



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

SUPPORTING PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN GUATEMALA AND COLOMBIA FOR THE LONG-TERM

Report of the Standing Committee on
Foreign Affairs and International Development



Hon. Robert D. Nault
CHAIR

42nd PARLIAMENT, FIRST SESSION

DECEMBER 2016

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Standing Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site
at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

**SUPPORTING PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT
IN GUATEMALA AND COLOMBIA
FOR THE LONG-TERM**

**Report of the Standing Committee on
Foreign Affairs and International Development**

**Hon. Robert D. Nault
Chair**

DECEMBER 2016

42nd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CHAIR

Hon. Robert D. Nault

VICE-CHAIRS

Dean Allison
Hélène Laverdière

MEMBERS

Peter Fragiskatos	Marc Miller
Hon. Peter Kent	Raj Saini
Tom Kmiec	Jati Sidhu
Michael Levitt	

OTHER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT WHO PARTICIPATED

Garnett Genuis

CLERK OF THE COMMITTEE

Angela Crandall

LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

Parliamentary Information and Research Service

Allison Goody, Analyst
Brian Hermon, Analyst

THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

has the honour to present its

FIFTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the Committee has conducted a case study – Guatemala and Colombia – Women, Peace and Security and Countries of Focus for Bilateral Development Assistance and has agreed to report the following:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAIR'S FOREWORD.....	1
LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS	3
SUPPORTING PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN GUATEMALA AND COLOMBIA FOR THE LONG-TERM	5
INTRODUCTION	5
THE COMMITTEE'S MISSION TO GUATEMALA: KEY FINDINGS.....	7
A. Development Challenges	8
B. Human Rights Concerns	9
C. The Struggle against Impunity	11
D. Women, Peace and Security.....	16
THE COMMITTEE'S MISSION TO COLOMBIA: KEY FINDINGS	19
A. The Paradox of "Two Colombias"	21
B. The Peace Opportunity	22
C. The Peace Challenge	25
1. The Rural Security Deficit.....	25
2. The Reintegration of Former Combatants	27
D. Women, Peace and Security.....	29
PARTNERING WITH GUATEMALA AND COLOMBIA FOR THE LONG-TERM.....	32
APPENDIX A: LIST OF WITNESSES	37
APPENDIX B: TRAVEL TO GUATEMALA AND COLOMBIA	39
REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE	45
SUPPLEMENTARY OPINION OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA	47

CHAIR'S FOREWORD

On behalf of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to everyone who contributed to the Committee's successful mission to Guatemala and Colombia. In particular, I would like to thank Deborah Chatsis, Canada's Ambassador to Guatemala, and Douglas Challborn, Canada's Chargé d'Affaires in Colombia, and their respective teams, for their support in advance of and during the Committee's trip.

I would also like to thank all of the organizations and individuals who took the time to meet with the Committee in Guatemala and Colombia and who were willing to share their perspectives and experiences with openness and sincerity. In both countries, the Committee engaged with a variety of experts, officials and local stakeholders, and was able to tour development projects in rural areas. Those interactions and field visits were essential in exposing the Committee to the key issues facing the Guatemalan and Colombian people as they work to build sustainable peace and prosperity, and in informing the Committee's conclusions regarding the role that Canada should play to support those efforts.

The report that follows presents the findings of the Committee's mission. It also includes the Committee's recommendations to the Government of Canada regarding its engagement with Guatemala and Colombia, two important partners in our shared region of the Americas. With these case studies, this report builds on two other reports that the Committee recently presented to the House of Commons entitled, [*An Opportunity for Global Leadership: Canada and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda*](#) and [*Development Cooperation for a More Stable, Inclusive and Prosperous World: A Collective Ambition*](#).

It is the Committee's hope that, together, these three reports will contribute to discussions about how Canada can most effectively support the full implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, as well as broader international development objectives. The Committee will continue to follow those themes closely, as it will the situations in Guatemala and Colombia.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Government of Canada should continue to support the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala. 16

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Government of Canada should provide direct support to local civil society organizations – and their Canadian civil society partners – that are working to fight impunity, strengthen the rule of law, advance women’s human rights and women’s empowerment, combat sexual- and gender-based violence, address indigenous rights and inclusion, and pursue transitional justice in Guatemala. 16

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Government of Canada should pursue opportunities to engage with the Government of Guatemala and Guatemalan civil society organizations on the women, peace and security agenda, including by supporting the development and implementation of Guatemala’s national action plan. 19

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Government of Canada should explore opportunities to support the National Police of Colombia in its efforts to strengthen rural policing, including through training initiatives. 26

RECOMMENDATION 5

As part of its development assistance to Colombia, the Government of Canada should provide targeted support to programs that are focused on the reintegration of former combatants. 28

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Government of Canada should provide on-the-ground support for the efforts of women’s organizations and women’s rights activists in Colombia, including in rural areas, towards the development and implementation of gender-responsive peace agreements. 31

SUPPORTING PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN GUATEMALA AND COLOMBIA FOR THE LONG-TERM

INTRODUCTION

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (the Committee) travelled to Guatemala and Colombia from 28 August to 8 September 2016. This was the Committee's first international fact-finding mission during the 42nd Parliament, and was undertaken as part of its studies on the women, peace and security agenda and the countries of focus for Canada's bilateral development assistance.¹

The purpose of the Committee's trip was twofold. First, it provided an opportunity to examine the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda in two countries within the Americas, both of which have experienced internal armed conflict. Second, it allowed the Committee to conduct a comparative analysis of one of Canada's countries of focus for bilateral development assistance – Colombia – and one of its partner countries for development – Guatemala.² While those two study themes drove the Committee's agenda, members learned about several other important issues during the course of this trip, including the peacebuilding experiences of both countries.

It has been around 20 years since the peace accords in Guatemala were signed to end that country's 36-year internal war. Guatemala is now years into its peacebuilding process, but continues to face challenges related to citizen security, inequality and institutional fragility. Impunity is an overarching concern, as are violence and discrimination against women. Nevertheless, recent years have seen important progress in the fight against corruption and in efforts to bring to light the country's legacy of human rights abuses and injustices. The Committee's meetings in the capital, Guatemala City, as well as in Rabinal and Cobán – two sites of some of the worst atrocities committed during the armed conflict – underscored the country's ongoing struggle for justice, peace and sustainable development.

The Committee's mission to Colombia took place only days after the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) announced that they had finalized a comprehensive peace accord intended to end more than 50 years of armed conflict. On 2 October 2016, that accord was put to the Colombian people in a

1 The House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (FAAE) recently presented reports on women, peace and security and Canada's countries of focus for bilateral development assistance. See: [An Opportunity for Global Leadership: Canada and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda](#) and [Development Cooperation for a More Stable, Inclusive and Prosperous World: A Collective Ambition](#).

2 In 2009, Colombia was designated as one of 20 countries of focus for Canadian bilateral development assistance. In 2014, Colombia was again selected as a country of focus on an expanded list of 25 countries where Canada would spend 90% of its bilateral development assistance. In 2014, Guatemala was designated as one of 12 development partner countries where Canada would maintain smaller bilateral development assistance programs.

national plebiscite where it was narrowly defeated, with 50.2% voting against it and 49.8% in favour. Following intensive talks with the FARC, which took into account key concerns of the accord's opponents, a revised accord was announced on 12 November 2016. That accord will not be put to another plebiscite, but instead submitted to the Colombian Congress for ratification. Even though this process was continuing to develop as the Committee finalized its report, it is important to emphasize that this report is not focused on the specific details of the peace accord. Rather, the report reflects the Committee's broader observations regarding the long-term development support that Colombia will require as it works to build and sustain peace.

In both Guatemala and Colombia, the Committee engaged with a variety of experts and stakeholders, as well as citizens who have been affected by the violence that has afflicted their countries. Meetings and site visits revealed a broad range of perspectives, including those of government officials and agencies, international organizations, members of the donor community, local and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), human rights defenders and women's rights activists. As part of its work, the Committee toured a number of development projects in rural areas.

The report that follows presents the Committee's main findings from its missions to Guatemala and Colombia. It is structured in three chapters. The first two discuss the themes that emerged from the Committee's meetings and field visits in each country. Those two chapters each include specific recommendations on areas in which the Committee believes that the Government of Canada can provide targeted support to Guatemala and Colombia through its development assistance and other international policies. The third chapter outlines the Committee's broader observations and conclusions in relation to Canada's development cooperation programs in both countries.



Meeting with the Inter-Institutional Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 31 August 2016.

THE COMMITTEE'S MISSION TO GUATEMALA: KEY FINDINGS

In 1996, the Government of Guatemala and guerrilla groups signed the final peace accords that ushered in the end of the country's 36-year (1960–1996) internal armed conflict. Among their many provisions, the peace accords instituted a formal ceasefire, set out a framework for political, social and economic reform, and outlined commitments for addressing the underlying causes of the conflict, including the marginalization of indigenous communities. A United Nations-supported Commission for Historical Clarification was also created to investigate human rights violations, foster tolerance and preserve the memory of the conflict's victims.³

For many, the peace accords represented a historic moment for Guatemala, raising expectations for a more democratic, peaceful and inclusive future. However, while the accords succeeded in preventing a return to large-scale conflict, they did not lead to the broader transformation of Guatemalan society that many had hoped for. Violence, as the most notable example, remains all too common in Guatemala. In the years since the

3 The Commission for Historical Clarification was in operation between 1997 and 1999, during which time it conducted interviews with 11,000 people. In its final report released in 1999, the Commission concluded that approximately 200,000 people had been killed over the course of the war, 83% of whom were Mayan and 17% of whom were Ladino. The Commission determined that "state forces and related paramilitary groups were responsible for 93% of the violations documented." [*Guatemala: Memory of Silence, Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification: Conclusions and Recommendations*](#), 1999, available in English on the website of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

peace accords were signed, criminality has become the primary source of citizen insecurity, including drug- and gang-related violence.

Concerns about citizen security were raised repeatedly over the course of the Committee's visit to Guatemala, as were issues relating to development, human rights, transitional justice, impunity and corruption, and women, peace and security. The Committee's meetings in the capital and its field visits to rural areas highlighted the important work being done by local and international stakeholders to confront domestic challenges and to build a more secure and prosperous country. This chapter explores those issues and findings in greater detail.

A. Development Challenges

Guatemala is, in many ways, a country of contrasts. It is the most populous country in Central America and that region's largest economy. It has also been one of the strongest economic performers in Latin America over the past five years. At the same time, Guatemala faces a number of economic and social challenges, including widespread poverty and a very high level of inequality. While it is classified as a lower middle-income country by the World Bank, officials from Global Affairs Canada told the Committee that "nearly 60% of [Guatemala's] population lives in poverty, almost a quarter of its population lives in extreme poverty, and great social and economic inequalities persist."⁴

Poverty is most pronounced in rural areas and is highest among indigenous peoples, as was evident from the Committee's visit to the city of Cobán and the town of Rabinal. Guatemala is one of the most unequal countries in Latin America in terms of income distribution. According to Canadian officials, approximately 80% of the total arable land in Guatemala is owned by only 2% of the population.⁵

Malnutrition and maternal mortality are specific examples of development challenges in the country. Guatemala has the 4th highest rate of chronic malnutrition in the world and the highest rate in the Americas. Approximately 49% of Guatemalan children under five years of age suffer from malnutrition.⁶ Again, it is rural and indigenous populations who are suffering disproportionately. While slight improvements have been achieved at the country level, the rate of chronic malnutrition has worsened in most indigenous communities.⁷

Maternal mortality is another concern. The Committee travelled to the community of Santa Inés Chicar, located just south of Cobán in the department of Alta Verapaz. There it met with young women who are working as community health workers at a health clinic

4 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 9 June 2016.

