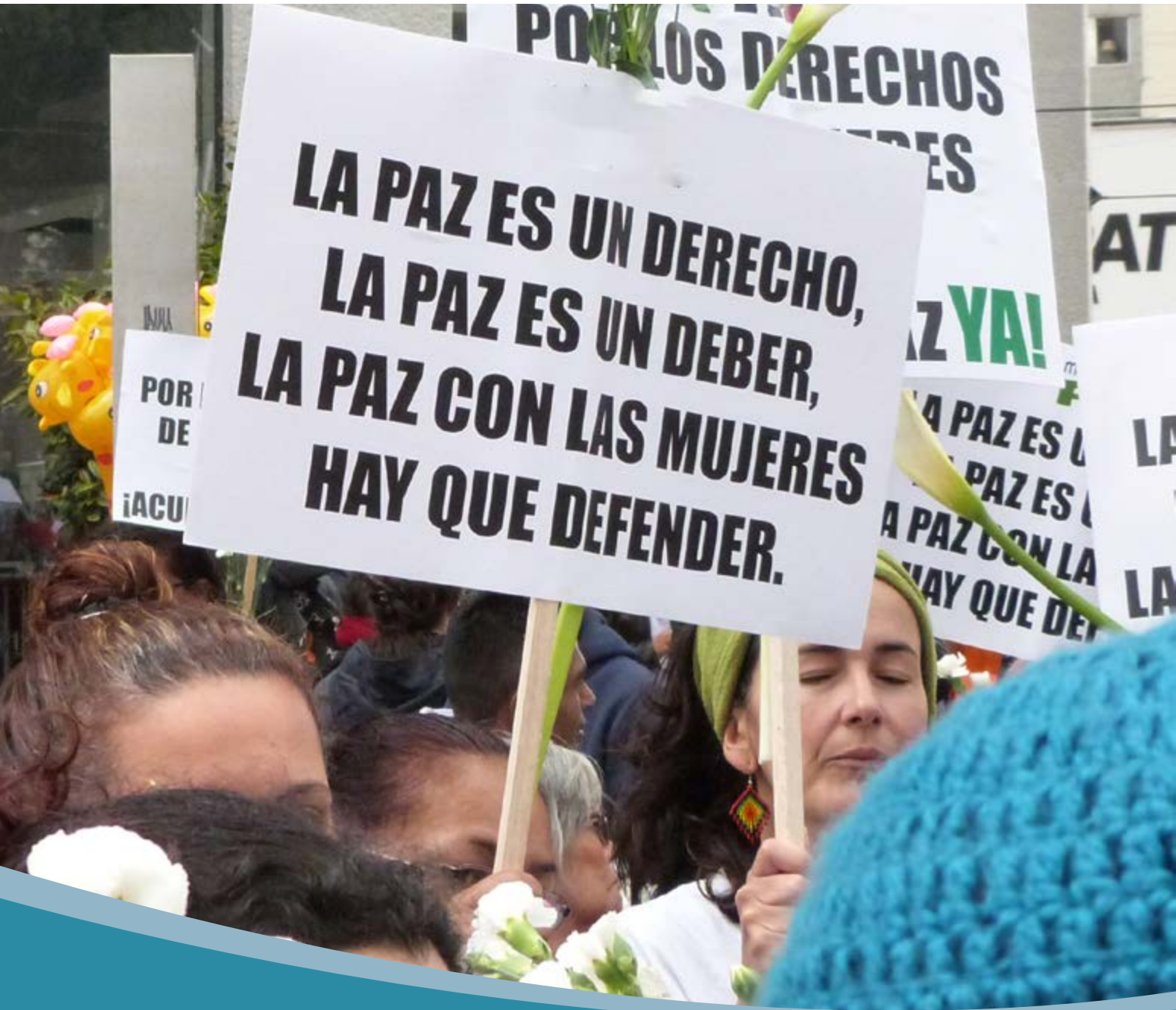


Magazine

# FOKUS women

Number 1 | First semester 2020

Colombia



## Resistance

“They aren’t victims of sexual violence, they are survivors.”

Page 6

## History

An Agreement on the Search for Truth in the Conflict

Page 8

## Activism

United for the Right to Abortion in Colombia

Page 19

## With the support of NORAD

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## CONTENT

FOKUS and our global work **4**

"They aren't victims of sexual violence, they are survivors." **6**

An Agreement on the Search for Truth in the Conflict **8**

Defending young women's sexual and reproductive rights **10**

Peace in Movement: Colombia in Our Times **12**

Women's Political Participation **14**

"Patuna" women in heart and soul **16**

Bogotá Women and Youth Working for Territorial Peacebuilding **18**

United for the Right to Abortion in Colombia **19**

Women in the system for justice, truth, reparation, and guarantees for non-repetition **20**

A Two-way Street **22**



Photo FOKUS.



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## EDITORIAL

Colombia, after more than five decades of armed conflict--and in spite of the signature of an Agreement to End the Conflict between the National Government and the former FARC-EP over three years ago--has not been able to overcome the dynamics of war, armed conflict, drug trafficking, and the murder of male and female social leaders. This was the hope of people who saw the possibility in the signature of an agreement of this nature to access truth and justice, in order to advance towards a horizon where everyone has the space to be, live, and dream of a better future. This country is strange; sometimes it seems like many horizons are opened and then closed moments later, without leaving room for the air needed to breathe and dream.


In spite of this, the organizations of young and adult women in Colombia stand strong in their search for truth, justice, and reparations for their communities, in addition to a large percentage of those individuals who, as insurgents, signed in favor of peace after decades of war.

However, the tides of war and fundamentalisms mean that, more and more, women's and LGBT organizations must remain firm in the vindication of their rights and, based on the manifold challenges this poses, contribute from small settings with a common intention: to transform life amid war to achieve the full enjoyment of their rights, with true opportunities to freely decide on their own lives.

Today the implementation of the Peace Agreement is a central element for moving past the era of war, in addition to demands to decriminalize abortion, a central aspect for achieving autonomy and freedom for women.

As FOKUS we will continue accompanying the women's and LGBT organizations that are part of our programs, Women, Peace, and Security and Sexual and Reproductive Health. This is our mandate as the Country Office, and we will continue fulfilling it.

This magazine, which we launch today, seeks to increase visibility of the strength and tenacity of Colombian women, who, through different projects, work with women farmers, indigenous, Afro-descendants, youth, urban, and the grassroots, for a better world for all.

FOKUS thanks them for their trust over the years and reaffirms its commitment to their accompaniment and support. 

# FOKUS AND OUR GLOBAL WORK



TEXT: **GRO LINDSTAD**,  
General Director  
of FOKUS

FOKUS was founded as a platform of Norwegian women's groups and organizations in 1995, the year that the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing.

**F**OKUS was established as an umbrella organization by Norwegian women's organizations and groups in 1995. This was the year that the fourth UN Women's Conference took place in Beijing, and the origin of the Beijing Platform of Action, that the UN, its member states, civil society organizations and feminists all over the world still use as a compass for our work. The 12 pillars of the Plan of Action have also been FOKUS guiding principles for almost 25 years now.

