



**SUPPORTING
RURAL WOMEN
TO DRIVE
PEACEBUILDING
PROCESSES IN
COLOMBIA**



OXFAM

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1 Overview

Programme information

Name	Equality and Territorial Development for Rural Women in Colombia
Country	Colombia
Budget	£5.69m
Start Date	April 2015
End Date	March 2020
Donors	UNICEF, Projects Direct (Oxfam), SMFT Pioneers (Oxfam), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Latin America Children's Trust, Oxfam affiliates

Problem analysis

Colombia has suffered over 50 years of armed conflict that has claimed the lives of more than 230,000 people and had severe social and economic impacts. In December 2015, over 6.3 million people were registered as internally displaced in Colombia,¹ making it one of the worst-affected countries in the world. Serious human rights violations have been committed involving displacement, extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances, and sexual violence – the latter having been used as a military strategy for territorial control.

The country is rich in natural resources, but it is also one of the most unequal in the world. Oxfam's research has shown that farms of more than 500 hectares – which only account for 0.4 percent of all farms in Colombia – occupy 67.6 percent of productive land.² Members of rural, indigenous and African-descendent communities have been dispossessed of 8m hectares of land as a consequence of the conflict, and 87 percent of the internally displaced population is from rural areas.

In rural areas, 39 percent of people live in poverty and 18 percent live in extreme poverty; 85 percent of the rural population is without access to a sewerage system, and 60 percent without potable water. The average monthly salary of rural women is \$76 (compared to \$230 for urban women). Women in rural areas dedicate on average five hours a day to collecting water, and spend on average 19 hours more on housework per week than men. 50 percent of rural women experience domestic violence, and indigenous women are 2.5 times more likely than others to be raped or a victim of violence. Women's political participation level is also low – they account for just 20 percent of the current National Congress.³

Following the October 2016 peace plebiscite, in which the 'No' vote won by a small majority (50.21 percent to 49.78 percent), the peace agreement was signed with the FARC⁴ guerrilla group in November 2016. Negotiations with other armed groups are still ongoing. The first point agreed in negotiations with FARC is on 'comprehensive rural development', highlighting the exclusion of rural populations and setting out plans for rural reform and development. The agreement does not, however, consider rural women's rights and agency, mentioning them only as beneficiaries of public programmes and limiting them to their role within the family unit.

Brief programme description

The Equality and Territorial Development for Rural Women programme draws on Oxfam's 10-year experience in Colombia and its evidence-based advocacy work that has led to significant changes in women's lives. It has been reviewed, along with Oxfam's strategy for the country, following the results of the October 2016 peace plebiscite and subsequent agreement with the FARC to ensure relevance of focus and interventions within the changed context.

The programme seeks to ensure that rural women, especially young, indigenous, and Afro-Colombian women, lead and influence peacebuilding processes and contribute to reducing inequality in Colombia. Its specific objective is to strengthen women's organizations and support transformative leadership of rural women, particularly their ability to influence policies, promote peacebuilding and rural development agendas, and to reduce inequality. The programme specifically targets rural women with an emphasis on young women from ethnic groups and includes a focus on the following thematic areas: violence against women and girls; access to safe water; care work; fiscal justice; land rights; livelihoods; and peacebuilding. This last area is particularly important, considering the gap in the peace agreement around rural women's rights and agency.

In order to achieve its aim, the programme will continue to invest in capacity development and influencing. It focuses on driving change in four spheres:

