Bodily Harmonies

Memory and Resistance of Women Defenders, Following-up on Resolution 1325

LIMPAL Colombia

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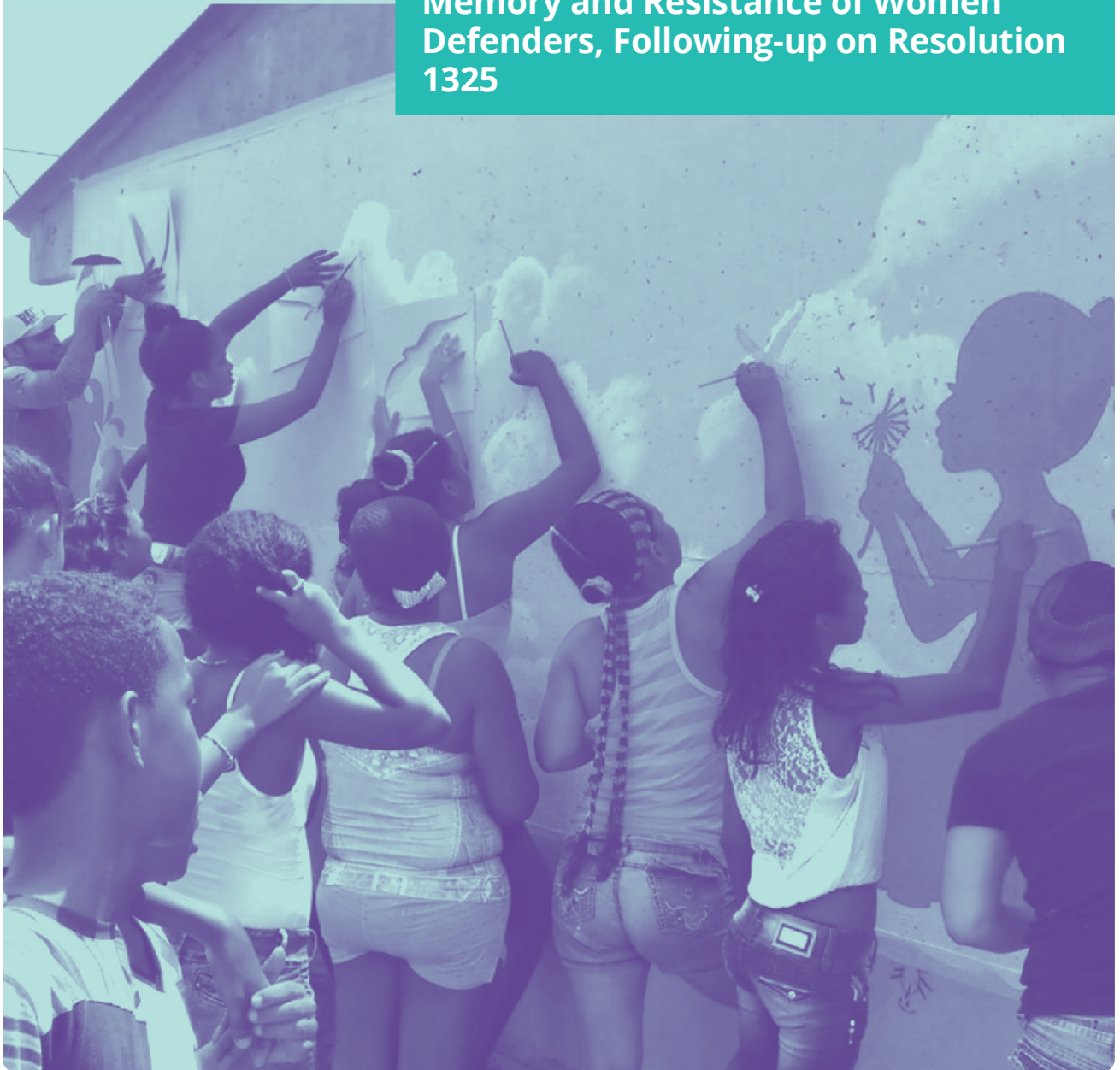
Memory and Resistance of Women Defenders, Following-up on Resolution 1325

**BODILY HARMONIES: MEMORY AND RESISTANCE OF WOMEN
DEFENDERS, FOLLOWING-UP ON RESOLUTION 1325**
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom – WILPF
Liga Internacional de Mujeres Por la Paz y la Libertad – LIMPAL Colombia

**This report has been translated from the
original Spanish, found here:
https://limpalcolombia.org/images/
documentos/SINTONIAS_CORPORALES_
DIC_19_1.pdf**

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Self-esteem strengthening workshop, Bolívar, 2019.

Presentation

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, WILPF (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom- LIMPAL) is a feminist, pacifist and antimilitarist organization. Since its founding in 1915, it has worked in 47 countries to promote female empowerment and the incorporation of gender perspectives and women's rights in peacebuilding processes, recognizing the need to eliminate inequality in public and private spaces and to give women's voices a platform in order to build a more just world for women.

WILPF Colombia has dedicated itself to defend and promote the guarantee of women's rights to create justice, reparation and equality, through the empowerment and participation of women and young people who are impacted by or survivors of the armed conflict. Since 1998, WILPF Colombia has been committed to building stable and sustainable peace settings via women's advocacy and political participation that defend and protect their rights in the national territory.

Since the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2016, WILPF's initiatives for the application of Resolution 1325 have focused on promoting research to urge the Colombian State to improve their policies working with and for women. In June 2016, when the Peace Agreement began, WILPF Colombia published the yearly monitoring report *Disarming Life, Reflections on Resolution 1325*, Disarmament and Women in Colombia. This report expressed WILPF's stance on the steps for a sustainable and lasting peace, putting forward questions based on the experiences, needs and proposals of women themselves.

Disarming life seeks to integrate a theoretical framework based on international law, above all the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and it's link with disarmament, demilitarization and the small arms trade in the post-conflict setting. It uses as a reference the perspectives of women's organizations that have been working in the field and developing political positions based on local realities for years, and that demonstrate the specific needs for the incorporation of a gender perspective and women's rights in peacebuilding (WILPF Colombia, 2016).

A year later, WILPF Colombia published the report *Women for Disarmament, + Lives - Weapons: an Overview of Disarmament Since Resolution 1325*, in which it followed up on FARC-EP's disarmament process and its links with women's human rights and safety guarantees. What's more the report analyses some of the effects of the circulation of weapons in the territories and reflects upon the impact of high defence and military spending.

In 2018, after various reconciliation processes and work on agreements and internal reflections, WILPF published a report entitled *The Fight for Dignified Reincorporation for Women: Monitoring Report on Resolution 1325* with Recommendations for Reincorporation Processes. In this report LIMPAL published the following decision, based on the

8th March celebration for International Women's Day, San Jacinto, Bolívar

knowledge dialogues between WILPF Colombia and FARC:

[...] to work together to create a political analysis of the reincorporation processes of farianas (women members of FARC) with a focus on gender and women's rights. The analysis will take a critical perspective and reveal a more balanced picture of what reincorporation means for women, with the firm intention of transforming the country (2018).

This report promoted reflections on women's agendas in reincorporation processes, their proposals for citizenship building, and highlighted the communication channels that women use to fight together for women's rights guarantees, from their oppression and inequality in a patriarchal system.

Through its work in participative research carried out with its target populations, WILPF Colombia has developed its pacifist feminist proposal that brings

an analytical perspective to national and international discourses. It gives a platform to a wide range of dialogues between women in all their diversities and the national and international women, peace and security agendas. This year (2019), 19 years after Resolution 1325 was presented in the General Assembly, we publish our report, *Bodily Harmonies: Memory and Resistance of Women Defenders.* In this report, WILPF Colombia continues its investigation-action-participation methodology and dialogue of knowledge from an intersectional perspective. It extracts from women's stories the knowledge most pertinent to understanding the adverse context from which the strongest leadership emerges, in this case from those of women human rights defenders.

For these women, this has meant leaving behind the patriarchal structures that stop them from recognising and appreciating their actions in representing and speaking for others. These structures

assume that women stay in their historically traditional domestic roles as caregivers and mothers. However, various social dynamics, which have been mixed with the dynamics of the war in the Colombian context, have led to the women survivors taking on traditionally male roles in what the patriarchy christened the public sphere. Through bringing their and other women's agendas, voices and proposals to those public spaces, these women have confronted the colonial and masculine nature of language, testimony and finally, of the truth.

Even though both men and women defend human rights, their working styles have different connotations and reflect their respective life experiences and places in society. Their styles of leadership and, of course the issues, risks and threats that they face are dependent on their individual contexts.

Women defenders' right to defend human rights has always been influenced by their being a woman in a patriarchal society. This has led them to use their skills via their historically-assigned societal role; as such, women defenders work most of all in communities, in the social fabric, in networks. Through their work, they have contributed to what it means to defend human rights, expanding its reach to the realities and issues that mostly – but not exclusively – affect women, such as domestic issues with partners, ex-partners and family members, and participatory spaces, among others.

The woman defender's identity is, of course, subject to diverse intersectionality, but always aims to protect democracy, and strengthen women's citizenship and political participation. Defenders are motivated by these aims and have pathed new paths into political spheres where their voices have a platform, and bit by bit constructed a strong discourse on diversity in the human rights defence, peacebuilding and women's participation.

> " **Women defenders' right to defend human rights has always been influenced by their being a woman in a patriarchal society. This has led them to use their skills via their historically-assigned societal role; as such, women defenders work most of all in communities, in the social fabric, in networks".**

From our political position, LIMPAL continues to advocate for the voices that defend human rights, peace, life and dignity.

Diana Salcedo López
Director

Introduction

In Colombia, leadership and human rights defence have been key to strengthening access to human rights, social processes that demand justice from the government, and full guarantees of rights. These collective processes draw attention to the huge challenges that the Colombian state faces in terms of the prevention, protection and no repetition of human rights violations. Human rights defence work is not always supported by all parts of society, and although governments tend to publicly support such work, the disproportionate number of issues that defenders face shows a lack of political commitment to, and respect and recognition of, their work.

These leaders share the goal of bringing full dignity to their lives and those of their communities. It is important to remember that their forms of leadership are also responses to various kinds of inequality and exclusion, social and territorial control by armed groups, institutional economic interests unconnected to their communities, and conflict-based methods to maintain order. Due to these groups' existence, movements and interactions, Colombia has been affected by conflicts of electoral politics and territorial domination that have caused large rifts in the population, fed by notions of violence and peace. Human rights defenders place themselves into these very rifts and start to fight for the population's collective wellbeing. Whether in wartime, in rural places or urban centres, or in their own homes, efforts to build peace require certain kinds of energy investment, including physical, mental,

emotional, economic, relational, spiritual and many more.

If we add to this general situation an internal armed conflict and its consequential tearing of the social fabric, the effort required from rights defenders is exacerbated, and the violence's reach expands to have direct, structural and cultural implications[1]. This violence often affects those members of society who have historically had their access to power restricted, such as women, children, rural populations, afro-Colombians, indigenous people, and LGBTQI+ people[2].

In such circumstances, some of these people have decided to make their voice heard and take action against different forms of oppression, discrimination, marginalisation or exclusion that affect their lives. They build a life where their actions protect the guarantees and rights of all human beings.

This investigation demonstrates that the scope for leadership is limited by the socio-political risks created by the peace process, which are added to

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[1] Johan Galtung (quoted by Diaz, Dora Ortega, Magda Prieto, Patricia Zabala, Sonia, 2012, p. 17), "direct violence harms people physically and psychologically. War is a maximal expression of direct aggression. Structural violence comes from oppressive social, political and economic structures that restrict people from developing their potential, such as poverty, hunger, lack of access to education or health services […]. Cultural violence originates from the imposition of cultural values and rules that deny cultural diversity and legitimize the other two forms of violence."

[2] Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersexual, and queer people, with the "+" representing other identities not mentioned in the previous acronym, such as demisexual, pansexual and asexual.

the constant territorial and national dynamics of corruption, misgovernment, and illegal trafficking. The women human rights defenders interviewed confirmed that the current environment not only represents a threat to their lives, but also impacts their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. In this report, some common characteristics of the women interviewed will be presented, but first the definitions of leadership and human rights defence roles will be clarified.

For the purposes of this report, a woman leader and human rights defender will be defined as a person committed to and recognized for their work in the strengthening of the social fabric, and whose advocacy seeks to positively and fairly dignify the lives of members of their community, The program *Somos Defensores* (We Are Defenders, 2018) defines leaders as:

The soul of the territories, they are the guiding light of their communities, a source of democracy, the seeds of ancestral wisdom, they are part of the earth's umbilical cord […], Colombia's hope for peace. These men and women are these things and much more […] History will not forget their immense sacrifice (p.3).

We wish to differentiate here between a leader and a human rights defender, as any person may be a leader in a process or a cause, but said cause does not necessarily fight for human rights. On the contrary, any person who defends human rights is a social leader, since the aim of social leadership is to work to guarantee the provision of social goods. Human rights defenders are different from social leaders because their duties expand further than just fighting against human rights violations. According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur, Michael Forst, these duties include:

Helping State parties in the creation of public policies to fulfil their obligations […] [the human rights defenders may be] parents seeking the recognition and inclusion

"This investigation demonstrates that the scope for leadership is limited by the socio-political risks created by the peace process, which are added to the constant territorial and national dynamics of corruption, misgovernment, and illegal trafficking".

of their transgender children, a whistle-blower who reports labour standards infractions, a public servant who judges those who have committed human rights violations, and those who suffer extreme poverty and lack of resources and who fight against systems of exploitation, among others (2018, pp. 7-19).

This does not mean that a leader cannot be a human rights defender or vice versa; neither role is exclusionary. Quite the opposite, the international community, speaking through the UN General Assembly, promotes the application of Resolution 53/144 of 1998 in states and civil society. This resolution approves the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and highlights the global movement that we all play a role in,[3] independent of our diverse cultures.

Peace, being another part of culture, has encouraged the creation of non-violent ways to manage the conflicts that affect the lives of women leaders and their communities. It has also created various levels of direct, structural and cultural responses. Given that peacebuilding actions have become collective efforts, those who defend human rights and build peace are a social group. As Marion Young understands it:

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[3] The Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Retrieved from: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Defenders/Declaration/declaration_sp.pdf

[Social groups are] a specific type of group with specific consequences for how people understand themselves and others [...]. People within a social group have specific similarities thanks to their shared experiences or lifestyles, and these similarities lead them to associate with each other more than with people outside of their group, or people who live differently from them (1990, p.77).

Social movements should be understood as social groupings that create dialogues with the government's presence and positions. They are characterised by: a desire to mobilise for the interests of a group and attract the attention of governmental authorities; the use of various strategies to drive political action (protests, assemblies, official letters, etc.); and public demonstrations that make the social movement's unity clear.

Social movements have organised and acted for the vindication of rights in many spheres. With more than 45 years of history, these fights' are founded upon the vindication of rights; demanding guarantees for communities to have a full life in the territories. Social mobilization is communities' demand for reparation and their active participation in the reduction of violations and the satisfaction of basic needs, such as survival, wellbeing, identity and freedom. The rural movement continues to fight for health and working rights, public services and resources, the creation of living spaces, the environment, and the reduction of exploitative and mining extractivism practices.

To understand the context of this report, it is important to understand other social movements. The LGBTQI+ movement has achieved goals such as: their recognition in politics and society through legislation on patrimonial and pension rights, gender-affirming surgery for trans people, medical attention, and equal marriage. However, the movement still faces challenges, including the effective implementation of these regulations, the visibility and inclusion of transgender issues, regional sec-

tors and the integration of these initiatives into daily life in general.