FOKUS' vision is societies based on gender equality and equity, where women's human rights are respected and protected and with equal access to participation regardless of gender.

Today FOKUS has 52 Norwegian member organizations, spanning from all the political parties women's caucuses and forums, large labor unions such as Nurses Unio, Midwives Union and Health and Social Workers, to a large number of the more traditional women's organizations in Norway, diaspora organizations, student organizations and the Norwegian LGBTQI organization.

FOKUS is governed by an annual member organization meeting. They

elect members to the FOKUS board. The Board employs an Executive Director that is responsible for running operations and for FOKUS staff and secretariat.

FOKUS has its head office in Oslo, Norway, where we have 7 ½ positions/staff members. In addition we have a country office in Colombia, due to the large number of partners and programming in Colombia.

FOKUS acts as a resource and competence center for all its members. Most importantly we have funding from Norad (the

## **Our partner organizations are in Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, Guatemala, and Colombia.**

Norwegian government international development directorate) through a framework agreement that currently is running 2019 – 2022. Through this framework agreement we cooperate with and provide funding to partner organizations in Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, Guatemala and Colombia. Some partnerships are ones that exist between individual member organizations and partner organizations, and some are direct

partnerships between FOKUS as a whole and partners in the different countries mentioned. In total we have about 25 partner organizations.

To be effective FOKUS has a Strategic Plan – Empowerment, Rights and Resources - that is decided by the annual meeting for four years at a time. The current strategic plan has just been revised as we are in the middle of its period. The areas of work are consistent for all four years and is defined by thematic areas. We prioritize 1) Women's economic rights and participation, 2) Women's right to control their own bodies – violence against women and sexual and reproductive health and rights, and 3) Women in Conflict and Crisis.

The thematic priority areas have been chosen because they are areas where FOKUS has long experience working and where we together with partners can have an added value. This is also done to be more effective and to not duplicate work done by other organizations.

Through advocacy and international development cooperation, FOKUS aim is to strengthen the international commitment and endeavors to promote women's human rights and participation in society. In addition to the programmatic work and partnerships we work internationally together with other organizations and network to strengthen advocacy and



March on November 25, 2018, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

PHOTO: Yenny Leguizamón Orjuela.

meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

FOKUS has had a role as a Norwegian National Committee for UN Women. As of 2019 we will change the role and are now signing a special agreement that makes FOKUS UN Women's preferred civil society partner in Norway. It also opens up for cooperation between FOKUS and UN Women country offices in countries where we have partners and programming.

In Norway we are visible as an outspoken organization on issues connected to global gender equality and women's empowerment issues. We do advocacy towards the government, the parliament and try to be visible in media. FOKUS is asked to be part of government meetings on relevant issues and we constantly push for more attention to issues we have as part of our strategic plan, and we push for increased funding to women's organizations in the global south.

to give visibility to issues that still need attention to achieve equality and to end discrimination.


Norway has an NGO network for organizations and activists working on issues connected to women, peace and security. NGO Forum 1325 Norway works to highlight issues connected to women, peace and security through advocacy, acting as dialogue partners with the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, monitoring the National Action Plan, organizing meetings and discussions and much more. FOKUS has since the start of the NGO Forum acted as its secretariat and coordinator.

We are members of AWID – Association for Women in

Development, work with a number of networks on women, peace and security and sexual and reproductive health and rights and also have special attention on the follow up of CEDAW – the UN Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women. When Norway is reporting to the CEDAW Committee FOKUS coordinates Norwegian civil society to write the Shadow Report.

In connection with Beijing +25 next year we have also coordinated a Norwegian shadow report, been present at the regional meeting for Europe and Central Asia and will bring 10 representatives from our partner organizations to New York in March 2020 for the Beijing +25

Connected to FOKUS work in Norway, and in connection with the work we do in Colombia, FOKUS has been part of the Norwegian Colombia Forum for a number of years. The Forum is a network of organizations and academia that jointly organize seminars, do advocacy and work in other ways to give attention and visibility to the situation in Colombia to Norwegian politicians, government, media and the public in general.

FOKUS is a member of, and has been involved in the work of ODHACHO as it is relevant to our work in Colombia. ODHACO is a network of European and international organizations and development organizations that work to promote peace and human rights in Colombia. 

# “THEY AREN’T VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE, THEY ARE SURVIVORS.”

Olga Romero is an example of struggle, resistance, and peacebuilding amid the tragedy of sexual violence.



TEXT:  
**MÓNICA LOZANO.**  
*Corporación Humanas Communications Staff.*

“

I survived, but many have died,” says Olga Romero, legal representative of *Supérate, la*

*Asociación de Mujeres Renovadoras de Vida* (Overcome! Association of Women Renovators of Life) from the department of Sucre. Hailing from Montería, Olga is a survivor of sexual violence, but more than that she is a teacher, leader, and peacebuilder. She, together with 55 indigenous, black, mixed-race, young, and adult women met on 14 November in Tolú to reiterate that peace is possible if, and only if, women, their rights, struggles, and resistance are taken into account. This was their message during the closing of the project *Ágora de Mujeres para una Colombia en Paz* (Women’s Agora for a Colombia at Peace), implemented by *Corporación Humanas*, and in thanks to the support of FOKUS in Colombia, which since 2011 has supported

some *Humanas* projects specifically related to its work on peacebuilding and women’s access to sexual and reproductive health.

“We have worked with so many women, it has been wonderful. Also, talking about the Peace Agreement has shown us that sexual violence didn’t only happen here, but also in other countries,” said Olga, and she added that, in spite of these women’s challenges, “they have been able to move forward confronting all kinds of actors. That gives us strength and motivates us to work for those of us who survived.”

It is amid these same struggles that *Supérate, la Asociación de Mujeres Renovadoras de Vida* arose in the department of Sucre. In 2014 several victims of sexual violence from the Montes de Maria region met while filing complaints and processing paperwork with the Victims’ Unit and the Attorney General’s Office. “One said to the other: ‘hey, this happened to you, dare to make a statement.’ And that is how we became friends, seeking services together,” explains Romero.

## OLGA’S STORY

Olga comes from the rural community of Macayepo, in Carmen de Bolívar, an area that, during the roughest years of Colombia’s war, was disputed by the

FARC guerrillas and paramilitaries. In fact, the victim’s family was displaced due to threats from the guerrillas.

“I had a relationship with a military man in Sincelejo, and two women had already been murdered in my town, one because she had a romantic relationship with a military man, and another because she did laundry for the military when they came through. Nevertheless, in ‘95 I accepted a job and decided to return,” she states. Four years after she returned to Macayepo, the guerrillas found out about her relationship and that is when the pressure began.

At the end of 1999, one morning at a guerrilla checkpoint when Olga was traveling to town, she, two other women, and a man were taken off the bus they were traveling on. “The guy was led one way, one woman was killed, and they took me in another direction. I told them that if they were going to kill me, to do it there, but instead they told me that the commander needed to speak with me.”

