

Magazine

FOKUS women

Number 7 | Second semester 2025

Colombia and Guatemala



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the girls who have children

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The articles in FOKUS
 Women are a responsibility
 of their authors.

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EDITORIAL

FOKUS Women is the magazine that reports on our work, support and accompaniment in Latin America, specifically in Colombia and Guatemala. It reaches its seventh issue with this edition.


Last year, we decided to review the issues published to date and, with the help of a communications expert, we took the opportunity to make the leap towards a truly digital magazine that would include various narrative genres.

Thus, through a training process, FOKUS partners in both countries participated with their programme or communications teams in a training process to learn about and recognise clearer, more enjoyable and assertive writing in different genres such as chronicles, photo reports, life stories, interviews, analysis articles and voices.

This issue, then, attempts to show the qualitative leap we are taking with our partners towards a form of communication that increasingly reflects the enormous work they are doing alongside women, young people and girls, as well as local communities and organisational processes, towards a fairer world for everyone.

The challenges remain, but we are confident that the various articles will enable readers to maintain the hope and strength to continue advancing with the necessary transformations for a world in which human dignity is the guiding light.

We are grateful to our partners who have been willing to walk with us on the paths of the magazine's past and on those that are now opening up; in this experience, we all grow and become stronger.

We are also grateful for the contributions of our FOKUS director and our colleague who leads the FOKUS team in Africa. These have allowed us to provide a broader vision of FOKUS' commitment to women, young people, girls and the LGBTQI+ population globally. 



TERRITORIAL MONITORING OF THE GENDER APPROACH OF THE FINAL PEACE AGREEMENT

The Committee promotes the inclusion of the gender perspective of the Peace Agreement in territorial plans, achieving 47 measures in Sucre and Bolívar. Today, it is promoting their monitoring and implementation.

The Committee for Monitoring Gender-Based Measures in Montes de María was created on March 18, 2021 to analyse the implementation of the gender approach of the Final Peace Agreement (AFP), incorporating a territorial and ethnic perspective. Since then, it has produced two reports that confirm the slowdown of the implementation of the Agreement and, with it, the difficulty of overcoming the impacts of the armed conflict on women's lives.

Among the causes of the slowdown are: officials' lack of knowledge about gender-based measures and the weak

coordination between the national and local levels.

During 2023 and 2024, women leaders promoted the territorialisation of these

It is possible to implement the Peace Agreement's gender approach from the territories, using local policies and programmes.

measures through their inclusion in the Territorial Development Plans (PDT). This strategy was based on



TEXT: MARÍA
DE LOS
ÁNGELES RÍOS
ZULUAGA
PHOTOS:
CORPORACIÓN
HUMANAS



an understanding of the territory as a network of relationships between people, nature and the institutional, economic and organisational conditions that structure them¹. It was done by means of the recognition of and action on existing spaces of power (mayor's offices, governor's offices, councils and assemblies), linking with institutions through informed

¹ Edwin Murillo and Angelica Bernal, Territorialization as a proposal for public policy analysis, Journal of the University of Zulia, 2024, p. 407.

participation that included educational actions to address ignorance of the gender approach, and articulating the goals of the PDT with gender-focused measures. It also involved challenging the cultural meanings that have historically limited who can speak, how and about what, thus reaffirming women's right to influence decisions that affect their territories.

The participatory processes for formulating the PDT are key spaces for ensuring that citizens can make suggestions to overcome the problems that affect them.

The women leaders implemented this strategy in four stages. 1) Analysis of the PDT development process, 2) identification of opportunities for advocacy, 3) development of an advocacy agenda based on women's issues, 4) implementation of advocacy actions. This was implemented in municipalities in Sucre (Sampués, San Antonio de Palmito, San Onofre, Sincelejo and Morroa) and Bolívar (El Guamo, San Juan Nepomuceno and Cartagena), as well as in the departmental plans of both departments.

The scenarios and actors that the women of the Committee identified as key to achieving the incorporation of gender measures were: public hearings for the construction of the PDT, Territorial Planning Councils,

government advisory teams, council sessions and assemblies. In all of these, women submitted their proposals.

The women of the Committee participated actively in these spaces despite being discredited with expressions such as “you don't know how to read,”

The active participation of women leaders was key to territorialising the gender approach of the Peace Agreement and strengthening its implementation.

“that word is not pronounced like that,” “you need to dress appropriately for the occasion,” and “here they come again to cause trouble.” They succeeded in incorporating 56 provisions into the PDT, which will implement 47 gender-focused measures, including:


25 measures from Point 1. Comprehensive Rural Reform, aimed at guaranteeing priority access for landless or land-poor peasant women through: access to productive factors (land, housing, financing, technical assistance and training), the formulation of a public policy with an ethnic focus for black and indigenous women, and the creation of viable productive projects for women entrepreneurs.

18 measures from Point 2. Political participation, consisting of actions that strengthen women's participation in decision-making processes through: the creation of specific mechanisms to guarantee their voice in consultation forums, the formalisation of women's advisory councils, leadership programmes in rural areas and the strengthening of Municipal Women's Offices.

4 measures from Point 5. Victims, focused on rebuilding the social fabric with a gender perspective through: the creation of listening

centres for women, comprehensive programmes for victims of violence, and the institutionalisation of the “Women's Week” as a space for memory, participation and symbolic reparation.

The experience of the human rights defenders of the Montes de María Committee shows that it is possible to advance the implementation of the gender approach of the Peace Agreement from the territories, taking advantage of existing local policies and programmes, without the need to create new instruments. The inclusion of these measures reveals that institutional coordination, women's participation and recognition of territorial dynamics are essential for building territorial peace.

The Committee is currently in a new phase focused on monitoring the implementation of the measures incorporated, with the aim of translating them into concrete actions that transform women's lives. To this end, it is essential to strengthen capacities, promote institutional and cultural transformations, and maintain spaces for dialogue and citizen oversight. 



LETTING GO OF HISTORICAL TRAUMA IS HEALING

Medicinal plants are a part of healing, as they allow us to build a life in harmony.



Eulalia Diego Pedro lives in the municipality of Santa Eulalia, Huehuetenango, Cristo Rey canton. She was born on 28 March, 1950. At 75 years of age, she has seven children, two sons and five daughters, who are now adults, and one deceased child. They live in different parts of Guatemala. Eulalia tells us about her experience of participating in the healing processes.

Aq'ab'al: What has your life experience been like?

Eulalia Diego Pedro: I have a long story, and it may not end today because I left my country, Guatemala. I went to live in Ixcán Playa Grande Quiché for 12 years. Because of the armed conflict, I fled to a refuge in Mexico. When I was living in Ixcán, I didn't worry about any-

thing. I just took care of my house, my home and my chores. But down in the mountains, because of the conflict, I learned a little. I started working, and they chose me as coordinator among thousands of women. But there, I was

“When I healed traumas from violence I experienced for 25 years, it motivated me to accompany and heal other women who experience violence.”

scared. I was afraid when they told me to come and talk. I would hide from the people because there were so many of them. But in the end, some of my colleagues would say, ‘Come on, Doña Eulalia’. Little by little, the fear, shyness, fright and embarrassment went away, in addition, when you are with your husband, you are going to say: ‘you victimise us’. When I arrived in Mexico, I thought I was going to rest, that I was free, that there was nothing there, but there is more work there. I rested for about two

years and was chosen as coordinator of the return process. I learned everything there. I have no education, I have only picked up a few words, but thank God I have managed to learn. They told me I had to go to meetings with the government, the president, the governor and ambassadors. They treated us very badly as indigenous people, but thanks to the people who guided us, I was encouraged to participate and speak up. There are bad memories and good memories. I did the work and we achieved our goal. That's why I have my family. My husband was still with me. He complained about the work I was doing. I had to stand up to him because he didn't want me to do it. He scolded me, but I made the effort and my children supported me.

Aq'ab'al: What do you wish for women?

Eulalia Diego Pedro: I see myself because I was a victim of violence, so when I arrived here in my community, I saw women who were very quiet, very shy. They are victims of violence, of abuse, they don't complain. That's why I thought, can't I support these women? We talked to some of them because they saw that I had a lot of problems,

many of them ask me: how were you able to overcome all those problems? Through the support of other women or some organisations. But you are not used to it, but you have to talk about it. You have to discuss it to see how we can help. You shouldn't fight with your husbands either. Sometimes, when you talk, they understand, and little by little things get sorted out. Some come to look for me at home to see what to do, those who have problems. I have accompanied women and girls because there are parents who tell their children, 'Go away, I don't want to see you'. So where do the children go? Sometimes they come to me, but they ask me, 'What if they put you in prison?' Why, am I stealing their children? I joined the meetings of the Public Ministry's Referral Network and there I learned a little about the laws, so now I can take the women there. That's how I started my work. I want women to not be victims of their husbands because there are laws that can defend us, but when you don't know about them... And the worst thing is that the men threaten you: 'If you report me, I'll kill you'. That's how it was for me.

Aq'ab'al: How did the healing process help you?