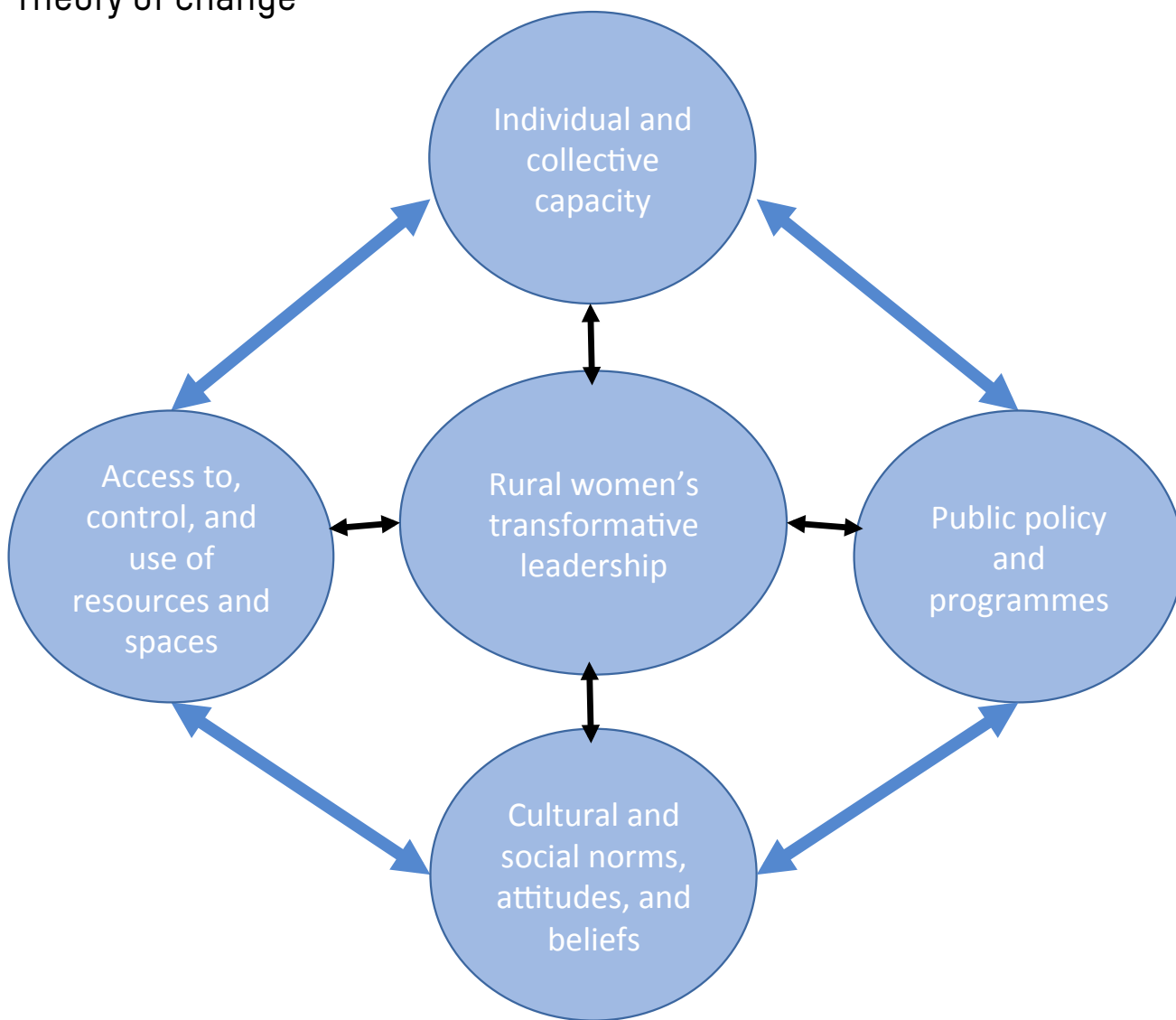
1. Change in individual and collective capacity – through promotion of spaces for dialogue among rural women to strengthen their collective power, and strengthening of the Colombian Platform of Rural Women.
2. Change in access to, control and use of resources and spaces – through economic empowerment and leadership initiatives, capacity building, knowledge generation and exchange, advocacy and setting up protection mechanisms for women leaders.
3. Change in cultural and social norms, attitudes and beliefs – through campaigning to increase the visibility of rural women in public spaces and promoting mechanisms for recognizing, reducing and redistributing care work.
4. Change in public policies and programmes – through strengthening networks and alliances; supporting advocacy and lobbying for improvement of policy definition and implementation; enhancing monitoring, evaluation and learning; and focusing on research, knowledge generation and dissemination.

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Building on the successes and lessons learned from previous phases of the programme, partner organizations will lead on influencing work at local and national levels, with Oxfam

supporting them and facilitating networking among the different organizations to strengthen their joint influencing capacity at national and international level.

Theory of Change



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2 Achievements and challenges

Achievements to date

The programme has successfully contributed to promoting the rights of women in Colombia. Oxfam has invested in evidence generation, capacity development, and networking and alliance building of women's organizations (especially rural and indigenous women's organizations), and supported them in achieving important policy change.

Indeed, the Colombian Platform for Rural Women – which brings together 26 rural women's organizations linked to 840 grassroots organizations – has successfully lobbied the Colombian Congress for the creation of the Office for Rural Women within the Ministry of Agriculture and the development of a specific public policy for rural women (article 232)⁵ under the National Development Plan. These significant policy gains have the potential to benefit around 7.4 million rural women.