5 Briefing by the Canadian Embassy in Guatemala, Guatemala City, 28 August 2016.

6 Chronic malnutrition can result in stunted growth or "stunting." According to the World Food Programme (WFP), Guatemala is one of 36 countries that account for 90% of stunting in the world. WFP, [Guatemala](#).

7 Briefing note provided to FAAE by Global Affairs Canada entitled *Human Rights Situation in Guatemala*, August 2016.

supported by an NGO called TulaSalud.⁸ From its interactions with community health workers, the Committee learned that Guatemala has one of the highest rates of maternal mortality in Latin America, and that Alta Verapaz is one of the most affected departments in the country.⁹ Overall, it is estimated that Guatemala has the third highest ratio of maternal mortality in Latin America, with 88 deaths per 100,000 live births.¹⁰

High levels of maternal mortality in Alta Verapaz are due in part to inequities in access to health services. Committee members were told that indigenous women face particularly high risks given that many reside in remote areas far away from hospitals or health clinics. In its discussions with stakeholders at the clinic in Santa Inés Chicar, the Committee was briefed on TulaSalud's efforts to improve maternal, newborn and child health in the country by strengthening health systems in low resource settings. They do so by training nurses and community health care workers, and by introducing information and communication technologies that can lead to better monitoring, diagnoses and reporting on health challenges.

TulaSalud and other civil society organizations are filling a gap left by the state in rural parts of the country. Public spending on social services in Guatemala, including on health care, is below both the regional average for Latin America and the global average for lower middle-income countries. Public revenues make up a very low percentage of Guatemala's gross domestic product. In fact, Guatemala collects the lowest share of public revenues in the world relative to the size of its economy.¹¹ Not only is the country's taxation rate low, but tax evasion is rampant, another factor that limits public revenue and investment in social services.¹² A number of individuals with whom the Committee met, including indigenous peoples, emphasized the lack of public investment in health services, clean water, electricity and infrastructure in rural parts of Guatemala.

B. Human Rights Concerns

The human rights situation in Guatemala was a recurrent concern during the Committee's trip. The Committee met with a number of individuals and organizations engaged in human rights related work, including women's rights activists, indigenous peoples, and human rights lawyers. The overall sense was one of an ongoing struggle to

8 TulaSalud is a Guatemalan non-governmental organization that works with the Guatemalan Ministry of Health to reduce maternal mortality and child morbidity. TulaSalud is supported by the Tula Foundation, a Canadian-based organization with a focus on Guatemala. In March 2016, Global Affairs Canada signed a contribution agreement with the Tula Foundation for \$7.6 million for the 2016–2020 period. The funding is aimed at scaling up the Tula Foundation's initiatives for maternal, newborn and child health in Guatemala, including by strengthening and modernizing health systems. For more information, see: Tula Foundation, "[Tula Receives \\$7.6 Million for Work in Guatemala](#)," *TulaSalud News*.

9 Visit to a TulaSalud-supported clinic, Santa Inés Chicar, 29 August 2016.

10 The World Bank defines the maternal mortality ratio as "the number of women who die from pregnancy-related causes while pregnant or within 42 days of pregnancy termination per 100,000 live births." The World Bank, [Maternal mortality ratio \(modeled estimate, per 100,000 live births\)](#).

11 Briefing by the Canadian Embassy in Guatemala, Guatemala City, 28 August 2016.

12 Meeting with the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), Guatemala City, 31 August 2016.

ensure the presence of justice and rights for all, notwithstanding the two decades that have passed since the formal end of the country's internal armed conflict.

The situation facing human rights defenders in Guatemala is especially troubling, a finding that echoed the Committee's Ottawa-based hearings on women, peace and security. Freedom of speech is protected under Guatemala's constitution, but the Committee heard that human rights defenders routinely face threats and intimidation because of their work. Environmental activists – particularly those who protest against large-scale agricultural, hydroelectric and other resource projects – were said to be at particular risk of arrest and violence. The number of environmental activists who have been unlawfully detained by police has increased in recent years.

Issues related to resource development and land rights are of significant concern to indigenous communities. The Committee heard that there is an absence of legal protections for, and recognition of, the property rights of indigenous groups. Moreover, legal disputes over agricultural development and resource projects in areas with indigenous communities are not being resolved. The palm oil industry is a specific example. The Committee became aware of the increasing number of palm oil companies operating in areas inhabited largely by indigenous peoples. A group of indigenous women who live in an area near such palm oil plantations indicated that the production of palm oil was having a negative impact on their local environment.¹³

Violence against women was also highlighted for the Committee's attention. Guatemala is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for women and girls. They face high rates of murder, sexual violence, domestic violence and sex trafficking. In fact, Guatemala ranks third worldwide in the killing of women, with an average of 9.7 murders for every 100,000 women.¹⁴ While Guatemalan law criminalizes rape, including spousal rape, police capacity to investigate crimes of sexual violence and assist survivors is weak and the law is not always enforced effectively. The statistics are, as noted, both revealing and concerning. An estimated 3,000 women have been murdered in Guatemala since 2012. Of those murders, only 381 cases resulted in a judicial decision.¹⁵

The horrendous incidence of violence against women reached the point where, in 2008, the Guatemalan Congress passed a specific *Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women*. As a result of that law, femicide is now punishable by a prison term of 25–50 years.¹⁶ In the time since the law was enacted, there has been a

13 In October 2015, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) held a hearing on the impact of the palm oil industry on the health, environment, indigenous culture and economy of Guatemala. For more information, see: Human Rights Brief, [Human Rights Situation of Indigenous Peoples in the Context of the Activities of the Palm Oil Industry in Guatemala](#), 26 October 2015.

14 Briefing by the Canadian Embassy in Guatemala, Guatemala City, 28 August 2016.

15 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 9 June 2016.

16 Femicide is defined as the deliberate killing of a woman because of her gender. Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA, [Guatemala's Femicide Law: Progress Against Impunity?](#) Washington, D.C., May 2009, p. 9.

reported increase in the number of judgments connected to that law.¹⁷ However, the United Nations human rights office in Guatemala has indicated that women in rural areas of the country have not benefited from the protection and redress provided by the specialized courts established as a result of the heightened focus on femicide, as those women “do not have access to the specialized jurisdiction.”¹⁸ While specialized courts have been established in areas outside of the capital city, women living in remote rural areas lack access to them.

Weak rule of law appears to be exacerbating the rate of violence against women and contributing to the low number of investigations and prosecutions. The Committee visited the Human Rights Law Office of Rabinal, where it met with human rights lawyers and victims of the country’s internal armed conflict.¹⁹ That legal clinic was created to help victims of human rights violations in their pursuit of justice and to ensure that they are effectively represented before national or international tribunals. Many of the cases the clinic has dealt with – including those involving massacres – date back to the beginning of Guatemala’s internal conflict, a fact that reiterates how slowly the wheels of justice are moving in the country. During the Committee’s tour of the clinic, it heard that sexual violence against women remains prevalent in Guatemala.²⁰ Many women are afraid to report such crimes for fear of being re-victimized. Women who do come forward are often denied justice or encounter discrimination in the legal system; moreover, many perpetrators benefit from a culture of impunity. Such systemic problems have created a situation where vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples and women, are unable to assert their rights or to receive redress for what they have suffered.

C. The Struggle against Impunity

Impunity is a problem affecting many other aspects of Guatemalan society. Endemic violence, weak state institutions and a lack of political will are all contributing factors. At the same time, the Committee was told that there is some cause for optimism. In recent years, several high profile investigations and criminal proceedings have directly tackled such sensitive issues as government corruption, organized crime and abuses in the security sector, along with the legacies of Guatemala’s long war.

In 2015, then-President Pérez Molina and former Vice President Roxana Baldetti were implicated in the so-called “La Linea” (the line) corruption scandal – the name given to a scam in which importers paid bribes to public officials to avoid customs duty. In May of that year, after mass demonstrations and the revelation of evidence linking Mr. Molina and

17 IACHR, [Situation of Human Rights in Guatemala: Diversity, Inequality and Exclusion](#), Organization of American States, OEA/Ser.L/V/II, Doc. 43/15, 31 December 2015, p. 108.

18 [Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the activities of his office in Guatemala](#), Addendum, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), A/HRC/28/3/Add.1, 12 January 2015, para. 52.

19 The Human Rights Law Office in Rabinal has received funding from the Government of Canada through its partnership with Lawyers Without Borders Canada. Canada has provided support to Lawyers Without Borders Canada for projects in Guatemala at different stages: \$2.75 million from 2011 to 2013 and \$857,003 from 2015 to 2016. An additional \$25,000 was provided in 2014 through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives.

20 Visit to the Human Rights Law Office of Rabinal, Rabinal, 29 August 2016.

members of his administration to the customs fraud scheme, Ms. Baldetti resigned from her post. She was subsequently arrested. On 1 September 2015, following the release of further details on the fraud scheme, the Guatemalan Congress agreed to withdraw immunity for Mr. Molina. Two days later, he resigned the presidency and was taken into custody.²¹

The Committee was briefed on this case by officials from the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). Those officials also spoke about the Commission's broader role in efforts to combat impunity and corruption in the country. CICIG is an independent body that was established in 2006 through an agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Guatemala.²² It is mandated to determine the existence of illegal and clandestine organizations; to collaborate with the Guatemalan government to dismantle such organizations; and to promote the investigation, prosecution, and punishment of those groups.²³

As part of the investigation of "La Linea," CICIG officials analyzed more than half a million documents, in addition to thousands of wiretaps. In their meeting with the Committee, the CICIG officials framed the case as one of the most significant events to occur in Guatemala since the signing of the peace accords. In particular, they highlighted the mass protests against the Guatemalan government, which occurred on a daily basis during the height of the scandal. For them, such large-scale public mobilization represents a "political awakening" within Guatemalan society that rejects the perniciousness of corruption.

"La Linea" is one of a number of recent cases that are gradually and cumulatively strengthening the integrity and legitimacy of Guatemala's political, security and judicial systems and institutions. The overall goal of these cases, and of other national and international initiatives to strengthen Guatemala's institutions, would be to replace the country's legacy of impunity with the rule of law, anchored by democratic and accountable governance and the protection of human rights. There has been a surge in cases focused on human rights abuses that were committed during the armed conflict. Many of those cases have been spearheaded by Guatemalan civil society organizations that are pursuing opportunities for "strategic litigation." The purpose of strategic litigation, as described by the Human Rights Law Office of Rabinal, is to bring specific cases of human rights crimes before the courts, so that a body of jurisprudence can be created that will help put an end to impunity.²⁴

21 The corruption trials against former President Pérez Molina and former Vice President Roxana Baldetti are ongoing. Both are currently in preventive custody.

