



**Pilot phase
achievements**

September
2017

Truth, Memory and Reconciliation Commission of Colombian Women in the Diaspora

The Truth, Memory and Reconciliation Commission of Colombian Women in the Diaspora (*Comisión de Verdad, Memoria y Reconciliación de las Mujeres Colombianas en la Diáspora*) is a citizen initiative created to contribute to peacebuilding in Colombia.

The initiative started in London in late 2014, at a time when the diaspora was considering its role within peace negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC. A group of women felt a common need to create a process that would enable us to act as peace and social transformation agents.

To this end, we needed our own innovative initiative, an endeavour able to break down the barriers and polarisation typical of war, and to mobilise the wide-ranging social, economic and ethnic identities of the Colombian diaspora. A thoughtful and welcoming environment, respectful of differences, focused on dialogue and collective thinking, and specifically designed to harness women's historical memory, from the women's perspective.

The Commission was set up with the aim of meeting the following **needs**:

- Healing potential traumas caused by armed conflict, as well as by the migration process.
- Documenting the war and migration experience in order to contribute to formal truth, memory and reconciliation processes in Colombia.
- Facilitating integration processes in the host countries.
- Identifying skills and offering tools for women's empowerment.

In 2016 we set up a core group in Barcelona. Since then, we've received proposals to replicate the process in Stockholm, Brussels, Oslo and other cities in Europe and the Americas. In addition, women returnee groups are being set up in Colombia, which are looking for ways to include their experience as migrants in peacebuilding efforts.

Supporting organisations

Conciliation Resources is an independent international organisation that works with people affected by conflict in order to prevent violence and build peace. We are guided by the belief that increased public participation is key to ensure peace processes that are more legitimate, transformative, and sustainable. We explicitly endorse the empowerment of women as agents for change as an act of social justice, whilst also understanding that women contribute essential perspectives and experiences which are usually not taken into account.

The Commission requested Conciliation Resources' support in 2014. Since then, the organisation has helped with providing meeting spaces, as well as with gathering testimonies and offering institutional support and financial assistance. At the same time, the Commission's initiative helps Conciliation Resources learn and become stronger.

The **International Catalan Institute for Peace** (*Institut Català Internacional per la Pau* – ICIP) was created by Catalonia's parliament in late 2007, as part of the implementation of the *Llei de Foment de la Pau* (Peacebuilding Act). The ICIP's basic purpose is to promote a culture of peace in Catalonia and throughout the world, as well as peaceful resolution and conflict transformation, and to ensure that Catalonia plays an active role as an agent of peace. Since 2016, the ICIP has been offering institutional and emotional support to the Commission, helping it carry out its work in Catalonia.

Introduction

Over the last few decades, millions of men and women, many direct victims of the war, have left Colombia in search of a better future. Others migrated primarily to study, work or maintain personal relationships; but even in those cases, armed conflict permeates their life experience.

As Colombia faces the task of rebuilding its historic memory in order to overcome a violent past and build a peaceful future, Colombians abroad – the country's diaspora – sense an opportunity to be part of this collective responsibility.

The migration process has equipped the diaspora with experiences, capacities, and knowledge that give it great potential to contribute to the transition towards a more inclusive and democratic Colombia. At the same time, their expertise tends to be insufficiently recognised or valued in the host countries, which hinders integration processes.

The Commission is one of many initiatives developed by the Colombian diaspora to increase their visibility both in Colombia and their countries of residence. The Commission is unique in that we prioritise psychosocial healing, women's empowerment, and the development of innovative methodologies in order to contribute to more transformative and sustainable peace processes.

This document sets out the methodology used by the Commission, as well as the results we've achieved during the experiment's pilot phase in London and Barcelona.

Social models

The Commission's initiative builds on and is informed by other social initiatives in Colombia and internationally.

1. In 2014 the Ruta Pacífica de Mujeres (Women's Peaceful Road) presented the Truth and Memory Commission's results. That initiative documented the testimonies of over 1,000 women affected by violence committed by all of the armed actors. (www.rutapacifica.org.co/comision-de-la-verdad-y-memoria). The project's findings emphasised how important psychosocial support is for women taking part in this kind of activity.