The indigenous movement has been active for around 48 years and fought issues such as the creation of armed groups in their territories, persecution and assassination of people who take on leadership roles, the organization of indigenous people and political representation on a national level, training in urban centres, and the defence of the right to land as a collective good (*Programa de comunicaciones del Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca* – The Cauca Regional Counsel Communications Programme – CRIC, 2019). Daniel Martínez (2016) states that the Indigenous Guards are an example of this; they carry out non-violent interventions to protect the authorities and their communities, implement early warning systems, enter into dialogues with state and international groups, carry out Educational Programs for Peace, and accompany return processes. They are trailblazers in the construction of alternative conflict-management strategies and call on the rest of the community to maintain balanced relationships, strengthening their collective capacity for autonomy, self-determination and the protection of their worldview.

What is more, Afro-Colombian women human rights defenders have a key role in the creation and inclusion of regulations on race and gender in the Peace Agreement. Even so, the current government's lack of action to implement these regulations has meant that these women continue to live in conflict zones and to be victims of gender-based violence (Procesos de Comunidades Negras *et al*., 2019). Movements such as *Cuerpo Silenciados*,[4] a

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[4] A multimedia platform that tells the life stories of three Afro-Colombian women leaders whose work, pain and legacies have not been recognised or remedied by society and the Colombian State. The women are: Inis Mosquera, survivor of the Bojayá massacre; Yolanda Perea, a leader in Riosucio (Chocó) who works with 300 families and 5000 children in her community; and Ana Fabricia Córdoba, one of the legendary leaders in Urabá, Antioquia who was displaced by the persecution and crimes of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, and murdered in Medellín in 2011. https://cuerpossilenciados.revistaviveafro.com

movement from the digital review *Vive Afro*, have arisen from this. Cuerpos Silenciados works to raise awareness for the work and stories of Afro- women victims of the armed conflict in Colombia, via an interactive platform with infographics, videos, podcasts and photos that tell the stories of three afro women leaders' lives and their human rights defence work. Adrian Atehortua's report (2019) documents the testimony of Vanessa Marquez, the director of *Vive Afro*, who states that this movement was born because:

> [...] we noticed that there was a huge absence of stories on Afro- women in the conflict: from civilians to groups outside the law, the state... it seemed as though nobody was telling these stories. We felt that it was important to create these spaces, because violence against women is different. During the war, women's bodies have been seen as objectives, as a target to make them vulnerable. (par. 3)

Colombian plurality is integral to women's movements. They have described themselves as a heterogenous group of diverse social origins, ethnicities and histories that began a movement in the 1970s. In the subsequent decades women have come together from various sectors such as popular movements, unions, and students. They fight for sexual and reproductive health rights, access to services such as aqueducts and education, labour rights, access to ownership, the right to participate in decision-making spaces, peace, strong democracy and the strengthening of citizenship for women.

Given this historical context, women leaders and human rights defenders have to face various risks to their lives, integrity and safety because of: 1) the existence of an armed conflict that exacerbates violence and discrimination against leaders and defenders, and 2) a patriarchal context that shuts down any transgression of traditional gender roles, and brings with it a significant increase in violence against women leaders and human rights defenders.

In order to understand the political role of women leaders and defenders in peacebuilding we must highlight the dynamics of power in public territories and decision-making spaces. Sandra Barreto Daza (2018) underlines that women leaders and defenders face a system dominated by the interests of the public security forces, the national government, and other actors linked to a patriarchal culture that prioritises masculine voices in the public and political spheres. This situation creates obstacles for women leaders' participation and their voices to be heard in the peace agendas, and creates asymmetry in decision-making environments.

However, these balances of power do not always shape the actions and strategies of women, since defenders carry their own elements of power and a collective legitimacy. This power comes from the trust they have built, the communities' recognition of their work, their experience in political action, their relationships of support, and from recovery with their families and personal communities.

Due to their leadership, many women have been exposed to physical, mental, emotional and spiritual violence that negatively affects their lives and integrities. More than one hundred women human rights defenders were murdered between January 1st 2009 and March 31st 2019, (estimation from the *Somos Defensores* program). This means that murders of women defenders increased by 433.3% between 2009 and 2019, compared to the 379.3% increase in the murders of male defenders in the same period. The increase of murders of women defenders in 2013, for example, was 45.5% (Indepaz, 2019).

Women leaders have confronted these individual and collective issues by coordinating with their communities and other socio-political sectors to raise awareness of, report and repair acts of violence through political advocacy strategies that contribute to peacebuilding in the territories. This opens up

space for transforming relationships of inequality, discrimination and violence.

Sandra Barreto Daza states that women leaders and defenders' primary political capital is based on resistance, reporting and recognition of the war-like dynamics of the armed conflict, as well as the poverty, corruption and socio-political violence present in many parts of the country (2018). This was proven in the peace process started by Juan Manuel Santos' government (2010-2018) and the illegal group, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP)*. During this process, the political advocacy of women human rights defenders was essential to for the creation of an agreement with a gender focus and lines of action to protect groups that are historically excluded and made vulnerable by the dynamics of the conflict.

In effect, the signing of the Peace Agreement drew attention to the psychosocial resistance tools that women leaders and human rights defenders use to confront the many factors that impact them directly and indirectly in their work. According to the document written by Patrick Ball, Cesar Rodríguez y Valentina Rozo:

[...] since the signing of the Final Agreement between the Government and the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC)* in November 2016, many organizations have reported an increased number of murders of social leaders. Although the signing of the agreement reduced the lethality of the conflict in general, it implies new threats, originating from the "military reintegration of the guerrillas, the rearming of paramilitary groups and the increased spending on the state military, which has not been able to put an end to the conflict" (2018, pp.2-3).

As such, Colombia's socio-political landscape took a decisive turn in 2016, the year in which the presidential campaign for the 2018 elections began and the peace process between the government and FARC-EP culminated. This new socio-political context affected the lives, integrity and security of leaders

Non-violent direct action. Antimilitarist conference: Antimilitarism in Movement, 2019.

and their communities in new ways; the worsening of violence and lack of protection guarantees have impacted the way in which these people organise themselves.

From a national perspective, the prevalence of these situations have been proven by various international actors and recognised by General Recommendation no.30 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):

[...] for most women in post-conflict environments, violence doesn't end with the official cease fire or the signing of the peace agreement, in fact it tends to increase. The Committee recognises that many reports confirm that, although the forms and places of violence change – perhaps violence no longer comes from the state – all forms of gen-

der-based violence, particularly sexual violence, intensify in post-conflict situations (2013).[5]

Equally, the constant conjunction between the search for peace and resistance strategies in a violent and discriminatory environment have created fatigue, concentration problems, sleep disorders, feelings of guilt or desperation, an increase in negative thoughts about themselves, etc. in women leaders and defenders. As a consequence, they have been put at risk; these situations highlight the obstacles that they face in their contributions to a stable and long-lasting peace.

While these women continue their work in peace management, they have also oriented their leadership around non-traditional issues, such as access to the earth, the rights of populations with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, women's political participation in the peace process, natural resources, and ancestral wisdom, among others (Indepaz, 2019).

The participation of women leaders and defenders in the fight for land and territory is also framed by the armed conflict in Colombia, which at its core disputes entitlement to, possession, or use of the land for lucrative means, mainly in illegal economies. According to Carolina Mosquera, Monica Carmona and Cinthya Carrillo, the data submitted to the *SISMA Mujer* corporation and the *Red Nacional de Mujeres Defensoras de Derechos Humanos (National Network of Women human rights defenders):*

[...] In at least seven of the murders of women defenders between 2013 and 2019, the women were known to be defending environmental and territorial rights, in some cases opposing mining energy projects (2019, p. 81).

Some of the structural barriers that affect defenders are: destruction of aqueducts, attacks against health services and medical missions, the planting of anti-personnel landmines, and the fumigation of illicit crops and food crops. These create physical and mental harm by reducing their access to drinkable water, timely medical attention, safe mobility through rural areas, and food provisions. According to the group, *Gestión Integrada para la Salud Mental* (Integrated Mental Health Management, 2014), all of these circumstances affect the defenders' mental health, as they provoke feelings of unease, fear, anxiety, and sleep alterations that significantly decrease their quality of life in their community and their leadership work in the long term.

Despite the aforementioned issues, women human rights defenders have maintained cohesion in their communities in the face of the State's institutional weakness in guaranteeing collective rights to the access, use and possession of land. One example is the installation of mega projects that indiscriminately exploit natural resources and benefit businesses or individuals with no links to the communities. As a response to this phenomenon, women territory defenders have reported favouritism and the promotion of private access routes, the formalization and restitution of land that unjustifiably slows down public participation in productive projects, sponsored by entities such as the *Agencia Nacional de Tierras* (National Land Agency, ANT) and the *Unidad de Restitución de Tierras* (Land Restitution Unit, URT) (*Procuraduría General de la Nación* – National Attourney General's Office, 2018).

Women land and territories defenders are just one example among the large group of women leading processes to demand action from the State. The common denominator of these processes is the State's response which, in general, not only reproduces violence through legal obstruction of leaders and defenders' fights, but also contributes to communities' stigmatisation of these women. The communities' stigmatisation comes about over time because statements against women leaders undermine the trust that the community has in them. These statements use discriminatory stereotypes

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[5] This recommendation was approved on November 1st 2013.

that rupture the community's internal cohesion and heighten tensions between the leader and her community.

In response to this, the women leaders and defenders have created processes to eliminate the historical violence that has affected their bodies, lives, family systems, the territories that they live in and their communities. While this report recognises that the multidimensional character of violence and the armed conflict has led to different confrontation and leadership strategies, it also highlights that the majority of women defenders have supported the building of a stable and long-lasting peace in an environment of constant risk, exclusion and stigmatization.

Towards a definition of psychosocial issues

The expression "psychosocial issue" shall be used for descriptive and informative purposes. As such, it alludes to the combination of psychosocial harms and confrontation strategies that have arisen from the experience of defending human rights. Given the social, political and cultural implications of women leaders' actions, and the fact that these leaders' community, family, emotional and erotic relationships are also impacted, it is necessary to take an ethical position on what we understand by "harm" in order to recognise and highlight the clear impact that violence, aggression and negative dynamics have on the lives of these women. In the words of Martha Bello and Ricardo Chaparro, these should be understood as "processes that put human dignity at risk ¬– they negatively affect satisfying relationships upon which the human subject is built and sustained –, and that cause deficiency situations such as the negation of the dignified human subject" (2011, p. 31).

Psychosocial harm has been studied in such situations that put human integrity at risk, and various reflections have been drawn on the many ways that it may manifest according to the person's position in the social and community framework. Alba Nefer and Ángela Yadira Hinestroza list some psychosocial harms as prolonged states of uncertainty, fear, anxiety, a decrease in the perception of wellbeing and safety, a decrease in trust in intimate and institutional relationships, breaking of family ties, and traumatic experiences with forced displacement (2014).

Susan Folkman and Richard Lazarus (1986) worked on the notion of *Confrontations*, taking into consideration the combination of behavioural and cognitive resources, strategies and efforts used to resolve threatening or adverse situations while reducing the emotional response or modifying the evaluation of that situation. In the Colombian socio-political context, they studied the confrontation strategies of survivors of victimizing acts that may increase psychic suffering. They observed an increase in behaviours such as emotional avoidance, aggression, denial of impact, alcohol consumption, and the distortion of religious beliefs. They noted that strategies such as positively re-evaluating the situation, taking actions to change or resolve problems, and seeking social support helped to decrease suffering. However, Nohelia Hewitt, Fernando Juárez, Arturo Parada, Jeannie Guerrero, Yineth Romero, Andrea Salgado and Martha Vargas (2016) underline an underlying concern arising from these studies; there continues to be a perception that medical and mental health attention is not needed to deal with these issues. This perception is born in the context of prolonged violence and the consequent pushing of these issues into peoples' private lives.

For the purposes of its analysis, this report will use the expression "psychosocial issue", since it recognises the harm or effect of the context on a person, and also the conflicts or ways in which people organise themselves and take agency in order to impact their context. For the purposes of this report, all non-violent collective actions the seek to re-establish forms of relationships shall be included in the term

"confrontations". As such, it is reasonable to highlight conversations with women leaders and defenders, who are recognised as representative figures in communities and their re-existence processes.

As for the analysis of psychosocial issues, the conceptualisations of expressions of psychosocial harm put forward by Martha Bello and Ricardo Chaparro (2011) shall be considered. The categories that this report will use to analyse information are based on the theory, and what was said in interviews and focus groups. They are as follows:

1. *Identity.* Covers the ways in which a person refers to themselves and how others refer to them, as well as all transformations, deconstructions, actions, meanings and interpretations that have to do with one's personal existence and life project, empowerment, feeling of freedom, or autonomy. Identity is dynamic, meaning that it interacts with one's surroundings; as such identity will be considered in both its individual and social expressions.

2. *Body.* Covers the combination of meanings and interpretations given to what happens to the body as a living organism, and also aspects of the normative, active and discursive context that influences it. This includes the environment (natural disasters, water and air contamination, anti-personnel landmines, destruction of soil and resources used for food and survival).

3. *Psychosoma.* Is understood as the combination of expressions of suffering or psychic alteration and other psychological issues (mood, motivation, alertness, managing emotions, processes of pain and non-material harms), including the deterioration of a person's mental and psychosocial health.

4. *Community.* Refers to the collective and sociocultural dimension of women leaders and defenders as a part of a group, organisation or co-

> **To identify and understand women leaders and defenders' issues from a psychosocial perspective, it is key to include their identities and what they are built on: beliefs, opinions, experiences and feelings".**

llective. This category describes the community ruptures and unions, resistances, vulnerabilities and resilience that they experience together.

To identify and understand women leaders and defenders' issues from a psychosocial perspective, it is key to include their identities and what they are built on: beliefs, opinions, experiences and feelings. This is a context of ethical and political stances where it is necessary to recognise the violations of women and communities' rights. Identifying ourselves as part of this social reality allows us to recognise ourselves as actors with various levels of responsibility for its transformation. Equally, observing the individual nature of each woman and her community allows us to avoid pathologizing and homogenising their experiences, because understanding this in context means that no two leaders, community processes, or rights defence experiences are the same.

In order not to polarise understanding of psychosocial issues, we must consider socioeconomic, economic, political and all other dynamics of power and impunity. Andrés Bastidas Beltrán (2011) states that we should also consider the spaces for dialogue established in alternatives for development, the strengthening of organisational processes, widening of access to justice, and building of memory. In line with Bastidas' remarks, the Colombian context is marked by tensions created by the contrast between social exclusion and weakening resistance processes, and coordinated efforts for social justice. Women have claimed a meeting space among

these dynamics where they take transformative action. One such action has been peacebuilding.

This very *meeting space* was made possible by social combinations, bifurcations and transformations, which groups aiming to reclaim respect and the granting of human rights see as an opportunity for organisation. Social movements also create dialogues with the state by exposing individual and collective problems and demanding effective intervention to solve them.

In collective platforms, defenders adopt the key role of being the guardians of minimum reparations. The achievements of this social mobilisation are exemplified in those of survivors of the armed conflict, who are united by groups such as victims organisations, associations, councils, observatories, committees, corporations, foundations, reserves, overseers and unions. They have constantly advocated to draw all people's attention to the most vulnerable sectors of society.

In response to such actions, state entities and institutional agencies have created a series of laws and programs to protect those people's lives, integrity and safety. However, as explained below, institutional environments are insufficient and ineffective in providing the necessary medical services for women's specific needs. The following section briefly explains the legal arrangements put in place by the Colombian Government to deal with the risks that women leaders and human rights defenders face.