Eulalia Diego Pedro: The healing process has given me a lot of support from the beginning. When I was little, my late parents and grandmother told me that medicinal plants heal us. Before, there were no doctors or pharmacies, because with so much violence and abuse... where I lived, plants helped me a lot. Thanks to the Aq'ab'al women's organization, which supported me when I felt pain, shame, fear, turmoil and headaches, and couldn't find a way to heal myself, I joined the Aq'ab'al women's organisation. There they taught us how to use medicinal plants more effectively. For example, rue for headaches and sadness. Not only rue, but also exercises,

For Mayan women, healing is the connection with Mother Earth and her elements.


breathing and massage. Rue is relaxing. You rub it from your head to your feet. I've used it when my arms hurt, my body hurts, my knee hurts, everything hurts. Anyway, I used it.

MAYAN WOMEN AND HEALING

For the Mayan people, healing is the connection and communication with Mother Earth, who saw us born, feeds us and gives us a healthy life. Mayan women take care of Mother Earth. Before, there were no doctors, babies were born on the ground. That is where the connection with Mother Earth begins. Our grandparents tell

us that when they felt anxious, sad or worried, they would seek out the mountains, trees, rivers, the cries of birds, jaguars, weasels and many other

animals. When they returned home, they brought joy with them because they had eliminated those emotions.

It is important to continue the healing processes. From the Aq'ab'al Women's Association, thank you for the support of Fokus. As Doña Eulalia says: "We continue to stand because WOMEN'S STRUGGLE NEVER ENDS." 

Links to articles

 <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1CID2sK-FWtbA8CCgmfzeil0VVvqLnc5Ga?usp=sharing>



Two women with a vision for good living.



Basil, a healing plant.

WHERE FEW HAVE GONE



TEXT AND
PHOTO: FONDO
LUNARIA



Furia Marica is a collective supported by Fondo Lunaria as a part of their Peace Building programme. They are located in the southwest of the country and work from a trans-feminist, dissident and territorial perspective. In a context marked by armed violence, structural racism and fundamentalism, they build peace by articulating networks of care and

resistance, overflowing the cracks of the hegemonic norm and reclaiming the value of trans lives.

This photo reportage is a sample of moments that narrate trans memories, their commitments to the right to identity, to dignified living and to the embodiment of bodies through enjoyment, struggle and tenderness. It is evidence of resistance through the connection with the territory they inhabit and transform. [FM](#)



◀ **Habitarnos Trans: struggle, strength and resistance.**

Hermitage of Popayán, the city's first church.

In memory of the transmasculine lives that have built a legacy with their voices and struggles. In honour of Daniel Montaña.

▼ **Fibres of transits mapped in resistance, healing the colonial cracks.** Clock tower in Caldas Park, Popayán.

The mapping was an exercise in cartography and historicization that recovers life trajectories and significant places for trans masculinities and non-binary people (AFAN) in the city, reclaiming their memories and presence in a territory marked by colonial legacy.



{ Photo report }

- **Inhabiting the city: memories and recollections.**
Humilladero Bridge, Popayán. The rainbows correspond to the trans and non-binary flags, respectively.



Bodies that choose to flourish on their own terms.
Stacked boxes of testosterone.



- ◄ **Building memory: narrating the trans struggles that transform life for peace.** Mural by Furia Marica at the University of Cauca, Faculty of Human and Social Sciences.

- **Collective care as a part of memory.** A collage created during *Parche Trans*, a space organised by Furia Marica as a creative sharing between trans and non-binary people (AFAN). The phrase “to see what few have seen, you have to go where few have gone” frames the intention of this photo report.



Loving with your own body, with your chosen name, with your whole gaze.
Pueblito Patojo, Popayán, Cauca.



A STORY WOVEN FROM THE THREAD OF RESISTANCE

Patricia Meléndez, the first Guna leader in Arquía, Chocó, defends her identity, culture and territory through language, ancestral knowledge and the fabric of community.



In the Arquía reserve in Unguía, Chocó (Colombia), Patricia Meléndez, a Guna woman, is recognised as the first female leader of her community. Her leadership combines political representation with the defence of a way of life woven into language, ancestral knowledge and ties to the land. For her, being Gunadule is a daily practice that also involves fighting for collective rights and for women's participation in decision-making spaces.

Patricia stops in the shade of a tree, standing upright and looking alert. She wears glasses, a floral blouse and a skirt covered in green designs – plants, shapes, symbols – the traditional dress of the Gunadule indigenous women.



“I’m not afraid to speak for my community,” she says, “because if I don’t, who will?”

Arquía is an indigenous reserve located in the municipality of Unguía, in northern Chocó, near the border with Panama. There are rivers and trees that arch over the paths. There is a community: wooden houses built on stilts, courtyards with fire pits, words that travel from mouth to mouth and endure.

Since she was a child in Arquía, Patricia was guided by her grandfather, a chief, who passed on the stories, songs and teachings that shaped her identity.

In every word he spoke, she says, “he sowed respect, a sense of belonging and responsibility”.

She learned to weave *molas*, colourful fabrics that, in the Gunadule tradition, are not made for decoration but to tell stories. Women have been the bearers of this knowledge. She received it as something that requires care and determination. “For me, every stitch in the *mola* is a story I tell with my hands,” she says. “Each design carries the memory of our ancestors, our land, who we are and who we want to continue to be.”

Leadership did not come to Patricia overnight. Within the reserve, decisions are discussed, questioned and made collectively. Outside, dialogue with institutions is not always easy. There



Guna Dule women.
Arquia Reserve,
Unguia, Chocó.

are external perspectives that do not understand the relationship between territory, culture and autonomy.

In addition to this, there is something that is not always mentioned, but which is present nevertheless, which is that as a woman and indigenous person she faces a double barrier in many spaces. Defending her way of life, as she has said many times, is also a way of caring for what remains. She has felt the weight of responsibility, but she has not stopped speaking up. “I am not afraid to speak for my community,” she says, “because if I don’t, who will?”

She learned that leadership means listening, studying, engaging in dialogue and, above all, living with integrity. “Being *Saila*,” she explains, “a traditional, spiritual and local authority, is a way of being. Everyone must be respected, from children to the authorities. You must behave in an exemplary manner. For his part, the *cacique*, who is a more political and representative authority, guides people not only with words, but also by example.”

The territory, she says, is mother, home, source of life and identity. It is where the roots of the people lie, where the festivals, the *chicha* and


the ancient songs are found. She has seen new technologies and customs arrive: some welcome, others that force people to pause and discuss collectively. “We have had to adapt without losing who we are,” she says. In the face of change, the response has been to organise: to create councils, hold assemblies, make decisions.

“If we lose our language, we lose our history and our way of seeing the world.”

She talks about community politics as if she were talking about a teacher. “Here, we don’t rule alone,” she says. “We are part of something bigger and we must walk together, even if we think differently.” For her, leadership is a responsibility in the service of the common good. That is why she insists on preserving the Guna language as an essential part of identity: “If we lose our language, we lose our history and our way of seeing the world.” She explains that it should be passed on in daily life, in songs, in rituals, in conversations with younger people. It should also be passed on in intimate moments such as the celebration of a girl’s first period.

Patricia participated for two years in the Akubadaura training process, which gave her the tools to become a former councillor for women, family and generation in Asorewa. Today, she is a political leader and works with the Chocó Indigenous Women’s Programme, spending her days between meetings, workshops and craft work. Everything has a purpose: to strengthen the identity of her people. “It’s not about surviving,” she says, “it’s about living with justice, rights and pride.”

She dreams that the new generations will be able to move between two worlds without losing their own: that they will learn Spanish and use technology, but also know about medicinal plants, songs and the value of collective work. “I want today’s children to become adults who are proud to be Gunas and who defend their culture,” she concludes.

She leaves other indigenous communities with a message that is not meant to convince, but to accompany: “Don’t give up. Fight for your culture, for your children and your future. Together we are stronger. And even if they want to silence us, we will continue to say: ‘We are here, we are Guna and we will not disappear.’” 

WOMEN'S RIGHT TO DECIDE IN GUATEMALA STARTS WITH ACCESS **TO CONTRACEPTION AND AUTONOMY**

Access to contraception in Guatemala is not just a health issue, it is also a struggle for control over women's bodies, decisions and rights marked by machismo.



DENIED AUTONOMY IN A PATRIARCHAL COUNTRY

T

alking about contraception in Guatemala means talking about the restrictions on women's decisions about their lives and their bodies.

Although legally all women have the right to decide about their reproductive health, in practice women face obstacles, including the expressions of structural machismo, such as the lack of autonomy that many women have when facing their partners or family members when it comes to deciding on the use of contraceptive methods. They also face the prejudices of health personnel who judge or discourage the use of contraception, the imposition of traditional roles that deny women control over their reproduction, and

even the lack of attention from the health system.

According to data from the Multidisciplinary Group's Sexual and Reproductive Rights Watch, between 2019 and 2024 the number of contraceptive methods provided by the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance to women over the age of 15 has decreased. In 2019, 1,577,362

In five years, the provision of contraceptive methods fell by more than 30%. This is due to social barriers such as patriarchal control and gender-based violence, which limit women's free and safe access to these methods.

methods were distributed. In 2020 the figure fell to 1,504,594. In 2021, it fell to 1,273,151. In 2022 it was 1,191,162. In 2023 it fell even further, to 926,080. And in 2024 only 1,017,713 were

distributed. This represents a decrease of more than 30% in five years.

