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COLOMBIA & ECUADOR
Global Fund outreach trip report by
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Introduction:

In January 2008, Erika Guevara Rosas, Program Officer for the Americas, visited Colombia and Ecuador to generate greater attention and support for women in both countries. During the two-week visit, GFW Program Officer for the Americas Erika Guevara-Rosas visited and met with our grantee partners and other women's organizations in the two countries, working on a range of issues affecting women. In Colombia, Erika visited the cities of Cartagena and the capital Bogota, and the communities of Turbaco and El Pozon in Bolivar. In Ecuador, Erika visited the capital city of Quito and spent time with an indigenous community in Otavalo, Imbabura.

The trip enabled the Global Fund to assess the current situation and identify concrete strategies to effectively support the women's movement in Colombia and Ecuador, by strengthening current and forging new alliances with formal and informal advisors, as well as other regional and international partners in these two countries.

This outreach trip enabled the Global Fund to learn firsthand about major trends affecting women in both countries, particularly against the current political and socio-economic context. Ecuador is going through a very interesting process of state transformation and constitutional debate. Women's participation has been critical for the inclusion of a social feminist agenda in this process, and it is important to continue supporting this participation. In Colombia, due to the deteriorating situation of the conflict, the utmost priority is being given to security over human rights safeguards. In today's incarnation of the Colombian war, armed groups, including the Colombian army continue to fight for territory and control in many parts of the country, and women continue to bear the physical, political, economic and moral consequences of the conflict.

SECTION 1: COLOMBIA

Global Fund grantees in Colombia

Since 1990, the Global Fund has supported 60 women's groups with 90 grants totaling almost \$900,000. Our grantmaking has been focused on the empowerment of marginalized women and girls facing the impact of the internal conflict including indigenous women, rural women, and Afro-Colombians, among others. These women's organizations are working to advance women's rights, particularly working to end violence, and working on public policy and advocacy issues focused on the impact of the

war on women, including forced displacement, sexual violence and economic inequalities.

In Colombia, with the support of Global Fund Advisor and Founder of the League of Displaced Women Patricia Guerrero, we organized two grantee convenings, one in the Atlantic Coast and another in Bogota. In both meetings, we invited very diverse groups of women representing different regions of the country. The main objectives of these convenings were to facilitate an exchange of experiences and knowledge, to create and consolidate networks, to strategize together around creative initiatives of collaboration and to learn about their needs and priorities.

In Cartagena, we held a meeting with 21 women coming from seven departments in northern Colombia, representing different marginalized and margin populations (indigenous women, Afro-Colombian, internal displaced communities, rural women and lesbians. In Bogota, 18 women coming from Medellin, Cali, Bogota, Popayan and Quibdo convened in an historical gathering, as they called it, to create an space of solidarity among sister organizations. GFW grantees concurred on the importance of these convenings as a way to strengthen the women's movements and their ability to fight for their collective rights. It was the first time these organizations had a space to share testimonies and strategies to overcome violence and discrimination. In the past, international agencies, such as UNIFEM, have invited women's organizations to forums and meetings to discuss different issues and to develop research publications, but these groups have not felt free to speak up and voice their concerns and demands. According to GFW grantee partners, these meetings are not intended to create solidarity or to build networks and alliances.

In these meetings, GFW grantee partners and other women's organizations shared with us some of the most pressing challenges facing women and their organizations in the context of the internal conflict.

Overview of Colombia

Historical overview of the conflict

The history of Colombia's ongoing conflict has been characterized by a gradual evolution from an ideological one to a conflict driven by economic interests and territorial control. The international community has acknowledged the complexity of the conflict; any attempt to briefly summarize its evolution risks oversimplifying complex facts. During the course of the 20th century, Colombia became one of the most violent countries in the world. Political exclusion of the poor has been the main cause of the ongoing political strife in Colombia. During the 1930s many peasants began to campaign against the political and economic exclusion of their population by the mainstream Liberal and Conservative political parties.

