

## Gender provisions in the FARC-EP's reincorporation into civilian life

Jakeline Vargas-Parra

*Legal and Political Sciences, Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga, Bucaramanga, Colombia*

[Jvargas557@unab.edu.co](mailto:Jvargas557@unab.edu.co)

### Abstract

This paper aims to take stock of the process of reincorporation of female ex-combatants into civilian life in the first 5 years of the implementation of the Peace Agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC-EP. The analysis demonstrates a spatial reconfiguration of the individual and collective reincorporation process, which implies challenges to the institutional framework for the effective territorialization of public policies in this area. This article's findings in the social, economic, and political dimensions were established through the documentary review of the monitoring and verification reports of the agreement and the information provided by the Agency for Normalization and Reincorporation.

**Keywords:** Gender, FARC-EP, Reincorporation, Ex-combatants, Peace Agreement

### Introduction

Internationally acclaimed as the more gender-sensitive peace agreement ever signed<sup>1</sup>, the Colombian Peace Agreement faces many challenges five years later. The adoption of gender mainstreaming as a core principle in the implementation of this agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP has to do with the incidence of women's and LGBTIQ+ organizations at the negotiation table, to which they submitted 7172 proposals<sup>2</sup> through the gender sub-commission. Women have been at the forefront of achieving the recognition of the relationship between the repertoire of violent actions used by the armed actors in the disputed territories and the gender identity and sexual orientation of the people who inhabited them. Consequently, the Agreement provided grounds to

---

<sup>1</sup> Jakeline Vargas-Parra and Ángela Díaz-Pérez, 'Enfoque de Género en el acuerdo de paz entre el Gobierno Colombiano y las FARC-EP: transiciones necesarias para su implementación', *Araucaria Revista Iberoamericana de Filosofía, Política y Humanidades*, 20, no. 39 (2018): 389–414.

<sup>2</sup> ARN, 'Soy Mujer Somos Cambio. Anuario 2020', (2020). <https://www.reincorporacion.gov.co>. <https://www.reincorporacion.gov.co> (accessed July 16, 2021).

tackle structural inequalities that underlie the conflict, among others, regarding victims' rights, gender equality, and the strengthening of political participation for women and their organizations<sup>3</sup>.

The approach adopted at the negotiating table gave the Agreement a dual character: in the international context, it was considered groundbreaking, and at the national level, it was controversial, particularly because of the measures referring to the guarantee of LGBTIQ+ rights. These provisions were considered by the sector opposed to the Agreement as an imposition of the "gender ideology"<sup>4</sup> that went against the family model instituted in Colombian society. Consequently, the stability of the Peace Agreement was put into question. The modification of such provisions in the Agreement text was a condition imposed on the National Government to achieve its final endorsement, which had been threatened by the negative results of the plebiscite.

Additionally, the number of gender provisions that made it through the filter of the controversy and materialized in the final Agreement varies according to the actor that identifies them. The Colombian government recognizes 51<sup>5</sup>, the actors of the international verification component, such as UN Women and the Institute of Women's Rights and Gender Equality as well as the Kroc Institute

---

<sup>3</sup> Republic of Colombia and FARC-EP. 'Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace' (2016).

<sup>4</sup> Jakeline Vargas-Parra and Ángela Díaz-Pérez, Araucaria, 'Enfoque de Género en el acuerdo de paz', 406.

<sup>5</sup> National Planning Department, 'Plan Marco de Implementación. Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace'.

<https://portalterritorial.dnp.gov.co/PlanMarcoImplementacion/> (accessed July 14, 2021)

identify 100<sup>6</sup> and 130<sup>7</sup> measures, respectively, while civil society organizations grouped under the umbrella of G-PAZ<sup>8</sup> have pointed out 122<sup>9</sup> provisions.

The objective of this paper is to establish an analytical balance of the incorporation of the gender approach in the process of reincorporation of female ex-combatants into civilian life in the first five years of the implementation of the Peace Agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC-EP. To this end, this paper is structured in three sections. First, it establishes an overview of the actors and methodologies in the follow-up and verification of the gender measures in the peace agreement. Secondly, it presents the institutional architecture that has been established for the mainstreaming of the gender approach in the reincorporation process of ex-combatants and the challenge that the spatial reconfiguration that this process has acquired poses to these gender measures. Finally, the last section presents the findings regarding the implementation of the social, economic and political dimensions of the reincorporation process of female ex-combatants, as well as the recommendations to progress in this area.

## 1. Methods

The research was developed from a qualitative approach, and its starting point was the exploratory, analytical and interpretative study of the literature related to the monitoring and verification of the gender approach in the implementation of the Peace Agreement between the Colombian government

---

<sup>6</sup> ONU Mujeres, '100 medidas que incorporan la perspectiva de género en el Acuerdo de Paz entre el gobierno colombiano y las Farc-EP para terminar el conflicto y construir una paz estable y duradera', (2018). <https://colombia.unwomen.org/es> (accessed July 14, 2021)

<sup>7</sup> Kroc Institute, 'Informe Especial del Instituto Kroc y el acompañamiento internacional, ONU Mujeres, FDIM y Suecia, al seguimiento del enfoque de género en la implementación del Acuerdo Final', (2018). <https://peaceaccords.nd.edu/barometer> (accessed July 14, 2021)

<sup>8</sup> *Género en la Paz* (G-PAZ) is a group made up of 8 civil society organizations with a recognized track record of advocacy and mobilization for the incorporation of a gender perspective in the Peace Agreement and the monitoring of its implementation. It includes Red Nacional de Mujeres, Sisma Mujer, DeJusticia, Comisión Colombiana de Juristas, Humanas Colombia, Women's Link Worldwide, Red Nacional de Mujeres Defensoras and Colombia Diversa.

