



BRIDGING THE DISTANCE LESSONS LEARNT FROM A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH TO GENDER AND SECURITY IN RURAL COLOMBIA

Lessons learnt paper

2020

The Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance - DCAF is an international foundation whose mission is to assist the international community in pursuing good governance and reform of the security sector. DCAF develops and promotes norms and standards, conducts tailored policy research, identifies good practices and recommendations to promote democratic security sector governance, and provides in-country advisory support and practical assistance programmes.

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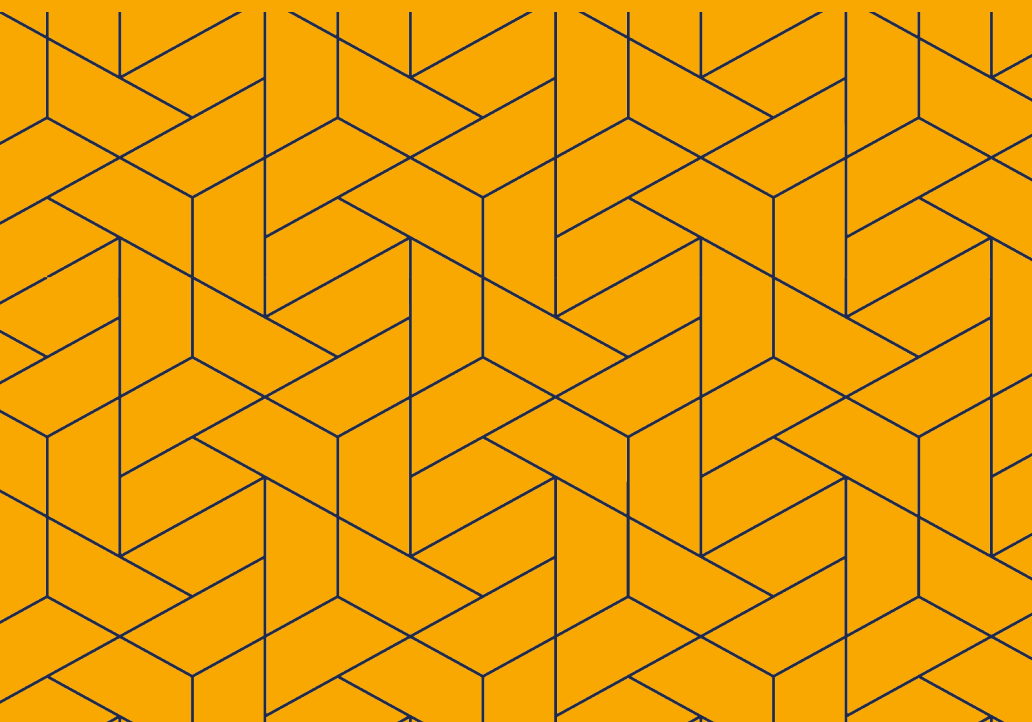
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Acronyms

CEDAW

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

ETCR

Territorial Training and Reincorporation Spaces (Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación)

FARC-EP

Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo)

LGBTI

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people

OHCHR

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

PTSD

post-traumatic stress disorder

SGBV

sexual and gender-based violence

SSR

Security Sector Reform

UNIPEP

Colombian Police Unit for Peacebuilding (Unidad Policial para la Edificación de la Paz)

Executive Summary

The purpose of this study is to outline the lessons learnt identified by DCAF and its Colombian partner, Corporación de Investigación y Acción Social y Económica (CIASE) from a set of projects **“Promoting and implementing spaces of dialogue on security priorities for rural women in Colombia - Phase I and Phase II”** (hereinafter referred to as “the project”) carried out in 11 rural regions of Colombia on Security Sector Reform with a gender-sensitive perspective. This study includes a brief description of the national context, the approach and strategies implemented, the preliminary results, and the steps forward.

After having been plunged for 52 years into an internal armed conflict, Colombia marked a historic turning point in 2016 with the conclusion of the Final Peace Agreement with the FARC-EP. The peace agreement is not only internationally recognised for addressing solutions and mechanisms on rural reform sector, political participation, peace building process and human rights, but also for being an international model for gender-sensitivity and mainstreaming women’s rights. From the 578 final provisions, 113 refer to a gender perspective, women’s inclusion, and representation of women in mechanisms of implementation.

In this regard, the project was designed to give impetus to the gender-crosscutting concerns of the Final Peace Accord, the Agenda on Women, Peace and Security, and the principles and recommendations **set out in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325**. The starting point was the acknowledgment of the **significant value in bottom-up approaches to Security Sector Reform** - specific recommendations to the Colombian National Police and other security actors are grounded in a thorough analysis of the security needs of women from different ethnic and indigenous communities as well as the barriers they faced in accessing security institutions.

Importantly, the project focused first on providing **a space in which women could speak about their own definitions of security and insecurity**, a process of dialogue which led to fundamental changes in women’s perception of themselves as agents of security. This paradigm shift proved to be useful in many cases to accept losses and deal with negative feelings such as guilt or fear, that have a detrimental effect on mental health and general well-being. Furthermore, it was found that **profound changes and learnings are required to transform the perception of women who have lost their trust and confidence in the state, as a whole, and in the Police, in particular.**

From these dialogues, based on women’s perceptions of security and their specific needs, **capacity-building workshops with members of the Colombian National Police and with women** were integrated into a second phase of the project. These activities were supported through the application of specific methodologies which focus not only on the rights and security needs of women but also on those of men and on challenging stereotypical notions associated with patriarchal structures to contribute to more inclusive and peace-oriented understandings of masculinity.

The approach and methodology are based on three overlapping pillars: I) intersectionality, II) security as an experience shaped by emotions and III) women’s security agency. **Intersectional methodologies** are supported through an understanding of **security as a multi-layered experience** (physical, cognitive-emotional, political, economic and spiritual), which can help to reveal biases and support individuals and communities in moving beyond dualities such as friend vs enemy, war vs peace, civil society vs security institution, and man vs woman. Developing **emotional management tools** is necessary to increase security, with a focus on victims of war and trauma, security forces and

former combatants. Finally, acknowledging that **women play a leading role in the provision and management of security**, rather than being only receptors of security services, is central to perceive the meaning of 'security' in positive terms and start overcoming mistrust.

Based on the experiences during the implementation of the project, this paper offers a section of **recommendations and lessons learnt** for traditional security actors that interact with women in rural communities, which includes the National Police of Colombia and other civil authorities. The purpose of these advice is to contribute to bridging the gap between formal security actors and the community by reducing risk factors and strengthening protection and care factors in each of the dimensions of security.

Despite the positive impact of the consultations and workshops carried out during the project among participants, the study acknowledges that the improvement of women's security in Colombia continues to be an uphill struggle. Now, when meeting the cross-cutting gender commitments in the Final Peace Agreement lies at a crucial moment, continuous efforts are needed to ensure that the rights of women and girls are heard and that women and girls enjoy a life free from violence in Colombia.

1 | Context

The conclusion of the Final Peace Agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC-EP in November 2016 marked a historic turning point to bring a 52-year lasting armed conflict to an end and start building stable and lasting peace. Over half a century of internal armed conflict caused the **death of approximately 220,000 people, 81.5%** of whom were civilians not taking part of hostilities.¹ The toll of non-lethal violence during the conflict is likewise shocking, with estimated numbers of 25,007 disappeared persons, 1,754 victims of sexual violence, 6,421 children and adolescents recruited by armed groups and 4,744,046 displaced persons.² Beyond the figures, the impacts and harms caused by the armed conflict are complex and difficult to quantify. According to the National Centre of Historical Memory, they can be grouped in a complex mosaic of emotional and psychological harm, moral harm, political harm and socio-cultural harm.³

Besides, the conflict impacted various groups of the population differently. For instance, Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities in rural areas have been the most affected in terms of displacement and forced expropriation of their lands. Also, gender considerations have shaped how the conflict impacted differently on men, women, boys and girls. While men account for the majority

of the victims of killings and disappearances, on other aspects much of the burden of violence has fallen disproportionately on women and girls due to the male-dominated environment that marked the conflict. One of the most evident impacts in this regard is the radical, traumatic, and sudden change that many rural women had to experience in terms of family structure and roles, geography, culture, community and socio-economic standing, as well as increased exposure to threats, violence, and discrimination.⁴ Moreover, the high levels of sexual violence, often used as a weapon of war, had serious consequences for the physical and psychological health of thousands of women and girls, who, in addition to the trauma, had to deal with a number of consequences such as unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, discrimination, and serious frustrations in their life plans. Overall, women, girls and LGBTI people belonging to indigenous and afro-descendant communities, as well as people with disabilities, have been particularly vulnerable to violence due to intersecting factors of discrimination.

