

Magazine

FOKUS women

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Colombia and Guatemala



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Responsible editor

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EDITORIAL

In this 6th issue, FOKUS Women's magazine continues to share the reflections of the 18 partners of the programmes in Colombia and Guatemala with its readers. The partner organizations present analyses of the political contexts that open doors to advance the agendas of women in their diversity. Their articles also point out the significant barriers that persist when it comes to ensuring that women, young women and girls enjoy lives free of violence, fully exercise their sexual and reproductive rights, and can live in countries with consolidated peace processes.

The analyses of the partners, as well as the reflections of FOKUS in Norway and Colombia, allow us to have greater clarity on the challenges that persist. Women's and feminist movements and development cooperation must pay attention to these in order to advance agendas that assertively incorporate the demands and proposals of women in the global South.

Colombia and Guatemala require broad support from the international community in order to strengthen democracy and emphasise public policies that allow for advances in human rights that lead to full citizenship.

In this issue we interview the Norwegian ambassador to Mexico and Central America. She shares her reflections on the political situation in Guatemala and on the need to advance the full enjoyment of women's rights, with a special emphasis on indigenous women.

We would like to thank all the organisations that have written parts of their reflections and we invite you to read, analyse and debate what has been published here. 

COLOMBIA AND GUATEMALA: BETWEEN HOPE AND REALITY

The structural changes required in Colombia and Guatemala are long-term. Concrete progress is needed in both countries to lay the foundations for ongoing transformations.

The Petro/Márquez government in Colombia and the Arévalo/Herrera government in Guatemala were elected due to great social discontent. They were also elected due to the hope of achieving changes and transformations for those who have had fewer opportunities in both countries. Those are the people who have been excluded from social policies and, therefore, have not been able to fully exercise their political, social, cultural, environmental, gender and other rights. Two long years into the government of the Historical Pact, in the case of Colombia, and seven months into the government of the Seed Movement, social movements and the women's movement in general still agree that in both countries there are many aspects to advance real change. However, this is with a timeframe that is too short, since in both cases the presidential terms are four years.

The time that has passed has allowed us to see the differences between one govern-

ment proposal and the other more clearly, when they in principle could have been considered similar. The Petro/Márquez government is a left-wing government that proposes that progress must be made towards democratic capitalism, in order to then make more profound transformations. These transformations imply directly confronting the great economic and political powers that have held power for decades. The Arévalo/Herrera government, on the other hand, is a social democratic government that does not necessarily confront the economic and

The consolidation of democracy involves understanding that governments that have an agenda based on social and human rights policies, require the economic and political backing of the international community.



TEXT AND
PHOTO:
**REGIONAL
OFFICE IN LATIN
AMERICA**



political powers. It rather attempts dialogue with some of them, despite the discontent of the social movement and the indigenous movement in particular. These movements do not see this as a sign of progress, but rather as a negotiation of key aspects that should not be negotiated if structural transformations are required.

With long-standing social movements in both countries, it is clear that one hundred percent of the expectations are not left in the hands of the governments in power. There are many actions that are maintained despite the fact that the governments in power are more open to dialogue. Thus, actions of resistance are maintained, but also actions of construction from the collective and com-



munity levels to advance the transformations that the movements identify as priorities. The agenda of the social movement, and of the women's movement in particular, is not subsumed by the governmental agenda. There are undoubtedly more favourable spaces for dialogue and interlocution, but this is not generalised. There are still officials in state institutions who are reluctant to change and who place explicit or implicit limitations on change.

The international community has an important role to play in both countries. The consolidation of democracy requires understanding that governments that have an agenda based on social and human rights policies require economic resources and political backing for their development and implementation. In addition, they must consider that maintaining support and consolidating the strengthening of civil society is not only key to advancing rights demands, but also to strengthening democratic channels and participation.

In both Guatemala and Colombia, the governments have the 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a reference point. However, for this to become a reality it is imperative to recognise the inequalities at the global level and those existing in these contexts due to racism, exclusion, misogyny and classism, among others.

From the perspective of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, whose relational philosophies involve the human and the non-human, the processes of social transformation must not be fragmented. Broad and collective visions are required that allow for the integration of multiple reflections in order to advance towards the common good.

This ancestral knowledge must open up possibilities to consider that the



Meeting of the
Colombian Regional
Office in Guatemala

From the perspective of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, whose relational philosophies involve the human and the non-human, the processes of social transformation must not be fragmented. Broad and collective visions are required that allow for the integration of multiple reflections to advance towards the common good.

struggles and demands of indigenous, Afro, peasant, urban and LGBT women must be increasingly articulated not only among themselves, but also with other sectors. This is in order to take

advantage of political junctures with governments that should be favourable to the demands of social sectors.

The demand to end violence against women, young women and girls, to advance in the realisation of sexual and reproductive rights and to take concrete steps towards the achievement of agreements that allow peace to materialise in the territories, is part of the agendas that international cooperation must support. This is with the understanding that the transformations that are required are structural

in nature, involving in-depth debates on the economic model, militarisation and the impact of climate change, as elements that put the life of humanity in general at risk. ^{FM}



Press conference:
Monitoring the
situation of sexual
and reproductive
rights in El Mirador.

THE SECULAR STATE IN GUATEMALA: **GUARANTEEING HUMAN RIGHTS**

Enforcing the secular state in Guatemala is essential to protect human rights and ensure equality and justice. Despite pressure from conservative groups, this struggle is crucial to guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and the LGTBIQ+ population.



In Guatemala, guaranteeing the secular state is essential to protect human rights and guarantee the equality of all citizens. The Political Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala establishes, in Article 36, that the State guarantees freedom of religion and worship. In addition, Article 73 guarantees freedom of education and Article 74 prohibits the obligation to receive religious instruction in state educational establishments. These articles provide a legal framework for the religious neutrality of the state, which ensures that no religious belief is favoured or discriminated against.

CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES

Despite these principles, Guatemala faces significant challenges in maintaining a truly secular state. The influence of conservative and anti-rights groups in politics and education is notable. These groups have lobbied against laws promoting comprehensive sex education and contraceptive use. This power is reflected in the opposition to the Youth Law, where they successfully lobbied for the revision of key articles on sex education and sexual and reproductive health.

In addition, the Guatemalan constitution includes guarantees for religious institutions, such as tax exemptions and the state's contribution to their upkeep. However, religious instruction in public schools and religious events in Congress are examples of the influence of religion in the country's political sphere.

IMPORTANCE OF THE SECULAR STATE

A secular state in Guatemala is a guarantor of religious freedom for all

people and ensures democracy and inclusion of all citizens, especially the most vulnerable sectors such as those representing ethnic and sexual diversity. A secular state ensures that public policies are based on principles of equality, justice and evidence, not on faith and dogma, in order to make substantive progress in areas such as sexual and reproductive health and comprehensive education. It is also crucial for the prevention of pregnancy and forced marriages among girls and adolescents.

A secular state ensures that public policies are based on equality, justice, and evidence, protecting the rights of all people.

For children and youth, a secular state allows for an education free of religious dogmas, focused on scientific knowledge and respect for human rights, which is essential to form critical citizens who are aware of their rights and responsibilities. Comprehensive sexuality education, for example, is a key tool for preventing sexual violence and promoting informed and responsible sexuality.

In a secular state, public policies can focus on gender equality and sexual and reproductive rights without the interference of religious dogmas that often limit their rights and freedoms. In a secular context, women can access sexual and reproductive health services and make informed decisions about their bodies and their lives.


LGTBIQ+ people find in a secular state a guarantee that their rights

will be respected and protected without discrimination based on religious prejudice. Equality before the law is a fundamental principle that allows for the fight against homophobia and transphobia, promoting a more inclusive society that respects diversity.

THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY GROUP AND ITS IMPACT

In this context, the Multidisciplinary Group stands out as a political platform made up of civil society organizations and individuals working to promote sexual and reproductive rights in Guatemala. This group focuses on advocacy and the generation of information through the Mirador, a tool that monitors and evaluates the state of sexual and reproductive rights in the country.

The actions of the Multidisciplinary Group are crucial to advance the implementation of public policies that respect the secular state and protect human rights. The advocacy carried out by this group seeks to influence legislation and governmental decision-making, ensuring that the principles of equality and justice are respected in all areas of public and private life.

The secular state in Guatemala is a fundamental guarantee for the protection of human rights. Despite present challenges and obstacles, it is crucial to maintain and strengthen a secular state to ensure equality and respect for diversity, especially for the most vulnerable sectors of society. The work of organisations such as the Multidisciplinary Group is fundamental to move in this direction and build a fairer and more inclusive country. 

BETWEEN HOPE AND CHALLENGES

Colombia is at a crucial moment in its history, marked by great possibilities, but also by important challenges. This article takes a look at the exercise of sexual and reproductive autonomy in the department of Chocó.



TEXT AND
PHOTOS:
**FUNDACIÓN
ORIENTAME**



At the national level, Colombia has made progress in promoting sexual and reproductive rights compared to other countries in the region. The implementation of the Final Peace Agreement has opened spaces to discuss gender and sexual rights issues in peripheral and conflict-affected regions. However, the regional disparity is notable. In Chocó, the indicators of health and well-being are considerably lower than the national average, reflecting a history of neglect and marginalisation.

ACCESS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN CHOCÓ

The department of Chocó presents serious difficulties in terms of access to sexual and reproductive health, as

well as high levels of gender-based violence. This is reflected in alarming indicators such as, for example, that the maternal mortality ratio in Chocó is 83.4. This figure is double of that of the national level, according to data from the National Institute of Health in 2023. Vulnerability is high among adolescents, who represent 44% of the victims of sexual violence, and 9.3% of girls and adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19 have had at least one child.

These indicators reflect the complexity of addressing the intersectionality presented by the population of Chocó, where sexual and reproductive health must be addressed not only from the perspective of access to health, but also from a rights-based and intercultural approach that requires consideration of

Improving access to sexual and reproductive health is urgently needed to ensure the well-being of women and girls in the region.



factors such as poverty, the geographical dispersion of the population, the lack of health infrastructure and the shortage of qualified medical personnel. Women in Chocó, especially young women and those living in rural areas, face significant barriers in accessing sexual and reproductive health services, such as contraception, safe childbirth and prenatal care.

In Bahía Solano, where the MADERA (Mujeres Aliadas por sus Derechos Reproductivos y Autonomía) project takes place, conditions are even more precarious. The lack of infrastructure and trained human resources limits access to essential services. Local organisations such as FOKUS, Oriéntame and others present in the territory play a crucial role in filling these gaps, but need more support and resources to expand their impact.

It is essential that the Colombian government takes urgent action to address inequalities in the exercise of rights and improve access to sexual and reproductive health in Chocó. This includes investing in health infrastructure, training more medical personnel, and ensuring that women have access to modern contraceptive methods and quality maternal health services.

The road to the full realisation of sexual and reproductive rights and gender equality in Colombia, particularly in Bahía Solano (Chocó), is long and full of challenges. However, the continued efforts of women's organisations, the LGBTIQ+ population and other marginalised communities are crucial to advancing this agenda. Collaboration between the state, civil society and the international community is essential to overcome obstacles and ensure that all Colombians can enjoy these fundamental rights.

The project has identified how community leadership, with the participation of women leaders, young people and midwives, can generate a certain integrating force in the response to prevention and access to services. However, it is imperative that institutional commitment and health personnel are involved so that education, information and communication strategies have an effect on the provision of services. This is


especially important for those focused on the prevention of maternal mortality: comprehensive sexual education, information on rights, contraception, and legal and quality abortion care.

