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*Erasmus*

**Rural women in Tolima**  
**The story of gender, precarity, and peace**

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## List of Acronyms

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ART	Territory Renewal Agency
CEDAW	Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CERAC	Resource Center for Conflict Analysis
CINEP/PPP	Popular Research and Education Center
DANE	National Administrative Department of Statistics
ILO	International Labor Organization
PDET	Development Programs with a Territorial Approach

## **Abstract**

This study focuses on understanding the role played by rural women in southern Tolima within the framework of the peace process signed in 2016. The study provides a nuanced specific contextual framework, where it explains the situations of precariousness, gender division in the work and what it has implied for the meaning of rural women who have lived in this region. Using participatory methods, it was possible to identify that the peace process has contributed to the recognition of the rights of rural women, where voice and association processes have been relevant. In the end, it is shown that gender is constructed through the relationship between social relations and the strategies that occur in the context of violence, where the understanding of the economic role that it fulfills will be key to the promotion of the solidarity economy. and labor formalization.

## **Relevance to Development Studies**

This study is relevant because it seeks to make visible and tell the stories of rural women in southern Tolima. Understanding the women of this region and the strategies they carry out in the midst of the situations of vulnerability in a traditionally patriarchal context that has made them invisible, allows us to contribute to the construction of multidimensional contextual studies *for* women within the framework of the peace agreement.

The importance of this empirical contribution is that it seeks to transcend the role of women as peacebuilders, make visible the meaning and importance of their economic contribution and analyze the precariousness and gender division at work. Thus, it exposes the implications of the strategic promotion of solidarity and cooperative economy and the formalization of rural employment, included in the peace agreement.

In a context like Tolima, which has been highly damaged by the war, it tries to portray women before and after the process, serving as a reflection of the practices that are carried out in the attempt to transform traditional and patriarchal structures. All together can be seen as a contribution to the process of building peace, not as a policy or an instrument that arises from the agreement, but from the concept of “peace-building” itself.

## **Keywords**

Gender and peace; precarity; gender division of labor; voice; Colombian conflict; peace process.

# Chapter 1

## What this Study is all about

This study seeks to portray if there has been, and how, a contribution of the peace process in Colombia to reducing the precarious situations faced by decades by women in southern Tolima.

The peace process in Colombia recognizes a historically marginalized group as rural women. Within its configuration, the process includes in its first point a comprehensive rural reform, and a specific strategy focused on the promotion of solidarity and cooperative economy and the formalization of rural employment. The tensions that exist with this strategy refer to the lack of understanding of the precarious conditions lying underneath the informality.

Therefore, when thinking about the rural women, their struggles, and the urban-rural configuration, it is important to address that Colombia has a patriarchal system that doesn't recognize rural women given the focus on the family unit as the main productive unit, where men are key. Also, with income being recognized as the sole and most important variable regarding economy and labor, the lives of rural women and their identities reshaped by the conflict have remained hidden.

Given the necessity for more nuanced context-specific evidence of political, economic, and social dynamics of peacebuilding for women, this research carried out a case study of the southern region of Tolima, one of the regions prioritized in the peace agreement. The research relied on the framework of gender and development and the concepts addressed by gender and peace as a subfield of study and a powerful analytical tool. A qualitative methodology of the study focused on defining and portraying the precariousness faced by women in the region and analysed the impact of the peace process, a major event, on their daily lives and identities.

To achieve the aforementioned, this document is organized in 5 main chapters: "Research problem" (context and research question), "Research problématique" (theoretical and methodological choices), "Analysis of fieldwork results" (definition of emerged concepts), "Portraying precarious situations" (presentation of findings), "Discussion" (answering the research question) and "Conclusion" (final remarks). Detailed structure and objectives are announced at the beginning of each chapter.



# Chapter 2

## The research problem

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter has a two-fold objective: (1) it provides the relevant contextual background (parts 2.2 – 2.5) and (2) it states the research question and reiterates its relevance (2.6). It first exposes a general context of the peace process (2.2), raises the challenges faced by the peace agreement strategy of promoting the solidarity economy and the formality of employment (2.3), gives the figures of poverty and low labor market participation of rural women (2.4), proposes a case study of the southern region of Tolima (2.5). Then, it builds on the context to establish the core of the investigation (2.6).

### 2.2 Background

#### 2.2.1 Peace process in Colombia: a historical debt towards rural women

The peace process signed in 2016 in Colombia ended 50 years of conflict with the guerrilla FARC-EP, one of the oldest guerrilla groups on the continent. This conflict left more than 200.000 people dead and more than 6 million displaced people, positioning Colombia as the second country after Syria with the largest number of people who have abandoned their homes and lands (Bouvier, 2016). From all perspectives, this peace process represents a very important agreement for Colombians, not only because it implies the end of this armed movement, the handover of weapons, and the aim to eliminate illegal practices they were carrying out, but also because it is an attempt to start complex processes of justice and reparation of the victims, as well as the promotion of the development of the regions where the conflict took place (Gobierno Nacional de Colombia y FARC-EP, 2016).

Among the main objectives of the process is the transformation of the country side with legal opportunities and promotion of economic development, “*breaking the gaps between countryside and the city*”<sup>1</sup> (Gobierno Nacional de Colombia y FARC-EP, 2016, pg7). Now, it is important to mention that the agreement includes the recognition of a historical debt toward rural women in Colombia. In this recognition, it highlights women’s role and their importance in the construction of peace as an actor who seeks to generate equity, social accompaniment, and is keen to participate in politics, environmental conservation, and promoting economic development (Virginia M. Bouvier, 2016). It represents an opportunity to develop the capacities of rural women, their role in economic, social, and environmental development, as well as the deepening of democracy (CEDAW, 2019).

The recognition of the gender component (see 2.2.2) in the agreement represents an effort to vindicate the struggle of rural women in Colombia who has historically been marginalized and invisible. There is evidence of the struggle of the women’s agrarian movements since before 1950, but it was not until the late 1980s and 1990’s that the claims materialized through the irruption of rural women’s organizations and the recognition of women as an autonomous subject of rights who can participate in decisions at the individual and collective

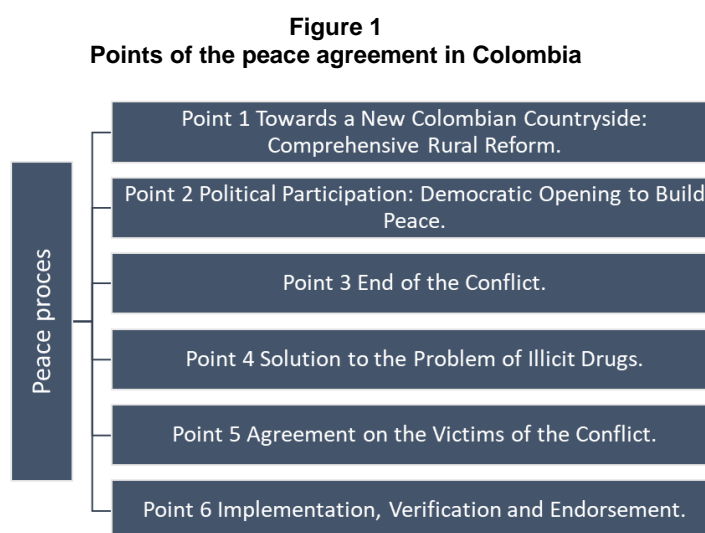
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<sup>1</sup> The gap closure means access to land, reintegration into society, productive goods and services, and infrastructure that generates opportunities and increases the quality of life in the different regions (Gobierno Nacional de Colombia y FARC-EP, 2016).

level (Dora Isabel Díaz Suaza and Elcy Corrales Floa, 2002). Proof can be found in the 1991 Political Constitution, where specific rights were enshrined. As shown later, the agreement is even more relevant because it is facing discouraging figures that show the gaps that have been reproduced historically and that persisted comparing them to men, as well as the differences between rural and urban areas, reflected in unemployment rates, demographic transitions, poor health conditions, and poor levels of education, among others (Lancheros Fajardo, 2017).

## 2.2.2 Rural reform and the gender component

The peace process is organized into 6 main points and a cross-cutting gender component. A transversal gender component means that in those 6 points there are a series of specific initiatives aimed to reduce the gaps and vulnerability of rural women (see Annex 1). These projects include an intersectional perspective that considers age, class, ethnicity, and regional location, as an intention to understand the different effects the armed conflict had among the different regions and communities.



**Source: own elaboration, based on (Gobierno Nacional de Colombia y FARC-EP, 2016).**

Emphasizing on the first point of the agreement, corresponding to the comprehensive rural reform, it intends to carry out a reconfiguration of the rural property, generating processes of restitution and distribution of land, promotion of local governance, and reactivation of local economies and agricultural production in the areas affected by conflict. Overall, 25 gender measures are included within the rural reform (July Samira Fajardo, 2021), which include affirmative actions to guarantee women’s prioritization, promotion of leadership and participation, and elements to reduce structural discrimination and the impact of violence. An especially relevant plan for this research project, is called “agricultural production, solidarity, and cooperative economy and labor formalization” and its objective is to:

“...strengthen the productive capacities of the peasant, family and community economy to develop their productive projects and stimulate technological innovation processes and guarantee social protection, decent work, and the rights of rural workers.” (Gobierno de Colombia, 2017, pg41)

The strategies contained into this plan to promote solidarity and cooperative economy and the formalization of rural employment consider affirmative measures to guarantee the rights of women; promoting the participation of women in spaces of representation, decision-making, and conflict resolution; and institutional management for the strengthening of

women's organizations for their political and social participation. Today, five years after the signature of the peace process, and besides the issues that the implementation is facing from an institutional and public policy instrument perspective<sup>2</sup>, it is found that the main challenges to strengthening the solidarity economy and the formalization of rural labor are:

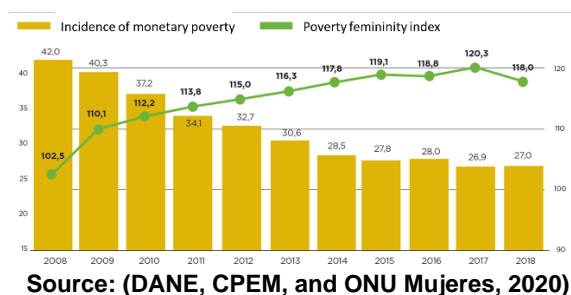
- i. Redefinition of home or domestic work.
- ii. Cultural model of decision making.
- iii. Greater access to leadership spaces.
- iv. Ideological and psychological barriers.
- v. Stereotypes regarding women at work
- vi. Lack of self-determination and empowerment for their entrepreneurial projects

These elements come from the report of the Implementation Framework Plan (PMI) carried out in March 2020, which followed up on the different initiatives. The above elements show that the implications of promotion of solidarity and cooperative economy and the formalization of rural employment must be studied and taken seriously

## 2.4 Understanding the participation of rural women

A myriad of indicators tells the story of the marginalized position of rural women in Colombia (Díaz Suaza and Corrales Floa, 2002). The latest rural census in 2014 (DANE, 2014) or the most recent rural women analysis published by DANE (National Administrative Department of Statistic) in 2021 help to understand the gaps that have been reproduced historically in terms of poverty and in the labor market, comparing it to men but also comparing it to urban women. Regarding poverty, it is important to briefly mention the contrast between the indicators of the incidence of monetary poverty and the incidence of femininity in poor households for the period 2008-2018 at the national level. The contrast depicts that the number of people living below the poverty line has been reduced, but they show that the measures have not had the desired impact on women, and reflect *"the lack of autonomy of women, who in the absence of other household income are more likely to be in a situation of poverty, a situation that is exacerbated in households with a greater presence of boys and girls"* (CEPAL, 2020)

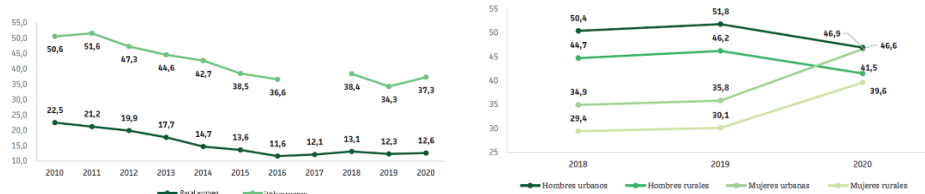
**Figure 2**  
Incidence of monetary poverty and femininity in poor household's index



<sup>2</sup> The implementation of gender initiatives presents great challenges. The follow-up reports carried out by different women's organizations or multilateral organizations that function as guarantors of the peace process have determined that there is a deficient execution because many projects have not been formulated, they present technical problems or they do not address the entire objective, where only 12% of the initiatives of the rural reform have implemented correctly, while 44% have been regular, 40% badly, and 4% have no information (July Samira Fajardo, 2021; CINEP/PPP-CERAC, 2021).

By reviewing the data from the perspective of rural women, DANE (2021) report exposes various the gaps that exist between men and women, as well as between urban women and rural women (Figure 3).