The negotiation and drafting process of the peace accord acknowledged these disparities. Regarding gender inclusiveness, the peace process has been described by several organizations around the world, including UN Women, as an historical

¹ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación (National Centre of Historical Memory), ed., ¡Basta Ya! Colombia, Memorias de Guerra y Dignidad: Informe General (Enough of This! Colombia, Memories of War and Dignity: General Report), Second edition (Bogotá: National Centre of Historical Memory, 2013), 32.

² Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación (National Centre of Historical Memory), 33.

³ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación (National Centre of Historical Memory), 259.

⁴ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, "Violence and Discrimination against Women in the Armed Conflict in Colombia" (Washington, D.C.: Organization of American States, 2006) par. 70.

⁵ Corporación Humanas - Centro Regional de Derechos Humanos y Justicia de Género and Corporación de Investigación y Acción Social y Económica, CIASE, Vivencias, Aportes y Reconocimiento: Las Mujeres En El Proceso de Paz En La Habana (Experiences, Contributions and Recognition: Women in the Peace Process in Havana), 2017, 16, <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20colombia/documentos/publicaciones/2017/07/participacion%20mujeres%20en%20la%20habana.pdf?la=es&vs=827>.

example of the participation and accomplishments reached by women.⁵ **These efforts resulted in the inclusion of a gender perspective in 130 out of the 578 stipulations of the peace accord.** Of these, a total of 17 stipulations are directly targeted towards improving the political, social, and economic conditions of women; the remaining 113 stipulations refer to gender perspective, women's inclusion, and representation of women in mechanisms of implementation.⁶ However, the implementation of the gender commitments lags behind in comparison to other provisions. According to the latest report on the monitoring of gender commitments of **Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, as of July 2020, 32% of the gender-focused commitments have not been initiated and only 12 % of the commitments with a gender component have been fully completed.**⁷

Despite the comprehensiveness of the accord, the slow pace in implementing gender-related provisions and the continuous violence in rural areas, along with the unexpected impacts of COVID-19, reveal that ensuring lasting safety conditions for women in Colombia remains an unfinished challenge. In this regard, the CEDAW has noted that in particular Colombian women of African descent, indigenous, rural, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and women with disabilities continue to suffer serious violations of their rights without access to the protection of the State or to justice.⁸ In addition, threats and killings of social leaders, human rights defenders, and

former combatants, many of them women, is today one the most serious human security challenges in Colombia since the signing of the historic peace agreement.⁹ **In 2019, OHCHR documented 108 killings of social leaders and human rights defenders, from which 75% occurred in rural areas.** Among those aggressions, attacks against women leaders often include sexual violence and severe harm to their bodies, which reflects a strategy of humiliation, intimidation, and violent denial of their agency as political subjects.¹⁰ In the first six months of 2020, another 45 murders of human right defenders and social leaders were reported.¹¹ On top of that, the COVID-19 pandemic and the containment measures imposed by the Government have left women and girls more unprotected and exposed to violence, including Sexual and Gender Based Violence (GGBV).

In a context marked by violent disputes between illegal armed groups to fill the power vacuum left by the FARC-EP, along with the devastating effects of COVID-19 on the security and wellbeing of women and girls, it remains vital to intensify efforts to address the security needs of women in Colombia.

⁶ Gindele, Rebecca et al., "Implementing the Final Colombian Peace Agreement, 2016–2018," PRIO, GPS Policy Brief, 1 (2018).

⁷ Barometer Initiative, Peace Accords Matrix, and Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, "Towards Implementation of Women's Rights in the Colombian Final Peace Accord: Progress, Opportunities and Challenges." (Notre Dame, IN and Bogota: University of Notre Dame, 2020), <https://peace-accords.nd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Towards-Implementation-of-Womens-Rights-in-the-Colombian-Final-Peace-Accord-2.pdf>.

⁸ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, "Concluding Observations on the Ninth Periodic Report of Colombia" (United Nations, March 14, 2019), para. 9.

⁹ "Colombia: Killing of Rights Defenders, Social Leaders, Ex-Fighters, Most Serious Threat to Peace," UN News, July 14, 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1068371>.

¹⁰ Barometer Initiative, Peace Accords Matrix, Kroc, Institute for International Peace Studies, UN Women, and FDIM, Sweden, "Gender Equality for Sustainable Peace. Second Report on the Monitoring of the Gender Perspective in the Implementation of the Colombian Peace Accord" (Notre Dame, IN and Bogota: University of Notre Dame, 2019), 44.

¹¹ Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, "Respuesta del Estado Colombiano al Cuestionario de la Relatora Especial sobre la Situación de los Defensores de Derechos Humanos (Response of the Colombian State to the Questionnaire of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders)," October 2020.

2 | Introduction to the projects

The set of projects “Promoting and implementing spaces of dialogue on security priorities for rural women in Colombia - Phase I and Phase II” (hereinafter referred to as “the project”), funded by the Government of Norway and implemented by DCAF’s Latin America and the Caribbean Unit together with its Colombian partner, Corporación de Investigación y Acción Social y Económica (CIASE), and the Colombian National Police, were conceived to contribute to the peace building process in Colombia from a gender perspective. The aims of the project are to identify and understand the security needs of women in areas that were heavily affected by the conflict and have now been established as transitional zones in order to advise the Police and other relevant stakeholders on how to prioritise and address those needs, while sharing knowledge and tools that facilitate access for women to security and justice. The underlying notion is that the voice of women must be a central guidance for policing and protecting the population in those areas, in order to strengthen a gender-sensitive peace process. In this way, the project ultimately aims to provide concrete and evidence-based recommendations for state institutions in Colombia, the Colombian National Police and the international community to improve security for women living in rural areas formerly controlled by the FARC-EP.

By acknowledging the importance of identifying the elements linked to protection, prevention, and

women’s participation in peacebuilding scenarios, the project is deeply embedded in the commitments established in the Agenda on Women, Peace and Security and in the principles and recommendations set out in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and other related resolutions.¹²

The project is jointly being implemented by DCAF and CIASE, together with the National Police. DCAF is responsible for the overall design and management of the project, while the consultations and workshops on the ground are designed by CIASE in coordination with DCAF. CIASE is directly responsible for the planning, organization, and facilitation of the consultations and workshops, and the gathering of preliminary recommendations.

The targeted areas to carry out the project activities are special transitional zones, called Territorial Training and Reintegration Zones (ETCR, for its acronym in Spanish), that were designated by the Colombian government to facilitate the transition and adaptation of former guerrilla members to civilian life. After decades of armed conflict, these communities are characterised by their vulnerability and little trust towards the government, local administrators, and the State in general, including its security institutions.¹³ In this context, it was considered vital that the institutions in charge of providing security services in those areas, such as the Police Unit for Peacebuilding (UNIPPEP, for its name in Spanish), come closer

¹² DCAF, “Transcending the Long Path. Recommendations for the Security of Rural Women in Colombia.” (Bogotá: CIASE; DCAF, 2018), 4, https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/DCAF-CIASE_Transcending%20the%20long%20path.pdf.

¹³ Defensoría del Pueblo de Colombia, “Reincorporación Para La Paz - Informe Defensorial Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación (ETCR) (Reincorporation for Peace - Report of the Ombuds Office on Territorial Training and Reincorporation Spaces)” (Bogotá: Defensoría del Pueblo de Colombia, 2020), 29, [https://www.defensoria.gov.co/es/nube/noticias/9687/Informe-defensorial-espacios-territoriales-de-capacitaci%C3%B3n-y-reincorporaci%C3%B3n-\(ETCR\)-Farc-ETCR-informe-PTCN-acuerdo-de-paz-implementaci%C3%B3n.htm](https://www.defensoria.gov.co/es/nube/noticias/9687/Informe-defensorial-espacios-territoriales-de-capacitaci%C3%B3n-y-reincorporaci%C3%B3n-(ETCR)-Farc-ETCR-informe-PTCN-acuerdo-de-paz-implementaci%C3%B3n.htm).

to the inhabitants and protect them effectively, considering especially the needs of the female population due to its greater vulnerability.

