



Women Waging Peace

Preparing for Peace: The Critical Role of Women in Colombia



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WOMEN WAGING PEACE

Women Waging Peace, a program of Hunt Alternatives Fund, is a multi-year initiative to shift the public policy paradigm so that women are fully included throughout formal and informal peace processes. More than 400 women comprise the “Waging” network of peacemakers from conflict areas around the world, ranging from Northern Ireland to Burundi, Columbia to the Philippines. Waging was launched in 1999 to connect these women to one another and to policy shapers worldwide.

Members of the waging network, all demonstrated leaders, are elected and appointed government officials; directors of non-governmental organizations and movements in civil society; lawyers, scholars, and educators; business, military, and religious experts; representatives of multilateral organizations; and journalists. With varied backgrounds, perspectives, and skills, they bring a vast array of expertise to the peacemaking process.

Through case studies conducted by its Policy Commission, and strategic work with domestic and international policy shapers, Waging is successfully broadening the base of support for women’s participation by raising awareness of the roles they play in promoting security.

Recent policy statements from the UN Security Council, the Group of Eight Leading Industrialized Nations, and other institutions call for the inclusion of women in all efforts to prevent, manage, and resolve conflict. Waging advocates for the implementation of these international commitments by brokering relationships among women peace builders and policy shapers, resulting in new solutions to long-standing conflicts at local, regional, and international levels. More than 3,000 senior public officials, media professionals, and academics have collaborated with Waging members to develop specific recommendations for building sustainable, inclusive peace.

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Cover Photo: Colombian women stage
a protest march in Bogota, July 25, 2002.

Photo by Reuters/Daniel Munoz via Newcom.

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

From May 9–14, 2004, Women Waging Peace hosted 16 Colombian women peace builders for meetings, presentations, and events in Washington, DC. The purpose of the conference was to elevate the voices of women in Colombia and to urge the US government, international governmental organizations, think tanks, and non-government organizations to promote the inclusion of women in all peace-building efforts in the country.

Women have been both victims and actors in Colombia's war and peace movement throughout its history. While they represent more than 50 percent of internally-displaced persons (IDPs) and head more than 30 percent of IDP households,¹ they are also involved as armed combatants and supporters of the various groups. As part of civil society, women's engagement in peacemaking increased in the early 1990s and has evolved into a complex network of national and local organizations. By 2002, 17 percent of assassinated and disappeared leaders and activists throughout Colombia were women.²

At this point, the country remains entrenched in violence. The 2002 collapse of the Pastrana-Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) dialogues has led to disillusionment within Colombia's peace movement, but women's groups are leading new efforts, raising awareness of the human costs of conflict and calling for negotiations that include civil society. They are strengthening the peace constituency nationwide and creating common agendas that unite Colombians across racial, geographical, and class boundaries and highlight the root causes of conflict.

The series of events in May 2004 was an opportunity to bring these Colombian leaders and other experts together to develop concrete recommendations for policymakers to include women in their attempts to bring stability and security to the country.

Women Waging Peace, throughout the week, also distributed its report, "In the Midst of War: Women's Contributions to Peace in Colombia," which assesses the importance of a gender perspective in peace negotiations and documents the critical work of women at local, regional, and national levels to mitigate the effects of continued violence on their communities, mobilize for renewed dialogues, and prepare for the next cycle of peace in Colombia. To download the report go to <<http://www.womenwagingpeace.net/content/articles/ColombiaFullCaseStudy.pdf>>.

¹ *The Impact of War on Women: Colombian Women's Struggle*. Washington, DC: United States Office on Colombia, 2004. 27 February 2004 <<http://usofficeoncolombia.org/insidecolombia/women.htm>>.

² Ibid.

INTRODUCTION

Intermittent armed conflict has persisted in Colombia for more than 40 years. Currently, the Colombian government is combating three armed movements: two left-wing guerrilla groups—the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN)—and a right-wing paramilitary group, the United Self-Defense of Colombia (AUC). Political, cultural, and sexual violence have touched all regions of the country.

The consequences of the conflict are especially dire. Of the approximately 60,000 deaths since 1985, 80 percent have been civilian.³ In a country of 44 million people, an estimated 3 million have been forcibly displaced by violence.⁴ Human rights organizations regularly document kidnappings, massacres, and disappearances.⁵

The collapse of dialogues in 2002 between former president Pastrana and FARC raised doubts about the possibility of a negotiated solution. Women, however, are establishing, sustaining, and enhancing peace efforts in Colombia. Diverse in focus, ideology, and origins, Colombian women's organizations are an integral part of a vibrant civil society, working at local, regional, and national levels towards a peaceful resolution.

This commitment to realizing peace historically has not translated into substantial inclusion in formal peace negotiations. Women and women's organizations have been excluded from every round of formal peace talks between the government and armed insurgent groups.⁶ Future efforts to establish peace in Colombia would be strengthened by fully incorporating women and women's organizations.

From May 9 to 14, 2004, Women Waging Peace hosted 16 Colombian women peace builders in Washington, DC. In collaboration with other experts, these Colombian leaders developed recommendations for concrete ways policymakers can include women in their attempts to bring stability and security to the country. The conference aimed to elevate the voices of women in Colombia and to urge the US government, international multilateral organizations, think tanks, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to promote the inclusion of Colombia's women in all peace-building efforts.

³ See "2002 in Focus: Spiraling Political Violence in Colombia." London: Amnesty International, 2003. 5 October 2004 <<http://web.amnesty.org/report2003/col-summary-eng>>.

⁴ *The Impact of War on Women: Colombian Women's Struggle*.

⁵ Amnesty International, 2003.

⁶ "A Portal on Women, Peace, and Security—Colombia." New York: United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2004. 27 July 2004 <<http://womenwarpeace.org/colombia/colombia.htm>>.

The Colombian delegation developed its recommendations with the following in mind.

Considering

- That a challenging human rights and humanitarian crisis exists in Colombia, aggravated by internal armed conflict that urgently requires a negotiated political solution;
- That the 1991 Constitution of Colombia created a state that embraces dignity, human rights, and peace as the right and obligation of all citizens; and that the constitution mandates political, financial, and administrative decentralization to facilitate the participation of Colombian society in the design of public policy;
- That Colombia is a diverse and multicultural country—Women make up 51 percent of the Colombian population and hold 10 percent of elected positions at the local level;
- That violence against women constitutes one of the gravest forms of discrimination and increases during times of armed conflict in both public and private spheres;
- That forced displacement disproportionately affects women, girls, and boys;
- That it is imperative to guarantee respect for and protection of human rights and international humanitarian law from a gender and women's perspective;
- That international aid given to Colombia should be directed to overcome its human rights crisis, to strengthening democracy, enhancing the legal social state, and seeking a negotiated political solution to the conflict as essential to achieving peace;
- That the perspectives and experiences of women uniquely contribute to the building of peace and to negotiations processes; and therefore women's participation must be protected and promoted;
- That Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council, adopted in October 2000, is international law and thus a binding commitment.

Disclaimer

The recommendations contained in this report summarize those developed in Spanish by the delegation of Colombian women; while this English translation is not literal, every effort was made to retain the letter and spirit of the original Spanish text. Women Waging Peace acknowledges the differences between the Spanish and English versions. The original Spanish text can be found at the Women Waging Peace website, www.womenwagingpeace.net.