Olga began a nearly two-hour journey. Her sandals broke walking across the rocks, thorns, and streams she had to cross. “That pain in my feet has never gone away. I suffered with each step that I took. I thought they were going to kill me.”

PHOTO: Corporación Humanas.



\* Expresión de Marianne Holden en este encuentro.





## 56 women participated in the final event in Tolú.

**Fokus has been supporting Humanas projects since 2011.**

When they arrived, she was left in a tent, and not a word was uttered to her all day. That night she began to hear what sounded like a party. They brought her a glass of something—she still doesn't know what it was—but she lost consciousness and hours later woke up naked and with vaginal pain. “I do not know how many raped me,” she says looking at the floor. At dawn they led her back along the same path and left her on the road.

Forty days later she was forced to tell her family, as she was pregnant. Accompanied by her sister, she had a back-alley abortion, because at that time rape did not justify a legal abortion in Colombian. “I ended up in the hands of someone who was not a gynecologist and my uterus and small intestine were perforated. It was no longer only my soul that wept because of what I went through, but I also had physical pain.” Olga had to have her uterus removed and 14 centimeters of her small intestine were cut out, in addition to being hospitalized to treat a vaginal infection that lingered after the rape. In 2000, when her boyfriend learned about everything that had happened to her, he traveled to Cartagena to see her in the hospital and died in a traffic accident on the way.


Olga does not know how she survived. “I didn't have anything left. I couldn't return to the town, I didn't have a

boyfriend, I couldn't have children. I wanted to die.” But she has survived, thanks to the love of her husband, who she later met working in a school. She survives thanks to the daughter she adopted, and she also survives because she met the women from *Supérate*, with whom she can share her life story and stories of overcoming the pain, as the organization's name states.

“When I moved to Sincelejo I learned about the association and met other women who had the same experience. Thanks to the work with them and *Humanas*, I understood that what happened to me isn't my fault and that is when I decided that I wanted to help other women so that they could also understand,” explains Olga, who in 2016 was elected as director of the organization. She is a teacher by trade, but at times she must also be a psychologist and even a nurse. Olga is an example that, beyond everything

that the women have experienced, they are the ones rebuilding the social fabric.

“They aren't victims, they are survivors. Women who, in spite of the pain of war, continue moving forward, pushing for their dream of a country at peace,” says Marianne Holden, an officer with the FOKUS program who heard some of the stories of women like Olga at the project closing in Tolú.

Today, with the accompaniment of *Corporación Humanas*, the members of *Supérate* are participating in processes that have psycho-social services, reclaiming their rights, and carrying out actions to demand that the Colombian State implement the Peace Agreement's measures with a gender perspective so that there is land for women and protection for women leaders and their communities. They understand the importance of a public health approach in the attention given to those individuals who consume drugs and recognize the importance of actively accompanying the work carried out by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Truth Commission. That is why they are preparing to present their cases before these entities. “Peace is made with women, it must be, because we lead the resistance and we are peace promoters,” concluded the women at the end of the gathering in Tolú, confident in their continued dream of a Montes de María at peace. 



TEXT:  
**COLOMBIA  
DIVERSA**

PHOTO: Colombia Diversa.

Song and dance: the only way that Afro-Colombian communities could say what they could not scream during the times of slavery. Today, music, the thing that gave their ancestors strength, is still an avenue that lets singers from Tumaco raise their voices for the disappeared and for the relatives who are no longer present. These women know the fractures and scars the conflict has left on mothers, families and entire populations. That is why they created this group, so they could sing songs that allow them to try to heal from the pain of war.

These are the women who have made themselves heard by singing at many of the agreement ceremonies between the State and civil society. They did so again in September of this year when they sang at the signing of an agreement between *Colombia Diversa* and the Truth Commission. All of this happened in the midst of insecurity caused by the announcement that Iván Márquez, Jesús Santrich, and alias El Paisa where beginning “a new phase of armed combat.”

*“At this moment, the signing of these agreements is very important. It is not a secret that this is a very difficult moment politically in relation to the Peace Agreement and the institutions that were created as a result of the accord. What motivates and strengthens us is that society is also*

# AN AGREEMENT ON THE SEARCH **FOR TRUTH IN THE CONFLICT**

“In the framework of the Marxist-inspired revolutionary war, the guerrillas persecuted LGBT people. Apparently, they were not part of their vision in the construction of a new society” —Marcela Sánchez



*working for this process, a process that in midst of all the difficulties has achieved important things.”* These were the words of commissioner Alejandra Miller, who underscored the importance of cooperation with civil society organizations as a vital asset in the search for truth. She argued that, in this way, the Commission can reach places and people they otherwise would not have been able to, due to budget or time constraints.


Behind the signing of this agreement is FOKUS, an entity that supports the work of organizations like *Colombia Diversa* who are at the center of projects related to the armed conflict and, in this case, projects focused on the LGBT community who has suffered from the violence for more than half a century. This support has been the foundation that has allowed the voices of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans victims not to be silenced. It has also been important in order to build a bridge of understanding so that society can learn about the Commission’s work.

*“The cooperation between Colombia Diversa and the Commission represents a window of opportunity for the incorporation of truths into the official history, [truths] that for a long time have been considered uncomfortable. An example of one such truth is that, in the framework of Marxist-inspired revolutionary war, the guerrillas persecuted LGBT people. Apparently, they were not part of their vision in the construction of a new society. They built on existing prejudice against this community and created forms of control and legitimacy. This legitimacy is another of the uncomfortable truths, that in many cases it was the communities and families who called for this kind of violence,”* expressed Marcela Sánchez, director of *Colombia Diversa*.

## “This support has been the foundation that has allowed the voices of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans victims not to be silenced.”

It is not a coincidence that the singers were present during the signing of this agreement, nor is it a coincidence that they were singing *“I have the right, I have the right to*

*the truth.”* In the midst of what simply appeared to be the signing of a document, there was also a strong presence

of hope for truth, hope that with the Peace Agreement the structures of domination that have fused and overlapped with the war can be deconstructed. 

Signing of the agreement between the Truth Commission and Colombia Diversa



PHOTO: Colombia Diversa.



PHOTO: Colombia Diversa.

# DEFENDING YOUNG WOMEN'S SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Sexual and reproductive rights are a human right, therefore, young women must have guarantees to exercise them, to decide about their own bodies, and to enjoy a sex life that is free and without discrimination.



BY: **YULY ROMERO GARZON,**  
*Fondo Lunaria*  
Communications  
Staff

**I**n order to strengthen the work of grassroots organizations and/or the groups of diverse young women who work to defend and disseminate the right to healthcare, in particular the right to control their own bodies, and the sexual and reproductive rights of Colombian young women as a fundamental strategy to achieve sustainable and lasting peace, *Fondo Lunaria*, with

support from FOKUS, backs the work of six groups of young women from around the country.

