

# Defeating Invisibility.

## A Challenge for

## Afro-descendant Women in Colombia

Landscape of Violence and Human Rights Violations Against  
Afro-descendant Women in Colombia, in The Framework of Collective Rights



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## About “Defeating Invisibility”

Every day, we receive news of a woman leader—a woman human rights defender—mistreated, threatened, “disappeared,” insulted or attacked. Every day, a woman stands up and takes up the flag of the struggle for dignity that Afro-descendant men and women in Colombia have sustained, and continued to sustain, as they build the capacity for Black people’s self-determination. In this report, we highlight Afro-descendant women leaders and human rights defenders and survey the hurdles in their way as they fight to overcome the different forces determined to maintain their oppression.

As women and Afro-descendant, the women from the Black Communities’ Process in Colombia (*Proceso de Comunidades Negras en Colombia–PCN*), join the call to see violence against women as a human rights problem that has a multi-dimensional character. In this sense, the abuse of the human rights of Afro-descendant women not only affects them as *women* but also as *Afro-descendants* living in a homogenizing context of geo-economic wars that exacerbate the historic practices of domination through violence, and reinforce their impoverishment and marginalization through the dispossession caused by forced displacement.

This document is an exercise in hope, built on a foundation of political faith on the part of a collective of women members of the Black Communities’ Process, and is part of the *Afro-Colombian Women Human Rights Defenders Project* that PCN is in the process of developing. The document compiles information from Tumaco and Buenaventura, in the Territory-Region of the Pacific Coast, and Maria La Baja, in the Colombian Caribbean Coast, collected by the Association of Afro-descendant and Caribbean Women Graciela Cha-Ines, the Palenque El Congal of Buenaventura, the organization Caminos de Mujer in Tumaco and by Jeannette Rojas Silva, independent researcher and consultant, and unconditional ally of the movement and of Afro-descendant women.

This preliminary report is the first stage in an analysis of the complexities and magnitude of the situation of Afro-descendant women’s human rights in the context of the internal armed conflict and structural racism and discrimination in Colombia. This analysis begins by presenting some premises to help facilitate an understanding of the violence and human rights violations perpetrated against Afro-descendant women in Colombia, and goes on to outline the intersections between gender, race and class that determine Afro-descendant Women as subjects of differentiated approaches within the Afro-descendant population. The section on *Racism: the breeding ground for violence and human rights violations* looks at the situations impacting the lives of Afro-descendant women as consequences and manifestations of the denial Colombia’s government and wider society of the existence of racism in the country. The international and regional agreements and national legislation to which the Colombian State has committed itself for the protection of human rights are presented in the section entitled *Institutional and Legal Framework for the Affirmation and Exercise of THE BEING*, with a review of how far Colombia is from meeting its obligations.

Infused throughout the document are women’s testimonies, collected in workshops and activities intended to reconstruct memory and stimulate thinking, and which shed further light on the structural violations of human rights faced by Afro-descendant women. The report also presents cases of violence against women in Buenaventura, Tumaco and Cartagena, with conclusions and recommendations. The conclusions provide guidelines for advancing the interpretation and formulation of initiatives that aim to understand and correct the structural problem of human rights violation against Afro-descendant women; the recommendations are a call to State entities responsible for protecting Afro-descendant women’s rights, and to the human rights movement, to commit to the abolition of racism and discrimination in all its forms and manifestations, and to ensure respect of our right to self-determination as individuals and as a collective.

With this document, the PCN’s women collective rises to the challenge that Afro-descendant women have set for ourselves: defeat the invisibility of our people and garner the political will that is required to remedy the state of unconstitutional and inhuman conditions that Afro-descendant people are facing in Colombia.



## Premises for understanding violence and human rights violations against Afro-descendant women in Colombia

- In 1991, Colombia acknowledged the multicultural and plural character of ethnicity in the country and reflected this in the National Constitution by recognizing the specific rights of ethnic groups, particularly for Indigenous People and Afro-descendants. In the case of Afro-descendant communities, the Constitution recognized their right to collective ownership of their ancestral territories, the need to define the mechanisms and legal resources to ensure their cultural protection, conditions for sustainable development harmonious with their cultural views, and their political participation.
- In 1993, Law 70 was established, constituting one of the greatest achievements of the Afro-descendant community since the abolition of slavery on May 21, 1851. Law 70 generated a process for recognizing the cultural, economic, social and political presence of the Afro-descendant population in the life of the Colombian nation and a movement based on principles of collective rights and self-determination was strengthened. This new “visibility” of Afro-descendant people created a path for important opportunities for development, welfare and a dignified life for the population and, at the same time, awoke, and has increased, interest in their territories and resources (whose value was unknown at the time). It also galvanized Afro-descendants leadership and organization, and their intention of self-determination as holders of individual and also collective rights.
- With the “recognition” and “visibility” of Afro-descendants, beginning in the mid-1990s, the internal armed conflict in their collective and ancestral territories intensified, along with the imposition of development models based on neo-liberal policies and internal colonialism. The result today is an environment of “geo-economic war”<sup>1</sup> concentrated in the Afro-descendant territories, with harassment and targeted violence against their communities, organizational structures and their women and men leaders. The environmental, cultural and economic impacts of almost twenty years of terrorizing practices have resulted in what appears to be a process of “cultural genocide.”<sup>2</sup>
- In this context, the role of Afro-descendant women, determined culturally and socially, has been transformed dramatically, putting women at the center of the actions and impacts of the war as leaders, as weapons to demobilize and exercise control through sexual violence, as main breadwinners and heads of families, and as points of resistance. Even though it has been widely recognized that women are the most affected by factors that negatively impact the lives and territories of Afro descendants, and in spite of their brave acts of resistance and self-protection, their situation and their fight are still not visible.
- The human rights situation for Afro-descendant women therefore should be looked at in the context of systemic discrimination and marginalization of the Black population as a whole, of the political and geo-economic wars that are being fought in their territories, of the cultural and political particularities of the regions the women live, and of their own cultural and gender particularities.
- Moreover, as political subjects, the rights of Afro-descendant women should be understood and their violations evaluated in the context of the political project of the Afro-descendant movement in Colombia. This begins by identifying the right to identity (TO BE), the right to territory (the space to BE) and the right to participate (the exercise of BEING), as a fundamental constituent axis of the right to difference and ethnic rights in general.<sup>3</sup>
- In the framework of the political project of Afro-descendant communities in Colombia, the link between the communities and their territory is a fundamental element of identity and cultural strength. Therefore, the phenomenon of forced displacement as a result of the impacts of the internal armed conflict, the imposition of homogenizing public and economic policies, and the denial of fundamental rights such the right to prior, free and informed consultation and consent, should be understood as factors that undermine the advancement of the Afro-descendant population and affect in a very concrete way their rights and life goals, which are founded on self-

<sup>1</sup> “Geo-economic wars” refers to “war as a tool and intervention to open new terrains to specific economic interests,” where “there is a qualitative change in contemporary wars toward new ‘geo-economic wars,’ that frequently involved extra-state actors.” Oslander, Ulrich, *Constructing Counter-powers to the New Geo-Economic Wars: Ways toward a globalization of the resistance*.

<sup>2</sup> Grueso, Libia, Galindo and Juliana, *Comunidades Negras y procesos de justicia y paz en el contexto del estado de cosas inconstitucional*, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Bogota, November 2011, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> PCN, Principles and Foundations of Being Black, defined by the first National Assembly, 1993



determination. The evaluation and attention to the situation of Afro-descendant women cannot be excluded from these contexts.

- In the same way that is imperative to recognize and value the diverse character of the Afro-descendant population in Colombia while discussing the systematic violations being committed against them, it is necessary to discuss Afro-descendant women in plural, recognizing the multiple intersections between, culture, class, gender and sexuality, and recognizing that to discuss the systematic violations against their rights and their bodies, so as to define policies, programs and mechanisms of assistance, protection and empowerment, implies the recognition and analysis of such intersections.
- The Afro-descendant population, understood as groups that identify themselves as members of the Black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquero population, are subjects of collective rights and entitled to differentiated policies, programs, projects and actions by the State. Consequently, Afro-descendant women should be subjects of differential attention not only from a gender perspective, but also from an ethnic-racial perspective, in a framework of collective and individual rights.
- The fundamental rights framework of Afro-descendants comprises, among other things, the right to self-determination, including access and use of their natural resources and to not be deprived of their livelihood; the right to work and to satisfactory and equal work conditions; the right to form trade unions; the right to social security; the right to protection and assistance for the family, including during infancy, adolescence and maternity; the right to housing and an adequate diet; the right to water; the right to a high level of mental and physical health; the right to a healthy and protected environment; the right to education; and the right to culture and to enjoy the benefits of the scientific progress.

#### Foundations and principles of the Life Project of PCN's Rural and Urban Afro-descendant Communities

"The Life Project of Afro-descendant communities is sustained by the possibility of building alternative societies that have as their foundation the conservation of the natural environment and cultural values that recognize the solidarity and respect for different forms of life. PCN begins with the understanding that the exchange of cultural visions around the defense of natural resources and the territory is not an exclusive project of Black communities but a national building-project, wherein cultural dialogue is the basis. Our proposal is life, joy and freedom, thus our purpose continues to be a project for liberty based on life and joy."

#### Principles:

1. The **IDENTITY** or the Right **TO BE** black women and men reaffirmed in the consciousness of their ethnic and cultural identity as African-descendant communities.
2. The **TERRITORY**, as a Space **TO BE**, is the legal recognition of the ancestral right to the territories of the black/Afro-Colombian communities settled in the Pacific (coast-region).
3. **PARTICIPATION**, as the exercise of **BEING**, is the right to organize and participate autonomously in decision-making processes on issues that affect the being.
4. **AUTONOMOUS DEVELOPMENT**, as a right to determine its *Own Option* of **FUTURE**, that ensures environmental sustainability and is in concordance with the cultural aspirations of the black communities.
5. **RECIPROCAL SOLIDARITY**, as the link between the life aspirations and struggles of the African Diaspora and other social sectors, for the vindication of rights and the construction of a more just world.