The paths to health access are most effective when they include ancestral knowledge and community leadership.

Oriéntame is working to improve access to sexual and reproductive rights, and has established training programmes for health professionals in Bahía Solano to improve local capacity to provide quality services. This group of professionals includes traditional midwives from both indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, who with their ancestral wisdom have traditionally been the answer for the maternal population living in very dispersed areas, and whose work becomes a fundamental pillar in caring for women's reproductive health.

In addition, awareness-raising campaigns are carried out in the communi-

ty to promote sexual and reproductive health, and to reduce the stigma associated with sexuality and rights. The vision of adult and young women in the territory has an impressive educational power in advocacy for socio-cultural transformation, which includes men and women working together to deconstruct the discourses and practices that naturalise gender-based violence and stigma towards people who try to bring about change in the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights.

In conclusion, Colombia is at a crucial moment in its history, with great possibilities, but also with important challenges. It is necessary to advance in the implementation of narratives, language and rights adopted in the Montevideo Consensus tool to reduce social inequality, guarantee the rights of historically marginalised groups and create opportunities for all Colombians. In the specific case of Chocó, it is urgent to improve access to sexual and reproductive health to guarantee the wellbeing of women and girls in the region. 



COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION: **PROGRESS OR STAGNATION?**

Although comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is an ongoing commitment made by the Guatemalan state, there are no guarantees for its implementation. Girls and boys without sexuality education are more vulnerable to adolescent pregnancy.

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) continues to be a taboo subject in Guatemala. Despite the broad legal framework, there are still opposition groups that represent an obstacle to the implementation of CSE in our country, arguing that “it is a fashionable topic” or something “they want to impose”.

However, CSE is not a new or recent issue in Guatemala. We have to go back to 2008, when in the framework of the XVII International AIDS Conference, the Ministers of Health and Education of Latin America signed the Ministerial Declaration “Prevent through Education”. On that occa-

sion, they committed to include HIA in school curricula in the region. The State of Guatemala ratified this declaration in 2010, 2016 and 2021.

To argue that CSE is a “fashionable” topic is a fallacy. As such, CSE should be understood as a curriculum-based teaching and learning process that addresses the cognitive, psychological, physical and social aspects of sexuality. Furthermore, its purpose is to equip children and young people with knowledge based on skills, attitudes

Comprehensive sexuality education does not seek, nor is it intended, to encourage early sexual debut.

and values that will empower them to enjoy health, well-being and dignity; to engage in social and sexual relationships based on respect; to analyse how their decisions affect their own and

others’ well-being; and to understand how to protect and care for their rights throughout their lives.

It is prudent to emphasize that comprehensive sexuality education goes far beyond sexual relations. It seeks to prepare children and adolescents to know and value their bodies and to build affectionate and respectful relationships with themselves and with others, as well as to equip them with the skills to be more autonomous, to be assertive and to make good decisions. All this taking into account the age and stage of development of each student.

In the same vein, Unesco warns that several curricula omit topics related to sexuality due to socio-cultural factors that prevent them from being addressed. A clear example is the menstrual cycle, which is considered negative in some places, forcing female students to stay away from their families and miss school, which makes them feel more uncomfortable. In addition, issues related to sexual relations, scientific in-



formation on pregnancy prevention, responsible sexual health of young people with disabilities, among other related topics, are ignored.

But why is SIA needed in our country?

Guatemala continues to be one of the countries with the highest rates of teenage pregnancies. 18% of births in the country are to adolescents, as a result of social exclusion, poverty, early and forced unions, which truncate the life plans of girls and adolescents. They are also a result of sexual violence, the absence of accessible and friendly health services, which are structural conditions that enable, finally, the violation of the rights of girls, boys, adolescents and young people.

Adolescent motherhood has been identified as a constraint to achieving adequate levels of quality of life and well-being, and its causes and consequences have been widely studied. Depression and frustration are problems that are triggered in adolescents by premature and unwanted pregnancy, and constitute a trauma that leaves significant psychosocial sequelae. Sexual violence and pregnancy generate fear, sadness, anger,

Not talking about these issues only contributes to stigma, shame and ignorance about sexuality.

guilt, recurrent thoughts about the situation, restlessness, fear and shame, and can lead to suicide.

Year after year, early pregnancies continue to increase and, although there are commitments made by different government institutions, the reality is different. Guatemala developed the National Plan for the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy (Planea) 2018-2022, but when prevention fails, pregnant adolescents and mothers must face parenting and all that it entails on their own.

Guatemala has the Vida Program, run by the Ministry of Social Development, a government initiative to provide economic assistance through conditional cash transfers to pregnant girls and adolescents or mothers under the age of 14 who are victims of sexual violence. However, this program is only for cases that have been heard in the courts and covers a very low percentage, less than

10% of the number of premature pregnancies.

Despite the challenges that SIA represents, it is not all bad. The latent need for access to secular, truthful

and scientific information makes different educational institutions (formal and non-formal) provide learning spaces hand in hand with civil society and youth organizations. Peer-to-peer (youth-to-youth) work in sexuality education has proven to be a feasible tool for the prevention of teenage pregnancies and should be an institutionalized strategy.

Ensuring the right to CSE requires inter-institutional, intergenerational and intersectoral work. Government institutions, civil society, education and health authorities, youth organizations and groups must work together to create strategies that enable gender-sensitive and culturally relevant sexuality education.

Comprehensive sexuality education is, and will continue to be, an effective and fundamental strategy for the prevention of early pregnancies and the country's development. **FM**



VOLUNTARY TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY: BETWEEN REPRODUCTIVE AND COLLECTIVE RIGHTS

Indigenous girls and women face more inequality and discrimination in access to voluntary termination of pregnancy (VTP) as a reproductive right.



TEXT AND
PHOTO: **THE
ROUNDTABLE
FOR WOMEN'S
HEALTH AND
LIFE**

The Causa Justa ruling (C-055 of 2022), which decriminalized abortion up to 24 weeks gestation, is a milestone for sexual and reproductive rights in Colombia, as well as a legal and political victory that put the country at the forefront with the most protective framework in the region.

This ruling has been a victory for women's organizations in all their diversity who, under the banner of the Causa Justa Movement, work locally and nationally for the implementation of the ruling, its protection and legal defense, as well as for the social decriminalization of the right to decide on the voluntary termination of pregnancy (IVE).

The existing normative development on women's right to health, including Resolution 051 of 2023 of the Ministry of Health, and the coming to power of a progressive and pro-feminist government suggest a political context conducive to the advancement of sexual and reproductive rights, as well as access to free and safe abortion. However, for all women to have access to this health service, with all the established quality standards, numerous barriers remain, especially for groups that have historically seen their enjoyment of their rights more limited, such as indigenous women. Inequality of access represents one of the main challenges to the effective implementation of the judgment.

It is important to mention that indigenous women are the main victims of maternal mortality, the causes of which include unsafe abortions. Their access to sexual and reproductive health services is associated with differential barriers derived from geographical, economic, social and cultural factors, so that the criminalization or non-provision of abortion services adds to a series of discriminations that affect their right to health and equality, among others.

In this regard, judgments T-430 of 2022 and T-158 of 2023, which dealt with the cases of an indigenous girl and woman who were denied an abortion by their indigenous health service provider (EPS-I), were problematic in that they concluded that the request for an abortion could be rejected by the ethnic authorities, based on the legal autonomy enjoyed by these peoples.

These rulings created confusion about the scope of the right to abortion in Colombia, and a scenario of regressiv-

ity and misinformation for both those seeking access to safe abortion and the entities that must guarantee it. On one hand, they raised an alleged tension between the autonomy of ethnic communities and that of women and, on the other, a false normative vacuum, ignoring what the Constitutional Court had stated in the Causa Justa ruling, as well as in Ruling C-355 of 2006, which established the State's duty to guarantee access to abortion as a reproductive health service, and in SU-096 of 2018, which declared abortion to be a fundamental right.

Causa Justa therefore asked the Court to analyze these rulings and succeeded in having them over-

For indigenous women there is a double protection, as the recognition of their individual rights does not contradict the rights of their communities, but rather a double standard of protection.

turned by the High Court. However, it is hoped that the Court will issue a new ruling clarifying that, instead of a contradiction, there is a double protection for indigenous women, as the recognition of their individual rights does not contradict the rights of their communities, but rather a double standard of protection.


We hope that this new ruling recognizes that indigenous women should not be subject to additional require-

ments based on their ethnicity. Indigenous communities must harmonize the right to diversity with respecting and guaranteeing the reproductive rights of women, trans men and non-binary people.

Furthermore, the right to abortion is based on the recognition of freedom of conscience, and is thus a very personal, individual and non-transferable decision. Neither the indigenous authorities nor the health care providers can weigh the reasons for access to this procedure. It must be the woman who, according to her religious, moral, ethical and spiritual convictions, decides whether or not to continue with a pregnancy.

Delving into access to abortion for indigenous women in Colombia is not only an opportunity to evaluate how to advance in guaranteeing it as a reproductive right and part of the fundamental right to health, but also to address it in an intersectional way, considering the structural violence that they experience and the recognition of the barriers to access to abortion as gender-based violence,

marked by prejudices and taboos on women's freedom.

In order to achieve structural transformations associated with cultural change, such as the recognition of reproductive autonomy, it is necessary that no woman is left behind in the exercise and enjoyment of her rights. Therefore, it is necessary to insist on the effective implementation of the Causa Justa ruling, without discrimination and without barriers. 



Workshop sowing seeds of protection in the territory and in the body. Quibdó, Chocó.

INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND CHALLENGES IN TERRITORIAL PLANNING AND PEACE

Akubadaura empowers indigenous Tucano women in Guaviare and Embera women in Chocó (Colombia), promoting their participation in territorial planning and the implementation of the Peace Agreement, as well as addressing historical barriers.

In the territories of Guaviare and Chocó in Colombia, indigenous Tucano and Embera women face a monumental challenge: to make themselves heard in a world that has ignored them for centuries. Through the project “Capacity building for indige-

nous women and girls”, the Corporación Comunidad de Juristas Akubadaura aims to break the silence. This project is not only a fight against gender-based violence, but also a battle for inclusion in decision-making spaces. The participation of these women in more open and democratic processes is not a mere ad-

ministrative act, it is a cry of resistance, re-existence, an affirmation of identity and a step towards justice in a land marked by conflict.

GUAVIARE

In San José del Guaviare, indigenous women attend meetings, but

few participate with a voice and vote. Only a few, with more experience in institutional relations, manage to express their proposals in spaces where male proposals predominate. In these places, the issue of indigenous women is relegated or led by men, and is therefore invisible among other institutional priorities. To address this situation, the Territorial Development Plan (PDT) 2024-2027 mentions the articulation with the National Development Plan (PND) 2022-2026, whose objective is to guarantee the rights of all population groups.

In addition, the project for the cultural safeguarding of Nukak and Jiw indigenous women is included within the framework of the NDP's human security and social justice. Likewise, the programme "Guaviare advances in the strengthening and equity of indigenous peoples", which is transversal throughout the Departmental Development Plan, focuses on promoting autonomy in decision-making and guaranteeing the integral participation of indigenous peoples in accordance with their cultures. Despite this differential approach, which can be a positive factor in achieving true equity and recognition of indigenous peoples, women are neither visible nor included in the priorities of these programmes. Thus, in the midst of generality, the intersectionality and particularity of certain population groups are lost.

