THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN PEACEBUILDING IN COLOMBIA

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By

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ABSTRACT

Colombia has been at war for over 60 years. Throughout this protracted conflict, several unsuccessful peace negotiations have been held. Women have participated in the conflict as peacebuilders, perpetrators, and victims. Regardless of this they have remained absent from all of the high-level negotiations.

Today the Colombian government is having peace talks with the FARC. These talks represent an opportunity to put an end to decades of protracted violence. Aiming to understand if the inclusion of women could benefit the negotiation process and the peace and stability of the country in the future a literature review on the roles of women in peacemaking and peacebuilding was performed.

Afterwards, a comparative analysis of women in peacebuilding and peacemaking in Rwanda, Liberia, and El Salvador was implemented. Subsequently, the mentioned cases were compared with the previously discussed literature, and with the Colombian conflict.

The research indicates that including women in the negotiation tables is of great importance if a long-lasting peace and a stable country are desired. Although further research should be implemented, it is believed that Colombia would greatly benefit from including women in the peacemaking.
I dedicate my thesis to everyone who helped along the way, especially to Professor Catalina Rojas and Professor Marc Chernick; I could not have done it without them.

Many thanks,
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INTRODUCTION

Colombia has been at war for over 60 years (if you count the bloody period of La Violencia that came before the guerrilla war). Throughout this protracted conflict women have played three main roles. They have been victims, perpetrators, and peacebuilders. Many times, these roles overlap.

As victims it can be said that women’s bodies have been used as a war strategy, leaving 94,565 reported cases of rape as a tactic of war in the last ten years (El Tiempo 2012). Additionally, Colombia’s bloody war has produced about 4 million internally displaced persons (Asociación Colectiva de Mujeres Al Derecho (MAD) 2012). 70% of the displaced are women (MAD 2012). As they are forced to leave their lands women are doubly victimized. According to Human Rights Watch, one in every two displaced woman suffers from sexual violence (Human Rights Watch (HRW) 2012). Impunity rates are incredibly high (Amnesty International 2011).

Women have also suffered when it comes to land titles. Even though the Colombian government has been working to help women get tittles to their lands there is still a long way to go. In 2009, the Colombian government made an estimate of the number of women that were getting land tittles in relation to men. It concluded that per every 100 men that received access to land subsidized only 39 women received similar aid from the government to buy land.

Colombian women have also been perpetrators. This can be seen in their roles as high-level commanders of some of the FARC’s and the AUC’s military fronts (Bedoya 2011). It can also be seen in the political role they played within the AUC, where women came to represent the soft face of the paramilitaries in the Colombian Congress (Sánchez and Wills 2011a). Even more, women have played a central role in the Colombian military.

Finally, women have played a key role in peacebuilding, both at the national and the local level. At the national level there are woman such as former Senator Piedad Córdoba, who dedicates her life to
peacebuilding in Colombia, by for example, constantly advocating to the liberation of those who are kidnapped by the FARC. Córdoba was nominated for a Novel Peace Price because of her work.

At the local level there are several peacebuilding initiatives that are headed by women. In the book Women that Build History (Mujeres que Hacen Historia), written by Historical Memory Group (Grupo de Memoria Historica) we can see how María Zabala, Magola, and Yolanda Izquierdo commit themselves to fighting for their rights and to making Colombia a better place (Sánchez and Wills 2011b).

In 2012, after many decades of war, and many failed negotiations, Colombia has once again entered into peace talks with the FARC in order to put an end to the guerrilla war. Issues that affect women such as drugs, land, political participation, and victimhood are being negotiated at the table. Yet women are not playing a central role when it comes to negotiations. As a matter of fact, there are no women representing the Government in the negotiations.

This research analyzes the role of women in peacebuilding in Colombia and also compares the country with other international conflicts. It attempts to answer the question of whether including women more directly in the negotiating table would help the country reach a more durable and stable peace as well as a more inclusive society.

**Validity of the Research**

In the past few years Colombia has been placing more and more attention on women and conflict. Organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Grupo de Memoria Histórica have gathered information on women as victims and perpetrators. Less attention, however, has been given to women in peacebuilding and little analysis has been performed on the importance of including them in all levels of negotiation processes and on the possible impacts that this could have on Colombia’s future.

This research focuses on that void in the literature and evaluates the following hypotheses:
1. Including a gender perspective at the high level of the negotiation table would have a positive effect in developing peace and a more stable Colombia in the future.

2. Including women in the negotiating table would help to empower women in Colombia and would therefore help to generate a more inclusive society in the future.

3. Woman have been disproportionally affected by the Colombian conflict, therefore including woman in the negotiation table would help to better address justice issues.

4. Including women in the negotiation table and listening to their claims for peace would help in developing a more successful post conflict reconstruction.

In order to avoid confusion, the subsequent definitions will be used. In this research gender will be understood as follows: “gender refers to the socially constructed roles ascribed to women and men, as opposed to biological and physical characteristics. Gender roles vary according to socioeconomic, political, and cultural contexts, and are affected by other factors, including age, class, and ethnicity. Gender roles are learned and negotiated and contested. They are therefore changeable” (Bouta, Frerks, and Banon 2005, 3). It is important to note that while it is understood that gender includes men and women, this research will mainly focus on women because of the historical discrimination they face when it comes to peacemaking.

Another key term for this research study is peacemaking, which will be defined as “the signing of agreements between policymakers, which results in a suspension of fighting” (McCarthy 2011, 10).

Finally, the following definition of peacebuilding will be used: “peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and therefore relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives” (UN: Secretary
The investigation proceeded as follows. First, research on previous literature on women and peacebuilding was performed. Second, the cases of El Salvador, Liberia, and Rwanda were evaluated. Finally, the Colombian conflict and 2013 peace talks were analyzed. Especial attention was given to women and their role in the Colombian conflict.
CHAPTER I:

LITERATURE REVIEW: WOMEN AND PEACEBUILDING

Introduction

Throughout history women have been part of both peacebuilding and war-making. Yet when it comes to formal negotiation processes and to decision-making processes, they have been largely ignored. This chapter aims to review previously existing literature on women and peacebuilding in order to evaluate the importance of including women in peace processes.

As was mentioned before, women have been excluded from most decision-making processes. This discriminatory tendency started to be reversed in 1949, with “The Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War…” the “first modern-day international instrument to establish protections against rape for women” (Theydon, Phenicie, and Murray 2011, 7). However, discrimination, rape, and lack of protection continued.

Because of this, women’s groups and civil society continued to push to put an end to discrimination. As a result, the convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Convention) was created in 1976. The convention advocated for the need to end discrimination towards women. It was signed and ratified by 189 countries (Simonovic 2010).

The CEDAW was a major legal step towards ending women’s discrimination. Discrimination tendencies persisted and women groups and civil society continued to advocate for their rights. This led the international community to establish the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) in 1996. The BPA identified strategic priorities and created necessary actions and strategies to move forward when it came to women’s discrimination.
Yet, women continued to be segregated. This was especially evident when it came to peace processes where women are almost completely ignored. Attempting to fill this gap the United Nations Security Council established Resolution 1325 in the year 2000 (United Nations Security Council 2000).

Resolution 1325 was very significant because it recognized the importance of including women in peacebuilding processes and all decision-making processes. “The inclusion of women is rooted in the premise that their presence, participation and perspectives will improve the chances of attaining viable and sustainable peace. It is also based on the knowledge that if half the population faces discrimination and violence there can be no peace” (GAPS 2010, 1).

A report performed by Judy El-Bushra, with the organization International Alert confirms the importance of the resolution: “Activists stress the importance and variety of women’s roles in peacebuilding and the need to support women’s peace organizations. UNSC Resolution 1325 echoes this concern, and represents a global policy commitment to support women’s role in peacebuilding and in post-conflict reconstruction. Resolution 1325 is seen as a tool to promote women’s empowerment, as well as a basis for mobilizing women as a resource to render peace processes more effective” (El-Bushra 2012, 8).

In addition, according to Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini (Anderlini 2007), including a gender perspective when it comes to peacebuilding is important in order to guarantee that discriminatory policies, such as gender-based violence, and exclusion from political life, are not perpetrated when peace comes.

Since the creation of Resolution 1325 many analyst and organizations have agreed on the importance of including a gender perspective when it comes to peacebuilding, and especially of including women in all levels of peacebuilding processes (Moser and Clark 2001; Anderlini 2007; Bouta, Frerks, and Bannon 2005). For example, according to Munro “Gender and peacebuilding interface both conceptually and practically” (Munro 2000, 2). Munro also states the following: “Gender and Peacebuilding can be viewed as an approach, an analytical tool, and a goal” (Munro 2000, 2).
Regardless of the importance given to gender and peacebuilding, the same authors argue that the international community continues to exclude women from key decision-making positions in peacebuilding processes and in politics. According to many theorists this exclusion of women has come with consequences. El Salvador, for example, excluded women in many aspects of the post-war country’s reconstruction. The exclusion of these women stopped the country from gaining a large amount of qualified and educated personnel that could have helped for the country’s reconstruction. Today, more than twenty years after the country sign the peace accords, women continue to be excluded and segregated, and the country continues to be in an economic crises.

GAPS 2010’s report also agrees with the fact that women continue to be excluded: “…despite these resolutions, implementation has been slow and uneven, particularly in relation to women’s participation in preventing, resolving and recovering from conflict. In practice this means peace negotiations remain the domain of men, post-conflict recovery processes continue to be gender-blind, and local and international efforts to reform the security sector, including the police, judiciary and military, still fail to respond to the security needs of women” (GAPS 2010, 2).

I. Women and their roles in conflict

Throughout history women have been seen as passive actors of war and peace. Either they have nothing to do with war or they are victims of it. This idea is embedded in most societies, as could be seen in a conference held in the Wilson Center in January 2013 (Wilson Center 2013). During the conference Marta Ruiz, a well-known Colombian journalist, was asked to give her opinion on the fact that there were no women in the Colombian Peace Process. To this she answered “la Guerra es una cosa de hombres, ha sido una cosa muy masculina y que las mujeres han tenido un papel muy marginal realmente en la Guerra (War is a men’s thing. It is very masculine and women play a marginal role in it)” (Wilson Center 2013).
As was stated before, Marta Ruiz is not the only person to believe this. According to a research that is being performed by the Institute of Collaborative Learning Projects “Many people assume that since women bear children and are their primary caregivers, they are predisposed to be peaceful and reject violence. In reality, neither sex nor gender roles are predictors of peacefulness” (Berwind-Dart 2012, 2).

In her doctoral thesis research Mary McCarthy stated that “while women are generally the victims during conflict, their condition should not be misconstrued as one of passivity. Because of the extreme circumstances in which they are placed, women often adopted proactive strategies to ensure their survival and to provide for their families. Further, women do not always retain their civilian status during these wars—they are increasingly likely to participate either as combatants or as women associated with fighting forces (WAFF), who provide logistical and economic support for the fighters” (McCarthy 2011, 28).

International Alert also confirms this belief: “globally, men do predominate not only as actors in war but also as perpetrators of violence, practitioners of extreme physical feats, and decision-makers in institutions that underpin violence. Women (with some exceptions) are less commonly engaged directly in combat or violence, yet they support violence in many indirect ways, e.g. by providing services to fighters, through the way they educate their children, and by encouraging men to engage in violence. As such they may be key players in the creation of “murderous ideologies.” A review of data from different parts of the world and different historical periods shows that both men and women can be both victims and perpetrators of violence, and both men and women can exert extraordinary efforts, overcoming fearful odds, for peace” (El-Bushra 2012, 7).

According to the United States Institute for Peace throughout the last century women are becoming more and more directly involved in armed conflict: “Over the past century, the nature of armed conflicts has changed. In particular, wars are no longer primarily interstate conflicts arising out of national interests. This reconfiguration has been accompanied by the increased awareness that women are
no longer—if they ever were—simply civilians standing on the sidelines or camp followers trudging along (or lying beneath) the soldiers. As Charlotte Lindsey has observed, “The assumption that women are vulnerable overlooks the fact that women are more and more frequently taking up arms” (Theydon, Phenicie, and Murray 2011,18).

Women therefore do have a lot to do with war. They can be victims, perpetrators, war-resisters, supporters of violence, and peacemakers. Sometimes these roles overlap and women end up playing all roles at the same time. It is important to note regardless of all the roles women play in conflict they should be a part of the peace process because “in addition to the potential for women to contribute to successful peace outcomes, their participation should also be encouraged on the basis of fairness and justice” (McCarthy 2011, 30). Women account for more than 50% of the world’s population and a successful peace process cannot ignore more then half of the population.

In order to gain more clarity of women and their roles in war, each of these roles will be analyzed separately.

