women and girls and structural factors that exclude women from decision making arenas.<sup>6</sup>

### Suicides Linked to Lack of Hope

Indigenous women reported an increase in suicides amongst Indigenous children and women between 12 and 22 years of age.<sup>7</sup> The continuing conflict and militarisation of territory, sexual and gender-based abuse from illegal armed groups, the destruction of Mother Earth, as well as the lack of opportunities – there are no guarantees of higher education or employment – all accumulate in the lack of hope for Indigenous girls and young women.

There were reports about how Indigenous girls who had left to work in local towns, usually in domestic service, had been



Participants at the conference.

enslaved, abused and raped and unable to communicate with their families until they had escaped these situations. Further compounding the situation for Indigenous girls and women was domestic abuse and the lack of safehouses in Indigenous communities. They highlighted how it is important to provide these under the care of Indigenous Women's Commissions, with funding for running costs.

### Barriers to Reporting to State Institutions

Whilst Colombian laws in favour of women are progressive, in the case of rape, adequate protocols are either not in place, or where they do exist, are not applied. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is severely underreported. When it is reported, women and girls complain of prejudice and discrimination by public officials, insinuations and unreasonable questioning of their behaviour, which results in re-victimisation and impunity. There is also a substantial risk of information on the rape being divulged, either because the police and other authorities are in collusion with the perpetrator, particularly if they are an armed actor, or simply due to a lack of professionalism.

Social stigma, fear of reprisals, and in the case of migrant women, lack of documentation, further exacerbates the situation. Women living in remote communities encounter barriers of cost, in terms of travelling to report the crime, provide forensic evidence and access health services. The lack of a central database is also a deterrent to reporting, as women are re-victimised by having to repeat their ordeal to each State department they access. Women questioned what reporting would achieve, given the high levels of impunity, re-victimisation and lack of action by state institutions. They therefore preferred to remain silent, rather than risk retaliation in the form of threats, harassment, and attacks, or, to avoid this, being forced to leave their community.

Due to there being no official or unified records of SGBV and insufficient coordination in terms of identification and classification of crimes and collation of relevant data, some Indigenous communities and CSOs have established their own observatories or undertaken surveys to collate data on SGBV against women, children and LGBTQI+ persons. This data is slowly revealing the prevalence of these crimes. One survey undertaken by a range of women CSOs found that SGBV was increasing, having risen from 149 people per day between 2000 and 2009 to 400 between 2010-2015, the majority of which had not been reported.<sup>8</sup>

### Peace Process and Access to Justice

"When the State fails to hold perpetrators accountable, impunity not only intensifies the subordination and powerlessness of the targets of violence, but also sends a message to society that male violence against women is both acceptable and inevitable."<sup>9</sup> The women's movement, aware that impunity had to be addressed in order to achieve transformative change, insisted on and achieved "no amnesties" for CRSV, along with a gender and ethnic perspective in the 2016 Peace Accord. Despite this, women and LGBTQI+ organisations had to work extremely hard to convince the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP Spanish acronym) to open a case on CRSV. This was the last case to be opened, five years after the JEP started, entitled "*Gender-based violence, including sexual and reproductive violence, and hate crimes committed during armed conflict*" (Macro Case 11). The magistrates, in a highly innovative approach, will consider all the SGBV cases presented to it. Other Courts such as the International Criminal Court usually take a couple of emblematic cases to examine. Whilst this is welcome, it will create a challenge to conclude the case within the time-limit.

The main objective of the JEP is to promote the rights of victims and take measures to secure non-repetition. Reparations must therefore be designed to reduce gender gaps, improve the social, political and economic conditions for women, girls and LGBTQI+ persons, as well as promoting respect for women's rights. Whilst at the time of the Conference there was no clarity on reparations for Macro Case 11, the model of restorative transitional justice currently focuses on the perpetrator rather than the victim when considering reparations. This could result in reparations failing to address structural issues related to equality and women's rights. Those participating in the conference considered it essential that the JEP consult the victims on reparations, as victims know their needs and priorities and are uniquely placed to specify the type and distribution of reparations, and to ensure that the benefits are accessible, equitable and effective.<sup>10</sup>

### Indigenous Justice System

Indigenous women highlighted the importance of addressing access to justice in the Indigenous Justice System. Impunity is high in the territories for SGBV. Recognising a lack of access to justice for Indigenous women, Indigenous women's organisations are training women and Indigenous Authorities appointed to the Justice System, in Indigenous



Indigenous women ... are developing spiritual strength, engaging in practices to restore the balance of Mother Earth, rediscovering spiritual and cultural practices for healing and addressing sexual and gender based violence through intercultural dialogue.”

legal processes. This will not only improve the functioning of justice, but also mean that women with legal training can support other women through the judicial process. These organisations are also engaged in reconciliation, construction of memory, reappropriation of territory, and participation in cultural reparations.

### Holistic Measures to Achieve Justice, Peace and Healing

Indigenous women spoke of the exchange of knowledge between women in different Pueblos (tribes), developing spiritual strength, the importance of *Sagas* (women spiritual guides), engaging in practices to restore the balance of Mother Earth, focussing on rediscovering spiritual and cultural practices for healing, and addressing SGBV through intercultural dialogue. Different Indigenous groups across Colombia have established community committees with the central theme of “Access to Justice”. This theme incorporates psycho-cultural, spiritual and legal support. Local women are training to be psychologists, *Sagas*, Indigenous authorities and legal professionals.

Colombian CSOs are engaging in feminist psychosocial accompaniment to support women. This offers them the possibility to name what cannot normally be addressed in a patriarchal world that undervalues their realities, truths, organisational processes, expectations of access to justice and peacebuilding proposals. It exposes what is at the root of discrimination: the dynamics of power, control and structural violence. Feminist psychosocial support aims to demystify and question beliefs and imagery associated with victimising events and/or being a woman and promote transformations in social relations to guarantee rights.

### Activities for Transformative Change

Whilst the full extent of the violations that women have suffered may never be known, one activity that started to lift the veil of silence was communities gathering and documenting evidence for reports to the Truth Commission. One Indigenous woman explained how shocked she had been to learn, through this process, of the extent of SGBV in her community. This began to open channels of communication between women and work has continued through dialogue, psycho-cultural, psychosocial and spiritual support, as well as proactive programmes for change. The resilience and courage of girls and women in addressing the issues of SGBV, both in the context of

the conflict and within the community, is evident in this report. These issues were often taboo subjects especially in indigenous communities.

One Indigenous woman leader explained that the violence experienced in the conflict had permeated all areas of their lives. When she consulted the women in her community on work on CRSV, they acknowledged that this was a relevant issue, but a more pressing one was the issue of violence in the family, perpetrated by fathers, uncles, grand-fathers and brothers. Frequently the growth of domestic violence is connected to the conflict, as the militarisation of communities serves to reinforce patriarchal, domineering and controlling behaviours in the home. As a result, women hold workshops with men that promote the recognition of harmful masculinities, educating them about the root causes of SGBV, and ultimately seeking to create a culture that does not tolerate such violence.

Women’s CSOs (Indigenous, Afro-Colombian, Peasant and NGOs) are engaged in carrying out legal, political and organisational training for women to become “architects of their own progress”. This involves challenging patriarchy, strengthening women’s leadership, tackling impunity, seeking to achieve truth, justice, reparations and non-repetition through customary and transitional judicial mechanisms.

Women are at the forefront of resistance, insisting on policy changes at local, regional and national levels. They face specific threats to their leadership and resistance, with 42 women defenders killed between 2022 and March 2024, and almost 450 femicides in 2023.<sup>11</sup> Women leaders face different risks to those of their male counterparts, as these risks are not only a direct result of their social and political work, but also due to their having stepped out of their assigned roles in a patriarchal culture. Attacks against women activists are often a violent expression of this culture, intensified by the armed conflict, aimed at punishing, sanctioning, and limiting the political power of women defenders.<sup>12</sup> The way in which these often fatal attacks are framed serves to give a frightening message, hindering the emergence of new women leaders, and negatively impacting on women’s participation.

As a result of the work of the women’s CSOs, a public policy was achieved containing protection guarantees for women leaders – *Programa Integral de Garantías para Mujeres Líderesas y Defensoras* – PIGMLD. This policy has three main focuses:



prevention, protection and guarantees of non-repetition. In 2020 a two-year Action Plan<sup>13</sup> was adopted which included affirmative measures for women leaders to access institutional protection. However, according to Sisma Mujer, who monitor this programme, implementation is low to non-existent on aspects of tackling impunity and prevention.

## Women's Participation

The genuine participation of women requires a shift in patriarchal dynamics and the provision of guarantees such as the elimination of all forms of violence against women, accommodation of care responsibilities, and addressing the democratisation of family roles. Despite women's role in the Peace Talks and the incorporation of the crosscutting theme of ensuring women's representation in decision-making spaces in the 2016 Peace Accord, there is minimal progress toward guaranteeing gender parity, and limited results in strengthening women's effective participation.<sup>14</sup>

At the Conference, women highlighted the importance of decision-making spaces, including within their own organisations, to transform their reality. Many of the projects that women's organisations want to undertake require funding. In grassroots women's organisations, some of the most difficult areas to obtain funding is for project research and set-up costs. Women also stressed the importance of independence and the self-direction of local grassroots organisations and receiving direct funding for activities they have identified that will bring about transformative change.

## Women, Peace and Security

An area where there has been genuine participation by women and LGBTQI+ persons is in the development of Colombia's Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan (NAP 1325). The Colombian Government, under the Women Equality Unit and the Foreign Affairs Department, established the *Comité de Impulso* (Impulse Committee) to oversee the work of consultation and development of Colombia's NAP 1325. The Committee consists of the Foreign Ministry, UN Women, the Council for Women's Equality, the CSOs that are part of the Women's Alliance and 3 other CSOs. Five regional consultations were held with broad territorial participation, one National Forum, thematic forums and forums for specific populations. The different proposals and recommendations were gathered from women's grassroots CSOs in the territories. The NAP1325 has been drafted. This

process of consultation has been supported by various countries including the UK and Ireland.

It is essential that the NAP 1325 not only includes women's CSOs in the consultation process but also in the governance structure, in oversight mechanisms for implementation, monitoring and evaluation. A practice adopted by the Dutch Government is the incorporation of women CSO representatives in its oversight board, a practice that Colombia should consider implementing.<sup>15</sup>

## Prevention of Violence against Women

There has been a growing recognition of the need for global action to end CRSV. The conference therefore looked at the initiatives taken internationally by Colombia, the UK and Ireland to prevent CRSV.

In 2014, the UK positioned this theme with the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, followed by the 2023 International Conference on CRSV. Ireland focused on addressing GBV with a zero-tolerance policy, and in 2022 held a Conference that achieved a signed agreement between 38 European countries<sup>16</sup> that highlights three elements: a global cultural change that recognises gendered violence as completely unacceptable; systems and strategies to implement cultural changes; and an adequate justice system to address impunity. Colombia recently accepted the role of vice-chair of the International Alliance on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict (PSVI) – the UK holds the position of Chair.

Colombia's National Development Plan 2022-2026 (article 342) declared a national emergency due to gender-based violence and recognised the urgent need to address and overcome the aggravated violence committed against women. The Colombian government's representative at the conference highlighted that the development of a unified database was in progress – the National System for Registration, Attention, Follow-up and Monitoring of Gender-Based Violence,<sup>17</sup> a centralised technological platform to collate, action and monitor all cases of SGBV that enter the Justice System, from the Prosecutor's Office, Medicina Legal (forensic medicine), the health sector, Police and others. Under this National Monitoring System, women would only need to report the details of the crime to one institution which would then document and make available the information needed to all the others. This centralised system started in November 2023.<sup>18</sup>





The genuine participation of women requires a shift in patriarchal dynamics and the provision of guarantees such as the elimination of all forms of violence against women, accommodation of care responsibilities, and addressing the democratisation of family roles.”



A Wayúu woman on her land which is a proposed mining site.

## Endnotes

- 1 Alerta Temprana de la Defensoría AT002-2020
- 2 United States Department of State, Trafficking In Persons Report, July 2022
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 See the case of Chiquita Brands; and The Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report that states “there was a confluence between the state military apparatus, the actions of paramilitary groups and the multinational Drummond to ‘secure’ its extractive project”. In December 2020, the Attorney General’s Office charged the most visible figures of Drummond’s Colombian operation with conspiracy to commit a crime, for allegedly promoting and financing the AUC. Cited in <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/133837-drummond-case-corporate-litmus-test-colombia-transitional-justice.html>
- 5 Janeth Lozano, CODACOP
- 6 Sisma Mujer et al, Miradas feministas para transformar la seguridad
- 7 The National Public Health Surveillance System, SIGVILA of the National Institute of Health, shows 128 cases of suicide in the age group 0-9 years. The age groups with the highest number of reported cases are between 10 and 19 years of age. There are 9,160 cases in females and 3,124 in males. State statistics do not define the number of suicides by ethnicity.
- 8 Oxfam, Survey on the prevalence of sexual violence against women in the context of the Colombian armed conflict 2010-2015 and Oxfam, La violencia sexual en Colombia Primera Encuesta de Prevalencia, 9 de diciembre de 2010
- 9 UN Secretary General BAN Ki-moon, cited in Impunity for violence against women is a global concern, 14 August 2012
- 10 These are in line with the principles outlined by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence, and the 122 gender-focused measures of the 2016 Peace Accord.
- 11 El Tiempo, Las alarmantes cifras de la violencia contra las mujeres: ‘En Colombia, cada 18 horas se comete un feminicidio’ 1 June 2024
- 12 [Corporación Sisma Mujer, Situación de las mujeres lideresas y defensoras de derechos humanos en Colombia durante 2021.](#)
- 13 The Action Plan involved 28 entities of the Colombian State and contains 144 actions.
- 14 Kroc Institute (2024) Seven Years of Final Accord Implementation: Perspectives to Strengthen Peacebuilding at Halfway Point
- 15 Fourth Dutch National Action Plan on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and successive related resolutions
- 16 Ministers of the Council of Europe adopt Dublin Declaration to tackle domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (www.gov.ie) 30 September 2022
- 17 Sistema Nacional de Registro, Atención, Seguimiento y Monitoreo de las Violencias Basadas en Género [https://observatoriomujeres.gov.co/archivos/Publicaciones/Publicacion\\_315.pdf](https://observatoriomujeres.gov.co/archivos/Publicaciones/Publicacion_315.pdf)
- 18 <https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/el-gobierno-colombiano-presenta-salvia-un-sistema-para-prevenir-la-violencia-de-g%C3%A9nero/49008756>
- 19 Programa Integral de Garantías para Mujeres Lideresas y Defensoras – PIGMLD
- 20 Alerta Temprana de la Defensoría AT002-2020, page 3

# Recommendations

## Recommendations for the Colombian Government

- **That the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP 1325) includes budgeted, operational measures to address SGBV**
- That **the NAP1325 governance structure**, responsible for development, monitoring and evaluation, includes the appointment, on a rolling basis, of women CSO representatives, at least one of which should be from the Women's Alliance
  - **Ensure that anti-trafficking measures are integrated** into the Women, Peace and Security NAP1325
  - Ensure that the **gender-related provisions of the 2016 Peace Accord are incorporated** and plans to accelerate their implementation are included in NAP1325
  - Ensure that there is **guidance** on how to translate objectives of the NAP 1325 into action.
- **Dedicate greater resources and closer monitoring of the full implementation of the Programme of Integrated Guarantees for Women Leaders and Defenders<sup>19</sup>** with particular emphasis on the prevention measures and affirmative actions, together with investing in **rapid prosecution** of those responsible for the threats, attacks, and killings of women leaders.
- **Order the Public Prosecutor's Office to undertake an investigation** into the situation of young women in Cartagena and the allegations of systematic disappearance, kidnapping, sexual exploitation and trafficking linked to criminal networks and the touristification of Cartagena, and in response to the Ombudsman Alert 02-2020<sup>20</sup>
- **Guarantee women's and LGBTI+ persons' political participation** in decision making spaces at local, regional and national level, in line with agreements made in the 2016 Peace Accord
- **Amend the Colombian penal code (Article 188A) in respect to trafficking for sexual exploitation** to bring it in line with international law by including force, fraud, and coercion in the definition of trafficking.
- **Establish a specialised police unit with training in investigating sexual and gender-based crimes** and abuse including domestic violence.
- **Provide funding for Indigenous safe houses in Indigenous communities** for Indigenous girls and women who suffer CRSV or SGBV. This funding should also cover **psycho-social and psycho-cultural support**
- Increase financial resources to, and support training for, **Indigenous Justice Systems**, including training on how SGBV crimes should be treated in the justice system.
- **Take effective measures to prevent trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, including in the tourism industry**, and strengthen prevention and protection programmes led by victims and provide funding to CSOs working on these issues.
- **Strengthen the capacity and increase training to health services** to raise awareness and combat discriminatory stereotypes to ensure full implementation, without discrimination, of protocols in relation to sexual and reproductive health.
- **Focus additional resources on the full implementation of the Gender and Ethnic Chapters of the 2016 Peace Accord**
- **Paz Total (Total Peace) policy**
  - Include **specific provisions** in ceasefire agreements under the Paz Total policy to prohibit sexual violence and strictly monitor compliance
  - Ensure that there are **gender and ethnic provisions and no amnesties for CRSV** in all Peace Agreements made under Paz Total

## Recommendations to the JEP

- **To ensure that it consults with women’s CSOs on their proposals and recommendations** for comprehensive and transformative reparation within the framework of feminist restorative transitional justice for victims of gender-based and sexual violence
  - Ensures that the benefits are accessible, equitable and effective.
- **To ensure that it consults with the UN Security Council Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict** and CSOs on appropriate reparation measures

## Recommendations to the British and Irish Governments

- **Provide core, flexible and multi-year financing to local women’s organisations and movements, and LGBTQI+ grassroots organisations** for projects including those focused on Indigenous and Afro-Colombian girls and women and female peasants, and local CSOs for projects on sexual and gender-based violence, addressing discrimination, economic empowerment, leadership, and political participation.
- **Create funding provisions that Indigenous Women’s Commissions and Observatories can apply for, to run safe houses**, provide psycho-social and psycho-cultural and spiritual support for girls and women who have suffered SGBV, domestic and/or conflict related.
- Provide ring-fenced money to support Macro Case 11 in the JEP, as well as any further expert help.
- Promote and support specialised police units and training in **investigating SGBV crimes**.