While the Departmental Development Plan assumes that integral peace with a territorial approach is essential to address the causes of the conflict in the department of Guaviare, society in general is aware that building true peace requires active community participation, social inclusion, responsible land tenure, environmental preservation and recognition of ethnic peoples.

At Akubadaura, we believe that it is necessary to differentiate between the strengthening of indigenous peoples in general and the equal participation of indigenous women, as well as the strengthening of their own governments with actions that promote their active inclusion.

CHOCÓ

In Chocó, indigenous women in the Departmental Programme have achieved a more active participation in the construction of the PDT. Their leadership capacity has allowed them to raise their demands, requests and specify actions aimed at them. However, discrimination and the lack of adequate intersectional analysis continue to be obstacles to overcome. The Plan includes several differential approaches, but the focus on population groups does not always recognize the specific differences of indigenous women.

Indigenous women live in territories affected by landmines and invisible borders, which limits their relationship with the territory and affects their well-being.


Analysis of the participation of the Departmental Indigenous Women's Programme of Chocó reveals a greater capacity for leadership and training compared to other territories. Most of the scenarios are concentrated in Quibdó, the capital, and decisions at the departmental level directly influence the municipality of Unguía. Although indigenous women urged the departmental administration to include strategies and projects differentiated by ethnicity and gender that would

distinguish them from the black and Afro-descendant population, this was not taken into account in the Departmental Development Plan 2024-2027.

CHALLENGES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PEACE AGREEMENT

The 2016 Peace Agreement, signed with the former FARC-EP, seeks to end decades of armed conflict and focus efforts on building a stable and lasting peace. Citizen participation is fundamental, with more than 107 processes described by the civil service. However, implementation of these processes has been limited, and indigenous communities are still unaware of many of them. The effective participation of indigenous women remains a challenge.

For the communities accompanied by Akubadaura, peace is not only the absence of conflict, but also the presence of justice, equality and well-being. Healing the conflict involves restoring the dignity and rights of all affected people. The word "peace" loses meaning when health, education and work are not guaranteed. And it is no secret that indigenous women in Colombia live in territories affected by landmines and invisible borders, which limits their relationship with the territory and affects their wellbeing.

In this way, women recognize the need for the healing of the territory, body and land, as an integral tool for community wellbeing. Knowing their rights, they identify the absence of guarantees in their contexts. The integral healing of the collective, revitalizing cultural and spiritual practices, becomes a tool to recover the social fabric and reduce vulnerabilities to new conflicts. 



TO CONTINUE TO WEAVE HARMONIOUS AND FULFILLING NATIONS

The reaction and action of the Guatemalan people to express their non-conformity with the prevailing system of corruption and impunity in a peaceful and forceful manner through the vote, in the two rounds of elections held in June and August respectively, meant that the year 2023 represented hope and changes in the historical memory of Iximulew.

In 2015, a hopeful process began to take shape in Guatemala. As a result of the demonstrations to demand the resignation of the president of that time, an emotional struggle began without a clear plan. On the other hand,

in 2023, the dissatisfaction with the excessive levels of corruption seen in the administrations of different governments in recent decades in Guatemala led ancestral authorities from different regions of the country to lead a peaceful resistance that lasted 106 days. This movement was

more rational, with a clear vision of where they wanted to go and with the significant power of the union of the four peoples that inhabit the country. It was a year in which the ancestral authorities demonstrated the strength and power of organization, as well as the convening and wisdom they have, through the leadership they exercised and the support they received.

During these 106 days of resistance, it was possible to see multiple peaceful forms of manifestation of popular discontent, highlighting art through music, dance, recreational activities, games, etc. This showed people that there are ways to promote changes from these new narratives that promote solidarity, joy, tenderness, understanding and collective sharing, as well as the material and economic contribution as more humane and innovative ways to seek peace and social justice. This also showed the need to continue generating these spaces in which the

population experiences that it is possible to achieve collective wellbeing through different ways, in which people's integrity is not put at risk.

The existence of a functioning and effective ancestral and community system was also made visible at the national and international level. The challenge is to avoid the co-optation of indigenous leadership by the dominant system and to strengthen the internalization of the effectiveness of their own system, which is not perfect, but has elements that allow for individual, collective and systemic fulfilment.

In Guatemala, youth represent one third of the total population, and 61.9% are between 19 and 30 years old. In the Mayan cosmovision, during this stage one has all the energy and all the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional strength to go through life, but it is also a time to accumulate wisdom. The new generations played a very important role in this part of history. They believed that transformative change in Guatemalan society was possible, and from the beginning they were an example of determination and courage. Strengthening youth leadership is very important to advance towards the fullness of life, however, it is necessary to do so from their identities and from the appropriation of their life mission.

For social organizations, which in many ways were being threatened by the repressive nature of previous governments, this administration represents many more possibilities to develop their work in favor of the wellbeing of communities, with fewer risks and threats to their integrity.

In relation to the role of aid agencies in the national situation, it is important to mention that the support they




As integral beings, we must be clear that profound changes are also achieved through profound individual and collective actions.

have provided to communities and social organizations can be seen in the leadership and participation that has now been assumed. It is essential to continue providing this support, leaving behind maternalism and assistance, so that people can take charge of their own transformation by taking ownership of their being and doing.

We deeply admire the capacity of the different instances, organizations and civil society in general to react peacefully and legally to the different forms of violence and illegalities that have been promoted to contravene the decision of the people, and we invite us to continue in the firmness of weaving a country free of corruption, impunity and with dignified conditions for all. As

integral beings, we must be clear that profound changes are also achieved through profound individual and collective actions.

The proposals that we present as Kaqla revolve around the satisfaction of essential human needs (EHN), as this guarantees more assertive decision-making, the balance of the four dimensions (mental, emotional, spiritual and physical), happiness and fullness of life for the population. We contact and strengthen our inner light, so that from there we can act to generate a life in harmony and wellbeing for all beings that make up the sacred territory of Iximulew. We want to honor our ancestors, as they lived, so that they can see our actions in a good way and thus live together in harmony and collective wellbeing.

May all our actions be to continue weaving a harmonious nation, with equal justice and prosperity for all and for the web of life! 



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AS A CHALLENGE IN GUATEMALA

A life free of violence for women is possible if we all get involved in preventing it.

The Aq'ab'al Women's Association, established in 2011 in the municipality of Santa Cruz Barillas, department of Huehuetenango, works to prevent violence against women, girls and adolescents. It has positioned this issue in different spaces. However, there have been few results in response to the prevention of violence against this population, which is vulnerable in their families, schools, churches, public areas and in the workplace.

Aq'ab'al proposes to work on training processes that allow women to acquire knowledge about human rights. At the end of the processes these women demonstrate the capacity and empathy to denounce violence, because during the processes they learn about the concepts of violence and also the numbers that increase day by day in different spheres of life. So far in 2024, according to the Women's Observatory of the Public Prosecutor's Office, the crime of violence against women represents 68% of all crimes against women, children

and adolescents. For the Aq'ab'al Women's Association, the numbers on violence against women are alarming, as it is not only worrying that justice processes are not advancing, but also how this problem affects the life, integrity, development and general experience of women. There is a high percentage

of women who are being violated, who are sad because they believe that their lives have no meaning, that they are belittled, discriminated against, exploited, isolated and forced to be with the aggressor thinking about the wellbeing of their children. However, we see that the children who grow up where there is violence are not happy. They suffer from malnutrition. They are prone to be drug addicts, to be alcoholics. They are children who are empty because they lack the love of a father, of a mother. The affection that is given to children at home is and should be the product of a good couple's relationship.

It is clear that violence against women is increasing every day. The fight against violence remains only in words, as women continue to make it known that the male chauvinist, patriarchal and racist system belittles them. The political decision-makers and authorities who took office on the 14th of January 2024 are still struggling with a system that oppresses. The justice system has regressed, the Public Prosecutor's Office has dedicated itself to persecuting and criminalizing the struggle of the people in the face of a system that seeks to corrupt justice and democracy. This political erosion has repercussions in the lives of women who denounce violence. The denunciations of violence against women, sexual abuse of minor girls and alimony do not advance due to a lack of personnel to attend to and follow up on the cases in the courts, public prosecutors' offices and police substations. However, we clearly see that the justice system mobilizes all its personnel to carry out evictions and other actions that oppress the lives of the people, including the lives of women, children and adolescents.

"It is not that women are more important and men are less important, it is about changing ideologies that harm peo-

ple's integrity. Understand that talking about violence against women involves all people regardless of their age, sex, social status, profession, religion and skin color".

The aftermath of the election year is still present in the lives of women, as many were used and it has cost them their leadership. Male chauvinism humiliates them, belittles them, discriminates against them, and the

The aftermath of the election year still lingers in the lives of women, as many were used and it has cost them their leadership.


saddest thing is that it is due to some male relative who exercises leadership. Women are clear in their decisions and this does not please male chauvinism because they feel that they lose power, in addition to the prominence of personal interests. Women look for spaces where they can be cared for, but political interests have divided them.

Is there hope for improvement in Guatemala? We see political debts to be

settled between them, the inequality and division caused every four years does not end. Plans, policies and agendas for women are built to give a result, but demanding that they be fulfilled is not within the reach of the women themselves. Raising the issue of violence against women, girls and adolescents from the community has been and will continue to be a challenge for women's organizations.

The dream of a world where we are all brothers and sisters is within reach. That day will be when we stop thinking that girls are born to raise children and stay at home, that women can exercise their profession, that women's

entrepreneurship is for them and to fulfil their dreams, that their wages are fair, that they can decide freely about their bodies, that they are safe living at home, that they can live together in a healthy way in all areas of their lives, and that at the moment of pregnancy they receive affection, care, appreciation, love, acceptance and, above all, responsibility.

May every child born be the product of love, desire and decision! 



IN SEARCH OF TRANSFORMATION **FROM DECISION- MAKING SPACES**

Women must be heard and taken into account in public decision-making spaces in order to find balance and equality of rights, conditions and opportunities between women and men.



All women and girls should enjoy a life free of gender-based violence and be able to fully develop politically, socially, culturally and economically in an inclusive, equitable and non-racist society. Equally, they should have the same conditions and opportunities as men at all levels and in all spheres of life as women, as enshrined in national and international agreements, conventions and covenants. However, today there is still a high rate of violence against indigenous women and girls throughout the world and particularly throughout the country. There is a lot of discrimina-

tion, racism and social exclusion that generates unequal rights between women and men.

The Asociación Red de Organizaciones de Mujeres Ixhiles and the Defensoría de la Mujer I'X de Nebaj-Quiché, Guatemala, fight every day for the promotion, protection and defence of human rights and the specific rights of indigenous women in the region. They

Guatemala's current political situation is hopeful and needs to be better articulated to access opportunities for change.

carry out different processes for a life free of violence and access to comprehensive justice through legal advice, psychological care, training processes, strengthening of strategic alliances and awareness-raising actions with allies and key actors to eradicate gen-

der violence, based on experience and reflection on the general conditions of women, based on human rights and the gender approach.

It is worth mentioning that the aftermath of the internal armed conflict marked the lives and bodies of women through rape, a systematic, massive and generalized violence. As a consequence of the conflict in the region, many of the women to this day suffer symptoms of individual and collective trauma that have repercussions on the lives of other women and girls.