Phase I

Phase I started on November 2017 and covered special transitional zones in 5 regions: Fonseca (Guajira), Caldono (Cauca), Vista Hermosa (Meta), Planadas (Tolima) and San Vicente del Caguán (Caquetá).

The core part of the implementation process consisted of 2-day consultations with groups of women in each region. The consultations combined elements of dialogue, collective learning, confidence-building activities, and initial drafting of the recommendations from a participative and relational approach, in a way that participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences, concerns, and needs on various topics such as security, women's rights, discrimination, peacebuilding, and gender-based violence. Initially, it was estimated that about 90 to 120 women would take part in the consultation process. However, a total of 188 women from a wide variety of backgrounds participated, reaching young, adult and elderly women, indigenous women, and afro-descendants, as well as victims of violence and former guerrilla fighters.

The consultations were followed by feedback sessions with the women who participated in the consultations, with the purpose of having a more extensive dialogue on their views of the consultations and the way forward on initiatives to build safer environments and advocate for women's rights to security and a life free from violence.

Phase I was successfully concluded in May 2018 with the delivery of a set of specific recommendations addressed mainly to the National Police of Colombia and its Peacebuilding Unit (UNIPPEP), but also to the Colombian State

in general and the international community – all of which have an important role to play in the provision of safety to women in rural Colombia.¹⁴

Phase II

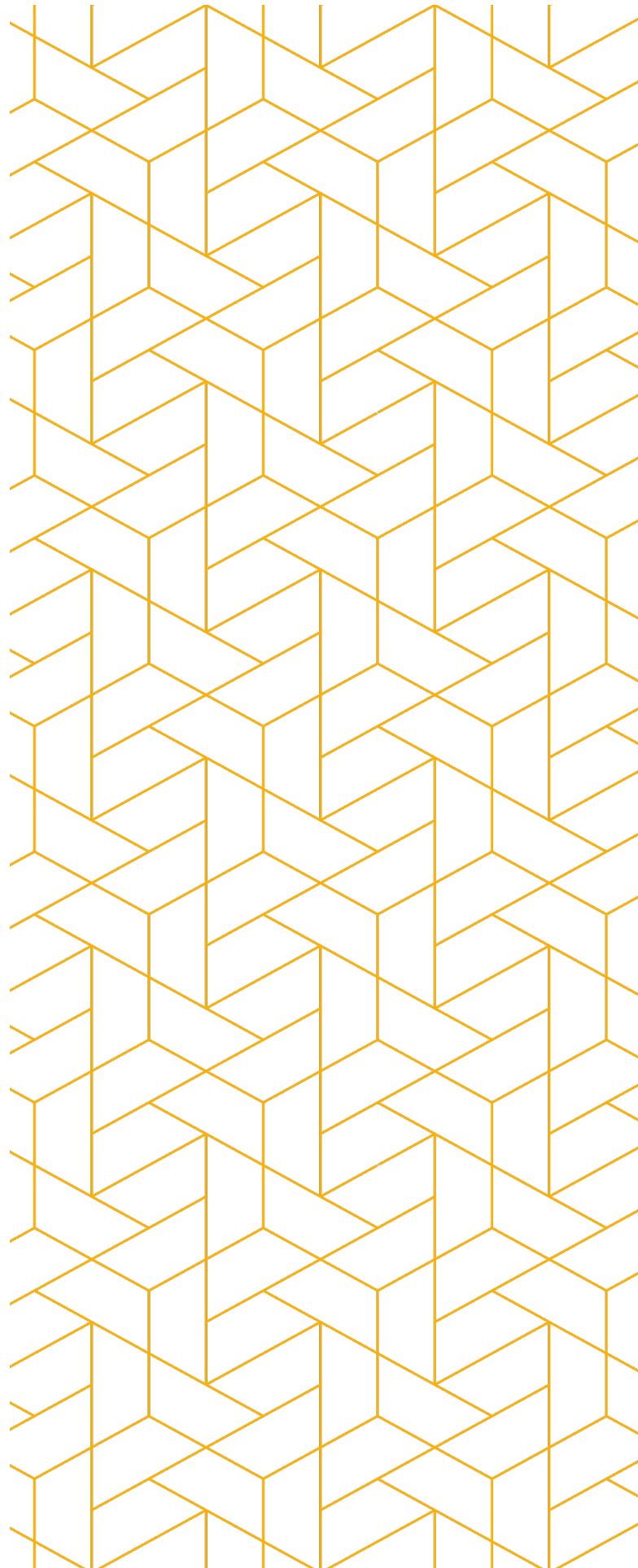
Building on the experiences of Phase I, thanks to the interest and continuous support of the government of Norway, a second phase was initiated on October 2018 to expand the consultation process to another 6 transitional regions: Montes de María (Sucre- Córdoba), Mitú (Vaupés), Chaparral (Tolima), Buenaventura (Valle del Cauca), Apartadó (Antioquia) y Aracataca (Magdalena).

In addition to the consultations and feedback sessions in these new areas, this phase includes two additional activities aimed at empowering women and strengthening the dialogue between women and the Police in the territories already worked on in Phase I, as well as in the six regions newly included (11 in total). The new activities consist of two types of capacity-building workshops, one with women, the other with Police officers.

The capacity-building workshops with women are built as learning sessions with the participants of the consultations in order to discuss and improve their understanding on the peace process, the security obligations of the state, and their right as women to security and justice. These sessions aim to contribute to their empowerment and leadership. The capacity-building workshops with Police officers are intended to reinforce compliance with the recommendations made during Phase I, as well as with new recommendations resulting from the consultation process in the new targeted regions. Closely related to the recommendations, the workshops include learning pills on relevant topics and concepts such as: gender and masculinities, conflict transformation, intersectionality, human rights-based approach on security, mediation, emotion

¹⁴ DCAF, "Transcending the Long Path. Recommendations for the Security of Rural Women in Colombia." (Bogota: CIASE; DCAF, 2018), 4, https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/DCAF-CIASE_Transcending%20the%20long%20path.pdf.

management, and peacebuilding, among others. The second phase was initially designed to span over 2 years, ending in September 2020. However due to the difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the restriction measures declared by the Government, part of the activities had to be readjusted and rescheduled during the second year of implementation. Therefore, the expected date to conclude the consultations and workshops, and to deliver a new set of recommendations for the Colombian state, the National Police, and the international community, has moved to 30 April 2021.



3

The role of the Police Unit for Peace Building (UNIPEP) in Colombia's Security Sector Reform (SSR) process

The main ally to DCAF and CIASE for bridging the gap between the Police and local communities has been UNIPEP. This is not only the Police unit responsible for providing security services in the 26 Training and Territorial Reintegration Zones, but it is also in charge of developing and carrying out strategies, programmes, and projects that enable progress in the implementation of the peace agreements, in partnership with different governmental and non-governmental entities.

UNIPEP was created in April 2016, months before the Final Agreement was signed in La Havana, so that the Colombian National Police could prepare for an imminent scenario of transition to peace and begin to plan the deployment of police services in those places where they had been absent due to the dynamics of the conflict.¹⁵

UNIPEP's role in the early phases of implementation of the final peace accord has been pivotal and its achievements are broadly acknowledged. Several of the key commitments to ending the conflict - the definitive ceasefire, the demobilisation of combatants, and the laying down of arms, for example - were achieved in the short term with UNIPEP's direct involvement in the Tripartite Mechanism for Monitoring and Verifying-MM&V. This body consisted of a tripartite technical mechanism made of representatives of the government (Public Force), the FARC-EP and unarmed observers from the UN.