Tim Hemmings, Deputy Head of Mission, British Embassy Colombia; Fiona Nic Dhonnacha, Ambassador of Ireland to Colombia; Reem Alsalem, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls; Carolina Morales Arias, Universidad de Javeriana; Laura Gil, Colombian Vice Minister of Multilateral Affairs.



# 1.0 Indigenous Women

The colonial hierarchization of life according to a European reference – where everything that departs from a European model is considered barbaric, savage, animal, as opposed to cultured, civilized, and human – has had an impact on the sexual violence experienced by Indigenous women in the Colombian armed conflict. Reports to the Truth Commission explained how many Indigenous women were subjected to mockery because of their physical features such as height, skin colour, physiognomy, and their way of dressing, perpetuating views of racial inferiority that ‘these women’ were not “equal”. Indigenous Peoples with little contact to those outside of their tribe, as is the case of the Nukak in Guaviare, or the Embera communities in the jungles of Chocó, their isolation, the nudity of their bodies and their poor command of Spanish, subjected them to differential violence by the armed forces. The logic of many armed actors was that the isolation of the Indigenous peoples would prevent justice from being done for the crimes committed in this “no man’s land”. Armed actors controlled the population by armed intimidation.

As a result of these impacts, many women agreed to stop carrying out their daily or spiritual practices, such as bathing in the river, practicing rituals, sowing and harvesting at the times guided by their cosmivision, visiting lagoons, moors, rivers or other spaces that were fundamental to their spiritual experience. This particularly affected Indigenous communities without social organisations, as they rely on spiritual practices alone as a means of protection.

The relationship with the body – to live it, to take care of it, to narrate it – has some particularities for Indigenous women, because their existence is closely linked to the territory. Talking about sexual violence has different implications for Indigenous women. They report feeling assaulted when filing a complaint about what happened to them. The fear of being exposed to blame, judgment, misinterpretation and even mockery limits many from speaking out. This, together with the high levels of impunity, and little or no sensitivity of many law enforcement agencies, results in high levels of underreporting.

A challenge for State entities is to develop an ‘Ethnic Approach’ in institutional guidelines, legislation, and public policies. Some indications for this approach are: the recognition of traditional medicine in the processes of restoration of rights, working hand in hand with the *chamanes, walas, jaibanás y sabias* (wise women and men) for a holistic approach that includes the body, the mind and the spirit; the presence of female interpreters; and

consultations with community organisations and leaders to create protocols for care. Women’s experiences and perspectives must be the starting point when analysing the ways in which sexual violence was perpetrated and the impacts it left on women’s bodies, their communities, their daily lives, territories, and ways of relating.

Sexual violence due to the armed conflict has been a banner of the struggle, led by many women’s organisations, around which women have united to raise awareness and denounce this crime, as well as creating spaces for healing and care that transcend the legal component and involve the spiritual. Many Indigenous women, through their involvement in community organising and advocacy, are reclaiming their relationship with their bodies, reshaping their identities, and by taking political action. They are creating agency which subverts the feelings of guilt, shame, and fear caused by the armed presence in their territories.

## 1.1 Spiritual and Cultural Healing

*“Women bear the brunt of the effects of the conflict on their bodies and territories, because what affects the territory also affects women’s bodies. Women have identified and publicised these impacts in collaboration with civil society organisations, because the state has been blind, deaf, and mute to what has happened and continues to happen to us.”*  
Kankuamo Woman

The Kankuamo Indigenous Peoples have suffered for generations, a suffering that continues today. This suffering was also recognised by Colombia’s Constitutional Court (T-25 of 2004/004), which identified the Kankuamo Peoples as at risk of physical and cultural extermination due to the impact of multiple human rights violations.

This suffering started with the arrival of the religious missions and colonialisation which perpetrated cultural oppression and territorial dispossession, and today the suffering is caused by forced recruitment of children; stigmatisation; extortion; threats and massacres. All of this generates fear, terror and forced displacement by different armed groups, impacting Indigenous economic activities, food supplies, and access to traditional medicines and territory.

As a result of the forced recruitment of children by legal and illegal armed groups, women from the four Nations of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (Kankuamo, Arhuaco,





**Illicit economic activities and the presence of armed actors impose militaristic models of “being a man” and “being a woman” that end up reinforcing hegemonic misogynistic and violent masculinities and sexist attitudes.” CODACOP**

Wiwa, Kogi) had to search for strategies to prevent their sons and daughters from being taken. This often resulted in Indigenous women fleeing the territory and taking their children to the towns to protect them. After being displaced, women were forced to work in domestic service, and the **full extent of what happened to them in this context is hidden beneath a cloak of silence.**

Indigenous women support the peace process, the guarantee of clear and timely truth, and non-repetition. The work that Indigenous women in the Sierra Nevada did for a report presented to the Truth Commission revealed the level of silence that surrounds sexual and gender-based violence in Indigenous communities.

*“Women are still afraid to speak, they need safeguards to be able to talk about what happened to their bodies. Women were taken and arbitrarily detained and raped and babies resulted from these rapes. Many leaders were imprisoned. Those women who suffered are still hoping that the truth will be told about what happened to them.” Kankuamo Woman*

But the violence has not stopped, there is a repetition of this violence today by armed groups with their seeds – their children. The patterns of violence have changed – armed actors deliberately seek out young girls and get them to “fall in love” with them and then they abuse them. Many girls have told their story, but that is as far as it goes. That is because these girls and young women are marked, stigmatised by their experiences, and forced to be silent.

### 1.1.1 What are Indigenous women doing to achieve healing?

*“Our security lies in our territory because that is where our spirits reside, all our elements for resistance, for survival, for our protection, are in the “Heart of the Earth” El Corazon del Mundo – our territory.” Kankuamo Woman<sup>1</sup>*

Amid these difficulties, Indigenous women have been seeking balance with Mother Earth. Having endured much in their bodies they are now looking at how they can

strengthen themselves organisationally and politically to move forward.

The Indigenous women of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (SNSM) have been drawing strength spiritually through exchanges of knowledge between the four Nations with their *Sagas* (women spiritual guides), restoring the spiritual roots that were lost due to the conflict.

### 1.1.2 Access to Justice

Women of the SNSM have started a political process, creating community committees with a central theme – “Access to Justice” – because many women remain silent about the multiple violences perpetrated against them. This group gives support on psychosocial, legal, and cultural issues.

The aim is to empower and train Indigenous women and to explain the law. This political process is carried out by the Indigenous Women’s Organisation in the territory, supported by civil society organisations (CSOs) such as the Centre for Research and Popular Education (CINEP). Women with only primary school education are engaging in this process, training to be psychologists and legal professionals. The women are working towards having Indigenous universities with Indigenous knowledge, not just simply knowledge from outside.

### 1.1.3 Psycho-cultural Support

This is to understand the sick roots that have developed, and how, with spiritual fathers and mothers, these sick roots can be healed. Healing cannot happen simply with knowledge from outside of the community. The Indigenous women of the SNSM recognise the need for their *Sagas*, who are their *mamos* (spiritual leaders), learning the rituals that they were forced to forget due to the impacts of the conflict on their bodies and their territory. Sierra women are growing in spiritual strength and learning spiritual ceremonies. Recovering in their search for harmony, as

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For Mildreth Montero, an Indigenous Kankuama woman whose life was taken from her, leaving her two children orphaned. A sister whose departure hurts like the first day, her life was taken from her in the defence of human rights and women’s rights, a woman we will always remember for her great leadership, firm voice, proactive for the wellbeing of others. Defending rights cannot continue to cost us our lives, I will love you forever.

– Angelica Patricia Ortiz

women peacebuilders they are moving forward from these experiences, because that is what they want to build in their territory.

By weaving their artisanal products, they weave wisdom, it is their way of seeking balance with Mother Earth [the women weave handicrafts, and during that everyday activity they talk about the violence that impacts their lives – past and present – and how to move forward, away from these impacts and into a new future. It is also a way of discussing these issues without the presence of men].

*“The Report that Sierra women worked on for the Truth Commission woke us up, made us realise that we must do more research. It has led us to understand that we must heal. Our challenge in the healing process is that we, as Indigenous women, need to speak out about our life experiences, explore ways to understand them – as the women leaders we are today.”*

In the Truth Commission’s Report women expand on the idea of body-territory, explaining that the bodies of Indigenous women are the human representation of the territory. They see Mother Earth as the principle sustaining the life force, identity, and essence of the Indigenous people. The Indigenous woman is the symbolic representation of Mother Earth and responsible for spiritual harmony and the maintenance of the earth’s balance.<sup>2</sup>

*“Our territory’s reality is different today. The impacts we have suffered are now being seen where it hurts us the most – in our seeds. We are seeing them succumb to drug addiction and prostitution amongst other things. The root cause, we know, is the conflict and all that it brought into our territory. And, for this reason, we dared to write a report for the Truth Commission, so that what we have lived through is made known.”*

## 1.2 Wayúu Women, Megaprojects and the Environment

This presentation focuses on the situation in Indigenous territories, the situation for women and the impact of megaprojects embarked on for the sake of (the misnamed) ‘development’. This word has had serious consequences for women, for example, women’s bodies have been treated by the mining company employees as existing for their benefit.

### Multinational mines and their impacts on women and cultural practices

The Cerrejón mine, owned by British-registered multinational Glencore, has been in our territory for approximately 43 years with serious consequences for the region. Its impacts on women have been many, including illnesses – an increase in cancers associated with emission of particulate matter pollutants found not only in the air and water, but also in the soil<sup>3</sup> – psychological impacts, and sexually transmitted diseases. A study was carried out in collaboration with the University of Cartagena – the results were then corroborated by the University of Koblenz Landau, Germany – which related to the levels of particulate matter consumed by people living near the Cerrejón coal mine. The analysis found that various metals known to cause serious health effects were present in the waters in and around the Rancheria River.<sup>4</sup> This situation is further compounded by state abandonment of the population in relation to anything to do with the Cerrejón mine.

Our concerns now are not just about the Cerrejón mine but also the impacts of other multinational companies developing wind power. The transition to renewables is also having serious consequences for our territory. These impacts particularly affect Wayúu women, as they are responsible for the transmission of knowledge and wisdom [the Wayúu spirits communicate through dreams and when noise, such as that from wind turbines, disturbs the women’s sleep, it also interrupts the messages they are being given]. This diminishes the space for people to be able to practise their culture and customs.

The structural violence suffered takes the form of discrimination and racism, and this increases when there are mines in the territory. We see sexual slavery around mining services and a huge amount of prostitution and alcoholism in young people. Villages and small towns around the mine are further impacted at the weekend, because that’s when the miners have their days off. This affects relationships within families, and although people don’t talk about it, this predominately affects women.

### Political Participation

The government’s role in the legal process of prior consultation in our territories is also disheartening. In these processes it is what men say that matters. The government then finishes the consultation process without consulting

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There are families who only have access to 24 litres of water a day, others must walk up to two hours to get 48 litres, this task is undertaken by women and children.”

women. In this way territory has been taken from the Wayúu Peoples.

#### Access to food and water

There are scandalous statistics on levels of malnutrition. In 2022, 1,954 cases of malnutrition and 85 deaths were reported in La Guajira, which is a gross under-representation.<sup>5</sup> This occurs because institutions do not come to La Guajira to obtain accurate data. Access to food and water becomes more difficult daily and impoverishment increases. The government responds by drawing up action plans to tackle malnutrition, but they are formulated in offices in Bogotá and fail to consider the culture of the Wayúu and Afro-Colombian peoples, who are also suffering the impacts of the mining project.

In terms of water supply, there are families who only have access to 24 litres a day, and others who must walk up to two hours to get 48 litres of water – a task undertaken by women and children. Our water comes from wells which are not maintained, they are contaminated and cause illnesses such as gastroenteritis and skin diseases.

#### Crime and access to justice

La Guajira is also an area for drug trafficking. The region is being used by gangs as a springboard for the transport of drugs to the Antilles – to places such as Curacao and Trinidad. This has resulted in the arrival of armed groups who were never in the territory before.



Jakeline Romero Epiayú, courageous Indigenous leader who passed away in 2024

Dedicated to Jakeline Romero Epiayu (1977 – 2024), founder of the Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu, defender of environmental rights, territory, life and socio-environmental justice. ‘I take off the mantle of fear and put on the mantle of hope’ these words of hers leave us a path to continue the work. – Jenny Ortiz

Justice is another issue. In La Guajira cases of femicide are on the rise. When these cases reach court, they are treated as homicides and frequently the perpetrator is given a conditional discharge and released. We had a case of a girl who was brutally beaten to death, but because the perpetrator had ‘connections’ with the mayor of the municipality, the Public Prosecutor’s Office closed the case, and the perpetrator walked free.

How can sexual violence against women be justified? It’s on the rise in La Guajira, along with the problem of trafficking for sexual exploitation. This is why we have concerns about Wayúu women who were offered work in nearby cities like Barranquilla, Cartagena and Santa Marta, taking them out of the territory, we do not know where many of them are or what happened to them.

### Impacts on women of increased militarisation

There is considerable concern about the increase of militarisation in our territory, including the units brought into the territory to protect multinational operations (*Batallón Especial, Energético y Vial*). There is a serious problem with the violation of sacred sites by soldiers, this has impacted the spiritual life of families. Women have been violated in the territory, this violence against women is not reported out of fear of the armed actors still present in the territories. There is an increased presence of rightist paramilitaries who never demobilised. These include the Clan del Golfo, Aguilas Negras, Gaitanistas and others. Despite this, we are always being told that there is “no problem in La Guajira”. Nevertheless, the whole of the supply chain for coal is militarised, from the port where the coal is exported, all along the railway line and back to the coal-mine complex. Around five municipalities are affected by this militarisation, posing a considerable risk for women and damaging spiritual life. Women bear the brunt of this as they are the ones with the main responsibility for spiritual matters.

In summary, women, who have borne men, are being violated and abused by men. La Guajira is becoming a ‘zone of sacrifice’ for Colombia. Unfortunately, it has a lot of minerals and non-renewable and renewable energy, through which the territory is being looted. This energy, which is bringing about change, is also causing damage. Many problems are generated within Wayúu communities due to the presence of the multinationals, and the burden falls on women, as it is women who have responsibility for conflict resolution in the community.

## 1.3 Women, Territory and Illicit Economies

Cauca, a department in the south-west of Colombia, is one of the regions most impacted by the armed conflict and illicit economies, and this has resulted in brutal violence affecting both the territory and its people. Following the signing of the 2016 Peace Accord between the Colombian Government and the Fuerzas Armadas de Colombia-Ejercito del Pueblo (FARC-EP),<sup>6</sup> there was an initial reduction in the violence in Cauca. However, since then, violence has not only continued but worsened. State presence is weak, with the armed forces often being the sole representatives, resulting in the militarisation of the territories and lives of the communities.

There is a close relationship between illicit economies, control of the territories and armed actors in the North of Cauca. This is a reality that implies control and occupation of roads, trafficking routes, the invasion of communities and sacred sites, and the constant risk that children will be recruited by one of the armed actors. All of this instils fear and constant insecurity, impacting Indigenous practices and traditions, and imposing control over community dynamics and territories.

The lack of rapid implementation of the 2016 Peace Accord, and in particular the chapter on the “Solution to the problem of illicit drugs” represents a lost opportunity to tackle this issue. After seven years (2023), the net result has been non-compliance, lack of implementation, frustration at the lack of progress in ending illicit economies, and a lack of healing of the damage caused to the environment, to the lives of women and entire families, as well as to the social fabric of the community.