<sup>9</sup> G-PAZ. 'La Paz Avanza Con Las Mujeres: Observaciones sobre la incorporación del enfoque de género en el Acuerdo de Paz', (Bogotá, 2019). <https://humanas.org.co> (accessed July 14, 2021)

and the FARC-EP. The documentary search favored reports from sources that met one of three following criteria: (1) monitoring and verification mandate conferred by the Peace Agreement itself (Special Women's Instance for the Incorporation of the Gender Approach, Technical Secretariat of the International Verification Component, Kroc Institute, Integrated Information System for the post-conflict); United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia; (2) advocacy for the fulfillment of the Peace Agreement (Gender in PEACE) and (3) direct competence in the implementation of the Agreement in terms of reincorporation of former combatants (Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization).

For the information analysis, three analytical categories were established that revealed the coincidences and differences between the different sources. The first category dealt with the methodology used for the follow-up and verification of the Peace Agreement, the second with gender measures, and the third with implementing these measures regarding social, economic, and political reincorporation.

## **2. Actors and methodologies in the monitoring and verification of the implementation of gender measures in the peace agreement**

The speed of implementation of the Peace Agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP has generated different levels of progress in the gender-related provisions of each of the six points agreed upon. Given the connection between them, if progress is not made simultaneously, undesired effects are produced which, in a transitional context, delay the advancement of women in Colombian society.

The follow-up of the implementation of these measures was arranged through an institutional architecture with instances, mechanisms, methodologies, and national and international actors, in charge of monitoring and reporting on their compliance through periodic thematic reports. Thus, the

National Government, in compliance with its mandate, monitors the 51 gender indicators declared in the Implementation Framework Plan (IFP) of the Peace Agreement through the Integrated Information System for the post-conflict<sup>10</sup>. These indicators are equivalent to 10% of the 501 contained in the IFP of the Agreement and under the coordination of the Government's High Instance of Gender, 18 entities are responsible for complying with them through work plans for the indicators distributed in each of the points of the Peace Agreement.

In this regard, the Special Instance of Women for Gender Mainstreaming indicated that the gender approach is not central because it was reduced to a chapter within the implementation framework plan. It also pointed out that the scope of the management or result indicators contained in the plan does not sufficiently contribute to the reduction of inequalities in women's lives<sup>11</sup>.

The work plans of the High Instance of Gender also received recommendations from the Special Instance of Women regarding the establishment of baselines, the treatment of information with a differential and territorial approach, the definition of resources, and short-term goals<sup>12</sup>.

The Integrated Information System for the post-conflict<sup>13</sup> assessment of the implementation of the gender indicators during the first five years of the agreement is 35%, with points 6, 1 and 4, in order, being those with the highest percentage of progress: 77%, 36% and 35%, respectively. In contrast, it reports less implementation of the indicators contained in the items on victims (13%), political participation (18%), and the end of the armed conflict (25%).

For its part, the Technical Secretariat of the International Verification Component carries out its work using a methodology based on three dimensions that have to do with the fulfillment of the action, the relevance in time, and the correspondence of what has been executed with what has been agreed. This

---

<sup>10</sup> National Planning Department, <https://siipo.dnp.gov.co>

<sup>11</sup> Special Instance of Women for the Incorporation of the Gender Approach, 'Enfoque de género y paz territorial. Balance a tres años de la firme del Acuerdo de Paz' (2019). [www.instanciagenero.org](http://www.instanciagenero.org)

<sup>12</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>13</sup> National Planning Department.

methodology has produced four reports verifying the implementation of the gender approach in the final agreement<sup>14</sup>. As technical support to the International Verification Component, the Kroc Institute monitors the implementation of the Peace Agreement on 708 measures, 578 identified as general and 130 as gender. The Kroc Institute collects monthly qualitative data on the implementation of these 130 provisions and gives each of them a score from zero to three according to its level of implementation as follows: no action (0), minimum (1), intermediate (2), and completed (3). An overview of the three reports issued<sup>15</sup> (2018, 2019, 2020) is shown in Figure 1 with respect to the mainstreaming of gender in the final agreement.

**Figure 1**

*Comparative levels of implementation of general measures vs. gender measures*

<i>Monitoring cut-off date</i>	<i>Measures</i>	<b>Levels of implementation</b>			
		<b>Not started</b>	<b>Minimally</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Completed</b>
2018	General	37%	31%	10%	22%
August	Gender focus	51%	38%	7%	4%
2019	General	26%	34%	15%	25%
November	Gender focus	40%	42%	9%	9%
2020	General	21%	36%	17%	26%
July	Gender focus	32%	45%	14%	9%

<sup>14</sup> CINEP and CERAC. Cuarto informe de verificación de la implementación del enfoque de género en el acuerdo final de paz en Colombia, (2018, 2019, 2020). <https://www.verificacion.cerac.org.co> (accessed July 14, 2021)

<sup>15</sup> Kroc Institute, ‘Informe Especial del Instituto Kroc y el acompañamiento internacional, ONU Mujeres, FDIM y Suecia, al seguimiento del enfoque de género en la implementación del Acuerdo Final’ (2018; 2019; 2020). <https://peaceaccords.nd.edu/barometer> (accessed July 14, 2021)

Source: The author based on data from Barometer Initiative et al. 2018, 2019, 2020

As of July 2020, 32% of the measures were not started yet, compared to 21% of the general measures, which represents a difference of 11% between these two categories. The measures completed represent 26% in the general measures and only 9% regarding gender provisions, which shows a difference of 17% at this level of implementation.

Within this multiplicity of actors linked to the monitoring of the gender provisions in the final agreement, it is necessary to highlight the civil society organizations. Those organizations have played an active role, from their position as citizens, in the design and application monitoring mechanisms related to gender measures. They have used the following criteria: satisfactory, insufficient, and no progress. This evaluation corresponds respectively to the colors green, yellow, and red, or what G-PAZ calls the 'implementation traffic light.' This civil society organization made two reports<sup>16</sup>, in which they followed up 122 measures classified into 5 categories: 1) gender focus, 2) affirmative actions, 3) gender-based violence, 4) participation, and 5) gender instances.