This reality has direct consequences on women's lives, especially for those who live in rural areas, are young, indigenous, victims of violence or lack their own income. Inequalities in access are exacerbated when the health system does not guarantee constant availability or offer adequate care or clear and

scientifically accurate information. Many women who seek health services face limited options that are fraught with the stigma that still surrounds reproductive rights. As a result, some are forced to resort to unsafe methods or unwanted pregnancies, which can lead to school dropout, health complications, or greater

economic and emotional dependence on their partners or families.

According to Mirador, between January and April 2025, the data reports the



The Mirador press conference. Photographs of women leaders in training. Community leaders from municipalities in the department of Guatemala and the city gathered to analyse, debate and challenge conservative discourses, with the aim of strengthening the defence of sexual and reproductive rights.

following methods to which access was provided: injectables remain the most widely used (297,734), followed by the pill (26,951), natural methods (21,969), subdermal implants (11,445), barrier methods (10,982), surgical procedures

In many cases, women cannot freely decide whether to use contraception for fear of reprisals or control.


(2,173) and IUDs (1,560). The injectable method is the most widely used, not only because of its effectiveness, but also because it leaves no visible evidence. Many women choose it as a way to protect themselves in contexts where their partners exercise control. In these relationships the use of contraceptive methods can lead to aggression, as men use psychological and physical violence to limit women's autonomy. This situation reflects how the violence experienced by women restricts the exercise of their sexual and reproductive rights. These data show how the decision about how many children to have, or even whether to have them, is not a free choice for many women. In most cases, it is the man who makes that decision.

The decline in the provision of contraceptive methods is considered a phenomenon with multiple causes. Firstly, it is recognised that Guatemala has been marked by a historical neglect of health services, which has a direct impact on the availability of and access to family planning methods. Likewise, the patriarchal system prevailing in the country influences the fact that women's reproductive health is not prioritised by the state. In this context, public policy processes need to include a periodic evaluation of annual planning in order to ensure the distribution, delivery and adequate counselling of these methods. In addition, there are also myths and lack of information that is accessible, timely and unbiased. The limited or often non-existent spaces for discussing comprehensive sexuality education are often met with opposition from conservative sectors.


You can't talk about contraception without talking about power. Who decides about a woman's body? That's why it's also important to mention the different forms of violence that prevent women from deciding when and how they want

to become mothers. The imposition of motherhood, control over their bodies, misinformation and neglect by institutions are all forms of violence that need to be made visible and denounced.

Therefore, it is not enough to provide access to contraceptive methods; it is also important to ensure that they are accessible to all, without discrimination, stigma or conditions. This requires investment in comprehensive sex education, gender-sensitive training for health personnel and public policies that recognise women's autonomy.

Free and safe access to these methods is essential for the exercise of the right to decide about one's own body and life. However, the machismo and the patriarchal system continue to be the main forms of oppression faced by women in their daily lives. Many women in the country are judged by their families, the community and health personnel when requesting contraceptive methods, which reinforces the sexist stereotypes that deny them the right to decide about their sexuality. 

Link to articles

 <https://www.grupomulti.com.gt/miradorsr>



PERISCOPIO INVERTIDO: THE LENS OF MEMORY



TEXT AND
PHOTO:
**CARTOGRAFÍA
SUR**



Periscopio Invertido (The Inverted Periscope), as a chronicle, revives memories and resistance from the margins of Colombia. It uses documentary film as a tool for denunciation and collective creation that leads towards other possible futures.

THE NEED TO LOOK FROM BELOW

Periscopio Invertido emerged in Colombia from a murmur of the conch shells in the centre of the continent, which spoke of the need to learn to see beneath the earth in order to find the buried key to memory and use it to heal the peoples afflicted by the plague of oblivion. We travelled along trails and paths, fumbling through the long night. We listened to the voices of the elders and the song of the fish. We saw a multitude of fireflies illuminating the grey streets

and hundreds of grasshoppers that, without exhausting their strident sound, united into a single voice.

Then Periscopio Invertido emerged: the School of Memory and Audiovisuals. It's a part of the urgent need to maintain the search for the struggles and resistance that lie beneath the

Periscopio Invertido is a historical, political and cultural review of Colombia through the lens of memory.

earth. The school focuses on the perspective of women, young people and gender dissidents. It emerged as a device for remembrance, as an attempt to reverse the gaze, to look inward. Fragments of the country's reality are narrated from the margins, the suburbs and the territories.

THE JOURNEY OF PERISCOPIO INVERTIDO

Each version of Periscopio Invertido builds a theme of memory that functions as a compass in the midst of the thicket of the Colombian conflict. To look back on this initiative is to undertake a historical, political and cultural review of Colombia through the lens of memory.

The first version was made in 2011 with young people from the village of San Juan del Sumapaz, focusing on the conflict over land and peasant identity. This gave rise to the documentary *Al páramo lo que es del páramo* (What belongs to the moorland stays in the moorland), which shows the defence of the territory against the geopolitical interests of megaprojects that threaten vital resources such as water and the cultural practices that surround it.

In 2012, the school arrived in the La Perseverancia neighbourhood of Bogotá. This gave rise to *Perseverancia: territorio de maíz, chicha y dicha* (Perseverance: land of corn, chicha and joy). It explores the history of this neighbourhood, its peasant and working-class roots, its ancestral relationship with chicha and its leading role in the Bogotazo, following the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948.

In 2013, Periscopio Invertido produced three 3-minute films. One that denounced the political genocide against the Patriotic Union (*Esa rosa se llama UP*), one that reflected on death in violent times (*Rito a la muerte*) and one that narrated the despair inherited by a generation (*Caminando*). Between

2014 and 2015 it addressed forced disappearance and “social cleansing” with *Nomen Nescio*, the role of the media in depoliticization with *Última Hora*, and the grief of those searching for their disappeared loved ones with *Bruja*.

THE IMAGE AS A REFUGE FOR MEMORY

In the last decade, Periscopio has shifted its focus from acts of violence to memories of resistance. These are stories of transition, crossroads and possible paths that communities trace in order to build peace and demand guarantees of existence. The aim is not to tell a single truth, but to show that each image leads to another, like someone walking along a spiral. Sometimes to illuminate possible worlds; other times to remember those that were taken from us.


Periscopio enables the strengthening of the intersensibilities of resistance as a basis for the creation of other possible futures.

This political-educational device is based on the conviction that popular communication and audiovisual media are tools for inhabiting the present with the potency of the past. The productions are configured as collective exercises in memory that invert the hegemonic logic of narrating history and give rise to other ways of telling stories from a place of pain, dignity and hope.

CURRENT CHALLENGES AND POSSIBLE HORIZONS

Each version of the school proposes ways of living together as part of the reconstruction of a fabric torn apart by years of violence. Periscopio Invertido is a way of sharpening our gaze and, through the lens of memory, sketching out paths for the future. It enables action through the moving image, thus strengthening the intersensibilities of resistance as a basis for the creation of other possible futures.


Today, faced with the resurgence of narratives of fear, the silencing of social processes and territorial dispossession, the challenge is to continue narrating. To remember not only to remember, but to transform.

Periscopio Invertido is a call to continue building the country from the bottom up, with hands full of earth, images and dignity. That is why today we dream from the regions. In recent years this project has flourished in territories such as La Nupa, Tumaco, the Pacific corridor and the Colombian Caribbean. From there, memory remains alive and in motion. 



Inverted
Periscope, Valle
del Cauca (2023).

Link to articles

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHn9DF3JL-cU&t=11s>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5jaODGSvio>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cq5P8zrusY-M&t=46s>

“CARE MUST BE COLLECTIVE”

Interview with the steering committee of the Women Caregivers’ Circles of Northern Cauca.

In northern Cauca, a group of Nasa, Black and mestizo women who are signatories of the Peace Agreement, along with LGBTQI+ people, are rethinking care, healing, and reconciliation from a territorial, interethnic, and intercultural feminist perspective.

Corporación Ensayos: How has your perception of care changed since you joined the Circle?

Dielina Palomino: There are many different forms of care. We were used to thinking of care as an everyday activity in our homes, but now we see it as a transformation of our lives and the lives of those around us. That transformation no longer falls on one person, but becomes an exercise in collective action with a sense of good living.

Martha Dagua: *Women Caregivers* is an exercise in reciprocity. We have received and given. The transformation lies in having the peace of mind to accompany experiences of violence,

as well as having the tools to avoid causing harm.

Marcela: We started by shaking off a mandate that was imposed on us: that women are caregivers. Here we ask ourselves about the importance of *care* for the sustainability of life. This cannot continue to fall solely on us. As this awareness grows, the lives of women and others will improve. This will allow us to move towards the collectivisation of care.

CE: The *Circle* has been built around the question “who cares for those who care?” How does it feel to be cared for by others?

Carmenza: I felt accompanied from the beginning, when we received the *marma massage*, with the constellations, the psychological accompaniment and the support of our companions. We have felt strengthened by being able to share what is happening to us without being judged. That is what it means to feel accompanied.

