

International Alert.

RE-EXAMINING IDENTITIES AND POWER

Gender in peacebuilding
in Colombia



Understanding conflict. Building peace.

About International Alert

International Alert helps people find peaceful solutions to conflict.

We are one of the world's leading peacebuilding organisations, with nearly 30 years of experience laying the foundations for peace.

We work with local people around the world to help them build peace and we advise governments, organisations and companies on how to support peace.

We focus on issues which influence peace, including governance, economics, gender relations, social development, climate change, and the role of businesses and international organisations in high-risk places.

www.international-alert.org

© International Alert 2014

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without full attribution.

Layout by D. R. ink. Cover illustration by Rebecca Truscott-Elves

RE-EXAMINING IDENTITIES AND POWER

Gender in peacebuilding in Colombia

Diana López Castañeda and Henri Myrntinen

October 2014

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to explicitly thank the individuals, organisations and communities who patiently shared their insights for this research. They are also grateful to the International Alert staff and others who assisted in various ways, but especially to Adam Baird, Summer Brown, Alexandra de la Torre, Jessica Dixon, Judy El-Bushra, Mandana Hendessi, Olawale Ismail, Lana Khattab, Anne Labinski, Jana Naujoks, Mia Schöb, Ndeye Sow and Phil Vernon.

International Alert is grateful for the support of its strategic donors: the UK Department for International Development UKAID; the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency; the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The opinions expressed in this report are solely those of International Alert and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of its donors.

About the authors

Diana López Castañeda is an anthropologist and PhD candidate on sociology at Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Argentina. She has been carrying out applied research on migration, gender, development and human rights in several Latin American countries.

Henri Myrntinen is a senior research officer on gender in peacebuilding at International Alert. He has been working and publishing on issues of gender, peace and security with a special focus on masculinities and violence for the past decade. Henri holds a PhD in conflict resolution and peace studies from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Contents

Executive summary	5
1. Introduction and background	6
1.1 A gendered background to conflict in Colombia	7
1.2 Wider effects of the conflict	12
2. Selected project case studies	15
2.1 AMOR	15
2.2 <i>Wayuumunsurat/Mujeres Tejiendo Paz</i>	16
2.3 Santamaria Foundation	19
3. Thematic issues	21
3.1 Gender and economic recovery	21
3.2 The continuum/permutations of gendered violence	23
3.3 Intergenerational dynamics	26
3.4 Gendered challenges to accessing justice	28
4. Summary and outlook	31

Abbreviations

ACR	Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración
AMOR	Asociación de Mujeres del Oriente Antioqueño
AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia
Bacrim	Bandas criminales
CNMH	Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica
CSO	Civil society organisation
DDR	Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional
EPL	Ejército Popular de Liberación
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia
GMH	Grupo de Memoria Histórica
ICBF	Instituto Colombiano del Bienestar Familiar
IDP	Internally displaced person
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans- and intersex
MAQL	Movimiento Armado Quintín Lame
M-19	Movimiento 19 Abril
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SF	Santamaría Fundación
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SGM	Sexual and gender minorities

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of a four-country research project on gender in peacebuilding, this report examines the case of Colombia, where society has been deeply affected by both decades of armed conflict as well as high levels of criminal violence.

Our research approaches the challenges of peacebuilding in Colombia from a ‘gender-relational’ angle, which looks at men, women and trans- and intersex persons as gendered beings, takes into account the interaction between gender identities and other markers such as age, class, disability, marital status and the like, and examines how these identities are constructed relationally to one another. We approach gender not as a ‘technical’ peacebuilding issue, but as a lens through which to analyse societal norms, identities and power dynamics.

After giving a background to the history of violent conflict in Colombia and its gendered dynamics, the report examines three local civil society organisations that, in their own way, approach peacebuilding in a gender-relational way. The three organisations are: Association of Women of Eastern Antioquia (*Asociación de Mujeres del Oriente Antioqueño*, AMOR), a women’s organisation that is increasingly working on issues of both femininities and masculinities; *Wayuumunsurat/Mujeres Tejiendo Paz* (Women Weaving Peace), an organisation led by indigenous women working for transitional justice and gender equality; and Santamaria Foundation (*Santamaría Fundación*, SF), a trans-women’s rights organisation.

Based on field research, an examination of the work of the three above-mentioned organisations and an extensive analysis of secondary sources, we then provide a gendered analysis of four focal areas of peacebuilding:

- the economic and livelihoods dimensions of peacebuilding;
- intergenerational conflict and age–gender dynamics;
- permutations and continuums of violence; and
- access to justice.

The report concludes with a summary and an outlook as Colombia hopefully enters a new phase of peacebuilding – if and when the Colombian state and the FARC conclude a peace agreement.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This study is one of a series of four-country case studies (Burundi, Colombia, Nepal and Uganda) contributing to the second phase of International Alert's research project on gender in peacebuilding, summarised by the *Re-thinking gender in peacebuilding* report.¹ The first phase consisted of a mapping exercise of key gender issues in peacebuilding and resulted in the publication of the report *Gender in peacebuilding: Taking stock*.² That report defined the focus of the second phase of the research as being to explore and document, as well as to draw lessons from, the practical ways in which peacebuilding incorporates gender as a 'relational' concept.

The 'relational' view of gender understands that both men and women lead gendered lives, coloured by age, class and other identities. It further believes that the political, socio-economic and cultural dimensions of the context concerned, as well as its historical and geographical positioning, combine to produce varied patterns of gender relations. Global and normative policy frameworks for gender and peacebuilding³ therefore need to be interpreted – and most likely extended – to address the different dynamics encountered in these varying contexts.

The research for the second phase focuses on four peacebuilding themes:

1. the economic and livelihoods dimensions of peacebuilding;
2. intergenerational conflict and age–gender dynamics;
3. violence and its many manifestations, and the interconnections between these (for example, between inter-communal violence and domestic violence); and
4. access to justice.

The Colombian country case study is based on 12 individual and 2 collective interviews conducted in Bogotá, Cali, Medellín and Riohacha by the International Alert research team between February and March 2013. The report does not aim to be a comprehensive, standalone work on the complexities of gender in peacebuilding in the Colombian context, but rather seeks to highlight key issues that arose through the research process.

The various Colombian conflicts are perhaps among the best-researched and documented in the world. This research includes, importantly, the immensely thorough and critical work by Colombian institutions such as the state-sponsored Group of Historical Memory (*Grupo de Memoria Histórica*, GMH),⁴ hundreds of local and national civil society organisations (CSOs), as well as countless academics, which this work also draws on. The aim here is to flag certain key issues related to gender and peacebuilding in Colombia – issues that may increase greatly in importance in the upcoming years and decades if and when a peace deal is signed between

1 H. Myrntinen, J. Naujoks and J. El-Bushra (2014). *Re-thinking gender in peacebuilding*. London: International Alert. Available at <http://www.international-alert.org/resources/publications/re-thinking-gender-peacebuilding>

2 J. El-Bushra (2012). *Gender in peacebuilding: Taking stock*. London: International Alert. Available at <http://www.international-alert.org/resources/publications/gender-peacebuilding>

3 Chief among these is the Women, Peace and Security framework set by UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820, along with subsequent 'sister' resolutions.

4 GMH is an independent state-funded research unit created to collect, preserve and analyse the memories of people affected by the conflict. Originally, this group started as an advisory board of experts aiming to reconstruct the history of the conflict from the victims' point of view, but its role has now been formalised. The group plays an important role in validating some of the testimonies given by former combatants, as part of their collaboration in restoring the truth as they are obliged to do as part of their reintegration process under the Justice and Peace Law (*Ley de Justicia y Paz*, 975/2005). It has since been formalised as the *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* (CNMH).

the government and the two remaining guerrilla groups, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC) and the National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, ELN).

After a brief introduction to the conflict and its gendered dimensions, this report will outline the work of three Colombian organisations, whose work is integrating gender into peacebuilding in a relational manner, using different approaches and at different levels. This is followed by a reflection on the four focal areas of peacebuilding outlined above from a gender-relational perspective.

1.1 A gendered background to conflict in Colombia

Colombia's intra-state conflict, spanning over six decades, has been characterised by a wide diversity of agents disputing land control and resulting in massive human rights violations against its population. These violations include sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), disappearances, displacement and forced recruitment.⁵ The conflict-related violence has been compounded by various other forms of violence, including narcotics-related criminal violence both in rural and urban areas, which has also been partially attributed to different actors involved in the armed political conflict.

It is beyond the scope of this study to present a comprehensive history of the conflict, but it is important to understand some of the root causes and historical trajectories in order to comprehend the peacebuilding challenges. Although the actors and their stated and unstated motivations have changed over time, real and perceived exclusion remain at the heart of the armed conflict, especially with respect to access to land and other resources, along with weaknesses of the democratic system.⁶

The GMH divides the phases of political violence in Colombia as follows:

- 1958–1982, marking the transition from bipartisan to subversive violence: this period involved the formation of the main guerrilla groups⁷ and social organisations (students, labour unions and grassroots organisations), which maintained a permanent mobilisation attempting to fight the political and military repression against them. Drug trafficking started by the end of the 1970s but did not play a major role in the conflict at that stage.
- 1982–1996, characterised by the diversification of armed actors: the guerrilla groups,⁸ mainly the ELN and the FARC, expanded their territory, while right-wing paramilitary groups appeared. This period also saw the explosive spread of narco-trafficking and related violent crime, both in urban and rural areas.
- 1996–2005, when the remaining guerrilla groups and paramilitaries expanded both geographically and militarily: paramilitary groups increased their attacks on the civilian population (leading to massacres and massive displacement), while creating stronger links with local politicians and narco-traffickers in their regions of influence. The guerrilla contingent was able to consolidate its hold on part of the countryside.
- 2005–2012, which started with the negotiation and demobilisation of the paramilitaries (united under the umbrella of the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas*

5 CNMH (2013). *¡Basta Ya! Colombia: Memorias de guerra y dignidad*. Bogotá. Available at <http://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/descargas/informes2013/bastaYa/BYColombiaMemoriasGuerraDignidadAgosto2014.pdf>

6 Ibid. pp.21–22.

7 In addition to the currently active ELN and FARC, this included the now demobilised left-wing 19 April Movement (*Movimiento 19 Abril*, M-19), the Quintín Lame Armed Movement (*Movimiento Armado Quintín Lame*, MAQL) and the Popular Liberation Army (*Ejército Popular de Liberación*, EPL).

8 Although some organisations demobilised during this period (EPL in 1990 and both the M-19 and MAQL in 1991), the FARC declared a change from a 'defensive' to an 'offensive' strategy. The ELN also increased its attacks against the extractive industries and kidnapping (CNMH (2013). Op. cit. pp.135–138).