## Legal and institutional framework for the affirmation and exercise of THE BEING

Colombia has ratified the main international human rights treaties: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and its two Optional Protocols, and has ratified without reservation the Convention on Elimination of All the Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Regionally, Colombia has ratified the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights (Pact of San Jose, Costa Rica), the Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture, the ILO's Convention 169 on the right to prior, free and informed consultation and consent, and the Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Elimination of Violence against Women ("Convention of Belém do Pará").

International treaties have constitutional status, in accordance with Article 93 of the Colombian Constitution, and the rights and duties outlined in the Constitution must be interpreted in conformity "with international human rights treaties ratified by Colombia."<sup>4</sup>

Nationally, the Constitution recognizes the pluralistic character of the State (Article 1), and recognizes and protects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Colombian Nation (Article 7). Articles 13 and 70 recognize the right to equality and non-discrimination, which covers African descendant communities and their members. Law 70 of 1993, which in turn resulted in a normative and legal framework for the protection and exercise of the fundamental rights and freedoms of people of African descent, recognizes the right of communities to collective ownership and to "establish mechanisms for the protection of their cultural identity, the rights of these communities, and to promote their economic and social development." In December 2011, Law 1482 was passed to penalize legally and economically all forms of discrimination and segregation, and Decree-law 1421 was passed in December 2011, providing reparations and restitution to Afro-descendant victims of the internal armed conflict. Meanwhile, the Colombian Constitutional Court has legislated, through Order T025 of 2004, and Orders 005 of 2009 and 092 of 2008, on the State's obligation to provide differential attention to Black communities and women (respectively) in situations of internal displacement, and to address the systemic aggravating factors for displacement in order to prevent it.

Under this framework, the Colombian State is obligated to *respect, ensure and protect* the enjoyment and full exercise of fundamental rights of Afro-descendant citizens.<sup>5</sup> The State's obligation to guarantee *respect* implies that the State "must prevent its agents from abusing directly or indirectly the rights"<sup>6</sup> and freedoms of citizens and "*should refrain from adopting measures that hinder or prevent the enjoyment of human rights.*"<sup>7</sup> (...) *The obligation to protect determines that the State monitors, regulates and sanctions the actions of others non-state actors to be respectful of human rights and, otherwise, the State must provide mechanisms for their defense. (...) In connection with the obligation to ensure, the State must take all necessary measures to allow its citizens the enjoyment and full and effective practice of human rights, directly and immediately whenever an individual or group cannot, for reasons beyond their control, access or implement their rights with the resources at their disposition.*"<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Colombian Constitution, Article 93.

<sup>5</sup> Estupiñan, Danelly, and Valencia, Hamington, *Lineamientos para la atención a víctimas de la violencia política y el conflicto armado en Buenaventura, con un enfoque diferencial para Comunidades Negras*, Buenaventura, 2010

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Sandoval Teran, Ariel, *Construcción de indicadores en materia de derechos humanos económicos, sociales, culturales y ambientales*, Equipo Pueblo, Ciudad de Mexico, March 2007, p. 9. <http://www.equipopueblo.org.mx/desca/descargas/IndicadoresDESCA.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



## Afro-descendant women as subjects of differential attention in the context of the Afro-descendant Population<sup>9</sup>

*“Speaking of Afro-descendant women is a challenge, as they represent a series of intersection, resulted from the identities that they embody, identities marked by being part of something different, from the other, the excluded, representing heterogeneity, rejected by the hierarchies that are in power and that have historically legitimized the inferiority of social groups, through racist and sexist ideologies.”<sup>10</sup>*

The use of **gender and ethnicity** as differential approaches derives from a recognition of the situation and status of Afro-descendant women in the context of Colombian society and their ethnic group, in connection with the exercise of their rights and equality. In this regard, *“What does being a black woman in the Colombian context of gender inequality, growing poverty, forced displacement, discrimination and racism mean? The identity of Colombian Black women is defined by the fact of being Black in a discriminating mestizo society, poor in a class-based society, and women in a patriarchal society, where the features of their particular ethnic groups fundamentally count, recognizing that Black communities are not homogeneous but on the contrary have different specificities, all of which allows us to talk about black women in plural. For black women, gender is not a central category, neither is class or ethnicity/race—we are Black women historically impoverished, so the articulation of all these categories, without hierarchies, is essential to account for the Black female subject.”<sup>11</sup>*

As Lozano L. continues: *“In this sense, an analysis of gender-based violence perpetrated against Black women should begin by recognizing the intersections between race, class, gender and sexuality, to allow us to understand and account for the systematic violence perpetrated against these women. It is not enough to analyze the situation of violence against Black women speaking only from the gender category. To limit (the analysis) to a single category hides violence perpetrated in various contexts and relationships and means the continuity of excluding Black women from the liberation struggles that are carried out in the name of the universal abstract “woman”. The intersectionality of oppressions should allow us to understand why both men who share the oppression of ‘race’ and class, as ‘white’ women or mixed women who share gender oppression, are indifferent to the violence that both of them exercise and perpetuate against women.”<sup>12</sup>*

Afro-descendant women, due to their subordinated status in their communities, are at a disadvantage compared to Afro-descendant men and therefore more prone to physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence.

According to Lozano L., B.R.: *“this leads us to acknowledge, following Maria Lugones, that ‘the division of labor is completely racialized and geographically differentiated’. There is an intersection between ‘race’ and work, it is why most domestic workers are Black and indigenous women living in socially marginalized urban and rural areas, and make up a large part of the significant number of informal workers who do not have any social security”<sup>13</sup>*

In order to make visible their marginalization and the exclusion that afflicts them, Afro-descendant women have always sought ways to organize and develop collectively. Particularly since Law 70, and in response to their marginalization within the Afro-descendant movement itself, some groups of Afro-descendant women have been organizing around processes that seek to raise awareness about the inequalities and discrimination that afflicts them, focusing their struggle on the enjoyment of rights as women and as an ethnic-racial group. *“By addressing their experiences and perceptions from these two areas (gender and race), they (are) committed and (go) further to fight to attain ethnic and territorial rights. (...) They have sought to organize their own vindications so their empowerment and leadership bring*



<sup>9</sup> This subject is developed here mostly taking original text from the document elaborated by Jeannette Rojas Silva, *“La situación de las mujeres en Tumaco”*, which she generously contributed to this report. The original text is complemented by contributions from other documents on the issue. For the production of her report, Jeannette had the collaboration of Betty Ruth Lozano Lerma, a sociologist with a Masters degree in Philosophy who is also finishing her doctorate degree; an Afro-Colombian woman recognized for her prolific work on the elimination of racism and sexism, among other issues, and a reason why she is quoted amply.

<sup>10</sup> Rivera, Irma, from, *Indicadores Ana Maria Matamba*, Programa integral contra violencias de genero, Bogota, Colombia, November 2011, p. 40, no 8.

<sup>11</sup> Lozano Lerma, Betty Ruth, *Mujeres Negras (Sirvientas, putas, matronas), Una aproximación a la Mujer Negra de Colombia*, Santiago de Cali, April 2008 (quoted in the original: Rojas Silva, *La situación de las Mujeres en Tumaco*).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

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them to be heard beyond the 'domestic-private' domains and change the collective actions of women into political demands."<sup>14</sup>

The differential approach also requires to understand the determinants of the geographical distribution of Afro-descendant people, particularly concentrated in the Pacific region and the Caribbean Coast, from a human rights perspective which as proposed by the Observatory of Racial Discrimination (ORD), "has two connections with patterns of racial discrimination that are worth pointing out. First, regions with high percentages of blacks occupy a subordinate role in public policies and dominant cultural conceptions in the country. This is especially clear in Colombia's Pacific region, which continues to have the lowest indices of the guarantee of rights. (...) In the geographical notions of much of the Colombian state and society, the Pacific continues to occupy that marginalized place that was described nearly eight decades ago by the former Colombian President, Laureano Gomez, thusly: 'in the Pacific region, which blacks inhabit, is a territory of jungle, heat, mangroves, lianas, vermin and rain, relentless rain that rots everything and allows only the development of a flabby and vicious vegetation adapted to that humid environment, where there is not, neither is there a visible possibility, that a human culture of importance can exist' (Gomez 1930: 39).

"Secondly, paradoxically, the concentration of Colombia's Black population in these regions, which have been marginalized by racist ideologies, also serves to deny the existence of racial discrimination and to excuse the state's inaction in these areas. In fact, one of the State's most frequent responses to the critical state of Afro-Colombians is that this situation is not a result of racial discrimination but of the fact that Black people live in inhospitable parts of the country. Such was the statement made by the Colombian Ambassador to the United States, Carolina Barco, in response to criticism of racial discrimination in Colombia in the context of the debates on the Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. According to press reports, Ambassador Barco stated that 'there was never historic marginalization' of blacks in Colombia; the problem, rather, has been that 'the regions where they [Blacks] live report the highest levels of poverty and the lowest levels of education, health, and infrastructure because these regions are very complicated' geographically (El Universal 2008). This vicious cycle of argumentation continues to feed the rhetorical negation of racism in Colombia and perpetuates social practices and geographic patterns that sustain it."<sup>15</sup>

"If Afro-Colombian women are not conceived as individuals who embody the complexity of the specific rights that have been ascribed (to them) by reason of their belonging to an ethnic-racial group, they will be deprived of their collective rights, and that includes their rights to territory and cultural identity." (Libia Grueso)<sup>16</sup>

This is why Orders 092 of 2008 and 005/2009 of the Colombian Constitutional Court exist, and the reason why the Inter-American Human Rights Commission "considers essential that the States acknowledge the situation of multiple discrimination faced by black women based on their sex and their race, and collect disaggregated data on the status and living conditions of Afro-descendant women."<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the Commission says: "the States must incorporate the gender approach when designing public policies, taking into account the specific needs of Afro-descendant women and adopting a comprehensive approach to address issues that affect them directly."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Programa Integral contra violencias de genero, *Sistema de Indicadores Ana María Matamba*, Bogotá, November 2011, p 39

<sup>15</sup> Observatory of Racial Discrimination (ORD), PCN and others, *Race and Human Rights in Colombia, Report on racial discrimination and human rights of Afro-Colombian population*, Uniandes, Bogotá, 2009, page 52.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in *Sistema de Indicadores Ana María Matamba*, p. 41 (Libia Grueso is co-founder of PCN and one of the prominent intellectual and political forces of the Afro-descendant movement).

