

Feminization of Female FARC-EP Combatants: From War Battle to Social-Economical Struggle

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Abstract

Women combatants of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) participated in the Colombian peace process at different stages, at the negotiation table, at the signing of the agreement, and in the implementation of the accords. However, the process of reincorporation into civil society also produces new roles that do not appear in the Peace Agreement. Once they lay down their arms, FARC-EP women want to enjoy all human rights and expand their freedoms. But the societies that receive them have structural flaws in the way they are treated. They are acquiring, adapting, or resisting gender regulations, not widely available in the armed group. Based on qualitative fieldwork, this research aims to expose functionings and real capabilities, in the light of dimensions of reincorporation. Further evaluations of achievements and limitations suggest that female FARC-EP ex-combatants face greater barriers, burdens, and gaps than their male counterparts. These refer to unpaid domestic and care work, and gender-based violence and discrimination.

Keywords

FARC-EP, DDR, woman, social inequalities, capability approach, reincorporation, unpaid and domestic care work, intersectionality, gender discrimination, feminization of poverty

Introduction

Women have been systematically excluded from most peace processes (True & Riveros-Morales, 2019). Nevertheless, the Peace Agreement signed in 2016 between the Colombian government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (hereafter FARC-EP) is fully recognized as one of the most comprehensive accords ever made, where victims and affected communities broadly participated (Iniciativa Barómetro, 2018; Salvesen & Nylander, 2017). One of the outstanding results was the establishment of the Sub-commission on Gender and its cross-cutting

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adoption during dialogues (Huertas et al., 2017). Despite this milestone, the gender approach in negotiations does not guarantee an egalitarian reintegration, namely reincorporation into the FARC-EP process.¹

After laying down their arms, former women combatants began the process of reincorporation into Colombian civil society. A comprehensive reincorporation refers to the social, economic, political, cultural, and psychological components included in the normalization of civilian life—early and the long-term—of people who have laid down their arms (ARN, 2019). Subsequently, they assume new roles and face expectations associated with being born with a woman's body. For many, that place either did not exist or has yet to be built up. They will be mothers, daughters, sisters, students, leaders, and workers, in a society that is not politically neutral towards gender.

When I completed preliminary fieldwork to orientate my research question, I joined some staff of the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN) to visit productive projects of Colombian ex-combatants. I was very surprised that women, mostly, were the ones running the family business. During 3 weeks, we visited 25 initiatives each day located predominantly at home: hairdressing salons, clothes-making machines, greengrocers, pet shops, street fast food carts, ice-cream parlors, and small grocery stores. I expected to see former guerrilla and paramilitary men. Instead, I met Martha, Carolina, Vanessa, Tatiana, and Olga. I noticed women have been taking an active role in peacebuilding in Colombia, but I had to figure out what was happening behind.

Previous research has described new social roles of women's FARC-EP (Barrios & Richter, 2019; Barrios Sabogal, 2020), but there have been no gender analyses in terms of human development. Additionally, once they move from Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation (ETCR) and are dispersed in many locations, it is harder to collect data. Besides the initial census (UNAL, 2017), no updated database includes characterization based on gender approach; what we have are sets of qualitative narratives gathered from field research (Santamaría & Hernández, 2020). Thus, the questions that will guide this research are, firstly, what kind of capabilities are female FARC-EP combatants developing to achieve a comprehensive reincorporation? Secondly, are there differences in the reincorporation process compared to male counterparts? I will use the capability approach to identify the set of liberties, and the real opportunities they have to foster their human development (Nussbaum, 2000; Robeyns, 2011, 2017). As Martha Nussbaum argues, women have all too often been treated as the supporters of the ends of others, rather than as ends in their own, therefore, international political and economic thought must be sensitive to gender difference as a problem of social justice.

In the following sections, I will first explain the core concepts of the theoretical approach used for the analysis. Then I will discuss the method and tools of data collection. Afterward, I will present the findings in light of the dimensions given by the reincorporation process. In the discussion section, I will explain how women are (re)adopting traditional gender roles, and their effects the capability building. Finally, I will conclude with some recommendations.

Theoretical Background

More than 20 years ago, resolution 1325 on Women's Peace and Security, the United Nations Security Council (2000), capitalized on the importance of ensuring women's protection and full participation in the peace process. The egalitarian approach of the resolution reaffirms the four Ps of women's rights: Participation, Prevention, Promotion, and Protection. Despite women's more recent inclusion, war is largely understood as a masculine endeavor for which a woman may serve as a victim, spectator, or prize (Shekhawat, 2015). However, women have played an active role in both wartime and peacebuilding.