Unidas de Colombia, AUC)) and major military offensives against the FARC: the deaths of several FARC commanders created a crisis of leadership that led to the commencement of peace negotiations in Havana, ongoing at the time of writing. Some imprisoned ex-paramilitaries have been extradited to the United States on charges of narco-trafficking.⁹ Currently, the main challenges in terms of security are criminal group¹⁰ actions and guerrilla activities (by both the FARC and the ELN). Military officers have been mostly able to avoid prosecution for human rights abuses committed during the conflict.

During the decades of continuous violent conflict, the agents of conflict have shifted both ideologically and territorially. Their violent behaviour has shaped (and in turn been shaped by) almost all social relations, including gender relations.¹¹

Gender roles in Colombian society

The multitude of gender roles, identities and attendant societal expectations in Colombian society are co-determined by a range of other interrelated identity markers, such as age, ethnic background (including belonging to one of over 100 indigenous groups or the Afro-Colombian community), religious and political background, marital status and the particular urban/rural setting. These different ways of being a woman or a man, a trans- or intersex person, a girl or a boy in Colombia have been affected by conflict and displacement to different degrees, creating new spaces and possibilities but also new gendered vulnerabilities and needs.

Individuals' enactments of gender roles are often determined by the aspiration to conform to (or rebel against) the expectations of what it means to be a man, a woman, a transgender or intersex person in a given society at a given time. In the mainstream Colombian (and broader Latin American) context, two concepts that are often referred to as being hegemonic in determining socially appropriate gender behaviour are those of *machismo* for men and *marianismo* for women.¹² The two concepts tend to be vague and often do not correspond to the lived reality of actual men and women; however, they can often guide aspirations and social expectations of what it means to be a 'real' man or a 'real' woman.

'Machismo' often refers to a form of masculinity that embraces and celebrates heterosexual male privilege. While there is no single definition of the term, it is often linked to the readiness to use violence to defend one's masculine honour, to being the sole breadwinner, being 'hard', being muscular, being sexually virile and also at times to engaging in heavy drinking.¹³ 'Marianismo' (after the Virgin Mary) is equally vaguely defined, but refers to ideas of women as being chaste and morally unblemished virgins before marriage and caring mothers after that, and as being subservient to their husbands and bound to the household. The weight carried by these gender ideologies differs between individuals, social classes, regions, ages, education levels, ethnic background and so on. They are often not lived up to, but nonetheless remain powerful tropes in Colombia's gendered social imaginary.

Studies of masculinities and femininities in the Colombian conflicts have underlined a trend for the conflict to lessen societal space for alternative expressions of masculinities and femininities. However, the studies have also highlighted how new spaces have opened up, especially among young

9 Although this decision was generally understood as hardening the prison punishment, it actually affected the possibilities of determining the truth about crimes, massacres and political alliances.

10 These criminal groups, known in Spanish as *bandas criminales* (Bacrim), are informal groups allegedly composed mostly of ex-combatants, narco-traffickers and small-scale warlords who control a limited territory. See also the discussion below.

11 See, for example: D. Pecault (2000). 'Configurations of space, time, and subjectivity in a context of terror: The Colombian example', *International Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 1. p.129: "violence leads to the construction of new frameworks of subjectivity, how the existence and activities of armed networks of protagonists create new identities, whether through coercion or choice".

12 The concept was first articulated in E. Stevens (1977). 'Marianismo: La otra cara del machismo en Latino-América', in A. Pescatelo (1977). *Hembra y macho en Latino-América: Ensayos*. Edición Diana. México. For Colombia, see also D. Mazurana (2013). 'Women, girls and non-state armed groups', in C. Cohn (Ed.). *Women and wars*. Cambridge: Polity Press. pp.146-168.

13 For a discussion on the complexities of machismo and men's expectations of living up to the ideals, see, for example: M. Gutmann (2006). *The meanings of macho: Being a man in Mexico city*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

women and those from marginalised groups, such as indigenous groups or Afro-Colombians.¹⁴ Men and boys often face expectations to, or are socialised in ways that make them likely to, join armed groups. These trends tend to cultivate notions of ‘hard’ masculinities, although the forms these might take do differ between groups.¹⁵ In addition, armed groups may actively police gender norms both of the members of the groups and of civilians under their control. The ‘acceptable’ ways of being male or female tend to be heteronormative, leading to violence (or threats thereof) against women deemed not to be virtuous enough or against ‘unmanly’ men by paramilitaries, punishment of homosexuality or the forcible control of motherhood of *guerrilleras* by the FARC.¹⁶

“Nobody talks about it. Male victims of SGBV feel emasculated and often they seek, by actively ignoring it, to reduce their feelings of shame and the damage done. The majority of the cases are reported by the mothers of the male victims, mostly because they are afraid of their sons ‘becoming gay’, as if that could be an even worse predicament, if it were possible in the first place.”

LGBTI SPECIALIST, MINISTRY OF HEALTH, BOGOTÁ

Conflict and gendered vulnerabilities

Widespread SGBV against women, girls, men, boys and transgender persons has been both part of the conflict and part of the widespread criminal violence of recent decades in both rural and urban areas. The available figures point to gaps and inconsistencies in the reporting, but also to a higher prevalence of non-conflict-related rather than directly conflict-related SGBV – although the differentiation is not always simple and underreporting is very common for a range of issues.¹⁷ Figures by the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Science are indicative of the extent of the issue, with 22,597 cases of SGBV examined in 2011 compared with 12,732 cases in 2000.¹⁸

Some researchers also point out that there is a cultural acceptance towards violence against women as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans- and intersex (LGBTI) persons.¹⁹ While female victims are usually targeted because they are considered to be inferior or weaker in terms of physical force, sexual attacks against the LGTBI population are often the result of discriminatory and derogative attitudes linked with moral disapproval of non-normative gender and sexual orientation. According to research by the *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* (CNMH), there are two main types of sexual violence against LGTBI people: one aims to punish them because of their sexual orientation and to reinforce heteronormative gender patterns; the second type consists of sexual violence within the context of sexual slavery, kidnapping and forced disappearances.²⁰ Male-to-male sexual violence continues to be a largely taboo topic and is poorly documented, with gender stereotypes greatly contributing to the silencing of male victims and often portraying men

14 N. Herrera and D. Porch (2009). “Like going to a fiesta” – The role of female fighters in Colombia’s FARC-EP’, *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 19, No. 4. pp.609–634.

15 See, for example: A. Baird (2012a). ‘Negotiating pathways to manhood: Rejecting gangs and violence in Medellín’s periphery’, *Journal of Conflictology*, Vol. 3, No. 11. pp.30–41; and K. Theidon (2009). ‘Reconstructing masculinities: The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants in Colombia’, *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 31. pp.1–34.

16 See, for example: A. Méndez (2012). *Militarized gender performativity: Women and demobilization in Colombia’s FARC and AUC*, PhD thesis. Kingston, Ontario: Queen’s University; and N. Herrera and D. Porch (2009). Op. cit.

17 Reasons for not reporting may include shame, lack of access to police, medical and judicial services, fear of retribution by perpetrators, real or perceived reluctance of authorities to pursue these cases, or pressure from families or peers not to report.

18 See, for example: Amnesty International (2012). *Colombia: Hidden from justice. Impunity for conflict-related sexual violence, A follow-up report*. London. Available at http://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/colombia_vaw_report_oct._4_embargoed.pdf. A further, detailed source of data on different forms of SGBV and domestic violence is: Mesa de Trabajo – Mujer y Conflicto Armado (2010). *Décimo informe sobre violencia sociopolítica contra mujeres, jóvenes y niñas en Colombia 2000–2010*. Bogotá. Available at <http://www.uclm.es/fundacion/resolucionConflictos/pdf/enlaces/XinformeViolencia.pdf>

19 Relative cultural acceptance of sexual violence against women is linked to the traditional views that women should be sexually available to men.

20 A. Serrano (2013). ‘Enfoque de género en los procesos de DDR’, in CNMH (Ed.). *Desafíos para la reintegración, enfoque de género, raza y étnia*. Bogotá. pp.93–94.

as perpetrators only.²¹ Moreover, the role played by women as direct perpetrators or instigators of sexual violence in conflict has received relatively little attention in Colombia, despite several documented cases.

Conflict and new gendered spaces

In addition to vulnerabilities, the various conflicts have also created new gender dynamics. Both the left-wing guerrillas as well as right-wing paramilitaries have recruited women as combatants and for support activities, the former often with an explicit emancipatory agenda, at least in theory.²² In particular, the FARC has relatively high numbers of female combatants, although mostly in the lower ranks.²³ Through these roles, women (and men) can escape stifling or abusive relationships, be it in the community, with spouses or parents, with the latter being a key ‘push’ factor for children and adolescents joining armed groups.²⁴ In addition, the expectations of ‘hard’, militarised performances of masculinity expected of combatant men have their flip-side in the increased physical and emotional vulnerability faced by these men in trying to hold on to their ‘hardness’. Female ex-combatants, on the other hand, often face the double stigma of being an ex-combatant and of having transgressed gender norms by taking up arms. However, they also reported feeling more empowered and assertive than their civilian counterparts, for example in terms of not accepting sexual harassment.²⁵

“Upon return to civilian life, one has to open a new space, embrace a different kind of femininity, where even your former comrades look down at you. Society does not forget [one’s past participation in violence] and one has to construct a new life, saying: look at me, I’m a good person.”

FORMER FEMALE GUERRILLA MEMBER AND PEACEBUILDING ACTIVIST, BOGOTÁ

However, in both guerrilla and paramilitary groups, women are expected to carry out tasks that are often ‘coded masculine’ (such as carrying heavy loads or arms) in civilian life, while men are expected to also perform ‘feminine’ tasks such as cooking and washing.²⁶ The FARC tend to stress the need for men and women to carry out these tasks both out of practical necessity and as part of its left-wing ideology. In the AUC, some tasks expected of men and women have broken with expected gender roles, but there has been a higher degree of practical flexibility (such as exchanging tasks or paying for them) and a vested ideological interest in retaining traditional gender divisions.²⁷ An interesting exception to these expectations in the FARC is the rule that, if

21 Research about SGBV against men by CNMH includes them only as indirect victims, by recognising that violations against women are an effective means to emasculate their partners, who seem unable to protect them [CNMH (2013). Op. cit. pp.311–314]. Research by Medecins Sans Frontiers (2008) showed that 6.7% of the victims in their sample were men and boys aged 13 to 49. For a discussion on the silence around male SGBV victims in conflict, see G. Obando (2008). *De lo que no se habla: Violencia sexual contra los hombres en el marco del conflicto armado*. BA political sciences monography. Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes.

22 A. Méndez (2012). Op. cit.; and L.M. Dietrich Ortega (2012). ‘Looking beyond violent militarized masculinities – Guerrilla gender regimes in Latin America’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 4. pp.489–507. As discussed, the lofty ideals of gender equality were and often are not mirrored in the lived reality of life in the guerrilla. Nonetheless, many male *ex-guerrilleros* interviewed by Dietrich Ortega saw the experience of increased gender equality during the armed struggle as a positive experience, but tended to revert to traditional gender roles after the end of the conflict.