<sup>17</sup> CIDH, *La Situación de las Personas Afrodescendientes en las Americas*, OEA/Ser/L/V/II/Doc. 62, December 5, 2011, No 14, p. iv (original in Spanish).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



## Racism: A breeding-ground for violence and violations of human rights

*The violence against (Afro-descendant) women has to do with the traditional roles and stereotypes that socially assign responsibilities to men and women based on notions of gender, and not based on the skills, abilities, needs and interests of the persons. Additionally, this gender-based violence is also influenced by their belonging to the Afro-Colombian ethnic group, which deepens its manifestations and occurrence.* (Jeanette Rojas Silva, 2009)

## Territorial control and dispossession

*"After 500 years of historical presence of Afro-descendants in these territories and 155 years of legally abolished slavery (...) Afro-Colombians on the Pacific Coast continue to have the worst indicators of poverty, marginalization and exclusion in the country."*<sup>19</sup>

The current situation of the country and in the living areas of Afro-descendant people exacerbated by the internal armed conflict and an imposed model of development, show us that the aspirations of the communities of being in a collective territory under the principles of *Identity, Participation, Autonomy and Autonomous Development*, have yet to be achieved. The deterioration of living conditions; changes in laws that regulated different aspects of the environment; the impulse of oil palm cultivation; projects for the exploitation of the forestry, mining, water, oil and land; aerial spraying of cocoa mono-crops affecting the livelihood in collective territories in Nariño and Cauca, all of these without prior consultation and consent, constitute a panorama in which the dispossession and the deterioration of the collective rights increase, further deteriorating territories where these communities live and develop key aspects of their lives.

The processes of territorial dispossession of Afro-descendant communities (and indigenous peoples), is also response to external political and economic interests, legal and illegal. This pressures along with armed conflict, has generating an accelerated loss of dominion of the communities over their territories. This deteriorating situation with the social, political, cultural and ecological crisis that results from it, is related also to the processes of spontaneous and planned colonization linked to the penetration of narcotraffic, paramilitaries, guerrillas, criminal gangs, fighting among themselves and with state forces, to gain control over areas, like the territory-region of the Pacific Coast. All these happens on lands that are suppose to be imprescriptible and inalienable and protected accordingly with the Colombian Political Constitution and the Law 70/93.

Considering that in the context of geo-economic and political warfare fought in the territories inhabited mainly by Afro-descendants, they are the most affected, and that more than half of the affected population are women, the impact on women is also disproportionate. As it was confirmed by the Inter American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), during the visit of the Rapporteur on the rights of women in 2005, *"the situation of Afro-Colombian women living in the area of the Pacific Coast is especially precarious and alarming. Racism and the marginalization of Afro-Colombian populations, and the fact of been residing in rich territories appealing to the armed groups, has meant that their territories become scenes of violence and death and are one of the populations with the highest level of forced displacement."*<sup>20</sup>

In addition, the Rapporteur found that *" key to them is the loss of the territory which, from their perspective, means more than a physical area; it is integrated with 'neighbors, animals, nature, social organization: elements that give them a sense of belonging to a group and differentiates them from the others."*<sup>21</sup>. As it was shared with the Rapporteur in Chico, *"women have been squashed and assaulted in our own territory, and everywhere, by different armed groups legal and illegal, who kidnap us, kill us, rape us and humiliate us... leaving as consequence of these acts the deterioration of the social fabric of our communities. Thus, it is clear that the armed conflict has hurt the sensibility of*

<sup>19</sup> Tumaco Declaration, Declaration of the Community Councils and Afro-Colombian and Indigenous ethnic-territorial organizations, from the Pacific Coast territory-region, met in the *Regional Workshop for the Analysis and Design of Local and Regional Strategies for the Defense of the Territory*. Tumaco, June 17-18 2007. <http://www.censat.org/ambientalistas/58/Nacionales7.html>.

<sup>20</sup> IACHR, Ibid. No. 107.

<sup>21</sup> IACHR. Numeral 117



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*the Black woman, her ancestral legitimacy, her creativity and life-giving capacity, her cultural identity and her love for her territory.*"<sup>22</sup>

Even though the impact of the armed conflict and the geo-economic wars on Afro-descendant communities in rural and urban areas have created cultural and social disruptions and destabilized their organizational forms, Afro-Colombian women "have undertaken the task of rebuilding the weakened community's ties in districts, comunas and provinces, and recovering the organizational strength of their communities."<sup>23</sup> This resistance, however, has made Afro-Colombian women direct targets when identified as human rights defenders.

### Racial discrimination: Recognition and political will a challenge

*"In Colombia, racism begins with a denial of the existence of discrimination on the part of the state and society<sup>24</sup>. (...) The first obstacle for the design of policies that promote the rights of the Afro-Colombian population is the lack of reliable and systematic information about their situation. This, coupled with social and state denial of the existence of racial discrimination, is what we call "level 0" in the fight against racism in the country."<sup>25</sup>*



This photograph was published in the Spanish magazine "Hello" in December 2011. (Reprinted from The Spectator, <http://blogs.elespectador.com/umpala/2011/12/05/la-venganza-de-blanquita/>).

Despite the legal recognition and protection of the rights of the Afro-descendant people and women, this "recognition" of rights has not been a guarantee to improve the conditions of in Black communities in Colombia. The Observatory for Racial Discrimination for example, concludes in a report that it produced on racial discrimination and human rights in Colombia that, "policies and state actions against racial discrimination have been timid and intermittent and have responded more to the pressures of civil society and international human rights bodies than to a strong political will to recognize and fight the entrenched practices of racial discrimination in the country. (...) In general, the policies aimed at Afro-descendant people are characterized by institutional dispersion as they are made

by different actors at national, departmental and municipal agencies with no coordination between them."<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the implementation of legislation and existing international agreements, programs and mechanisms derived from these agreements, face serious obstacles given the institutional dispersion and dislocation. (De Roux 2010)<sup>27</sup>. In addition, De Roux makes it clear that many of the proposals for the creation, design and implementation of public policies are not formulated properly, meaning that they have gaps in their objectives and content in general. CONPES is an example of this where policies for the Afro-Colombian population (in the context of national developmental policies),

<sup>22</sup> IACHR. Numeral 107

<sup>23</sup> Ombudsman Office in Buenaventura. Ombudsman delegated for the evaluation of risk on civilian population as consequence of the internal armed conflict. Early Alert System. *Violence against women in the district of Buenaventura. Thematic Report. Buenaventura. 2011.*

<sup>24</sup> Garavito, Cesar, Rojas, Tatiana and Cavalier A. Isabel, *Racial Discrimination and Human Rights in Colombia*. First Edition. 2008. Observatory on Racial Discrimination, Black Communities Process and Dejusticia. Page 14. <http://odracial.org/index.php?modo=interna&seccion=publicaciones>

<sup>25</sup> ODR. Race and Human Rights in Colombia. Series 2. p. 43

<sup>26</sup> ODR, PCN, ONIC and others, *Informe alternativo al decimocuarto informe presentado por el Estado colombiano al CERD. Resumen Ejecutivo.* [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/ngos/observatorio\\_summary\\_Colombia\\_CERD75\\_sp.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/ngos/observatorio_summary_Colombia_CERD75_sp.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in *Sistema de Indicadores Ana Maria Matamba*, Ibid. p. 36.



are formulated but do not contain clear plans made on the basis of the actual resources available, or the specification of appropriate mechanisms for implementation.<sup>28</sup>

It is alleged that in Colombia there is no racism, but the imagery of Black people in Colombian society continues to relegate them to a status of second-class citizenship. Since 2006, Colombia authorities have discussed creating legal remedies to address racial discrimination. On November 30, 2011, President Santos finally approved Law 1482, which penalizes any type of discrimination or segregation. The President, however, had initially objected to the law as unconstitutional, because "it is impossible to determine when a person commits this crime." (La Prensa, October 26, 2011).