The State's Response to Psychosocial Issues in Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders

Many health, justice and security bodies are unaware of protocols for the monitoring and accompaniment of regulations, measures, programs and plans that attend to women victims of violence, causing

the revictimization of these women. The lack of budgets assigned to medical and psychosocial attention has meant that Colombia has no clear policies to fulfil this obligation. The State's obligation to fulfil the specific needs of victims of the armed conflict was made clearest in Law 1448 of 2011,[6] which describes attention, assistance and reparation measures for victims of the internal armed conflict, among other regulations.

Despite the statement of CEDAW and many international organisations that "gender-based violence related to conflicts has a wide range of physical and psychological consequences for women" (2013, p. 16), the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies' most recent report shows that the poor budget has left rural areas without coverage. This means that the State's response for ethnic populations and other rural communities through the Ministry of Health and Victims Unit has been inadequate.

While these factors have negatively impacted the lives and integrities of victims of the armed conflict, many of the women leaders and human rights defenders have been affected both as victims and as leaders, experiencing exponentially worse mental health problems and no access to professional psychosocial attention. These women can access psychosocial attention through programs such as the *Plan Nacional de Rehabilitación Psicosocial para la Convivencia y No Repetición* (National Psychososcial Rehabilitation Plan for Coexistence and No Repetition), which has its roots in Law 1448 and is established in point 5 of the Peace Agreement, however, these programs do not specifically support women defenders and leaders.

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6   Law 1448 of 2011, June 10th 2011. Medidas de atención, asistencia y reparación integral a las víctimas del conflicto armado interno. Diario Oficial 48096. Retrieved from: https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/subsites/colombia-linea-tiempo/docs/Ley1448/ley1448.pdf

The statistics show that only 20% of victims in the Health Ministry's Psychosocial Attention Program have received attention, and around three million people have still not been considered to be included in the program (El Espectador Newspaper, 2018). According to the Congress of the Republic's Ley de Víctimas (Victims Law) Monitoring Commission, around $115.9 billion COP/USD[7] more is needed to cover the initial number of victims left by the worsening of the armed conflict within Law 1448's framework. And even so, this sum does not guarantee attention to all victims; we recommend extending the law's enforcement at least for another decade. There is a similar situation with Law 1257, which was promoted by more than a dozen women's organisations in 2008 and successfully laid out regulations for the awareness for, prevention and sanctions of violence and discrimination against women. Today, the State does not support the implementation of Law 1257, especially in terms of the required responses for prevention and psychosocial support.

As Mónica Carmona, Cinthya Carrillo and Carolina Mosquera (2019) mention, the Defensoría del Pueblo (Ombudsman's Office) has two programs for the implementation of Law 1257: a psychosocial advice and support service for women victims[8] and a Gender Program for the National System for LGBTQI+ people. Even so, they do not guarantee women's access to justice, nor do they have inclusive information on the procedure for women with disabilities, who cannot read or write, or who speak a dialect or language that is not Spanish to access attention; not receiving appropriate and timely attention doubles these women's risk of being affected by violence.

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[7] Estimated by the General Attorney's Office in Bulletin 587 of August 2019: https://www.procuraduria.gov.co/portal/-Comisiones-de-seguimiento-a-la-Ley-de-Victimas-y-Decretos-Leyes-Etnicos-alertan-sobre-aumento-de-nuevos-hechos-de-violencia-y-precisan-que-se-requiere-_115_9-billones-para-reparar-a-las-victimas.news

[8] The program works with "gender pairs" (women psychologists, social workers, and lawyers) in 13 regional Ombudsman's Offices (Guajira, Atlantico, Bolívar, Uraba, Antioquia, Caldas, Cundinamarca, Bogota, Choco, Valle, Cauca, Arauca and Norte de Santander) (Sisma Mujer, 2016).

Methodology

This study is based on feminist epistemology, in line with WILPF Colombia's positions and policies, as well as the international commitments of their advocacy, and taking into account Norma Blásquez's considerations (2012). With this foundation, this report uses knowledge obtained from and with women, avoiding systematically silencing them, in order to build equality between the people involved. These approaches have been developed through critical feminist readings of science's claim to objectivity and universality; they have proposed an alternative epistemology based in Donna Haraway's idea that "feminist objectivity is about limited localization and situated knowledge, not transcendence and the division of the subject and the object" (1995, p. 327). For Sara Alvarado and Adriana Arroyo Ortega (2017), this very situated knowledge allows us to explore diverse ways to look at and name ourselves, and tell our own stories while recognising our contingencies, pluralities and contradictions. The situated knowledge that this investigation is based on highlights the relevancy of women defenders' lived experiences. It gives them authority that goes against the patriarchal lens through which the universal masculine, "white", heterosexual subject has constructed knowledge and experience.

This monitoring report sought to include the voices of women defenders that come from various places in the country, with different kinds of leadership, whose actions in defence are recognised at the public or community level, and which tackle issues such as women's rights, trans rights, LGBTQI+ rights, the right to water, black women's rights, and the rights of victims of crimes of the state. The women defenders who participated are part of collectives, platforms and organisations that work in political mobilisation and advocacy for various causes within the peace process in the territories. As such, our methodology sought to recognise the differences between women defenders through questions that allowed us to carry out our central investigation into psychosocial support for women defenders.

At the individual level, the investigation was carried out through semi-structured interviews with two stages: the first sought to establish how much the women leaders knew about the central components of Resolution 1325; the second sought to identify the psychosocial issues that these women face due to the violation of their rights during their defence work. Seven women leaders and defenders were interviewed in four cities and one municipality of Colombia. At the group level, focus groups with women leaders and defenders were carried out in one city and one municipality. An average of seven women participated with professionals who support them through therapeutic, psychosocial and alternative tools for emotional healing. The focus groups aimed to create conversations around the specific experiences that has caused psychosocial issues.

Self-esteem workshop, San Jacinto, Bolívar, 2019.

Other voices were also included, in the form of primary and secondary sources, in order to widen understanding of such problems via literature and other studies conducted on this topic, while maintaining the logic of a feminist analysis.

The information collected was categorised, based both on components of Resolution 1325 and on the categorisation of psychosocial issues into: *identity, body, psychosoma and community.* Thus, this analysis combines these categories with the contributions of the following working approaches:

Intersectional Approach:

This report adopts an intersectional approach to its integral analysis, in accordance with Soledad Valle (2016) in order to identify, describe and understand the different forms of inequality, oppression, discrimination or vulnerability that affect women lea-

ders and defenders and put them in situations of risk and social exclusion. This methodology is based on the consideration of social reality as a plural and diverse construct, which allows us to recognise not only the diversity of leaders and defenders, but also the diversity of the impacts on them and even their abilities to confront problems from their social positions.

This focus means analysing the mandates and roles assigned to women and normalised by patriarchal logic that have impeded their inclusion in political spaces, expressed in terms of age, social class, access to formal education, ethnicity, location (urban or rural), and work (paid or unpaid). These expressions of standards and mandates are vantage points from which the inequality that underlies and causes conflicts can be analysed. As Tomeu Sales Gelabert puts it, the "basic objective of intersectional analysis is to critically address the different power dynamics that privileged and oppressed groups face in society" (2017, p. 251).

As such, an intersectional approach contributes to the recognition and understanding of women leaders and defenders' leadership, and their agency to continue applying their strategies, in this case being strategies for integral guarantees of rights.

Psychosocial Approach:

Psychosocial analysis focuses on the relationship between people and their social context, and how this affects their emotions, thoughts and behaviours. Carlos Beristain states that in human rights research it is a tool to "assess and understand the impact on victims and prepare for the challenges presented by reporting, judicial processes and accompaniment processes" (2010, p. 11).

For David Becker and Barbara Weyermann (2006), a psychosocial focus in social and political situations of violence studies not only the dynamics of subjective processes, like cognition, emotion and trauma, but also the link that these have with social proces-

ses such as threats and destruction. According to Juan David Villa, a psychosocial reading is based on principles such as "dignity, mutual support, solidarity, good quality of life, valuing human rights, and an integral gender- and human mental health development-based approach" (2012, p. 353). Villa's notion of psychosocial wellbeing is founded on a combination of "symptomatologies or disorders, epidemiologies, social pathologies and deficiencies; but also collective processes, meanings, confrontations, and factors of individual and community resistance" (2012, p. 354).

Territorial Approach:

This approach establishes that a territory is a socially constructed space that goes beyond physical and biological boundaries; Julio Berdegué and Alexander Schejtman (2004), study territories in this way. Equally, as Mariana Calcagni and Valentina Cortínez (2017), point out, a territorial focus exposes the consequences of the armed conflict and the dynamics of violence on the lives of women and girls; a subject that has been ignored, along with their key role in the distribution of land and the empowerment of populations. The territorial approach, then, is an analytical tool that draws attention to women's productive and reproductive work in the traditionally masculine and militarised space of the earth and the environment, seeing the body as women's first territory.

> **A psychosocial focus in social and political situations of violence studies not only the dynamics of subjective processes, like cognition, emotion and trauma, but also the link that these have with social processes such as threats and destruction.".**

Tribunals for Memory, Vista Hermosa, Meta, 2018.

Mural in Bolívar, 2016.

01

The United Nations Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Resolution 1325.

"I'm scared to say I'm a human rights defender in public because I don't know who might be against it, and the same thing is happening with the stigmatization that we've been feeling, which has come from institutions".

Woman defender, focus group, Meta, 2019.

The United Nations Security Council's Resolution 1325 is a regulatory framework that urges Member States to recognise women's role in the building and consolidation of peace. As Carmen Magallón (2004) states, it was approved on October 1st, 2000, and urges the United Nations Secretary General and the Member States to:

- Guarantee women's participation in decision-making in peace processes.
- Include a gender perspective in the peace agenda.
- Put measures in place to protect women in armed conflicts and post-war situations.
- Make a gender focus mainstream in all United Nations data collection and information systems, as well as in the practical application of its various programs.

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda emerged from these provisions. It highlights the commitments of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, the 1999 CEDAW Optional Protocol, and other international tools for increasing women's participation in the prevention, management and resolution of armed conflicts.

While Resolution 1325 talks about protection and prevention measures for women and girls who are vulnerable to the violence of an armed conflict in general, this report will prioritise the vision and experiences of women leaders and human rights defenders. It is these women who sustain the structure of

post-agreement community processes and manage new possibilities for the transformation of armed disputes in the territories. This chapter will address the relationship between Resolution 1325 and the psychosocial issues that permeate the lives and safety of women leaders and defenders. Below is a brief description of the regulatory framework for the 1325's indicators.

Indicators for Resolution 1325

In April 2010, the United Nations Security Council proposed a series of indicators for the monitoring of Resolution 1325's implementation in the Member States. In the words of Dora Díaz, Susana Ortega, Patricia Prieto and Sonia Zabala, 26 indicators to "determine how the desired results are being achieved in terms of the resolutions on women, peace and security" were approved in October 2010 (2012, p. 46). The indicators were grouped into four pillars:

1. *Participation:* Seeks to measure the incorporation of women and their interests in decision-making in conflict resolution and management processes, as well as peace agreement negotiations. The United Nations Security Council urges members to increase women's representation and participation in peace processes as mediators, negotiators and technical experts in official negotiations. It also demands their increased participation in national and local go-

International Women's Day Mural, March 8th 2018, Meta.

vernments as citizens, elected public officials, and decisionmakers.

2. *Prevention:* Seeks to measure the state's provisions for the prevention of all violations of the rights of women and girls, with a particular focus on sexual and gender-based violence. It also evaluates the institutional strategy to combat violations of the rights of women and girls within ceasefire processes, peace negotiations, and post-conflict environments. The United Nations evaluates the number of women working in national bodies and the percentage of reported cases of exploitation and sexual abuse in each country. Member States are also expected to create provisions to attend the concrete needs and problems of women and girls in early alert systems and conflict prevention mechanisms.

3. *Protection:* By emphasising the need for the protection of the life, integrity and security of all people, without discriminating on the grounds of gender, the United Nations requests that Member States ensure the security, physical and mental health of women and girls, and the full respect of their human rights. In order to do this, States must apply laws that respect the political, economic, social and cultural rights of women and girls, in accordance with international standards. Equally, States must have mechanisms for the control of small and light arms, which put the population's security and integrity at risk. Finally, the UN expects states to provide access to justice for women whose rights have been violated.

4. *Relief and Recovery:* is concerned with the specific needs of women and girls, especially in terms of access to health services, education and attention, since armed conflicts can exacerbate violence and block women's access to these services. The United Nations states that this pillar evaluates relief and recovery programs for women and girls, especially those from vulnerable populations (internally displaced people, victims of sexual violence or gender-based violence, ex-combatants, refugees and women returning from displacement). The level at which the gender focus is part of the mainstream operations of institutions established after conflicts, and of judicial, transition, reconciliation and reconstruction processes is evaluated. This pillar also evaluates whether the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs take into account the specific needs of women security agents, women ex-combatants, and women and girls associated with armed groups.

This report will use Resolution 1325's four pillars as a framework to consider the psychosocial issues of women human rights defenders, who have faced huge setbacks in their work due to prejudices, stigmatisation, and a lack of guarantees of their rights. By centring its analysis around these women's testimonies, this report aims to demonstrate the psychological, physical, mental and emotional harms that these women face, in terms of Resolution 1325.

26   Women's International League for   Bodily Harmonies: Memory and Resistance
          Peace and Freedom - WILPF Colombia   of Women Defenders, Following-up on
                                                    Resolution 1325

Through the understanding that human rights defence is a practice of women in favour of peace, this section of the report seeks to shed light on some of the relationships between the psychosocial issues of the women interviewed and their participation in decision-making, violence prevention, and protection spaces within the peacebuilding process. This will be done in line with Resolution 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders' Participation in the Peace Process

Historically, women leaders and human rights defenders have focused on the fact that men and women have not had equal political participation in the public sphere. For this reason, women leaders and defenders have created a resistance and advocacy agenda to pressure the Colombian Government to guarantee women defenders' effective participation in the design and implementation of peace agreements, in order to recognise the inequality and discrimination that is accentuated by the armed conflict.

Even though women defenders have fought against these asymmetries in Colombian decision-making and peace processes, they have had to face many obstacles in order to have their strategies heard. As mentioned above, current structural violence in Colombian society has normalised the stigmatisation of women leaders and defenders, because they are taking on traditionally male work and because they are breaking the standards of the private sphere. These patriarchal dynamics block women's participation and create serious mental, emotional, and physical health issues for them.

This confirms that the right to political participation in peacebuilding processes for women leaders and human rights defenders is still not sufficiently fulfilled. In fact, when a woman does manage to participate in political dialogues, she not only faces the patriarchal structural obstacles that all women face when trying to gain representation in political spaces, but she also faces other obstacles to the recognition of her agenda and proposals as valid for social transformation. These women's experiences and abilities are still stigmatised as irrelevant during dialogues that benefit communities in general.

This situation has caused negative emotions such as stress, disappointment, sadness, depression, and other emotions caused by a lack of recognition of the political leadership. As one of the women interviewed puts it:

Some of the obstacles [for participation] that I think still exist are gender-based violence, insecurity, and fear in some sectors. It makes women more anxious, and all of this is happening in territories where the conflict is still happening in a different way, and it can be more paralysing for women. Another obstacle is the lack of work opportunities [...] for example, sometimes women are not empowered, and since they don't have the minimum they get into an economic situation where they are dependent, and dependency leads to submission. Another obstacle is that girls and young women have been sexually assaulted at home just because the pot isn't on the stove, because the meal isn't ready. So all of those things become obstacles at one moment or another (Woman leader, virtual communication, 2019).

In this way, women leaders and defenders are surrounded by sexist practices that reproduce discriminatory and exclusionary gender stereotypes, which, in some cases, arise alongside racist and classist practices that devalue the women leaders' work. The fact that the state does not guarantee women's participation is most obviously demonstrated by very slow progress in public policies. While these are not the solution to all of the structural issues that affect women, they are the minimal response that is expected of the government.

