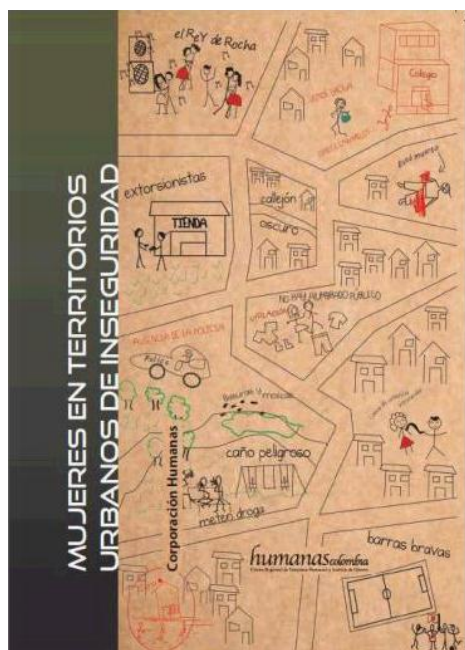


“Women in unsafe urban areas” of the Corporación Humanas

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This report of *Corporación Humanas*, which is the result of cooperation with scholars, representatives of NGOs and religious organizations, is a recollection of information regarding the cities of Barranquilla, Cartagena, Santa Marta and Kennedy, suburb of Bogotá, in order to understand how the dynamics of the violence and the armed conflict affect the lives of women. It is composed of three parts.

The first part deals with information regarding the incidence of violence in the mentioned urban areas. The *growth of criminality constitutes a problem since 2008* and consists, among other aspects, of an increase in certain offences such as homicide, motorcycle thefts, petty larceny, burglary, extortion, the rate of personal injury per 100.000 inhabitants, as well as of sexual violence. In addition, multiple forms of gender-based violence occur in the cities under study. With a **rate of 5.3 women per 100,000 inhabitants, Colombia occupies the**

seventh place in the list of the world’s highest homicide rates. According to the information obtained, **Cartagena** would be the city with the highest rate of homicide against women. In the municipalities studied, the number of family violence was higher than in the country in general. At national level and in the municipalities concerned, family violence mainly affects individuals of female gender, except for elderly victims. In the latter case, the majority of the victims are male. Only in Bogotá are women always the victims in all forms of intrafamily violence. Additionally, in all the municipalities studied, the rate of women that are victims of sexual violence is higher than the national rate (with the exception of Barranquilla). Finally, it is important to consider that Colombia represents, within the American context, the **third country with the highest rate of inequality in the region** and that the numbers of this phenomenon, as well as of poverty, **affect more women.**

The second part relates to the identified factors of insecurity. The report distinguishes two groups of factors of insecurity in the municipalities mentioned. The first group concerns the **criminal structures**, which according to the domain (politics, justice, etc.) receive different names and titles, such as “delincuentes comunes” (“common offenders”), offenders of international humanitarian law, “the demobilized”, paramilitaries or “bacrim” (“criminal gangs”). From the study’s perspective, the **main actors of insecurity are the armed groups that lead the negotiations and that benefit from the power relations formed by the paramilitary.** They recruit and abuse youngsters with a violent or poor background. Although narcotraffics constitute the main activities of the criminal gangs, the motives of their performance may vary. As such, in Santa Marta and its surroundings, the smuggling of fuel prevails. In Bogotá however, the armed actors rather have political interests, but some neighbourhoods of the capital also have a focus on sexual commerce, which allegedly sustains trafficking of women and girls, as well as the sexual exploitation of girls. The second group of factors of insecurity analyzes **gender structures from**

stereotypes, such as violent masculinities, the resolution of differences through the use of force and demonstrations of masculinity, which are therefore seen as substrates of insecurity. Consequently, “pandillismo” (gangsterism) is a demonstration of force and sexual commerce a form of execution. Despite the fact that violence is a typical masculine choice, there are cases in which women are part of “pandillas” (gangs) or even gangs composed of only women. Nevertheless, when women participate in a gang, they usually fulfill different roles. They serve for instance as sexual objects of the gangsters or as a bait to attract the enemy. With regard to sexual exploitation, the problem is very widespread. There are however key locations in the municipalities studies, such as transport and cargo terminals.

The third part **maps out insecurity** and shows how the actors creating insecurity compartmentalize the cities. These actors take advantage of failure, urban deterioration (such as unpaved roads, playing fields and suburbs) and spatial segregation. Especially the lack of light is an element that facilitates the commission of offences. Accordingly, many locations in the cities studied are identified as dangerous because they do not provide (sufficient) lighting. The main risks that women run are of being raped or attacked. Additionally, the construction materials that the poor use are likely to make them more vulnerable. Furthermore the phenomenon of “**territorialization**” needs to be taken into account. There are territories, which gangsters qualify as “theirs”, that are sections of public space from which the population is stripped. Currently also “cyberterritories” are formed. In Cartagena for example, gangsters make use of social networks, such as Facebook, to wage war. With regard to women, depending on the level of control, they might need to create strategies to face the factors and territories described above. Consequently, they stay at home and try to be as less as possible in the street, or they flee from those territories.

Oidhaco¹ wants to make the most of this report to emphasize recommendations made in the report "[Opening the EU's doors to women](#)" , which are still available today. It calls upon the European Union, its member States, Switzerland and Norway to:

- Monitor the advances of the implementation of the Constitutional Court's 092 Auto (2008);
- Advance in the implementation of the United Nations' Resolutions 1325, 1820 and 1888 regarding Women, Peace and Security;
- Promote political dialogue spaces and consulting of the civil society;
- Urge the Colombian State to adopt, through all the appropriate means, orientated policies in order to prevent, sanction and eradicate violence against women and in particular femicide;
- Urge the Colombian State, in accordance to their international obligations, to effectively fulfil the criminal proceedings on violence against women which are in progress. The investigations must include a gender perspective.

¹ *The International Office on Human Rights - Action Colombia, represents a network of more than 35 European organisations. From its headquarters in Brussels, Oidhaco accompanies Colombian civil society initiatives which work towards the full respect of human rights and international humanitarian law, and a negotiated solution to the internal armed conflict. Oidhaco has a Special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 2012.*