It is important to note that a member of one of the platform organizations has been appointed Director of the Office for Rural Women, providing an exciting opportunity for further influencing of the national agenda and policies. This nomination also reflects another of the programme's successes: making rural women visible.

Through capacity development of rural and indigenous women's organizations and public campaigning in collaboration with national media outlets, the programme has contributed to a change in the way that rural women are perceived, from victims of violence and inequality to change agents. Several of the Oxfam-supported rural women's organizations also participated in the women's delegations influencing the peace negotiations. Together with local, national and international allies, they raised awareness of the absence of women from peace talks and successfully influenced the government to open the space for women's participation, resulting in 2014 in the creation of the Gender Sub-commission, officially included in the peace process. Rural women's organizations were able to present their proposals for a sustainable peace and ensure their needs and aspirations were voiced.

Specific challenges

The programme faces several challenges that it needs to address to sustain changes it has contributed to bringing about. First, in terms of context, the programme is implemented in highly volatile and conflict-affected areas where populations are at high risk of displacement. This instability jeopardizes activities and requires Oxfam and partner organizations to carefully monitor the situation and develop appropriate mitigation strategies.

The security of women leaders at local level also represents a concern and a challenge for the programme – it needs to

balance promoting women's participation and leadership in the public space, and their protection from harm, especially with the use of sexual violence as a weapon against them. With government-led protection strategies being urban-centric, the programme has started to explore the development of approaches for the protection of rural and indigenous women and women human rights defenders.

While celebrated as a success, the appointment of a member of the Colombian Platform of Rural Women as Director of the Office for Rural Women also presents a challenge for the rural women's movement. With one of 'their own' now part of the government, the movement is likely to face the risk of divisions around engagement strategies and priorities, threatening to weaken its influencing capacity. In addition to investing in maintaining its hard-earned union and cohesion, it will also need to reconsider the advocacy strategy it has used until now and change its approaches, possibly looking at engaging in less direct action.

Finally, two key challenges emerge following the peace agreement. First, organizations are concerned that new forms of territorial conflict might emerge over access to, and control of, natural resources. A greater coherence between the peace agreement implementation (including developing institutional presence and governance at territorial level) and the economic development model driven by the government is needed. Civil society organizations (CSOs) fear that unsustainable natural resource exploitation would continue to affect rural populations, particularly after the ZIDRES law⁶ (which furthers land concentration) was passed in late 2016, despite having successfully been halted various times in the past thanks to advocacy efforts by CSOs, including Oxfam partners and allies.

Second, there are concerns over financing. Funding implementation of peace agreements will need a domestic effort to ensure allocation of appropriate financial resources. This includes tax reforms to ensure that public budget planning and spending effectively support the peace plans. There are, however, concerns that these fiscal reforms would be more oriented towards creating incentives for the extractive economical model than towards the peace agenda.

Lessons learned

Investing in capacity development of rural women's organizations and linking them with established national organizations and networks is essential to ensure their access to decision making spaces.

Advocacy strategies need to be constantly adjusted to respond to changes in context.

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3 Partnerships and links with other programmes

Partnerships

The programme partners with women, young people, feminists, rural women, indigenous women, women of African descent, and organizations with members of diverse backgrounds, as well as with national networks such as the Colombian Platform for Rural Women. The programme has sought to develop the influencing capacity of partners and has facilitated creation of, and access to, spaces of dialogue and coordination among organizations working on women's rights, especially rural women's organizations.

Through the networks it has supported, the programme has contributed to building alliances for the exchange of knowledge and joint action. Partner organizations from different implementation locations are now replicating approaches and interventions and engaging in joint advocacy initiatives among themselves, without requiring Oxfam's coordination.

Furthermore, based on its power analysis and revised theory of change, it has become clear that early engagement with public influencers and duty-bearers is key in any advocacy process. Positive engagement with them supports buy-in and is more likely to ensure the success of influencing initiatives. The programme thus also engages with government representatives, opinion leaders, international organizations, expert think tanks and research institutions, and media outlets.

Links with other Oxfam programmes

The Equality and Territorial Development for Rural Women programme is aligned with Oxfam's focus on gender justice and inequality. Its concentration on the civil and political rights of women using a transformative approach, and on governance of food systems using a systemic approach, is in line with Oxfam's regional priorities. Additionally, the programme is linked to Oxfam's GROW campaign, which supports the advocacy work of farmers' organizations, especially rural women's organizations. In future it will also be linked to Oxfam's global Even It Up campaign on inequality.

