

1 Overview of gender equality in Colombia

This chapter presents a succinct overview of the status of gender equality in Colombia. It explores the policy and legal instruments as well as existing barriers and gaps in attaining gender equality. It briefly maps factors that affect women's empowerment at the national and local levels, such as access to education and employment, violence against women, problems faced by the indigenous populations and the internal armed conflict in selected regions. Based on a multidimensional understanding of women's empowerment, it proposes an empowerment continuum to enhance women's access to justice and politics at the local level.

1.1. Current status of gender equality in Colombia

The OECD promotes gender equality as a key enabler of inclusive growth and national well-being (OECD, 2016^[1]). In particular, the equal participation of women and men in decision-making positions in public institutions is inherent to their perception as legitimate, representative and trustworthy. Inclusion must take account of intersecting factors such as gender identity, race, age, socio-economic background and minority status, among others. Political empowerment is also essential for democratic governance; this relates to citizens' legal rights to vote, express their opinions, run for elected office and exercise these rights without facing discrimination.

Colombia has made important strides in gender equality over the past two decades. It rose to a ranking of 22nd out of 153 countries in the World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Gender Gap Index, up from 40th out of 149 countries in 2018 (World Economic Forum, 2020^[2]). In particular, Colombia has adopted a robust normative system that protects women's rights, and legislation requiring that women candidates comprise at least 30% of party electoral lists. This Quota Law has been a crucial enabler for higher representation of women in public institutions. In March 2013, the Colombian government approved a National Policy on Gender Equality (CONPES 161) that aims to co-ordinate efforts across the whole-of-government to guarantee women's equality and non-discrimination. In 2010, Colombia became the first country formally to acknowledge the economic contribution of unpaid care work with the passage of a law (Law 1413 of 2010) mandating time-use surveys to account for the care economy and women's invisible contribution to national accounts (OECD, 2017^[3]). The National Development Plan 2018-22 includes an entire chapter on women's rights based on three dimensions: the economic, the political and the dimension regarding physical integrity, which includes violence against women.

Despite these achievements, Colombia still faces challenges on the path to gender equality and the social and economic empowerment of women and girls. Advances are needed in the effective implementation, enforcement and evaluation of relevant gender equality policies, laws and government programmes, particularly at the local level. The ability to embed a gender perspective within routine government decision making also needs enhancement. There is scope to make political financing regulations more gender responsive and to introduce incentives for political parties to allocate resources to support female candidates. Other barriers to overcome include increased flows of illegal financing, vote buying, political violence and violence against social leaders.

In terms of access to justice, Colombia has made important advances in its efforts to measure and map the legal needs of its population through the use of a comprehensive legal needs survey. This approach has been strengthened through the development of an Effective Access to Justice Index, an example of best practice, designed to locate regions of greatest need and assist with measuring the effectiveness of justice initiatives. However, there is room for improvement in Colombia's design, planning and delivery of justice services, at both the national and subnational levels. A more consistent focus is needed on the barriers women face when accessing justice, especially women who are victims of violence. In addition, greater co-ordination, such as unified information systems, is required among the multiple and often disconnected actors in the national and subnational justice systems.

Addressing these gaps and realising effective change on the ground requires all national and regional actors in Colombia to share collective responsibility via strengthened mandates, capacities and resources. This means not only strengthening the inclusiveness of public policies and justice institutions, but also fundamentally reshaping gender stereotypes and attitudes: at home, at school, in workplaces and in public spaces. Integrated and long-term efforts are needed at both the policy and civil society levels. The OECD-SIDA Co-operation Joint Work Plan aims to support this by fostering collaboration among stakeholders to enhance the effective and efficient use of existing resources – by breaking down barriers to access and delivery, and by identifying opportunities to consolidate and streamline government services.

