

Recommendations to the United States to Support the Consolidation of Peace in Colombia

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A peace agreement with the FARC could mark an end to the longest and most brutal armed conflict in the Western Hemisphere, a bloody war that has ravaged the country for over half a century and, since 1984, has generated well over six million victims. More than 220,000 people have lost their lives in the conflict, of which over 80 percent were civilians; the human cost of war includes more than 45,000 forced disappearances, an enormous number of unrecognized sexual violence cases, and over 6 million people forcibly displaced. (See this [infographic](#) about the human cost of war.)

As one Colombian indigenous leader expressed, echoing a sentiment shared by many, "We have not lived a single day of peace... We want to give our children a chance to live in a country at peace."

Only a peace process that is well constructed and fully implemented can stop the tragic impact on civilians and help achieve the vibrant and inclusive democracy that all Colombians deserve.

The United States, which has funded over fifteen years of war in Colombia, contributing more than \$9 billion since 2000, has a moral obligation to play a critical role in constructing peace. USAID will be the leading international donor agency and its 15 years of experience in Colombia should not only allow USAID to design effective programs but also to use its influence to leverage constructive changes in the Colombian government's policies and programs.

To support the consolidation of peace in Colombia, the United States should:

Continue to be a public voice of support for the peace process

- **Vocally support the peace negotiations with the FARC until the final accord is signed.** The negotiations still face obstacles. Even though public support for peace has grown, some sectors of the Colombian public find it hard to believe in peace after so many years of war. Certain sectors within the armed forces and political parties oppose negotiations. Especially as there is no bilateral ceasefire, acts of violence committed by the FARC or by the armed forces can put strains on the peace process. The United States can help to "surround" the peace process with support. **The appointment of a U.S. special envoy for the Colombian peace process was a vitally important step.** U.S. support should continue to be made clear via frequent declarations by high-level government officials, private diplomacy by the U.S. Embassy with key actors such as army leadership and business associations, congressional public statements and "dear colleague" letters, and civil society pronouncements. The voice from all sectors of the United States government should be united, with the Southern Command,

for example, echoing the message of support for peace with counterparts in the Colombian military.

- **Express support for the benefits of peace once the final accord is signed.** The accord may go to a referendum and parts of the accord will go to the Colombian Congress to be approved. This is another key moment in which the international community needs to encourage constituencies for peace within Colombian society and express support for peace within international and national outlets.
- **Encourage negotiations to move forward with the ELN, the most significant guerrilla force remaining in Colombia.** The ELN still conducts operations in several areas of Colombia. Conversations with the Colombian government have not gone smoothly and were jeopardized by an ELN attack in October 2015. Nonetheless, peace in Colombia can only be consolidated if an accord is also reached with the ELN. FARC members unwilling to demobilize, for example, could be recruited by the ELN if an accord does not advance. If formal negotiations begin with the ELN, it would be beneficial for accords with the FARC, to the extent possible, to be reconciled with the ELN process to ensure that both processes complement each other.
- **Promote the complete dismantlement of paramilitary successor groups.** To ensure that peace is stable, it is important to recognize that these groups¹ continue to exist and to be a threat to the effective demobilization of the guerrillas, the peaceful existence of rural and urban communities, and the lives and activities of civil society leaders. These groups continue to engage in combat with other armed groups, exercising social and economic control and generating human rights violations—such as threats, assassinations, and displacement—against civil society activists including trade unionists, human rights defenders, land claimants, and Afro-Colombian and indigenous leaders. A previous peace process with the FARC did not survive precisely because paramilitary groups killed more than 3,000 members of the the Patriotic Union, the political party that emerged from that previous peace negotiation. In order to assure that this history is not repeated, the United States must insist that the Colombian armed forces combat these groups – always prioritizing the protection of the civilian population –, that any kind of collusion or inaction on behalf of these groups by the armed forces is immediately punished, and that a strong plan is put into place in Colombia with U.S. support to dismantle the economic, political, and military operations of these groups.

Design comprehensive, substantial, and long-term plans to support and monitor the political, financial and technical implementation of the peace agreement, plans that are widely consulted and agreed upon with Colombian civil society.