The coca plant is considered sacred and of enormous healing value for Indigenous peoples, but when used for commercial and criminal purposes it has dire consequences. The chain of production, processing and commercialisation of the product (coca paste) has affected community dynamics. For example, young people are increasingly involved in the supply chain, despite the associated risk, due to the precarious economic situation – such work appears to be ‘easy money’ as compared to more traditional work on the land. This has impacted communities’ food security, affected traditional Indigenous practices and knowledge of how to work the land, and has created increasing dependence on imported products to the detriment of the communities’, particularly children’s, nutrition. This further burdens women as their





There is considerable concern about the increase of militarisation in our territory, including the units brought into the territory to protect multinational operations.”

traditional caring role means that they have responsibility for providing food and health care.

The effects of this illicit trade and the presence of armed actors go even further, with externally imposed models of “being a man” and “being a woman” that reinforce hegemonic sexist and violent masculinities, and submissive women who enter the logic of perfect bodies that must undergo aesthetic interventions to respond to demands from men with “a certain purchasing power.”

The damage is not only sociocultural. The takeover of territories by armed groups, overwhelmingly male, who are in charge of guarding trafficking routes, distribution, laboratories – in short, the entire process of illicit drug trafficking – have caused roads and a large part of the territories to become even more dangerous, particularly for women who are exposed to threats and risks of sexual

abuse, harassment, violence and intimidation that force them to stay silent and not report the presence of these groups. Furthermore, women must strengthen care and protection practices for their sons and daughters, especially adolescents, who are vulnerable to recruitment.

This recruitment of children has had an immense impact on women. In Cauca, the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC) reported that in the first six months of 2023, over 150 cases of forced recruitment of minors had been recorded, of which at least 50% were girls. In the north of Cauca, the Association of Indigenous Councils (ACIN) reported 272 cases of children and adolescents recruited in 2021, 80% of them girls. Of the 272, 39 were subsequently killed. It should be noted that these cases **are very significantly under-reported.**



Bajo Calima: conflict disproportionately impacts women and children.

## 2.0 Rural Women (Campesinas)

### 2.1 Mapiripán, Meta

I'm going to talk about the violences that women experience in the region of Meta, or at least some of the violences experienced, because there are too many to address.

Discrimination and violence persist, especially for rural peasant women, accentuated by the fact that the armed conflict disproportionately affects women. At the root of the conflict is a dispute over land. As peasant women, and victims of the armed conflict, there were high expectations of the peace process and how the 2016 Peace Accord and reintegration would be implemented. These hopes have been re-invigorated with the recent change of Government (to Gustavo Petro).

Women in Meta have lived from hope to hope. When the Victims Law 1448 (2011) on Land Restitution and Reparation was passed, they "hoped" that they were going to receive reparation, that they were going to be listened to, but nothing happened. Then the peace process arrived and, once again, women participated and continued building territorial peace, and with the signing of the 2016 Peace Accord, war and conflict decreased in the territory. But now, in Meta, illegal armed groups have returned to the territories. They're taking a census of all the peasants (campesinos), asking what properties, banana plants, houses they have – everything is documented. These illegal armed groups force the population to carry ID cards, and they extort "taxes" based on the documentation. It's particularly bad in the municipalities that have a Territorial Focussed Development Programme (PDET)<sup>7</sup> as the armed actors force the Community Action Boards (Parish Councils - Spanish acronym JACs) to meet with them and then issue their order that everyone must be given ID cards. Even children as young as 14 must be certified, registered, and entered on a database. It is one of the ways that the illegal armed groups control territories. Many people are being killed, and this context is particularly adverse for women and children.

Women did not feel included in the development of the plans for the PDETs. They were present at the consultations, but it was not easy to participate. The specific projects that women proposed, that had the potential to provide guarantees for rural women, were not included in the final PDETs.

The women from victims' grassroots social organisations want to be heard in decision-making spaces, but there

are many institutional obstacles. When women empower themselves to talk about rights, they are stigmatised, even when they reach out to State institutions - they are stigmatised and sidelined. The institutions claim that the women disagree with everything, saying, '**Send someone else because you really do nothing but argue with us.**' This is untrue – the women approach the institutions respectfully, **but the institutions turn a deaf ear, making negative comments about their leadership which exposes them to even greater risks.**

*'In 2023, 188 community leaders and human rights defenders were killed'*<sup>8</sup> INDEPAZ

Women arrive from the rural areas with great expectations, carrying important messages about the violation of women's rights but, as time passes, they realise that the norms and rights enshrined in Colombian laws and policies are not respected by public officials.<sup>9</sup> They encounter many institutional barriers including a range of imposed "rules". When there is a change in government, they think they will be able to launch the projects they have designed to guarantee women's rights, but the historic grassroots women's organisations do not receive funding - the money instead goes to newly established organisations not heard of previously in the territory.

#### 2.1.1 Access to land and land restitution

Many women in Mapiripán are widowed. Mapiripán is the second largest municipality in the department of Meta, and one of the municipalities with the most land dispossession nationwide. Initially women were unaware they could claim land restitution, but a group trained themselves in the law and in how to make a claim and shared this with other women. SISMA Mujer supports the women not only with workshops, but also in how to secure rights. **Despite this, there has been no institutional response – no land has been returned to the dispossessed peasant women in Mapiripán.**

Seeking land restitution generates threats. Women feel they are alone and exposing themselves and their children to danger because there are no officials offering support. Living in a rural area is very difficult when there are no state institutions to guarantee rights. The resurgence of violence and control by illegal armed groups in the municipalities puts women's leadership at risk, and they find it difficult to participate, saying, "women's rights are only talked about by women and nothing changes".



Women are in despair at this moment. Sexual violence has increased again, women remain silent, no one wants to say anything” Peasant woman, Meta

There can be a better country, and women continue insisting that they want peace with justice. Despite everything, we still have hope, which helps us to come together. It is up to the women to defend human rights because state institutions do not fulfil their responsibilities. National and international organisations are very important. When the women are aware that an armed actor is going to kill ‘this woman’, they use their links to national and international organisations. The support that these organisations give to women is essential because, without it, it would be impossible for women to know who to safely speak to regarding the threats, we can trust international organisations and they help us to develop strategies that protect lives.

## 2.2 Rural Women: Re-Victimisation and Discrimination

This presentation focuses on two of the issues that mark the lives of rural women in rural territories in the Caribbean region. One is re-victimisation of women who have been raped, and the other, discrimination against women in relation to access to land.

There is a high rate of re-victimisation of rural women (*campesinas*) by the state and by society. When a woman who has been raped arrives at the hospital, the first person she sees is the ‘patriarchal boss’ (the hospital guard), and he starts to ask questions about what happened to the woman. The woman is suffering, she may have a companion with her, but they make the mistake of telling the guard that the woman has been raped. By the time the woman leaves the clinic, people already know what has happened to her. This is where the re-victimisation starts.

Having suffered this experience, the route is from the hospital to the family police, to the Public Prosecutor’s Office and, if necessary, to forensic medicine. Instead of the information being passed from one institution to another, the woman must go to each institution and repeat the details of what has happened— reliving the horror.

Public officials have lost all credibility in the eyes of women. When a rape report reaches the family police station, it

is filed away. There is no investigation, and the woman remains in danger as her attacker is free. This means that women are limited to reporting the crime with no access to justice. The perpetrator remains free, and she lives in fear of encountering him again.

Furthermore, when a woman reports the crime, the first thing she is asked is how she was dressed. This can result in the woman thinking, “Maybe I was raped because of the way I dressed”, leaving her with a sense of guilt that she should not have. The aggressor is not prosecuted and the woman is blamed. This is why women say, “It is better for me to keep quiet and not report anything”.

Therefore, we have formed alliances between organisations to support and care for each other and to seek ways of preventing violence. Sexual violence is only one type of violence of the many affecting women’s lives, which include physical violence, economic violence, patrimonial violence, gynae-obstetric violence – which is also very prevalent in our territories – and psychological violence. We women in the territories experience all this violence, which is why we have organised.

The other situation that we face as women is access to land. Megaprojects have come to our territories - we have oil palm plantations covering almost 6,000 hectares of land. In addition, there are teak and pineapple plantations. Every day megaprojects come to our territories, and this prevents us from accessing land. As women we say, “We were not displaced by the armed conflict, but today, we are being displaced by megaprojects”.

The *Coalicion de Mujeres del Caribe por la Defensa de la Tierra y el Territorio* has been demanding the implementation of our right to land and to access credit. We want the land, not as a luxury, but to produce, to support our families, to have economic independence. There are many administrative procedures to fulfil, and the first thing they ask us for is **a man to certify the land**. We want to be economically autonomous and manage our own resources. Sometimes when we work the land with our partners, the partner sells the harvest, gives us “a few pesos” and keeps the rest for himself. The work of peasant women is not valued, nor is she recognised. This is our struggle.



## 3.0 Afro-Colombian Women

### 3.1 Chocó

The department of Chocó is the only region of Colombia that has two coastlines, on the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. It also borders Panama, and its geostrategic location poses a range of challenges. The area is rich in biodiversity and minerals and is geographically diverse. There are three main groups living on collectively owned land: Afro-Colombian, Indigenous and mestizo populations. There are many water tributaries which are the main transport routes. Chocó has two roads out of the department, neither of which link to the centre of the country. There are four factors that impact the population: a social, environmental and humanitarian crisis; state abandonment; armed conflict; and administrative corruption compounded by the lack of commitment from state entities to the wellbeing of the population in Chocó. There are a range of armed groups present, some of which arrived as far back as the 1980s.

There was so much hope in Chocó with the signing of the 2016 Peace Accord, and at first there were real changes – the armed actors who were signatories to the 2016 Peace Accord laid down their arms and it felt a little calmer. Nevertheless, despite the calm, other armed actors remained and more arrived with even more force to fill the power vacuum. These groups are still present today in our territories.

In Chocó, both legal and illegal armed actors are responsible for perpetrating sexual violence and abuse against women. When there is armed control in the community, women are defenceless, tortured, detained, and there are military operations and massacres. Women are seen as spoils of war; it is a strategy that these groups use. This is because women are the heart of the community - it is the women who hold the family together and transfer knowledge and are at the forefront of resisting the illegal armed groups in their communities. The use of sexual violence and abuse by the armed actors frequently succeeds in forcing the women and the whole community to displace, allowing the armed actors to freely occupy these territories.

There are various reasons for the failure to provide justice for women in Chocó. Major obstacles exist when it comes to reporting the crime: there is a high risk of the information being divulged, whether because the police and other authorities are in collusion with the armed actor who perpetrated the crime, or simply due to lack of professionalism. Women are also aware that their case will be neglected and that adequate protocols are not in place,

even where they do exist, they are not applied. Therefore, women prefer to remain silent.

In addition to the lack of reporting and the silence that prevails, there is also a lack of awareness of the impact of femicide on society. Statistical records are insufficient as they fail to clearly identify and classify the crime. There is no official or unified record on femicide or attempted femicide (one organisation has some data, the state another set). This situation in Chocó does not allow for real justice. Whilst Colombian laws in favour of women are progressive, they are not applied in practice.

Another major cause of vulnerability for girls and young women in the urban areas of Chocó, is their recruitment through seduction (*enamoramiento*). There are many different armed actors who use these so-called “relationships” to convert young women into tools of war – for example, for alerting armed groups when the police or rival gangs are coming, running errands with contraband, or for drugs trafficking.



Women panning for gold in Chocó.





Colombia is a country in which patriarchy is widespread. It is normal for men to make demands, for the man to be the one who makes the decision. Sexual and psychological violence has been so normalized that when a man hits a woman, the people around them assume that the woman must have done something to deserve this.” – Yesenia del Carmen Palacios, Pastoral Social, Diocese of Quibdo

### 3.1.1 Women and work

Chocó is the second poorest department in Colombia after La Guajira.<sup>10</sup> Women don't have access to decent jobs. For many the only option is to work for the illegal goldmining camps as cooks and domestics. It is in these situations that women are frequently raped. Most do not report these crimes as they need to earn money, and rape continues.<sup>11</sup>

Another impact of this type of mining is that the mercury and cyanide used for separating out the gold is washed into the rivers, contaminating them. The river gives Afro-Colombian and Indigenous peoples life, it is also their sociocultural space. When these rivers are poisoned by toxic chemicals, it affects health and causes infections. It is women who most frequently use the rivers for washing clothes or other domestic chores – they spend a lot of time standing in water. Studies for a Constitutional Court Case in 2016 on the rights of the River Atrato (T-622) showed that where the water was contaminated with mercury, women's sexual and reproductive health was affected.<sup>12</sup> Mining also generates sexual violence. When miners are on leave from these platforms, they have money and go looking for young girls, often resulting in sexually transmitted diseases.

Indigenous communities that have been impacted by these various forms of violence have seen their reality transformed, resulting in numerous suicides amongst young women and men.

This, in summary, is the situation experienced in Chocó. This is part of a strategy across the entire Pacific and Caribbean region to dispossess Afro-Colombian, mestizo and Indigenous communities living on collectively owned territory, to have land free of people, allowing the rest of the Pan-American Highway to be built, to create infrastructure for access to Central America, and permit armed groups to continue with their illicit businesses.



A lack of access to employment in Chocó forces women to work for illegal goldmining camps.

For those women who are no longer with us, and who opened doors for us to continue struggling and resisting together, and supporting one another. – Leidy Laura Perneth

## 4.0 LGBTQI+ People

### 4.1 The Common Cause – Feminism

Before starting, it is important to explain why LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer (or questioning), intersex and other terms) persons are part of the feminist movement. LGBTQI+ persons did not win the lottery of 'who is attached to the feminist movement' – it is because there is a common cause between the two movements. When a LGBTQI+ person is punished or discriminated against for being LGBTQI+, in the end the punishment is for being a 'bad woman' or being a 'bad man'. That is because in today's culture, bodies have been divided into two categories – male and female – and each identity group is expected to behave in a specific way. Men must behave like men, that includes being strong, being providers, not showing their feelings, wearing certain types of clothing, and having certain hair styles and accessories. Females must behave like women, be responsible for domestic tasks, caring, sensitive, with feelings on the surface, with certain types of clothing and accessories. In addition to those behaviours, one group is expected to feel attraction for the other. Any human behaviour that disobeys these social norms is disobeying the norms of being a man and being a woman. A woman who does not feel desire for men or who does not wish to present herself in society with the clothes and accessories supposedly assigned to her body is a 'bad woman', in the cultural sense. For that reason, the LGBTQI+ and feminist movements have everything to do with each other, because in the end both are asserting the view that it is possible to exist with their own rules in relation to their bodies, their lives, their desires, the way they dress and participate in society. Without this, they are in some ways being violated. That is why *Colombia Diversa* takes a feminist position, although it concentrates on LGBTQI+ people.

### 4.2 Conflict-related persecution of LGBTQI+ people

*Colombia Diversa* documents violence motivated by discrimination against LGBTQI+ people. These are not cases in which armed actors commit a violent act, and the victim, by chance, was LGBTQI+. It's not a case of the displacement of an entire community and, by chance, one of the people who lives there was a lesbian woman. The violence documented is violence targeted specifically at a person for being LGBTQI+. *Colombia Diversa* has been working on human rights issues since 2004, but in 2012 it began to talk specifically about the armed conflict. This is because people did not believe us when *Colombia Diversa*

said that it was possible that LGBTQI+ people were being attacked specifically for being LGBTQI+.

When *Colombia Diversa* started to document cases, they uncovered violence motivated by discrimination against LGBTQI+ people. Recognition of this is important when talking about peacebuilding and social transformation, because the armed actors took advantage of LGBTQI+ people's status in society to advance their war aims. The armed actors needed to obtain some approval from civil society, otherwise it would have been impossible for them to continue. One way they were able to do this was by seeking to ingratiate themselves, by combining the values of civil society with its activities. But at the same time, they had to instil fear, therefore they publicly committed acts of great cruelty and excessive violence on people who were already deemed of little value to society. These people were often LGBTQI+ people, but they could also be people with disabilities – people no one protected. The armed actors arrived at a town and said to the community, *"I have values like yours, that's why you should support my armed struggle a little. And, to prove it, but also to scare you, I am going to publicly torture a person you consider undesirable. I'm doing the dirty work that you guys want to do, and I am going to demonstrate that I am capable of extreme violence."* This was an established pattern: deploying particularly cruel violence to gain the approval of civil society, taking advantage of social and judicial impunity.

### 4.3 The Instrumentalisation of Transgender Women

Another common pattern was for armed actors to use transgender women to gain access to female prostitutes in the towns. The armed actors would then kidnap them, take them to their camps and subject them to sexual violence and abuse. This trend could have divided the feminist and gay movements – a trans woman providing information to the armed actors that led them to the local prostitutes. But it has not. Through the documentation of cases, it was possible to demonstrate what was happening – armed actors were using a person who could not protect themselves, legally or socially. Trans women were alone, if they went to the police, the police would attack them – a very real fear as *Colombia Diversa* has documented police cases regarding the disappearance of trans women – or they would make fun of her, they would not believe her, and the armed actor would find out about the police complaint. If she went to the local population, she was



[The armed actors] deploy[ed] particularly cruel violence to gain the approval of civil society and take advantage of social and judicial impunity. This allowed them to exploit LGBTQI+ people – they forced them to carry weapons from one place to another, or to undertake forced labour – very publicly”

– María Susana Peralta

already seen as a monster, as someone undesirable. Trans women were forced to decide between their lives and handing over information.