### **3. Gender measures in the process of reincorporation into civilian life**

The reincorporation into civilian life of the ex-FARC-EP population was agreed to be developed 'in all its components, with a differential approach with emphasis on the rights of women,'<sup>17</sup> who represent 24.7% (2,987) of the population in the reincorporation process. Figure 2 shows the distribution by gender of the 12,082 former FARC-EP members in the 32 departments and the Capital District of Bogota. Fifty percent of the women are concentrated in Meta (470), Antioquia (329),

---

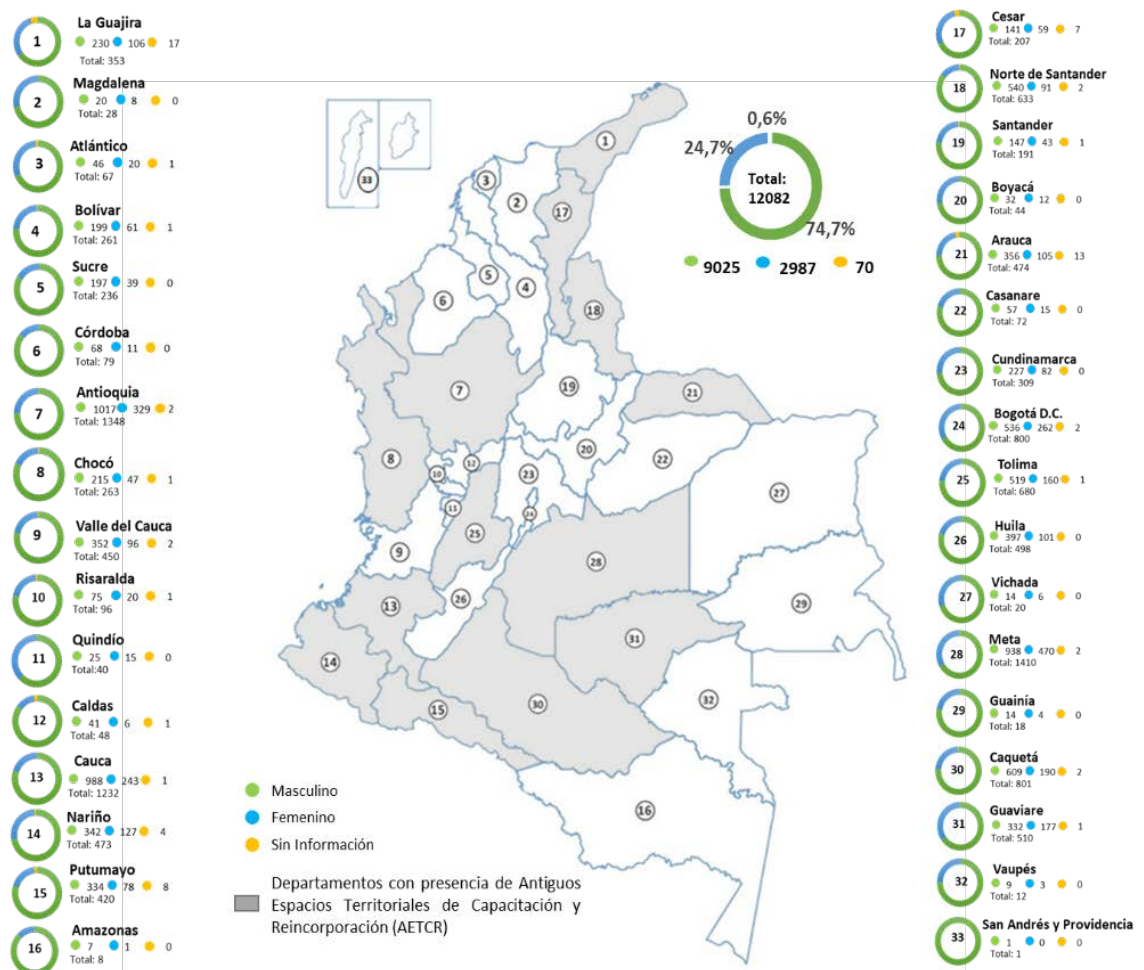
<sup>16</sup> G-PAZ. 'La Paz Avanza Con Las Mujeres: Observaciones Sobre La Incorporación Del Enfoque De Género En El Acuerdo De Paz', (2018, 2019). <https://humanas.org.co> (accessed July 14, 2021)

<sup>17</sup> Mesa de La Habana. "Acuerdo final para la terminación del conflicto y la construcción de una paz estable y duradera", 2016.

Bogota D.C. (262), Cauca (262) and Bogotá D.C. (262). (262), Cauca (243) and Caquetá (190) and the other 50% dispersed throughout the national territory.

**Figure 2**

*Geographic distribution of ex-FARC-EP population by gender*



Source: The author with data provided by the ARN on April 30, 2020 (Personal communication

[OFI20-012271 / IDM 112000] June 1, 2020).



The implementation of the provisions emphasizing women’s rights is led by the gender technical roundtable of the National Reincorporation Council<sup>18</sup>, which is the main mechanism for mainstreaming and monitoring the gender approach in the reincorporation process. The table played an active role in the definition of gender provisions in the reincorporation policy, which gave rise to the national policy for the social and economic reincorporation of former FARC-EP members in 2018.

The strategic axes that make up the policy aim at strengthening inter-institutional coordination, promoting community reincorporation in the territory, access to fundamental rights for ex-combatants and their families, as well as to mechanisms and resources necessary for stabilization and economic projection<sup>19</sup>.

Figure 3 shows a summary of the 18 specific measures incorporated in each of the four axes of the policy. The current main challenge is to obtain the necessary budget for their implementation<sup>20</sup>.