The Armed Movements in Colombia

The marginalization of low-income rural communities led to the emergence of guerilla movements in the 1960s. The principal groups have been the Colombian Revolutionary

Armed Forces (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). In reaction to their growth, the government of Colombia encouraged the development of paramilitaries, or armed civilians, in order to counter the dominance of guerilla movements in certain parts of the country. These paramilitaries became quite active during the 1980s. The continual conflict between paramilitaries and guerrilla groups has only been exacerbated by the onset and persistence of the illegal drug trade in Colombia. In fact, both the paramilitary groups and FARC have been closely connected with the illegal drug trade because it is a lucrative source of funds for their activities.

"Plan Colombia"

The administrations of Colombia and the US conceived in 1999 the controversial "Plan Colombia" as a comprehensive package, covering economic, fiscal and financial policy, peace, national defense, judicial and human rights, counter-narcotics, alternative development, social participation and human development. However, the plan was widely perceived as a measure geared at improving the Colombian military's capacity to wage war not only against drugs, which provide the main source of revenue both for and against the insurgency.

Present day Colombia

In February 2002, negotiations to end the most dangerous confrontation of Colombia's decades of civil war collapsed after four years of fruitless peace discussions between the government and the guerrilla groups (FARC, ELN). The demilitarized zone for the guerrilla in the south of Colombia came to an end, raising fears of a further deterioration in the armed conflict and the humanitarian crisis.

Alvaro Uribe, the current president, has promoted a military "solution" to the conflict. He has repeatedly insisted that no negotiations will take place with the FARC. Despite a formal demobilization of the 32,500 right wing paramilitary groups, many of these individuals have joined new criminal groups estimated in a number of 10,000, which exercise territorial control on areas used for the production, refinement, and transport of coca and cocaine. Uribe has downplayed the armed conflict in his country, a conflict that has forcibly displaced over 3.5 million Colombians, mainly women and children, as the result of atrocities committed by all sides. The president denies there is a conflict in Colombia, and instead refers to the perpetuation of violence as "terrorist activities." By characterizing the conflict as a terrorist threat the government is denying root-causes of the conflict: poverty and inequality.

The Women's Movement in Colombia

Colombian women have been at the center of every stage of unrest in the country, despite their pronounced absence from formal and official "peace negotiations." Colombia boasts a strong, vibrant and diverse women's movement. Despite repeated attacks, disappearances, kidnappings and threats perpetrated against women leaders, women's groups continue to organize, develop agendas for peace and lobby for their

implementation. It is important to place an analysis of gender politics within the broader geopolitics of Colombian society.

Women in Political Power

In Colombia, there are two realities for women and their participation in decision-making. There is the official culture of non-discrimination reinforced by the mainstream media. The media tends to focus on the fact that there are women in leadership positions in the government. In other words, that there is political space for women and that women have access to positions of power. However, the reality for most women is markedly different because they do not participate in these spaces. Equality is not just a numbers game and simply filling positions with women does not and has not guaranteed policies that serve the interests of women in general.

In spite of this reality, women's organizations are working actively for the protection of human rights - including but not limited to women's rights. In so doing, women human rights defenders enrich and advance protection of human rights in a totally unique way. Through their work they enhance women's access to human rights and empower women to be more visible and active in public affairs and public life.

Like their male colleagues, women face attacks, threats and other acts of intimidation. However, women leaders, particularly those working in grassroots organizations such as the League of Displaced Women and Organizacion Femenina Popular, face enormous risks during the course of their work. They face additional marginalization, prejudice, violence and threats to their human rights, safety and well-being on multiple levels: as human rights defenders; as women and as individuals who defy cultural, religious or social norms about the role of women; and as activists raising controversial issues such as sexuality, sexual orientation and reproductive rights. By far the greatest difficulty faced by many women leaders is that their work and proposals are all too often discredited or dismissed in importance, increasing their isolation and the risk of public and community reputation, stigmatization, discrimination, arbitrary arrest and detention.

The Impact of the Conflict on Colombian Women

Colombia has ratified major international and regional human rights treaties, which prohibit discrimination against women, and has enacted several laws purporting to guarantee women's equality. However, discrimination against women in Colombia persists and this discrimination often manifests itself as gender-based violence. In today's incarnation of the Colombian civil war, the FARC, the AUC, the ELN and the Colombian Army continue to fight for territory and control in many parts of Colombia and women continue to bear the economic, political, physical and moral consequences of the war. Women also continue to have limited access to positions and areas of activity that enjoy socio-economic prestige, reliable income, and labor guarantees. The government has failed to protect women's rights, and to provide conditions for the exercise of social, economic and political rights.