These recommendations reflect an extraordinary amount of effort and discussion by a very diverse delegation. Not every recommendation received universal support from the delegation, though the vast majority are endorsed by the delegation as a whole.

The women who participated in the conference did so as individuals; the views expressed in this document and during the conference do not necessarily represent the views of the institutions and organizations with which they are affiliated.

WORKING GROUP ONE: Mitigation of Violence and Empowerment of Local Communities and Internally Displaced Persons

Colombia has endured a relentless fluctuation between elevated violence and hopes of peace. Since the failure of negotiations between the Pastrana administration and FARC in 2002, the country has experienced an increase in violence. Between July 2002 and June 2003, more than 19 people were assassinated, disappeared, or killed in combat every day—an increase from an average of 15 per day between July 1999 and June 2000.⁷ In 2002, 17 percent of assassinated and disappeared leaders and activists were women.

This working group focused on steps to alleviate violence in Colombia, especially against women. The group considered advantages and disadvantages of programs that address previous acts of violence versus programs that deter future violence, finally recommending a combination of the two.

The discussion frequently returned to how local communities could be empowered to contribute to peace efforts. There was wide agreement on the importance of incorporating a gender-sensitive approach to communities' empowerment. Such an approach could help peace organizers be more attentive to the needs of those who benefit from training and resources. The working group agreed that additional resources should be allocated for the protection of women leaders.

Given that women represent more than 50 percent of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and head more than 30 percent of IDP households,⁸ the issue of IDPs received special attention; a number of the participants had worked extensively with this group. Forced displacement cannot be treated with isolated measures, the working group concluded; rather, a combination of social, political, and economic initiatives is needed to address this important issue.



“Somehow we are beginning to get used to the tendency that in order to regain some rule of law you have to suppress human rights. This tendency has to be corrected.”

-María Emma Mejía

⁷ “WARNING Regarding Government Human Rights Statistics.” Bogotá: Colombia Commission of Jurists, n.d. 5 October 2004. <<http://www.colombiasolidarity.org.uk/Solidarity%2011/reportofccj.html>>.

⁸ *The Impact of War on Women: Colombian Women’s Struggle.*

**Recommendations:
Mitigation of Violence and Empowerment of Local Communities
and Internally Displaced Persons**

To all parties

1. Insist that all Colombian policies integrate a gender perspective.
2. Allocate resources to guarantee the participation of women in decentralization processes, including defining public policies, implementing development plans, and defending natural resources at the local and regional levels.
3. Fund programs that work to increase the number of women in elected office.
4. Ensure that all humanitarian aid programs consider the ethnic and gender dimensions of the beneficiary populations.
5. Take action to ensure that the needs of displaced women are addressed through humanitarian aid programs for displaced populations; in particular, strengthen women's participation as citizens and in displaced women's organizations.
6. Train public servants at all levels to plan and implement gender-sensitive policies.
7. Create a program to strengthen and protect women leaders and organizations working for women's rights and peace. Such a program might include formal and informal training, access to technology, and the creation of communications networks.
8. Fund programs that promote and facilitate the recognition and participation of women in peace building at all levels.
9. Strengthen state entities at the national and departmental levels and civil society organizations that work to prevent violence and to assist women and children affected by violence.
10. Fund programs for the design, evaluation, and monitoring of state actions to prevent, punish, and eradicate violence against women in accordance with Colombia's international commitments; emphasize the participation of women in these programs.



“Previous negotiations have lacked the emotional intelligence that women can bring to the table. For this reason, it is important to include more women and gender perspectives and to promote all the women’s organizations.”

-Magdala Velázquez

WORKING GROUP TWO: Mobilizing for Negotiations and Getting to the Peace Table

Working group two developed the theme of preparing for peace by discussing women’s efforts to create public awareness and mobilize for formal peace negotiations. The discussion drew heavily from the Pastrana administration’s most recent attempt to initiate a dialogue with FARC and ELN. Several members of the working group were involved in the negotiations as representatives of the government at the table or as organizers or participants in a public forum on women’s issues.

Participants approached the discussion in firm agreement that a negotiated settlement was not only possible, but would be the preferred solution for ending the armed conflict. However, the success of any negotiated settlement is contingent upon the involvement of civil society—particularly women’s organizations and other representatives of peace movements. These organizations best represent the diverse stakeholders in achieving peace.

Recommendations for increasing civil society’s role in peace negotiations were based on international agreements. The participants repeatedly turned to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (see box below) to substantiate their calls for women’s involvement. Ideas also circulated about how the international community could lend greater support to the role of civil society. There was a general conclusion that Colombian civil society, while diverse in purpose and origin, could benefit from fortifying networks of cooperation and communication as groundwork for future peace negotiations.



“We don’t want to picture ourselves as victims; we want to see ourselves as actors pushing for peace.”

-Ana Teresa Bernal

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 is a landmark document for creating international security and stability. Mandating women’s equal and full participation in peace processes, its recommendations are largely rooted in the recognition of women’s contributions to peace building. The document represents the first time that the Security Council has addressed the disproportionate effects of armed conflict on women and the under-recognized role women play in conflict management and resolution. For full text see <<http://www.un.org/docs/scres/2000/sc2000.htm>>.

**Recommendations:
Mobilizing for Negotiations
and Getting to the Peace Table**

To the US government

1. Acknowledge that Colombia faces an internal armed conflict that must be overcome through a negotiated solution. Insist that all actors observe international humanitarian law, in particular to prevent and punish crimes against women.
2. Evaluate the impact of US foreign policy, military assistance, and counter-narcotics policy on the humanitarian crisis and how it affects the civilian population, especially women, girls, and boys.
3. Support the initiatives of women and civil society in the search for peace, including culturally, ethnically, regionally, and locally diverse peace organizations.
4. Schedule discussions and meetings with women and civil society organizations that represent all ethnicities for all US government representatives that visit Colombia.
5. Support and endorse coalitions of US and Colombian women working for peace in Colombia.
6. Increase resources dedicated to women's organizations in order to strengthen the focus on women, girls, and boys affected by the armed conflict and humanitarian crisis, with an emphasis on sexual and reproductive rights.

To the Colombian government

1. Formulate and implement a permanent state policy for peace and for political negotiation of the armed conflict; and operationalize the National Peace Council, created by Law 434 of 1998, with a guarantee of equal participation for women.
2. Design and execute a plan to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (October 2000) that includes the creation of follow-up and oversight mechanisms.

To the international community

1. Ensure that women's organizations, as well as other civil society groups, are given priority in design and implementation of aid policies and projects. Condition the projects on the inclusion of a gender perspective that recognizes and highlights the experiences, needs, and problems of women.
2. Offer sustained resources to initiatives and coalitions of women for peace, community led-peace processes, the initiatives of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, and other citizens' networks for peace. Guarantee that women's organizations benefit from resources provided to Colombia.