### Main policies and International agreements: Balance of Colombian State compliance

- After 30 years it has still not fulfilled its commitments to eliminate racial discrimination, racism, xenophobia and related intolerance. Colombia presented its first report to CERD only in 2008. (ORD, 2010).
- Public policy has failed to meet the needs and expectations of Colombian women and is far from conforming to the government's commitments under CEDAW<sup>29</sup>.
- Apparent lack of political will to fulfill the commitments made 15 years ago with the Beijing Platform.
- The government has failed to comply with agreements to prevent, punish and eliminate violence against women (Belem do Para, 2007) And has not acted "with due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish violence against women" (Art. 7). Impunity in all cases of sexual violence, torture, forced disappearances, death threats and intimidation against women in Buenaventura, Tumaco, Maria la Baja and the Northern Cauca continues unabated.
- There is no differential policy to assist Afro-descendant women in condition of internal displacement, as ordered by the Colombian Constitutional Court's Order 092 of 2008.
- There is no a differentiated plan of attention for Afro-descendants vulnerable to internal displacement, in accordance with Order 005 of 2009. The structural causes identified by the Court as generators of forced displacement remain intact.
- The experience of the communities of Curvarado and Jiguamiando<sup>30</sup> (Choco) that has cost the lives of hundreds of Afro-descendants, demonstrates that the Colombian government has no political will to provide the minimum guarantees of safety and dignity demanded by the Guiding Principles for the sustainable return to the ancestral territories.
- The government of President Santos approved the National Development Plan, the Victims Law, decree-law 1421/2011, without "free and prior consent" as demanded by ILO Convention 169 and the national legislation that supports it.
- There are NO guarantees for the exercise of civil and political rights; 21.7% of the Afro-descendant women organized, decreased their participation in organizational processes as a result of being threatened (AFRODES 2008)<sup>31</sup>.
- Colombia failed to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Afro-descendant communities. They have the lowest index of quality of life.
- Violence against Afro-descendant women is 41.1%, in contrast to the national rate of 37%.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Confluencia Nacional de Redes de Mujeres -CNRM. 2009.

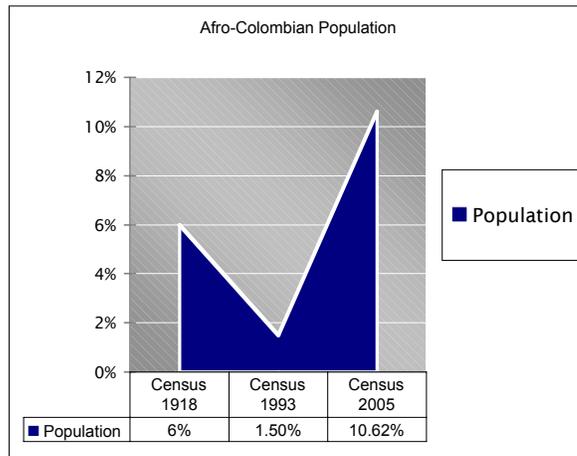
<sup>30</sup> See, <http://www.lasillavacia.com/historia-invitado/22660/yamile-salinas-abdala/el-caso-de-jiguamiando-y-curvarado-estrategia-criminal>

<sup>31</sup> Afrodes Y Global Rights *Life in the face of adversity. The human rights situation of internally displaced Afro-Colombian women*. Bogota. November, Global Rights. 2008.p. 37.



**Marginalization, discrimination, exclusion and invisibility: Black women the most oppressed**

It was not until 2005 that the Colombian government included the ethnic-racial variable in the national census to account for the particularities of the Afro-descendant population. Despite inconsistencies in the implementation of the census, the challenge posed by the Afro-descendant movement to overcome the "statistical racism", it nevertheless, provided an opportunity to have the first approximate disaggregated data to make visible the development and welfare gap between Afro-descendant population and the rest of the nation. Similarly, although the information is still deficient, it has provided, at minimum, population data disaggregated by gender. One would expect that this step would facilitate the formulation of public policies and programs for the Afro-descendant population designed to overcome the factors that have maintained it marginalized. However four years later, in 2009, the Observatory of Racial Discrimination (ODR)-PCN, presented in the first report on discrimination and human rights of Afro-descendant population, the evidence that the population suffers from lack of the enjoyment of almost all their rights, because neither the state nor the private sector have data to resolve the many questions that are relevant to seriously discuss the situation of Afro-descendants<sup>35</sup>. One of the greatest disparities in terms of numbers is the total percentage of Afro-descendant populations. According to the 2005 census Afro-descendants are 10.6% and the estimates from different sources give account of about 26%.



Official Data and Facts on Afro-descendant Population		
Total Colombian Population (Census 2005) 41.468.384		84% are more likely to be displaced 14% had not eaten for at least a day
Total Afro-descendant Population (2005) 4.311.757		Areas with larger Black populations have a subordinate role in the public policies sector.
% Afro-descendant Population	10.62%	Most Afro-descendant territories are located strategically where 10% of natural and genetic resources in the world can be found.
% Afro-descendant Women	50.50%	Afro-Colombians have collective ownership over more than 5.5 million hectares (4.4% of the Colombian territory).
% Afro-descendant Men	49.50%	Over 1.5 million Afro-descendants are internally displaced. More than half are women head of the household.
% Urban	76%	79% of Afro-Colombian internal displacement in 2010 took place in collective territories.
% Rural	24%	More than 60% of Afro-Colombians are poor and almost a quarter of them live in misery.

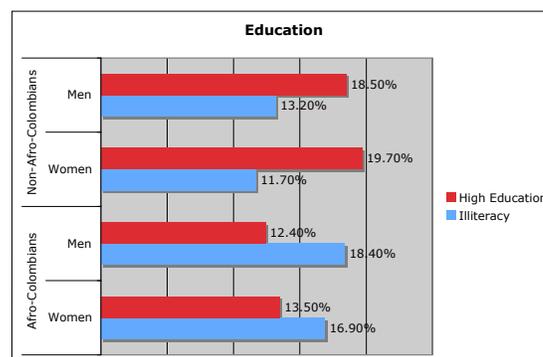
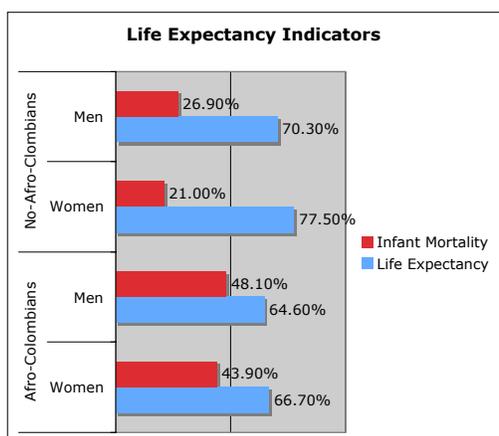
The statistics about Afro-descendant women speak for themselves about their unequal conditions. The female-headed households are higher in Afro-descendant households (29.3%) than in non-Afro-descent ones (28.6%), and the income level in the first is 6.8% lower than in those with male-headed Afro-descendant. The percentage of unemployed Afro-descendant women is higher than that of Afro-descendant men and non-African descent women (20.4% - 12.6% - 17.6% respectively).

<sup>35</sup> Garavito, Cesar, *Cifras de la discriminación racial*. EL Tiempo. Febrero 5, 2011. <http://www.elespectador.com/impreso/nacional/articulo-249153-cifras-de-discriminacion-racial>



The level of education impacts the ability of women to obtain employment, better wages and living conditions, at the same time that poverty is a factor influencing the dropout rate in schools. Illiteracy, for example, is higher for Black women than for white/mestizo women (16.90% and 11.70% respectively), while only 13.5% access to higher education compared with 19.7% of the white/mestizo women. Data collection in Maria La Baja, Tumaco and Buenaventura confirms that most Afro-descendant women are part of the informal sector, many of them linked to domestic work, with a monthly salary between \$150,000 and \$ 300,000 Colombian pesos maximum (something around US\$85 and US\$170 monthly). Also, it became apparent, particularly in Buenaventura and Tumaco, that the participation of women in prostitution is a significant area of employment. In Buenaventura, for example, it is known that girls from the age of eight are participating in prostitution<sup>36</sup> in addition to having to assume housekeeping chores and the care of younger siblings while the mother works.

The precariousness of Afro-descendant women is reflected in their life expectancy, which is 11 years less than that of the *mestizo* or white women and 2.1 years less compared to men of African descent. Mortality rates of Afro-descendant children are another tragedy that doubles the overall figures in the country (43.9% for girls and 48.1% for boys). Despite the wealth of their territories and government rhetoric, African descendant women, men, girls and boys endure more hunger (14.3%) than white/mestizo population (6.11%). The disparities continued on data related to access to public services and health which is double in almost all cases, and in relation to the loss of property and ownership of land and home ownership.



Considering the context of geo-economic and political warfare being waged in Afro-descendant territories, and taking into account that more than half of the African Descendant population are women, the impact on them is disproportionate not only in relation to the overall population but also in relation to Afro-descendant men.

In relation to land and housing, according to the Comprehensive Development Plan for the Pacific Coast, in 1981, 82% of people from the Littoral Pacific owned their homes. In about 20 years, 73.2% of African descent not only lost territories from which they were displaced by violence or by the advance of large scale projects such as palm oil, but also in urban and rural areas 60% lost their homes. The phenomenon of internal displacement and the loss of their partners leave Afro-descendant women at a disadvantage when considering policies of restitution and return. In example, the Constitutional Court recognized in the Order 092/2008 that *“the great obstacles presented to Afro-descendant women to access to land ownership and to protect their inheritance in the future, heighten the risk of displaced women to be victims of structural patterns of violence and gender discrimination, especially in relation to the return and resettlement plans.”*<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Data offered by Fundemujer, The house of the adolescent mother. Buenaventura.

<sup>37</sup> Colombian Constitutional Court, Order 092 of 2008. *Synthesis of the present decision. Obstacles aggravated on the access to land property and the protection of the patrimony toward the future, specially regarding plans for return and relocation*. A.1. “viii.



"As women we anguished not knowing what to do with the children when we have to arrive at the houses of relatives or neighbors who, like us, are equally poor. . One has to start facing life with a serious problem: you do not have income or housing and in addition there is the discrimination that we have to deal with because we are black women displaced from the countryside, and that is a lot of stigmatization, especially from institutions (when they have) to make arrangements for the complaint. The process to access programs can take a long time and often not everybody can access them because there is a lot of politics in it. We know of people who are not displaced and but who receive government assistance". Testimony of displaced women in Tumaco.