#### 4.4 LGBTQI+ People and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace<sup>13</sup>

For this reason, *Colombia Diversa* is promoting a case before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP, Spanish acronym) relating to crimes against humanity for persecution motivated by gender, as well as attempting to construct an accurate historical memory, and to search for people thought to be missing. LGBTQI+ people were subjected to a series of crimes that took advantage of them or were designed to punish them and permanently expel them from society – persecution motivated by the perpetrators’ opinion that LGBTQI+ men and women were flouting gender norms.

Macro Case 11 of the JEP, on gender-based, sexual and reproductive violence, is an opportunity to access justice that could be transformative. It is a judicial case dedicated to seeing how gender functions in Colombian society in conjunction with the armed conflict. It probably offers the most innovative and democratic opportunity to transform society, with the potential to address issues that are more complex and that predate the armed conflict. Of course, there are a very large number of cases of sexual violence, forced pregnancies and forced marriages related to the armed conflict, but there is also an accumulation of violence and discrimination that has led women and LGBTQI+ people to a situation of vulnerability. It is no coincidence that if an armed actor arrives at a house and finds a man, he will probably subject him to torture, but if he finds a woman, he will probably subject her to sexual violence. This is not by chance. Gender is an essential part of the Colombian armed conflict which must be talked about in its complexity.

Furthermore, LGBTQI+ people, including minors as young as eight years, have been handed over to armed actors by their parents to turn him or her into real men or real women. There are examples of eleven-year-old lesbian girls forced to marry commanders of armed groups so that they could learn to be ‘women’.

##### 4.4.1 Legal Prosecution and Reparation

It is essential to learn how to resolve these gender issues peacefully, rather than continually resorting to violence. Criminal law is limited, and it is not the complete answer. *Colombia Diversa* has focussed on reconciliation in civil society, construction of memory, reappropriation of territory, and participation in cultural reparations. Criminal law is one initiative among hundreds. It is an easy way out to say that a lot is being asked of criminal law, however, we are asking for what is appropriate and has been denied for decades – access to justice and an end to impunity.

The reparations we are expecting from Macro Case 11 are reparations that provide transformative societal change. Not individual reparations – the JEP has never made that promise. Positive results in relation to these crimes, are the removal of the personal shame and responsibility associated with these events and to assign these to where they really belong – to the perpetrators of the violence and to society that has facilitated and perpetuated discrimination which made gender-based violence possible. Therefore, collective reparations that will change the discourse of civil society are essential.

But this cannot happen if there is no acceptance of responsibility. The JEP has been operational for five years [February 2023] and, to date, no armed actor has made a significant contribution to the truth about the existence of, or their responsibility for, gender-based violence, either against women or LGBTQI+ people. That is the first step, the most basic and elementary step. Until this happens, talking about transformation and reparation is difficult.

These acts of victimisation first need to be acknowledged and considered in terms of transformative structural changes in society. There are things that work, such as dismantling the notion that prevailing attitudes are acceptable through, for example, public acts that show that it is wrong to believe that women are just bodies at men’s disposal, and that LGBTQI+ people are monstrosities. It is important to think about creative strategies to level the playing field in areas that have been structurally prohibited to women and LGBTQI+ victims of gender violence, such as work and education. Recognition of culpability by former participants in the conflict, in and of itself, would be a considerable social transformation.



## 5.0 Urban Women

In Colombia's urban contexts, whilst most sexual and gender-based violence occurs in the domestic arena, or is perpetrated by an acquaintance, there are a considerable number of sexual crimes connected with the exploitation, trafficking and forced disappearance of impoverished women. This is especially the case in tourist areas and in the border regions.

Statistics show that girls and women from ethnic communities face the greatest risk. Belonging to an ethnic group has been shown to be the key vulnerability factor, a significant change compared to 2020, when belonging to an ethnic group ranked fourth and being an LGBTQI+ person ranked third in terms of vulnerability.

In urban contexts, poverty and inequality have resulted in sex tourism and enslavement in domestic service for many women. Afro-Colombian and Indigenous girls are at particularly high risk of being victims of sexual crimes. Indigenous communities report that girls and women forced to leave their communities and move to the cities often engage in domestic service. Frequently, they are enslaved in this service, working all hours, receiving no money and unable to contact their communities, and they are often raped.

### 5.1 Cartagena: Tourism and Sexual Exploitation Networks

Cartagena's economy has been built on three main sectors: tourism, the port and industry. These three have all contributed to the increase in illicit economies, sexual exploitation, and the trafficking and disappearance of women. Despite the wealth generated by these industries, poverty in Cartagena is persistent.<sup>14</sup>

Since the 1960s, Cartagena has been a tourist destination, and a large part of its economy relies on this industry. Despite a vibrant economy, high levels of poverty and inequality remain, with the extreme poverty rate surging from 10.1% (2022) to 12.7% (2023). As tourism requires the image of a safe city, the level of commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of girls and adolescents is hidden. Feminist organisations have been denouncing institutional silence around cases of trafficking and forced disappearance of women for sexual exploitation, and the lack of willingness on the part of the State to activate its Urgent Search Mechanism.<sup>15</sup> This disproportionately impacts impoverished Afro-Colombian families with



Poster asking for information following the disappearance of Alexandrith Sarmiento Arroyo.

little economic and political capital to be able to launch and manage their own searches. CSOs have played a vital role in publicising individual cases and generating public pressure under the campaign slogan **“Black girls’ lives matter!”**

Geographically, Cartagena is a strategic point for human trafficking, drug trafficking and criminal structures. There has been a succession of highly disturbing cases concerning the prostitution, disappearance and murder of girls and women. In June 2007, a documentary on child prostitution in Cartagena was shown on national television. This was the first time that the issue of child sexual exploitation in the city had been exposed and an explicit link made between sexual exploitation in the historic centre and that the vast majority of the child prostitutes were poor, black girls from working class neighbourhoods.

On 20 July 2011, 19-year-old **Karina Cabarcas Peña** left her house with her boyfriend and other friends. She and



In Cartagena there is [a] racist violence, which is disappearing, violating, murdering our girls, our adolescents...our women.” – Génesis Gutierrez Morales

## Forever Alexandrith Sarmiento Arroyo

**17 years old, Afro-Colombian, Disappeared in Punta Canoa, Cartagena, Colombia**  
Document written by the Alexandrith Sarmiento Arroyo Advocacy Alliance

*Hello, my name is Alexandrith Sarmiento Arroyo. I've been missing since 19 March 2021. I was last seen in Punta Canoa, district of Cartagena, Colombia. My aunt's husband took me from my home without my parents' permission. I thought he was going to teach me to ride a motorbike but, since 5:00 p.m. that day, I haven't been back home and no one has heard from me.*

*I'm very scared to be away from home. I didn't leave without saying goodbye, nor did I leave of my own free will. I want you to know that my disappearance is not my fault. I've tried to communicate with the people I love. I'm present in the dreams of my best friend, in the heart of my mother and in the perseverance of my father. Why? Because I want to come home alive.*

*The pain of my family hurts me a lot, their anguish at not knowing if I've slept, if I've eaten, if I'm okay or if I'm even alive. My grandmother's pain at not hearing my voice hurts me, as does my aunt's helplessness at not being able to find me.*

*Life has never been the same since I was taken from my home.*

*My mother has had bad days – I know that her pain and her tears at night are because of my absence. The pain of my father who tries, at every meeting he can, to say that his daughter has not come home yet. My sister's tears when she feels so alone and abandoned. The sadness of my friends because I am no longer with them. The dreams that I have not fulfilled. All this is caused by my absence.*

*It has been 1 year and 11 months since my disappearance. My uncle has just been tried and convicted of forced disappearance, almost two years later, but I still haven't reappeared. I don't understand the silence he maintains about my whereabouts. As long as I don't reappear, impunity continues. I want to come back alive.*

*I'm amazed that the authorities didn't heed the Early Warning Alerts that the Ombudsman's Office (Defensoría) issued on human trafficking in the area where I disappeared, and that the Prosecutor's Office didn't follow that lead, knowing that there are powerful organised criminal structures operating in the zone. Because they think this is a disappearance motivated by passion and are not looking any further, with each passing day I still don't come home. As a result, other impoverished black girls who may be your daughters, sisters, aunts, friends, and mothers continue to disappear because Cartagena is not safe for women.*

*The authorities are not looking for me anymore.*

***I ask: if I weren't a girl, black, poor, and from a working-class neighbourhood, would they look for me until they found me?***

***I just want you to know that I am still here somewhere in this country or the world and that I want come home.***

**DON'T STOP LOOKING FOR ME!**

**SHOUT MY NAME FROM EVERY WALL IN THE HISTORIC CENTRE OF CARTAGENA**

Dedicated to Alexandrith Sarmiento Arroyo, who was taken alive, and alive we want her returned.

– Génesis Gutierrez Morales

her boyfriend disappeared. Her boyfriend's body was later found dumped on one of Cartagena's beaches – he had been murdered. Karina has not been seen since that day.

On 18 March 2018, the so-called "Rape Tours" were publicly denounced. These consisted of groups of girls and women who were drugged and released onto a beach in Cartagena so that tourists and wealthy Colombian men could hunt them until they caught them. They then raped them and could do whatever they wanted to them. One woman escaped the Rape Tour and made a complaint. To date, these women have never been heard about again.

On 21 July 2018, La Madame (Liliana del Carmen Campos Puello), one of the key organisers of the Rape Tour, was arrested. She was accused of running a prostitution network, taking young women to the islands of Cartagena and prostituting or selling them.

On 19 March 2021, 16-year-old **Alexandrith Sarmiento Arroyo** disappeared on a beach in Cartagena, in the district of Punta Canoa.

Between 31 July and 23 November 2022, three black girls aged nine, ten and eleven were disappeared and raped, but later rescued in the historic centre of the city. On 31 January 2023, a seven-year-old girl was raped in the same area of Cartagena.

In the south of the city, in neighbourhoods that border the *Troncal del Caribe* (the major road along the Caribbean coast), there have been repeated situations where adolescents between 12 and 17 years old have been picked up by armoured vehicles allegedly linked to a sex exploitation network that offers services in the centre and north of the city. People are reluctant to report these incidents as the *Clan del Golfo* is involved and they would be completely unprotected from reprisals.

In 2016 there was an Early Warning Alert by the Ombudsman's Office for the protection of children in Punta Canoa, where Alexandrith disappeared, as well as in the Rio Grande and Arroyo de Piedra districts that are close to the city of Cartagena. The Ombudsman's Alert 02-2020<sup>16</sup> refers to the presence of armed groups and criminal structures with territorial control of the beach areas where sex tourism is practised, and girls have been disappeared.

The *Clan del Golfo* is one of the structures that has a presence in the area where Alexandrith disappeared,

which has transport links to the entire Caribbean Sea, the whole of Central America and a direct line to Mexico. The authorities failed to search for Alexandrith immediately even though the community, her family, and women's organisations asked for a professional search with dogs. The search was finally conducted 11 days after her disappearance, making it very unlikely that she would be found.

Cartagena's CSOs have identified features in common: beaches, the historic centre of the city, black women, impoverished women. There is a racist violence that is disappearing, raping, murdering girls, adolescents, and women. Despite these features there is no recognition of the pattern of racism and misogyny that exists in these cases, and these are just the cases that CSOs have been able to identify and document.

These acts have another thing in common – institutional silence. There has been no investigation into the final whereabouts of Karina, who has been missing for 12 years (as of 2023), and her mother is still waiting for her in the same house from which she disappeared. Karina's family has been stuck for 12 years.

Girls have been subjected to sexual exploitation through digital technology, with minors between 14 and 16 years of age being offered to tourists in catalogues. As of July 2022, there were over 165 documented cases of minors being used for sexual exploitation in Cartagena, with tour operators acting as intermediaries.<sup>17</sup>

A thorough investigation is needed to identify how many girls have been raped, kidnapped, and trafficked because of the touristification of the city. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, tourism is central to economic prosperity, but the result has been to make black women into subjects of consumption – not only sexual exploitation, but also in terms of labour characterised by racial discrimination and subordination. Black women are caught in a cycle of poverty.

The responsibility to search for the missing girls and women, to investigate, prosecute and condemn the violations is the responsibility of the State, the responsibility of the authorities, not just civil society. Women and feminist movements continue to look for their friends, sisters and daughters. It's a process of local pressure coordinated with other national movements to continue





Sexual violence due to the armed conflict has been a banner for the struggle led by women's organisations and around which women have united to raise awareness, denounce the crime and create spaces for healing and care that transcend the legal component and involve the spiritual.”

the search. Posters put up in the historic centre of Cartagena are torn down the very next day – this shows the sheer anger and rage they cause. Nevertheless, the search for sisters and friends continues.

**This violence is a racist violence – and the whole structure of impoverishment forms part of that racial violence.**

**“We are still searching for our girls”.**

CSOs indicate that the networks of drug trafficking, the trafficking of women and girls and sex tourism are all linked. These criminal organisations also profit from other illicit activities, such as the arms trade and illegal gold mining. Even when middle-ranking actors are captured, their profits are usually left untouched, meaning there is no real incentive to stop committing these crimes. This is clearly illustrated by cases in Cartagena involving officials.<sup>18</sup>

The most visible cases of sexual exploitation networks in Cartagena involve the participation of a range of actors:

**Local actors:** important figures in the administration of the sexual services market, although they are not necessarily the ones with the power.

**Intermediary Local Actors:** who recruit and offer the girls for sexual exploitation. They oversee finding clients, mainly tourists, both foreign and Colombian. Three critical geographical areas have been identified in this exploitation network: the beaches in the northern area of Cartagena, the historic centre and the southwestern area called Bomba del Amparo.

**State actors:** although it is suspected that there are others, only the lower ranks in the police have so far been arrested for their part in these crimes.

**Foreign actors:** who play two roles – control of the networks offering sexual services at an international level, and as consumers. Those who provide the capital for the establishment and operation of the networks often do so with the intention of attracting other foreigners as consumers. For example, Assi Moosh, an Israeli who owned the Casa Benjamin hostel, was expelled from Colombia in 2017 for holding 'sex parties' involving prostitution and drugs, primarily for other Israelis.

In Cartagena, those caught and tried from these networks are mainly low-ranking local actors who are easily replaceable. There is a legal vacuum in matters of prosecution of internationals who both offer and consume the sexual services that exploit girls and women. There is also a lack of investigation by the police to identify the high-ranking political and military commanders who control the networks.

Campaigns against sexual exploitation and trafficking focus on encouraging reporting by communities which places responsibility for impunity on them, rather than on the lack of investigation by the authorities. This ignores the fact that those involved in these networks are powerful and protected people, in contrast with local communities, for whom reporting would put at considerable risk. Intelligence and investigation strategies should instead be applied to dismantle these structures of exploitation and trafficking of women at the highest level.

## 5.2 The Colombian Criminal Code

Whilst the Colombian criminal code identifies 'trafficking for sexual exploitation' as a crime, the definition of trafficking is inconsistent with international law,<sup>19</sup> as it does not include force, fraud, or coercion which are essential elements of trafficking crimes. Forced child recruitment and forced criminal activity by illegal

armed groups are therefore not treated as human trafficking crimes. Trafficking children for sexual exploitation and sex tourism crimes tend to be investigated and prosecuted under 'induction into prostitution', with **the prescribed penalties not commensurate with those of human trafficking.**<sup>20</sup>

## 6.0 Trafficking of Women linked to Colombia's Frontiers

### 6.1 Case study: Venezuelan Migrants

Over 4 million Venezuelans have been forced to leave their country due to dire economic conditions, insecurity, poverty, and a lack of food, medicine and essential services. Migration is not a new phenomenon; migration and mobility are rights that people should be able to exercise in a safe and dignified way. However, this is far from the case for many of the acutely vulnerable women and girls migrating from Venezuela to Colombia.

Women and girls generally enter Colombia on foot, travelling along routes known as “*trochas*” – literally “paths” or “shortcuts”. The *trocha* in this case is the illegal crossing from one country into another, which is a scene of humiliation. Many tell stories of how they have been subjected to abuse, forced recruitment, forced sexual exploitation, and trafficking. Women are abused in a variety of ways, including the traffickers marking them as their property.

*“Women recount the degradation of being forced to cut their hair, a mark that stays on their body, and they recount with horror the feeling of being stripped of themselves and forced to give away part of their body.”*

*Fundación Mujer y Futuro*

Having survived the *trocha*, the women and girls must then continue by foot, transiting from one department of Colombia to another in the hope of being reunited with friends and relatives that went ahead to Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, or to a third country. The further the destination, the greater the risk.

When they start out, the authorities give them kits with food for the journey.<sup>21</sup> Cartels target these women, they offer to purchase the kits for \$25, with the promise of showing them a shortcut. The women frequently report being abandoned before they arrive at the “shortcut”, and CSOs working with the women have established that the places where the women are abandoned are where the trafficking gangs are located. These gangs offer women jobs in restaurants or the tourist industry before forcing them into sexual exploitation.