Initiatives to promote gender equality, described below, have been introduced by local authorities at the departmental and municipal level (i.e. governors and mayors), taking into account the constitutional principle of territorial autonomy (Article 1, Colombian Constitution). Moving forward, reforms at the departmental and municipal levels should be accompanied by reforms at the national level in a holistic and systematic manner. This approach forms the basis for several recommendations presented in this report. Capacity-building activities outlined in the “women’s political participation” and “access to justice” streams of the OECD-SIDA Co-operation Joint Work Plan are set within a framework of collaborative and linked departmental/municipal and national action to improve the coherence and sustainability of future policies and programmes.

Further efforts to raise awareness of gender equality within political parties, public institutions and society, and to tackle gender stereotypes, enhance legal empowerment and strengthen institutional gender mechanisms, could help to create the space for women from diverse backgrounds to access decision-making posts, including in politics.

1.2. A snapshot of socio-economic factors underpinning gender inequalities

Women’s rights in Colombia have evolved gradually since the early 20th century. Measures taken to combat gender discrimination and gender-based violence include the ratification of international norms, the adoption of a robust normative system and the creation of a National Policy for Gender Equality (Box 1.1).

Box 1.1. Colombia's international and national commitments on women's rights

Colombia has signed and ratified all international treaties and instruments on human rights and rights for women, including the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) and its Facultative Protocol (1999); the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (1994); and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998). Colombia has also adopted laws and public policies aiming to promote gender equality and to guarantee women's rights. For instance, Law 1257 of 2008 dictates norms to raise awareness of women's rights and to prevent and sanction all types of violence and discrimination against women.

The National Development Plan 2012-14 mandated the development of a national policy on gender equality (Articles 77 and 179), to be led by the Office of the Presidential Advisor for Gender Equality (CPEM). In dialogue with civil society, the government thus produced a policy document, CONPES 161 of 2013, with general guidelines on a National Policy for Gender Equality (CONPES, 2013^[4]).¹ This policy document addressed important challenges facing women in Colombia, such as challenges concerning women's rights vis-à-vis the justice system. It included a Plan to ensure women the right to a life free from violence and created a committee for co-ordinating actions among institutions, led by the Presidential Advisor for Gender Equality.

The National Development Plan 2018-22 includes a chapter on women's rights, "Pact for Women's Equality", based on three dimensions: the economic dimension (overcoming poverty, the care economy, inequality in the workplace); the political dimension (women in positions of power and decision making) and the physical integrity dimension (violence and sexual and reproductive rights). The pact's policy lines are:

- strengthening the gender institutional framework for women in Colombia
- education and economic empowerment for eliminating gender gaps at work
- a commitment to articulation and co-responsibility in the care economy
- women's political participation
- promotion of sexual and reproductive rights
- women's right to a life free of violence
- rural women as agents of transformation
- equity for women in peacebuilding.

Stereotypes and discrimination still limit women's and girls' choices and outcomes in Colombia, as they do throughout the world. Many factors drive these inequalities. As in many other countries, women in Colombia participate in unpaid work, including housework and family care, at greater rates than men do – 7.23 hours per day on average, compared to 3.10 hours per day for men – and these hours in unpaid work restrict time that can be spent in the labour market (DANE, 2018^[5]). This is the case despite the fact that Colombia was the first country formally to acknowledge the economic contribution of unpaid care work (OECD, 2017^[3]).

An important factor affecting women in Colombia has been the civil armed conflict of recent decades. More than 8.8 million people have been registered as victims of the armed conflict. The majority are victims of forced displacement, and about 80% of the internally displaced are women and children (Verdad Abierta, 2016^[6]). Colombia has one of the highest proportions of displaced persons in the world: as of June 2019, 7 513 774 were registered as internally displaced (Unidad de Víctimas, 2019^[7]). Of these, 87% are from rural areas (Norwegian Refugee Council and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2016^[8]). Furthermore, 15.8% of the women displaced because of the armed conflict have stated that they were also victims of sexual violence. Women belonging to indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities have been most affected by the armed conflict, with 51.6% indigenous women and 40.7% of Afro-Colombian women

declared to be victims of the conflict. Of these, 59% of the indigenous women and 62.7% of the Afro-Colombian women were displaced (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2019^[9]).