**Figure 4**  
**Incidence of monetary poverty in women and femininity in poor women head of the household's index**

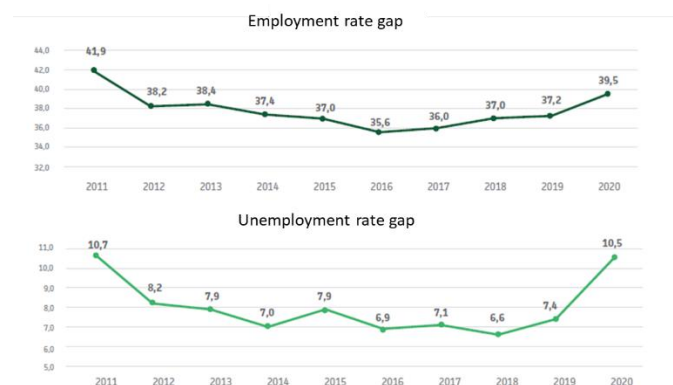


Source: (DANE, 2021)

Also, trying to address the gaps, DANE (2021) express that there is a relationship between multidimensional poverty and the labor market, where rural women dedicate themselves to a greater extent to household activities to domestic work and unpaid care (Becerra Elealde, 2022).

Researching the labor market in rural areas, reports from the Presidential Advisor for Women Equality (2021), DANE (2020 and 2021), and UN Women (2018) portray the indicators that show how rural women - and women in general - are still relegated from the occupation and unemployment perspective. As seen in the Figure 5 occupation and unemployment show how the gap between women and men between 2008 and 2017. When disaggregating these data for rural areas, according to DANE (2020), the occupation of rural women was 29,2%, while the rate for men was 68,8%, showing a gap of 39,5%, raising tendency since 2016.

**Figure 6**  
**Gender gap (M-F) in the employment rate and the unemployment rate (percentage points) Rural areas 2011-2020**



Source: DANE (2021)

Authors such as Palomino (2018), Parada Hernández (2018), León (2008), and Salinas-Arango, Orozco-Toro and Mejía-Giraldo, (2021) consider that, despite the participation of rural women in Colombia and the multiple roles they play in the economic, social and political spheres, their contributions are made invisible because they are understood as responsibilities inherent to the feminine (Palomino, 2018) and their contributions in generating household income are underestimated.

Poverty and the labor dynamics portrayed in the aforementioned graphs throughout the years show two phenomena. The first is the low understanding of rural women in Colombia,

the definition of "rurality" in itself, as well as the lack of knowledge of the role of women in the dynamics of production and social reproduction and the contribution or relationship that, from these two edges, they generate to the economy and the development of their regions (Parada Hernández, 2018) (Claudia Belén Lancheros Fajard, 2017). The second refers to public policies that reinforce women's traditional role as an agent confined to the domestic sphere (Dora Isabel Díaz Suaza and Elcy Corrales Floa, 2002). As (Parada Hernández, 2018) mentions, Colombia has a patriarchal political system that has focused on understanding the rural approach from a family unit perspective, which does not present disaggregated statistics and under this conception, it is the man who is at the head of these units, who traditionally makes the decisions and to whom the aid is traditionally directed.

Discrimination against rural women also it is translated in the use of land where 24,7% of the productive units were led by women in contrast to 73,2% by men (DANE, 2021); the high rates of the informality of the rural areas in general (including men and women)<sup>3</sup> or the most recent figures of the domestic and unpaid care work, which hasn't been recognized nor paid by generations and that is seen as a naturalized extension of the role of women in society. The percentage of participation on these activities raises to 88,8% for rural women living in towns and 92,5% for women living in remote rural areas (DANE, CPEM, and ONU Mujeres, 2020)<sup>4</sup>:

## 2.5 Southern Tolima

This is an interesting case because being the region where the firsts peasant movements emerge and the FARC-EP was born, women are trying to change the stigma of being a violent region, through a discourse that promotes the regions a thriving area that wants to contribute to the construction of peace and a better society.

With the above scenario, and returning to the challenges facing the peace process, when researching projects or organizations that are promoting the solidarity and cooperative economy and the formalization of rural employment, the south of Tolima stands and emerges as a particular region that is playing an important role in promoting the peace process specially through rural women's organizations. The south of Tolima is one out of sixteen regions prioritized in the peace agreement, and it includes 4 specific municipalities: Chaparral, Planadas, Rioblanco, and Ataco.<sup>5</sup>

Albeit the region is facing challenges in the implementation of the peace process (Agudelo Urrego, 2021; Ecos del Combeima, 2022), different reports portray what they have highlight the "*organizational process of rural women from the south of Tolima: rural-urban link weavers for peace*" (Ambeima FM, 2022), "*women's union a symbol of resistance and progress*" (Laura Alejandra Moreno Urriaga, 2022) or "*...protagonists of peacebuilding and the transformation of homes and*

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<sup>3</sup> Women in populated centers reach 52,4% and men 54,7%, while women in the far rural reach 81,9% and 83,6% for men, in contrast with the national average which is 60% and 59,3% respectively for women and men (Dane, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> The country created an account with the elements to include unpaid work in the National Accounts System: 1) the quantification of the TDCNR from a time-use survey, 2) the assignment of an economic value and 3) the construction of the Satellite Account of the Care Economy. In Colombia, each year 37 billion hours are allocated to the TDCNR, of which 29 billion are hours of work by women. That is, 8 out of 10 that are dedicated to the care and well-being of the population without receiving an associated payment, are hours contributed by women.

<sup>5</sup> Within the configuration of the peace process, some regions and municipalities were defined and prioritized. Those should be prioritized because are considered the territories most affected by violence, poverty, illicit economies, and institutional weakness (Gobierno Nacional de Colombia y FARC-EP, 2016).

*communities*” (Helena Rodríguez, 2020). Efforts led by women seeking to make rural women visible, participating in development processes and calling for different resources to be allocated in this region, either from the government or the international community.

Perhaps the most important refers to the message from these rural women for the reduction of livelihoods precarity. A process they have been in for several years, through which they have tried to convey a message so that women appropriate different spaces, value themselves as women and the work they do, and encourage them to be protagonists in the construction of peace, the transformation of households and communities, as well as breaking through a patriarchal culture embedded in different structures in the region (Laura Alejandra Moreno Urriaga, 2022; Helena Rodríguez, 2020; Laura Alejandra Moreno Urriaga, 2022; Ángel López, 2022; Uniminuto Radio Tolima, 2022).

## **2.6 Relevance, questions and objectives of the research**

### ***The puzzle and relevance of the research***

The previous sections summarize the challenges the peace agreement face in terms of the understanding of rural women, the implications of their participation in the economy, specifically in the informal and hidden economies. In this sense, gender initiatives within the peace process are an invitation to do a contextual, transdisciplinary, and cross-sectorial analysis of the causes and implications of poverty and inequity gaps (Ian Scoones, 2009). The complexity and intertwined of these variables, given the Colombian conflict, pose a challenge to understanding the development notions, where remnants of colonization processes, centralization of decisions, and power dynamics have often alienated, marginalize, and distanced rural realities (Agarwal, et al., 1998).

Promoting the solidarity and cooperative economy and the formalization of rural employment under the gender scope, implies rearranging or creating new scenarios that don't replicate the existing exclusive practices for rural women, that help the country and the different regions to get out of the gender stereotypes, explicitly when is about to frame to rural women in domestic and care activities, without considering them as a subject that can be productive (Verdad Abierta, 2021).

Therefore, it is key to understand rural women, and their roles in the rural economy, to incorporate in the analysis the dynamics and complexity of everyday life and the role of the different structures they participate in.

### ***Research question***

If and how the women of southern Tolima have benefited from the peace process in their fight against precarity?

### ***Sub questions***

- What does it mean to be a rural woman in Tolima and what has been the role of the peace process in the perception of their rights?
- What are the situations of vulnerability that women face in the context of the armed conflict?
- How is gender division at work perceived?
- What is the role of the community and associative processes in the development of the region?
- Have the gender division of labor transformed since the peace process?

# Chapter 3 Research problématique

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and justifies the way of reasoning guiding the study. It first discusses the broad theoretical framework of gender and development on which the research will be based (3.2), and makes the link between gender and peace, as a subfield and a valuable analytical tool for this research. Subsequently, the chapter focuses on resulting methodological choices to elaborate on the case study and data collection methods (3.3). It finishes by recognizing associated limitations (3.4).

## 3.2 Theoretical framework

Inside the purpose to close rural gaps, reconciling the state abandonment, and creating opportunities to promote social inclusion and reduction of poverty and inequality, it's found the reality of the rural women in Colombia who *"have historically been marked by patterns of social and political exclusion, which impact gender roles and relations"* (Bouvier, 2016, pg4). Through its gender component, the peace agreement recognizes that *"experiences of armed conflicts are infused with gender dimensions, sometimes obvious and more often hidden"* (Ibid, 2016, pg7). Within these dimensions, it is important to mention how rural women faced structural violence, developed different strategies for survival and resistance, and also carried a reconfiguration of roles that have been contributing to the rural economy and processes of peacebuilding throughout the years (Salamanca, 2021).

Understanding the structural inequalities that rural women face, their struggle, their roles in the production and reproduction systems, and the complexity of their daily lives, as well as the recognition of their needs, interests, and their role in the peace process, requires of a theoretical conjunction between development, gender, and peace.

Below are a series of authors who present various topics that will serve to frame the debate around gender and to be able to take some elements that guide the definition and understanding of gender and the role of women from the socio-economic perspective.

### 3.2.1 Gender and development

Starting from the theoretical perspective of gender and development, it allow to take a critical look at the understanding of gender relations in terms of personal behaviours, attitudes, values, and commitments (Nilsson, 2013; de Jong, 2016). It also pays attention to the complex realities of power, poverty, race, and class, where women are agents of change whose roles have been reshaped by these power relations (Dombroski, 2016). From a critical perspective the gender and development approach questions *"the crucial constraints for women's progression are the social structures and processes which create and maintain male superiority and female subordination"* (Guijt and Shah, 1998, pg7). These processes of subordination seem natural and unchangeable, despite being socially constructed over time and, in some cases, from a personal perspective *"this position of subordination is not recognized"* (Ibid, 1998, pg 10).

The objective of the peace process to reduce poverty and inequality of women requires a holistic gaze to assess poverty from the perspective of income, agency, decision-making, legal right, family situation, vulnerability to violence, respect, and dignity (Lund, 2015). This is necessary because as Kabeer (2015) states, there is little understanding of women in economic and political decision-making, despite the proven contribution women generate,

making them underpaid, undervalued, and put aside from different spaces, where the dimensions of poverty and marginalization are embedded into structures of gender inequality in institutions such as home, workplace or the market (Lund, 2015). In this regard, for the continuity of the peace process, it is key not only to address the notions of welfare, poverty, or different indicators from the efficiency point of view women face but rather is necessary to take into consideration power dynamics and social justice (Kabeer, 2015).

As stated by Bouvier (2016), (Kabeer, Mahmud, and Tasneem, 2011), and (Janvry and Sadoulet, 2004), it is necessary to complement the inter-household analyses of poverty and women marginalization with the intra-household analysis given that the institutions mentioned above have played an important role in making rural women, although their contribution in the subsistence process of rural livelihood (Lund, 2015). Mies (2014) and Lund (2015) defines this as *housewifization or universalizing housewife*, a concept that refer that woman, despite working, are not defined as such but as housewives, considering themselves as free salaried workers, where the nuclear family is the key indicator, where men play the most important role regarding income, production, and decision-making processes.

However, Prügl (1996) states that the definition of a housewife is a concept embedded in social contexts, contextual, not generalizable. In that regard for the promotion of solidarity and cooperative economy and the formalization of rural employment, it is not only necessary to understand the implications of rural women as housewives, but the involvement of women in productive decisions, and incorporation into markets.

In this sense, from a positive point of view Kabeer (2002) and Vinayak Banerjee and Duflo (2011) highlight that employment status is one of the most important indicators to assess the socioeconomic status of women and, therefore, has a relationship between the processes of inequity and vulnerability that occur at different levels, from the individual to the household or the market. Kabeer (2002) states that work, when it is paid, generates a series of processes that reduce the marginality of women, increasing empowerment, the perception of their contribution from the productive point of view, their position in the family, triggering transformation and strategies to overcome survival from positive effects on their families and children.

Other debates around socioeconomic status of women manifest that the pure discourse on inequity and inequality of women must transcend inequity and vulnerability, in favour of addressing complex realities of power, poverty, and race (Janvry and Sadoulet, 2004; Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem, 2018).

Saying so, in the frame of the peace process, it will be relevant to understand what are the dynamics that are being presented in regard to the solidarity and cooperative economy and the formalization of rural employment. Building on Parada Hernández (2018), it should be analysed if the projects that arise from these initiatives have this problem where the intentions of transformation fall short when creating mechanisms that develop entirely differentiated political processes to address inequalities in rural spaces. This implies an understanding of the constraints and barriers that confine women to more poorly remunerated, more casual, and more insecure forms of waged and self-employment, and of what this implies for women's ability to provide for their families and cope with insecurity (Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem, 2018).

This repercussions the labor market vulnerability (Kabeer, 2003), where several elements are problematized given the relationship between the economic activities of women in regard to production and social reproduction, affecting the decisions to link employment and asymmetric contractual relations (Kabeer, 2003). Vulnerability also because rural women, with the aim of fulfilling their functions of social reproduction, are linked to jobs with poor working conditions, exploitative or informal that can even generate insecurity to meet their basic needs.