22 CICIG operates under Guatemalan law and in Guatemalan courts. It employs both Guatemalans and foreigners and works closely with other Guatemalan agencies, including the Public Prosecutor's Office and the National Civil Police. For more information, see: CICIG, [About CICIG](#).

23 CICIG has also helped implement legislation to create a witness protection program, tighten gun controls and establish rules for court-ordered wiretaps and asset forfeiture, as well as institute high-risk courts for the trials of particularly dangerous defendants. For more information, see: CICIG, [Mandate](#). The Committee was told that, between 2008 and 2015, CICIG was involved in 222 criminal investigations that resulted in charges against 73 public officials and the dismantling of 41 criminal structures. Meeting with the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, Guatemala City, 31 August 2016.

24 Visit to the Human Rights Law Office of Rabinal, Rabinal, 29 August 2016.

The trial of former Guatemalan President and General Efraín Ríos Montt – who was in power from 1982-1983 during one of the most violent periods of the armed conflict²⁵ – is an example of strategic litigation. In 2013, a Guatemalan court reached a historic decision by convicting General Montt on charges of genocide against Mayan indigenous peoples and crimes against humanity. It was the first time that a former head of government had been convicted on such charges by a domestic court. Only ten days after the verdict was delivered, however, it was overturned by Guatemala’s Constitutional Court on procedural grounds in a three-two decision. Retrial proceedings against Ríos Montt were reinstated in July 2015. In June 2016, however, after various interruptions, Guatemala’s First Court of Appeals suspended his trial indefinitely.²⁶

Even though it was eventually overturned, the original verdict in the Ríos Montt trial is considered a major victory for the cause of transitional justice in Guatemala. The same can be said for the ruling in the landmark Sepur Zarco case. In February 2016, two former military officers were convicted on charges of crimes against humanity in the form of sexual and domestic slavery, as well as on several counts of homicide and enforced disappearance. The Sepur Zarco case involved 15 Mayan Q’eqchi women. It was the first criminal trial focused specifically on sexual violence perpetrated during Guatemala’s armed conflict and the first-ever sexual slavery case to be heard in a national court.²⁷ The crimes occurred in Sepur Zarco, which is a small rural community in northeastern Guatemala, in the early 1980s.

The defendants in the case were Lieutenant Colonel Esteelmer Reyes Girón, former commander of the Sepur Zarco military base, and Heriberto Valdez Asig, former military commissioner. During four weeks of testimony, survivors and expert witnesses detailed a pattern of military repression in Sepur Zarco and the surrounding areas; they also revealed the lasting impact of the violence on the victims.²⁸ The High Risk Tribunal “A” heard that women were systematically raped by the soldiers, men were forcibly disappeared, homes and belongings were destroyed, and many families were forced to flee to the mountains to seek shelter, where many died of hunger and cold.²⁹ The defendants were found guilty on all of the charges and sentenced to 120 and 240 years in prison, respectively.

25 In its final report, the Commission for Historical Clarification concluded that “agents of the State of Guatemala, within the framework of counterinsurgency operations carried out between 1981 and 1983, committed acts of genocide against groups of Mayan people” [Guatemala: Memory of Silence, Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification: Conclusions and Recommendations](#), 1999, para. 122.

26 For more information, see: Trial International, [Efraín Ríos-Montt](#).

27 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 12 April 2016 (Bill Fairbairn); FAAE, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 9 June 2016.

28 Jo-Marie Burt, [“Military Officers Convicted in Landmark Sepur Zarco Sexual Violence Case,”](#) *International Justice Monitor*, 4 March 2016.

29 Ibid. In 2009, Guatemala’s Supreme Court created special high risk courts to oversee the most sensitive and complex cases related to the alleged commission of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, corruption, and drug trafficking. These courts have the authority to hear cases that pose a serious risk to judges, prosecutors, defence attorneys and witnesses. The high risk courts are provided with additional resources and security in order to maintain their autonomy and independence and to protect all of those involved in a case. For more information on Guatemala’s high risk courts, see: The Center for Justice and Accountability, [Guatemalan Court for High Risk Crimes](#).

In Cobán, the Committee met with five Mayan Q'eqchi women from the community of Sepur Zarco who are survivors of sexual violence. That discussion included many of the civil society groups that have supported these women, including Project Counselling Service, Mujeres Transformando el Mundo and Unión Nacional de Mujeres de Guatemala. The women, who shared their individual testimonials with the Committee, described the horrific injustices that they and their communities suffered. They described sexual exploitation, violence, psychological abuse and enslavement. The women also spoke of economic exploitation; they lost their land and livestock and were forced to feed government soldiers and wash their clothes. Many women also lost their husbands, brothers and other family members.³⁰



Meeting with Mayan Q'eqchi women from the Sepur Zarco community, Cobán, Guatemala, 30 August 2016.

The women who were involved in the Sepur Zarco trial made what could only have been a difficult decision to seek justice after so many years. The Committee heard that they faced intimidation and threats and found it difficult to revisit their horrific experiences. In the end, the women felt compelled to “put a face to the injustices of the past” and to break down legal barriers so that other victims of violence could come forward and speak up.³¹ That courage will also help to establish important case law in Guatemala.

The Sepur Zarco trial is therefore a victory of a symbolic, legal, political and personal nature. The ramifications for Guatemalan society could be significant over the longer term. Calls for reparations have grown louder, as have expectations regarding

30 Meeting with women victims of violence, Cobán, 30 August 2016.

31 Ibid.

government support for survivors of such crimes. Beyond the legal considerations, the women with whom the Committee met also emphasized the need to raise awareness about the current situation in their communities. They described conditions of poverty and neglect, including a lack of investment in schools, hospitals and basic infrastructure.

The high-profile cases discussed in this section of the report notwithstanding, significant challenges remain in Guatemala's struggle against impunity. State presence in remote parts of the country is limited, and state institutions are unable to enforce the rule of law in those areas. According to CICIG officials, the Office of the Attorney General has a presence in only 10% of the country.³² The Committee was also told that the police have difficulty operating in remote parts of the country, such as the department of Petén, due to the presence of organized crime.

Guatemala is, as emphasized previously, one of the most violent countries in Latin America.³³ Many of the groups that are fuelling the violence and instability that plague the country benefit from corruption. Ensuring the safety of individuals – including whistleblowers – who expose criminality and illicit activities, as well as the safety of people who investigate, prosecute and adjudicate such cases are therefore paramount concerns. The current Attorney-General of Guatemala, as well as the previous one, has faced threats and harassment. Members of the Committee heard about these difficult circumstances directly from Judge Miguel Ángel Gálvez, the President of Guatemala's High Risk Court "B", who has had threats made against his life.³⁴

The Committee believes firmly that Canada should continue to support Guatemala in its efforts to tackle impunity and to build a just society for all Guatemalan people. Momentum has been building and must be sustained. CICIG is a critical partner in this regard. Since 2008, Canada has provided \$18 million in support of CICIG, and the Committee is of the view that this support should continue.³⁵ At the same time, the Committee is aware that, while CICIG's mandate has been extended until 2019 – and could be renewed further – it will not exist indefinitely.

CICIG's role within Guatemalan society is part of a larger picture. In weighing all of the concerns that were brought to its attention, the Committee is mindful now, as it has been throughout its study of women, peace and security, that durable results and real change depend on local action. The eradication of impunity and the firm establishment of peace and justice will ultimately depend on the efforts, commitment and leadership of local organizations and local actors. Progress of this nature also requires a bedrock of institutions: well-resourced and functional political parties and civil society organizations,

32 Meeting with CICIG, Guatemala City, 31 August 2016.

33 In 2014, the homicide rate in Guatemala was 31.2 per 100,000 people, with the total number of homicides estimated to be 4,998. That rate was down from a peak rate of 45.1 per 100,000 people and 6,498 total homicides in 2009. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, [Statistics](#).

34 Reception with Guatemalan members of Congress and other officials, Guatemala City, 30 August 2016.

35 Through a partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Canada is providing CICIG with funding of up to \$4 million between 2015 and 2019. Global Affairs Canada, [Project profile: Support to the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala \(CICIG\)](#), Project Number D002778-001.

high-quality and universally accessible health care and education systems, and an independent judiciary, alongside responsible and accountable governance. Strengthening the capacity of such actors and institutions to address the needs and carry forward the work highlighted in this report should, therefore, be an integral component of Canada's development cooperation with Guatemala.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Government of Canada should continue to support the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Government of Canada should provide direct support to local civil society organizations – and their Canadian civil society partners – that are working to fight impunity, strengthen the rule of law, advance women's human rights and women's empowerment, combat sexual- and gender-based violence, address indigenous rights and inclusion, and pursue transitional justice in Guatemala.

D. Women, Peace and Security

Assessing the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda³⁶ in a post-conflict setting was one of the principal reasons for the Committee's trip to Guatemala. It is an important case study for several reasons. The country's 36-year conflict had a devastating and disproportionate impact on women. It was brought to an end through a peace process that did involve women, albeit unevenly. Twenty years on, implementation of the peace accords remains incomplete and women continue to face violence and exclusion. The Committee's visit allowed it to examine those issues in greater detail and from the perspective of individual Guatemalan women and civil society leaders. While this section of the report is focused on the women, peace and security agenda, some of the Committee's findings relevant to that agenda have already been detailed above, including Guatemala's legacy of societal violence and the ongoing need to rein in corruption, reduce inequality and ensure the rule of law.

The situation in Guatemala vis-à-vis women, peace and security is often examined from the perspective of women's involvement in the 1991–1996 peace process, which culminated in peace accords. Women-led organizations and grassroots movements were able to engage in that process through a civil society body that was established to make non-binding proposals and recommendations to the official negotiating teams – the Government of Guatemala and the umbrella Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit. On the other hand, only two women were included in the teams themselves.³⁷

36 The women, peace and security agenda is largely embodied in eight resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council: Resolution [1325](#) (2000); [1820](#) (2008); [1888](#) (2009); [1889](#) (2009); [1960](#) (2010); [2106](#) (2013); [2122](#) (2013); and, [2242](#) (2015).

37 [*Women Leading Peace: A close examination of women's political participation in peace processes in Northern Ireland, Guatemala, Kenya, and the Philippines*](#), Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2015.

Ultimately, the peace accords prioritized some but not all of the issues advanced by women's organizations. The *Agreement on the Social and Economic Aspects and Agrarian Situation* (1996), for example, emphasized the importance of women's active participation in Guatemala's economic and social development. It addressed the need for the state to promote the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and to recognize the equal rights of women and men in the home, workplace, and productive sectors, as well as in social and political life.³⁸ Other issues and proposals prioritized by women, however, were either not included in the peace accords or were weakened. For instance, the *Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (1995) did not explicitly address conflict-related sexual violence or access to justice for the abuses that were suffered, many by indigenous women.³⁹

While in Guatemala, the Committee met with several organizations and women's rights advocates who conveyed a broad range of perspectives on these issues. Some spoke about the positive aspects of the accords. The Committee heard, for example, that the Guatemalan experience was notable for the degree to which gender-related content was incorporated in the text of the peace accords. The participation of women-led civil society organizations during the peace process was also highlighted. Without the contribution of these groups, it is quite likely that the final accords would have been much less inclusive and gender-sensitive.