3. Promote the preparation and training of negotiators to ensure a gender and women's perspective in future negotiation processes.
4. Demand implementation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) recommendations (March 2003 and March 2004), and give priority to actions that should be adopted by the national government, civil society, and all parties involved in the armed conflict. Similarly, demand the fulfillment of the London Declaration (see page 16) from donor countries.
5. **To the Organization of American States (OAS):** Promote the passage of a resolution that stipulates incorporation of a gender and women's perspective when addressing peace and security in the hemisphere, taking into account UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and incorporating follow-up mechanisms.
6. **To the OAS Mission in Colombia:** Support the work of all sectors of society, especially women, in the development of citizens' initiatives for peace.
7. **To the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank:** Produce reports, utilizing indicators that stress the gendered impact of war and the roles and experiences of women and children during armed conflict, as well as the impact of Inter-American Development Bank and World Bank funded projects on vulnerable communities.

To civil society

1. Compile a database of examples of women in Colombia and in the world that highlights women's successful contributions to peace building and that promotes their visibility.
2. Inform women of resources and international and national instruments that they can use to defend their human rights and promote peace.
3. **To Colombian civil society:** Continue working for a negotiated solution to the armed conflict. Defend the application of international humanitarian law, particularly the distinction between civilians and combatants; and promote the proposals of humanitarian accords developed by women and their organizations, such as the one developed by the coalition of Women Against the War and Operation Siriri for the Humanitarian Accords.
4. **To US civil society:** Continue efforts in the United States to raise awareness of the Colombian armed conflict, the need for a negotiated solution, the impact of US policies in Colombia, and the role of women in peacebuilding.

WORKING GROUP THREE: Redefining Security and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration and Promoting the Rule of Law, Transitional Justice, and Reconciliation

Working group three combined several related topics into a single discussion. The group first examined prevailing notions of security, particularly as articulated by the Uribe administration's Democratic Security Policy (PSD) (see box below). All participants agreed that PSD, both on paper and in practice, encroaches on basic human rights and humanitarian law as articulated in international instruments. The working group found it troubling that due to heightened militarization throughout the country, women and women's organizations remain particularly vulnerable to violence.

As part of PSD, the Colombian government is enticing members of armed groups to disarm by offering a combination of judicial and economic benefits. The working group closely considered the November 2003 demobilization of 800 AUC members and the disturbing precedent it may set for future disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs. Several working group members expressed doubts about the potential for DDR programs to contribute to the establishment of peace; many felt that such programs only increase the likelihood of impunity because the welfare of victims is rarely considered.

The working group fleshed out their concerns about PSD and DDR programs by identifying obstacles that Colombia must overcome in preparing for peace. Participants exchanged ideas on addressing the existing system of impunity, whereby violent crimes and human rights abuses by left-wing guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries, and even the Colombian armed forces remain largely unprosecuted. They identified international groups that could advise on systematic reform of the Colombian penal code and support the strengthening of Colombian institutions responsible for prosecuting human rights violations. Finally, the working group considered how best to bring together victims and perpetrators of violence in a process of reconciliation, specifically in pursuit of truth and social justice.

DEMOCRATIC SECURITY POLICY

President Alvaro Uribe's campaign promise to combat insurgents has translated into a dramatic expansion of security measures. Launched on June 29, 2003, the Democratic Security Policy (PSD) has two parts. First, the policy seeks to regain control of the country by increasing the numbers and capacity of troops and police units.⁹ Second, the government has deployed troops and police units across the country to challenge areas controlled by guerrilla and paramilitary forces.¹⁰ Strengthening the formal military structure has been aided by the enlistment of civilians as informants, collaborators, and militiamen. An increase in military aid from the United States has complemented the PSD.¹¹

⁹ *Colombia: President Uribe's Democratic Security Policy*. Bogotá and Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2003. 5 October 2004 <http://www.icg.org/library/documents/latin_america/o6_colombia_uribe_dem_security.pdf>.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ "US Aid to Colombia Since 1997: Summary Tables." Washington, DC: The Center for International Policy, 2004. 5 October 2004 <<http://ciponline.org/colombia/aidtable.htm>>.

**Recommendation:
Redefining Security and Disarmament, Demobilization,
and Reintegration and Promoting The Rule of Law,
Transitional Justice, and Reconciliation**

To the US government

With regard to security

1. Direct technical, political, and economic aid toward implementation of the UNHCHR recommendations from the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and the London Declaration, (see page 16) particularly those related to:
 - a. the protection of women and their organizations, defenders of human rights, social leaders, trade union leaders, and peace builders; and
 - b. policies that strengthen the defense of fundamental human rights.
2. Abstain from supporting policies that violate the principles of international human rights and humanitarian law, particularly those that involve peasants and farmers in military actions and civilians as informants, as such policies exacerbate women's vulnerability.

With regard to aid

1. Fulfill the requirements of US law, such as that established by Congress (2002) requiring a study of the environmental, economic, and social impacts of the mix of fumigation chemicals used in Colombia, and include a survey of the effects on the health of women and their food security before any fumigation program can begin.
2. Direct economic and technical resources to the Colombian government's Program of Protection for Defenders of Human Rights and Trade Union Leaders and require the evaluation and adjustment of strategies, in consultation with women's organizations, to guarantee effective protection of women.
3. Evaluate the impact of US foreign policy, assistance, military aid, and counter-narcotics policies on the civilian population, especially women, girls, and boys.
4. Strengthen programs in counter-narcotics policy that reduce US consumption and recognize the effects of the deteriorating situation in Colombia on women's human rights.
5. **To the Senate Foreign Relations and Appropriations Committees and the House of Representatives International Relations and Appropriations Committees:** Review the fulfillment of the three conditions for the renewal of aid from the United States to Colombia.
6. **To the Office on International Women's Issues at the US Department of State:** In coordination with women's organizations in Colombia, evaluate the effect on women of US aid policies and present a report to Congress that includes compensation measures.

With regard to justice

1. Direct aid to Colombia toward the complete implementation of international commitments made by the Colombian state, including investigation into and effective prosecution of gender-based violence.
2. Integrate capacity building on human rights and international humanitarian law with a gender perspective into aid programs for the police force, judges, finance and justice officials, and humanitarian personnel.
3. Direct aid toward effective implementation of the recommendations of the London Declaration, UNHCHR, and UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, with an emphasis on overcoming impunity, particularly related to crimes against women.

To the Colombian government

With regard to security

1. Evaluate the Democratic Security Policy and adjust it to reinforce international humanitarian law and international human rights law, taking into particular account the recommendations of the UNHCHR, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, and the London Declaration (see page 16).
2. Implement permanent and consensus-based policies that guarantee the participation of women and the protection of their lives and organizations.
3. Ensure that no public declarations are made that put at risk women who are dedicated to defending human rights, working in trade unions, mobilizing community groups, and organizing for peace.
4. Evaluate the Program for Defenders of Human Rights and Social Leaders from a gender perspective, and consider the needs of women.
5. Suspend the massive and arbitrary detentions that particularly impact women, girls, and boys, often condemning them to forcible displacement as a result of social stigmatization stemming from false arrest.
6. Respect international humanitarian law by refraining from including civilians—particularly women, girls, and boys—in networks of informants. Avoid involving families in the peasant soldiers program.

With regard to aid

1. Formulate and implement a policy of illicit crop substitution that adequately consults women and diverse communities and incorporates their needs and proposals.
2. Clarify and specify the goals of the counter-narcotics policy which currently discriminates against women in order to prevent and control the targeting of inhabitants in zones affected by these policies.
3. Establish a diverse commission with the participation of women's organizations to evaluate the effects of militarization and fumigation on the public and private lives of women in these zones.
4. Support projects and programs for women and their families displaced as a consequence of the counter-narcotics policy.