### 3.2.2 Gender and peacebuilding: a subfield of study

Gender and peacebuilding are defined as an analytical tool within gender and development. As a keyframe for this research project, acknowledges and critic the lack of understanding of the reality of different communities with respect to the different experiences of men and women during conflict and the peace process itself, where it is relevant to “*assess needs and portray how gender relations change due to conflict and peace*” (Peace Building Initiative, 2008). This includes the conception of forms of violence, roles, and power structures (Bouvier, 2016; Villa Mesa and Reyes Manrique, 2018) where it is necessary for a multidimensional gaze to “*take measures to ensure the equity and protection of women in all social, political, economic and cultural forums of life*” (Chant, 2015).

In this sense, authors such as Phelan and True (2022) and Gutiérrez and Murphy (2022) establish how peace processes navigate fragile political bargaining processes which makes it necessary, for sustainable peace, to address structural issues behind conflict at both political and economic levels, navigating into gender structures and gendered forms of violence, shaped my militarism and patriarchy.

Given these structures, publications by Niner (2016) and Bouvier (2016.1) and Bouvier (2016.2) portray how women are generally more vulnerable to violence due to their socio-economic condition. Saying this, they highlight how within the consolidation of peace economic appropriation and women’s empowerment contribute to economic activity, economic growth, and therefore to peacebuilding. Elaborating this further implies understanding that gender and structural forms of prevalent economic and social inequalities are “*deeply situated rather than one-size fits all*” (Phelan and True, 2022, pg175). This includes gender division of labor, where women are more vulnerable to violence struggling against marginalization and unpaid reproductive and care work and less decision power.

From the point of view purely of the peacebuilding process, the role of women is fundamental since women find themselves within a complex arrangement of roles that are interlinked, not only between social reproduction and production but also as peacebuilding agents, victims, supporters of war, care providers, among others Bouvier (2016.2; CEDAW, 2019). Immerse in armed conflict dynamics gender dimensions include obvious and hidden patterns of political and social exclusion, which impact gender roles relations. In the rural case, the intersectional characteristics make it possible to illuminate the experiences of the conflict (UN Women, 2018), but also how after the agreement individuals and communities have been navigating through different identities, changing gender norms give involvement in new activities that took place in the survival during the conflict but also in the process of revitalization after conflict (Bouvier, 2016.1; Bouvier, 2016.2). In this sense, and in line with the process of implementing the peace process in Colombia, men and women have generated new identities that must now work together to create an understanding of what it means to have a peaceful society (CEDAW, 2019) and deal with new expectations towards social, economic and environmental development. In other words, it will be interesting to understand the effects of the process on the subjectivities that are created in the regions.

### 3.2.4 Elements for study: thematic level

The conjunction between gender, peace, and development rise elements that are relevant and will guide this research project, where different lenses are necessary for the understanding of the effects of the armed conflict in Colombia from an intersectional perspective (Myrntinen and López Castañeda, 2022). Key in assessing critically the contribution of the peace agreement in the aim to reduce the gaps and vulnerability of rural women, and moreover, to the objective of the construction of a peace that is sustainable over time.

Summarizing common points, there is a necessity to understand the complexity of gendered lives, to expand the understanding of women factor into broader economic and political decision-making arenas, that give us evidence on the political dynamics related to current structures, including within women's groups. In complement, Lund (2015) states it is important to address female poverty not only in the privation of minimum basic needs but the opportunities, choices, and roles.

In regard to roles, given the background mentioned above is important to carry analysis to determine the dynamics between women's participation in formal or informal activities (Bouta, Frerks, and Bannon, 2005), and the intersection between transitional processes that intersect the existing gendered division of labor with the new identities and the expectative generated by the peace agreement (Hedström and Olivius, 2020).

### **3.3 Research methodology**

The research used the logic of the approach of a case study proposed by Yin (2018) and the variables determined by Gerring (2006) to pick the case of the southern region of Tolima, composed of the municipalities of Chaparral, Planadas, Rioblanco, and Ataco. The case relied on qualitative and quantitative data, collected from primary and secondary data. Regarding the primary data, it was collected through fieldwork that used mixed methods from the participatory action approach. Secondary data were extracted from reports on the situation in this situation in Tolima and other related academic works.

Given the objective of the research to identify if the peace process has contributed to the fight of rural women against precarity, and the necessity of more nuanced context-specific evidence of political, economic, and social dynamics within women groups (Phelan and True, 2022) in the understanding of the relationship between women, peacebuilding, and development, the research chose the municipalities from the south of Tolima given the aforementioned women's rural organizations that stand out in the process to create promote solidarity and cooperative economy and the formalization of rural employment.

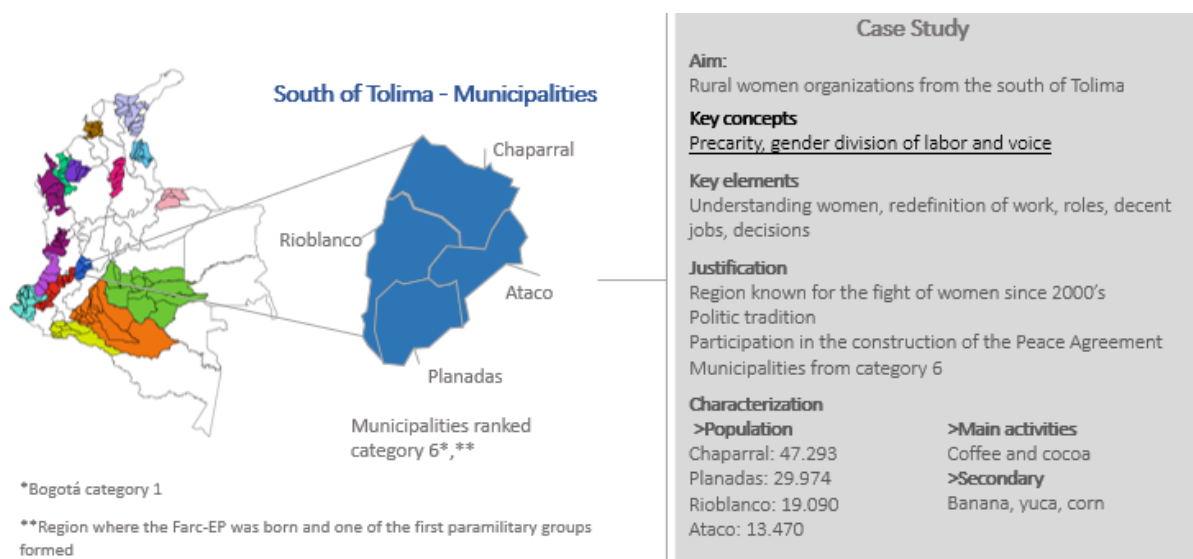
The research analysed the 4 municipalities of Tolima as a whole, and not as different cases to be compared along. Respectively, following Yin's (2014) categories and implications for an embedded case, the research analysed different units such as household, community, and market. In this particular scenario, throughout the logic that connects the question raised above, the data and the concepts, it seeks to generate a debate regarding the importance of gender measures to make rural women visible and understand their local context in depth.

Finally, the selection of this region is explained for an additional reason. From the security and logistics perspective, according to the latest report by Indepaz (2021), this sub-region is one of those with the lowest number of massacres and the lowest number of murders in the last year. Being a less violent area compared to some of the municipalities that were prioritized by the peace agreement, it allowed being able to talk and interact with different people, but also mitigates the risk, both for the participants and the researcher.

#### **3.3.1 Case study: southern municipalities from Tolima**

The southern region of Tolima made up of Ataco, Chaparral, Planadas, and Rioblanco arises from the prioritization process that was carried out in the structuring of the roadmap for the implementation of the peace process, where those regions most affected by violence, poverty, illicit economies and institutional weakness (Gobierno Nacional de Colombia y FARC-EP, 2016).

**Figure 7**  
**Case Study Summary: Southern Tolima Region**



Source: own elaboration.

The aggregate information of these four municipalities shows that they are characterized by having 118,274 inhabitants, where 62.5% is rural population and 37.5% is urban population (Gobernación de Tolima, 2020); 48.3% are women and 51.7% are men. Regarding the development indices, it is found that, according to the 2018 figures, 52% of its population was in a situation of multidimensional poverty. Regarding the global rate of participation, it decreased from 71,07% in 2011 to 58,64% in 2020; the occupation rate went from 58,8% in 2011 to 45,93% in 2020; and respectively, the unemployment rate went from 17,15% to 21,67%. There is no disaggregated information on the four municipalities nor the difference between men and women. Geographically, located in Colombian Massif, where it is possible to find a diversity of landscapes, flora, and fauna; economically, it has a legacy in the agricultural vocation, standing out coffee growing as the pillar of its economy that places it as a great coffee producer in the departmental context (Alcaldía de Chaparral, 2020).

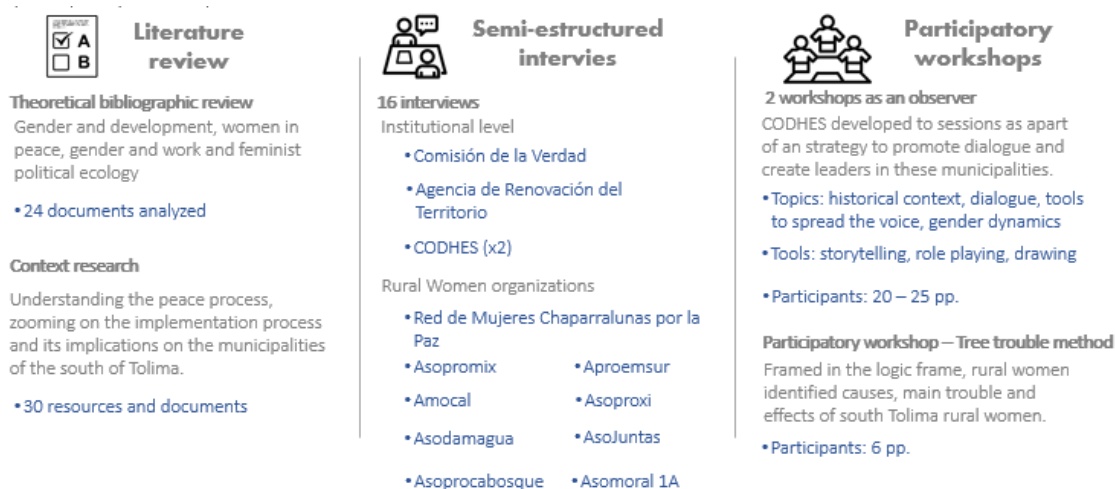
From the perspective of the implementation of the peace agreement, in southern Tolima there are approximately 1,166 initiatives presented in development plans with a territorial approach. Figures from different sources report that there are between 150 and 170 projects that have been presented for economic and agricultural reactivation (Gobernación de Tolima, 2020; Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2021; Colombia Sostenible, 2022). Regarding execution figures, approximately 76 projects are financed by external sources of funding resources, where between 20 and 35 projects currently executed are financed by international cooperation, and 6 are financed by national sources.

### 3.3.2 Data collection

To answer the questions and fulfil the objective of this research, the data collection took into account primary information gathered through a participatory approach through semi-structured interviews and workshops. It was complemented with secondary data that helped to clarify the context of the region, as well as other research carried out in the region and reports from the projects that are promoting solidarity and cooperative economy and the formalization of rural employment.

**Figure 8**

## Summary of the data collection process



Source: own elaboration

### 3.3.3 Fieldwork

When carrying out fieldwork with the PAR methodology, the research sought to generate a process of reflection on the part of the interviewees and the people who attended the workshops. In these spaces it was they who, based on their testimonies, knowledge and experience, guided the generation of knowledge (Kendon, Pain and Kesby, 2007). As a result, the concepts of precarity and voice emerged, elements that were analyzed later (4.0 and 5.0). These arise because there was a lot of talk about the discourse of resilience and the leadership of women in this region, but they asked to see further in understanding what the reality was in their homes and communities, where precarious conditions were present. For its part, the voice as the mechanism of women to make this situation visible, push and encourage women to appropriate different community and economic spaces.

The fieldwork took place between the 30<sup>th</sup> of August and the 9<sup>th</sup> of September. It was developed in the capital of Tolima, Ibagué, and Chaparral, one of the municipalities prioritized and which is a central point for different women's organizations. After a lot of calls and meetings to connect to different women and organizations, the fieldwork was divided into 3 moments:

#### ***Moment 1: Truth Commission Workshops***

The Truth Commission was an institution created in the frame of the peace agreement. This institution organized two participatory workshops that took place on the 1st and 2nd of September to deliver a toolbox for different leaders and organizations as part of the kick-off of the “*Alfredo Molano Bravo Cathedra: voices and truths of deep Colombia - a space for training and citizen participation through the dialogue of knowledge between the academic sector and social organizations*” (Comisión de la Verdad, Universidad del Tolima, and CODHES, 2022). Invited by CODHES, an organization contacted in the moment of networking in Ibagué, it was possible to participate as an observant. Different leaders and participants shared stories and narratives around the conflict, talking about history, feelings, and the process of naturalization of violence. In the second one, the participants performed in groups different participatory mechanisms such as role-playing, narrative poetry, podcasts, narration, and painting. All of these mechanisms manifest and shared the implications of war in these municipalities and how they are working toward the peace agreement, everything framed in the concepts of truth, justice, reparation, and non-repetition.