In order to demand justice, a sentence for genocide was achieved in Guatemala against General Ríos Montt on the 10th of May 2013, and a second trial is currently underway against General Benedicto Lucas García for the crimes of genocide, forced disappearance and crimes against

the duties of humanity against the Ixil people. This was achieved thanks to the courage and struggle of Ixil women who continue to stand up to defend the rights of other women. Their objective is to combat and counteract the patriarchal practices that have made women



invisible and subordinated them to a system structured by the state.

Ixil women have taken on the challenges to demand rights and denounce injustices due to human rights violations and all kinds of violence against them. They have been promoting and persisting in the struggle, thanks to the support of the Forum of Women and Development FOKUS in Latin America. Through the project “Ixil women building their autonomy from equality and knowledge”, they have become involved and taken on spaces at municipal and community level, as representatives of women’s organizations that now have a voice and vote within the Municipal Development Council (Comude), as titular and substitute members. This is a space that implies double effort and risks for them, as we are aware that occupying the space does not imply that there will be an immediate transformation and acceptance, but the great hope is that strategies for participation will be sought at an individual and collective


It is important to highlight women’s needs and demands in terms of human rights and gender through advocacy in decision-making spaces.

level so that these occupied spaces are real and that we are taken into account and listened to, the aim of which is to achieve a great transformation in terms of our real participation.

We are convinced that with women’s unity and joint struggle we will achieve changes in our lives and will be able to lead the transformation of our families, community and country. These changes are achieved through the openness of the local government to listen to the needs and demands of the population and, specifically, to women. They are also achieved through the intervention and good governance of the current administration at the national level, enforcing the principles that govern its government plan, such as the con-

struction of democracy, and establishing equity as a guiding principle of public action.

We know that the current government faces a panorama full of tests and

critical challenges, but the opportunities for change are encouraging. Indeed, eliminating gender inequalities in different areas offers us the possibility of change and significant improvements for the construction of a better future in the lives of women and girls. To this end, the government must guarantee an independent and efficient judicial system, creating strategies appropriate to the demands and needs of the population, starting with the renewal of the Supreme Court of Justice, which implies a long road ahead based on the articulation of effort and cooperation between women’s organizations and civil society organizations, based on the principle of complementarity, where the full participation of indigenous women is guaranteed. 

THE NEW DEMOCRATIC SPRINGTIME IN GUATEMALA

WITH CONSTANTLY INCREASING OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND YOUTH

Strengthening the leadership capacities of indigenous women and girls for their civic participation and social organization are key to the prevention of violence and the exercise of their sexual and reproductive rights.



However, the government has been hamstrung by various measures adopted by Congress, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Supreme Court of Justice and the Constitutional Court, thereby weakening the rule of law and undermining human rights guarantees.

In these first 5 months of 2024 there has been a window of opportunity for rapprochement between civil society and the executive body, as the political will to open dialogue in which the diverse demands and needs faced by indigenous women in their territories are presented, has become visible. However, bureaucracy and the lack of budgetary allocations for public policies aimed at guaranteeing a life free of violence and the enjoyment of women's sexual and reproductive health, which have also been lacking in previous public administrations, mean that there is currently no progress in political agendas promoted by indigenous women

This year was seen as a great opportunity to initiate minimal but truly structural changes that would contribute to tackling different social

problems such as impunity, corruption, violence against women, freedom of expression, persecution and criminalization of human rights defenders, child malnutrition, teenage pregnancies, poverty and extreme poverty, among others.

and young people. It is important to mention that the current Guatemalan government has a lower approval rating in Guatemalan society. This means that people have stopped believing and trusting because they do not see possibilities and progress in the areas of health, education and justice.

After the political and democratic instability that the country went through, provoked by the corrupt pact and in the face of which the indigenous peoples rose up for more than 106 days of resistance, the importance of promoting political training processes for indigenous women, in which they can strengthen their leadership, citizen participation, organization and local power, stands out.

Currently, the department of Quiché is facing a setback in terms of access to the national justice system, in particular the Defensoría de la Mujer Indígena (DEMI). It does not have legal professionals who can represent women victims of violence in judicial processes. This leads to the abandonment of complaints, lack of institutional credibility, violation of rights and lack of protection for women and girls who are victims of violence, which has led to an increase in the number of cases attended to and accompanied by Ixmukané with the support of FOKUS.

A comprehensive approach to violence against indigenous women in Quiché continues to be an obstacle in the current political situation. The statistics portal of the Women's Observatory of the Public Prosecutor's Office indicates that in Quiché in 2024, out of every 10 complaints received, 6 were received through the courts, 2 through the Public Prosecutor's Office and 2 through police prevention. Likewise, 9 out of every 10 women victims are Mayan. The conditions of geographic coverage, quality

and warmth of care provided by justice sector bodies continue to be challenging for women survivors of violence.

The Ixmukané Association has strengthened the mechanisms of care and support for indigenous women and girls so that they can report any type of violence to the official justice and indigenous bodies. On the other hand, through training processes, they have recognized that violence is not normal and is not justified. At the same time, the psychosocial healing processes have allowed women victims of violence to identify the emotional and psychological traumas that, as sequels of the different forms of violence they have experienced, negatively affect the course of their lives.

The participation of women, youth and adolescents sustains peace and is necessary for the positive transformation of national health and justice services.

With regard to the sexual and reproductive health of women, youth and adolescents, the hope is that with the openness of the current government, the political agenda of youth can move forward in terms of demanding that the current government of Guatemala can update the National Plan for the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy (PLANEA) 2018-2022.

By 2022, Quiché registered 398 complaints of sexual violence and by May 2024 it ranked fourth nationally with 2,168 cases of adolescent pregnancies. At the departmental level, the public health system continues to be precarious in terms of quality, warm and culturally relevant care for adolescents,


youth and indigenous women who use this public service.

In most of the municipalities of Quiché, with the exception of the departmental capital, there is an absence of friendly spaces where comprehensive sexuality education for women, youth and adolescents is addressed.

To prevent teenage pregnancies, as well as early and forced unions, it is important that adolescents and young people have adequate and relevant information. Therefore, Ixmukané has implemented an awareness-raising process with adolescents and young people in 5 municipalities of Quiché to address sexual and reproductive rights and the development of life plans.

Likewise, grandmother midwives have lobbied the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance for the follow-up and monitoring of the National Midwives Policy and its action plan, which expires in 2025.

In this regard, the hope is that with the new government there will be political will to update the policy, which will guarantee recognition, respect and dignity for the grandmother midwives as legitimate authorities and guardians of the health of indigenous peoples.

For current governance, the next few years will be crucial in order to define the country's course in terms of preventing violence against women and girls, as well as guaranteeing their sexual and reproductive rights. Let us remember that the participation of women, youth and adolescents sustains peace and is necessary for the positive transformation of national health and justice services. 

Palenquero women's
collective Semillas de
Wiwa, Bolívar.

AFRO YOUTH: AN ANTI-RACIST BET THAT TRANSFORMS

The activism of Afro-descendant youth has persisted in the face of political junctures and changes of government, mobilizing and creating strategies to address the problems of structural and systemic racism. Based on two examples, the focus is on the vitality of Afro-descendant youth organizations and their political commitment to connect agendas from an anti-racist perspective.



TEXT AND
PHOTO:
LUNARIA FUND



What country are we in today? This is certainly not an easy question to answer. Indeed, it is a question with different answers depending on the place of enunciation of those who wish to answer it.

Almost two years after the election of Vice-President Francia Márquez and President Gustavo Petro, the reluctance of right-wing and far-right sectors to an alternative government has become even more evident. The positioning of fundamentalist discourse and racist acts in response to a gov-

ernment that places dialogue around reparations and the Colombian state's historical debt to ethnic peoples at the centre of its agenda is striking.

If anything has been made clear by the racist insults directed at the vice-president and the government's policies, it is the persistence of racism as a deeply rooted ideology in Colombian society, for which it is clearly uncomfortable to see women and black people, such as Francia Márquez and Minister Aurora Vergara, in positions of power. In the face of all the challenges imposed by racism, the Afro-Colombian social movement, particularly the youth, continue to demonstrate the strength of their activism and, with it, the importance of continuing to build processes that articulate, from the grassroots to electoral politics, actions that guarantee the enjoyment of rights and their effective participation.

With the current government, we have seen important advances in the regulation of Chapters IV and V of Law 70 of 1993, which recognizes the collective ownership of land by black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquero peoples. This is an area in which, even 30 years later, the Colombian state still owes a historical debt to black communities. Likewise, in terms of education, the development of strategic plans with a territorial approach that seek to promote access to this fundamental right in majority Afro-Colombian territories where the absence of the state in terms of educational provision has until now been the norm, stands out.

While these are great opportunities, the agendas of the black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquero move-

ments have not run out. As we pointed out, racism, discrimination and racial inequality continue to be major challenges for the organizations that have persisted beyond the electoral changes that, until this government, had not been favourable to historical demands. Just to point out a few things, racism continues to affect Afro youth in their permanence in education, continues to claim lives as a result of racist police violence, continues to be the basis of stigmatization and stereotyping that affects their daily lives in different areas and contexts, and limits opportunities in different contexts where armed actors and illicit economies take advantage of racist inequality to recruit minors.

Afro-descendant youth organizations carry out actions that fight for a society and a state capable of combating racism.


Faced with these challenges, Afro-descendant youth organizations carry out actions to fight for a society and a state capable of combating racism. For Palenquero women's organizations, peacebuilding with gender equality is fundamental. In this sense, through their work they generate spaces for collective participation that involve young women, LGBTIQ+ people, institutions and other relevant actors in dialogue processes for peacebuilding in their territory.

On the other hand, on issues of sexual and reproductive rights, Afro

youth collectives call attention to the urgency of decentralizing these discussions, creating strategies with a community and popular approach, which counteract the barriers that Afro women, transgender men, transmasculine and non-binaries AFAN (assigned female at birth) face when seeking access to the right to abortion in urban and rural contexts. They especially point out the differentiated realities they face in Afro-Colombian majority territories, where health services are deficient, which is evidence of the intersection of structural racism and transphobia.

These two examples, which are not the only ones, allow us to observe the importance of Afro-descendant youth organizations as key actors that oxygenate social movements with discussions and actions at the forefront of challenges that have traditionally been thought of as separate agendas. These are certainly fundamental for imagining and creating transformations that last

over time, especially because their activism has persisted in different political contexts and situations.

The organizations live not only because of their creativity and the strength of their resistance to the problems of structural and systemic racism, but also because of their awareness of the place they have the right to occupy in this country as actors who mobilize and defend broad and plural democracies, where the dignity of black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquero communities is the horizon. 





2024

IN PICTURES









WOMEN AND GIRLS IN GUATEMALA ARE AN INSPIRATION FOR WOMEN IN OTHER LATITUDES

Ana Milena González Valencia, Director of the Regional Office in Latin America, interviews the Norwegian Ambassador to Mexico and Central America, Ragnhild Imerslund, in an interview that reveals her admiration and recognition for the struggles of women and young people in Guatemala.



FOKUS: How does the Norwegian Embassy in Mexico and Central America assess the possibilities for advancing women's rights under the new government of Ber-

nardo Arévalo and Karin Herrera in Guatemala?