Understanding the importance of knowledge, access, and the defense of sexual and reproductive rights, organizations of young women have been working in regions like Bogotá, Nariño, Putumayo, Cauca, San Pedro de Urabá, and Antioquia. These are initiatives and projects that increase visibility on the status of sexual and reproductive rights, the rhetoric and practices that limit them, and that **generate advocacy actions that will make possible a transformation of cultural, chauvinist, and patriarchal ideas so that young women can decide with whom, when, and how to fully enjoy their sexuality, guaranteeing the freedom to life and to decide about their own bodies.**



**In Pasto and San Pedro de Urabá, the young women are focused on working with high school students** from the Artemio Mendoza Carvajal and Los Almendros educational institutions, respectively. The organization *Construyendo Igualdad de Género* (Building Gender Equality) looks to create a cultural transformation, promoting young women's autonomy, gender equality, and decision-making through the arts and sports. In Nariño, the student group *Vivo mi Sexualidad en Todo mi Derecho* (Living my Sexuality with all my Rights) works from a youth perspective on the implementation of an adolescent-led space to promote sexual and reproductive rights, using pedagogical activities and dialogue among peers to address subjects like the use of contraceptives, sexually transmitted diseases, abortion, the right to independently and autonomously decide when and with whom to initiate their sex life, as well as the right to choose their sexual partners.





PHOTOS: Fondo Lunaria.

**SRR should be understood in the context of diverse women, with particular needs and independent struggles.**

sexual violence, and preventing  
unplanned teenage pregnancies.

On the other hand, alternative communication has become a key tool to create and share information and denouncements regarding the obstacles and difficulties faced by young women to access their rights. For example, in Medellín,

## the *Colectivo*

## ***Autónomas***


(Independent  
Ladies Collective)

**has established  
training  
exchanges  
between deaf**

**and hearing women that allows them, through photography and a redesigning of service roadmaps, to obtain information and learn about their sexual and reproductive rights as social subjects, in addition to rights based on a recognition of diversity.**

In Popayán, the group *Aquelarre*, a design and visual communications laboratory, has been creating a practical guide for group work to

discuss the right to safe, legal, and free abortion in the three cases contemplated in ruling C-355 of 2006, directed at youth who are leading feminist initiatives and/or a gender approach to facilitate the transformation of discriminatory ideas and practices regarding women's self-determination and autonomy over their bodies.

The political focus of these six Colombian organizations of young women is the defense of their sexual and reproductive rights and to continue breaking down the barriers that prevent them from accessing information, quality sexual education, and services. These initiatives seek to create a life free from stigmatization, discrimination, coercion, and/or violence of any kind in their communities, regions, and cities in relation to their sexuality, and the right to decide about their own bodies, sexual orientation, and gender identity. This work also demands access to quality services with dignified and humane treatment. 

# PEACE IN MOVEMENT: COLOMBIA IN OUR TIMES

This photographic report gathers young women's testimonies and experiences with peacebuilding and their daily activities in different scenarios for political advocacy.



BY: **CARTOGRAFÍA SUR**  
PHOTOGRAPHY: **ANDREA PUENTES**,  
*Cartografía Sur* Communications Staff. Proposal  
to use photo reporting as a tool for political  
advocacy, rooted in experience and visual  
representation @callejera\_fotografia.

After the 2016 signing of the *Final Agreement to End the Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace* in Havana, Cuba, Colombia was again confronted by a context where the population is still unable to access the fundamental right to life with social justice. Since the peace agreement, there have been ongoing and systematic assassinations of ex-combatants from the FARC — The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — who decided to abandon the armed conflict, in addition to social leaders throughout the Colombian territory.

The response of society and social movements has been mass protests around the country to reject violence and demand guarantees for the agreement's implementation, as well as a transformation of the living conditions of the nation, in addition to fundamental economic, social, and cultural rights. This photographic chronicle is a collection of testimonies and experiences on peacebuilding carried out by young women and their daily political advocacy efforts in different spaces. These diverse young women share their contributions, shouting their demands for a dignified life, peace with social justice, truth, reparation, an end to the war, and access to culture, art, and education. **FM**



Lucía Vargas Salinas during the filming of *Revolución Interna: dentro y fuera de los oídos*, a short documentary collectively created in *Periscopio Invertido* 2019 (Inverted Periscope 2019).

Woman from the Indigenous Guard of the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC- *Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca*) in the Temporary Humanitarian Refuge, April 2019.







Lucía Vargas Salinas is a Colombian rapper who has been on the hip hop scene for about 19 years. She began in southern Bogotá and, as she puts it, "I am from the places my feet have walked." For Lucía, being a woman on

the hip hop scene has meant solidarity, respect, and love. "I contribute to peace through art, music, and making my country's problems visible, such as the armed conflict, and I do all this from other spaces outside of Colombia, too."



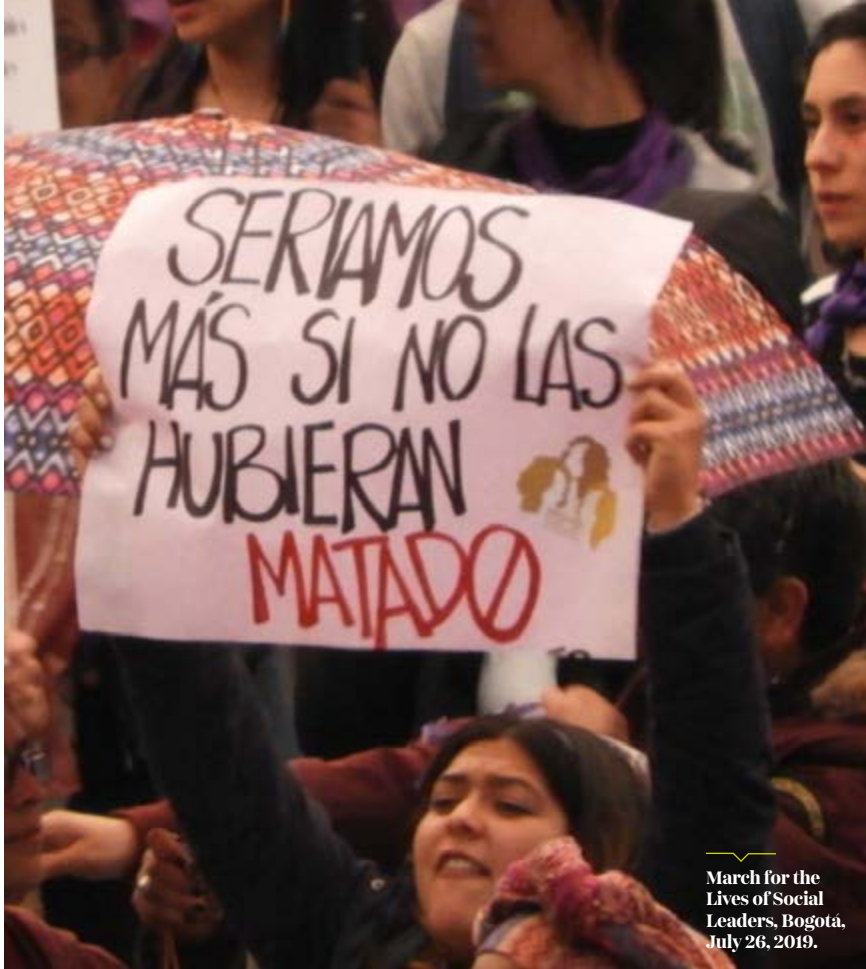
To answer the question, "why did you decide to rejoin civilian life?" she responded, "because I had the opportunity to learn, to unearth memories at a time of reconciliation based on my condition as a woman, student, and ex-guerrilla from the FARC."

