



# WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR **PEACE & FREEDOM**

## Good Practice Case Study: Demilitarisation for Gender Equality and Peace in Colombia

By Katherine Ronderos (WILPF Colombia) and Abigail Ruane (WILPF PeaceWomen)  
Based on the report by WILPF Colombia

### Overview

After decades of militarised approaches to fighting drug trade and armed insurgency, the Colombian government declared the start of formal peace talks with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) in 2012. This time, the government chose to negotiate an agreement on the basis of a political process while addressing some of the structural causes of conflict, including violence, poverty, and social inequality. In the midst of the negotiation process, the role of women-led civil society, including the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Colombia ("Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad" LIMPAL Colombia), has been fundamental. Women peace leaders have advocated for women's participation, the inclusion of gender perspective, and women's rights in political and public life in a variety of ways, including by submitting a shadow report endorsed by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) as part of mobilising support for women's meaningful participation and rights in peace processes.

Despite these efforts, the history of violence in Colombia has left a trail of devastation. The continued increase in sexual and gender-based violence incidents exacerbated by a proliferation of arms underscores that disarmament is vital for achieving sustainable peace. As part of the preparations for the final phase of peace negotiations in Havana, WILPF Colombia conducted an investigation of the current disarmament efforts and published a report entitled "Desarmando la Vida (Disarming life)" in June 2016. This report aims to provide reference points regarding the lack of substantial disarmament efforts in Colombia and highlight the interlinkages between gender inequality and cultures of militarised masculinities which are highly prevalent in Colombia.

### Challenges



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The use of arms is a form of power, control, and domination. Armed control often reproduces societal norms of discrimination and generates increased rates of violence, especially against women. The presence of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and other forms of military, while added to the structures of patriarchal societies, continue to threaten the safety of women in both public and private domains. Of the total of 7.931 cases of killings of women between 2009 and 2014, 4.973 (62,70 percent) of them happened as a result of the use of a firearm.

Despite the fact that some progress has been achieved in strengthening women's equal participation in decision-making processes since the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) (UNSCR 1325), the global arms trade, drug trafficking, and the high levels of private possession of arms (legal or illegal) are rapidly increasing, creating obstacles to effective women's political participation in local governance and contributing to economic and social instability.

## What are women doing to produce change?

WILPF Colombia works in collaboration with civil society networks to promote women's political participation and empowerment in peacebuilding efforts and support women victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in the context of armed conflict. As part of their work, WILPF Colombia promotes the implementation of UNSCR 1325 at local and national levels and the ratification of 2013 Arms Trade Treaty by bringing gender discrimination into discussions related to security, militarism, and arms proliferation as one of the main obstacles to women's participation, protection, rights, and peace in Colombia.

## Impact:

The advocacy efforts of women-led civil society, including WILPF Colombia, has cultivated debates and actions around disarmament, arms control and regulation as well as women's political participation and rights.

In 2013, at the National Summit on Women and Peace "Cumbre Nacional de Mujeres y Paz", WILPF Colombia contributed to a series of recommendations to the six points of the negotiation agenda in order to promote women's rights provisions and gender perspective in the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP. The sections' proposal included specific recommendations on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes. Specifically, WILPF Colombia advocated for an increased



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focus on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence to be included in the monitoring and verification mechanisms lead by the UN Political Mission, and specific considerations of women and girls as ex-combatants.

The Summit played a vital role in promoting women's participation in negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP. Recommendations were subsequently presented to the negotiation table in Havana, Cuba, and became the main point of reference for women peacemakers' involvement in the negotiation process. In 2014, a sub-commission on gender was created to include a gender perspective into the peace agreement. As a result, the 2016 proposed peace agreement, despite eventually being rejected by the referendum on 2nd October, included a historic recognition of women's rights and also recognised sexual and gender-based violence as a crime against humanity. It furthermore provided no amnesty for sexual and gender-based violence.

Moving forward, WILPF Colombia visited Havana in early November 2016 to lobby representatives of FARC-EP on the importance of keeping a gender perspective and actions ensuring women's rights in the revised and final version of the peace agreement as a way to achieve long-lasting and sustainable peace in Colombia. A second and final agreement was then signed on 24th November and later ratified by Congress on 30th November.

## Lessons learned:

Disarmament is critical for gender equality and sustainable peace in the post-conflict Colombia. Leadership by women's organisations is critical to ensure that a feminist, pacifist, and anti-militarism perspective is integrated into peace agreements, public policies, and actions for transformative change. As the implementation of the peace agreement is on its way, WILPF Colombia's report "Disarming Life" presents a series of recommendations for the government of Colombia to take into account:

## Recommendations on DDR:

- Coordinate the inclusion of gender perspectives in security initiatives and strengthen spaces for active women's participation with the aim of avoiding current centralisation;
- Conduct special gender-sensitive training for professionals in charge of sexual violence cases as well as allow follow-up in each case without a specific deadline;



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- Guarantee permanent job placements for people working at institutions such as the Colombian Reintegration Agency (ACR) to ensure a proper transfer of knowledge;
- Identify the skills of women ex-combatants in the “reconstruction of a life plan”, to strengthen a higher efficacy in their work performance;
- Guarantee primary and secondary education for women ex-combatants and provide economic support enabling the opportunities for women to get higher education;
- Offer training on self-protection mechanisms for victims and women ex-combatants who are relocated in urban areas;
- Strengthen skills in maternal care and in the upbringing of children.

## Recommendations on ATT:

- Ratify the Arms Trade Treaty;
- Monitor all stages of the transfer of arms, including the identification of those who participate in the arms trade;
- Confront the main causes of conflict through improving the economic and labour opportunities of the population and guaranteeing the improvement of higher education;
- Regulate the internal arms control which is carried out by civilians;
- Establish a transparent, complete, and current arms register;
- Design effective data-access processes on behalf of the public and the authorities;
- Encourage and support spaces for effective participation of women in forums for safety, legal measures, and development plans.

## To learn more:

2016. Disarming Life: Reflections on Resolution 1325, Disarmament, and Women in Colombia, The latest Research Report of WILPF Colombia (LIMPAL) / Desarmando la vida: Reflexiones sobre la Resolución 1325, el desarme y las mujeres en Colombia. Accessible at: [www.peacewomen.org/resource/disarming-life-reflections-resolution-1325-disarmament-and-women-colombia-latest-research](http://www.peacewomen.org/resource/disarming-life-reflections-resolution-1325-disarmament-and-women-colombia-latest-research)

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Colombia.pdf](http://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Report_CEDAW56_-_Colombia.pdf)

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