**Women as Perpetrators**

When it comes to conflict, women as well as men can be perpetrators. Their roles in supporting conflict vary. According to Anderlini, “from Bogotá to Baghdad, women are on the front lines of providing services, heading households, caring for the sick and the elderly, and sustaining and ensuring the survival of their families” (Anderlini 2007, 8). Women also support war by helping to spread war propaganda, and by, for example encouraging revenge. Even more, women serve men, iron their clothing, cook for them, and perform many other sorts of services that allow warriors to fight. At times, they are warriors themselves. Many times they perform these activities by force, as they are abducted and obliged to be active members of conflict. Yet other times they willingly support the conflict.
In McCarthy’s words: “some women adopt an active role—serving on the front lines of the conflict...Frequently, women find the experience empowering, as they acquire skills such as basic literacy, organization, leadership, map reading and negotiations. Thus, women are not inherently peaceful—they too have the potential for violence and are capable of participating alongside male combatants in brutal conflict” (McCarthy 2011, 29).

Deciding to take part in conflict affects women in ways different ways then it affects men. This is especially true in patriarchal societies. As women become perpetrators they are usually discriminated by society. This can be seen in the following quote from USIP’s report: “When women challenge the mythical division between Just Warriors and Beautiful Souls, they tend to be portrayed as particularly transgressive and ruthless, thus implicitly violating gender norms of femininity, which plays into other derogatory stereotypes” (Kimberly, Phenicie, and Murray 2011,19).

**Women as Victims**

As victims, women’s roles vary. As was stated before, women can become victims by being forced to take a part in conflict; they can also lose their loved ones, or become direct victims of rape, landmines, or explosions among other forms of violence. Additionally, they can lose their land, their household support and be forced to shift their traditional roles in society.

According to McCarthy, for example, women are “more likely than men during a civil war to be displaced, experience food insecurity and to lose traditional social networks”(McCarthy 2011, 28).

It is important to note that women suffer the most when it comes to conflict. Even before conflict starts, abuses towards them increase. “Too often women’s roles and positions in society are among the first to be circumscribed. Their employment, their freedom of movement, their dress, and legislation governing their citizenship, as well as rise in sexual violence and parallel decline in prosecution of such
crimes, are among the earliest indicators of increased social and political intolerance” (Anderlini 2007, 27). In Rwanda, for example, the escalation of violence against women could have been used as a predictor of genocide, the first to be attacked were the educated Tutsi women (Anderlini 2007).

During conflict women also suffer the most, as their bodies become tools for the different armed groups. Many analysts, such as Amnesty International (Amnesty International 2011), Human Rights Watch (HRW 2012), Anderlini (Anderlini 2007), and McCarthy (McCarthy 2011) among others agree on this fact. In Anderlini’s words: “in effect, men communicate with each other through attacks on women: thus women’s bodies are literally in the front lines and battlefields of many contemporary wars” (Anderlini 2007, 31).

As armed conflict advances so does the abuse towards women. In many occasions abuse that was perpetrated before conflict continues and exacerbates during conflict: “sexual violence during wartime could be viewed, therefore, as representing an exacerbation of existing patterns and accepted norms of behavior under conditions that tend to multiply the number of armed actors and heighten their authority and freedom. As Wood has noted, “repertoires of violence” may magnify existing patterns of interpersonal violence, yet they may also reflect innovation as perpetrators begin deploying forms of violence that are truly unprecedented in a particular region or armed conflict” (Theydon, Phenicie, and Murray 2011, 21).

Many authors state that this abuses will usually continue to grow and will not end after war, unless they are addressed during peace negotiations.
Women also play a key role in peacebuilding. They are activists for peace, and advocate for the end of violence; “women are among the first to speak out collectively against war and to try to prevent escalation. That is evident globally” (Anderlini 2007, 32).

As peacebuilders, some women, for example, use the role of motherhood and base themselves on non-violent Ghandian strategies in order to achieve their objectives. This works quite well because it is hard to attack a mother, and because it generates public awareness (Anderlini, 2007). Even more, women try to find a common ground for all parties in conflict.

Women also engage in nonviolent strategies in order to advocate for peace. “Both men and women join anti-war movements, but women are often more numerous then men, and sometimes they form separate organizations. Sometimes they do so because they find the male leadership style prefigurative of neither democracy nor violence” (Cockburn 2001, 23).

These non-violent strategies of conflict resolution require organization, strategizing, and putting pressure on warring parties into signing peace accords, among others. Women around the world have proven their capacity to do this. In Colombia, for example, women have designed non-violent strategy interventions in order to regain their children from armed groups. In Liberia, women engaged in sex strikes in order to pressure their husbands to stop fighting.

Women also play a central role in ending conflict by for example trying to prevent the recruitment of boys. This was evident in a report produce by the Colombian Historic Memory Committee, where a group of mothers stood up to the paramilitaries and stopped their sons from being recruited (Sánchez and Wills 2011b).
Additionally, women care for victims, recover children from war and exert enormous efforts in to survive. “Because women normally have to bear greater responsibility than men for their children and elderly relatives, they are less able to flee and escape violence” (BOUTA, FRERKS, and BANNON 2005, 35).

Women also strategize to get attention from the international community in order to get more support for peace. This was done in Liberia, and is currently being done in Colombia.

Many women continue to advocate for peace, even when others might have lost their hope, as will be seen in the cases of Liberia, and Colombia where women continued to fight for peace even when most of the country supported the continuation of the war to achieve military victory. Others, help in the reconciliation processes, and aid communities in resolving their problems in order for there to be a smoother transition into peace. This was particularly evident during the first part of the Liberian Civil War, where women started a reconciliation process and aided in the reconciliation of men even before the conflict was over (Anderlini 2007).

Regardless of their input towards making peace, “their substantial work for peace is seldom recognized in seats at peace-making negotiations” (Cockburn 2001, 24).

II. Importance of including women at negotiating tables

Reasons for excluding women from negotiations

Very often, when it comes to negotiating tables they usually exclude women and leave war makers in charge. “The war makers rarely have the requisite experience and expertise in peacemaking or coexistence. Yet they are charged with the responsibility and power to bring peace” (Anderlini 2007, 60).

This happens for several reasons. First, as was seen before, many argue that gender issues do not have a place in negotiation tables. “Women are shut out on the basis of excuses ranging from a lack of
grassroots constituency to a supposed lack of knowledge of the issues or negotiating skills. Meanwhile, this same criteria is rarely applied to armed actors. The skills of women as mediators within the home and their experiences building trust and dialogue in their communities are often dismissed as irrelevant by national governments and the international community” (GAPS 2010, 4).

Additionally, most societies oppose to women being part of the negotiation table by saying they are not sufficiently qualified. Others simply state that women groups represent the elite and no the majority of the population and therefore they do not see a reason for them to be included. The international community also says that they should not force women’s inclusion in the negotiating tables because by doing this they would be going against the local culture.

Another argument presented for excluding women is that war is gender neutral. This however is not true gender makes people experience conflict in different manners (Anderlini 2007; 9 Bouta, Frerks, and Bannon 2005; 15 GAPS 2010; 17 Moser and Clark 2001). Even more “Gender-neutral translates into discrimination against women because the impact of decisions made at the table are rarely considered through the experiences of women who have to live with them” (Anderlini 2007, 62).

**Importance of including women at the table**

Regardless of these beliefs, it has been proven that women have a positive impact at the negotiation table. Even more, Resolution 1325 requires for the international community to take action and to make sure women are included in the negotiating processes. There are several reasons for this.

First, when it comes to negotiating tables men and women have different qualities, and these qualities can be used in order to get better peace results. According to research performed by Collaborating Learning Projects “…women are able to bridge ethnic, religious, political and cultural divides more easily and willingly than men” (Berwind-Dart 2012, 3).
The same organization states that women are better than men at building communication bridges, advocating for peace before and during formal negotiations, influencing the political arena in post conflict in order to make sure commitments are kept, maintaining peace within civil society, and organizing in order to send positive cultural messages.

Even more, many authors agree on the fact that once women take a seat at the table they manage to change discourses in order to include the needs of minorities (Anderlini 2007; 21 Berwind-Dart 2012; 9 Bouta, Frerks, and Bannon 2005): “there is evidence that, when given the opportunity, women are responsible for shifting the conversation and putting neglected issues that could be key to the adding up process on the agenda (and keeping them on the agenda in post-conflict reconstruction). A few cases surfaced the assumption that women in positions of power and women who participate in peace talks will be more likely to prioritize and surface “softer” issues” (Berwind-Dart 2012, 8).

As a matter of fact, when included in negotiation tables and in high-decision making positions women “tend to be the sole voices speaking out for women’s rights and concerns, often forging coalitions based on women’s shared interests that transcend political, ethnic, and religious differences, and bringing a better understanding of social justice and gender inequality to peace negotiations” (Bouta, Frerks, and Bannon 2005, 52).

Additionally, women are said to comply with USAID’ characteristics of good governance, which include the “ability to maintain social peace, guarantee law and order, promote or create conditions necessary for economic growth, and ensure a minimum level of social security” (Anderlini 2007, 123) among others.

Finally, it is important to note that, according to Anderlini (Anderlini 2007), more pluralistic societies are usually more tolerant and therefore less violent. Including women in all levels of politics helps to develop a more pluralistic society. Evidence shows that women are more willing to participate in win-win accords (Anderlini 2007).
Women advocating for positive peace

By reviewing conflict resolution literature it is evident that the notions of peace are changing. In Munro’s words: “there are two general categories of peace; positive peace and negative peace. The latter is defined as the absence of all kinds of violence while the former is described as the fulfillment of basic needs, freedom, and equality at all levels of society” (Munro Jean 2000, 3).

At one point, peace primarily meant the signing of peace accords and the demobilization of armed actors. Recently, however, the idea of a positive notion of peace is getting stronger. This notion states that to construct peace the structures and root causes that produce violence need to be directly addressed and civil society has to be included in the process: “Trust and security are ripped aside in civil war, and peace cannot be made solely by military and political leaders” (Anderlini 2007). International and national actors involved in peace processes are more and more advocating for this notion of peace.

More often than not, women, search for a holistic notion of peace, not just a ceasefire. They advocate for inclusion of everyone, for the end of violence in society, for a shift in social structures, for a change of the structural causes of conflict. Therefore most observers have concluded that women should be included in future peace processes.

Women and their role as change generators

Among other things, it has been demonstrated that once women are in political positions, they start to legislate on matters that affect women’s lives and vulnerable communities (Anderlini 2007; Bouta, Frerks, and Bannon 2005). As will be seen latter on, Rwanda and Colombia represent perfect example of this.
Issues of violence against women have to be tackled because they are “linked to more complex issues of security, crime prevention, and economic development” (Anderlini 2007, 143) and therefore affect society as a whole. Most authors agree on the fact that women bring a different perspective to politics and therefore they bring a different perspective to the negotiating table, they represent a part of society that has been absent of decision making positions for years and that deserves a space in order to really generate change.

Anderlini (Anderlini 2007) states that “first, supporting women’s full and active participation in decision-making, particularly in countries emerging from conflict, is a key indicator of a shift in the status quote that, in many instances catalyzed the conflict. Second, as 50 percent or more of the population women are an important resource. Overlooking their capacities and commitment to peacebuilding is an indication of bad planning. Third, respect for and promotion of women’s rights are mandated by the international law” (Anderlini 2007, 3-4).

Irrespective of the importance of women in conflict and in peacebuilding, women continue to be excluded. This tendency has to be shifted, because “Regardless of whether women have a positive or negative impact, they like men, have a right to participation; it is a given” (Anderlini 2007, 3). During negotiation tables the future of society is being discussed, and women are part of this society, their future should not be discussed without them.

III. International legislation

As was stated before “from the Women and Armed Conflict plank in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) (United Nations 1996), through government commitments in the June 2000 five-year BPA review, to Security Council Resolution 1325 (SC 1325)(United Nations 2000), the world has increasingly
acknowledged the impact of conflict on women. And of women on conflict” (Zuckerman and Greenberg 2006, 70).

By putting pressure on the UN’s Security council women managed to create a law that mandated their inclusion in peace processes. “So the strategic targeting of the Security Council and push for a resolution that endorsed women’s inclusion in peacemaking was not only a deliberate attempt at shifting the paradigm and the norms governing peace processes, but also a means of ensuring that they had a change to determine the future-theirs and their society’s-at the point in time when foundations were being laid” (Anderlini 2007, page 72). This was a huge accomplishment and has led many countries, such as Colombia, to create more inclusive legislations towards women.

Later on, “in 2008, Security Council Resolution 1820 went further and recognized rape as a weapon of war and a threat to international security” (Theydon, Phenicie, and Murray 2011, 9).

Regardless of the importance of Resolution 1325 and of more than 50 years of legal advances, women largely remain absent from negotiating tables. In general, “it is a challenge for advocates of women’s rights to persuade most governments and donors to allocate sufficient funding for women’s right-based approaches” (Zuckerman and Greenberg 2006, 70). Although much legislation has been created in order to include women few official peace processes and few negotiating tables include women.

