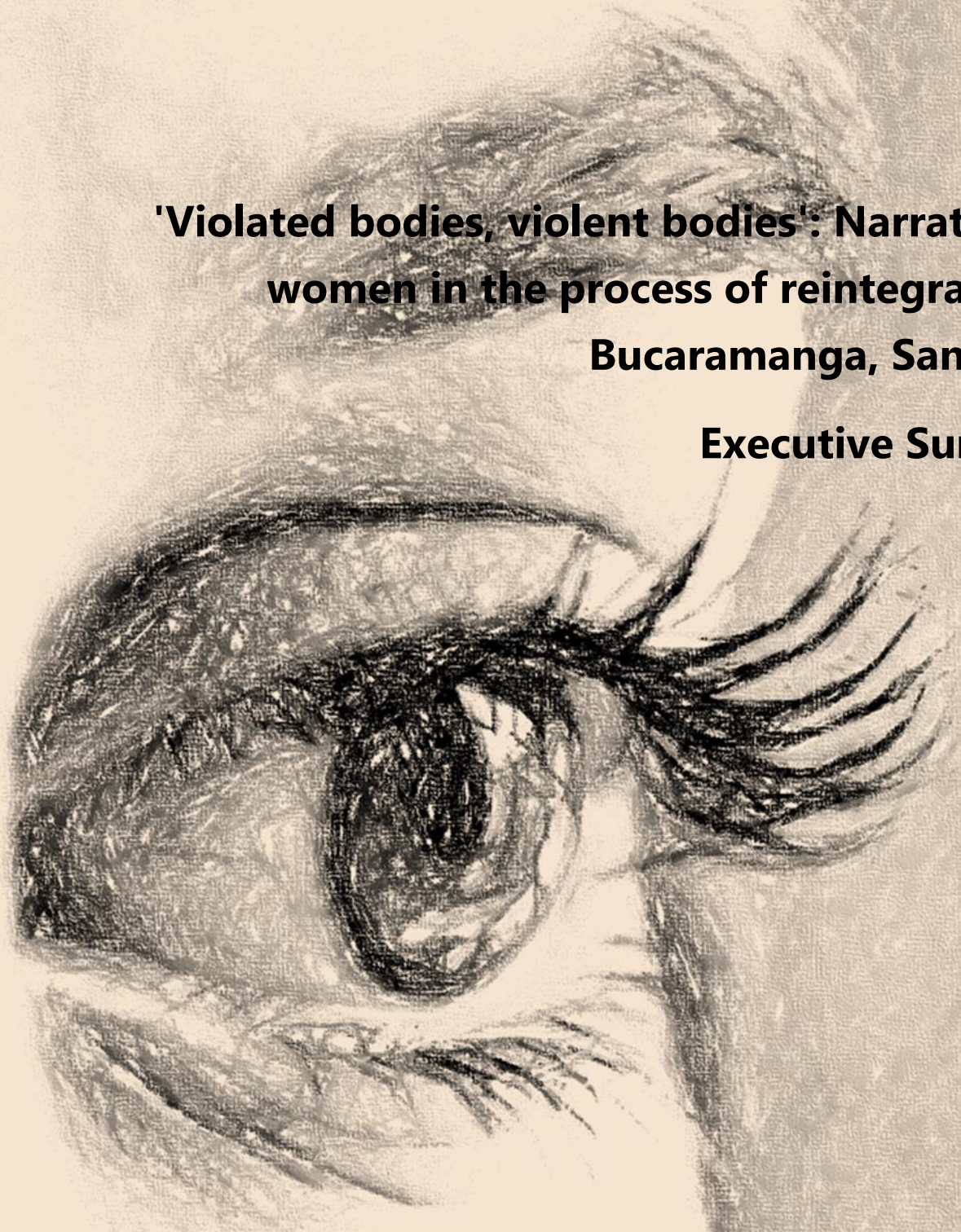
'Violated bodies, violent bodies': Narratives of women in the process of reintegration in Bucaramanga, Santander

Executive Summary



DES CONTA MINA



DESCONTAMINA

Author
Priscyll Anctil Avoine
Researcher and Gender Consultant
Corporación Descontamina
priscyll.anctil@descontamina.org

Designer
Yira Isabel Miranda Montero
Social Worker and Researcher
Corporación Descontamina
yira.miranda@descontamina.org

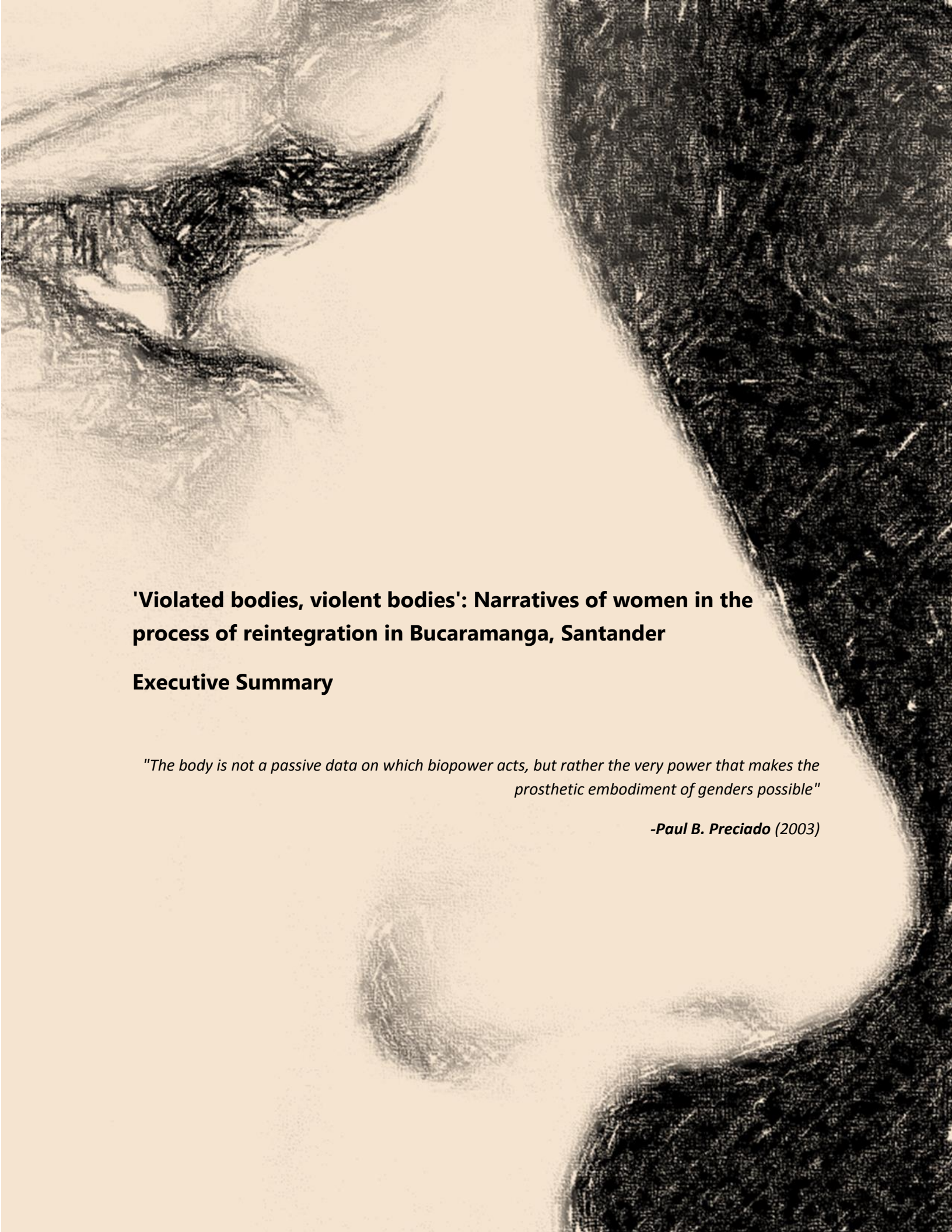
Photographs
©Juan Sebastián Flórez
©Pixabay.com

©Editorial

Corporación Descontamina

Calle 70 A No. 06-03
Bogotá, Colombia

www.descontamina.org



'Violated bodies, violent bodies': Narratives of women in the process of reintegration in Bucaramanga, Santander

Executive Summary

"The body is not a passive data on which biopower acts, but rather the very power that makes the prosthetic embodiment of genders possible"

***-Paul B. Preciado** (2003)*

The body.

We cannot free ourselves from our body. As Merleau-Ponty (1962) claims, the body is our vehicle in this world, the place where we feel and resent, the site of the political struggle[1]. It is the place and the site of this research; and, in this site, how is the relationship between victims and perpetrators of violence represented? Is it possible to make an historical and embodied account of it? Can we understand the role of women in the Colombian armed conflict through an embodied understanding of their experiences? Can the body represent a scenario of resistance – and resilience – to reflect on the various political possibilities of women in the process of reintegration? Can the body be a powerful instrument of socio-political reconciliation? Inspired by the Philosophy of Embodiment, Gender Studies and Peace and Nonviolent Studies, I propose to reflect on these questions drawing upon the narratives of 15 women in the process of reintegration (WPR) in the metropolitan area of Bucaramanga, in the department of Santander, Colombia.