Ambassador Ragnhild Imerslund: Norway and the Norwegian Embassy in Mexico and Central America are very

hopeful about the new government of Arévalo and Herrera, after so many years of great challenges in Guatemala and governments that did not really prioritise human rights and women's

rights. We think that now we have, at least, a government that is committed to human rights and women's rights.

We see this as an opportunity to strengthen the rights of everyone in Guatemala and improve the situation for the population and democracy. We feel that the new administration has very clearly stated their commitment to these issues and they have also been quite clear in their commitment to gender equality and the whole agenda of protecting democracy which, of course, also includes the protection of human rights.

It gives us a lot of hope and, at the same time, we have to be realistic in the sense that the challenges are very great. There are many forces in Guatemala that are going to continue working against the government, and we also know that many of the challenges in the country are structural problems that cannot be changed during a government cycle. They are problems that require a continuous approach, so we also have to be realistic, to understand what a government can do in such a short period of time, in this context and with so many forces against it.

In Norway we are ready. We have sent very clear messages and that is also why we made the recent political visit to show and confirm our commitment. Furthermore, as you know, in Guatemala we are active through the United Nations and Guatemalan civil society so that they can work on the agenda of women's empowerment, the strengthening of democracy and social and economic issues.

FOKUS: We also see this government with a lot of hope, but we also share the idea that this hope has to be moderate, because the expectation cannot be fulfilled in such a short period of time.

Madam Ambassador, Guatemala has for the second time in its republican life elected a vice-president like Karin Herrera, who has presented herself as a feminist woman. Do you see this as a possibility to open the way for the political participation of women, not only mestizo women, but also indigenous women, who make up the largest percentage of Guatemalan society?

RI: We know from our country's experience that having women at the highest level in politics is extremely important in order to have a gender perspective in all public policies. In my country we had our first female prime minister in the early eighties, Gro Harlem Brundtland.

At the same time, we have to work with indigenous women and girls so that they can also be active in politics and raise their voices.

She showed the changes that women can introduce in top positions and this changed my country forever.

I think that having a female vice-president in Guatemala, in a country that is still very male chauvinist, is very important in several ways. First, it serves as a model for women and girls, and it shows that the way is open for positions at the highest levels also for women, but most importantly, I think, is that having women like Karin Herrera in government also changes the content of politics and its priorities and really is the way to ensure that there is a gender perspective in all public policies.

But again, we have to be realistic, there is a saying by the former president of Chile Michelle Bachelet: 'If one woman enters politics, women change, if several women enter politics, politics changes', so I think that



one person alone cannot change everything. It is necessary to have several women in Guatemalan politics for there to really be a change, and I am very happy that Bernardo Arévalo and his government have shown their commitment to have a parity government. I don't know if they have achieved it at the moment, but they are working on

FOKUS has played a crucial role in promoting women's rights and gender equality in Guatemala.

it. I think it is vital to understand that one person cannot change everything, that there must be several, but the example of Karin Herrera is important as a model for other women and girls in Guatemala. At the same time, we have to continue working at all levels of society, because, for example, the vice president does not represent the indigenous peoples, she is not indigenous. So, at the same time we have to work with indigenous women and girls so that they too can be active in politics and raise their voices.

In the recent visit to Guatemala in June 2024, we met in Sololá with women from different sectors of society who have participated in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) trainings, which Norway supports. These trainings seek to make models of women who participate in politics visible so that the participants can meet people who can advise them on how they can advance their agendas. I think this is very important to motivate them, to get them involved in politics, because participating in politics has a cost and it is even higher for women. So, having the support of others is essential to stay motivated and get involved.

FOKUS: In Guatemala we have two programmes: one on Prevention and Attention to Violence against Women, Youth and Girls, and the other on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, both of which are very challenging to work on in Guatemala. FOKUS has been supporting organisations working on these issues for a number of years.

Many of the partners have raised the difficulties in advancing these two programmes, as there are a series of forces within society such as fundamentalism, male chauvinism and certain logics that make this work more difficult. However, these also make it more necessary and we would like to know what the agenda of Norway and the embassy is on these two issues in Guatemala.

RI: First, the protection and promotion of sexual and reproductive rights is a priority of Norwegian foreign policy and cooperation. We are committed to leading globally on this issue with both financial and political support, more at the global level. In Guatemala, efforts are channelled through the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which is very active on these issues.

Firstly, in Guatemala it is important to promote universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, including comprehensive education and contraceptive methods. This should be the priority. Secondly, programmes that address the prevention of gender-based violence are essential, for example, having shelters and legal assistance to victims, which we also see here in Mexico as a very important part of this work.

Finally, it is essential to support work to strengthen the capacities of civil society organisations that fight against violence, the culture of male chauvinism and that promote gender equality. I believe, for example, that promoting gender equality is something integral, because if a woman is economically independent, it is much easier for her to get out of a violent relationship, as it happens everywhere in the world.

These are priority issues that we address through our support to the UN and also through our dialogue with the





Guatemalan government, and through our support to civil society organisations in Norway, such as FOKUS, we also contribute to these issues.

FOKUS: In Norway we are a platform of women's civil society organisations that will be 30 years old next year and the resources we receive, in the case of Guatemala, are from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). How does the Embassy value the presence of FOKUS in Guatemala?

RI: We greatly value the role of FOKUS in Guatemala and as a platform for women's organisations in Norwegian civil society. FOKUS has played a crucial role in promoting women's rights and gender equality in Guatemala, as well as in the collaboration and partnerships you have with Guatemalan civil society, which allows for a deeper understanding of the specific needs and challenges faced by women in Guatemala. For this reason, we greatly value the dialogue with you. The analyses and your observations help

To all the women and girls in Guatemala who fight tirelessly for their rights, I would like to send a message of solidarity and admiration.

us in the dialogue with the Guatemalan government, because we know that you are closer to the reality of women in the country and we value that enormously.


FOKUS: We would like you to leave us a message for the Guatemalan women and young girls who persevere every day in the pursuit of their rights, and for the people who read *FOKUS Mujeres* magazine.

RI: To all the women and young girls in Guatemala, who fight tirelessly for their rights, I would like to send a message of solidarity and admiration. When we talk about the situation in Guatemala and the challenges that exist, we always end up talking about the strong

women of the country who throughout the ages have shown their courage and perseverance in all the situations they have faced yesterday and today.

For me they are a source of inspiration and hope,

and for all women in all latitudes of the world. They have been an example of the resilience they have shown in all these years and in the way they have organised themselves. They really are very inspiring.

They also need to know that they are not alone in this struggle, that they have the support of the international community and organisations that promote women's rights and gender equality. The message is to keep raising your voices, to keep telling your stories, because this also motivates us, and so we will never forget what we have left to do in Guatemala. Even though there is hope now, we know that we have a long way to go. 

MOCHILÓN WEAVING AS A PROPOSAL FOR INTERCULTURAL PEACE

The Mochilón de Cabuya, led by indigenous women from the Sierra Nevada de Gonawindúa, is the intercultural dialogue that materializes with its ancestral legacy the care for life and peace with nature.



TEXT AND PHOTO:
**KANKUAMO
INDIGENOUS
RESERVATION**



For the indigenous peoples of the Sierra Nevada de Gonawindúa, peace is to be in harmony with all that exists, material and immaterial. This is in order to fulfil the mandates of their Law of Origin, which goes beyond overcoming violence between human beings, proposing the restoration of imbalances to care for life in its integrity through the system of ancestral knowledge and practices, in a profound relationship with water, land and nature that opens as a teaching to the world. It was recognized by Unesco in 2022.

It is this millenary legacy that guides and has allowed the weaving of the Mochilón de Cabuya de Fique by indigenous women of the Sierra Nevada de Gonawindúa since 2019, as an intercultural peace agenda conceived from their own as a harmonizing process. This process gathers the historical journey of indigenous women and is strengthened from the relationship and spiritual support that each one has with the Mother of Origin Seynekun,

whose codes give them the strength and interconnection with the Territory-Body-Memory, where the peoples of Abya Yala (America) build, keep and transmit their ancestral wisdom.

Therefore, their leadership for the fulfilment of their role as caregivers of life and cultural transmitters demands the recognition and inclusion of other visions, cosmogonies and epistemologies, not only of the conceptions of violence

**Peace is to be in harmony
with all that exists, material
and immaterial, for the care
of life and nature.**

and peace, but also of the spiritual, cultural, organizational and political contributions of the Kankuama, Arhuaca, Wiwas and Koguis women. They demand further progress in complementarity with men and in the collective as a people, for the exercise of self-government, whose principles and spiritual foundations are based on unity, territory, culture and autonomy.

Its relevance comes at a time when it is becoming less and less viable to sustain life on the planet due to the wars that are unabashedly being waged in different latitudes, including the resurgence and reconfiguration of the Colombian armed conflict which, once again, is raging in this mountainous region of the Caribbean. It continues to impose violence and fear as a mechanism of control and domination of the hegemonic models of economic, political and cultural power, whose worst outcome is the destruction and elimination of vast ecosystems that today submerge us as humanity in a climatic and civilizational crisis. From the ancestral cosmovision of the Sierra Nevada de Gonawindúa, this also represents an attack against women as territory, which is reflected in the rupture of this spiritual and cultural relationship with nature, whose effects occur and are equated in the bodies and memories of women, understood as gender-based violence.




The historic challenge of responding to these crises in the midst of a government that proclaims Colombia to the world as a “World Power of Life” with the implementation of different policies such as Total Peace, the National Action Plan of Resolution 1325 of

2000, as well as proposals such as the COP 16 World Summit on biodiversity, places President Gustavo Petro Urrego as a spokesperson and international leader who calls on other nations to de-escalate the war and develop sustainable strategies in the face of glob-

al warming. The Mochilón de Cabuya de Figue emerges as a contribution to this challenge not only as an intercultural dialogue on the construction and consolidation of peace in its model and scope (thought), but also as a fabric of territorial processes (practices) that are being carried out for re-existence and coexistence.

This has been possible with the advance of two stitches, one inward as a contribution of indigenous women to the reaffirmation, self-determination and cultural re-contextualization for the fulfilment of the mandates of origin in these times. This means nurturing from the sowing, transmission and spiritual sustenance with their communities of healing processes and for the access to justice of the violence/disharmony faced by women, girls and families. These processes are advancing as they grow stronger organizationally and participate more and more with a voice and vote in their own government bodies, including their highest body, the Territorial Council of Cabildos, where they are now called upon because of the value of their contributions.

It has been this strength that has allowed us to advance in the second stitch, outward as an indigenous movement to weave alliances, to agree on joint spokespersons for advocacy in other initiatives of indigenous, peasant, Afro-descendant and communal women, who lead, among others, the Seymakan Network, the Caribbean Women’s Network and the National Network of Indigenous Women, managing to participate and influence national and territorial public policies, but above all to nurture the concept of peace based on ancestral care and safeguarding in a national conversation towards a multi-ethnic and multicultural democracy for Good Living. 

“CONSPIRING FOR PEACE”: FEMINIST PROPOSALS AGAINST VIOLENCE

While violence is increasing and war is creeping into the cities, the feminist gender proposals of “Conspirando por la paz” (Conspiring for Peace) are making a strong impact in the northern part of Cauca.

diversified the armed actors and degraded the logic of war.

Against this backdrop, the announcement by the current government (led by President Gustavo Petro and Vice-President Francia Márquez), to decree the state policy of “Total Peace” was crucial. Although in the territories we have been able to feel the challenges that this brings, we insist on the importance of maintaining our conviction of finding a negotiated solution to the armed conflict.