Studies in Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reinsertion, and Reintegration (DDR) suggest that during wartime women took on traditionally masculine roles: receiving military training, carrying weapons, participating on the battlefields, behaving fiercely, even violently (Dietrich Ortega, 2014). While women are encouraged in this context to become masculine, and “feeling like men,” expected to adopt traditional roles when they demobilize, “they are relegated to the private domain within the four walls of domesticity to play one socially attributed role—that of women” (Shekhawat, 2015, p. 1). Thus, the sort of “shield” they had in the armed group breaks down, and they enter the continuum of gender asymmetries (Dietrich-Ortega, 2015). Previous arguments are based on the idea that gender is not only given by individual preferences, but also by social norms and traditions placed upon it.

There is no doubt that female ex-combatants have developed freedoms in the new setting, but some of them are subordinated to gender roles. To analyze them, I will use the capability approach. This theoretical framework is centered on the idea that human development must be comprehended in terms of expanding human freedoms, not just economies (Sen, 2000). It is based on two key aspects: *capabilities* understood as freedoms, and *functionings*, which are “beings” and “doings” that people have reason to value (Nussbaum, 2012). For instance, two workers have the same functioning about having a job, but they do not have the same capability, if one of them does it formally, while the other does it informally because she has no other choice. Therefore, this approach helps to evaluate achievements, substantive freedom, and real opportunities (Anand, 2011). The notion of agency used here include both, the social regulatory burdens and the decisions individual, group or collective subject makes with them (O’Reilly, 2018). This development framework is useful to explain the phenomenon of the feminization of poverty, and gender inequalities (Robeyns, 2011) in women ex-combatants.

Methodology

This research is in line with the studies of Anthropology of experience, which allows us to understand how individuals experience their culture (Turner & Bruner, 1986). The type of study is descriptive/interpretative. I used the ethnographic method to facilitate direct contact with the actors under study (Aguirre, 1995; Guber, 2001), based on observation, semi-structured interviews, and indirect interviews—or guided informal conversations—. The indirect questionnaires were based on the characterization of the cultural variables, given from the initial categories of the research (Espina, 1997).

It is not easy to reach out to the former guerrilla population and gain their trust. Thus, I had to use convenience sampling and snowball sampling. In the beginning, I contacted former combatants through institutional ties, then it was extended to a network of contacts provided by key participants. These are people with a formal position in the organization, able to reach out to more participants in closed environments. The qualitative design included two fieldwork visits, in 2017 and 2019. I chose different areas and diverse actors to reduce community bias. I visited two rural and one urban reincorporation areas: Vereda San José, Mutatá (Antioquia); Vereda Venus (Valle del Cauca); and, the city of Medellín, respectively. Participants from the city constantly referred to Mutatá as the reincorporation area that most quickly established productive projects in the country. For its part, the productive projects in Valle del Cauca were being implemented in partnership with host communities.² I carried out 43 direct interviews in Spanish, with participants belonging to ARN, the UNDP Rural Development Program; social and political leaders of COMUNES, leaders of worker cooperatives COMUNES, ex-combatants in the headquarters of the Casa del COMÚN, Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA) and, some NGOs on the ground. I asked for informed consent to make the recordings and take the photographs. The names of the participants are changed to protect their identity. The ethical dimension was adopted during the design of the research and was systematically considered throughout the process, following question guides and checklists at each stage (Chirk et al., 2006).

During the research, I followed the phases of description, coding, interpretation, analysis, and theoretical construction (Guba & Lincoln, 2011). First, I analyzed the interviews, observations, and notes taken after the conversations through repetitive listening/reading; it was useful to identify thematic units. Second, I proceeded to select the material to be transcribed and translated. Third, I created a matrix of analysis, based on the dimensions of reincorporation and the documentary review: capabilities (freedoms), gender, community, family, affective ties, preferences, poverty, dimensions of reincorporation, economic inclusion, and personal attributes such as age, sex, living space, productive vocation. Differentiated experiences between men and women served as emerging categories. Fourth, I coded quotes and excerpts from the participants and placed them in the matrix. Fifth, I compared expressions and textual fragments of the same thematic unit (for instance, informal work). Sixth, I triangulated the results: quotations, categories, and theoretical references.