2. In addition, in 2012, a Colectivo de Pensamiento y Acción Mujeres, Paz y Seguridad (Women, Peace and Security Thinking and Action Collective) was set up in Colombia, possibly the first initiative enabling women from different social, economic and political backgrounds to start a dialogue and work together. The Collective developed a Pacto Ético por un país en paz (Ethical Pact for a country in peace) (www.pactoetico.org), a conceptual and practical input for peacebuilding beyond the negotiating table, which sets out 15 *paths to peace*.

The Commission's achievements

1. Critical analysis of categories related to truth, memory and reconciliation.
2. Identifying patterns among the women of the diaspora.
3. Producing its own innovative methodology to promote active memory.
4. Psychosocial healing, empowerment, and reconciliation.

3. The main methodological model comes from the *Mujer Frontera/BorderWoman* initiative (www.mujerfrontera.org), developed between 2008 and 2012 with women from eleven countries who survived human trafficking. The women undertook a critical analysis of institutional care policies for trafficking victims, and developed alternative interpretations to improve understanding of trafficking, as well as their own proposals on how to work with women survivors. All the training, advocacy, and proposal development work was based on the participating women's own experiences.

Methodology

The Commission's core group, with women's psychological healing and empowerment as its stated aim, decided to use the methodology developed by the *investigación acción participativa con enfoque feminista* (IAPF – participative action-research with a feminist focus) for its work. The framework uses scientific research, training, and political action simultaneously, and considers critical analysis, situation assessment, and practice as sources of knowledge, whilst at the same time seeking to empower the people who take part in the process. With its feminist focus, this methodology seeks explicitly to effect change in women's situations and to review their role in past, present and future history. To this end, it takes ownership of spaces and processes, challenges prevailing categories and develops new concepts.

“The Commission seeks to turn women's experiences into knowledge and that knowledge into tools that can be transferred to other women.”

Helga Flamtermesky, Commission's Coordinator

The IAPF is characterised by dialogue, reflection, and proposals. Therefore, the

Commission develops organically: it is shaped and modified by the needs and personal or collective dynamics that arise during implementation.

Core themes of our work

The Commission's common thread is the **gathering of testimonies**, and the specific manner in which we conduct this task. Unlike in the context of legal statements or therapy, in this exercise it is essential for the women to feel that they have control over their decision to speak. This is why women decide where they wish to give their testimony (usually a kitchen), what the format (usually free, unscripted) should be, and who they wish to invite as guests.

Food, music, and decoration are essential. We cook together, we play joyful music, and we decorate the room with Colombian items and flowers. The Colombian food, smells, music, and decoration in a foreign land help soften the bitterness of the story, alter the setting, and are a reminder of something positive about the country, all of which helps dialogue and emotions flow. They also help channel the anxiety that we may feel when giving or listening to testimonies. In this way, we create secure and loving spaces which help rebuild trust as an extra step towards reconciliation.

“You should always finish a testimony in the present and end the session with desserts and lots of sweets, music and dancing if possible, or with a symbolic gesture.”

All the testimonies are **audio recorded** and, if the woman so wishes, **filmed** as well. We then give the audio recording to each woman who gave a testimony so that she can decide with whom to share it. The recording makes it possible to transcribe the testimony so that it can later be **encoded in a database** especially created for the Commission. As well as the



Transformation through art: sharing photographs. © Ingrid Guyon

testimonies, the database development uses other information sources such as interviews, press briefs, academic papers, etc.

The Commission also seeks to turn the testimonies into a form of **artistic expression** able to enhance the beauty of the women themselves and of their actions. To this end, so far we have produced videos about the initiative, photo exhibitions featuring women's portraits, poems, paintings, *arpilleras*, and a theatre performance. The aim, as far as possible, is for local artists originally from the woman's native country to undertake this work. The artwork is a symbolic way to acknowledge and thank those offering their testimonies, as well as to enhance self-esteem and, to an extent, the woman's integration in the host country.

Other parallel activities carried out alongside the gathering of testimonies and which complete the focus of the Commission's effort include:

Training sessions designed for the Commission's members, as a key building block of their empowerment. These training sessions can be related to methodological (psychosocial care, feminist analysis, advocacy), theoretical (human rights, peacebuilding), normative (UN Resolution 1325 on women's participation and protection, victim protection policies) or political (peacebuilding process status, women's movement in Colombia, alliances with other social processes) aspects.