According to independent reports from women's rights groups that are released every two days, a woman dies in Colombia from "political" causes and every fourteen days, a Colombian woman falls victim to forced disappearance. All rebel and paramilitary groups in Colombia have been reported as raping women and girls and torturing civilians. Women have been forced to observe war crimes committed against their families, as well as being victimized themselves by executions, mutilations and sexual exploitation and violence.

The United Nations Human Rights Commission Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women notes, "Violence against women, particularly sexual violence by armed groups, has become a common practice within the context of a slowly degrading conflict and a lack of respect for international humanitarian law." According to our grantees, armed groups often force women heads of households to leave their homes because of the prominent role they play in community development. In areas where there are high levels of paramilitary and gang activity, women face particular security threats especially because lack of transport options leave women vulnerable to attack. These threats are particularly severe for female-heads of households who must travel to work to support their families.

The armed conflict has negatively impacted Colombian women's lives in multiple ways:

Sexual Violence as a tool of war

Diverse reports from women's organizations, as well as testimonies gathered during the visit, coincide in documenting the use of sexual violence as a war strategy. As in many countries of the world as in Colombia, sexual violence against women is used as a weapon to terrorize and weaken communities, in the pursuit of control over territory and resources.

Global Fund grantee partners League of Displaced Women and Working Group Women and Armed Conflict have documented the use of rape as a common method of torture inflicted on women. Sexual violence has been used as a means of aggression toward a community or as a means of acquiring information about activities of other parts in the conflict. Unfortunately, women do not denounce sexual crimes due to the stigmatization and rejection of their communities, and due to the lack of an adequate legal system that protects them.

Forced Displacement

Forced Displacement is a crime against civilians that causes severe violations of their human rights. The crisis of displacement in Colombia is highly gendered. There are three million internally displaced persons in the country and 57 percent of them are women. In addition to the particular problems of women as heads of displaced households, many of whom have lost their partners and sons to the war, there is also the problem of sexual violence during the displacement.

Displaced women and girls are particularly at risk because of the insecurity and desperation in which they are forced to survive. Some of the women of the League of

Displaced Women reported that reasons of their displacement include: assassination of their families; forced disappearances; protection of themselves or their children from sexual or gender-based violence and forced recruitment by armed groups; attacks to their communities; and the economic impact of the conflict on their lives.

GFW grantee partners Organizacion Femenina Popular and Ruta Pacifica de Mujeres have worked to give visibility to the challenges facing internal displaced women. With GFW support, the Organization Femenina Popular is implementing a project entitled “Solidifying Women’s Resistance Against Forced Displacement and Paramilitary Occupation” in the Magdalena Medio region, a campaign to give visibility to women’s stand against war. Last year, with GFW support, the Ruta Pacifica and OFP organized a transnational mobilization of women against the war with internal displaced women and Colombian refugee women in Ecuador as an advocacy tool to demand the rights of this population.

Indigenous Women and Afro-Colombians

The Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities represent 8% and 2% of Colombians respectively and have been traditionally marginalized in an already unequal society. As the conflict has spread over the last decade from the central regions of the country to remote and border areas, they represent a disproportionate number among the IDPs as they have been especially hard hit by years of hostilities and widespread or systematic violence. Indigenous, rural and Afro-Colombian women are even more likely to fall victim to violence, assassination, harassment and displacement due to marginalization. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women have suffered directly the impacts of the Colombian war without having opportunities to speak out and claim their rights. GFW grantees Cabildo Wayuu Nouna de Campamento and Comite Local de Quibdo de la Red Nacional de Mujeres Afrocolombianas are organizing indigenous and Afro-Colombian women to articulate their demand.

Persecution against Lesbians

While the struggle for LGBT rights in Colombia parallels similar efforts in other parts of the world, the Colombian experience is marked and formed by war. It cannot be analyzed without reference to political violence and social control wielded by Colombian armed actors. Armed actors have systematically targeted LGBTI individuals in their “cleansing” efforts to seek control of territory and populations. In order to further their homophobic project, armed actors have targeted members of the LGBT community, particularly lesbians, capitalizing on false social fears around HIV and AIDS, LGBT sexuality practices, and LGBT moral influence on children.