According to the US State Department, in 2022 ‘...trafficking convictions decreased significantly [in Colombia], and authorities did not criminally prosecute or convict cases of official complicity... The government did not make efforts

to criminally investigate, prosecute, and convict cases of forced labour, resulting in impunity for labour traffickers and leaving unidentified victims without protection in critical sectors.’<sup>22</sup> This occurred despite victims of forced labour having been identified.

#### 6.1.1 Migrants, Status Challenges and Rights

Once Venezuelan women and girl migrants enter Colombia they face a range of challenges. These include poor living conditions, lack of access to basic services, lack of legal resolution of their immigrant status, as well as a heightened risk of gender-based violence and discrimination. According to the Colombian Foreign Affairs Ministry, as of January 2022 there were 1,821,095 people on the Single Registry of Venezuelan Migrants, of which 52% were women. This official figure has seen exponential growth since 2015. However, this is still an under-representation of the situation as many Venezuelans have yet to complete their registration process.<sup>23</sup>

Xenophobia is a driving factor behind the violence against Venezuelan women. Colombia's cash-based informal economy, combined with irregular immigration, means that women are forced to accept employment conditions that violate their rights, as they lack alternatives in the formal sector. These conditions include low wages, work outside normal hours, different or additional tasks, mistreatment of pregnant women, sexual violence and slavery. The situation is made worse because of a lack of family and community support networks, combined with the fear around how they entered the country and their legal status. These act as barriers to seeking institutional support and registration, resulting in impunity for the perpetrators.

Legal insecurity is caused by regulatory gaps between the Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Migrants (ETPV)<sup>24</sup> and the recognition of refugee status. To “expedite” their application for ETPV status, which allows the migrants to work and have access to health and education services, women are required to renounce their refugee status, if they have it, along with its associated safeguards.<sup>25</sup> This can place them in legal limbo, as applications for ETPV status can be a difficult and lengthy process.

“

I escaped from my partner of 3 years; I'd suffered considerable violence during the journey. I ... felt unprotected because I thought I couldn't report him because I'm Venezuelan. Through *Fundación Mujer y Futuro*, I realized I could report him. This information freed me.” – Voice of migrant woman

### 6.1.2 Venezuelan Migrants and Sexual and Gender-based Violence

*“... women continue to be caught in a ...circle of violence, reinforcing the power that officials and their partners have over them.” Angelica (Venezuelan Refugee)*

Sexual and gender-based violence is a pervasive political and social problem, but a migrant caught in a humanitarian crisis is even more vulnerable. According to the National Violence Observatory, there has been an exponential increase in violence against migrant women. In 2021, 4,709 Venezuelan women were reported as victims of gender-based violence, an increase of over 1,000% in three years.<sup>26</sup> In 2022, 5,837 cases of gender-based violence against Venezuelans were reported, 81% against women and children.<sup>27</sup> However, these statistics are vastly underreported as many are reluctant to report sexual and gender-based violence due to discrimination and fears regarding their immigration status.

#### Access to Health Services

Migrants face barriers accessing sexual and reproductive health services and the right to a voluntary abortion.

Venezuelan women arrive from a country where there is no access to contraception, having been victims of many types of violence on the way to Colombia. If they request sexual and reproductive health services, including voluntary abortion, they are stereotyped, stigmatised, and questioned.

According to a survey carried out by *Fundación Mujer y Futuro*, the main barrier to access to abortion is the reaction of the medical staff – not their capacity or lack thereof, nor infrastructure, nor legal frameworks. Medical staff frequently take a moral stance when attending to Venezuelan women instead of guaranteeing their rights.

*“A girl of 14 years who was abused on Venezuelan territory came to Cucuta to request an abortion and the hospital refused it because the case occurred in Venezuela.” Fundación Mujer y Futuro*

Medical staff need to undergo further training to address attitudes and to fully understand existing protocols. Further, monitoring and evaluation processes must be initiated to improve frontline responses to sexual health and reproductive rights.



Participants at the conference.



## 7.0 Women, Violence and Displacement

“

The intersectionality of violence has resulted in a multiplicity of violences. Women are not only exposed to sociopolitical violence, and the gender and sexual violence this generates, but also to domestic violence.” – Sisma Mujer

Women and girls often find themselves caught in a continuum of violence, beginning in childhood – in the main area of socialisation, the family – and from there extending to a wide range of settings. Rural women frequently experience domestic violence, and they must cope with this whilst also suffering the consequences of sociopolitical violence perpetrated against them and their families.

Forced displacement has a disproportionate impact on women and girls, as highlighted by Colombia’s Constitutional Court in 2008, which stated that displacement leaves women vulnerable to a range of other risks, including disappearance, killing, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, sexual slavery, and sexual abuse.<sup>28</sup> This stems from patriarchal attitudes that are accentuated when intersected with racist attitudes, as in the case of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women. In recognition of the gravity of the situation, the Court issued various rulings (Auto T-025/04, Auto 092/08 and Auto 009/15) that together identify ten differential gender risks that occur in conflict, which explain the disproportionate impact of forced displacement on women and girls and identified the links between increased domestic violence and the impacts of armed conflict. Furthermore, the Court recognised the extreme rate of impunity in cases of sexual violence and identified<sup>29</sup> a small group of cases to be prioritised to accelerate their progress. The Court also appointed a group of CSOs to monitor and report on their progress.<sup>30</sup> Despite all these efforts, structural impunity prevails, and most of the identified cases have still not been processed. Therefore, women are now looking to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) and the recently opened Macro Case 11 to obtain truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition.

Whilst the transitional justice case is of major importance, there remains a critical need to strengthen the capacity of the ordinary justice system and other judicial institutions like the Indigenous Justice System to advance credible and inclusive accountability processes for sexual and gender-based crimes, as well as for prevention and deterrence.



Woman human rights defender in London to advocate on behalf of communities.

Dedicated to Carmelina Yule Pavi, NASA Indigenous woman, assassinated on 17 March 2024 by a dissident guerrilla group, while working to rescue a kidnapped minor. A *Tejido Mujer* Coordinator in Toribío and Kiwe Thegna (Guardia Indígena). A passionate defender of her people’s rights and territory, her life exemplified resilience and unwavering commitment to justice. – Janneth Lozano Bustos

## 8.0 Women and Forms of Resistance

### 8.1 Women as Architects of Progress

I am an Indigenous Nasa woman, representing *Tejido Mujer* – *Çxhab Wala Kiwe*. I am going to tell you a little about the forms of resistance that we *Tejido Mujer* have been working on. We resist so we can continue to live in our territories.

*Tejido Mujer* formed in 1993 in the territory of Northern Cauca. *Tejido Mujer* carries out various initiatives including political and organisational training for women, and it is because of this training that we are the architects of our own progress. This training has positioned women in spaces of participation, because if women are not participating or at the centres of power, it is very difficult to transform our reality, as there are few men who are sensitive to what is happening to women and who want to change the situation.

It has been up to women to provide information in human rights and political training schools, forging internal alliances through the education network, through the Indigenous Guard (*Guardia Indígena*) and with the communication network. It is women who are training in different areas of knowledge, not only in rights and political participation, but also in economics, health, self-government, talking about issues that are extremely important for the community, and for those who exercise leadership. This is an enormous effort that *Tejido Mujer* is making, with the help of several organisations, particularly CODACOP. Every day women must do more, explain more to each other, and the work of non-Indigenous women has also been vital. Sometimes this is not valued by Indigenous communities, it can be seen as “white” (non-Indigenous), but this support, training, and knowledge that they have



Nasa Indigenous women.

Dedicated to all the Indigenous women who have been victims of the armed conflict, and of gender-based violence  
– Ilsa Banuvi Caizamo



contributed to the struggle has been important for what Indigenous women are harvesting today.

In the last 12 years, Indigenous women have been training as community researchers to develop new knowledge. Together with *Corporación Ensayos*, Indigenous Women have advanced in the investigation of a topic that is very difficult even to name, which is sexual violence. Twelve years ago, we wanted to launch a research initiative and talk to the Nasa women about sexual violence perpetrated in armed conflict. In the first conversations, they listened to us and said, “It’s not that we don’t want to talk about that, but we want to talk about the internal violence. We want to talk about the sexual violence perpetrated by my father, by my grandfather, by my uncle, by my neighbour, by my stepfather”. And we were like, “Wow, what is this?” because we understood how difficult it is to talk about sexual violence within our communities.

*Tejido Mujer* and *Corporación Ensayos* continue to work on this project to obtain knowledge of how Nasa women understand sexual violence, because the concept of sexual violence from outside the Indigenous communities is very different from the concept that we have. There is no word in the Indigenous languages, or at least we do not know it, for sexual violence. We discovered this during the research, with over 500 Indigenous women interviewed in the North of Cauca, from two different age ranges. We found out many interesting things to begin to address sexual violence culturally and from an Indigenous perspective.

Indigenous women began to question certain practices and customs which are said to be part of the culture, but which cause women harm. At times this has been costly, and we have experienced political violence. The research process and our commitment with *Tejido Mujer* is that we continue advancing in the investigations, not only in relation to sexual violence, but all types of violence in the community. This first stage, in which several women were trained and participated in the process, has allowed us to produce educational materials called – “To feel, think, talk and heal”. It is a political, educational game for the prevention of sexual violence that came out of the research. It is a game produced by several of the networks

(*Tejidos*) to be delivered in educational institutions. Women have undertaken the task as a team, to train teachers in these materials.

Under the auspices of the Observatory of Human Rights and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Northern Cauca, *Tejido Mujer* is training women from each of the *resguardos* (Indigenous reservations) to categorise and register different types of violence. Based on this information, periodic reports are produced on the impacts of violence against Nasa women – not only conflict-related, but also violence within the community and domestic violence. *Tejido Mujer* has also created groups for the psychocultural care of women victims.

Training alone is not enough, it is important also to consider economic processes, because women need financial autonomy. Often, women cannot undertake training because they have no money for the fare or because of childcare responsibilities. Therefore, it is important for training courses to cover the cost of transportation and a creche. This ensures that the women are more relaxed when attending the training, but then we can also engage the children in a process of political education, thereby also working on the prevention of violence.

*Tejido Mujer* does not discriminate against men. We train both men and women, because we believe that the only way that men can unlearn violent practices is to participate in activities that will allow them to transform their lives.

By reviewing the kinds of cases put before the Indigenous Justice System *Tejido Mujer* realised that in many instances this system does not guarantee women’s rights. This is why *Tejido Mujer* is training women to comprehensively understand Indigenous Justice and accompany the different processes in the territories.

It is extremely important to be able to transform the situation, consolidating and moving forward despite the different armed groups in the territory. All this would be a little more bearable if, within government policies, there were more resources for women to be able to carry out these projects. Unfortunately, many of them stagnate due to lack of resources. Research to collate Indigenous

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To the Indigenous women of Colombia, for their tireless dedication, unwavering courage and profound wisdom. All those who are protective mothers, inspiring teachers, the essence of our nation, to them, our deepest respect and admiration. – Genith Quitiaquez





It is women who are training in different areas of knowledge, not only in rights and political participation, but also in economics, health, self-government, talking about issues that are extremely important for the community and for those who exercise leadership.” – Tejido Mujer

women’s knowledge to transform the lives of women is sometimes halted because the funders do not support the research element.

Nasa women from Northern Cauca produced a report for the Truth Commission. We did this because we are aware that peace will not happen without the participation of women. Sometimes we get tired of denouncing violations, again and again, with nothing changing. Sometimes one feels powerless denouncing, while in the territory they are killing and massacring. We want to build peace, although it is true that it has been more men’s peace because they are the ones who are in decision making positions. But we women are the ones who ultimately build peace. We do it starting from the home.

All the training we have done, in consensus and as a team, has allowed us to have colleagues in different decision-making spaces who represent women’s voices, who carry the message that together we can transform the situation for women. We also undertook an educational process with 32 Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women, and women signatories to the Peace Accord, who wrote their stories which now form part of a Training Kit for preventing sexual violence.

## 8.2 Territorial Peacebuilding and Violence Prevention

I am going to speak about territorial peace building and violence prevention. To speak about territorial peace, I must speak about the territory where I live – that is Bogotá. Not the Bogotá of the Plaza de Bolívar, the international centre, the seat of power, but the Bogotá that has been the epicentre and product of an armed conflict. Sometimes we forget to look at Bogotá from that perspective. It is not that I have the desire or the intention to equate my experience with that of the rural regions, but when we ignore the fact that Bogotá unfortunately plays a significant role in the generation of conflict in this country, we also lose the opportunity for those of us who live in Bogotá to see ourselves as peacebuilders and understand the role we can play. I participate in organisational processes in the southwest of Bogotá – nothing to do with the centres of power – from there I can talk about peace building processes.

When the armed actor is removed, there remains a set of structural conditions that led Colombia into conflict,

beyond the armed actor: social justice, rights, housing, basic sanitation, the creation of conditions which should exist and which of themselves prevent violence against women. These are elements that, if guaranteed in one way or another, would lead to a different kind of life. There are two aspects: the implementation of the Peace Accord, which is the responsibility of the State; and the process of building peace, which is one of building society.

The peacebuilding processes did not begin with the Peace Accord, they began much earlier. They started with organisational processes whereby women in the territories began to set up Community Action Boards, children’s homes, community kitchens, community gardens, everything that meant social justice. Peacebuilding involves me, as a political subject. I am based right next to the central food market in Bogotá, where not only the displaced population come, but also armed actors and migrants. All the social problems identified in Colombia are present in our territory in a distinct form.

It is true that they are not addressed in the same way as in Cauca, La Guajira or Montes de María, but you can look at what the effects are, the form they take in Bogotá. There is the issue of territorial control. Socio-political violence has increased against women by armed actors fighting over the shantytowns, invading the wetlands or occupying an area in the mountains. When we talk about the feminisation of poverty in Bogotá we understand that many of the problems faced by women in the city are due to the lack of safeguards.

According to UN Security Council Resolution 1325, we women must have guarantees of participation in a distinct form. We must have the opportunity to relate in a distinct way to everything that happens in our territories, because in the end peace is not built from the top down, but from the bottom up. That is where we need to create processes, to coordinate with each other, to believe in each other. The recognition of ourselves as working-class women has led us to consider the need to meet not only people from Kennedy, but also from Bosa, Ciudad Bolívar, Usme, Sumapaz, San Cristobal, Santa Fe, in an alliance in which we created for working class women of the district who wanted to talk about peace in Bogotá. We talked about peace from within the territories, and we identified key elements. We needed to learn about the armed conflict, because when we reached 2016 and the country said “No” to the Peace Accord [in the referendum], after all

we had gone through, we said “What happened? What have we not done? What have we stopped doing?” What we concluded was that we had stopped talking about something that everybody took for granted – **the armed conflict and how we experienced it.**

We therefore embarked on a process of educating ourselves to become peacebuilders – learning how to coordinate with others, how to make demands, how to involve this city and say, “How are you following up on the implementation of public policy - the Equality Plan?” and all that is aimed at implementing the 2016 Peace Accord. I cannot say this is only a women’s issue, but we have a part to play. Now the city is formulating a District Peace Policy, they came and announced, “We are going to organise the district public policy for peace”. Why don’t they first come and listen to the experiences of the women’s organisations in the territories? What do I mean by this? Effectively, we need organised agendas and objectives, we need coordination processes that also allow us to have our place in these processes and the acknowledgement that we are indeed peacebuilders. While the Peace Accord was being prepared, work on the agenda for the peace began. In 2012 in Bogotá, we began to talk about the issues connected to peace, not only for the discussion in Havana, but also for territorial peace.

We discussed various issues including the body as the primary territory, free of violence and conflict, because a premise we all believe is that *“I cannot talk about peace and political participation if my body is completely destroyed.”* This also involves acknowledging what has happened to us. It was a very beautiful experience talking about the geography of memory, of being able to discuss with the women victims of the armed conflict who arrived in Bogotá, how they have had to make this city their new place for living, for relationships, for connections, but also for memory. It is not a case of losing the connection with the initial ancestral territory, but of understanding that there is also a different process of building memory when arriving here.

Talking about a culture of peace and establishing territorial peace building processes, whereby people can have their disagreements without thinking that the other must be wiped off the face of the earth, is more difficult than we thought. It is a very complex issue, and this also applies in the city. Demilitarisation of the territories and the control of women’s daily lives is also experienced in the city, and it continues to be a challenge. Political participation is the most difficult thing that women currently experience with the Peace Accord – not simply turning up to warm the seat, but what it really means, that administrations and



Humanitarian and biodiversity zone Agua Clara (San Juan).



Women embarked on a process of education to become peace-builders – learning how to coordinate with others, how to make demands, how to participate in public policy and how to monitor its implementation.”

organisational processes consider the voice of women – because while it is true that none of the indicators of the Accord are really being fully complied with, for women, political participation is all but denied to them.

