



PeaceWomen Across the Globe  
FRIEDENSFRAUEN WELTWEIT  
نساء من أجل السلام عبر العالم  
Femmes de Paix Autour du Monde  
Женщины мира за мир на земле  
MUJERES DE PAZ EN EL MUNDO  
Mulheres pela Paz ao redor do Mundo

DONNE DI PACE NEL MONDO  
ピースウーマン—国境を越え平和をつくる女たち  
全球和平妇女



## Newsletter 2/2022

### FOCUS COLOMBIA

# No truth-seeking without the voices of women

The Colombian Truth Commission has carried out exemplary work. Women, marginalised groups and the diaspora were actively involved in the process of finding the truth and coming to terms with the history of the armed conflict. The commission's mandate has ended, but the peace work continues.

There are numbers that stun: 8 million displaced; at least 450,000 people killed; 120,000 forcibly disappeared; 30,000 documented cases of sexualised violence. There are also numbers that impress: 8,000 pages documenting serious human rights violations and filled with dozens of forward-looking recommendations – and with the voices of 30,000 people telling their stories of suffering and resistance. Among them, the voices of women.

The peace agreement signed at the end of 2016 between the FARC-EP (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo) and the Colombian government officially ended one of the world's longest armed conflicts after more than 50 years. The Truth Commission was created as one of the three institutions that make up the "Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence in Colombia". The Commission began its work in 2018, with the aim of documenting human rights violations and finding explanations as to why the conflict lasted for decades. The final report, submitted in June,

contains recommendations aimed at ending the violence that continues due to a militarised drug policy and the continuing activity of paramilitary groups, among other reasons.

### A model for inclusion

The Colombian peace agreement was already a model for the inclusion of marginalised communities and women. The fact that the experiences of women and LGBTIQ+ people were included in the peace negotiations is also owing to the active women's and LGBTIQ+ movements. Thanks to them, the Commission's final report includes the 644-page volume "My body is the truth", which pays tribute to the experiences of 10,864 women who were multiply affected by the conflict. Thousands of them experienced sexualised violence at the hands of both parties to the conflict and the security forces. The volume also depicts the enormous debt Colombia owes to LGBTIQ+ people who have been branded as "sick" or "criminals".

"As a feminist on the Commission, it was a great opportunity to explain to society how patriarchy, racism and discrimination fostered, justified and legitimised violence against women and LGBTIQ+ people," Salomé Gómez Corrales, Gender Coordinator of the

Colombian Truth Commission, tells us. It was her team that convinced the Commission to dedicate a separate chapter to women and LGBTIQ+ people in the final report. “Without the voices of women, it would not have been possible to clarify what happened in the Colombian conflict,” she says. The state had violated their fundamental rights and thus exposed them to violence. The 10,864 women told their stories “to find relief and to demand from the government and society that this violence not be repeated”. She counts the nationwide publication of the chapter on women and the LGBTIQ+ community among the moments of the “greatest joy and peace of mind” of the past five years.

### Women in dealing with the past

The *testimonios*, the testimonies of the witnesses to the conflict, play a central role in establishing the truth and in reconciliation, explains Carla Ruta from our cooperation partner, the Switzerland-Colombia Working Group. The conflict has polarised society. “Everyone sees only the victims and suffering of their own camp. This report lets everyone have their say.” The testimonies of 2000 members of the diaspora were also included, which is otherwise largely ignored by truth commissions.

Since 2016, hundreds of conflict-affected women have participated in Women’s Peace Tables (WPTs), which we have conducted together with our project partners Comunitar and Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres. At the WPTs, they

worked through their experiences of violence and resistance, received psycho-social support, formulated strategies together and made demands for a new social order, united by their striving for peace and truth, says Zully Meneses Hernández, Director of Comunitar. Truth Commission staff recorded many of the women’s *testimonios* at the WPTs. In this way, they became part of the final report and of Colombian history. The fact that the women’s experiences are made visible in the report is a tribute to their contribution to peacebuilding, says Zully.