Paramilitaries justify social cleansing as a means by which to eliminate individuals who fail to conform to “traditional” Colombian standards, thereby strengthening the community against the guerrilla threat. Guerrillas employ similar discriminatory methods to secure their own strongholds. According to GFW grantee partner Cooperacion Triangulo Negro, in Barranquilla, lesbians who have publicly expressed their sexual diversity have received letters ordering them to abandon their town and neighborhoods within forty-eight hours, or face death threats.

Women in Armed Groups

Some women in Colombia have, for various reasons, decided that the only way to overcome state repression and the structural problems of poverty and inequality is through armed struggle. Women make up more than thirty percent of the fighters in the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Colombia's largest guerrilla group. Furthermore, they now constitute approximately forty percent of mid-level commanders in the rebel army.

While the FARC has been criticized for its violations of human rights, particularly kidnapping, targeted assassinations, and the use of home-made mortars and landmines, some analysts have suggested that it is a mistake to simply dismiss the group as a criminal or terrorist organization as both the Colombian and US governments have done. Alix Maria from GFW grantee Colectivo the Mujeres Excombatientes, who was a guerrilla member for more than 10 years explains that she became involved in the guerrilla group because "I was committed to fight for the interests of the people, the struggle against imperialism, against discrimination, for a radical change in the structure of the state." Alix and other former members of armed groups are currently helping women to be demobilized and integrated to the society.

Funding for women's rights in Colombia

International cooperation agencies, the United Nations and other intergovernmental regional bodies have been present in the country for years trying to address the social impact of the conflict. However, most of the programs developed by these actors lack a gender perspective to address the specific needs of women. Local non-governmental organizations are either used to implement programs designed by international agencies or are given restricted funding to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to internally displaced populations and other marginalized communities affected by the war. Women's organizations are resisting this trend, as it has not been a proven strategy to address Colombia's social and political crisis.

According to our grantee partners in Colombia, Global Fund for Women has offered them an alternative to access unrestricted trust-based financial support to continue their struggle for social justice, equity and peace.

City of Women: A model of peaceful resistance

The City of Women is located in the northern Colombian municipality of Turbaco, and is one of the most emblematic examples of women's peaceful resistance against the war in Colombia.

Led by Patricia Guerrero, a dynamic advisor to the Global Fund, and founder of the League of Displaced Women, a group of internal displaced women organized themselves to overcome the impact of the forced displacement and the war on their lives. Since 1998, the League has been working to get forced displacement recognized as a war crime and to reclaim their rights. The women of the League identified lack of access to housing as one of the most pressing challenges, and decided to build their own "city."

In 2003, Patricia Guerrero secured a seed grant of \$500,000 from the US. Congress to kick-start the process. Additional money came from the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme, the Spanish government, the Ford Foundation, the Global Fund for Women and other public and private organizations. The project, which included the cost of the land and the construction of the dwellings, was negotiated with the owner for more than a year and a half. The resources were not sufficient to pay for the construction of the houses, so the League's women themselves manufactured the cement blocks used to build 97 houses, which now benefiting 500 people.

Today the City of Women is more than a housing project; it has become a space to empower women. This amazing women's empowerment initiative has been nominated and recognized by different international actors. It was nominated for the 2003 Luis Carlos Galán Human Rights Prize and the 2005 National Peace Prize, and received an honorable mention in the Second Edition of the King of Spain Human Rights prize for 2006.

The League built a community center in the City of Women where women obtain skill-abilities through trainings and business development. Some of the women are being trained as bricklayers or in agriculture, and all of them receive training on women's rights, national and international law, leadership and advocacy skills, among other important issues. The center is also a refuge for children and adolescents, where they receive physiological attention to overcome the trauma of the war. Additionally, the community center hosts a women's cooperative called "MujerCoop."