It is clear that Ivan Duque's current Colombian Government is making few efforts to implement the

Final Agreement, and in particular is making very few efforts to encourage women's participation in post-conflict politics. Instead, according to the Kroc Institute, the government finds itself facing:

[...] blocks or delays in implementation, as well as a lack of approval for the Special Transitional Peace Constituencies, or political electoral reform that aims to widen democracy among the political parties, guarantee financing in equal conditions, improve the electoral process and encourage women's participation, among other things (2019, p. 4).

As such, women leaders and defenders must face many patriarchal and hegemonic dynamics that prevent the fulfilment of their social and political rights and which add to the already high levels of socio-political violence in the country's territories. Even so, this environment has not stopped these women's advocacy and resistance for peace, since in most cases obstacles fuel them to continue their work as leaders and human rights defenders. In fact, during the dialogues between Juan Manuel Santos (as a spokesperson for the Colombian Government) and FARC-EP in La Habana, Cuba, 33% of the peace negotiators, 3% of the mediators, and 2% of the signatories were women. This level of women's participation was achieved through large-scale national and international advocacy to abide by Resolution 1325's principles.

This achievement increased the international figures for women's participation in peace agreements, but for Colombian women it went beyond a percentage. It showed that women's proposals go beyond the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in line with organizational strengthening in the territories, and are built upon their everyday, community-based work done in the territories. As one of the women leaders interviewed put it:

I can honestly say that, in some ways, we made this change possible by working together. It didn't have the re-

> " It is clear that Ivan Duque's current Colombian Government is making few efforts to implement the Final Agreement, and in particular is making very few efforts to encourage women's participation in post-conflict politics".

sults that we desperately want, but it did wake people up to the topic of women's full participation. We did it through the various workshops and courses with teenagers and women who now see their participation as possible. So in these different life cycles we have been helping the women to grow, and through their participation we guarantee them training and a certificate, on the one hand because it's the right thing to do, but more importantly because women are always required to fight harder than men. So my answer is yes (Woman leader, virtual communication, 2019).

Lastly, it is important to highlight that point 2 of the Final Agreement stipulated that measures must be taken to guarantee the participation of social movements and organisations, recognising the need for coexistence, tolerance and a lack of stigmatisation in order to strengthen the country's democratic and participative capacity. The Kroc Institute (2019), in its technical verification role for the Final Agreement, confirms that some guarantees for participation have been put in place, such as the approval of the Statute of Opposition, the pre-emptive deployment of measures to strengthen the judicial process, and the Timely Action Plan (Plan de Acción Oportuna, PAO) for prevention and protection for human rights defenders, social leaders, community members, and journalists. The Kroc Institute also states that leaders and human rights defenders' participation in Development Programs with a Territorial Approach (programas de Desarrollo con enfoque territorial, PDET) has been strengthened:

Assemblies were held with communities and leaders from more than 11,000 veredas (rural areas) of the 170 municipalities most affected by the armed conflict. This was organised through 1,630 pre-assemblies in the veredas; including 305 community councils; 452 indigenous reserves; 6 rural farmer reserve areas; social, territorial ethnic, women's, LGBTI+, environmental and productive organisations from the 16 prioritised territories; the mayoral offices and governors of the 170 municipalities; and these territories' chambers of commerce, guilds and businesses. As of December 13th, 2018, around 147,499 people had participated, of which 41% (61,054) were women. These people participated in and contributed to the construction of a shared vision for the future and a series of regional, municipal and veredal development initiatives seeking to achieve that goal. The challenge now is to implement these initiatives (2019, p. 38).

However, the Kroc Institute has echoed the warnings of women's organisations, stating that the national government has faced more challenges than successes in the implementation of point 2 of the Final Agreement. This is due to the fragmentation of legislative processes and the lack of political will to implement the law for the guarantee and promotion of citizen participation: the Electoral and Political Reform, and the Special Transitional Peace Constituencies. Equally, according to the Kroc Institute (2019), the high rates of political and social violence, polarisation and stigmatization during the 2019 electoral period affected participation levels in the sense that there were no protection guarantees for exercising democratic rights.

In this context, women defenders and leaders have challenged the structural and patriarchal violence that denies them their rights in the public sphere via political resistance and advocacy aimed at the decision-making levels of the national government. One such strategy is the approval and backing of Resolution 1325 as a policy framework for women's, feminist and peace defending organi-

> **It is important to highlight that point 2 of the Final Agreement stipulated that measures must be taken to guarantee the participation of social movements and organisations, recognising the need for coexistence, tolerance and a lack of stigmatisation in order to strengthen the country's democratic and participative capacity".**

sations in order to demand that human rights are granted and build a democratic, participative and inclusive society.

As such, Resolution 1325 has provided a mechanism to empower and strengthen participation, management, and territory defence processes, since it recognises the disproportionate effects of war on women, and promotes their role as peacebuilders.

Conflict Prevention: an Overview of Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders' Safety

Given the country's current environment of aggressions, persecutions, murders and other forms of violence against social leaders and human rights defenders, the international community has demanded that the Colombian Government not forget "its duty to guarantee life and integrity for defenders, since this would be a glaring omission of its duties, as stated in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders of 1998, among others" (2018, p. 5). The international community urges Ivan Duque (2018-present) to implement integral protection and prevention measures to end the wave of violence.

Although this report will dedicate a section of its second chapter to speak in more detail on the prevention of violence against women leaders and human rights defenders, it is important to recognise that the Colombian Government must guarantee the life, safety and integrity of human rights defenders through integral strategies for the prevention of violence that go beyond militarised measures such as bodyguards, armoured cars, bulletproof vests, etc. In 2012, the Colombian Government promoted Resolution 805, which for the first time recognised women's specific prevention and protection needs. This was added to the Colombian Constitutional Court's Declaration 098 of 2013, which recognised the need to:

Adopt concrete measures to create a favourable environment for women human rights defenders. The Court finds that the relevant parties must: establish and take relevant corrective measures to avoid discriminatory or derogatory attitudes and practices against women human rights defenders on behalf of government officials; incentivise women human rights defenders' work through public campaigns that legitimise their work; and create programs for training in women's human rights for all government officials who work with women leaders and victims of for-

ced displacement, as a part of their legal or constitutional role.[9]

In this way, prevention should avoid all forms of discrimination, stigmatisation and violence that affect the life and safety of women defenders, their communities and their territories. This requires an organised dialogue with local, departmental and national institutions that analyse the factors that lead to violence and respond immediately to early warnings issued by the Ombudsman Office, and risks identified by women leaders and human rights defenders.

During the National Process for Guarantees for the work of Human Rights Defenders, and Social and Community leaders, started in 2009, coordinated efforts have been made between the Human Rights, Peace and Democracy platforms of the *Techo Común*[10], the Presidential Program for Human Rights, and the international community, led by the Ministry of Interior and Justice. Thanks to this work, the Integral Guarantees Program for Women leaders and Human Rights Defenders was formed (regulation in Resolution 0845 of 2018), which states that "institutional actions are needed to: (a) strengthen women's leadership, their organisations and their part in the social movement; (b) recognise and publicly back the work of women leaders and human rights defenders; and (c) institutionally manage risk with a gender perspective and focus on women's rights, integrating an ethnic and differential perspective" (Presidential Council for Women's Equality, 2018, pp. 29-30). An integral response must, therefore, be centred around structural prevention mechanisms, that is to say that decrees and resolutions are not sufficient for the protection and prevention of leaders and defenders. A rights-based approach must be

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[9] Corte Constitucional de Colombia (2013). Relatoría Auto 098 de 2013, M.P. Luis Ernesto Vargas Silva. Retrieved from: https://www.corteconstitucional.gov.co/relatoria/autos/2013/a098-13.HTM

[10] The Techo Común is made up of the Permanent Assembly of Civil Society for Peace, the Colombian Platform for Human Rights, Democracy and Development, and the Alliance of Social and Related Organizations, Colombia-Europe-United States.

prioritised to create and implement public policies for prevention. If these measures are not taken, governments run the risk of exposing women leaders and defenders to being victims of violence, especially sexual and gender-based violence.

According to the Institute of Development and Peace Studies (*Indepaz*), one case of sexual violence against a woman human rights defender was registered in 2016, while in 2017 six cases were registered, representing a 500% increase compared to the previous year. In 2018 four cases of sexual violence against women human rights defenders were registered, and one against a woman involved in politics. In the first trimester of 2019, three cases of alleged sexual offences against women human rights defenders were registered, which is alarming given that it add up to almost the total number of cases registered in the previous year. These data demonstrate, beyond the figures and the significant increase in cases of sexual violence each year, a lack of efficient prevention mechanisms to mitigate and eradicate the patterns of sexual violence that human rights defenders are commonly victims of.

This is a risk to the safety, life and integrity of women leaders and human rights defenders, which adds to the already complex emotional issues that negatively affect these women's mental and physical health. As the following testimony shows, sexual aggressions impact not only the life of the victim, but they also intensify the feelings of weakness, anger, or affectations such as depressive disorders in women defenders who work with victims of these crimes:

"I think the challenge here in Meta is to make it clear that there's been too much sexual violence, that women were taken like objects of the war, but everything has been kept very quiet and a lot of women haven't been able to report abuse because their own husbands won't let them. This job is way too dangerous, at times we suffer horrible emotional instability. For example, we've had cases where sexual violence victims never heal, because as soon as they find peace they end up the same situation again, and those kinds of experiences really destroy a person. It's horrible and we human rights defenders are psychologically threatened; we could end up going crazy because of the work that we do." (Woman defender in Meta, in-person communication, 2019).

These statements demonstrate not only the harm that sexual aggressions inflict on the victims and defender's physical and mental health, but also the structural deficiencies in the government's prevention and protection measures to guarantee security and human rights in Colombia.

Given institutions' lack of action to prevent the various forms of violence that affect women leaders and defenders, these women have opted to create their own collective or individual care strategies, contributing to a safe space for them and their communities:

"I'm always prepared. I have some very strong prevention strategies, and I think they've given me an aversion to people – I prefer to be in my safe space rather than going out. I go out when I have to and I interact with people when I have to, but recently I've practically only been going out for work, and to take the dog out at night or in the early morning because I can't not do that. And to buy food, because when I ordered groceries on the internet, they brought the wrong things... so I had to. But I did develop a lot of misanthropy; I'd rather be in my environment, my space, or closed off in the office when it's necessary, or in a meeting" (Woman leader, personal communication, 2019).

Self-care can be understood as the combination of activities that allow leaders to reflect on themselves and how they work in human rights defence, attempting to solidify the everyday language of our discourse in favour of people's lives. This aims to recognise that often women defenders' work spaces are also permeated by sexist patriarchal cultures of exploitation, or self-exploitation.
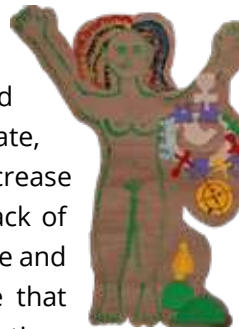
By centring our analysis around self-care, we can also recognise the need for spaces to distract ourselves, vent, rejuvenate and strengthen ourselves, which allow us to identify that often women defenders have not been able to identify risk factors, or have exposed themselves more than necessary, because they are so tired. In general, women defenders' work schedules cause high levels of stress and other emotional states that affect their relationships within organisations and the people around them[11].

From this perspective, prevention mechanisms are not limited to the state's provisions to stop forms of violence or violations of women and girls' rights. They also include processes of recognition, confrontation and resistance aimed at the individual and collective empowerment of women leaders and defenders to help them overcome the emotional burden of their work. Equally, many of the women interviewed stated that prevention must include measures to eliminate not only direct violence such as murders, torture, disappearances, sexual assault, etc. but also the structural violence that encourages the stigmatisation of and discrimination against leaders and defenders in Colombian society. This requires work on the inequality, asymmetry and exclusion that women face in the public and private sphere. As one of the women interviewed explains:

And not just security where I won't be subject to any kind of aggression. Security where I feel free in any space, [...] well, in my case I don't have problems because people already know me for my work, but... that persecution...

that stigmatization... those stereotypes that so many women face" (Woman leader, personal communication, 2019).

What's more, prevention should have a differential, ethnic, intersectional focus that takes into account the diversity of gender identities, sexual orientations, geographic locations, ages, economic circumstances and other factors that are important for the respect of these people's dignities. CEDAW's Committee warns that ignoring the diverse factors that affect women leaders and defenders creates a general, inaccurate impression of the harms and confrontations that impact their lives. It also expresses worries about the considerable increase in aggression against women defenders and leaders and the most vulnerable women in society – particularly Afro-Colombian and indigenous women, women who live in rural areas, lesbians, bisexual and transgender women, and women with disabilities – in the period after the signing of the agreement. These people must be protected in a differential and integral way.

The Multifaceted Impact of Violence on The Lives of Women Defenders: Protection Scenarios

In December 2013 the United Nations General Assembly created the Resolution for the Protection of Women Human Rights Defenders and Defenders of Women's Rights as in international guide for the recognition of the risks that women leaders and defenders face in armed conflicts. The resolution recognises that women defenders are key figures in building peace, justice and equality, and demands that Member States adopt concrete programs with a gender perspective for the integral protection of women.

In this way, the international community urges the Colombian Government to protect the life, integrity and security of women defenders and leaders. During his recent visit to Colombia, the UN

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[11] Taken from the *Guía de Acompañamiento Casa la Serena* (2016, pp. 6-7). In 2016, IM-Defensoras and Consorcio Oaxaca created Casa La Serena, a project of retreats for women members of one of the national networks for women defenders in Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Mexico. These stays aim to encourage women human rights defenders' recovery, healing, rest and reflection from extreme fatigue, emotional or physical burnout, personal crises, pains, losses, or other impacts of their violent and patriarchal context that impair their defence work. http://im-defensoras.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/casaserenaweb.pdf

Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders confirmed numerous examples of insufficient protection measures for human rights defenders in rural or remote areas. He also recognised that the existing protection program's focus is largely reactive and material, which reduces the effectivity of its protection measures and puts the National Protection Unit at risk of reducing its capacity, due to a large number of unresolved cases. In particular, during his visit the Special Rapporteur stated that:

Women [in Colombia] continue to be one of the groups most affected by the conflict [...] they face disproportionate risks and effects, which are exacerbated by their work in human rights defence, their sexual orientation and gender identity, their ethnic origin, their location in the territories and, usually, by their being victims of the war (Forst, 2018, p. 24).[12]

It has also been shown that the dynamics of the conflict and structural violence have worsened these risks and made it impossible to fully fulfil the right to safety and protection. The October 2019 trimestral report of Secretary General's Verification Mission to Colombia states that:

The attacks against social leaders and human rights defenders continue to be of great concern, and I am particularly concerned about the repercussions of these attacks on communities and their social fabric. So far in 2019, civil society actors and state institutions have reported 123 alleged murders of human rights defenders and social leaders (p. 10).

While these attacks and aggressions have happened all over the national territory, the Secretary General highlights the situation in the department of Cauca between August and September, where

an alarming 19 murders were reported, "including the brutal attack of the Liberal Party Candidate for the Mayor's Office in the municipality of Suarez. She was murdered along with five other people, including her mother, a candidate for the municipal council" (United Nations Secretary General in Colombia, 2019, p. 10).

Given the low or ineffectiveness of the protection measures for women defenders, leaders, their communities and their territories, they have suffered many issues caused by stress which have a negative effect on their leadership and defence work, and which add to the ineffectiveness of the local and national governments.

