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THE FIGHT FOR INCLUSION: ADVOCATING FOR A GENDER-SENSITIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COLOMBIAN PEACE ACCORDS

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(AP Photo/Fernando Vergara)

The Colombian peace accords, signed on November 24th, 2016, marked the end of the nearly 60-year long conflict between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP guerrilla group (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo*). The accords were negotiated over a period of four years with extensive stakeholder involvement.

One of the most remarkable achievements of the Colombian peace accords, and peace process more generally, is the inclusion and recognition of gender-based issues. These achievements, however, were only achieved after civil society organizations fought for the negotiations to include the voices of women, the LGBTQ+ community, and ethnic communities including indigenous and Afro-Colombians. Most notably, the National Summit for Women and Peace, a coalition of eight women's organizations, networks, and platforms, was one of the major actors in ensuring that gender issues would be addressed during the negotiations. After a year of persistence, the peace process opened to women, LGBTQ+, Afro-Colombian, indigenous and victims from diverse backgrounds. ²

As a result of this inclusion and participation, women, Afro-Colombian and indigenous peoples, and LGBTQ+ groups were able to achieve the establishment of various protective measures within the accords themselves, particularly the “*enfoque de género*,” or, “gender-based approach” and the “*enfoque étnico*” or “ethnic approach.”

The gender approach is intended to establish stipulations and measures to help overcome the gender gaps that have long marked Colombian society. It is one of eleven guiding principles of the accords but is also woven throughout each point of the

accord in specific and concrete ways. The specific gender-sensitive measures center around 8 principal themes.³

1. Access to and formalization of rural property in equal conditions to men
2. Guarantee of economic, social, and cultural rights of women and people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, with an emphasis on the rural sector
3. Promotion of women's participation in representation, decision-making, and conflict resolution spaces and equal participation of women in the decision-making committees created in the accords
4. Preventative and protective measures that address the specific risks faced by women
5. Access to justice, truth, reparation and the guarantee of non-repetition, demonstrating the different ways the conflict affected women
6. Public recognition, non-stigmatization, and dissemination of the labor done by women as political actors
7. Institutional management to strengthen women's organizations in their social and political participation
8. Disaggregated information systems.

Another achievement of civil society groups in the fight for inclusion was the installation of the Gender Sub-Commission to the negotiating table in 2014. This sub-commission was “not only focused on women's rights, but also on how the conflict affected individuals based on their sexual and gender identity.”⁴

The Colombian conflict also affected individuals based on their ethnic identity. Ethnic communities, including, but not limited to, indigenous and Afro-Colombians, have been especially hard-hit by the conflict

and represent a disproportionate number of victims of the conflict and displaced communities.⁵ Their increased vulnerability during the conflict is also related to the historical social, political, and economic exclusion, discrimination, and injustices they have faced throughout Colombia's history. Afro-Colombian women, for example, have been disproportionately harmed by the Colombian conflict because of the "historic and systemic racism," and sexism that exists.⁶

This exclusion has prevented Afro-Colombian women from accessing justice regarding issues of sexual and gender-based violence. For example, in rural Afro-Colombian communities, victim services are severely lacking, despite the heightened vulnerability of sexual violence for rural Afro-descendant women.⁷ Moreover, indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders and victims' rights advocates are the "most impacted [by the assassination of social leaders]."⁸

Despite the disproportionate impact of the conflict on ethnic communities, Afro and indigenous Colombians were initially excluded from the negotiating table in Havana. It was only after the tireless efforts of several civil society organizations that they were formally included in the process through the Ethnic Commission, which was created in 2014, due to "the rapid mobilization of Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples... to guarantee the vision for a just peace."⁹

The Ethnic Commission was able to successfully advocate for their inclusion in both the process and the accords. This is most apparent in the inclusion of the ethnic chapter in the final peace accords, which was created in conjunction with the Afro-Colombian Peace Council (CONPA) and the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC). The ethnic chapter provides specific provisions for Colombia's ethnic communities. Specifically, the accords recognize the structural nature of

exclusion and the differential impacts of the conflict experienced by ethnic groups, propose the creation of special mechanisms for consultation and ensuring participation of ethnic communities in all institutions created for the implementation of the accords (comprehensive rural reform, political participation, victims, solution to the problem of drugs, and implementation and verification), and stipulate a transversal application of the ethnic chapter throughout the accords. In this way the accords recognize the legitimacy of ethnic authorities as key actors in all implementation mechanisms.¹⁰ This chapter also guarantees a gender-sensitive implementation of the accords.