In January 2007, the City of Women's community center was burned down, apparently in an arson attack from paramilitary groups. The City of Women is threatening the armed groups' control over the communities in Bolivar. Firstly, because the League is trying to restore the social fabric of the region based on the principles of equality, no discrimination, no violence, no corruption and they stand against everything else that is detrimental to the population in the region. Secondly, some of the League's displaced women witnessed crimes perpetrated by paramilitary members that are currently being prosecuted. And thirdly, the process of paramilitary disarmament, demobilization and reintegration that is being implemented in Colombia is rather atypical because it is taking place in the middle of the conflict. The paramilitary demobilization is not being properly monitored by the local authorities and is perpetuating impunity. The League's members, especially its leaders, have received frequent threats and in the past two years, the local Ombudsman Office has repeatedly warned that it was at high risk of targeted violence. In a separate report, the Office warned of a generalized rise in threats and violence against community leaders in the Atlantic region. More than ever, the League needs the support to give visibility to their efforts to resist the war and build peace.

SECTION 2: ECUADOR

Global Fund grantees in Ecuador

In the capital city of Quito, with the support of GFW grantee partner Taller Comunicacion Mujer, we organized a grantee convening with 14 women coming from Machala, Ambato, Cuenca, Esmeraldas, Sucumbios and Quito. The main objective of this gathering was to exchange experiences and strategies in light of the current political, social and economic transformation of the country. The General Assembly is drafting a new constitution, and women's organizations are struggling to voice their demands and push for a feminist agenda. This is a critical moment in the history of Ecuador, and women's participation is essential to ensure the respect of women's rights, particularly those related to their sexual and reproductive health.

The findings in this section of the report are based on the results of GFW grantee convening, individual meetings with feminist organizations Casa de Rosa, Coordinadora Politica Juvenil, Coordinadora Politica de Mujeres, Taller de Comunicacion and a meeting with a groups of feminists working in different sectors including the General Assembly, the Congress and the Women's National Commission (CONAMU)

Ecuador: Background Overview

Ten years ago political and social instability besieged Ecuador with the sudden emergence of new actors organized in a strong indigenous movement. These actors actively opposed the entrenched elites that have long refused to give up their control over the state. While President Rafael Correa's victory in the referendum to convene a constituent assembly could lead to changes in state control, it is no guarantee that Ecuador's seemingly chronic instability will decline.

Correa's first months in office were marked by his inability to overcome the institutional instability that has wracked the country for more than 10 years. Since 1996 no president has served a full term in office due to the recurrent insurrections and social protests that have convulsed the country. It will be hard for Correa to succeed where others failed. The population, especially the indigenous movement, seems unwilling to tolerate continued rule by the white elites who plunged a nation rich in natural resources—including oil—into poverty. On the other hand, the elites are averse to losing their privileges, leading to today's climate of confrontation.

The movement that brought Correa into power is made up of urban middle classes (intellectuals, professionals, economists and academics, among others) that indulged themselves in consumerism with the neo-liberal model and now demand a working democracy. These sectors have benefited from the influx of foreign currency (especially US dollars), and above all from the dollarization of the economy. Between 2000 and 2005, two million Ecuadorians—out of a population of twelve million—left the country. In 2006, they sent home US\$3 billion, a fabulous sum that rivals the annual US\$3.6

billion from oil sales, Ecuador's most important export. That money arrives directly to families and lubricates mall-based consumption.

The challenge faced by President Correa is to make the political system transparent and efficient, that is, to overhaul it. First, he must overcome the resistance of the elites and of government officials. Second, he must solve the conundrum of dollarization, which has turned the country into a colony of the United States economy. Moreover, he must maintain his positions on defense of national sovereignty and resisting the renewal of the Manta US airbase contract.

If Ecuador readopts its original currency, the Sucre, the middle classes will feel cheated since it will reduce their buying power. But if it fails to do so, millions of peasants and poor urban dwellers, mostly indigenous persons whose livelihoods were destroyed by dollarization, will be further impoverished. Sooner or later, Correa will have to choose between dollarization's winners and its losers. A difficult choice—but one he will not be able to avoid.

The New Government

Key political developments in Latin American countries have been taking place over the last decade. The presidential elections' results in Venezuela, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Nicaragua, Ecuador and to some extent in Argentina, showed a shift toward the center-left or a consolidation of left-leaning leadership in the region. The remarkable comeback by leftist political parties and governments in Latin America in recent years has created hope among the different social movements that social justice and equality can happen. However, leftist politics, particularly in Latin America, has always had a complex relationship with women's struggles, one that many times translates into political exploitation and neutralization.

