

Colombia - Summary Report

WPS National Action Plan (NAP) Status:

Colombia has not developed a NAP. That said, the November 24, 2016 peace agreement includes many gender provisions. Additionally, in 2018 the Ministry of Defense (MoD) published its own transversal (intersectional) gender implementation plan for uniformed personnel in Colombia.

Overall Assessment: Colombia has a robust civil society network dedicated to advancing the WPS agenda, and many are lobbying the Colombian government to adopt a WPS NAP.¹ Although the national government has made statements in support of gender equality and the MoD recognizes UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda, no NAP has been developed.

National Importance/Political Will:

Gender equality is enshrined in the Colombian Constitution (See Articles 40 and 43).² Colombia also has a Presidential Council for Women's Equity, which collects and analyzes information related to the situation of women in Colombia. Gender equality, women's rights, and the empowerment of women are also referred to in the 2018-2022 National Development Plan, an all-inclusive policy document that addresses foreign and domestic security policies.³

In Colombia, the army, the air force, the navy, and the national police all fall under the authority of the (MoD). The MoD guidelines and policies apply to all four services. Its 2018 report, *Public Policy for a Cross-Gender Approach for the Uniformed Personnel of the Public Force*, explicitly refers to UNSCR 1325 and its related resolutions.⁴ The report, developed as a requirement of the 2016 peace agreement, is referred to as the military's WPS implementation plan, and it includes the police under the umbrella term "public force." It calls on the military and the police to make sure that women have equal access and opportunities. It also sets up Gender Observatories at the level of the MoD and General Command, as well as inside each military branch and the police.

¹ See Humanas Colombia, *20 Años Exigiendo que el Gobierno Colombiano se conecte con la Paz y la Seguridad de las Mujeres*, Pronunciamento (Bogotá, Colombia: Humanas, July 2020), at https://www.humanas.org.co/alfa/dat_particular/arch_contenidos/i_e_73153_q_PRONUNCIAMIENTO_R1325.pdf; Also from Humanas Colombia, see Observatorio Mujeres, Paz y Seguridad (a group actively lobbying for a WPS NAP), *Cumplimiento del Estado Colombiano con la Resolución 1325 de 2000: Informe de monitoreo del año 2017 y primer semestre de 2018*, (Bogotá, Colombia: Humanas, December 2018), at https://www.humanas.org.co/alfa/dat_particular/ar/ar_9042_q_R1325informe.pdf.

² See Corte Constitucional, *Constitución Política de Colombia 1991, Actualizada con los Actos Legislativos a 2016*, (Bogotá: Corte Constitucional), at <https://www.corteconstitucional.gov.co/inicio/Constitucion%20politica%20de%20Colombia.pdf>

³ See Departamento Nacional de Planeación (DNP), *Colombia en la Escena Global: Política Exterior Responsable, Innovadora y Constructiva*, (Bogotá: DNP, May 2019) at <https://www.dnp.gov.co/DNPN/Plan-Nacional-de-Desarrollo/Paginas/Pilares-del-PND/Legalidad/Colombia-en-la-escena-global.aspx>; and also from DNP, *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2018-2022* at <https://www.dnp.gov.co/DNPN/Paginas/Plan-Nacional-de-Desarrollo.aspx>

⁴ Ministerio de Defensa, *Política Pública Sectorial de Transversalización del Enfoque de Género para el Personal Uniformado de la Fuerza Pública 2018-2027*, (Bogotá: MinDefensa 2018), at https://www.justiciamilitar.gov.co/irj/go/km/docs/Mindefensa/Documentos/descargas/Prensa/Documentos/politica_genero.pdf

While the political commitments toward gender equality are important, there is no overall monitoring mechanism for the uniformed services to examine how measures are applied. In addition, no additional resources or positions have been made available to ensure that the principles of the WPS agenda are implemented within the security forces.

Institutional Policy and Practice:

Strategy, Plans, and Policy

WPS principles, and the importance of gender analyses and gender perspectives, are mentioned on an ad-hoc basis in military and police strategies, operational plans, and policy documents. They are not systematically applied. For example, it is recognized by the security services that a gender perspective must be included in the investigation of transnational organized criminal activities, but there are no public documents to corroborate that it occurs in other operational situations.

The prevention of sexual violence and the protection of women and children from sexual violence during the conduct of police and military operations is mentioned in many strategic and policy documents as an important objective in operations. That said, interviews with members of the military and the police, as well as civil society actors, seem to indicate that the implementation of this objective is not systematic.

