From gender-responsive provisions to gender-equal peace:

Exploring the implementation of gender provisions in peace agreements through the lens of the Final Agreement to End Armed Conflict and Build Stable and Lasting Peace in Colombia

Summary of the research

What?

A participatory research study on the **implementation of the gender provisions in peace agreements**, **conducted** between September 2021 and October 2024 **in Colombia and globally**, designed to:

1. Better understand the processes and mechanisms that lead to the implementation of gender provisions and *formulate concrete recommendations* for more impactful processes;
2. Map and better understand the roles and contributions of diverse actors at the national and local levels and *highlight good practices and efforts led by the most marginalized;*
3. Nuance the understanding of "success" in peace agreement implementation and peacebuilding more broadly, and *propose new ways to measure* it;
4. Provide a space for diverse actors involved in the implementation of the peace agreement in Colombia to *jointly strategize* and chart an inclusive way forward.

Why?

Peace agreements remain one of the main ways of ending conflicts, yet there is still not enough evidence and discussion around their implementation. There is a gap in knowledge about how agreements get implemented, and what facilitates or hinders implementation. This gap is even more glaring when it comes to gender provisions, which often lag behind the others. Better understanding when and how gender provisions in peace agreements get implemented can help **design better processes and ensure more effective and durable implementation.**

Critically exploring implementation also helps and nuance what is understood as "success" in peace agreement implementation, allowing for **exploring new ways of defining and measuring peace that are meaningful and grounded in local realities.**

Colombia provides a rich case study for better understanding the mechanisms behind peace agreement implementation, both because of exceptionally strong women's movement and the fact that the Final Peace Agreement signed between the Colombian Government and *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejercito Popular* (FARC-EP) includes over 100 provisions related to gender.

How?

The research built on two main methodological pillars:

(1) **Participatory action research in Colombia**, which used co-design techniques to ensure that the main research participants – Colombian women peace activists at the national and local level – have strong ownership of the research, and that the results of the research are useful to their work. The research reached **over 150 participants through in-depth interviews, interactive workshops and roundtable discussions in Bogotá, Cauca and Valle del Cauca**.

(2) **Creation and analysis of a unique dataset containing over 300 gender provisions from over 20 peace agreements signed around the world between 1991 and 2020.** The dataset includes information about the provisions' content, type and implementation level. It was created using a methodology adapted from the Kroc Institute's Peace Agreements Matrix, as described in more detail here: https://falagnieszka.wixsite.com/genderequalpeace/gap-dataset

Key messages from the research

1. **Peace agreements are complex policy documents aimed at creating social change rather than simple contracts between two parties.** My research showed that thinking about agreements as contracts designed to stop the fighting obscures many of the processes, mechanisms and actors involved in the implementation, especially at the local level.
2. **There is more than one way to think about, approach, operationalize and measure peace agreement implementation.** Better understanding how peace agreements contribute to transforming institutions, movements and societal norms is key to assessing their implementation.
3. **When women participate in peace negotiations, the content of peace agreements is significantly different than when they are not at the table** – which in turn affects the entry points for implementation.
4. **New institutions can play an important role in implementing gender provisions in peace agreements – but they do not automatically challenge the underlying gendered orders**. The design of institutions and distribution of funds within them play an important role in sustaining or challenging gender norms.
5. **Feminist and women's movements play a central role in shaping and implementing peace agreements.** Civil society organizing is a key mechanism behind implementation, which – however – is often overlooked and under-resourced.
6. **Restorative justice is a key aspect of peace agreement implementation, and has the potential to transform relations within the society.**
7. **Transforming gender roles and norms around care work is integral to transforming social conditions that make conflict possible** – and can be an important mechanism towards implementing a peace agreement.

From gender provisions to gender-equal peace: discussing key findings of the research

1. Peace agreements as policy documents

My exploration of peace agreements signed in over 20 countries between 1990 and 2020 indicates that it is more useful to think about peace agreements as policy documents aimed at creating social change rather than as contracts between two parties. In particular, most comprehensive peace agreements signed during that period share two core characteristics: (1) their implementation depends on a wide range of diverse official and unofficial actors; and (2) their ultimate goal is to create a social change that will transform the conditions that made war possible in the first place.