The case of Ecuador with its current political transformation exemplify how women are struggling to promote a social agenda that include women's issues as human rights. It is still assumed that the arrival to power of governments with a leftist profile represents an advance, or at least the possibility of an advance for certain emblematic women's struggles. However, the Ecuadorian government is reducing women's battles to a general theme among many others and is trying to organize women's organizations, at least those affiliated to the National Women's Commission, into sectors with a ranking system that assures that women's struggles are not the top priority of any political program, including the new constitution.

Despite some egalitarian measures, Correa, who has a strong Catholic background, has not been open to include in the social agenda a more liberal perspective of women's issues, particularly in relation to women's sexual and reproductive rights. During his campaign, he publicly positioned himself against abortion and same-sex marriage. In his opening remarks at the constitutional assembly, Correa stated that he would ensure the right to life that begins at conception.

The Ecuadorian Women's Movements

Ecuadorian women were the first women in Latin America to win the right to vote in 1929, and the efforts of a strong civil society movement have produced many advances in women's rights in past decades. There is greater equality in the level of education women and men receive, as well as more women participating in agriculture and the workforce. 1995 saw the establishment of the Law Against Violence Towards Women and the Family, and the 1998 Constitution specified equal rights between men and women in many areas.

In 1999, the Ecuadorian National Congress hosted an event that was unprecedented in the region: the Women's International Tribunal for Sexual Rights. The members of the tribunal - all of whom were authoritative Latin American human rights defenders - heard and judged eight cases of rape whose victims and survivors were mainly young women. Organized by Feminists for Autonomy, the tribunal placed on the public agenda the violation of women's rights and to demand, both from the State and civil society, conditions and criteria that concretize the validity of these rights.

Ecuador is one of the only countries in the region, which from 1998 has recognized sexual and reproductive rights in its constitution, along with the right to a life without violence in the public and private environment and equal opportunities in the labor market. Also, in the economic decision-making process the productive character of domestic work done by housewives is not recognized.

The women's movements have shown cohesion and strength in moments such as the preparation of the 1998 Constitution. They succeeded in creating a strong National Women's Council (CONAMU), an autonomy body that is comprised of government institutions and civil society representatives. The movement has been able to develop a legal framework for violence against women and for some sexual and reproductive rights. However, the movement is currently fractured by internal disputes and weakened by a decrease in funding.

Many issues still remain that challenge women's empowerment. In the arena of health and reproductive rights, there is limited access to contraceptives, abortion is allowed under very limited circumstances and there is a high rate of teenage pregnancy. Prenatal care is not sufficient, and there is a significant risk of maternal mortality.

Gender-based wage gaps are common, and women's participation and presence in the political scene is still limited. Women's issues are not sufficiently addressed by Ecuador's highly organized indigenous movement – a movement said to be extremely patriarchal and prone to marginalizing women from local decision-making.

Finally, the economic crisis in Ecuador's recent past has increased the burden carried by women. Changes in household expenditures, consumption patterns, family structure, access to basic resources, inflation and increased workloads in the household have disproportionately affected women due to their socialized gender roles. Additionally, the escalated levels of male migration due to the loss of former livelihoods has the potential

to put further pressure on women through the creation of single female-headed households. As the government cuts back on social services, women are the most affected, as they bear the brunt of these cuts.

CONAMU is also fragile at the moment. It used to be linked directly to the presidency and it is now placed under a ministry, with no autonomy in decision-making. CONAMU is in a transitional period of internal elections of its representatives. Due to this, its participation in the constitutional process has not been relevant.

Women's organizations are making efforts to establish a common agenda. CONAMU has recently convened the "Women's Pre Constitutional Assembly". Women from all over the country came together for two days and agreed on a minimum agenda that included a chapter on sexual and reproductive rights. The proposal to include abortion in the discussion has not been unanimous at the Pre Constitutional Assembly. In fact, few Ecuadorian women's organizations focus mainly on sexual and reproductive rights, and most of the groups are extremely cautious when talking about these rights.

Most women's rights groups do not have intense collaboration with other social movements such as indigenous and human rights movements. There have been serious tensions and little collaboration between feminist organizations and organizations that advocate for the rights of children and adolescents. The women's movement holds some good connections with the health and education sectors, and the emerging LGBT movement is an ally.