At the same time, a number of individuals told the Committee that the promise of the peace accords has yet to be fully realized. For example, although the accords criminalized sexual violence and harassment, gender-based violence is still endemic in the country. As noted above, Guatemala has one of the highest rates of femicide in the world. Moreover, while the accords committed to promoting women's participation in government and public administration, the Committee learned that women continue to be under-represented in positions of power. Only 22 of the 158 members elected to Congress in the last elections were women, and only 1 of 14 members of Cabinet is a woman.⁴⁰

In Guatemala City, the Committee met with the group responsible for the development of Guatemala's national action plan on women, peace and security. The Inter-Institutional Working Group on Women, Peace and Security is composed of government agencies, ministries and security institutions, as well as representatives of civil society and international organizations. Several of those stakeholders participated in the meeting with the Committee, including UN Women, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Public Ministry and the Institute of Education and Sustainable Development, which is a

38 [*Agreement on Social and Economic Aspects and Agrarian Situation, concluded on 6 May 1996 between the Presidential Peace Commission of the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca*](#), Annex in UNGA, A/50/956, 6 June 1996.

39 [*Agreement on identity and rights of indigenous peoples*](#), Annex in United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and UNGA, S/1995/256, A/49/882, 10 April 1995.

40 Briefing note provided to FAE by Global Affairs Canada entitled *Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Guatemala*, August 2016.

civil society organization that promotes research and supports the development of peacebuilding activities in Guatemala.⁴¹

Guatemala is in the final stages of developing its national action plan. While the plan is not yet finalized, the Committee was informed that it will be composed of pillars that address women's empowerment and leadership, human rights and the participation of women in peacebuilding. The plan will reportedly also discuss the need to provide reparations to women who suffered violence during the internal armed conflict and to support transitional justice processes. The plan will include monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to support implementation.

It is not clear whether Guatemala's national action plan will have a dedicated budget. The Committee was told that attaching a budget to the plan would require approval from Guatemala's Congress. National budgetary constraints and legislative gridlock within Congress, however, mean that securing this approval could be difficult. Even so, some members of the Inter-Institutional Working Group emphasized the importance of dedicated funding. Others had a different perspective, arguing that each government ministry or agency with responsibilities under the action plan should set aside its own budget for programs related to women, peace and security.

In general, there was widespread agreement that investment of a different kind will be instrumental to the success of any national action plan adopted by the country. Several stakeholders emphasized that the Guatemalan government needs to show political will and leadership in support of the women, peace and security agenda if it is to be implemented effectively and consistently. The Committee was told that the Guatemalan government – which has expressed support for the women, peace and security agenda internationally – has yet to translate its international commitments into national policies. One view is that a presidential endorsement of the national action plan would go a long way in reaffirming the government's support of this agenda.

Consistent with the recommendations of its recent report on women, peace and security, the Committee agrees that political will and high-level leadership are critical to the success of national action plans. So are targeted funding and a long-term commitment to implementation. Witnesses highlighted many of the same issues during the Committee's hearings in Ottawa.⁴² While each national action plan should be context-specific, countries can learn from one another's experiences and support each other in the process of institutionalizing the norms and commitments that the women, peace and security agenda seeks to advance. In this respect, the Committee believes that the Government of Canada should look for opportunities to engage with Guatemala on the development and implementation of its national action plan. Given that Canada is in the process of renewing its own action plan, it is an opportune moment for such cooperation.

41 Meeting with the Inter-Institutional Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, Guatemala City, 31 August 2016.

42 See: FAAE, [An Opportunity for Global Leadership: Canada and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, October 2016.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Government of Canada should pursue opportunities to engage with the Government of Guatemala and Guatemalan civil society organizations on the women, peace and security agenda, including by supporting the development and implementation of Guatemala's national action plan.

THE COMMITTEE'S MISSION TO COLOMBIA: KEY FINDINGS

The Committee's mission to Colombia occurred at an important moment in the country's history. Only days before the Committee's visit, the Government of Colombia and the FARC announced that they had reached a comprehensive peace accord to end more than 50 years of armed conflict.⁴³ It was a historic announcement given that Colombia's was the last unresolved conflict in the Americas from the 20th century, a time when the hemisphere was riddled with insurgencies and episodes of political violence. The accord was the culmination of four years of intense negotiations held in Havana, Cuba. As part of the provisions on implementation, the two parties agreed that the final peace accord would be submitted to the people of Colombia in a national plebiscite. Following a signing ceremony in Cartagena on 26 September 2016, that plebiscite was held on 2 October 2016, just weeks after the Committee departed Colombia.

Nation-wide campaigns in favour of and in opposition to the Havana accord were actively taking place while the Committee was in Colombia. Many of the Committee's meetings focused on the mechanics of the peace process and on next steps in the implementation of the accord, which was supported internationally, including by the United Nations, the United States and Canada. The accord was, however, narrowly rejected by Colombians in a vote of 50.2% to 49.8%. Opponents of the accord focused in particular on its provisions related to transitional justice and the FARC's participation in Colombia's political system.⁴⁴ Turnout was low, with less than 38% of the electorate casting a vote.

43 The peace accord that was signed in Cartagena in September 2016 was composed of agreements that addressed six issues: rural development and land reform; the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia's (FARC) political participation; ceasefire and security guarantees; illegal crops and drug trafficking; transitional justice and reparations; and mechanisms for verification and peace implementation. For the entire peace accord – available in Spanish only – see: [Acuerdo Final Para la Terminación del Conflicto y la Construcción de una Paz Estable y Duradera](#). Several joint communiqués and documents agreed to by the FARC and the Government of Colombia are available in English [online](#).

44 Under the agreement on transitional justice, a "Special Jurisdiction for Peace" would be established to investigate and prosecute "grave violations of human rights and international law." Perpetrators who confessed to atrocities would be exempt from jail. Instead, they would be subject to "sanctions" that have a "restorative and reparative function," which could include carrying out projects to assist victims of the conflict. For further background and analysis, see Human Rights Watch, [Human Rights Watch Analysis of Colombia-FARC Agreement](#), 21 December 2015. The agreement on political participation would grant the FARC five seats in each Congressional house through to 2026 and funding to establish a political party. For further information, see Virginia M. Bouvier, [The Accord: Colombia's Commitment to Peace](#), United States Institute of Peace, 1 October 2016.

Following renewed discussions, on 12 November 2016, the Government of Colombia and the FARC announced their agreement on a revised peace accord.⁴⁵ It reportedly addresses a number of the concerns raised by opponents of the accord that was defeated in the October 2016 plebiscite.⁴⁶ The new accord will be put before Congress for ratification, rather than to another popular vote. While the specific provisions of this new accord will continue to be debated, the Committee's visit underscored the significant peacebuilding and development challenges that Colombia will need to overcome going forward. It is those larger challenges that are the focus of this chapter of the report.

The Committee's meetings were held primarily in the capital city of Bogotá, but also involved a field visit to Villavicencio, a smaller city in the Department of Meta that was a former FARC stronghold. In Bogotá, the Committee met with a number of government officials, including the Minister Counsellor for Post-Conflict, Human Rights and Security and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, as well as representatives of the Presidential Agency for International Cooperation. The Committee also engaged with international agencies, such as UN Women, and grassroots civil society organizations on issues related to gender and peacebuilding. As part of its two-day trip to Villavicencio and nearby areas, the Committee visited Canadian-funded projects focused on rural economic development, and met with implementing agencies and local stakeholders. Committee members also learned about the reintegration process from discussions with ex-combatants at a reintegration centre. Overall, the Committee examined its two focus areas – Canada's development assistance and the women, peace and security agenda – through the lens of Colombia's peace process.

45 The peace accord that was announced on 12 November 2016 is currently available in Spanish only. See: [Acuerdo Final Para la Terminación del Conflicto y la Construcción de una Paz Estable y Duradera](#), 12 November 2016.

46 Humberto de la Calle, the Government of Colombia's lead negotiator to the Havana peace talks, has been quoted as saying that the revised peace accord "resolves many criticisms" of the previous deal. BBC News, "[Colombia peace deal: Government and Farc reach new agreement](#)," 13 November 2016. For example, the accord reportedly requires the FARC to compile a list of their assets, which would be used to compensate victims of the conflict. According to media reports, if the FARC fail to surrender their assets, they would lose the benefits laid out in the transitional justice provisions of the revised peace accord. Under that accord, FARC guerrillas who confess to crimes before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace would still be subject to "restricted liberty" and exempt from jail. However, those individuals would now reportedly serve their sentences in areas no larger than the demobilization zones in which the FARC would be concentrated once the deal has been ratified. Once disarmed and demobilized, FARC members would still be able to run for political office. The new accord would bar foreign magistrates from serving on the Special Jurisdiction for Peace tribunal, which would be dissolved after 10 years. More generally, the period of implementation for the entire accord would be lengthened from 10 to 15 years. It would not form part of Colombia's constitution. Source: The Economist, "[Deal or no deal? Colombia and the FARC strike a new peace agreement](#)," 13 November 2016. See also: Stephanie Nolen, "[Future of Colombia's new peace deal with FARC rests with No campaign](#)," *The Globe and Mail*, 14 November 2016.

A. The Paradox of “Two Colombias”

Colombia is an established democracy and an upper middle-income country with a growing economy, stable institutions, and regional and global aspirations. It is also a conflict-affected country, marred by poverty, income inequality, development disparities, drug trafficking and internal displacement. All of these characteristics represent the inherent contradiction of Colombia. Indeed, the Committee found that there are “two Colombias”. The country is a complex mix of experiences, realities and geography. Today, Colombia is neither dominated by, nor free from, conflict and underdevelopment; it has also not yet achieved broad-based peace and prosperity.

Colombia is commonly regarded as an economic success story. Over the past decade, it has been one of the top economic performers in Latin America, and is now the fourth largest economy in that region after Brazil, Mexico and Argentina. Sound macroeconomic policies, an improved security environment and increased foreign direct investment all contributed to Colombia’s strong economic performance. Colombia has also witnessed a significant reduction in poverty. Approximately 6.7 million people are estimated to have been lifted out of poverty between 2002 and 2014.⁴⁷

On the flip side of this economic picture lies the other Colombia. According to Canadian officials, approximately 28% of the Colombian population lives below the poverty line.⁴⁸ That amounts to about 13 million people. These disparities are all the more stark when disaggregated by rural and urban areas. The World Bank estimates that approximately 41% of Colombia’s rural population lives under the poverty line compared with about 24% of the people in urban areas.⁴⁹ Income inequality is generally pronounced. Based on the World Bank’s available data for 2013, Colombia ranked as the fourth most unequal country in the world, after South Africa, Haiti and Honduras.⁵⁰ The worst devastation of the armed conflict has taken place in Colombia’s poverty-stricken regions and communities.