We carry out **migration interviews** designed to improve understanding of the plurality of migration experiences. Through semi-structured interviews, we start a dialogue around the gains, losses, and impacts in emotional and physical terms. This exercise enables interviewees to think aloud about their experience as migrants, as well as to subjectively value their relationship with the host country and with Colombia. This approach, which starts



Food: a fundamental part of testimony gathering. © Ingrid Guyon

by acknowledging the personal experience before focusing on assessing the context, also allows for a different dialogue about the challenges and expectations in relation to peace: we can talk about Colombia whilst avoiding the polarisation and preconceptions that the topic tends to lead to, and we can engage with women who have never been involved in social processes before and who can have very critical views regarding the peace process.

Research. In order to do its work, the Commission needs to have a good understanding of developments in the field of women's participation – and that of the diaspora more generally – in peace processes, and of Truth Commissions and other transitional justice endeavours. But above all, we feel that efforts to rebuild Colombian women's history in their countries of residence are essential, in order to identify the spaces opened by women over the years, as well as

what they have contributed to their host countries. The London research is being carried out by a young woman born in the United Kingdom to Colombian parents. This set of circumstances facilitates the transfer of knowledge between generations, while also giving young women the opportunity to discover and honour the paths opened by others.

Alliance-building with other social, academic, and institutional actors, both in the host country and in Colombia. This is essential to complement existing initiatives and strengthen our own advocacy capacities. Also key is the ability to count on support from local organisations in order to access meeting and work places, secure institutional support and help with fundraising, and share lessons, commitments, and affections.

Fundraising. The Commission can function thanks to its members' voluntary



Figure 1: The core themes of the Commission's work

work and, whenever possible, pays for professional work carried out by its members on tasks like training sessions, research, transcribing, and encoding testimonies, as well as coordination and management work. Having a minimum budget to cover logistical costs such as meals served when gathering testimonies is also essential. However, we have noticed how difficult it is to fund the work carried out with victims living outside Colombia, because most public tenders don't include provisions for supporting the diaspora.

The Commission's second core effort is **collective analysis**.

Informed by testimony encoding and research, the analysis seeks to create dialogue between the testimonies, the experiences of other women, and additional knowledge that may illuminate the testimonies and experiences.

We undertake collective analyses as part

of exercises specifically designed for that purpose, but they also take place spontaneously during the gathering of testimonies, or as part of informal conversations or thinking sessions. Thus they become a process of ongoing methodological review and they contribute to collective learning and empowerment.

At the same time, a process of collective reflection helps us identify the advocacy proposals that emanate from the Commission and the recipients of said proposals, such as institutions from Colombia or from the countries of residence, the international cooperation community, academic institutions, other social organisations, or other countries' diaporas.

Ultimately, collective analysis is the process that allows us to pursue the feminist goal of turning experience into knowledge and knowledge into concrete action proposals.

The figures up to September 2017:

- 84 transcribed and codified testimonies.
- 96 migration interviews.
- 12 training sessions.
- 2 photo exhibitions, 2 videos, 1 theatre performance.
- Caravan of women to the Catalan Pyrenees.
- 400 actively participating women.
- Collaboration agreements with the London and Barcelona consulates.
- Presentation of the Commission and alliances with social, institutional and academic institutions in Colombia and Europe.
- Initial contacts with women from the Syrian, Somalian, Kurdish, West African and Palestinian diasporas.

The Commission's achievements

1. Critical analysis of categories

A fundamental strategy in empowerment work consists in identifying the dominant concepts in social and institutional discourses and attempting to empty them of their assumed meaning and to fill them with women's individual or collective experiences. Here are some of the critical reflections which we, the women of the Commission, have undertaken to date.

Memory. Rebuilding memory has been institutionalised, with a drive to document the process and strict guidelines on how to approach the task. We, the Commission's women, view memory as an exercise aimed at ensuring justice and reparation, with a focus on personal healing. Documenting alone deprives the victim of her ability to think and act, and keeps her consigned to history.