With regard to disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration

1. Consider processes for Colombians to reenter civilian life as part of the strategy for peace, not for war. Formulate disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs that guarantee the political, social, and economic reinsertion of ex-combatants; offer services tailored to ex-combatants of both sexes and various ages.
2. Recognize the contributions of women as mediators of the conflict, and strengthen their role as facilitators of reintegration for ex-combatants.

With regard to justice

1. Preserve “*la tutela*”¹² as a mechanism essential for protection and as a guarantee of fundamental economic, social, and cultural rights—particularly for those persons that traditionally face discrimination.
2. Receive and implement the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to overcome impunity and gender-based violence in the home, community, and during the armed conflict.
3. Clearly differentiate the judicial treatment of crop growers from narco-traffickers.
4. Create and fund a special unit in the Office of the Attorney General to investigate crimes against women, and ensure that all measures against impunity are undertaken with a gender perspective.
5. Taking into account international experiences and guaranteeing the fulfillment of international commitments, construct a state policy based on truth, justice, and reparations that ensures the participation of victims and civil society and includes women, taking into consideration their needs and interests.
6. Adjust the draft Alternative Penal Law Bill in accordance with Colombia’s international obligations, particularly UN Security Council Resolution 1325, in order to guarantee the right to truth, justice, and reparations for the victims of social and political violence.

To the international community

With regard to security

1. Support and monitor disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration activities to guarantee that they are part of a strategy for peace; include a gender perspective and ensure the right of victims to truth, justice, and reparations.

With regard to justice

1. **To the OAS:** Verify implementation of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women and the “Convention of Belem Do Para” (1994), by establishing a temporary mission that reports on the steps adopted to prevent, punish, and eradicate violence against women in the home, in the community, and during the armed conflict.

¹² Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “International Community Confirms Support for Colombia” (July 10, 2003) <<http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Servlet?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029391629&a=KArticle&aid=1057657993187>>

POLICY MEETINGS MAY 12-14, 2004

United States Institute for Peace

After two days of generating, revising, and refining their recommendations, the delegation met with staff from the United States Institute for Peace (USIP). This federally funded organization examines international conflicts and develops recommendations for their nonviolent resolution. Throughout the meeting, the delegation underscored the potential for US organizations committed to building peace, such as USIP, to assist women's organizations in Colombia.



"It is impossible to reconstruct a country and strengthen democracy in a country where more than 50 percent are not represented."

-Patricia Guerrero

The delegation identified two principal areas in which USIP could support women's organizations — reporting the realities of the conflict and training women community leaders. Magdala Velázquez asked USIP to help increase awareness of the grave humanitarian situation in Colombia; she explained how constitutional reforms, especially those pushed by the Uribe administration, are jeopardizing the potential for a negotiated settlement to the conflict. Part of the humanitarian crisis, María Elena Domínguez explained, was armed actors' strategic use of sexual and political violence against civilian women. She suggested that, in response to this and other gender-specific violence, USIP offer training to support women as they attempt to attain greater political participation.

Patricia Guerrero reiterated that women face some of the most under-recognized consequences of the armed conflict, rhetorically asking why there are not more investigations into crimes committed against women. She pointed out that the Colombian government still lacks programs that actively search for truth, justice, and reparations for women victims.

Michael Lekson, program officer of USIP's Professional Training Program, described a successful workshop he recently conducted in Colombia on conflict resolution, conflict analysis, and mediation. He noted that "[USIP] wants to do a new program in Colombia, if we can, by the end of the year...We have a lot of interest in the idea."

During the question and answer session, the delegation elaborated on areas where USIP could contribute. Ana Teresa Bernal thought USIP could be instrumental in affirming that Colombia is in the midst of an internal conflict and is not just another example of worldwide terrorism. Acknowledging the armed conflict, she explained, allows for the possibility of peace and a greater recognition of the importance of women in peace processes. Fresia Guacaneme asked USIP to support groups engaged in local-level dialogues with armed actors and to raise awareness of the nexus between women and armed conflict.

The session concluded with optimism that USIP, through its grant-making, training, and research programs, could serve as a key ally of women's organizations preparing for peace in Colombia.

The World Bank

The delegation met with World Bank representatives to address the intersection of peace and development in Colombia. The discussion centered on how development agencies can better monitor the situation of Colombian women and implement development initiatives in support of peace.

Fresia Guancaneme described how the armed conflict worsened in recent years. The increases in forced displacement, attacks against women, and domestic violence are examples of how the humanitarian crisis has been exacerbated by ongoing armed conflict.

The delegation expressed a desire for greater international support for civil society peace efforts. Gloria Inés Flórez Schneider said, “International cooperation can have one of two effects—either foster the possibilities for peace or for war.” She cited the London Declaration (see box below) as an excellent example of how international cooperation can foster opportunities for peace.

Martha Quintero added that the World Bank must give explicit support to women’s organizations working towards peace. Only by considering indicators that reflect women’s situations can the World Bank and other international agencies determine and respond to the hardships women face.

During the question and answer period, participants explored how women have been excluded from previous peace negotiations. Magdala Velázquez detailed how they were shut out of topics discussed at the peace table. In spheres of power, such as the central government, women are not present in large numbers. Patricia Guerrero pointed out that women nonetheless are negotiating at the local level. She cited indigenous women who have negotiated agreements with armed actors to spare their families and communities from violence. Maria Correia, World Bank lead development specialist for Africa, noted that a simple majority of women at the negotiating table does not ensure women’s issues and interests will be represented; instead, a conscious effort must be made to raise women’s needs and concerns in peace talks.

Correia suggested it was important to capitalize on the trend of women’s increasing participation in negotiations by encouraging governments to consider issues such as the victimization of women, reparations for sexual and other forms of violence, and justice for victims.

The meeting concluded that gender-sensitive inquiry is vital to diagnosing the impact of armed conflict and, in turn, developing appropriate responses. World Bank representatives assured the delegation that an effort would be made to connect the women with the World Bank mission in Colombia to build on the discussion.

LONDON DECLARATION

Signed in July 2003, senior leaders from several G8 states and development agencies reaffirmed their “support for Colombia as it seeks to tackle its severe internal conflict and serious illegal drugs problems,” while “urging the Colombian Government to tackle human rights concerns.” The declaration also calls for the Colombian government to recognize and support civil society, NGOs, and trade unions as stakeholders in achieving reform and defending human rights. Signatories encouraged the Colombian government to observe human rights and international humanitarian law as it develops the fully functioning institutions of a democratic state.

Center for Strategic and International Studies

Representatives from the US government, think tanks, and advocacy groups gathered at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) to discuss the work of women in the Colombian peace process.

Catalina Rojas began the briefing by presenting an analysis of the armed conflict in Colombia and sources perpetuating the violence. Her new report, "In the Midst of War: Women's Contributions to Peace in Colombia," documents the contributions of women to formal and informal peace processes in recent years.¹³



"We all have very different views about what women have to do in Colombia in order to achieve peace. But we all share the belief that women should be involved in realizing peace."