Over the course of the country’s 50-year internal conflict, violence, criminality and human rights abuses have been pervasive, including in the form of targeted killings and kidnappings. Many women and girls have also suffered sexual- and gender-based violence, an issue that is detailed in the final section of this chapter on women, peace and security. The impact of decades of armed conflict cannot be summarized easily in a few statistics. Nevertheless, several figures stand out in their ability to convey the totality of the harm and destruction that the conflict has caused. Colombia’s conflict is estimated to have claimed 220,000 lives, of which 80% were civilians. With more than six million displaced, Colombia

47 World Bank Group, [Country Partnership Framework for the Republic of Colombia for the Period FY16-21](#), 23 February 2016.

48 Briefing by the Canadian Embassy in Colombia, Villavicencio, 1 September 2016. In 2014, Colombia’s national poverty line was US\$4.15 per day on a purchasing power parity basis. World Bank Group, [Country Partnership Framework for the Republic of Colombia for the Period FY16-21](#), 23 February 2016.

49 World Bank Group, [Country Partnership Framework for the Republic of Colombia for the Period FY16-21](#), 23 February 2016.

50 World Bank Group, [Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016. Taking on Inequality](#), 2016, p. 84.

has the second largest number of internally displaced people in the world after Syria. The country also has the highest number of landmine victims in the world after Afghanistan.⁵¹

Violence has occurred not only as a result of the conflict between the Government of Colombia and the FARC, but as part of Colombia's many overlapping conflicts. These include interactions between illegal armed groups, such as paramilitary and other guerrilla forces, as well as conflict between drug trafficking organizations and the state. The trafficking of illicit narcotics by criminal organizations – and the associated counter-narcotics operations of the Colombian military – have all caused enormous human casualties in some of the poorest parts of the country.

B. The Peace Opportunity

The timing of the Committee's trip meant that the "two Colombias" reality was at the forefront of people's minds. Many emphasized that the achievement of durable peace would be an essential part of lessening the disparities and healing the divisions within the country. There is a general need to bridge the divide between Colombia's centre and the rural areas in the periphery.

The Committee heard throughout its meetings and field visits that peace, once realized, could create significant economic opportunities for Colombia. This potential is referred to as the "economic dividend" of peace. The Presidential Agency for International Cooperation – the government agency responsible for managing international assistance – indicated that the economic dividends of peace could be as high as 1.1 to 1.9 additional points of growth in the country's annual gross domestic product.⁵² It is believed that a final peace settlement would increase confidence among consumers, businesses and investors, which would lead to stronger economic growth, as well as more trade and foreign direct investment.

More particularly, peace would provide an important opportunity to address the country's rural development challenges. The Committee was told by private sector companies working in the natural resource sector that there is "unlocked potential" in Colombia's rural areas.⁵³ The agricultural and infrastructure sectors were highlighted in the same way. Increased tourism could also contribute to economic growth in a post-conflict scenario. Colombia is the second most biologically diverse country in the world after Brazil. Peace could open up rural parts of Colombia that were formerly too dangerous to visit, including national parks, to eco-tourism and wildlife tourism.

Generating and sustaining economic growth in rural parts of the country, of a kind that would benefit the poor and the marginalized are, however, no small tasks. Rural underdevelopment is one of the major legacies of Colombia's armed conflict. Large parts

51 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 9 June 2016. Another legacy of Colombia's conflict is the number of "disappeared". During a briefing in Villavicencio, the International Committee of the Red Cross told the Committee that some 117,000 people are registered as missing.

52 Meeting with the Presidential Agency for International Cooperation, Bogotá, 1 September 2016.

53 Meeting with private sector companies, Bogotá, 7 September 2016.

of rural Colombia have long been beyond the reach of the state and have not benefited from the economic growth that other parts of Colombia have experienced. The protracted nature of the armed conflict combined with a lack of economic opportunities has led many people in these areas to turn to illicit economic activities, such as coca cultivation, to maintain their livelihoods. The Committee discovered that many people in rural Colombia lack access to basic services, such as water and sanitation, hospitals and schools. Moreover, there is less and less access to high-quality justice and police services the farther away from the main urban areas one is.

Financial inclusion is another issue that needs to be addressed in rural Colombia, particularly for women and youth. That theme emerged from the Committee's discussions with agencies that implement Canadian-funded development projects. For example, Desjardins International Development indicated that there is a need to formalize the financial system in rural areas, and to make it more adaptable to the needs of the people who live there.⁵⁴ In this regard, the Committee was told that access to responsible micro-credit services could be an important tool in reducing poverty and promoting sustainable economic development in rural areas.

The scale of the country's rural development challenges was underscored during the Committee's meeting with Rafael Pardo, Colombia's Minister Counsellor for Post-Conflict, Human Rights and Security. In his view, it could take upwards of 20 years, and considerable resources, to bring the standard of living in rural areas up to that of urban parts of the country. At the same time, Minister Counsellor Pardo expressed, on behalf of the Colombian government, a clear desire to invest in rural infrastructure, to extend state services to the countryside and to provide a path out of poverty for people living in those areas. He also noted that the Government of Colombia is seeking partnerships with local and international private sector companies to help build rural economies, including by providing tax incentives to companies that promote commercial development in rural regions.⁵⁵

The Committee saw first-hand how conditions of peace can have a positive effect on rural economic development. One field visit took the Committee to San Martin de Los Llanos, a small municipality located just south of Villavicencio in the Department of Meta. There it visited a watermelon farm that is being supported by the Canadian government via its partnership with Socodevi, a Canadian NGO. Socodevi is funding a project called *Procompite*, which aims to improve the living conditions of people in rural areas by strengthening the economic competitiveness of rural associations.⁵⁶

One of those associations, Asosandia, works to advance social development through the production and sale of watermelons. Asosandia members indicated that their business increased significantly over the past year due in part to support from the

54 Meeting with rural development partners and beneficiaries, Guamal, 2 September 2016.

55 Meeting with Rafael Pardo, Minister Counsellor for Post-Conflict, Human Rights and Security, Bogotá, 1 September 2016.

56 For more information on the *Procompite* project, see: Global Affairs Canada, [Project profile: Improving Economic Competitiveness of Rural Associations – PROCOMPITE](#), Project Number: D000165-001.

Procompite project. Asosandia has, in fact, become the largest producer of watermelons in Colombia, and is currently exploring the possibility of exporting to international markets.⁵⁷



Visit to a watermelon farm supported by Canada through the *Procompite* project, San Martin de Los Llanos, Colombia, 2 September 2016.

The Committee heard that the success of Asosandia would not have been possible just a few years ago. Meta is one of the most conflict-affected departments in Colombia, and the areas surrounding San Martin de los Llanos have historically been home to the FARC and other armed groups.⁵⁸ In recent years, however, the security situation in the area has improved significantly. As a result, the region is beginning to see increased investment in land, capital and technology. Members of Asosandia told the Committee that better security conditions have allowed their organization to succeed and to create jobs for hundreds of people living in the San Martin de los Llanos area.

57 Visit to the Asosandia Association, San Martin de Los Llanos, 2 September 2016.

58 Document provided to FAAE by the Colombian Agency for Reintegration, September 2016. For more information on the presence of armed actors in the Meta department, see: Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz, [Reconquering and dispossession in the Altillanura: The case of Poligrow in Colombia](#), November 2015.

C. The Peace Challenge

As the preceding section indicated, the Committee's mission underscored the immense potential of peace. At the same time, the Committee heard that improved security conditions in certain parts of the country should not obscure the fact that many parts of Colombia continue to struggle with the legacies of the conflict. The following section discusses two such challenges, which Colombia will need to address as it attempts to transition to a post-conflict era. The first is rural security; the second is the reintegration of former combatants. These are also two areas where the Committee believes that Canada can provide targeted support.

1. The Rural Security Deficit

Ensuring broad-based rural security will be one of the main challenges in a post-conflict Colombia. Rural Colombia has, as noted, been the epicentre of the country's armed conflict. It is in rural Colombia where the FARC and other guerrilla groups, as well as paramilitary organizations, have their power base and where the vast majority of coca cultivation has taken place. Despite seeing better conditions in recent years, the Committee heard that the security situation in rural Colombia is still precarious.

Should a peace agreement be ratified, the demobilization of the FARC could result in a re-alignment of criminal actors in rural Colombia. For example, Colombia's second largest guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army (ELN), could see the FARC's demobilization as an opportunity to gain control over land and assets traditionally held by that rebel group. The ELN is engaged in talks with the Government of Colombia on a separate peace agreement, but the prospects for a negotiated settlement are unclear.⁵⁹ If those peace talks are unsuccessful, the ELN could push for control of the lucrative drug trade in the country, an activity in which the FARC has long been involved.⁶⁰ Other armed actors – including criminal groups referred to as BACRIM (from the Spanish “bandas criminales”) – may also position themselves to move into the security vacuum that could be created through the FARC's demobilization.

Citizen security in rural Colombia is also affected by the proliferation of landmines, another conflict legacy. Colombia is the second most mine-affected country in the world. There have been 11,000 mine victims in Colombia since 1990.⁶¹ Some 65% of the country's 1,123 municipalities contain landmines.⁶² In Villavicencio, the Committee met with HALO Trust, an NGO that specializes in the destruction of antipersonnel landmines and unexploded ordinance. Its personnel explained to the Committee that landmines

59 The National Liberation Army (ELN) is composed of approximately 1,500 members. After three years of preliminary negotiations, the ELN and the Government of Colombia agreed to begin peace talks in Ecuador in October 2016.

60 The FARC has been involved in the drug trade in Colombia for decades. However, as part of the Havana accord that was signed in September 2016, the FARC agreed to abandon its involvement in the drug trade. Meeting with donor countries and organizations, Bogotá, 7 September 2016.

61 The HALO Trust, “[Colombia](#),” *Where we work*.

62 Briefing note provided to FAAE by Global Affairs Canada entitled *Political and Security Situation in Colombia*, August 2016.

continue to blight much of rural Colombia, devastating local communities, inhibiting agricultural and economic development and preventing the return of many internally displaced persons. It was apparent from this meeting that there is a vast unmet need for demining in areas of the country that have either recently emerged from conflict or are still conflict-affected.⁶³

Several experts emphasized that Colombia's police force needs to play a much larger role in building and maintaining peace in rural parts of the country. The Committee visited the third largest police station in Bogotá, where it met with officers of Colombia's national police force, along with Fundación Ideas para la Paz, an independent research centre that is focused on peacebuilding. During the meeting, the Committee heard that Colombia's police force is currently undergoing a transition from "preparing for conflict, to preparing for peace."⁶⁴ As part of the country's shift from the management of conflict to the enforcement of law, the police force is seeking to extend its presence into conflict-affected parts of the country where it has historically been absent.

A key step for law enforcement officers will be gaining the trust of local populations. The representative of Fundación Ideas para la Paz emphasized to the Committee that many people living in rural and conflict-affected areas have long felt neglected by the state. As a result, Colombia's police force intends to undertake a recruitment campaign aimed at increasing the presence of police in rural areas. The Committee was told that 40,000 new police officers need to be hired nation-wide. As part of this campaign, the police will seek to recruit locally, including by hiring women as well as members of ethnic minorities. The recruitment campaign may involve the hiring of ex-combatants, provided that they have undergone the necessary reintegration programs and training.