23 Estimates vary between 20% and 40%. See also N. Herrera and D. Porch (2009). Op. cit.

24 Based on initial findings and secondary literature, this appears to be the case both for armed groups in conflict and for violent criminal groups. See also N. Herrera and D. Porch (2009). Op. cit. For recruitment and stigmatisation of former child soldiers, see M. Denov and I. Marchand (2014). “‘I can’t go home’ – Forced migration and displacement following demobilization: The complexity of reintegration for former child soldiers in Colombia”. Paper presented at the International Studies Association Conference, Toronto, 26–29 March 2014; and D. Mazurana (2013). Op. cit.

25 A. Méndez (2012). Op. cit. pp.160 and 180; and L.M. Londoño and Y. Fernanda Nieto (2006). *Mujeres no contadas: Procesos de desmovilización y retorno a la vida civil de mujeres excombatientes en Colombia, 1990–2003*. Medellín: Universidad de Antioquia. pp.154–161.

26 While these tasks are considered traditionally ‘male’ or ‘female’, for many urban and rural women and men in low-income groups, they are, with the exception of direct combat, part of everyday civilian life as well. Nonetheless, the perceived notion of what is appropriately male and female remains intact.

27 In the words of A. Méndez (2012). Op. cit. pp.137–138: “traditional gender roles are altered, but aspects of each gender that are traditionally considered to be natural remain as the structuring framework for soldiering in the FARC. In the FARC, these differences are hidden behind the organization’s claim to gender equality.” See also F. Gutiérrez Sanín (2008). ‘Telling the difference: Guerrillas and paramilitaries in the Colombian war’, *Politics and Society*, Vol. 36, No. 1. pp.3–34.

two comrades get married, the wife will be expected to primarily take care of household tasks, indicating an unwillingness to break with traditional heteronormative views of marriage in spite of their progressive rhetoric. The same also applied to married AUC couples.²⁸

Within the armed groups, sexuality and sexual relations are tightly controlled, but male combatants tend to have more liberties (such as the right to have civilian girlfriends in the FARC) and are less likely to be punished for transgressions (both in the FARC and the AUC).²⁹ A key difference between the guerrilla groups (especially the FARC) and the paramilitaries has been their policies towards motherhood among female combatants. While the FARC has a policy of strict control of motherhood, including forced abortions or having to leave the child with foster parents, the AUC has actively supported motherhood of female combatants with financial bonuses.³⁰ In the areas under their control, guerrillas and paramilitaries have actively policed gender norms and sexual behaviour of the civilian population, including for example paramilitaries publicly shaming supposedly adulterous wives and women who were deemed to have dressed too sexually. Paramilitaries have also targeted sex workers, drug addicts and others accused of 'deviating' from social and gender norms imposed by them.³¹

Sexual and gender minorities

Although Colombian society is often referred to as being socially conservative, the current legal provisions for sexual and gender minorities (SGM) are, at least in theory, in many ways exemplary. Also, our research did find surprising openings, such as the willingness of right-wing paramilitary groups, who tended to define themselves through extreme heteronormativity, to open their ranks to male-to-female transgender partners of male members. Nonetheless, major challenges remain in terms of implementing full rights for SGM persons and, more challengingly, in achieving real societal acceptance.³²

Since 2007, local political agreements and decrees in Bogotá have been created to promote and enhance the rights of the LGTBI population, their civic participation and the acknowledgement of diversity. From 2011 onwards, a comprehensive public policy has been implemented aiming to create inclusive action plans for social integration, culture, recreation and leisure, economic development, education and health. An advisory council and sectoral programmes have been created to mainstream differential approaches for the LGTBI population, including recognising those who are victims of the conflict. The local policy has also promoted affirmative actions towards trans-people, who have been enrolled as public officers. The media has played an important role in promoting the change of attitudes, including by creating public TV programmes underlining respect for sexual and gender diversity.

Within the framework of the armed conflict, there have been reports of lesbians who have been punished or forced into prostitution or domestic slave work by armed groups because of their sexual orientation.³³ Others have been murdered and sexually abused as a form of public policing of

28 A. Méndez (2012). Op. cit.; and R. Kunz and A-K. Sjöberg (2009). 'Empowered or oppressed: Female combatants in the Colombian guerrilla. The case of the revolutionary armed forces of Colombia – FARC'. Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, New York, 15–18 February 2009.

29 A. Méndez (2012). Op. cit.; and C. Medina Arbeláez (2009). *No porque seas un paraco o seas guerrillero tienes que ser un animal – Procesos de socialización en FARC-EP, ELN, y grupos paramilitares (1996–2006)*. Bogotá: Universidad de Los Andes.

30 A. Méndez (2012). Op. cit.

31 See, for example: Amnesty International (2004). *Colombia: 'Scarred bodies, hidden crimes.' Sexual violence against women in the armed conflict*. London; and A.M. Estrada, C. Ibarra and E. Sarmiento (2007). 'Regulation and control of subjectivity and private life in the context of armed conflict in Colombia', *Community, Work and Family*, Vol. 10, No. 3. pp.257–281.

32 For example, the Law on Victims specifically mentions same-sex couples as potential beneficiaries, and, over the course of our interviews with ACR staff, they consistently raised the need to be better able to respond to the needs of same-sex couples or transgender persons among the ex-combatant population. Interviews in Bogotá and Cali, March 2013.

33 See also N. Herrera and D. Porch (2009). Op. cit.; A. Serrano (2013). Op. cit. pp.92–96.

their sexuality.³⁴ However, although all armed actors tended to impose heteronormative behaviour, at times even the otherwise socially conservative paramilitaries have tolerated the inclusion of transgender members and same-sex couples, and also actively recruited female members.³⁵

“Despite the lack of systematic information, there is evidence of homophobic crimes being committed as part of the conflict. For instance, in San Onofre, Sucre, a paramilitary leader known as ‘el Oso’ organised ‘gay boxing’ at his birthday party, in which paramilitaries kidnapped some young men accused of being gay or too effeminate and forced them to box with each other publicly. In another town, the paramilitaries organised a ‘gay’ pageant, where some leaders had the right to choose one as their own male sex slave. There is evidence of specific torture committed against suspected gays and lesbians aiming to ‘correct’ conduct considered to be ‘deviant’; but again, there is too little research about it.”

LGBTI SPECIALIST, MINISTRY OF HEALTH, BOGOTÁ

1.2 Wider effects of the conflict

Direct casualties and IDPs

Other criminal effects of the conflict are: children recruited (6,421), people disappeared (25,007), summary executions by state agents (1,622) and kidnappings (27,023).³⁶ In addition, the conflict has led to approximately four-and-a-half million people becoming internally displaced persons (IDPs), which represents nearly 10% of Colombia’s population and is one of the largest IDP populations in the world. In addition, nearly half a million people are displaced in neighbouring countries, either as registered refugees or in the process of applying for refugee status.³⁷ Official data indicate that 51% of IDPs are women and girls who fled to avoid becoming victims of SGBV or who were forcibly displaced after having survived human rights violations.³⁸ One in two displaced women in Colombia has experienced SGBV. Although this violence may often not be directly conflict related (perpetrated by armed actors), displacement does increase vulnerability.³⁹

Demobilisations in the midst of conflict

One of the key groups on which the field research focused was ex-combatants. Since 1990, Colombia has seen a series of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) measures for former combatants. The main initial DDR process was designed for members of the EPL and M-19 guerrillas, who received amnesties to facilitate their transition to civil life and political participation, although these were marked by a collapse of the political parties set up by the former guerrilla groups and marred by targeted assassinations of their members.

34 A. Méndez [2012]. Op. cit. p.163; and C. Medina, V. Quintero, M.N. Bello, N. Herrera, P. Linares, R. Uprimny and M.E. Wills [2011]. *Mujeres y guerra: Víctimas y resistentes en el caribe Colombiano*. Bogotá: Ediciones Semana.

35 Interviews in Bogotá, Cali and Medellín, February to March 2013.

36 All figures are taken from CNMH [2013]. Op. cit., except for the summary executions, which were reported by UN Human Rights [2012]. *Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights – Addendum: Annual report of the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights in Colombia* [A/HRC/19/21/Add.3]. Geneva/Bogotá. Available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/countries/LACRegion/Pages/COIndex.aspx>

37 UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). ‘Internally displaced people: On the run in their own land’. Available at <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c146.html>

38 Although they are thus not overrepresented compared with the overall population, their particular needs and vulnerabilities have been recognised by Constitutional Court Resolution 092/2008.

39 Human Rights Watch [2012]. *Rights out of reach: Obstacles to health, justice, and protection for displaced victims of gender-based violence in Colombia*. New York. Available at <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/colombia1112forUpload.pdf>; see also CNMH [2013]. Op. cit. pp.77–84.

In 2002, the Colombian government and paramilitaries (AUC) started bilateral negotiation that led to the current DDR programme and its transitional justice framework: the Justice and Peace Law (*Ley Justicia y Paz*). The current programme has two main strands: demobilisation and reintegration en bloc for former AUC members and individually (or in small groups) for ELN and FARC members. The current programme is run under the auspices of the state Colombian Agency for Reintegration (*Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración*, ACR), which is in charge of adults in the process, and the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (*Instituto Colombiano del Bienestar Familiar*, ICBF), which is responsible for minors.⁴⁰ In theory at least, the DDR process is meant to take into account the particular needs of ex-combatants based on their gender, age, ethnicity and disability, although to what extent this happens in reality and across the country is a matter of debate.⁴¹

In October 2012, the Colombian government entered peace talks with the FARC. Among the main issues being discussed are land rights and the reintegration of FARC members. If there is a peace agreement with an attendant DDR process, it will face several challenges that have not been addressed in previous peacebuilding processes such as: the reintegration of a large percentage of female combatants; the carrying out of extensive reintegration processes with large groups of ex-combatants and their supporters/dependants in rural settings; the need to address reparations to victims of the conflict; and the reintegration of current and former combatants of different age groups, from minors to formerly active guerrilla members now at retirement age (see also section 3 below for a more in-depth discussion of DDR processes).⁴²

Criminal violence

Criminal violence in Colombia is partly linked to the broader armed conflict but simultaneously follows its own logic, which is different in each city and also different in rural areas. Since the beginning of the internal conflict, cities have seen the emergence of various armed actors (such as left-wing militias and guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries, street gangs and drug cartels). This has led to a 'naturalisation' of violence, resulting in high rates of homicides, mainly male to male; in fact, it is often the principal cause of death among young men.⁴³

Criminal urban violence is currently the main driver of forced displacement in urban areas. Much of the current crime tends to be ascribed publicly to the so-called *bacrim*, criminal gangs that are often assumed by the media and the public to consist mostly of ex-combatants. Closer research reveals a more complex picture: while in some cases former combatants have reverted to criminal activities that they had been engaged in prior to becoming combatants, and some of the newly formed *bacrim* are headed by ex-combatants, only 12% of those arrested have been former combatants. In some cases, ex-combatants may even act as informal arbitrators and security providers for communities.⁴⁴

40 The transition of former underage combatants from ICBF to the ACR reintegration programmes on turning 18 years of age is not always smooth. See, for example: M. Denov and I. Marchand (2014). *Op. cit.*; and M. Schöb (2014). *Demobilizing and reintegrating whom? Accounting for diversity in DDR processes: An analysis of the Colombian case*. Documentos de CERAC No. 21. Bogotá: Centro de Recursos para el Análisis de Conflictos.