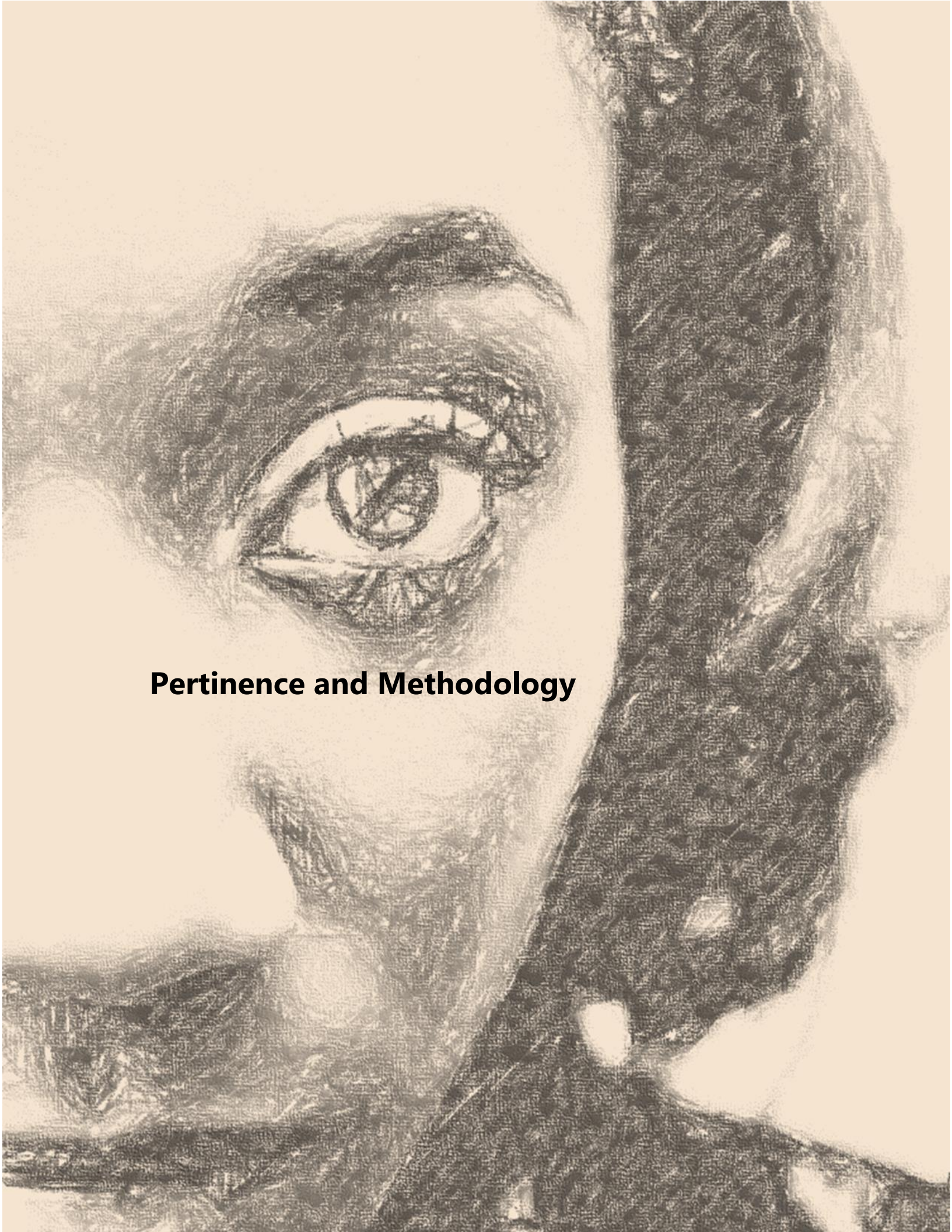
The present research is focused on the narratives of women in an attempt to visualize the feminine experiences of war through corporal and political aspects. However, as discussed in this report, the analysis of masculinities is presented quite frequently as an unintended consequence of the interviews conducted with the WPR and the professionals of the ACR: it became clear that patriarchy has perverse effects on the construction of the masculine being and that this is strengthened during wartime. Thus, this report does not attempt to reduce gender to the feminine, but rather tries to provide analytical tools for social action in the context of reintegration from an embodied perspective in a field that is generally dominated by man: war.

Here we intend to contribute to efforts at rethinking our position as members of civil society with regards to the reintegration of women given that the body represents apolitical site *par excellence* to analyze the different painful and joyful moments that women have lived during the course of their lives.

It is a question of going beyond stigma to a person who has violated, since all human beings have multiple and complex subjectivities while living various forms of social marginalization derived from cultural violence (Anctil, 2015). However, the forms of marginalization are becoming more acute for women, mainly due to domestic violence and unequal access to work and education. However, in this report I intend to argue that, despite these great obstacles, the experiences of the armed conflict represent an interesting opportunity to work on social resistance and the promotion of the reconciliation process.

As a society, when we learn that a woman has been part of an armed group, we tend to judge her, to see her as a perpetrator of violence without bearing in mind the complexity of the violence she herself has also suffered. Considering the body as a political site to understand the framework of such violence is the purpose of this research in order to accurately portray the violence they committed, as well as suffered.

[1] A special thanks to Marissa Pothen for her useful comments on the final version of this document.



Pertinence and Methodology

1. Personnal motivation

The present research is derived from a personal, academic and practical trajectory oriented towards the need to reconsider body language in politics, armed conflict and collective memory. From a framework based on embodiment, the central question to consider is the agency of these women who were victims, but at the same time protagonists of the conflict and the current path to peace. On a personal level, it represents the continuity of my work initiated in my Master's Thesis, *Female Suicide Bombers: Performativity and the Gendered Body in Terrorism*, where I explored the body as a performative act and political message in female terrorism. Since my arrival in Colombia three years ago, I have been researching the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process, an experience that permitted me to co-author a book chapter with Rachel Tillman entitled *Demobilized Women in Colombia: Embodiment, Performativity and Social Reconciliation* (2015). As such, I hope that this research can express my deep desire to embark on a path towards the articulation of theory and practice. It is, therefore, the opening of a long journey towards the comprehension of the corporality of women in the process of reintegration not only in Santander, Colombia, but globally.

2. Pertinence of the project

The presence of women and the LGTBI collective in political scenarios remains a challenge in Colombia, despite the constant efforts that have been made by grassroots organizations. Recently, academic literature on the topic has advanced and developed but still suffers from many shortcomings. There is an important need to: (1) collect information on the embodied experience of demobilized women; (2) foster a space to openly speak about genders and bodies, the multiple forms of violation in times of armed conflict and the various subjectivities that compose it and; (3) consider, as Maria Milagros Rivera says, "in other terms, the personal experience of living in a feminine sexed body[2]" (1998, p.61). When contemporary wars are discussed with respect to corporeality, it is approached mostly from the same point of departure: with "dead" or "discovered" bodies, or rather, "calculating bodies" to represent the horror of war and armed conflicts. However, we almost never consider the embodied identities within these complex schemes of violence: carnal subjectivities that can also allow us to reconstruct the mourning process and permit us to advance towards the reconstruction of historical and collective memory.

Similarly, it is imperative to address the gender perspective in DDR processes in regions such as Santander. The selection of this region pertains precisely to the dire research needs regarding DDR due to the near absence of documents addressing this process in the department. Finally, it is also pertinent to analyze this problem within a broader cultural framework given that women are often represented in the region's collective imaginary as "strong", having a "bad temperament" or as is commonly said "*arrechas*[3]". Likewise, the report is also a contestation of the dominant view on demobilized women in armed groups: we tend to consider women, because of the natural maternal and

[2] This and all the subsequent quotes have been translated by the author.
[3] *Mujeres arrechas* refers to strength, endurance and high capacity to tolerate pain and hard work.

pacific role we give them, only "as victims", where "they reproduce a model in which they participate only in a passive way" and where "that victimization is rooted in the sexualized body of women" (Coral Diaz, 2010, p.386). I want to challenge that vision.

3. Objectives

The **general objective** of this research is to propose a framework of analysis, from a gender perspective, of the embodied narratives of women in the process of reintegration in Santander, Colombia, in order to contribute to the improvement of gender differentiated approaches in DDR as to make visible the problem in local and global populations. The **specific objectives** are the following:

- ✓ To propose a different interpretation of the experiences of women in the process of reintegration in the department of Santander from a reflection on the body and its political-historical materiality.
- ✓ To investigate the interrelationships between being a victim and a perpetrator of violence, understanding the heteronormative and patriarchal patterns that are part of the passage through organized armed groups outside the law (OAGOL) and the Colombian cultures in general.
- ✓ To provide a space of dialogue and reflection for the MPR and the professionals of the ACR regarding the gender differentiated approach in the department of Santander in order to take the first step towards breaking post-demobilization social isolation.
- ✓ To promote an analysis that would lead to an alternative, collective and ethical view of the reintegration process in Santander, based on embodied narratives that allow us to detect the interconnections we have with one another and, therefore, grants us the opportunity to strengthen our capacity to understand the grieving of others and to contribute to actions aimed at rebuilding the social fabric.
- ✓ Finally, based on the findings, the last objective is to make recommendations to the ACR, its professionals and the Colombian government on possible strategies and methods to improve the application of gender differentiated approaches in reintegration.

4. Methodology

The present research was carried out in the Territorial Group of Santander (TGS) of the ACR, specifically in the city of Bucaramanga. The fieldwork was conducted with 15 WPR that have been demobilized from three different OAGOL: the FARC-EP, the ELN and the AUC. I decided to use biographical narrations; that is, I structured the methodology differently from what is usually done in academia. Firstly, I listened to women's stories and, secondly, I began analyzing their stories in order to understand how we can improve reintegration processes from a gender perspective. Thus, the methodology based on the narratives allows to establish a certain confidence during the meetings, but also to draw from the realities in order to build theories.