Emilse: I am one of the most cared for in this Circle. That care transformed the reality of my life. I was able to look at life with new eyes and it helped me get out of a place I thought I couldn’t get out of.

CE: What do you consider essential for caring for others?

Jessica Llantén: In the psychocultural component we have learned healing techniques and psychological first aid, because each accompaniment is different... In the legal component, instead






Jessika: We want to build a portfolio of services and care. It is important that this Circle reaches more community spaces and other territories, which is why it is important to continue strengthening capacities through training.

Martha: I see it being funded by the state, but not within institutional contexts, because the essence would be lost. Institutions have ways of being and doing things that make any initiative mechanical; it ceases to be profound and humanistic. It would become very technical.

CE: Fokus Magazine also works with women in Guatemala and other parts of Colombia. What message would you like to send them?

Dielina: We must weave together. We must share our experiences. We have gained knowledge that we can share with other people who are doing the same thing in other parts of the world. We can enrich others and ourselves from these experiences that have situated realities.

Marcela: Internationally, there is an exacerbation of warrior masculinities. It is a threat that highlights a setback in the rights of women and LGBTQI+ people. The call is to internationalise these feminist commitments: territorial, inter-ethnic and intercultural, to find ourselves with others. We must return to the principle of international solidarity in these struggles.

Martha: We need to reinvigorate these policies to put carers at the centre of all these conversations and dynamics. These initiatives are political and poetic; the reality is that carers must be at the centre. 

Link to the full interview

 <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TrfkOMMSL7Y-3d8lpI22car2DZLsr3imu/view?usp=sharing>

“The Circle is a space where we can take refuge, feel accompanied and not judged”. Nelly Pavi.

of answers, questions arise. How do we understand justice and how do we make it restorative? We have learned to think about the relationship between ordinary justice and community justice, but we still have many questions about the institutional obstacles that do not take into account the interethnic and intercultural perspective, which is the emphasis we propose.

CE: What are the main challenges?

Marcela: One challenge is to diversify the commitment to *care* across generations.

The armed conflict in northern Cauca has a generational component that must be understood and addressed. Another is funding. In this regard, what we are seeking in the Circle is to strengthen this feminist, interethnic and intercultural process and show the state the importance of creating public-community alliances that recognise this experience of care in the prevention and response to violence against women and LGBTQI+ people, and that they finance it, always respecting our perspective.

CE: In the face of these challenges, how do you imagine the Circle's space in the coming years?

Leydi Cuene: I imagine it having its own physical space that provides protection for these sensitive meetings.



BACK TO LIFE

I was 16 when I married my husband. During our time together I suffered physical and psychological violence. After 36 years of violence, ASOREMI is supporting me in my recovery process.

“That day when they took him out of the house, I felt a great calm, as if a great weight had been lifted off my shoulders.”



My name is Marta. I am 52 years old and I live in the municipality of Nebaj.

When I was 16, I married my husband. From the moment the people in the community found out that I was getting married, they told me not to marry him because he was a violent person. Despite their comments, I got married.

Shortly after we were married the verbal abuse began, but I did not take it seriously. Then he started to get jealous of one of his brothers, which aggravated the arguments. I continued to live with him because I hoped that one day he would change, but that never happened. I lived with him for 36 years. During that time, we had 15 children, 13 of whom are alive and two of whom

have died. Of the 13 children who are alive, six are boys and seven are girls.

Over time the abuse intensified. Almost every night he would come home drunk and physically and verbally abuse me, telling me that I was worthless, ugly and many other things that made me feel insignificant. He said that I was having affairs with other men, but that was not true. Over time, I discovered that he was the one who was having affairs with other women. He didn't give me any money for household expenses, so I did some knitting to feed my children.

The abuse also extended to my children, especially my daughters. They were verbally and physically abused. During the attacks he would ask me if I was seeing other men. I kept quiet about these incidents for a long time for fear of further abuse. Once I confronted my husband about the beatings he inflicted on my daughters, but all I got was even worse beatings. That's why I only saw what my daughters were suffering. I didn't dare leave him because I didn't think I would be able to support my children on my own, since I was living in his house and had nowhere else to go.

During this time of abuse, I often wanted to take my own life, but my children stopped me. I continued to endure the abuse until one day I told one of my sisters that I wanted to leave the house because I could no longer bear the life my husband was giving me. She replied that it was he who had to leave the house, not me. She told me that I had to report him and seek support. She encouraged me and took me to the Women's Advocacy Centre. They gave me guidance and instructions on the process I needed to follow. That same day, security measures were requested and my husband was removed from the house.

I remember that day when they took him out of the house. I felt a great sense of calm, as if a great weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I thought that at that moment everything was over, but when my children found out that their father had been taken out of the house at my request, they were angry with me and supported their father. This affected me greatly because I felt guilty for what was happening, but I received guidance from the Women's Advocacy Centre and understood that none of what was happening was my responsibility. Over time, my children also understood that their father was the only one to blame. He was responsible for the bad things that were happening in the family. They started talking to me again and I received their support.

“Today I am sharing my story to encourage other women to be brave and report abuse.”

During the reporting process I received a lot of support from the Women's Advocacy Centre/Ixiles Women's Network. This support was financial, “payment for transportation, food, medical care and they also gave me a stove to cook food for my children”. They gave me legal advice, support throughout the different processes, psychological support and workshops that have strengthened me, improved my self-esteem and brought about improvements in my life.


I currently feel better and I feel free to carry out my activities. I can run errands without fear of being controlled.

The violence I experienced left scars on me. I have constant headaches, fatigue and a lack of desire to knit, which is what I do for a living. However, I make an effort to move forward for myself and my younger children, because the child support I receive is not enough to cover household expenses.

I make an effort to educate my young children because I want to see them succeed academically, an opportunity that my older children did not have because of the violence we suffered.

My younger children tell me that they feel better, even though we are not financially well off. The most important thing is that they are no longer experiencing violence from their father. After I separated from my husband, my family reached out to me because my ex-husband had distanced us from them. He wouldn't let me communicate with my siblings and parents, saying that they were giving me bad advice and telling me not to fulfil my responsibilities at home, which wasn't true. It was because he didn't want them to find out about the abuse I was suffering at his hands.

Today, I am sharing my story to encourage other women to be brave and report abuse, to tell them that acts of violence should not be tolerated. There are things we don't think we can do, but it's only when we face the situation of violence that we realise we can overcome these obstacles and move forward.

I know there are many women suffering violence. I know some of them and I have told them to report it, even though I am afraid that their partners will take reprisals against me and against them. Then I remember what I went through, so I decide to support them so that they too can change their lives. 



WEAVING *RESISTANCE*



TEXT AND PHOTO:
**CENTRO DE
PROMOCIÓN Y
CULTURA (CPC)**





We invite you to listen to the podcast *Tejiendo Resistencias* (Weaving Resistance) from the Centre for Promotion and Culture (CPC). It is a space for deep reflection on self-care as an essential tool for healing and resistance. Through the voice of social leader María Cristina Cruz Maecha, who has experienced the armed conflict indirectly and has accompanied and strengthened women who have suffered

it directly and indirectly, this podcast addresses how the socio-political context has profoundly marked the lives and bodies of women. From these experiences, self-care practices emerge that reconstruct memories, strengthen organisational processes and contribute to peacebuilding in the territories. *Tejiendo Resistencias* is an audio testimony of cultural struggle against violence and an invitation to heal collectively through dignity, solidarity and hope. [FM](#)



THREE DECADES OF CHANGE:

PROGRESS, RESISTANCE AND THE RENEWED STRUGGLE FOR GENDER EQUALITY

During the past three decades, FOKUS has been active in promoting the rights of women and the LGBTQI+ community globally. We remain active, aware that many challenges still need to be addressed.



TEXT AND
PHOTO: **FOKUS**



OUR BEGINNINGS

1 995 is an important year for FOKUS. Not only is it the year the world gathered in Beijing to adopt a historic declaration on women's rights and gender equality at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women. It is also the year the Norwegian women's movement came together to found FOKUS, the Forum for Women and Development.

PROGRESS, CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS

This marked the beginning of a period of progress for women and girls, both in primary education and maternal health, and in the recognition of violence against them as a violation of human rights. The United Nations provided a framework for cooperation and accountability.

And yet here we are, thirty years later, facing increasing resistance not only to gender equality but to the very concept of international cooperation.

The struggle for gender equality, especially for sexual and reproductive health and rights, has become a battleground in what is sometimes called the culture war. In 2024 alone, one in four countries reported setbacks in women's rights. Conflicts, climate crises and economic instability disproportionately affect women and girls, reinforcing existing inequalities.

The influence of anti-gender movements, which oppose the rights of women and LGBTQI+ people, is being felt around the world. These actors actively oppose inclusion policies, among many others, and attack civil society organisations and minority rights.

The scope of global peace is increasingly being called into question with old and new scenarios of war, such as the genocide of the Palestinian people by the State of Israel, the expansion of this conflict in the Middle East, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and a war that has now lasted more than three years, the reactivation of armed actors linked to the international drug trafficking chain who recycle old conflicts and control territories and populations in several Latin American countries, among others. Likewise, the increasingly explicit weakness of the United Nations system to intervene clearly in stopping wars

that claim human lives everywhere is becoming apparent.