- **Ensure substantial support at a minimum over the next five years.** The current crisis of violence and insecurity in Central America demonstrates the costs of not investing enough resources in the implementation of peace agreements in those countries. The United States should redirect the current support for the Colombian armed forces towards programs oriented toward the implementation of the peace agreement. Such assistance must be planned now and must be ready to deploy as soon as the peace agreements are signed, which could be as soon as March 2016.
- **Encourage other international donors to contribute to the implementation of the peace agreement and to collaborate for a strong, coordinated cooperation.** A significant problem facing the Colombian peace process is that European donors previously active in Colombia have scaled down their

investments in recent years. The U.S. government should encourage other international donors, including European and Latin American governments, to generously support peace accord implementation. Furthermore, the United States and other international donors should coordinate their efforts to be most effective.

- **Support and monitor the implementation of the peace agreement in the coming years and exert diplomatic, political and public pressure for full and complete implementation.** Peace does not come with the signing of an accord. A well-designed peace agreement provides an invaluable plan to carry out the structural reforms needed to consolidate a genuine peace and coexistence on the ground. Congress should form a bipartisan working group to monitor the implementation of the agreement and the role of U.S. support. In addition, the State Department, the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Congress should, at key moments, issue public statements and conduct diplomatic actions to invoke the full implementation of the agreements by all sectors.
- **Finance strong, independent mechanisms for verification of the peace accords over the course of several years.** The U.S. government should support the official verification mechanism decided upon by the parties to the agreement. In addition, the United States should expand support for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' office in Colombia to monitor the human rights situation, expand its presence in the field for this purpose, develop local capacity for human rights programming and monitoring, and support the implementation of the peace agreement in regards to human rights. Over the course of several years, USAID should substantially support a broad range of civil society initiatives, including those by women,ⁱⁱ small farmers' associations, victims' associations, displaced groups, families of the disappeared and ethnic communities (indigenous and Afro-Colombian), to monitor peace accord implementation and to carry out human rights monitoring in former conflict zones.
- **Scale up support for civil society organizations, not only Colombian government agencies.** Consult with a broad range of civil society organizations when designing and implementing programs to support the peace process. Much of the Colombian conflict has taken place in rural and remote areas, many of them with little to no presence of civilian state institutions. In many areas, Afro-Colombian and indigenous entities responsible for collective territories and local civil society organizations, including victims, community, faith and human rights groups, will have the best knowledge and skills to build the "territorial peace" referred to in the peace agreements. It is therefore necessary for USAID to substantially increase the percentage of assistance provided to a wide range of civil society initiatives, in a transparent and participatory manner. This support must be independent, meaning without requirements that recipients work directly with the state or other specific actors. It must be accompanied by a political support that shields organizations from threatening physical and verbal attacks from those who see their interests affected by the work for the construction of peace and the defense of human rights. Colombian institutions are strengthened when there is a civil society that can provide oversight of public policies and programs.
- **Ensure that the U.S. government itself fully respects the peace agreements.** The U.S. government cannot call on all parties to fully implement the accords without being willing to adhere to the accords itself. This may require some, if modest, modifications to current U.S. policy to Colombia. For example:
 - **Focus on participatory rural development, with a focus on harm reduction, as the principal counternarcotics strategy.** In the drug policy chapter of the peace agreement with the FARC, the two parties agreed to a drug policy focused on working with rural communities to design and implement voluntary eradication and sustainable development plans and eliminate aerial

- fumigation as a routine practice. In October 2015, the Colombian government also phased out the use of aerial fumigation in response to the determination of the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer that glyphosate, the main ingredient in the aerial spray, was a probable human carcinogen. In any case, an approach based on working with rural communities on voluntary eradication is more sustainable, and with the conflict winding down, will be considerably easier to implement.
- **Respect the decisions of Colombia regarding U.S. extradition requests for FARC leaders on drug trafficking charges.** While the U.S. executive branch has no power to withdraw these requests regarding FARC leaders who are not already in U.S. prisons, and the requests will remain on the books, the United States can and should respond flexibly according to the outcome of the accords. This may mean accepting a Colombian government decision not to extradite demobilized FARC leaders, given that FARC leaders may not demobilize otherwise, as well as the fact that there is no extradition treaty in force. U.S. Ambassador to Colombia Kevin Whitaker has noted that the United States will respect decisions by the Colombian government, including the decision not to extradite FARC members; the United States should continue with this policy.