In March 2024, following the assassination of the mayor and indigenous guard Carmelina Paví by the EMC-Farc (Estado Mayor Central - EMC), confrontations between the armed actors escalated, leading to a drastic increase in human rights violations and breaches of international hu-

manitarian law (IHL). The national government suspended the ceasefire with the Western Command in the region of Nariño, Cauca and Valle del Cauca and, although talks with the EMC continue, the prospects and interests of maintaining peace in Cauca are increasingly threatened. For this reason, it is urgent that society as a whole support this peace-building proposal in order to confront those who insist on taking away our right to live in peace.

THE SITUATED PERSPECTIVE AND TERRITORIAL, INTERETHNIC AND INTERCULTURAL FEMINISMS AS AXES FOR PEACEBUILDING

We are tired of seeing our sons, daughters, neighbours and relatives disappearing, joining or being recruited by armed groups, dying in the midst of cruel confrontations, selective assassinations and massacres. For this reason, we have joined together to create a space for inter-ethnic and intercultural dialogue in order to draw up regional proposals for peacebuilding.

“Conspirando por la paz” is a space in which we have woven bonds of trust based on the recognition of ethnic-racial, generational, gen-

“In the north of Cauca we have already known war, the time has come to know peace”. This powerful message is repeated over and over

again from “Conspirando por la paz”, an articulation where Nasa women, black/afro-descendant women, peasant women, signatories of the Final Peace Agreement and LGTBI people meet to analyse and build proposals in the face of the latest events taking place in the department of Cauca, in general, and in the north of Cauca, in particular.

We know that the government of Iván Duque carried out his threat to “shatter” the Final Peace Agreement signed between the Colombian state and the FARC in 2016. This transformed the dynamics of the conflict,

**The dynamics of the
conflict have changed,
which is why it is urgent
to listen to inter-ethnic
and intercultural regional
feminist proposals.**

der and sexual orientation diversity. For this reason, our commitment to peacebuilding is based on territorial, inter-ethnic and intercultural feminisms.

We speak from here as a political commitment of women and LGTBIQ+ people to defend our territories and communities. For us, this horizon means the encounter between diverse conceptions of the world from which we have woven bridges of communication to transform our individual, family, community, territorial and Mother Earth lives.

In particular we have made progress on proposals related to the necessary guarantees for the participation of women and LGTBIQ+ people in the ongoing dialogue with armed actors, as well as on urgent humanitarian measures to de-escalate the armed conflict that has worsened in our region. We have managed to diversify

and expand this space for dialogue, debate and the construction of proposals, to build trust and to position our commitments in regional and national decision-making scenarios.

Territorial feminisms are key to understanding diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds and building bridges of communication.

The proposals of “Conspirando por la paz” have reached ethnic-territorial authorities, social organizations and institutions. At a regional and national level, and even the peace talks with the ELN and the EMC-FARC. But there is still much work to be done to gain leadership spaces within peacebuilding processes. We need more women and LGTBIQ+ people participating, influencing and


making decisions in peace dialogue scenarios. Because peace without women and LGTBIQ+ people does not happen!

What are our pillars of work? Although we have structural proposals in order to achieve the necessary transformations for peacebuilding, due to the worsening of the armed conflict we have concentrated on advancing humanitarian proposals that become gestures of

peace to de-escalate the armed conflict and create a favourable environment for the ongoing dialogues with the armed actors. At this time, we see it as a priority to demand that the armed actors stop the recruitment of minors, promote humanitarian guarantees for our communities, provide information on missing persons and demand the implementation of the multilateral ceasefire.

For us, the commitment to “total peace” must be a reality, we are committed to surrounding all peace efforts, and we are here to show that it is necessary and possible to deepen the commitment to build a policy of human security from territorial, interethnic and intercultural feminisms. For this reason, today we want to insist that “the militarization of life is not the way out”.

Questions, proposals, stories and ideas are flying back and forth. We want our message to reach the country, all those who embrace peace. We want our rejection of war and our proposals to build peace to resound in all territories, in the streets, in offices, in decision-making, in the media, in social networks and in public opinion.

That is why we are launching our bid for peace from Cauca. Let Cauca, Colombia and the world know that we are here “conspiring for peace”. 



“Conspirando por la paz”
discussion session in
Santander de Quilichao,
Cauca, May 2024.

JADACX PIYAN FOR GOOD LIVING AND PEACEBUILDING

The Women's Network of the Cxhab Wala Kiwe (ACIN), together with Codacop, is promoting the *Jadacx Piyan* school on land and climate change for indigenous women, a space for training and research on land rights and climate change.

The Women's Network of the Cxhab Wala Kiwe (ACIN), together with Codacop, is promoting the *Jadacx Piyan* (learning together) School of Land and Climate Change for indigenous women, a space for training and research on land rights and climate change.

For indigenous women achieving territorial peace means ensuring women's full right to access and enjoyment of the land and all its wealth, a dream that has motivated initiatives such as the one that began in 2021. This initiative was to carry out a participatory diagnosis of the challenges faced by Nasa indigenous women in relation to the use, enjoyment and tenure of the land. Over time, and due to the context and needs of the territories, this initiative was transformed into a school of community research in which the participants - especially indigenous women - are trained as researchers. It is they who document the reality

based on methodological tools shared and recreated in the training spaces, designing a participatory research experience together in which they learn to research by researching.

The *Jadacx Piyan* School is an unprecedented experience in the women's process and it has had a significant impact on their lives as

For indigenous women achieving territorial peace means ensuring women's full right to access and enjoyment of land and all its wealth.

women, community members and leaders of the indigenous process. In this school, the participants realized that training as researchers and having strategies to interpret reality is a tool that empowers them and allows them to reach political and organizational spaces with arguments that



TEXT AND
PHOTO:
**CODACOP -
ACIN WOMEN'S
FABRIC**



strengthen the exercise of demanding full guarantees for the enjoyment of the rights they have been denied, such as access to land.

As the school has progressed and the modules, research and training have developed, the participants have organically found their own pedagogical path, based on the principles of "minga" (community and collaborative work). The school is a collective, collaborative construction in which the findings dialogue harmoniously with the experiences and traditional knowledge.

It is precisely here where the voices and knowledge of the women guide the research process. The new information, the knowledge and skills that are acquired throughout the training process, converses with tradition and is projected in practical and political exercises in each of their territories; that is, in




the different *resguardos* (indigenous territories) that they inhabit. The *Jadacx Piyan* School favours participatory methodologies such as social mapping, community workshops and joint analyses of climate vulnerabilities. These methodologies encourage inclusive and contextualized research

processes, which ensure that capacity and knowledge remain in place wherever the school goes.

For indigenous women, advocacy - as a step-by-step route - is local, regional, national and even international. Creating and recreating the steps of

advocacy has been a significant gain for Nasa women, a product of these years in which their voices have been heard. A clear example of this is the participation in the construction and implementation of Resolution 1325, which recognizes the role of indigenous women in peacebuilding and security in their territories, emphasizing the importance of their participation in prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Today, indigenous women are preparing to participate and bring their voices and proposals to the United Nations Conference on Biodiversity - COP 16, in 2024, to be held in Cali (Colombia) in October. This is an opportunity to reach relevant spaces in order to advance the implementation of the goals proposed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to strengthen their voices on environmental and climate issues, especially with regard to limited access to land and its impact on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

In conclusion, it is important to mention that the responsibility for addressing these issues does not only lie with women, as they have been well assigned, but that their voices need to be included in a general call for climate justice and equity in environmental and land policies. The *Jadacx Piyan* School enables indigenous women to leverage their technical capacities in research and influence public policy. As the women mention, “we have also had to include ourselves in the research world to help build *Wet Wet Finseñxi* (good living)”.

The continuity of these processes is essential to face future challenges and to strengthen the resilience and autonomy of Nasa women in their indigenous communities in northern Cauca. 



The Committee is making progress in the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement.

WOMEN'S VICTORY IN TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The Monitoring Committee for the Final Peace Agreement in Montes de María welcomes the incorporation of key provisions to guarantee the rights of women and girls in different territorial development plans in Bolívar, Sucre and Córdoba.



TEXT AND
PHOTOS:
**HUMANAS
CORPORACIÓN**

The Monitoring Committee for Gender Focused Measures in Montes de María was created the 18 March 2021 with the aim of analyzing the implementation of the gender focus of the Final Peace Agreement from a territorial and ethnic perspective. Since then, two reports have been produced that allow us to reflect on the

slowdown in the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement and, with it, the impossibility of overcoming the impacts of the violence that particularly affects women in the context of the armed conflict.

Given the need to promote the adoption of measures to guarantee the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement, the women leaders of

the Committee initiated an advocacy strategy in 2023 with the objective of promoting the adoption of measures in favor of women's rights, in particular the right to peace, in the Territorial Development Plans (PDT). The advocacy strategy included actions such as bilateral meetings with officials from the Mayor's Office, the Governor's Office, the Municipal Council and the Departmental Assembly. It also included

constant dialogue with the Territorial Planning Council and the government advisory team, participation in public hearings, presence in Council and Assembly sessions and delivery of documents with the women's proposals.

The actions resulted in important victories in the municipal development plans (PDM) in: Sampués (Sucre), San Antonio de Palmito (Sucre), San Onofre (Sucre), Sincelejo (Sucre), Morroa (Sucre), El Guamo (Bolívar), San Juan de Nepomuceno (Bolívar), Cartagena (Bolívar) and in the Departmental Development Plans of Bolívar and Sucre.

One of the most remarkable victories is that in all PDTs it is established that:


- In relation to the right to a life free of violence, the strengthening or creation of women's houses and shelters for women victims of gender-based violence (GBV), as well as the promoting of training scenarios for the officials responsible for the GBV care route, is included.
- In relation to the right to economic autonomy, measures were incorporated to advance the processes of land titling and allocation of productive projects for women.
- In relation to the right to political participation, the adoption of measures to promote the political participation of women and LGBTI people was established. Finally, measures for the creation and functioning of the Peace Council were identified, as well as the implementation of collective reparation plans with a gender focus.

