

# Building an Inclusive, Sustainable Peace with Women's Leadership

**MADRE urges the US to support efforts to include women from frontline communities most marginalized by war and conflict in peace building, negotiations and implementation around the world.**

- Data shows that broadened peace processes—that are inclusive of women and civil society groups—are 35% more likely to last at least 15 years. However, women represent only 4% of major peace accord signatories in the last 20 years.
- US law, including the Women, Peace and Security Act of 2017, requires a government-wide strategy to improve the meaningful participation of women in peace and security processes. The Trump Administration has not yet released this Congressionally-mandated strategy, delaying crucial action.

**Where women leaders have been included in peace-building, those peace processes have gained broader legitimacy, addressed the root causes of conflict, and met community needs including transitional justice that set the stage for a long-term, sustainable peace.**

## **Women peacebuilders in action:**

- Colombia: Women comprised one-third of the total number of negotiators and played an essential role in talks that led to a peace agreement between the Colombian government and the rebel FARC. Many of the Peace Accord's key protections and advancements for the rights of Afro-Colombian and

Indigenous Peoples and for women were only secured after a concerted struggle by civil society organizations representing these groups.

- Korean peninsula: The activism of Women Cross DMZ, a women's peace network, has revitalized the movement to end the Korean War. Women activists organized Peace Walks across the demilitarized zone, amplified the calls of women peace activists on the Peninsula, held international symposiums, and met with senior officials in the US, South Korea, North Korea and Canada. Their activism has elevated the priorities raised by women at the grassroots – including the impact of sanctions on North Korean civilians, family reunification, denuclearization and demilitarization.
- Syria: The Syrian women's movement is working to include more women in negotiating committees. Women have played a critical role in protecting communities through years of war and ensuring the provision of vital services for the most vulnerable people. Women negotiated local ceasefires, brokered prisoner releases, and set up aid corridors in areas beyond the reach of international agencies. Women have elevated their leadership during the war and have an important role to play in creating peace and lasting security.
- Iraq: The Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI) documents gender-based crimes committed by ISIS and other actors in the context of the recent conflict, ensuring that vital evidence is not lost and survivors are able to access redress and justice mechanisms as well as needed services.

Since January 2018, OWFI has documented over 400 human rights violations committed by armed actors, including cases of rape, slavery, murder, torture and other heinous crimes. This evidence is crucial to create a robust historical record of the conflict in Iraq that memorializes women's experiences of the conflict, raises awareness about abuses, promotes healing and helps survivors seek accountability, justice and reparations.

## Case Study: Colombia

### Background:

In 2016, the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) signed a landmark peace agreement. Afro-Colombian women's rights advocates were at the forefront of peace movements that led to the signing this accord.

MADRE's partner in Colombia, **Proceso de Comunidades Negras (PCN)**, is a national network of more than 120 Afro-descendant organizations and activists. Due to the advocacy of organizations like PCN, an Ethnic Chapter in the Peace Accord features provisions furthering the collective and gender-based rights of Afro-Colombian Peoples.

Now, these local women's rights advocates continue to work for the agreement's implementation and to build conditions for meaningful peace. They also mobilize to end conflict-related violence, including sexual and gender-based violence.

### Recommendations:

- **Direct increased funding and aid to inclusive implementation of the peace accord – not destructive policies focused on the drug war or security assistance**

- The US has given over \$10 billion in aid to Colombia since 2000, but about 71% has been

security assistance and funding to fight the war against drugs, specifically the eradication of coca. But this US security assistance flowed to military forces that have killed more than 3,400 civilians with relative impunity, perpetrated forced disappearances, and fueled violence against human rights defenders.

- Last year, President Trump sought to cut the aid budget to Colombia. However, the end of the armed conflict means that US aid is needed more than ever to cement gains in peace and security. Colombia lags behind on implementation of the Ethnic Chapter and implementation of the Accord's gender provisions, in part due to funding constraints.

- Increased coca cultivation has heightened calls for a return to forced eradication programs. However, coca cultivation will only be reduced by meaningful investment in the inclusion of communities, infrastructure, peace and justice, not by a renewal of failed policies that only fuel conflict.

- *The US should* reallocate funding away from security assistance or the drug war, into:

- Implementation of the Peace Accord, particularly the Ethnic Chapter of the Peace Accord and its gender provisions.

- Support for the transitional justice and truth and reconciliation process, including efforts to document conflict-based sexual and gender-based violence crimes and seek justice, accountability, and basic services for survivors.

- Investment in basic health, education, and justice services for Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities, particularly in rural and under-resourced areas.

- Funding for grassroots women's and Afro-Colombian groups to elevate their voice in peace implementation.

○ We request that representatives call for a hearing to investigate the status of current funding to Colombia, where it is going, and whether these issues are being meaningfully prioritized.

● **Urge Colombia to support full and meaningful participation of Afro-Colombian women and girls in the peace process**

○ As of May 2018, 54% of the 13 dispositions of the Ethnic Chapter had not been implemented, with the remaining only partially or minimally implemented. For example, the government has failed to adequately consult Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities on land reform and developmental programs.

○ Implementation of the gender provisions lags behind implementation of other provisions.

○ The US should urge Colombia to implement the Ethnic Chapter of the Peace Accord as well as its gender provisions – and to allocate sufficient funding to do so.

● **Urge Colombia to address ongoing security concerns affecting Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities**

○ Indigenous and Afro-Colombian people face continued conflict, displacement, and a heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence due to an increase in armed paramilitary, organized crime and Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN) guerrilla groups who are filling the power vacuum.

○ Violence and threats against human rights defenders has escalated – with up to 226 social leaders assassinated in 2018. Afro-descendant and Indigenous leaders are disproportionately impacted.

○ The leadership of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women is crucial, but the government has failed to adequately collaborate with these communities on local self-protection.

○ *The US should*

■ Clearly state that these killings must stop.

■ Urge the Colombian government to include and consult with Afro-descendant organizations in implementing measures required by the Peace Accord to develop collective and preventive security for communities, including new plans for protecting human rights defenders.

■ Publicly uplift the leadership of Colombia's women-led civil society organizations.

■ Support the ELN peace process and urge the Colombian government to address the growth of other paramilitary groups.

● **Ensure provision of services and transitional justice processes for victims of sexual and gender-based violence**

○ Afro-descendant communities have been disproportionately impacted by conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, and victims lack adequate access to justice and services. Data on this violence is not comprehensive or disaggregated by race or ethnicity.

○ MADRE is supporting PCN to establish the first-ever *Observatory* to gather testimonies and document conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence in Afro-Colombian communities, and help survivors seek justice and healing. The creation of a robust historical record will strengthen the process of seeking accountability and reparations to ensure a just and sustainable peace.

○ MADRE also supports Taller de Vida (TdV) to build peaceful communities in the aftermath of conflict – including by providing young survivors of war and displacement with theater, art and somatic therapy, life-skills training, safety and security training, and community organizing.

○ *The US should*

- Urge the Colombian government to prioritize the transitional justice process.

- Provide funding to Afro-Colombian women's groups for transitional justice documentation, healing, and empowerment programming.

- Provide increased funding for basic justice and health services for survivors.

- **The US must not use Colombia as a launching point for intervention in Venezuela**

- The US must allow a diplomatic solution to move forward.

- *We request that Representatives oppose* military intervention, which will only destabilize the region, slow down the Colombian peace process, and cause unnecessary suffering in both Colombia and Venezuela.