**Figure 3**

*Gender-focused measures in reincorporation policy*

<b>Shifts</b>	<b>Lines of action with a gender perspective</b>
I. Strengthening of the planning processes among stakeholders	1. Training and awareness 2. Differential institutional offer 3. Flexibilization of the offer 4. Follow-up and monitoring 5. Tools for capturing differentiated information

<sup>18</sup> The National Reincorporation Council is composed of two former FARC-EP members and two representatives of the national government.

<sup>19</sup> National Planning Department, ‘Política Nacional para la reincorporación social y económica de exintegrantes de las FARC-EP-Documento CONPES 3931’ (2018).

<sup>20</sup> Kroc Institute, ‘Hacia la implementación del enfoque de género en el Acuerdo final de paz de Colombia: avances, oportunidades y retos’, (2020), 30.

<p>II. Promotion of reincorporation and strengthening of the social fabric, coexistence and reconciliation.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Formulation of programs and projects for community work with a differential, ethnic and gender approach.</li> <li>2. Community Reincorporation Strategy that contributes to coexistence.</li> <li>3. Training for the active citizenship of women in the community and ex-militants.</li> <li>4. Promotion of participation scenarios for the women of the community and ex-militants regarding reconciliation, peaceful coexistence, peace building and non-repetition exercises.</li> <li>5. Participation</li> </ol>
<p>III. Conditions for access to programs for economic stabilization and economic projection</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Economic autonomy</li> <li>2. Reduction of barriers</li> </ol>
<p>IV. Conditions for access and attention to fundamental and integral rights.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Against violence</li> <li>2. Social and economic reincorporation</li> <li>3. Sexual and reproductive rights</li> <li>4. Security</li> <li>5. Census update</li> <li>6. Psychosocial support</li> </ol>

Source: The author based on data from the gender Technical Committee of the National

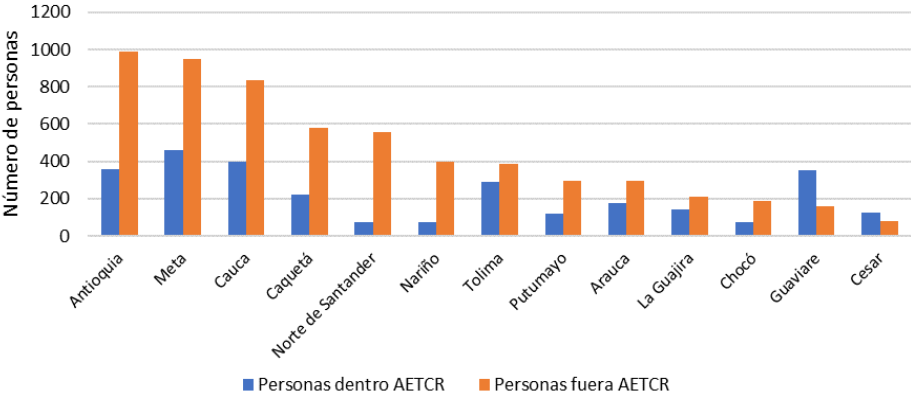
Reincorporation Council. 2019

At the national level, the effective implementation of these measures faces the challenge of obtaining the necessary budget, and at the subnational level, the territorialization of public policy in this area that can respond to the spatial reconfiguration of the reincorporation process, which can be seen in Figures 3 and 4.

The departments shaded in the map concentrate 74.3% of the ex-combatants in their territory, since the 13 territorial spaces for training and reincorporation were established there. From the data provided by the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization, it can be established that 8,804 former FARC-EP combatants are undergoing their reincorporation process in those departments. Figure 4 shows the relationship inside and outside these spaces, 33% remain in them while 67% have left but continue their reincorporation process in the same department.

**Figure 4**

*Ratio of people in the process of reincorporation inside and outside the territorial training and reincorporation spaces*



Source: The author with the information provided by Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization on April 30, 2020 (Personal communication OFI20-012271 / IDM 11200, June 1, 2020)

The department of Guaviare with the Colinas and Charras AETCR and the department of Cesar with the San José de Oriente AETCR are the only ones in which the percentage of people in the process of reincorporation is higher inside the former spaces than outside them, 69.2% and 60.4% respectively. In the opposite direction, this is the case in the other 11 departments, being the department of Norte de Santander (88.5%) with the AETCR of Caño Indio and the department of Nariño (84.1%) with the AETCR of La Variante, those where it is most evident that the highest percentage of PPR are outside the AETCRs.

An important segment of these people living outside the territorial spaces continued their reincorporation process in the so-called New Reincorporation Areas. The recent emergence of these areas and the resistance of Duque's government to recognize them as spaces for collective reincorporation has hindered their specific location and access to the institutional offer. This situation constitutes a territorial conflict because it reduces the possibilities of economic and social reincorporation and produces an unequal geographical development between the collective reincorporation process.

This reconfiguration of the spatiality of reincorporation demands responses from subnational governments and shows that it is a living and dynamic process, in which the women and men who participate in it have also made decisions regarding their permanence in these spaces. Some people were able to freely make this decision according to their personal interests (family reunification, work and academic opportunities), while others were forced to leave these spaces due in part to delays and/or non-compliance in the implementation of the Agreement, particularly with regard to the disbursement and implementation of productive projects. On the other hand, the presence of different armed actors who are disputing territorial control in the regions where the spaces are located, have assassinated, threatened and displaced social leaders, people in the process of reincorporation and their families.

Women ex-combatants in their reincorporation process face discrimination as individuals and as a social group, for having exercised a role that is stereotypically considered masculine and that consequently transgresses the established gender mandates<sup>21</sup>. Consequently, the implementation of the reincorporation route, should contribute to overcome such barriers to increase women's physical, economic and political autonomy as a condition to achieve gender equality<sup>22</sup>. To this end, the FARC's National Commission on Women, Gender and Diversities<sup>23</sup><sup>24</sup> has designed its own comprehensive strategy for women's return to civilian society, in which it proposes lines of action on the social, economic, political and socio-legal dimensions of reincorporation. This strategy also proposes a particular approach to non-violent masculinities and sexual diversity in the reincorporation process.