This research was developed using 4 methods that were later systematized for the present report – the main axis of these 4 methods was always the women's life stories, even with the professionals of the ACR:

1) Literature review
2) Semi-structured interviews with WPR
3) Focus groups with 5 professionals of the ACR
4) Workshop to disseminate the results of the project with the professionals of the ACR and autobiographical activity

In order to respond to these different methods, I have followed this calendar of activities:

Activities	2015								2016								
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dic	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept
Preparation of the interviews and settings																	
Interviews																	
Literature review																	
Data analysis																	
Focus groups with professionals																	
Analysis of the focus group																	
Workshop with the ACR																	
Analysis of the autobiography																	
Redaction of the final report																	
Revision																	
Final report and redaction of the executive summary																	

4.1. Ethical aspects of the research

This research was designed in accordance with national and international frameworks on study processes with human populations. In this sense, it did not harm or cause any damage to the population in question; on the contrary, it seeks to improve their living conditions.



Theoretical Framework

5. Research background

"The history of the transit of the Colombian combatants, from weapons to civil life, is made of silences."
-CNRR (2010, p.221)

At the international level, it is important to highlight Farr's (2002) contributions to the subject at hand with the report *Gendering Demilitarization as a Peacebuilding Tool*, which emphasizes how crucial UN Resolution 1325 has been to the analysis of the relationship between women, war, security and peace. At the regional level, *Making Memories and Leaving Footprints: Encounters with Women Ex-combatants from North East Colombia,* which was published by the *Fundación Mujer y Futuro* in the year 2004, is an interesting piece of work to consider for the current report. This document had a purpose similar to the previous one in that it intended to collect "the testimonies, the voice and the feelings of a group of women in front on their participation in the war" (Lelièvre Aussel, Moreno Echavarría & Ortiz Pérez, p.53). The report also revisits the centrality of UN Resolution 1325 regarding DDR and gender perspectives, reiterating that it is a right for women to be involved in peacebuilding as to ensure sustainable and equitable development.

One of the first steps in this DDR research has been to recognize the shortcomings of previous processes, which serve as a background to encourage reflection and improve practices in this regard. The National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation (CNRR) issued a report on the process of reintegration of the AUC, commenting on gaps regarding the gender approach and making clear that "reintegration has lacked a gender approach, recognition of rights and implementation of affirmative measures in favor of women in programs and the recovery of new masculinities" (2010, p.53). Likewise, Law 1448 of 2011 demonstrated an interesting step taken by the Colombian State to consider differential approaches in victim assistance as to foster comprehensive reparation. While we focus our attention on women ex-combatants for this research, it is of primary importance to analyze and understand the management of differential approaches from governmental entities, which had not been formalized so clearly before 2011.

For its part, the ACR has been working on the gender perspective since 2010 and the most important report issued by the entity on the topic is *Gender Perspective in the Reintegration Process - ACR Gender Strategy: Implementing a Differential Approach Based on the Consideration of the Individual and Its Characteristics* (ACR, n.d.). However, it is acknowledged that this is not a broadly and effectively implemented strategy throughout the national territory. The document *First Global Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Summit: Global DDR Challenges and Techniques, South-South Cooperation, and Rural and Territorial Reintegration* (2014), is also an important reference; however, it hardly mentions women, and when it does, it repeats certain patterns of victimization and raises DDR tactics where it is the woman who "convinces" the "man" to leave the battlefield (ACR, 2014, p.43), reinforcing the idea of men as violent and women as peacemakers.

In 2015, the ACR strengthened its gender strategy, and stated in a document published that same year that the objective is "To contribute to the reflection of those aspects of masculinities and femininities that affect the process of reintegration of women and men by promoting the development of equitable, assertive and non-violent gender relations"

(ACR, 2015a, p. 31). Finally, it is of particular importance as an antecedent to this research to mention the publication of the book from the GMH in 2013 *Challenges for reintegration: Approaches to Gender, Age and Ethnicity*, which in its first three chapters makes a comprehensive portrait of both the presence of women in OAGOL and the challenges of reintegration in relation to hegemonic masculinities and gendered violence.

6. Theoretical framework

Addressing the issue of corporeality is never easy: although we admit to living in societies where taboos are being reduced, reality is different, and fear guides many of our approaches to the body. For this reason, the research is framed in three theoretical lines:

The first, **Philosophy of Embodiment**, allows us to conceive of the body not only as a materiality but as a series of complex interactions that compose a subject's life experience, trying to go beyond the prevailing body-mind dualism in Western philosophy (Jung, 2006, p.316). That is why we seek to analyze more deeply the dynamics between gender, power, motherland, violence and femininity that are still insufficiently studied in Philosophy, with the exception of particular authors such as Derrida, Foucault, and gender theorists like Oliver and Butler.

In addition to analyzing the body as a place of suffering, the Philosophy of Embodiment allows many more analytical spaces: it seeks to interrogate the body as a *potencia* (Preciado, 2003). It is constituted as an epistemic project that seeks to transcend the Euro-Western view of the body, which has had several consequences on the corporealities of women: on the one hand, it has depraved the feminine universe of possibilities that fall outside "male reason" (and more than often, classist and white) and, on the other hand, has contributed to the disdain of both the body and the feminine.

The second theoretical line is drawn from **Gender Studies**, which forms the theoretical basis of what should constitute the national gender strategy of the ACR. Through analyses based on embodiment and emotions, Gender Studies has significantly contributed to the rethinking of the multifaceted roles of women in armed conflict and in societies that transition into the post-conflict scenario. Over the last twenty years, Feminist and Gender Studies have attempted to rethink what women and men experience in these war contexts, and have especially attempted to explore the shifts from traditional and non-traditional femininity and masculinities. They tried to theorize from a different angle, not from the passive perspective: it aimed at demonstrating that the "sexualized body of women" is prolonging the vision of "victim" in daily life as well as in armed conflict. It contested this view on women associated with the "structural experiences" of victims (Coral Diaz, 2010, p.395). In Colombia, grassroots women's organizations, popular organizations and politically involved women have been the protagonists of great practical and theoretical contributions to the issues at hand and, more recently, have played a significant role in the media when it comes to the peace talks in La Havana.

Finally, the third theoretical axis of this research may be found in **Studies of Peace and Nonviolence** (SPNV), mainly because of the value given to the human being by this

field of social science. The SPNV are represented in several geographies, from Eastern Philosophy, to the most recent field of international relations. As far as we are concerned here, I will focus on Research for Peace (*Investigación para la Paz* – IPP), that is, the studies of international conflicts that gradually have been transformed to work more on the concept of peace rather than war. Although conflict studies are still necessary to understand the dynamics of war, the intention is to emphasize positive peace rather than negative peace, associated only with the absence of war or violence (Comins Mingol, 2007, P. 94). Within this scheme, SPNV understands that the human being can harm the other, but it also means that processes of violence are learned and for this reason, one can generate a responsibility towards others to create nonviolent relationships (Martínez Guzmán, 2009). The idea of violence is then seen as a breakdown of communicative power and human intersubjectivity, understanding that conflict is an opportunity for learning (Martínez Guzmán, 2005; Cascón Soriano, 2001).


Context

7. Socio-political context

7.1. La Havana Peace talks

The history of the Colombian conflict has been written – and unfortunately "rewritten" to please certain parts of society – many times and from different perspectives to account for the more than 60 years of violence. Figures and reports of pain are inexhaustible, but even so, feelings of indifference remain ubiquitous in the country (GMH, 2013a). However, the recent history of the armed conflict shows a greater commitment to building peace in the country, especially in the context of the peace agreements in La Havana between the FARC-EP and the National Government. This agreement contains a proposal for transitional justice, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, with the aim of stimulating disarmament, reparation to victims and national reconciliation (Verdad Abierta, 2015). But more than the stories of violence, that for us are fundamental to the writing of body politics, this report wants to focus on the DDR process in the country from a gender perspective.

7.2. DDR in Colombia

At the international level, the entity normally charged with the responsibility of implementing the DDR process is the United Nations; however, in Colombia this process has been experienced differently. That is to say, it is clear that the country has tried to follow international standards but at the same time, it has handled the issue more independently. The DDR process in Colombia is unique for two reasons: (1) DDR was implemented directly from the National Government and not from the UN, and (2) DDR actions are being handled within the framework of an armed conflict while it has normally been carried out in post-conflict scenarios (Magnaes Gjelvisk, 2010, p.29). The DDR process with the FARC-EP will not be the first to take place in Colombia: since the end of the eighties, the country has experienced three similar experiences according to the CNMH (Serrano Murcia, 2013).

The most analyzed and criticized demobilization process was that of the AUC, which has encountered a number of problems, especially emanating from the government. The implementation of transitional justice was very difficult because of the workload of public officials which has not permitted a successful conclusion of the DDR process that was originally initiated in 2003. It is worth saying that, at the beginning of this process, violence decreased slightly (ICG, 2014, p.6), but one of the points which hinders the receptivity of civil society in this regard is that it has not been possible to demobilize the entire paramilitary apparatus. However, ACR figures show that the process is advancing, for which they have designed a strategy of eight holistic dimensions that has allowed them to improve their efforts.