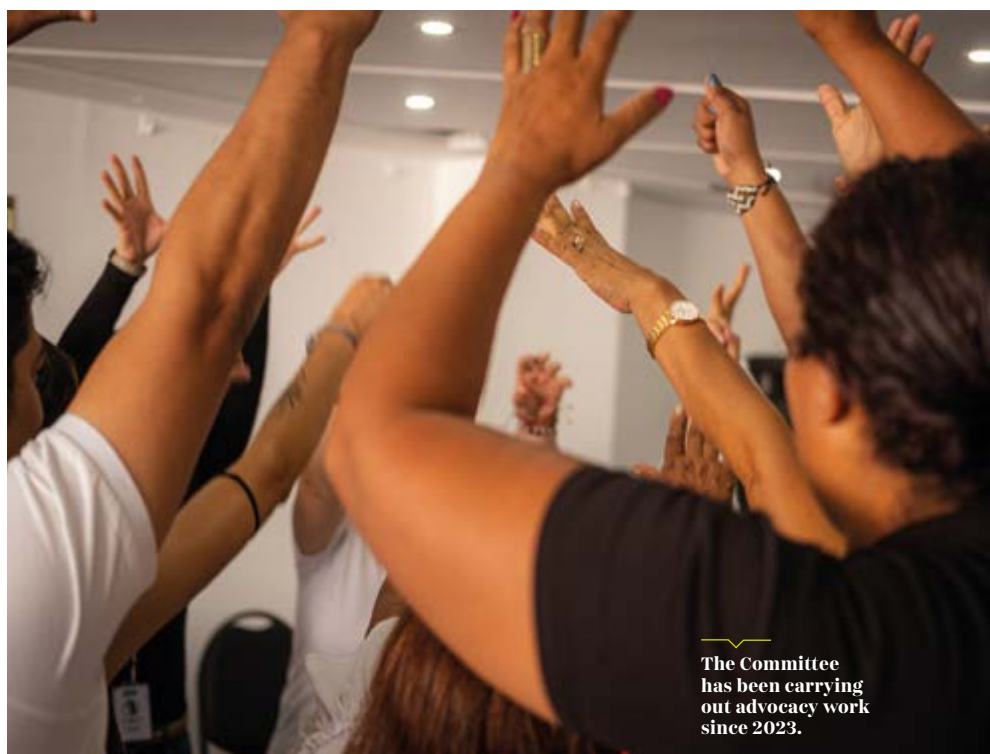
It is important to highlight that the PDM of Sampués identified the obligation to develop a strategy for the implementation of the Final Peace

Given the need to promote the adoption of measures to guarantee the implementation of the Peace Agreement, the women leaders of the Committee initiated an advocacy strategy in 2023 to promote the adoption of measures in favor of women's rights, in particular the right to peace, in the TDPs.

Agreement. The PDM of Sincelejo ordered the formulation of a public policy to guarantee women's sexual and reproductive rights. The mayor's office of Cartagena set a goal of zero femicides.

In light of these victories, the Committee will soon hold a discussion on the findings, victories and challenges in the Territorial Development Plans with the authorities responsible for their implementation. This is done with the aim of promoting that officials have the political will to move forward in guaranteeing women's rights and lay the foundations for overcoming the armed conflict. This in turn will lead to the consolidation of democracy and the transformation of women's lives.

There is no doubt that the Committee is establishing itself as a political force with the capacity to advocate for what has been agreed between the government and the FARC-EP, and to guarantee the rights of the women of Montes de María. 



The Committee has been carrying out advocacy work since 2023.

CARTOGRAPHIES FOR RE-EXISTENCE: **A TERRITORIAL PERSPECTIVE**

This article presents important contributions from the effort Cartographies for Re-existence in the Pacific Corridor for the understanding of the current national context. It also presents some coordinates for following the paths that lead to the construction of peace with social justice in Colombia.



TEXT AND
PHOTO:
**MAPPING
SOUTH**



Cartografía Sur has been developing a series of collective mappings with a local and regional focus among women and gender dissidents called Cartografías para la Re-existencia (Cartographies for Re-existence).



After the configuration of the national territory based on the dynamics of the armed conflict in Colombia, the borders offered by classical geography were blurred by invisible borders. The geopolitics of progress were transmuted into corpographies of cruelty. Social fabrics were broken and armed groups bifurcated and specialized to such an extent that even today they maintain full control of the national territory.

With these antecedents still present, and with the current scenario of a progressive government that places the defence of life and the construction of peace at the centre of its agenda, we maintain the latent emergency of carrying out cartographic and mapping processes from another perspective that allows us, once again, to identify these new configurations of the conflict in Colombia. It allows us to recognize

ourselves as an incident movement on different territorial scales and to mark a presence of women and gender-dissident people in the national spatiality that allows us to re-exist.

The purpose of this article is to share some fundamental contributions to the understanding of the current national context, as well as to outline some coordinates for the paths that lead to the construction of peace with social justice for Colombia, specifically from the cartographic perspective of women and gender dissidents who are leaders of the Pacific Corridor.

In the last decade, politics and the media have focused their attention on two of the most significant peace processes in Colombia's history, both involving guerrilla groups active since the 1960s. The first process was the peace talks between the national government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP), which began and culminated during Juan Manuel Santos' second term in office. The second process, the dialogue between the national government and the National Liberation Army (ELN), was also initiated by Santos, closed by Iván Duque and resumed under the current government of Gustavo Petro Urrego. Faced with these scenarios of constant and intermittent war and peace, what are the current territorial realities identified in Cartographies for Re-existence in the Pacific Corridor?

The failure to implement the Havana Peace Accords has seriously affected communities in rural territories that saw in this agreement a possibility to improve their living conditions. Furthermore, with the FARC's reincorporation, the territories occupied by the guerrillas became disputed and controlled by other armed groups, including FARC dissidents. These groups

have strongly harassed the communities, going so far as to assassinate (on 17 March 2024), the Nasa indigenous leader Carmelina Yule Paví, who was trying to recover a young Nasa boy who had been recruited. This event led President Gustavo Petro to decree the suspension of the ceasefire with the dissident group in Cauca.

The mappings were recurrent in the differential impact on women and young people in specific situations such as sexual violence and forced recruitment.


In the mapping of the Pacific corridor, emphasis was placed on the high presence of paramilitary structures, now known as criminal gangs (bacrim), which remain solid and are expanding throughout the national territory in an indiscriminate harassment of social leaders. This is a latent and constant risk to young people, a control over local economies and a bloody militarization of daily life in the territories. In June of this year (2024) the "National mobilization for permanence in the territories" took place, with actions in Nariño, Cauca and Valle del Cauca, in which the communities declared a humanitarian emergency and demanded a change in the national security policy, protection for the communities, a comprehensive reparation plan and the dismantling of paramilitarism.

The mappings were recurrent: they showed the differential impact on women and young people in specific situations such as sexual violence, forced recruitment, the fracturing of family nuclei and the transformation of the lives of women who have had to become mothers searching for the disappeared

and mothers who are heads of families. It is also pointed out that the psychosocial aspect has been damaged, and that the figures of victims and the reports presented are not sufficient to measure the effects on the social fabric, as well as on the bodies and lives of women and young people in the territories.

Last but not least, there are the findings presented in the Cartographies for Re-existence by trans women who point to a non-place in the national geography. Although progress is being made in terms of rights, the transgender community continues to be made

invisible, and is heavily violated and abused. They are mobilized on the trails and in the nocturnal rhythms of the countryside and the city. Given this, there is a need to strengthen educational and pedagogical processes in the face of otherness. An example of the invisibility of this community can be seen in the current peace process between the national government and the ELN, just as an example of different scenarios of peace building and national participation, where trans women are still not recognized as full political subjects either by the state, the guerrilla or the women's social movement itself. This presents high gaps of inequality in participation and differential recognition of the impact of the conflict on their bodies and lives.

While the Cartographies for Re-existence allow us to identify reconfigurations, current problems and to situate ourselves in geopolitics and national history, they also make it possible to demarcate routes and actions that enable the social transformations we want, as well as the active presence of women and gender dissidents in the construction of a peaceful country. 

CHALLENGES AND PROGRESS ON GENDER

This article addresses the challenges and advances in human rights and gender in Colombia, highlighting the role of the gender approach and the importance of strengthening leadership in contexts of violence and transitional justice.



TEXT AND
PHOTO: **YIRA
CASTRO LAW
CORPORATION**



The last two years have been a period of changing social, political and security dynamics throughout the country. Some departments are in a socio-political and security transition with disputes over territorial control due to the intensity of clashes between armed groups over strategic zones. The post-agreement scenario has led human rights organizations to seek new forms of advocacy and to establish strategic litigation in order to achieve the fulfilment of victims' rights.

At Corporación Jurídica Yira Castro (CJYC) we are aware that the objectives of the transitional system of the Final Peace Agreement are still far from being achieved. However, our work as a civil society organization must be closer to grassroots organizations and accompanied communities, in order to guarantee the direct participation of victims in

the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-Repetition. Recent advances include the approval of the Statutory Law on Agrarian and Rural Jurisdiction and the declaration of the peasantry as political subjects and rights holders, laying the foundations for agrarian reform and guaranteeing the land and territorial rights of millions of peasants.

The gender approach promotes justice and strengthens leadership in conflict-affected communities.

The work carried out has made it possible to establish strategic litigation with the participation of victims, promoting judicial processes that seek to clarify facts of forced displacement and land dispossession. New leader-

ship has been strengthened, especially among women, children, adolescents and youth (NNAJ), which has improved the comprehensiveness of demands for legal action and advocacy, incorporating a focus on rights and gender. This has resulted in favourable rulings, such as those obtained by women land restitution claimants.

The gender approach, applied transversally in our activities, is a political and legal commitment to justice, dignity, equality and respect for all. Since the Law 1448 of 2011 came into force, we have empowered women victims of displacement and dispossession in land restitution processes, seeking their recognition as subjects of rights and political actors.

The work with these populations is a gradual process that seeks to empower their voices, leadership and participation. In the CJYC we have worked to




raise awareness in order to strengthen these communities in the future, reflected in their own advocacy spaces. This work encompasses psychosocial, political and personal levels.

CJYC implements psycho-legal actions that advocate for the defence of rights by strengthening the empowerment of communities of women and girls, based on principles such as action without harm and the construction of tools that allow women and girls to strengthen their vision of themselves in order to achieve leadership for the defence of their rights.

A gender mainstreaming approach is key to advancing justice, dignity, equality and respect in our activities.

However, significant challenges remain, such as the re-signification with the communities, which require both external and internal processes from the territorial context. Despite the Final Peace Agreement, the populations continue to be victims of new

dissidence which limits the impact of the work carried out. This violence affects both the public and personal spheres and hinders progress in the work with these populations.

In this way, we must continue with awareness-raising processes with women, children and youth in order to achieve, in the future, the construction and strengthening of leadership within their communities. This is an extensive and important task for progress towards a stable and lasting peace. 

WOMEN CONTINUE TO SUSTAIN **PEACE IN BOGOTÁ**

In Bogotá, in the face of the weak institutional commitment to peace, popular and diverse women remain determined to make it an urgent part of life in the city.



TEXT AND PHOTO:
**PROMOTION
AND CULTURE
CENTRE (CPC)**



In 2023, Bogotá elected a new mayor for four years and this marked a new moment for peace and women's lives in the city. The new guidelines are worrisome as they reveal a regression in women's rights that had been won in previous administrations, including the right to peace.

At the beginning of the year 2024, women's organisational processes in the city and the Women's Consultative Council took the initiative to talk to the incoming mayor in order to propose elements to be taken into account in the new district development plan, so that women would not be left out of the new provisions. Several advocacy days were held, including actions with the Bogotá Council, which gives the final endorsement to the District Development Plan (PDD).

When the new PDD was published, the weak commitment to women and peace was evident. Furthermore, although it is true that peace was included in terms of attention to victims, the connection with the processes of restorative justice and memory, everything that could be connected to the national government's proposals for total peace, was excluded in the PDD.

Although the budget includes aspects that cover the women's sector, such as the prevention of feminicides, the strengthening of organizations, which we can include, or the continuity of the Manzanas del Cuidado, many other things, such as strengthening women's political participation, the cultural processes that are so urgent for Bogotá to be a truly inclusive, safe and peaceful city for women, are far from the realities of the local territories.

All of the above has a significant impact on the local development plans (LDP).

This is why, starting in 2024, another of our actions was to get involved in their formulations, as this is where we anchor and draw attention to women's political work in the territories or localities.