Support efforts to secure truth, justice, reparations, and guarantees of non-recurrence for the victims of the conflict.

- **Declassify U.S. documents related to the armed conflict.** After the formation of the Truth Commission for reconciliation and historical clarification, already agreed upon by the parties, the White House should issue an executive order to declassify U.S. documents related to the Colombian armed conflict to the maximum extent possible and on an expedited basis from all relevant agencies, including but not limited to State (including the embassy), Defense (and Defense components, including especially DIA and Southcom), CIA, DOJ, DEA, and White House and NSC records, in order to support the Truth Commission and Transitional Justice system's investigations. The U.S. government has an enormous quantity of information about the Colombian conflict and human rights and humanitarian law violations by all parties that would be invaluable to such a commission. There are many precedents for such action: Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama declassified documents for truth commissions and other efforts to uncover historical truths in Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile, Peru, Panama and Brazil. To be of maximum use to the Truth and Transitional Justice System, this order must be issued and implemented expeditiously.
- **Encourage the Colombian government to declassify documents, including all relevant military and intelligence archives and Justice and Peace Law dossiers, for the Truth Commission and Transitional Justice System.** In addition, urge the Colombian government to ensure that false information regarding human rights defenders is purged from military intelligence files. This work has already begun under the auspices of the Intelligence Files Review and Removal Commission,ⁱⁱⁱ created by the 2013 Intelligence and Counterintelligence Law, which plans to issue recommendations for the preservation and declassification of intelligence records relating to the worst, most emblematic cases of human rights violations. The U.S. government should provide the Intelligence Files Review and Removal Commission, made up of civil society and government representatives, with technical support.
- **Provide financial, technical, and political support for the Truth and Transitional Justice System.** The United States should provide substantial financial assistance to the Truth Commission and Special Jurisdiction for Peace, for both investigative and educational responsibilities in the capital city of Bogota and in the regions. This assistance should be used to ensure that the system is designed in consultation with victims from all sectors^{iv} and local organizations and indeed, is victim-led. The United States should

help promote extensive educational outreach in the media and in society, beginning with the public broadcasting of the Truth Commission hearings. The United States should provide technical and psychological support to victims and facilitate guaranteed access to security and autonomous participation to victims in these hearings. In addition, USAID should support reconciliation efforts designed by the victims in zones where the Truth Commission will operate to guarantee that the process of truth and justice will be effective and in accordance with the needs of each region.

- **Provide special support to ethnic communities for their participation in the Truth Commission and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.** Given the disproportional impact that ethnic communities have suffered in the conflict, it is necessary that the truth be revealed in a preferential and differential way in reference to violations against Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities and individuals. This specific support could include training for judges and commissioners to understand the differential nature of the crimes committed against ethnic groups and individuals.
- **The U.S. Justice Department should grant access for Truth Commission members, and victims and their representatives, to FARC members currently in U.S. jails, as well as extradited paramilitaries, drug traffickers and military members, in order to contribute to establishing the truth and uncovering information related to the crimes they committed.** This has a precedent in the access that the U.S. Justice Department granted to Colombian prosecutors to interrogate paramilitary leaders in U.S. jails. However, access to these extradited prisoners should be broader than it was in this strictly limited case.
- **Maintain programs of support for victims.** The signing of a peace accord does not signify that the needs of victims of the conflict will be immediately resolved. In addition to the other recommendations elaborated in this document, USAID should maintain programs to support the strengthening of victims' organizations.
- **Continue to strengthen judicial systems and expand reach into post-conflict areas.** In spite of some advances, the levels of impunity in Colombia remain extremely high, particularly in cases of attacks against human rights defenders and civil society leaders, and the judicial system requires support to face the new challenges of the post-conflict period. This should include streamlining procedures within the judicial system, unifying related cases into a unified case under the direction of a single prosecutor (for example, all attacks against a specific human rights organization should be unified into one macro-investigation and investigated by one prosecutor or unit), putting in place systems for monitoring progress in emblematic cases, etc.
- **Encourage, financially support, and provide declassified U.S. documents to the Colombian government to fully implement the agreement between the parties to create a mechanism to identify, locate, and establish the truth regarding the disappeared, and to return remains to their families.** The new Special Unit to Search for Disappeared Persons, proposed in the agreement, must be a new mechanism that does not repeat the mistakes made by the existing National Search Commission. Its design and implementation should be carried out with the active and effective participation of relatives and victims, both in the design of the mechanism and in the implementation of its activities, in addition to including psychosocial support programs for victims and their families.^v The Special Unit should have ample capacity to convene, coordinate and put into operation all of the relevant government institutions in a timely and effective manner. Among the actions that the Special Unit must perform are: design a public policy regarding the search for the disappeared, produce results in the efforts to find the disappeared that remain alive, create a single database of the victims of this crime, and develop and