The newly elected left-progressive government in Colombia has promised to implement the Commission’s recommendations and will hold consultations with representatives of the women’s movement to create a national action plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on “Women, Peace and Security”. The armed conflict may officially be over, but women continue to be exposed to violence and to a militarised understanding of security. The peace work continues.

On our website you can find more information about our work in Colombia under Activities – Projects.

The cover picture shows women and LGBTIQ+ people at a meeting with members of the Truth Commission after the publication of the final report. (© María Paula Durán/Comision de la Verdad).

## The final Truth Commission report

*“We bring a message of hope and a future for our broken and shattered country. Uncomfortable truths that challenge our dignity, a message for all of us as human beings... A message of truth to end the unbearable tragedy of conflict...”*

So begins the final report presented by the Commission on 28 June 2022. The newly elected president, Gustavo Petro, said at the time that the “permanent cycle of violence” must be severed. The Truth Commission’s report, he said, forms the basis for peaceful coexistence in the future.

Here are some of the most important recommendations:

- The government should press ahead with the full implementation of the Peace Agreement, including negotiations with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional ELN. The security of former combatants should be guaranteed.
- A new vision of security should be created that promotes peace as a public good, with people at the centre.

- A new Ministry of Peace and Reconciliation should be responsible for the implementation of the peace process and contribute to reconciliation in general.

The report on women and LGBTIQ+ people, “Mi cuerpo es la verdad”, lists 15 pages of concrete recommendations:

- Strengthen state capacities to make progress on gender equality.
- Strengthen the role of women and ensure adequate reparations for women victims of the armed conflict.
- Seek cultural and social changes to end violence against women, including a call to the government to sign agreements for women’s equality and the abolition of patriarchy “to build peace.”

More information on the Commission’s website: [www.comisiondelaverdad.co/](http://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/)

# Bringing sparks to glow

With the Feminist Peace Initiatives, we finance projects that arise from our network. Events organised by us or our partners provide the impetus from which new ideas emerge and are passed on. This, too, is what feminist peace work is about.

You probably have experienced this: at a webinar, a discussion or a workshop you learn about something that triggers a thought or even a specific idea that would be of great relevance to your networks or to your own work. Without funding to turn the idea into reality, this spark often goes out.

With the Feminist Peace Initiatives (FPIs), developed in 2021, our aim is to prevent such sparks from extinguishing – by making it possible to turn them into a concrete project. In this way, inputs from transnational exchange formats can be translated into local activities and continue to have an impact.

In our networking, we recognise time and again how ideas emerge at joint events or meetings but need support to be realised. The FPIs provide an opportunity to try out new formats or approaches. The variety of FPI-funded products is therefore intentionally broad.

At events organised by us or by our partners, participants are invited to apply for an FPI grant. The financial contributions range from CHF 1000 to a maximum of CHF 10,000. Applicants must define what the “end product” of their project should be. The format of these projects can range from reports to videos. We check the applications for feasibility and for proximity to the issues that are important to us as an organisation, such as peace or security.

## A wide variety of projects

After one year of experience with this instrument, the range of FPI-funded projects becomes apparent. Here are examples from two countries. FPIs have also contributed to projects in countries such as Indonesia and Ukraine (see page 4):



Left: Graphic of the podcast series of the band Clandestinas.

Above: Screenshot from a video from Guam with Hope Cristobal and her granddaughters.



**Guam:** The FPI-funded inter-generational workshop grew out of our three-part event series on demilitarisation that took place in 2021. Women who had lived through the time before the US established military bases in Guam discussed their experiences with younger activists who have known nothing but the militarised environment. One product is a video, “IHFG Kids Talk to a Resource Protector”, produced by our partner I Hagan Famalao’an Guåhan (IHFG). It shows Hope Cristobal, a former Senator of Guam, in conversation with her granddaughters about the environmental effects of militarisation and what the people on the Pacific island of Guam can do to protect natural resources.