#### **4. Assessment of the social, economic, and political reincorporation of female ex-combatants: findings and recommendations**

This section gives an account of the reincorporation process of women former FARC-EP members based on the results of the monitoring and verification process that the different actors have carried out on the implementation of the measures with a gender perspective in the Agreement and the analysis carried out by the author of the figures provided by the ARN.

##### ***Social reincorporation***

In the transition from clandestinity to reincorporation into civilian life, the revealed identity of ex-combatant and the social representations associated with it, expose women to situations of

---

<sup>21</sup> Farr, Vanessa, "Gendering demilitarization as a Peacebuilding tool", Bonn: BICC, 2002, 34

<sup>22</sup> María Benavente and Alejandra Valdés, "Políticas públicas para la igualdad de género: un aporte a la autonomía de las mujeres", libros de la CEPAL 130, Santiago de Chile:Naciones Unidas, CEPAL, 2014, 20.

<sup>23</sup> FARC's National Commission on Women, Gender and Diversities , 'Estrategia integral para la reincorporación de las mujeres de las FARC,' (2020).

stigmatization, which cause them to return to the traditional roles of the domestic space and to silence<sup>25</sup>. This silence of former FARC-EP women is exacerbated by the combination of different factors observed by them and by the instances and actors that follow up their process. The situation of insecurity and political violence they are going through, domestic violence, the overload of care work and the low access to their sexual and reproductive health rights<sup>26</sup>.

The Barometer Initiative<sup>27</sup> identified that only 58.5% of women in the reincorporation process have received sexual and reproductive health care and 56.7% use some contraceptive method. This situation is attributed to budgetary limitations of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection for the territorialization of a national directive that orders local health secretariats to prioritize actions and budget for this purpose. On the other hand, the situation of isolation generated by Covid-19 has deepened the inequity in family care responsibilities and the increase in cases of GBV among women in the process of reincorporation<sup>28</sup>.

Gender and Diversity of the Commons Party has promoted local awareness campaigns on gender-based violence among ex-combatants<sup>29</sup>. Using its integral strategy, the Commission has promoted the change of traditional gender concepts and the recognition of women as agents of change<sup>30</sup>. In compliance with this purpose, the reincorporation spaces have formed collectives that work on this matter<sup>31</sup>.

The situation of violence experienced by women leaders, human rights defenders, ex-combatants and their families; in the development of Peace Agreement implementation actions, requires security and

---

<sup>25</sup> FARC's National Commission on Women, Gender and Diversities, 23.

<sup>26</sup> FARC's National Commission on Women, Gender and Diversities, 23.

<sup>27</sup> Kroc Institute, 28.

<sup>28</sup> CINEP and CERAC. Cuarto informe de verificación de la implementación del enfoque de género en el acuerdo final de paz en Colombia, (2018, 2019, 2020). <https://www.verificacion.cerac.org.co> (accessed July 14, 2021)

<sup>29</sup> UN Verification Mission in Colombia, 13.

<sup>30</sup> Kroc Institute. 'Hacia la implementación del enfoque de género', 27.

<sup>31</sup> CINEP and CERAC, 'Cuarto informe'.

protection measures with a gender approach, both individual and collective, within the framework of the public policy aimed at dismantling the criminal structures that threaten the peacebuilding process<sup>32</sup>. The provision of such measures requires that specific attention be paid at the ‘situated knowledge’<sup>33</sup> of women in the territories and in all related instances so that they ‘participate on an equal footing and are fully involved in all initiatives aimed at the maintenance and promotion of peace and security’<sup>34</sup>.

Intra-family violence is another form of gender-based violence that affects women in the reincorporation process, it is, according to Theidon a ‘lasting effect of the militarization of daily life and the formation of militarized masculinity [...]’<sup>35</sup>. Hence, it is very relevant to broaden the gender perspective in the monitoring of women’s reincorporation and to incorporate the analysis of the configuration of masculinities in the context of the armed group<sup>36</sup>. In fact, the involvement and permanence in an armed group modifies the way in which gender relations are understood or reinforces those of their context of origin<sup>37</sup>. The challenge for the psychosocial accompaniment offered by the reincorporation route is that these masculinities nurtured in militarized and patriarchal contexts can transition towards ‘non-violent reconstituted masculinities’<sup>38</sup>. To this end, the implementation of FARC’s gender strategy is relevant.

### ***Economic reincorporation***

---

<sup>32</sup> Kroc Institute. ‘Hacia la implementación del enfoque de género’.

<sup>33</sup> Donna Haraway, *Ciencia, cyborgs y mujeres, la reinvención de la naturaleza*, (Valencia: Ediciones Cátedra, 1995).

<sup>34</sup> UN Security Council, ‘Resolution 1325’ (New York: UN Security Council, 2000).

<sup>35</sup> Kimberly Theidon, ‘Reconstrucción de la masculinidad y reintegración de excombatientes en Colombia’. (Bogotá: Fundación Ideas para la Paz, 2009), 16.

<sup>36</sup> CINEP and CERAC, ‘Cuarto informe’, 25

<sup>37</sup> Jakeline Vargas-Parra, Angela Díaz-Pérez and Priscyll Anctil Avoine, ‘Seguridad, afectos y familias. Obstáculos en el proceso de reintegración de personas desmovilizadas de grupos armados en Santander, Colombia’, *Prospectiva. Revista de Trabajo social e intervención social* 30, (2020), 61.

<sup>38</sup> Fidelma Ashe, ‘From Paramilitaries to Peacemakers: The Gender Dynamics of Community-based Restorative Justice in Northern Ireland’. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 11(1), (2009), 298-314.

The long-term reincorporation route has a component called economic sustainability aimed at income generation through productive projects, promotion of associativity, and inclusion of ex-combatants in the labor market. This component grants one-time economic support equivalent to USD 2.100 to each ex-combatant to undertake a collective, individual, or housing productive project.