In relation to the memory processes for Colombia in Our Times, Alexandra considers that memory "is reconstructed by each individual and, therefore, in spaces like *Periscopio Invertido* where there is a wide diversity of ideas and emotions."

Alexandra Marín, photographs from her personal file and background material for *Al Aire: RADIO UTOPIA* (On Air: RADIO UTOPIA) a short documentary, collectively created in *Periscopio Invertido 2019*.



Young activist in Gustavo Petro's 2018 presidential campaign.



March for the Lives of Social Leaders, Bogotá, July 26, 2019.

PHOTO: Yenny Leguizamón Orjuela.



TEXT:  
**YENNY LEGUIZAMÓN ORJUELA**, FOKUS in Colombia Communications Officer

This principle is reflected in point 2 of the Final Agreement, signed between the government and the former FARC guerrillas, which includes political participation measures “that not only look to guarantee women’s right to participation and to promote and strengthen their role in political and social representation spaces, but also proposes the creation of full guarantees to participate in politics and the opposition, and the creation of scenarios that promote social harmony, tolerance, and non-stigmatization.”<sup>1</sup>

The murder of social leaders puts at risk this point of the agreement, which is fundamental to overcome one of the structural causes of political violence in Colombia—exclusion from political participation. After the agreement’s signature, the murder of social leaders increased. For example, in the first semester of 2019, it increased by 3%, in comparison with the same period in 2018.<sup>2</sup> Between November 24, 2016 and July 2019, 80 leaders were assassinated.<sup>3</sup> In the first months of 2020, four women leaders and 24 men leaders have been assassinated.<sup>4</sup> In

- 1 Third report to verify the implementation of the Gender Approach in the Final Peace Agreement in Colombia, executed by International Verifiers, Felipe González and Jose Mujica (A.F. 6.3.2)
- 2 La cuota de lideresas sociales agredidas en Colombia, Newspaper el Espectador, consulted January 30 <https://www.elespectador.com/columbia2020/pais/la-cuota-de-lideresas-sociales-agredidas-en-colombia-articulo-885010>
- 3 Database made by the Movement, Las Mujeres Contamos, using several human rights sources.
- 4 LÍDERES Y LÍDERESAS SOCIALES Y DEFENSORES DE DERECHOS HUMANOS ASESINADOS EN 2020\* <http://www.indepaz.org.co/paz-al-liderazgo-social/>

# WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Women’s political participation in Colombia faces two major obstacles: first, the murder of social leaders and, second, low-level citizen support for women candidates running for elected positions, in addition to the non-compliance of the Quotas Law for political parties and movements, as was demonstrated in the last local elections held in 2019.

**T**o speak of political participation is to speak of citizens strengthening democracy by influencing the

course that the society they live in should take. It is for that reason that guaranteeing women’s participation is of vital importance to strengthening the political initiatives that contribute to peacebuilding.



Colombia there are not full guarantees for the participation of women and men social leaders.

With the murder of women leaders, society loses. The time and effort required for a woman to construct her leadership role is incalculable, even more so in a society like Colombia's, which implies more than just breaking down the patriarchal patterns that limit the development of these leadership roles.

The murder of women social leaders is additionally characterized by **attacks suffered against their bodies and sexuality**,<sup>5</sup> which is understood as an exercise in punishing their leadership. This can immobilize other women who want to assume a leadership role in their areas of interest, directly affecting women's right to participation.

In 2019, the first local elections were held since the signature of the peace agreement with new topics of interest emerging, such as corruption, which took first place in the country's political and media agenda. This subject determined the results of the last elections, leading mainly to the election of female and male candidates who proposed the transparent management of public resources.

Of course, the results still demonstrate that the political castes that move within the framework of corruption maintain their political power, but it has also opened up the possibility of supporting other political proposals.

Another indicator from the elections is that the political participation of Colombian women and men has increased since the anti-corruption

consultation vote in 2018, achieving a 55% participation rate. Different political analysts see a positive change in the anti-corruption vote and the October 2019 elections, which is most evident in the larger cities.

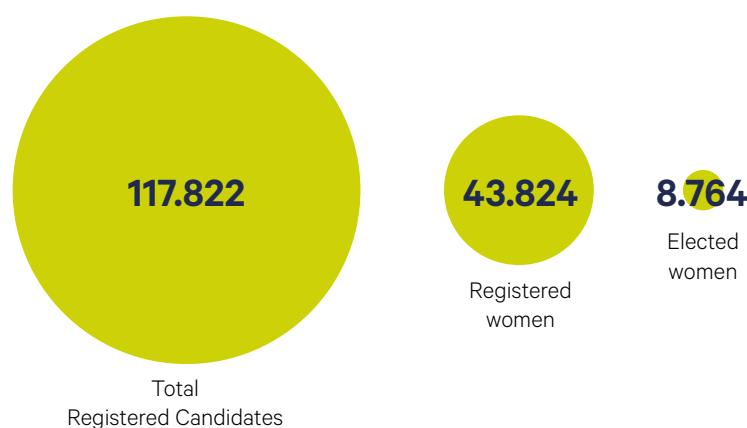
Nevertheless, the results in relation to women are not encouraging, even though three important positions—such as Mayor of Bogotá, Mayor of Santa Marta, and Governor of the Atlántico department—were won by women, it is also true that, in general, there were setbacks in relation to women's participation, which was already low. See graph 1.

Of the women who reached these positions of representation, to what extent have they included a women's agenda? Being a woman is not a guarantee of government plans with a gender perspective. These elections demonstrated progress through the **Estamos Listas (Women are Ready)** women's political movement, which was born as a political proposal in the city of Medellín after the 2016 loss of the plebiscite vote, obtaining 28,078 votes and a seat on the Council of Medellín.

Of the three most important positions in which women were elected, two have points in their government agendas regarding gender. Claudia López, Mayor of Bogotá, established an alliance with the women's movement and her government program includes issues such as: strategies to eliminate violence against women, the care economy, and participatory budgets with a gender perspective. Virna Johnson Salcedo, Mayor of Santa Marta, filed a proposal before the city's council to create the Women's Office, and Elsa Noguera, the new Governor of Atlántico, has incorporated, as concerns inclusion, the empowerment of women and girls.