The evolution is not linear. It is a matter of advances and setbacks, and new advances. The achievements of the last thirty years must be defended – and expanded – if we are to realise the vision established in Beijing. In the face of crisis, whether it be a war, a pandemic or a natural disaster, women continue to be disproportionately affected, through job losses, increased care burdens and greater exposure to gender-based violence.

CURRENT CONTEXT

FOKUS was founded in a time of idealism and solidarity. Thirty years later, a significant change is taking place: international development cooperation and international aid are in decline. This is mainly, but not exclusively, due to cuts by the Trump administration. We view with concern the

1995 is an important year... it is the year when the Norwegian women's movement came together to found FOKUS, the Forum for Women and Development.





results of the recent UN Women global survey¹, which, based on a sample of 411 women's organisations working in 44 humanitarian and crisis contexts, found that the programmes most affected are those addressing gender-based violence and protection, among others.

OUR COMMITMENTS TODAY

FOKUS remains active in its cooperation with organisations in the global South, supporting women's organisations and the LGBTIQ+ population committed to structural changes that dignify the human condition.

Since 2010, we have had an office in Colombia, which in 2023 became the regional office for Latin America, with

small teams in Colombia and Guatemala supporting our partner organisations.

Since 2024, we have also been building a team in East Africa to support partner organisations in Ethiopia, the Republic of Somaliland, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Malawi.

The scope of global peace is increasingly being called into question with old and new scenarios of war.

In general terms, we develop four programmes in line with our strategic guidelines; however, not all of them are present on both continents. Below is a brief overview of each of them.

The programme for the *Prevention of Violence against Women, Young People and Girls in Latin America*, in both Colombia and Guatemala, is aimed

at training, prevention and advocacy processes at a municipal and national level. These enable the prevention of the different types of violence faced by this population group, some of whom are affected by migration or by sexual, psychological and economic violence, among other things. It is worth highlighting the importance of

the healing processes that have allowed for an approach based on the worldviews of indigenous peoples, as well as the individual and collective work with young women and girls, some of whom

have been affected by the armed conflicts that both countries have experienced. In Africa, specifically in Kenya and Tanzania, the programme focuses, among other things, on the eradication of female genital mutilation and child and forced marriages, as well as the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence. Female genital mutilation as a rite of passage for girls

¹ At a breaking point: the impact of foreign aid cuts on women's organisations in humanitarian crises worldwide. UN WOMEN, April 2025. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/05/at-a-breaking-point-the-impact-of-foreign-aid-cuts-on-womens-organizations-in-humanitarian-crises-worldwide>.

into adulthood is considered to create fertile ground for early and forced marriage of girls. These are deeply rooted practices that compel compliance or, otherwise, punitive sanctions.

The *Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights* programme in Latin America has different approaches in Colombia and Guatemala. While in the former there is a legislation that decriminalises abortion up to the 24th week and maintains four grounds for the following weeks, in Guatemala it is prohibited, except when the mother's life is at risk. This, in turn, has an impact on the projects developed by our partners in terms of the possibilities for advocacy as well as for training and educational processes in sexual and reproductive health. Guatemala also restricts the possibility of comprehensive sexual health education in educational establishments. In both countries, the partners develop training processes aimed at women and young people, with the aim of reducing teenage pregnancy, among other objectives. In Africa, specifically in Ethiopia, Malawi, the Republic of Somaliland and Uganda, the partners focus on overcoming attitudes and practices

that limit women's and girls' access to these rights, based on the premise that training and dissemination of information on rights-related issues will increase demand and access to sexual and reproductive health for women and young people.

In Uganda, the *economic empowerment* programme aims to contribute to overcome structural discrimination and inequalities that highlight women's economic disadvantages and impact their well-being and that of their families. This programme supports women's access to capital, entrepreneurship and factors of production, including technology and machinery, legal registration of businesses and their protection.

Since 2024, we have had a team working in East Africa, supporting partner organisations in Ethiopia, the Republic of Somaliland, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Malawi.

The *Women, Peace and Security* programme, developed in Latin America, specifically in Colombia, aims to contribute to the construction and consolidation of peace, despite the many factors that continue to fuel war. The partner organisations continue to work on promoting a culture of peace, advocating for the implementation of the Peace Agreement, demanding dialogues that contribute to total peace, and creating spaces within civil society that continue to urge armed actors to follow the path of dialogue and political negotiation with the active participation of women's organisations and communities.

We have recently begun working with Ukrainian women's organisations with the aim of ensuring that the country's recovery processes include gender issues as a key pillar. The experience gained with the 1325 programme in Colombia has been relevant in this regard.

The journey from Beijing to today is neither a linear success story nor a story of setbacks. The world has witnessed remarkable, albeit fragile and uneven progress. Extreme poverty rates had declined, but with the COVID-19 pandemic they rose again. A considerable number of legislative reforms against gender discrimination have been passed and there are more women in leadership positions. Women's organisations have increasingly been involved in peace processes.

The global feminist movement must continue to *lobby* for the realisation of human rights of women and the LGBTQI+ population, and for the dignity of human life.

Let us protect what we have achieved and continue to move forward! 







FOKUS 30 YEARS IN PICTURES

As we celebrate our 30th anniversary, we would like to share some photographs from our journey in Colombia, Guatemala and East Africa.





In August, we received a visit from NORAD and FOKUS Norway, who accompanied some of the activities of the Kankuama women in Atánquez - Valledupar, carried out within the framework of the Women, Peace and Security and Prevention of GBV programmes. They also accompanied activities carried out by the women of Tejido Mujer ACIN – CODACOP, a partner in the Women, Peace and Security programme.

2025 IN PICTURES

In this photo gallery, we take a look at some of the support provided by FOKUS to its partners in Guatemala and Colombia, as well as the visits we received this year, including one from Midwife Lena Henriksen of the Norwegian Midwives Association to Guatemala and a visit to Colombia from NORAD.



In May, FOKUS monitored the progress of projects being carried out by partners in Guatemala as part of the programmes: *Prevention of Violence against Women, Young People and Girls, and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.*



1. Accompaniment of the Second Discussion Forum:

‘Women, political participation and representation for peace and territorial reconciliation’ CPC.

2. Administrative accompaniment of Cartografía Sur as part of the strengthening of partners. **3. Accompanying the Democracy Forum in the Square: A New Opportunity for Peace in Cauca**, organised by Conspirando por la Paz and Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres - Cauca region.



{ Photo gallery }



We attended the meeting with Beatrice Tisato, political advisor to the Norwegian ambassador to Mexico, and CA Dag Nylander.



Laura Sánchez designer, in the production of the FOKUS 2026 glider.



We accompanied the start of the Diploma Course on the Right to the City for Popular and Urban Women, organised by the Centre for Promotion and Culture (CPC).





{ Photo gallery }



Photos taken by IXMUKANE during the dialogue between midwives Lena Henriksen of the Norwegian Midwives Association and Mildrid Mikkelsen, head of programmes at FOKUS.



In April, we held a meeting of FOKUS partners in Colombia from the three programmes: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Prevention of Violence against Women, Young People and Girls, and Women, Peace and Security.



Context Analysis Workshop conducted by SweFOR with the participation of the Colombian Theatre Corporation (CCT), the Ensayos Corporation, and Codacop, FOKUS partners in Colombia. Photos Copartes.

THE FEMINIST AGENDA ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

Feminist organisations and civil society are key players in international spaces to counter conservative anti-rights discourses and promote gender equality.



TEXT AND
PHOTO: **LA
MESA POR
LA VIDA Y LA
SALUD DE LAS
MUJERES**



In a global context where the regression of rights threatens fundamental freedoms and challenges democracies, the strategic participation of civil society in multilateral spaces such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) of the United Nations system is essential to protect advances in women's rights and gender equality achievements. These are crucial forums for guiding public policies and regulatory frameworks and charting a course for social justice and sustainable development by integrating issues such as reproductive autonomy into a broader rights agenda. Understanding

their strategic role allows for the identification of opportunities for effective participation.

Colombian civil society organisations have participated actively. For example, within the framework of CSW 69, the Mesa por la Vida y la Salud de las Mujeres (Roundtable for Women's Life and Health) attended the event



“Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Complex Contexts” organised by FOKUS and the Humanas Organisation. Similarly, together with the Colombian Mission in New York City and Fos Feminista, it convened the side event “Strengthening links between agendas: sexual and reproductive health and rights 30 years after the Beijing Platform for Action.”



This conversation was further explored at the event “Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: A Central Element in Guaranteeing the Right to Health.” This was also led by La Mesa, together with the governments of Uruguay and Mexico, the organisation Iniciativas Sanitarias and Fos Feminista.

In this regard, it should be noted that the feminist movement has undertaken mobilisation and advocacy actions that have been fundamental in securing rights. However, like several social organisations, it now faces key challenges: conservative discourses backed by restrictive states that perpetuate inequalities and limited funding that hinders the sustainability of transformative agendas.