However, when it comes to analyzing peace agreements and their implementation, most studies disregard their complexity, and take one of two dominant approaches.

One is to look at whether the peace agreement was successful in stopping violence between the warring parties. I call this a "compliance" approach, since it focuses on whether the main parties that signed the agreement have complied with it at the most basic level. This is the approach most studies that have examined what makes peace agreements work (or not work) have taken (Bekoe, 2003; Maekawa et al., 2019). This approach reduces peace agreements to "contracts" between two warring parties. Based on my analysis, I found that this removes much of the complexity behind the peace agreement negotiation and implementation processes. I argue that viewing **peace agreements as policy documents – whose implementation depends on collaboration of many different actors rather than compliance from the few signatories – is a better approach.**

The second dominant approach is to consider each provision in a peace agreement separately as a task or mandate that has been created and evaluate the level of its implementation. This is an approach taken, for example, by the Peace Agreements Matrix (Joshi & Quinn, 2015) and one that I also adopted in creating my Gender and Peace (GAP) dataset. While **this approach takes the complexity of a peace agreement more seriously, it still obscures the political nature of peace agreements**.

In other words, it ignores the fact that **peace agreement provisions, as they are written, are prone to be re-negotiated and re-interpreted as part of the implementation**. They can become an entry point for advocacy for other policy changes. Thus, peace agreement might contribute to a social change that goes beyond the tasks set out in it. Focusing solely on individual provisions misses this aspect of implementation.

In my research in Colombia the **dynamic nature of provisions and their constant (re-)negotiation was very clear.** Women activists, in particular, have used the provisions of the peace agreement to spur broader changes in the society and the country's law – including changes related to **how "gender-based violence" is perceived and defined, and changes in how social reproduction labor is approached and recognized.** It was clear from the way my research participants approached the peace agreement that it is **more than a contract between the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP, but also more than a "laundry list" of tasks to be ticked off.** It is a political document that constantly evolves as they strategically engage with it in advancing their priorities.

2. New approaches to assessing and measuring implementation

Embracing complexity as one of the defining features of peace agreements also means understanding that there are multiple different ways of understanding peace agreement implementation – and therefore, of measuring it.

Based on my exploration of the 23 comprehensive peace agreements included in the GAP dataset, as well as the in-depth research in Colombia, I identified **4 implementation "logics".** Each logic implies a different set of mechanisms or processes through which a peace agreement is implemented, and different approaches to how the level of the implementation can be evaluated and measured. Within each logic, a societal transformation to create conditions conducive to peace is the key goal of the peace agreement. However, the logics differ with what this "societal transformation" should look like and how it can be achieved, as summarized in the table below.

Importantly, the logics should be thought of as complementary – more than one logic can be (and often is) at play in any given implementation context. Indeed, my research has brought to light several complex ways, in which the logics are interrelated. For example, several of my interviewees in Colombia pointed out that **the compliance logic – which can be assessed through monitoring whether the parties adhere to the non-recurrence clauses – was key to foster trust towards the peace agreement** and therefore allow for the fulfilment of other tasks within it.

In a similar way, while it might be tempting to view **the task-fulfilment logic – measured by monitoring the extent to which individual provisions are fulfilled** – as a purely technical, "box-ticking" exercise, my interviews made it clear that the tasks often had deep political significance and opened the door for broader advocacy by the women's movement. Such was the case, for example, with the **seemingly modest provisions around recognizing and valuing social reproduction labor in the Colombian peace agreement, which were leveraged by feminist activists to advocate for broader programmes and policies** to support social reproductive work. These programmes were the result of *both* the task-fulfilment logic and the movement-building logic working in concert.