Largely as a result of the advocacy from civil society organizations, the Colombian peace process was the first in the world to include a differentiated gender approach. Primarily women, but also representatives of the LGBTQ+ community, were able to gain a seat at the negotiating table and many of their concerns were, ultimately, reflected in the final accords. The protection and inclusion of women and the LGBTQ+ community in the process and the accords is truly remarkable and Colombia currently serves as a global example of inclusive peacebuilding.

Unfortunately, a backlash that developed to these advances has resulted in the regression of the rights of these marginalized groups in the accords themselves, as well as in the implementation of the accords. In other words, much of the progress that Colombia has achieved toward the inclusion of women and the LGBTQ+ community in the peace process has remained on paper or in words and has yet to become reality.

The first major attack came only months after the signing of the first version of the

accords when the accords were put to a plebiscite. As part of the campaign against the approval of the accords, a battle emerged over the inclusion of the “*enfoque de género*,” or, “gender-based focus.”¹¹ Certain opponents to the accords, particularly some Evangelical leaders and conservative members of the Colombian Congress, claimed that this “gender-based focus” promoted a “gender ideology,” which threatened traditional family values and roles and encouraged homosexuality. The first version of the accords was ultimately narrowly rejected by the Colombian people during the plebiscite, and opposition to the so-called “gender ideology” supposedly contained within was a decisive factor in this vote. Although the inclusion of women and LGBTQ+ issues in the accords largely simply asserted these populations’ rights as victims of the conflict and participants in the peace process—rather than touching on issues such as same-sex marriage or abortion rights, for example—this rather biased critique of the accords proved to be powerful.

As a result of the adamant opposition to the so-called “gender ideology” of the first version of the accords, the Colombian government made amendments to the accords that erased many of the mentions and rights of the LGBTQ+ community. For example, all mentions of the phrase “sexual orientation” in the peace accords vanished between the first version and second versions.

Additionally, then-president Juan Manuel Santos immediately retracted the informational manual “Discrimination-Free School Environments: Non-Hegemonic Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities. Aspects for Reflection” from use in

Colombian schools due to this intense opposition. Although this manual had nothing to do with the peace accords and came out of a separate process, its publication sparked the backlash against the so-called “gender ideology” in the accords. The informational manual was published as part of a court mandate regarding inclusion of diverse sexual and gender identities in Colombian schools following the suicide of Colombian student Sergio Urrego, who was victimized for being gay.¹²

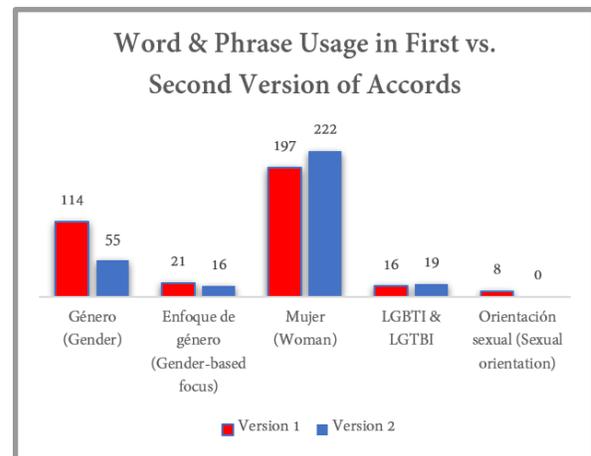


Figure 1. Comparison of usage of words and phrases in the first and second versions of the Colombian Peace Accords.