41 For the legal framework of DDR, see: Government of Colombia (2008). *Política nacional de reintegración social y económica para personas y grupos armados ilegales*. Documento Conpes 3554. Bogotá: Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social, República de Colombia, Departamento Nacional de Planeación. Available at <https://www.dnp.gov.co/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=-tcp2y8QyBI%3D&tabid=752>. For a discussion of how these categories have or have not been taken into account, see, for example: M. Schöb (2014). *Op. cit.* pp.32–33 and pp.56–58. In particular, little research has been conducted on the 'culturally sensitive' reintegration of indigenous ex-combatants, and none at all in the case of Afro-Colombians.

42 On various age groups, see also: F. Gutiérrez Sanín and A. Giustozzi (2010). 'Networks and armies: Structuring rebellion in Colombia and Afghanistan', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 33, No. 9. pp.836–853 and p.845. Estimates regarding the percentage of females in the FARC range from 15% to 30%, compared with 6% of the collectively demobilised AUC women (ODDR (2011). *Desmovilización, desvinculación y reintegración de mujeres en Colombia 2002–2011*. Bogotá: Observatorio DDR, Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Available at http://www.observatorioddrr.unal.edu.co/productos_academicos/ODDR_desmovilizacion_desvinculacion_reintegracion_mujeres_colombia2002-2011.pdf

43 In 2010, the homicide rate was 81.1 per 100,000 inhabitants, with men making up 92% of the victims. See: UNODC (2011). *Global study on homicide*. Vienna. Available at http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/Homicide/Globa_study_on_homicide_2011_web.pdf

44 See, for example: F. Massé, V. Negrete, E. Nussio and J.E. Ugarriza (2011). *Presencia de desmovilizados y insurgencia en las ciudades. Casos de estudio: Villavicencio, Montería y Bogotá*. Madrid: Centro Internacional de Toledo para la Paz; E. Nussio (2011). 'How ex-combatants talk about personal security. Narratives of former paramilitaries in Colombia', *Conflict, Security and Development*, Vol. 11, No. 5. pp.579–606; and R. Rozema (2008). 'Urban DDR processes: Paramilitaries and criminal networks in Medellín, Colombia', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 40. pp.423–432.

The gendered dynamics of gang-related violence are complex and in many ways understudied, especially regarding the direct and indirect role of women, be it in the gangs, as girlfriends, or as family members.⁴⁵ These dynamics need to be seen in the greater socio-economic framework in which the young men and women live, where there are often few other avenues open to them to advance economically or socially than involvement with gangs and/or the narcotics trade.⁴⁶

In addition to the socio-economic 'push' factors, joining a gang is often due to a mixture of motivations, as is associating with a gang, which is more commonly the case with young women. These motivations may include ambition, the allure and coolness of 'power', living up to prevalent gender norms, escaping the emasculating effects of socio-economic disempowerment, access to material goods but also sex, longing for respect, escaping abusive relationships at home and finding surrogate structures of support in the gang, or socialisation into the gang through friends and peers. As Adam Baird argues, gangs thus become an alternative pathway for attaining manhood.⁴⁷ However, the dangers of membership of and association with gangs are immense, including the risk of death or serious bodily harm for men and exposure to sexual violence for women.

45 An interesting possible example of intergenerational and gender-relational reproduction of violence in this respect is the involvement of juvenile male *sicarios* (hired assassins) in criminal gangs, who join to support their single mothers financially – as popularised in F. Vallejo (1994). *La virgen de los sicarios*. Bogotá: Alfaguara. While this may be one possible dynamic, we were not able to refute or corroborate it in our interviews, given the divergent views on the issue.

46 However, it is important to keep in mind that, despite this, the majority of young women and men do *not* join or associate with gangs.

47 A. Baird (forthcoming). 'Duros and gangland girlfriends: Male identity and gang socialisation and rape in Medellín', in J. Auyero, P. Bourgois and N. Scheper-Hughes (Eds.). *Violence at the urban margins in the Americas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2. SELECTED PROJECT CASE STUDIES

2.1 Association of Women of Eastern Antioquia (*Asociación de Mujeres del Oriente Antioqueño, AMOR*)

AMOR⁴⁸ was founded in 1994 as an umbrella organisation for the women's groups that were emerging in each of the 23 municipalities of Eastern Antioquia sub-region, close to the city of Medellín in Colombia. During the peak in regional violence (1998–2002), while men were being recruited by armed actors or displaced through threats, women tended to remain in the area and gained access to public arenas as well as taking on more economic responsibilities. AMOR became an active vehicle for women's social mobilisation and peacebuilding in the region. It aims to achieve human development with an equality approach, to prevent sexual violence against women and to promote human rights. It organises solidarity campaigns and mobilisations to strengthen the social fabric damaged by social unrest. AMOR strongly believes in the social and cultural transformation of patriarchy. Through this transformation, the organisation hopes to break current cycles of violence that are created jointly by men and women in the family, school and neighbourhood, among other spaces. AMOR's actions promote mutual learning and the deconstruction of violent patterns associated with gender roles and expectations.

AMOR has three areas of work that reflect its aims and purposes. The first is a programme called '*De la Casa a la Plaza*' ('From the House into the Public Square'), which encourages women to step out from the private to the public sphere, focusing on citizenship and participation for women. Secondly, AMOR runs a programme to enhance women's inclusion in sustainable regional development. Thirdly, it carries out work on peace and reconciliation. The latter was developed as a result of the conflict's impact on the Eastern Antioquia region and included organising mass demonstrations against the war. AMOR has also worked to provide psychological and social support to women victims of the conflict in 23 communities.

These three working areas interact with each other and are influenced by AMOR's vision of challenging social and cultural patterns of patriarchy. The goal of constructing a non-patriarchal society involves analysing patriarchy in the region and among community members and leaders to promote change. Its analysis of society, peace and conflict is based on the relationships between men and women, and how they can mutually construct or deconstruct patriarchy and patterns of violence. The organisation recognises that women, as mothers, sisters, wives, girlfriends and so on, also play a role in maintaining and reproducing hegemonic masculinities and patriarchal structures both publicly and at home.

In 2008, the organisation began accompanying ex-combatants in their reintegration process. Working with both ex-combatants and victims of violence, against whom the former had perpetrated violence, was initially controversial. However, the inherent tensions were overcome by focusing on the violent conflict itself as the problem, rather than on individual persons or groups as 'the enemy'. This created awareness on both sides of how the conflict and its consequences have caused and continue to cause distress for both victims and former perpetrators. The approach was based on a horizontal relationship, whereby both sides have had similar experiences in the war, and encouraged them to jointly develop coping strategies. Through its '*Pasos y abrazos*' ('Steps and hugs') programme, AMOR also provides communal and individual psychosocial support for

48 For more information on AMOR, see http://pazdesdelabase.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=502&Itemid=38

over 3,000 IDPs, both male and female, by training 200 women from the host communities to provide this support.

Working with men

Although AMOR was initially founded as a women's organisation, over the years it came to feel that, while it had empowered women in terms of understanding their own rights, the men in the communities were being left behind and were not able to participate politically, socially and analytically at the same level as the women. AMOR therefore began organising open discussions for men and women on patriarchy, equal relationships and seeing men and women as equal partners for social change. It also created a men's group as part of an initiative called 'new masculinities' (*'nuevas masculinidades'*), which is still at an early stage at the time of writing.

The organisation's members have experienced resistance from other women's organisations in the region that are opposed to the idea of using funds for women's programmes in conjunction with a men's project. Nevertheless, as the project progresses, AMOR hopes to produce a report documenting the outcomes of the initial stages and to use this to promote the project and to obtain funding to further develop the scheme. AMOR is also concerned with the rights of, and violence against, SGM in its region. Like much of Colombia, the regional culture tends to be conservative in terms of sexual diversity and gender identity, although SGM are allowed to express their identities in private. AMOR has organised different activities with grassroots counterparts to promote SGM rights as a matter of respecting human rights in general.

Impact

Since the outset, AMOR has applied a participatory methodology through workshops, group discussions and open debates. The organisation's willingness to engage men in their activities has involved methodological challenges for opening spaces for discussions and mutual learning. In the process of creating such spaces, both women and men have agreed on strategic ways to deal with domestic and social conflict both in the private and public sphere, thereby transforming family and community relationships. The organisation has seen how applying approaches of cooperation and mutual understanding between men and women has led to new, more gender-equitable behavioural dynamics. AMOR has seen progress on how communities, and men in particular, have begun to see women as local and political actors whose representation and voice is important. Nevertheless, there are still challenges that need to be addressed, such as the increasing number of female murders in the region of Antioquia.⁴⁹

2.2 Wayuumunsurat⁵⁰/Mujeres Tejiendo Paz (Women Weaving Peace)⁵¹

Wayuumunsurat and *Mujeres Tejiendo Paz* (from here on referred to collectively as *Wayuumunsurat*) are partner organisations working together in the La Guajira Department on the northern coast of Colombia. The organisation began its work after the Bahía Portete massacre in 2004, where an indigenous reserve – mainly inhabited by Wayuu women – was attacked by paramilitaries.⁵² *Wayuumunsurat*, formed by female survivors of the massacre, initially worked with women but now works with men and women of all ages, including the youth and elderly people. Its aims are to defend and lobby for human rights, with a focus on women's rights, the protection of biodiversity in the indigenous territories, the promotion of Wayuu traditions and

49 Antioquia has the second highest rate of homicides in the country. According to official statistics in 2012, Antioquia reported the highest number of female murders in Colombia (255), accounting for 8.2 female victims per 100,000 inhabitants, while the national rate is 5.58 female victims per 100,000 inhabitants. Source: National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences (2012).

50 *Wayuumunsurat* means 'people from the mountains'. The selection of names for the organisation was very important to its members due to the value given to words in the *Wayuu* culture.

51 For more information, see <http://organizacionwayuumunsurat.blogspot.co.uk/>

52 For a detailed analysis of the gender aspects of the massacre, see: GMH (2010). *La massacre de Bahía Portete. Mujeres Wayú en la mira*. Bogotá: Grupo Memoria Histórica. The study covers the background, impact and consequences of the massacre in 2004, when four women and two men were murdered. Two more women were disappeared. This event triggered a massive displacement of nearly 230 families, who fled to Venezuela and Riohacha, Guajira's capital city. A government inquiry into the events showed that the killing of women leaders was a strategy to break the ethical code of the community and to damage the honour and pride of the Wayuu men.

peacebuilding. A special focus is on male participation within the organisation and working on sexual violence against both women and men. Most of their activities employ a psychosocial approach, which aims to recreate communal Wayuu memory and culture. Wayuumunsurat's impacts include transforming traditional values of male privilege by changing men's attitudes, changing intergenerational dynamics, increasing the organisation's public visibility on a regional, national and international level, and changing people's perceptions about the organisation.