With the progression of the early commitments set out in the peace accord, UNIPEP's functions have also evolved. Its scope has shifted from

focusing on short-term commitments to ending the conflict to covering aspects of the entire peacebuilding process in the country, mainly in rural areas. By virtue of this broader scope, nowadays UNIPEP is responsible for analysing, verifying, documenting, advising, designing, directing, and coordinating institutional actions for the execution of missionary and complementary commitments and responsibilities in relation to peacebuilding. As such, UNIPEP now maintains a direct interaction with the community it serves (community policing approach), primarily in those areas most affected by the conflict. In short, the establishment of the UNIPEP, from its initial purpose to its consolidation as a peacebuilding and community service force, is a cornerstone of SSR in Colombia.

One of UNIPEP's main achievements for effective SSR consisted in framing a Peacebuilding Model for the National Police, which was a process led by the UNIPEP Strategic Area for the Implementation of the Agreements but was developed through a participatory methodology involving the entire institution. The model seeks to develop capacities in peace building and peaceful conflict transformation within the entire National Police and to optimise the police service for the overall implementation of the Final Peace Accord.

In its work with communities, it is worth highlighting that UNIPEP has been remarkably responsive to the needs of people adversely affected by the conflict. The adoption of a conflict-sensitive approach to policing and its involvement in several social programmes have been key ingredients in building trust with the communities, including "breaking the

¹⁵ National Police of Colombia, Peacebuilding Model of the National Police of Colombia, trans. Knut Walter (Bogota, 2017), 77, <https://www.interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/National-Police-Peacebuilding-Model-EN-Version-1.pdf>.

“UNICEP initiated the process of opening up spaces and mechanisms enabling communities and Police officers to have a closer relationship. Thus, it was a collective process of exchanging experiences.”

Lt. Colonel Lurangeli Franco, on the work of UNICEP with the communities | 2020

Based on the gender self-assessment results and recommendations, DCAF is currently supporting the National Police to develop a gender action plan to implement these recommendations.

In conclusion, credit must be given to UNICEP for being a laboratory of good practices in SSR. While many considerable security challenges persist in the rural territories and increased protection is needed, UNICEP’s commitment to advancing the implementation of the peace agreement, its adaptability to change, and the inclusion of a gender perspective in its service have been indispensable factors in building trust with communities and generating dialogue, including that with rural women.

ice” with former combatants who tend to perceive the Police as an enemy.¹⁶

This responsiveness has also been reflected in UNICEP’s role in mainstreaming gender in the Police service. With regard to its engagement in the ETCRs, UNICEP has integrated various programmes and measures related to the prevention and response to SGBV. **In 2020, UNICEP led a comprehensive gender self-assessment process for the Colombian National Police, which is based on a tool developed by DCAF for assessing the gender responsiveness of a security-sector institution.**¹⁷

For building the institutional diagnosis data was collected through semi-structured interviews, regional focus group, surveys, and the review of secondary sources. The product is a comprehensive report on the barriers encountered by the institution in relation to 16 gender dimensions and concrete recommendations on how to address them.

“UNICEP participants were able to actively use the good practices on conflict resolution acquired in the capacity-building workshops in an indigenous community in the municipality of Mitú. UNICEP was able to apply the tools presented in these workshops by supporting the creation of a ‘maloca’, an ancestral house used by indigenous communities to discuss and settle disputes through customary rules and practices.”

Captain Jonathan Bastidas, UNICEP | 2020

¹⁶ E. Sanandres, Protección y Reconciliación. Un Análisis de La Experiencia de La Policía Nacional de Colombia Durante El Cese al Fuego Con Las FARC-EP (Protection and Reconciliation. An Analysis of the Experience of the Colombian National Police during the Ceasefire with the FARC-EP) (Bogota: Colombian National Police, 2019), 113-24.

¹⁷ Megan Bastick, Gender Self-Assessment Guide for the Police, Armed Forces and Justice Sector (DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, 2011), https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/self_assessment_guide.pdf.

4 | Approach & methodology

4.1 Background

A civil society that is involved in the security discourse and actively engages with security providers is a key asset to democratic security governance as it establishes a channel for communicating diverse views of the population about the quality of security and the ways in which it can be improved.¹⁸

Advocacy, awareness raising activities, and public oversight are some of the ways in which the participation of civil society can shape security sector governance, based on the guiding principle that governments should be accountable and responsive to the people they govern. Working with civil society, in turn, allows security and justice providers to become more professional and effective, gain legitimacy and credibility as well as help prevent conflict and violence.¹⁹

Mending the relationship and communication channels between civil society and the security sector is essential in the context of peace processes and for societies that were, and continue to be, affected by the aftermath of war. **In Colombia, particularly in rural areas, public trust towards the government and security providers remains low** due to the decade-long absence of the state in many regions of the country. In this sense, the peace process in Colombia goes beyond the reintegration of former FARC combatants and transitional justice, making it a broader process of state building in a country fragmented by geographical, racial, and economic divisions.²⁰

Bridging this gap between the government, security providers, and civil society, with an emphasis on rural women in areas most affected by the armed conflict, became thus the methodological impetus for the collaboration between DCAF and CIASE. This collaboration created a fruitful and complementary synergy whereby CIASE provided the feminist, bottom-up perspective from civil society that was complemented by DCAF's vast expertise in working with the security sector and governments. DCAF, as an impartial actor committed to local ownership, democratic governance, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, forged a bridge for this bottom-up perspective on gender and security to be translated to a language that security providers and public institutions in Colombia could understand and implement. The methodology developed and applied by CIASE and DCAF enabled spaces of dialogue to contribute to a more inclusive and accountable provision of security in Colombia.

4.2 Framework

The premise of this methodology is based on three overlapping pillars: **I) intersectionality, II) security as an experience shaped by emotions, and III) women's security agency.**

Adopting the lens of **intersectionality** allowed to identify how women relate to a traditional understanding of security by looking at the cognitive-emotional, political, physical, economic, and spiritual dimensions. In **war contexts, security is understood by most of civil society as an authoritarian and imposing presence that**

¹⁸ DCAF – the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, “Civil Society”, SSR Backgrounder Series (Geneva: DCAF, 2019).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ De Freitas, W., “Colombia struggles to build trust in the state as peace process rumbles on”, The Dialogue (June 2018)

is expressed in a paternalistic way, centred on the provision of security by those who enjoy the monopoly of power and their application, i.e. the state, security institutions, and non-security sector actors.

Security, as a concept, has drawn knowledge from biology, psychology, sociology, and anthropology to understand the origins of violent and criminal behaviour, and thus, prevent it. The traditional theoretical frameworks of these disciplines explain violence and criminal behaviour as a lack of control or regulation of biological functions and bodily experiences, such as emotions, impulses, drives, etc. Hence, the aim of traditional security perspectives is to control or regulate “by rational means” people that are not able to control their emotions, drives or impulses by themselves, so as to prevent further violence and crime. Building on a feminist intersectional perspective has offered an opportunity to reflect experiences and visions on security from the point of view of multiple actors, which in turn facilitated the dialogue with these actors. This led to an understanding of a **security as a multi-layer experience** that enables us to regain common signifiers²¹ and embrace the importance of managing emotions.

Due to the internal conflict, the term “security” has long been equated by many Colombians with war and fear. Peace, on the other side of the spectrum, became a utopian concept. Understanding security as a “multi-layered experience” is an attempt to break free from the binary notions of friend vs enemy, peace vs war, and men vs women. Learning how to manage fear and distinguish between protection (short term) and care (long term) are substantial parts of feeling safe and secure.

Lastly, understanding security through a feminist epistemology perspective is crucial to build **women’s security agency**, meaning that women play a leading role in the provision and management of security, rather than being only receptors of the security services.²² When talking about security for women, it must be done from the perspective of women’s reality and experience. It is then fundamental to develop and apply methodologies that promote women’s security agency and allow them to position themselves as security advocates. By working with and learning from a wide variety of different actors, such as local²³ allies in the regions, the Colombian National Police (especially the Police Unit for Peacebuilding - UNIPPEP), the Colombian armed forces, international organizations and other national civil society organizations and civil authorities, CIASE has recognised the need to translate security into experiences and find a common understanding on security, in order to overcome mistrust and the notion of the “otherness” that generates mistrust.