Based on the analysis of the figures provided by the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization<sup>39</sup>, it can be estimated that as of May 31, 2020, 45% of the FARC-EP ex-combatants had received this incentive through the disbursement of 1346 productive projects. Ninety-six percent corresponds to individual projects and 4% to collective projects, with 22% and 28% (637) of women, respectively.

The collective projects located in Bogotá and in the 14 departments shown in Figure 5, concentrate the highest participation of women in the departments of Meta (207), Cauca (129), Antioquia (73), Caquetá (57), and the Capital District of Bogotá (36).

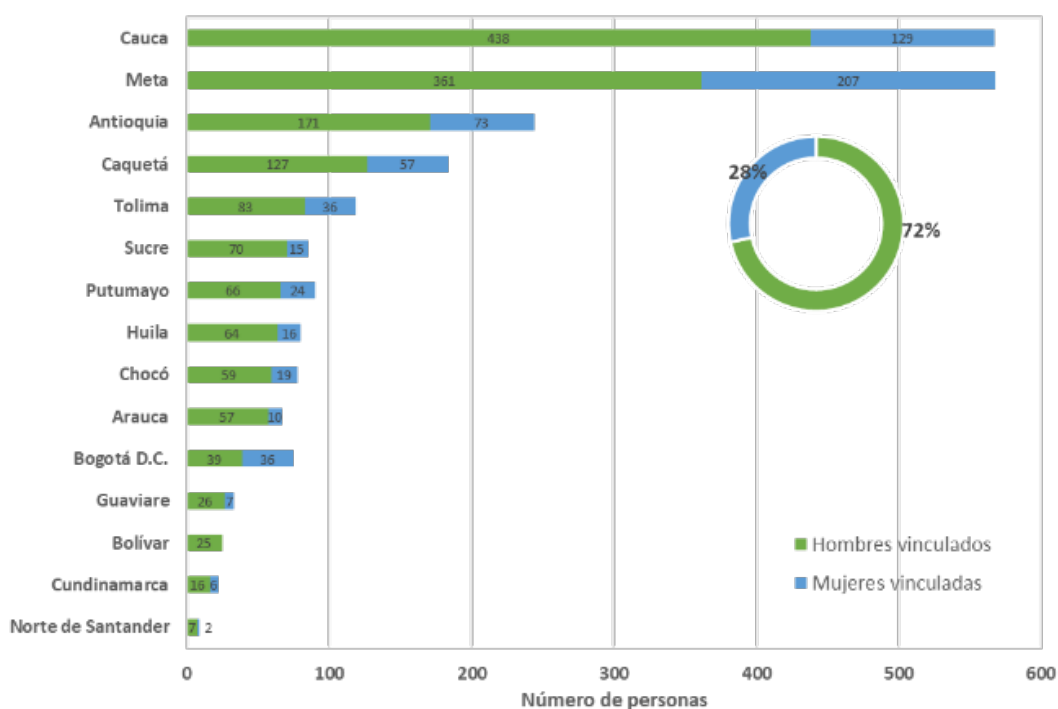
## **Figure 5**

---

<sup>39</sup> Personal communication OFI20-013251 / IDM 11200, June 11, 2020).



*People in the process of reincorporation linked to collective productive projects disaggregated by department and gender*



Source: The author with the information provided by ARN on May 31, 2020 (Personal communication OFI20-013251 / IDM 11200, June 11, 2020)

Fifty-six percent of the projects are related to the livestock sector, 29% to agricultural industry activities (coffee, panela, lemon, banana, avocado, *sacha inchi*, pineapple, among others) and 15% correspond to activities related to the service sector. The productive initiatives of the 637 women linked to these collective projects are mainly concentrated in production lines related to cattle raising, fish farming and agriculture.

CINEP and CERAC, two months after the date shown in Figure 5, reported 793 women linked to collective projects and point out that ‘these figures show the low participation of women in the

productive projects already approved, and the need to continue strengthening strategies to expand participation in decision-making spaces and productive environments'<sup>40</sup>.

Associativity is a strategy that promotes the sustainability of women in the reincorporation process. The Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization<sup>41</sup> reports that 135 associative forms have been formed with 34% of women members. Meanwhile, women who carry out their reincorporation process outside the AETCR have lower probabilities of strengthening their economic autonomy, given that, according to the Special Instance of Women, 'they do not have land that can be used for housing or agricultural production, and they are frequently excluded from the few programs implemented by the State to strengthen their reincorporation'<sup>42</sup>.

The involvement of women in productive projects has the potential to contribute to their economic autonomy, as long as they, on equal terms with men, are able to generate their own income and resources, which necessarily involves the recognition of women's contribution to the economy and the free disposal of their time<sup>43</sup>. In this sense, it is necessary to make visible some differentiated obstacles that women and LGBTIQ+ people have been facing in setting up productive reincorporation projects. These obstacles can be classified as internal and external. The internal ones are associated with limitations in the technical capacity of women to effectively participate, the limited availability of time they have due to the burden related to domestic work and their role as caregivers<sup>44</sup>. Most of the time, this role cannot be delegated to a childcare space: according to the UN Verification Mission in Colombia 'progress in the creation of childcare centers in the AETCRs is slow: three had progress in infrastructure, two in planning and four others presented some limited progress'<sup>45</sup>.

---

<sup>40</sup> CINEP and CERAC, 26.

<sup>41</sup> Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization, 30.

<sup>42</sup> Special Instance of Women, 29.

<sup>43</sup> Observatorio de Igualdad de género, <https://oig.cepal.org/es> (accessed July 14, 2021)

<sup>44</sup> Gender Technical Committee of the National Reincorporation Council.

<sup>45</sup> Misión de Verificación de las Naciones Unidas en Colombia, 14.