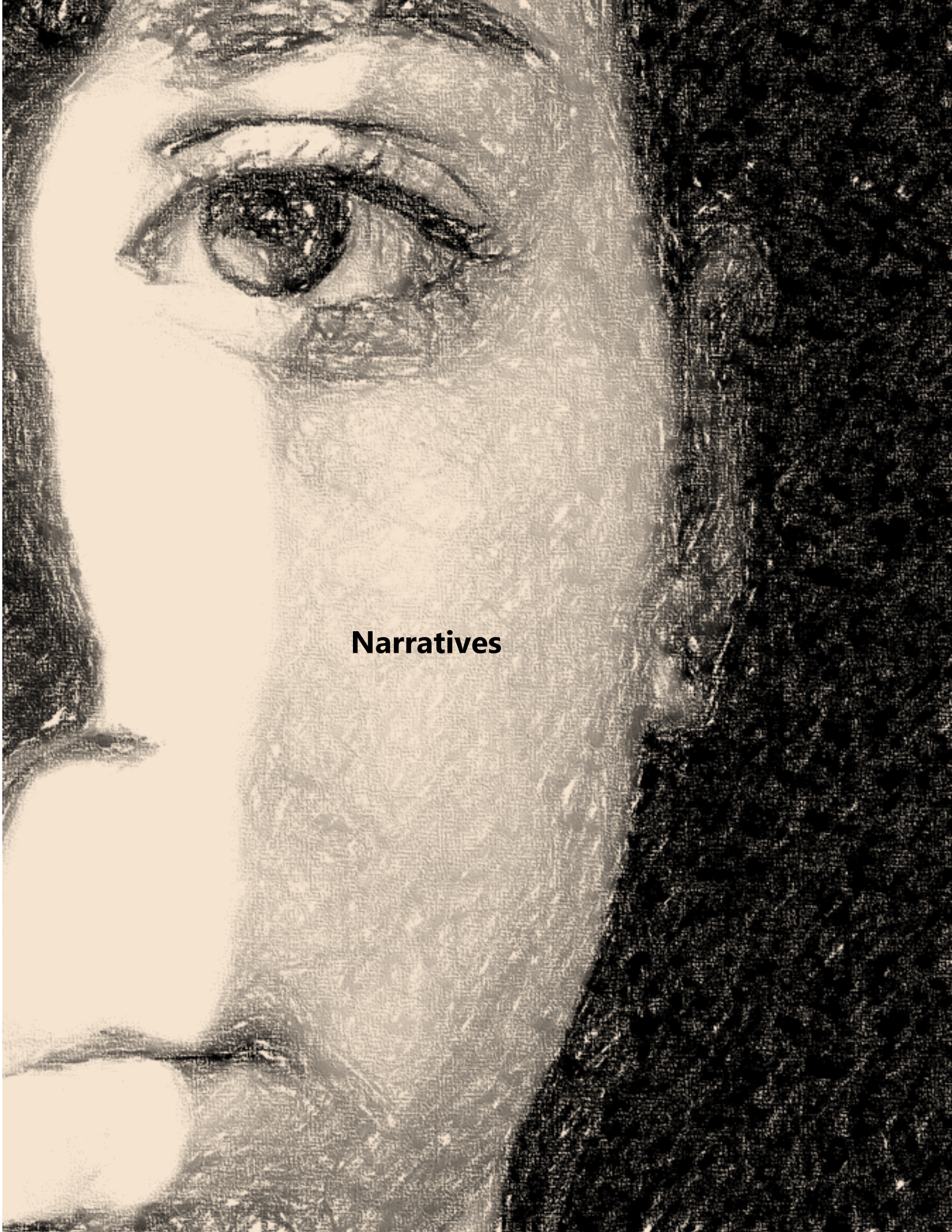
7.2.1 Gender perspective in DDR

In this context, we urgently need to ask ourselves about the gender perspective in DDR in the Colombian case. Despite the significant female participation in the political and military spheres, the challenges of peacebuilding and reintegration for women have not been fully investigated nor fully considered in most DDR processes (Serrano Murcia, 2013, p. 69). It is important to remember here that international considerations about gender-based violence (GBV) have increased since the 1979 *Convention on the*

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and later with the *Fourth World Conference on Women* in 1995. However, it was only in the year 2000 that UN Resolution 1325 was actually created, increasing the comprehension of the relationships between violence, peace and women. From then on, another 8 resolutions would follow; the last being approved in October of 2015 (UN, 2015). Resolution 1325 took a fundamental step on the subject that concerns us in this research: it created an international precedent on the importance of recognizing that gender justice is essential to the transformation of societies and to the construction of peace.

The work of the CNMH has also served as an advance in the gender perspective in DDR in Colombia. However, although the CNMH reports give an account of professional knowledge about differentiated approaches, it has been difficult to apply them practically in government agencies. On the other hand, the ACR has taken several steps towards understanding and applying differentiated approaches to ethnicity, gender, age and other particular needs drawing upon its gender strategy for the reintegration process. However, as of now, few tools and methodologies exist to help professionals apply gender differentiated approaches to their work.

On the other hand, it is important to reiterate that the Havana peace talks have shown that women's demands have been hidden for far too long, even though they were an active part of the movements for peace. As a consequence, it is crucial to implement gender approaches for reintegration programs and, contrary to what is commonly thought, these should not be restricted to women and girls. As will be shown in this report, gender issues are omnipresent, forming a cross-cutting part of human life.



Narratives

8. Narratives of women in the process of reintegration: a bodily account

As specified in the methodology, in the semi-structured interviews based on the biographical narratives that were made, 15 women participated with their life story. In Annex 12.5 of the complete final report, the interviews carried out in the framework of the research are more carefully detailed, also describing the relationship with the OAGOL to which each woman belonged. This section is dedicated to the analysis of the narratives of the MPR, addressing them from the theoretical approaches suggested by this research.

In general, the corporeality of women is understood through entrenched cultural patterns and is very difficult to change. Thus, in scenes of armed conflicts, their bodies are understood from the prism of victimization given that there is a tendency to associate women with motherhood. From there, women are almost always considered, both in civilian life and in armed conflicts, in their "quality of victims", marking their political participation as passive and based on their sexualized bodies (Coral Díaz, 2010, p.386). Therefore, in this section of the report I seek to explore political corporeality by following a three-step division: (1) a political and embodied account between *here* – reintegration – and *there* – life in the armed group – with emphasis on the community of origin of the WPR, their passage through the OAGOL and finally, the different difficulties that are present in their lives during the reintegration process; (2) a greater focus on the reintegration process from a gender perspective where the testimonies of TGS professionals are also incorporated and; (3) a preliminary exploration of how we could theorize the body as a socio-political tool of resistance. Thus, this section seeks to focus on these bodily sites of marginalization, resilience and resistance.

8.1. *Here* and *there*: a political and embodied account

Although we tend to think that we live in more equitable societies, the challenges regarding equality of life opportunities for women, men and the different genders are still tremendous, especially in a society such as Colombia, which has inherited a patriarchal system that hinders the effective fulfillment of human rights due to the various scenarios of colonization. In this sexual division of daily life, stereotypes are established according to the role socially assigned to the gender of the person; and these discriminatory stereotypes are often exacerbated in contexts of armed conflict. The next few sections explore these transitions that have undoubtedly had a major impact on the reintegration of women into civilian life and the gender interrelations that stem from this new way of life after having belonged to an armed group.

8.1.1. Community of origin: landscapes of the body

Gender interrelations do not only operate in extreme situations such as war scenarios. One of the important points essential to the narrative of life has been to start from the sensorial experiences of gender since childhood: thus, the community of origin was the first step of reflection that I have considered with the WPR. This section is divided into two parts: the first seeks to show that contexts of war are violent frameworks where subjects are constituted within precarious conditions. In a second part, the problem of forced recruitment is treated as a tendency especially common by the guerrilla groups, addressing the blurred notions of *self-will* and *strength*.

8.1.1.1. Violated bodies: preexisting violence

In the different interviews, we have first focused on the concept of gender equity. We have addressed the various forms of pre-existing violence in their villages, towns or cities of origin that may have had an impact or influence on their decisions as women, on a political and personal level. Initially, many women emphasize traditional roles in their villages: they argue that women were more often assigned to roles related to child care, and associated with home tasks, while men were dedicated more to the productive sphere. However, as will be demonstrated later, the reintegration into civilian life tends to reproduce these patterns.

Similarly, during their narratives, women initiated certain comparisons between gender roles within the context of their community and vis-à-vis the armed group. Likewise, the narratives also present discontinuities in the understanding of gender equality: several women affirm that life in the village did not involve GBV, but in their narrations several contradictions are revealed. Many of them have been victims within the armed groups – paramilitaries or guerrillas groups – increasing certain forms of rage towards the political-social situation where they were living. Sometimes, multiple factors are introduced that have implications for the *devenir* of the woman, especially in the stage of adolescence. The women interviewed, although sometimes presenting discontinuous accounts of gender equity, know that the privileges, in their community of origin, are achieved by being male and because of the prevailing *machismo*.