In summary, on the one hand the lack of protection for women leaders and defenders has caused many physical, mental, emotional, organisational and cultural issues, which has made their work in change and peace management more difficult. On the other hand, the lack of integral protection and the state's absence in many territories has caused cracks in the social fabric, and made the emergence of new illegal armed groups and illegal economies possible. These increase the levels of violence against women who defend the rights of their communities and territories.

Given the above circumstances, the CEDAW (2019) has recommended that the Colombian Government increase the presence of state institutions and access to basic services in the former conflict zones, bearing in mind the specific needs of women for specific, differential protection. Equally, INDEPAZ (2019) states that the National Protection Unit (Unidad Nacional de Protección – UNP) does not adequately protect the rights of women leaders and defenders, because many cases of violence and aggressions perpetrated by men whose duty it was to protect them have been reported:

Some women defenders have reported to women's organisations cases of psychological violence, bullying, or sexual

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[12] United Nations Special Rapporteur End of Mission Statement on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst, in his visit to Colombia from November 20th to December 3rd, 2018. Doc. A/HRC/37/51/Add.1 page 24.

violence, ranging from harassment to violent rape, from men working for the protection unit. *Sisma Mujer* obtained information on 2 cases of gender-based violence against women defenders from men in charge of their protection in 2018. Additionally, the situations identified also reveal: prejudiced comments; threats; control over the women's activities, appearance, telephones, ways of dressing, friendships or frequently visited places; manipulation; coercion; sexual insinuations; or derogatory language. These create patterns of discrimination and forms of revictimization that deepen the impact of previous aggressions or allow it to resurface, reinforcing already established inequalities that women defenders face (p. 60).

This violence, discrimination and stigmatisation on the part of UNP employees is characteristic of the institutional violence that women defenders and leaders face because of their work. For this reason, many of them have testified that the Colombian Government does not effectively protect their individual and collective rights; in fact, most of the interviews carried out for this report indicate that the government creates and reproduces violence and prejudices towards women leaders and human rights defenders:

Resolution 1325 says that they have to guarantee our protection, and I feel like the government doesn't fulfil that commitment. I don't know about other women leaders but as a victim of sexual violence they sent me "protection" because I was a witness. They sent the police to my house for protection, and then I started receiving threats, because the guy from the Clan del Golfo said that those police were at my house because I'd brought them there for him, or something like that. So that put me at risk and I had to sign to say that I didn't want the police at my house. (Woman leader, personal communication, 2019)

> **Given the low or ineffectiveness of the protection measures for women defenders, leaders, their communities and their territories, they have suffered many issues caused by stress which have a negative effect on their leadership and defence work, and which add to the ineffectiveness of the local and national governments".**

This shows the government's failing in seeing protection as a synonym of militarization, since the presence of the police in a woman leader's house did not keep her safe - in fact it put her at greater risk of violence, stigmatisation and being targeted. Instead, protection measures should build peaceful coexistence, social justice, and organisation between the state, and women leaders and human rights defenders in order to encourage cultural transformation and change the violent dynamics within Colombian society.

This is set out in the human rights regulations of the International Women, Peace and Security Agenda and Resolution 1325. These regulatory frameworks recognise the role of women's leadership and defence in contexts of violence and conflict, and focus on guarantees for protection, participation, prevention and relief and recovery. For this reason, this first chapter covers the components of Resolution 1325 in order to draw attention to structural recognitions of women leaders and defenders in their territories, and to shed light on the risks that affect their physical, psychological and emotional health. The following section analyses the realities of women leaders and defenders, along with the psychosocial issues that they face due to their work.

Commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Mesetas, 2019.

International Women's Day Celebration, Bolívar, 8th

02

Psychosocial Issues Affecting Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders

For women activists, the search for recognition and their work to defend
the rights of other women often requires a heroic form of activism,
with huge sacrifice and total dedication. With this total dedication, one
stops caring for oneself; it is not a priority, and this takes a physical and
emotional tole that can cause sickness.

Urgent Action Fund for Latin America and the Caribbean (2015, p. 15).

In Resolution 1325, The United Nations Security Council recognises that "an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, [...] can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security" (p. 2). In terms of prevention, the resolution recognises the value of women's presence in conflict management, resolution and/or transformation, and peacebuilding.

This chapter explores narratives on the psychosocial issues caused by the experience of defending human rights to show some of their most common characteristics, whether they be due to work in leadership, accompaniment and mentoring, or political activism in communities and institutions. It also uses social psychology and feminism as tools to reflect upon the need to create links between Resolution 1325 and the importance of the psychosocial wellbeing of women leaders and defenders in peacebuilding processes. This chapter's reach does not cover the true magnitude of these issues in women defenders and must not be understood as a full reading of the situation, instead it emphasises the aspects that are most relevant to this monitoring report.

Areas of knowledge such as psychology, social work, anthropology, law, sociology, and educational theory, among others, are relevant to the study of human rights defence, given its historical, populational, cultural and regulatory complexity. All of these areas make up a group of interdisciplinary knowledge, as Angela Maria Estrada, Karen Ripoll and Diana Rodríguez (2010) identify it. In this space, the actions and reflections of various bodies interested in humanitarian goals are organised, working together to create better knowledge, accompaniment and research practices for defence processes. These entities include research institutes, universities, human rights observatories, Think Tanks, activist collectives, as well as the responses and measures taken by public sector commissions, work groups, and regulatory bodies, where important developments in the humanitarian aspects of peacebuilding are made.

We have based this report on this multidimensional and interdisciplinary study in order to call for the widening and creation of knowledge around the harmonies and dissonances that human rights defence has generated in the lives of women defenders. All of this while understanding that the category "woman" is not universal, that it does not override our personhood, and instead that it is built in certain contexts and is expressed sporadically and differentially. That is to say, we prioritise the consideration that women are diverse, and as such women leaders and defenders are also diverse.

Some of their voices and feelings are included in this monitoring report, which aims to recognise them by coming close to their experiences, and to trace the connections between the existing regulations and their daily lives. This chapter organises the conversations into these analytical categories of psy

chosocial issues: identity, body, community and psychosomatic aspects, and relates them to the prevention component of Resolution 1325.

Understanding women defenders and leaders' psychosocial issues is, in itself, a political act of resistance in the face of war, it is a way to explode patriarchal norms that dominate how we conceptualise emotions and the humanisation of war as a weakness. Attributing meaning to and questioning the abuses that affect women defenders minds and capacities for confrontation slows down violence. It demands human responses that do not seek to create machines that work for just causes but refuse to recognise their own pain and the impact on their lives.

We wish to underline that the categories are described separately for the purpose of analysis. However, in reality they are all connected and play a different role in the experience of each woman leader.

In Conversation with Women Leaders

These conversations with women leaders were an opportunity to deeper understand the realities, feelings and ideas that make up the growing leadership and achievements of Colombian social movements. It also demonstrated how communities have used the knowledge on human rights and the regulatory tools for enforcement, and how these manifest in the large and small achievements in the search for dignified lives.

The interviews were carried out in safe and familiar spaces that the women leaders chose, whether that be their houses, their offices, a public place or via virtual communications such as video calls. The nature of these spaces means that in some cases the women leaders and defenders were accompanied by family members, co-workers and/or members of their community. Given these distinct circumstances, it was important to take a moment before beginning the interviews and focus groups

> **" Understanding women defenders and leaders' psychosocial issues is, in itself, a political act of resistance in the face of war, it is a way to explode patriarchal norms that dominate how we conceptualise emotions and the humanisation of war as a weakness".**

to familiarise ourselves with the communication styles of each woman and, at the same time allow the research team and participants to feel that they were in a mutually trusting space. This aimed to establish agreements on communication, to resolve doubts and finally to frame and guide the women in the nature of the interview.

During the meetings the women shared anecdotes about their defence work. They also remembered their work in health care in communities, spoke bravely and tearfully about their experiences of loss and pain in the armed conflict, and told the stories of how they began their work as defenders – the first collectives, associations or movements that they were a part of. In one way or another, they were open to their voices being heard and to voicing their worries about their lives and the lives of their communities in the current circumstances.

Damage and Confrontations: a Preliminary Overview

Their stories were about latent problems for women leaders, such as: threats over phone, via writing, and in person (from known or unknown actors); physical aggressions; sexual violence; the prejudices of public sector officials; forced displacement; family separation; and other situations that cause fear, mistrust, anxiety, emotional avoidance, and social isolation. These issues caused falls in their wellbeing, feelings of future security, perceptions of justice, and their motivation to continue

Painting a mural in Bolívar, 2016

defending human rights.

These harms and impacts have been documented in social movements, studied by academics, worked with in the law, and talked about in the media. However, the lessons learned must still be viewed more complexly in order to understand what conditions worsen or mitigate the damage, and what circumstances lead to more effective management of conflicts, that will lead to stronger prevention measures in the long term. The interviews and focus groups established that factors such as geographical location, ease of access to state protection measures, age, belonging to an ethnic group, and access to formal education influence the intensity and the form of the harms and confrontations that they face.

From the many strategies that women leaders use, individual measures such as avoiding emotionally heightened conversations or interactions (or,

on the contrary, openly feeling and expressing their emotions, particularly while crying), decreasing the visibility of their public defence work when faced with threats, and other alternative validation of their circumstances were identified to have a positive effect. They are interested in acquiring knowledge that will help them to improve their leadership and defence work, create boundaries for that which they may emotionally assimilate in certain situations, practice self-care in their eating habits, rest, and practice of hobbies such as knitting or theatre.

Collective confrontations still face challenges originating in the mutations, evolutions or repetitions of violence in its cultural, structural and direct forms. The women leaders spoke worriedly about the cracks in their communities caused by conflicts with neighbours, the presence of illegal and armed groups and the micro trafficking of psychoactive substances. They pointed out that the difficulties

in strengthening communities are exacerbated by fear, terror, silencing and uncertainty among the residents. The focus groups underlined their worries around organisational processes, in terms of the duration of the accompaniment of highly vulnerable women, and the possibilities to strengthen the links that they already have with these women.

I've found myself in situations where we accompany women victims of all types of violence in a project, but the overriding problem is that when the project is finished you think that that victim has gained access to the attention they need, but once it's finished it becomes obvious that they don't have it. So then the project's commitment falls on me as a leader, as an organisation, to not leave her without help. Because the project was four or five months long, so the victim is in the middle of her personal growth, in her self-empowerment, beginning to believe in herself, but that's a long-term process, because it's her own life (woman defender, focus group, 2018).

One of the challenges of attending women survivors of victimisation is that all action is taken within a temporal, special and personal context that is not included in the accompaniment. Although this is not a problem in itself, by viewing it in the context of what was discussed previously in this report on the reach that violence has in the Colombian context, the severity of the women leaders' worries becomes clear. In cases of physical aggressions from intimate partners, we must urgently reflect on the everyday spaces of the accompanied women and how the psychosocial recovery achieved by their accompaniment can be maintained in the long term, given that often their everyday environments are where violence and abuse are normalised and perpetuated. In order to consider the preliminary environment of damages and confrontations, the following section deepens our analysis of women leaders and defenders' psychosocial issues, using four analytical categories that line up with the prevention component of Resolution 1325.

> **Our identity is built from and by our socialisation at home, and in educational, community, and work spaces; both those that we visit often, and those that we visit infrequently or a single time".**

Psychosocial Issues and the Component of Prevention

The following observations and reflections aim to identify four dimensions or expressions of psychosocial issues, relating them to their manifestations in identities, bodies, psychosomatics and communities. This objective allows the comprehension of the importance of opening dialogues on the situations of women leaders and human rights defenders, as well as the ways that these discoveries are related to the prevention aspect of Resolution 1325.

Identity

One thing is getting involved in the role of women, but who am I in that role?
Woman leader, virtual communication, 2019.

Identity is understood to be the way that women leaders and defenders refer to themselves, and the way that others refer to them. It arises, changes and evolves in relation to its context, which includes: daily bodily practices; traditions and customs; uses of language; values; beliefs; and symbols. All of these things continuously interact with each other and give meaning to our existence in the world. In order to underline its dynamic and dialogical aspects, identity can be understood as individual identity and social identity. According to Anastasio Ovejero (2015), these two concepts feed off of and support each other. Our identity is built from and by our socialisation at home, and in educational, community, and work spaces; both those that we visit often, and those that we visit infrequently or a single time.

For women, these spaces have been influenced by patriarchal norms that have tried to devalue their actions, their voices and their knowledge.

Women defenders' identities are not homogenous. They have been interfered with by multiple forms of oppression which have made up and determined not only their existences, but their states and their actions in the world that they live in today. The female subject that defends rights and resists war is a compendium of women, of othernesses, of experiences and expressions that motivate individual and collective action in the context of war and inequality.

Identity is the beginning of a journey of understanding of how women leaders and women human rights defenders are made. A journey which will later facilitate an understanding of living in parallel with one's social identity, the us that these women fight for and vindicate in their work. In this way, it is possible to follow the direction of political and social processes undertaken by their communities without forgetting the individual people and stories that make them up.

Women leaders and defenders do not only express themselves through their basic characteristics such as their name, age, place of residency and occupation. The process of building an identity goes deeper, starting with questioning the meaning of their existence and the values that we have learnt, such as respect. These strengthen their convictions as human rights defenders and motivate them to survive and continue resisting in the face of external negative pressures on their leadership.

I am also furiously dedicated to human rights defence, out of respect for other people (Woman leader, personal communication, 2019).

The circumstances under which I decided to start leading have a little to do with where life leads us, but also as we take a path some things start coming together, we start finding out what we should be doing, but we also start answering the question of the meaning of existence itself (Woman leader, virtual communication, 2019).

This is the subject of the woman human rights defender; built on the intersectionalities of the many women that it represents, the multiple experiences and reactions that make up their memories and that are signs that they have lived. Women defenders, peacebuilders and war resisters are citizens who have forged a path through a system of domination and oppression that has left them vulnerable and with unequal power. In the environments where women did not have a voice – where they cared for injured people, listened to men's conversations planning the next attack, when they escaped in the night to help other women in violent situations – they were forced to develop skills which they then used to help communities and contribute to peacebuilding.

Far from this is the subject of the woman human rights defender's naturalisation. It is impossible to comprehend this compendium of experiences and this multiplicity of women as a one-dimensional, intrinsic relationship to peace and life. It is, however, possible to identify a collective identity for women rights defenders, which walks the path of social transformations with them from their knowledge and tools.

Their ways of referring to themselves within their leadership experience allow us to locate the identity of women leaders in relation to their duties: the narrative of their stories, ethnicity, the trans experience, or the fact that they are survivors of victimising acts.

I've been working with women for 20 years [...] this organisation has mostly promoted the rights of women homemakers and women's right to water (Woman leader, personal communication, 2019).

I opted to channel my energy into something specific [...] I decided that I had to join the response in a specific

Manifestation for peace, Bogota, 2019.

sector as a woman and as a black woman (Woman leader, virtual communication, 2019).

I'm part of an organisation that works with people with trans experiences, their families, their support networks, with trans children and teenagers, and also trans adults [...] let's say that my current work has turned into my life project, I've been doing this for a long time (woman leader, personal communication, 2019).

I'm a victim of sexual violence in the armed conflict [...] I dedicate myself to leadership, and working in everything to do with prevention of sexual violence, because I don't want what happened to me to happen to anyone else (Woman leader, personal communication, 2019).

Among these intersectionalities, women leaders and defenders situate themselves in a place that connects their individual identity with the social identity that they have built around their human rights defence work. Women defenders use the knowledge of the harm that war and violence has inflicted on society, communities and women to promote knowledge of the story from another perspective, which has allowed them to take the path to peacebuilding and resistance of war.