The Committee heard that there may be a role for Canada to play in supporting Colombia's efforts to achieve rural security. Minister Counsellor Pardo expressed an interest in partnering with Canada on the issue of rural policing. He made reference to the work of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the possibility of exploring opportunities for training and capacity-building assistance.

The Committee believes that addressing the security deficit in rural areas of Colombia will be crucial to the country's long-term peace process, and that Canada has important expertise to offer in that regard. As such, it wants to see targeted Canadian support for those initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Government of Canada should explore opportunities to support the National Police of Colombia in its efforts to strengthen rural policing, including through training initiatives.

63 Meeting with the HALO Trust, Villavicencio, 3 September 2016. In July 2016, Global Affairs Canada announced a commitment of \$12.5 million over five years (2016–2021) to the HALO Trust for demining in Colombia.

64 Visit to a Bogotá police station, Bogotá, 6 September 2016.

2. The Reintegration of Former Combatants

One issue that the Committee heard about in detail concerned the reintegration of former combatants into civilian life. That general process is not limited to the FARC or specifically tied to the Havana peace negotiations. In fact, Colombia has had a process for reintegrating former combatants from a number of armed groups, including the FARC, the ELN and other guerrilla and paramilitary organizations, for many years.

During its field visit to Villavicencio, the Committee met with the Colombian Agency for Reintegration (ACR). ACR is the government agency in charge of designing and coordinating state policy for the social and economic reintegration of members of illegal armed groups who demobilize, either individually or collectively. The ACR works in coordination with the Ministry of Defense, which has overall responsibility for the disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants. Since 2003, some 58,000 combatants from paramilitary groups, the FARC, the ELN, and other armed groups have demobilized.⁶⁵ For many, reintegrating into regular social and economic life is all the more daunting given that the average age at which people entered the conflict is 13.

ACR's reintegration program is a multi-stage process that begins after combatants have disarmed and been certified as "demobilized" by Colombia's Operational Committee for the Abandonment of Weapons.⁶⁶ The program can take more than six years to complete. During that time, ex-combatants receive assistance and support in a number of areas, including psychosocial support, health care, education and job training. In the latter stages of the reintegration process, ex-combatants are also entitled to an economic incentive aimed at increasing employability or income generation. Participants who successfully complete the process are said to have "graduated" and receive certification. The Committee was told that, over the past 13 years, ACR has assisted more than 32,000 ex-combatants; of that number, more than 13,000 have successfully graduated from the ACR's program. According to the ACR, 80% of these people are currently employed.⁶⁷

The Committee had an opportunity to visit a "house of peace," which is one of the first points at which individuals engaged in the process begin to reintegrate into society. Members met directly with former FARC and ELN combatants, as well as ex-combatants from two smaller armed groups. The experiences they conveyed were insightful and emotional. Members learned about what had led those individuals to join armed groups, and about the circumstances that allowed them to exit the conflict. Some of the former combatants had participated in the armed conflict for as little as six months to one year, while one individual had been a member of an armed group for more than 21 years. The Committee heard that some people felt "brainwashed" by the guerrilla groups and were denied outside information and interactions. A number of individuals expressed fear for the future and regret about the past. Others spoke optimistically about wanting a better life and a brighter future for their children and families.

65 Briefing and site visit with the Colombian Agency for Reintegration, Villavicencio, 3 September 2016.

66 The Operational Committee for the Abandonment of Weapons verifies the circumstances of voluntary demobilization and issues certifications as the basis for reintegration benefits and services.

67 Briefing and site visit with the Colombian Agency for Reintegration, Villavicencio, 3 September 2016.

The Committee also met with ex-combatants at the ACR office in Villavicencio who were further along in the reintegration process. During this meeting, the Committee was informed about some of the practical challenges associated with re-entering civilian life, including issues related to gaining employment. One woman described her 13 years in the jungle fighting with the FARC. When she began the process of demobilization and reintegration, she was very afraid of the Colombian justice system. However, she was thankful to have reintegrated, which allowed her to receive an education and participate in a national apprenticeship program. Others raised the issue of stigmatization. Being an ex-combatant complicates employment prospects and social relationships. Several people revealed that they keep their past a secret from friends and employers.

The Committee also heard about the issue of recidivism (i.e., people returning to guerrilla activity). The ACR said that its programs are designed to prevent recidivism by encouraging ex-combatants to pursue education, training, and economic opportunities. The rate of recidivism for ex-combatants who complete the ACR program is much lower than for all people who leave Colombia's prisons. According to ACR figures, less than 1% of ex-combatants who complete their program re-enter the armed conflict, and about 9-14% commit crimes. Those figures compare to a recidivism rate of 70% for people who leave prisons⁶⁸ ACR officials believe that their success is based on continued support and engagement with individuals following their completion of the reintegration program.

ACR officials told the Committee that they were expecting to receive a large wave of demobilized combatants in the near future. Those remarks were made in the context of the Havana peace accord that was announced in August 2016, which laid out a framework for the total demobilization of the FARC and the reintegration of its members into civilian life. The need for reintegration services will become even greater should the Government of Colombia successfully complete a peace agreement with the ELN and put the resulting agreement into effect.⁶⁹

For the Committee, there is a clear connection between the success of reintegration programs and the durability of peace and prosperity, particularly in the areas of the country that have been most affected by conflict. Given the scale of the demobilization that is hoped will unfold in Colombia, and the resources that effective reintegration programs will require, the Committee believes that Canada should prioritize such programs for support.

RECOMMENDATION 5

As part of its development assistance to Colombia, the Government of Canada should provide targeted support to programs that are focused on the reintegration of former combatants.

68 Ibid.

69 Estimates on the number of FARC members vary. The most recent estimates put the number of FARC at approximately 7,000. The ELN is estimated to be composed of 1,500 members. Source: The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), "[Colombia's 52-Year Old Conflict with the FARC Comes to an End](#)," WOLA Statement, 24 August 2016.

D. Women, Peace and Security

As with Guatemala, one of the main purposes of the Committee's visit to Colombia was to examine the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda on the ground in a conflict-affected state. Over the course of its many meetings, the Committee learned of the challenges faced by women in Colombia and assessed the extent to which the principles of the women, peace and security agenda are being addressed in the country's peace process, and in Colombia's political system more broadly.⁷⁰

The Committee was told that women's rights and empowerment have been advanced through Colombia's political and legal systems, and that a body of legislation exists to protect and promote gender equality. The Committee met with the Congressional Legal Commission on Gender Equality, which was created in 2011 to draft and review legislation so as to ensure that the human, civil, political, economic and cultural rights of women are guaranteed. Members of the Commission spoke about several initiatives that have been advanced to reduce gender discrimination in Colombia. They highlighted the 2011 law on victims and land restitution, which includes dedicated provisions on land restitution for female claimants, including a measure to prioritize women, particularly those who are heads of households.⁷¹ Members of the Commission also noted that Colombia has a quota requirement to ensure that women represent at least 30% of the candidates on a political party's electoral list.⁷²

Notwithstanding these and other initiatives, there is a gap between the legal framework that has been put in place and actual outcomes relating to gender equality and women's rights. For example, the Committee was told that the number of women elected to Colombia's Congress falls well below the minimum threshold set for nominating candidates to party lists. In its 2014 election, only 23 out of the 102 members elected to the Senate were women (22.5%), and only 33 out of the 166 members elected to the House of Representatives were women (19.9%).⁷³ The Committee also heard that the rate of unemployment in the country is higher for women than it is for men, as is the incidence of poverty.

Decades of armed conflict have had a devastating impact on women in Colombia. Since 1985, some 7.8 million people have been reported as victims of the armed conflict, with the vast majority of those being victims of internal displacement. According to UN Women, approximately 49.5% of the victims are women.⁷⁴ Women too have been participants in the conflict; it is estimated that 30-40% of FARC members are women. And

70 For further background reading, see: Virginia M. Bouvier, [Gender and the Role of Women in Colombia's Peace Process](#), UN Women Background Paper, UN Women and United States Institute of Peace, 4 March 2016.

71 Meeting with the Congressional Legal Commission on Gender Equality, Bogotá, 5 September 2016.

72 In addition, Colombia's statutory law 581 (2000), the Quotas Law, mandates that 30% of high-ranking jobs within the structure of public administration should be occupied by women. For more information, see: UNDP, [Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment in Public Administration, Colombia Case Study](#), June 2014.

73 Document provided to the Committee by UN Women's country office in Colombia, 1 September 2016.

74 Ibid.

as was emphasized by the National Centre for Historical Memory, women have also played an important role in pushing for the defence of rights and the cataloguing of the experiences of victims and survivors.⁷⁵

Sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war by both state and non-state actors. Women have been subjected to sexual slavery, rape, unwanted pregnancies and forced abortions.⁷⁶ In general, a “continuum of violence” has affected women in Colombia. It was reported to the Committee that gender-based violence is widespread in Colombian society and few perpetrators are brought to justice. According to a 2014 review by the country’s Constitutional Court, approximately 97% of cases of sexual violence ended in impunity.⁷⁷ In terms of the situation in 2015, UN Women indicated that the country recorded more than 21,000 allegations of sexual-based violence and more than 75,000 allegations of domestic violence.⁷⁸ The Committee also heard from civil society organizations that threats against women human rights defenders are common and that violence against members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community occurs with troubling frequency.⁷⁹

Much of what the Committee learned on the subject of women, peace and security concerned the peace process between the Government of Colombia and the FARC. The Committee was told that it took considerable effort by women to gain access to the negotiating table. When the Colombian peace talks began in 2012, all of the plenipotentiaries – the limited number of people who speak on behalf of their delegation – were men, as were the vast majority of the government and FARC negotiators. Gender concerns were not prioritized in the initial negotiations.

That situation did change, however, as a result of the efforts of civil society organizations and women’s rights activists. Belén Sanz, UN Women’s Country Representative for Colombia, explained to the Committee that, in 2013, nearly 450 women from all over Colombia gathered in Bogotá at the National Summit of Women and Peace to demand recognition and a voice in the peace process.⁸⁰ Just weeks after that summit, an agreement was reached to increase the participation of women in the peace negotiations.⁸¹ In November of that year, President Juan Manuel Santos announced that two women would be appointed as plenipotentiary negotiators in the Havana discussions. In subsequent meetings in Havana, delegations of conflict victims – 60% of whom were reportedly women – were also invited to provide direct testimonials to the negotiating teams.

75 Meeting with the National Centre for Historical Memory, Bogotá, 5 September 2016.

76 Briefing by the Canadian Embassy in Colombia, Villavicencio, 1 September 2016.

77 Ibid.

78 Meeting with UN Women’s Country Representative for Colombia, Bogotá, 1 September 2016.

79 Roundtable discussion with civil society organizations on gender issues and peacebuilding, Bogotá, 5 September 2016.

80 The National Summit of Women and Peace is a process supported by UN Women that brings together Colombian women engaged in peacebuilding. The second national summit was held in Bogotá in September 2016. See: UN Women, [UN Women supports the Second National Summit of Women and Peace in Bogota highlighting Colombian women’s participation in peacebuilding](#), 20 September 2016.