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4 In focus

Supporting young women to drive peacebuilding processes

One way that the programme worked to ensure the participation and leadership of rural, young and indigenous women and women of African descent in peacebuilding interventions was through the one-year Young Women Peacebuilders project implemented in 2015–2016.

The project worked with 233 young women from urban and rural schools, supporting them in becoming peacebuilders through capacity development on gender justice, women's rights, violence against women and girls, active citizenship, and peacebuilding. A virtual platform was also set up to allow for networking and exchange of information and experiences on self-care; violence; diversity, UNSCR 1325;⁷ and Women, Peace, and Security⁸ initiatives in the Colombian context, among other subjects. Following the increased awareness and knowledge of these issues, participating young women developed a political and advocacy agenda reflecting their strategic interests and demands: early pregnancy; violence against women and girls, especially sexual violence; and building identity (in recognition of the diversity of their own identities – socio-economic, cultural and regional differences).

Oxfam and partners supported the representatives of the young women peacebuilders in voicing the specific changes they feel are needed, first with communities, CSOs and authorities at local level, and subsequently through organization of campaigning and lobbying meetings with duty-bearers at national level, such as senators and members of Congress, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Equality for Women, and the High Commissioner for Peace, as well as with international actors such as representatives of UN Women, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the British embassy and the European Union delegation.

The peacebuilders used these opportunities to request that Congress enforces laws that guarantee the rights of women and young women in rural and urban settings and appropriately

allocate resources for these laws and policies. They also asked for backing from international actors in supporting the implementation of their agenda and facilitating gathering and reflection spaces. These meetings have resulted in a series of commitments to address the demands from targeted duty-bearers and international stakeholders.

Despite challenges, especially in the security context, the project has successfully demonstrated that women can, and should, have a say in peacebuilding processes. In addition to significantly investing in networking to create a space for exchange of knowledge and experience, and development of a joint advocacy strategy, a key approach that has contributed to the success was the work done on disseminating the 'change agenda' at local level with communities and authorities to ensure buy-in and ownership, supporting the expansion of the network and mitigating potential backlash.

The programme ensures this initiative connects to influencing processes at territorial and national levels. 'This is a programme that is aimed at the community, with no intermediaries, and it is popular with traditional authorities and communities. That is the best thing about this project', explains Claudina Jayaripuaana, participant and Oxfam process facilitator in Alta Guajira.

Following the review of the programme in light of the peace plebiscite and agreement, Oxfam will build on its successes and further develop its support for partners on capacity development, networking and alliance building, and influencing for increased leadership of rural women. It will particularly look at supporting rural women to engage in regional and international influencing spaces. The programme will continue to build on its thematic expertise, but recognizing the role played by the church in influencing attitudes and practices on gender justice and women's rights, the programme will explore the added value of engaging with faith-based organizations to generate shifts in social norms.

For further information about this programme:
www.oxfam.org.uk/women-colombia

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Notes

¹ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and Norwegian Refugee Council. (2016). *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2016*. Retrieved from <http://www.acnur.org/fileadmin/scripts/doc.php?file=fileadmin/Documentos/Publicaciones/2016/10449>

² Guereña, A. (2016). *Unearthed: Land, power and Inequality in Latin America*. Oxfam. Retrieved from <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/unearthed-land-power-and-inequality-latin-america>

³ All statistics in this paragraph from Departamento Nacional de Estadística. Bogotá. (2017). *Pobreza monetaria y multidimensional en Colombia 2016. Boletín técnico*. Retrieved from https://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/condiciones_vida/pobreza/bol_pobreza_16.pdf

⁴ Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia).

⁵ See page 104 of Government of Colombia. (2015). Ley 1753 de 2015: *‘Por la cual se expide el Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2014–2018 “Todos por un nuevo país”*. http://www.mincit.gov.co/loader.php?!Servicio=Documentos&!Funcion=verPdf&id=78676&name=Ley_1753_de_2015.pdf&prefijo=file

⁶ Zonas de Interés de Desarrollo Rural, Económico y Social (Zones of Rural, Economic and Social Interest).

⁷ UN Security Council Resolution 1325. See United Nations Security Council. (2000). *Resolution 1325*. Retrieved from <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/720/18/PDF/N0072018.pdf?OpenElement>

⁸ See UN Women. *Peace and Security*. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security>

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