Peace agreement implementation logics – a summary

	"Meaning" of peace agreement	Implementation mechanisms	Implementation actors	Possible approaches to measurement
Implementation as compliance	Peace agreements as *contracts* between warring parties Social transformation focused on the transformation of behaviour of these actors	Maintaining a power balance between parties to ensure neither reneges on the ceasefire provision of the agreement Preventing dissidence through reintegration programs	(Armed) signatories to the peace agreement – primarily high-level, official actors	Measurement through observation of the recurrence of conflict and/or levels of violence (including, for example, political violence)
Implementation-as-task fulfilment	Peace agreement as *policy document* Social transformation viewed as a result of the "building blocks" mandated by specific tasks.	Institutionalization and resourcing of individual tasks (Re-)negotiation of the meaning of peace agreement provisions	National and local level bureaucrats	Measurement through task-specific indicators
Implementation-as-institution building	Focus on peace agreement as *dynamic* and peace as a process Focus on transforming dynamics within institutions	Formation of new institutions and reform of existing ones (Re-)negotiation of the meaning of peace agreement provisions through institution design.	National and local bureaucrats Civil society emerges as an important actor with its ability to (re-)shape institutions through advocacy and coalition-building	Measurement through a qualitative analysis of the institutions – including a feminist analysis of gender dynamics within them
Implementation-as-movement building	Focus on peace agreement as *dynamic* and as a tool towards achievement of broader goals of social movements. Social transformation defined through movements' priorities.	Organizing, coalition-building and movement-building. It presumes that the way activists interact with each other - and with official actors - is both shaped by, and shapes, the peace agreement content and implementation.	Movements, civil society actors, including non-organized members of communities, emerge as key actors in implementation, their role and contributions are made more visible	Innovative and participatory approaches to measurement necessary to capture the organizing processes.

3. Where do gender provisions in peace agreements come from – and why does it matter?

My research has shown that when women participate in peace negotiations, the content of peace agreements is significantly different than when they are not at the table. This, in turn, affects the entry points for implementation. A quantitative exploration of the GAP dataset I created has demonstrated that when women are involved in peace negotiations – either as negotiators or as part of a strong women's movement – certain types of provisions are more likely to appear in the final agreement. These included:



Development provisions (including women's economic empowerment, access to land and job opportunities).

These **were 2.5 times more likely to appear in peace agreements where women were included in negotiations**, and twice as likely to appear in peace agreements in contexts where there was a strong women's movement at the time of peace agreement signing.

In interviews in Colombia, more than half or my research participants viewed lack of livelihood opportunities as a sign of failure of the peace agreement. While access to land was viewed as important, it was also important to be able to **use the land effectively** – meaning, being able to farm without facing insecurity or attacks by armed groups and being able to sell the produce.

Women also made sure that the provisions related to development were more comprehensive and addressed structural roots of inequality. As viewed by women activists, **ensuring equitable development is not a technical exercise, but one that requires political changes.** Several of my interviewees referred to the need for a cultural transformation as part the implementation of the development provisions. They cited, for example, **the lack of recognition of care work and support to it** as a major barrier for women to be able to benefit from the agreement, including its development provisions. My research made it clear that including the language of care in the agreement was important to women negotiators because they saw it as part of ensuring "care for women, so that they can develop their own activities, so that they can study" (former FARC-EP fighter and former peace negotiator, April 2024).



Participation provisions (including quota for women's participation, as well as broader commitments to women's participation in all spheres of public life).

These were nearly **three times more likely to appear in peace agreements, where women were involved in the negotiations**.

For women activists in Colombia, promoting women's participation also included the recognition of women as political actors. One of my interviewees highlighted that her organization's priority was to include the language on "women's rights" in the agreement between the government and FARC-EP, as a way to "**recognize women as [political] subjects"** (national woman activist, Bogotá, September 2023).

Moreover, women activists I spoke to highlighted the importance of not only including women in official positions, but also **strengthening and supporting women's movements and civil society.** More than one-third of my interviewees mentioned insufficient support to the women's movement as a key barrier to the

implementation of the Colombian peace agreement. Such understanding of women's participation that encompasses participation through movement building and civil society advocacy is rare in existing peace agreements**.** Only **5% of participation provisions related to strengthening civil society and women's movement – all of them in agreements that resulted from negotiations with women's participation.**

This indicates that when women participate in peace negotiations they can bring not only distinct issues, but also new *meanings* and interpretations of certain concepts to the table: for example, by extending the meaning of "participation" to civil society and women's movements.