During the Bahía Portete massacre, women were subjected to sexual torture and other forms of SGBV.⁵³ The surviving victims of the massacre faced a humanitarian crisis and were displaced to different municipalities in Colombia and Venezuela.⁵⁴ The massacre also destroyed the basis of their rural livelihoods as cattle were stolen or died because of abandonment. Those displaced to urban areas have had to adjust their economic survival strategies to wholly new environments.

A further dimension of the massacre was the wilful transgression of socio-cultural norms with respect to the dead: in Wayuu culture, there are several stages of death, which require special rituals to ensure that the body and soul will rest in peace. These were denied to those killed during the massacre, especially those who were 'disappeared'. In addition, the attackers, who included Wayuu, knowingly desecrated tombs in the village, breaking the community's bonds with its ancestors.

Activities

Wayuumunsurat's work addresses four themes: gender, human rights, protecting indigenous territories and youth. The current aims of the organisation are to defend and lobby for human rights and women's rights, to protect biodiversity in the indigenous territories, to promote traditions and customs of the Wayuu community, and to encourage peacebuilding. Although the organisation is led by indigenous women, they have men within their structure too leading on some of the thematic issues. Decision-making within the organisation is consensual and is formalised through their annual assembly. Wayuumunsurat does not receive funding from international donors but raises its funds through its own activities, such as the sale of Wayuu handcrafts and through donations.

Since 2005, Wayuumunsurat has been organising the annual *Yanama* (*wayunnayi*⁵⁵ word for communal work), which comprises cultural, religious and social activities to commemorate the Bahía Portete massacre. In 2008, the organisation organised a large peace march, which reunited people from different ages and Wayuu clans, thereby overcoming socio-cultural prejudices in the community against them based on their relatively young age.

In its work with children and youth, the organisation promotes Wayuu cultural traditions and oral historical memory through storytelling, which plays a central role in indigenous tradition. These activities use a psychosocial approach, which also aims to recreate and recall the communal memory of the community and to allow men and women of different ages and social backgrounds to revisit and pass on their memories of the conflict. These communal memory activities began immediately after the massacre, but it was the cooperation with the GMH that gave them methodological tools. The work with the group involved a two-way learning process, and included the writing down of oral memories.

The organisation's work during the nine years of its existence has been challenging, especially in terms of denouncing paramilitary activities, and their political connections, which has led to the group at times being labelled as 'guerrilla supporters'.

53 GMH (2010). Op. cit. pp.15-30.

54 Many Wayuu have dual Colombian and Venezuelan citizenship and were thus able to access some form of state support.

55 Name of the Wayuu language.

Nonetheless, the organisation has opened up spaces at a local and governmental level for the whole Wayuu community to address and openly discuss issues related to the conflict. In addition, Wayuumunsurat is currently leading a campaign to initiate a return of the displaced population back to Bahía Portete. The founder and director of Wayuumunsurat, Débora Barros Fince, was among the first 12 victims' representatives to join the peace talks between the Colombian government and the FARC in Havana, Cuba in August 2014.⁵⁶

Changing perceptions of gender norms

The work on preserving traditional and historical memory has opened up a space for reflection for the community. It has also changed perceptions around the political participation of women and younger members of the community. For instance, the central role played by the women of the organisation in researching the massacre has raised awareness in the community of women's potential for public political and social engagement.

Through its work with women and men, Wayuumunsurat also aims to change 'machista' patterns of regional behaviour – for example, by changing stereotypes about men's involvement in working on social issues. Some of the young men who work with the organisation are frequently mocked by peers because their bosses are women⁵⁷ or because they are volunteering for the organisation.⁵⁸ At times, the organisation has also faced opposition from more traditional women's rights organisations for involving men in its work.

“Sometimes they call you names; they either recommend us to leave because we could face danger or threats, or tell us we were crazy because we were led by women. They tried to discourage us. Nevertheless, since the first Yanama, we – as men, as young men – realised about the importance of participating in these citizenship spaces. One has been raised thinking that men are supposed to know everything, but actually we haven't acknowledged our weaknesses. The first Yanama showed us how brave Wayuu women are; when we saw them going back to Bahía Portete, we decided that we had to go as companions and to support.”

WAYUUMUNSURAT YOUTH COORDINATOR (MALE), RIOHACHA

In spite of the opposition, the male members interviewed felt that their participation was a positive experience, allowing them to see that, as men, they do not necessarily have to lead all processes. Their involvement has allowed them to promote inclusive and more positive ways of being men in their community.

Through a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiative, members of the organisation have participated in different workshops and trainings. These include workshops on socially sensitive topics such as SGBV against men and boys, which is still very much a taboo issue that the organisation feels needs to be urgently addressed, along with SGBV against women and girls.

Impact

Wayuumunsurat has succeeded in achieving public visibility and credibility within the community, with the regional and national government, and with international agencies. This success is reflected in the number of publications about the organisation's role in seeking justice for the Bahía Portete massacre and its active participation in justice and reparation initiatives led by

56 A. Anselma (2014). 'Colombia conflict victims face victimizers at FARC peace talks in Cuba', *Colombia Reports*, 16 August 2014. Available at <http://colombiareports.co/colombia-conflict-victims-face-victimizers-farc-peace-talks-cuba/>

57 Wayuu culture is matrilineal and has a very strict definition of masculine and feminine roles. Women have the power to negotiate outside of the familial/clan group, especially with the non-indigenous society. However, the centre of authority is the *Aulala*, the oldest uncle in each family. The Wayuu community is the only matrilineal indigenous group with a matriarchal society in Colombia. Traditionally, the Wayuu law gives only women the power to mediate, resolve or decide on arrangements over disputes between clans or families.

58 All group members have either jobs or income-generating activities that allow them to volunteer for Wayuumunsurat.

the national government. Apart from working with local and national partners and networks, the organisation has supported the creation of a cross-border organisation of Wayuu women in Venezuela, focusing on health, women's rights, cultural activities and youth work.

One of the biggest impacts has been changing the community's perception of its work and its transformative leadership dynamics. Early misrecognition and ridicule based on gender and age preconceptions, which tended to underestimate female and youth agency, have gradually diminished.⁵⁹

2.3 Santamaria Foundation (*Santamaría Fundación, SF*)

SF is an advocacy non-governmental organisation (NGO) that works with the male-to-female trans-population in Cali. It was founded following the murder of María Paula Santamaría, a trans-activist who was murdered as a victim of transphobia. It aims to counter social stigmas against trans-people and to promote their political rights.

SF aims to represent the different strands within the trans-women population.⁶⁰ SF has close relations with other SGM grassroots organisations, but it sees some of the demands and needs of the trans-women population as being quite different from those of the gay, lesbian, bisexual or even trans-men population. A concrete example of these occasionally divergent goals is that, while Colombian trans-women are struggling for an exemption from mandatory conscription into the military, trans-men are campaigning for the right to serve.

SF also considers LGBTI activism as often being dominated by upper-middle-class, urban, white activists, who tend to emulate trends from North American or Western European academia and activism, which are not necessarily directly transferable to the Colombian setting. Instead, SF tries to adopt local, creole categories of representation for trans-people, which highlight the local hybridity of language, class, gender and racial identities. In addition to being more representative of local realities, SF aims to use these to highlight the overlapping patterns of class-based and racial discrimination, which impact on lower-class and non-white trans-people in particular, and gender-based discrimination of trans-people.

SF has struggled to raise public awareness of transphobic⁶¹ crimes in the public agenda. The organisation also tries to actively counter public exoticisation and sexualisation of trans-women, as well as entrenched economic marginalisation, which tends to trap lower-class trans-women in precarious and poorly paid jobs as hairdressers, cosmeticians and sex workers. SF sees this as being a product of the objectification of sexuality based on biological differences rather than social-cultural, personal gender identity.

Due to the exoticisation of their identities, trans-women have faced an uphill struggle to be taken seriously, while trans-men on the other hand have often been politically less active. SF has created different activities and mechanisms to enhance the human rights of the trans-population in general and to build their capacities in terms of active citizenship and participative democracy. The organisation is also using these activities as a basis for developing its own socio-political consciousness.

Activities

SF organises awareness-raising events and campaigns to increase recognition of the trans-community's human rights and to achieve legal recognition, focusing especially on male-to-female

⁵⁹ Wayuu tradition mandates that no younger person can have authority or leadership over any older person.

⁶⁰ The transgender community includes transvestites, transgender and transsexual people.

⁶¹ Transphobia refers to expressions of emotional disgust, fear, anger, discomfort or violence directed towards transsexual or transgender people.

trans-women. In addition to public campaigns, the organisation engages in advocacy with academia, local media, politicians and the Catholic Church. SF advocates for a better oversight of the police force, whom they accuse of harassment and corrupt practices such as requesting part of the earnings from street-level sex workers to allow them to work, sexual abuse against trans-women or unlawful detention.

“If we assume that democracy defends freedom as a fundamental principle, then in that sense we have the right to determine our bodies, our minds, our sexuality and our identity ourselves.”

ACTIVIST FROM SF, CALI

SF does not work specifically with displaced persons, although there are cases where trans-women have left their hometown due to constant sexual harassment and violence. The organisation has also documented cases of kidnappings of trans-women by armed groups who were then forced to perform support duties for the group and became subjects of sexual exploitation.

“We live in a society where it is perfectly okay to look at a trans-woman and call her names in public; where sexual harassment is common among the police; where trans-victims of hate crimes are considered as ‘deserving it’ because we are ‘street walkers’, because ‘we were looking for trouble, committing crimes’. But whenever they pass us by, they ‘devour’ us with morbidity in their eyes. We are only seen as bodies, ‘public bodies’; we are not considered citizens, but we are citizens...”

ACTIVIST FROM SF, CALI

According to SF, trans-women from rural areas tend to migrate to urban areas because they can find a wider network of support and escape familial control. However, in the cities, they can also be subjected to harassment by armed actors. For instance, in Cali, small-scale drug traffickers force them to carry small amounts of drugs to allow them to work (as hairdressers or sex workers) in different areas of the city. SF has played an important role in documenting and following up cases with the relevant authorities, although so far there have been no judicial consequences for these cases.