The military has an official gender office with gender advisors, but we do not know how many people staff this office and what training they receive.

Gender in the Ranks (Military and Police)

Service	Men	Women	Percent Women
Army	39,892	1,512	3.7%
Army Senior Women			1.5%
Navy	10,351	899	7.9%
Navy Senior Women			1.8%
Air Force	5,604	1,243	18.2%
Air Force Senior Women			1.7%
National Police	131,784	13,142	9.1%
National Police Senior Women			1.9%
Women Deployed			Less than 1%

Data provided by MoD personnel.

Few women serve in Colombia’s military and police—less than 4% in the army and a little over 9% in the national police. In addition, women are not promoted to the highest ranks at rates equal to the percentage that they serve in the forces.

Women serve mostly in the support branches and remain prohibited from serving in some ground combat occupations and units. Colombia has not set any targets for increasing women’s participation in the security forces.

Work Environment

Family Policies: Women in the Colombian military and police receive 18 weeks of paid maternity leave. Men receive 8 days of paid paternity leave. Neither men nor women receive any paid family leave, and there is no childcare assistance for military members who have children.

Anti-Harassment and Abuse Policies: There are no programs for the prevention or treatment of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation within the ranks, and the security institutions do not publicly report on the incidence rate of such behavior.

Equipment and Facilities: Women do receive equipment and uniforms designed for women, and they are supported with women-specific facilities including bathrooms and billets.⁵

Training, Education, and Exercises

Entry and mid-level military and police personnel are introduced to the concepts of the WPS agenda, but the training is basic and not systematic. Senior level leaders receive no training in the principles of WPS. Civilian staff personnel occasionally receive training on the principles of WPS within the organization and during operations.

The military and police receive training on protection and prevention of sexual violence and sexual exploitation and abuse of civilians in an area of operations. Despite this training, there are many complaints of sexual violence perpetrated by the military, and particularly by the national police.⁶

Monitoring/Reporting and Evaluation:

There are some monitoring and reporting requirements at some agencies, but it is not a formal national level effort. The MoD does have a monitoring and evaluation program.⁷ An objective for the Gender Observatories in the military and the police is to ensure the monitoring and follow-up of efforts to integrate gender perspectives. The Observatories are supervised by the Sectorial Committee for Mainstreaming the Gender Approach in the Defense Sector.

Both the military and police collect some sex-disaggregated data, but most are not made public. That said, Colombia has a robust civil society that promotes and advances the UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda.⁸ The Women Peace and Security Observatory, a coalition of organizations, is actively lobbying the government to adopt a WPS NAP.⁹

⁵ See, for example, Reserva Naval de Colombia, *Uniformes*, (Bogotá-Colombia, 2020), at <https://www.reservanaval.co/uniformes>

⁶ See, for example, Julie Turkewitz, “Seven Colombian Soldiers Charged in Rape of Indigenous Girl,” *The New York Times* (June 26, 2020) at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/26/world/americas/colombia-indigenous-girl-rape.html>. See also, Daniel Arias Bonfante, “Denuncian Caso de Violencia Sexual de Policías,” *RCN Radio* (September 12, 2020) at <https://www.rcnradio.com/bogota/denuncian-caso-de-violencia-sexual-de-policias-contra-tres-mujeres-en-bogota>; Justicia, “Solo el 29% de uniformados con crímenes sexuales han sido condenados,” *El Tiempo* (July 4, 2020), at <https://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/delitos/violencia-sexual-condenas-contra-militares-o-policias-por-crimenes-sexuales-514276>

⁷ See Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, *Politica Publica Sectorial: De Transversalizacion del Enfoque de Genero para el Personal Uniformado de Fuerza Publica 2018-2027* (Bogota: Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, 2018), at https://www.justiciamilitar.gov.co/irj/go/km/docs/Mindefensa/Documentos/descargas/Prensa/Documentos/politica_genero.pdf

⁸ See note 1.

⁹ See note 1.

Recommendations:

At the national level, Colombia should deepen and codify its commitment to the principles of the WPS agenda by developing and publishing a NAP. The national government should ask their robust civil society groups to assist in writing the NAP and in overseeing its implementation. The military and police should be given specific goals for advancing the agenda as well as resources to realize established goals. Both the military and the police must look internally at how women are treated within the ranks. In particular, the national government should address barriers for women to enter the security forces and how to increase the low numbers. It must also address sexual harassment issues within the ranks.

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