

Reader's guide

This report assesses the current landscape of women's access to justice in Colombia and women's political participation in parliament, local councils and civil society organisations at a national and subnational level. It reviews the existing legal, policy and institutional frameworks that promote women's access to justice and political participation, including international commitments and key national legislation, and assesses the successes, challenges and gaps in the implementation of access to justice and gender-equality objectives within the government's current policy-making frameworks and processes. The drafting of this report was finished by October 2019, date after which it was revised and edited. Therefore, information on some of the most recent events are not included (i.e. 2019's local elections results).

The aim of the report is to evaluate current policies and practices in Colombia and to determine possible future strategy and policy directions for promoting women's political participation and women's access to justice, particularly at subnational levels, with a focus on women who are victims of violence. It offers user-centric approaches to the analysis of access to justice and political participation at subnational levels, including a multidimensional empowerment continuum that combines legal and political empowerment. The report builds on existing initiatives and good practices in Colombia, and highlights efforts of the central government to co-ordinate actions and policies with departments and municipalities.

The research for this report involved OECD fact-finding missions to two of Colombia's 32 departments, Putumayo and Chocó, where the aftermath of the internal armed conflict and the presence of large indigenous populations make women's political participation and access to justice all the more complex. The report also provides examples from different countries – especially from Spain and Argentina, as the Peer Reviewers – to showcase different approaches regarding policy issues on women's political participation and access to justice.

Methodology

This report applies an assessment framework developed by the OECD that is based on data collected through different tools and mechanisms: a review of key documents, such as those produced by the OECD's Public Governance Committee during Colombia's accession process to the organisation; field observations and discussions; and desk research. It builds on the framework of good governance elements as presented in the draft OECD document "Strengthening Public Governance Approaches to Eliminating Violence Against Women: Towards an Overview of Elements of Good Practice." This work benefited from peer expertise provided by Mexico and Argentina as well as Spain.

In 2017, at the beginning of the project, surveys on women's political participation and access to justice were sent to Colombian entities and organisations at a national and subnational level. These were inspired by the standards and principles enshrined in the 2015 OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life and the 2016 OECD Survey on Gender Sensitive Electoral and Legislative Practices. They were also built on the experiences and practices of OECD member and partner countries in the area of women's political participation and gender-sensitive lawmaking, as well as on the country context of Colombia.

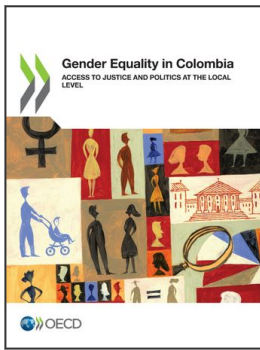
The ten surveys on political participation were tailored to their recipients: the National Planning Department; the High Presidential Advisor for Women's Equality; the National Ombuds Office; the Electoral Council; the National Civil Registry; political parties; civil organisations; the Departmental Assemblies of Putumayo and Choco; the Municipal Councils of these departments' capitals, Mocoa and Quibdó; and the Ombuds Offices of Mocoa and Quibdó. Likewise, the four surveys on women's access to justice were tailored to their recipients: bodies of the central administration; subnational bodies; justice providers; and non-governmental organisations.

The OECD then carried out two fact-finding missions to Colombia, in November 2017 and July 2019. Research was conducted in Mocoa during the first mission, and in Mocoa and Quibdó during the second. The purpose of these missions was to assess the situation regarding the participation of women in political life and women's access to justice, especially for women victims of violence. The missions also aimed to assess the impact of current institutions and participation mechanisms at the national and subnational levels in both areas.

Specifically, at the national level, this involved meetings with stakeholders including the National Electoral Council (CNE), Attorney General's Office, National Ombudsman, Ministry of Justice, High Presidential Council for Women's Equality, Department of National Planning (DNP) and the National Gender Commission for the Judicial Branch.

At the subnational level, meetings were held in Putumayo with the Office of the Governor, the Office of the Mayor of Mocoa, the Mocoa Municipal Council, local judges, Justice House representatives, the Regional Ombudsman (*Defensor del Pueblo Regional*), the Local Ombudsman (*Personero*), local prosecutors (*Fiscalías locales*), local lawyers, the Police Inspector, representatives of women's organisations, and candidates to the Mocoa City Council. In Chocó, meetings were held with the mayor of Quibdó and his secretaries, the Gender liaison in the Governor's Office, other key departmental secretaries, local judges, the Family Welfare Institute, regional and local ombudsmen, police inspectors, the Family Commissioner (*Comisario de Familia*), representatives from the Victims Unit and the Land Restitution Unit, local prosecutors, the Institute of Forensic Medicine, representatives from Quibdó's Municipal Council and Chocó's Assembly, and representatives of women's organisations.

Together, the assessment and the fact-finding missions aimed to shape a vision of a gender-responsive political and electoral system in Colombia, with a specific focus on women's access to politics in the local communities, and to assess women's efficient and effective access to justice at a local level.



From:

Gender Equality in Colombia

Access to Justice and Politics at the Local Level

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/b956ef57-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2020), “Reader’s guide”, in *Gender Equality in Colombia: Access to Justice and Politics at the Local Level*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/b30ce2f4-en>

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