implement investigations into cases of enforced disappearances. Finally, the design of the Special Unit's operations must allow for specification according to the context of different regions, as this is in rural areas where the most cases of enforced disappearances have occurred.

- **Contribute to the Land Fund for the post-conflict period.** USAID should support efforts to create the Land Fund established by the accords, strengthening agencies charged with recovering lands that have been idle and occupied illegally. The U.S. government, as a partner in counternarcotics efforts, should support Colombian authorities charged with carrying out the asset forfeiture law to recover the illicit gains that have been accumulated within and outside Colombia, which should be invested in individual and collective reparations for victims and in the reconstruction of communities affected by violence and the armed conflict through strategies that protect the environment and the immense biodiversity of Colombia.
- **Continue supporting with financial and technical assistance land restitution and collective and individual land titling, and assure respect for and strengthening of the various agreements the Colombian government has created with indigenous and Afro-Colombian organizations in this regard.** Particular emphasis on titling for women heads of households is essential. In post-conflict areas, land restitution and titling programs must be accompanied by protection and prevention plans developed by returning communities to ensure that land restitution is safe and sustainable. Reintegration plans should focus on ensuring that youth have access to education and technical training needed to remain in rural areas.
- **Support initiatives for collective reparations.** Both individual and collective reparations—i.e. measures to protect groups and communities especially affected by the war, such as Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities, labor unions and survivors of the aforementioned Patriotic Union political party—are already agreed upon or will emerge from the peace accords. As an example of support for these collective reparations, the United States should monitor the efforts to provide reparations to the Bojayá community and provide support to the victims. USAID can be especially helpful in leveraging funding to encourage adequate and thoughtful implementation of collective reparations.
- **Fund civil society programs for the construction of a culture of peace.** Most Colombians have not lived a single day of peace. Changing from a culture of war to one of peace will require a lot of effort, led primarily by local communities and civil society organizations. The U.S. Institute for Peace (USIP) can play an important role in fostering historical memory and reconciliation initiatives. The U.S. Congress should increase USIP's budget for work directed at these efforts.

Advocate for a new, more restricted role for the Colombian armed forces

- **Encourage the Colombian government to transition to a new and more limited role for the armed forces, as civilian law enforcement expands in post-conflict zones.** Given its close partnership with the Colombian armed forces, the U.S. government has a special role to play, and should adopt an unequivocal, inter-agency policy encouraging this new role. Expanded police forces, trained in community policing techniques and respect for human rights, with strong internal and external oversight control mechanisms, should be replacing Colombia's armed forces in conducting law enforcement in rural as well as urban areas. Such police forces should be under the civilian Interior Ministry rather than the Defense Ministry.