This failure to include women is evident when looking at the following quote from the 2011 Humanitarian Response index: “gender is far from being mainstreamed into humanitarian action. Many actors do not take the time to understand the different needs of women, girls, men and boys in a crisis, and ensure programming meets these needs equitably. This can result in aid that is unsuitable, such as culturally inappropriate feminine hygiene kits in Pakistan, or worse, putting women and girls in danger, such as inadequate lighting and security in camp latrines in Haiti. While the majority of donors include gender in their policies, their funding is not always allocated towards projects that incorporate adequate
gender analysis, and few donors actually monitor and follow up on how gender is addressed in programs they support. Donors have enormous potential to influence the sector by requiring their partner organizations to prioritize gender in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs, ensuring that aid is not discriminatory and meets the different needs of women, men, girls and boys equally” (DARA 2011,1).

To conclude, “the gap between legislation and enforcement, however, continues and warrants further research into ensuring more effective implementation and evaluation of efforts” (Theydon, Phenicie, and Murray 2011, 9). The international community has acknowledged the importance of including women in peace processes; it now has to make sure they are included.

**IV. When women are included at the negotiating tables**

Many women advocate for peace. Sometimes this pressure leads to their inclusion in the negotiation processes. Including women is important because they “…affect the process dynamics, relations, and ways in which negotiations are conducted. But perhaps most importantly, they come to the table with a more holistic understanding about the actual purpose of the talks and the centrality of interdependence” (Anderlini 2007, 74).

For women, the peace table represents an opportunity to challenge and change existing structures, as well as an opportunity to achieve justice. By being at the negotiation table, they can tackle fundamental inequalities and contest social standards. They can also ensure that the voices of victims are heard.

Most women’s concern for peace comes from the grassroots. Therefore they bring the negotiations back to the grassroots and manage to include minorities into peace processes.

“Although there has been little systematic research, anecdotal evidence suggests that women may unite around such issues as motherhood or on the basis of their family responsibility such ‘bridging’
elements seem less important to men” (Bouta, Frerks, and Bannon 2005, 52). Having worked in the
domestic arena for so long, women have learned to care for others and to maintain harmony within the
household. These led them to develop certain skills that allow them to perform better negotiations (Bouta,
Frerks, and Bannon 2005; Anderlini 2007).

Anderlini states that according to Psychologist Simon Baron-Cohen women and men have
different communication styles and this can affect negotiations; women usually soften their opinion by
stating it as a question and are less direct in expressing anger (Anderlini 2007, 81). Because of this
women tend to work better at negotiating.

It is important to note that not all women seated at the negotiating tables hold a holistic notion of
peace, yet, around the world women are committed to peacebuilding that deserve to be included in peace
processes.

V. Post-Conflict

As was previously stated, peace negotiations represent an opportunity to restructure countries and
revert social dynamics of discrimination. In the USIP’s words: “armed conflicts are both destructive and
transformative. During war, women frequently take on new roles which may lead to a greater sense of
political protagonism…” (Theydon, Phenicie, and Murray 2011, 24).

During negotiations many promises and commitments might be made, yet these commitments
might never become realities. Therefore “transitional periods present an opportunity to script new gender
roles if femininities and masculinities are made the object of study and intervention. Conversely, if gender
issues are marginalized during transitional periods, existing social inequalities and power relations can
remain largely intact” (Theydon, Phenicie, and Murray 2011, 25).
If post-conflict situations are not handled carefully all of the efforts that were made to generate change during the conflict and during the negotiations might be reversed.

According to the report made by USIP “a central lesson is that the dividends of peace are not shared equally, in part because gender regimes forged or exacerbated in conflict can persist afterward. Violence against women and girls, in fact, frequently rises. Moreover, the design and implementation of specific postconflict policies can exclude women from accessing benefits, thereby reflecting and reinforcing their marginalization in society” (Theydon, Phenicie, and Murray 2011, 24).

Therefore, if women managed to get their issues on the table during negotiations, it is very important for them to be careful, and to make sure that promises are kept. Women can advocate for peace, and they can transform conflicts, but they need support and they need to properly evaluate the context in which they are working. This support comes from high decision-making government positions. These positions usually fully exclude women, and male government ministers generally fail to realize the important role that women play as peacemakers in their societies and the knowledge that they have gained throughout decades of enduring conflict.

Women’s roles change during conflict, and if they want to maintain the changes, they must be vigilant. According to International Alert “changes in the gender division of labor (gender roles) are a society’s practical and immediate response to managing crisis. However, they do not in themselves alter the institutional or ideological underpinnings of gender relations. If things are not to go back to how they were before, change may need to be institutionalized through active policy. However, institutions (that generate policy) are themselves gendered, in that they are both products and shapers of existing gender relations in the society from which they draw their individual members” (El-Bushra 2012, 8).

Many authors recognize that post-conflict reconstruction also “offers opportunities to establish new norms and rules, engage new leaders, and build new institutions. Each of these processes offers an opportunity to focus on women’s rights and respect them; and to acknowledge and value the contribution
of women in reconstruction. Yet, in addition to these processes, activities which focus on women as a specific group are required to redress gender disparities in women’s access to essential services and resources” (Zuckerman and Greenberg 2006, 71).

Additionally, post-conflict situations also offer an opportunity to resolve property disputes (Zuckerman and Greenberg 2006). Women should be included in these processes in order to guarantee full and equal rights to own property.

“Rebuilding after conflict provides a window of opportunity to transform the status quo. This requires recognition of the roles which women have played during the conflict (such as combatants, economic actors, leaders and peacemakers in their local communities) and post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery processes which include the needs, skills and experiences of women” (GAPS 2010, 1).

Finally, “the immediate post-conflict period provides a critical window of opportunity for women to enter and engage in formal political arena. Where they have succeeded in gaining a foothold, women have not only symbolized change but also initiated it. They are often the first to develop cooperative and cross-party working structures. They tend to be more inclusive” (Anderlini 2007, 145). If women managed to get their needs in the table, or if they manage to reach decision making positions during conflict they must make sure that they are able to keep those positions and that their roles as power holders are not reverted when peace comes.

As conflict ends and “normal” peaceful relations are reestablished “the pendulum of society swings from wartime to peacetime norms, the window for women can close” (Anderlini 2007, 146). Therefore, women have to push to be included and to generate change before it is too late.
As was already stated, when it comes to justice it is important to note that: “women as a group make up half the world’s population and should be able to participate in decisions which affect their lives” (GAPS, 2010, page 2). Therefore, there cannot be justice if women are not present at the negotiating tables and in the justice making processes.

In addition to the obligation of including women in the justice process, women should be included in justice making for many other reasons. For example, “…women as advocates, commission staff, and perhaps most importantly as witnesses have been central to the process of exposing hidden truths about human rights violations in conflict” (Anderlini 2007, 165). Additionally, women play a central role in making the victims voices be heard at a national and international level.

Moreover, including women in justice making provides the whole picture of the conflict and can lead to fairer outcomes. According to Anderlini, “without a gender perspective… there is only one victim. But when the lens is broadened to view the crime from standpoint of both men and women, we find that for every person who was disappeared, there is often a mother and a wife who searched for him” (Anderlini 2007, 161).

Women’s impact on justice is very clear in international tribunals. “The participation of women, particularly those within the structures of tribunals and commissions, has led to significant reforms in the processes undertaken at the tribunals and commissions and the substance of national and international law and jurisprudence” (Anderlini 2007, 167). For example, as a result of women’s efforts, rape as a war strategy was included in the category of crimes against humanity.

Finally, when it comes to transitional justice women have implemented “…broken taboos and ensured that the cloak of invisibility and silence surrounding gender based crimes in war will be gradually removed” (Anderlini 2007, 181).
In conclusion, women suffer disproportionally when it comes to war. This is especially evident when it comes to rape. Unfortunately justice is almost never achieved. “The failure to adequately recognize the full profile of experiences and violations during conflict, including its gender dimensions, limits the prospects of reparations for harms and their associated potential to transform gender regimes. As a result of the narrow focus on certain classes of violations, especially physical ones, viewed as most severe and often disproportionately suffered by men, most formal reparations programs are woefully insensitive to the many other ways in which women and girls are affected by violence and surrounding circumstances” (Theydon, Phenicie, and Murray 2011, 30).

Post-conflict represents an opportunity to realize justice; including women can translate into greater justice.

**Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Processes**

Processes of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) are really important when it comes to peacebuilding. According to the World Bank a successful DDR process is “the key to an effective transition from war to peace” (Anderlini 2007, 96). Throughout these processes combatants have to be integrated into society and rehabilitated to ensure that they do not take up arms again. If combatants are not reintegrated and rehabilitated war is likely to emerge again.

“Research conducted with former combatants in various Latin American and African countries reveals how gender greatly influences the options available as these individuals transition from their armed group back into civil society. Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs are often designed around certain gendered assumptions about combatants and their needs. Thus they tend to systematically marginalize women at each step of the process” (Theydon, Phenicie, and Murray 2011, 19).
As was stated before it is commonly thought that women are not active members of war. Therefore, people think that addressing gender issues is a luxury that war torn societies cannot afford (Anderlini 2007, 99). The international community, despite the rhetoric, tends to supports this notion in practice and often excludes women in DDR processes; this is mainly due to their ignorance regarding the role of women in conflict (Anderlini 2007, 100).

Women should be included in DDR programs for several reasons. First, it is beneficial for society. Throughout conflict women acquire great amount of competencies that could serve the DDR purposes; by excluding them the agencies in charge of DDR are losing an enormous amount of human capital (Anderlini 2007).

Furthermore, when former combatants are not properly demobilized and supported they are left with few choices for surviving; therefore their children are left with few options for surviving. Finally, if they were part of combat they have to be reintegrated into society. If this is not done, the risk of relapsing into violence is increased.

UN Resolution 1325 states that women and men’s needs have to be addressed separately when it comes to DDR. This generates additional issues because often, women are not seem as perpetrators, they are seem as civilians, and therefore they are not taken into account when it comes to DDR.

There are many reasons for including women in DDR process. To start with “…women have the right to equal opportunities and treatment in DDR programming as given, regardless of whether they make a difference to the overall outcome of the process” (Anderlini 2007, 94).

However, “DDR´s male focus perpetuates gender stereotypes, unfairly discriminates against women ex-combatants and others who supported combat, and hampers women from contributing to economic growth” (Zuckerman and Greenberg 2006, 75). This tendency has to be reversed if long-lasting peace is to be achieved.
Ending discrimination and moving forward

During conflict women’s roles in societies are shifted. After conflict they are usually forced to go back to their previous roles. This usually generates “resentment and disappointment at not attaining equality and rights they strived toward” (Anderlini 2007, 118). Publicly no one dares to say that including women is not important. Yet in practice they are excluded most of the time.

Women should be included into politics because they bring in a new perspective to the table. These new perspectives are really useful when it comes to reconstructing a war torn society. According to Elaine Zuckerman and Marcia Greenberg “sustainable peace requires a more permanent transformation of social norms relating to violence, gender, and power, and they call for a transformative approach to achieve gender equality premised on more gender-equitable relations. “Transforming the violent and dominating power relations, which are widely associated with masculinity, war and militarized societies with alternatives values of co-operation, peaceful dispute resolution and equality. Without gender equality, it is impossible to achieve economically and physical secure societies, cleansed of structural violence” (Strickland and Duvury 2003, in Zuckerman and Greenberg 2006, 79).

Additionally, “women play a key role in reestablishing the fabric of society, if they have access to productive assets and social services. For example, women are more likely than men to spend their income in a way that benefits their own family and their community” (GAPS 2010, 1).

To conclude, “women’s participation in government at the local, regional and national levels encourages more inclusive, representative and responsive governance (GAPS 2010, 1). These qualities are all desired in a country that is trying to reconstruct itself after war. Therefore taking women into account in all decision-making processes is essential for there to be a more stable and organized society in the future.
CHAPTER II:
CASE STUDIES

After conducting the literature review it can be seen that in theory, including women in peacebuilding and negotiation processes is really important in order to have successful peace processes. By analyzing the cases of Rwanda, Liberia, and El Salvador we will try to evaluate how theory fits into practice and to better understand the possible effects of excluding women from the Colombian peace process.

I. Rwanda

Historical Background

Historically Rwanda has had two major ethnic groups, the Hutus and the Tutsis. Both groups share a history, a language, and a culture. Differences among them are minimal but Tutsis were said to be taller and to have smaller noses. Additionally, Hutus were seen as farmers and Tutsis were seen as cattlemen (Gourevitch 1998). Regardless of these associations Hutus and Tutsis regularly intermarried all the time.

It is important to note that these ethnic differences did not mean much, until the 1890s, when the Germans colonized Rwanda. Germans used ethnic differences to favor Tutsis and discriminate against Hutus. In 1918 Rwanda passed to the hands of the Belgians who continued the discriminatory tendencies.

In 1959 the Hutus led a revolution and took over the country. Abuse was reversed and Tutsis were now the object of discrimination. Many Tutsis fled to Uganda.