Results: Womens' Struggles in a Post-Peace Agreement Setting

Following Nussbaum's argument, if one wants to apply the capability approach the questions would not be, how satisfied are women FARC-EP ex-combatants? Or, how many resources are they able to manage? It is, instead, what are they able to do and to be? In other words, what real opportunities do they have to expand their freedoms? To tackle this approach, I will present the findings in light of the components of comprehensive reincorporation.

Exercise of Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Previous research confirmed that reproduction was strictly regulated during wartimes (Ancil & Tillman, 2015; Bouvier, 2016). Motherhood was a denied capability, but not completely absent, due to the mobile nature of the guerrilla where most slept in tents, and the intense armed confrontations (Barrios & Richter, 2019; Barrios Sabogal, 2020). In the reports of the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2017, 2018) many women said they were forced to have abortions and, some had to leave their children with relatives or in the closest village to their area of operations. As expressed by a peace signatory "I asked God to let me get pregnant this year, I am going to turn 40 before I could not have children [...] well, I did have one, but I had to give it away in a town near the camp," she adds later "there are still mothers and children who have not been reunited" (Diana, Indirect interview, July 4, 2019).

Both men and women identified reincorporation as an invaluable opportunity to have a home and to have children. One participant said, "I'm not asking the state for anything, if it doesn't want to give

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me land, then don't give it to me. All I want is for it to let me see my children grow up in peace [as she watched her three children run around on the hillside]" (Maria, Interview, August 14, 2019). Although there are no exact figures, a 2.6% increase in the total birth rate has been detected in the areas

affected by the armed conflict compared to the rest of the country, some have called it the FARC "baby boom" (Guerra-Cujar et al., 2020).

Leaders and Promoters of Social Change

Social and community leadership affects human wellbeing and socio-affective reincorporation. It implies acceptance and participation, guided by a feeling of inclusion that diminishes the stigma of the guerrilla

among a wider public (Barrios et al., 2020). Indeed, the social commitment of FARC-EP ex-combatants shifts the logic of adversaries for a cooperative relationship, in the places they are working along with the communities (Peña-Sarmiento & Valencia-Casallas, 2019). In this sense, it drives the reparation of the social fabric destroyed during the armed conflict. Nevertheless, social reincorporation is not always exhaustive, as a participant recognized “[social] exclusion is also a type of punishment” (Diana, Indirect interview, July 4, 2019).

Historically in Colombia, having belonged to the guerrilla represents a stigma. In social imaginaries, it is synonymous with murderer, kidnapper, terrorist, rapist, and delinquent (Rhyn, 2019). This stigma makes society tend to reject guerrilla women, as stated by an ex-combatant “they look down on us because we have taken up arms, they are afraid of women who insubordinate themselves and took up arms” (Olga, Indirect interview, July 2, 2019). Socially speaking, these narratives have been changing, but unfortunately

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not yet inside the families of former combatants. As one participant said, “we receive a rejection from our families, men are not rejected, they are welcomed as heroes. When we go back to live with our relatives, they have taken away our rights to the land or the inheritance left to us by our parents. We are an inconvenience to our families” (Tatiana, Virtual interview, October 29, 2021). This type of rejection or “re-destination,” as one participant called it, is a product of the structural inequalities of Colombian society. A man with a gun could be seen as a strength, power, status, and family pride. On the contrary, women receive disapproval, shame, and dishonor. That forces them to remain in the private sphere.

FARC-EP ex-combatants also have fears regarding the assassination of social leaders in the country. One participant said “They are killing us, it is not an annihilation of ex-combatants, nor the extermination of the 80s. [...] In Colombia, they kill the social fabric because it is a danger to the power elites [...] before we had weapons to defend ourselves, now we do not” (V́ctor, Virtual interview, February 3, 2021). Until June 2022, more than 1,327 leaders have been killed since the signing of the peace agreement, of which 185 were women and 327 are former combatants (Indepaz, 2022). The situation is not an incentive to develop these functionings (Figure 1).