Guaranteeing women's participation is essential to consolidate peace. This is a challenge that once again is fundamental after the signature of the peace agreement, because the strengthening of illegal armed groups in coordination with drug trafficking rings, excessive exploitation of the territories, and corruption means that protecting these leaders is fundamental to guarantee the construction of true peace for all Colombians. <sup>FM</sup>

Graph 1. 2019 Elections<sup>6</sup>



5 <https://www.verificacion.cerac.org.co/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Tercer-Informe-de-Implementaci%C3%B3n-del-Enfoque-de-G%C3%A9nero-STCVI.pdf>

6 En casi la mitad de los municipios no hubo candidatas a la alcaldía, <https://www.eltiempo.com/elecciones-colombia-2019/equidad-de-genero-en-politica-cerrar-la-brecha-tomaria-mas-de-100-anos-426374>



PHOTO: Fondo Lunaria.

# “PATUNA”<sup>1</sup> WOMEN IN HEART AND SOUL

“May young people take the reins to build a new country, a homeland the size of our dreams.” —Mayra Moreno.



TEXT: **YULY ROMERO GARZON,**  
Fondo Lunaria  
Communications  
Professional

**T**he afternoon comes to an end and at the bus terminal in Neiva, Mayra Moreno boards a small truck, the only possible means of transportation to the rural area called Los Andes in the municipality of San Vicente del Caguán, part of the El Pato-Balsillas Farmer

Reserve. She is tired and anxious. Mayra has accepted the challenge of representing the CoMPaz youth network at the Annual Farmers’ Festival. This festival is also a setting to share the advances reached in their work with youth and women, where they help them develop their own voices in the defense of freedom of speech and the construction of communities with gender equality and social justice.

Along the way, following a bumpy earthen road that leads to Los Andes, the green Farmer Reserve emerges, little by little. Women, men, boys and girls recognize Mayra and her work as a part of the CoMPaz youth network to strengthen youth leadership. They especially recognize

the voices, work, and agenda of the young female farmers of El Pato that allow for the construction of peaceful territories, the reconstruction of the communities, and the defense of their region. As political actors with rights, they share the same motivation; to generate dialogue, resilience, and sorority so they can live in harmony.

Mayra first arrives in Los Andes after nightfall because of landslides that delayed them along the way. She tells us that during the festival they will present a play titled “Women and Peace,” made with the participation of young people from Balsillas, and a compilation of stories and letters written by *patuna* women with their bodies, souls, and hearts, titled “Clandestine Duels.” These two pieces seek to make young female farmers’ participation in peacebuilding more visible through art and culture. The presentations also seek to present

1 The demonym for people from Neiva.



and explain the region's historic memory and its ongoing struggle for the implementation of the peace agreement.

Dawn in the farmer reserve is full of sounds. As is usual in Los Andes, one can already hear people moving about who need to wake up early to get ready for work. The community has been preparing for the opening of the traditional farmers' festival for days. The festival is also a way to collect funds to improve education in the area and local infrastructure. At the Los Andes school, various community members are gathered to organize the logistics of this annual event that involves eight local zones of the farmer reserve. The activities prepared for the festival are a mix of art, music, sports, and work, all aimed at constructing a space to recognize the struggle, peace, and resistance of the farmers.

## May the farmer, indigenous, women's, environmentalist, and youth communities who have lived through the war be the ones to determine the actions taken for peace.

The elders that are preparing for the festival take the opportunity to chat. Their conversations are a mixture of nostalgia and relief that they have lived to see a transformation, leaving behind years of violence. They remember sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, and other family members who were lost to the armed conflict. Every now and then an uncomfortable silence takes over and it is barely comprehensible that this place, a valley connected to the eastern Andes mountain



**VIDEO:** interview with Mayra. <https://youtu.be/MWCL6K-PAYY>



range, home to kind and welcoming people, that has had very little State presence, has lived through countless armed confrontations, bombings, displacement, enforced disappearances, and arbitrary arrests.

It is precisely in the context of this reality that the CoMPaz youth network thinks that all the organizations and social movements should prioritize work on the proposals to materialize peace for the communities of farmers, indigenous peoples, women, environmentalists, and youth. The idea is that these communities should become the protagonists in the construction of

territorial power so that all who have suffered from a lack of well-being and have lived through the horrors of war, can be the source of actions that will make it possible to overcome over 50 years of armed conflict.

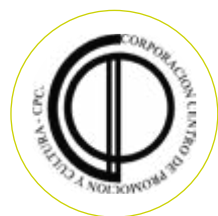
However, no silence is capable of threatening the joy that is felt when the community opens the Farmers' Festival that same afternoon. Now everything is ready; the tents are all set up, the lunch is ready, and the music is turned up to its fullest

volume. The agenda of activities is read out loud and the groups of young people await their moment to perform dressed in traditional outfits from the region. Between every dance Mayra and some of the other young women participating in the CoMPaz youth network's social initiatives read some of the narratives and letters from "Clandestine Duels." The *patuna* women have poured their pain, joy, fears, and hopes into these narratives along with what it has meant for them to build a community that holds on to and remembers its past so that they can teach the children about the importance of belonging to this region and leaving behind the violence.

The afternoon comes to an end. The festival is still not over. It will continue until Monday, a bank holiday. However, as she is getting ready to return to Neiva, Mayra shares some of the youth network's motivations to continue supporting social initiatives that allow them to *"propose spaces for participation, discussion, and celebration in order to plan post-conflict scenarios where new territorial relationships can be woven out of a mentality based on a culture of peace, so that the young people can take the reins to build a new country, a homeland the size of our dreams."* **FM**

# BOGOTÁ WOMEN AND YOUTH WORKING FOR TERRITORIAL PEACEBUILDING

La construcción de paz nos ha permitido tejer lazos en los distintos territorios con mujeres diversas, populares y jóvenes de Bogotá.



TEX: CENTRO DE PROMOCIÓN Y CULTURA - CPC

Peacebuilding has allowed us to forge relationships in different regions with diverse, grassroots, and young women from Bogotá. In shared spaces, they have continuously expressed concerns to us about the minimal advances in the Peace Agreement's implementation, both nationally and within the District of Bogotá.

The *Centro de Promoción y Cultura*—CPC, Center for Promotion and Culture— together with social, cultural, and women's organizations from the District of Bogotá and with support from FOKUS, works on different territorial-based peacebuilding initiatives using pedagogical and cultural activities. By means of these activities there is a constant call to recognize the importance of Bogotá's

territories as spaces for peacebuilding and information-sharing on the agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC, signed in November 2016.

On 25 and 26 October the ***District Gathering of Women Peacebuilders from the Territories: Monitoring the Agreement's Implementation in Bogotá*** was held at the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation, where women and youth analyzed implementation and compared it with the proposals from the *District Agenda for Grassroots and Diverse Women for Peacebuilding*. The women expressed their deception at the minimal advances in the agreement's implementation on a national level and the almost null implementation in Bogotá.

Over the two days, the group identified the importance of starting advocacy efforts to promote a continued and more effective implementation of the agreement, taking into account, for example, that there has been increased violence in the regions due to an as-of-yet unresolved armed conflict.