Juvenal Habyarimana took over the country in a coup d’état. He established a one party system; only members of the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND) could participate in elections (McCarthy 2011). Discrimination towards the Tutsis continued.

Tutsi Rwandans in exile started to resist the officially-sanctioned discrimination and formed the Ugandan refugees formed the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). The first attack took place on October 1, 1990. Rwanda’s civil war had initiated.

Habyarimana’s Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) started a counter attack. The war was brutal and had many causalities. Half of the country’s population fled. Two million Rwandans went to other countries (Turshen 2001).

A truce was made in July 1992. The truce “included a fixed timetable for ending the fighting and initiating political talks” (McCarthy 2011, 57). Nevertheless, violence against Tutsis continued. As a result the RPF launched a major offensive in 1993.

The French sent in troops to support Habyarimana. This increased the military pressure and led to the signing of the Arusha accords in August 1993. Although violence came to an end ethnic tensions continued. In an effort to address these issues president Habyarimana met with other African presidents. They agreed on a timetable and a transition program in order to solidify the peace accords. As the President was flying back to Rwanda his plane crashed (Gourevitch1998; McCarthy 2011).

Extremist Hutu militia groups responded with organized attacks against the Tutsi population. One hour after the president’s death the killings of Tutsis, Tutsi sympathizers, and human rights defenders started (McCarthy 2011). The RFP responded to the killings and started to advance towards the capital city. The Hutu government fled.
By July between 500,000 to one million people had been murdered (Turshen 2001). Although there were atrocities committed by both the Hutus and the Tutsis most of the victims were Tutsis.

The genocide started in April 1994 and ended in July 1994 after the RPF took control of Kigali. The RPF established a coalition government and the reconstruction of the country began. Women had different roles in the genocide and in the reconstruction of the country after the genocide. In this chapter we will evaluate these roles in order to better understand their impact on Rwanda’s peace and reconstruction.

**Women as victims**

Crimes committed throughout the genocide were extremely disturbing. One of the most notorious was rape as a genocide strategy. Human rights organizations state that between 250,000 and 500,000 women were raped (McCarthy 2011; Munro 2000).

Rape as a strategy of genocide was promoted by government officials and by the mass media. Radio stations, for example, advertised the raping and slaughtering of Tutsi women. An example of this is when they asked Hutus to treat women as part of their war loot (“...the radio, the couch, the goat, the opportunity to rape a young girl” (Gourevitch 1998, 115)). Additionally, Hutu men that married Tutsi women were accused of being traitors, were told that Tutsi wives were no good, and Hutu women were encourage to stop their family members from marrying Tutsis (Anderlini 2007).

The majority of the victims throughout the genocide were Tutsi women. Targeting of Tutsi women started before the genocide as Hutus were encouraged to target Tutsi women because of their mythological beauty (McCarthy 2011). This myth was used to get Hutu women to kill Tutsi women in order to access men (Gourevitch 1998).
Additionally, quite often, if a Tutsi married a Hutu, members of the RFP murdered their husbands. Once the man was dead they would force the Tutsi widow to marry the RFP members in order to gain the land that used to belong to the deceased Hutu man (Turshen 2001).

Hutu women were also victimized. They were targeted for marring Tutsis and forced to get pregnant to aid in reproducing Hutus (Gourevitch 1998). They were also raped, and, in many occasions lost their husbands and loved ones.

It is important to note that both the RPF and the FAR took part in the victimization of women. According to Turshen, “…in war rape may be an end in itself, a random act of brutality as in this example from Rwanda, were rape was a gender issue that crossed all political lines” (Turshen 2001, 9).

Women as perpetrators

According to a USIP report “a substantial number of women, and even girls, were involved in the slaughter in countless ways, inflicting tremendous cruelty on other women as well as on children and men” (Theydon, Phenicie, and Murray 2011, 19). Women’s roles went from direct participation in the genocide, to provision of services to combatants, and to fomenting the war among others. “Even if some women were not directly involved in the genocide, they did not use their indirect power over their husbands and sons to prevent the violence” (Munro 2000, 11).

As a result, “as of March 2010, almost two thousand women remain in Rwandan prisons, having been convicted of genocide-related offences” (McCarthy 2011, 68). In theory, women only composed 6% of genocidiaries (although according to Anderlini they only comprised 2,3 percent (Anderlini 2007), in practice however it is estimated that this number is much higher. They participated in the genocide by killing, “by looting Tutsi property, revealing the hiding spots of Tutsis to the killers and supporting their men-folk in perpetrating violence” (McCarthy 2011, 69). They also revealed the Tutsis hiding spots.
Finally, women in leadership positions, like Habyarimana’s wife, also participated in the genocide by, for example helping in the development of policies to eradicate Tutsis (Gourevitch 1998). Therefore, it can be noted that Rwandan women were very involved in the perpetration of the genocide

**Women as peacebuilders**

The organization of Rwandan women during the genocide was minimal. This was highly due to existent tensions between Tutsi Women and Hutu women. In Munro’s words: “because there was supposed tension between Hutu and Tutsi women because of differential treatment and status in society (based on their relations with men), women, as a group, did not rally together to work at stopping the genocide” (Munro 2000, 11).

Nevertheless, this tendency changed in the aftermath of the conflict. As the genocide ended women realized they needed stronger participation in order to generate change in the country. They were fully backed up by the government and helped to rebuild the country. As a result 15,400 women groups were created. These groups focused on filling in gaps that were left by the state (Munro 2000; McCarthy 2011). By doing so they help provide economic stability. Women groups also helped the government to identify the needs of the different communities. The organizations “also directly addressed the need to maintain the stable peace attained following RPF’s military victory” (McCarthy 2011, 81).

**Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Process**

Rwanda’s DDR process started in 1995. Since then 54,000 combatants have been demobilized and reintegrated into society (McCarthy 2011). “Although women account for less than 1% of all combatants in this conflict, making their marginalization a significant possibility, the Rwandan Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (RDRC) has promoted, at least rhetorically, the necessity of “paying particular attention to women” during this process” (McCarthy 2011, 70).
Regardless of the support promoted by the government, in practice, no special support had been given to female soldiers. As a matter of fact, only 346 female combatants were part of the DDR process. Today former female combatants remain among the poorest in the country (McCarthy 2011).

Justice

A special international tribunal was created in order to make sure atrocities committed in the genocide were not left in impunity. The tribunal was of extreme importance to international law because it “brought forward the first case of rape as a war crime…” (Anderlini 2007, 168). “In terms of accountability for crimes against women, Rwanda and the ICTR have demonstrated an unprecedented awareness of the gendered dimensions of conflict” (McCarthy 2011, 80). Regardless of this, impunity towards rape as a war strategy remained high in the country “while rhetoric of support exists, and some progress has been made, the reality does not yet match the justice that Rwandan women expect and rightfully deserve” (McCarthy 2011, 80).

Local justice mechanisms have been also been implemented. An example of this are the gacaca courts. These courts bring “together survivors, perpetrators, and witnesses to establish the truth of the events. The guilty are charged with forms of community service as means of giving reparations and assisting their reintegration into the community” (Anderlini 2007, 184). It is important to note that rape and sexual torture are not under the gacaca courts’ legislation because they are considered harsh human rights violations (Anderlini 2007).

Regardless of the advances made by the gacaca courts and the ICTR both organizations lack the capacity to prosecute all crimes committed during the genocide (Anderlini 2007). As result, indices of impunity remain high.
The genocide shifted household structures. Today, women compose between 60% and 80% (Cole 2011; McCarthy 2011; Munro 2000) of the population and they had to start providing for their families and working in the field. This was a job that was previously kept for men.

This shift in social structures was made particularly difficult by the fact that before the genocide, Rwandan women had no rights to own or inherit land. Their relationship with land tenure depended on their relationship to men. The government is working on reverting gender inequality when it comes to land ownership. An example of this is law 2/99 of 1999 that allows both boys and girls to inherit land from their parents (Turshen 2001).

In order to deal with these new needs Rwandan women started to organize politically. This organization can be seen, for example, in the creation of new NGOs. So far, they have been successful and had received support from the international community. An example of this was the creation of the organization “Campaign for Peace” in Kigali. This organization particularly addresses women’s critical needs in the post-conflict and grouped with Pro-Femmes in order to be more successful (Newbury and Baldwin 2000).

Women have also started to access important political positions. This has been a process. In the aftermath of the genocide women were not immediately empowered to become politically active. Between 1994 and 2003 women only held 25.7% of parliamentary positions (Cole 2011).

In 2003, however, a new constitution was adopted and this brought positive changes for women’s rights. This can be clearly seen when in the parliament, where women occupy 56% of the positions in the lower house and 34.6% in the upper house (Cole 2011). It is important to note that: “Rwandan women were active in the twelve-member constitutional commissions that organized the consultative process”
This political representation was largely due to the input of Paul Kagame’s government. “The GNU (Government of National Unity) openly stated that it considered women’s participation in peacebuilding and governance to be crucial for sustainable peace” (McCarthy 2011, 72). This idea did not just remained in words; a couple initiatives were launched in order to ensure women’s inclusion.

Among them were a Ministry of Gender, the inclusion of women as judges in gacaca courts, and the implementation of quotas in order to make sure that women were included in high-level decision-making. A new political system was designed: “an innovative system of triple balloting for local elections, allowing women and youth to stand on separate ballots from mainstream candidates” (Anderlini 2007, 121) was established.

Additionally Kagame implemented gender attention posts all around the country. This gender posts make sure women’s needs are included in decision-making. It is important to note that “the ministry was dedicated not only to the advancement of women, but also to mainstreaming gender into all policies and to the acknowledgment that equal inclusion of both men and women was necessary for successful development and sustainable peace” (McCarthy 2011, 73). A 30% quota was created in order to make sure women could access decision-making positions. The quotas worked quite well; today Rwanda is the country with the higher level of female representation in the world.

Today women from all political parties are working together to guarantee gender inclusion. They are legislating to promote women’s rights and to address women’s needs. They have also been proven to work hard in making sure the society is reconciled and are “trusted more, in large part because in general women were less implicated in the killings” (Anderlini 2007, 132).

The country has been in peace for over a decade, and elections are being held at all levels except
presidential (presidential elections will be held in 2017), and the economy is growing. Although Rwanda did not go through peace negotiations Kagame’s government made sure women were included at all levels of decision-making. Empowering women and including their needs has aid in maintaining peace in Rwanda.

It is important to note that “violence against women continues in overt, brutal, subtle, and ambiguous ways” (Turshen 2001, 58). Regardless of this, this violence is going down, and legal mechanisms are being implemented in order to ensure it stops once and for all. Therefore, the country seems to be moving forward.

II. Liberia

Until 1980, former American freed slaves ruled Liberia. They constituted 5% of the population and excluded all other ethnicities from decision-making. This exclusion led to a coup d’état in 1980 (McCarthy, 2011) and Samuel Doe, took over the country. Elections were held in 1985 but they were considered fraudulent and, once again, Doe was elected President (McCarthy 2011; The Advocates for Human Rights 2009).

Doe’s regime started to fail by 1989. Charles Taylor (a former member of Doe’s government), took this as an opportunity and resettled in Ivory Coast to create a rebel group; the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). At the same time, Prince Johnson created the National Patriotic Front of Liberia. A fourth group, the United Liberation Movement of Liberia (ULIMO) (The Advocates for Human Rights, 2009) was to join the warring parties in 1991.

The Liberian civil war officially started December 24 1989, when he NPFL moved into Liberia (McCarthy 2011; The Advocates for Human Rights 2009). The Government’s Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) were not able to contain them.
The conflict lasted until 2003, with a brief peace period between 1997 and 2003. The brief peace came as a result of several peace accords (The Abuja Peace Accords) that were signed by all warring parties as a result of pressure from both the civil society and the international community. Women’s pressure was very significant. Accords were signed in Nigeria in 1996 and led to the establishment of democracy in 1997. Elections were held in July 1997 and Charles Taylor won, receiving 75% of the votes (McCarthy 2011; The Advocates for Human Rights 2009).

Elections were held without the implementation of a full disarmament and demobilization process. As a result there were many combatants that did not demobilize and continued fighting. Additionally, Taylor violated the Abuja Accords and maintained the NPFL forces as part of the country’s military. These facts were to put the security of the country at risk. As a result, the Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) group emerged in 1999. The group started to attack northern Liberia in order to take over the country.

In response to the attacks the RUF (loyal to Taylor) started to attack Guinea from Liberia and Sierra Leone. Liberia was in the middle of a three-way conflict with Guinea and Sierra Leone: “both of these countries supported the LURD while Taylor supported opposition factions in both countries” (McCarthy 2011, 105).

More drama was to be added to the conflict as the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) emerged in the south. The Ivorian government supported the group.

By 2003 the LURD controlled the north of the country, the MODEL control the south, and Taylor control the rest (only one third of Liberia). The level of violence was so high that the international community started to pressure for negotiations. After much pressure, (especially from women groups) all groups agreed to begin negotiations in Ghana.
The Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed and Taylor was forced to resign. He was exiled to Nigeria. The nation started peacebuilding operations by October 14, 2003 a transitional government was in place. It was to rule until the 2005 elections (Cole 2011) when Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected president. The remaining sections of this case study will examine women’s role in Liberia’s war and peacebuilding.