-Alma Viviana Pérez

María Emma Mejía introduced the delegation's recommendations by declaring, "There will be peace." Presenters agreed, however, that achieving peace would be aided by resolute international involvement. Mejía argued that in order to prepare for peace, the international community must overcome divisions and respond to a "conflict of incredible humanitarian and social proportions."

Alma Viviana Pérez emphasized that, historically, the most viable means to building peace in Colombia has been through a process of negotiation. She argued that "we really need women to be trained to handle the challenges of negotiations and to give us attention because otherwise women will remain invisible in future peace processes." The international community could be instrumental in providing such support, she said.

The delegation also emphasized that resolving the armed conflict entailed more than a ceasefire; complex cultural, socioeconomic, and ethical issues have become intertwined over decades of violence. Martha Quintero expounded upon the complexities that must be considered in any negotiated settlement. Issues of drug trafficking, corruption, and sexual and domestic violence against women are inseparable from the armed conflict; in order to achieve peace, policymakers must address all of these issues.

During the question and answer period, there was a brief exchange about how a global climate against terrorism has renewed efforts to end the armed conflict militarily. Ana Teresa Bernal asserted, "We cannot allow for public opinion in the United States to compromise the opportunity to enrich the peace process in Colombia."

Participants concluded the meeting with appreciation for the delegation's commitment to building peace in Colombia and recognition that their success requires substantial support from allies in the United States and internationally.

¹³ Rojas, Catalina. *In the Midst of War: Women's Contributions to Peace in Colombia*. Washington, DC: Women Waging Peace, 2004. 28 September 2004. <<http://www.womenwagingpeace.net/content/articles/ColombiaFullCaseStudy.pdf>>.

US House of Representatives

Members of the US House of Representatives hosted a morning briefing with the delegation. This was an opportunity for the delegation to discuss US military aid and development with members of Congress who approve such funds.

Ambassador Swanee Hunt, chair of Women Waging Peace and president of Hunt Alternatives Fund, welcomed the delegation and members and staff of the House of Representatives. She stressed that the impact of the delegation's work extends beyond Colombia and affects how policymakers approach other armed conflicts.

Those in attendance echoed Hunt's appraisal of the delegation's impact. Representatives Jim McGovern (D-MA) and Mike Honda (D-CA) noted that there are many in Congress who would like to work with women's organizations to develop peace and justice in Colombia. Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) said, "Even in this country of democracy, there is something that we can learn. We're listening to you as well." Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) joined the others in affirming women's potential to have major influence in building peace. Representative Grace Napolitano (D-CA) said that, as a Latina leader, she identified with the issues Colombian women face.

The delegation's remarks centered on how US aid to Colombia could be redirected towards preparing for a peaceful resolution to the armed conflict. Ana Teresa Bernal began by underscoring that the Colombian government has heightened its military response since the failure of the Pastrana negotiations with FARC in 2000 and the implementation of the Democratic Security Policy (see box on page 11). Bernal encouraged the House to urge the Colombian government to follow the London Declaration, emphasizing that Colombia's needs are not limited to military aid; the country is in dire need of assistance in building peace and protecting and promoting human rights.

Similarly, Pilar Rueda Jimenez asked that the congressional representatives in attendance lead a comprehensive reexamination of US military aid to Colombia and assign more support to programs defending Colombia's human rights activists, specifically those working for the rights of women.

María Clara Baquero Sarmiento explained, "We want US taxpayers' money not for war, but for social justice." Toward this end, she encouraged the US Congress to support reform in the Colombian Attorney General's Office, giving it the capacity and flexibility to prosecute armed actors for their numerous violations of humanitarian law.

Representative Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX) highlighted the value of the delegation's recommendations: "You are educating us about the wrongness of the money going to Colombia and can help us raise our voices as decisions are being made in Congress and the administration."

As follow-up to the session, Representatives McGovern, Schakowsky, and Honda sponsored a congressional resolution commending women's efforts in Colombia to promote peace and calling for their inclusion in formal and informal dialogues (see page 20).



Colombian delegation with Ambassador Swanee Hunt and Representatives Jim McGovern (D-Ma), Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX), and Mike Honda (D-CA)

US Senate

After visiting members of the House of Representatives, the delegation participated in a briefing at the US Senate with staff of senators central to shaping US foreign policy towards Colombia.

The delegation raised doubts about the classification of Colombia's armed conflict as another target of the global war on terror. In 2002, President George W. Bush authorized the expansion of counter-narcotics aid to Colombia to include assistance in fighting terrorism. Maria Emma Mejía asserted that the United States and the Uribe administration are mistaken to frame the armed conflict as another instance of global terrorism. She argued that, in order to prepare for peace, it is imperative the armed conflict be understood as an internal conflict with vast humanitarian consequences. The delegation joined Mejía in asking the Senate to pass a resolution that raises awareness of the egregious human rights violations that remain unaddressed.



"If the United States says that we are going to talk about 'terrorism,' our government says that we are going to talk about 'terrorism.'"

-Nancy Tapias

The presenters drew connections between the US political climate and Colombian policies. According to Nancy Tapias, "If the United States says that we are going to talk about 'terrorism,' our government says that we are going to talk about 'terrorism.'" Similar to Mejía, Tapias also emphasized the potential for the Senate to call for a prioritization of human rights, especially the rights of women, and international law in Colombia. Several delegation members suggested the Senate could help women's peace organizations by guaranteeing that foreign aid is invested in social capital, not military expansion. Gloria Nieto argued that the United States needs to conduct a comprehensive study of Plan Colombia's effects, especially as they pertain to women. For example, according to Nieto, "Fumigations [of coca fields] are doing incalculable [environmental and health] damage to my country, to its children, its women, and its future. The Senate should insist on a stop to fumigations and [initiate] a study of the practice's effects."⁴

The presenters assured the staffers that redirection of US aid from anti-terrorism efforts toward local peace building would have positive effects. Pilar Rueda Jimenez drew attention to the role women play in local peace efforts. She cited examples of rural women who, despite persistent threats of violence, frequently protest violations of their communities' rights. "These women," Rueda explained, "have been trying to counter acts of aggression without many resources." Funds would bolster peace-building initiatives that are both established and effective. Ambassador Swanee Hunt suggested that a Senate resolution could call for Plan Colombia to support the protection of women leaders in rural regions.

⁴ According to the US Department of State, Bureau on International Narcotics and Law Enforcement <<http://www.state.gov/g/inl/>>, the aerial eradication program uses aircraft to spray a glyphosate-based herbicide on fields of coca and opium poppy, which are illegal in Colombia and are the vital ingredients of cocaine and heroin. Supported by the Narcotics Affairs Section of the US embassy in Bogotá, it is a program of the Colombian National Police Antinarcotics Directorate.

**Commending the efforts of women in the Republic of Colombia to promote peace.
(Introduced in the House of Representatives)**

108th CONGRESS, 2d Session
H. CON. RES. 465

Commending the efforts of women in the Republic of Colombia to promote peace.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

June 24, 2004

Mr. MCGOVERN (for himself, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, and Mr. HONDA) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Commending the efforts of women in the Republic of Colombia to promote peace.