Women defenders' declaration is also their power; their power to situate themselves in the world in response to their context and build bridges from there in order to respond to war via non-violent practices. This *Lugar de Enunciación* (Place of Speech) allows us to understand the social role that people take on to take control of their power, act in their contexts, and communicate their discourses. As Djamila Ribeiro puts it, it's the social location that people take in order to "think and exist in the world, even guaranteeing a multiplicity of voices and perspectives of other groups without platforms" (2018, p. 17). It is an ethical position that allows us to dismantle practices and regimes that control

discourses, those around which knowledge has been produced, and have subsequently silenced or suppressed the wisdom of non-hegemonic social groups.

The aspects of the identities of the women leaders interviewed inform us on the place, resources, attitudes, and actions that they take to determine and refer to their existence, in a context where some people are hostile towards them (as stated by Johan Galtung, 2016), are violent towards them, and limit their access to basic necessities, happiness and prosperity. As such, it is possible to identify the damages caused by threats, intimidation, vilification, or cultural ideals that reject the action and presence of (cisgender or transgender) women in conflict management spaces, which create fear in these women and put them at risk of stopping or decreasing their participation in peacebuilding processes.

We shall take as an example the previously mentioned organisational work and promotion of women's agency in some territories, which face challenges such as hostility towards some of the projects from beneficiary communities, given that the work of some organisations is compared to the roles that women traditionally fulfil. Women defenders often, for example, find themselves in situations where they receive threats because their work is judged as promoting marital breakdowns and the separation of families. Consequently, some of these women hide their defence work and only do it silently and in private.

They often say they we destroy families, instead of seeing that we help women. We are always in situations where they talk about us, and we're filled with anxiety not knowing if they are going to go through with those threats. The only thing we can do is help in secret and not let the community know about our work, we have to work reservedly (Woman defender, focus group, 2019).

The institutions themselves have stigmatised human rights work to be problematic. For example I don't tell peo-ple who I don't know what I do. I just tell them that I work in farmers markets, I do this and that, and that's it. It's like we have a shield there, for me combining my leadership with our microbusinesses and participation in farmers markets is a shield (Woman defender, focus group, 2019).

The previous stories require urgent reflection on the current possibilities and resources that some women defenders have for their recognition and re-consideration within the community. The confrontations of the women interviewed showed different stages of the appropriation of identity, which they take on in a dynamic and differential way. The identity of one of them, for example, has not been affected, despite the fear and distancing or change of routine that she has faced since she was threatened. This can be understood through an understanding of her work in the defence of people with trans experiences. Her interest was piqued independently at a young age, as such her empowered identity is visible, facing the hostility that has historically affected LGBTQI+ people.

Another example is a woman defender who has principally worked with a non-governmental organisation. She feels she has a greater backing and strength in her leadership because she has been in shared processes, even in a risky context for individual action.

The prevention component of Resolution 1325 references the strengthening of mechanisms that promote a culture of no violence towards women. One of the cases studied in this investigation was of a woman leader and defender of indigenous heritage who tells the story of how being a midwife to thousands of children in indigenous communities in Colombia gave her leadership meaning. It allowed her to understand that her role was highly important for the delivery rituals of women in the territories:

As a midwife you have to bathe in the river, they said it was to give the baby health, life, spirituality, to give it

This memory shows how her work in support and
care as a leader strengthens the spiritual values of
the babies and their mothers, and with that cultiva-
tes non-violent ways to relate to one another. The-
se acts based on ancestral indigenous wisdom also
build peace. As Martha Bello and Ricardo Chaparro
(2010) mention, it unites the dichotomies of *mental
health and physical health, individual and collecti-
ve*, while prevention is the integrated combination
of measures for social wellbeing. Her story also
shows that her presence in natural environments,
her active participation in the accompaniment and
care intrinsic to birth, and her being in the territory
to avoid undesired or conflictive circumstances for
the children and the future of the community, are
all forms of building peace, which are supported by
ancestral wisdom on the connection between Mo-
ther Earth and those who inhabit her.

Equally, the woman leader's story reflects
what she had earlier mentioned as *el palabrero*
("the intermediary"; "*palabra*" literally meaning
"word"), a role assumed by a few men in Wayuu
communities, who mediate in negotiation, con-
flict resolution, and crime punishment processes.
Words have a fundamental value in the context
and history of this people, and their constant use
transmits the common knowledge of non-violent
intervention and prevention methods for rela-
tionships in the community. The conversation
with this leader, by way of this Wayuu ancestral
practice, allows us to understand the importance
of words and dialogue to guarantee collective sta-
bility. According to Johnny Alarcón (2009), these
two aspects are fundamental to social transfor-
mation seeking conversation and reparations for
affected people.

> " **The confrontations of the women
> interviewed showed different
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> affected, despite the fear and distancing
> or change of routine that she has faced
> since she was threatened".**

In terms of prevention, the previous considera-
tions of dialogue connect with the stories of other
women about attaining knowledge and reflection
about oneself being ways to resolve or adjust one-
self in the face of threatening situations in the pre-
sent or the future. All acts that problematise and
re-assign meaning to violence and its structural,
cultural, or direct manifestations are, in themsel-
ves, preventative. Questioning our notions of the
stories, evolution and naturalisation of the dyna-
mics of the conflict creates new meaning for hu-
man rights defence, and at the same time makes
more resources available for transforming the
conflict and building peace.

In this respect, prevention requires the recogni-
tion of diverse political identities built by women in
the territories. In the case of Colombia, the emphasis
on recognition is supported by the notion that indi-
vidual subjectivity is baked into polarised contexts,
often fragmented and codified in the language of di-
fference. In this way, giving the other a platform is
a way to educate populations on the specific condi-
tions required to manage conflicts.

Body

*It's worth it to smile in the face of pain, because when
you report these things you help that person and you
see the gratefulness in their face; these are the most
important and most sincere embraces that we receive,*

in those moments when we help people to live well.
Woman defender, focus group, 2019.

At first glance, the body is the living organism that exists in the world. However, it is necessary to widen that definition, as the body does not end with our skin; it is also the first territory for resistance and power, the space into which our identity is carved, the place where feelings, thoughts, words, actions and relationships come together. For the queer theorist and philosopher, Judith Butler (2008), "the body is merely form and figure by certain discursive standards [...] that it is actively 'con-formed' to. But the body cannot be reduced to the various forms that it takes on, because underneath its development and transmutation there is something continuous" (p. 83).

One of these discursive norms may be the notion of gender, which the World Health Organisation[13] has defined as the combination of roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that society assigns to men and women. Inequalities are enforced via the male-female dichotomy, historically favouring the experiences of bodies conceived as male, constructing their hegemony over women's bodies, and also over the bodies of those that do not conform to this binary.

Women leaders and defenders' bodies are subjected to inequalities rooted in the notion of gender. In Colombia, this notion is a standard wherein women and non-binary bodies are subject to expectations and experiences of how they should exist in and express their bodies. This also speaks to the previously discussed category, identity. They are standards because they are assimilated and legitimised into the daily life of communities, increasing their regulatory power over social relationships and reinforcing gender inequality.

Day of Peace, Mesetas, Meta, 2018.

During their experiences in human rights defence, women leaders acquire tools for legal pressure and meet to learn from each other, sharing knowledge and strengthening their leadership. These meetings build understanding and action against inequality; an issue that, as previously discussed, is closely related to the concept of gender and our assigned bodily roles. Some leaders focus their work on these roles, such as those working in the rights of women (girls, young women, and adults) and LGBTQI+ communities. In these cases, human rights defence becomes a space for transforming and updating the norms that come from conflicts, such as the disparity of the male-female binary.

We recognise that the women leaders who we spoke with have defended rights in more areas than gender, such as reparations for survivors of the armed conflict, people deprived of their liberty, and the right to water. In order to widen our understanding of the body proposed by Butler, we will continue to talk about human rights defence work, as it is a useful example in our understanding of the discursive norms that shape and permeate the experiences of all bodies, whether the focus is on gender or not.

Human rights defence work entails building knowledge, language and specific ways to act and

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[13] World Health Organisation. Health Topics: "gender". https://www.who.int/health-topics/gender

move through the world; practices that repeat over time. They change, evolve, and accompany the woman leader in her body and as a person. Their biographies influence their biologies; firstly, in relation to the topic of identity, by contributing to their bodily experiences; and secondly, because of the trace and memory that their bodies leave in the territories during their work.

I have dedicated myself to work that truly makes me a better person; human rights defence work (Woman defender, virtual communication, 2019).

I've been a leader since I was 18. I've worked all over Colombia. I worked with the government for many years, I worked in communities, and yes, I have been a person who, from there [...] what happens is that back then people didn't say leader, no, they said "a lady who helps, or who's there for us... a hard worker" (Woman leader, personal communication, 2019).

The stories previously mentioned allow us to observe that simply taking on leadership work changes the discursive norms that influence social relationships in the territories through targeted practices, such as human rights defence. Some of the leaders have been working for decades which, undoubtably, has left a narrative mark on bodies and territories. This makes attempts to question the legitimised silencing, submission and distancing inherent in social transformation processes sustained over time easier.

As Martha Bello and Ricardo Chaparro (2011) underline, the harms and confrontations inflicted on the body lead to conditions – physical injuries, damages to sexual integrity, alterations in the environment, self-care practices such as exercise, eating habits and sleep – that will later impact psychosomatic issues.

Women leaders and defenders' bodies have been harmed by violent acts that impact their personal integrity. These include physical aggressions from unidentified actors, sexual violence in the armed conflict, and threats from neighbours which, paradoxically, shed light on the fact that the body is not restricted to the head, torso, and limbs, but instead is surrounded by discourses that naturalise vulnerability and expose it to new harms, and that are reflected in those narratives when they are subjects making up the material protection measures provided by the State.

[Speaking about the protection measures she received] They sent the police to my house for protection, and then I started receiving threats, because the guy from the Clan del Golfo said that those police were at my house because I'd brought them there for him, or something like that. So that put me at risk and I had to sign to say that I didn't want the police at my house, and they said that they were going to speak to [...] the UNP, and they called me saying that "we're going to do a risk assessment". That was more than a year ago, and they never came to my house. So we leaders don't have any protection from the government [...] they expose us as leaders, because where I live there's micro-trafficking, there's gangs, there's BACRIM [drug-trafficking organizations, often with paramilitary links], and organized groups. That puts you at risk, because they call you "the neighbourhood snitch", when the police come they say "it's the neighbourhood snitch", the whole world comes at you, and the whole world did come at me, with the police coming to my house, and I had to get my children out (Woman leader, personal communication, 2019).

By extending the body beyond the limits of the skin, it also refers to the person's environment, such as the earth, their territory, the environment, and their food, farming, and mobility resources. In this respect, the concept of *ecogenoethnocide* put forward by the Afro-Colombian historian, Santiago Arboleda Quiñó-

nez (2018, 2019), is relevant. It comes about through the complex connections between historic dispossessions, internal displacement, massacres, poisoning of rivers and lakes, destruction of food sources, and breaking down of socio-cultural structures.

In this environment, where the possession of and entitlement to land is one of the primary causes of attacks, discrimination and/or the violation of rights in Colombia, the concept of *ecogenoethnocide* analyses the constant systematic violations of women leaders and defenders' bodies, territories, and cultures (genocide, ecocide, and ethnocide). This is made clear in the following testimony, which speaks of the emotional damages that a deteriorating environment caused:

I watched sadly as part of that sea, of the land and the sand – that sand that was grey when I was a child – was turning the colour of tar or oil, and it wasn't because it had tar or oil in it. It was a very dark mark. It stuck in my head and I just said to myself, "this has something to do with everything that's happening in the territory, this has to do with pain, with lives; this has to do with blood" (Woman leader, virtual communication, 2019).

We shall take the Afro-Colombian population as an example. It is one of the sectors of the population whose bodies have been strongly damaged and impacted, bearing in mind that racism crates complex violence that spans from discrimination to the termination of lives and cultures. Afro-Colombian traditions provide a holistic understanding of life. Arboleda represents all of these spheres with the term *ecogenoethnocide*, approximating and interpreting the experiences of women who are part of ethnic communities. From here, it is important to analyse the discursive norms that worsen violence against their bodies in Colombia.

Arboleda's reflections on the complexity of the factors that make up the violations of Afro-Colombian populations reinforces the idea that the body

> **Human rights defence work entails building knowledge, language and specific ways to act and move through the world; practices that repeat over time. They change, evolve, and accompany the woman leader in her body and as a person. Their biographies influence their biologies".**

is a physical centre upon which all forms of conflict and abuses of power fall. In the interviews, there were two specific cases that showed this in relation to the police's protection measures. They are examples of the effects of the public forces on the bodies and daily spaces of women leaders. The police officials, their attire, vehicles, and weapons create a militarised aesthetic in *veredas*, communities, neighbourhoods, communes and rural areas that, in an attempt to defend the life of the woman defender, are actually far from the integral and differentiated need of the woman and her community. The resulting psychosocial issues tend to be stress, anxiety and hypervigilance.

The resulting discrepancies of the public forces' actions are perceived as a risk by the women leaders, who know their context and its dynamics of violence (common delinquency, organised crime, drug trafficking, among others). The weapons used, both by the public forces and by illegal groups, lose all connotations of protection and gain those of risk, danger, and death. In this way, prevention implies changing the institutional mandates of the security sector and the way in which it is deployed in the daily lives of the women and communities who ask for protection. It requires the implementation of strategies that are sensitive to the different vulnerabilities of each territory, looking beyond the homogenised view of who is considered a "protector" of bodies, and an avoidance of practices that exacerbate the risks of victimisation. It should contribute to psychosocial recovery and strengthen

the relationships of trust between communities and state officials.

We suggest this strategy in order to create an understanding that preventing violence against women and girls' bodies is also interlaced with the narratives and symbolisms of culture, institutionality, belief systems, contexts, and learning spaces, which invariably have a significant impact on bodies and the identities that live within them. The militarisation of bodies and territories, an integral part of institutions in states such as the Colombian one, invades cultural contexts and meanings, basing its actions in a specific but systematic approximation to social protection in the territories, implying a limited comprehension of conflict and its expressions. The following is an example.

We analysed some of the National Protection Unit – UNP's procedures to identify the current general ideas that are held in the state institution about bodily security. This organisation has adopted a perspective that includes Human Rights and a differential approach (territorial, ethnic, and gender) in its action protocols, one of these being collective risk assessment. Workshops "in an agreed place, in order to jointly identify the threats, risks and vulnerabilities that the group is exposed to"[14] contribute to an understanding of the group, community, or organisation's problems. However, these protocols do not deepen their analysis to the impact of conflicts on women and girls; a joint identification of threats and risks does not necessarily contain the sociocultural relationships and complexities that cause, surround, or lie beneath the group or collective's needs, when their dynamic and relational nature is taken into account.

In other words, an accurate appraisal of protection needs includes sustained procedures to listen to and respectfully receive the worries, fears, dis-

Ecofeminism workshop, Caquetá, 2018.

satisfactions and unease of the people and groups that seek its services. The conditions for prevention must be studied deeply, sensitively, and in detail, creating time and spaces to cultivate communication, trust links, and shared experiences in which participants feel safe.

Recognising these disconnections in prevention processes allows the identification of the places where the resolution should be better implemented, bearing in mind that its guidelines cover central ideas on women leaders and defenders' everyday experiences, both at an individual and collective level. As the anthropologist Rita Segato (2003) puts it:

By identifying this central meaning - in some ways always collective, and anchored in socially shared community ideas - we are able to act on these people and their practices, achieving transformation, whether that be legal, pedagogical, in public representation, or any other type (p. 2).

Does this analysis comprehend Human Rights? How does it reflect on the specific effects of the conflict on women and girls?