Political Participation

Covered in point 2 of the Peace Agreement, the political party FARC—Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común—was created. This continuity with the acronym was strongly criticized, so, as of January 2021, it officially changed its name to “Comunes.” Thus, to avoid associations with both the extinct guerrilla and those FARC dissidents that keep its name. Based on the agreement, they have guaranteed five seats in the House of Representatives and five in the Senate during the next two legislatures. Out of 10 seats, only two are held by women. They face major challenges if want to win the popular vote, as an ex-combatant said “we needed to lay down our arms to start along the political path and change the logic of war for political one [...], over time [in the FARC] the ideological core, the political action, began to fade away. Arms without politics are useless. Arms without politics turn us into a criminal gang. Now the war is at the ballot box” (Darío, Interview, June 12, 2019).

One of the most memorable moments occurred in 2020. It was the first time that a senator of the FARC party presided over a plenary session in Congress: Griselda Lobo Silva, known as Sandra Ramírez, was elected senator with 52,532 votes. Also in July 2020, Francia Márquez was the first black woman to be elected president of the Consejo Nacional para la Paz, la Reconciliación y la Convivencia (Barometer Initiative Peace Accords Matrix, 2020); she was also elected vice-president of the Republic of Colombia in the recent 2022 presidential elections. These are outstanding achievements, that is, functioning’s, but isolated cases if one knows the participation of women in Colombia: 57.9% (11/19) in



Figure 1. Mountain village, 2 h and a half driving from the nearest town center, Vereda Venus, 2019.

ministerial positions, 18.3% (31/169) in the lower chamber (Senate), and 21.7% (23/106) in the upper one (House of Representatives) (ONU Mujeres, 2021).

Political participation in the country is still dominated by traditional elites who refuse to have a more inclusive agenda. It is still difficult for women, FARC-EP inclusive, to reach decision-making arenas (Phelan & True, 2021; True & Riveros-Morales, 2019), and when they attain, they are confronted with a highly polarised society. The plebiscite in 2016 illustrates this situation perfectly: the No vote obtained 50.21%, while the Yes vote obtained 49.7%. Although the inclusion of the gender approach in the Agreement was exemplary, the right-wing in Colombia took advantage of this in their almost successful attempt to defeat the peace accord in the plebiscite. Those reactionary groups used that “gender ideology”³ to spread the idea that it would threaten the traditional family, and that homosexuality was being promoted, among additional false and sexist information.

Education

The former FARC-EP women have assumed processes of certification of competencies, developing beings, and doings regarding this educational opportunity. Many signatories know that if they are not certified they will not leave the informal economies that put them on the edge of poverty. As expressed by a former combatant: “I know that I have to study, I had never had the opportunity and now that I have it, I cannot waste it [...] if you do not have a degree, you have to stay working as a farmer, and that is a very ungrateful job” (Estella, Interview, August 1, 2019). But FARC-EP

ex-combatants would prefer more practically “not sitting for hours in a room. Learning by doing, as we did there” (Víctor, Interview, June 12, 2019).

Although all female combatants received some type of training during their belonging to the armed group, these skills are not certified. One of the most common cases is of people who performed

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nursing tasks, this is how a training leader of the national agency expressed “in the rural context they were strongly trained to perform manoeuvres during a combat, but that does not imply that they are technically trained to work in a hospital” (Jenifer, Interview, August 9,

2019). Alejo Vargas, one of the UNAL census leaders, said “there is a know-how that is not necessarily formal knowledge” (Gómez, 2017).

Access to the education system is a basic component of long-term reincorporation. Education articulates labor reintegration (job search) and makes sustainable their productive project: “The agency has 17 years of experience with more than 72,000 people who demobilised, both individually and collectively [...] a successful reintegration process takes between 7 to 10 years” (Camilo, Interview, June 6, 2019). For the former guerrillas, education should not be a condition for the economic subsidies. Instead, they prefer immediate economic reintegration: “if you are single, you can survive on the money they give us, but if you have children, you cannot stop working [...] How am I going to go to study without an additional income? it is not easy to support a family with the basic income and pay the buses to go to study, or move to the city” (Olga, Indirect interview, July 5, 2019). In consequence, if access to education is conditional on additional income, therefore it is not substantive freedom.

Although institutional provisions in the rural areas are more limited, if they still live in the ETCR, FARC-EP ex-combatants can access “Arando la Educación” (UNAD, 2019). It is a basic education model settled in the reincorporation spaces not limited to ex-combatants; the host community can also beneficiate from the program. After completing basic education, ex-combatants can enroll in job training, but some ex-combatants do not seem to be very satisfied: “they give us all the same content, regardless of where we are settled, it seems that [for the government] we all want to fish, livestock and poultry farming, as if there were nothing different to do in the countryside” (Matías, Direct interview, July 24, 2019).