**Women as peacebuilders**

Since the beginning of the conflict Liberian women were active in the peacebuilding process. This could be seen particularly in the increase of women organizations during the war. An example of this is Mary Brownell, a teacher who decided to start mobilizing women since the beginning of the conflict. She called for a gathering over the radio and more than 400 women showed up. The Liberian Women’s initiative was born (Anderlini 2007). These women (along with other organizations) lobbied and pressured men to sign the peace accords. Their tactics were diverse. Among them were holding peacebuilding workshops with the different combatants.

As they organized, they gained national and international contacts that allowed them to push further. Indeed, women started to reconcile the country before war was over (McCarthy 2011). This could be clearly seen as they negotiated with all warring parties in order to get them to seat at the table (Reticker 2008).

Women also worked at the national level and were involved in initiating the Abuja Peace Accords. According to Anderlini, “The Liberians perfected the art of “corridor lobbying” literally waiting in corridors talking to negotiators as they entered and exited the room during breaks in the 1994 Accra conference” (Anderlini 2007, 63). Because of their lobbying they were made official members of the negotiations by the third day of the peace talks. Nevertheless, in practice, they were discriminated against
when participating.

Despite their exclusion, women continued to advocate for peace, even after the first peace accords failed. As a matter of fact, as violence increased, women’s peaceful resistance got stronger. New strategies such as sex strikes were implemented to get men to the negotiating tables (Reticker 2008). They mobilized and organized across religion, ethnicity, and social class (Bouta, Frerks, and Bannon 2005).

After several years of pressure and meetings with all of the perpetrators, women managed to get all warring parties to seat at the table. They carefully oversaw the negotiating processes and constantly protested in order to get their voices heard and made sure that men were committed to signing the accords. Liberian women also created national and international alliances, working with refugees all around the world, NGOs, and governments, to get warring parties to commit to peace.

*Women as victims:*

Women suffered disproportionately during the Liberian civil war. They were raped, abducted and served as sexual slaves. Although rape was terrifying (169,676 violations recorded throughout the conflict (Republic of Liberia 2009)), women were not just raped. They were also coopted and forced to participate as sex slaves, or as wives of commanders, forced into pregnancy, or given HIV. Most female child soldiers were forced to perform sexual services (McCarthy 2011; Republic of Liberia 2009).

Men in power had a lot to do with these rapes. Charles Taylor, for example, was caught given orders to his soldiers to rape women (McCarthy 2011).

Accountability for sex crimes was discussed during the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreements and the decision to include sex crimes in the truth and reconciliation commission was made. The
commission was created in 2006 and had a mandate to investigate gross human rights violations, including rape. Four of the nine positions of commissioners were reserved for women in order to better deal with gender-based violence.

The truth and reconciliation report was finished in 2009 and included a section dedicated to women and conflict. The report recommended that changes in culture had to be made in order to stop gender-based violence. “Further, the TRC recommended that state provided reparations to the women who suffered sexual violence, including: receiving free medical services, trauma counseling, scholarships for the children of women whose husbands had been killed, and individual reparations on a case- by-case basis by all women who testified to the TRC” (McCarthy 2011, 113).

Finally, a new law that made rape a crime was created. Despite this law, rape in Liberia continues in alarming rates. Additionally, few perpetrators are brought to justice (McCarthy 2011).

Women as perpetrators

During the first and the second Liberian Civil war women participated as combatants and provided logistical support to the armed groups. This support went from providing water services to sexual slavery and forced marriage (McCarthy 2011; Republic of Liberia 2009). “Although the exact number of female combatants for the first conflict is not known, women and girls comprised 30-40% of all fighter forces or approximately 25,000 to 30,000 participants, between 1989 and 2003” (McCarthy 2011, 90).

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Process

The first part of the demobilization process started during the Abuja accords. “By February 1997, about 24,5000 of the estimated 33,000 fighters (or 74 percent) had been disarmed and demobilized”
4,306 of the combatants (about 13 percent) that participated in the demobilization process were children. This is alarming because child soldiers were said to comprise from 15,000 to 20,000 combatants. Girls comprised a large number of these combatants, yet it is hard to determine what percentage because the DDR program did not disaggregated the data by gender (McCarthy 2011).

The second DDR process was performed by the Liberian transitional government, several UN agencies, and by different NGOs. “Starting in 2003, Liberia undertook a comprehensive DDRR program—disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion and reintegration—to ensure full compliance on the part of all parties and to provide necessary support to ex-combatants” (McCarthy 2011, 107).

At some point, the disarmament process was about to fail and women carefully watched in order to make sure the process was successful (Reticker 2008). “Initially, the UN mission in Liberia (UNIMIL) ignored them for their lack of expertise, but women peace activists were not dissuaded. They entered cantonments, engaged with fighters, and collected and destroyed AK-47s” (Anderlini 2007, 106). They also put pressure on high-level commanders in order to make sure they would stick to the DDR process and worked hand to hand with the UN so that the process would not fail (Anderlini 2007).

The program ended in 2007 with the successful reintegration of 90,000 combatants. 22,370 (28% of all combatants) of the demobilized were women. 10,072 of the demobilized combatants were children; of these children 2,740 were girls. Thousands of women were educated as part of the process. They were also given a small stipend to support them through their transition to civilian lives (Reticker 2008).

Regardless of these advances many women were excluded from the DDR process. Some women were excluded because when DDR started, many Liberian women did not want to recognize that they had taken up arms. As a result they did not participate in the DDR process (Bouta, Frerks, and Bannon 2005). Women were also excluded because they did not have the economic opportunities to participate in
programs.

The aftermath

Women continued to organize after conflict and created strategies to help in reconstructing and reconciling the country. They carefully watched the implementation of the peace accords and ensured combatants were demobilized and reintegrated. Additionally, they advocated for women’s inclusion in the 2005 elections. They also helped to reconstruct the country’s economy (McCarthy 2011).

In the 2005 elections women made up 12% of the House of Representatives and 17% of the Senate. Although this was the highest level of women political representation in Liberia’s history (McCarthy 2011) the number is still low as only 13.5% of the elected parliamentarians were women. Additionally, the country ranked 90th in the world’s female representation in the parliament (McCarthy 2011).

Despite this, Liberia managed to elect a female president and many Liberian women hold important positions. More than just being a woman Sirelaf is a highly educated individual with the knowledge and capacities to fill the position. She took office in 2006. One of her most notable accomplishments was reducing the external debt of the country from 4.9 billion dollars in 2006 to 1.7 billion in 2010 (McCarthy 2011). Additionally, she has been strongly combating corruption (Anderlini 2007).

Another part of Sirelaf’s strategy has been increasing literacy. Female’s literacy rates increased from 15% in 2007 (Anderlini 2007) to 56.8% in 2010 (CIA 2013). Nevertheless, women continue to be highly uneducated, and this undermines equality when it comes to politics (Cole 2011).

Although Sirelaf has pushed for women’s inclusion, today women compose only 22% of her
cabinet. Additionally, women continue to be highly underrepresented in the parliament. This inequality is trying to be reversed by the creation of a bill proposing a quota for at least a 30% inclusion of women, nevertheless, many male parliamentarians continue to oppose the bill and political parties are not taking concrete actions to empower women. Therefore, there are no electoral quotas for women. Even more, the judicial system continues to be dominated by men (Cole 2011).

To this day, “women are still largely confined to household responsibilities” (Cole 2011, 5) and men continue to make most household decisions. This lack of inclusion has a lot to do with lack of economic opportunities that stop women from participating in peace process (Action Aid, Institute of Development Studies, and Womankind Worldwide 2012). Additionally, “the scars of civil war on women persist, with many women living in extreme poverty” (Cole 2011, 5).

Although Liberia has a long way to go, peace has been maintained for over 10 years and the country seems to be moving forward. Women’s situation is improving slowly, and they are being able to access high-level decision making positions.

III. El Salvador

From 1981 until 1992 El Salvador went through a bloody civil war that left thousands of causalities. The war was the result of decades of social struggle that led to the creation of several leftist armed groups fighting against a rightist state. These groups came together in 1981 under the name Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (FMLN), after the government murdered Archbishop Romero (a Catholic priest that advocated for peace and was somewhat influenced by the liberation theology). The FMLN represented a legitimate threat to the Salvadorian state. The civil war had started.

By the end of twelve years of conflict there were “80 thousand dead, half a million internally displaced, one million in exile, and $1.6 billion in infrastructure damages” (Conway and Martinez 2004,
2). This in a country with a population of only 6,108,590 (CIA 2013).

The government was responsible for most human rights violations, and had a policy of draining the water in order to get the fish. The water were the people, the fish were the guerrilla, so in order to get the guerrilla the people had to be killed (Danner 1993). The FMLN, however also committed many atrocities.

After more than a decade of conflict, peace accords were signed on the 31th of December 1991. The UN, through the Secretary General’s especial representative, Alvaro de Soto, was fully involved in getting both warring parties to sign the accords, and carefully followed the implementation of the accords after the war was over. El Salvador was exceptional because it gave full participation to women in the peace process and in the DDR process: this was largely due to women’s high level of participation during the conflict.

The peace accords were considered successful because since then, regular elections are held in El Salvador and both warring parties moved from armed conflict to competing for ballots and were transformed into El Salvador’s two leading political parties. Regardless of this, El Salvador continues to have very high indices of violence and the highest rates of femicide in the world. In order to understand why violence persisted this next section of will analyze women’s roles in El Salvador’s conflict, and in the peace process.

Women as Perpetrators

In El Salvador women were largely active in the conflict. Some joined the war striving for equality that was promised by joining the FMLN. In Marina Santamaria’s words (a former FMLN combatant) “We went to conquer our right to be equal to men. We women fought the same as men on the front line; we carried injured people on our backs just like men we gave first aid under conditions that no
one can imagine” (McCracken and Simon 2012, 52).

Others joined the war because they had no option. As Veronica, a former FMLN combatant stated: “I got involved in the war, well… in the eighties, all of us were in danger. Either I ran from there or I would be killed, so I decided to join the frente [The Guerrilla]” (McCracken and Simon 2012, 2).

Many women joined because of economic needs. Indeed, women in El Salvador “are found in the neediest social class. This might explain why so many women joined or supported the guerrillas. They responded to the call to build a better future for their children, and fulfilled their social identity or self-sacrifice and ‘giving themselves for others’” (Ibañez 2001, 119).

Other combatants joined the war because it gave women opportunities for education, and for obtaining additional work skills. It is important to note that women who were educated got better working positions within the FMLN.

Finally, women joined the FMLN responding to decades of repression imposed by the Salvadorian government and because of pressure put on them as their family members joined the guerrilla forces or the military (Conway and Martinez 2004).

These women supported the war in diverse ways that went from encouraging men to fight, to cooking and caring for men, and to fighting hand to hand with men among others. FMLN female combatants constituted from 30% to 40% of warriors. Some of them were made Commanders (Conway and Martinez 2004).

Women in peacebuilding

Women´s support for peace in El Salvador went from high-level negotiations to grassroots movements. During the war, for example, some refugee women helped in organizing repatriation, and
went back home with their communities (McCracken and Simon 2012). An example of this was Maria Esperanza Ortega that “the goal was to accompany people, the refugees, as they returned to their places of origin and began the process of struggling for respect for human rights. So that we would be allowed to live in our places of origin, that we not be seen as military targets” (McCracken and Simon 2012, 71). Additionally, women organized to rebuild the country after the war, and continue to organize today in order to access their rights.

Women were fully involved in the Salvadoran peace negotiations. “High-ranking women in the FMLN and government participated in all phases of negotiations…” (Conway and Martinez 2004). Nevertheless, the negotiations lacked a gender component and former combatants failed to address women’s needs, this can be seen, for example in the fact that the paperwork of the accords does not mention women (Conway and Martinez 2004).

Although women were unable to include a gender perspective, they still had an impact on the negotiations as they pushed for inclusion of civil society. As a result, “the majority of land beneficiaries were non-combatants” (Conway and Martinez 2004, 5) that collaborated with the FMLN and were facing extreme poverty.

Women as Victims

Women suffered disproportionally throughout the civil war. Many of them were raped and tortured, as could be seen for example, in the massacre of El Mozote were women were not just incinerated but sexually abused (Danner 1993). Throughout the war, rape was use as a weapon of war and of domination.

Rape in El Salvador was hardly prosecuted. “Even in the 1993 reports of the Salvadoran truth commission, rape was excluded because it was not regarded as a politically motivated crime” (Anderlini
2007, 158). This, however, goes along with general impunity that remained in the country after the amnesty was signed.