81 Meeting with UN Women’s Country Representative for Colombia, Bogotá, 1 September 2016.

Other changes followed. Ms. Sanz described how in 2014 an agreement was reached between the Government of Colombia and the FARC to create a gender sub-commission that was specifically mandated to ensure that gender perspectives and women's rights would be included in all the peace agreements. It is the first time that a dedicated gender sub-commission has been created as part of a conflict resolution process.⁸² In July 2016, the sub-commission announced the results of its work, which included putting forward proposals on women's access to land and property; political participation; special protection measures; and psychosocial attention for victims of sexual violence.⁸³

Over the course of the Committee's mission to Colombia, the issue of implementation was referred to time and again as a key concern in relation to the women, peace and security agenda. Colombia does not have a national action plan on women, peace and security. Some civil society organizations in the country have been pushing for the government to adopt such a plan and ensure implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. That said, even without an action plan, it is clear that the Government of Colombia is responsive to the women, peace and security agenda. The design of the Havana peace process and content of the resulting accord are concrete examples.

At the same time, the defeat of the peace accord in the national plebiscite in early October 2016 raised concerns about the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda in Colombia, including whether the gains made by women's organizations and activists during the Havana peace process would be maintained in a revised text.⁸⁴ The Committee believes that it is vital that achievements realized to date in the recognition of the gender aspects of Colombia's conflict dynamics and post-conflict needs be upheld and built upon. At this stage in Colombia's history, it is more critical than ever to reiterate the vitally important role that women play in achieving and sustaining peace. As the Committee emphasized in its recent report on women, peace and security, women's participation in peace processes increases the durability of the peace that is achieved.⁸⁵ Women therefore must continue to play a leading role in all efforts to realize a lasting peace in Colombia.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Government of Canada should provide on-the-ground support for the efforts of women's organizations and women's rights activists in Colombia, including in rural areas, towards the development and implementation of gender-responsive peace agreements.

82 Meeting with donor countries and organizations, Bogotá, 7 September 2016.

83 Document provided to the Committee by UN Women entitled *Key data about women's participation in the Colombian peace negotiations*, September 2016.

84 Some segments of the Colombian population expressed opposition to the provisions of the September 2016 peace accord that addressed gender issues and referred to the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. See: Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli, "[Debunking the myths about "Gender Ideology" in Colombia](#)," The Washington Office on Latin America, 25 October 2016.

85 FAAE, [An Opportunity for Global Leadership: Canada and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, October 2016, p. 12.

PARTNERING WITH GUATEMALA AND COLOMBIA FOR THE LONG-TERM

One of the Committee's main objectives in travelling to Guatemala and Colombia was to examine the results of Canada's bilateral development cooperation in greater detail on the ground. That exercise was not meant to culminate in a pronouncement on Guatemala's status as a "development partner" as opposed to "country of focus" for Canada's bilateral assistance. Nor was the Committee's aim to make a recommendation on whether Colombia should be maintained or removed from the current list of 25 countries of focus. Making such determinations would have required a much larger scope of comparative analysis, including travel to a broader range of focus and partner countries, and to those not currently on either of those lists.

It was evident from the Committee's hearings in Ottawa⁸⁶ that the criteria currently used as the basis for determining the lists of focus and partner countries need to be clarified.⁸⁷ It would be difficult from a methodological perspective to use the three elements of those criteria – development needs, capacity to use aid effectively, and alignment with Canadian policies – to assess definitively whether Guatemala and Colombia should be prioritized as recipients of Canadian development assistance over other countries. It is not clear, for example, why Honduras is a country of focus and Guatemala is a development partner country, but El Salvador is neither. In 2014-2015, Canada's total bilateral international assistance to El Salvador was \$2.4 million compared to \$8.16 million for Guatemala and \$29.25 million for Honduras.⁸⁸ Yet, these three neighbouring countries are at similar levels of development and face many of the same challenges, including high levels of poverty, inequality and criminal violence. It would therefore appear that sufficient needs exist in all three countries as to make a case for Canadian bilateral development assistance. In terms of capacity, all three have grappled with weak governance and rule of law.

Likewise, it is not clear what factors Global Affairs Canada takes into account to determine how much it allocates to each of these countries. From a comparative perspective, the only development partner countries that received less Canadian bilateral assistance than Guatemala worldwide in 2014–2015 were South Africa (\$6.22 million) and Cuba (\$2.42 million).⁸⁹ It would have been very tempting for the Committee to recommend, based on the real needs it saw first-hand in Guatemala, that Canada's development cooperation program with that country should be expanded. Some of Guatemala's greatest challenges – strengthening the rule of law, ensuring accountable governance and upholding the rights of women and indigenous peoples – are exactly the

86 See: FAAE, [Development Cooperation for a More Stable, Inclusive and Prosperous World: A Collective Ambition](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, November 2016.

87 According to Global Affairs Canada, the 25 countries of focus were chosen in 2014 according to an assessment of their needs, their capacity to benefit from development assistance, and their alignment with Canadian policy priorities. FAAE, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 May 2016.

88 Global Affairs Canada, [Statistical Report on International Assistance 2014–2015](#), 2016; document provided to the Committee by Global Affairs Canada entitled *Canada's International Assistance to Countries of Focus and Development Partners*, June 2016.

89 Ibid.

policy areas in which Canada has long-standing expertise to offer, and its own national experiences to reflect on. Nevertheless, the Committee wants to be consistent with the main messages of its recent report on Canada's countries of focus, in which it noted that Canada's total aid budget will ultimately determine the number of countries and the range of sectors in which Canada can be a leader. Without solving that larger puzzle, a Committee recommendation arguing that Canada should become a top donor in one country would only result in it becoming a lesser player in another, where needs could be equally great.

These questions about budgetary figures and methodology aside, in an overall sense both Guatemala and Colombia provide a compelling rationale for Canadian support. As discussed above, while Guatemala and Colombia are technically middle-income countries, that classification masks huge disparities in living standards.⁹⁰ It was emphasized to the Committee that the two capital cities – Guatemala City and Bogotá – are not representative of most areas of Guatemala and Colombia. In both countries, it is people living in rural areas, including indigenous peoples, who are most in need, yet who feel most neglected by the state.

From a comparative perspective, the Committee's mission to these two countries underscored a number of thematic areas that warrant Canadian attention. Ensuring that economic progress reaches and benefits communities in rural areas was a key take-away for the Committee. So was the need to enhance state capacity in rural areas, including in the form of security for all citizens, but also access to justice, health care, financial services and education. Another message was the importance of supporting local actors, whether institutions or individuals, that are focused on strengthening the rule of law, protecting human rights and challenging impunity. As the Committee saw first-hand, there are many local partners in Guatemala and Colombia that are striving for change and achieving results in these sectors, and for whom even a small amount of Canadian funding could be catalytic.

The women, peace and security agenda is another compelling part of the rationale for Canadian engagement in Guatemala and Colombia. In both countries, women have taken on leadership roles in peace and security processes. In Guatemala, these efforts have involved the development of a national action plan on women, peace and security. In Colombia, women played an important part in ensuring that gender perspectives were included as part of the peace talks with the FARC. At the same time, however, the Committee heard that significant challenges related to the fulfilment of women's rights exist in both countries, including the persistence of troubling rates of sexual- and gender-based violence. There is also still room for women to be included more systematically in political institutions and the formal economy.

90 According to the World Bank, for the current 2017 fiscal year, lower middle-income countries are defined as those with a gross national income (GNI) per capita of between US\$1,026 and US\$4,035 in 2015. Upper middle-income countries are defined as those countries with a GNI per capita of between US\$4,036 and US\$12,475 in 2015. Guatemala's GNI per capita in 2015 was US\$3,590. That same year, Colombia's GNI per capita was US\$7,130. For more information on the World Bank's methodology, see: [The World Bank, World Bank Country and Lending Groups](#).

These findings provide some direction on priorities for Canadian development assistance in Guatemala and Colombia. The Committee visited a number of relevant projects during its mission, and has addressed many of the themes highlighted in this chapter in the preceding recommendations of this report. The Committee is also aware that Canada provides funding for many other projects in both countries, such as those focused on child protection and community resilience to climate change. While the Committee did not tour examples of such initiatives during this trip, it believes they are worthy of continued support.

With all of Canada's development cooperation programs, the Committee believes that predictability, partnerships and long-term engagement are critical elements for success. Those elements stood out during the Committee's mission to Guatemala and Colombia, and were also addressed in the Committee's recent reports and recommendations on women, peace and security and the countries of focus for Canada's development assistance.

Canada's support to the Federation of Cooperatives of the Verapaces (Fedecovera) in Guatemala is a good example of the benefits that can result from sustained engagement with local partners and a long-term outlook. Fedecovera is a federation of agricultural cooperatives that specializes in the production of organic cardamom (a spice made from the seeds of plants), coffee, tea, cocoa, essential oils, basic grains, black pepper and turmeric. The Government of Canada supported Fedecovera for 23 years. During that time, the largest and last Canadian-funded project was a \$6.85 million program called the *Project for Entrepreneurial Development of Cooperative Federations in Guatemala (Prodef)* that was implemented between 2002 and 2011.

During a field visit to Fedecovera's production facility in Cobán, the Committee was told that when the *Prodef* project began, Fedecovera had no export capacity. However, by the end of the project, Fedecovera was the largest producer and exporter of organic cardamom in the world.⁹¹ Fedecovera, which was almost destroyed during Guatemala's internal armed conflict, now has a membership of more than 25,000 producing families, or some 140,000 people. It also has clients on five continents and portfolios with 150 companies.

91 Visit to the Federation of Cooperatives of the Verapaces (Fedecovera), Cobán, 30 August 2016.



Visit to a Fedecovera agricultural cooperative, Cobán, Guatemala, 30 August 2016.

Fedecovera is a notable example of how long-term Canadian support for local initiatives can yield significant development benefits. It is also an example of how targeted development funding can have wider ripple effects. The growth of Fedecovera has not only led to important economic gains, it has also helped to empower indigenous people and women. The Committee was told that all of Fedecovera's producers are indigenous Mayan Q'eqchi or Poqomchi people – groups that are often the most affected by extreme poverty within Guatemala. The Committee also learned that the number of women participating in local Fedecovera cooperatives, including at the decision-making level, has increased as a result of the *Prodef* project.

The success of Fedecovera also points to the importance of predictability. The *Prodef* project lasted more than eight years. This time frame provided the implementing partner – Socodevi – and the beneficiary – Fedecovera – with a significant amount of time in which to execute the project and learn from challenges and successes encountered along the way. The long project lifecycle also allowed Fedecovera to prepare for the project's end and to structure their finances, operations and partnerships accordingly.

The Committee believes that these principles – long-term engagement, predictability and partnerships with local actors – can increase the likelihood that positive and sustainable outcomes will result from the money that Canada spends on development projects. While there is a sense of forward momentum in both Guatemala and Colombia, the development gains that have been realized in recent years need to be consolidated and sustained. That is particularly true for rural areas. The Committee therefore wants to see Canada’s development assistance in both countries concentrated, to the greatest degree possible, on rural development initiatives and on projects that can help to empower grassroots organizations, as well as businesses and state institutions that are working for progress in rural communities.