4.3 Strategies and tools for working with women

The starting point of CIASE’s methodology to work with rural women Colombia is the implementation of a “do no harm” approach that follows three phases: 1) context analysis²⁴ and collaborative logistical work with partners from local women’s organizations, 2) analysis from secondary sources of information to have a wide reading of the context, which is validated with the first local consultation in the territory, while maintaining respect for local knowledge, 3) the information gathered allows the team to identify the specific needs for pedagogical, didactic, and psychosocial accompaniment that

²¹ Signifiers as the result of concrete experiences that pass through the senses and give real meaning to a concept, value, expectation.

²² In this context the notion of “local” is used to refer to municipalities. In this process, local allies are women networks in small towns and their rural areas, women organizations that center their action in their ground communities and women that have organized themselves within collective ways of association such as Resguardos (indigenous communities), Juntas de Acción Comunal (peasant communities), and Consejos Comunitarios (afrodescent communities).

²³ As a first step, CIASE enquires the local allies about the characterization of the target group (ethnic affiliation, racialization, age, identity building process, leadership, among others) in the targeted areas.

²⁴ As a first step, CIASE enquires the local allies about the characterization of the target group (ethnic affiliation, racialization, age, identity building process, leadership, among others) in the targeted areas.

provides women with tools to become the agents for their own security.

While piloting the workshops of the Phase I Project (2018), CIASE realised the need to address the emotion of fear as well as its strong connection and effect on the notion of security within the target groups. CIASE addressed this emotion through group psychosocial accompaniment, using a methodology developed in contexts of violence and war where the emotional and trauma healing is framed in recognizing that violence and war are abnormal experiences that leave abnormal consequences such as trauma and mental health issues. Through this methodology, the participants recognised the impact that violence has had on their lives as well as the tools that each participant developed to cope with it.²⁵ The main findings of these experiences differ from the traditional view that equates security to a life free of fear. On the contrary, fear plays a fundamental role in human survival by identifying risks and taking conscious actions accordingly.

When people try to resist experiencing certain emotions (like boys and men avoiding sadness or girls and women avoiding anger), or to control emotions, drives, impulses, and bodily functions, it often leads to a lack of awareness of bodily experiences, needs, and emotional reactions, and how they work. CIASE and DCAF witnessed how women peacebuilders, after years of experiencing violence, had neglected their bodies and emotions left over from past traumas due to a lack of tools and understanding of how the lack of safety had impacted their health. Similarly, some police officers react disproportionately to children playing around

without masks during the COVID-19 pandemic, in part because of the way they were trained to react to the threats, and because they felt responsible for security in a country at war.

In the course of the work with women and the Police, CIASE has often provided individual accompaniment to aid in emotions management or health issues or general well-being; **it has found out, in many cases, that both women and police officers had dealt with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)²⁶ symptoms.** In contexts of war and extreme violence, such as the Colombian, PTSD has become a pressing issue whose growing impact it has on security and peace society is often reluctant to understand and acknowledge. The best manner to prevent and reduce the impact of PTSD, and similar conditions, is to learn tools about how to manage emotions related to trauma.²⁷ This has been reasserted by CIASE's constant exposure to histories of violence with colleagues, communities, and institutions. Developing emotional management tools is necessary to increase security in post-conflict societies, with a focus on victims of war and trauma, security forces, and former combatants.

The learnings from Phase I and Phase II evidence that, in order to build a more secure society, it is essential to reconstruct an emotional well-being that has been affected by violence and war. Based on these experiences, CIASE has created processes that emphasise the cognitive-emotional dimension as one of the essential layers of security. Furthermore, it has also provided the knowledge to develop tools²⁸ aimed at transforming the manner the project beneficiaries approach, express, and deal with emotions in their daily lives, while also

²⁵ As a consequence of traumatic experiences, victims develop tools to cope with them, which might be built from those learnt throughout life. These tools can be exercising, painting, singing, writing, participating in support groups, etc.

²⁶ PTSD is a mental health condition that stems from direct consequence of experiencing trauma. For a complete diagnosis criterion see: American Psychiatric Association. (2013) Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, (5th ed.). Washington, DC.

²⁷ This approach proves how preparedness diminishes prevalence of PTSD and that healing requires addressing the emotions related to trauma. For specialised researches on this topic, see: Perrin, Megan A., Laura DiGrande, Katherine Wheeler, Lorna Thorpe, Mark Farfel, and Robert Brackbill. "Differences in PTSD prevalence and associated risk factors among World Trade Center disaster rescue and recovery workers." *American Journal of Psychiatry* 164, no. 9 (2007): 1385-1394.

promoting intersubjectivity and empathy towards others and the recognition of other people's feelings and needs. These tools include:

- **Emotional self-monitoring tool:** This tool is designed to increase the participants' awareness of emotional experiences in the body, ideas related to emotions, and the context where the emotions are experienced. It also allows learning that emotional reactions are temporary and felt with higher intensity in the body while sentiments are long term processed emotions articulated with ideas, values, etc. Additionally, it recognizes that everyone experiences a wide range of emotions, and that emotional experience is not divided by gender, age, etc.
- **Emotional management tool:** A guide to help participants to read and understand their own emotions as well as other people's emotions. It teaches that there are not positive and negative emotions, but all of them are fundamental to understand needs and values that cannot be eliminated by will. This shows that everyone uses emotions in their everyday decision-making, alongside other drivers such as ideas, values, etc.
- **Emotional management workshops:** These workshops collectively address emotions that need to be further managed at the individual level. These are an evolution of the group psychosocial accompaniment sections developed in Phase I, where the collective experience of living in a context of war, heal guilt and other emotions that are related to violence and war in order to strengthen individual tools towards healing and recovering well-being and dignity was shared. In this case, the workshops also offer individual support based on the notion that violence prevention and proper decision-making are interconnected to be aware of emotions and know how to manage them.
- **Vocal and sound exercises:** Exercises with vowels and the voice to understand how participants express emotions with their tone of voice and increase awareness and abilities to express emotions assertively. This allows the participants to learn that emotions are experienced in the body and are not universal bodily functions, but learned in specific socio-cultural settings.
- **Role-playing and physical exercises:** These exercises help the participants to better understand reactions and behaviours (in bodily expressions, neurological functioning and general behaviour) driven by emotions, such as anger, sadness, pain and fear, and how to accompany others' emotional reactions. This is of particular importance and use for first responders.
- **Police body map²⁹:** A methodology that allows women from the civil society to broaden their perspective about security providers and open up a debate concerning the responsibilities and duties of the different security actors.
- **Toolbox for women:** As part of the Phase II project, CIASE created an experiential and physical toolbox for women, which they can appropriate during the course of the project, interact, ask questions, adapt it to their daily experiences, and be able to replicate what they have learned widely in their local networks.

Bisson, Jonathan I., Anke Ehlers, Rosa Matthews, Stephen Pilling, David Richards, and Stuart Turner. "Psychological treatments for chronic post-traumatic stress disorder: Systematic review and meta-analysis." *The British journal of psychiatry* 190, no. 2 (2007): 97-104.

²⁸ To be used individually or in group.

²⁹ Methodological tool to gather information whereby women draw on a paper the "police officer we have nowadays" and explain how he behaves, evaluate the fulfilment of his service, his attitudes and characteristics and then draw "the police officer we would like to have" and explain the same factors mentioned above. This tool illustrates the perceptions and imaginaries that women have about the police service in their territory as well as evaluates the fulfilment of their functions and find the possible points of tension to be factored in the security round tables (expected in 2021).

The process of developing this methodology also contains an advocacy component, as DCAF and CIASE have built security recommendations to state institutions, international cooperation, and civil society. To this end, CIASE developed an observational tool called “codified narrative”, which is used in dynamic workshops with local allies to transform abstract demands on security into concrete recommendations.

4.4 Strategies and tools for working with the police

In phase II, CIASE first engaged in informal discussions with UNPEP to raise their awareness about the recommendations developed in phase I. This included information on how the Police could learn and apply Psychological First Aid Tools for first respondents, in particular to attend SGBV victims.