They also called on the Women's Social Movement to insist on the agreement's implementation in Bogotá. Even though it is not considered a prioritized territory, it is important to recognize the city's context in the development of the armed conflict and as a territory with a concentration of the armed conflict's victims, ex-combatants, human rights organizations, social leaders, and diverse urban and rural women from the grassroots. That is why it is necessary to promote recognition of these women's and community-based social organizations' efforts in favor of territorial peacebuilding.

The Grassroots Carnival for Life, organized by the CPC for the last 31 years, is a historic space that is conceived as a carnival for the defense of the human rights of the inhabitants of the area. It is recognized by the community as a space to defend peace.

The motto for this year was *The Right to Live in Peace*; the defense of social leaders and, at this moment, the Nasa Indigenous Peoples in particular, is a call for Bogotá's residents to act in solidarity in response to the humanitarian crisis faced in the country's regions, the threats and murder of social leaders, environmentalists, defenders of human rights and the peace agreement, ex-combatants, as well as the exacerbation of violence against women and the feminicides that are reported each day.

This year the grassroots and social initiatives have been strengthened, forging collective resistance through artistic, cultural, and community actions carried out by women and men who continue to believe that a country at peace is possible. **FM**



Carnival for Life

PHOTO: Centro de Promoción y Cultura CPC.





PHOTO: Mesa por la Vida y la Salud de las Mujeres.

a public discussion on the need to fully decriminalize abortion. This initiative, called “Just Cause,”<sup>2</sup> is led by *La Mesa* with the support of different women’s, feminist and human rights organizations, as well as academia, and it aims to eliminate abortion as a criminalized conduct from the Criminal Code and advance toward a cultural transformation of the ideas and stigmas surrounding abortion and its regulation in the healthcare system.

The event paved the way for new ideas and strategies to spread the influence of “Just Cause” at the local level with the help and effort of young activists, who have an important role in this fight. Young people from Barranquilla, Manizales, Pereira, Armenia, Pasto, Cúcuta, Cali, Antioquia, Bogotá, Huila, and Ibagué presented their projects for promoting sexual and reproductive rights from different perspectives, such as indigenous cultures, the arts, education, communications, and interaction on social media, so that women all over the country can access accurate information on their rights.

Current challenges, in addition to possible horizons for this project were also a central topic during the event. The different organizations came up with new ideas and opportunities for interaction and cooperation between the different organizations and groups. Each group emphasized that they would continue to work together for the defense and guarantee of the right to abortion in Colombia, from their different contexts, abilities, and experiences. The strengthening of this work and cooperation will, without a doubt, contribute to improve the access of girls and women to safe abortion, and FOKUS has been an excellent ally in working towards this goal. <sup>FM</sup>

# UNITED FOR THE RIGHT TO ABORTION IN COLOMBIA

On the 15th and 16th of October, more than 28 young women and activists from different regions of the country met in Bogotá responding to the call from the “Mesa por la Vida y la Salud de las Mujeres,”<sup>1</sup> to establish new alliances in favor of the right to abortion.



TEXT: **JULIANA MARTÍNEZ LONDOÑO.**

Coordinator of the *La Mesa por la Vida y la Salud de las Mujeres* (Roundtable for Women’s Life and Health) from March 2017 to December 2019.

**T**he *Mesa por la Vida y la Salud de las Mujeres* is a feminist collective that has been working for the defense of Colombian women’s sexual and reproductive rights since 1998. The right to abortion, regardless of the circumstances, is particularly important. Within the framework of their work in different regions, they arranged a meeting to exchange and discuss the impact of their joint

activities for the recognition of the right to abortion in the country.

The round table has built alliances with local women’s and feminist organizations from different regions of the country to strengthen the defense of the right to abortion. Through an assessment of the implementation of the current legal framework, public official and citizen trainings, disseminating clear information, building networks, and other communications and education actions, the organizations have positioned issues related to reproductive autonomy and the free choice to maternity and abortion. In this way, they are becoming leading organizations with a work agenda on sexual and reproductive rights in their regions.

During this event, young female leaders from these organizations shared their experience in activism and opened

1 Round Table for Women’s Lives and Health

2 Causa Justa.

# WOMEN IN THE SYSTEM FOR JUSTICE, TRUTH, **REPARATION, AND GUARANTEES FOR NON-REPETITION**

Women meet with the SIVJRNR to learn about the roadmap to access truth, justice, reparation, and non-repetition from a gender perspective.



TEXT: **MARÍA PAULA ROA POLO,**  
Head of Communications  
Corporación Jurídica Yira Castro

**T**he Yira Castro Legal Corporation –CJYC, Corporación Jurídica Yira Castro– is a non-profit, non-governmental, human rights organization that was founded in 2001. Its primary objective is to defend and demand the respect and guarantee of human rights for vulnerable populations. To do this, CJYC uses legal and political actions, on a national and international level, to achieve higher levels of social justice in Colombia.

CJYC is a FOKUS partner in the Women Peace and Security Program, making it possible to implement a cross-cutting gender perspective in the work areas of training, advocacy, and litigation in relation to the defense of human rights, land, and territory, among others. These actions are carried out in the accompanied regions and the capital.

In this context, CJYC held a **“Regional Gathering on Roadmaps for Women’s Participation in the SIVJRNR with a Gender Perspective”** on 18 September, 2019 in Bogotá. This gathering benefited from the presence of women from the departments of Meta, Sucre, Nariño, Cundinamarca, Magdalena, and Cauca, as well as delegates from the Special Jurisdiction for Peace –JEP, the Commission for the Clarification of Truth –CEV, and the Search Unit for People Allegedly Disappeared –UBPD.

The gathering was particularly important due to the participation of women victims of the armed conflict who have strengthened their community leadership, women heads of household, women who were victims and continue to resist, and women who are accompanied by CJYC, thus generating a space to share experiences and wisdom on an issue that is as little known in the country and “post conflict” as is a gender perspective in violent contexts and peace-building.

As the FOKUS program “promotes the protection of women and girls in conflicts and guarantees them a role in peace negotiations and reconstruction after an armed conflict,”<sup>1</sup> the Regional Gathering also sought to vindicate these women as subjects of rights and political protagonists who, through their struggles and experiences, contribute to initiatives that increase dignity, resilience, and peacebuilding in their regions.

The Regional Gathering was divided into two sessions. The first was

**“They identified patterns of physical, sexual, and psychological violence that contributed to the violation of women’s rights in the armed conflict.”**

dedicated to integration among women from different regions where patterns of physical, sexual, and psychological violence were identified and contribute to the violation of woman’s rights in the armed conflict.

Some women who have ended up as the sole individuals responsible

1 <https://www.fokuskvinner.no/colombia/mujeres-construyen-paz/> [Recovered 13 November 2019]





PHOTO: Corporación Jurídica Yira Castro.

Regional  
Meeting

for their homes have confronted the difficult task of advancing the well-being of their households amid a misogynistic system that repeatedly tells them: *“these are not tasks for a woman,” “a single woman cannot do that,” “women do not know about agricultural work,” “this is work for men,” “women who do not fix themselves up are ugly”*; phrases that disregard women and reinforce the collective idea that a woman does not have the same capacities as a man, and even more so if it is agricultural work. These are views that are established in society and contribute to the oppression of and discrimination against women.