The external obstacles have to do with the actors and the institutional offerings associated with the life cycle of the projects. In the design phase, they do not actively and decisively include women and they reproduce traditional gender roles associated with the feminine. In the implementation phase, there is no coordination with local and regional institutions to include the gender approach, which is reflected, for example, in the absence of security measures for some women participants who require them. This, in turn, limits their participation, especially in the commercialization, distribution and marketing of products<sup>46</sup>.

The identification of these obstacles led to the production of a practical guide called *Tools for the inclusion of the gender approach in economic reincorporation processes* aimed at people, entities, agencies and instances that throughout the national territory propose actions focused on people in the process of reincorporation<sup>47</sup>. CINEP and CERAC, in their verification exercise, considered this guide as significant progress because, according to their assessment, the major obstacles are ‘the lack of incidence, impact, and financing to carry out technical advice in the field, and to provide the necessary support required by productive projects to include gender guidelines that benefit women in reincorporation’<sup>48</sup>.

In Colombia, the gap between women and men with respect to their participation in domestic work and unpaid care is 27.5 percentage points (89.5% women vs. 62.0% men)<sup>49</sup>. The activities of the care economy, performed in the context of the household and without remuneration, are those related to ‘maintaining the home, caring for other people in the household or community, and maintaining the paid labor force’<sup>50</sup>.

---

<sup>46</sup> Misión de Verificación de las Naciones Unidas en Colombia.

<sup>47</sup> CINEP and CERAC, 26.

<sup>48</sup> CINEP and CERAC.

<sup>49</sup> ONU Mujeres, DANE and CPEM, 120.

<sup>50</sup> Senate of the Republic of Colombia, 2010.

In the guerrilla context, the care activities were distributed equally between men and women. Now, in the civilian life, the burden of these tasks falls unequally on women<sup>51</sup>. This is an obstacle that limits their active participation in the economic sustainability component of their reincorporation route, for which it is necessary to incorporate in the cycle of productive projects, three strategic actions or minimum standards related to the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid domestic and care work<sup>52</sup> to promote equal access opportunities for both men and women in the reincorporation process.

Equal responsibility for domestic and care work promotes equal opportunities for female ex-combatants to advance in their economic autonomy. To the extent that this responsibility is understood as a 'social and political practice'<sup>53</sup>, life is collectively sustained and the economic sustainability of communities in the reincorporation process is strengthened.

### ***Political reincorporation***

The transition of the FARC-EP from an insurgent armed group to a formal party is a central component of their political reincorporation and 'a necessary condition for the end of the armed conflict, the construction of a stable and lasting peace and, in general, for the strengthening of democracy in Colombia'<sup>54</sup>.

Consequently, the *Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común*<sup>55</sup> party was formed in 2017, with a leadership composed of 111 people, representing the heads of the most voted lists in the elections held during its internal congress. Twenty-three percent of this leadership comprises 26 women, of

---

<sup>51</sup> Gender Technical Committee of the National Reincorporation Council, 61.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 34

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 60

<sup>54</sup> Mesa de La Habana, 68.

<sup>55</sup> In January 2021, the FARC political party changes its name to *Comunes* to counteract the stigmatization associated with the name of the former FARC-EP guerrilla.

which Sandra Ramírez obtained among them the highest number of votes (802) and was ranked 13th out of 111 in descending voting order<sup>56</sup>.

This party leadership replaced the Central High Commands<sup>57</sup>, the highest leadership and command figure of the former FARC-EP guerrilla, which was historically made up of men. It is only in 2015, in the framework of the peace dialogues and on the verge of guerrilla disarmament, that a woman, Francy María Orrego, alias 'Érika Montero', is incorporated into the EMC and subsequently participates in that capacity in the X Conference of the FARC-EP held in the municipality of Yarí<sup>58</sup>. This conference became a milestone for the guerrilla women because of the composition of the board of directors, that attained parity for the first time. It was also at that moment that the guerrilla women had the opportunity to expose their decision to implement the gender approach within the organization and consequently demand their participation in its decision-making bodies<sup>59</sup>.

This commitment continued through the FARC's National Commission on Women, Gender and Diversities when it states that the critical deconstruction of hegemonic masculinities in the exercise of power by male ex-combatants is a condition to promote women's leadership in 'interlocution, spokesperson, advocacy, organization and political practice'<sup>60</sup>.

This position of women in the reincorporation process has evolved from a critical gender perspective, because it challenges the traditional hierarchies of the patriarchal system of the former guerrilla organization, as showed by Mejía Jerez and Antil Avoine<sup>61</sup>. The discourse of the former FARC-EP

---

<sup>56</sup> El Heraldo, '¿Quiénes son los 11 directivos del nuevo partido?', 2017, <https://www.elheraldo.co/> (accessed July 14, 2021)

<sup>57</sup> El Tiempo, 'Márquez y Catatumbo lideran lista de los 111 directivos de las FARC', 2017, <https://www.eltiempo.com> (accessed July 14, 2021)

<sup>58</sup> Verdad Abierta, 'Abortos en las Farc no son forzosos, son deseados', 2016, <https://verdadabierta.com/> (accessed July 14, 2021)

<sup>59</sup> Verdad Abierta, 'Las mujeres queremos espacios de dirección en el Partido de las Farc', 2016, <https://verdadabierta.com/> (accessed July 14, 2021)

<sup>60</sup> Comisión Nacional de Mujer, Género y Diversidades de FARC, 'Estrategia integral para la reincorporación de las mujeres de las FARC', 2020, 23.

<sup>61</sup> Mejía, Yuly and Antil, Priscyll, 'Corporalidades y subjetividades sexuales : el caso de las mujeres ex-combatientes de las guerrillas colombianas', *Revista de Trabajo social e intervención social*, 23, 2017.

women members, in terms of gender equality within the guerrilla ranks, was associated with men and women performing the same logistical and combat tasks without questioning the gender inequality in the authority and command structures. Therefore, the increasing commitment of women ex-guerrillera to the gender perspective – compared to a major focus on the class component during the armed struggle – poses challenges to the political party leadership to reduce gender gaps in the inclusion of women in politics.