The second major setback has been the lack of implementation of the Colombian peace agreement in general, but, more specifically, of the gender-specific stipulations in the accords. According to a 2018 Kroc Institute report, **of the 130 stipulations with a gender perspective only 4 percent have been completed** (refer to Figures 2 and 3). Comparatively, of the 578 total stipulations in the accords, 22 percent were complete as of the same time. In other words, **stipulations without a gender perspective have been completed at 5x the rate of stipulations with a gender perspective.** Additionally, while

only 37 percent of all stipulations have not been initiated, over half (51 percent) of the stipulations with a gender perspective have not been initiated.¹³ This report reveals that the Colombian peace accords have not been satisfactorily implemented in general, but that the stipulations with a gender perspective have been especially vulnerable to lack of implementation.

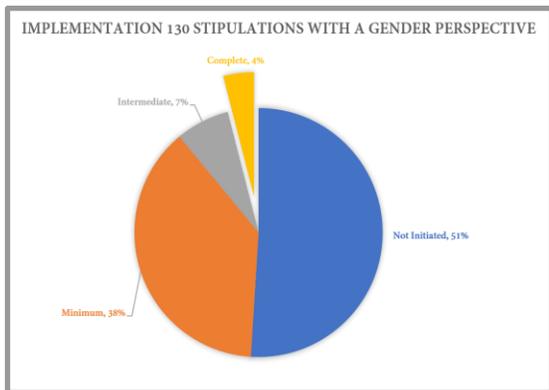


Figure 2. Status of implementation of 130 stipulations in the final Colombian peace accord with a gender perspective as of June 2018

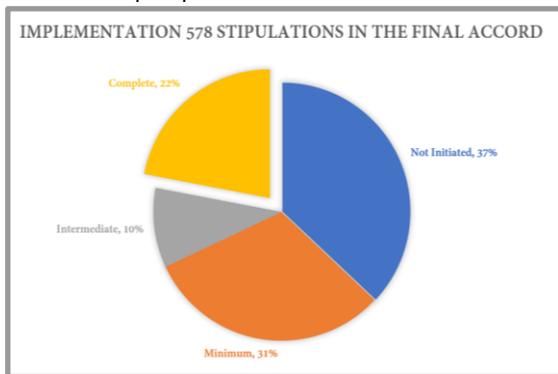


Figure 3. Status of implementation of 578 stipulations in the final Colombian peace accord as of June 2018

More specifically, monitoring and evaluation reports have found that the gender-specific stipulations in Point 4 (Solution to the Problem of Illicit Drugs) have been the least implemented followed by the provisions in Point 1 (Comprehensive Rural Reform) and Point 2 (Political Participation). In addition, a report by Colombian organization Genero en La Paz¹⁴ has found that many of the

provisions have not moved beyond the legislative phase and the government has failed to establish concrete measures to implement the existing framework. Lastly, according to the Kroc Institute, no progress has been made on various stipulations including the implementation of specialized investigation methodologies for the most serious acts of victimization undertaken against women, children, adolescents, and the LGBTQ+ community as well as training to prevent sexual and gender-based violence as related to illicit drugs.

U.S. Support for the Colombian Peace Accords

While the Obama Administration strongly supported the Colombian peace process and appointed a special envoy, Bernie Aronson, to the negotiating table in Havana, the support of the Trump Administration has been more muted and contradictory. Although the administration has not officially withdrawn support for the peace accords and U.S. financial support the accords continues, its overt actions as well as inaction do not demonstrate this supposed support.¹⁵

Firstly, the Trump Administration decided not to appoint a new Special Envoy for the Colombian Peace Process during the transition from the Obama administration. Former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson told the U.S. Congress that the Trump administration would not fill the position because they believed there were too many special envoys and that the peace deal did not require a full-time U.S. monitor.¹⁶

The current U.S. administration has also proposed cuts for aid to Colombia. In FY2019 the proposed foreign aid budget to

Colombia was \$265 million, which is 32 percent less than the previous \$391.3 million in FY2018. The administration also requested reducing the aid to “post-conflict recovery programs” in order to “place greater emphasis on counternarcotics and security” (CRF, 2018). Nevertheless, the U.S. Congress continued to support funding at FY2018 levels in its appropriation bills.