Everything related to the creation of conditions for self-care in the face of the violence we experience, precisely because of the work of leadership and the political authorities for territorial peace. It is crucial for Bogotá to be in solidarity with women and their experiences in the territories, because when they arrive here, this city must welcome them and create alternative conditions for them to be able to live.

### 8.3 A Feminist and Women’s Rights Perspective to Achieving Peace

The *Ruta Pacífica de Mujeres* consists of 350 organisations from throughout Colombia, both rural and urban. How have we women resisted in this war?

Whilst the system women face is violent, for us, resistance is always peaceful. It is a resistance which is offered from the life of women’s bodies and from the struggles in which they engage. Our peaceful resistance comes from our declared position as women and feminists. Our work consists of resisting, advocating and strengthening ourselves. These three elements have enabled the *Ruta Pacífica de Mujeres* to continue. Women’s organisations play an active and important role dealing with various aspects of the armed conflict, including sexual violence and displacement.

Feminism, antimilitarism and pacifism are the three elements of coherence for the *Ruta Pacífica*. We work from a feminist and women’s rights perspective based on subjective transformation – the belief that we must subjectively transform ourselves as women to achieve change in society. Women are always forced to explain why they do not report violence against them and why they stay in a violent relationship – society and patriarchy always question the women rather than the perpetrators. Feminism has therefore been a constant guide in our work with women.

Antimilitarism is not only about rejecting weapons but also all the military values that have remained as a mind-set, ideas of military power and how to resolve conflicts. One of the *Ruta Pacífica’s* central principles has always been not weapons but words, “walking the word”, as Indigenous

people say. Having pacifism at the centre of our work was very difficult in 1996 [when *Ruta Pacífica de Mujeres* was founded] because many supported war and thought the issues could be resolved through violence. Fortunately, this has been changing and civil society is far more open to pacifism. These are the central pillars of resistance for the *Ruta Pacífica*.

Women have had considerable experience of resistance. In the 1980s, women’s organisations were mainly feminist organisations working to put feminism on the agenda. The early 2000s saw an escalation in armed conflict and its impacts: displacements, rapes, control exercised by men over women and their children in the territories, forced recruitments, disappearances. This context motivated woman to organise and create women’s and victims’ organisations amongst others. Strengthening social organisations is an important strategy for resistance. Today there are a critical mass of very important women’s organisations and that alone is a form of resistance.

Social mobilisation has been one of the central elements of resistance. The *Ruta Pacífica* has mobilised over 120,000 women in the last 25 years. These mobilisations (peaceful protests) were strong in territories in the 1990s and 2000s. This enabled women to secure a place at the negotiating table of the Peace Talks that led to 2016 Peace Accord, where we raised the issues of the impact the conflict had on women, on women’s bodies, sexual violence and the continuation of violence. Constant analysis of the context enabled women’s organisations to get to the truth of what happened, and this served as the basis for our contributions to the Peace Accord and to the Truth Commission.

The other important aspects we have been working on are protection and self-protection due to the serious situation for women leaders in Colombia, who are the focus of threats and assassinations; peace management in the negotiations where we are involved in peace building; promoting political participation; providing psychosocial support from a collective perspective, with a focus on the collective healing of women. There is also the idea of a journey of fun and games - working with boys and girls to create a country in which they can be men and women for the future of peace.



## 9.0 Women and Justice

### 9.1 Transitional Justice

The Colombian Special Jurisdiction for Peace (*Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz* – JEP) is the judicial component of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-repetition created by the 2016 Peace Accord between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC-EP) and the Colombian Government. The JEP started functioning in March 2018 and is designed to investigate, prosecute and punish those responsible for the most serious human rights violations committed during the armed conflict between 1 January 1990 and 1 December 2016. The JEP has named 11 macro cases which it will investigate, by grouping together violations according to geographical region or thematic issue.<sup>31</sup>

#### 9.1.1 The work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) – Macro Case 11

On 27 September 2023, the JEP officially recognised the strategic use of sexual and gender-based violence by illegal armed groups and Colombian Security Forces, announcing the opening of Macro Case 11. Its remit is to investigate gender-based violence, sexual violence, reproductive violence and other crimes committed out of prejudice based on sexual orientation, diverse gender expression and gender identity in the context of the Colombian armed conflict. At the time of the announcement of the case, the JEP had a register of 35,178 victims/survivors from 1957 to 2016. 89.2% of the victims are women (35% minors). Two challenges are the lack of ethnic data on 78% of the victims, and the massive under-reporting of these crimes.<sup>32</sup>

At the time of the conference (February 2023), the JEP was in the process of putting together the judicial and investigative team for Macro Case 11. They had received a considerable number of high-quality civil society and community reports to help with the proceedings. Those working on this case were requesting the appointment of an additional supplementary magistrate and public officials dedicated solely to this issue. Thanks to international cooperation they had contractors and a very good team of analysts. However, the supplementary magistrate is an appointment that must be made by the State, using State funds.

#### JEP Methodology for Macro Case 11

To devise an appropriate and effective methodology, the JEP had examined the Justice and Peace Process,<sup>33</sup> and

guidelines issued by the Constitutional Court, building on what already existed in the ordinary justice system. The learning gained from the Justice and Peace Process highlighted the need to manage macro cases in a comprehensive manner and ensure the information was **accessible to the public**. The judgments available from the Justice and Peace Process on sexual violence are very difficult to access as they are up to 5,000 pages long.

The JEP concluded that, given the sheer scale of sexual and gender-based violence, cases needed to be grouped together by establishing patterns – identifying, for example, crimes with a similar logic, or in the same sequence. In an innovative approach the JEP decided that it will consider all the cases presented to it. Other courts, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), tend to examine just a couple of emblematic cases.

Many cases of sexual and gender-based violence fall within one of the other 10 macro cases. How to make sexual crimes visible in this context is not only a technical issue but also an ethical one. The JEP’s solution is to highlight crimes of sexual violence wherever they occurred, for example, this crime would still be present in the thematic or regional macro case where it occurred and in Macro Case 11. If evidence emerged that a ‘false positive’ victim had suffered sexual violence before they were killed, they would be left in Macro Case 03. The same applies to forced recruitment by the FARC where sexual abuse of recruited girls and other forms of reproductive and sexual violence are a visible and significant issue. This sexual abuse is also an important part of Macro Case 07 (Recruitment of Children in the Armed Conflict). Cases of sexual violence and violence motivated by prejudice are also similarly treated in geographical macro cases such as Macro Case 04 (Urabá) and 05 (Northern Cauca) as part of understanding the territorial dynamics of those regions. There could also be mixed reasons or instances where the situation was technically complex, for example, when a rape is in a thematic area and a territorial area of investigation meaning the accusation is between macro cases e.g. 03 (False Positives) and 04 (Urabá). In this event the investigators will work on both cases together, thereby ensuring that the context is not lost, and the motives and their complexity understood.

When seeking to define the crimes to be addressed, the JEP analysed the reports submitted by CSOs. Here they encountered a series of gender-motivated offences and found that it was not only sexual violence, but also other crimes that were part of the pattern, that would allow them



As of September 2023, the JEP had a register of 35,178 victims/survivors of conflict related sexual and gender-based violence. Despite this, there is a massive underreporting of these crimes.”

to account for the complexity of violence motivated by a person’s sexual orientation, identity, and gender expression or simply by being a woman. For example, a young boy that appeared to local militiamen to be very effeminate was forced by them to perform manual work because that “would make him a man”. The crime was forced labour, but the motive was the boy’s gender expression. The same attitudes drove the crimes committed against women.

In the context of transitional justice there is no individual reparation. Nevertheless, the guiding principle of ethical investigation is that it represents some benefit for the victim. It is still an open question as to how the JEP’s treatment of the case will benefit the individual victim; at a minimum it must do no harm.

The emphasis of the 2016 Peace Accord is on exemplary punishments rather than accountability for crimes. So instead of over 40 years in prison, which would be the case in the ordinary justice system, those who acknowledge their guilt and tell the truth receive community service. For those who do not tell the truth, their sentence is commuted to a maximum of 20 years. The question the JEP is exploring is how Macro Case 11 will be conducted within the principles of the Peace Accord, where acceptance of responsibility for crimes, reconciliation and peacebuilding is privileged.

It is a long road, but there is hope that Macro Case 11, combined with the Truth Commission’s report, will ensure that the state explicitly addresses the social and cultural patterns which allowed, tolerated and justified sexual violence against women and LGBTQ+ people, and that this, together with the advancement of women’s rights, will provide suitable mechanisms to start talking about concrete guarantees against repetition.

## 9.2 Impunity and Restorative Justice

Feminist psychosocial accompaniment is a process of acknowledging the stories and memories of women. They are the teachers and experts on their paths because they are the ones who have travelled them, and there is no one better placed to be at the centre of the plans and proposals for transformative reparations or actions to avoid repetition of victimising events.

### 9.2.1 Psychosocial support

Women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence have been taking part in discussions around how feminist psychosocial support should operate for women accessing justice.

Feminist psychosocial accompaniment to access justice is a relational space of emotional support between women, not something that happens in a specific action or moment. It is above all a secure bond of recognition and support for women who have experienced various kinds of victimisation. It offers the possibility and the freedom to be and to name what cannot normally be addressed in a patriarchal world; a world that undervalues their realities, their truths, their organisational processes, their expectations of access to justice and their peacebuilding proposals.

This accompaniment relationship seeks to weave critical, deep and collective reflections on the structural violence experienced and the dynamics of power and control that are at the root of discrimination. Its aim is to demystify and question the beliefs and imagery associated with victimising events and being a woman, and to promote transformations in social relations to guarantee rights. This ethical feminist support is committed to changing the realities of subjection or exclusion, a non-neutral support that recognises how, by the fact of being women, we are already exposed to differential risks of being victims of violence.

Feminist psychosocial accompaniment is a process of acknowledging the stories and memories of women. This means that the voices, concerns, emotions and truths of the women are heard, validated and their participation enhanced without finger-pointing, blame or stigmatisation, thereby creating a space to honour life’s coping decisions, memories and pain.

Feminist psychosocial support is a space for reflective mediation between women and state institutions, which sometimes do not represent security due to re-victimisation or omission of guarantees for women’s rights. This mediation process provides clarification, grounds expectations, and creates a joint understanding of the process of access to justice.

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Dedicated to the Tacueyo Indigenous Guard and Cristina Bautista, who were assassinated on 29 October 2019 in a massacre in Toribío. Tireless activist for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and women, whose words “If we keep silent, they kill us. If we speak, they kill us too. So, let’s talk” echo in our hearts. – Janneth Lozano Bustos

### 9.2.2 Obstacles that Prevent Transformative Reparations for Victims of Sexual Violence

For over 50 years, women in their diversity have suffered the impact of war on their lives and bodies due to the confluence of a multiplicity of legal and illegal armed actors who have committed serious human rights violations and infractions of international humanitarian law.

Various legal regimes created by the Colombian State (ordinary justice, JEP and the Justice and Peace Process) have all indicated that one of their main objectives is to promote the rights of victims. However, structural obstacles have persisted in terms of rights to access to reparations for women and girl victims/survivors of sexual violence. Women's CSOs have drawn up proposals and recommendations for comprehensive and transformative reparation within the framework of feminist restorative transitional justice. They raise the possibility that peace could reduce gender gaps, improve the social, political and economic conditions of women and girls, and promote and respect women's human rights.<sup>34</sup>

The creation of the Transitional Justice System was established to respond to demands for justice, truth, reparation and guarantees of non-repetition. However, the model of restorative transitional justice in place has been created according to a male paradigm, which fails to explore and acknowledge the women's experiences and respond to their needs. It is a transitional system focussed on the perpetrator which does not allow for the effective application of women's human rights. On the contrary, it maintains a scenario of impunity and lack of guarantees of enforceability of the right to reparation and guarantees of non-repetition.

## 9.3 Transformative Justice in Chocó

The *Coordinación Regional del Pacífico Colombiano* is made up of ethnic-territorial and social organisations, NGOs, academics and the Catholic Church in Valle, Cauca, Nariño and Chocó.

**What does transformative justice look like with respect to the restitution of rights, reparation for sexual violence and non-repetition?** Transformative justice should guarantee the effective and real participation of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women in decision-making spaces<sup>35</sup> which affect not only them, but also their community. This requirement is not being fulfilled. Even

where participation of Indigenous women is supposed to be guaranteed, for example, in the seven regional Executive Committees in Chocó, there is only one woman. Generally, women are given space in areas of coordination where there is no decision-making vote. This also happens in the community councils. This is why women are always at a disadvantage when it comes to participation in decisions that affect us.

**What are our internal regulations?** We have national, departmental and regional regulations that consider women's rights, but many Indigenous communities are not implementing them. This is because each community is autonomous, and in Chocó these regulations often do not reach the remote rural communities. The authorities in these territories practically have not heard of women's rights and they do not recognise the rights that have been won at the national and regional level.

**There should be recognition of the struggle undertaken by Indigenous women in community, organisational, and political processes.** In my territory there is no recognition of the struggle for territory undertaken by women. Men are always the ones who are visible. Nevertheless, in our silence we have always resisted in our territories, and frequently led the struggle, although this has not been recognised by our Indigenous Authorities.

**The relationship between the Special Indigenous Justice and the State Justice Systems.** Violations of Indigenous women carried out by Indigenous men outside Indigenous territory usually go unpunished. This is because the Public Prosecutor's Office says that this is the responsibility of the Special Indigenous Justice System. But this is not the case – basically the Prosecutor's Office is washing its hands of it. This is the state authorities' response to violations of Indigenous women. But the Indigenous Justice System's response is practically the same.

**The municipal, departmental and national governments need to take effective measures to guarantee the safety of Indigenous women in the territories.** This is because when illegal armed groups and the Army itself do countless harm to women, girls, young people, and the elderly, this always goes unpunished. The Colombian government finds it very difficult to counter these crimes. Many Indigenous women also never file a complaint because most women in the remote territories do not speak Spanish. This is a major disadvantage when it comes to reporting a crime





Women’s CSOs have proposed recommendations for comprehensive and transformative reparations .. aimed at reducing gender gaps and improving the social, political and economic conditions of women and girls...”

to the Public Prosecutor’s Office, and in other areas where Indigenous rights are supposedly guaranteed.

The women’s programme of the *Mesa Indígena de Chocó* carried out a survey with Indigenous women on gender and sexual violence, where all types of violence were identified: sexual, psychological, physical, economic, and spiritual violence. It found that these forms of violence are a daily occurrence. Rape, when it occurs within the community, is frequently not considered a crime by the Indigenous Authorities, because in many cases, it is the

authorities themselves who are committing the violence. This is why it’s important to undertake awareness-raising and educational work with men.

### 9.3.1 Suicides Among Young Indigenous Women

The issue of suicide among young women between 12 and 22 years of age is particularly concerning. In the last four years we have received 26 reports from the Indigenous authorities in Chocó. There has been a disharmony in our



Indigenous Woman at the Arroyo Bruno (La Guajira). The destruction of Mother Earth kills hope.



territories - the continuation of conflict and war, with abuse from illegal armed groups, the destruction of Mother Earth, as well as the lack of opportunities with no guarantees of higher education or employment, all accumulate in a lack of hope for young Indigenous women.

The prevailing culture of machismo is what produces violence within Indigenous communities. To achieve reparation, the Indigenous principles and the Law of Origin<sup>36</sup> must be taught to Indigenous men, because they have apparently been forgotten. Women are more resistant and still preserve the Indigenous culture. In the territories it is the women who still wear their Indigenous clothing, maintain their language, and customs, something that is less apparent in men – young men's clothing in the communities is permeated by Western culture. This movement away from their culture has led to an increase in violations of Indigenous women. Women are beaten and mistreated daily in the territories. Men rape women, stigmatise them and deny them effective participation. It is not about dominating men but educating them.

Empowering women in organisational processes would enable them to leave the world of violence and claim their rights. It would allow them to accompany men and raise awareness, rather than being seen as only there to give birth to children and as domestic slaves. Women are more than that, they are human beings. This cannot be achieved with the Women's Programme of the *Mesa Indígena de Chocó* alone, it also needs support from empowered Indigenous women at national level to be able to address this problem in rural Indigenous territories.

#### 9.4 An Ethical Pact for Peace, Reparation and Non-repetition

The National Coordination of Indigenous Women in Colombia (*Coordinación Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas de Colombia* – CONAMIC) is an organisation of Indigenous women with an ethnic-feminist approach. Originally, the women focussed on peace and security, dialogue, and mediation, publicly launching in 2015. CONAMIC comes



Louise Winstanley (ABColumbia) with UK & Irish Parliamentary Delegation (Gary Cannon, Claire Hannah and Brendan O'Hara) with women from the four Tribes of the *Sierra Nevada*.



Empowering women in organisational processes would enable them to leave the world of violence and claim their rights.”

from the collective social struggles of 26 women from ten Indigenous communities across Colombia. CIASE was one organisation that supported us. Initially CONAMIC met clandestinely, and the political knowledge gained in those four years allowed it to consolidate. The organisation was founded on an “ethical pact” containing the 20 points that united the women, under the heading of to “win the peace” not to “win the war”. The ethical pact was seen as the first step to reconstruction – a pact that implies morality in those undertaking this work.