Whereas women comprise 51 percent of the population of the Republic of Colombia;

Whereas women represent the majority of the 2.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in

Colombia, and women head more than 30 percent of IDP households;

Whereas armed actors have threatened and assassinated leaders of organizations working for peace, human rights, and stability in Colombia;

Whereas sexual violence and other forms of abuse have been used as weapons of war against women in Colombia;

Whereas women in Colombia are taking leadership roles for peace at the local level, establishing informal agreements with armed actors, and forming 'peace zones' to protect their communities;

Whereas women in Colombia represent diverse political parties and views, and are involved in governmental and nongovernmental leadership positions at the municipal, departmental, and national level;

Whereas women throughout Colombia are leading demands for an end to violence and a return to dialogue and negotiation;

Whereas United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) mandates the participation of women in peace processes and the representation of women at all decisionmaking levels for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict; and

Whereas paragraph 2(h) of the Declaration of the Special Conference on Security (2003) issued by the Organization of American States reaffirms the need to increase the decisionmaking roles of women in conflict prevention, management, and resolution, and to integrate a gender perspective in matters of hemispheric security: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress--

- (1) commends the efforts by women and civil society in the Republic of Colombia to mitigate violence in their communities, to advocate for a negotiated solution to conflict, and to develop a common agenda for peace;
- (2) reaffirms the importance of including the expertise, knowledge, and experiences of women in Colombia in formal and informal peace dialogues, negotiations, and in decisionmaking roles to resolve conflict and promote peace and security in Colombia, including the participation of women as planners, implementers, and beneficiaries of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs and security policies in Colombia;
- (3) supports the protection of women and their organizations and the defense of fundamental human rights in Colombia; and
- (4) calls on the Department of State, including United States Agency for International Development, the Department of Defense, and other appropriate Federal departments and agencies to integrate a gender perspective in United States policies, programs, and activities regarding the situation in Colombia and to support through funding, training, networking opportunities, and other activities the efforts by women in Colombia to promote peace, respect for human rights, and an end to conflict and violence in Colombia.

United States Agency for International Development

The delegation met with representatives from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to discuss how assistance programs for Colombia are designed and implemented.

Patricia Guerrero explained that the delegation came to the briefing in search of ways USAID could support peace efforts and human rights in Colombia. These goals are not departures from existing USAID plans, Guerrero argued; successful development is predicated on peace and the respect of human rights.

Two complementary recommendations were highlighted as immediate steps towards these goals. First, Claudia Mejía Duque suggested that USAID recognize women's important peace efforts by funding initiatives to protect women leaders and provide training for them. She explained, "We believe in the empowerment of women, defenders of women's rights, women of rural and urban organizations, women working for peace, and their social empowerment."

"It is very easy to get depressed after reading these classified military reports about the country and the region, but I can tell you that this discussion really helped buoy our sense of what is going on in the country and the hope for the region."

-Beth Hogan
USAID

Second, Mejía called for USAID to support training programs for security sector personnel and civil servants. Several presenters argued that both groups are ill-equipped to defend women from gender-specific violence; impunity is especially acute for crimes committed against women. Martha Quintero agreed that women leaders need help in Colombia. The elevated violence combined with inadequate protection places women's lives and work in danger.

USAID representatives acknowledged the relationship between peace and development. Beth Hogan, deputy director of the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean in the Office of Regional Sustainable Development, concurred that reconstructing a country after armed conflict is not the same as bringing justice, particularly for women. She expressed support for the suggestion that USAID provide specialized training for the prosecution of

crimes against women. Marissa LeMargie, USAID Colombia desk officer, noted that a participatory process of generating recommendations is a new concept and worth further discussion.

The question and answer period focused largely on why women historically have been excluded from Colombia's peace processes. Gloria Nieto said there are myriad examples of women participating in regional discussions and local peace dialogues, although the Colombian government refuses to recognize such talks. Ana Teresa Bernal assured USAID representatives that civil society is optimistic about their chances of participating in the formal peace process.

Closing the meeting, Hogan expressed a desire to have USAID explore how to incorporate into its programming the important roles women play as peacemakers at the local level and how to help women develop the additional skills necessary to rebuild their communities after civil war.

US Department of State

The delegation visited the US Department of State to advocate for support in pressuring the Colombian government to involve women in future peace processes. Ambassador Swanee Hunt made opening remarks and introduced former foreign minister Mariá Emma Mejía, who presented current challenges facing Colombia's search for peace and offered examples of women's activities as a sign of hope.

Presenters prefaced the discussion by pointing out that Colombia's armed conflict is at a crossroads. The recent classification of Colombia as a site of terrorist activity has resulted in a growth in the country's military expenditures. Mariá Emma Mejía stated, "Somehow we are beginning to get used to the tendency that in order to regain some rule of law you have to suppress human rights. This tendency has to be corrected." Ana Teresa Bernal suggested that the Department of State pressure the Colombian government to reevaluate its Democratic Security Policy and align it with basic human rights and democratic principles. Judith Santander concluded the delegation's presentations, saying that inclusion of gender-sensitive perspectives in all policies is a fundamental step for ensuring women's rights are protected.

Department of State representatives noted that the delegation has allies in the US government in their peace efforts: Paula Dobriansky, under secretary of state for global affairs, reaffirmed the department's commitment to working with Colombian civil society for the creation of peace and security; Charlotte Ponticelli, senior coordinator for international women's issues, expressed confidence in the potential for Colombian women to make decisive contributions to peace; and Don Steinberg, then director of the Joint Policy Council, adamantly agreed that "peace processes work best when women are involved." Once peace has been established and reconstruction begins, Steinberg argued, women should be involved as planners, implementers, and beneficiaries. Charles Barclay, deputy director of the Andean Affairs Office, agreed with the delegation that ending Colombia's armed conflict is not just a matter of establishing law and security; resolving decades of conflict requires a multifaceted approach. Civil society, especially women's organizations, are valuable contributors to that effort.

Many topics were raised during the discussion period. Alma Viviana Pérez asked that the Department of State support the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (see box on page 8) by encouraging dialogue between the Colombian government and civil society. Pilar Rueda Jimenez noted that there are important lessons to draw from the demobilization of several guerrilla movements in the 1990s. In the absence of clear consideration for the differing needs of women combatants, these previous demobilizations demonstrate the complexities of stigmatization, acceptance, and issues of masculinity and femininity that many female ex-combatants face upon reintegration into civilian society.

Under Secretary Dobriansky later commented how impressed she was with the quality and diversity of the delegation and urged the women to meet with the US embassy in Bogotá to explore ways the embassy and USAID mission could assist the women's efforts.



"It is imperative that US aid to Colombia support programs defending Colombia's human rights activists, specifically those working for the rights of women."

-Pilar Rueda Jimenez

Organization of American States

The Organization of American States (OAS) provided a venue for exploring how regional cooperation could advance the role of women in future peace processes.

Ambassador Horacio Serpa Uribe, permanent representative from Colombia to the OAS, opened the reception by explaining that he had arrived at some basic notions about Colombia's pursuit of peace. One of these conclusions was that women leaders have assumed important roles in establishing peace. Though the conflict continues, he encouraged the delegation to remain active in peace efforts. It is imperative never to "abandon the theme of peace."



Esther María Gallego with Ambassador Horacio Serpa Uribe.

Elizabeth Spehar, executive coordinator of the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy at the OAS, identified parallels between the delegation's advocacy and the work of the OAS. The most direct and pressing was perhaps the importance of women in peace processes. Spehar contended that it is critical to provide more support for women, particularly because "we know that some of the most important contributions for peace come from the non-governmental and non-formal sectors."