8.1.1.2. Precarity of war: forced recruitment and lack of economic opportunities

In earlier research, we have shown that precariousness and bodily vulnerability are much higher in certain areas of the country, especially in rural areas (Anctil and Tillman, 2015). This differential allocation (Butler, 2009) of precariousness is a factor that has increased the unequal distribution of wealth and power in Colombia. On the one hand, many women confess that they were tricked when taken to the guerrilla armed groups; not necessarily with physical "force" but with coercive mechanisms that help manipulate the child population. Most of the people who have joined the ranks of the guerrillas, especially women, have been victims of a war context. On the other hand, the WPR who were part of the AUC have different stories regarding the incursion into the armed group. The lack of job opportunities, sometimes coupled with difficult situations at home, involves decisions that are not entirely their own. On both sides, guerrilla and paramilitary ex-combatants, it is asserted that the affective and bodily relationships, that are sometimes translated into love stories, were important in their involvement.

Embodiment



8.1.2. There: "violent" bodies or the passage through war corporalities

Early involvement and economic vulnerability make women engaged in war, bodies that have been violated in several respects. In their eyes, I could see many lived years, many more than it would seem; I could see a body violated by the war context, but also, I could see the agency, an empowered body, and a body that has matured past events. This section explores an important stage of each woman who, at one point in her life, was part of the war as an active agent. At first, it tries to understand the deployment of embodied realities in the guerrilla and paramilitary groups and; secondly, it observes how the bodies of women who enter the war break with their established gender. Thirdly, it explores the exposed embodiments in the war context.

8.1.2.1. The deployment of corporeity: differences between paramilitary and guerrilla groups

The deployment of corporalities within the OAGOL has not been uniform, much less unique or following behavioral parameters, although certain patterns tend to be repeated. These interviews also correspond with the results of earlier research, focused on AUC demobilized women, where logistic roles were attributed to women in this group (Anctil and Tillman, 2015). Some women were bursars, in charge of the allowances or finances of the group. Their embodiment did not necessarily involve the use of weapons or uniform but in the field, they were dedicated to assisting the men fighters. On the other hand, the isolation was perhaps greater for the women who were part of the ranks of the guerrillas; a closer control of their bodies was carried out, therefore all the time they spent in the armed structure also different. So there are many variables: indeed, the women of the FARC-EP and ELN also admit that there are several differences between the two groups in terms of assigned roles.

8.1.2.2. Bodies breaking gender norms

Masculinity, the military uniform and the power of weapons usually represent the common image we have of war. All these symbols do not associate women with combat; on the contrary, we see female participation in violence as intriguing – in the style of Laura Croft, Angelina Jolie or *femme fatale* – or female combatants are perceived as irrational women driven by emotions. Even this vision is extended to nonviolent political participation: activists are often labeled as hysterical or they are silenced or even murdered, which happens frequently in Colombia. The feminine body that speaks, be it in words or actions, dismantles patriarchal hierarchies. In this sense, the woman who enters a GAOML transgresses her gender: it no longer responds to what is expected of a female being.

The body of women entering a GAOML shows multiple marks of transgression. They are recognized as politically active, they enter a field usually reserved to men, they often renounce their role as a mother and they can become perpetrators; that is to say, they may exercise armed violence or even kill another human being, which goes against the social role of women as being a life-giving agent through the embodiment of reproduction. These relationships and corporealities transform their relationship with life and society, and have several impacts on their reintegration.

8.1.2.3. Exposed corporealities: the feminine under debate

The war system implies a greater "patriarchalisation" of the environment in which women and men find themselves: thus, war creates real, distorted, re-invented and diverse femininities. The subjectivities of girls and women are marked as dislocated and discontinuous, and for many of them, they live in a crucial moment of constitution of their "self"; that is, the transition from childhood to adulthood. This influences their perception of sexualities and relationships with the same gender or the opposite gender. Often joining the armed group as a minor, their bodies are marked from multiple violent scenarios that in turn, have an impact on the development of their adult life, within or outside the GAOML.

As a matter of example, in the guerrilla groups, the annulment of femininity, and of its reproductive/maternal component, reaches its paroxysm with the control over bodies by contraceptive methods. The prohibition of maternity – through reproductive control, abortion or separation of children – carries a harsh reality for women.

At the same time, this report also shows corporeality as a site of affects, highlighting spaces of resistance to war, which shows love, sexuality and body care that do not respond to the logic of war.


Broken Corporealities

8.1.2.4. The discours of equality

During the discussions with the WPR, gender roles at every stage of their lives occupied an important place, especially in the conceptualization of equality. The FARC-EP is the organization that spreads the most propaganda about equality of status in its ranks for women and men; they actively take part in the debate on equality through the *mujeres farianas* webpage, using this platform to spread their ideas about policies and the place of women in it. Their discourse is based on equality of status, the possibility of deciding their sexuality and the opportunity to engage in the political struggle. It is a discourse on equality that tends to focus on the masculinization of femininity, which means incorporating women into an already existing patriarchal-warrior system.

However, the discourse on equality changes from one group to another. Compared with guerrilla women, demobilized women from paramilitary groups mentioned little contact with men: most of the time, they mentioned that they were either cooking or sewing, and others said that they were a little more isolated from the group, many times in a secluded house with the rest of the women.

8.1.2.5. Broken corporealities: forced abortion and sexual violence

Forced abortion

Motherhood is not recommended in guerrilla structures: women are rarely allowed to have children under the premise that "revolution" and "wartime" takes precedence over the condition of mother. The pregnant body appears as "useless" or "unfortunate" in the armed group. Pregnancy is therefore seen as a political obstacle.

The testimonies collected with the WPR that have belonged to guerrilla groups confirm the existence of corporal control over the women's sexual and reproductive health as well as the occurrence of forced abortion. According to recent studies, it has been demonstrated that forced abortions are frequent; as quoted by the Humanitarian Assistance Group for Demobilized People of the Ministry of Defense: between January 2012 and October 2013, 244 demobilized women reported 43 abortions (Diálogo, 2013). Thus, it becomes evident that the ACR must take into account these painful episodes and treat them from the differentiated approach (Open Truth, 2015a).

Sexual violence

Sexual violence is, because of the gravity of its nature, a difficult problem to approach with women, which has also been expressed by the professionals interviewed concerning ways to approach the WPR that have been victims of this type of violation. Professionals stress that sexual violence as such is not something that they insist on during their meetings with WPR. Thus, most professionals indicated that there is still a gap in this respect whereas the only resource they claim to have is to refer the case to a clinical psychologist. In this way, more research is needed in this regard given that "Investigations and sentences on sexual violence in the conflict are practically nonexistent and the little we know on the topic has not served to gain the attention that it would require [...]" (Fajardo Arturo and Valoyes Valoyes, 2015, pp.13-14).


My Territory

8.1.3. Here: (in)securities and re-appropriation of the self

8.1.3.1. Economic dimensions: precarious bodies

The report highlights that there is discrimination against women because of the prevailing *machismo* in society. In addition to this, we can mention problems derived from the condition of being a demobilized person. In fact, civil society shows reluctance to integrate demobilized people into the labor market. There are also great difficulties in understanding the reality of the people who were part of the armed conflict.

8.1.3.2. Cities: territories and embodiment of insecurity

Reintegration involves a physical transfer – from one geographical point to another, often for safety reasons – and a psychological displacement – where the person loses his or her body and space-time referents when arriving to a new environment. In this sense, several women exalt the countryside and consider cities as hostile. The majority of women express their preference for rural zones, understanding that it is the territorial space where they grew up. It is also perceived that in the countryside, compared to urban spaces, it is easier to find work or practice self-management activities.

8.1.3.3. Marked bodies: socio-cultural marginalization

Generally, the DDR process entails "social guilt" both for the demobilized as well as for the society that demands reparation for the damages caused. This leads us to ask ourselves about the problems related to being a marginalized body in the process of reintegration into civilian life, insisting on the importance of thinking relationally about this experience with their partners who, in the case that concerns this report, are men that are also in the process of reintegration. Women express, in the first place, that being demobilized intrinsically implies being marginalized; their condition seems to imply a social label that is difficult to ignore in their relationships. In the same way, it is worth highlighting that depending on the rank, acts or time in the armed group, women experience very different problems in their return to civilian life.