The leadership that the women developed was based on the provision of a space for listening and working to generate cultural transformation. When some of the women became Indigenous authorities, the space allowed for women to support one another and to reflect on the type of leadership they wanted to exercise in their communities. It built on the concepts of *buen vivir* (wellbeing), feminism, and spirituality with a strategy of security and protection. Putting spirituality and care at the centre is political, and it means going back to Indigenous “origins”, going back to Indigenous roots. This diverse spiritual dialogue is a place between feeling, thinking and acting, a place that brought together the spirituality of the Indigenous communities in dialogue and mediation with other spiritualities.

CONAMIC produces reports which provide statistical evidence regarding the situation in the territories. The first report highlighted gender-based discrimination and the exclusion of women in the internal decision-making spaces of communities and the state. The second examined how to ground the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in the rural areas,<sup>37</sup> the advances in the peace and security agenda in local and regional institutions, and Indigenous life plans (*planes de vida*).

#### 9.4.1 Indigenous Justice System

The third CONAMIC report covered access to justice and challenges for justice in the territories. Whilst the Indigenous justice system is officially recognised and applied in Indigenous territory, the state does not provide it with the

same technical or financial support as other justice systems e.g. the military justice system. The Indigenous Justice System focusses on the search for harmony and balance, a customary approach not necessarily written in the Justice Manuals. Despite its being faster and more efficient in some proceedings, the lack of financial support leaves it in a marginal position. Furthermore, what is in the Indigenous Justice Manuals lacks clarity especially in respect to women seeking to access justice. The functioning of the Indigenous Justice System depends on who holds the positions of authority and the training that they have received. Indigenous Justice has three categories of disharmony – minor, serious, very serious. In the very serious cases ordinary jurisdiction takes precedence over the Special Indigenous Jurisdiction. However, the ordinary justice system also does not have guarantees for Indigenous women, and therefore there is little access to justice for them.

#### 9.4.2 Reparations

Reparations that are being considered by the JEP should consider differences and dismantle structural inequalities, so that reparations are able to guarantee non-repetition in the territories. CONAMIC’s approach is that there should be an ethical pact underpinning reparations because of the diversity that exists in the territories, in the communities, and in approaches. To restrict victims/survivors to one set of rules will not ensure real reparations, because the damage has been differential.

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Dedicated to Ana Tulia Zapata, “Mama Wala”, Nasa woman who fostered the organisation and empowerment of Indigenous women. She passed away in July 2021, leaving a rich legacy of wisdom and teachings for the Indigenous movement. She inspired future generations. The first Indigenous woman authority in her Reservation, Coordinator of the Tejido Mujer of Cxhab Wala Kiwe and member of executive team- Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca. – Janneth Lozano Bustos



# 10.0 Women, Peace and Security

Guaranteeing women's right to participate in decision making is decisive in the protection of women's rights, specifically in the prevention of sexual violence. As recognised by the UN,<sup>38</sup> the effectiveness of women's participation in establishing and sustaining peace is one of the strongest arguments for advocating that women participate in equal measure to men in all decisions relating to peacebuilding and security. The participation of women in the 2016 Peace Talks in Havana was crucial in achieving protection mechanisms for women in the 2016 Peace Accord and the opening of Macro Case 11 on sexual violence in the JEP.

Women's participation transformed the Havana agenda<sup>39</sup> from one where sexual violence was absent into one of the most advanced agendas in peace negotiations globally regarding its treatment of the issue. Initially, there were no guarantees for women to participate, but advocacy actions opened a space for a level of dialogue (though never fully equal). If there had been guarantees of equal participation, there could have been greater opportunities and progress in positioning the issue of sexual violence as a priority on the access to justice agenda. This has had repercussions in that it took seven years for a macro case on sexual violence to be opened. Equal participation would have resulted in greater decision-making possibilities to make progress on the issue of sexual violence.

The women's movement had a moment of participation during the peace negotiations in Havana to incorporate proposals for women victims of sexual violence, but these were restricted in scope when it came to implementation. This was not due to the JEP judges, but rather to the limits on the participation of women "at all stages" of the peacebuilding process.<sup>40</sup>

## 10.1 A Feminist Security Policy Designed by Women

The National Commission for Security Guarantees (CNGS), a body created by the 2016 Peace Accord, is responsible for formulating a policy to dismantle illegal armed groups ("dismantling policy"), identify patterns of criminal activity that affect women, girls, boys, adolescents and the LGBTQI+ population, and guarantee the effective participation of women.<sup>41</sup> The women's movement presented to the CNGS a dismantling policy proposal from an intersectional feminist perspective, which highlights the need to rethink 'notional' security in public policies, and to incorporate existing

advances in feminist theory and international standards and which fully complies with the gender focus measures in the Peace Accord.

Feminist security questions the exercise of force, militarisation and hegemonic masculinity as an ideal response to security problems in society. The current notion of security not only represents various risks for women, but also reproduces, from its own dynamics, sociocultural patterns of discrimination. In that sense it does not protect, but rather reinforces the structures of domination, by being an expression of patriarchal domination through armed violence. The idea of security is permeated by stereotypes of discrimination. The imaginary need for protection of women by men is the basis for the belief that men from armed forces (legal and illegal) are the answer to the risks society faces – i.e. the societal notion that women are weak and defenceless, that men are strong, and that armies are powerful.

The use of weapons and force, as characteristic aspects of notion of security, is a generally unquestioned practice that has repeatedly failed. The existing security models have not helped reduce violence against women and girls, nor have they improved the living conditions of societies, and yet they continue to be the most approved forms of state intervention in the face of any threat. A gender reading of the existing power relations of state decision-makers can explain why there is no progress in rethinking this notion of security.

From a feminist perspective, the dismantling policy provided for in the Peace Accord should be committed to a different concept of security, which entails a change in the state security model. It should seek to intervene in the dynamics that reproduce violence and discrimination against women and girls, and which expose them to risks from armed actors. Therefore, a feminist dismantling policy must address multiple factors, such as the imagery around masculinity, the environment of daily or structural violence, the economic and social situation in the regions, the sociocultural practices of discrimination against women and girls, and the role that women themselves have in the armed conflict.

## 10.2 Gender Risks Faced by Women Human Rights Defenders

Women human rights defenders (WHRDs) face a double vulnerability related to their human rights work. As well as the vulnerability shared with their male peers, there are additional and disproportionate gender impacts reflected in the way in which they are attacked. 2022 was the third



Acts of violence against women defenders are not related to common violence but to a type of sociopolitical gender violence designed to make an example of them, using fear as a tool to produce terror in women.” – Sisma Mujer

most violent year for women political leaders since the signing of the Peace Accord, with a total of 90 attacks, an increase of 60.7% compared to 2018.<sup>42</sup> The loss of a WHRD gives a frightening message that hinders the emergence of new women’s leaders and negatively impacts women’s participation. There are also difficulties associated with the sexual division of labour that create structural inequalities for women’s participation and can also lead to the loss of female leaders.

The main acts of aggression against WHRDs are misogynistic attacks: extreme cruelty in the killing of WHRDs, harassment, accusations and stigmatisation based on pre-established ideas of who women are and what they should do, threats against their children, use of humiliating language in threats that violate their sexual integrity, sexual violence, partner violence and femicide.<sup>43</sup> This violence aims specifically to punish, sanction, and limit the political power of WHRDs because of their gender.

The institutional response has centred on providing protection from a male perspective, such as the granting of protection schemes comprised of male bodyguards, bullet-proofed vehicles and the use of firearms. These fail to recognise the gender risks identified by the Colombian Constitutional Court and the perspective of feminist security. For example, a defender from the rural area of Montes de María was a beneficiary of a protection scheme after being attacked. It consisted of an armoured vehicle, two bodyguards and a bulletproof vest. However, these measures made her very conspicuous, and her work colleagues considered this a threat to them. As a result, it was impossible for her to continue to work in rural areas, leaving her without a means of making a living. Those responsible for providing her with protection measures had failed to take into consideration that she was a woman living in a rural area and undertaking sensitive work. There is little or no incorporation of a territorial, ethnic, rural, working class, women’s rights or gender approach in the state protection schemes, resulting in an unfavourable environment for women leaders.<sup>44</sup>

Rural women face additional risks to their leadership when they are forced to relocate to urban areas where they are highly stigmatised. Difficulties include the loss of support networks, and damage to the social fabric and a

weakening of the community organisations they have been forced to leave.

The women’s social movements have promoted a public policy with a gender focus that more effectively guarantees the life, integrity, and security of WHRDs. Decree 1314/2016 and Resolution 0845 of 2018 provide the legal basis for the programme of integrated guarantees for women leaders and defenders (*Programa Integral de Garantías para Mujeres Líderes y Defensoras – PIGMLD*) with three main focuses: Prevention, Protection and Guarantees of Non-Repetition. In 2020 a two-year Action Plan<sup>45</sup> was adopted and the next four-year Plan (2023-2027) is currently being drawn up, which includes affirmative measures for WHRDs to access institutional protection. The problem lies in its implementation which, according to Sisma Mujer, is low to non-existent on aspects of impunity and prevention.



Human Rights Defender Luz Marina Arteaga, who was brutally murdered in 2022

This is dedicated to the memory of Luz Marina Arteaga, an incredibly brave human rights defender who was tortured, dismembered, and killed on 18 January 2022. – ABColombia



## 11.0 Colombian Government's Policies and Perspectives

### 11.1 Eliana Valencia, Presidential Advisor for Women's Equality

The National Development Plan for 2022 to 2026 (*Colombia, potencia mundial de la vida*)<sup>46</sup> was based on the electoral mandate, combined with a feminist mandate, and input from regional dialogues which included information from women, the LGBTQI+ community and a disability roundtable consultation. The Ministry is using this information to influence local planning councils to include these contributions in the territorial development plans (PDETs).

The Ministry of Equality and Equity has five areas of work: (i) economic autonomy for women; (ii) prevention of violence against women, (iii) sexual and reproductive rights; (iv) feminisation of the State – this includes women, justice, peace and security; women, environment, and territory; and (v) a Gender Observatory. There are also two cross-cutting principles: intersectionality and non-discrimination, and communication for cultural transformation.

**Prevention of violence:** the proposal is to create a National Monitoring System. This will consist of a central database that collates all women's cases that enter the justice system, from the Prosecutor's Office, forensic medicine, the health sector, police - the institutions where women go to obtain justice after experiencing a violent or criminal act. This National Monitoring System will mean that women will only have to report what has happened to them to one institution, rather than the current situation where they are having to provide the same information multiple times. It will integrate data collection with all entities to operate a unified single data collection system, which will provide the information needed by the different state entities in one location. Currently, each entity collects and documents data in different ways, which can affect the classification of the crime. The National Monitoring System has been developed jointly by the Ministries of Equality, Equity and Justice, the Attorney General's Office, the Police, and the Prosecutor's Office.



"Women out in front without fear". Demonstration in Bogotá 2024.





The Government is committed to seeing impunity for sexual and gender-based violence addressed and supports the opening of the macro case on sexual and gender-based violence by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP)” – Laura Gil, Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs

In addition, the national 155 Helpline for women victims of violence will be expanded and integrated, to incorporate district and departmental helplines. This should strengthen the helpline, but it will require further financial resources, which should be available from the recent tax reforms and the budget of the Equality and Equity Ministry.

The Agreement between the Equality and Equity Ministry and the Police includes a measure related to actions with a gender focus. There will be training, institutional capacity building and strengthening for the police as they are the first responders to sexual and gender-based violence – but also the first to re-victimise women, and the first to fail to follow procedures correctly.

Presidential Directives with guidelines for the consolidation and updating of government sector protocols are in progress on how to provide effective attention to women and girls and address different forms of violence. A training programme called “Mara’s Angel” is being designed, aimed at ‘unlearning’ machismo and racism for public officials, along with a communication plan to effect cultural transformation and the eradication of stereotypes.

State officials are responsible for overseeing the implementation of the public policy changes recommended in the ruling by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on the case of Jineth Bedoya.<sup>47</sup> These will be prioritised.

## 11.2 Laura Gill, Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs

The Petro Government is committed to a feminist foreign policy. To strengthen this approach Colombia has joined international alliances, for example, on the prevention of sexual violence in conflict and a group of nations promoting feminist policies. It has withdrawn from the anti-abortion Geneva Consensus Declaration.<sup>48</sup> It has withdrawn from the anti-abortion Geneva Consensus Declaration and filed a bill in Congress to ratify the Inter-American Convention against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance. If passed, this would establish Colombia’s first binding legal instrument addressing discrimination based on sexual orientation. Furthermore, the government has signed the Political Declaration on strengthening the protection of civilians from the humanitarian consequences arising from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas<sup>49</sup>, launched a National Plan for safe schools and is undertaking extensive consultations (Feb 2023) with civil

society to design the first National Action Plan (NAP) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

### 11.2.1 National Action Plan 1325

One of the government’s foundations for addressing Colombia’s structural gender inequality will be the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (NAP1325). The development of the NAP1325 will be a shared responsibility between the Presidential Council for the Equality of Women and the Department of Multilateral Affairs. There is a core group representing networks of women’s organisations which is helping the government create an action plan for the Government’s feminist policy and co-constructing the first Colombian NAP 1325.

The aim is for the NAP1325 to include indicators for each government department along with an allocated budget related to each proposed activity, making monitoring easier. The initial proposal was to launch Colombia’s NAP1325 at the UN Security Council meeting in October 2023. Whilst Colombia was unable to meet this deadline for the full plan, they did present the road map and strategic lines.

As part of the development of its Feminist Foreign Policy, Colombia has formally withdrawn its reservations from the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).<sup>50</sup> This will allow the CEDAW Committee complaint and inquiry mechanism to better monitor Colombia’s implementation of the CEDAW and give it greater powers when investigating complaints from individuals of potential “grave or systematic violations” of the Convention. Rights in relation to sexual orientation and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against the LGBTQI+ population will also form part of the feminist policy. Colombia is also holding the presidency for the LGBTQI+ group at the Organisation of American States (OAS).

The Government is committed to seeing impunity for sexual and gender-based violence addressed and supports the opening of the macro case on sexual and gender-based violence by the JEP. Progress on this could mean that Colombia is able to provide a practical example of how to document and process such cases and ensure appropriate reparations for victims of sexual violence.

## 12.0 International Engagement: Violence Against Women and Policies to Promote Women's Equality

### 12.1 Monserrat Solano, Deputy Representative of the Office in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

*"To move towards a peaceful society, it is essential to transform gendered power relations that perpetuate discrimination and violence against women, children and LGBTQI+ communities, and that are also reflected in the structures of the State."*

Women, WHRDs and representatives of the Indigenous communities have undertaken a range of work highlighting sexual and gender-based violence in their territories, discrimination against women, something that puts them in considerable danger, especially in territories where there is a lack of state presence. Above all, it is important to recognise their contribution to peace and justice. This Conference space has been fundamental for reflecting on the impact on women and the LGBTQI+ community in the context of the armed conflict, and on how to create peace by putting gender justice at the centre.

#### 12.1.1 Women, Conflict and Peace

To move towards a peaceful society, it is essential to transform gendered power relations that perpetuate discrimination and violence against women, children and LGBTQI+ communities, and that are reflected in the structures of the State. Both UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the CEDAW reinforce the obligation of states to ensure the effective participation of women in dialogues, the implementation of the Peace Agreement and the reduction of gender-based violence in the context of conflict. Further, the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, Víctor Madrigal-Borloz, recognised that in armed conflicts, members of the LGBTQI+ community experience specific patterns of violence because of their sexual orientation and gender identity,<sup>51</sup> and due to an intensification of gender roles and the control exerted by armed groups. Therefore, mechanisms and routes need to be found to start conversations that will enable the LGBTQI+ community to participate effectively in peace talks.

In 2023, Indigenous women made up over 50% of the victims of the armed conflict and human rights violations. Furthermore, around 90% of sexual and gender-based violence is committed against women. Women suffer and die from a violence that is perpetrated mostly by men. Women must therefore be part of the search for peace and justice, they cannot continue to just be recipients of policies or a separate category, a special consideration, rather they must be an integral part of a vision for peace. Precisely now, with the Total Peace policy and the State's efforts to ensure peace, it is important that gendered considerations are not only included in the design of public policy, but also in its implementation, so that structural problems of gender-based violence can be addressed. Agreements in the 2016 Peace Accord for comprehensive rural reform and changes in drug policies must also be approached from a gendered perspective.