Therefore, although states actively participate in spaces such as the CSW, the CPD, and the Future Summit, among others, civil society efforts must focus on maintaining dialogue with governments, providing clear conceptual frameworks and transformative proposals. In addition, the oversight must be strengthened so that the commitments made by states in these settings are translated into public policies that effectively guarantee the rights achieved.

Collaborating with states does not imply losing autonomy, but rather expanding the scope for action from a perspective of rights and social transformation. Feminist organisations not only enrich government agendas: they build knowledge and strategies that enrich multilateral debate. Civil

society ensures that freedom, gender equality and social justice remain central themes in these forums. In this regard, it is essential to demand that progressive states engage in active diplomacy that does not shy away from debate for fear of geopolitical tensions or reprisals from more powerful states.

Gender equality must be guaranteed as a pillar of democracy and anti-rights discourses must be countered.

On the other hand, and in the context of global debate on the demographic decline facing some regions, it is important that discussions in these forums also focus on guaranteeing women’s rights. This is because there is a narrative that is currently gaining ground that blames women for this phenomenon by focusing on their decision not to become mothers. This narrative reinforces gender stereotypes and diverts the conversation away from the failures of national care systems.


Conservative discourses take advantage of this concern to promote compulsory motherhood, ignoring the structural causes underlying this phenomenon, such as job insecurity, poverty, lack of access to health care or inequality. Reorienting this conversation from a rights-based perspective is an active way of defending these rights. Thus, the answer cannot be to impose motherhood on women, but rather to

build dignified conditions so that they can decide freely on their life plans.

Similarly, with democratic values under dispute, it is important to link the media more closely to the international agenda and discussions. This is the only way to ensure that citizens have more information on the subject. The information must be accurate and rigorous in order to help dismantle myths and stereotypes about the feminist movement, continue to legitimise gender equality as a pillar of democracy and counter anti-rights discourses.

In this vein, with each strategic action in international discussion and debate, feminist organisations strengthen their role in promoting rights. Furthermore, by collaborating with governments, leading campaigns that transform perceptions and forging alliances, civil society not only expands its capacity for advocacy, but also contributes to democratic strengthening and progress in gender equality. Making these spaces political and ethical benchmarks for democratic and just societies around the world requires technical and political clarity, sustained alliances and collective feminist work. We must therefore commit to a diplomacy that defends reproductive autonomy and the consolidation of more just and inclusive democracies. 

Link to articles

-  <https://www.instagram.com/mesaporlaida/p/DIOseOSuzTR/>
- <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DHTnmHI-JA7F/?igsh=MTRyNnRyejRhaDh5dw%3D%3D>
- <https://www.instagram.com/p/DIM6fg-2J4LM/?igsh=MW15bW15emU1M2lyO-Q%3D%3D>
- <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DHJXp-yMT-PR/?igsh=MXdlOXZjeDFseG8wMw%3D%3D>
- <https://www.instagram.com/p/DH-GkrM6uBEH/?igsh=azhtZmYwcjltYXpi>



Alicia at work
as a community
nurse.

demanding improvements for her territory. Until the very end, her struggle was for the collective well-being.

Alicia was much more than a nurse. She was a great leader, counsellor, defender and spokesperson. She was someone who listened attentively, understood, cared and helped with many issues, including the health of the people in the area. She was a woman who, like a strong and flexible knot, united her community in the most difficult moments. Her strength and flexibility were evident in community workshops where, despite being one of the few women among male leaders, she spoke firmly and defended her village. At the same time, she was approachable and open to listening to those who came to her for support.

Because Vallenato, like other villages in Alto Mira and Frontera, has been hit hard by violence for decades. Since the 1970s, armed groups have fought for control of the territory, leaving fear, displacement and silence in their wake. In the midst of this history of conflict, women like Alicia emerged. Women who, instead of fleeing, decided to stay, resist and build from the ground up.

Being a leader in this context is not a title, it is an act of bravery and courage. In the Vallenato region, at the village school, women from different communities gather with members of Yira Castro's team to talk about their struggles, their dreams, their wounds. They want to be heard, to participate in decision making, to break the pattern where the public voice has historically

“They feel that we shouldn’t have a voice or a vote... but we know how to organise, lead and be heard.”

THE LEGACY OF ALICIA

Discover how the women of Tumaco are transforming the region through education, empathy and leadership, following in the footsteps of an unforgettable leader: Alicia.



TEXT AND
PHOTO:
**CORPORACIÓN
JURÍDICA YIRA
CASTRO**



The canoe’s engine roars on the Mira River as we enter the green thicket of Tumaco. On board, with only our backpacks, the contained silence of the trip is overshadowed by the persistent hum of the engine. When

we reach a small beach, we climb a dirt path to a brick shop. It’s on the first floor facing the river with a window where packets of potatoes, biscuits and rice hang. Mrs Alicia’s daughter is now the one who remains behind the counter. She greets us with a friendly smile as we climb towards Vallenato. Although Alicia is no longer with us, her presence can still be felt there. That shop was not just a business: it was a meeting place, an open doctor’s office, a space where community was woven together. Alicia died suddenly while participating in a community meeting on health issues in Tumaco. She was in the prime of her leadership, speaking for her people,

been male. Alicia opened that door and today other women are motivated to continue her legacy.

One of them tells us with conviction: “Sometimes they think that because we are women, we have no voice or vote. They interrupt us, they minimise us. But we know how to organise, lead and suggest. We have always done so, only now we are saying it out loud.”

Female leadership in these territories does not shout, it summons; it does not impose, it accompanies. It is based on empathy, trust and the ability to look at others with honesty. Alicia was sought after, not only for her medical knowledge, but also because she knew how to listen and find solutions. And that legacy lives on. Many current women leaders work tirelessly to improve education. They manage teachers, talk to head teachers and demand improvements in infrastructure. They know that the school is the seed of change.

This collective spirit is also articulated in the Association of Community Action Boards of Alto Mira and Frontera (Asominuma). It is currently made up of 33 villages and it was there that Alicia became one of its most respected voices. Today, women’s voices are growing louder and women are making their mark on multiple fronts. They are making their mark as secretaries of the boards, as organisers of meetings and educational workshops, as promoters of dialogue processes, among other things.

Women here are like knots. They unite the villages scattered along the Mira River, connect stories, confront stigmatisation and build bridges where there were once only walls. But there is still more to be done. The challenge remains to unite all women, because when women from different villages come together, their


Women leaders are living knots that unite neighbourhoods, build community and sow peace with empathy and education.

voices are amplified, their influence grows and the hope of transforming the territory is strengthened.


Women leaders are also key in peace processes, not at the big negotiating tables, but accompanying children in the school corridors, at community assemblies or queues at the health centre. They are the ones who can build bridges with armed actors and create spaces for dialogue with respect and recognition, because they know

the territory, because they live there, because they feel it.

This is how Alicia’s legacy resonates!

Today, her shop is still standing. Her daughter continues to serve the customers. And in every meeting, in every effort to improve education, to unite villages, to build peace, there is a piece of her legacy. One more thread in this collective fabric that the women leaders of the territory continue to weave, stitch by stitch, knot by knot. 

Links to articles

-  <https://vueltaalamemoria.cjyiracastro.org.co/narino/>
- <https://cjyiracastro.org.co/la-educacion-en-tumaco-un-derecho-limitado-por-la-distancia/>
- <https://cjyiracastro.org.co/tumaco-cansados-de-la-guerra-anhelantes-de-la-paz-2/>

Alicia, leader and health manager in Vallenato.





▲ “They told me it was my fault, that I had to accept my fate, but I just wanted to be a child.”

FROM DOLLS TO NAPPIES: THE GIRLS WHO HAVE CHILDREN

Each image reveals a childhood stolen, marked by poverty and a lack of opportunities. This photo essay immerses us in the intimacy of Aurora, who was forced to become a mother after violence shattered her world. Here, pain becomes a cry for justice and transformation. It invites us to look beyond the statistics, to feel the impact



of a reality that should not exist. It is a bridge between despair and change. An urgent call to action. We thank the Italian photographer Yuri Segalerba for his art. OSAR works in Guatemala to eradicate sexual violence and forced pregnancy by raising awareness, creating alliances and caring for girls and their babies. Training and prevention processes with children and adolescents are promoted with FOKUS. **FM**

“Her little hands search for my breast; her crying makes me tremble... but I’m still a girl.”

▼ “Today she lives with her mother while they struggle to survive. Sometimes they don’t have enough to eat.”





◀ “I grew up playing with dolls, never imagining that I would soon be holding a real baby in my arms.”

“She could be a bad influence on the other girls,” they said when they expelled her from school.





◀ “Being a woman shouldn’t mean carrying chains that other generations forged.”

▼ “Violence hides behind normality. What they did to me should never have happened.”



“I don’t want to repeat history, I want to write a future where it is possible to decide.”





WHEN A
WOMAN SPEAKS,
**THE SILENCE
TREMBLES**



Lucía




Paulina

The Asociación por Nosotras Ixmukané is an organisation led by indigenous women. It implements a set of processes for their political and economic empowerment, as well as providing comprehensive support to women victims and survivors of violence through a range of services that contribute to their recovery and the redesign of their life projects.