However, rhetoric and aid regarding Colombia in both the executive and legislative branches continues to prioritize counternarcotics and while peace accord implementation is woven into different categories of assistance and may not be fully reflected in these graphics, it is still overshadowed by counternarcotics in the budget.¹⁷

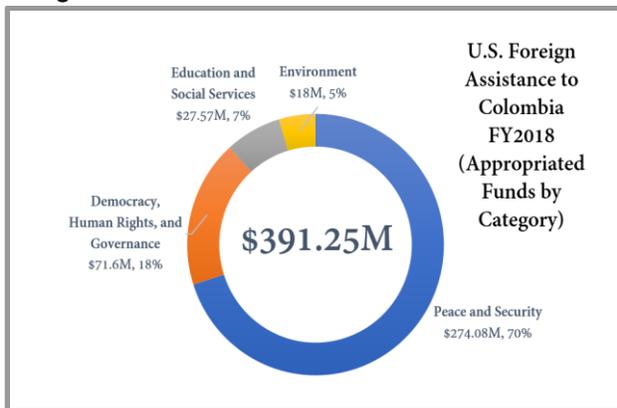


Figure 3.

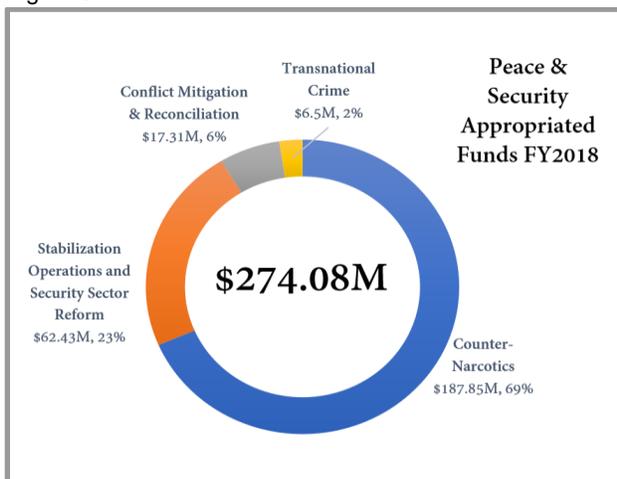


Figure 4.

At a diplomatic level, conversations between the United States and Colombia focus on topics other than peace accord implementation. In their April 2, 2019 conversation, for example, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Colombian President Iván Duque discussed only drug trafficking and the crisis in Venezuela, according to official reports.¹⁸ The current U.S. Ambassador to Colombia, Kevin Whitaker, also actively undermined the peace process in Colombia by threatening to cut aid if the Colombian Congress supported the stance outlined by the peace accords regarding transitional justice, especially regarding extradition of demobilized FARC leaders for drug trafficking crimes.¹⁹

Despite the lukewarm support from the U.S. in recent years, Colombia continues to be a strategic and necessary partner to the United States.²⁰ U.S. interests in terms of a stable region are best served by a Colombia truly at peace, with the stability and resilience that comes from a country in which citizens’ rights are respected. Therefore, supporting the full implementation of the Colombian peace accords, and with it a sustainable peace, is supporting the sustainability of the bilateral relationship as well as hemispheric security at-large.

PRIORITY ISSUES

This briefing memo clearly delineates which issues are of the top priority within the implementation of the Colombian peace accords, and, more specifically, within the gender-based focus of the accords. To discern these priority issues we have consulted with several Colombian civil society organizations who work on the

issues of gender and peacebuilding along with extensive research of academic, multilateral, and journalistic reports.

1. Lack of Political Will

On paper, women and the LGBTQ+ community in Colombia enjoy substantial protections and rights both within and external to the Colombian peace accords. The reality, however, is much different. The severe lack of implementation of not only the gender-specific stipulations of the Colombian peace accords but also of other protective legislation for Afro-Colombian and indigenous groups demonstrates an egregious lack of political will on the part of the current Colombian administration. In the words of one civil society representative, “*todo se queda en el papel,*” or, “everything stays on paper.” In other words, there is a significant gap between what is said and written and what actually happens in regards to the protection of minority rights in Colombia. There is currently very little accountability or enforcement of protective legislation.