To respond to this urgent matter, the Victims and Land Restitution Law (Law 1448 of 2011) implemented measures to ensure gender equality when women are displaced from their land (Box 1.2). Additionally, in 2013 the National Council on Economic and Social Policy issued detailed policy guidelines (CONPES 3784) regarding the rights of women victims of the armed conflict.

Box 1.2. The National Reparation Programme

Law 1448 of 2011 sets out “measures for the provision of attention, assistance and reparation to the victims of the internal armed conflict”. The measures apply to victims of forced displacement, homicide, kidnapping, torture, forced disappearance, recruitment of children, anti-personnel landmines and sexual crimes during the internal armed conflict, starting from January 1, 1985.

The Reparation Programme, implemented by the Unit for Victims’ Attention and Reparation, has evolved from plan for humanitarian support and assistance to a system of economic compensation, land restitution, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees that victims will not be victimised again.

The law also includes “special provisions for women and children survivors of human rights abuses, and those targeted because of their perceived sexual orientation; and the recognition of the importance of protection measures for victims returning to lands that are restored to them.”

Source: (Amnesty International, 2012^[10]), *Colombia: The Victims and Land Restitution Law*, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4f99029f2.pdf>.

Box 1.3. Context of the armed conflict in Putumayo

The southern department of Putumayo is a coca-growing region and this has made it a conflict zone between guerrillas and the army. Putumayo’s 13 municipalities have traditionally been grouped into three subregions, High, Middle and Low Putumayo, according to their geography, their economic production and the presence both of state institutions and armed groups.

Most coca plantations are located in Low Putumayo, which shares a border with Ecuador. This zone constitutes a strategic corridor for drug trafficking and thus has seen a strong presence of illicit armed groups. In 2000, a large proportion of Colombia’s coca plantations (40%) were located in Putumayo, with 87% of these in Low Putumayo.

There have also been illicit crops in most municipalities of Middle Putumayo, where Mocoa is located. This subregion has been exposed to the armed conflict since 2005, when fighting began there between the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) guerrilla movement and the army. In contrast, High Putumayo, a zone with extensive stockbreeding and no coca plantations, has been less exposed to armed conflict than the other subregions.

All of the various armed groups that fought in the area, from guerrillas to paramilitaries, were linked to drug cartels or were themselves coca producers and/or dealers. FARC guerrillas had a strong presence in the department from 1991 to 1998, which continued until the Peace Agreement of 2016.

Source: (National Historical Memory Centre, 2012^[11]), *El Placer: Mujeres, Coca y Guerra en el Bajo Putumayo (El Placer: Women, Coca and War in Low Putumayo)*, http://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/descargas/informes2012/el_placer.pdf.

Box 1.4. Context of the armed conflict in Chocó

Chocó's key strategic location, with access to the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans and borders with Panama and three other departments, fostered drug trafficking and the growing of illegal crops during the armed conflict. Illegal mining, in most cases linked to illegal armed groups, also generated violence in in this department.

FARC guerrillas were present in the department from the 1980s until the Peace Accords took effect in 2017. Since then, areas controlled by the FARC have been reoccupied by other illegal armed groups, such as the *Autodefensas Gaitanistas* and the ELN (National Liberation Army). During the 1990s, paramilitary groups like the AUC were also present in Chocó, moving in from the departments of Antioquia and Valle del Cauca.

Sources: (IOM, 2015^[12]), *Chocó: Una paz estable, duradera y sensible a niños, niñas, adolescentes y jóvenes*, <https://repository.oim.org.co/bitstream/handle/20.500.11788/1638/86.5.%20COL-OIM%20218%20V5%20Choco.pdf?sequence=9&isAllowed=y>.

1.2.1. Violence against women in Colombia

While women were particularly affected during the country's 60-year internal armed conflict, many women in Colombia also experience violence in everyday life, e.g. within their households.