Women, however were not just raped and tortured. They also faced intense amounts of violence and lost many of their loved ones. In Ana Gabriela’s words (a Salvadorian war survivor) “There are lots of things that affect women. War. Violence. Sometimes women don’t have the initiative to defend ourselves. Sometimes it’s our husbands, or even our children” (McCracken and Simon 2012, 73). Although both men and women suffer by the loss of their loved ones, women were not used to provide for the house and they had to re-structure their entire social practices in order to adapt to the war.

Women also suffered for being mothers. An example of this was within the guerrilla where women were forced to kill their babies because they might cry and they crying would alert the army. Additionally, women had to carry the burden of the children while the men continued fighting. Many women were traumatized as a result of not being able to see their children (Ibáñez 2001).

**Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Process**

The Salvadorian demobilization process was performed by the United Nations Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) and the Salvadorian government. As the war ended 8,552 FMLN combatants demobilized. 29% of them were women. Although many combatants were not included in the demobilization process, the fact that 29% of the demobilized were females represents a pretty accurate figure because female combatants represented approximately 30% of the FMLN’s forces.

Regardless of women’s inclusion in DDR, the process was a not very successful in including a gender component and women’s and men’s special needs were not addressed (Anderlini 2007; Conway and Martínez 2004). In Conway and Martinez’ words: “for example, some local leaders assigned land under the husband’s name, and additional criteria that discriminated primarily against women were added
for land entitlement, such as literacy and specific documentation” (Conway and Martinez 2004, 4).

Additionally, during the DDR live was not made easy for former women combatants. In Anderlini’s words: “in El Salvador, one of the few instances in which women combatants and supporters were included as beneficiaries of DDR programs, the immediate postwar transition was a difficult environment for women who had dedicated their lives to the FMLN. As they returned to civilian life, many faced social stigmas for breaking taboos and becoming fighters” (Anderlini 2007, 103). This was partly because they had acquired skills that were not socially accepted for women.

As a result women were forced to decide “whether they should or should not make effort to salvage what they had earned and apply it to their daily lives” (Ibañez 2001, 127). Many women opted for going back to their traditional roles before the war. Some stepped back and did not receive many of the benefits that came with demobilization. Several women made these sacrifices in order to benefit their male counterparts and to allow Salvadorian society to transition. Others made them because they had no choice. In many occasions, for example, “the simple lack of child-care support to enable their involvement in trainings or work programs meant they had no real means of participating.” (Anderlini 2007, 103).

Cynthia Cockburn provided another example of women being excluded without an option. In her article, she states that, according to the World Bank, men in El Salvador received more benefits from land distribution programs then women. This is partly because they are “Considered a better risk by lenders…” (Cockburn 2001, 26).

The World Bank’s idea seems to be supported by Conway and Martinez. When talking about discrimination against women when it comes to land tittles they stated the following: “for example, some local leaders assigned land under the husband’s name, and additional criteria that discriminated primarily
against women were added for land entitlement, such as literacy and specific documentation” (Conway and Martinez 2004, 4).

Female negotiators tried to revert this tendency and pushed the government into giving women 30% of the land that was to be redistributed (Anderlini 2007; Conway and Martínez 2004). They stated that women were to “receive land proportional to their participation in the FMLN” (Conway and Martinez 2004, 4). Their voices were heard.

The Aftermath

During war, and in the immediate aftermath of war, women did gain that desired equality. Before war, women were limited to domestic chores and reproduction and men took care of providing (Ibáñez 2001). The conflict however, forced women to become fully active in many new activities.

Regardless of this, as was stated before, women were forced to resume their traditional roles, and their long-craved equality never came. This was very preoccupying because many women were widowed and forced to perform non-traditional roles. As a matter of fact, after the war, women headed 29% of the households in El Salvador (Conway and Martinez 2004).

“Despite this social regression, in immediate post-war Salvadoran society women struggled to maintain their presence in the public sphere” (Conway and Martinez 2004, 4). This struggle continues today, as can be seen with women in Morazan, the department of El Salvador with the highest rates of gender-based violence. This discrimination is also reflected in the fact that Morazan has the highest rates of gender-based violence in El Salvador (Voices on the Boarder 2013).

Additionally, it is important to note, that the country faces huge issues with youth gangs that, in many occasions link themselves with drug cartels and help exacerbate the country’s violence. As a result,
the country has the highest rate of homicides in the world (United States Department of State 2013). These rates of homicide are specifically affecting women. This year, El Salvador became the country with the highest rates of femicide in the world (UN Women 2013).

To conclude, today, violence towards women in El Salvador remains very high, and gang and drug violence are at its peak, making El Salvador one of the most violent countries in the world. In addition, even though women strived for equality and for peace, today the country remains highly unequal and a lot has to be done in order to revert these tendencies. Women gave up a lot during the DDR process, and stepped back. The biggest issue is that they seem to have closed the window of opportunity for political participation, and are currently struggling to regain it.
Chapter III:
The Colombian Conflict and Women

Colombia has been in war for over 60 years (if you count the bloody period of La Violencia that came before the Guerrilla war). The conflict started with the time of La Violencia, a period in which the two main political parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, declared war against each other. The war left more than 300,000 death people (ONU-Hábitat 2005, 50). This generated a phenomenon of displacement and new owners came to occupy land.

The period of La Violencia ended with the creation of El Frente Nacional, a political arrangement in which power was equally divided between Liberals and Conservatives. It was a pact done by the elites and many people were left out of the arrangement. For this some of the members of the previous liberal guerrillas continued to use arms, additionally many new guerrillas were to emerge in the sixties and seventies.

In order to respond to the violence landowners and the government decided to create and train self-defense armed groups. They did this with the complicity of the Colombian Army. As a result violence was intensified, and continued to grow as self-defense groups got involved with drug dealers. The so-called self-defense groups became paramilitaries and soon got out of control. Later on, around 1998, these paramilitary groups unified themselves under the AUC (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia).

The 1980s and the early 1990s were especially violent largely because drug trafficking was significantly increased. This led the state to declare a war on drugs, and the drug traffickers responded harshly. Many civilians died in the process. Additionally, as was already stated, the paramilitaries started to finance themselves with money that came from the drug trade.
By the late 80s the FARC also came to take part in the drug trade through their domination of the coca-producing zones, intensifying the conflict even more. The ELN would avoid participating in drug trafficking until after the year 2000.

Between the Presidency of Belisario Betancourt (1982), and the presidency of Andrés Pastrana several rounds of peace talks were held. Women were highly excluded from formal negotiating tables. The only woman that participated in official negotiations was Maria Emma Mejia, during the Pastrana peace talks. However, she was just one member of a government negotiating team and she was withdrawn from process after only a brief period. There is no evidence that during her brief tenure at the negotiating table that she attempted to assert a special women’s agenda or to apply a gender-sensitive approach to peacemaking.

Some of these peace processes were successful in demobilizing and disarming individual armed groups. Guerrilla groups such as the M-19 and the EPL were reinserted into society. After the reinsertion of the M-19, elections were held for a Constituent Assembly where the M-19 won 28% of the vote. Several women participated in the Constituent Assembly, including some M-19 former combatants.

The first attempt at negotiating with the FARC also experienced some successes before ultimately breaking down. This guerrilla group agreed to a bilateral ceasefire in 1984, under the presidency of Belisario Betancur. However, “…no lasting agreements emerged, as the government did not implement the proposed changes and FARC did not give up its weapons” (Rojas 2004, 6).

The EPL and Qiintin Lame guerrilla movements demobilized in 1990, and a small faction of the ELN, the Corriente de Renovación Socialista, also demobilized in 1994. However the majority of the ELN and the FARC did not reach agreements with the government and the war with these groups intensified throughout the 1990s, as did the expansion of paramilitarism. A final attempt at peacemaking with the FARC and ELN during the Pastrana years from 1998 to 2002 also broke down. After 20 years of
intermittent peace efforts, the government could only claim partial success in demobilizing some of the smaller groups but ultimately these earlier peace processes did not lead to a durable peace.

After the year 2002, when President Alvaro Uribe was elected, the government decided to use all of its military strength to attack and defeat the guerrillas. Because of the use of force guerrillas were relegated to other territories, yet they were not destroyed, and they continue to have a strong impact on the country.

Alvaro Uribe’s government also created a demobilization process with the paramilitaries. The demobilization process was not very successful. Today many of the paramilitaries are still using their strength to terrorize civilians. They operate under different names but their structures remain very similar.

President Juan Manuel Santos was elected, promising to continue with Uribe’s harsh policies towards the guerrillas. Even though he continued with these hardline policies, he surprised the country by creating laws that would help the victims regain their dignity and that would restore land to those forced to flee their lands. At the same time, President Santos opened up direct peace talks with the FARC. In these talks, too, the issues of land and victims have become central issues.

Yet although new laws toward victims and land included a gender component, Santos has thus far failed to include women in the government’s negotiating team.

The remaining part of this essay will evaluate the roles of women in the Colombian and will then examine the agenda for current peace negotiations.

I. Women as peacebuilders

Decades of conflict have allowed Colombian women to organize more effectively. “Women have expressed their rejection against the diverse forms of violence and have taken different actions, protesting against the harm that war has caused on the entire population, and on women in particular” (“Las mujeres
Desde diversas iniciativas han expresado su rechazo contra las diversas formas de violencia y desde distintas acciones han protestado contra las afectaciones de la guerra sobre la población y en particular sobre las mujeres” (Corporación Para el Desarrollo Humano 2003, 64). Today women organize independently from their ethnicities, political parties and from their religion. Women “organize to protest as mothers united against war. They do so, thinking about others, adopting a speech of respect for life and human rights that brings an ethical component to political discussions about the use of violence” (“Por el contrario, más allá del control de los partidos y de la Iglesia católica, ellas se organizan para protestar como madres contra la guerra. Lo hacen, por lo demás, inspiradas en un discurso de defensa de la vida y de los derechos humanos que pone en el centro de la discusión política el debate ético sobre el sentido del uso de la violencia” (Sánchez and Wills 2011a, 313-314).

Women have organized from the local level to the national level. At the local level, they have, for example, stopped their sons from being recruited, as could be seen in the locality of Valle Encantado where women organized and took their sons back from the paramilitaries (Sánchez and Wills 2011a; Sánchez, Wills 2011b). They have also created non-violent strategies, such as dismantling military bases without the use of force in order to get armed groups out of their territory (Karsin 2012).

At the national level their organization ranges from grassroots to openly political. They have created national and international networks. Among these networks is the Red Nacional de Mujeres (National Women’s Network), which advocates for the inclusion of women at all levels of political participation, and for ending gender-based violence among others. They have created national and international networks. Among these networks is the Red Nacional de Mujeres (National Women’s network), which advocates for the inclusion of women at all levels of political participation, and for ending gender-based violence among others (Sánchez and Wills 2011a).

They have also been leaders in the organization of national marches to make sure their voices are heard. “In the words of Gloria Nieto, a member of INDEPAZ: “The first big marches took place in 1998
and 1999. We were leading those processes… Our mode was to resist by marching with one voice that represented all social sectors for peace”” (Rojas 2004, 14).

Additionally, women have constantly protested in order for there to be a peaceful solution to the conflict. One of their first massive manifestations took place on May 1990, and it was called “Exorcícemos la Muerte y Alumbremos la Vida” (Let’s exorcise death and put some light in live) (Sánchez and Wills 2011a). These strategies had a big impact. On some occasions, women have managed to encourage warring parties to come to the table (Rojas 2004).

Regardless of this constant pressure and organization for peacebuilding, women have been excluded by both guerrillas and by the government from all high levels of peace negotiations. Pastrana’s government made a brief exception by naming Maria Emma Mejia as a negotiator at the beginning of the Caguán Peace talks. Nonetheless, Mejía was removed her shortly after the peace process started (Corporación Para el Desarrollo Humano 2003; Rojas 2004).

During the Caguan talks, the FARC only named one woman (Mariana Perez) to collaborate in the peace process, but she was not a member of the formal negotiations, just of the thematic committee, which had no real influence overall the peace process. Perez was only included in the peace talks after the pressure put on the FARC by women in the civil society and neglected to include issues regarding gender-based violence in the thematic committee (Rojas 2004).

It is important to note that despite their small roles, these women (and a few others that were including in thematic committees) managed to get the negotiators to briefly focus on women. As the peace talks went by they, for example, pushed for the inclusion of a special public hearing (audiencias públicas) on women’s issues as part of a broader program of pubic dialogues that were held between the FARC and civil society groups. This public hearing took place in June 2000 and it helped to show women’s efforts and capacities to resolve conflicts in Colombia (Corporación Para el Desarrollo Humano 2003; Rojas 2004).
Additionally, women managed to bring other sectors of civil society to the table, because: “historically, neither the FARC nor the government considered the demands of civil society as important to negotiation processes, nor had an event ever been designed to give voice to women’s demands and perspectives on peace” (Rojas 2004, 19). This is of extreme importance, because, civil society is once again excluded from today’s negotiation tables, and few outlets are being given for them to participate. Among these outlets are a webpage for citizens to comment on the negotiations and a negotiating table that was held at the National University on December 2012, were citizens could give their input about subjects that were being discussed by the Colombian Government and the FARC.