3. THEMATIC ISSUES

3.1 Gender and economic recovery

Despite decades of violence, Colombia has maintained a rather healthy economy during the last 10 years compared with other countries in conflict. Nonetheless, the country is characterised by high levels of social and economic inequality and ongoing struggles, especially around access to land. Land reform has thus been one of the key discussion points in the Havana peace talks between the government of Colombia and the FARC.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture (2012), nearly 8.3 million hectares of land have been occupied illegally by armed groups. The Victims and Land Restitution Law aims to compensate the victims and reverse the effects of the massive, conflict-related displacement. However, lack of documentation and legal support, along with the intimidation of activists, have greatly delayed the law's implementation. In terms of access to property rights, displaced, widowed women have in the past often faced difficulties as they were usually not included as co-owners of the property. Moreover, traditional gender rules greatly limit women's land ownership as well as access to credit, skills and training. However, there are legal dispositions for strengthening the rights of female victims of conflict to access these.⁶²

“We are from XX, a small town in Cordoba. Initially, we didn't have problems with the paracos [paramilitaries], but later they started harassing us for food, wanted to recruit our kids ... My husband and I took the children one night and moved to Chocó; we travelled for several days. We lived there for a while, until once again, los guerreros [armed fighters] forced us to leave ... So we arrived to Medellín around 2000, first to San Javier, but it was just too much: listening to gunshots every night, I got really nervous about my girls' safety. One is in a nuns' boarding school, to keep her safe, and the rest of us moved there, to a new barrio at the very end of Comuna 4. It's very far, but at least it is not so insecure.”

INTERNALLY DISPLACED WOMAN, MEDELLÍN

For those internally displaced men and women who move from rural to urban areas and remain there, social integration and access to the labour market often mean they need to rethink or readjust dominant gender norms that they have grown up with. For instance, men who were traditionally providers, earning their income as small landowners, fishers or peasants in rural areas, now find themselves unemployed, without social networks or skills to provide in the cities. This often leads to frustration with their inability to fulfil expected gender norms. Instead, women tended to expand the scope of their reproductive and productive labour by finding employment as household helpers or in childrearing roles. Women also seem to have been better able to maintain relational networks that account for social capital in the new contexts. However, it should be noted that the displaced constitute a heterogeneous group, whose circumstances are influenced, in addition to gender norms and roles, by social status, educational levels, ethnic and regional origin, and the circumstances of the area where they resettle.⁶³

⁶² Such as the Constitutional Court Order 092/08, and the Victims and Land Restitution Law (Law 1448/12).

⁶³ See also: M. Denov and I. Marchand (2014). Op. cit.; and D. Meertens (2006). 'Reflexiones éticas, metodológicas y conceptuales en desplazamiento y género', in M. Abello (Ed.). *Investigación y desplazamiento forzado. Reflexiones éticas y metodológicas*. Colciencias. p.121.

Integration into new contexts is a great challenge for both IDPs and ex-combatants, who often face gendered stigmas related to their status as newcomers into an area. This is reinforced by mistrust and a lack of social networks. Men, especially younger ones, often struggle with overcoming their objectification as being ‘dangerous’. This can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy if the only economic avenues available are those in the illegal economies and if violence and substance abuse seem to be the only ways to deal with frustrations. Displaced women, but also girls and boys, may face increased sexual vulnerability due to their socio-economically marginalised position.

“Participants (ex-combatants) look for support and advice; some men have told us: it’s difficult to get a job without personal references, everything goes wrong from the moment they get to know that I’m an ex-combatant. They are afraid I’m going to steal or kill them. Private companies feel threatened by the possibility of participants passing on security-relevant information. On the other hand, private security, both legal and illegal, is an economic sector that is always open to them.”

DDR EXPERT, BOGOTÁ

Support networks and sectoral programmes differ greatly in terms of the economic and social support they afford to victims, IDPs and ex-combatants. While the reparations mechanisms for victims are not yet clear, the DDR programme provides comprehensive support for ex-combatants, including a monthly income, housing arrangements, psychosocial provision and vocational/educational training through the ACR for adults and the ICBF for minors.

A major issue has been retaining participants in the DDR programme. Their monthly income tends to be less than what they could earn through illegal activities. Enrolling in low-end jobs can represent a step backwards economically and socially that ex-combatants may have difficulty coping with.

Reintegration into civilian life often clashes with expectations of recognition, prestige and economic wellbeing. However, these situations are not the same for all ex-combatants as age, gender, class and education have an impact on their economic reintegration. Gender norms and the personal situation of each individual greatly influence the selection of the training or vocational component of the reintegration process. For instance, men tend to follow courses on mechanics, electricity, repairing appliances and the like. Women are more likely to choose training programmes to become beauticians/cosmetologists or in food processing. Both male and female ex-combatants have often been socialised into functioning in strongly hierarchical systems, where various kinds of displays of power by superiors are common. Adapting to less hierarchical civilian structures where individual agency is expected can be challenging. Furthermore, female ex-combatants often struggle to balance their vocational training with the expectations of simultaneously taking care of their families and households.

“Participants of both genders, be it from the FARC or the AUC, have internalised power relationships attached to their military rank. They struggle to swallow their pride whenever they get rejected for a job application or get a job offer that undermines their status. Male ex-combatants often react to being rebuked by storming out. Women who used to be radio operators or intelligence support, and thus who were important, may get employed as maids, and they often don’t even know there are labour laws in place that regulate that sector.”

GENDER EXPERT, ACR, CALI

Ex-combatants with low levels of formal education often lack knowledge of their rights as workers and may seek to solve their personal conflicts through the use of force.

For the legally recognised victims, the situation is different, as the support mechanisms are far less comprehensive than for ex-combatants. With the exception of IDPs, victims can claim a one-time economic compensation package that ranges between USD 4,500 and USD 11,000 per person, based on the damages suffered and they can access an investment support scheme. Restitution processes seek to re-establish the individual economic situation prior to the violation of their rights and the programme also provides psychosocial support.

IDPs who decide to stay in their new places of residence often face great economic difficulties as many of them have been incorporated into the urban poor and are reliant on social welfare transfers. For IDPs who decide to return to their regions of origin, economic recovery is a key element, often linked to land restitution and their integration into local market economies. Returnees often face additional challenges due to an increasingly market-oriented rural development model, the unequal distribution of land and the growing importance of extractive industries in rural areas.⁶⁴

Both Wayuumsurat and AMOR stressed the difficulties faced by returning populations in re-establishing traditional livelihoods and the gendered patterns of this.

There are no specific studies of issues linked to the economic recovery of conflict-affected SGM populations in Colombia. However, SGM advocacy organisations such as Colombia Diversa do point to social exclusion both in the educational system and the labour market. For example, trans-people are stereotyped negatively (for instance, as sex workers, drug dealers/users or criminals), which is used to justify hate crimes and abuses in order to ‘correct’ a deviation. Many trans-people are forced to abandon their homes at an early age, becoming victims of discrimination and domestic violence. Thus, they tend to migrate to urban areas where anonymity is an asset.⁶⁵ Most of them work in ‘trans-sexualised’ or feminised, socially exoticised and eroticised jobs, such as the beauty-cosmetic business and commercial sex work, which are badly paid, flexible and informal, leading to low self-esteem.⁶⁶ Trans-rights organisations are among those demanding labour rights and protection for sex workers.

3.2 The continuum/permutations of gendered violence

In various direct and indirect ways, the different forms of violence present in Colombian society are connected and interrelated. They range from the personal (including self-inflicted violence such as self-mutilation, substance abuse or suicide) to the collective and from the private to the public, including criminal, communal and political violence.

The SGBV breadth of this continuum of violence affects men, women and SGM, often in different ways based on age, social class and location. According to Colombian national statistics, women accounted for around 84% of the recorded victims of SGBV between 2007 and 2011; thus, around 16% of victims were men. Of the latter, 68% of male victims were children under 14 years of age, while 59.8% of female victims were in the same age category, possibly suggesting either a higher rate of occurrence and/or degree of reporting of sexual violence against minors. There are no disaggregated data available for trans- or intersex persons. While incidents of SGBV by armed actors, be they criminal or political, tend to receive more media and societal attention, as in other conflict-affected societies most SGBV in Colombia tends to be ‘every day’ violence by perpetrators known to the victim. Gendered socio-economic circumstances – such as displacement, poverty, being a young woman or being a member of (or assumed to be a member of) SGM – can greatly increase a person’s vulnerability.

⁶⁴ UNDP (2011). *Colombia rural – Razones para la esperanza. Informe nacional de desarrollo humano*. Bogotá: Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD).

⁶⁵ See, for example: N. Prada, S. Herrera, L. Lozano and A.M. Ortiz (2012). *A mí me sacaron volada de allá! Relatos de vida de mujeres trans desplazadas forzosamente hacia Bogotá*. Bogotá: Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

⁶⁶ Although the report refers to eight cases of trans-women who were displaced by various agents of the conflict, it is recognised that vulnerability among trans-people is shaped by class and social capital (Prada et al (2012). Op. cit. pp.181–191).

“I’ve worked with people who have psychologically and physically abused children for 30 to 40 years and, when you talk to them about their background and experiences, a lot of them – not all – were abused themselves.”

SECURITY EXPERT, BOGOTÁ

SGBV in the context of the conflict has included rape, forced birth control (both in terms of forced abortion and forced pregnancy), sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual slavery and sexually transmitted disease contagion. As in many other countries, SGBV crimes tend to be underreported, poorly prosecuted and seldom punished. This is especially the case for sexual violence inside the various armed groups.⁶⁷ In the case of forced birth control, this may cause medical and emotional issues that future DDR programmes for FARC guerrillas need to be aware of.⁶⁸ Sexual violence has been used by armed actors against civilians but also especially against human rights defenders and community leaders.⁶⁹ As a report of the General Prosecutor Office highlights: “Acts of sexual violence within the conflict were justified because victims were considered *collaborators* of enemy groups, or as a mechanism to show hierarchy and power inside the criminal group.”⁷⁰

Many of the political and criminal forms of violence in Colombia are linked in different ways to structural violence, which perpetuates poverty. However, a prevalent, reductionist view of these links tends to limit the analysis of the causes of violence to deviant behaviour projected onto members of the lower classes, thereby hiding the cumulative effects of exclusion, inequality, racism and corruption. As the CNMH highlights: “many want to see the current violence as a simple example of delinquency or banditry and not as a manifestation of root problems based on our political and social configuration.”⁷¹

Gendered factors can be a motivation to join an armed group. These can include an interest in military life, experiences of domestic violence, lack of employment and other opportunities, ideological factors or desire for revenge.⁷² Interpersonal violence can often be a motivating factor for enrolling in either armed groups or criminal gangs. Some young women and men who have suffered from domestic violence have engaged in the guerrillas or paramilitaries to escape from abuse or abandonment.⁷³ Others see their enrolment as a possibility to gain recognition and power in or over their families and communities, and thus to become respected and feared. These violent performances of ‘hard’ masculinities (and less often ‘hard’ femininities) are geared towards several audiences: the performers themselves, who are seeking to reinforce their own toughness; their comrades whom they are trying to impress; the civilian population from whom they are trying to gain respect; the ‘enemy’ whom they are trying to intimidate; and potential sexual partners whom they are seeking to woo.⁷⁴

67 L.M. Dietrich Ortega (2012). Op. cit.; and N. Herrera and D. Porch (2009). Op. cit.

68 See also A. Méndez (2012). Op. cit.

69 A prominent case occurred in February 2013 during the fieldwork, when Angelica Bello, the founder of the National Foundation for Defence of Women’s Human Rights (FUNDHEFEM), was found dead, apparently after having committed suicide. She was a local left-wing activist, who had been raped twice. Two of her daughters were kidnapped and raped by paramilitary groups. Following this ordeal, she was displaced and later became an important activist for the recognition of sexual violence against women in the conflict.