## Loss of space for the BEING: Body and territory, "geographies of terror"<sup>38</sup>

### Forced displacement

The magnitude and impact of forced displacement on women is such that the Colombian Constitutional Court ruled through the Order 092 of 2008 that the Colombian government "should take special measures for the protection of women victims of forced displacement due to armed conflict, with a differentiated approach for Women from ethnic groups as they are subject to multiple and enhanced constitutional protection, whose rights are being violated in a systematic, widespread and massive way throughout the country, given the risks derived from the condition of discrimination and acute vulnerability of the Indigenous and Afro-descendant women."<sup>39</sup>

CODHES<sup>40</sup> and AFRODES<sup>41</sup>, as well as the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN expert for minorities Gay McDougall (2010), women and human rights organizations have documented the devastating impact of internal displacement on Afro-descendant women and have made recommendations to the Colombian government

For Afro-descendant women, the internal displacement means the loss of ethnic, cultural and territorial identity linked to their extended family and their community, their neighborhoods, their rivers, farms, mountains and animals, and their festivities, spiritual ceremonies and typical ways of relating. This is why it is considered that forced displacement is, even after 300 years of enslavement, the greatest and most extreme manifestation of the violations of the dignity and rights of Afro-descendant communities<sup>42</sup>.

### The conditions of refugee and immigrant women

The bleak realities of black women spread out of national boundaries. For example, the Association Graciela Cha-Ines de Cartagena notes that "in the last 15 years the situation of poverty, marginalization and violence has been a major inducer of women to migrate in large numbers to other cities and even out of the country. . The women from San Basilio de Palenque, for example, who sell candles for a living, have moved to Venezuela, the Brazilian border and other cities in Colombia. It has been reported that a number have disappeared, such was the case in 2003 of Rosa Padilla Navarro, who, in order to raise her two daughters, moved to *Los Llanos* to work selling typical candy named "*palenqueros*". It is alleged that her refusal to not let a "*cachaco*"<sup>43</sup> touch her, resulted in death threats and up today, her family does not know if she is alive or dead.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Ulrich Oslender describe the "geographies of terror" as "a conceptual and methodological framework to studied terror and terrorism" for two reasons: "1) to re-orient the contemporary geopolitical discourses about the 'war on terror' that narrowly define 'terrorism' as a terrorism against the systems of the Western democratic neoliberal State, while hiding 'other terrorisms' including those orchestrated by those same democratic neoliberal states, and 2) as a methodological tool for the systematic study of the impact of terror on local populations. Oslender, Ulrich, *Geographies of Terror: an analytical framework for the study of terror*. Lecture presented at the X International Colloquium of Geo-critic, "Ten years of changes in the world, in the geography and in the social sciences, 1999-2008". University of Barcelona. Barcelona. May 26-30, 2008.

<sup>39</sup> Summary of the Constitutional Court Order 092 of 2008. See, Observatorio de Genero, democracia y derechos humanos (OGDDHH) <http://www.observatoriogenero.org/magazine/seccion.asp?id=116>.

<sup>40</sup> See, CODHES. *Afrocolombianos desplazados, un drama sin tregua*. 22 de mayo de 2008.

<sup>41</sup> See, Afrodes, Global Rights, *Life on the face of adversity*. 2008

<sup>42</sup> Rojas Silva, Jeannette, *The Context of the Pacific Black Communities' Process Workshop*. March. 2002

<sup>43</sup> White man

<sup>44</sup> Information provided by the Asociacion de Mujeres Afrodescendientes y del Caribe Graciela Cha-Ines, *Situacion de la mujer de la Costa Caribe*. 2011



El Palenque El Congal of Buenaventura found that “another social situation in Buenaventura is the phenomenon of forced migration of women to Chile, Spain or Italy. We say forced migration because women migrate in search of better living conditions that their city and country have denied to them. Generally, they use prostitution as a way to raise money and send to their families to pay for housing, food and education of their children and brothers. According to testimonies of women, in these countries they are battered, abused and persecuted because most lack legal documents and are sometimes forced to work without pay as employers threaten to report them to immigration.”<sup>45</sup>

In her report, Jeanette Rojas<sup>46</sup> found that the Mayor of Tumaco indicated that about 20,000 people displaced from the Tumaco (rural) area of Alto Mira and Frontera are currently living in the Ecuadorian province of San Lorenzo because of the violence that exists in the region as a result of the presence of guerrillas and emerging gangs battling for territory for planting, processing and marketing of illicit coca crops<sup>47</sup>. The Afro-Colombian *Pastoral Social* in a statement signed at the end of the XIX Meeting of the Catholic bishops who work in the Colombia-Ecuador border, held on April 26 to 28, 2010 pointed to the persistence of “*very serious structural problems that undermine justice and peace, human rights and mutually supportive cooperation on both sides of the border*”<sup>48</sup>. In the workshops and meetings conducted by Jeannette, women confirmed that sexual violence was a central strategy of symbolic and territorial control in the region.

### Militarism and violence

Between 2000 and 2010 the Colombian government increased its military capacity by 41%. Eighty percent of the U.S. assistance to Colombia between 2000 and 2010 was devoted to the military component. During that period in municipalities where the internal armed conflict and military presence was more obvious, 149 women were victims of sexual violence per day, 6 hourly; , In a survey conducted by OXFAM with 94.565 women, 62% of the respondents said the presence of armed actors increased sexual violence in the public space and 49% believed that it increased in the private sphere; 12.17% of the respondents self-identified as Black women<sup>49</sup>. Buenaventura and Tumaco, two of the cities with the most military presence in the Pacific Coast, also reported the highest number of homicides. Between 2003 and 2010, for example, acts of violence and confrontations between armed groups were responsible for 20% of homicides in Buenaventura<sup>50</sup>. Similarly, while the number of homicides decreased, the rate of homicides of women increased 6% in 2008 to 9% in 2009 and 11% in 2010<sup>51</sup>.

As with other factors known to severely impact the physical and cultural integrity of Afro-descendant women and cause of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, the militarization denies the enjoyment of the rights to self-identification, autonomous development, self-determination and, of course, the right to the territory.



<sup>45</sup> Estupiñan, Danelly –Palenque El Congal, *Mujeres y Derechos Humanos*. 2010

<sup>46</sup> Rojas Silva, *Situación de la mujer en Tumaco*. 2010

<sup>47</sup> Diario de Sur. Tumaco, *Representantes de la Alcaldía de Tumaco señalaron que es importante trabajar de la mano con el Gobierno de Ecuador para brindar bienestar a las familias víctimas del conflicto*. April 19, 2010. Quote from Rojas, Silva. Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Prensa CODHES. *Persiste injusticia, violencia y pobreza en la frontera colombo ecuatoriana*. April 30, 2010

[http://www.codhes.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=792](http://www.codhes.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=792). Quote from Rojas Silva. Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> OXFAM. *Sexual violence against women in the context of the internal armed conflict in Colombia. First Survey of Prevalence, 2001-2009*. 2011.

<sup>50</sup> Ombudsman Office in Buenaventura. *Violence against women in the district of Buenaventura. Thematic Report. Buenaventura*. 2011.

<sup>51</sup> According with information from the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Science in response to the legal petition by the UN Women-Program for the Gender-based Violence on July 30, 2010. Forensic Report 2010. On Rojas Silva, *Situación of Women in Tumaco*. 2010

## Sexual Violence

*“Ernestina Rivas, a 17 years old Afro-descendant youth, was tied to a pole for two days. She was tortured and raped. Her breast and gluteus were mutilated. Then, she was buried alive from her neck down on a tidewater area so that she will die by drowning. Her body was found later on a swamp.” (Taken from cases documented by Palenque El Congal, Buenaventura).*

Although the issue of sexual violence against women has increasingly gained analytical and political importance for some organizations involved in documenting and reporting human rights violations in Colombia, still sexual offenses in the context of the internal armed conflict as they relate to Afro-descendant women are largely invisible crimes for much of the international community.

War and forced displacement, has transformed the role and participation of Afro-descendant women in the family, the community and in the organizational, economic and political structures, making them more active and visible. And as a result, there are new forms of intimidation directed toward Afro-descendant women, including sexual abuse in the context of the war in Afro-descent territories. This new form of repression joins the traditional list of degrading treatments endured by women leaders that include forced disappearances, torture, public punishment, and death threats to the women leaders and human rights defenders. Between 2008 and 2010 these threats increased, resulting in the loss of the lives of numerous women leaders in the Pacific region. Despite the national and international public cry, the Colombian government never acted diligently in defense of women leaders and advocates. The murder of Martha Cecilia Obando, known as Doña Chila, in Buenaventura (2008), Ana Fabricia Cordoba in Medellín (2011) or Mayra Alejandra, killed by her partner<sup>52</sup>, were deaths that the authorities could have prevented. In none of the crimes have the authorities investigations resulted in any perpetrators being brought to justice.

The military control exercised by the armed groups in rural and urban communities and the terror they implanted has not made it easy to document cases of violence. El Palenque El Congal and the Ombudsman’s office in Buenaventura have been among the most active in documenting cases in the last three years. Particularly the Palenque El Congal, has conducted a thorough work of psycho-social assistance and political education of women and youth in the neighborhoods and rural areas. This work has allowed El Congal a for more than three years to recover the voice of women and document the situation. Meanwhile areas with high rates of violence against women as Tumaco in the Nariño department, remain in silence because individuals who might step forward to complain are not guaranteed protections. There are known cases where after a report to the police has been submitted the complainant is persecuted and threatened by armed groups, commonly paramilitaries.