Civil society representatives also point to the lack of resources for the implementation of the gender-specific provisions of the peace accords as further evidence of the lack of political will of the current Colombian government. Resources to support the implementation of these provisions have been scarce or non-existent. Additionally, there is a lack of transparency regarding the allocation of funds for programs or legislation specifically for women and the LGBTQ+ community. For example, we have been unable to find exact figures on the budget for the implementation of the “*enfoque de género.*”

2. Meaningful Participation of Women and the LGBTQ+ Community

Although the Colombian peace accords contain provisions for the participation of women and the LGBTQ+ community in the accords’ implementation, civil society representatives expressed that participation has been insufficient and inadequate and that many obstacles to effective participation remain.

According to Fundación Ideas Para La Paz, for example, in the participatory meetings to create the Rural Development Plans (Planes de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial, PDET) women represented, on average, only 39 percent of participants.²¹ The same study also found that the number of women participants decreased as the overall number of participants increased.

Additionally, the *Second Report on the Verification and Implementation of the Gender Focus* by the Technical Secretariat of the International Verification Component notes that though the peace accords include the issue of participation in all of its six points, effective participation is severely lacking. The report highlights that women’s right to participation cannot be implemented if “women cannot count on guarantees of political exercise, especially in a setting where the threat and assassinations of social leaders and human rights defenders persists.”²²

The Kroc Institute report, which defines effective participation as “the real capacity for influence and not simply as the presence of women in participatory spaces,” further observes that though there has been normative progress there still persists “unresolved challenges in the phase of implementation” in regards to mechanisms

and concrete measures that would guarantee effective participation.²³

These findings were echoed by representatives of civil society organizations who noted that there are currently no mechanisms for ensuring the effective participation of women, LGBTQ+ persons, and indigenous and Afro-Colombians. They brought attention to the fact that, often, governmental agencies will invite minority group participants to decision-making processes simply to “check the box” for inclusion, but have not been trained to ensure their meaningful participation.

Lastly, civil society representatives noted that there exist many unaddressed obstacles to the participation of women groups in the peace process at the societal and cultural levels. For example, intra-familial relationships can affect married women’s participation because their husbands may feel threatened by their participation and react violently. Civil society representatives voiced concerns that there are currently no adequate protections in place for these situations and women, therefore, often do not feel safe participating.

LGBTQ+ organizations raised similar concerns. Many expressed that simply being a member of the LGBTQ+ community is often a reason for victimization in Colombian society so their participation has been similarly marginalized and threatened.

3. Issues regarding Security

Several civil society organizations noted a grave concern with matters of security, primarily the assassination of social leaders and human rights defenders and issues regarding sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

One of the most pressing concerns is the killings of social leaders. Since the signing of the Colombian peace accords in 2016, the number of assassinations has increased. According to the Colombian human rights ombudsman’s office, 431 human rights defenders and community leaders were killed between January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2018.²⁴

Civil society representatives expressed that there is currently not enough protection provided for social leaders and human rights defenders. The National Association of Displaced Afro-Colombians (AFRODES), for example, stated that although “everyone knows when a social leader is going to be killed, the government still does nothing about it.” Several reports also highlighted a need for further development in the protection of social leaders. The National Summit of Women and Peace in Colombia, for example, states that “the extermination of leaders and defenders of human rights has been a great threat to the construction of peace.”²⁵

Although the current Colombian government has legislation and programs in place to protect social leaders and human rights defenders,²⁶ they are clearly unable or unwilling to provide sufficient protection as the situation continues to be dire, and human lives are becoming increasingly at risk. “Afro-Colombian women human rights defenders find that the level of protection they do receive from the government, via its National Protection Unit (UNP), is inadequate, and may place them at greater risk.” (pg. 7)²⁷

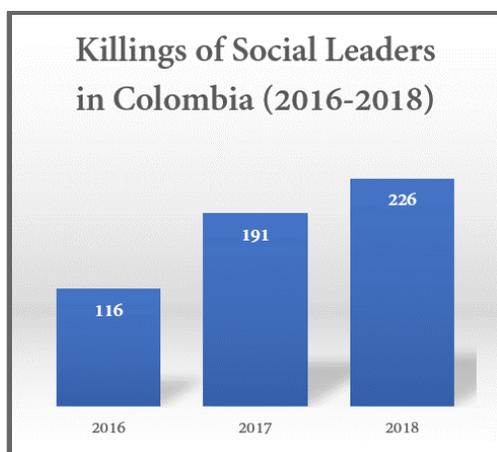


Figure 5

Sexual and gender-based violence also remains a major concern. Sexual violence against women continues, especially due to the insecurity at the territorial level where illegal armed groups control narco-trafficking routes; their presence put women at a great risk for sexual violence.²⁸ The Kroc Institute report points to the need to make threats and instances of sexual violence more visible, especially in regards to the protection of social leaders; in “2018, 23 female human rights defenders were killed (15 percent of the total number of homicides presented)...in three of these cases, the crimes included sexual violence and in two of them, torture” (pg. 42). LGBTQ+ organizations expressed similar concerns.