Guatemala’s experience also points to important lessons regarding the challenges with which countries must grapple in navigating post-conflict transitions. Twenty years after its realization of a peace accord, Guatemala has not resolved all societal issues related to the role of its state security institutions, the discrimination and exclusion faced by vulnerable and marginalized groups, or the thirst for justice that citizens have in response to crimes committed in the past and the present day. Yet, the support of the international community inevitably seems to wane in such countries before the ultimate goals of any peace agreement have been realized: the presence of justice and the absence of fear.⁹² While Guatemala and Colombia have unique characteristics and experiences, such general lessons apply to all countries seeking to move on from periods of armed violence. Even if Colombia is able to achieve permanent peace settlements with different guerrilla groups, that will mark only the beginning of a long peacebuilding process. It is the Committee’s firm belief that Canada will therefore need to play an active supporting role in both countries for years to come.

92 This phrase is a variation of a famous quotation by Dr. Ursula Franklin, a Canadian scientist, feminist and pacifist.

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>As an individual</p> <p>Jean Daudelin, Associate Professor, The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University</p> <p>Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development</p> <p>Isabelle Bérard, Director General, Latin America (Development)</p> <p>Sylvia Cesaratto, Director, South America</p> <p>Mylène Paradis, Deputy Director, Central America</p> <p>Fio Corporation</p> <p>Michael Greenberg, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer</p> <p>Inter Pares</p> <p>Bill Fairbairn, Latin America Program Manager</p> <p>KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives</p> <p>Rachel Warden, Coordinator, Latin American Partnerships and Gender Justice Program</p>	2016/06/09	19

APPENDIX B

TRAVEL TO GUATEMALA AND COLOMBIA

From August 28 to September 8, 2016

Organizations and Individuals	Location/Date
GUATEMALA	
Embassy of Canada Deborah Chatsis, Ambassador of Canada to Guatemala Claude Beauséjour, Director, Central America Development Program Christina Laur, Senior Development Officer, Canadian Cooperation Section Monica Izaguirre, Foreign Policy and Diplomacy Service Officer	Guatemala City August 28, 2016
Lawyers Without Borders Canada (Guatemala office) Dominic Voisar, Country Representative	Rabinal, Baja Verapaz August 29, 2016
Human Rights Law Office of Rabinal Jesús Tecú, Director	
Tula Foundation Eric Peterson, President and Founder Christy Gombay, Global Health Program Director	Cobán, Alta Verapaz August 29, 2016
TulaSalud Guatemala Isabel Lobos, Executive Director	
Mujeres Transformando el Mundo (Women Transforming the World) Paula Barrios, General Coordinator	Cobán, Alta Verapaz August 30, 2016
Project Counselling Service Cristal Barrientos, Administrator for Central America and Mexico	
Unión Nacional de Mujeres de Guatemala (National Union of Guatemalan Women) Olivia Tox	
Estudios Comunitarios y Acción Psicosocial (Community Study and Psychosocial Action Team) Judith Erazo	
Colectiva Jalok U Demecia Yat Matilde Sub Margarita Chub Rosario Xo Carmen Xol	

Organizations and Individuals	Location/Date
GUATEMALA	
<p>Federation of Cooperatives of the Verapaces (FEDECOVERA) Leonardo Delgado, General Manager</p>	<p>Cobán, Alta Verapaz August 30, 2016</p>
<p>Inter-Institutional Working Group on Women, Peace and Security Ana Isabel Carrillo, Director of Multilateral Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ana Grace Cabrera, Women, Peace and Security Coordinator, UN Women Carmen Rosa De León, Representative, Instituto de Enseñanza para el Desarrollo Sostenible (Institute for Training in Sustainable Development) Vilma Rojas, Representative, Public Ministry</p>	<p>Guatemala City August 31, 2016</p>
<p>International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) Arturo Aguilar, Senior Political Officer Tomas Salcedo, Special Assistant to the CICIG Commissioner</p>	
<p>Fundación Myrna Mack Helen Mack</p>	
<p>National Coordinator of Widows of Guatemala (CONAVIGUA) Feliciana Macario</p>	
<p>As an Individual Otilia Lux, Mayan Q'eqchi Leader and Analyst, former Commissioner of Guatemala's Historical Clarification Commission</p>	
<p>Unión Nacional de Mujeres de Guatemala (National Union of Guatemalan Women) Ada Valenzuela, Executive Director</p>	
<p>Centro para la Acción Legal en Derechos Humanos (Center for Legal Action on Human Rights) Alejandra Castillo, Deputy Director</p>	
<p>Mujeres Transformando el Mundo (Women Transforming the World) Paula Barrios, General Coordinator</p>	

Organizations and Individuals	Location/Date
COLOMBIA	
Embassy of Canada	Bogotá September 1, 2016
Douglas Challborn, Counsellor (Political)	
Ryan Clark, Director of Cooperation	
Nicolas Cloutier, Counsellor (Management) and Consul MCO	
Diana Munoz, Development Officer-Analyst	
Office of Post-Conflict, Human Rights and Security	
Rafael Pardo, Presidential Counsellor for Post-Conflict, Human Rights and Security	
Gloria Ospina, Director, Office of Post-Conflict, Human Rights and Security	
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	
María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar, Minister of Foreign Affairs	
Presidential Agency for International Cooperation	
Andrés Uribe, Technical Director	
Catalina Rojas, Coordinator for Bilateral Cooperation	
UN Women	
Belén Sanz, Country Representative for Colombia	
ASOSANDIA Association	Villaviencio September 2, 2016
Juan Carlos Montejo, Manager	
Germán Tilano, President	
Développement International Desjardins	
François Dionne, PMP Director	
SOCODEVI	
Sébastien Valdivieso, Project Manager	
Canadian Co-operative Association	
Lydia Joan Makuch Phillips, Program Director, Colombia	
Gestando	
Nicolás Alexander Mendoza V., Director of Operations	
La Financière agricole Quebec (FADQ)	
Andres Jacome, Development Officer	
Colombian Agency for Reintegration	Villaviencio September 3, 2016
Juan Carlos Silva, Director of the Meta Office	
International Committee of the Red Cross	
Steven Van Damme, Head of the regional office for San José de Guaviare and Villavicencio	

Organizations and Individuals	Location/Date
COLOMBIA	
HALO Trust Yeison Villamil, Operations Manager Emma Simmons, Location Manager for Meta Natalia Gardezabal, Communications Officer Dan Haddow, Programme Support Officer	Villaviencio September 3, 2016
Corporación Colombia Diversa Marcela Sánchez, Director	Bogotá September 5, 2016
Initiative of Women for Peace Patricia Buriticá	
Rural Peasant and Indigenous Women's Association Blanca Flor Valencia	
Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres por la Paz Marina Gallego, National Coordinator	
Corporación Sisma Mujer Viviana Rodríguez, Head of Mobilization	
Congressional Legal Commission on Gender Equality Argenis Velásquez Ramíres, Vice-President	
Senate Iván Leonidas Name Vásquez, Second Vice-President	
National Centre for Historical Memory Gonzalo Sánchez, Director Alvaro Villarraga Maria Emma Wills Paula Ila Patricia Linares Martha Nubia Bello Patrick Morales Thomas	
National Police of Colombia Coronel Yed Milton López, Chief of Prevention, Community Wellbeing and Citizen Security Directorate of Citizen Security Lieutenant Angelica Mora, Gender expert, Directorate of Citizen Security	Bogotá September 6, 2016
Fundación Ideas Para la Paz Patricia Bulla, Director of Public Safety	

Organizations and Individuals	Location/Date
COLOMBIA	
Unidad Nacional de Atención y Reparación Integral para las Víctimas (Unit for the Integral Attention and Reparation of the Victims)	Bogotá September 6, 2016
Ana Maria Torres	
Ana Maria Martin	
Diana Alejandra Ibañez	
Plan International	
Gabriela Bucher, Director	
Gabriela Luna	
Office of the UN Resident Coordinator	
Pontus Ohrstedt, Chief of Staff	
Organization of American States Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia	
Juan Carlos Roncal, Director of Bogotá Office	
Fundación Ideas Para la Paz	
Maria Victoria Llorente, Director	
USAID	Bogotá
Peter Natiello, Mission Director	September 7, 2016
European Commission in Colombia	
Francisco García, Director of Cooperation	
Embassy of Great Britain	
Katherine Johnson	
Embassy of Sweden	
Juan Camilo Clavijo, Donor Coordination Group	
Embassy of Switzerland	
Andrés Restrepo, Program Officer	
Canada Colombia Chamber of Commerce	
Olga Fernandez de Soto, President	
Continental Gold	
Alexandra Guaqueta, Vice President, Government Relations	
Gran Tierra	
Adrian Coral, President	
Ed Caldwell, Director of Corporate Social Responsibility	
Canacol Energy	
Charles Gamba, President	

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 19, 33 and 36](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Robert D. Nault
Chair

**SUPPORTING PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN GUATEMALA AND COLOMBIA FOR THE LONG-TERM
Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development**

Supplementary Opinion of the New Democratic Party of Canada

The New Democratic Party extends its thanks to the many people who assisted the Committee during its visit to Guatemala and Colombia in August 2016. This was an important occasion to witness the achievements and opportunities for improvement of Canadian assistance in both countries. In particular, we want to thank the many women who challenged the Committee to think more deeply about the importance of women's full participation in women, peace and security processes in their respective countries. We celebrate their leadership, courage and insight.

While the NDP agrees with much of the Committee's final report, we believe the Committee's recommendations are not sufficiently ambitious or bold, especially with regard to Canadian funding. Canada's annual contribution of official development assistance (ODA) is below the OECD average. If Canada wishes to strengthen its international reputation and seriously contribute to ending global poverty, it must increase its official development assistance budget.

The Committee has already recommended in a previous report that Canada increase its ODA to 0.7% in order to better achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, we believe the Committee should have recommended, based on the real needs it saw first-hand in Guatemala (see notably paragraph 93), that Canada's development cooperation program with that country should be expanded as Canada's international aid budget increases. As this report correctly recognizes, some of Guatemala's greatest challenges are key policy areas of interest to Canada: namely, strengthening the rule of law, ensuring accountable governance,

and upholding the rights of women and indigenous peoples. Canada should therefore consider increasing its assistance in these areas.

The trip to Colombia and Guatemala also highlighted the important roles women play in peace and security, and the need for sufficient assistance from Canada for this area of programming. We therefore take this opportunity to reiterate recommendations we, the New Democratic Party, made in our previous supplementary report to the Committee's 2016 report on Women, Peace and Security, in particular: if Canada is to make the WPS Agenda a core goal of Canadian foreign policy, it must provide a dedicated budget for Canada's National Action Plan, including funds for staff, consultations, outreach, Canadian capacity building and knowledge management. Further, we believe Canada must allocate at least 15% of the international assistance it provides for peace and security programming to projects that have the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment as their primary objective.

Canada has much to contribute globally, both in terms of women, peace and security and in terms of sustainable development. For our country to succeed, we must walk the talk and strengthen our commitments. This is not just the right thing to do - it's the wise thing to do.