Historical memory. The fact that « historical memory » is exclusively associated with memory in relation to armed conflict is problematic in our eyes. We believe that this association

overlooks an absence: we women are invisible in Colombia's history. We now have a unique opportunity to correct this error and ensure that (contemporary and past) women are represented as active and leading subjects. We want to tell our own stories and decide which aspects and contributions we wish to emphasise.

“We don't want our stories to be told, we want to tell our own stories.”

Victim. We understand that this is a category that one can enter or leave, and through which one can move in different ways. It is a category that has multiple definitions, according the specificities of personal experiences. Many of the women who identify as victims don't want to be permanently labelled as such. Others claim to be victims in order to demand their rights or because it strengthens their social activism. And there are those who, while affected by armed conflict, don't identify as victims at all. The most common reason



Public testimony in Barcelona. © Ingrid Guyon

invoked for this is « by comparison... »: because they feel other women might have suffered more, or that they had fewer opportunities or resources to process events. This comparison can have adverse effects since it leads to the minimisation of personal trauma and resilience.

Affected. We identified the need to create this new category. It includes women who, though not being direct victims, have suffered trauma or threats, such as women who have worked with victims, or foreign women involved in solidarity work. In Colombia,

those women assumed taking those risks was normal but, once abroad, with the benefit of distance, they understand that it was not normal, and they highlight the lack of care strategies for people exposed to complex situations.

Truth. Truth to us is not only a right but also a necessity, to be shared with social and family circles, particularly with future generations. We understand that women's

truth is subjective and that it shouldn't be called into question, less still questioned or substantiated by the abusers or by officials.

Trauma. In psychosocial work, trauma shouldn't be used as the common thread to recount or analyse a story. Women question the imaginary links between memory, the victim, and trauma as part of a direct or permanent correlation. There are undoubtedly traumas that last a long time and require treatment. However, the Commission's work has shown that many of the women have managed to overcome the trauma, or to leave it behind. Recognising this capacity for overcoming trauma is an empowerment strategy, too.

“That's all we need, going down in history not only as victims but also as traumatised, when in fact we are demonstrating that we are the exact opposite: strong, constructive, dynamic, and resilient.”



In the kitchen: awaking the senses to facilitate testimony gathering. © Ingrid Guyon

Reparation. Many of the Commission's women have registered as victims in order to receive some sort of acknowledgement and reparation from the State. The Commission has signed agreements with the London and Barcelona consulates in order to provide psychosocial support to the women who wish to endure a process that may involve more trauma. However, it should be noted that the Commission has gathered more testimonies than the consulates.

Social reparation. Many of the women who have given their testimonies to the Commission feel that their expectations in terms of reparation have been met. Faced with a very remote State, the Commission's *active memory* exercise (see definition below) becomes a process with a strong power to repair. The Commission does not intend to take on the State's obligations, but instead offers a response that more closely addresses the victims' needs while still complementing the State's reparation measures (when they materialise).

Forgiveness can be interpreted in various ways and not all women consider forgiveness to be the path to reconciliation or healing. Forgiveness is a personal decision. There are women who have not forgiven but have sought other ways to heal, such as not seeking revenge. Others have chosen to forgive but not to forget.

Exile. For a large group of victims, this concept is not only their identity, but an integral part of their political identity. However, many others do not feel protected by this term for a number of reasons. This is therefore a concept that can exclude or make invisible a majority group.

Diaspora. The concept that covers the largest number of people who left the country – for any reason – is that of *migrant*. The notion of diaspora is new for many Colombian women, but it does have a connotation that allows them to claim the right to participate in Colombia whilst being active in their country of residence. Thus we understand it as a more inclusive concept than *exile*, and a more political one than *migrant*.

Return. This concept is much more complex than expected. It seems ideal, but isn't always an option. For those who spent many years outside of Colombia, returning can involve splitting families again, disrupting professional careers, and facing uncertainty. For other women, returning can end up being a decision forced upon them, either because their visa has ended or because job opportunities have dwindled.

Returnees usually go through a complex adaptation process, with an identity split between homeland and international experience, which people who've never left the country sometimes struggle to grasp. Once they return, they experience new losses and, for certain women, fears related to their gender – which they overcame while abroad – reemerge due to security and machismo dynamics in Colombia. In addition, the challenges related to (and the need for) the victims' and migrants' return are all but absent from current debates in the country.