70 ‘Criminal group’ in this case refers to illegal armed groups, including both the guerrillas and the paramilitaries. For more information, see: ‘Fiscalía investiga 1.169 casos de violencia sexual cometidos por las AUC y las Farc’, *El Espectador*, 2 December 2013. Available at <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/fiscalia-investiga-1169-casos-de-violencia-sexual-comet-articulo-461699>

71 CNMH (2013). Op. cit. p.13.

72 Ibid. p.150.

73 See also D. Mazurana (2013). Op. cit.

74 See also A. Baird (2011). ‘Negotiating pathways to manhood: Rejecting gangs and violence in Medellín’s periphery’, *Journal of Conflictology*, Vol. 3, No. 1. pp.28–38; and K. Theidon (2009). Op. cit.

“Guns, money, power ... those are the things that young men usually see in movies. However, in Colombia young men see these images on the news, around their neighbourhoods, as part of their everyday lives. Poor people in the cities can easily be recruited by criminal bands and by armed groups in rural areas. If having a gun gives you prestige, then becoming part of such groups gives you a sense of belonging, protection ... a kind of protection a young girl is looking for, that’s a vicious cycle; the most beautiful girl in the town hardly gets interested in a guy riding a bicycle – she wants the one with the motorcycle.”

SOCIAL WORKER, MEDELLÍN

A continuum of violence from the public to the private sphere may also be observed in households of people directly affected by the conflict, including ex-combatants and IDPs. Based on interviews with support staff working with ex-combatants, both men and women may have internalised violence rather than resort to communication as a primary mode of conflict resolution, turning to aggression even at the slightest confrontation and as part of normal coexistence. Moreover, women victims of domestic violence tend not to report abusive partners, among other reasons, out of fear of being kicked out of the programme and thus losing the familial income. The ACR is seeking to address these issues through providing counselling.⁷⁵

Victims of internal displacement have also experienced patterns of domestic violence and SGBV prior to and during the displacement. This occurs especially when housed in temporary shelters, but also in new settlements, which tend to be in poorer areas of towns and cities. IDPs have to adapt to difficulties linked with poverty, exclusion and discrimination due to a lack of legal recognition of their status and poor access to networks of acquaintances or references. They can thus become easy targets of distrust because of the ‘criminalisation of vulnerability’,⁷⁶ something also experienced by ex-combatants. As in other Latin American countries, socio-economically marginalised persons, especially in cities, may become targets of what is euphemistically called ‘social cleansing’ (*limpieza social*) – that is, targeted physical attacks, including the murder of those considered ‘undesirable’, such as suspected sex workers, drug addicts, people who are homeless or children living on the street.

In terms of both political and criminal violence, men and women – but above all young men – can be seen as being disproportionately both perpetrators and victims. Both urban and rural violence is often linked to the construction of masculine identities, especially among younger men. In studies focusing on Colombia’s second largest city of Medellín, young men were found to be more vulnerable to violence because of their marginalisation and the ‘chronic social violence’ of the city.⁷⁷ Dominant expectations of masculinities and the ‘absence of licit masculinisation opportunities’ lead the young men to join street gangs or armed groups. These groups provide them with male role models who are often absent in their families, as well as giving the young men status, recognition and material capital.

Gangs and armed groups are thus seen as a ‘pathway to manhood’, whereby young males can perform their masculinities and simultaneously reproduce violent ways of being men and of being part of a group. As discussed, women – be it as mothers, girlfriends, wives or as a more imagined audience – may play an active or passive role too in reproducing these forms of masculinity; they may also become victims themselves through these associations, for example of sexual violence and physical abuse.⁷⁸ In addition, many of the men involved with armed groups often have been

75 Interviews with ACR, Cali and Bogotá.

76 Criminalisation of vulnerability refers to the ‘common sense’ tendency to attribute vicious behaviours, mischievous actions and negative inclinations to people who face different degrees of exclusion due to the lack of community contention or social coercion.

77 See, for example: A. Baird (2009). ‘Methodological dilemmas: Researching violent young men in Medellín, Colombia’, *IDS Bulletin. Violence, Social Action and Research*, Vol. 40, No. 3. pp.72–77; A. Baird (2011). Op. cit.; and A. Baird (2012). ‘The violent gang and the construction of masculinity amongst socially excluded young men’, *Safer Communities*, Vol. 11, No. 4. pp.179–190.

78 A. Baird (forthcoming). Op. cit.

unemployed, with limited education and entrepreneurial skills and “whose bodily capital may be their only marketable asset”.⁷⁹

However, there are multiple masculinities, and many young men in Medellín do reject violence and violent groups. This is often due to the influence of role models or other opportunities for developing positive masculinities and rejecting the “gang male role model system”.⁸⁰

3.3 Intergenerational dynamics

The length and intensity of the Colombian conflict means that no resident of the country has experienced a life without being directly or indirectly affected by various forms of violence, both in the private and public spheres. While traditionally families and communities have been organised largely along patriarchal lines and in a way that privileges older members over younger ones, the decades of conflict and displacement but also modernisation and urbanisation have changed these patterns. There is a great diversity of different forms of social organisation in Colombia today, with different gendered and age-related power dynamics.

The traditional model of the division of power between genders and generations within families and households has tended to be male oriented and adult-centric. In this model, authority is highly valued and represents the capacity for decision-making and guidance, reinforced by the economic power that each person has within the household. Thus, an ideal family in this sense has a father who is the main breadwinner and acts as the head of the household, while the wife controls the private realm and the offspring are expected to obey until they form their own family or become financially independent.

However, the possibility (or even desirability) of living up to such an ‘ideal type’ of family has varied regionally and between different social classes. It has been further undermined in reality both due to the conflict and due to modernisation processes. Nuclear families have been increasingly replaced by single-parent families or reunited, extended or non-familial households. In these instances, new gender and intergenerational dynamics of power develop, with potential positive and negative implications. While the various forms of familial and filial support are often a main source of security, assistance and identity, they can also be abusive or repressive.

As a consequence of the conflict and displacement, and also due to incarceration, migration or absconding of men, single-mother-headed households are increasingly common in poor urban households.⁸¹ These women often earn their living in the precarious informal sector – for instance, as street vendors or domestic workers, with little access to other educational or vocational opportunities. Under such circumstances, their children are seen as an important economic asset.

The relative deprivation of urban poverty, alongside the difficulties in accessing formal employment and the existence of a lucrative illegal economy, creates incentives for some youths to join violent groups – although it should be emphasised that many do not. Traditional roles and hierarchies of age and gender may be renegotiated through their children’s increased access to financial resources. For example, in a mother and son relationship, the single mother might now rely on the son, rather than on her absent partner, to be the main breadwinner. In turn, sons become the core of the household, the male figure who holds power.

79 K. Theidon (2009). Op. cit. pp.22–23.

80 A. Baird (2011). Op. cit. p.28.

81 Official data show that female-headed poor households account for nearly 30% of households, while male-headed households account for 26.2%. See National Planning Department (2013). *Documento conpes social – Equidad de género para las mujeres*. Bogotá. Available at <https://pwh.dnp.gov.co/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=1HWTeFgXhY%3D&tabid=1657>

“Those kids grow up experiencing domestic violence against their mothers, watching how their mothers struggle to get by and thinking, one day I’ll be able to give her what she deserves; some work a lot to escape poverty, to provide enough, but unfortunately a lot of them get caught up with armed groups.”

MALE LOCAL LEADER, MEDELLÍN

“We have been able to recognise how violence is ever present in our society, how men mistreat their wives and they just keep the growing resentment inside, making them bitter. Some women direct all their frustrations against their kids, often against their daughters, transferring all that guilt and bitterness over and over generations.”

FEMALE LOCAL LEADER, ANTIOQUIA

“Our local culture is very complicated in terms of ‘intra-gender’ violence. It is quite common that the mother-in-law undermines the role of a wife. In turn, that woman raises her sons as the centre of her life, so she can eventually hold the same kind of power over her sons’ wives.”

FEMALE LOCAL ACTIVIST, MEDELLÍN

Patterns of passive aggression, mistrust and abuse have often been incorporated by family members into their everyday lives and ways of interacting. These patterns of violence can then be reproduced in the public sphere as ‘valid’ forms of coping with frustrations.

A particular aspect of intergenerational relations in violent conflict is the role played by minors who have been illegally recruited by armed groups. Often, violence in the family can be a driving factor in motivating them to join armed groups in the first place – but they are often subjected to violence inside the group as well and may face threats of violent retribution after demobilisation. Legally, all demobilised minors are considered victims.⁸² Having spent a part of their childhood and/or youth in armed groups, demobilised minors face challenges regarding education, but also in terms of their own relationship with authority and respect of others’ rights. Returning minors to their families is not always possible due to fear of retribution by armed actors, necessitating the placement of ex-combatant youths in foster families, which can be a very conflictual process.

“Some demobilised children are seriously damaged. It is pretty hard to hear that they have been forced to kill their friends, how the commanders have sexually exploited them or how they have been forced to commit crimes because they cannot be prosecuted as adults. Those kids have been denied their childhood rights and all basic rights, but at the same time, they need to reflect upon their acts.”

DDR GENDER SPECIALIST

In the specific case of the FARC, there are two main intergenerational issues that need to be addressed in the event of a future demobilisation process: the FARC has a relatively high proportion of minors in its ranks, but it also has ‘retired’ members who are old combatants who have been part of the group all their lives. As a large proportion of the FARC might choose to remain in the so-called Peasant Reserve Zones, reintegration processes could become more community centred – but would need to take intergenerational issues into account along with gender.

Gender and intergenerational relations within the over 100 indigenous groups in Colombia differ, but often traditional views respect the status and power of older generations as the keepers of symbolic and political capital. However, violent conflict has also led to generational shifts in these communities that challenge gerontocratic norms. In the case of Wayuumsurat, for example, the group’s young, mainly female activists have transformed the dynamics of decision-making and

⁸² M. Denov and I. Marchand (2014). Op. cit.

political participation.⁸³ In addition, other indigenous groups, such as the Nasa from Cauca or the Kankuamo on the northern coast, have adopted a dual system whereby younger professionals who have been socialised and educated within the formal educational system are the official representatives in terms of the state and mainstream society, while older generations remain in power within the ethnic groups.