Economic Empowerment

Economic reintegration is a key aspect of comprehensive and sustainable reincorporation. For many people in Colombia, productive roles are mandatory, not optional. There is marked monetary poverty of 35.7% and extreme monetary poverty of 9.6%, which is worse in

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populated and dispersed rural centers, with a national average of 47.5% (DANE, 2019). Although education has proven to be the best social elevator, in Colombia it takes 11 generations to get out of poverty (OECD, 2022).

Hence, structural inequalities drive other types of poverty, so “if you don’t have a job, you and any of your children probably can’t study,” said a FARC-EP ex-combatant (Diana, Indirect interview, July 4, 2019).

Women peace signatories achieve their economic security through two routes: insertion into the labor market, and setting up a productive project. In the first case, according to an ARN officer, “75% of people in the reintegration process get jobs, but only 25% of them achieve it through formal

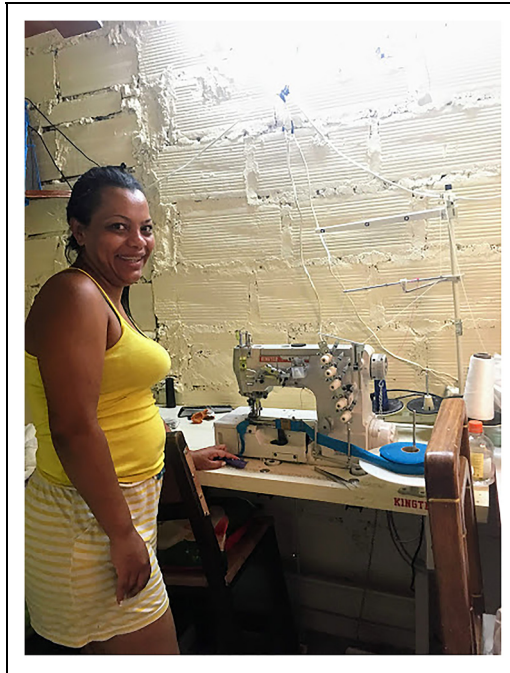


Figure 2. Ex-combatant with a sewing machine, Medellín, 2017.

employment.” There is no single cause, he adds: “low training, lack of certification of both skills and previous work experience; stigmatization by large employers and selection recruiters; and, of course, it converges the conditions of informal employment in Colombia” (Carlos, Interview, May 17, 2019). Even though many ex-combatants are interested in exercising non-traditional professions, they get jobs in tasks associated with female professions, such as domestic work, tailors, secretaries, and hairdressers (Dietrich Ortega, 2014). The reason may not be related to their capability of choice, but rather to the absence of opportunities to find a job in a different domain (Figure 2).

Productive projects can be implemented individually or collectively with FARC-EP comrades. None of them escapes from drawbacks (Lopera-Arbeláez, 2021). As stated by one leader of Comunes, “there are problems in access to land, allocation of resources due to difficulties in the formulation of projects [...] and geographical location of the reincorporation areas do not facilitate the distribution of the products” (Darío, Interview, June 26, 2019). During interviews, an additional factor emerged: business training. This is not a negligible issue because certifying competencies to do a job is not enough to successfully manage a productive project, that needs complementary training in business administration.

The capabilities approach does not ignore the fact that economic empowerment reinforces alternative capabilities. Particularly, for women ex-combatants, an income of their own strengthens their professional career, access to credits, rights to property, and land ownership (ILO, 2009). The benefits are amplified if it gets it through formal employment. When women receive legal social security, they are more confident to plan their future (Escobar-Espinoza et al., 2019; Martínez & Lefebvre, 2019). Furthermore, female economic empowerment is a protective factor against gender-based violence providing confidence to leave relationships when aggression occurs (Aizer, 2010; Rodríguez, 2015). Thus, the “employment effect” is greater than the income effect in women’s lives.