Due to this context and the concerns and urgencies that this generates, the Centre for Promotion and Culture (CPC) is implementing the project "Women's political participation and advocacy weave diverse paths that strengthen peace". This is financed by FOKUS which, from their awareness of political action as popular and diverse women, seeks to strengthen links between organisational processes of women from

Our common commitment to peace is alive, because for women peace has no age or time. Peace is an urgency of life.

different parts of the city for the construction of peace and reconciliation in Bogotá, from a collective commitment. From this perspective, in many neighbourhoods and scenes of the city, people will continue to talk about peace. The leaderships that make it possible will continue to be recognized, local agendas for peace will continue to be built, the right of women to a peaceful city will continue to be defended, debates and discussions will continue to be held in which we women continue to demand the right to local political participation, and in which we will continue to demand that the city is in tune with the debate on the need for the National Action Plan (NAP) contained in Resolution 1325. Strengthening the organizational fabric of grassroots women and their political education is also on the horizon. All of the above is an important step forward, despite the current context.


Our common commitment to peace is alive because for women peace has no age or time. Peace is an urgency of life.

While it is true that the National Development Plan (NDP) sets out towards the horizon of total peace as a comprehensive process of change towards a new country, the reality of implementation is slow and sometimes unclear, as in the case of the development of the NAP of Resolution 1325, as the measure par excellence for women's political participation in the achievement of comprehensive peace in the country.

It is an uncertain, complex horizon, but we see it as an opportunity to maintain a critical interpretation of what we are living through, and what we have to do as civil society and as a women's movement. In this way, each action we carry out becomes a pedagogical occasion

to assemble, to talk about peace in the territories and to raise awareness of the need for dialogue and negotiations with the armed groups that still use weapons to demand and negotiate their existence.

As women inhabitants of a city that continues to host populations affected by the persistence of an armed conflict that continues unabated, we remain steadfast in our demand for peace and, for this reason, we continue to participate in the institutional and civil spaces provided for this purpose.

The articulation of processes, political training, advocacy, dialogues and debates, contextual readings and taking care of each other will continue to be the tools that we use to follow up on the commitments agreed upon for peacebuilding. 

THE POLYPHONIC URSULA SCHOOLS: A WOMEN'S PATH TO PEACE

The Women's Schools are a formidable polyphonic space, where women not only build themselves as social leaders, but also as creators. That makes them free, supportive and wise. We have been together for more than a year now, creating, experimenting and socially projecting the plays, performances and knowledge meetings. Both the processes and the results are true discoveries.



In order to continue the process initiated in 2023 with the project *Úrsulas Polifónicas, mujeres libres y sabias*, it is necessary to strengthen the role of the women participants in the environments they inhabit, and to advance in the search to position the issues of women, peace and security as central to the country's events and agenda.

With the background of the roads travelled, the learning and achievements made during the previous year, it is essential to broaden the scope and move forward in terms of political advocacy and management required for the sustainability of this space for women's empowerment, creation and growth from the personal and collective spheres.

The project is about each school, from its eminently popular environment, having an impact on its territory with purposes that help to transform the imaginaries of war into environmental imaginaries of peace and coexistence.

Colombia has been one of the countries that was hit the hardest by war and violence. For decades, women have been and are a part of the immense number of victims of the social and armed conflict, as well as of the historical scourge of male violence. Therefore, the social and creative work of these schools is absolutely necessary and transformative.

It is about influencing peace. It is not enough to carry out acts and events. It is necessary to conceive culture and education as transformers of reality. That is why the schools, as well as contributing to the personal and collective growth of their members, have set out

to influence peacebuilding and the environment from a feminist perspective, in each of their territories.

Likewise, we understand that we are not in an era of change, but in a change of era. The world is experiencing a crisis of planetary dimensions that is bringing humanity and nature to the brink of extinction. Progressive climate change and escalating wars are symptoms that we are reaching a civilisational crisis. This crisis condenses the concentration of patriarchal capitalist power as never before. We are, as the teacher Rita Segato wisely says, 'in the stage of world domination'. This means that many women's gains are being taken away by authoritarian governments.

Women's Schools are a formidable polyphonic space. They are places where women not only build themselves as social leaders, but also as creators. This makes them free, supportive and wise.

For this reason, now more than ever, we women are obliged, in addition to defending and extending our conquests, to fight for the defence of life on the planet, for the defence of nature and for the defence of humanity.



Examining the creative work that has been done, we see how schools have reached out to communities, seeking not only to raise awareness of the need for social change, but also to reach out to people's emotions. Art reaches other areas that have to do with affection and is a determining factor in the construction of social sensitivity.

Looking specifically at the schools we can see how they have managed to have an impact through national and local work. One of them was the participation in the show *Paz Haré La*, a performance with the participation of seventy diverse women. It was carried out on the basis of the schools, particularly the one in Bogotá. This performance became a central event of the 8th of March, a major advocacy for peace, with the support of the Ministries of Culture and Labour.

Each school is led by renowned women artists. Behind each of the directors there is an enormous amount of social and cultural leadership work. The directors and coordinators of all the processes are cultural leaders and artists with decades of cultural and social work. They have also put their spaces, community venues and theatres at the service of this project.

One of the schools is led by artists and creators from Teatro La Máscara de Cali, a group of women pioneers in theatre with a gender perspective. It has been operational for five decades and this year the artists are working especially on artistic creation, political advocacy and ecofeminism.

The Escuela de Creadoras Salamandra, also from Cali, has an enormous projection both in the city and in neighbouring municipalities. It works with the methodology of collective creation, which is a system of group creation that allows everyone to be the makers and subjects of the works and processes.

The Bogotá group works at the headquarters of the Corporación Colombiana de Teatro. It is the school with the longest trajectory and in these five years it has managed to influence peace. One of its members has been a part of organisations that monitor compliance with the agreements and another belongs to the National Peace Council. The teachers are artists with a systematic dedication. This school constantly produces works and performances and is present in social mobilisations in Bogotá.

The Palma de Vino School in Galeras, Sucre, is located in one of the most re-

mote municipalities of Colombia, but at the same time it has an extraordinary cultural richness. This women's school works with peasant women and young people. It also has a seedbed of girls with whom they develop a process of artistic training with an emphasis on music, weaving and live painting.

Finally, the Necoclí School is located in one of the municipalities hardest hit by war and violence, which is now a crossing point for thousands of migrants from all over Latin America who try to leave through the Darién jungles to the United States. It operates in the cultural centre El Totumo Encantado.

All the schools develop a unique work related to their environment. At the same time, they work on collective education and advocacy. The integral approach of this project, which combines artistic creation with the strengthening of socio-emotional skills, training in human rights with a gender focus and eco-memory, allows for a holistic approach to the various dimensions that connect the issues of women, security and peace. It is through theatre, dance, music and poetry that it is possible to hold increasingly warm and close encounters, moments that foster fertile dialogue and the exploration of new forms of self-knowledge. Their own history becomes the main reference for creation. The method invites women to go through their life history in different ways and to identify emotions that have been contained or repressed over time. With the support of the collective they can move towards the resignification of their experiences and weave new narratives. They can also stage their testimonies of the most silent and daily struggles, as well as the significant and transforming ones. Performative actions mobilise the senses, activate the word and keep the issues current so that no one should remain silent about them again. **FM**



BEIJING AND BEYOND – A TRULY GLOBAL WOMEN’S MOVEMENT

The 1995 Beijing Conference inaugurated decades of progress for women’s rights, but also mobilised resistance to gender equality. Facing today’s challenges, the women’s movement should look to the decisive role of Latin America’s feminists on the international stage.



Multilateral conferences can be frustrating affairs, politicised, slow and cautious. Any women’s rights advocate who has followed negotiations at one of these large and unwieldy events, where governments haggle endlessly over outcome documents, will probably have asked themselves: what’s the point?

During negotiations, national priorities often trump global concerns, and there’s always a risk that searching for compromises with actors resisting gender equality will lead to diluted declarations that remain unimplemented. So, while arenas such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) are undoubtedly great opportunities for feminists to learn from each other and build networks, does it

really matter what ends up in the outcome declarations? Of course it does.

‘WOMEN’S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS!’

Consider the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, unanimously adopted by 189 countries in 1995. This astounding consensus is even more remarkable as the documents both consolidated gains for women but also

laid out a radical and practical agenda, making it clear once and for all that “women’s rights are human rights, and human rights are women’s rights”.

While this clarion call was made famous by Hillary Clinton’s address at the conference, it is less known that the slogan had been used in Latin America for decades, for instance in campaigns to recognise GBV as a human rights violation.¹ This is just one example of a larger trend: that the contributions of Southern feminists to international gender equality norms have been obscured.

Women’s rights were first internationally recognised in the UN Charter. However, the draft did not mention women; reference in the final version to the “equal rights of men *and women*” is due to persistent advocacy by Latin American women delegates at the UN’s founding conference. Similarly, inclusion of non-discrimination based on sex was proposed by Brazil, Uruguay, Mexico and the Dominican Republic.

Out of only four women signatories, Bertha Lutz from Brazil and Minerva Bernardino from the Dominican Republic led the fight for gender equality. In fact, many western delegates *resisted* it – a story rarely told, even in the UN’s own accounts.² But overlooking the agency of non-western feminists is more than historical neglect, it also weakens the development of a truly global women’s movement.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE BEIJING CONFERENCE

Fast forward to 1995 and the 4th (and last!) World Conference on Women. In Beijing, 17000 delegates with an additional 30000 activists convened; the radical declaration, as mentioned, was unanimously adopted. No wonder the conference sparked an era of optimism and impatience.

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The conference adopted a broad, non-reductionist approach to women’s issues, which helped make gender equality an integral part of all policy areas. In fact, the Platform for Action played a crucial role in promoting the concept of gender mainstreaming, a strategy that seeks to integrate gender perspectives into all aspects of policy-making to achieve gender equality.


The Platform for Action defined twelve areas of concern, among them women in armed conflict, poverty, media and the environment. Notably, the conference marked a breakthrough in addressing controversial issues, particularly reproductive rights, including access to contraception and safe abortion, which made possible the progress made over the past decades.

VICTIM OF ITS OWN SUCCESS?

The successes of Beijing also mobilised conservative and religious groups op-

posing gender equality, who’ve labelled it a threat against the natural order and a concept imposed by the west. But it was the contributions of women delegates from Latin America that ensured inclusion of women’s rights in the UN Charter – the claim that gender equality is a neocolonial norm simply doesn’t hold up to scrutiny.

And as today these regressive forces intensify their campaigns against the rights of women and sexual minorities across the globe, Latin American activists continue to conduct some of the most groundbreaking campaigns for gender equality, whether on reproductive health, LGBTQ or intersectionality. This must be highlighted, so we can learn from the strength of collective action in the region. This is where the pioneers are. This is where it originated.

In 2025, the Beijing Platform for Action will be reviewed at the 69th CSW (also established thanks to Latin America’s trailblazing feminists). Here too, opponents of women’s rights will be active and rehash false claims that silence the historical agency of women from the south. So, as we continue the struggle for women’s rights both at the grassroots and in the halls of power, let’s recall the work of Lutz, Bernardino and the pioneers of Latin America. 

Link to articles

Marino, K. (2022) “From women’s rights to human rights: The influence of Pan-American feminism on the United Nations”.

Dietrichson, E. and Sator, F. (2022): “The Latin American women: How they shaped the UN Charter and why Southern agency is forgotten”.

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2 Dietrichson, E. and Sator, F. (2022): “The Latin American women: How they shaped the UN Charter and why Southern agency is forgotten”.



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