In the last year (2022), the OHCHR documented cases of sexual violence and femicide in the context of the armed conflict. We have also seen cases of violence against LGBTQI+ people because of their sexual orientation and gender identity. We are concerned about the barriers that victims and survivors have in accessing care and protection services for fear of reprisals and of being re-victimised, and the lack of a directive presence of the state in many territories affected by violence. The CEDAW Committee has called on the Colombian State to increase the presence of State institutions, access to basic services for women, to guarantee protection of the affected population in conflict zones and the prevention of the recruitment of children by armed groups. It has also insisted on the implementation of the National Plan for the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence against Women and Girls, paying special attention to Indigenous women, Afro-Colombian women, rural women, women with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual and trans women. The Committee also calls for the allocation of sufficient resources for the implementation of Law 1257,<sup>52</sup> with an emphasis on the provision of health services and shelters for victims in rural areas and compliance with the Prosecutor's Office directives on due diligence in the investigation of cases of violence against women.<sup>53</sup>

It is essential to develop methodologies to ensure that the pursuit of justice for sexual and gender-based violence is not re-victimising, but rather restorative and above all, empowering; this means women must be listened to. It is crucial to address the issue of state structures and to ensure parity, not only among those who write and pass



Human rights can never be fully upheld unless they are also enjoyed by all women and girls, and conflicts will not be resolved, and sustainable development will not be attained, without the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at all levels.” – UN Pact for the Future

laws, but also those who judge. The opening of Macro Case 11 on sexual violence by the JEP is undeniable progress in combatting impunity in these crimes – an important success for the women’s and victims’ organisations. The OHCHR also collaborated in insisting on the need to open this macro case and on the importance of strengthening the integration of the gender approach in the investigation of the other macro cases in the JEP.

## 12.2 Tim Hemmings, Deputy Head of Mission, British Embassy Colombia

Prevention of gender-based violence is a long-term priority for the UK, starting ten years ago with the launch of the Global Summit to end sexual violence in conflict.<sup>54</sup> The idea of the event was to unite with allied countries and others

to promote amongst all governments an agreement that using sexual violence as a weapon of war is completely unacceptable. Despite the many changes of UK ministers and governments, we remain committed to this agenda.

In November 2022, the UK held a second international conference on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict with 57 states, survivor organisations, and CSOs to drive forward global action. A political declaration on conflict-related sexual violence was signed by 54 states, including Colombia.<sup>55</sup> New UK funding and pragmatic tools to support survivors was announced as well as plans to launch an International Alliance.<sup>56</sup>

In the UK’s fifth National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP1325), Colombia is named as a priority in respect to sexual violence in armed conflict, and how



Jineth Bedoya Lima, Colombian Journalist, at the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict conference, London 2022.

Dedicated to Jineth Bedoya Lima, an incredibly inspiring woman who was willing, at untold personal cost, to ensure the world knew what women in Colombia were suffering. Her courage in speaking out provided the space for others to tell their stories and her determination achieved recognition for herself and for others. – ABColombia





Louise Winstanley (ABColumbia), Margarita Hilamo Mestizo (Indigenous Nasa Activist) and Lizeth Trejos (CODACOP) at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

this has impacted, and is impacting, communities. The UK supports the work Colombia is doing towards achieving accountability and has found an ally in Colombia for sharing information and good practice.

The UK offers support to a range of organisations including those that provide legal and psychosocial support to victims, networks of survivors of sexual violence, training for medical staff in rural locations, preventing stigmatisation and victimisation during media coverage of cases of sexual violence, as well as the work of the JEP and organisations documenting cases of sexual violence and preparing reports to present to the JEP. The UK considers it important that the macro case focussed on sexual violence brings to light the atrocities committed.

### 12.3 Fiona Nic Dhonnacha, Ambassador of Ireland to Colombia

The themes of women, peace and security, gender inequality and gender-based violence are all important strands of both Irish foreign policy and international development. Violence and gender inequality are also key issues in peace processes. Ireland's third NAP1325 has criteria around supporting these issues multilaterally and bilaterally with other countries.

Ireland addresses the issue of gender-based violence both domestically and in its foreign policy. Ireland has a zero-tolerance policy against sexual, domestic and gender-based violence and has promoted this internationally,



To move towards a peaceful society, it is essential to transform gendered power relations that perpetuate discrimination and violence against women, children and LGBTQI+ communities, and that are reflected in the structures of the State.”

hosting a conference in 2022 that culminated in an agreement between 38 European countries to address this issue.<sup>57</sup> There are three essential elements: a global cultural change that recognises that gender violence is completely unacceptable; systems and strategies to implement the cultural changes; and an adequate justice system that ensures there is no impunity.

Ireland was a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) 2020-2022. Whilst on the UNSC, Ireland maintained a focus on Women, Peace and Security and, alongside the UK and Mexico, held the presidency of the Informal Group of Experts on Women, Peace and Security, which held a session on Colombia in April 2022. In addition to this, during the UN Mission of Verification Reports on Colombia (every three months) Ireland highlighted the importance of the implementation of the gender provisions in the 2016 Peace Accord. Women have an essential role in peace processes, in the negotiations but also in the implementation of peace agreements, not only because women are impacted disproportionately by violence, but also because it is essential to include their perspective. Peace is not possible if you include only half of the population.

Ireland has quite a small bi-lateral cooperation programme with Colombia. Despite this, the role of women in peace talks and implementation of the Accord is always highlighted in three ways. Politically, not only in our conversations and support to the government but also in sharing messages

received from Colombian women and civil society. Key messages from civil society are that the Colombian NAP1325 must be implemented, the importance of Macro Case 11 in the JEP, and the recognition of the role of women and women’s organisations, specifically the “*madres buscadoras*” - mothers seeking information on the disappeared. By sharing these messages, and supporting the Colombian government, Ireland is supporting the work of women civil society organisations and communities.

In terms of promoting women, peace and security, Ireland also supports the exchanges of experience, of women sharing their experiences of the Northern Ireland peace process and learning from Colombia and taking these messages back to Ireland. An example of this is an exchange with women from Putumayo. It is important to share these experiences, not only at government level, but also at civil society level, to listen to and amplify these voices.

Regarding funds, Ireland supports the UN Human Rights Office in Colombia. Much of Ireland’s funding goes into the UN and EU’s multi-donor funds, but Ireland ensures that there is gender focus in every project and, in a proportion of these, support to civil society groups. We support very localised projects as well as larger regional and international exchanges. We accompany Colombian processes with this funding - we do not impose our agenda, but instead always listen to voices on a governmental, civil society and community level.

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Dedicated to all the courageous women leaders who are threatened, killed, attacked, raped, undermined and put down in an effort to silence them and send a message of social sanction because they dare to participate, to demand and to struggle for women’s rights and the rights of their communities. – ABColombia

## Endnotes

- 1 This is the name given to the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, the mountain range and its nearby territory, contained within what the four Nations of the SNSM call the 'Sacred Black Line' or 'Linea Negra'. For more information see the [Public Statement issued by the Kogui, Arhuaco, Wiwa and Kankuamo Indigenous Tribes - ABColombia](#) (November 2019)
- 2 Truth Commission '[Voces de la Madre Tierra, la resistencia de las mujeres Arahuacas de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta - Comisión de la Verdad Colombia \(comisiondelaverdad.co\)](#), July 2022
- 3 OECD Complaint <https://www.abcolombia.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Parent-Companies-FINAL.pdf>
- 4 Daniel Armando Campos and Allan Philippe, 'Monitoring and assessment of polluting metals in the southeastern mining-impacted region of La Guajira, Colombia' (University of Koblenz Landau, 2017)
- 5 This figure was cited in the conference, although we have not been able to find the reference. Cited in ACAP are the following statistics: from 1 January to 2 September 2023, local health authorities identified 1,762 severe and moderate malnutrition cases among under-five children. Of the reported cases, 1,342 came from indigenous communities. In La Guajira, in the first eight months of the year there [were 97 deaths in total](#) of under-fives (not just from malnutrition). As at July 2023, the [maternal mortality rate in La Guajira is double the national average](#).
- 6 The 2016 Peace Accord was signed with the FARC-EP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army), the largest of the guerrilla groups, but others remained in the conflict, the most significant being the ELN (National Liberation Army) and EPL (People's Liberation Army). In addition to this, a dissident group of the FARC continues to operate, as well as various paramilitary groups.
- 7 Territorially Focussed Development Programmes (PDETs in Spanish) that are part of the Rural Reform Chapter of the Peace Accord. They are the main tool for planning and managing a broad rural development process aimed at transforming 170 municipalities (covering 16 subregions) most impacted by the armed conflict. PDETs are in the municipalities with the highest rates of forced displacement and land dispossession, killings, massacres, and forced disappearances, above average rates of extreme poverty and inequality, the strongest presence of illicit crops, and the lowest levels of state institutional presence.
- 8 [Líderes Sociales, Defensores de DDHH y Firmantes de Acuerdo Asesinados en 2023 - Indepaz](#), December 2023
- 9 Colombia has a number of laws recognising women's rights e.g. mechanisms to ensure victims' rights and protective measures for women victims of violence, established by Law 1257 of 2008
- 10 [DANE](#), Pobreza monetaria y grupos de ingreso en Colombia Resultados 2021, 26 April 2022
- 11 For more information, see [Fuelling Conflict in Colombia: The Impact of Gold Mining in Choco - ABColombia](#), October 2015
- 12 Constitutional Court Tutela Judgment T622 of 2016 (Atrato River Case)
- 13 See section 9.1 on Transitional Justice below for more background on the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and Macro Case 11.
- 14 National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) of Colombia, the poverty rate in Cartagena de Indias is 34.6%, which is equivalent to 340,000 people living in poverty. The situation is especially alarming in the city's Commoners Government Areas (CGA) four, five, and six, where more than 70% of the population has unsatisfied basic needs.
- 15 The Urgent Search Mechanism (Mecanismo de Búsqueda Urgente – MBU) is a public action for the protection of personal liberty and integrity of people presumed to have disappeared. The search is conducted by the judicial authorities.
- 16 Ombudsman's Office, Early Warning Alert AT002-2020, page 3
- 17 [Communication to Colombian Government](#) (AL COL 10/2023), Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls, 22 November 2023
- 18 Cambio Magazine, 12 August 2022
- 19 United States Department of State, Trafficking In Persons Report, July 2022
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 [Estandarización Del Paquete Alimentario Para La Atención De Población Migrante Caminante Y En Tránsito](#)
- 22 United States Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report, July 2022
- 23 Corporación Sisma Mujer. [Llamado a la gestión migratoria desde un enfoque de DDHH de las mujeres y las niñas](#), 2021
- 24 Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Decree 216 of 2021. Special Stay Permits introduced in 2018 were replaced in 2021 by the Temporary Protection Status for Venezuelan Migrants.
- 25 [Carta abierta sobre la necesidad urgente de un mecanismo de regularización migratoria para mujeres migrantes víctimas de Violencias Basadas en Género en Colombia](#), 8 May 2023
- 26 Observatorio Nacional de Violencias de Género
- 27 This information has been confirmed by 25 organisations and networks.
- 28 Constitutional Court, [Summary of Order 092 of 2008](#)
- 29 634 incidents of sexual violence, 178 derived from the 183 cases initially reported in the Reserved Annex of Order 092 of 2008 and 456 resulting from the 444 cases that originally featured in the Reserved Annex of Order 009 of 2015.
- 30 Corporación Sisma Mujer. Acceso a la justicia para mujeres víctimas de violencia sexual. Séptimo informe de seguimiento al Auto 092 de 2008 y Segundo informe de seguimiento al Auto 009 de 2015 Anexos reservados-Corte a noviembre de 2019.
- 31 For a list of the macro cases, see <https://www.jep.gov.co/Paginas/casos.aspx>
- 32 JEP Press Release 112, 27 September 2023. La JEP abre macrocaso 11, que investiga la violencia basada en género, incluyendo violencia sexual y reproductiva, y crímenes cometidos por prejuicio
- 33 The process of demobilisation and submission to justice of the paramilitaries in 2005
- 34 These are in line with the principles outlined by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence, and the 122 gender-focused measures of the 2016 Peace Accord.
- 35 Such decision-making spaces include organisational, political, administrative, community processes, in the local, zonal, regional councils and, for Afro-Colombians, community councils and regional black organisations.
- 36 The Law of Origin, a philosophy that governs human relationships to nature and the universe and incorporates the Ancestral Systems of Knowledge and Wisdom which



- play a fundamental role in protecting ecosystems and avoiding the loss of the cultural identity. See [Ancestral system of knowledge of the four Indigenous peoples, Arhuaco, Kankuamo, Kogui and Wiwa of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta - intangible heritage - Culture Sector - UNESCO](#)
- 37 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (S/RES/1325) on women, peace and security, adopted on 31 October 2000.
- 38 Report of the Secretary-General. Our Common Agenda. A/75/982 5 August 2021.
- 39 The Havana agenda refers to the Peace Talks between the Colombian Government and the FARC that resulted in the 2016 Peace Accord
- 40 See UN Security Council Resolution 1889 (2009) paras. 1 and 15; and Resolution 2493 (2019) para. 3, both on women, peace and security.
- 41 2016 Peace Accord, section 3.4.3
- 42 Electoral Observation Mission (MOE), Report “[Manifestaciones de violencia política contra liderazgo y candidaturas de mujeres en un año de campañas electorales](#),” 2022, page 7
- 43 Corporación Sisma Mujer, [Situación de las mujeres líderes y defensoras de derechos humanos en Colombia durante 2021](#).
- 44 Corporación Sisma Mujer. Intervención ante la Corte Constitucional: Aportes para la intervención en la audiencia pública del Proceso T8018193: “Acción de tutela para la protección del derecho a defender derechos” relating to the situation for female leaders and WHRDs, 2022
- 45 The Action Plan involved 28 entities of the Colombian State and contains 144 actions.
- 46 Colombian’s National Development Plan, “[Colombia, potencia mundial de la vida](#)” 2022 - 2026
- 47 Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Case of Bedoya Lima et al. v Colombia. Judgment of 26 August 2021. The Court found the Colombian State guilty of the kidnapping and torture of the journalist Jineth Bedoya and made a range of recommendations. See press release: [https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/comunicados/cp\\_73\\_2021\\_eng.pdf](https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/comunicados/cp_73_2021_eng.pdf)
- 48 [Petro se retira del “Consenso de Ginebra”, que lucha contra el aborto](#), La Silla Vacía, 23 August 2022.
- 49 [EWIPA \(Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas\) Conference, Dublin 2022](#)
- 50 Colombia withdrew all its reservations to the Optional Protocol on the CEDAW in two stages, on 22 November 2022 and 8 February 2023. See UN Treaty Page: [https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-8-b&chapter=4&clang=en](https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-8-b&chapter=4&clang=en)
- 51 [Summary Report - From Wars against Diversity to an Inclusive Peace: Conflict-Related Sexual Violence based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#), November 2022
- 52 Law 1257 of 2008 on the Prevention and Punishment of Forms of Violence and Discrimination against Women
- 53 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, concluding observations on the ninth periodic report of Colombia, 14 March 2019
- 54 [Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- 55 Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) conference 2022: [a political declaration on conflict-related sexual violence](#)
- 56 [International Alliance on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict](#)
- 57 Ministers of the Council of Europe adopt Dublin Declaration to tackle domestic, sexual and gender-based violence ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie)) 30 September 2022

**ABColumbia** is the advocacy project of a group of leading UK and Irish organisations with programmes in Colombia. We advocate in favour of human and environmental rights, peace, justice, sustainable development, women's rights, equality and marginalised communities. ABColumbia's members are CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Colombia, SCIAF and Trócaire. Amnesty International and Peace Brigades International are observer members. ABColumbia develops the collective advocacy work of its members. Our members work with around 100 partner organisations in Colombia, most of them are marginalised communities with little access to decision-making forums nationally or internationally.

[www.abcolombia.org.uk](http://www.abcolombia.org.uk)

The **Corporation for Research, Social and Economic Action (CIASE)** is a Colombian feminist organisation that works to defend human rights, particularly economic, social, cultural and environmental rights. CIASE contributes to the construction of democratic, just, equitable and sustainable societies that recognise the value of equality in difference, plurality and diversity, valuing cultural, political, gender, sexual orientation and religious differences and identities.

[www.ciase.org](http://www.ciase.org)

**Grassroots Community Support Corporation (Codacop)** works in support of grassroots, Indigenous, peasant and popular organisations that seek the achievement of a world without exclusion, and advocates for an equitable society that embraces diversity, justice, dignity and environmental and economic sustainability. CODACOP adopts a holistic approach by providing advice, training programmes, promoting networks and linking different civil society groups.

[www.codacop.org.co](http://www.codacop.org.co)

**Sisma Mujer** is a Colombian feminist organisation that works with women who are victims of violence and discrimination because they are women, in private and public spheres and in the armed conflict, for the expansion of their citizenship, the full enjoyment of their human rights and the promotion of their role as actors in the transformation of their reality. From a legal and human rights, comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach, we strengthen social processes for the individual and collective empowerment of women.

[www.sismamujer.org](http://www.sismamujer.org)

The **Centre for Research and Popular Education Peace Programme (CINEP)** works towards the peaceful handling of conflicts, the expansion of democracy, the construction of citizenship and institutional strengthening through research and education. CINEP promotes peacebuilding, the effective implementation of the 2016 Peace Accord, reconciliation and the enforcement of human rights with a gender, ethnic, territorial and generational approach.

[www.cinep.org.co](http://www.cinep.org.co)

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