While the documentation of request processes for state protection is important to systematise and improve them, it must not go against the very rea-

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14 Unidad Nacional de Protección. ¿Cómo acceder a la ruta de protección colectiva? https://www.unp.gov.co/atencion-al-ciudadano/preguntas-y-respuestas-frecuentes/

son for the request; communities or peoples' bodies and territories being put at risk. In the territories, these regulations and procedures are far from being part of the primary tools that women defenders reach for when they are at risk. "Even though they tell us about the regulations, about measures for women's security, they aren't seen in the territories, in the daily lives of the women [...] the underlying worry is still there because people know that there are no guarantees" (Woman defender, focus group, 2019).

Another woman defender told this anecdote: "Once we were working with some women, and we saw something kind of weird so I pushed the panic button, but that didn't help at all - it made us panic more because we felt truly alone. Four days later they called me to see how I was. They called me from the UNP" (Woman defender, focus group, 2019).

These reflections on the UNP reveal just a small part of the complex framework of actors and structures that perpetuate the divisive logics that create inequality and vulnerability. It is important to carry out complex analyses of the measures designed to repair the social divisions caused by the war using inclusive language, and to encourage sustained collaboration in various areas, recognising the factors that affect security.

These factors include class, ethnicity, age, power, territory and environment, as well as work, interpersonal relationships, and the effects of human rights defence work. This demonstrates the need to take on multidimensional preventative strategies, that is to say, strategies in which many social sectors work together to eliminate inequalities that cause exclusion, poverty and violence. Recognising the differential needs of each body also establishes connections with the diversity of identities and the repercussions that these harms have on them. Identity constructions cover life projects, everyday practices, work, and social identity.

> " These reflections on the UNP reveal just a small part of the complex framework of actors and structures that perpetuate the divisive logics that create inequality and vulnerability".

In the meantime, women leaders and defenders have opted to create their own dialogues on what protection and recovery means. These create a language to describe their bodily experience and some practices that create meaning for their confrontations. Some of these women are still interested in or open to improving their physical, mental and emotional health. They take on these strategies after reflecting on their bodily experiences.

[In response to the question "if your body could talk, what would it say?"] I think it would say a lot. For example, it would talk about being tired, on days like today it would say "we're not going to work, right?". Or things like "why don't you calm down a bit?", "why don't you take things a little slower?" My body has told me these things so many times, telling me to slow down with all this, and every time I tell it "sorry, no." (Woman leader, personal communication, 2019).

With the therapy that I went through, because before I was badly affected, when I spoke about what happened I cried, I mean I couldn't get the words out, my hands started to sweat. But after my therapy I can stand up, whether it's here or shouting it as I leave, I can say "I'm a victim of sexual violence!" Because I shouldn't be ashamed of that, the person who harmed me is the one who should be ashamed (Woman leader, personal communication, 2019).

Psychosoma

I don't want to let the idea that it's so horrible, so atrocious take me over. I want to maintain moderation.

Woman leader, personal communication,2019.

Psychosomatic issues are psychological changes that originate in or affect a person's body. According to Martha Bello and Ricardo Chaparro (2011), the armed conflict and socio-political violence in Colombia have been and axis around which women's and men's psychosomatic affectations can be understood. The high levels of direct, structural and cultural violence create emotional, and sometimes mental distress in individual and social life. They state that this is due to the fact that "the systematic violation of Human Rights diminishes dignity and social and spiritual support, putting people and their communities in extremely vulnerable positions without protection" (2011, p. 41). Given their systematic nature, the dynamics of the conflict can be traced through time and space, giving it a history and footprint in the psychosoma; that is to say, the unity of the body with the space that it inhabits: thoughts, emotions and behaviours of the body.

In their conversations, the women defenders told stories of changes in their alertness and sleep, hypervigilance, and irritability while talking to others. One outstanding factor is their overly high workload in their leadership in rights and prolonged exposure to stories of the people they accompany's painful experiences, whose effect accumulates over time and leads to apathy. These situations lead to reduced recognition of the self and others, forgetting or ignoring the notion of dignity, deteriorating social and spiritual support, and leave people and their communities in extremely vulnerable positions without protection.

Leadership is also carried out in fear, pain, indignation and anger. These feelings are connected to physical problems, such as insomnia, neck pain and indigestion. This leaves people irritable, hypervigilant or constantly alert, and leads to confrontations that may cause distancing from members of the community, especially in moments and spaces to talk about the problems of others.

When women leaders feel physically exhausted, they begin to seek to reduce their tiredness through distancing themselves. If not confronted, this situation can lead to apathy; this is not a lack of interest, but an over-exposure that gradually reduces their capacity to take in other peoples' worries with the same sensitivity. These psychosomatic harms also have long-term impacts by stopping or reducing activities for personal growth and creating a need for social isolation to find any space and time to take a break from pressure on the body.

Analyses of these circumstances mentioned by the women leaders - physical and emotional exhaustion, irritability, a neglect of basic necessities such as food and sleep - open up space for dialogue on the limits of the body. One of the psychosocial issues that human rights defenders face is found in the intensity of their practices; they describe it as needing a lot of space and time, some even describe it as 24 hours-a-day, 365 days-a-year work.

The overly heavy workload makes it difficult for women defenders to go through the emotional processing necessary to guarantee their wellbeing and mental health. Actions such as political participation and advocacy, community work, dialogues with institutions, and exposure to risks and traumatic situations that cause psychic suffering (both first- and second-hand), require leaders to have a level of empathy, communication and conflict mediation skills with people with different levels of power and beliefs, and the physical fitness to mobilise and take action in different environments. Day-to-day, doing their work requires women leaders to have certain conditions and abilities for which they are not necessarily prepared and which require the development of a community or a network, because they themselves are supporting a process.

Another of the main obstacles to reducing psychosomatic harm is the unstable visibility or treatment of women leaders and defenders by social attention and protection institutions. They do not always take into account the specific circumstances in which harms to women come about, or to the minimal conditions necessary for the effective

provision of integral health services as a response. As a consequence, their first port of call for confrontation strategies is not to seek social and/or professional support. Instead, they prioritise moments and practices for introspection and identification of personal needs, without mentioning it to others, as well as resisting external pressures through optimistic thinking, positive attitudes and learning to manage their emotions in difficult situations. Finally, in contexts where women leaders have the support and advice of other people, networks, and organisations, they participate in psychotherapeutic processes as a form of confrontation.

In light of this, the preventative function of psychosomatic efforts comes about in the prevention of conflicts in relationships. This may be encouraged by identification and early response strategies for situations such as burnout, which, in the words of Carlos Beristain is a state of "extreme emotional exhaustion and primitive defence mechanisms (emotional distance, cynicism, etc.); but also symptoms such as depersonalisation (insensitivity, questioning of one's own values)" (2010, p. 144). These characteristics are an obstacle to healthy participation in effective conflict management, given that it necessarily involves tense and draining work.

It is important to reemphasise the humanity of women human rights defenders and not to idealise them as "superheroes"; this is not a story called *Violence and Inequality*, and they neither wrote such a story nor do they themselves have the power to finish it alone. Prevention must find a space for care, rest, and the change of rhythms and directions at work, safeguarding social and constitutional participation in the community, without requiring the depletion or minimisation of women leaders' basic needs.

Community

For me, my protection is parcería *[friendship], I think we've learnt to* defender *each other, to look after each other.*
Woman leader, personal communication,2019.

Community provides a place for human rights defence and enforcement, nourishes leadership in shared lives, guides the accompaniment of people in their psychosocial recovery processes, and strengthens feelings of agency and empowerment. It is clear that community is central to the understanding of the impact of conflicts on women and girls in their different groups. The Venezuelan psychologist, Maritza Montero (2004), defines community as a "constantly transforming and evolving group [...] that creates a feeling of social identity and belonging through interrelation, giving its members a feeling of self as a group, and strengthening itself as a social potential and unit" (p.100). According to Montero's research, community is a meeting point for one or more groups of people. Being a meeting point also means that it has a common place and history; the relationships within a community are built in close quarters, giving meaning to the concept of us. Trust, solidarity, sharing emotions and fulfilling needs, as well as autonomy and freedom are some key factors that sustain relationships in communities.

Women leaders' experiences indicate that they understand the vicissitudes of the meetings of human beings, and the differences between people. What is more, in peacebuilding (an eminently political process) people take action through united communities, despite their differences.

Where there are humans there are always differences, but when it comes to peacebuilding I think there's a joint path we can take, we can walk together in our differences, and in the face of those differences we of course have to

Preventing psychosocial harms in women leaders has a direct link to the protection of their communities; as the leader goes through personal growth, especially in her mental health and psychosocial wellbeing, the ways she builds relationships with others improves, and she can better create a feeling of us and our community. If she is feeling fear, apathy, stress, exhaustion and a need to socially isolate, she will not be able to carry out her leadership work. Her ability to fully involve herself in the fights of her community will be diminished, and she will also be heavily restricted in her ability to respond to that community's interactions with her, given that psychosocial harms cause ruptures between people, whether or not they have to do with her defence work.

Human rights defence politicises subjectivity, this undoubtably is aligned with the constitutional principles of political participation. However, there have been notable imbalances in Colombian state guarantees and protection, due to social polarisation, violence that fragments communities, and the lack of governmental presence in the territories. Given this situation, some people feel the implicit responsibility to guarantee human rights. This task is so large that it inevitably overloads these women's physical and emotional capacities as citizens to bring about far-reaching social change. They find themselves carrying their own and other people's issues, reproducing the patriarchal notion that they are made to serve others, and not being conscious of the impacts of this work and their need to strengthen their individual and collective confrontation strategies.

We are including this responsibility in psychosocial issues because of its repercussions on the women leaders' abilities to strengthen other aspects of their subjectivity, such as self-care, emotional management, learning new skills, building a belief

National Meeting of Girls and Adolescents, Bogotá, 2019.

system, expression of feelings and ideas, and the careful construction of boundaries between their public duties (as a defender and social actor) and their private lives. Building awareness of these women's transgressive self-care practices shows that protection and prevention are intertwined with the self, with the collective, with the links of empathy, and with our responsible and respectful daily relationships with each other.

Collective confrontation is done through the use of interpersonal language and communication. One example is the use of the word *parcería* ("friendship") by a transgender woman leader and activist. It refers to forms of solidarity and inclusion in her community, while understanding that the term "*sororidad*" ("sorority") may not be used in daily situations, whereas the words "*parcero, parcera*" (a colloquial word for "friend") and consequently parcería are more widely understood and used. This particular confrontation shows that, in some communities, inclusive language strengthens relationships, giving a firm foundation to the emancipation work that they are doing. Through this, they aim to dismantle the ideals of sectarianism, silences and separation within trans communities, in order to create new response spaces that recognise and humanise the links between people, using non -hegemonic constructions of identity.

A prevention exercise for work in organisations

We recommend the following approach to psychosocial harms in organisational work, via five aspects, points or phases related to women leaders and defenders' organisational spaces. The process is as follows:

- Identify the sources of stress in defence work. Then, determine whether or not it is possible to change them. Where change is not possible, you must, as Carlos Beristain suggests, "redefine the objectives or take these sources as limits of the action itself" (2010, p. 144).

- Create self-observation habits for one's emotions, thoughts and behaviours in order to detect stress early, while one still has the psychological capacity to do it. If the woman leader is already experiencing burnout, rest will not be sufficient for recovery; burnout can return quickly and easily, and changes to the situation that caused the stress are necessary.

- Determine particular forms of confrontation and management of emotional tension in order to encourage their use and/or make it more adaptable to the context in which they are needed.

- Recognise the impacts that the damaging situation and stress have on the group dynamics. Group issues can manifest themselves in highly reactive situations (aggressive interactions, misunderstandings), limitations of group communication (isolation, inhibition, defensive actions) and the deterioration of trust.

- On the organisational level, obtain clarity on work objectives and agendas, adopting the framework of "training, supervision, organisational changes, support after critical incidents, or access to specific professional support where necessary" proposed by Carlos Beristain (2010, p. 150). The support that arises from this framework should be conscious of the needs of the people, and make sense to them; in many cases it can be difficult to understand one's own emotional state or take the step to ask for help.

Abordaje del estrés como ejercicio de prevención. Adaptado de *Enfrentar el estrés* (Beristain, 2010, pp. 144-150)

It is important to consider interpersonal communication and links to understand that the women interviewed did not say that their function was isolated from the territory in which they work. On the contrary, their functions take place within the meetings of subjectivities and, as such, they affect the lives of each member of the community. This comes from the fact that leadership and human rights defence work stimulates relationships to improve social wellbeing in terms of health, education, justice, and the guarantee of human rights.

As Mónica Carmona, Cinthya Carrillo and Carolina Mosquera state:

For women defenders, leadership has allowed them to get over difficult, violent experiences and has positively changed them, giving them a greater capacity for resistance and endurance. They have re-assigned meaning to their own life paths, which have been marked by war and violence; this is a process of personal growth and collective construction that they often say is a process of empowerment (2019, p. 30).

This shows that many women see leadership as an opportunity for a new beginning in their lives, their territories and their communities. This new beginning combines their personal experiences and interests with collective social transformations.

Along with these initiatives come collective protection strategies, which come about in daily narratives and practices such as parcería. This creates spaces for meeting, talking and listening which foster mutually supportive conversations on the feelings that come along with being a human rights defender such as love, solidarity, anger and resentment. It opens a space for each person to recognise their intrinsic value. Parcería is a key example to understand the importance of defining and using language in these encounters; it can strengthen links and collective actions for the community's development. Conflict prevention is strengthened by inclusive and non-sectarian communication strategies.

Community is a central experience in the lives of the women leaders and defenders interviewed. Their experiences reveal the importance and mea-

Psychosocial Workshop, Meta, 2018.2019

ning behind inter-subjective meetings and the empowerment afforded by mutual recognition and communities seeing themselves as agents of change in their own realities. Their stories show that the women leaders and defenders make efforts to identify and mitigate situations that affect the community by appropriating and acting upon them. Even so, many of them warn that discrimination and violence have been constant problems in the communities and territories in which they work; high levels of stigmatisation exacerbate discrimination and gender-based violence, since cultural ideals of women's roles as carers persist.

When a woman opts to abandon the spaces assigned to her to take on defence work, she sees herself, her family, and her communities attacked. Equally, issues depend on the particular context, people, and culture in which they are working; not all communities have the same ability to closely examine the imperatives of a patriarchal society. For example, in-

digenous and afro-descendant women leaders who are face violence and discrimination because of their race, ethnicity and sex, creating greater issues in their leadership and defence work.

Individual feelings of fear, mistrust and anxiety can be extended to communities when a woman defender is affected or attacked, creating a general silence around the events that produced such emotions. The women also tell stories about the community; "I think that sometimes it's complicit, it keeps the silence. For example, I find my neighbours are so silent about the violence in my neighbourhood. They hardly talk, they hardly even make jokes anymore" (Woman leader, personal communication, 2019).

Violence in Colombia has inhibited some of the women leaders from participating in political spaces with their communities, since they were repeatedly singled out and persecuted by armed actors that were blocking individual and collective action. Insidious threats or aggressions have created fear, uncertainty and fractures in communities. Due to this vulnerability, they question the solidarity of members of their own community, and the efficacity of protection measures.

The lack of solidarity between LGBTI people, their reluctance to join fights for trans rights, and the lack of sorority – from other women! – and their inability to recognise the femininity of a transgender person, and to contribute to all of these efforts also makes people withdraw from social settings (Woman leader, personal communication, 2019).

I used to really like going into the community with the mayor's office. One day they arrived and a man hugged me and said, "Hello little friend, I can take you down, and I won't hesitate". I left that elevator pale, I started thinking and I told my escort "let's go!". They asked me what was wrong, and I just couldn't... my legs were shaking. I left and got in the car and I told them, "I was just threatened in the elevator, what use are you if I was in the elevator and you were downstairs?" (Woman defender, focus group, 2019).