Stereotypes, discrimination and socio-economic conditions have a direct impact on violence against women in Colombia (defined by Law 1257 of 2008). This violence takes various forms: against women in the family (domestic violence and marital rape), in the community (sexual violence, trafficking and femicide²) and with respect to women's reproductive rights. The armed conflict exacerbated the situation, with numerous cases of violence against women (notably against internally displaced women) perpetrated by the state and illegal armed groups (World Organisation Against Torture, 2003^[13]). In Colombia the security of women and girls deteriorated as a result of the armed conflict and the use of social control and sexual violence by illegal armed groups, according to a study by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (OAS, 2006^[14]). The study noted that violence against women is used as a "strategy of war" by the actors of armed conflicts in their fight to control communities and territories. There has yet to be a full accounting of sexual violence against women during the internal armed conflict in Colombia, with official figures and reparations for the victims. Entities such as the Attorney General's Office have an important role to play, especially in investigating this issue as a systematic practice within the armed conflict (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2019^[9]).

Reports indicate that indigenous and Afro-Colombian women still experience multiple forms of discrimination despite their inclusion in the Final Peace Agreement.³ One report, *Indigenous Women and Colombia's Peace Process*, found these women to be facing political, economic and cultural discrimination (Salamanca et al., 2017^[15]).

Indigenous and Afro-Colombia women were disproportionately victims of sexual violence and internal displacement during the armed conflict. They were also disproportionately killed: out of 3 445 cases of murder of indigenous and Afro-Colombian individuals, 65.5% of the victims were women (UN Women, 2018^[16]). Yet there are few analyses of the conflict through the combined lenses of gender, ethnicity and territoriality (Tovar-Restrepo and Irazábal, 2013^[17]).

Domestic and international stakeholders stress the need take both collective indigenous rights and individual women's rights into account in order to achieve an effective political settlement at both the national and subnational levels (Salamanca et al., 2017^[15]).

Colombia has enacted many laws in recent years to address violence against women, yet the figures are still alarming. In 2018, 47 feminicides and 50 attempted feminicides were reported; in more than 50% of these cases, the aggressor was the husband or partner. According to the Colombian Institute of Forensic Medicine, 23 798 cases of sexual violence were reported in 2017, 85% of them against women (an increase of 11.2% over 2016). In three-quarters of these cases, the aggressor lived in the same household as the victim.

The Attorney General's Office has made significant efforts to address the issue, for example by issuing internal guidelines in 2016 and 2017 to assume during investigations that sexual violence occurred because the victim was a woman. Yet more efforts are needed to investigate a great number of cases of sexual violence against women (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2019^[9]). Furthermore, different data on women victims of violence are reported by different institutions (the Attorney General's Office, the Institute of Forensic Medicine), illustrating the need for a unified information system in Colombia regarding sexual violence.

Although in countries with internal armed conflict, violence against women is exacerbated, most countries in the world face this problematic. In fact, in a 2016 survey of countries adhering to the OECD Gender Recommendations, 21 of the 37 governments listed violence against women as one of the three most urgent gender equality issues in their respective countries (OECD, forthcoming^[18]).

The OECD has identified three critical pillars to strengthen whole-of-government approaches to ending violence against women: Systems, Culture and Accountability and Enforcement. Colombia has notably made efforts within the Systems pillar, creating structures and systems to respond to violence against women, including holistic laws and policies addressing multiple forms of violence against women and gender inequality, and clear identification of the roles and responsibilities of governmental actors and relevant stakeholders in the implementation of these strategies. Yet, there is still space to improve in the Culture pillar regarding the survivor-centric culture surrounding responses to violence against women (i.e. capacity-building and co-ordination efforts and funding necessities such as shelters). Developments could also be done in the Accountability and Enforcement pillar regarding improving women's victims of violence access to justice, particularly strengthening the pathways. This is further explained in Chapter 3 of this document (OECD, forthcoming^[18]).