Civil society organizations argue that in programs dealing with the reincorporation of ex-combatants there is not enough attention being placed on addressing the sexual violence experienced by female ex-combatants.

Cases of sexual violence are rarely prosecuted. For example, a civil society representative from AFRODES noted that the organization had documented 225 cases of Afro-Colombian women victims of sexual violence between 2007 and 2016, and that only 83 of these cases are in the public prosecutor’s office and none have been processed.

4. Access to Justice

"Queremos la verdad. Nosotras las mujeres víctimas de violencia sexual sentimos en nuestro cuerpo el peso de la guerra. Reclamamos justicia para que no haya impunidad"²⁹

Access to the various transitional justice mechanisms and measures stipulated by the Colombian peace accords is of great importance to the civil society representatives with whom we consulted. Representatives stressed the importance of the transitional justice court known as the JEP (the Special Jurisdiction for Peace), for example, as a crucial tool for access to justice in matters of sexual violence, especially for women and the LGBTQ+ community, and noted that such mechanism would ensure justice for conflict-related sexual violence crimes that was not ensured by the ordinary justice system.

Recently, the court has accepted several cases dealing with conflict-related sexual violence. For example, this past April, civil society organization Sisma Mujer, turned in 72 cases of sexual violence to the JEP.³⁰ In addition, in March of this year Colombia Diversa and Caribe Afirmativo turned in two reports outlining sexual violence crimes perpetrated by the FARC and paramilitary groups.³¹

Unfortunately, the JEP has been under continuous attack in recent years, and modifications to this transitional justice mechanism have put its credibility at risk, and have directly weakened it. For example, a 2017 Constitutional Court decision hindered the JEP’s ability to “prosecute third-party perpetrators” such as, landowners or drug traffickers which are

among the worst perpetrators of violence during the conflict. The decision weakened the JEP by “removing language that would compel such actors to appear before the court.”³²

What is more, last July the Duque administration proposed to eliminate article 213 of the Statutory Law of the JEP which contains provisions that obligate the JEP to refer victims of sexual violence to the healthcare system and would eliminate any reference to LGBTQ+ persons.³³

Civil society organizations have asserted that these attacks on the JEP are equivalent to attacks on the victims of the Colombian conflict.

The Truth Commission was also identified as a unique and important space for women and the LGBTQ+ community to obtain access to justice. Reparations, restitution of lands to women, victim’s rights and participation, and non-repetition were also raised. And yet, even though the women’s organizations have advocated for transitional justice mechanisms, that does not mean that these mechanisms are already working in the way that they should.

According to various civil society representatives, women and members of the LGBTQ+ community often face marginalization and discrimination while attempting to access the justice afforded to them by the peace accords. A representative from the JEP, for example, noted that women who attempt to utilize the services available to them through the JEP are met with officials who are either unaware of the available provisions or unwilling to provide them. Representatives from LGBTQ+ organizations such as

Colombia Diversa and Caribe Afirmativo similarly expressed that members of the LGBTQ+ community have faced discrimination and re-victimization upon attempts to access justice. They are, in essence, re-victimized when accessing the justice services available to them through the transitional justice mechanisms established by the peace accords.

In short, the access to justice that the transitional justice mechanisms outlined in the peace accords provide is crucial to women and the LGBTQ+ community in Colombia and their protection is hugely important, and must be upheld.