Regarding the political reincorporation of ex-FARC-EP women in public corporations, in the 2018 elections, the Commons Party ranked second in the group of parties and movements with the highest number of women candidates for Congress of the Republic<sup>62</sup> (40%). However, its responsibility as a political party to generate conditions of equality in electoral participation between men and women, was not fully complied with because ‘[...] none of its lists were headed by women and neither did it implement alternation’<sup>63</sup>.

The distribution of the ten seats granted by the Peace Agreement to the FARC party – now the Commons– was regulated through Legislative Act 03 of 2017, for the constitution of the two chambers of the Congress of the Republic in 2018. The designation of the five seats for the House of Representatives, took as a criterion to grant them to the heads of the list of the candidacies that the party endorsed in the constituencies of Antioquia, Atlántico, Bogotá, Santander and Valle del Cauca. Consequently, women are not represented there given that all the lists were headed by men<sup>64</sup>.

The five seats in the Senate were designated by taking the first five places of the list presented by the FARC Party, in which the representation of women occupied the second and third places<sup>65</sup>. Thus, two women in the process of reincorporation, Victoria Sandino and Sandra Ramírez reached these seats

---

<sup>62</sup> Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil and UN Women. ‘El camino hacia la paridad en el Congreso colombiano: la representación política de las mujeres después de las elecciones de 2018’, 2019, 23.

<sup>63</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>64</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>65</sup> *Idem.*

and the latter was elected as second vice-president of the Senate for the 2020-2021 legislature. CINEP and CERAC attribute this achievement to the democratic opening made possible by the Peace Agreement, showing that it is ‘the first time that a member of this party holds a leading position in Congress and the first time that a woman ex-combatant is supported by the vote of the congressmen to hold a position in the legislature’<sup>66</sup>.

The exercise of political participation by women in the reincorporation process requires ‘access to security measures, mobility conditions, financial and material resources and logistical conditions for the exercise of collective deliberation, decision making and participation’<sup>67</sup>.

In terms of security, the Peace Agreement stipulated, from a gender perspective, that the leaders and militants of the FARC Party should have special guarantees within the framework of the Integral Security System for the Exercise of Politics<sup>68</sup>. On the one hand, G-PAZ<sup>69</sup> warns that there is no signs of progress in the mainstreaming of the gender approach in the security, protection and psychosocial care protocols for people in the process of reincorporation who are part of the protection program, which weakens the exercise of political participation. On the other hand, it recognizes satisfactory progress in the measures related to the inclusion of women in the National Commission for Security Guarantees and the creation of a new early warning system with a territorial, differential and gender focus.

The strengthening of the social fabric, coexistence and reconciliation are objectives of the community reincorporation<sup>70</sup> process for former FARC-EP members, who are distributed throughout the country. The achievement of these objectives has to do with the reconstruction of the political community,

---

<sup>66</sup> CINEP and CERAC, 29.

<sup>67</sup> Comisión Nacional de Mujer, Género y Diversidades de FARC, 23.

<sup>68</sup> Presidencia de la República, *Decreto 895 de 2017*.

<http://es.presidencia.gov.co/normativa/normativa/DECRETO%20895%20DEL%2029%20DE%20MAYO%20DE%202017.pdf> (accessed July 14, 2021)

<sup>69</sup> G-PAZ, 12.

<sup>70</sup> DNP, ‘Política Nacional para la reincorporación social y económica de exintegrantes de las FARC-EP. Documento CONPES 3931’, 2018, 47.

particularly in rural areas where collective reincorporation spaces are established. Community reincorporation is an opportunity for the activation of the political field and the reactivation and/or emergence of social and community leaderships of women and people with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, silenced by the order imposed by the armed actors.

## **Conclusion**

Gender equality is indissolubly associated with development and stable and lasting peace. The comprehensive implementation of the points of the peace agreement from a gender differential approach, has the potential to reduce the historical gaps between Colombian regions; exacerbated by the warlike action of the different actors of the armed conflict, on the social order, territories and female, male, diverse and dissident bodies.

However, the implementation of gender-specific measures lags behind the general provisions. The gender measures for the reincorporation of ex-combatants have not made significant progress due to the lack of a specific budget among the multiple entities responsible for their implementation and the low level of coordination among territorial entities in the planning of measures to support the reincorporation of ex-combatants.

Planning territorial development in municipalities and departments requires considering the emerging dynamics around the spatial reconfiguration of the reincorporation process. In this sense, the territorialization of the national public policy for the social and economic reincorporation of former FARC-EP members is a necessary condition to considerably increase the speed of implementation, whose time horizon is the year 2026.

In this sense, for this to occur, timely action by government management in the acquisition and allocation of land and the dismantling of criminal structures that threaten the security of this population, their families and host communities is necessary.



Finally, it should be pointed out that the reincorporation process is a transitional device in which the challenges posed are interdependent and, consequently, the construction of solutions to achieve gender equality takes as a starting point that progress occurs when simultaneous action is taken on the dimensions that constitute women's autonomy. The interrelation of autonomies acts as a gear that must be set in motion to guarantee the exercise of the human rights of women in the reincorporation process, in a context of full equality. The results of the follow-up and verification of the implementation of the Peace Agreement in terms of gender, open a scenario for reflection between implementers and women in the reincorporation process, to determine the contribution that such actions make to their autonomy, and whose exercise is imperative to determine the quality of a democracy.

**Disclosure statement**

No conflict of interest

**Funding**

This work was funded by the Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga, Colombia.

**Notes on contributor**

Jakeline Vargas-Parra is a researcher at the Institute of Political Studies of the Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga (Colombia). Her interest is focused on gender regimes in contexts of armed conflict and their relationship with the reintegration process of ex-combatants. She has developed collaborative research projects in alliance with the State agency in charge of reintegrating ex-combatants into civilian life in Colombia, leading to the design and implementation of training courses in gender mainstreaming for practitioners in the psychosocial area.