Symbolic return. Symbolic return is an effort to recreate social, political, cultural, and emotional bonds with Colombia without the women having to physically return to their country of birth. This idea has the potential not only for healing but for reparation as well.

2. Identifying patterns

Collective analysis – as well as the database that has been created using the testimonies – makes it possible to identify and analyse certain patterns of behaviour. Those patterns offer a better understanding of the impacts on women of the diaspora of abuse inflicted in Colombia and of migration.

Feeling of guilt. One way or another, the women who have approached the Commission have managed to rebuild their lives in spite of the traumas caused by conflict and the challenges they face

when trying to rebuild themselves in another context and another culture. Even so, many of them play down their achievements and insist they could have done things differently. Low self-esteem stops them from identifying, acknowledging or celebrating the countless skills with which they overcame past extreme situations. While this feeling of guilt is a cultural and patriarchal issue, it does feature other dimensions. Many women feel that they've somehow betrayed those who stayed in the country (the party, the cause). They feel that they can't or mustn't visualise (professional, personal) achievements, nor express their happiness. They can also feel guilty for not being able to pursue a professional career, for not continuing it, or for not being able to bring in income for their families.

Silences. We found that a large number of women left the country without telling anybody – not even their relatives – about what happened to them or the risks they would take by staying in Colombia. Collective analysis suggests that while some silences are the result of fear, there are other very telling dimensions: in many cases, that silence was a *decision*, not a *consequence* (of what happened or of fear). It is a brave decision to remain silent in order to protect the people around you; or as a strategy to prevent retaliation and thus break spirals of violence; or as an expression of forgiveness; or as a form of resistance. Identifying silence as something positive reduces the feeling of guilt and has a healing and empowering effect.

Fear. Fear is an ever-present theme in all testimonies: fear of talking, fear of listening, fear of being recognised by her abuser or of looking at herself or, in some cases, fear of acknowledging one's participation in (and responsibility for) the armed conflict. There are fears related to what happened in Colombia, linked to the lack of security. And fear of rape stands out because it is so widespread.

All fears – of being kidnapped, or robbed – implicitly include fear of sexual abuse. Other fears are the result of the migration process – such as fear of rejection, racism, the stigma attached to being a Colombian woman, fear of failure, and fear of « starting from scratch over and over again ». We have observed that the feeling of fear can be unlearned in the country of residence. But fears come back even stronger when returning to Colombia, even for a short stay and, as far as returning is concerned, fear can be considered as one of the stumbling blocks to readaptation.

Illness. Most of the women are affected by some form of physical illness (including cancer) and a sizeable proportion have reported emotional impacts such as anxiety, depression and sleep disorders that they put down to the extremely tense situations experienced whilst in Colombia and/or during the migration process.

Anger, indifference, powerlessness and disillusionment in relation with Colombia.

When they left the country, several women decided to sever all links with Colombia and to avoid all contact with Colombians in their new countries of residence.

These decisions are made in response to situations of exhaustion and, sometimes, are a mechanism to process grief. They are personal decisions which are generally experienced in silence to escape social or family judgement.

At the same time, the Commission's women experience renewed **curiosity and commitment towards Colombia**. Many have decided to return after not setting foot in the country for years. And many also show a renewed desire to be reunited with their compatriots. In other words, participating in the Commission fosters links between Colombian women who hadn't previously met and contributes to reconciliation within the country itself.

Solidarity: Gathering testimonies as *part of a dialogue* has enabled women to

identify and talk about solidarity actions that they benefitted from, both in Colombia and abroad, from known individuals or strangers. We also managed to ensure that they themselves acknowledge and value their own solidarity actions for others. This sort of acknowledgement enhances self-esteem and empowers them because it strengthens them as social actors.