3.4 Gendered challenges to accessing justice

Access to justice in Colombia is an ongoing challenge and the country has high rates of impunity in both penal and civil law. According to one report: “Criminals caught in the act are often set free because of bureaucratic procedures, leading the police to publicly question the effectiveness of the judiciary. Trials are lengthy processes and impunity prevails (in cities such as Bogotá, it is reported that impunity rates are as high as 97%; that is, only three of every 100 complaints are actually resolved).”⁸⁴ Lack of implementation has been a major concern for transitional justice processes, support to victims and addressing SGBV.

Previous peace agreements between the government and illegal armed groups have resulted in a series of judicial, economic and social safeguards for armed actors in exchange for disarmament and demobilisation. However, none of these processes properly addressed reparations for victims or access to justice for them.

In 2008, 13 paramilitary leaders were extradited to the US to be prosecuted for narcotics trafficking, regardless of the fact that they were facing charges in the Colombian courts for crimes against humanity and the formation of illegal armed groups.

The shortcomings of access to justice are highlighted in the case of the Bahía Portete massacre.⁸⁵ Wayuu women who had acted as instigators of violence by choosing individuals for targeting have not been apprehended. The paramilitary leader who commanded and executed the massacre, as well as the indigenous leader seen as the mastermind behind the massacre, were both extradited to the US in 2012 on narcotics charges – despite the fact that the former has admitted his participation in forced displacement, murder, disappearances and torture in La Guajira.

Wayuumunsurat also takes a comprehensive view of justice and supports the victims’ demands that justice can only be achieved once the truth about the causes and motivations behind the massacre and, even more importantly, the fate of the disappeared is made public. It demands that the restitution of their ancestral land be linked to a comprehensive programme to secure basic rights and services as well as to restore their livelihoods.

“Wayuu culture gives a special value to storytelling and oral traditions, and all members of the community are urged to know about their traditions. While weaving or resting on their hammocks, older men and women will share stories from the past with the young. By remembering the massacre, they have created cultural celebrations that enhance the cultural heritage and social ties. They recognised that working with the GMH has brought them newer tools for maintaining their historical memory, while the two-way learning process also benefited the researchers who learned about wayuu memory practices.”

GROUP INTERVIEW, RIOHACHA

83 For more information, see http://organizacionwayuumunsurat.blogspot.com/2013_05_01_archive.html

84 Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI) (2012). *BTI 2012 – Colombia country report*. Gütersloh. p.13. Available at http://www.bti-project.org/uploads/tx_itao_download/BTI_2012_Colombia.pdf

85 GMH (2010). Op. cit.

After a revamping of the DDR process in 2010, the government has moved towards comprehensive reintegration programmes and reparations for victims. This programme now includes a differential approach that includes a comprehensive gender strategy.⁸⁶ The reintegration programme has been made compulsory and includes a sentencing of ex-combatants for participating in an illegal armed group; however, this sentencing is then immediately lifted under the provision that they enter the ACR reintegration programme and carry out community work, although not necessarily in the area of origin/operations.⁸⁷

Reparation payments to victims and land restitution claims are covered by the Victims and Land Restitution Law (Law 1448/12), which represents the most recent advancement in terms of access to conflict-related justice. The greatest challenges in terms of compensating victims are the low efficiency of the judicial system, persistent threats against victims' rights campaigners and the difficulties in assuring land restitution. Moreover, individual and communal monetary reparations for more than six million victims⁸⁸ represent a major financial challenge to the state. Currently, the programme is implementing a differential approach that aims to attend to the particular needs of certain groups, such as simplifying access to the land restitution process for widows and widowers. Female leaders at risk due to their activism receive special protection from the Victims' Unit, although this has not always been effective.⁸⁹

“I've personally carried out several focus groups and individual interviews, in order to better understand the context where the conflict and ex-combatants came from. We have aimed to include a comprehensive gender perspective that not only looks at women's needs, but also includes masculinities and recognises special LGBTI needs. Our differential approach also includes other factors, such as disability, age, mental health and their position in the armed group. However, one huge challenge is that not even the specialists and the professionals who are working for the agency, who supervise the reintegration process, have sufficient gender training. Therefore, we had to start from the very basics: construct a baseline and carry out gender training for all professionals at ACR.”

GENDER SPECIALISTS, ACR, BOGOTÁ

“Over the years, we have witnessed female empowerment through the peace process. Victims and ex-combatants have become more active in the reconciliation process, realising that there are different needs for all of them.”

REGIONAL ADVISER, ACR, CALI

Although Colombia has greatly improved in terms of inclusion and progressive legislation regarding gender issues, patriarchal institutional cultures and conservative norms continue to hinder their implementation. With regard to SGM, access to justice is limited by shortcomings, both in the legislation and the application of existing legal norms. Hate crimes are seldom prosecuted as such, but tend to be classified as ‘crimes of passion’ resulting from interpersonal matters.⁹⁰ Prosecution of homophobic and transphobic violence, much like SGBV cases, often leaves much to be desired, as institutional practices within the judicial and security sector tend to reproduce and enhance gender discriminatory practices. These lead to a lack of trust towards authorities, low reporting rates, unequal power relations between victims and perpetrators, difficulties in collecting evidence and lack of gender sensitivity while carrying out investigations.

⁸⁶ However, the degree to which this is actually implemented in practice is open to debate. See, for example: M. Schöb (2014). Op. cit.

⁸⁷ Under the new framework, participants are compelled to participate in a six-year comprehensive process that includes: training for labour, psychosocial attention and safe-life practices, along with the commitment to testify about their criminal activities to help the victims. Those who fail to adhere to such arrangements or who get involved in criminal activities are expelled from the programme and face criminal charges under ordinary law. Another important modification has been the individualisation of the DDR process, which was originally a homogeneous collective process.

⁸⁸ Official data from Registro Unico de Victimias. Available at <http://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co>; see also Amnesty International (2012). Op. cit. regarding lack of efficacy.

⁸⁹ Further information is available at <http://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/index.php/en/438-enfoques-diferenciales>

⁹⁰ Interview, Colombia Diversa, Bogotá, February 2013.

“In terms of access to justice, what motivation has a victim got when the police don’t respond to crime at all, or even when they do it is days later – what kind of actionable evidence do you have then? So, again it’s about having not only the capacity, but the processes and the systems in place, to be able to make a complaint and have a complaint investigated.”

SECURITY EXPERT, BOGOTÁ

In May 2014, the Colombian senate passed a new bill to improve access to justice for SGBV survivors, with a particular focus on conflict-related SGBV, including sexual slavery and forced prostitution. Once implemented, it is meant to guarantee that survivors receive psychosocial support and free comprehensive medical attention and to increase pressures for the prosecution of these cases. Moreover, it will aim to explicitly protect survivors against further discrimination based on their past sexual history, behaviour or sexual orientation.⁹¹

91 Human Rights Watch (2014). ‘Dispatches: A victory for Colombia’s sexual violence victims’, 14 May 2014. Available at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/05/13/dispatches-victory-colombia-s-sexual-violence-victims>

4. SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK

The Colombian case study underlines the need to apply a deeper and broader understanding of gender and to understand it in a relational way. This is necessary in order to more effectively address the peacebuilding needs but also to support the peacebuilding capacities of women and girls, boys and men, and sexual and gender minorities. Gender needs to be seen not as a technical or administrative add-on, but rather as an analytical lens through which to better understand these needs, vulnerabilities and capacities, in conjunction with other markers such as social class, age, sexuality, disability, ethnic and cultural background, and urban or rural setting.⁹² Gender is one of the key categories through which one can better understand societal power dynamics, identities and social values – all of which are key to determining the possibilities of a group or an individual to access resources such as land, to participate fully in political processes or even to be able to control one's bodily integrity.

Gendered peacebuilding analyses therefore will need to engage much more with the complexities of multiple, often fluid identities and power gradients. This will require a certain degree of re-conceptualisation as far as gendered stereotypes of 'naturally' aggressive men and 'innately' peaceful women are concerned in order to address male vulnerabilities, women as perpetrators of violence, and also the societal co-production of violent and violence-enabling gender roles by both men and women alike. The research also highlighted the need to better understand the specific needs and vulnerabilities, but also agency, of SGM in peacebuilding.

In the Colombia case, most of the victims of violence and a large proportion of past perpetrators share similar challenges in terms of finding employment and securing their livelihoods. They often lacked (and still lack) access to proper healthcare and education, also carrying with them the physical and mental scars of the conflict. Continued exclusion from other opportunities of economic survival or dealing with frustrations, along with restricting gender roles and expectations, may lead to their involvement in criminal activities, substance abuse and violence against others or themselves in both public and private spaces. This is especially the case for men whose masculinity is conflated with expectations of 'hardness'. These masculinities are reinforced not only among male peers or within armed groups and state institutions, but also often in the home and family, by men and women alike. Overcoming societally harmful, 'traditional' patterns of gender-appropriate behaviour is difficult. It requires that women and men, transgender or intersex persons, boys and girls begin de-normalising and not accepting violent behaviour by themselves or against themselves and others.

In different ways, AMOR, Wayuumsurat and SF show how local, gender-relational answers can be found to address local gender dynamics and peacebuilding challenges. This can occur, for instance, through opening up spaces for 'new' masculinities alongside 'new' femininities, using local indigenous traditions or developing creole understandings of transgender identity. All three cases challenge state agencies, NGOs and international agencies to rethink current approaches to gender in peacebuilding, to consider if and how interventions perpetuate heteronormative structures or gender inequality, and if there are ways of using gender to question fundamental issues of power relations and exclusion that hinder the building of inclusive and peaceful societies.

⁹² As much of the current gender debate is informed in many ways by research conducted on urban gender roles – by urban-based researchers in and for urban academic and policy institutions – it may well be worth considering possible urban biases in the tools and approaches we use for our gender analyses.

The positive and negative experiences of both violent conflict and peacebuilding faced by Colombian society in past decades will need to be drawn on if and when the Colombian government signs a peace deal with the FARC. One of the great promises (and risks) of the process has been the attempt to adopt a more comprehensive approach in the peace process than in previous ones, including looking at access to land and other economic resources, victims' issues, comprehensive DDR and so on. The issues raised in this report – access to justice, economic recovery, intergenerational conflict and interplay of different forms of violence – are all underlying dynamics that need to be addressed therefore in the future peace process. Understanding the role of gendered, age and class identities, expectations and power imbalances will be key to ensuring that the implementation of any peace agreement will lead to a more inclusive, socially cohesive, peaceful and gender equitable society for all Colombians. As important as the top-level negotiations are, it is at the local level, through the efforts of groups like AMOR, Wayuumunsurat and SF, that the actual implementation will be done.

International Alert.

346 Clapham Road, London SW9 9AP, United Kingdom

Tel +44 (0)20 7627 6800, Fax +44 (0)20 7627 6900

info@international-alert.org

www.international-alert.org

ISBN: 978-1-909578-37-1