*“The pamphlet, the threat, reads that us, the organizations in situations of displacement, are also threaten because we (protest) for government policies. We are not making claims to them , we are demanding the government (...) it might be the government that is sending me the threat (...) I’m asking the government to give me what I’m entitled to as a person in situation of displacement because (the government) did not provide guarantees of protection in the area, then I do not know why the black eagles threaten the organizations of the displaced population. That is my question, I do not know why they threaten us.”<sup>53</sup>*

## The problem of Guaranties Reparation, restitution and return

Territory is the space for development and self-determination of the BEING of Afro-descendants it therefore follows that the regaining of territory and its’ protection is essential. The pivotal role that Afro-descendant women play in the struggle to demand reparation, restitution and return as essential for the full rights of Afro-descendants, makes the protection of Afro-descendant women human rights defenders and essential task and responsibility of the Colombian

<sup>52</sup> El País Newspaper. *En Buenaventura, la violencia se ensañó con las mujeres.* <http://www.elpais.com.co/elpais/judicial/en-buenaventura-violencia-ensano-con-mujeres>. September 18, 2011.

<sup>53</sup> Ombudsman Office in Buenaventura. *Ibid.* Page 47.



authorities and the international community.

However, currently the prospects for the effective guarantees of protection and return of Afro-descendant people to their territories do not look too promising. UNHCR recently denoted that the security of the displaced and land rights are seriously compromised and that the Colombian government (including INCODER, former INCORA) does not have the political will required to ensure the return to the lands, with the safety that in the framework of individual and collective rights is mandated. UNHCR says for example that, *"in the last three years, the experiences of the land restitution process show that the safety of displaced persons who have participated in it has been seriously affected"*. According to CODHES, 44 displaced people that were involved in processes of restitution have been killed between March 1, 2002 and January 31, 2011, and the Attorney General's Office has indicated that *"between 2002 and 2010 seven thousand internally displaced people have been murdered."*<sup>54</sup>

The Colombian government itself, according to UNHCR, in its report to the Constitutional Court in 2010 recognized that *"almost 70% of displaced persons have returned without prior verification of security conditions and over 90% are relocated under those conditions"*<sup>55</sup>. An emblematic case that accounts for this lack of guarantees is the Curvarado and Jiguamiando<sup>56</sup> *Communities of Peace* in Choco, for whom the return to their collective lands had cost more than ten years of struggle with the government and paramilitary groups, and the lives of hundreds of defenders of their rights.

Moreover, institutional limitations, the inconsistencies and disparities in the data among institutions, the lack of updating of the land and property records, the lack of programs and mechanisms to bring differential attention, and the consistent denial of the government to respect the right to prior consultation and consent, make it more difficult to create adequate conditions for reparations, restitution and the return of Afro-descendants to their territories.

### Exercising BEING: Resistance and leadership

"(...) In the end these barbaric warriors have much fear of women, of the power we have (...). They know how far we can go, when to defend the life or protect the children we go as far as we can go."<sup>57</sup>

The sense of collectivity in urban and rural communities is manifested in organizational exercises for women, despite the fear, coercion, confinement, harassment, disappearances and threats from armed groups.

"Women leaders within the communes have been violated, have been abused or have been displaced and that is like the glue that makes the consolidation of the organization (...). To sit down with a woman who have gone through the same situations or have had more serious situations (...) those spaces of the organization become a safety escape valve (...). Often they lack the political awareness to organize themselves and address the rights of women, but they have the need to make visible the stories that have happened to them to prevent them from happening to others."<sup>58</sup>

So women build networks of resistance, self-care and self-protection.

For their part, *"armed actors find that the leadership of organizations dedicated to defending the rights of women, is an obstacle that hinders their progress in social and territorial control which, according to the CIDH- has meant that the members of organizations (...) are victims of systematic intimidation, persecution, kidnapping, torture and sexual abuse, among other crimes."*<sup>59</sup>

<sup>54</sup> ACNUR, *Desplazamiento forzado, tierras y territorios. Agendas pendientes: la estatización socioeconómica y la reparación*."

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. Page 51

<sup>56</sup> The lack of protection of these communities is serious despite the protective measurements ordered by the Inter American Commission on Human Rights on December 7, 2002. CIDH Report, Chapter III, 2003.

<sup>57</sup> Ombudsman Office in Buenaventura. Ibid. Page 46.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. Page 45

<sup>59</sup> IACHR. Ibid. Executive Summary. Page 10.



## PCN - Violence and Human Rights Violations Against Afro-descendant Women in Columbia

The effort of women to understand their situation and re-establish control over their vital spaces: body, family, community, territory, cultural practices, generates the balance of impacts and actions of self-help and self-protection that are presented below:

### Impacts

- **Impact on their right to BE Afro-descendant women:** Lack of self-esteem, feelings of shame and loss of ethnic identity.
- **Loss of cultural identity:** Loss of traditional structures to raise children; loss of traditional ways of spirituality; loss of respect and recognition of elders as figures of authority; loss of cultural values, such respect and solidarity; loss of ability to perform traditional funerals due to restrictions imposed by armed groups. Proper mourning and grieving is impossible due to the prohibition on funerals and the fact that the bodies of many people killed have never been found.
- **Sexual abuse of Afro-descendant women:** Rape of women and girls by armed groups, unwanted pregnancy, forced prostitution and slavery, early pregnancy, teenagers pregnant by armed actors and undesirably linked to the dynamics of war.
- **Forced migration and exile:** Women of working age are migrating to Spain, Italy, Chile, Ecuador and Venezuela, among others places, in search of physical and economic security.
- **Attacks on traditional medical practices:** Armed groups restrict access of traditional healers to areas where traditional medicinal plants are found, and stigmatize and harass healers, impacting their medicinal and spiritual practices..
- **Disruption and weakening of extended family ties:** Forced recruitment and involvement with armed groups generates mistrusts among neighbors, relatives and locals, disrupting relationships and family ties.
- **Naturalization of violence:** Excessive exposure to violence is creating a lack of respect for life and others; a war-like attitude, especially in young people and children; lack of compassion and solidarity.
- **Easy recruitment and tolerance:** Impoverishment creates an environment where armed groups become attractive as they offer "work" for the young and "comfort" to young women, and become a benchmark for power in the community through the use of guns, violence and money. Poverty also encourages prostitution.
- **Increased exposure to sexual abuse:** Girls and women who are emotionally involved with members of an armed group are exposed to sexual abuse by men of higher rank in the group, or are targets of violence by opposition groups. Women, youth and girls are regularly accused of being informants and punished as a consequence. Some of the violence that authorities report as "romance-related crimes" are in reality related to cases of retaliation for suspected or actual emotional ties to armed actors.
- **Stigmatization of the Afro-descendant community:** In addition to common stereotypes associated with appearance and intelligence, Afro-descendant people are now also considered to be violent in "nature." Rural youth are labeled as guerrillas in urban areas, and urban youth living in communities where violence takes place are stigmatized and rejected for living in these neighborhoods.
- **Greater impoverishment:** Link to the economic mega-projects imposed on Afro-descendant lands.
- **Emotional health repercussions:** The "warfare environment" causes widespread fear, collective panic, sleep problems, loss of appetite, schizophrenia, delusions of persecution, anxiety, hopelessness and anguish.
- **Rupture of organizational processes and women's participation in leadership:** Stigmatization, intimidation and harassment is demobilizing men and women leaders who not only fear for themselves but for their families and communities. AFRODES has found that 21.7% of internally displaced women who were organized decreased their participation in organizational processes as a result of receiving threats.<sup>60</sup> This is one reason why the Black Communities' Process (PCN) identifies the violent deaths of Afro-descendant women in areas of internal armed conflict and in the presence of armed groups as political crimes, "collateral" to the impact of war in the territories of Afro-descendant communities.

<sup>60</sup> Afrodes and Global Rights. Ibid. Page 37.



### Actions to create visibility and avoid repetition

- **Socio-political education for the victim:** provide technical and political tools to the victims of internal armed conflict and socio-political violence to promote and defend their rights and access to justice.
- **Strengthening emotional support groups:** these groups consist of victims of different areas or beneficiary communities, and are intended for women to gain capacity for self-care and protection of the body and the soul through relaxation, massage and other therapies.
- **Formation of self-help groups:** aimed at strengthening the social fabric and the restoration of community and family life.
- **Establishing and strengthening emotional ties:** Camaraderie, affection, mutual support, respect and authority are characteristic of Pacific extended families, through recreational activities, seminars and collective workshops.
- **Family celebrations:** held collectively in groups or at community level.
- **Cultural evenings:** during which adults and elders tell stories, legends and riddles to groups of children, women and young men, as a mechanism to preserve historical memory and rescue, appropriate and strengthen cultural values and practices that facilitate peaceful conflict resolution.
- **Collective mourning:** in response to the bans imposed by armed groups on funeral rituals, families—especially mothers—experience prolonged grief. Collective mourning is a symbolic ritual that is intended to help mothers and widows in their process of overcoming grief and the emotional crisis that overwhelms them.
- **Gastronomic festival:** this activity is to activate and integrate communities while recovering culinary practices that imposed forms of development and modernity have threatened.
- **Tournaments of traditional games:** to stimulate conviviality in the community, respect for the other, and to contribute to the transformation of conflicts in a peaceful way. These activities are done without referees or mediators, as the intention is that participants and the community itself put in practice values such as honesty and respect for each other.
- **Political mobilization:** actions designed to strengthen the right to social protest.
- **Campaigns:** In Buenaventura there has been a campaign of non-violence against women since 2010 called "Not one more" (*Ni una mas*), urging that not one more woman be hurt, physically or verbally abused, murdered, disappeared and discriminated against.

### Case Documentation

In Buenaventura, the percentage of women murdered went up 6% in 2008 to 9% in 2009 and 11% in 2010. By the first half of 2011 there were 13 violent murders of women recorded. Forensic Medicine of Tumaco recorded between January and December 2009, 43 cases of sexual violence against women and girls between zero and 50 years old, and 29 cases in the first half of 2010. According to Legal Medicine in Cartagena in 2007 there were 577 cases of sexual violence of which 85.1% were against women. For 2008 the percentage was 84.6%, of which 83.9% of the victims were between 0 and 19 years old.