Within the women's movement, there is strong expertise in the area of public health, even though the country lacks some precise data on sexual and reproductive health. There is some legal expertise, but there is not an organization that focuses on legal issues. The movement lacks strong connections with the national media and recognizes that their communications strategies are often weak or absent.

Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Rights: The agenda of the young women's movement
Many women's organizations, particularly young women, are afraid to lose what was achieved in the last Constitutional process. Regarding abortion, many fear the pressure of conservative groups, who are threatening to outlaw therapeutic abortion. Even though most women's rights advocates agree that the right to life since conception should not be included in the new constitution, they do not want to discuss abortion.

Many traditional groups, such as the Coordinadora Política de Mujeres, have decided to advocate for an agenda that goes beyond women's rights, including economic and social issues. Even though this is an important strategy, the concern is that this broad agenda may disperse the efforts of the women's movement and weaken its strategies on the issues nobody else looks at, such as sexual and reproductive rights.

The vibrant youth coalition, Coordinadora Política Juvenil and other feminist organizations led by young women are pushing for the inclusion of a feminist agenda that promotes women's rights in the constitutional debates. The Youth Coalition is a feminist

national organization of young people between the ages of 15 and 25 committed to promoting youth rights, particularly sexual and reproductive rights at all levels. They aim to ensure that the sexual and reproductive rights of all young people are respected, guaranteed and promoted, and to secure the meaningful participation of young people in decision-making that affects their lives, by advocating, generating knowledge, sharing information, building partnerships and training young activists.

Summary of Recommendations – Colombia and Ecuador

This trip to Colombia and Ecuador gave the Global Fund for Women the enormous opportunity to meet with grantees, advisors and other partners and learn about major trends affecting women in both countries, particularly in relation with the current political and social context. The visits and meetings with grantee partners provided a unique opportunity for the Americas team to strengthen GFW grantmaking in the region by fostering vital dialogue with women's organizations.

The impact of the women's rights movements in Colombia and Ecuador depends in part on the ability of the Global Fund and other funders to increase the access of marginalized and margin women's groups to funding and to provide opportunities for greater collaboration between movements.

Global Fund for Women priorities in both countries include:

1. Strengthen the role of advisors, from Ecuador and Colombia, but also from other regions, by designing innovative methods to ensure their participation in defining strategic grantmaking goals for both countries.
2. Develop collaborative agreements with other funders to better link resource allocation with the goals of our strategic grantmaking plan for both countries.
3. Define a strategy in consultation with board members and advisors, for a more effective use of the Now and Never Fund in Colombia and Ecuador, responding to the emergent needs of the movements.
4. Prioritize support for women's groups and networks within and across both countries, as well as for experience sharing sessions.
5. Continue to support the linking of marginalized women's movements, such as indigenous and Afro-descendant women, with the larger women's rights movement in both countries.

Funding Focus

1. Provide multi-year funding to long-time grantees in order to support the sustainability of the women's movements in both countries.

2. Prioritize our “seeding grants” over small groups promoting innovative approaches that have less access to funding.

3. Support organizations doing cutting edge work

4. Support feminist leadership and movement building (national and regional initiatives)

Country-specific priorities

COLOMBIA

Priority Issues –

Women in conflict

->Peace Building

->Sexual and gender-based violence

->Political violence against women activists and women’s organizations

->Sexual and Reproductive Rights (pro-choice organizations)

->Economic and Environmental Justices – the impact of the Colombian conflict and US intervention

Priority Population Groups –

->Women in conflict areas – internally displaced persons

->Marginalized women, such as rural, Indigenous and Afro-descendant women, sexual minorities

->Grassroots organizations (promoting their participation in peace negotiation processes)

->Young women

ECUADOR

Priority Issues –

->Constitutional reform and the inclusion of a feminist agenda

->Women’s civic and political participation (preventing polarization)

->Sexual and Reproductive Rights (pro-choice organizations)

->Refugee and Migration issues (Colombian refugees/ Ecuadorian migrants)

Priority Population Groups –

->Young women

->Indigenous and Afro-descendants women

->Refugee and migrant women

->Feminist organizations (advocacy level)

->Sexual minorities