Provisions on the creation of new institutions

Both agreements that resulted from peace negotiations with women's participation and those that resulted from negotiations *without* women often called for some kind of an institutional reform. However, what was unique about peace agreements resulting from negotiations *with* women's participation is that they included provisions mandating **creation of new institutions rather than a reform of old ones.** Such provisions appeared ***only*** **in agreements which resulted from processes with women as negotiators.**

This is significant since – as discussed below – creation of new institutions provides an important mechanism for peace agreement implementation and broader societal transformation required to prevent conflict and build sustainable peace.

4. Institutions and peace agreement implementation

My research identified institution-building as one of the key mechanisms through which gender provisions in peace agreements become implemented. New institutions can play an important role in implementing the gender provisions or the "gender perspective" in a peace agreement – but they do not automatically challenge the underlying gendered orders

Implementation of a peace agreement often requires the establishment of new institutions – whether these are explicitly mandated by the agreement or not. **The so-called peace infrastructure – the set of institutions created to implement a peace agreement – can provide a foundation for transforming societal conditions that have fueled both violence and inequality.** For example, the creation of the Office for the Defense of Indigenous Women's Rights as a result of the Accord for a Firm and Lasting Peace (1996) in Guatemala was an important achievement. Similarly, in Colombia, the establishment of a strong institutional framework for the advancement of transitional and restorative justice, partially mandated by the Final Agreement, is perceived as having provided an important framework for victim participation and effective restoration of victims' rights (Meertens & Zambrano, 2010; Weber, 2023).

However, how these institutions work is often shaped by underlying norms and ideas about what is appropriate and what is not. These ideas and norms are often gendered, in the sense that certain behaviors and priorities typically associated with men are viewed as more appropriate, while those associated with women are viewed as inappropriate. Based on my analysis of the data in Colombia, I suggest that in the context of peace agreements, there are **several key ways in which gendered ideas about what is appropriate shape the implementation of peace agreements:**



How are the funds distributed?

Resources are usually scarce, especially in post-conflict contexts. New institutions often come with new budgets. **How these funds are distributed, and which parts of the (new) institutions dedicated to peace are more or less funded can be an important indication of what is considered more or less relevant to peace agreement implementation**. For example, in Colombia, much of the implementation of the gender approach has relied on temporary consultants, often paid for by international partners, with only a very small permanent team dedicated to the implementation of the gender provisions.



How is implementation organized and measured?

While the task of creating indicators and measuring progress is often regarded as a technical exercise, it can in fact be very political, as which indicators are selected and how they are formulated has important implications on what is prioritized in the implementation. **Translating peace agreement commitments into institutional frameworks and indicators can become a process whereby a gender focus is co-opted or lost.** In Colombia, the government developed an implementation plan (*Plan Marco Implementation*, PMI) for the Final Peace Agreement. The plan initially included 51 indicators related to the gender approach – corresponding to less than a half of the 130 gender provisions identified by the civil society. The reduction is significant because it means certain aspects of the agreement – such as the collective reparations – do not include a gender focus in the PMI, despite the fact that they

originally included one in the Final Agreement (GPAZ, 2021, p. 63). Moreover, as a result of the reduction, only four of the PMI indicators mention LGBTQI+ persons (GPAZ, 2023, p. 25) – although their specific rights are highlighted in 18 provisions across the agreement.



How are the implementation processes designed and executed?

Participatory design of institutions is an important aspect of peace agreement implementation. Many of my interviewees in Colombia recognized the creation of avenues for victim participation in restorative justice processes – including discussions around reparations – as part of the reparatory process in itself. While the participatory process has many flaws, it has also resulted in some positive outcomes.

For example, the possibility to provide inputs into the reports of the Colombian Truth Commission has also provided opportunities for women and feminist activists to (re-)negotiate gender norms within their own (informal or semi-formal) institutions and organizations. An example of this is the report prepared for the Truth Commission by the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (Consejo Regional Indigena del Cauca, CRIC). CRIC – an institution that was established in 1971 and effectively serves as a self-government structure of the Indigenous peoples living in the Cauca department. The organization compiled a report, which highlighted the ways in which the conflict affected the Indigenous population in Cauca, and submitted it to the Truth Commission. However, as one of my interviewees related, the initial report included no gender focus, and no information about how Indigenous women have been affected specifically. This was soon rectified as the women of CRIC organized themselves, and lobbied with their male colleagues to submit a second, more gender-sensitive version of the report. This example highlights how participatory processes can be shaped and replicate gender norms and blind spots, but also how they can become an opportunity for bringing gender issues and women's priorities to the fore.