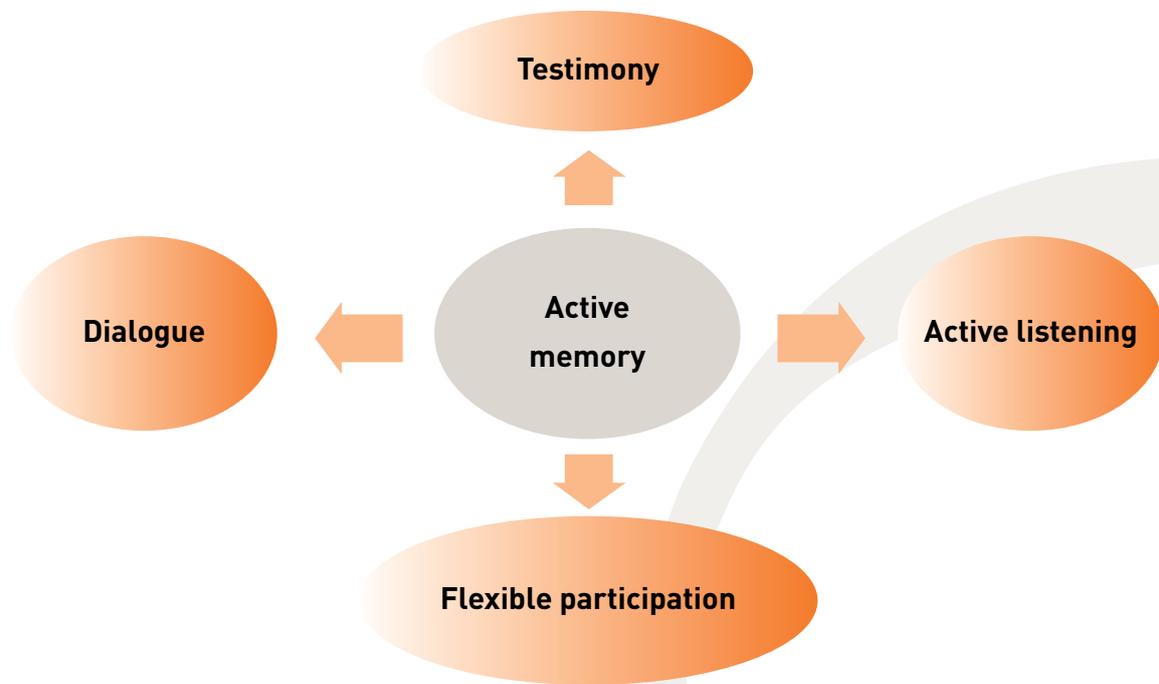
3. Active memory: an innovative methodology

In 2017, women in London and Barcelona carried out various analysis exercises around the two-and-a-half-year experience. We found that for the majority of participants, the initial objective, namely to document their experiences, is less relevant than the actual methodology used to gather testimonies. The dialogue and group dynamics that emerge around the testimony have a significant impact on participants, which places documentation in the background.

We call this interactive process *active memory*. We experience the rebuilding of memory as a dynamic, reflective, and inclusive process in which victims and non-victims build memory collectively. The dynamics that emerge around *active memory* have power to repair at individual and collective levels, and end up having an empowering effect.

Active memory rests upon four pillars:

3.1. Testimonies. The Commission's common thread revolves around the testimonies. Although gathering testimonies helps document the abuse suffered in Colombia, as well as the possible impacts of the migration process, we in the Commission are particularly interested in bringing to light women's resilience, their skills, and the strategies that they have developed in order to overcome the traumatic effects of war and



migration. This focus is centered around women and takes the spotlight away from the abusers. This allows us to address the past without staying stuck in it, thus strengthening the present.

“Many years of anger and pain, without ever talking about all that. The best part of telling you my story is that I managed to leave the past behind, and I tell myself: ‘How come in the 27 years I spent here I didn’t see all the good that I did?’. Now I want to contribute from what I’ve learnt during this long journey.”

3.2. Active listening. One of the main lessons has been the importance of listening. The Commission talks of « active listening » because the listeners respond to and interact with the person giving the testimony. The act of listening implies an act of generosity: the people who listen give their time and their (often scarce) financial resources in order to help with the gathering, their affection – which can involve hugging people, including strangers – and a tendency to leave aside their preconceptions and open themselves

up to new perspectives. Active listening helps humanise others and paves the way for reconciliation. The group of listeners, or **nest group**, help the speaking woman and the members of the group themselves withstand the testimony’s impact. At the same time, the *nest group* points out the speaking woman’s bravery, resilience, and recovery skills. The listening group hugs, laughs, or cries, it’s a group that celebrates life.