This long process of war and peacebuilding has given women a capacity to “...reflect about democracy, civic culture, tolerance, conflict resolution through the use of dialogue, the given right to be different, the acceptance of pluralism and the place institutions should occupy” (“Así, la guerra, con su barbarie y su arbitrariedad, impulsó en las iniciativas de mujeres una reflexión cualificada sobre la democracia, la cultura cívica, la tolerancia, la resolución de los conflictos por la vía del diálogo, el derecho a la diferencia, la aceptación del pluralismo y el lugar de las instituciones” (Sánchez and Wills 2011a, 315). This new role of women as secure individuals that reflect and take action led to, for example the gathering of 25,000 Colombian women in a protest in 2002 (Sánchez and Wills 2011a), when the negotiations with President Pastrana and the FARC failed. One of their slogans was “Not a single men, nor a single women, nor a single cent for war. We demand negotiations now!” (Ni un hombre, ni una mujer, ni un peso más para la gerra: ¡Negociación ya” (Sánchez and Wills 2011a, 319). By protesting, women put pressure on the government and the armed groups and told them they disagreed with the termination of the negotiations, and that they were going to continue pressuring in order to ensure peace was accomplished. It is important to note that in developing peaceful activities and advocating for the end to the conflict, women put their lives at risk every day.
Nonetheless, women continued to put pressure on the government for the last ten years even as the government became more focused on a military strategy to end the conflict. They strategized, they advocated for peace, and in many occasions they had some astonishing accomplishments. An example of this was former Senator Piedad Cordoba (the first Afro-Colombian women to be elected Senator in Colombia (Rojas 2004)) who constantly negotiated with the FARC in order to get them to release hostages. She also got the FARC to talk about possibilities for peace. These efforts performed by senator Cordoba came at a high price. As a result, her life was threatened on several occasions, and she was accused of being a guerrilla member. These accusations led to her removal from Congress after the Inspector General found that she had collaborated with the guerrillas. Despite the efforts to silence her, she continues to work for peace.

Although, it is hard to prove a direct relation between the pressure women put on warring parties and the current peace process, there is enough evidence to argue that the work performed by these women impacted the Santos’ governmental decision to move toward a peaceful solution of the conflict. This is especially evident when it comes to work performed by Senator Cordoba, who silently worked to get hundreds of hostages released and to get the idea of peaceful negotiations into the news while most of the media advocated for the continuation of the war.

II. Women as victims

Women have suffered disproportionally throughout the Colombian conflict. As victims, they were raped, stigmatized, ridiculed; they lost their lands, and their loved ones among others.

Regarding rape, it is important to note that all parties in conflict, including the Colombian Armed Forces, perpetrated the systematic raping of women as a war strategy. Most sexual abuses, however, have been done by the paramilitaries (Amnesty International 2011).

Rape has, for example, been constantly used as a mechanism of displacement in order for armed groups to obtain land. It has also been used in order to gain control of the territory. This is possible partly
because of the lack of registration and clarity of land titles. It disproportionally affects women because it is harder for them to prove that they owned land (because they did not usually hold land titles).

The Colombian Congress reported that between 2001 and 2009 members of the different armed groups raped 489,687 women (Colombian Congress 2012, 567). This means that approximately 54,410 women were raped yearly, 149 women were raped daily, and 6 women were raped every hour. All parties in the conflict, including the Colombian Armed Forces, perpetrated systematic raping of women as a war strategy.

According to Colombia’s Institute for Forensic Medicine the issue of rape as a war strategy has been growing. In 2003 there were 14,239 reported cases of rape, and in 2011 there were 20,142. Approximately 84% of the victims of sexual abuse are women (Colombian Congress 2012, 567).

Additionally, Colombia’s bloody war has produced about 4 million internally displaced persons (MAD 2012). 70% of the displaced are women (MAD 2012). As they are forced to leave their lands women are doubly victimized. According to Human Rights Watch, one in every two displaced woman suffers from sexual violence (HRW 2012).

Throughout its protracted conflict Colombia has opted for impunity, and sex crimes have not been an exception. Indeed, sex crimes committed as a war strategy remain almost completely unpunished. According to the Colombian Congress 98% of sexual abuse cases are not prosecuted (Colombian Congress 2012, 567). This could be seen in the El Caguán negotiations when women gave a document to FARC negotiators regarding rape performed by the members of that organization; they were ridiculed for their efforts. “On her return to El Caguán, a FARC leader aggressively confronted Velazquez, and she was subjected to a series of misogynist jokes while receiving no support from her male civil society partners. ”It was a very difficult episode for women,” says Velazquez, “an only then did I understand the magnitude of how alone we are in this process to talk about this issue”” (Rojas 2004, 22).
In addition to being raped women were stigmatized and ridiculed. As armed groups moved into their territories they imposed dress codes and ways of behavior for both men and women. Women were for example categorized as decent or indecent and were punished for being indecent. These stigmatizations remained within local populations, even after armed groups abandon the population (Sánchez and Wills 2011a).

It is important to note that on many occasions women had to stay in conflict zones and watched their loved ones die (Karsin 2012). This was largely due to the fact that they lacked economical resources to move somewhere else. Even when they had resources, it was harder for them to move because they had to care for their children (Sánchez and Wills 2011; Karsin 2012).

Finally, women were also targeted for strategizing for peace and human rights. “In 2002, 17 percent of assassinated and disappeared leaders and activists throughout Colombia were women” (Rojas 2004,12).

**III. Women as perpetrators**

Women have also been perpetrators. This can be seen in their roles as high commanders of some of the FARC’s and the AUC’s military fronts (Bedoya 2011). It can also be seen in the political role they played within the AUC, where women came to represent the soft face of the paramilitaries in the Colombian Congress (Sánchez and Wills 2011a). As perpetrators women also participate in forced displacement.

Many of the perpetrators are girls who sign up into armed groups because they were previously abused in their families, or because they had no incomes to support themselves. They are persuaded to take arms, yet as they do so they are often again raped and abused by other members of the armed group that they joined.
All armed groups have counted with women’s support. The M-19 guerrilla who demobilized in 1990, for example, had women working at all positions. Relationships between women and men were considered egalitarian, and women were able to participate in informal negotiation processes (Corporación Para el Desarrollo Humano 2003). Additionally, a few women represented the M-19 in the National Constitutional Assembly in 1991 and latter on in the Congress.

The AUC, for instance used women in “public relations, finances, tax gathering and extortions, social workers, and informants” (“Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá y del Bloque Norte cumpliendo el papel de relacionistas públicas, financistas, recaudadoras de impuestos y extorsiones, gestoras de iniciativas sociales, o informantes” (Sánchez and Wills 2011a, 44)). Women were also warriors, politicians, participated in military intelligence activities, and helped the commanders to hide their assets. As a matter of fact, in an interview performed by the historical memory group one of the paramilitary commanders stated that about 5% of warriors in his command were women (Sánchez and Wills 2011a).

The FARC also used women as combatants. “Recent estimates indicate that women make up at least one third of FARC’s 18,000 fighters” (Rojas 2004, 8). Some of the women can access high level positions, as was the case of Elda Neyis Mosquera, alias Karina, a demobilized guerrilla women who became a commander of one of the FARC’s battalions. Regardless of this, in 2013, the FARC has only appointed two women to be part of the peace negotiations. These women have not been seen at the peace table, and do not occupy high ranks within the FARC.
Chapter IV:  
The 2013’s Peace Process

As was noted in the introduction, in 2013, after many decades of conflict, and many negotiations Colombia is engaged in peace talks with the FARC in order to put an end to the country’s internal armed conflict. Issues that affect women such as drugs, land, political participation, and victimhood are being negotiated at the table. Yet women are not playing a central role when it comes to negotiations.

The remainder of this chapter will analyze each of the points that are being discussed at the negotiation table in order to better understand if including women in the peace talks would be relevant.

I. Land

Land and access to natural resources are and have always been a central part of the Colombian conflict. Land is of great importance because it guarantees the livelihood of those who own it and work it. Colombia has great levels of poverty and inequality, and access to land could help revert these long lasting social tendencies. Because of violence performed by the armed groups approximately 5,5 million hectares of land have been abandoned (El Espectador 2012).

Since 1948, land has passed from hand to hand through the use of force. People have been coerced into selling their land and kicked out of land with no legal tittles. Respect for human rights and life have been lost and this has resulted in the murdering of people as part of a displacement strategy. Intimidation methods like rape and torture are also used in order to gain access to land.

Today, as the government advances in the land restitution process, it can be said that 34% of the land was taken away by the guerrillas and 34% by the paramilitaries (Ortíz 2012). The government cannot clarify who took the remaining percentage of land.
The Colombian government has tried to create laws in order to organize, register, and legalize land. Among them are the law of victims and land restitution and the bill of land and rural development. These laws were supposed to help people obtain land, and help those who already own land to maintain it. However, though these laws were only recently passed, the early evidence is that on many occasions the government has failed in both implementing these laws and in guaranteeing security for the victims that file a petition for the law.

Concurrently, in the past few months the Colombian government and the FARC have been discussing land issues as the first agenda issue at the negotiating table. Although both parties have been secretive and cautious about the content of the negotiations they appear to be moving forward when it comes to land issues.

*What do women have to do with land?*

Land issues within the Colombian conflict have affected women disproportionately. In the first place, all warring parties have used women’s bodies as a mechanism of displacement; armed groups, for example rape women in order to get them to leave and gain their lands. They have also used rape as a way of showing women that they control the territory. According to Lina Cespedes “the case of sexual violence against women, and its connection to displacement and plunder, is one of many issues that have proved increasingly intractable due to the Colombian state’s inability to judge and sanction these crimes, even on a separate basis” (Cespedes 2010, 3). This and the fact that it is hard to prove that rape was perpetrated in order to displace a community makes rape as a war strategy an incredibly efficient weapon for armed groups who are trying to take over land.

Second, because of gender-based discrimination, many women do not have land tittles, and on top of having to deal with violence perpetrated by armed forces they are doubly victimized by their spouses or partners (ONU-Habitat 2005). Often they do not know their rights and they are usually isolated from society, so it becomes hard for them to change the situation.
According to Céspedes “the difficulties that women face in gaining access to land and property, especially in periods of armed conflict, can thus be studied in relation to a type of sexual violence aimed at dispossessing them. While not all cases of illegal property seizure involve this kind of violence, testimonies gathered in the last decade demonstrate that, in certain contexts, this violence is used as a tool to generate displacement and force women to abandon their real property” (Cespedes 2010, 3).

Third, Colombia’s bloody war has produced about 4 million internally displaced persons (MAD 2012). 70% of the displaced are women (MAD 2012). As they are forced to leave their lands women are doubly victimized. According to Human Rights Watch, one in every two displaced woman suffers from sexual violence (HRW 2012).

Women have not always been passive when it comes to discrimination perpetrated against them because of land. They have participated and organized themselves in order to gain gender equality and to reverse discrimination laws.

Women are usually the ones that file land restitution petitions (Corporación Humanas 2012). However, in doing so they risk their lives. Many times they have been successful in their demands, but at other times, they, or their families have been targeted and murdered. Several land restitution leaders such as Yolanda Izquierdo from Cordoba, Gilma Graciano from the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, Osiris Jacqueline Amaya Beltran have lost their lives in the struggle for land.

II. Political Participation:

According to Piedad Cordoba, former Colombian Senator, “historically, women have been excluded from the exercise of political power. This is reflected in the low number of women at the top-level decision-making positions in government, despite the social and cultural transformations that have taken place in recent decades, which have been favorable to women’s legal position and education” (Cordoba 2002, 2).
Although, in theory, Colombia guarantees the inclusion of women in high-level decision-making positions by creating law 581 of the year 2002, which grants women the right of occupying 30% of all government decision-making positions, in practice things seem a little different (Paz con Mujeres 2011). As a matter of fact, regardless of women’ right to inclusion, they continue to be excluded from high-level decisions that affect the country and law 581 is constantly violated (Paz con Mujeres 2011). This can be seen in the 2013s negotiation process in which there are no women representing the government’s negotiating team.

Additionally, Colombia has no legislation to enforce women’s election in popularly elected positions. As a result, women occupy less than 20% of positions in the congress. Even more, women only occupy 3% of positions as governors, and only 18% of the country’s positions as majors. This level of political participation is very low, and as a result, when it comes to political equality, Colombia was ranked in the 90th place out of 136 countries (Paz con Mujeres 2011).

Despite this exclusion in the official political arena, women continue to organize politically from the grassroots level and manage to influence decisions. For example, “women were key leaders in the mass campaign Mandate for Peace, Life, and Freedom that led to ten million votes on a non-binding ballot accompanying the 1997 local elections. Women’s organizations were among the movement’s toughest supporters” (Rojas 2004, 10). Additionally, women organizations like the National Women’s Network (Red Nacional de Mujeres) constantly organize and lobby to get their voices heard (Sánchez and Wills 2011). They also continue to fight for political inclusion.