We invite you to immerse yourself in two powerful audio recordings in which indigenous women, accompanied by the

Asociación por Nosotras Ixmukané in the department of Quiché (Guatemala), raise their voices and shed light on their struggles, their leadership and their courage. The first takes us to the heart of the empowerment and political participation of indigenous women. Their words open paths, break down barriers and transform rural realities.

The second audio recording is a strong and moving denunciation of the violence faced by many women and an urgent call to not remain silent.

These voices are not just stories; they are acts of resilience and hope. 

Lucía Chan and Paulina Ortiz, indigenous women supported by the Asociación por Nosotras Ixmukané in the department of Quiché, Guatemala.



WEAVING LIFE AND LEADERSHIP

Andrea Marcela Arias, an indigenous Kankuama woman from the Sierra Nevada de Gonawindúa, harmonises and weaves together leadership, healing and ancestry.



TEXT AND PHOTO:
**CABILDO INDÍGENA
DEL RESGUARDO
KANKUAMO**



Andrea Marcela Arias is an indigenous Kankuama woman born in the community of Chemesquemena in the Sierra Nevada de Gonawindúa. Her path to social leadership began around the age of 14, when she started participating in the Youth Commission. There she discovered her vocation for community work, organisational processes and the well-being of her ancestral people. She enrolled to study sociology. During her third semester she took on the role of coordinator of the Sociology and Legal team, made up of students from various university programs who were working within the framework of the commitment established by the Kankuama authorities for the recovery of the historical memory of the Kankuamo people, weaving together the legacy and invisible stories of their elders.



Andrea Arias,
Kankuama leader from
Chemesquemena.

As part of her growth, she participated in the creation of the University Student Council of Indigenous Peoples at the Popular University of Cesar (UPC), which still exists today. In 2015, while in her fifth semester, she became a mother for the first time. Three years later her second daughter was born. Motherhood became a driving force that propelled her to graduate with

a degree in sociology in 2019 with a clear vision: “I trained to contribute professionally to the strengthening of my community.” In order to strengthen her leadership, she participates in a programme called “Ethnic Territories” with the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF). In addition to this, there was the psychocultural healing process she underwent when she

began participating in the Commission of Indigenous Women and Kankuama Families (CMIFAK), after a difficult separation and taking on the upbringing of her daughters. This led her to join the women's commission as secretary, with the role of promoting tools for resilience, healing and training. This made her realise that her process was not unique since many women were experiencing similar situations of vulnerability in terms of their rights. She therefore decided to join them, accompany them, guide them and grow together on the path towards harmony for Kankuama women and families.

Following that experience she joined the Women's Community Committee, a space created by CMIFAK to prevent, accompany and monitor access to justice for Kankuama women and families facing violence. This experience began to be shared with other women from the Arhuaco, Wiwa and Kogui indigenous peoples, which led to a twinning arrangement to strengthen each other by establishing that "the women of the Sierra Nevada de Gonawindua have been valued since ancient times under the Law of Origin and their role is related to the Mother of Origin. From this perspective, it is recognised that what happens to the Mother, to the territory, also happens to women, who share the same effects as any process of harmonisation and healing that is carried out in her favour".¹

This process, called *Mochilón de Cabuya de Fique* (meaning: big bag woven from natural fique fibre threads), benefited




“When a woman heals, she can help heal others. This is how we weave harmony in the body, the soul and the land.”

from her contributions and leadership as a strategy for ancestral, cultural, political and pedagogical harmonisation that interweaves the Territory-Body-Memory and proposes an agenda for intercultural peace from the villages of the Sierra Nevada. This deeply spiritual initiative has made it possible to highlight the disharmonies experienced and propose networks of resistance and collective re-existence for the safeguarding and Good Living of its peoples.

During the pandemic in 2020 she joined the Association of Kankuama Women Artisans (ASOARKA), which aims to revive the traditional craft of Kankuamo fique weaving, from planting and processing to marketing the finished products. She has participated in the gathering of memories and the strengthening of ancestral practices through the weaving of bags and hammocks, among

other items. She has also contributed to ASOARKA by taking on positions in project management and implementation. In 2021 she formally assumed the position of secretary general of CMIFAK and coordinator of the Observatory on Violence and Disharmony against Kankuamo Women and Families. From there she has been working to promote women's rights and contributions as indigenous women, their families, the survival of the Kankuamo people and the peoples of the

Sierra Nevada. For her, all her leadership is based on this: "Our principle is that every process must be sown from the spiritual realm in order to flourish; it must begin in the soul."²

Andrea projects herself as a leader who seeks not only her own well-being, but that of her entire community. To achieve this, she wants to continue weaving paths of harmony, empowering other women, listening to them and accompanying them in their healing and collective processes. That is why she invites "young women to not limit themselves, because we can be mothers, professionals, leaders, healers, we can walk together, weaving community and self-love. Each bag they weave reflects their state of mind. If they are in harmony, that bag will be beautiful, strong and full of meaning. The same is true of their lives. When they heal, they help others to heal. In this collective weaving we leave a better path for our daughters, our mothers and our grandmothers." She concludes: "I am what I am thanks to the women."³ 

1 OIK (2019) Cabuya backpack woven by Women of the Sierra Nevada DE Gonawindua, ACIN and the Colombian Caribbean. Brochure in Cabuya 3: Women and Cultural Identity.

2 Acosta Pimienta Alicia Vanessa. Personal interview with Andrea Marcela Arias. Valledupar, 2025.

3 Arias, Andrea Marcela, A.A (10 June 2025). Life Story 'Andrea Arias' [Interview].

TRANSMUTATION

– FROM CRISIS TO FULFILMENT

The armed conflict in Guatemala had negative effects on the lives of the population, mainly on the Maya. However, there are people who, through their transmutation, contribute to the well-being of others.

The internal armed conflict in Guatemala left multiple scars on the lives of those who lived through it and on the new generations who still suffer some of its effects. However, there are people with powerful missions who, from their very being, contribute to the well-being of others and of the great web of life. This is the case of Sara Q, who represents the journey of numerous women who have participated in training programmes as social therapists at Mujeres Mayas Kaqla. Through their new perspective and awareness, they are transforming their own lives and bringing about profound changes in the lives of other women and their communities.

Sara's most special memory is of her home, which she had to flee during the internal armed conflict in Guatemala (1960-1996). "There lies the hill of my grandfather Mam Aj'. I remember my grandparents climbing the hill to celebrate community festivals, burning *pom* and lighting candles. My grandmother was a midwife and delivered my mother. We were 12 children, and this is part of my identity."

During the armed conflict, it is estimated that more than 200,000 people died or disappeared. Thousands were forced to leave their homes and communities to seek refuge in other regions or abroad. In addition, thousands of people, mainly from Mayan communities, who still preserved the customs of their ancestors' ancient heritage, were victims of crimes against humanity.

Sara Q is a Kiche' Maya woman born in the community of Tierra Caliente, Santa Cruz del Quiché. She had to flee with her family to San Antonio Ilotenango after the massacre that took place there in 1982, in which 48 people were killed, including her father, her 10-year-old sister and her 12-year-old brother. "When I was 8 years old, we had to flee the community, leaving everything behind: our homes, corn, beans and animals. We had to leave because at that time my community was accused of being guerrillas and the military said they would return to kill everyone."

Sara had the opportunity to go to school until she was 17, in 1989, and graduated as a teacher in 1998. Her journey began in 1999, when she became aware of her

family's history during the internal armed conflict.

She began working in the Ixil region, where she realised that many communities had been destroyed and massacred during that period. She started working in the social ministry of Quiché, in the mental health programme. The population she served was mostly survivors of the internal armed conflict. For several years, she accompanied relatives of the victims to carry out exhumations, provided psychosocial care and attended to survivors of various forms of violence. However, despite her years of experience, she discovered that she needed to heal the trauma and wounds from her childhood and her journey.

In that constant and profound search, she found support from several people who helped her fill the void she said she felt. She was accompanied by churches, priests, nuns, and women leaders from the communities she served. "Before I arrived in Kaqla, I felt empty, I was searching for something to fill me. In the midst of that search, I found part of my mission, which is to enhance



my abilities and skills in healing with medicinal plants and to reclaim myself as a healer. There I found part of my path, it filled me up a little, and so I kept walking until I found the wisdom of the great women of Kaqla.”

Since its inception in 1996, the first women of Kaqla accumulated experiences and lessons along the way. The training and healing processes were the foundations of the transformation of those who planted the first seeds. From this process sprang the advances and great achievements of Kaqla as a pioneering healing organisation in Guatemala. The concept of “social therapists” also emerged around 2006, based on the awareness of the need for personal healing to transcend into the collective, into the community.


Social therapists, based on their own healing, contribute to the healing of other people, communities and organisations. According to their energy, possibilities, potentialities and levels of training, they promote healing and training processes in the search for well-being and fulfilment in life. This involves healing, both individually and collectively, the traumas related to oppression, racism, poverty, discrimination and the various forms of violence that affect life. Along this path, Kaqla’s approaches to healing violence are

The concept of social therapist emerged around 2006, based on the realisation that personal healing needed to transcend the individual and extend to the collective, to the community.

taken into account, as well as the premise that, in order to heal violence and other traumas, it is essential to heal their origin.