3.3. Dialogue. As part of active listening, dialogue between people involved in gathering the testimony and, above all, with the women giving it, reduces the emotional load for listeners. Every one of them tends to relate the testimony to their own personal experiences, or the experiences of close ones – including of experiences heard from previous generations – which helps build a framework that gives meaning and connects the experiences of participants in the exercise. One testimony can trigger spontaneous testimonies from other women present, which weaves a network in which the story doesn’t stand alone, but accompanies and is accompanied by other stories. Spontaneous dialogue builds trust and facilitates analysis processes.

« It's proven very enriching for me to see that my story was a piece in a puzzle which fits with other pieces, and that little by little we can show who we, the women, are and what we've done. »

3.4. Flexible participation. The Commission breaks down hierarchies in participation. All participation forms are valid, no matter how intense or frequent each participant's activity, both for victims and for women who do not consider themselves affected by armed conflict. Some of them don't hesitate to speak out; some prefer to remain silent; and others struggle to listen to testimonies but find other ways to participate which contribute to the collective exercise, and to show love to the women who do share their testimonies.

“The Commission has helped me do something now; before, I couldn't do anything or didn't know what to do.”

4. Psychosocial healing, empowerment and reconciliation

The previous sections have highlighted the positive impact that the Commission's various methodological approaches have had on the interrelated aspects of self-esteem recovery, social reparation, psychosocial healing, empowerment, and reconciliation.

We have clear examples of women who, after presenting their story and receiving positive feedback, start to refer to themselves and others in more positive terms, and are able to pass on to other women this sense of healing and strengthening that has helped them resume their lives in their host countries with a different perspective. Some of the participants have intensified their activism and are recognised within their community



Rituals as symbolic reparation. © Ingrid Guyon

as fighters, exemplifying strength and stamina. Through the training sessions and collective analysis, they all feel that their knowledge and skills are enhanced. Faced with a remote and bureaucratic State, the active memory work has facilitated social reparation to an extent that exceeds all expectations.

We women have created bonds of friendship and trust that go beyond the Commission's activities. Thus we share such achievements as finishing a master's thesis, starting a new life, helping our friends' children take the trip they've been dreaming of, getting a diagnosis for the illnesses affecting loved ones, amongst other things. We are more than a victim or migrant group, we are part of a diaspora.

The *active memory* methodology facilitates conscious and unconscious **reconciliation**

processes. The women involved in the Commission's work represent diverse and conflicting political stances, different social and class experiences, as well as different types and levels of harm suffered through conflict and migration. Those differences are diluted during the process until they seem irrelevant. *Active memory* fosters generous attitudes on the part of all women involved in debunking preconceptions, opening hearts and minds, and generating curiosity and commitment, both amongst ourselves and in Colombia.

Tasks and proposals

This document sets out the Commission's objectives, methodologies and achievements. It is merely an initial document that helps us synthesise our own learning, share it with similar experiences, position ourselves as a political actor, and seek new sources of support.

On the basis of these initial achievements, we would like to:

- continue the pilot work in London and Barcelona;
- work on new focal themes for analysis, such as understanding the factors shaping decision-making, as well as what role spirituality plays in our resilience processes;
- produce a methodological guide and secure the funds that would allow us to replicate the initiative with Colombian women elsewhere, as well as with women from other diasporas;
- analyse the challenges for and contributions of the women who have returned to Colombia;
- include more men in order to promote the development of new masculinities;
- position women as knowledge generators (alliances with academia; publishing).

Proposals

- Millions of people left Colombia during the war. Yet, there remains much ignorance and myth in Colombia in relation to the **diaspora**. The Truth Commission in Colombia must help provide answers to fundamental questions such as: How many people left the country? How many people left because of conflict? Which actions and people led to their expulsion? How did they manage to get out? How did they adapt to their new context? What are their post-conflict expectations?
- The narrative that will be developed from institutional, academic and social spaces cannot ignore the **women's** contributions again, as has happened throughout the country's historiography. The diaspora's women must be co-protagonists in building this narrative.
- The **international community** has few normative and economic mechanisms to support the diaspora's women. We want to offer the Women's Commission's experience as a means to fill the gaps in United Nations Resolution 1325, and urge the international cooperation community to review its tender processes.

This initiative has benefitted from the support of:



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