Breaking Gender Regulations: Challenges with Reincorporation

While they have achieved equality in functions during the armed struggle, women are expected to return to traditional gender roles after disarmament (Boutron & Gómez, 2017). The implications are compelling. Firstly, female ex-combatants, similar to female noncombatants, have limited possibilities for their human development in the societies that host them (Robeyns, 2011). Secondly, the redefinition of gender relations that occurred during wartime, including greater gender equality, access to new roles for women, participation in decision making, and leadership of social organizations, rarely persists in the postconflict scenario; especially if state and nonstate actors are interested in comprehensive DDR do not implement strategies in that direction (Zirion Landaluze, 2018).

To identify the differences between female and male ex-combatants of the FARC-EP, it is precise to point out the conversion factors. Robeyns (2017, p. 43) defined them as “the factors that determine the degree to which a person can transform a resource into a functioning.” Using Sen’s example, people can have the same resource, a bicycle; however, if one does not know how to ride, has a disability, there are no roads to ride on, or riding in certain places puts her integrity at risk, she will present greater difficulties in her capability of mobility. Thus, the (un)balance of capabilities, structural inequalities, and systemic oppressions allow us to understand choices, practices, and effects on women’s lives.

FARC-EP men and women, at the initial moment of disarmament, received equal access to resources: a single normalization allowance of COP 2 million (€450), basic monthly income (90% of the minimum wage), one-off support for the productive project of COP 8 million (around €1,900), and equal opportunities in the reincorporation route. Nevertheless, 6 years later, women have a different experience of reincorporation than men in affective, social, political, educational, and economic components, as was presented before. Assuming that they were receiving relatively the same conditions during wartime, and arrived at moment zero with the same freedoms, why do the same resources produce different results postagreement? The answer is not in the physical conditions, but rather in social attributions and gender stereotypes.

The feminisation of female FARC-EP members starts as soon as they lay down their arms. Women ex-combatants leave the military order behind and begin the process of acquiring, that is, performing, the signification of the feminine in the culture that hosts them. Gendered expectations shape certain beings and doings associated with hegemonic values placed upon women such as love, care, fragility, tenderness, sensitivity, and kindness. The series of continued social performances consistent with the

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gender conventions produce an illusion of essence, the feminine must be (Butler, 2004). Therefore, the aforementioned “return” or “reintegration” pushes them into the flawed and unequal social structures that exist in the background. Shekhawat (2015)

argues that female combatants have to face the continuum of the patriarchal structure, even though they experienced occasional ruptures during wartime. Those ruptures, namely masculinization or relative equality, are followed by the (re)adoption of gender regulations post-agreement, because “war and peace to these women are mere stages in a continuation of structural gender inequality and violence against women” (Lahai, 2015, p. 140).

Feminization does not imply that women, or what is attributed to the feminine, are destined for traditional roles, private life, or subordination. It does, however, recognize the general provisions of social structures and culture. As one participant points out, “this is the social structure we have, this is Colombian society” (Natalia, Interview, May 25, 2019). One could argue that women decide to (re)adopt gender roles, or one might understand that preferences are conditional on social structures, and the options available to them are narrow. In this way, we can evaluate opportunities that are real (or not) for the development of free agency. In the analyzed case, two main conditions negatively



Figure 3. Male ex-combatants removing earth after a landslide, while women prepared lemonade to give them, Mutatá, 2019.

affect the human development of female FARC-EP ex-combatants: unpaid domestic and care work, which makes them economically vulnerable, and gender violence (Figure 3).

Unpaid Domestic and Care Work: “las nuevas a(r)mas de casa”

Family members, household, and house stuff imply time and work for its support. Unpaid domestic and care work (UDnCW) comprises the activities required for life support, such as providing food, cleaning the home, and caring for children and the sick or disabled. Women ex-combatants pay an invisible tax, as they are primarily responsible for the care of people, in tasks with very little participation of men, and with little supply of public services. This sexual division of labor constitutes an unfair barrier and causes time poverty among women. In Colombia, the National time-use survey (ENUT) identified that women spent twice as much time daily on this work, on average 7 h and 14 min, while men spent 3 h and 25 min, in other words, women contribute three-quarters of the unpaid work in households (DANE and ONU Mujeres, 2020). Even though there are no figures about people in the process of reincorporation, the qualitative fieldwork confirmed that women are adopting these burdens.