- **U.S. Southern Command should, in accordance with U.S. government support for the peace accords, leverage its influence with the Colombian armed forces commanders to encourage them to accept the transition to peace.** While U.S. training of the armed forces should scale down substantially, any continuing training efforts should be focused on the external defense functions appropriate to the armed forces.
- **Encourage greater respect for human rights by members of the police and armed forces.** If Colombia is to consolidate peace, both the expanded police forces and the armed forces must increase respect for human rights. Strictly implemented human rights conditions (both the Leahy Law and the Colombia-specific human rights conditions) on all U.S. security assistance remain important. The U.S. government should encourage the Colombian government to ensure that human rights crimes credibly alleged to be committed by members of the armed forces remain in civilian courts and should oppose any changes that would shift such human rights crimes into military jurisdiction. The U.S. government should also encourage the Defense Ministry to suspend and remove officials engaged in human rights crimes. It is necessary to eliminate military and security norms and doctrines related to the so-called “internal enemy,” which have contributed to the perception that human rights and victims’ organizations are also adversaries and legitimate targets.
- **Channel efforts within the U.S.-Colombia Action Plan on Racial and Ethnic Equality to help provide sensitivity training against racial discrimination to the Colombian armed forces and police.** In order to rebuild trust within Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities in post-conflict areas, it is important that security forces are trained on Colombian cultural diversity and the prevalence of racial discrimination in the country.
- **Do not promote and fund the use of the Colombian military to train other nations’ militaries or police forces.** Although the State and Defense Departments have touted this as a cost-effective way of leveraging U.S. investments in Colombia, the human rights record of the Colombian military, particularly with the so-called “false positive” scandal of several thousand extrajudicial killings committed by the armed forces, makes this an imprudent choice. In addition, any initiative to include the Colombian armed forces in international peacekeeping missions should be subject to scrutiny and all members of such missions should be thoroughly vetted.

Encourage and fund the strengthening of human rights and labor rights, and the specific protection of women’s rights and LGBTI rights.

- **Urge the Colombian government to prioritize dismantling of paramilitary successor groups and the investigation and prosecution not only of these groups but of the members of the armed forces and police that aid, abet and tolerate them, and of the national and international companies and landowners that employ, promote and finance them.** Successor paramilitary groups continue to threaten communities and to block restitution of land to displaced persons in many areas of the countryside. To achieve peace, not only must the FARC guerrillas fully demobilize and desist from any criminal activity, but the Colombian government must address the real problems with the paramilitary demobilization that began in 2005 and ensure a fuller demobilization of these groups, rearmed and new paramilitary groups, and sanction those who aid, abet and employ them.
- **Urge the Colombian government to prosecute and punish those responsible for illegal enrichment and illicit land takeovers, money laundering, corruption and associated human rights crimes, whether**

carried out by legal or illegal, armed or unarmed actors. Such practices and the impunity in which they thrive have been an obstacle for restoring land and reparations to victims and constructing peace. The U.S. government can support judicial agencies in regular and transitional processes to help establish responsibility and punish those who promoted, abetted or financed the displacement of over 6 million people.

- **Protect human rights defenders, labor, ethnic, LGBTI and community leaders, as well as land claimants and journalists.** Colombia remains a highly dangerous country for civil society leaders. In the first nine months of 2015, at least 86 human rights defenders, trade unionists, community leaders, and journalists were killed.^{vi} These groups will remain in serious risk even after the peace agreement has been signed. To ensure an active, independent, and participatory civil society it is essential to devote attention and resources to the protection of human rights defenders. In the post-conflict period, this support should be expanded, not diverted. The United States should urge investigation and prosecution of threats and attacks against human rights defenders, community and labor leaders, and journalists as a crucial method to reducing violence against them, as well as caution against the use of specious prosecutions to silence civil society activism. The U.S. government should also encourage public demonstrations of support for the work of civil society leaders and reject and condemn stigmatizing and defamatory statements made against them by government officials.
- **Monitor respect for rights to freedom of expression and protest.** Human rights organizations have warned that new legislative initiatives, such as changes to the police code, could violate the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful protest. In addition, organizations have documented 33 cases of security force attacks against civilians during protests between January and May of 2015. For peace to be consolidated, it is essential that these rights are fully respected.
- **Promote the participation of women and assist them in protecting their rights.** In post-conflict situations, women are particularly at risk of human rights abuses, including sexual violence. The U.S. government should encourage the Colombian government to promote the active participation of women victims of violence in the construction of the transitional justice framework and guarantee their rights to truth, justice and reparations. The Colombian government should be urged to develop and implement a plan to prevent sexual violence and gender-based violence nationally, but especially in the communities where demobilizations will take place, and to care for victims. Rates of violence against women in Colombia are currently high: for example, in 2014, at least one woman was a victim of sexual violence every 29 minutes.^{vii} Given that sexual violence against women and girls has been used as a weapon of war, United States should urge the Colombian government to develop and implement a national plan to prevent sexual violence and gender-based violence. Such a plan should include a specialized approach for communities where demobilization will take place and provide care for victims. In addition, the U.S. government should encourage the Colombian government to promote the active participation of female victims of violence in the implementation of the transitional justice system and provide guarantees for their rights to truth, justice, and reparations.
- **Promote the protection of the rights of the LGBTI population.** The United States should offer support to the Colombian government in addressing the persecution, discrimination against and murder of leaders, activists, and members of the LGBTI population, in particular the high rate of murders of trans women.
- **Strengthen U.S. efforts to achieve the implementation of the U.S.-Colombia labor action plan.** The U.S.-Colombia Labor Action Plan, which facilitated the approval of the Free Trade Agreement, has made