It is important to note that violence has helped women emerge as political leaders. This is largely due to the fact that women were forced to organize and to change their traditional roles because of the conflict.

*Why would women care about political participation?*
Women have been highly involved throughout the long-lasting Colombian conflict. They have also been involved in all of Colombia’s peace initiatives. Regardless of this they continue to be excluded from the peace talks and from different decision-making processes.

There are several reasons why women should be included at the table. To begin with, the Colombian government is violating the law by not having women at the negotiation table (which is a process in which high-level decisions are being taken). Further, decisions that affect women’s lives are being made at the negotiating table, particularly as the begin discussions on *political inclusion*. Women should be allowed to express their voices. At the table the possibility of the punishment of perpetrators is being defined, and women, as victims, perpetrators, and peacebuilders should have a voice when it comes to deciding between amnesty or impunity.

Additionally, including women when it comes to planning the future political path of Colombia can be a way of recognizing their long-lived suffering and commitment to fighting for peace, even when most others gave up. Finally, the *political inclusion* negotiations could represent a historical opportunity to reverse social discriminatory tendencies and generate a true change in Colombia. Colombia could become a society that respects its women and its laws.

**III. Victims**

The topic of women and victimhood was largely discussed previously in this section. To summarize women have suffered disproportionally from the Colombian conflict and have largely been victimized by all parties in conflict. As a result they should have a voice in the discussion on victims at the table. Their future, and the fate of the perpetrators that committed crimes against them are being discussed as the parties negotiate, and they should have a saying in the process.

**IV. Illicit Crops**
Colombia’s conflict intensified during the late 80s and early 90s because of an increase in drug production and trafficking. This added new actors to the conflict and augmented the resources of old warring parties like the FARC and different paramilitary groups. Illegal armed groups started to tax peasants in the areas they controlled and began to control the coca production around the country (Sánchez and Wills 2012).

In 1995 Colombia came to occupy the first place in coca production in the world and was to occupy this position until 2013. Many peasants in the rural areas opted for cultivating the product because it gave them higher revenues than other sorts of crops. In the documentary *We Women Warriors* we can see how Dora Puyana, the governor of an indigenous tribe, states that in her community people cultivate coca because they do not have economic alternatives (Karsin 2012).

Responding to this growth in coca production the Colombian Government, with the support of the United States Government, opted for aerial fumigations. In this process airplanes fumigate from the air and spread a gas that kills most plants around it. It also poisons the water and as a result many human beings become ill. Peasants also lose their livestock (Sánchez and Wills 2011a).

**Women and Coca Leaf**

Women have taken part in all of the cocaine production stages. They work in the coca fields, the production, the processing, the transportation, and the commercialization stages (Sánchez and Wills 2012). Many of them have done so to escape poverty, and, as was previously mentioned, because they have few other sustainable economic alternatives and many need to raise their children.

Women that live in coca production regions have been disproportionally affected by coca aerial fumigation. This is because even if they decide not to produce coca their family’s security is affected by the fumigations; as the fumigations take place people loose their crops, their livestock, their health, and even their lives in some cases.
These issues have led women to organize at the local and at the national level and to protest in order to stop aerial fumigation. They have also organized because as coca production increases more armed groups come into the regions. These groups often target civilian populations; as a result many women lose their partners and are then forced to raise their children on their own (Sánchez and Wills 2012).

V. Cease fire

As already noted, throughout the Colombian Conflict, women have been victims, perpetrators, and peacebuilders. Therefore they would be affected by a ceasefire in several ways.

As victims, a ceasefire would mean that, in theory, no more atrocities would be committed. The guarantee of not committing more atrocities would grant women their safety. As conditions become safer, women would be allowed to move on with their lives and to start seeking justice.

As perpetrators women have made a living out of war. If a ceasefire occurs they would be forced to rethink their economic activities and prepare for new roles in society.

As peacebuilders, women have struggled for decades to get negotiators to the table and to help put an end to the Colombian conflict. As a result they have gathered levels of expertise that would help them give important input in the table discussing ceasefire.

VI. End of the conflict

As was seen in both the comparative cases and the literature review, ending a conflict can be complicated and require much work. In cases such as El Salvador, for example, deep levels of involvement from all of the civil society were necessary to bring about in stable and long lasting peace. Women, and other sectors of civil society were included in the planning of the termination of the conflict. However, the country failed in fully including women in the aftermath in the post-conflict reconstruction phase, and as a result, deep discrimination, misogynist and sexist tendencies were not reversed. Today the country has the highest levels of femicide in the world.
In Rwanda, in contrast, by including women and civil society in all levels of the conflict’s aftermath and peacebuilding phase, the tendencies that created the conflict are being reversed and a new peaceful Rwanda, with high inclusion of women, is being created. Although there were no negotiations, the aftermath in planning of the country’s reconstruction included women (which represented 70% of the Rwandan society) and they are managing to rebuild the country. Rwanda has remained peaceful for almost twenty years and it seems to be progressing towards becoming a peaceful egalitarian society in which women are respected.

In Liberia, we could see that women’s input in peacebuilding, terminating the conflict, and demobilization and reintegration, aided in making the country more peaceful. Discriminatory tendencies towards women continue, but they are slowly being reversed.

In Colombia, women have been fighting for peace for decades. They have also been victims and perpetrators in the conflict. Additionally, it is important to note that they comprise over 50% of the population, and 70% of the displaced population. If the three previous countries examined, it was critical to fully include women when it comes to planning the end of the conflict. Although it is hard to measure the impact of women on successful long lasting peace, we can see that including women in the long term and in the planning makes a huge difference. Rwanda and Liberia seem to be developing and at peace, El Salvador, on the other hand, neglected women at the end of the peace accords, and that country today seems to be paying the consequences.

Another lesson that can be learned is the importance of justice when it comes to gender-based violence, including sexual abuses. Both Rwanda and Liberia implemented some kind of judging and accountability for sex crimes. Both of these countries seem to be improving when it comes to gender-based violence, and seem to be attempting to reverse historical discrimination.
El Salvador, on the other hand, allowed impunity to take over, and this included impunity for violence against women. This could be affecting the country over all. Twenty years after the peace accords were signed, discrimination towards women continues and seems to be increasing.

In addition to the three case studies, the literature review also underscores the argument that the participation of women is crucial for the termination of a conflict. Many authors talk about peace talks and post-conflict situations as opportunities of reversing discriminatory tendencies and for putting an end to gender-based violence. If these opportunities are not used, discriminatory tendencies will most likely prevail, as can be seen in El Salvador.

Additionally, women often tend to bring a more holistic notion of peace that will include justice, peace and the reformat of sexist and patriarchic social structures. Reforming social structures helps to reverse social tendencies that permitted the creation of the conflict in the first place.

The literature review and the case of El Salvador underscore the importance of fully including women in Disarmament and Demobilization Processes in order for peace to last. DDR processes are usually planned in both the end of the conflict and ceasefire stages of negotiation. If the Colombian government fails in including women in this stage of the conflict it would likely be making a huge mistakes. Among them might be, the exacerbation of gender-based violence, and the mining of the possibility of a stable and long-lasting peace.
Conclusions

By evaluating the previously existing literature and comparing the three case studies with the Colombian conflict the following outcomes were obtained:

I. Gender affects women and men in different ways. This research focused mainly on women and therefore it was evident that women are more likely to be raped, widowed, and, for example, more likely to be excluded from decision-making then men. A gender perspective, therefore, helps in better understanding how both genders experience conflict and therefore, aids in properly addressing women’s and men’s needs when it comes to peacebuilding.

   El Salvador, for example, neglected to include a gender perspective during the peace negotiations. As a result many women’s needs where not taken into account when it came to reconstructing the country. This led to an implementation of a DDR process where women’s necessities were taken for granted. As a result, women were excluded from reintegration activities. Today, many of the former female combatants remain in extreme poverty, and the country has great amounts of gender-based violence.

   In Liberia a gender component was included. This helped in empowering women and allowed them to take advantage of the skills learned during the conflict. It also helped in increasing women’s political participation.

   Although Rwanda did not go through a peace process, it is important to note that a gender component was included in all faces of post-conflict and reconstruction. The inclusion of women aided in the creation of legislation that ensured women’s presence in politics. Both Rwanda and Liberia are peaceful and stable and are undergoing major transformations that will help in guaranteeing gender equality in the future.

II. Throughout the literature review it was evident that many authors agree on the fact that negotiating processes and post-conflict situations present the perfect opportunity for gender inclusion and for reversing discriminatory tendencies against women.
Reversing these discriminatory tendencies would be good for society as a whole. When evaluating the case of Rwanda, for example, it was evident that including women in the reconstruction of the conflict made a big difference. As a matter of fact, women are now working to change the country and are legislating to eliminate historic discriminatory tendencies.

In Liberia, women where also empowered through their role as peacebuilders and gained political recognition after the peace process ended. This resulted in the election of a female president and is slowly generating a shift in legislation to protect women and ensure they get the same opportunities as men.

In El Salvador, women that were present during the peace negotiations failed to include a gender component. They gave up their rights, and today they are paying for their decisions as violence towards women in the country increases.

In Colombia, discrimination and exclusion of women have been a historical constant. When looking at land issues, justice issues, and political issues it is clear that Colombian women have been highly discriminated, and that crimes committed against them remain in impunity. The most absurd discrimination is in the political arena. As could be seen women compose more than 50% of the Colombian population yet their congressional participation is lower than 20%. These rates are even lower when it comes to women as majors and governors. Additionally, the country has never had a female president. Although legislation guarantees their political inclusion, laws are highly violated. This is particularly evident when it comes to the current negotiations, where women shine for their absence.

3. As was seen throughout the paper, Colombian women, have suffered disproportionally because of the conflict. Their suffering has been received with impunity.

By analyzing the case studies it was evident that justice and peace have a clear correlation. In El Salvador, for example, little justice was done. Today, the country’s crime rates are extremely high, and crimes against women are amongst the higher in the world.
In Rwanda, great efforts towards performing justice were implemented. Today the country continues to organize its legal system and seems to be moving towards a culture of legality. The country remains in peace. In Liberia, justice was done to some extent. The country has remained peaceful and stable for a decade.

Although, more evidence is needed, it can be argue that justice and peace have a correlation. Today Colombia faces high levels of impunity. Many of the conflict’s victims are women. Including them in the negotiation table could help to address their sorrows, and adequately design a more effective justice system. This will help in decreasing levels of impunity, and in getting the country to be more stable and peaceful.

4. By performing the literature review and evaluating the three case studies it was clear that including women in post conflict reconstruction is of vital importance. As a matter of fact, when women are not fully included in DDR processes, peace is very likely to fail.

In Liberia, for example, addressing women’s needs in post-conflict helped in the adequate reconstruction of the country. Additionally, performing an adequate reintegration process where women’s needs were addressed allowed many women combatants to be reintegrated into society. This helped in a better reconstruction of society, and has helped to maintain peace in the country.

In Rwanda, women were highly included in the reconstruction of the country. They were given political positions, and were allowed to participate at all levels of decision-making. Although they were not fully involved in the DDR processes, they were given other kinds of benefits. Today, as has been previously mentioned, Rwanda remains in peace and is moving forward as an inclusive country that respects all ethnicities, and both genders.

In El Salvador, women were included in the reconstruction of the country but were asked to make a big sacrifice when it came to the DDR process; they were asked not to take part in the reintegration part of the process and to return to roles occupied before the war amongst others. Although it cannot be fully
proven, evidence suggests that these sacrifices came at a high price. Today, women are among the poorest in El Salvador, their rights are constantly violated, and indexes of femicide are the highest in the world.

To conclude, Colombia would be highly benefitted from including women in peacebuilding and peacemaking process for several reasons. First, because as victims, perpetrators, and peacebuilders women have participated in all aspects of the Colombian conflict; second, because all of the topics that are being discussed in the table will impact their lives in the future; third, because by including them they would have a voice and help in the justice-making and truth-telling processes; fourth, because they bring a different voice to the negotiation table; fifth, because their expertise in peacebuilding would benefit the peace process. Sixth, because it is the law; Colombia has a 30% quota that mandates for women to be included in all high-level decision-making processes, and a national peace negotiation is a high-level decision. Even more, Colombia is a signatory of Resolution 1325, which mandates the inclusion of women in peacemaking processes. Finally, because it is their right; women represent more than 50% of the Colombian population, and there cannot be a successful peace process without giving voice to more than half of the population.

This research also proved that including women in the DDR processes, and in the country’s reconstruction is highly important.

Finally, it is important to note that including a gender component in the negotiating tables is of great importance. This is because men and women experience conflict in different ways and have different needs when it comes to post-conflict and reintegration. Including a gender component at the beginning of the negotiations would clarify these roles and experiences and facilitate the country’s transit to a long-lasting and stable peace.
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