5. Increased vulnerability and exclusion of the LGBTQ+ community and Afro-Colombian and Indigenous Peoples

As highlighted above, the fear of the so-called “*ideología de género*” leading to the revision of the first version of the Colombian peace accords led to a direct attack on the rights of the LGBTQ+ population. This fear has persisted and is a driving factor behind the lack of political will to fully implement the peace accords. Both gender and racial justice provisions are suffering from failure of implementation, meaning that sexual minorities and “Afro-descendant and Indigenous women and their communities continue to live disproportionately in conflict-ridden areas and to be at high risk for displacement and other violence, including sexual and gender-based violence.”³⁴

Several civil society organizations consider this a grave concern given the increased vulnerability of these populations, and the differential victimization they experience. For example, civil society representatives noted that women sexual minorities are

often times victimized both for being a woman and for being a sexual minority. In regards to Afro-Colombian and indigenous peoples, AFRODES noted that, “women have always been disadvantaged in Colombia, but the situation for racial minority women is even more complicated.” Afro-Colombian and indigenous women, for example, were 3x more likely to be affected by the conflict than their male and white counterparts. That is, they are victimized *because* they are women, racial minorities, and because their communities are located in territories most affected by the conflict.

Therefore, given their increased vulnerability, a lack of implementation of gender and racial stipulations will likely have a greater effect on these populations than non-racial and sexual minorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Support the full implementation of the Colombian peace accords, including and especially the gender-based focus.

It is imperative that the United States and the international community at-large support the full implementation of the Colombian peace accords. Colombian civil society representatives repeatedly emphasized the immeasurable influence that the United States and the international community can have in pressuring the Colombian government to implement the accords.

Furthermore, the willingness of international actors to provide resources and support is a crucial variable in the long-term success or failure of a peace agreement. **Research has shown, for example, that one of the most important factors is *whether or not providing assistance and support to the***

affected country is seen as a priority to the national interests of a major or regional power. In fact, it is only when such interest exists that peace implementation has succeeded in the most difficult environments.³⁵

Both the accords themselves and the gender-based focus contained within them have been under constant attack since their approval in 2016, and threats to their implementation have been steadily increasing. The accords, however, already contain many of the solutions to the issues facing the country. Their full implementation, therefore, is essential for the construction of a stable and lasting peace in Colombia.

The implementation of the gender-based focus of the peace accords is also crucial to the establishment of a durable and lasting peace in Colombia. Research, for example, has shown that **when women participate in peace processes the resulting agreement is 35 percent more likely to last at least 15 years.**³⁶ Studies have also shown that **durable peace is generally more likely in countries with higher levels of gender equality that allow for women’s political participation.**³⁷

The inclusion of minority groups in peace processes is a human rights issue. When asked by a young man at an event in Colombia why women’s participation in peace processes is important, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Jody Williams responded: Why is men’s? Her response points to an important inequality that persists within Colombian and U.S. society wherein minority groups are continually excluded from formal peace processes and, as a result, suffer continued marginalization and inequality.

1a. Apply political pressure to make the implementation of the accords a priority

We recommend that the U.S. utilize its various diplomatic tools to strongly encourage the full implementation of the Colombian peace accords. As mentioned above, the U.S. Department of State as well as the U.S. Embassy in Colombia have recently been lukewarm at best in their support of the Colombian peace accords and process. Support for peacebuilding efforts in Colombia continues to be little more than a footnote in the U.S. priority agenda set by the Department of State.³⁸³⁹

This is unacceptable. The ongoing peace process in Colombia must be a priority at every level in U.S.-Colombian bilateral relations.

Therefore, we recommend that the U.S. significantly increase its diplomatic and rhetorical support of the Colombian Peace Accords and peace process.

1b. Increase aid for peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction efforts

Lack of funding and resources have significantly hindered the implementation of the gender stipulations in the Colombian Peace Accords, and as a major source of foreign aid to Colombia, we recommend the United States to efficiently and effectively support the *full* implementation of the Colombian peace accords by providing the proper aid.

Therefore, we recommend that the U.S. increase foreign to peacebuilding efforts in order to prioritize the full implementation of

the Colombian peace accords, and support Colombia's path to sustainable peace.

1c. Create and implement a National Action Plan in order to comply with both UNSCR 1325 and the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017.

Both the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 of 2000 and the U.S. Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 serve as mechanisms meant to hold the U.S. (and international community) accountable for supporting the inclusion of women in peace processes.