A procedural change in itself is not sufficient to meaningfully implement gender provisions in a peace agreement and spark a social transformation necessary to address the gendered roots of conflict. However, it is also not meaningless, as it can constitute an entry point for feminist to push for a better integration of their agenda through engaging and negotiating with state bureaucrats.

In designing participatory processes it is also crucial to reflect *who* they are designed for – what languages are accepted or made available during consultations, whether childcare is provided or not, how the information about the processes is disseminated and whether and how those who participate are compensated for the time they have put in (and potential work or income they had to forego).

5. Women's movements as key implementation drivers

Feminist and women's movements play a central role in shaping and implementing peace agreements. Civil society organizing is a key mechanism behind implementation, which – however – is often overlooked and under-resourced.

This is reflected, among other things, in the scarcity of funds available for feminist organizing. Globally, funding for gender equality, in particular in conflict-affected contexts, has been woefully scarce for decades, despite advocacy by feminist activists and organizations around the world (Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) et al., 2022). The same is true in the context of Colombia, where, as one of my interviewees put it, "It is very difficult to get resources for work of movement-building, meeting, circles of discussion, sanación [spiritual healing], because they do not have tangible results or impacts. Donors do not like this" (local woman peace activist in Cauca, Colombia).

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>
> - Woman activist, Cauca, Colombia

Meanwhile, my analysis of trends in the implementation of gender provisions in peace agreements around the world has shown that the **strength of the women's movements was one of the main factors associated with higher implementation levels of gender provisions in an agreement.** My research in Colombia documented key mechanisms through which women's organizing and feminist movement-building can contribute to the implementation of gender provisions in the peace agreement, including:

1. Movement-building as healing

The signing of the Final Agreement in Colombia provided a new impetus for the creation of "safe spaces" led by feminist and women's movements. In addition to helping create new alliances, these have sometimes also served as healing spaces for those who have been affected by conflict. As put by a research participant from the Indigenous women's movement:

> *These spaces where we can talk, where we can speak to each other, the spaces for women from different territories to meet have been very important. (…) We have brought together the knowledge and wisdom of the women, we have come together to talk about these issues [of the peace agreement] and to act. We have taught women about the laws, their rights, so that they have knowledge and can act.* (Indigenous woman during an interactive workshop held in Cauca, April 2024)

Several of my interviewees have also referred to women leading spaces of "sanación", or spiritual healing, often by using arts and creative methods, and relying on their own resources, with little external funding.

The healing spaces have also been used to heal relationships within the society, rebuilding bridges that have often been weakened or destroyed by the violence. For example, *Arcos Diversos* has organized spaces they refer to as Interethnic Rural Queer Schools (*Escuela Rural Marica Interetnica)*. They describe them as spaces "to work together with other Afro-Colombian and Indigenous LGBTQI+ leaders, to talk about how we are marginalized within our ethnicities" (queer activists, Cauca, April 2024). These types of spaces fulfil two interrelated purposes. On the one hand, they become a safe space for people coming from communities that have been characterized by tensions to forge relationships based on shared values

and experiences. On the other hand, they also allow to heal some of the individual wounds related to the different types of violence faced by LGBTQI+ people by sharing experiences and building solidarity.

2. Movement-building as meaning-making

Another powerful mechanism through which movement-building can contribute to implementation is also through the *creation and consolidation of different meanings* of what "counts" as the implementation of a peace agreement. In the context of Colombia, continued feminist and women's advocacy has been instrumental in ensuring that the gender approach within the peace agreement remains relevant and that its implementation reflects the needs and realities of the communities. A key example of this impact was the opening of the "macro-case 11" within Colombia's transitional justice court, which explicitly recognizes sexual and gender-based violence as systematic during the conflict. The macro-case has allowed the court to dedicate greater attention and resources to the treatment of sexual and gender-based violence cases.