This approach towards the Police was underpinned by the lessons learnt from phase I. At the beginning of the project, women’s perception of the Police was binary (either a good or bad Police officer). However, over the course of the implementation of phase I this dual perception moved towards concrete expectations related to security provision: the Police as an effective doorway to institutional routes that guarantee women rights to a life free of violence and to enjoy a safe and secure life. Therefore, rural women realised that their security needs cannot be exclusively addressed by the Police action, but that they are also entitled to make requests concerning women security needs to civil authorities.

It is therefore evident that profound changes and learnings are required to transform women’s perception who have lost their trust and confidence in the state, as a whole, and in the Police, in particular. This is deemed as the starting point to help the Police to become an active and trustworthy doorway for institutional action. These changes imply a substantial transformation in how

to manage reactivity, transformation of the binary vision that perceives civil society and Police as enemies, and the elimination of violence against women, normalised within institutional actions, such as some Police members who hypersexualise young women. Phase II (2019 & 2020) has offered the opportunity to support this transformation by applying methodologies that aim to mend the trust between the Police and rural women. To do so, it is not only essential to understand women’s rights and security needs, but also those of men, as well as transform the preconceived notions of masculinity. This approach challenges the stereotypical associations of masculinity that underpin patriarchal structures and contribute to a more inclusive and peace-oriented understanding of masculinity.

To this end, CIASE created a series of tools based on methodologies for emotional management and assertive accompaniment.³⁰ These tools were used in workshops targeting the Police. These methodological tools include:

- **First responders’ action and reaction:** A series of vocal, breathing, and movement exercises that provide elements for assertive responses in high risk scenarios and guarantee adequate contention of fear, grief, and anger, in order to generate a safe scenario for crime victims.
- **Self-management of emotions:** Police officers experience high emotional and psychological tensions in their everyday work. In order to address these tensions, CIASE created tools to monitor recognition of emotions and reduce emotional outbursts in risk scenarios.
- **Alert management:** Police duties involve constant states of alert. Therefore, CIASE built tools for managing intense states of alert (before and after action) through somatic movement, aikido and progressive muscle relaxation.

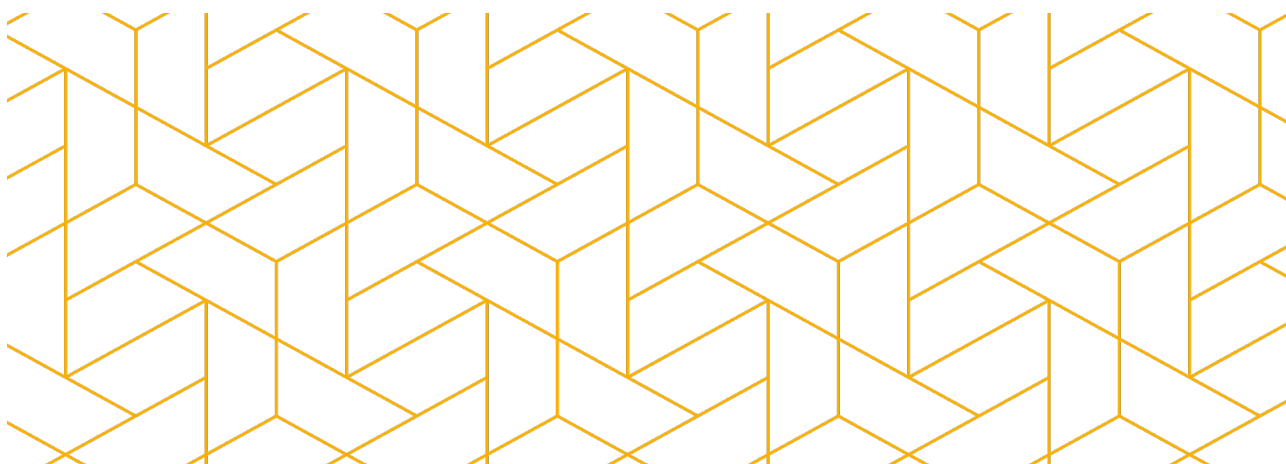
³⁰ Assertive accompaniment: the capacity to accompany a victim or citizen to manage their emotions, avoiding re-victimisation, after a risk situation.

- In addition to this, **CIASE created intersectional methodologies centred on the recognition of blind spots and prejudices**, for example, with trans people, and how it affects the provision of police services. Intersectional perspective in police action to guarantee rights in a multicultural and pluri-ethnic society has been promoted through an exercise that uses a pathway on the floor to symbolise diverse identities. This allows participants to comprehend power and subaltern positions, as well as identify discriminatory experiences. These methodologies took place during a national workshop with Police members from various departments and ranks, generating scenarios that transformed prejudices into consistent dialogues on central issues related to peacebuilding and conflict transformation, such as the comprehension of autonomous indigenous justice systems, the impact of racism in the day to day police service and the notion of diversity from a concept to concrete actions that trigger behavioural and institutional changes within the police body.
- **Furthermore, communication pieces were developed during the COVID-19 lockdown to offer information for Bogotá's Police** and the city's mayor office on how to implement a gender-based restriction of mobility, giving concrete advice to protect rights and the wellbeing of people that challenge gender norms (i.e. trans and non-binary people).

approach to raise awareness and make different gender-based experiences more visible within the Police and in the society as a whole. In this context, CIASE had the opportunity to lead another workshop on “masculinities for peace” that included members of several Police units. This workshop proved to be an effective exercise to transcend the traditional gender approach of the Women Peace and Security agenda and contributed to the transformation of gendered relations. This workshop included exercises to help participants to recognise diverse experiences of being a man, social construction of masculinity as a source of heroism and protection and sought approaches to build masculinities that can contribute to peacebuilding based on equity.

Another key source of knowledge for the Police were the conflict-transformations tools, in which their experiences and knowledge were channelled by CIASE to generate methodologies that identify a variety of contexts within and outside the Police. These tools allow the Police to acquire a broader comprehension of social diversity requirements for peacebuilding and a more secure life. As a part of this exercise, the body was used as a methodological tool, which was an opportunity for encountering methods that produced, unlike verbal trainings, a more profound and rapid transformation. Exercises based on aikido, for example, provided a platform to experience conflict and to recognise gendered binaries, such as force and weakness. This was a process of co-creation and co-learning between the public force and civil society organizations that proves the need for a feminist security that transform gender relations and realities in a country broken by war.

Transforming masculinity to reconsider how peace and security are understood has become a crucial



5 | Results and lessons learnt

5.1 General framework for the analysis

Although the project will not be completed until April 2021, to date most of the consultations with women and the workshops with women and Police officers have been carried out and several lessons can be drawn from the process. This section will mention some of the recommendations that can already be outlined, both for the Police and other national civil authorities. It should be noted that the final report of the project will include a broader and more specific set of recommendations than those mentioned in this paper, including recommendations for civil society, media, and international cooperation institutions.

The recommendations are expected to be implemented in the short term and focus on reducing risk factors and strengthening protection and care factors in daily life. The implementation of these recommendations should lead to improved safety for women in the medium and long term.

This proposal is based on a perspective of security that is interrelated in different dimensions: physical, cognitive-emotional, political, economic, and spiritual. In addition, it acknowledges that achieving efficient, effective, and inclusive SSG for women is a multi-actor agency.

Before mentioning the individual recommendations, it is important to briefly explain the analytical perspectives employed, the dimensions of security that were covered, and the factors that were identified to cover women security needs.

a) Perspectives

The recommendations have been drafted from the following perspectives: **a gender approach, an intersectionality approach, a feminist approach of security, and a hybrid-security approach**, meaning

that security involves non-state, informal, and customary security and justice providers. The latter approach is required to assure coexistence of several forms of guaranteeing security and justice in the territories, both through ordinary public authorities and through indigenous or Afro-descendant communal authorities. A categorical analysis of the field diaries written by the project team members working on the ground was used to construct the analysis and draft the recommendations.

b) Dimensions of security

Understanding what protection, care and the perception of security entails is fundamental to describe security as a daily concern. Security implies a proper management of daily risks, particularly those caused by situations of escalating violence. It only becomes a reality when people can live in freedom, tranquillity, and in trust with others.