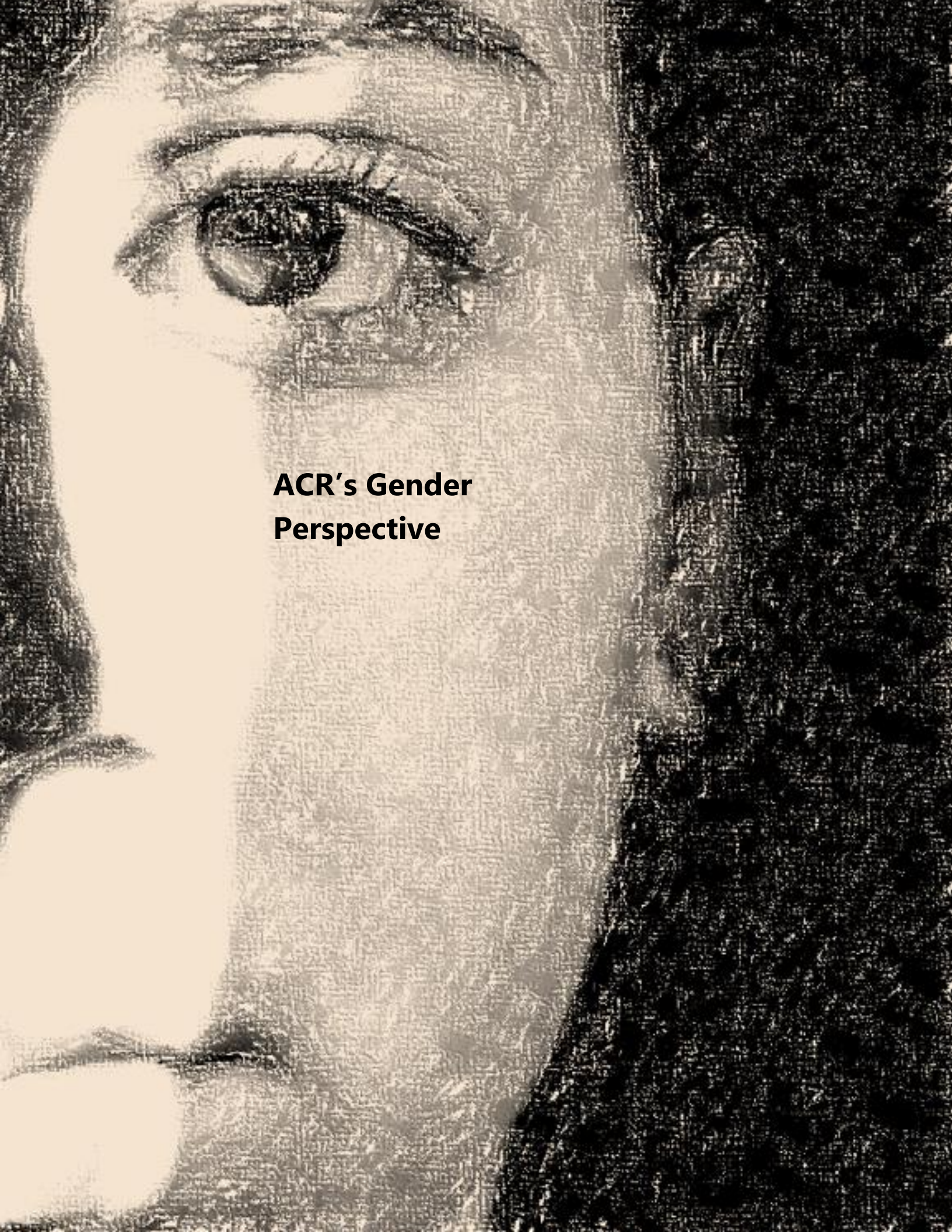
8.1.3.4. Re-embodying traditional femininities: patterns and gender violence

In the region of Santander, Colombia, where the research was conducted, many rigid patterns persist about gender roles and socio-cultural dynamics associated with female bodies. In this respect, many women repeatedly explained the need to work on gender interrelations, specifically in the activities organized by the ACR, during our conversations. As such, becoming a woman in the process of reintegration is highly mediated by intra-family relationships, which are marked by serious emotional issues given that most WPR have either lost their partner in combat or they are living with a man similarly in the process of reintegration.

Thus, gender stereotypes are often exacerbated in times of war and in the aftermath of conflict. When women return to civilian life, they are confronted with various problems related to the re-incorporation of femininity – and men, of masculinities. During the research, many testimonies show that, for WPR, removing oneself from the armed conflict has not meant the end of violent relationships.

8.1.3.5. Embodied liberties: reencountering the "feminine"

This brief section shows the reencounter of the WPR with the feminine and their new contact with civilian life. In this scenario, women also regain control of their lives through the enjoyment of their own body and they learn to develop strategies to counter the masculine and patriarchal influence on it.



ACR's Gender Perspective

8.2. Reintegration and the gender perspective: the ACR

8.2.1. The process with the ACR

The gender perspective in reintegration still requires a lot of work, not only from the ACR, but also in various countries that are experiencing armed conflict or that are going through a socio-political transition. In the eight dimensions of the ACR Reintegration Route, it became apparent through the interviews that gender is transversal. In fact, the ACR has been fundamental in several aspects for people in the process of reintegration, such as for their personal, economic and educational matters. However, it is clear that one should think about the embodied and emotional dynamics with respect to DDR. As evidenced in the interviews, there are several shortcomings concerning the reintegration process that are linked to these dimensions.

8.2.2. Subjectivities and embodiment of the professionals

At the ACR, the main interest of the professionals is to think about the positive impacts of DDR and what can be built by the people in the process of reintegration. In fact, this is what is reflected in the commentaries made by the WPR: the agency offers a new opportunity to choose another path in life. In the dynamics of reintegration offered by the ACR, there are many intersecting subjectivities, many achievements and many challenges. As gender is a part of life itself, it represents an important part of the interactions between reintegration agents and people in the process of reintegration. This section seeks to highlight these achievements, but also the obstacles and the necessities highlighted by the professionals during my meeting with them.

8.2.2.1. Achievements: self-constructed tools and gender

Although the ACR is still developing its gender strategy at the national level, it can be said that in practice, there are several examples of didactics and tools that professionals already use to put in practice the differential gender approaches. The workshops, for example, have made possible a local initiatives with regards to new masculinities and have served the emotional processes of the people who work there.

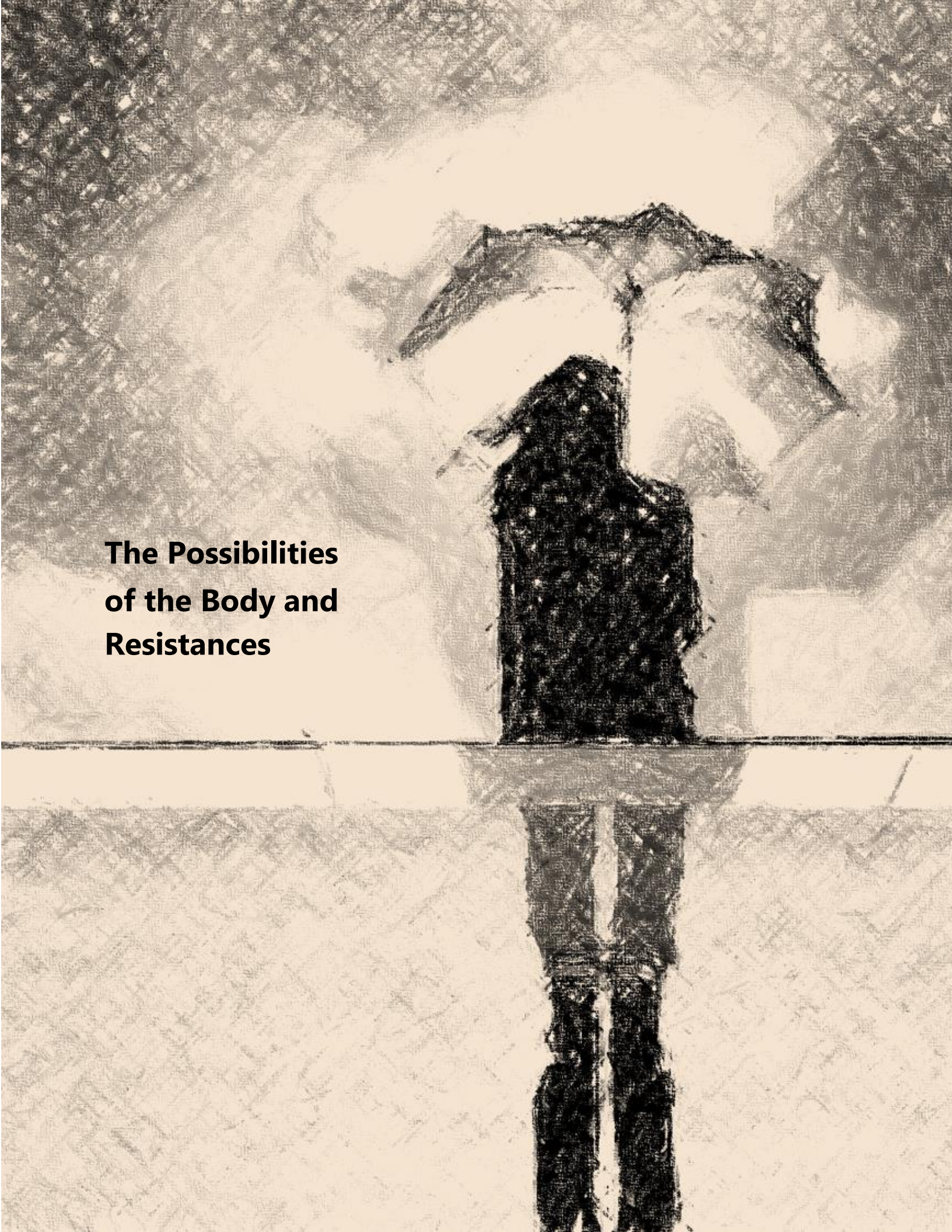
8.2.2.2. Difficulties

Firstly, it is important to note that the professionals emphasize the lack of a gender approach to guide their professional practice and their understanding of the concept of gender. The major problem highlighted by professionals has to do with hegemonic masculinities. Similarly, practitioners as well as WPR understand that traditional gender relations pose significant obstacles to the reintegration process. This complicates the fact that these *machista* relations culturally framed permeate even the actions conducted by the professionals of the ACR.

On the one hand, the flyers that are distributed in the regional headquarters of the ACR tend to repeat certain gendered patterns. On the other hand, there is an imminent lack of instruments to deal with gender and to transform the painful events into possibilities of change, even if people in the process of reintegration are facing affective and corporeal-emotional problems related to diverse types of violence.