**Figure 9**  
**Participatory Workshop Alfredo Molano Bravo Cathedra: voices and truths of deep Colombia'**



**Source: fieldwork 2022**

### ***Moment 2: Semi-structured interviews***

The interviews carried out had the objective to identify key elements regarding the contribution of the peace process in the fight of women against precarity and the increase in their voice. The structure of the interview (see Annex 2) took into account 13 questions that ask for the meaning of being a rural woman in the south of Tolima, different events that women consider relevant in the recent years, their thoughts about life and decision-making improvements in the last years, the specification of their productive projects, role within the household and community and changes in gender relations and balance, and remuneration status.

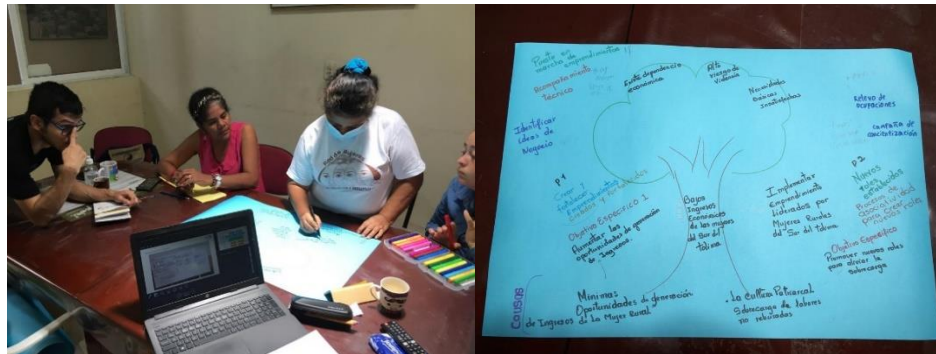
The interviews were conducted and built upon a key first question to identify what is the main problems they are facing and if, within the important events in women in the household, community, and market-level perceived or mentioned the peace agreement in their lives (Chambers, 1994). In that sense, the peace agreement was only mentioned at the end of the interview, in case they didn't mention it. A non-mention is in itself an answer, but given the objective of the research, the question was asked to know their own experience.

In summary, it was possible to capture 17 interviews that involved women from the four municipalities. Women from rural organizations were interviewed, as well as women from the institutional level. It is relevant to mention the help that the Red de Mujeres de Chaparral provided to make contact with the different interviewees, taking into account that several of the women are members or heads of organizations that are part of said network. Moment 3: Participatory workshop – Tree trouble method



Within the conversations with the Red de Mujeres Chaparralunas, it was agreed that given the help to find the interviewees, it was reciprocal to share some knowledge regarding project formulating. In this sense, the workshop involved key concepts around projects, the logic frame and practical examples. 6 people from the Red de Mujeres Chaparralunas por la Paz and from their associate organizations participated. By the end of the session, they formulated a project through the tree trouble method, which also helped to complement the findings of this research considering that the project developed was built on the need to reduce patriarchy.

**Figure 10**  
**'Participatory workshop: transfer of knowledge transfer of knowledge in project execution'**



Source: fieldwork, 2022

### 3.3.4 Second data review

This process involved 30 documents that included public policy documents, follow-up reports on the implementation of gender measures or the execution of projects, as well as reports about rural women initiatives or relevant projects who were promoting solidarity and cooperative economy and rural employment. These groups of documents helped in the process of clarifying the context of the peace process, and the status of the region towards the implementations and identifying key insights into the work of women. On the other hand, 24 academic texts or reports were consulted to identify critical research on women's organizations in Tolima. Concepts such as "south of Tolima", "peace organizations in Tolima", and "gender division of labor in Tolima", among others, were used in the search engines to identify and complement the context and the fieldwork information. It provided additional inputs that can complement the concept used in this research and that were not collected in the fieldwork.

### 3.4 Limitations of the study

Even though a good combination of women from different organizations was interviewed, from the rural and institutional levels, it is important to highlight some of the limitations of the fieldwork, considering that it may present a bias on the findings

- Availability of women:** considering factors such as time, distance, and the chance to gather them in a single place diffculted the process of reaching out to more women from different from the ones interviewed members of the Red de Mujeres Chaparralunas por la Paz or the ones outside of this network.

- Women who attended:** were women who have been immersed in these processes for more than 5 years, most of them leaders within their organizations, and who have been

involved in a continuous process of dialogue with their family members, and the reconfigurations of roles in the household. Key to annotate, some of them participated in the spaces of participation for the construction and implementation of the peace process.

- Lack of men:** it was difficult to reach men and there was a bias in the people who helped as a link given that always women were referred but not men at all.

- Younger and dispersed women:** the constrain of distance, and position at their household, among other factors, didn't participate at all. This will be mentioned and problematized afterwards.

## Chapter 4

# Defining precariousness, a concept that emerges from fieldwork

### 4.1 Introduction

Considering fieldwork results in which women mention precarity, this chapter reviews related concepts that allow it to be defined theoretically. It defines precarity and examines the premise that behind it lies informality as a structural feature of the economy (4.3). Then, it introduces the inequity generated by the gender division at work and the recognition of the role of women as another driver of precarious conditions faced by rural women (4.4)

### 4.2 Understanding rural women's economic contribution: going beyond income dimension

Rural women contribution to economy is unknown (González Guzmán Gaviria Gómez, and Cabezas Jiménez, 2019). This occurs for different reasons. One of the reasons, as it is established by González et al (2019), refers to the unknown work rural women perform daily by society because it does not directly show the monetary gain. Other reason is that Colombia has a patriarchal political system that has focused on understanding the rural approach from a family unit perspective, which does not present disaggregated statistics and under this conception, it is the man who is at the head of these units (Parada Hernández, 2018).

In this sense, from a theoretical point of view Gasparini and Marchionni (2015) establishes that the implications of increasing female labor participation needs to go beyond the dimension of income, referring to understanding the informal economy. This is a fundamental component part of the economy in this South Tolima. As seen in the reports from the Employment and Human Resources Observatory of Tolima (2018), informality of women was 73,5% and 71,1% respectively for 2017 and 2018.

As cited by Gibson-Graham (2016), Escobar (2008) also calls that to understand the informal economy beyond the pure economical activities: *"it is important to make the invisible visible or seeing different economies"*. According to him, this includes expanded unpaid and non-market-oriented activities, which refer to informal economies which in turn put pressure to recognize that livelihoods are situated by a plethora of economic activities that do not take the form of wage labor<sup>6</sup>. In the case of rural women in Tolima refers to the strategies rural women perform in order to guarantee their family survival and their own, actions performed amid the armed conflict and their lives.

### 4.3 Defining precarity and its relationship with informality

The above led the research to analyze the consequences of informality, where women are in a disadvantaged position (Kabeer, 2013), which translates in the precarity position women are. According to Agarwala and Chun (2018), the term "precarity" emphasizes the full strata

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<sup>6</sup> According to (WIEGO, 2022): "The informal economy is the diversified set of economic activities, enterprises, jobs, and workers that are not regulated or protected by the state. The concept originally applied to self-employment in small unregistered enterprises. It has been expanded to include wage employment in unprotected jobs."



of varying employment conditions. Agree, but it also, as some scholars, it refers to a declining continuum of criteria including employment security, control over the labor process, regulatory protection, income level, and job-based recognition and belonging (Cranford, Vosko, & Zukewich, 2003; Rodgers, 1989; Standing, 2011). Precarity also means that women exhibit uncertainty, vulnerability and insecurity, where employers are forced to assume the risks of their jobs, long hours of work, more difficult and more likely to have low-skilled, dirty and dangerous jobs and less remunerated (Ikonen, 2013). Precarity also mean that the synthesis between labor conditions, inequality and poverty translates into social precarity, defined as differential access to education, healthcare and housing opportunities (Bayón, 2006).

In trying to find the explanation of precarity, the investigation found that Hewison (2016) manifest that these struggles need to be better understood in terms of disaggregated impacts and perceptions by gender, age, work, or status. Regarding gender, the mixture between the postulates of Kabeer (2015) and Gibson-Graham (2016), lead to identify that labor markets produce poverty and vulnerability given the structural relations and socioeconomic systems, markets that are gendered, implying that through market logics women have to performed an entanglement of roles assigned to them as housewives, self-employees, wage workers, or others.

So, in the case of the Colombian case translates into the legacies that violence has left in terms of the division of labor that positions women as responsible for unpaid and poorly paid informal and social reproductive work, physical, material and emotional exhaustion (Hedström and Olivius, 2020). That is to say reality of informal work and precarious work is embedded in specific historical, political and social contexts (Hammer, Park and Ness, 2021).

In that order, Agarwala and Chun (2018) states that gender is a social, economic and legal principle of subordination that configures collective action practices and decisive forms. According to Elson and Pearson (1984) and Mies (2014), gender division of labor means a construction, a differentiation, and the assignation of roles and subordination of women based on natural differentiation, where women have obligations of domestic labor, difficulties in establishing control over her own body, and an inability to be fully a member of society in their own right (Elson and Pearson, 1984). It is also reflected in an intrinsic process of gender construction toward the recognition of skills, where women *“to a large extent, women do not do 'unskilled' jobs because they are the bearers of inferior labor; rather, the jobs they do are 'unskilled' because women enter them already determined as inferior bearers of labour”* (Ibid, 1984).

From the feminist political ecology notion, which establishes as an influential subfield within gender and development studies, the gender division of labor and intra-household dynamics are key to analyzing family authority structures, access to resources including land, labor and capital as well as gender specific vulnerabilities (Rocheleau, 2016; Mehta, 2016). This, considering that family authority relations are crucially linked to poverty dynamics in stacking gender division of labor (Rocheleau, 2016).

#### **4.4 Gender division of labor as a trigger of precarity**

What was seen before is that there is a relationship between precariousness and the gender division at work. That's why, building on Deere and Leon (1979), García-Rojas et al. (2020) and Fraser (2007) studies, the understanding of the gender division of labor can be done from two dimensions: i) the meaning of gender and culture in the social organization and ii) socioeconomic material inequalities, insecurities and family conditions.

## **Dimension i: Meanings of gender and culture within the social organization**

This refers to the cultural recognition (Fraser, 2007) and the intrinsic rules (Kabeer, Mahmud, and Tasneem, 2011) regarding the rules, beliefs or customs that imply the form and relationship between representation, interpretation and communication of society, which includes cultural domination, invisibility or lack of recognition legitimized by the same culture and the lack of respect. As refer by Elmihrst (2021), power structures have altered subjectivity of women's life projects, perpetuating negative dynamics rural women are embedded in.

This has produce stereotypes about masculinity, authority and roles in the workplace and in the household (Kabeer, 2015; García-Rojas et al, 2020), where economic and therefore income continue to be something entirely male, implying cognitive and intrinsic restriction structures imposed towards the entry of women into work and entities around the conflict:

“rural women must face a number of obstacles historically rooted in the collective imagination where their daily work is circumscribed, thus constituting a "disjointed and inequitable" discourse that limits the full development of their capacities as managers of sustainable practices as within household food, as a generator of alternative economic resources in support of her husband or partner, as a protector of the territory based on her environmental feelings and, finally, as a political subject with rights.”

In that regard, the role of women as dependent, with lack of opportunities and lack of control of resources, implies to call the role of patriarchy, *“used in different ways to define the idiosyncrasy and structural institutions that maintain the oppression over women, as well as the family structures that aim to maintain the social order”* (Goyes, Gallego and Jaramillo, 2019; Villa Mesa and Reyes Manrique, 2018; Facio, 1999). And as previously mentioned, wars are not neutral regarding gender, as it is exacerbated, instrumentalized and manipulated toward the role of masculinity strength, as a warrior and the perpetuation of the stereotypes.

Thus, the idiosyncratic conception of the meaning and the role of women within the different structures leads to the division between production and social reproduction, where the latter *“includes - biological reproduction, the unpaid work of everyday survival, education and skills to participate in the capitalist economy, work of livelihoods and survival of the households, care and household labour... social reproductive labour is required to sustain the rural labour force”* (Lyn Ossome and Sirisha Naidu, 2021).

This alludes the care economy and unpaid house work (González Guzmán, Gaviria Gómez, and Cabezas Jiménez, 2019). The former refers to the task of the household, including people from the community and maintaining the paid workforce who work in the crops of the farms. The second one refers to domestic, personal, and care services within the household. This includes food production for consumption, raising cattle, and care of minor species, imperceptible in the traditional economic information even though are fundamental for rural development and daily lives.

## **Dimension ii: Socioeconomic material inequalities, insecurities and family conditions**

Fraser's (2007) concept of social justice invites us to look beyond income and work itself since it considers that, from a gender perspective, it is configured between the productive and reproductive, and therefore is susceptible to resorting to violations financial and other issues that income alone won't fix.

Related to it, Salinas-Arango, Orozco-Toro and Mejía-Giraldo (2021) consider it imperative that the contribution of women cannot be addressed outside of her household activities given the double presence between the reproductive and productive. This is even more relevant considering the action niches around rural women in the context of the Colombian armed conflict, where household is not only key because of the role played by women, but also because all the material inequalities are translated there such as low wages, violence, labor and sexual exploitation, health and social protection (García-Rojas et al., 2020), (Agarwala and Chun, 2018).