Ambassador Hattie Babbitt, senior vice president of Hunt Alternatives Fund, introduced the delegation and its members' accomplishments. From diverse backgrounds, Babbitt explained, the group had developed synergy in generating and presenting their recommendations to policymakers in Washington, DC.

The delegation's presentations emphasized the importance of recognizing and maximizing civil society's contributions to Colombia's peace process. Magdala Velázquez outlined the central role the Colombian government historically has played in searching for peace, describing it as the "primary conductor for peace." She proposed that the government represent women better by employing a more gender-sensitive approach because "gender perspectives could better incorporate our needs, dreams, and demands."

Esther María Gallego highlighted the strength of women's efforts against war. Worldwide, women have built connections in search of peace and an end to human rights violations and sexual violence. She reminded the OAS that it can be vital in supporting women's efforts around the region to overcome victimization and become protagonists for peace.

The reception concluded with a presentation by Gloria Inés Flórez Schneider, in which she argued that the international community should encourage the current Colombian administration to focus on constructing peace and not creating more war. Schneider summarized, "We think that a government's security plan cannot be based on the violation of human rights and the restriction of civil liberties; rather, security must deepen democracy and strengthen the protection of rights."



María Emma Mejía with former Secretary General of the OAS, Cesar Gaviria, and Ambassador Horacio Serpa Uribe.

US Department of Defense

The delegation continued its visit to relevant organizations, meeting with officials at the US Department of Defense (DOD). Since the inception of Plan Colombia in 2000, Colombia has been one of the largest recipients of US military aid.

The US provides military, police, economic, and social assistance through various programs designed and implemented by the US Department of State, US Department of Defense, and US Agency for International Development. A summary of all US foreign aid to Colombia from 2000-2005 is included below.

Roger Pardo-Mauer, deputy assistant secretary of defense for Western Hemisphere affairs, briefed the delegation on DOD's understanding of the armed conflict in Colombia. He explained that focusing solely on narco-trafficking is unproductive because consumption, poverty, and violence are inextricably linked to the armed conflict. Designing policy based on a broader vision has allowed DOD to be flexible with support, engage multiple groups, transcend narrow dialogues, expand information gathering, and ultimately save lives.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004 estimate	2005 requested
International Narcotics Control (INC) (counter-drug arms transfers, training, and services)	688.05	46.35	254.2	431.0	313.0	334.0
Foreign Military Financing (FMF) (grants for defense articles, training, and services)	0.02	4.49	0	17.1	110	108.0
International Military Education and Training (IMET) (training)	0.9	1.04	1.18	1.17	1.8	1.7
Emergency Drawdowns (presidential authority to grant counter-drug equipment from US)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Section 1004 (provides authority to use defense budget for some types of counter-drug aid)	68.71	150.04	84.99	136	110.5 (estimate)	110.5 (estimate)
Section 1033 (provides authority to use defense budget for riverine counter-drug aid)	7.23	22.3	4	13.2 (estimate)	13.2 (estimate)	13.2 (estimate)
Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) (grants for anti-terrorism defense articles, training, and services)	0	Unknown	25	3.28	0	3.92
Excess Defense Articles (EDA) (transfers of excess equipment)	0.41	0.46	2.37	3.40	2.89 (estimate)	2.89 (estimate)
Discretionary Funds (office of the National Drug Control Policy)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Economic Support Funds (ESF)	4	0	0	0	0	0
Development Assistance (DA)	0	0	0	0	0	0
International Narcotics Control (INC) (counter-drug economic and social aid)	208	5.65	120.3	149.2	150.0	150.0
Total (in millions)	977.32	230.33	492.04	754.20	701.33	724.15

Source: Center for International Policy. See full summary table at <www.ciponline.org/colombia/aidtable.htm>.

The delegation generally agreed that responding to the armed conflict required a nuanced understanding of Colombia; however, they presented different elements they understood to be essential to an effective security policy. Ana Teresa Bernal contended that, contrary to the current Democratic Security Plan, all security policies should respect human rights and not limit guarantees for civil rights. Civil society does not have access to the Colombian armed forces and is unable to engage in a productive dialogue; thus, Bernal urged DOD representatives to encourage the Colombian government to respect human rights. Magdala Velázquez questioned whether the prevailing approach to the Colombian armed conflict, which she described as a strictly military-based approach, was a viable solution and argued that a successful and less violent alternative would include the knowledge and experiences of women. Patricia Guerrero and María Clara Baquero Sarmiento noted that military aid expenditures, such as those in Plan Colombia, might be ineffective because of corruption.

John Merrill, director of Central America and the Caribbean in the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Western Hemisphere affairs, outlined assumptions that guide US policies towards Colombia. He explained that the United States believes a solution requires both military pressure and negotiations, because the United States is skeptical about whether FARC is interested in peace. Merrill admitted that the US government has misgivings about the Uribe administration policies, including insufficiently financed disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs and the simultaneous pursuit of military and negotiation tracks. He reiterated, however, that the DOD believes Uribe has been more successful than previous Colombian administrations in his peace efforts and remains confident that a negotiated settlement can be reached.

Caryn Hollis, principal deputy of special operations and low intensity conflict, shared insights from her recent discussions with the Colombian government regarding crisis response and greater collaboration with civil society in this process. She agreed that civil society could be better integrated into the Colombian government's efforts but expressed confidence that there was a determination in the Colombian government for a more cooperative relationship.

As the briefing concluded, discussion about how to maintain a dialogue between civil society and armed forces spilled into the hallway. The delegation and DOD representatives appeared to agree that fostering such channels could avoid misunderstanding and generate innovative strategies for peace.

Inter-American Development Bank

The delegation's meeting at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)—its final session in Washington, DC—examined how regional allies could help advance the role of women in Colombia. The IDB is central in shaping development policy in Colombia and throughout Latin America.

The delegation and IDB shared similar interests in the status and welfare of women in democratic societies. Christof Kuechemann, deputy manager of social development and public governance, welcomed the delegation and noted that the theme of women's participation in democracies is of special importance to the IDB. His organization understands that democracy cannot function fully without the participation of all citizens.

The delegation members drew heavily on personal experience to emphasize the tenuous position of many people in Colombia. Patricia Guerrero described working with and advocating for internally displaced persons to underscore how displacement is a "complete indignity." She noted that Afro-Colombian and indigenous populations are especially susceptible to forced displacement, in part because they occupy valuable land. Guerrero heralded microcredit initiatives as a means of reaching out to the increasing numbers of displaced persons, especially women and children.

Esther María Gallego spoke at length about the effect 40 years of violence has had on Colombian women, yet she expressed a sense of optimism. Despite being disproportionately affected by the armed conflict, women remain at the forefront of innovative and persistent peace efforts.

Claudia Mejía Duque drew connections between women's security and targeted economic development. In Colombia, levels of poverty and unemployment are much higher for women, especially young women. Enhancing women's participation, Mejía said, largely depends on ensuring that women are beneficiaries of development and humanitarian aid.