Box 1.5. Forthcoming OECD Framework for Strengthening Whole-of-government Approaches to Eliminating Violence Against Women

The draft OECD framework on “Strengthening Public Governance Approaches to Eliminating Violence Against Women: Towards an Overview of Elements of Good Practice” identifies governance elements based on good practices that are conceptualised into three overarching categories, or pillars.

Pillar I - “Systems” highlights the need for states to create structures and systems to adequately respond to VAW. Key governance elements include the creation of a whole-of-government VAW framework, holistic laws and policies addressing multiple forms of VAW and gender inequality, and clear identification of the roles and responsibilities of governmental actors and relevant stakeholders in the implementation of VAW strategies.

Pillar II - “Culture” revolves around creating a survivor-centric culture surrounding responses to VAW through capacity-building and co-ordination efforts. Key governance elements include facilitating access to justice for survivors, training actors who will directly engage with survivors, facilitating coordinated community and inter-ministerial responses, funding necessities such as shelters and VAW programming, and engaging men and boys in challenging toxic and misogynistic thoughts and actions that lead to VAW.

Pillar III - “Accountability and Enforcement” is centred on the theme of responsibility. In this context, accountability refers not only to bringing to justice those individuals who perpetrate VAW but also to the government holding itself to account for its actions and inactions regarding VAW. Key governance elements could include criminalising VAW and enforcing punishment for perpetrators, developing internal and external accountability mechanisms that monitor the progress of VAW policies and the framework itself, and including mechanisms to review murders involving VAW in order to address preventable failings and inadequate responses.

Intersectionality: Women in indigenous or Afro-Colombian communities

A significant characteristic of Colombia is its ethnic diversity. Around 90 indigenous populations coexist in the country and within the wider population: 10.6% are of African descent, 3.4% are indigenous and fewer than 0.2% are Romani (Bushnell and Hudson, 2010^[19]).

The intersection of ethnic diversity and gender inequality is an important consideration when designing policies and programmes for citizens, as affirmative action and progressive efforts should take a holistic view of the different elements that impact how different citizens access and use state services and how they are represented and perceived in public life.

Box 1.6. Selected measures and commitments by the Colombian Government to prevent and address violence against women in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

1. Sixty-five buildings were recently set up to be suitable as shelters for women at high risk of violence.
2. The Ministry of Health committed to transfer 14 billion pesos to subnational governments in order to guarantee that women victims of violence, at high risk of femicide, have shelter and food for themselves and their children, during the period of time determined by a family commissioner or a judge.
3. A control and monitoring body were launched to provide immediate response to high-risk violence against women cases, identified through the Line 155, and other reporting channels. The National Police and the Presidential Advisor for Gender Equality are part of this body.
4. The National Security Council is committed to monitor cases of gender violence to prevent and penalise femicides as well as domestic and sexual violence against women and girls.
5. Artificial intelligence technology is leveraged to create an online platform for the prevention and monitoring of cases of violence against women. The platform is housed in the Colombian Observatory for Women of the Presidential Advisor for Gender Equality. It will connect all the information systems reporting on cases regarding women victims of violence. It is expected that this platform will serve to optimise the online identification and prosecution of offenders.
6. To improve the efficiency and effectiveness in the response to women victims of violence, the telephone lines to report violence related cases will be unified. A large national service line will be created.
7. The Government has committed to issue a decree to formalise various mechanisms for the prevention of violence against women and guaranteeing care services for victims of violence. This instrument will be coordinated by the Vice President, through the Presidential Advisor for Gender Equality. National entities together with the departmental and municipal committees, would be part of this mechanism to solve bottlenecks regarding cases of violence against women. Likewise, a national public campaign is planned to be launched to break down gender stereotypes and prevent violence against women.
8. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Justice, a bill is scheduled to be filed before the Congress to strengthen Family Commissariats (*Comisarías de Familia*).
9. Implementation of protocols by the Ministry of Education to prevent and respond with care services in cases of sexual violence.
10. Program implemented by the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Commerce, together with regional governments, to promote economic opportunities for women victims of violence, securing their autonomy and breaking the cycle of violence.