The clearest example found regarding hidden economies in field work, mentioned by (Arango-Giraldo, 2021) refers to food work, which is classified as a family job, in which women face precarious conditions, mayflies' conditions and which has a mandatory contractual category because the woman is in the bosom of the family (ibid, 2021). This is considered unproductive work that, when mixed with women's productive and reproductive work, overlaps with productive discrimination and violence in women's daily lives. Although this is not the focus of this work, job insecurity and informality are related to subsistence livelihoods. As stated by Scoones (2014, pg 6):

“a livelihood approach is an integrated, holistic, bottom-up perspective centered on the understanding of what people do to make a living in diverse social contexts and circumstances, central to rural development thinking.”

The activities that people perform to live are related to the conditions of the livelihood. Precarity livelihoods occur when there is variability, risks and insecurity, which are physical and economic (Devereux, 2002). That is, lack of education, access to health, housing, among others. As a consequence, it requires a process of resilience, resistance and self-government (Hedström and Olivius, 2020).

Thinking about the case of conflict Colombian, it is important to mention the resilience processes of the women under study which is considered an attribute or quality of rural families. Resilience refers to the adaptive processes that an individual or a family present in a particular time to bounce back strengthened from adversity and with more resources (Becvar, 2013; Khanlou and Pilkington, 2015). From the perspective of the household as the functional unit of this study, it will allow us to understand the adaptation process of women within it. In this context, women are resilient because they resist and adapt to discrimination processes resulting from power imbalances, violence, work settings, communities. In the process of responding and adapting, women protect the well-being of their children and families and, often lastly, themselves (Becvar, 2013; Khanlou and Pilkington, 2015).

With all the above, in the next chapter the concepts and the fieldwork finding are related, showing how gender has been configured in southern Tolima, showing that it is not a fixed concept.

## Chapter 5

# Analysis of fieldwork results: precarity before and after the peace process

### 5.1 Introduction

With key concepts theoretically defined in the previous chapter, this chapter analyses and interprets fieldwork results. Setting the foundation for answering the research question, this chapter tells the story of before (5.2) and after (5.3) the peace process.

### 5.2 Before the peace process

#### 5.2.1 Risks: invisibility, violence and instability

As mentioned before, as the most affected actor in war, women stories have been marked by oppression, marginalization and violence given not only the condition of rural women, but by the effect of war (Hedström and Olivius, 2020; Bouvier, 2016). 9 of the 17 interviewees have been victims of violence in all its dimensions: displaced by the armed conflict that took place in the region, different family members killed in the armed conflict or intense processes of domestic violence by their husbands or partners who relegated them to domestic work or “to the oblivion of the far rurality” as some of them mention. In each case the effects that this has had in a physical, psychological and material way are seen respectively for each one of them:

*“The less visible women, less compensated and is the one with the most constant struggle within society” (Interviewee 4, 2022).*

In the conversations, all of them related to processes of fear, threat or intimidation that overshadow women due to the cultural stigmatization of what it means to be a woman, as has been suggested, or processes of silence that derived from the violence and the lack of presence of the State, where those who dictated the rules were the guerrilla groups of the FARC-EP or the paramilitary groups that were also in the area (Interviews 1, 2, 15, 16 and 17). As mentioned by one of the interviewees:

*“The biggest challenge is overcoming fear, it does not allow us to be what we want to be in our daily context...we keep quiet about many things and accept others.... If fear did not exist, we would do a lot, we would build, we would be architects and those who would create”*

#### 5.2.2 Tasks and skills and strategies performed for survival during the conflict

Indeed, as supported by the theory that was described previously, precarity is related to both, the livelihood and work, translated in long hours of work, more difficult and more likely to have low-skilled, dirty and dangerous jobs and less remunerated (Ikonen, 2013). In the case of the women interviewed, this is seen in the work they have to do inside their home, taking care of their family, but also the production of food for self-consumption. Additional

work to receive some type of remuneration that complements the income of the family unit, Interviewee eight reveals a shocking testimony:

*“Even pregnant, I had to feed 17-25 workers and sometimes I went to bed at 10 at night and the next day I was up... When it was my turn to cook for all those workers, my hands hurt a lot from peeling so much banana or so much yucca”.*

And when talking about coffee, mention tasks to support the productive activities within the planting process or the feeding of workers. Many of those are manual tasks that come after the crop, while the man is still working. Activities that require physical work such as drying and moving coffee, under the sun without protection.

Among the strategies that women had to carry out in the context of the conflict or displacement, are activities such as picking up coffee in the midst of crossfire, wearing white t-shirts so that neither the army nor illegal groups would shoot at them while they were picking up the crops, domestic services to cook or clean other people's house. Faced with the latter, the women who suffered displacement recognize that as rural or peasant women *“recognition as a subject that is only valid for performing domestic care tasks”* (Interview 3 and 4). The activities of subsistence crops are also mentioned: *“You can call it: chickens, pigs, goats, corn, lemon, orange, fruit trees. That generates the harvest for home consumption, in a minimal way, beyond marketing”*, as stated by several of the interviewees. Finally, one of the testimonies reflects the situation of poverty in which they found themselves:

*“We were born into absolute poverty. My mother worked washing dishes in the army battalion and with that she collected food to take home, with the leftovers from the dishes; among others...”.*

### 5.2.3 Gender roles

Talking about roles is complex because women have multiple identities they have assumed in the context of violence as mothers, wives, entrepreneurs, community weavers Bouvier (2016). However, 13 of the 17 women interviewed mentioned elements that could be ascribed to the identity of rural women in regard to the gender division of roles, mentioning elements in all activities they perform, both at home and on the farm and crops.

In so related, one of the challenges that was mentioned mostly by all the women, explicitly or indirectly, refers to overcoming the macho culture and gender violence that continues to be *“very deeply rooted in the culture”* (Interview 1). Cases of their own or from people of their community were mentioned who were forced to remain silent or where women were relegated to limiting themselves to domestic work and having children, where the man is perceived as *“the person who says, who commands and who speaks”* (Interview 2).

The last interviewee expresses how sexist processes are linked to women's reproductive roles. She cited several cases in which she has evidenced cases in which women are attributed the sole responsibility of dedicating themselves to having children, but she also mentions the use of the woman's body from the indigenous perspective in the region. She cites the phrase *“for a dead Indian, a thousand will be born”* found in one of the hymns of the indigenous communities in the area.

Faced with this, the stereotypes of women at work are evident in all the interviews, where the importance of women was related always in the household providing food, cleaning:

*“The women are not yet in front of the coffee farm, to know how much money and productivity that crop generates...She realizes what the chickens generate, realizes the onion bushes, from what is generated in the orchards”.*

### 5.2.3 Market

In general, when asked about the market, the obvious problems regarding marketing are mentioned, the lack of infrastructure to connect different regions and what this implies in transportation costs, as well as the need to create markets that increase demand of products that women sell. In this sense, when asking about the fact of being a woman and the barriers they face entering or participating in the markets, two particular testimonies were found. The first, in the coffee sector, where one of the women leaders of an organization, in a report on her organization, states:

*“Sexism has existed throughout the world, nine years ago my husband left, he abandoned me. They didn't let us women have a coffee ID, they didn't let us work, because this coffee thing was for men, for machos” (Ángel López, 2022).*

The second case was raised by one of the women interviewed, where it is evident how the microcredit market for access to land continues to position the man as the person in charge of the productive unit as mentioned above. In this regard, one of the interviewees responds: *“The land and credit processes still work under the ownership of the husband: revictimization processes are presented through these mechanisms.”* In this regard, another of them states that she lived in great fear because her farm was in her husband's name, and after a separation process, in which she takes charge of the farm, she is not very clear about what could happen if he comes to appear.

### 5.2.4 Women associations: entrepreneurships and productive projects

Within what was found in the fieldwork and also in the evidence of other studies on gender, female entrepreneurship and the role of women in southern Tolima, is the emergence of women's organizations that took over different processes in the context of the conflict and that have had an impact on the role of women, their rights and their participation in the economy. In this study I highlight two that were observed:

#### ***Emergence of the Red de Mujeres Chaparralunas por la Paz***

When one investigates the peace process and the southern region of Tolima, an important organization for the visibility of women and the fight against discrimination and women's rights comes to light. This organization is called the Red de Mujeres Chaparraluna por la Paz, a network that gathers different women and women's associations to work together on social and development programs in the region. As they themselves define it: *“an organization that promotes the comprehensive development of rural and urban women. This works on increasing the capacity for participation, empowerment, leadership, decision-making and social control; to influence development plans”* (Red de Mujeres Chaparralunas por la Paz, 2020). According to one of the testimonials:

*“We began to go to the villages and associations, or the villages where there were no associations, but there were plenty of women so we met them, we explained the importance of associativity...women acquire knowledge not only of what they have as a rural woman, but also in the area of law, in their defence, their rights, how they can act to enforce them.” (Interview 7).*

As described by some of the women who are part of the network, they have been in charge of carrying out projects, all under the concept of associativity. This concept is key because they consider that, given the marginality of women and the dispersion in which they find themselves, they are unable to attract aid or resources from the State. As one of them stated: "*The individual woman is not going to achieve anything: she is not going to get anything, neither to her farm nor to her village*" (Interview 5). Additionally, they have played a very important role in terms of rights, voice and the dissemination of women's rights: "*As rural women we have promoted that they improve their self-esteem and empower themselves with their farm process, know their rights, that they see an opportunity to generate income from their farm*".

It is important to mention that the work carried out by this network was carried out in an "invisible" or "hidden" manner given the conditions of conflict and violence in the region. In order to operate, they did it silently as they affirm and, in some regions, where they saw the need to enter and support women, they had to ask the guerrillas for permission to be able to carry the message and the different projects they carried out with women. Thus, they had to tell the commanders what it was about, what the reason was, and they had to be explicit that they were not going to do anything else for which they had asked permission for.

### ***The importance of the coffee sector in the region***

The south of Tolima is known as a coffee region. They are not only characterized by the number of coffee-growing organizations they have, but also by the awards and distinctions they have won at the national level due to the quality of the coffee produced. Thus, it was necessary to investigate the research on the repercussions that coffee has had and still has on women and its relationship with the gender division at work. Therefore, the results of the investigation of the heritage of the coffee sector and how it is seen today in the women's organizations that are dedicated to this are presented below.<sup>7</sup>

### **The promotion for the inclusion of women in the coffee sector: changes in social structures**

Prior to the peace process, some projects were also carried out by the State and with the help of international cooperation that generated effects on the work of the coffee farms, the processes of women. Some authors express how the changes in the coffee sector and in family structures had a direct relation with the transformation experimented by women, who located them in the center within the new forms of social structures, given different politics that boosted a new coffee economic model (Fraija Lopera and Bucheli Gómez, 2020; Valencia, 2013). Different from the policies cited by these authors, but with a similar nuance, programs mentioned in the interviews such as Familias en Acción, Programa de Familias Guardabosques, Fortalecimiento del SENA, ProColombia o Colombia Sostenible gave priority to rural women. Valencia (2013) portrays how this process looked like:

“Basically, what was expressed as an effect of modernization in coffee-producing towns and in families was the opening of individualized projects, which became noticeable from the division of domestic and labor functions. These effects were reflected in the professionals who distanced themselves from agricultural activities, and the women, who modified the traditional way of being mothers and of being married” (Valencia, 2013, pg7).

The programs described above marked an important point in the training and information processes for women, given that women were accessing -almost simultaneously- a

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<sup>7</sup> In the annex 4 A historical explanation based on research on the effects of the hacienda and its relationship with the coffee sector in Tolima is presented.

world of work other than agriculture; to the educational world, with the learning of technical jobs and trades and information about their legal possibilities to claim some of their rights, as well as the practices of control over their possibilities of reproduction and change in the way of understanding their sexuality (Arango-Giraldo, 2021).

### 5.2.5 Income: family perspective

Perhaps the part of the income and remuneration was one of the most difficult questions of the investigation because it involves a lot of discretion and also touches on sensitive elements that reflect the situation of the family reality that each of the women interviewed lives and that, in that sense, varies in each case. Thus, making a generalization, as in the previous cases, is difficult. What can be seen is that the situation of women varies a lot depending on what has happened to each one of them.

There are some of them who live and share with their partner. Thinking within the framework of the family economy, two situations arose. The first, where some women worked, but do not receive an income for their work, but an eventual recognition from their partner that can be spent in any way for the needs or tastes they have:

*“Not really, because if we have a husband, they never give us a salary, one earns if the harvest time is over, only if he leaves for another harvest and they pay him there, one earns what they give him clothes, shoes”.*

*“Woman is the one who works the most, but receives nothing”.*

In the second situation, another group is observed that does have income that they receive from different activities, either within the economic activity of coffee in own or associative projects or in other tasks such as teachers, nurses, seasonal workers in other crops. The income of these women is considered within the family unit:

*“Decision (of the money) is shared between both: he contributes and I contribute...”*

*“in my case...we are going to work together because we have a purpose.”*

In the middle of these two groups are divorced women who were marginalized by their husbands and who were also not recognized for the work they did because they were in the care economy and unpaid house work. But today they are independent and through their work and the partnership they have created with their sons or daughters they have begun to receive income. Although *“the mother will always think of the family”* as expressed by interviewee 16, and even more so as the head of the household, they have the power to decide what is done with the money and how it is distributed for the well-being of their family, generating a different feeling.