The women who participated in the gathering also shared the concern of not being taken into account in the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Non-Repetition – SIVJRNR, created by the Havana Agreement, as women who seek and build peace. They do not see how the System’s different entities guarantee their rights and provide them with tools to access the system.

The second part of the gathering sought to clarify the women’s doubts and discontent regarding the Comprehensive System. The

SIVJRNR’s three bodies (JEP, CEV, and UBPD), presented the eight thematic focuses of the gender perspective included in the Peace Agreement, and how to participate in each of the entities. Thanks to this space for the entities and victims, the women at the gathering were able to contribute to the participation roadmaps proposed by the entities for the increased inclusion of women in the SIVJRNR. The proposals are as follows:

- Permanently promote a reflection on the stigmatization of women.
- Avoid statements, practices, or prejudices that reinforce gender stereotypes.
- Take into account situations of disability or belonging to ethnic groups, as women are diverse.
- The data bases created must take into account gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity.
- The institutions must create methodologies that make it possible for them to travel to the regions, instead of the women having to travel to the entities’ offices, which are generally located in capital cities, because in many occasions it is difficult for the women to drop their obligations to travel to the cities.
- For a humanitarian search to take

place, information must first be collected from other entities: the Attorney General’s Office, Forensic Medicine, the Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office, to avoid the repetition of prior declarations.

- Adapt the spaces in the entities’ offices so that women can go with children or elderly individuals who are under their care.
- Implement differentiated attention measures for men, women, boys and girls, and people with different sexual orientations or gender identities, among others.
- Women are tired of dealing with institutions that do not fulfill their responsibilities by stating that they are “not the competent authority,” forcing them to go through bureaucratic proceedings in a variety of entities instead of providing coordinated and comprehensive services.

Finally, it is important to highlight the importance of these kinds of spaces that seek to vindicate women’s role in the post-agreement society, recognizing their situation as victims of the Colombian armed conflict, but also their indispensable role in peacebuilding. These spaces are necessary to strengthen women’s rights and their recognition as political subjects in Colombian society. **FM**

# A TWO-WAY STREET

“In the medical world there are more doctors who object to and stigmatize women’s sexual and reproductive rights than those who respect them.”



TEXT:  
**LADY ALBA,**  
*Fundación  
Oriéntame  
Project  
Coordinator*

Rosa and Catherine are two women who have different perspectives but have both experienced the journey involved in trying to exercise women’s sexual and reproductive rights in distant rural areas or in the territorial spaces of training and reincorporation (ETCR<sup>1</sup>).

The first perspective is that of the patient, Rosa, a quiet woman with downcast eyes and slow movements, who was invited by a friend to a sexual and reproductive health brigade held in the Charras-

## SRR outreach must continue in the face of the Constitutional Court’s review of its decision on VTP.

Guaviare ETCR. She is 29 years old and lives in precarious conditions on the other side of the river. Her neighbor decided to take her to the brigade because she knew about the domestic abuse that Rosa faces at the hands of her partner, that her three children were taken into protective custody by the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare, and that after the birth of her last child, she

wasn’t provided with a contraception method at the hospital.

During the doctor’s visit, she was given a pregnancy test as the doctor had already identified several risk factors. When talking with her about the positive result, she raised her voice for the first time to express her serious anxiety: “You mean I am expecting?! I can’t have another child, I told him [referring to her partner] that if I got pregnant again that it couldn’t continue... he didn’t let me use protection, he doesn’t do anything, and now we don’t have a healthcare card.”

On the other side is Catherine, a general practitioner with a healthcare provider in Ipiales. At her doctor’s office it is common to see women requesting a voluntary termination of pregnancy (VTP). However, it is very difficult for her to immediately respond due to the lack of services in her workplace. She is respectful of women’s sexual and reproductive rights, but recognizes

that she has colleagues who do not provide women with information even though they know that for many women, for example women migrants, their journey will not only be longer but also more dangerous unless they can find safe services. She also acknowledges that as an employee there is little she can do.

Both sides of the story reflect how access to sexual and reproductive health services is a two-way street. First, is a social context where gender



PHOTO: Fundación Oriéntame.

<sup>1</sup> Translator’s note: ETCR’s are reincorporation spaces created for ex-combatants from the FARC under the Peace Agreement.





Sexual and reproductive health Brigades, carried out by Oriéntame with the support of FOKUS.

PHOTO: Fundación Oriéntame.

neighbors such as Rosa's are not afraid to advocate for other women and so they can keep replicating knowledge in their communities.

On the other hand, Catherine was strengthened as a healthcare professional interested in sexual and reproductive rights through the project "Women Without Barriers." The project's actions have made it possible to accompany several hospitals in the regions, including the institution where Catherine works, and also make assistance available to manage, organize, and implement first-level complexity VTPs. In the case of Dr. Catherine, this support gave her access to training on the Manual Vacuum Aspiration (MVA) technique. This is a technique used to provide safe and quality outpatient abortions, making it possible for women from rural areas to avoid a trip to the country's capital or other cities to receive attention.

violence goes unpunished—as is the case with Rosa's abuser—where there is a lack of empowerment and high-levels of disinformation, as is shown by all of the obstacles that she has to face to exercise her reproductive right. This is expressed in her wish to "not have more children who will be taken by the Institute for Family Welfare." Second, is an institutional structure that does not provide a timely response, and which has limited services due to a lack of administrative decisions and political will to provide sexual and reproductive health services that take into account women's specific needs.

Luckily for Rosa and Catherine, there have been some favorable changes. Thanks to a FOKUS and Oriéntame initiative that, by means of the Sexual and Reproductive Rights program, works to reduce access barriers and increase Colombian women's

reproductive autonomy. The program carries out Sexual and Reproductive Health brigades and strengthens hospitals, youth collectives, and healthcare professionals.

Rose, who lives in an isolated rural area, could not access the long-term

## To guarantee Sexual and Reproductive Rights, raising awareness with health workers is imperative.

contraceptive method she was looking for or safe and quality abortion services; a situation that would not have been resolved if it hadn't been for the health brigade offered within project 1325 which, in addition to providing services, also seeks to provide information on rights so that

In this crucial moment for the peace agreement's implementation, and in the context of a revision of the Constitutional Court decision regarding the right to a voluntary termination of pregnancy in Colombia, it is very important to continue raising awareness with healthcare professionals,

strengthening institutions, and empowering women on their reproductive autonomy so that legal rights are reflected in practice, meaning that all Colombian women can


enjoy a healthy and safe sex life. Rosa is just one example of the thousands of women who still do not receive quality care and Catherine is an exception to the rule in a world where there are more doctors who object and stigmatize patients than those who respect their rights. 



Photo FOKUS 2016  
Carnival for Life.  
Organized by Centro  
de Promoción y  
Cultura (Center  
for Promotion and  
Culture). Bogotá.