Mejía pointed out that the IDB was one of 24 signatories to the London Declaration. She underscored three of the agreement's primary recommendations to the Colombian government:

- 1) take all the steps needed to end impunity;
- 2) cut all ties with paramilitary groups; and
- 3) ensure the human rights of all citizens.

These three recommendations are central to improving the status and welfare of women in Colombia.

Kuechemann concluded the briefing with a promise to talk with the IDB mission in Colombia but said, "On paper, incorporating gender in development looks very good, but actually it's very difficult to do. This effort has to begin in the countries."

BIOGRAPHIES OF CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

María Clara Baquero Sarmiento is president of the Asociación Sindical de Servidores Públicos del Ministerio de Defensa, Fuerzas Militares, Policía Nacional (Trade Union of Public Servants of the Ministry of Defense, Military Forces, and National Police), the union representing members of the armed forces and police. She is a psychologist with the Policía Nacional in Bogotá and holds a degree in clinical psychology from the Universidad Católica de Colombia.

Ana Teresa Bernal is national coordinator of Red Nacional de Iniciativas Ciudadanas Por la Paz y Contra la Guerra (National Network of Citizen's Initiatives for Peace and Against War), a civil society umbrella organization working for peace in Colombia. She is a prominent civil society leader and has participated in government-led dialogues and negotiations with armed groups for the past two decades. She organized the 1997 campaign "Citizen's Mandate for Peace, Life, and Liberty," which gained ten million votes through a non-binding ballot that accompanied local elections.

Piedad Córdoba Ruiz is a member of the Colombian Senate, where she chairs the Human Rights Committee. She is also a member of the Congressional Peace Commission and the National Council for Peace. Senator Córdoba advocates on behalf of marginalized groups in Colombia, particularly women and Afro-Colombians, while also raising awareness of the situation internationally through publications and speaking engagements.

María Elvia Domínguez Blanco is chair of the School of Gender Studies at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, as well as a member of the consultative committee of the Presidential Office for Women's Equality. Holding a master's degree in women and development from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, she has worked extensively on women's empowerment and the peace process throughout Colombia.

Gloria Inés Flórez Schneider is cofounder and executive director of the Asociación para la Promoción Social Alternativa (Association for the Promotion of Social Alternatives). She has worked for peace and human rights in Colombia for two decades and was presented with the Robert F. Kennedy Award for Human Rights in 1998.

Esther María Gallego is national coordinator for la Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres, a non-governmental women's organization based in Medellín that comprises 300 groups from throughout the regions of Colombia most affected by the conflict. She has worked and published extensively on issues of women, peace, and security in Colombia. Ms. Gallego holds a law degree from the Universidad de Antioquia.

Fresia Guacaneme is a project coordinator for women and youth with the non-government organization Friedrich Ebert Stiftung en Colombia. In this position, she has worked to promote new perspectives on Colombia's armed conflict and open a space for women in the peace process. She holds a master's degree in local development and social management.

Patricia Guerrero is founder and legal advisor for La Liga de Mujeres Desplazadas (League of Displaced Women) in Bolívar, Cartagena, which supports and advocates for the rights of internally displaced Afro-Colombian and indigenous women and children. She has participated in national and international fora, including making expert presentations before the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, United Nations Commission on Human Rights, and Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. A participant in the Human Rights Advocacy Training Program at Columbia University, Ms. Guerrero was a member of the Women Caucus for Gender Justice at the International Criminal Court. As the author of several articles on women's human rights, Ms. Guerrero was a crucial contributor to the initial research for "Prevalent Investigation on Gender Based Violence on Displaced Women by the Armed Conflict in Cartagena, Colombia," supported by the International Rescue Committee. She holds a master's degree in international humanitarian law from the Universidad Externado de Colombia.

María Emma Mejía is Colombia's former minister of foreign relations and has been a government negotiator in talks with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – FARC) and Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army – ELN). She has been presidential adviser for security in Medellín, minister of education, and the Colombian ambassador to Spain. Ms. Mejía holds degrees from the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana de Medellín and the Universidad del Valle.

Claudia Mejía Duque is executive director of Sisma-Mujer and an adviser on displacement for the Colectivo María María. She is a founding member of Red Nacional de Mujeres (National Network of Women) and has worked for women's rights and political participation at local and national levels in civil society and government. She holds a law degree from the Universidad Externado de Colombia.

Gloria Nieto is coordinator of the Technical Secretariat of the Citizens Tables for Peace, a forum for regional and national leaders to discuss key themes in the agenda for peace and nonviolent alternatives to the armed conflict. Ms. Nieto has long been active in civil society mobilizations for peace through the Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz (Institute for Development and Peace Studies). Previously, she worked with the regional government to organize and support indigenous women and in 2002 was appointed acting governor of the Amazonas department in southern Colombia.

Alma Viviana Pérez is a consultant for the Presidential Office of Women's Equality and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She previously served as first secretary at the Colombian mission to the United Nations, where she focused on refugees and internal displacement and worked for the passage of Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security. She holds a master's degree from the Universidad de los Andes in negotiations and international relations.

Martha Quintero is coordinator of the Calí-based Women's Movement Against Arms, promoting gender-sensitive responses to conflict resolution and peace building in Colombia. The former coordinator of the National Network of Women, she is also associated with the Colectivo de Mujeres Paz-ificas (Women's Movement Against the Use of Arms) and the Free Thinking Liberal Group. Ms. Quintero is an economist and consultant focusing on gender issues and is a member of Women Waging Peace. She holds a degree in economics from the Universidad del Valle.

Pilar Rueda Jiménez is the advocacy and media officer with Oxfam in Colombia and is an adviser for research and advocacy with Colectivo María María. She has worked with civil society, government, and international bodies on issues of women, peace, and security, focusing on indigenous women and the displaced. Ms. Rueda has also lectured and published extensively on these topics and holds degrees from Notre Dame University and the Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

Judith Sarmiento Santander is an adviser in the Presidential Office for Women's Equality. She has lectured and published extensively on the topic of women, peace, and development in Colombia and abroad. Ms. Sarmiento holds a master's degree in gender, women, and development from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

Nancy Tapias Torrado was a consultant with the Gender Issues Oversight Board of the Presidential Office for Women's Equality until May 2004. She is the former director of the Human Rights, Humanitarian Law, and Peace Programme of the Faculty of Law at Javeriana University. She has organized prisoners through the Voluntariado Penitenciario program to advocate for peace and conflict resolution, and she cofounded the Victimology and Criminology study center to research and disseminate information regarding victims of crimes and abuse of power. In March 2004, she presented at the 48th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. A lawyer, Ms. Tapias Torrado is a researcher and professor of human rights, humanitarian law, and gender and conflict.

Magdala Velázquez is a feminist activist and scholar, widely recognized as a leading spokesperson for women in Colombia. She has worked for decades on issues of equality and rights for women, focusing her activism on the women's peace movement since the 1990s. As a founding member of the National Women's Network, she was nominated to represent women's organizations at the National Peace Council during the Pastrana-FARC dialogues.

Women Waging Peace, a program of Hunt Alternatives Fund, advocates for the full participation of women in formal and informal peace processes around the world. Over 250 members of the “Waging” network, all demonstrated leaders with varied backgrounds, perspectives, and skills, bring a vast array of expertise to the peacemaking process. They have met with more than 3,000 senior policy shapers to collaborate on fresh, workable solutions to long-standing conflicts.

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