8.2.2.3. Embodiment and self-care

The professionals emphasize that, because of the emotional relationship they develop with each person in the process of reintegration, they sometimes "take home" the cases. Consequently, work intensity increases and professionals sometimes forget self-care. Do I spend enough time with my daughter, with my son? Do I transmit gender stereotypes in the education of my children or the people I help in my work? They refer to these questions as emotions that are confirmed and contradicted all the time in their professional practice and their personal life. They also highlighted the need to see the body of professionals as a space to respond to the established gender order, but above all, the need to care for this space, through sustained self-care workshops. In this sense, this report reiterates the necessity for a gender strategy at the national level. This strategy should include a careful study of masculinities and femininities, but also adopt a differentiated approach to family processes, construction of subjectivities, multi-level gender relations, as well as an in-depth analysis of the sexual diversity of people who have participated in GAOML as this has been profoundly underdeveloped in both research and practice (Serrano Murcia, 2013, pp. 92-93).



The Possibilities of the Body and Resistances

8.3. Political possibilities of the marginalized body

This section seeks to dismantle the victim-victimization dichotomy and understand the possibilities offered by the marginalized body of WPR.

8.3.1. Spinoza would have said "what the body can do": transformative embodiment

In the narratives of the women in the process of reintegration, there are many indicators that their bodies and their embodied histories can contribute to reconciliation and peacebuilding in Colombia. This section addresses these embodied possibilities.

8.3.1.1. On victims and perpetrators

The WPR are very aware of the "bad things" – as they say – that they have done: they know perfectly well that, in the eyes of the society, they are portrayed as perpetrators of violence even if they have not committed major crimes in the GAOML. They report the passage in the armed group usually as painful, but simultaneously accept that they also experienced "not so bad things" in the GAOML, reiterating that many of them lived there during their adolescence. Thus, it is impossible to detach the position of the victim from the one of the perpetrator: we must understand that their choices were very limited and that the world of war cannot be interpreted in dichotomies, but from the multiple affectations women are confronting.

8.3.1.2. Resilience and resistance: transformative embodiment

How can we construct the body of WPR as a political tool? There is a general tendency in our societies to perceive women outside the political realm; their role as agents of violence, of resistance or as a political force is not considered. Consequently, the complexity of their roles in peacebuilding is rarely understood. In this sense, body resistance based on daily life, lived experience and embodiment, appears as a political enhancer for post-violence recovery. Thus, women reiterated several times in our discussions that their political power rests in their possibility to convince young people, through their stories, not to get involved in the armed struggle, telling them what it means to be part of an armed struggle so that they never think of it as a valid option.

Secondly, religion is seen as essential to the process of mourning and forgiveness, above all, in the process of self-forgiveness. The conversations we had were promising: women are optimistic and committed to their future, which is expressed in their daily body resistance that allows them to move towards a different life, with less violence.

8.3.2. WPR as agents of peace

The personal is political as the famous feminist saying points out: that is, the distinction we usually make between the private and the public disappears. In fact, one of the areas where WPRs are most committed is their home; it is their way of thinking about a new country. Although some interviewed women show a lot of skepticism with regards to the Havana peace talks, they claim that they want to showcase themselves as an example so that other people do not experience what they did.

Recommendations



9. Recommendations

Here are some of the recommendations that can be found fully detailed in the complete version of the final report for the ACR, its professionals and the Colombian government.

9.1. For the ACR

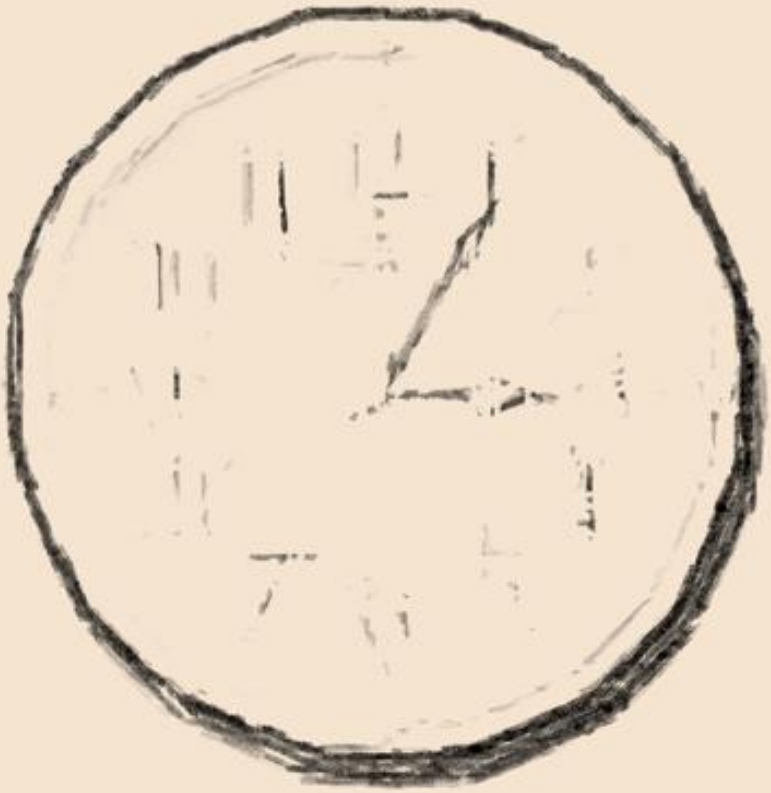
- It is essential that the ACR, as a national governmental organization, adopts a comprehensive and structured global gender strategy in order to allow concerted and harmonized actions in the construction of peace and rehabilitation of the social fabric;
- The policies to be adopted by the ACR regarding gender must be understood from human interrelationships and intersubjectivities, fundamental to nonviolent and peacebuilding oriented behaviors;
- The body, often neglected and forgotten in political processes, has not only been the site of victimization or perpetration of violence, but has alslo unveiled itself as a unique place to rethink the political resistance of the WPR;
- It is vital to take into account the obvious possibilities of violence that are generated during and after the reintegration process, confirming the importance of a gender nonviolent approach. The ACR must propose programs for the construction of nonviolent masculinities and femininities to avoid scenarios of intra-family and community violence;
- It is recommended to carry out an in-depth review, from a gender perspective, of the diagnostic guidelines (internal documents for psychosocial support) of the ACR in case of depression, post-traumatic syndrome and other clinical cases, since they currently do not take into account the differential approach, especially sexual, conjugal, and other gender-related problems;
- To encourage the creation of groups of women who have experienced similar situations in order to break the isolation and promote the construction of peace.

9.2. For the professionals of the ACR

- The professionals must take into account cultural violence that maintains power relations that often oppress women and prevent them from accessing certain jobs and other experiences;
- It is important to keep in mind the multiple dimensions of emotional and physical involvement of people in the process of reintegration: the attention to this population needs to be differentiated between women, men, LGBTIQ and other genders. It is also recommended to keep in mind these affectations at all times of the Reintegration Route, as the person and his/her family might still be facing violence;
- To continue the actions undertaken in each territorial group in the form of didactic workshops as to cover important issues such as hegemonic masculinities, gender violence, gender equity, etc;
- It is also recommended to systematize the strategies established in each territorial group in order to be able to advance a national gender strategy;
- It is imperative that the professionals engage in self-care measures regarding the labor processes they live daily.

9.3. For the Colombian government

- To clarify and improve communication policies as to better inform the population about DDR processes and their consequences in the daily activities of civil society;
- Government programs should not only work on DDR, but on the demilitarization (Farr, 2002, p.9) of society, collective thinking and behavior;
- It is essential to open political spaces for the active participation of women who have lived close to the Colombian armed conflict so that their experiences can be strengthened for national reconciliation;
- In this regard, one of the government's major challenges to reintegration has to do with the proper application of differential approaches, but above all, with raising awareness in the civil population about the DDR process, given that it is one of the main obstacles to the reconfiguration of the social space;
- The national government has to fulfill the postulates of UN Resolution 1325 regarding security, peacebuilding and the role of women in these processes;
- To consolidate public policies to take into account gender diversity and reintegration processes with their respective complexities.