In Montes de Maria, Caribbean region, the research group found that there have been six threats to male and female leaders in the first half of 2011. Also in northern Cauca between 2009 and 2012 male and female leaders of the municipalities of Buenos Aires and Suarez received 15 death threats from paramilitary groups. ASOM, an organization of over a hundred women has been threatened on three occasions, their office vandalized and their legal representative received several death threats and persecution. Puerto Tejada, Suarez, Buenos Aires and Pacific coast of Cauca, where the majority of people are of African descent have the highest figures of violence in the department, 15% of sexual violence recorded in the department of Cauca in 2010, happened in northern Cauca.



Typical cases of violence against women in Buenaventura in the last two years<sup>61</sup>

- A girl was found dead without her right arm in the court yard of Matias Mulumba neighborhood, she was not identified and prosecutors said was between 15 and 17, the body was found on February 1, 2011.
- In the district number 12 in the Alfonso Lopez neighborhood, the girls: **Monica Liseth Giraldo** (17) and **Lina Marcela Giraldo** (14), were raped, tortured by three men and one of them beheaded and killed. The 14 years old girl escaped because she pretended to be dead, her body was battered, beaten and with the nostrils stabbed, she was in intensive care and fifteen days later she died. This occurred on the morning of March 8, 2011, International Women's day, when their parents were at a funeral.
- In the Caldas neighborhood a girl, 14, was killed using the same pattern. There have been also murders carried out with cruelty such as the disabled boy who was raped and murdered also in district 12, and some teens that have had their stomach opened while alive.
- On March 02 2011, at 7:00 pm, three men came to the house of the leader **Ana Julia Renteria**, president of the Community Council of the Cajambre River, received the visit of some men who came to invite her to a "meeting", and ordered that she should go with them, which she refused. At the insistence, Ana said that she would go on her own boat and accompanied by her husband **Miguel Santos Renteria Caicedo**. The lady and her husband left but did not return. Days later two bodies were seen floating in the river. It is assumed that those were their bodies. Mrs. Renteria was a community matron and mother of nine children, highly respected and recognized for her leadership.
- On Saturday March 5 2011, 15-year-old **Lina Maritza Duran Olave** who lived in the neighborhood Nuevo Amanecer was found murdered. She was found with signs of rape, and apparently died by drowning in the same ditch that was found in the neighborhood Caldas.
- On March it was noted the presence of armed men on motorcycles and trucks, wearing black jackets and ski masks in areas of the neighborhoods of the district 12 and the neighborhood Doña Ceci, asking for the leaders of the internally displaced organizations
- On August 24, 2007, at 3:00 pm according to testimonies, **Ingrid Yahaira Sinisterra**, 16 years old, left school in the company of a classmate in the Bajo Firme neighborhood. When reaching the street, "Ramiro", Ingrid and her classmate were approached by an armed group that forced them to the street "The Guarapera" in Lleras neighborhood, on the district 3. Ingrid's classmate was hit several times demanding that she would said the names of the women (sentimental partners) of members of other armed groups. After beating her, they let her go. Ingrid was tortured and publicly exposed naked and murdered.
- Saturday, 03 October 2009, **Lorena Yenice Truque** was found dead at home with signs of torture. According to initial reports and testimonies all indications point to the fact that it was her boyfriend. Yenice was 30 years old and a professional psychologist who worked for the Foundation for the Advancement of Women of Buenaventura and the Pacific Coast FUNDEMUIER, providing counseling for young pregnant teenagers.
- On August 3, 2009, **Adelaide Hernandez**, 28-year-old, who worked at the Chamber of Commerce of Buenaventura, was found in her house located in the area Confamar, slaughtered and tortured.
- In 2007 the girl Ernestina Rivas called "Tinita" was killed. Her body was found mutilated (without breasts and gluteus) in the neighborhood Viento Libre.
- On June 29, 2008 at 7:45 pm the community leader, **Martha Cecilia Obando** (Doña Chila), was killed in the main street of the neighborhood San Francisco, thirty minutes after a community activity called "traditional children's game tournament" that she had organized with the help of PCN. Doña Chila, as affectionately was known, had created and ran a small organization for women who had fled the armed conflict, Asodesplas. Doña Chila had been threatened several times for her work.
- On 13 January 2007, Mrs. **Cecilia Vivas** was found in her house, who had gone missing for about 6 months. She was found buried in the basement of her home, Cecilia was 33 years old and worked as sales person and had two daughters, this woman was murdered by her husband
- **Luz Dary Santiesteban** and **Miryan Angulo** from the Community Council of La Gloria received death threats since 2010. Given the likelihood that offenders would do something to their children, Luz Dary was forced to displacement. Miryan had an attempted murder made in 2011 in which she was injured in the arm. The leader continues her work with the Community Council, despite having no guarantees for her protection.

<sup>61</sup> Cases documented by el Palenque Regional El Congal. Buenaventura.



Cartagena – Zone 1<sup>62</sup>

Name	Case Characteristics	Objects Used to harm	Trauma	Type of Assistance
32 years old women	Attacked by her ex-husband with a piece of glass bottle, because she refused to continued living with him, causing her injures in an arm.	Sharp arm (piece of glass bottle)	She refused to dress in ways that reveal her scars, because she believes that women with scars in their bodies are women of bad reputation rejected by society.	Psychological assistance and follow-up to legal actions.
17 years old girl	Domestic violence: physical and psychological by her father toward her, her mother and siblings and the fact that he doesn't respond to his responsibilities as provider for the family.	Punch and kicks	Fear, lack of confidence and poor communication with the father.	Psychological assistance by a professional specialist on family development. Involvement of social services.
40 years old women	Her son tried to kill his brother-in-law due to jealousy.	Gun	She is afraid that her son can attempt against her son-in-law again and against her daughter. Sleep deprivation, the daughter had to fled the place to avoid the aggression.	Psychological assistance and follow-up to legal actions.
25 years old woman	Has a relationship based in domestic violence, that she perceived as normal due to sexism. Her partner constantly hit her and had injured her with sharp objects in different parts of her body. He beat and harm her when she refuses sexual contact and doesn't give him money.	Sharp objects, knives, rocks, use of the fist, kicks and beats her.	Excessive use of alcohol per periods, depression, resentment. Her son has confronted his father armed when he is beating her. He has learning delays.	Psychological orientation, intervention of social services. Pedagogical assistance.

Zone 2

Name	Case Characteristics	Objects used for assault	Trauma	Type of attention
55 year old woman	Young people in Fredonia participated in adance competition that originated a rivalry between neighborhoods' groups which produced conflict to the point that they no longer speak and fight every time they encounter each other	Emotional Abuse	-Fear of something happening to her son - fear of being attacked by members of the gang	Counseling and intervention by a professional in family developme nt
Mother of a gang member	Her 20 years old son is a member of a gang. The young adult is no longer a student and is currently living with a girl that is pregnant.	Emotional Abuse with physical consequences	She feels physically and emotionally affected. The child has been injured with short sharp weapons, the family is afraid of what might happen	
55 year old woman	Her daughter has two sons 9 and 6; the oldest leaves with her, the younger lives with the father. While pregnant the daughter wanted to have an abortion but attempts were unsuccessful. She says that her mother does not love her. The women says that she loves her daughter but cannot allow further damage of her life or the life of the boys. The 6 years old boy told her that he has seen the father having sex, which he refers to as rape	Emotional Abuse	Fear for the future of her daughter and grandchildren	Counseling and intervention by a professional in family developme nt



<sup>62</sup> Information collected by the Organization Graciela Cha-Ines. Cartagena.2011

**In Tumaco, the southwestern corner of the armed conflict<sup>63</sup>:**

<b>Femicidios and deaths of women per month in Tumaco 2009 - 2010</b>													
Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
2009	02	03	06	03	05	05	05	07	07	04	06	04	57
2010	07	04	04	0	03	02	0						20

- These violent acts were committed mostly with: projectile weapon (single load and multiple load), (machete, and ax), and sharp arms (knife, razor), explosive, accident of traffic, accidental death, acute respiratory disease.

Year	Vaginal Tests – Forensic Medicine Tumaco					
	Women		Men		TOTAL	
2009	43		12		55	
2010 to July 12	29		04		33	
	Age in years and sex of the victims – First half of 2010					
	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 – 14	15 – 19	20 – 24	45 - 49
	1 girl	2 girls	13 girls 1 boy	3 women	1 women	1 women

<b>NON FATAL PERSONAL INJURIES PER GENDER IN TUMACO</b>			
YEAR	Against women	Against men	TOTALS
2009	434	420	854
2010	First half of 2010		
	178	221	399

<b>Domestic Violence in Tumaco: children and women, the most affected</b>										
Location	2008					2009				
	Couples' Violence	Infant violence	Violence by other family members	Total	Rate Per every 1000000	Couples' Violence	Infant violence	Violence by other family members	Total	Rate Per every 1000000
Nariño	1.230	191	337	1.758	121	1.085	203	373	1.661	103
Tumaco	167	26	14	207	121	178	35	12	225	129

Source: Forensic Medicine, 2009

YEAR	Serologic Tests– Forensic Medicine Tumaco					
	WOMEN		MEN		TOTAL	
2009	43		12		55	
2010 To July 12	29		04		33	
	Age in year and sex of the victims – First half of 2010					
	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 – 14	15 – 19	20 – 24	45 - 49
	1 girl	2 girls	13 girls 1 boy	3 women	1 woman	1 woman

<sup>63</sup> Information collected and systematized by Jeannette Rojas Silva.