Finally, among those interviewed, there were two women who consider themselves to have been independent all their lives. Women who separated very young from their partners and have spent their careers alone. Thus, there is the example of a woman who today has a beekeeping business and also a store in her house. By diversifying her income, she seeks to ensure the well-being of her family.



### 5.2.6 Other: material conditions

Finally, as is normal in rural Colombia, when asked about the greatest challenges for rural women, elements such as access to land, access to credit and technology, or business problems arising from the distance between farms and centers, towns and other cities, together with the road infrastructure that makes access and transportation difficult. In this sense, one of the women recounts what rural women mean in terms of their rights and the material conditions inherent to these, speaking emphatically about low education and poor housing quality:

*“(Rural women) is constantly struggling between the comparison of the role of women versus human rights”*

Regarding the quality of housing, interviewee 5 mentions that in this region of southern Tolima there are different thermal floors and therefore different types of housing made of boards, soil, block and cement or dirt floors, *“some houses without water drinkable, with bathrooms with septic tank. And others do not have sanitary units”*. In addition to the lack of basic sanitation, she points out that *“cooking is done with traditional firewood and there is no clarity with kitchens using ecological stoves, as they have been promoting in other countries. This causes respiratory diseases...”*.

## 5.3 After the peace process

After analysing the previous categories and responses, an attempt was made to draw a parallel between what existed before the process and how it has changed over time. In general, most categories are maintained because elements were mentioned that allowed the changes to be contrasted. In the same way, a new category was created as power of decisions, but in turn, the market category and the others: material conditions category were eliminated, since it has not presented any particular modification after the peace process.

### 5.3.1 Risks: Invisibility, violence and instability

When analysing the figures, nationally and regionally, it could be said that the risks rural women face are still present, especially after the decrease in the different development indicators after coronavirus (García-Rojas et al., 2020). In the same line, in the conversations of the interviews and the workshops, the struggles and the fights of women to reduce violence, to have a decent job, a habitable house with all basic sanitation services are still present, in a society where violence against women and their naturalization seems not to have left the bosom of culture, and threatens to keep them invisible.

Additionally, all of this, in a region where the peace process, the demobilization of the former guerrilla FARC-EP and the cease of fire has transformed and acquire a new face of conflict that now threatens with different types of dynamics, such as the emerge of criminal gangs and disputes for the territory by dissidents from the former FARC-EP and other actors. Dynamics that challenge the eradication of violence toward women and raise alarms about the future of the region.

*“Too much has changed, but I'm worried because I don't see things getting better, they're going to get worse, and it scares me, I was a victim of violence in my village.”*

*- “It is difficult because when the process was held in 2016: the situation calmed down, but common crime remained”.*

However, despite the above, when asking for the perception of the improvement in life, women agree that there has been progress. And this progress starts and is marked or framed by the recognition of the rights of rural women. The recognition of rights seems to have mobilize, unify and triggered women, where they are invited to “*leave the fear behind*” (Interview 2, 2022) and where “*we, the women, have revealed ourselves*” (Interview 3, 2022).

In this sense the arena set by the peace process, not only in the institutional level but in the collective construction of women, it is presented as a space to vindicate women’s rights. And as a consequence, women assess that there is an increase in participation, in voice and in influence. 15 women mentioned the word “rights” during the interviews; some of the phrases mentioned were:

*“We believe that we have made progress, but other women who are not clear about what their rights are and what role they should play are still missing...” (Interview, 2022).*

Accompanying the notion of rights by these rural women, a strong relationship was found given the mention of the role played by voice and participation in spaces to develop the capacity for expression. This concept, not mentioned until now, arises from the construction below and from the process that this research had. It arises from the interviews and serves to understand and go further in the explanation of the fight against precariousness, the role of women and the effects of the peace process. In that sense, coming from a bottom-up construction allows this concept to be one of the most conclusive for the objective of the study. Before defining it, there are relevant quotes worth mentioning:

*“Every woman has been made aware of: public policy from the base so that women tell their stories (voice), their problems”(Interview 2).*

*“Before, women were more submissive, they endured more mistreatment, now one is riskier. You want to give your children peace of mind” (Interview 12).*

In that sense, voice refers to the ability to speak, be heard, and have agency (Bifulco, 2013). In that sense, voice refers to the ability to speak, be heard, and have agency (Abakah, 2018). Aspiration is a key element and in this regard Bifulco (2013) establishes that there is a relationship between aspiration and voice. The voice serves to sift the capacities and cultural aspirations to be built and strengthened. For its part, it is by exercising the ability to aspire that the voice for the poor is exercised and expands.

Later, in chapter 6, will be raised the discussion regarding how the voice has had relevance towards the effects of peace process in the fight of rural women against precarity.

### **5.3.2 Tasks and skills and strategies performed for survival after the cease of conflict**

The explanation of the tasks, skills and strategies can be better understood by relating the categories of gender roles and women associations: entrepreneurship and productive projects. The combination between these shows us that, at the level of improvement of the quality of the tasks and jobs, there has been no improvement, but rather the change has been presented by the broadening of the spectrum of activities in which these women now participate. This will be problematized in the discussion in chapter 6.

Within the analysis of the interviews, the appropriation of the activities is seen, where women begin to have a leading role. Then, it is observed that women no longer speak only of jobs in the care economy and unpaid house work, but that women begin to speak of the

productivity of the food crop, of the transformation to organic gardens, of all the stages of cultivation. of coffee and the respective tasks, among others.

This is not only due to the irruption or consolidation, depending on the case, of these women in productive projects. It is also accompanied by an empirical process in which women, depending on their situation, have had to learn, as well as an increase in educational levels and professionalization, considering that women have initiated strong knowledge transfer processes among themselves, have started to validate their baccalaureate or some are doing specializations or postgraduate studies.

### 5.3.3 Gender roles

When evaluating the changes in the dynamics of the balance of gender roles, it is found that they are related to the concept of power and the message that women have transmitted through their voice and the scenarios in which they can exercise their expression. In accordance with Abakah (2018), voice is related to participation, considering that it grants power to influence decision-making and influence decision-making processes. In line with the aforementioned regarding freedom, Amartya (2002) expresses that freedom and power should serve to question and re-evaluate prevailing norms and values. If discriminatory norms and values are not examined and criticized there can never be freedom. In other words, voice and power are not only experienced through the interaction between people and their interaction with the markets, people from the market places, lenders, among others, but also through the possibility of questioning these relationships (Anne Marie Goetz, John Gaventa, and Andrea Cornwall, 2001). This is important because, according to what J. Gaventa and A Cornwall (2007) poses, internalized forms of power can affect the ability of community leaders to exercise their voice effectively, even when they enter new participatory spaces, such as those promoted by the peace process.

The peace process through the spaces offered by the Truth Commission, as well as the consolidation of the network, have generated a transformation in this sense. However, regarding the notion of power, it is important to clarify that they do not see it as a zero-sum game (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2006) (J. Gaventa, 2006), but as a way to equalize and balance rights, roles at home and the possibility of having decent, recognized and paid jobs. It also happens as in a case studied by Agarwala and Chun (2018, pg7) where: “women point to burdens, not to off-load part of the burden to men but to justify their demand for resources which to conduct responsibilities”.

When asked about the changes in the gender balance, it is found that the patriarchal culture of the Tolima region has an evident weight, but the gender regulations have been changing and the frontiers of action of women have been expanded thanks to the dissemination of rights and pedagogical processes. The interviewee 6:

*“We have understood that it is not immediate. There are communities that do not change. Men taking care of women, in meetings, but with a look of suspicion towards women. But there are other communities where we are going, that have been going for 5 or 10 years and it has changed...”*

The testimony shows that changes have indeed occurred thanks to the spaces where men are taught about women's rights, roles within the home and participation in productive projects. 6 of the 17 women talked about the processes with their husbands or partners where they have begun to use dialogue to show and change responsibilities, emphasizing that they must also contribute at home and that sustenance is something joint, not only of the woman. To cite an example, one of the testimonials shows this:

*“One becomes empowered and the man has also known that the woman has to come out from under there and where she knew nothing else. He knew, for example, that I was here today. I left the food cooked, but he has to make food for the workers, but he knows that I come with my issues.”*

As mentioned before, the struggles of these women and their process to raise awareness about women's rights do not seek to position them as a better agent than men, but rather for equity and equality and from there the balance of roles is also seen: *“it is to act on par, we do not say that we are more or less, but on par because it is the partner that supports us”*.

The group of women interviewed are part of different productive projects and that in itself is an example of the changes in the conception of the gender division of labor. However, as interviewee 17 stated, “the woman is endogenously supportive of her family and that will always come first. She first watches over the family and then over them”. This testimony and the cross-sectional analysis of the responses show that, although women's rights and gender equity are advocated, maternity and care continue to be a mandate and, beyond the beginning of cases of sharing of roles, continues to be accentuated in the role of women.

### **5.3.4 Women associations: entrepreneurship and productive projects**

Once again, what has been presented in terms of work and security in this aspect is marked by the Red de Mujeres de Chaparral and by the coffee sector.

#### **New economic alternatives promoted by the Red Mujeres Chaparralunas por la Paz**

Breaking away from the monoculture mentality that characterizes the region and seeking alternatives for rural women, the women's network has promoted processes so that women “improve their self-esteem and empower themselves with their farm process, know their rights, see an opportunity to generate income from their farm” (Interview 5).

With this objective in mind, what they found is that women who are not dedicated to monoculture on their farms, but rather have crops for self-consumption, was an opportunity for women to make use of crops for self-consumption and under elements such as sustainability. of the production chain, good agricultural practices and associative processes can produce and market products.

What they found was an opportunity for women who are not dedicated full time to coffee monoculture, to make use of their orchard or their self-consumption crops and begin a commercialization process. For this, they relate concepts such as good agricultural practices, sustainable production chains and associative processes from which women can unite, group products and market together. With this goal in mind, they did the following:

Women created a truck called ‘Fruver Sazón y Sabor de tu Tierra’ that is responsible for collecting the production of the women's crops and marketing it in the municipality of Chaparral and nearby areas. Complementing this, they have spread the word so that more women join and *“begin to produce their own garden of bread and that they can plant their products there and promote the cultivation of hens and chicken and egg production”*, that is, expand the activities carried out on their farms.

Additionally, they mention two more initiatives that are relevant. The first, for the strengthening and participation of women in the coffee sector, where they have been motivated and encouraged to get to know and take charge of the farms, beginning to learn and know *“how much a load of coffee costs, how many sticks of coffee it has, how much is harvested, how much is going to be taken, how much were the inputs... to know how much money and productivity that crop generates”* (Interview 9, 2022). The second refers to the promotion of beekeeping in the region where they have obtained resources that have served as seed capital to provide some

productive units with the inputs to start bee breeding, as well as a process of knowledge transfer in the that they can learn about the business, how many liters of honey it produces, how it is produced, how it is marketed and pollen.

### **The coffee sector, the inclusion of women and the Third Agreement**

As mentioned above, the coffee sector has played a role in the socioeconomic development of the region. In addition to the combination of the dynamics that come from the strengthening of the sector per se, together with resources that have been given by the peace process and the direct impulse to the inclusion and strengthening of the role of coffee growers in women, there is a case that encompasses this process and shows it very clearly. This process is called "The Third Agreement" and it took place in the municipality of Planadas. This is a "pedagogical project with ex-combatants, Nasa Wes'x indigenous people and coffee leaders for the design of a collective coffee brand as a symbol of reconciliation and local peacebuilding" (Agencia para la Reincorporación y la Normalización - ARN, 2019).

The project in general could be a new investigation and new analyzes could be carried out as the University of Tolima has done in its book "Diaries of the Third Agreement. Designing our territory through care and openness to new worlds" (2020). However, for the purposes of this project, it is worth mentioning what some of them called "*the aroma of coffee has been peace and aroma has been reconstruction and social fabric*" (Interview 2) and has allowed the articulation of women in different stages, not only of the production process, but also within the administrative and marketing processes, that is to say that for women they have begun to generate new spaces where they can participate, where they have been able to teach about gender balance and from where they have contributed in the claim of rights that has been discussed.

### **5.3.5 Income: the relationship between community perspective and the familiar economy**

Regarding the change in the way in which income is administered or received, the women stated that the associative processes have helped women receive income, in the coffee-growing projects. Led by these organizations, women have sought to propagate rights, women's participation in economic activities, not relegated to the home, and the concept of equality with men. This has occurred through gender training in which men have also participated. Some of the testimonies in this regard were:

"The fact of being organized has served for remuneration: being in association has led to the arrival of productive projects where they have been working collectively and they are implementing it and it has served for them to have some remuneration" (Interviewee 8).

As mentioned before, the issue of income depends on the situation of each woman in their homes. However, the cafe has been considered as a space where the income received, being received in the name of an organization and in a collectively, they have been changing the dynamics in the home and the conception of income as something purely masculine.