Since women ex-combatants have started having children, UDnCR has increased in their daily lives. The context makes them quickly fit into the pre-established roles of caregivers, one participant said “men are out on the streets looking for work, and women are at home taking care of the children. We tell them, no! don’t do it, did you forget everything we learned over there?” (Esteban, Virtual Interview, August 31, 2021). There is no single reason, in the words of a participant:

[Female ex-combatants] want to stay at home, some because they have never had a home, and despite knowing female empowerment, they want to enjoy being mothers and cook for their husbands. Others, for example, have up to three children, and women are the ones who stay with the children, even if they have partners. The women are raising them alone. Another thing is that most of them are older women, they are old for everyone, [and] we all have physical injuries from the war (Tatiana, Virtual interview, October 29, 2021).

To reduce UDnCW, 16 reincorporation areas have been implemented in “Building peace: reincorporation processes from the care systems with a gender perspective in the ETCR” led by LIMPAL, COMUNES, ARN, UNDP, UN Women, among other organizations (Torres, 2021). The main purpose of this project is to redistribute the workload collectively in “care spaces.” The Communes party, in the Comprehensive strategy for the reincorporation of FARC women document, recognizes that collective agreement and shared responsibility are essential to avoid the reproduction of gender stereotypes; these actions should be based on the cartography of reincorporation, the structural vulnerabilities of minorities and, the intersectional approach (FARC, 2020). However, neither legal equality nor paid work has been able to erase this female burden.

One of the most unfortunate effects of ex-combatants’ unpaid care work is their inability to develop additional capabilities. As the OECD policy brief states, time is a limited resource (Ferrant et al., 2014). Every minute more than a woman ex-combatant spends on this kind of beings and doings represents 1 min less than she could be potentially spending on political participation, market-related activities, cultural consumption, leisure time, or investing in her educational and vocational skills. The effects get worse by the fact that women must be fixed to the household. The need for flexible hours is a powerful incentive to take on informal jobs. Such jobs increase their vulnerability and reproduce the feminization of poverty. It constitutes, therefore, a poverty trap (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011). Although many women do not feel a sense of injustice and even justify these social roles, they pay a high cost for taking on these gender functionings. Thus, the cost of motherhood and becoming a housewife, without any re-distribution of work, tend to restrain their full development.

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Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination

The FARC-EP collective recognizes that domestic violence, political violence, and social violence are differential risks that occur during the reincorporation of women. The double stigma and social sanction experienced for having transgressed the social order and traditional gender roles by joining the insurgency are examples. Likewise, rejection by their families, being deprived of the right to inheritance, being considered apolitical, or the lack of access to resources in the countryside, of them are types of structural violence (Galtung, 1969). In the strategy for the reincorporation of FARC-EP women, it is stated:

It is essential to take into account that these risks are deepened if we included ethnic belonging of women and other types of intersections, which can lead to greater disadvantages, violence, and discrimination. Therefore, it reiterates the need to incorporate gender, differential, ethnic, intersectional, and especially women’s rights approach as strategic frameworks to understand and overcome the condition of vulnerability to which FARC women are exposed (FARC, 2020, p. 14).

Affective discrimination against FARC-EP women is also gender-based violence. It has been expressed in difficulties in establishing sex-affective relationships with non-FARC people. As a peace signatory

recognized: “our couples are comrades, whom we have shared a living camp [...] with the boys from outside it is more difficult, women often have to hide it, because they do not understand that we have had a life in the FARC” (Carolina, Indirect interview, July 6, 2019). One participant added, “I know a girl who, when her partner’s family realised that she was a guerrilla fighter, the relationship almost ended” (Diana, Indirect interview, July 6, 2019). In this matter, negative prejudices remain in the culture.

Regarding domestic violence, few cases have come to light. An official from the national agency acknowledges the under-reporting: “we do perceive that it exists, but they do not report it. They do not recognise it either because we are in a machista society, and because of the lifestyle they lead, they normalise this situation” (Natalia, Virtual interview, April 1, 2022). Robyns (2011, p. 78) pointed out: “domestic violence could be argued to be more devastating for victims than violence outside the home, as it might leave victims without a safe place to live, with no one to trust, and anxieties about the safety of their children.” Assessing the capability for bodily integrity and safety is difficult, especially in this private sphere. Nevertheless, it is further evidence that FARC women ex-combatants are adopting these traditional gender roles, with the negative burdens they entail.