UNSCR 1325 was unanimously adopted by the UN Security Council in October 2000, and serves as a demonstration of the commitment of UN member states to advance the rights and inclusion of women in peace processes.⁴⁰ To implement this resolution, member states must develop National Action Plans (NAP). The U.S. government developed a U.S. NAP on Women, Peace and Security in 2011 under the Obama Administration. The current administration, however, has yet to construct a strategy of implementation.

The U.S. Women, Peace, and Security Act, which was signed into law by President Trump in October 2017, calls on the U.S. to “promote the meaningful participation of women in all aspects of overseas conflict prevention...[and] encourage partner governments to adopt plans to improve the meaningful participation of women in peace and security processes...”⁴¹ It also mandates the current administration to establish a government-wide strategy to implement this act, which the Trump Administration has yet to develop.

Given this powerful domestic legislation and international resolution, we recommend that

the U.S. government develop and implement a National Action Plan to support and advance the incorporation of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution in compliance with both the UNSCR 1325 and the Women Peace, and Security Act of 2017. In addition, we recommend that this strategy include specific provisions for the support of the full implementation of the Colombian peace accords, including the gender and racial stipulations.

1d. Support the implementation of racial justice mechanisms of the Colombian peace accord and its implementation plan.

We recommend the U.S. government dedicate the necessary financial and political support to strengthen and guarantee the Colombian government's collaboration and consultation with Afro-descendant women's organizations and authorities to further the implementation of racial justice mechanism found throughout the Colombian peace accords. Additionally, we advise the U.S. government to utilize diplomatic and financial mechanisms to ensure that the Chapter on Ethnic Perspectives and its racial justice mechanism within are fully implemented.

2. Support Colombian civil society organizations

Much of the work and research that needs to be done to implement the Colombian peace accords, including the "*enfoque de genero*" as well as to protect women and LGBTQ+ rights is already being done by numerous Colombian civil society organizations and ethnic organizations. The organizations with whom we consulted, along with others, have already identified

the problems and outlined solutions for many of the issues raised in this report. Providing moral, political, and economic support to these organizations is crucial to ensuring the full implementation of the peace accords in general, and especially of the "*enfoque de género*." Specifically fund women's rights and LGBTQ+ organizations to work on peace accord implementation, implementation monitoring, and other efforts to defend women's and LGBTQ+ rights.

3. "Don't abandon Colombia"

"El trabajo que hacemos es lento...es como el cuento de la tortuga y la liebre. Queremos avanzar para lograr la paz estable y duradera" - Erlendy Cuero Bravo, AFRODES

It is tempting to turn our attention away from Colombia. The decades-long civil war has ended, a peace agreement has been signed, violence has decreased significantly, and a peaceful democratic transition occurred even in the midst of all of this change and upheaval. The eyes of the United States and the international community at-large have primarily turned toward the next "crises."

However, it is important to note and remember that peace is a process. Peace is not achieved with the signing of a document. While the primary violence has ended, the road to peace, or at least to positive peace, has only just begun.

Furthermore, the signing of a peace agreement does not necessarily mean the end of a conflict: **50 percent of negotiated peace agreements fail within 5 years⁴² and 57 percent of countries that experienced one civil war between 1945 and 2009 have experienced at least one**

conflict thereafter.⁴³ That is to say, **once a country experiences civil war, it is far more likely to experience additional episodes of violence.** Various domestic factors also add to the fragility of the peace that has been established in Colombia.

It is of the utmost importance to continue support for Colombia, and especially for marginalized groups, such as women, the LGBTQ+ community, and Afro-Colombian and indigenous peoples as they continue to fight for their rights. The international community should not abandon Colombia in these moments of transition and post-conflict reconstruction. Colombia continues to need the support and attention of the world.

Peace is a process. It is a road with many necessary stops and turns and roadblocks. Colombia has begun this process and has made one extremely important stop: the signing of a peace agreement between two of the warring parties. However, there are many more stops to come and the journey is not complete. The authors, therefore, urge the United States and the international community at-large to continue supporting Colombia on its path to positive peace.

Endnotes

1. *Quienes Somos?* (2019). Retrieved from Cumbre Nacional de Mujeres y Paz:
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