### **5.3.6 Power of decision**

The conjunction between the initiatives prior to the peace process regarding the incorporation of women in the coffee sector, as well as the emergence of organizations such as the Red de Mujeres Chaparalunas por la Paz and the impetus that has been received by the peace process. Through international cooperation resources, they seem to be contributing to changing the lives of women. Phrases like "*We women have revealed ourselves... Today: we women*

*say. We say what we don't like, we talk about what we don't like, we tell what we didn't like" (Interview 3) or "a step is being taken for us to participate, for us to give our opinion and suddenly if there are needs that suddenly they as men do not see, we can say it and they can be taken into account" (Interview 14), it is seen the processes that these women have gone through. This also shows how women are taking more risks in the processes of participation and at home.*

From the testimonies of the women interviewed, but also from the roles they currently occupy in their communities, it is seen how little by little they have been gaining space to participate and represent women politically. This can be seen in the women's community council, the territorial peace council, the accidental commission on gender equality for women, among others. Women also state the role of training and education as a key factor. Several are validating elementary or high school and others doing specializations to have more knowledge that can be used in the region.

Women also consider positive their improvement in life linked to the participation of spaces in productive projects where they can link more women or generate an exchange with men. From the perspective of the investigation, it is seen that the testimonies are positive given the relationship with the productive projects and the association itself, but not because they now receive remuneration. Only in the cases where there are consolidated associations, the income is presented in a community way, and even some have revolving funds to support each other, but at the household composition level, the income continues to be allocated for the maintenance of the house and the needs.

## Chapter 6

### Answering the research question

#### 6.1 Introduction

As has been shown, understanding the situation of women's struggles against precariousness in southern Tolima represents understanding a complex system embedded in a specific historical, social, political, and economic context (Hammer, Park and Ness, 2021) in which the concept of gender navigates different structures that are intertwined with cultural and material dimensions. This chapter draws on previous analysis to answer the research question.

#### 6.2 If rural women from Tolima benefited rural women from Tolima

The nuances between the responses vary because, as has been shown, the experience of gender within an armed conflict framework varies depending on the experiences of each woman. However, when analyzing the general perception of the peace process, it is found that 14 of the 17 women mentioned the agreement and consider that it has had positive repercussions in the region. Two of the most representative phrases are the following:

*“The peace process in terms of resources has given us nothing, but it has given us the best resource, which is freedom... there was fear... now we have that freedom, freedom of expression. The peace process gave us spaces and a voice” (Interview 3).*

*“The peace process enables the voice, recognize, represent. The ability to say “we are going to associate and get together!”” (Interview 17).*

When analyzing the categories, it is found two different perspectives depending on the women related to the productive or the associative one, which is a little more related from the economic perspective and the second with a more political nuance. Although the economic and the politic cannot be delinked, the perception of the peace process has a different connotation.

From the productive perspective, the peace process has allowed resources from the international cooperation and organizations from the third sector to reach these municipalities to fund resources for the promotion of the participation of women in the rural economy, both in the coffee sector and other activities mentioned such as cocoa, beekeeping, fruver and women's gardens. These resources have leveraged the processes that were already in place in these municipalities thanks to the role of women from organizations as the network of Red de Mujeres Chaparralunas por la Paz or associations in the coffee sector who fought against the struggle of rural women and the inclusion in different activities. In this regard, the mention of the peace process comes along with the resources disbursed through different initiatives, reinforcing the role of women as an economic actor, pushing the limits of the gender roles, the decision-making capacity, as well as the responsibilities and roles.

From the political perspective, the role of associations and collective organizations have been key in the promotion and the spread of the word rights, and showing that, given the settings of this region, woman alone, by their own, are not going to achieve anything. Standing together has created a process of solidarity, knowledge transfer, organization and visibility

that has ended up attracting more women, helping those who were suffering difficult situations and also reaching those remote places where women are hidden. The organization has attracted spaces to participate, to share and to get to know each other among the people of the different municipalities, a situation that previously presented its challenges given the individualization to which the situation of violence led.

### **6.3 How have the rural women benefited from the peace process: increase of voice**

By joining the previous dimensions, it is found that the peace process has promoted women and has opened some scenarios where the voice of women has been raised and with it a message of awareness in the face of the implications of war and violence of the desire for non-repetition and a call where everyone is summoned to be part of the peace process.

Thus, as mentioned, the concept of voice and participation linked to several spaces that emerged from the interviews and participatory workshops allow us to reflect on voice as the mechanism that has contributed to women in their fight against precariousness.

Gibson-Graham (2016) and Dombroski, (2016) tells us that the social measures that tend to give voice are well known: education and literacy, free press, public means of broadcasting and communication, freedom of belief and association, freedom to travel, help for disabled people of all type, safety, public health, and, the most relevant for this study, access to the labor market and food.

As mentioned before, the relationship between voice, access to markets, and development in general, are related to enhance agency and create processes of aspiration (Bifulco, 2013) (Abakah, 2018), that is, they arise from the conjugation between the productive and the associative, accompanied by the set of categories mentioned. So, what is found is that, the aspiration of these women is enhanced by the peace process with the fact of seeing more women, seeing other leaders, learning about rights and the possibility of joining projects. This can be seen in the hope that they manifest as a value that has been generated in the middle of the agreement process. And it is seen in the answers through the vision they have of their territory in 5 or 10 years where they talk about their dreams of learning more, of improving their houses, of being able to influence and help more women, of seeing their municipalities connected, among other.

The voice operates as an integral part of well-being and is instrumental in monitoring and increasing the improvement of that well-being and health conditions (Bifulco, 2013). Thus, the voice is considered as a way of escaping poverty insofar as it allows an interaction between the vision of the future and the agency. Now, agency and voice are simultaneously constructed (Blunden, 2000). The relationship between poverty and agency allows us to relate to the concept of Sen (2010). This refers to human development within those things that people can be or become, as well as the capacities that people have, understood as the opportunity to choose and lead life or any other (Bifulco, 2013; Nagaraj, 2021). In this sense, the voice is key to aspirations, the vision of the future and freedom because a person is not entirely free if they do not have the ability to say and their freedom is conditioned by social arrangements (Blunden, 2000; Bifulco, 2013).

It can be said that the processes that are being carried out, together with the political tradition, have generated a process of critical voice. Critical voice is a great ally for the development because it helps to *“truly define the essence of human need [and helps to] measure of inequality in a society... to the extent that people have a critical voice in the social arrangement determining their own life, they can determine those arrangements in collaboration with others affected by those some social arrangements”* (Sen, 2010, pg3). In this sense, the dynamics generated by the peace process is an



opportunity that structures (Preoteasa et al., 2016, pg3): “*specific interplay between different domains of the welfare domain: work, state, communities and household*” through the role of women, the network and the community.

Now, it is important to criticize this process of voice within the framework of a collected testimony. The voice is fundamental as it has been described and it is an achievement, however, since its promotion the psychological effects that violence has generated on women have not been taken into account. As expressed by the interviewee 3:

*“In the Truth Commission and in the spaces of the peace process they say that one has to tell and speak, but that hurts a lot. It hurts too much; One has to arm a shell and arm oneself to move forward...”*

It is not the scope of this study, but in the context of the armed conflict and the history of the country, new studies must be created that allow us to understand the psychological effects of violence and what this implies for them in terms of their representation, participation and the voice itself.

## 6.4 The role of community

In a case study in a municipality in Colombia called Quibdó, where Amartya Sen's capabilities approach is analyzed, Arias (2020) finds that voice and freedom come together so that rural women can feel and act as citizens whose voice really counts. The author says:

*“The process has implied a return to community life, not only due to the lack of relating to neighbours but also due to the lack of knowing what is happening in the environment, the possibility of acting, participating in the decisions that affect the community, propose solutions and have a voice from their displacement” Arias (2020, pg4).*

When compared with the case of the municipalities of the South of Tolima, it is found that the community has played a relevant role, both from the role that the Red de Mujeres Chaparralunas por la Paz has managed to carry out, as well as the different associations that have been created in the region, before and in the framework of the post-agreement, or the women who have championed the political processes on behalf of women. As mentioned before, the community and associativity have been key to spreading the message and mobilizing more women. The interviews that have some relationship exalt their help in the participation processes, in the way they have helped them tell their story, giving them a voice, including them in productive projects and advising them on rights and psychological help in cases of violence. As mentioned by interviewee 4.

*“The conflict built a very individualistic society, where no one was trusted... Each municipality was seen as an independent region. Today it has already changed, but due to the same need of all the communities of the municipalities.”*

Now, it is difficult to criticize given the context of the conflict and what was involved, both for the agency of women in their particular case and for the community and the complex processes of their day to day, but it is important to mention the “*concentration of power and the nucleus of concentration among the women of the community*” (Interviewee 16). As interviewee 17 notes, “*there are different leaderships, but this concentration of power can limit the expansion of the benefits that are achieved from the community perspective.*” When trying to understand why this was happening, the last two interviewees spoke of “*privilege*” or the classes themselves that are presented in Tolima society and how that can trigger the leadership and voice of women. This is a

factor that causes power to be concentrated or that some better ones, with fewer resources, with more remote farms and with less confidence, hand over power to these women who have older leadership processes.

In that sense, Evie Browne (2018) says that the community, the voice and participation are key in the process of reconstruction of the eroded social capital, in the particular case of the investigation, of the municipalities and women affected by the war. According to this, social reconstruction and cohesion are deeply “gendered” processes. The community of women becomes a key pillar to reduce the barriers in the participation of women in different structures and decision-making processes (Evie Browne, 2018).

However, as Guijt and Shah (1998) state, the processes of micro-politics of gender relations where members of a community, depending on their position, experience a different mix of social, economic, and physical experiences, as well as barriers and opportunities that influence their ability and willingness to participate in development processes.

Here the consequences of the limitations mentioned in the methodological construction of the project are reflected. The women interviewed are part of a community that has been in a process longer and this can have effects on the processes of voice and identity construction in the framework of the peace process.

## **Chapter 7 Final remarks and conclusion**

### **7.1 Case of Tolima: relevant case study**

Previously it was mentioned the motivation to study the case of the southern Tolima. It was mentioned as a region deeply affected by conflict, where women emerged and started to be recognized given their key role in promoting social bonding, the drive to create economic and social projects and being key to maintain the peace at the region. What women shared and what additional information depicts, is the thrive to eliminate the stigma of this region, once considered the cradle for violent and revolutionary agrarian movements which gave birth to the former FARC-EP.

From the agency perspective and the identities of these women, some of the testimonies affirm that the inertia happening right now is not only a consequence of the political heritage and the communal leadership that has characterized the culture, but the resilience of a conflict that hit badly the region. Close contact with different forms of violence, from the so-called wounded society, have pushed these group of women to be empathic to ensure that others do not experience something similar.

This heritage of war together with the strategies performed daily created un scenario that combines an environment of hope that has created leadership, demand for rights, and the transformation of the vision of the territory that have led to processes of representation from them as women and the expansion of the message and their voice all along the four municipalities.

By joining the economic and political processes that were guiding the expansion of the coffee sector, even during the conflict, processes of individual and associative leadership have been generated, in which women have managed to elevate the gender discourse and permeate the economic and social structures. Influencing the roles, they play in their productive projects and in their relationship with their family. Therefore, they make the region a relevant case where women have a leading role.

### **7.2 New division of roles: super exploitation of women**

The final reading regarding the division of gender roles shows that women in southern Tolima have fought to prevent stereotypes and inequalities typical of the patriarchal system (Zuluaga-Sánchez, G., & Arango-Vargas, C,2013), fighting against the exacerbation of traditional roles, where the man not only has the productive role, but of strength in the context of the warrior in the context of the conflict.

When the two scenarios and the process that has taken place before and after the signing of the agreement are contrasted, the reading is that an arduous process has begun in changing the balance of gender roles triggered by the relationship between the associative initiatives of women, the promotion of roles outside the home and the expansion of the voice and message of women's rights. However, despite the transfer of women from the reproductive and care to the productive, the transfer is not total, since the woman continues to be prescribed within the domestic, her conception will always be altruistic and the security of the family will go first, sometimes even in spite of themselves. Altruism in the end translates into what has been called in this research as the super-exploitation of women (Zuluaga-Sánchez, G., & Arango-Vargas, C, 2013), that is, a new role in which the woman is in charge of all the roles, with the participation of the man, perhaps a little more awareness, but where the spectrum of activities is much greater and the load is much greater.

*"There is more participation, voice and influence, but this represents more burden" (Interviewee 3, 2022)*

*"There are new spaces, there are new roles, but women are overloaded" (Interviewee 5, 2022)*

In the end, given the complications that the implementation of the peace process itself has, the responsibility from different dimensions in the construction of peace, in the fight for women's rights, for gender balance, for economic opportunities and to prevent the recurrence of violence then falls on the woman.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

This project was built to address the need for more nuanced and context-specific evidence of the political, economic, and social dynamics within women's groups in the context of conflict (Phelan & True, 2022). The result of this research allows us to conclude with the premise that gender in Tolima has been culturally constructed under an arrangement of situations. This has been transformed by the war, changing family dynamics, rurality itself and the understanding itself of what it means to be a woman in this region of Colombia.

Understanding that gender is built through social, economic and political relations, the peace process has brought the recognition of elements, stories and truths that were not spoken, treated or thought about because they were hidden in the dispersed nature of the region and because of the dynamics of violence. Within this is the visibility and situation of rural women, where the voice has been a key element to promote their rights.

The results showed that the division of gender roles, together with the strategies carried out by women and their families to avoid precariousness and the relationship with the community regarding associative processes, make it necessary to continue reflecting on the social, political and economic dimensions that frame the consolidation of solidarity economies.