Intersectionality is a valuable analytical tool for understanding and responding to how gender regulations intersect with other functionings. As the OXFAM practice paper defines: “The experiences of marginalization and privilege are not only defined by gender, but by other identity factors, such as

Intersectionality is a valuable analytical tool for understanding and responding to how gender regulations intersect with other functionings.

race, class, and sexual orientation, to name a few—all of which are determined, shaped by, and embedded in social systems of power” (Bolis & Hughes, 2015, p. 3). It recognizes the multiple and intersecting systems of oppression and implies that there is no single form of discrimination.

During the fieldwork, gender discrimination not only persisted, but was accentuated by the fact that they were ex-combatants, ex-insurgents, peasants, poor, indigenous, afro-descendants, and older women.

Rurality was one of the emerging categories for understanding women’s reincorporation. Despite female ex-combatants recognized direct benefices in the ETCR: more opportunities to redistribute UDnCW, access to training and education, food stipend, and housing support, projects have failed to be sustainable. The lack of productive opportunities in the most remote territories makes them dependent on the monthly basic income. One participant affirmed:

[Talking about one-off support for the productive project] That’s not even enough to sell empanadas.⁴ That has not been successful, the only way to be successful was to be productive. That was not possible. People have very specific concerns: one, land. Look, they tell us, I need a plot of land, two or three hectares so that I can work it. Others, they say, housing. That is another urgent need. That’s the biggest one. Give me a roof over my head, a place to live, a place to put my children, a place to stay, especially women. Then, we could talk about the rest. The rest is health, is work, is education, the rest is political participation. They are all asking for housing, productive projects, and land (Tatiana, Virtual interview, October 29, 2021).

Mostly of FARC-EP ex-combatants have preferred to abandon the ETCR in pursuit of employment and possibilities of achieving economic empowerment. According to the UN Verification Mission, only 17% live there, and one-third have moved to New Areas of Reincorporation (NAR) (UN Security Council, 2022). The NAR is also rural, but the land was bought collectively. Ownership of the land gives them the confidence to implement projects, otherwise, the state may move them anytime from the ETCR. Nevertheless, in the countryside, there is less opportunity for women’s human development (ONU Mujeres Colombia et al., 2020).

Time and Space, New Directions of Analysis

After laying down their arms, female FARC-EP combatants have expanded their basic freedoms to achieve a comprehensive reincorporation. However, almost 6 years later, they have gradually and progressively taken on gender regulations, with the burdens they entail. To combat the feminization of poverty and gender-based discrimination, it is necessary to implement differentiated strategies in this direction.

The inclusion of measures of time use, or time poverty, helps to strengthen the human development and capabilities approach, as well as identify barriers that prevent people from transforming available resources into valuable capabilities, as noted in UDnCW. For DDR practitioners, including everyday, local and intersectional strategies can enhance the much-criticized standard treatment (Mac Ginty, 2021; Mac Ginty & Sanghera, 2012; Richmond & Pogodda, 2016). In this direction, proposals such as peace from below, or everyday peace, have been worked on.

Territorial provision has proven to be very effective. Bringing the institutional offer to the places where the reincorporation occurs, instead of people seeking out the institution, increases participation and scope. The programs “Arando la educación” and “Building Caring Spaces” are good examples of this. If women are fixed to households, they need opportunities closer to them. One lesson learned should be to adopt a peasant approach, to counterbalance the lack of experience of the ARN in this field. Likewise, affirmative action must be implemented by the national agency to foster women FARC-Ep ex-combatants to assume leadership roles in productive projects and included their voices in decision-making scenarios. On the other hand, it is urgent to create a program to prevent, denounce and assist gender-based violence.

Finally, the FARC-EP collective must implement transformative pedagogies to promote equality capabilities among its population. Inequality between men and women is a real problem that is happening and must be addressed. Parenthood is a shared responsibility, and gender violence could be eliminated. The postagreement scenario also requires men to stop reproducing inequalities in the public and the private sphere.

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Notes

1. Changes in language and naming can be appreciated over these 6 years. During Havana, any use of terminology associated with DDR, which implied surrender, was avoided. In the beginning, they were called “ex-combatants,” giving way to “peace signatories.” Something similar with the FARC party, now COMUNES. It is an effort to distance themselves from the stigma of the conflict and confirm their commitment to the Peace Agreement.
2. In both, individual leadership has been fundamental in mobilizing social change, but this will be developed in a later paper.
3. Gender ideology is a term that is used in a negative and derogatory way to cancel or dismiss sexual and gender diversity.
4. “Empanadas” are a very cheap and popular type of food in Colombia.

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