Source: Information provided by the Government of Colombia, 2 July 2020

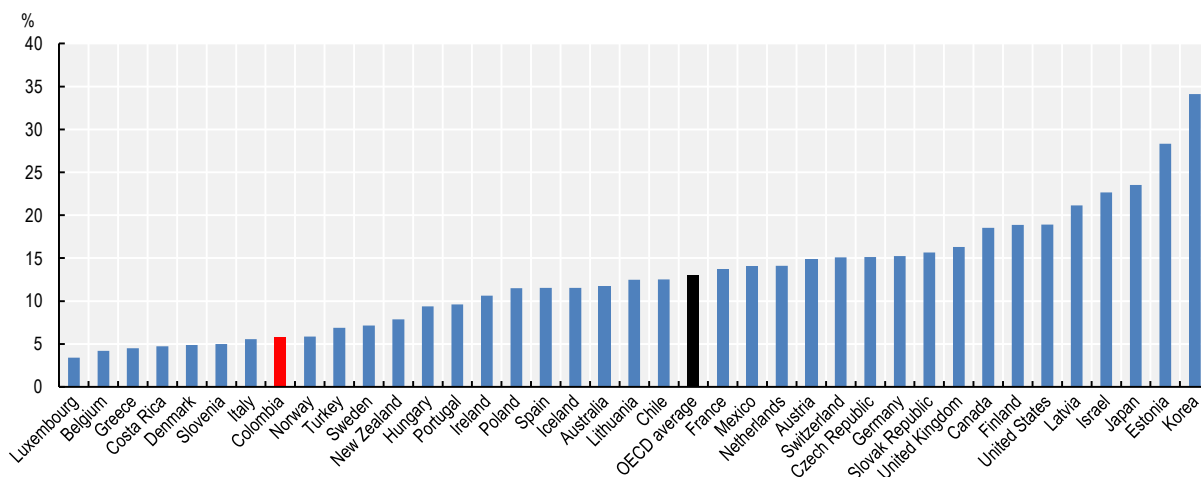
1.3. Access to education and employment opportunities

More women than men are enrolled in higher education in Colombia, in line with the pattern across the OECD, with women making up 52% of the student population. However, only 22% of Colombians aged 25 to 64 have attained a tertiary degree (OECD, 2016_[20]). This is in line with other Latin American countries, but it is 13% below the OECD average. If current patterns are maintained, only 16% of young adults in Colombia are expected to graduate from a bachelor or equivalent programme in their lifetime, compared to an OECD average of 38% (OECD, 2016_[20]).

The gender gap in employment and labour force participation is showing some signs of closing in Colombia, with positive trends over the last couple of decades. The gender gap in labour force participation rates (15- to 64-year-olds) has fallen by roughly a fifth since the turn of the century, from 29 percentage points (p.p.) in 2001 to 22 p.p. in 2019 (OECD, n.d._[21]). The gender employment gap has fallen by a similar amount over the same period. Much of this decline has been driven by growth in female labour participation: Colombia's female labour force participation rate (15- to 64-year-olds) increased from 57% in 2001 to 62% in 2019, and now sits only slightly lower than the OECD-wide female participation rate (65%) (OECD, n.d._[21]). Moreover, in comparison to many other OECD countries, Colombia also has a relatively narrow gender pay gap (Figure 1.1): in 2018, the pay gap in Colombia stood at 6%, or about half the OECD average (13%) (OECD, n.d._[22]), although to some extent this may be driven by Colombia's lower than average female participation rate and a "selecting out" of women with lower potential market earnings (OECD, n.d._[22]).