Thinking that the rural reform wants that the family solidarity economy to be an axis in the peace process and the reconstruction of the social fabric of the regions, there must be further studies that understand women and the processes that relate family and community life. The above, amid the dynamics of individualization and perpetuation of violence at different levels occurred during the Colombian conflict, as mentioned by Galeano and Grajales (2019) and exposed by the rural women interviewed.

## Appendices

### **Annex 1: Structure of the peace process, zooming onto the first point - Rural reform**

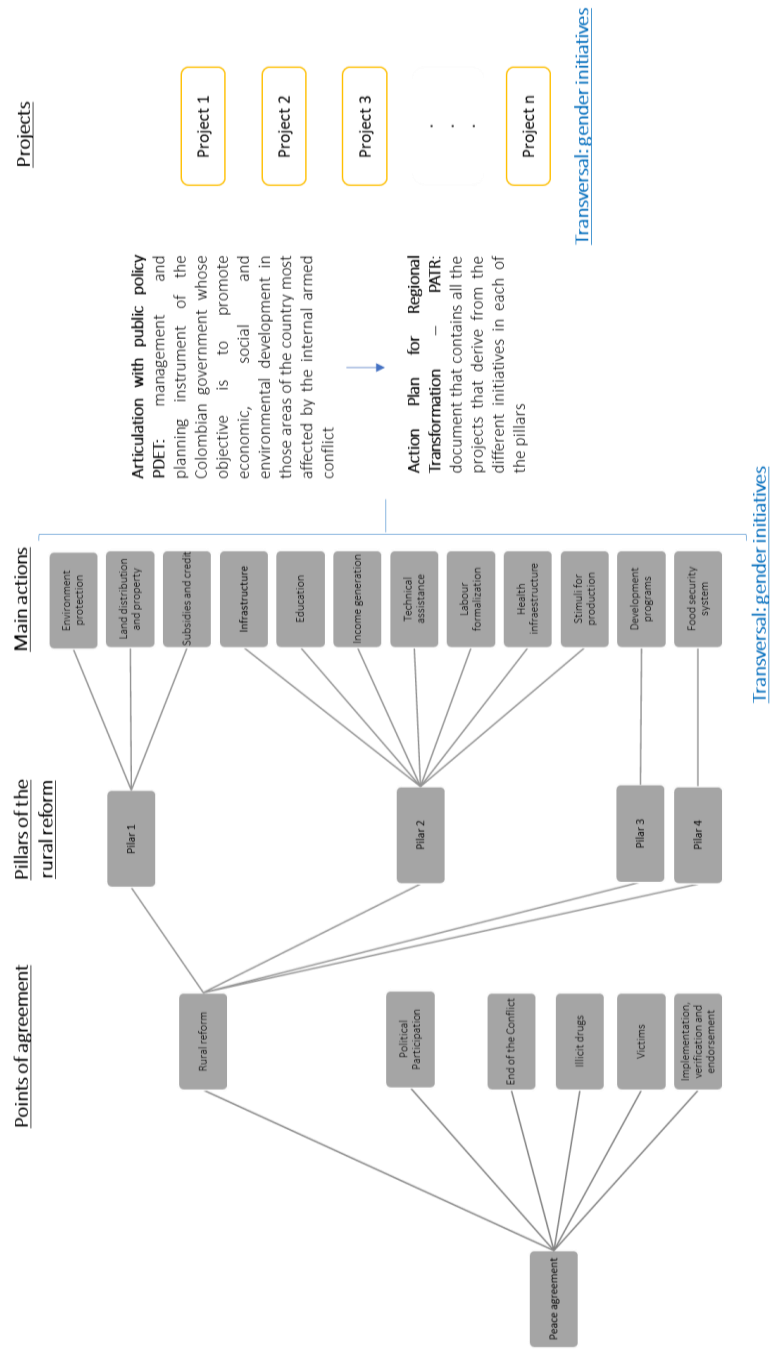
Illustration 1 shows how the agreement was configured specifically for rural reform and gender initiatives. Under a configuration that goes from the six points, through pillars, and initiatives, and then reaches the projects, it seeks to systematically and structurally address the different problematics in different sectors.

The instrumentalization and operationalization of this was done through a public policy instrument called PDET, which consists of "a planning and management instrument of the National Government (through the Territorial Renewal Agency - ART) to implement, as a priority and with greater speed, the sectoral plans and programs". This, in turn, is recorded in the Action Plans for Regional Transformation - PATR - which record all the projects, their budget allocations and other details that arise in each respective pillar and initiative.

On the other side, as it is defined in the agreement, the gender component is understood as:

“The recognition of equal rights between men and women and the special circumstances of each one, specifically women, regardless of their marital status, life cycle, and family and community relationship, as a subject of rights and special constitutional protection. It implies, in particular, the need to guarantee affirmative measures to promote that equality, the active participation of women and their organizations in the construction of peace, and the recognition of the victimization of women due to the conflict” (Grupo de Género en la Paz - GPAZ, 2021).

**Figure 11 Simplified version of the configuration of the 2016 peace agreement in Colombia, from the perspective of the rural reform**



**Source: own elaboration**

## Annex 2: Semi-structured interview questions

### Questions for the interview/survey instrument

#### Context:

I am Juan Manuel Moya right now I am doing some topics in development study and I am focusing on agricultural, environmental and food issues. Within my studies I have to do a research project, and we have studied a lot the issue of women in rural development. That is why I spoke with María Ximena a few weeks ago, to come here and be able to interview them and ask them some questions about what it means to be a woman here, how you see rural development and well, what are your expectations. I would like to ask you around 10 questions.

#### Objective of the interview:

To know the own experience of each woman in the region in the framework of her life as a woman, her main challenges, the most important events and perceived changes in her day to day with respect to work and home care. Also, observe if the peace process is mentioned as one of the main events in the region and what changes it has brought.

#### Part I. Caracterización

- Name of individual:
- Organization to which you belong:
- Job that performs:

#### Part II: Current situation, agency and meaning of being a woman

1. What does it mean to be a rural woman?
2. What are the biggest challenges and problems you face as women? \*

\*If they get to talk about machismo, patriarchy, male violence: how do you see inside the home is it still the same, the roles themselves? The distribution of roles is still the same, has this happened?

#### Part III: Important events and notion of change

3. Is life better now or not?
4. Do you think that as a woman you have more influence than 10 years ago?
5. What important events have happened in the region in recent years?
6. Why the south of Tolima stands as an example of rural women for organizations?

#### Part III: Attributes of precariousness, work and gender division

7. Are you part of any productive project or association?
8. What are the stereotypes of women at work? How does the man take part in the activities?
9. What about payment or paid work?
10. What have been the changes in gender roles and balances?
11. Has work from home been redefined or how do you handle that responsibility?

12. How do you perceive the peace process? How it has benefited from everything you have told me

13. What is your vision of the region for the next 5 or 10 years?

### **Closure**

I really thank you for the time and confidence to open up to talk about these issues and tell me everything you told me. Any questions or additional things you want to tell me, I am available for you.

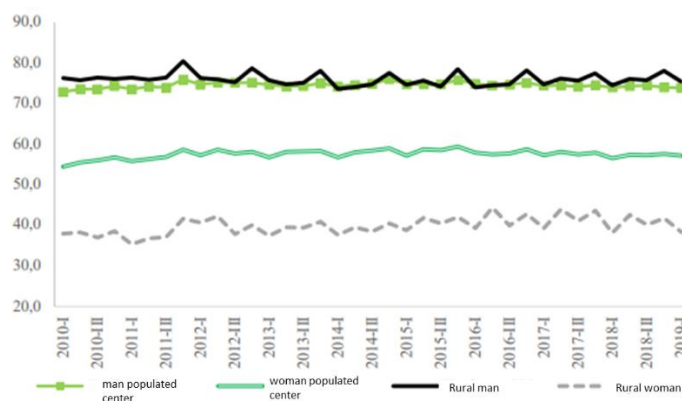


### Annex 3: A brief analysis of the global rate of participation of rural women in the south of Tolima

In order to understand what the promotion of familiar economy and labor formalization implies, the research process began with the understanding with one of the main definitions of the labor market in Colombia, such as the global participation rate. Then it proceeded dismembering what is behind of those figures and how it is portrayed in the south of Tolima. This was done in order to contrast what is seen in the national account and compare it with what is lived in the region and what was found in the field work. The global rate is defined as “an employment indicator that is constructed to quantify the relative size of the labor force. It compares the economically active population and the working-age population” (DANE, 2022, pg ix). The economically active population takes into account employed and unemployed people. Employed people include people who work in a formal or informal job. This last group will be relevant for the study.

To start with rural women in overall, a report by (Otero, 2019) portray how “female labor participation is very low compared to men’s participation in rural markets and with respect to women located in the urban areas and, in addition to that, women in the rural areas face a higher unemployment rate than men and urban women”. These figures complement and corroborate the gaps that were presented in the context, where the trend of the data reported between the 2010-2019 period shows that women who are in dispersed rural areas are the ones with a lower level of participation.

**Figure 12 Global rate of quarterly participation by sex in capitals and dispersed rural population center**

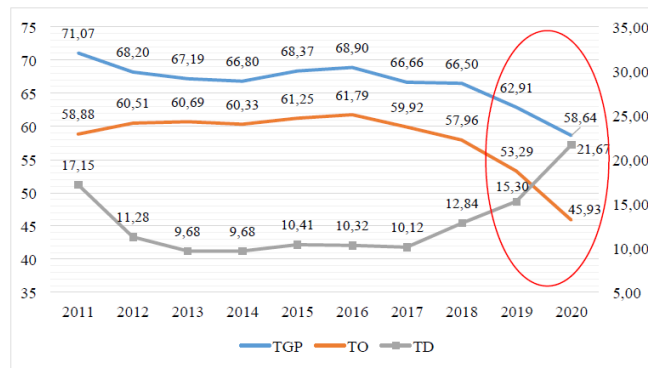


Fuente: GEIH.

Source: Otero, 2019

When searching for the global rate of participation in Tolima, it was found that there are no disaggregated figures for the municipalities under analysis and the differentiation between men and women. However, two relevant information were found for Tolima. The first one related to the global rate of participation for the whole region of Tolima for the period 2011-2020.

**Figure 13 Global participation rate, employment rate and unemployment rate Tolima 2010-2020**



**Source: Huergo, 2021**

Although there is no disaggregation by year between men and women or the comparison within Tolima between rural and urban, the second information was found in the report of (DANE, CPEM, and ONU Mujeres, 2020), where it is manifested that in 2020 the participation of rural women was 20,3% comparing it to 52,9% of men, which means a gap of 32,9%. Beyond the figures, questions began to arise regarding the situation of rural women towards the trends that could happen before or the peace process and result in the figures and the data shown. Has the peace process really benefited this region, where apparently there was a decrease in the participation after 2016, but also the gap, similar to the national level, is present? Does the peace process partly explain the trends of participation in this region? The quantitative perspective is not the scope of this thesis but, the lack of information guides the research towards understanding what is underneath this data

## Annex 4: The inheritance of the coffee plantation in the south of Tolima

The situation of labor dynamics evidenced in Tolima, could be portrayed joining different pieces from research done by de Leal and Deere (1979), Valencia (2013), (Acosta, 2020), and (Moreno-Henao, and Osorio - Varón, 2018). Although there is no study specifically done for the four municipalities, there are some key elements that are relevant to point out. The main take away it is the attribution of the gender division of labor to the phenomena inherited by haciendas. *“The historical evidence shows how Tolima suffered from the monopoly control over the landed elite’s which subjected the peasantry to various forms of rent extraction in return to the use and usufruct of land”* (Valencia, 2013). As Acosta (2020) annotates, Chaparral’s land the distribution of land was given between 4 large families. In consequence, *“...the sexual division of labor established on the hacienda assigned direct production activities to men and tasks geared to the reproduction and maintenance of labor to women”* (de Leal and Deere, 1979, 8).

After 1950’, changes promoted by the import substitution industrialization change the labor dynamics (de Leal and Deere, 1979), where the increasing value of land was the necessary condition for the breakup of the haciendas as well as the entrance of a new class grouping of entrepreneurs to the region. At the same time, it seems that the changes in the hacienda system, to a smaller structure, motivated changes in the structure of families and a different relation between family workers and wage workers out of the family as butlers/aggregates, administrators, sharecroppers, contractors, harvesters or walkers and day laborers to the production process. Thus, a new coffee structure is consolidated that went from being family (Valencia, 2013; Moreno- Henao, and Osorio - Varón,, 2018). Changes in land implicate that:

The study shows how production was carried out by man supported by seasonal workers. Family participation in these activities depends on the class. In the upper classes, women only participated raising livestock, while in the middle and lower classes they participated to a greater extent, from subsistence and commercial crops. However, the male role in any case was seen as the dominant one (Leal and Deere, 1979, p10).

This is an example of how power structures affect the subjectivity of women's life projects, in turn producing gaps and perpetuating structural inequalities (Parada Hernández, 2018). Additionally, Botero and Ávila (2021) refer to the patriarchal system:

“[rural women in Colombia] ... not only bear oppressions and generic gender inequalities with their material implications but they also present marginalization inherited from their status as collective peasant subjects” (Botero Blandón & Serrano Ávila, 2021, pág. 5).

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