In 2016, through the Barbara Ford Association, Sara was invited to get involved in a process and train as a social therapist with Kaqla. “It took me six years to train as a social therapist. I worked on trauma, belief systems and deficiencies, the whole system of oppression that took my eyes off reality. In the process with Kaqla I found my true mission with what I love to do. It vindicated me as a healer, social therapist and traditional healer. I am recognised for the work I do in my community. People seek me out and I feel confident in everything I do. It has allowed me to have a holistic view of the reality of life. This is reflected in my work in natural medicine, healing illnesses from a holistic perspective. I’m incorporating

healing tools into my daily work. *I have financial independence.* Thanks to all these tools, people find hope in life. It has allowed me to contribute to the lives of others by healing them and helping them find balance in their lives and their path, just as I did.

Many of the healing and harmonisation tools acquired by social therapists trained at Kaqla belong to the Mayan culture and worldview. To date, Kaqla has trained nine cohorts of social therapists, including a cohort of men, with approximately 139 people trained. As in Sara’s case, many have enhanced their skills and abilities through the Kaqla processes. 

Link to articles

-  <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1C-MAUSFSMw/>
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- <https://youtu.be/5ipSVimpE0k?si=E1msWtn-loYOU56io>

MEMORIES THAT BLOSSOM: CARMELINA YULE

Carmelina Yule Paví, an indigenous Nasa woman and leader of Tejido Mujer de la Cxhab Wala Kiwe in northern Cauca, was murdered by the Dagoberto Ramos front, a dissident group of the FARC, on March 17, 2024.



TEXT AND PHOTO:
**TEJIDO MUJER
CXHAB WALA
KIWE- ACIN /
CORPORACIÓN
DE APOYO A
COMUNIDADES
POPULARES -
CODACOP**



◀ Carmelina Yule Paví,
indigenous Nasa woman,
kiwe thegna and leader
(1962-2024). Illustration
by ACIN Communications
Network.





Carmelina, a fighter for the values and knowledge of her people, was an authority in her community, a weaver and a *kiwe thegna* (indigenous guard). It was precisely in her work as a defender, trying to rescue a child kidnapped by the armed group, that her life was taken from her.

This is one of many cases in which the community, organised and unarmed, has opposed the kidnapping of its sons and daughters.

The crime against Carmelina led the national government to suspend the negotiation process at the time in the department of Cauca. [FM](#)

Learn more about this story in this video:



<https://youtu.be/Rhi6gKN4ujQ?si=GRfTioAIQb-dYWQaF>

▼ We at Tejido Mujer and Codacop have decided to break the silence and raise our voices to call for an end to the war and demand an end to the attacks against women.



▲ In a symbolic act of recognition of Carmelina's legacy, we went to her home.

{ Photo report }

► We highlight Carmelina's role as a woman, defender and caretaker of life and the land.

▼ We shared this moment with her family and community, who are also victims.



▲ In this way, we turned their house into a garden.

**At the *minga*,
joining hands and efforts,
we plant seeds.**



- ▼ With this fence and this garden, we honour the memory of Carmelina and what she represents for the processes of indigenous Nasa women.

Planting this fence was a way to raise our voices in favour of life and for an end to the war.



- ▲ The fence reads: "Those who give their lives for their brothers do not die. Their spirit is always with us."



The community leader of the MADERA project, Andrea Amaya, turns the exercise of public health into a cause for social justice every day. This photo was taken during a sexual and reproductive health day in the municipality of Sogamoso (El Pino village).

WEAVING DIGNITY IN DEFENSE OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IN BOYACÁ

In the mountains of Sogamoso, in the heart of the Boyacá highlands, a voice resounds with strength, empathy and purpose.

young people and sexual minorities to make decisions about their bodies, lives and futures.



TEXT AND
PHOTO:
**FUNDACIÓN
ORIENTAME**

Andrea Amaya, nurse, mother and leader of the MADERA Project (Women Allied for their Reproductive Rights and Autonomy), embodies a struggle that goes far beyond medical care. She defends the right of women,

“I am the mother of a two-year-old girl. I work in sexual and reproductive health, and I see first-hand how the lack of comprehensive sexuality education and access to services deeply affects our communities.” Andrea emphasises that her work is

not exclusively technical, but rather a mission born out of the recognition of injustice and the desire to change the current indicators in her department. There are still “girls who are pregnant, women who are judged, health professionals who are poorly trained and communities that are mired in myths, taboos and prejudices.”

FO: What need did you identify in your community that led you to become a leader?

AA: “Every day I see how ignorance about sexual and reproductive rights impacts people’s lives,” says Andrea. Women who are judged, pregnant girls, uninformed health professionals and communities trapped in taboos and prejudices: “this is the context that gave political meaning and urgency to my work”.

FO: Was there a moment that marked a turning point in your decision to take action?

AA: In December 2023, “an eleven-year-old girl disappeared and was later found dead. Her death shook not only the municipality, but the entire country. For me, it was a painful but urgent call to action.” This event became a rallying cry for Andrea, who has turned knowledge into a form of resistance. Since then, her work has intensified in training, awareness-raising and advocacy spaces, both in public and private settings. “People think that talking about sex education is talking about promiscuity, but it’s quite the opposite,” she says. “It’s about rights, care and dignity.”

FO: How has the experience of training others been for you?

AA: Each training process has also been a transformative experience. “In each workshop, I not only share knowledge: I learn, listen and understand better how to communicate with people.”

What strikes her most is the genuine desire of many people, especially young people. “There is fear, there is guilt, but there is also a lot of curiosity,” she says.

In her work as a trainer in the village of El Pino, in the municipality of Sogamoso, Andrea has found that transforming collective imaginaries is a slow and challenging process. “Many issues, such as voluntary termination of pregnancy, continue to generate strong resistance,” she says. That is why she is firmly committed to making comprehensive sex education a reality in

“I want us to be a proactive community, not a reactive one, moving from misinformation to conversation, from silence to action.”

her community. A continuous education without taboos, adapted to each stage of life—from early childhood to late adulthood—that promotes knowledge of the body, respect for autonomy and the informed exercise of rights.

FO: What is your dream for your community in terms of sexual and reproductive rights?

AA: Andrea imagines a fully informed community where sexual and reproductive rights are understood as an essential part of social justice and personal autonomy. Beyond education, she dreams of universal access to sexual and reproductive health services of good quality: a comprehensive care that is confidential and free of barriers and stigma. In her vision, sexual and gender diversity must be recognised, valued and respected in all spaces. “I

want us to be a proactive community, not a reactive one, moving from misinformation to conversation, from silence to action,” she says.


FO: What have been the main challenges or barriers on your journey as a leader?

AA: In times of fundamentalist discourse, legislative setbacks and invisible barriers, “the greatest resistance often comes from the institutions themselves”; religious prejudices, social stigmas and even misinformation among health teams hinder her work.

In response, she is committed to ongoing training, alliances with committed institutions and sustained community work.

FO: If you could leave a message or a wish for your community and for other women who want to work for their rights, what would you say?

AA: In a country like Colombia, where sexual and reproductive rights remain a battleground, Andrea Amaya reminds us that “bodies and lives matter.” Community leaders are a beacon in the midst of the silence. The revolution of dignity is sown step by step, with tenderness, firmness and memory. That is why her advice is emphatic: “Trust your voice.”

Her call to inform, educate, dialogue and act runs through all her work. As she herself puts it: “It’s not about grand gestures, but about sowing awareness little by little. No one transforms anything alone: build networks and persevere.” Andrea sows a feminist pedagogy that challenges mandates, transforms bodies and ignites convictions. Because, as she says, “change begins when a community decides not to remain silent.” 



SERIES STORIES OF ÚRSULAS

EPISODE 1: "CARMEN,
ROOTS AND STRENGTH"

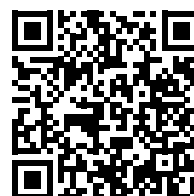




EPISODE 1: “CARMEN, ROOTS AND STRENGTH”

This podcast series is the result of a process carried out with the women of the project *Úrsulas Polifónicas, mujeres libres y sabias* (Polyphonic Ursulas, free and wise women). The series consists of five chapters, five protagonists and five life stories from their territories: Galeras, Necoclí, Cali, and Bogotá.

“Carmen, roots and strength” is the first episode. She was born among mountains and street alleys, grew up in a neighbourhood where life was woven by hand. She was a young mother, a worker, a rebel. She fought against fear until she learned to raise her voice. Today she grows healing plants and is part of the *Escuela de Mujeres en Escena Bogotá* (Women on Stage School in Bogotá). [FM](#)



WE INVITE YOU TO LISTEN TO THE ENTIRE PODCAST SERIES:

- **Introduction**
- **Episode 1:** Carmen, roots and strength
- **Episode 2:** Lucy, between leadership and survival
- **Episode 3:** The sound of my soul
- **Episode 4:** Úrsula's story
- **Episode 5:** Leisly: sowing female leadership with art and words





Photo IXMUKANE.
Knowledge dialogue
between midwives,
Lena Henriksen
from the Norwegian
Midwives Association
and Mildrid Mikkelsen,
Head of Programmes
at FOKUS.