When individuals are perceived as both agents and recipients of security (human security), it is possible to build a more comprehensive concept that transcends the idea that security can be applied generically to any hypothetical subject. Such a concept is built on interrelated dimensions of security, which are explained briefly hereafter:

- **Political dimension:** related to the exercise of citizenship and rights;
- **Spiritual dimension:** security related to a very private area of life, which draws upon the sources that inspire and uplift individuals (could be religion, transcendental inner searches or other sources of inspiration);
- **Physical dimension:** it relates to the protection of people's bodies, property, physical assets

and living environment;

Cognitive-emotional dimension: related to feelings, thoughts, and emotions;

- **Economic dimension:** it refers to the capacity of individuals, households or communities to meet their basic needs in a sustainable manner and with dignity.

c) Factors related to security

Security factors are events or situations that either prevent or enable to feel safe and secure. For the analysis carried out to draft the recommendations these factors were divided into three categories: risk factors, protection factors, and care factors.

Risk factors are those that limit the exercise of liberties and rights within a rule of law framework in such a way that they prevent people from feeling safe, calm, and confident in their living environments. These risks may be imminent or a sudden onset, but may also develop in the short, medium or long term.

Protection factors are those that create a protection barrier against sudden and short-term risk factors.

“The process has helped me a lot to know and identify types of security that I was not aware of, which I thought were not so useful in our daily lives. The information provided by CIASE has been very useful in my personal life and with other people. It was a very enriching experience to be able to identify types of security that are indispensable and very important in our lives: physical security, emotional security, financial security, political security, and spiritual security.”

Participant of a capacity-building workshop in Buenaventura | 2020

When a protection factor is applied for the long-term, the risk becomes normalised. Therefore, protection factors should not replace long-term care factors.

Finally, care factors refer to actions and strategies that enable people’s daily experiences to respond to dynamics that favour freedom, peacefulness, and trust in their present and future livelihoods.

5.2 Preliminary recommendations

In this section a sample of recommendations that can already be taken forward based on the analysis carried out so far are presented. In the first place, recommendations for civil authorities, other than the Police, are presented. These refer to public intuitions operating at a national and municipal level that provide security services or other services closely linked to security. Subsequently, recommendations for the Colombian National Police are presented, with emphasis on the personnel deployed in the concerned territories.

5.2.1 Recommendations for civil authorities

Physical Security:

Protection: In the regions, the imminent risks for women leaders, human rights defenders, and peacebuilders are not adequately detected due to urban-centred early warning actions or protection plans. It is essential that such actions are designed according to the realities of the territories, with emphasis on an inter-sectoral approach that considers the uses and customs of indigenous, Afro-descendent, and peasant communities. It is vital that trainings incorporate a perspective that recognises the world view and the daily dynamics of the women who inhabit the territory, especially indigenous and Afro-descendent women.

Care: It remains vital to ensure access to purified water and to sanitation in the target regions. The availability of water contributes to physical security, reduces conflicts, and alleviates the burden of caregiving that rests disproportionately on women.

Cognitive-emotional security

Protection: In all the target regions, there has been evidence of a systematic failure of public servants to comply with their confidentiality obligations after providing medical or psychological care. It is essential that health-care servants also have access to a health care support (second level care) that contributes to reducing the need to discuss their patients' cases with other people.

Care: It is necessary to increase the availability of qualified therapists in various institutional settings. This should include staff with expertise in post-traumatic stress, brief therapy, cognitive restructuring, and sexual and reproductive health, with a differential gender perspective.

Political Security

Protection: Labelling communities as “difficult” puts them at a very high risk and creates barriers for effective intervention by the entities of the State, especially the Police. It is necessary to clearly establish what is meant by a “difficult community” and to generate plans in accordance with the obstacles of dialogue with and access to a given community, whether it be: mistrust, infrastructure, management of warnings, management of fear, political polarization, among others.

Care: It is important to create differentiated spaces for the implementation of public policies to address risks and needs in each of the dimensions of security, in order to foster greater engagement of state institutions that are not usually involved in ensuring the right to security, such as health or cultural entities.

Economic Security

Protection: It is essential that protection plans contain concrete actions to counteract the impacts that situations of imminent risk, such as threats to life, of displacement, etc., have on collective or individual economic wellbeing.

Care: State actions related to the improvement of the living conditions (including environmental protection) must include clear proposals for the

economic wellbeing of the rural population in situations of greater vulnerability, so as to reduce the events that impact individual and collective security, especially of women.

Spiritual Security

Protection: Enforced disappearance has a very high impact in the meaning of existence of the victims' families, especially women. Therefore, it is necessary to generate proposals for targeted accompaniment that include dealing with grief in a manner that is sensitive to the individual beliefs and worldviews.

Care: It is essential that protection schemes include actions or alliances with people or entities that work on the spiritual component (not only in communities with indigenous or Afro-descendant ethnicities) considering the proven importance of mourning rituals in the management of loss. It is essential that this accompaniment is chosen by the persons involved in the process and not imposed from a single worldview or belief.

“I’ve learned a lot about my rights as a woman, about knowing my body, knowing when my rights are being violated, and what I should do in some instances. I consider this to be extremely useful because I can transmit everything I’ve learned to those closest to me so that they can also acquire a greater sense of their rights and the abuses they might be subject to. I am very happy to be part of this process and I look forward to continue with follow-up trainings.”

Participant of capacity building workshop in Buenaventura | 2020

5.2.2 Recommendations for the National Police

Physical Security

Protection: Police officers' capacity and trainings to carry out detentions and containment measures without producing harm must be broadened and strengthened, incorporating a gender and diversity-sensitive approach.

Care: It is essential to create a protocol related to geographical transfers of Police staff that includes measures for adapting to food, altitude, pollution, climate, and other drastic changes.

Days-off for resting must be granted for officials after high-alert situations, such as quartering for public order. Ensuring enough rest is a substantial element for assertive action by the Police.

Cognitive-emotional Security

Protection: Regular training is needed for staff from all units to teach them skills on how to become emotional respondents with a differential, intersectional, and gender focus. These trainings are particularly necessary for Police officers who serve as the first contact point for citizens facing risks or when presenting a complaint.

Care: The constant state of alert to which police officers are exposed increases reactive responses in everyday situations, such as hostile response to citizens. For this reason, it is important that commanders build spaces for deconstructing and analysing the alert before and after carrying out a high-risk intervention. Likewise, conscious processes are needed to allow police officers to heal after experiencing traumas or witnessing extremely violent situations.

Political Security

Protection: It is essential that the Police strengthen educational processes so that communities understand the scope and functioning of the institution. This is necessary in view of the lack of general understanding in Colombian society about the functioning and challenges of the Police, specially about their role in former conflict zones. This inadequate understanding fosters

generalisations that endanger the integrity of Police officers and diminishes trust from the citizens towards the institutions and its staff.

Care: The awareness of the institution's responsibility in de-escalating conflicts must be reinforced among staff members who intervene in daily situations linked to short- or long-term conflicts.

Economic Security

Protection: Acts of corruption by some Police officers deepen mistrust among the communities. It is essential that citizens are provided with safe channels to report these acts, especially in remote rural areas without access to Internet.

Care: It is necessary to strengthen capacities of the Police units operating in the ETCRs in conflict transformation and building trust, considering that conflict de-escalation actions carried out by the Police contribute directly to protect people's goods and assets, as well as public goods.

Spiritual Security

Protection: It is important that the Police conduct a periodic assessment on how institutional communication, such as their traditional greeting "Dios y Patria" (God and Nation), can lead to negative or positive perceptions in communities, with a special emphasis on women's perceptions.

Care: It is important to provide regular trainings on the basic characteristics and principles of the main religions and worldviews that are present in municipalities with indigenous, Raizal, Romani, and Afro descendant population. Minority religions and beliefs, such as Islam, Buddhism or Yoruba, should not be neglected. Such an approach can help to prevent conflicts related to beliefs and religion.

6 | The way forward

After three years of implementation, the project has left an important footprint on how to approach security from a gender perspective in post-conflict zones. However, Colombia's volatile economic, social, and political situation, the precariousness and lack of opportunities especially in rural areas, the persisting high levels of violence and crime, and the devastating effects of the pandemic continue to make the improvement of women's security an uphill struggle.