Importantly, the macro-case refers to "gender-based violence, including sexual and reproductive violence and crimes committed due to prejudice" (Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz (JEP), 2023, translated from Spanish by author). The recognition of the "violence of prejudice" helped re-shape which types of violence are considered relevant and addressed within the framework of the peace agreement implementation and beyond. As one of my interviewees highlighted:

> *The violence of prejudice is different than hate crime. It is something that is not very present in the judicial practice in Colombia. [Adopting the macro-case] is an advance not only for transitional justice, but more broadly for LGBTQI+ persons in the country. It is something very important and it is more real because of the inclusion of this macro-case.* (online interview with a woman activist and lawyer from Bogotá, February 2024)

In order to push for a broader understanding of violence within the transitional justice processes, feminist, women's and LGBTQI+ organizations have established a "Five Keys Alliance" (Alianza Cinco Claves). The alliance has published numerous publications documenting the different dimensions of violence against women and LGBTQI+ persons, especially during conflict, including reproductive violence and the violence of prejudice. It has also delivered an official letter to the transitional justice court, calling for the opening of a "macro-case" on sexual violence and the recognition of the wide range of violences women and LGBTQI+ persons experienced during the conflict with the FARC-EP (ColombiaDiversa, 2020). **This demonstrates the amount of effort and strategic organizing behind seemingly legalistic and institutional changes, but also the power of organizing and movement-building to change meanings** and, indeed, the very pathways of implementation.

3. Movement-building as pathway to norm localization

The third mechanism through which movement-building contributes to peace agreement implementation is by **increasing the visibility and legitimacy of feminist actors, which – in turn – enables them to have a stronger influence on local policies and institutions**, including those responsible for peace agreement implementation.

This mechanism is perhaps the least immediate of all three discussed in this section. Indeed, despite feminist and women's movement continued engagement with local authorities, many of those I interviewed expressed a disillusionment and a sense of tiredness due to the slowness of the change in the institutions. Moreover, local authorities and their lack of understanding of both gender and the peace

agreement and its provisions has often been pointed out as the key "bottleneck" in the implementation of the peace agreement. As put by one of my interviewees:

> *When you try to talk to [local] authorities about the peace agreement… They just don't know it. If we ask for a specific change, even if we show them the specific point from the peace agreement, they will tell us that there are no resources for it* (interview with a queer activist, Cauca, April 2024).

However, in the context of Cauca, the continued engagement with local authorities – beginning with the Localization of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and ending with advocacy around the peace agreement and its integration into Local Development Plans – has had important impacts:

- First, activists have been successful in **achieving some tangible changes through their advocacy**, both prior to, and following, the adoption of the Final Agreement. As a result of the feminist work to implement the resolution, some important changes took place in the department. This included the establishment of a Gender Patrol (*patrulla de género*) within the Metropolitan Police department in the Popayan municipality, the creation of Women's Secretariat in Cauca, as well as the integration of language about preventing gender-based violence into the 2012-2015 Local Development Plan for the department (Fal-Dutra Santos et al., Forthcoming).
- Second, **feminist and women's organizations in Cauca have been able to use their expertise in localizing complex concepts related to gender equality and their pre-existing relationship with local authorities to advance the understanding and acceptance for the peace agreement** and the gender approach contained within it. A key example that emerged from my research was the inclusion of feminist and women's movements' priorities in the Local Development Plans. There was a clear shift towards more inclusive and clearer institutional channels for women's participation in the drafting process between 2019 and 2024. While in 2019 women had to proactively "knock on the door" of the local authorities to have their priorities heard, in 2024 I witnessed several instances of the local authorities reaching out to feminist and women activists to solicit their inputs. While the process itself was far from perfect, several of the feminist and women's organizations I met with told me they were able to see drafts of the departmental and/or municipal Local Development Plans and make concrete suggestions to them – with most believing that their changes will be integrated.

  It remains to be seen to what extent the Local Development Plans in Cauca and Valle del Cauca will reflect the priorities of the feminist and women's movement – and the gender approach of the peace agreement. However, the very creation of new spaces, in which feminist and women activists can interact with local authorities and advance their agenda and their understanding(s) of the peace agreement and its gender approach is an important achievement, and an important mechanism that can eventually lead to more effective implementation of the peace agreement.