some, if limited progress in helping Colombia to improve labor rights. In particular, it has led to the creation of institutions that strengthen labor rights, hiring of labor inspectors, and the outlawing of associative cooperatives. However, much more is required to guarantee that labor rights are strengthened on the ground. Given that labor organizing helps to reduce inequality, a root cause of the political conflict, meeting the goals of the LAP will also help to consolidate peace. USTR, Department of Labor and Department of State should develop a strategy jointly with the U.S. and Colombian labor federations and human rights groups on the development of a mechanism that guarantees that the promises made in the LAP continue in the post-conflict phase. In the meantime, these agencies should work with the Ministry of Labor to push for its full implementation.

Support the political participation of ethnic and marginalized groups

- **Urge the Colombian government to comply with requests from ethnic communities regarding the type of public security and development actions they require.** For example, indigenous communities will seek to strengthen their own civilian security, the Guardia Indígena, and Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities may develop protection plans that should be respected and supported, including collective proposals that have been developed by AFRODES. In addition, the U.S. government should encourage the Colombian government to fully implement Constitutional Court rulings that protect indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities and their collective territories. USAID should continue to support the development plans devised by Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities for their own community development and security. Special attention should be given to the safety of ethnic groups living in areas where the FARC and/or other illegal groups exert strong territorial control. In addition, it is essential to support the design of a policy of inclusion and attention, oriented towards informal settlements or areas with lack of development to address the vulnerability of the population of African descent.
- **Promote concrete measures that allow for governance, autonomy, and the effective enjoyment of rights by Afro-Colombian, Palenque, indigenous and other ethnic communities, as well as members of the Rom people.** It is these communities that have suffered the greatest impact of the armed conflict in Colombia and will face special risks in the transition to peace. USAID assistance should be directed at strengthening the autonomy and rights of ethnic groups in accordance with the Colombian Constitution, particularly given the vulnerable situation that these groups find themselves in due to the continued presence of national and international economic interests operating on their collective territories without consultation. USAID programs, or that of any other agency, directed towards ethnic groups must undergo processes of evaluation and approval by ethnic communities and their indigenous and community councils under appropriate processes of collective decision making, and should serve to strengthen local economies.
- **Only provide assistance to development projects and plans that are fully supported by the affected communities via authentic mechanisms that guarantee free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).** These projects and plans should fulfill the highest level of transparency and active participation of territorial authorities and social organizations in their design and implementation. In the post-conflict period, mining and other extractive industries, agro-industrial and infrastructure projects will undoubtedly expand. These companies tend to try to expand into collective territories belonging to indigenous and Afro-descendant communities that are rich in resources, and in some cases hire violent actors to confront community resistance to projects that affect the environment. The U.S. government should encourage the Colombian government and U.S. companies investing in extractive industries to respect

these communities' rights to FPIC processes for the development strategies to be implemented in their territories, like the so-called "Plan Pazcifiko." Additionally, the United States should encourage the Colombian government to rectify the gap caused by the National Development Plan (NDP) 2014-2018, which has excluded ethnic sectors (particularly people of African descent), has yet to fund agreements with the indigenous sector, and pays inadequate attention to the implementation of the peace agreements. USAID should support greater transparency from the government in these projects, help ensure proper FPIC processes, and assure that economic projects designed for Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities are designed and implemented with local authorities and social organizations.