Familial relationships also suffer. Some of the women have opted to separate themselves from their families to protect them from possible threats and aggressions, while others had to leave their territories or birthplaces because of forced displacement. In the long term, these situations damage feelings of stability in family relationships, giving them feelings of uncertainty and the fragility of life. This can further damage women leaders and defenders' relationships, leading them to question why they do defence work, and to feel lonely, anxious, and sad:

When we're all together at home much children worry about me a lot. I tell them, "If we have to die, we're going to die, and they would come after me, not you." They reply, "Yes, but my mum should stop fighting with those people, she's never going to be able to help those people, and they aren't going to thank her either" [...] sometimes I start thinking and I feel alone, I start crying... not in front of them, because we can cry sometimes, but never in front of others

(Woman defender, focus group, 2019).

Rips in the interpersonal fabric are contributing factors to the consideration of prevention as an integral approach that fulfils needs for habitability, security and collaboration in the territories. Women leaders base their work on this approach; their ways of relating to others and their strategies to transform emotional loads and discomforts into opportunities for personal and collective transformation. In the woman leader's story we glimpse the worries of various communities that still live under systematic silencing.

The women defenders repeatedly stated that common interests, a feeling of belonging to a collective, and shared experiences help to create confrontation methods. This is thanks to the trust and emotional links that bring their communities toge-

Psychosocial Workshop with Mothers and Carers, Tumaco, Nariño,

ther and mitigate the damages and vulnerabilities that they feel exposed to. It is achieved by creating spaces for learning on regulatory and constitutional tools for human rights defence in general, but also in which they learn about their specific origins, lives and legacies, and their implications in the legal and social framework. It allows collective mobilisations to have a better-defined platform and, consequently, that its vindications be effectively placed in its context.

The community also protects each of its members; spaces for training and raising awareness create new language based around inclusion, recognition, information on underlying problems and the options available to deal with them, understanding the stories of others in the community, and strengthening of capacities for decision-making and taking transformative action.

Sorority, recognizing the need to protect each other, looking after one another, knowing that working together makes us feel and be stronger, as well as improving our physical condition. I think those are a big part of the answer to this problem. (Woman leader, personal communication, 2019)

To end this section, we wish to underline that psychosocial issues in communities, which are represented in the voices, bodily expressions and identities of women leaders and defenders, continue to originate and evolve in the circumstances and tensions of everyday life itself. In each territory, vereda, neighbourhood, community and reserve, these women's resistance against unstable circumstances have given us many clues as to the available opportunities for the analysis of their vulnerabilities in their specific contexts of action. Some of the processes highlighted to achieve this are the creation, promotion, updating and transformation of shared discourses that permeate sociocultural understandings in the long term, as well as legal processes for *prevention* and *no repetition* of violent acts and victimisations.

March for the Lives of Human Rights Defenders, Bogota, 2019.

Conclusions? Between Connections and Complexities

Identifying the harms and confrontations caused by psychosocial issues in human rights defence allowed an analysis of the complexity and depth of the subjectivity of those who lead and work in the defence and dignity of communities.

In terms of identity, human rights defence was reflected upon as a process that strengthens the platform of political consciousness in individual and social identities. As such, it has the power to strengthen and vindicate the identities of social groups that have been systematically silenced and controlled by hegemonic and homogenising regimes, which in no way reflect or tell the real stories of these social sectors. In the analysis of the Body, this report identified situations that put the body at risk, which, paradoxically occur via attempts to confront these situations, and are perpetuated and legitimised in daily life. The militarisation of the body was identified in police protection measures, the use of weapons for supposed protection, and the distribution of bulletproof vests for daily situations. It is vital to create measures that are appropriate to the public visibility of each woman leader and defender, without further exposing her to risks and harm from others; measures that recognise the individual differences of the situation of each of the women defender's bodies.

Bringing our attention to the psychosomatic aspect, defence work was a sensitive nucleus that gave meaning to the women leaders' experiences. Constantly acting for collective causes gradually distances them from their personal and individual needs in terms of their mental health and psychosocial wellbeing. If this is not addressed, women leaders begin to experience psychological and physical problems such as stress, fatigue, insomnia, depressive states, irritability, fear, and social isolation. These problems are cumulative, and have repercussions on their interpersonal and community relationships, as well as their general motivation to continue defending human rights. These observations shed light on the paradoxical experiences of some of those who defend rights such as health, security, access to services, and full human liberties; their work does not guarantee substantial changes to their own contexts of vulnerability, violence, oppression and other factors that prevent their access to the very rights that they advocate for.

In the community section, we addressed a part of the complex network in which women leaders and defenders' identities and bodily and psychosomatic experiences are formed. The women leaders shared their powerful perspectives on language and its importance in interpersonal relationships, in giving meaning to collective experiences, and in social groups and organisations' contributions to building a political basis for leadership. Knowing that one is heard, received, and supported by the community protects trust in cohabitance, em-

powers people to manage physical and emotional pains, and encourages the use of resources to transform violent ways of relating to each other into peaceful ways to achieve collective wellbeing.

Seeking social support from a group, community, organisation or network was highlighted as a confrontation strategy, since it makes space for people to care for each other. Emotions are shared through smiles, tears, hugs, kisses, chatting, and handshakes, which are transformatory actions that leave a meaningful mark on the body, creating a memory of belonging, a collective memory. They function as points of reference in dialogues, showing that women leaders and defenders know what causes their emotional, mental and physical issues and that they have taken actions to change them.

On the other hand, knowing that one is judged, ignored or questioned creates suffering and conflict in one's leadership, reducing the possibility of meeting with others in order to care for each other, work together, and protect each other's lives. In this way, emotions and behaviours that lead to isolation, fear and discomfort in one's relations with others may imprint themselves on the body, putting the psychosoma, and in some cases one's identity, at risk. In these circumstances, it is vital to encourage intersectional analyses through differential focuses (territorial, ethnic, gender-based, etc.) in order to create a prevention process based in the notion of accompaniment. As Luisa Gaindo, Stella Sacipa and Claudia Tovar state, this is the notion of "being with, giving warmth, renewing trust, feeling the presence of the other, listening with love" (2005, p. 11); an understanding that rings true with the experiences of women leaders and defenders, for example stating that "protection is caring for, is surrounding, is defending. And in terms of life itself, protection is conservation" (Woman leader, virtual communication, 2019).

Without a doubt, social leadership for the transformation of conflicts walks a path that is marred by all of the factors that restrict peace. Often, the

> **Emotions are shared through smiles, tears, hugs, kisses, chatting, and handshakes, which are transformatory actions that leave a meaning and a mark on the body, creating a memory of belonging, a collective memory".**

impressions and feelings shared between the leaders and the researchers were uncertainty when asked questions such as: who else is joining these fights? When will we be able to say the majority has joined these causes?

The proposal of Resolution 1325 as a regulatory framework recognises, among other things, the need to provide guarantees of participation, protection and prevention to women and girls who are exposed to violence and/or discrimination. However, nineteen years after its creation, we have seen large obstacles to the implementation of its provisions.

In Colombia, the implementation of the peace agreement and especially the measures that include the gender perspective and women's political participation in decision-making have been slow to implement, fragile, and ineffective, due to strong political polarisation and high levels of mistrust. In this context, many social sectors have called on the Colombian Government to respond to violence against women leaders and human rights defenders. This violence includes femicides, homicides, torture, sexual violence, kidnapping, forced detentions, threats, taking people hostage, false accusations, unjust sentencing and limitation of freedoms that have a negative impact on the physical, mental, and consequently psychosocial health of their communities.

The Colombian government's lack of action and its limited capacity to fulfil its protection and prevention duties in an optimised, complex way has caused disproportionate impacts on those who

seek to create spaces for reporting, and demanding peacebuilding measures. Their goal is to dignify lives and transform the logics and dynamics of the war, but these actions take the lives of more human rights defenders every day.

Women leaders go further than acquiring knowledge and skills to demand guarantees from institutions; they build cultures of peace that exist in harmony with life itself to create collective memories and resistances that are not influenced by violence. Little by little, this culture creates Political Subjectivities for Lives which, in the words of Claudia Tovar, are "the quality of the individual or collective subject that understands its own power through meeting with others, and uses that power to organise itself to transform reality, taking this on as an ethical task for the production, defence and care of lives" (2015, p. 13). This investigation identified that the women leaders and defenders attempt to separate their efforts from the dynamics and polarisations of the conflict in order to create and politically reinforce new forms of shared life in communities.

Recognising that women leaders and defenders are subjects committed to these efforts for a healthy life, we wish to underline the actions of them and their communities to transform the memories and dissonances of violence that have been insidious in their contexts. These actions demonstrate the vital importance of prevention and protection in peacebuilding.

The proposal of Resolution 1325 as a regulatory framework recognises, among other things, the need to provide guarantees of participation, protection and prevention to women and girls who are exposed to violence and/or discrimination. However, nineteen years after its creation, we have seen large obstacles to the implementation of its provisions.

In Colombia, the implementation of the peace agreement and especially the measures that include the gender perspective and women's political participation in decision-making have been slow to implement, fragile, and ineffective, due to strong political polarisation and high levels of mistrust. In this context, many social sectors have called on the Colombian Government to respond to violence against women leaders and human rights defenders. This violence includes femicides, homicides, torture, sexual violence, kidnapping, forced detentions, threats, taking people hostage, false accusations, unjust sentencing and limitation of freedoms that have a negative impact on the physical, mental, and consequently psychosocial health of their communities.

The Colombian government's lack of action and its limited capacity to fulfil its protection and prevention duties in an optimised, complex way has caused disproportionate impacts on those who seek to create spaces for reporting, and demanding peacebuilding measures. Their goal is to dignify lives and transform the logics and dynamics of the war, but these actions take the lives of more human rights defenders every day.

Women leaders go further than acquiring knowledge and skills to demand guarantees from institutions; they build cultures of peace that exist in harmony with life itself to create collective memories and resistances that are not influenced by violence. Little by little, this culture creates Political Subjectivities for Lives which, in the words of Claudia Tovar, are "the quality of the individual or collective subject that understands its own power through meeting with others, and uses that power to organise itself to transform reality, taking this on as an ethical task for the production, defence and care of lives" (2015, p. 13). This investigation identified that the women leaders and defenders attempt to separate their efforts from the dynamics and polarisations of the conflict in order to create and politically reinforce new forms of shared life in communities.

Recognising that women leaders and defenders are subjects committed to these efforts for a healthy life, we wish to underline the actions of them and their communities to transform the memories and dissonances of violence that have been insidious in their contexts.

Recomendations

This report identified the psychosocial issues that some women leaders and human rights defenders have faced; based on this analysis, we not only recognise that the factors that influence women's inclusion in peacebuilding are multidimensional, but also reflect on the understanding, accompaniment and transformations of psychosocial issues that these very women defenders use to improve their situations.

Recommendations for Policymakers

- We recommend that interinstitutional bodies take the previous point into consideration, creating prevention measures with complexity built in, that is to say, action that is sensitive to the specific needs of women who work in human rights defence. Creating closer dialogues between communities and these measures allows for understanding of and effective response to the experiences of women leaders.

- We urge the Home Office to make more effective channels for spreading information about the *Mesa Nacional de Casos Urgentes* (National Board for Urgent Cases) for the LGBTQI+ community, so that their sexual orientation is given proper consideration when assessing the risks that they are exposed to; their lives, work and especially their human rights work, should be taken into consideration.

- • Guarantee, accommodate, encourage, and protect women leaders and defenders' partici-

pation in decision-making spaces in the territories, such as the *Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial - PDET* (Development Programs with a Territorial Approach). This contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals such as *no poverty* and *gender equality*.

- We urge the Education Ministry to create strategies and guidelines to change gender stereotypes, as mentioned in Resolution 1325's section on prevention of violence against women and girls. This aims to contribute to the education of young leaders with the knowledge and tools to mitigate and eradicate GBV and discrimination because of sexual and romantic orientation, and gender identity.

- We urge the Culture Ministry to implement innovative and participatory information campaigns, via the *MinTIC* (Ministry of Information and Communications Technologies), on gender-based violence against women, teenagers and girls in all of the national territory. This with the goal of encouraging values such as respect, non-violence, no aggression, as well as the recognition of women defenders' work as fundamental to peace, in social interactions and attitudes.

- We call on the *Consejería Presidencial para la Equidad de la Mujer - CPEM* (Presidential Council for Women's Equality) to incorporate the gender and territorial focuses in the Departmental and Municipal Development Plans for 2020, aiming to recognise and eliminate some of the

women's limitations in access to resources and attention.

- Double efforts to immediately and effectively implement the Programa Integral de Garantías para Mujeres Lideresas y Defensoras de Derechos Humanos (Integral Guarantees Program for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders) and its action plans, at both the national and territorial levels. This program takes key aspects such as prevention, protection, and guarantees of no repetition into account, and will be a guide for women's participation in public policies, leadership, and human rights defence. This program must be widely implemented and include as many women defenders as possible, including indigenous, Afro-Colombian, territorial and trans defenders, among others.

- Use the effective application and monitoring of the Citizen Service Protocols to urge public officials to grant ethical, timely, respectful and efficient attention to women leaders and defenders, avoiding their revictimization, indifference, exclusion, discrimination, or abuse of power.

- We recommend designing and implementing models of security for women leaders, including a No Harm perspective, as well as mapping out alternative resources to the current security measures, which militarise and expose their beneficiaries to risk. In their place, measures should defend and protect the life, and physical and psychological integrity of women leaders and defenders.

- We recommend that the Attorney General's Office of the Nation ensures that Directive 0013 of 2016 is fulfilled in the territories through annual reports that record the advances in the categorisation of femicides. Equally, we recommend that the Sectional Attorney's Offices take greater control of its operators that give sanctions when a woman is revictimized, or regulations and the adequate attention to women victims of GBV

are not known about or not followed. According to CEDAW[15], not preventing, investigating and sanctioning all forms of violence based on gender, race, ethnic origin, or other factors may lead to increases in violence against women in Colombia's post-conflict period.

- Given the testimonies of some of the women interviewed, this report urgently calls for local governments to improve their roads, reviewing spaces that are unsafe for women. This would guarantee, among other things, optimal lighting of streets, since this is a common factor in the prevention of sexual abuse and harassment, which themselves are a tool of warfare that attacks women's integrity, and mental and physical health.

Recommendations for Psychosocial Understanding and Accompaniment

- Encourage participation in spaces and moments for reflection on the meaning of human rights defence and its intersectionality with ethnicity, sexual orientation, race, age and social class. These activities should be carried out in a stable and progressive way, assuring a common ground upon which to work on emotional relationships. In this way they should assure minimums of reciprocity in the commitment to well-being; key factors in protecting the psychosocial recovery process.

- It is advisable to encourage diverse groups of women leaders and defenders to come together, reinforcing care through emotional and political accompaniment for them and their communities. These spaces become protective by strengthening support links in psychosocial recovery processes.

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[15] General recommendation number 30 on women in on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, paragraph 35.

- We recommend launching collective processes between women leaders and the sectors of their communities where there are not strong links of trust. This in order that their work is received respectfully and recognised for what it contributes to peacebuilding.

- Encourage the tackling of issues related to women's economic subsistence by creating dialogues on the importance of paying for a diverse range of work, therefore identifying resources to confront harms and stressful situations. This contributes to the notion that economic independence and autonomy are mitigating factors in women defenders' exposure to direct, structural and cultural violence.

- Strengthen experiential awareness processes, such as practical workshops with women, teenagers, and girls that come from women leaders, defenders, or organisations, guaranteeing participation with a gender focus and invigorating resistance for peaceful cohabitation.

Workshop on Memories of the Body, Caquetá, 2018.

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Bodily Harmonies