6. Implementation as restoration

Restorative justice emerged as a key aspect of gender-responsive peace agreement implementation in my research. In particular, my research in Colombia has shown that transitional justice processes have the potential to not only recognize the past, but also to transform the future and re-shape relations within the society. However, this process is neither straightforward nor automatic. It requires careful consideration, planning and context-specific adaptation.

While individual reparations were considered important by many of those I spoke to – and, indeed, many of them felt the need to improve the efficiency of the distribution of these reparations – there was also a sense that **individual reparations in themselves are not enough to transform the society and restore the rights to the victims. They need to be complemented by broader approaches to reparations that aim at healing entire communities.**

There are several ways, in which collective reparations could be operationalized:

1. Investment in communities to more effectively restore the rights of the victims

As one interviewee pointed out, collective reparations could include providing "roads to access places, land titles for women and assignment of land or buildings to the community itself, establishing schools and some community training centres, also health centres and childcare." In other words, creating an environment in which the community – and all those within it – can thrive.

2. Investment in local organizing and movement-building

In line with the finding above, having safe spaces for coming together, (re-)building relationships and discussing priorities was an important aspect of peacebuilding for most of my interviewees, and also an important mechanism for implementing the peace agreement's gender provisions. Creating such spaces could be regarded as a form of collective reparation. As one interviewee from a local community in Northern Cauca noted, "We don't have a place to do our trainings, to meet as an association. Creating a 'Casa de la Mujer', a space where we could meet, this would be a form of reparations for us."

3. Ensuring an inclusive process

For some of my interviewees, the process of arriving at the reparations was equally meaningful as the reparation itself. As noted above, a move towards more inclusive and participatory processes was a positive development in the context of Colombia. However, lack of long-term planning, insufficient capacity and often unclear pathways for participation, have made it difficult to realize the full potential or participatory initiatives. Several of my interviewees highlighted that victim participation is one of the pre-requisites of meaningful reparations, since otherwise: "a road is fixed and this is considered as reparation, but it is not meaningful [to the victims]". At the same time, creating processes that are overly burdensome and time-consuming can strip the reparation process from its restorative potential. As one interviewee highlighted: "Reparation is not a thing, it is a process. If getting to a result, such as having a school in the community, means five years of meetings, then this is not very reparatory."

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- Woman activist, Bogotá

4. Centering truth-telling and recognition

The symbolic reparation of recognizing the truth about the conflict and violence inflicted and suffered during it is often seen as separate from material reparations. However, the research in Colombia demonstrates that they are closely interlinked and that having their victimhood recognized might be necessary for individuals and communities to effectively use material reparations to restore their livelihoods. This was expressed strongly by several of my interviewees. As an activist from Bogotá, stated:

To me, I think the success of this agreement for women would have to be about truth.

- Woman activist, Bogotá

> *"To me, I think the success of this agreement for women would have to be about truth. Even if we have half-truths, or part of the truth, because it depends on who tells it to you, but at least we have some version or some versions of the truth and that is important to make the new generations aware that this is a key issue in Colombia and that in Colombia we have normalized violence and conflict."*

According to the interviewee, acknowledging and recognizing the truth about the conflict, recognizing the victimhood of not only individuals, but entire communities, can serve as a step towards de-normalizing violence, which, in turn, is necessary for the victims to fully reclaim their rights and restore their livelihoods.

The experience of Colombia thus, shows that **transitional justice has the potential to transform some of the structural root causes of violence.** However, in order to achieve this, it has to be approached in a way that is holistic – meaning, encompassing different elements such as truth-telling, individual and collective reparations – and designed in a way that ensures meaningful and equitable participation of the victims.

7. Recognizing care work as a pathway to implementation

Transforming gender roles and norms around care work is integral to transforming social conditions that make conflict possible – and can be an important mechanism towards implementing a peace agreement.

What does "care work" mean in the context of peace agreement implementation?