Four years after the signing of the Final Peace Accord, it is remarkable how Colombia has moved forward by setting up a robust architecture for peace, including the creation of several national implementation organizations, numerous spaces for citizen participation, and a comprehensive mechanism of truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition. Nonetheless, as highlighted in the latest report of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, medium- and long-term commitments, such as reducing socio-economic gaps between rural and urban areas, ensuring the reincorporation of ex-combatants, guaranteeing the rights of victims, and implementing cross-cutting approaches related to gender, ethnic communities and the territorial transformation, are still pending and will be key on making the content of the Agreement truly

visible in the areas most affected by the conflict.³¹ As mentioned earlier, one of the main challenges in advancing towards these objectives is the strong presence of illegal armed groups and the presence of some guerrilla factions non-adhered to the peace accord, known as **"disidencias" or "residual groups"**.

To this extend, OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS) has noted that the persistence of forced recruitment of children and youth, the installation of antipersonnel mines and other explosive devices, kidnapping, sexual violence, and displacement is alarming and generating profound impact on indigenous, afro-descendant and peasant communities.³² Furthermore, in the middle of fighting COVID-19, the country has suffered a dramatic increase in massacres of civilian population in recent months, as illegal armed groups and criminal organizations are taking advantage of the situation posed by the pandemic to expand their territorial control. Up to October 2020, Indepaz has counted 65 massacres (260 people killed).³³ As shown by the numbers mentioned at the beginning of this piece, social leaders and human rights defenders are particularly exposed to threats, aggressions and killings, as they are perceived as a threat to lucrative and illegal activities carried out across

³¹ Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, "Report Four: State of Implementation of the Colombian Final Accord, December 2016 - November 2019 (In Spanish)" (Bogotá, June 2020), 11, <http://peaceaccords.nd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Cuarto-Informe-Final-with-Annex-Link-1.pdf>.

³² "MAPP/OEA advierte sobre continuidad de violencia de grupos armados ilegales contra población civil en Colombia (MAPP/OAS warns of continued violence by illegal armed groups against civilians in Colombia)," June 19, 2020, <https://www.mapp-oea.org/mapp-oea-advierte-sobre-continuidad-de-violencia-de-grupos-armados-ilegales-contra-poblacion-civil-en-colombia/>.

³³ Indepaz defines "massacre" as the intentional and simultaneous murder of several persons (3 or more) in the same circumstances of time, manner and place, that are protected by International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and in a state of defencelessness. Indepaz Conflict, Peace and Human Rights Observatory, "Informe de Masacres en Colombia durante el 2020 (Report on Massacres in Colombia during 2020)" (Indepaz, September 30, 2020), <http://www.indepaz.org.co/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Masacres-30-09-2020.pdf>.

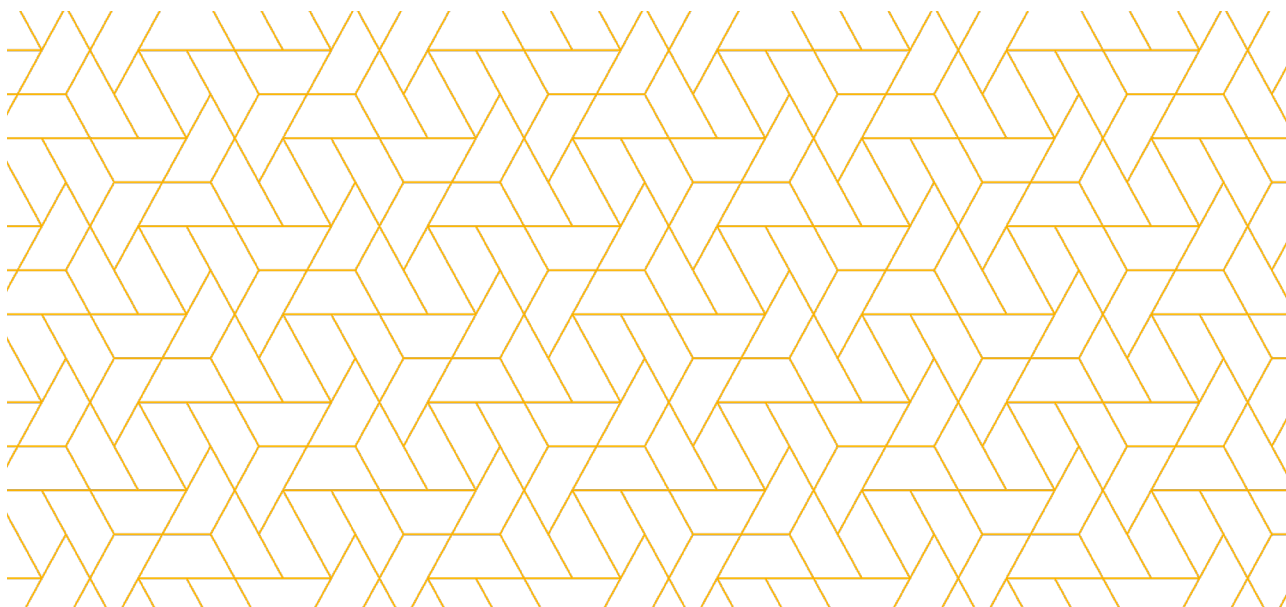
Colombia's countryside, including drug trafficking, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, illegal mining, and illegal timber trade.

Additionally, the spread of COVID-19 has brought devastating and increased risks for women and girls, particularly for those living in already fragile territories. Confinement measures have left women and girls more exposed to SGBV and have made access to crime reporting mechanisms more difficult. Although it is hard to estimate the actual number of such aggressions, as many go unreported, in March 2020 emergency calls to report domestic and SGBV **increased by 170% in Colombia, which gives a clear signal of this problem.**³⁴ In addition to SGBV, the pandemic exacerbates gender inequalities by disproportionately affecting women and girls in terms of school attendance, access to sexual and reproductive health services, loss of income and precarious working, and household conditions³⁵

Tragically, the current scenario threatens to deepen gender inequalities in Colombia and to hinder the exercise of women's leadership in the transition

towards peace. As such, meeting the cross-cutting gender commitments in the Peace Agreement is a challenge that lies at a crucial moment. Against this backdrop, the purpose of the project remains crucial to face the current crisis and continue to support the improvement of security conditions for women and girls in Colombia. Arguably, more than ever efforts are needed to ensure the rights of women and girls to be heard and to enjoy a life free from violence in Colombia.

Over the past 3 years, the project has made significant contributions to the implementation of the gender dimension within the Colombian peace agreement by strengthening the dialogue between the Police and the civil society in conflict-affected areas and by supporting the inclusion of a gender dimension within the process of re-establishing the rule of law in these remote areas of Colombia. Given the current COVID-19 situation, and its impact on SGBV in the country, it is paramount to continue staying engaged and building on the progress achieved through the first two phases of this project.



³⁴ Consejería Presidencial para la Equidad de la Mujer (Presidential Council for Women's Equity), "La Crisis Del COVID-19: Impacto Diferencial y Desafíos Para Las Mujeres En Colombia (The COVID-19 Crisis: Differential Impact and Challenges for Women in Colombia)," Serie Mujeres En Tiempos de COVID-19 (blog), July 28, 2020, 15, http://www.observatoriomujeres.gov.co/archivos/publicaciones/Publicacion_37.pdf.

³⁵ Consejería Presidencial para la Equidad de la Mujer (Presidential Council for Women's Equity), "Impactos Socioeconómicos Del COVID-19 En Las Mujeres: Pobreza (Socioeconomic Impacts of the COVID-19 on Women: Poverty)," Serie Mujeres En Tiempos de COVID-19 (blog), August 24, 2020, http://www.observatoriomujeres.gov.co/archivos/publicaciones/Publicacion_48.pdf; Consejería Presidencial para la Equidad de la Mujer (Presidential Council for Women's Equity), "La Crisis Del COVID-19: Impacto Diferencial y Desafíos Para Las Mujeres En Colombia (The COVID-19 Crisis: Differential Impact and Challenges for Women in Colombia)."

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