Conclusions

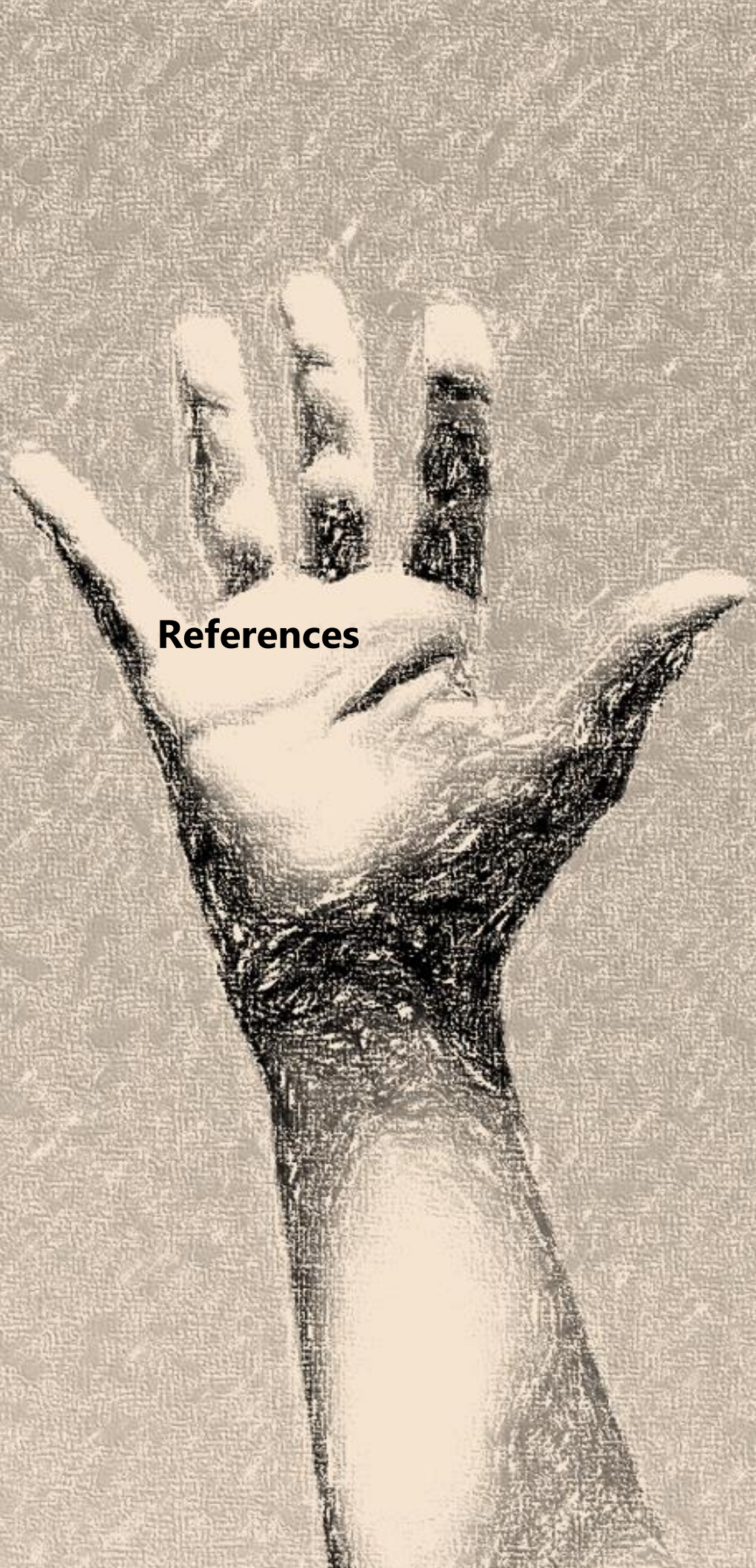
10. Conclusions

One of the most vibrant conclusions of this report is that, as a society and agents of the reintegration process, we cannot underestimate the lived processes of violence and we must understand the victim-perpetrator relationship if we want to improve the DDR process. People in the process of reintegration, like all human beings, have dynamic subjectivities that show convergences and divergences; they have been daughters, fighters, victims, perpetrators, and now, they are mothers, women, friends, students, professionals. They are not just women in the process of reintegration.

Serrano Murcia (2013) stresses the need to share the experiences of the WPR, explaining that their role in the conflict is an excellent starting point to understand their possible roles in peacebuilding and what it means to build peace from multiple femininities. However, social marginalization and isolation prevents WPR from taking an active and leading role in current political projects; it is still difficult for them to channel these political demands, usually because of their precarious conditions in the reintegration process. Underestimating the role of women in war has serious political implications for their activism in the possible post-conflict scenario.

Within the process to be initiated by the ACR in terms of gender, it is clear that the approach to be taken should be framed from gender interrelations, betting on the necessary and vibrant human intersubjectivities. As Farr mentions, reintegration programs must address needs from a differential approach, without which it will not be possible to re-establish or establish equitable gender relations in the society under construction. It is important to avoid increasing gender-based violence in the post-conflict scenario and to promote a culture of respect for human rights in the long term (2002, p.8). Similarly, all agencies that are working on DDR should also provide important training for their professionals so that they reorient their gender interrelations and use strategies for self-care, essential to their exercise of supporting populations in situations of vulnerability.

Gender, it is us: it is what we create and recreate in our daily lives. It is how we can relate better to one another. People in the process of reintegration offer us an opportunity to rethink politics, coexistence and collective responsibility in the construction of peace.



References

11. References

ACR (n.d.). Perspectiva de género en el proceso de reintegración. *Agencia colombiana para la reintegración*. Retrieved from http://www.reintegracion.gov.co/es/la-reintegracion/centro-de-documentacion/Documentos/Perspectiva%20de%20g%C3%A9nero%20en%20el%20Proceso%20de%20Reintegraci%C3%B3n.pdf

ACR (2014). First Global Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Summit: Global DDR Challenges and Techniques, South-South Cooperation, and Rural and Territorial Reintegration. *Agencia colombiana para la reintegración*. Retrieved from http://www.reintegracion.gov.co/es/la-reintegracion/centro-de-documentacion/Documentos/First%20GLobal%20Disarmament,%20Demobilization%20and%20Reintegration%20(DDR)%20Summit.pdf

ACR (2015a). Enfoque diferencial: componente de género. *Agencia colombiana para la reintegración* [Internal document prepared by Adriana Milena López Mesa].

Anctil, P. (2015). Body and Social Reconciliation: Preliminary Thoughts. *Revista Descontamina*, *2*(2), 6. Retrieved from https://descontamina.org/revista/

Anctil, P. & Tillman, R. (2015). Demobilized Women in Colombia: Embodiment, Performativity, and Social Reconciliation. In S. Shekhawat (ed.), *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace: Challenging Gender in Violence and Post-Conflict Reintegration* (pp. 216-231). New York, United States: Palgrave MacMillan.

Butler, J. (2009). *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* New York, United States: Verso.

CNRR (2010). La reintegración: logros en medio de rearmes y dificultades no resueltas – II Informe de la Comisión Nacional de Reparación y reconciliación. Bogota, Colombia. Retrieved from http://www.ideaspaz.org/tools/download/52283

Cascón Soriano, F. (2001). *Educar en y para el conflicto*. Barcelona, Spain: Cátedra UNESCO sobre Paz y Derechos Humanos.

Comins Mingol, I. (2007). La ética del cuidado: Contribuciones a una transformación pacifica de los conflictos. *Feminismo/s*, n°9, 93-105.

Coral Díaz, A.M. (2010). El cuerpo femenino sexuado: entre las construcciones de género y la Ley de Justicia y Paz. *International Law: Revista Colombiana de Derecho Internacional*, 17, 381-410.

Diálogo (October 19, 2013). Colombia: Exguerrilleras de las FARC denuncian crueles abortos forzados. *Diálogo Revista Militar Digital*. Retrieved from https://dialogo-americas.com/es/articles/colombia-exguerrilleras-de-las-farc-denuncian-crueles-abortos-forzados

GMH (2013). *Desafíos para la reintegración: Enfoque de género, edad y etnia*. Bogota, Colombia: Imprenta Nacional.

GMH (2013a). *¡Basta ya! Colombia: memorias de guerra y dignidad*. Bogota, Colombia: Imprenta Nacional.

Fajardo Arturo, L.A. & Valoyes Valoyes, R.Y. (2015). Violencia sexual como crimen internacional perpetrado por las farc. Bogota, Colombia: Editorial Planeta.

Farr, V. (2002). Gendering Demilitarization as a Peacebuilding Tool. *Bonn International Center for Conversion*, n° 20, 1-47.

ICG (2014). El día después de mañana: las FARC y el fin del conflicto en Colombia. *International Crisis Group – Informe de Crisis Group sobre América Latina*, n°53, 1-46.

Jung, H.J. (2006). The Body and Practice in Western Philosophy and Buddhism. *International Journal of Buddhist Thought & Culture*, 6, 313-327.

Lelièvre Aussel, C., Moreno Echavarría, G. & Ortiz Pérez, I. (2004). *Haciendo memoria y dejando rastros: Encuentros con mujeres excombatientes del Nororiente de Colombia*. Bucaramanga, Santander: Fundación Mujer y Futuro.

Magnaes Gjelsvik, I. (2010). *Women, War and Empowerment: A Case Study of Female Ex-Combatants in Colombia* (MA Thesis). University of Tromsø: Oslo.

Martínez Guzmán, V. (2005). La Filosofía para la Paz como racionalidad práctica. *Investigaciones fenomenológicas*, n° 4, 87-98.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of Perception*. New York, United States: Routledge.

Preciado, P.B. (2003). Multitudes queer. Notas para una política de los "anormales". *Multitudes: Revue politique, artistique, philosophique*, n°12. Recuperado de http://www.multitudes.net/Multitudes-queer/

Rivera, M.M. (1998). *Nombrar el mundo en femenino. Pensamiento de las mujeres y teoría feminista*. Barcelona, Spain: Icaria.

Serrano Murcia, A. (2013). Enfoque de género en los procesos de DDR. En GMH (ed.), *Desafíos para la reintegración. Enfoques de género, edad y etnia* (pp. 77-134). Bogota, Colombia: Imprenta Nacional.

UN (2009). Short Story of CEDAW Convention. *United Nations*. Recuperado de http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/history.htm

UN (2015). Resolution 2242 (2015). *United Nations Security Council*. Retrived from http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/RES/2242(2015)

Verdad Abierta (September 23, 2015). Para entender lo acordado en La Habana. *Verdad Abierta*. Retrived from http://www.verdadabierta.com/procesos-de-paz/farc/5983-para-entender-lo-acordado-en-la-habana

Verdad Abierta (2015a). El sufrimiento de mujeres combatientes y desmovilizadas. *Verdad Abierta*. Retrieved from http://www.verdadabierta.com/desmovilizados/5588-testimonios-de-mujeres-exguerrilleras-que-desertaron-de-grupos-armados-ilegales