In most existing analyses, it has been defined primarily through trust-building practices that lead to creating a culture of peace and mutual support amongst groups that are otherwise in conflict (Blomqvist et al., 2021; Rodríguez Triana, 2024; Vaittinen et al., 2019; Väyrynen, 2010). While this is an important facet of care, it does not capture other forms of everyday labour that people – primarily women – engage with both during and after conflict and in times of peace: taking care of children and the elderly, providing food for families and workers, for example on farms, sustaining family life and community traditions, and maintaining public spaces. All of these happen behind the scenes, often in the private realm of the home, but are necessary to (re-)building a peaceful society after a war.

Colombia provides a unique case study for the potential of policies linked to care to transform a society post-conflict. It is the only comprehensive peace agreement that includes an explicit recognition of the importance of women's social reproductive work in sustaining the society and the country's economy. In my interviews with Colombian women activists, they have offered d**ifferent interpretations of what care work looks like**, how it contributes to peace agreement implementation, and how it can best be supported. Some of these included:



Care for children and the elderly – when not enough systematic, state support is available for this kind of work, it makes it more difficult for women to participate in public life. This type of work is also often **heavily gendered and racialized:** with the heaviest brunt falling of women, in particular women from Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities, who are also **more likely to work as informal workers providing childcare and housekeeping support**, which is often underpaid (International Labour Organization, 2024).

However, Colombian women also saw taking care of children as an important pathway to peace: many women-led associations provided activities for children not only to support their mothers who are usually the primary caretakers, but also to **educate the children and "teach them how to use their free time"** in a non-violent and constructive manner. One association – Manuelitas, based in the capital city of Cauca, Popayan – has also seen their efforts to provide care and activities for children as a trust-building activities. Since former FARC combatants and women from the local community were leaving their kids together, this has helped to (re-)build trust and forge new relationships between them.



Care as seeking safety – many of my interviewees viewed their efforts to keep their families safe, including through moving away from their home areas, even at great personal cost, as part of their care responsibilities. Most of my interviewees also saw the **care for their children and families as a key motivation behind their peacebuilding work.**



Care as preserving cultural and spiritual heritage – when speaking about their peacebuilding work and their expectations for the implementation of the peace agreement, many of my interviewees underscored the **importance of restoring or repairing community life, traditions and cultural heritage.** The work of sustaining this heritage – for example by cultivating memories of the customs and traditions, even if they cannot be performed due to the insecurity – often falls on women.



Taking care of caretakers – self-care, but also providing opportunities for caretakers (who, in the Colombian society, are primarily women) was an important part of how my interviewees viewed care work's potential to contribute to peacebuilding. They have underscored that **recognizing and supporting care labour must also include a provision of opportunities for personal and professional development and mental and spiritual self-care for the carers.**

The above examples demonstrate that there are **multiple ways in which the labour of care can contribute to the implementation of a peace agreement.** Conversely, Colombia also provides an example of how a peace agreement can led to better recognition, and support, for the often invisible care labour.

Colombia has made some important progress towards better recognizing and supporting care work. In Bogotá, an initiative referred to as "Care Blocks" (*manzanas del cuidado*) has provided additional child and elderly care support (in the form of daycare and activities for children, elderly and people with disabilities), as well as self-care, psychosocial support, trainings and job search support for the caregivers. The initiative was coupled with cultural transformation activities aimed at men and the broader society to challenge some perceptions around care work and encourage its more equitable distribution. The National Care Policy, adopted in 2023, seeks to replicate some of the initiative's elements at the national level. However, there is no clarity on how it will be operationalized, especially in rural and remote areas.

However, what also clearly emerged from the research is that, **beyond only creating more care support structure, recognizing care work is a political act**. It requires challenging entrenched gender norms and ideas about who the carers are (by distributing care burden more equally, but also recognizing the role of communities and women's collectives in providing care labour), what and who deserves being cared for (by highlighting the needs of the carers themselves and the importance of caring for the spiritual and cultural heritage as part of social reproductive work), and what effectively supporting care would mean (by highlighting the need to provide carers with opportunities to secure dignified livelihoods, rather than only childcare support). While practical questions about implementation remain, including the mention of social reproduction in the Colombian Final Agreement has opened the door for initiating such discussions – an important consideration for the design and drafting of future peace agreements.

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