## Conclusions

To address the violence against Afro-descendant women is to put in evidence that socially tolerated racism and emotional and physical aggression against Afro-descendant women affects to a great extent their self-esteem and ethnic validation, constituting a great obstacle for their personal autonomy and participation as citizens, both politically and economically. These circumstances also contribute to perpetuating the existing relations of subjugation and under-estimation.

The violence against Afro-descendant women is manifested in the private sphere, identified as the space of family and the couple, as well as in the public sphere, the one of the community and the society. In the public sphere, the manifestations of violence against women are expressed through oppressive forms such as poverty, lack of access to services such education, health and sexual safety, which expose Afro-descendant women to indignant situations such as internal displacement, and sexual violence perpetrated by armed actors to exert control and political persecution.

The violence in the private sphere manifests itself mostly through physical and sexual violence perpetrated by emotional partners, members of the family or those close to it, or by armed actors. Sexual violence as an instrument of war has created patterns of “naturalization” of violence against Afro-descendant women in the private sphere, at home and with partners. The power and control expressed by armed groups over the bodies and lives of Afro-descendant women through sexual violence have become examples for men, especially the youth, who are initiating emotional relationships.

As long as the Colombian State does not assume its responsibility for participation in the exercise of violence and human rights violations against Afro-descendant women, there is no program of “education” and “awareness” that can be effective. The racial, economic and social injustices that affect the dignity of Afro-descendant women in Colombia and sustain their conditions of inequality are expressed as forms of violations of their human rights, and legitimate and exacerbate the violence perpetrated by non-state actors. The deficiencies in the legal system to evaluate and punish crimes against women, are part of this equation.

As a consequence of the internal armed conflict and geo-economic wars concentrated on Afro-descendant territories, some academics have begun to refer to “geographies of terror”. All armed groups, including those associated with the State, have developed techniques of terror that have impacted all public and private spaces, and the bodies and minds of Afro-descendants in rural and urban communities. The violence has scandalously transformed the space: mutilated and tortured bodies floating in rivers and streams; public torture and mutilation; houses destroyed (by bombs); emptied villages; threatening graffiti, pamphlets and text messages; girls exposed to public sexual violence, etc.

The territory as a place of belonging for Afro-descendant women, and their bodies as the private space of their identity, have been also radically transformed by the terror instilled by all armed groups. Over the meaning of “place” is imposed every day more the sentiment of violation, impunity, loss, fracture, estrangement and paralysis, generated by the fear that is threatening the Life Project of Afro-descendant communities. The possibilities for restitution and return to the spaces that gave meaning to place and belonging, urban and rural, are threatened by the new images, experiences and sentiments created by terror. The Life Project in territories of peace, joy and freedom tend, for many, to be lost on these “geographies of terror,” resulting in more obstacles to Black people’s reparation, restitution and return to their lands.

Nevertheless, Afro-descendant women have found forms of subversion and resistance to these violent manifestations and geographies of terror, and fight to defend their individual and collective rights. Psycho-social assistance, demonstrations and rallies, group meetings, community work—whether of a political nature or not, legal actions and individual and collective exposure of the situation, and resistance in their territory, are all ways to bring violence to the public arena and transcend the confinement imposed by embarrassment and fear. It is in this way that the Colombian government and State, which pretend to serve and defend Afro-descendant women and their rights, must understand her actual situation, and it is from this perspective that policies and programs must be developed and addressed.

The lack of prior, free and informed consultation is a violation of the fundamental right that Afro-descendant women have to self-determination. As long as the Colombian government does not demonstrate, with concrete results, the



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political will to respect and ensure the exercise of this right, it will be in violation of its responsibility to respect, ensure and protect the full enjoyment and exercise of the rights Afro-descendant women as citizens.

The institutional limitations and lack of political will of the government are serious impediments to putting into practice the existing mechanisms for protection, reparation and restitution, and for the guarantee of non-repetition of human rights abuses. With regard to the protective route ordered by the Constitutional Court in Orders 005/2009 and 092/2008, the failure to comply with them is a factor that threatens Afro-descendant peoples' opportunities for restitution and return to their lands. In the case of women, the fact that there is not a differential approach to bringing attention to their specific concerns and needs as victims and beneficiaries aggravates their perspective of effective opportunities.

The guarantees of protection and restitution require, furthermore, quality statistical information on population, lands and (collective) territories, and a remedy for the inconsistencies that institutions and the government have in their reports, in terms of data and results.

The lack of recognition of the autonomous forms of administration and protection of ancestral territories, such the Community Councils, and the failure of the government to legalize in a reasonable period of time the collective ownership of those, such as in the case of the Community Council of La Toma in the municipality of Suarez (northern Cauca), and La Gloria in the municipality of Buenaventura, are risk factors affecting the territorial, economic and cultural rights of its members, and have put at risk the lives of their inhabitants and leaders.

There is an urgent need to document and systematize information on cases of violence against Afro-descendant women; to educate victims on their rights; to train women to collect and systematize information on cases of violence and human rights violations and effective ways to expose those violations; and on UN and IACHR mechanisms to combat impunity. It is equally imperative that the Colombian authorities investigate and sanction those responsible as a first step to the truth and non-repetition of those crimes.

There are several documents that offer analysis and guidelines for the defining of indicators, development policies, access to justice and public policies that should be referenced in order to understand and apply the notion of differential policies and programs. We suggest, among others: 1) "System of Indicators Ana Maria Matamba" (2011), supported by the Comprehensive Program Against Gender-based Violence, the UN Fund and the Spanish government in compliance with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); 2) Guidelines for the Developmental Plan of Black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenque communities (2010), by Libia Grueso and others; 3) "Black Communities and the Peace Process in the Context of the Unconstitutionality" by Libia Grueso and Juliana Galindo (2011), published by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ); 4) "Extent of and limitations to public policies for the advancement of the Afro-Colombian Population," (Gustavo I. De Roux, 2012).

Finally, as long as the Colombian government does not recognize that racism exists, commit to a process of self-education and respect for difference and a radical commitment to eradicate discrimination in all its forms, there will be no justice, nor conditions for Afro-descendants to fully enjoy the exercise of their rights and to develop as BEINGS, free to determine their own future.

## Recommendations

### To the Colombian Government and Authorities:

To respect the right to prior consultation and implement its protocol for application, as stipulated in ILO Convention 169, supported by the various Colombian Constitutional Court Orders.

To comply with the implementation of Orders 092/2008 and 005/2009, identified by communities and women as fundamental tools to promote individual and collective mechanisms of protection, and the generation of conditions for the protection of the territory, reparations, restitution and return to the land.

To comply with commitments to CERD, CEDAW, the Covenant for the Economic and Political Rights, the Covenant to Prevent and Sanction Torture and the Belem do Par   Covenant, and various relevant Orders of the Constitutional



Court, all of which define the urgent need to embrace a differential approach in the formulation and application of the legal framework, policies and programs.

To ensure the investigation of cases of violence against women to combat impunity and guarantee that there is non-repetition of the violation.

Guarantee free psycho-social counseling to women victims of violence in all its forms.

In the context of violence in municipalities, the municipal police authorities must initiate actions to re-establish governability, territorial control and citizen safety. This will stimulate economic investment that will generate employment and income for women.

It is urgent that training on gender-based violence includes the participation of community women, and is extended to men and women officials of the entities responsible for caring for victims of violence, so they can provide a humane service that offers confidentiality, respect and dignified treatment.

Women have urged that investigations of their situation are initiated with the participation of youth, and that there is support for meeting spaces through the creation of libraries, support for recreational and cultural activities, and construction of more sports infrastructure and encouragement of sporting activities. Also it is important to develop communications media from youth and for youth on radio, TV and in the print media, promoting artistic groups of creative reading and writing. Women also suggested support for musical groups that goes beyond the traditional music from the Pacific Coast.

#### **To the IACHR:**

To accompany Afro-descendant women human rights defenders in their struggle for protection and the generation of conditions for the full exercise of their rights. For this, the Rapporteurs on Women and Afro-descendants should visit Afro-descendant women in their regions, get closer to their realities, make recommendations to the Colombian State, and monitor its compliance.

To contribute to making visible the situation of Afro-descendant women human rights defenders through reports, monitoring of cases and monitoring the compliance of the Colombian government to its obligations on the matter.

#### **To the United States Congress:**

Contribute to holding the Colombian State accountable for its responsibility to protect Afro-descendant women human rights defenders. For this, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) must establish an independent and inter-disciplinary Working Group to monitor, evaluate, and systematize pertinent information and make specific recommendations to the Colombian government related to its responsibility to respect, protect, and ensure that Afro-descendant women fully enjoy their rights as women and as an ethnic group.

Ensure that the Department of State does not certify Colombia as complying with human rights conditions without an independent evaluation of the human rights situation and adherence to international humanitarian law with regard to the Afro-descendant population and Afro-descendant men and women human rights defenders.

#### **To the international community, human rights organizations and foundations:**

Contribute to making visible the plight and work of Afro-descendant women organizations and human rights defenders in defense of their rights in all spaces and as often as possible. For this, they can make use of communications and advocacy media and tools (websites, Blogs, Facebook, events, etc), so cases can be exposed and information disseminated, in order that women's initiatives are promoted and solidarity can be mobilized.

Make more accessible funds and resources for Afro-descendant women human rights defenders organizing in defense of their rights, their territory and the life project of the Afro-descendant communities, without intermediaries.





## **About the Black Communities' Process in Colombia (PCN)**

The Black Communities' Process in Colombia-PCN (Proceso de Comunidades Negras-PCN), is an Afro-descendant collective of more than one hundred grassroots organizations, Community Councils and individuals, formed in Colombia in 1993. PCN is dedicated to raising black consciousness; fighting racial discrimination, exclusion and social injustice; and developing a legal and political framework for the recognition and respect of Afro-descendants' human rights and achievement of self-determination.