- **Strengthen efforts to eliminate racism and racial discrimination through the Action Plan on Racial and Ethnic Equality.** Among the initiatives that should be supported are the formalization of employment for the Afro-Colombian and indigenous working population and the training and sensitization of the armed forces, police, and judicial officials against racism and racial discrimination.

Support Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants

- **Support the demobilization, reintegration, and protection of ex-combatants.** The U.S government can provide assistance for demobilization and reintegration programs for ex-combatants. Furthermore, a nearly insurmountable obstacle to peace in Colombia has been the bitter history of the assassinations of demobilized guerrillas and the assassinations of more than 3,000 members of the aforementioned Patriotic Union political party. This must not happen again. The United States must work with the Colombian government, demobilized combatant representatives, and members of the international community to create and help fund the protection framework needed to avoid this history being repeated.
- **Programs for ex-combatants should include specific psychosocial programs for child soldiers and women.** Currently, there is inadequate attention to the needs of those who have suffered sexual abuse as child and female combatants.

Support the Strengthening of the Civilian State in Rural and Urban Areas

- **Provide financial and technical assistance to the demining program.** The parties have already begun a demining program, even before the accords are signed. Once a peace accord is signed, the need and opportunity for demining will increase, as it must happen before internally displaced persons and refugees return. The U.S. government can provide technical assistance to map and remove land mines. Areas requiring demining should be prioritized according to humanitarian necessities and the needs of resident communities. Programs must be implemented with the consent of communities. In indigenous communities, they should be carried out with leadership of the Guardia Indígena (Indigenous Guard). In Afro-Colombian communities, they should be carried out with leadership of local community councils.
- **Support the Colombian government to establish a civil state presence in rural areas, focusing on the realization of rights.** In areas where the FARC has regulated a good part of everyday life, the Colombian state has to establish the presence of civilian institutions, with an agenda of rights, justice, security, health, education, housing, infrastructure and other public services.

- **Continue with programs of alternative and rural development.** USAID should continue with programs of alternative and rural development, adhering to voluntary eradication and to the norms of community participation contained in the peace agreements.
- **Fund the consolidation of peace in urban centers.** It is not just the rural areas that need attention in a post-conflict era. Cities and urban centers will be affected by the presence of demobilized combatants and the continued presence of paramilitary successor groups, and will need to continue to grapple with rebuilding the lives and livelihoods of the several million internally displaced persons, many of whom will never return to the countryside. USAID should fund peacebuilding, community building and programs for internally displaced persons in strongly affected urban areas, working with dedicated mayors, municipalities and civil society organizations. For example, the model of projects of ACDI/VOCA aimed at providing economic opportunities to Afro-Colombian and indigenous youth, in which ethnic organizations join with public and private sector organizations, should be extended to other parts of the country.

ⁱ These illegal groups are referred to as “paramilitaries,” “neo-paramilitaries,” “paramilitary successors,” or, as the Colombian government calls them, BACRIM (short for “*bandas criminales*” or criminal bands).

ⁱⁱ See women’s organizations’ proposals on peace accord verification and implementation, “[National Summit of Women for Peace](#),” Bogota, 23-25 October 2013.

ⁱⁱⁱ Comisión Asesora de Depuración de Datos y Archivos de Inteligencia y Contrainteligencia

^{iv} Including: a) victims of all armed actors, including FARC and ELN guerrillas, the paramilitaries and their successor groups, and the armed forces and Colombian intelligence services; b) women, Afro-Colombians and indigenous peoples, and members of the LGBT community; c) relatives of the missing, survivors of kidnappings, landmine victims, relatives of victims of extrajudicial executions, and survivors of sexual violence.

^v Consult [proposal prepared by the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances](#) on October 21, 2015.

^{vi} See reports from the [Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia](#) and [Programa Somos Defensores](#).

^{vii} The National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences (INML) has conducted 21,115 forensic examinations for sexual violence. Of these, 85.09% were women.