**Brazil:** An international dialogue on democratic change and feminism in Latin America took place during the “Gender-Based Violence and its Intersectionalities” webinar in 2021. Brazilian participants picked up on two key topics: gender-based and institutional violence. Vera Viera, a long-time member of our network, used the FPI contribution to produce the podcast series “Conversinha Afiada”, which deals with peace and gender justice. This series is available in Portuguese, Spanish and English. In the podcast series “Fala, Clandestina!”, produced by the queer feminist band Clandestinas, the band members discuss pressing issues such as violence against women or LGBTQIA+ people through their song lyrics.

FPI funding will continue into 2023, with fewer projects, greater regional concentration and with transnational impact.

More information about these projects can be found in the “Feminists Connecting for Peace” magazine (under Network on our website). The “Conversinha Afiada” and the “Fala, Clandestinas!” podcasts are available on Spotify. You can find the video of the Guam project by entering the title on YouTube.



# Platform for knowledge sharing

Even before the Russian war of aggression, women in eastern Ukraine were barely heard, their needs and concerns ignored. Our pilot programme, launched in 2021, opened up spaces where women discussed issues and formulated demands to make their everyday lives safer. We are picking up where we left off with the new Women's Platform for Peace.

We decided to get involved in the place where the situation of women had already been precarious before 24 February 2022: in eastern Ukraine, in the then autonomous regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. A study conducted by our partner, KFR Public Alternative (PA), on the perceived and lived security of women in eastern Ukraine made clear how multiple insecurities shaped the everyday lives of these women. We facilitated several Women's Peace Tables with PA in 2021, where the experiences of physical and psychological violence, discrimination and poverty were articulated. Together, the women formulated demands to politicians.

## Continuing to work – despite the war

With financial contributions from the Feminist Peace Initiatives (FPIs), participants implemented their own projects on issues relevant to their everyday lives (see page 3). This year, six projects came to fruition in spite of the most difficult of conditions. They laid the groundwork for further collaboration – in defiance of the war.

In the past few months, we have further developed our Ukraine programme. The follow-up project, Women's Platform for Peace (WPP), builds on experiences and activities shared so far. The focus continues to be on issues that are of central importance to women: experience of violence, economic exclusion, and lack of jobs, retraining or opportunities for further education. Now it is a question of further developing what has been achieved through the smaller projects. The WPP offers the women a safe space for this work.

## First virtual workshops

In September, over 30 women participated in the first virtual WPP workshop. The women presented their projects and discussed what had happened so far. The topic of security – beyond the prevailing military definition – was again a focus of discussions. We invited three experts: from Afghanistan, from Kosovo as well as our Board member Sidonia Gabriel, Advisor for Human Security at the Swiss Foreign Ministry in Sri Lanka. They all shared their experiences in dealing with the past and with reconciliation work, investigating war crimes, and reconstruction. Despite the different contexts, all the women had similar questions about the importance of comprehensive security. Another workshop, on communication, took place in November.

More workshops are planned for 2023. The women will decide in which areas they

want to acquire new knowledge, as well as where they themselves can impart it. As soon as the security situation allows, the meetings will take place physically.

Read more about our work in Ukraine in Newsletter 1/2022 and in Newsletter 2/2021 on our website under Publications – Newsletter. You can find information about our Emergency Relief Fund and our appeals on our home page.

## Your legacy is in good hands

**Do you want your lifelong commitment to women to have an impact beyond your lifetime?**

**PeaceWomen Across the Globe and its partners are committed to a more just society. With your legacy you contribute towards this.**

**Deciding on a legacy takes care and time. We are happy to support you.**

**Please contact Franziska Vogel, +41 31 312 02 40 or [franziska.vogel@1000peacewomen.org](mailto:franziska.vogel@1000peacewomen.org)**

**We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your commitment to peace and your trust in our work.**

## For peace and gender justice

**Please support our women's peace work with a donation.**

**Thank you!**

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