Figure 1.1. Women worldwide earn less than men

Gender gap in median earnings, full-time employees, 2018 or latest



Note: The gender wage gap is unadjusted, and is calculated as the difference between the median earnings of men and of women relative to the median earnings of men. Estimates of earnings used in the calculations refer to gross earnings of full-time wage and salary workers. However, this definition may slightly vary from one country to another; see the OECD Employment Database (<http://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/onlineoecdemploymentdatabase.htm>) and the individual country metadata data available in OECD.Stat (<http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=64160>) for more detail. Data for Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, refer to 2014, for France, Hungary, Iceland, and Italy refer to 2016, and for Belgium and Chile to 2017.

Source: OECD Family Database, <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>.

However, there are still many challenges for women in the Colombian labour market. As just one example, the unemployment rate continues to be much higher for women than for men in Colombia, and this trend does not appear to be changing. In 2019, the unemployment for women in Colombia stood at 14.1% - much higher than the rate for men (8.3%) and the OECD-wide figure for women (5.7%) (OECD, n.d.^[21]). Barriers to equal access to employment opportunities, finance and land rights in Colombia are a significant obstacle for women's social and economic advancement, and this has subsequent impacts on their ability to access political opportunities.

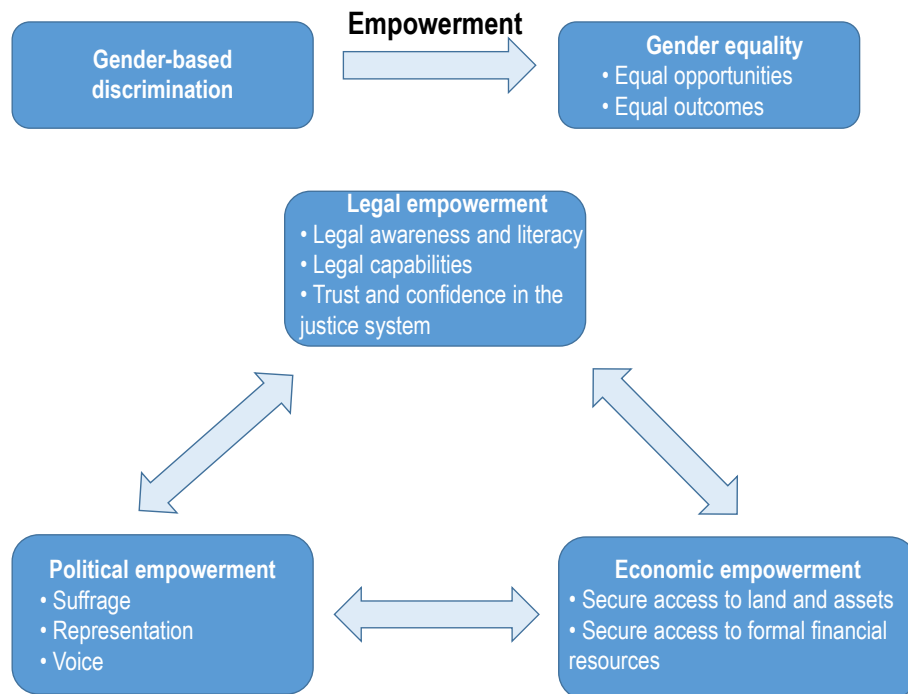
Although all countries of the Latin American region provide men and women with equal rights to access financial services, significant gender gaps remain in practice. In Colombia, for example, a World Bank study in 2014 found that only 34% of women over the age of 15 held an account at a financial institution, compared to 43% of men (OECD, 2017^[23]). Female-headed households in Colombia have the highest rates of poverty, even more so in rural areas (UN Women, 2016^[24]). It is also more common in rural areas for men to appear as land owners on land ownership certificates, a result of persistent gender stereotypes (CONPES, 2013^[4]).

Furthermore, women are in charge of care and domestic activities in 96% of female-headed households. This has a socio-economic impact, as these women are overworked and unable to earn a greater income (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2019^[9]).

1.4. Political participation and access to justice: Towards an empowerment continuum

Women's empowerment is a multidimensional dynamic. It encompasses a wide spectrum of processes and interventions in various dimensions, including the legal, political, socio-economic and financial dimensions. Understanding the interaction between these dimensions would help to create an empowerment continuum that comprehensively enhances the ability of women to manage their own lives – through improved access to education, employment, entrepreneurship, justice and leadership. There are direct and indirect links between empowerment, equal opportunities and participation. For instance, limited legal capability, civic literacy and legal empowerment can impede equal access to opportunities and services, and can hinder the ability of people to exercise their rights effectively.

The connection between empowerment and participation (the “empowerment continuum”) is highlighted in the literature on the subject: without meaningful empowerment, participation can be reduced to a token exercise (or even a way of maintaining existing power relations), and empowerment can be shallow or empty without genuine participation (Pettit, 2012^[25]). There is also growing recognition that social and legal empowerment affects the positive perception and acceptance of women in public life and their engagement in political activities. A government needs to reflect society in order to be efficient and effective in delivering public services to a socially, ethnically, culturally and economically diverse society, such as Colombia's. To this end, legal empowerment would seem to articulate and catalyse a two-way relation between political participation and access to justice; in this way, they are self-reinforcing (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2. The multidimensional nature of empowerment

Source: (Centre for Economic and Business Research, 2008^[26]), Economic Empowerment of Women, <https://www.oecd.org/derec/denmark/42211306.pdf>.

There is substantive evidence that having more women in politics and in public decision-making roles has a positive social and economic impact, such as reduced corruption, new research has concluded. In 2018, a cross-country analysis of more than 125 countries found that corruption is lower in countries where a greater share of parliamentarians are women (Virginia Tech, 2018^[27]). The study found that women's representation in local politics is important, too: in Europe, the likelihood of having to bribe is lower in regions with a greater representation of women in local-level politics. Research by Transparency International also shows that corruption, clientelism and political networking have a negative impact on the proportion of women elected to local councils, further reducing opportunities for women's political participation (Transparency International, 2016^[28]).

Effective access to justice can, in turn, ensure that the social and political rights of women are upheld and secured, and that threats to these rights (freedom of speech, assembly, the right to run for election or hold political office) can be prevented or challenged through legal means. Legal empowerment is about strengthening the capacity of all people to exercise their rights, either as individuals or as members of a community. Increased and enhanced access to justice strengthens gender-equality efforts by giving them legal backing, justification and recourse.

The OECD's work on access to justice aims to develop common criteria about "what works" to ensure equal access to justice and contribute to inclusive growth, sustainable development and individual and community well-being. It identifies empowerment as one criteria for people-centred service delivery. Legal and justice services build empowerment through strategies that increase legal awareness, legal literacy, legal capability, trust and confidence in the justice system – and this applies not only to women.

Understanding the women's empowerment continuum requires a thorough assessment of how women position themselves and are perceived within the political, legal, economic, social and cultural contexts. In Colombia, women represent 51% of the total population, yet they continue to face specific challenges and represent a vulnerable population group. This report highlights some of these challenges and provides recommendations for change.

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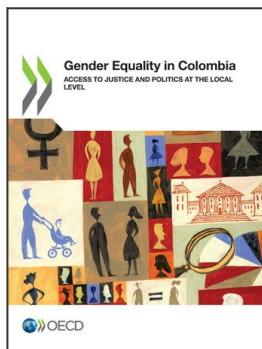
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Notes

¹ CONPES documents are documents approved by the National Council on Economic and Social Policy (*Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social*, or CONPES), the executive branch’s Cabinet committee on economic and social policy. They are an expression of the government’s policy intention and do not constitute formal legal instruments.

² Law 1761 of 2015, which defined femicide as a crime, is considered an important milestone. It made the killing of women or girls because of their gender punishable by up to 41 years in prison.

³ The agreement sets an international standard and includes gender-responsive provisions for indigenous women within the peace process.



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