

Colombia Human Rights Committee (CHRC)

The Colombia Human Rights Committee (CHRC) of Washington is a non-profit corporation that, since 1981, has been working to inform and educate policymakers, media, and the general public on the human rights situation in Colombia.

The CHRC's **mission** is three-fold: (1) to inform and educate policymakers and the general public about human rights conditions in Colombia; (2) to inform and educate policymakers and the general public about how U.S. policy affects human rights conditions in Colombia; and (3) to support communities and organizations in Colombia working for peace and social justice by peaceful means.

The CHRC's **vision** is of a permanent solidarity movement, based in the United States, to support human rights, peace, and social justice in Colombia. The CHRC has no affiliation with any political party or political or armed movement in Colombia, the United States, or elsewhere.

What does the CHRC do?

Organizing and facilitating visits and tours of Colombian activists has been one of our major activities over time. The agendas generally include meetings at the U.S. Congress, the State Department, and non-governmental organizations, as well as events organized at universities and in the community.

We have prioritized **working in coalitions**. These include the Colombia Human Rights Network (which includes other Colombia committees in the United States, since 1990), the Colombia Steering Committee (Washington-based, with other NGOs working on human rights in Colombia, since 1999/2000), and the Coordinación Colombia-Europa-Estados Unidos (based in Bogotá and bringing together over 280 national, regional, and local human rights groups in Colombia, since 1996).

CHRC members regularly visit Colombia, where long-term relationships with human rights groups and individual activists have been nurtured and grown. In addition, **CHRC has taken or accompanied delegations to Colombia**, though this has been a more sporadic activity.

Members engage in **media advocacy**, either contacting the press reactively, especially to respond to press coverage that excludes or distorts consideration of the situation of human rights and peace in Colombia, but also to proactively place op-ed articles or get activists onto broadcast news programs.

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We have placed **special emphasis on activities to support victims** and communities in Colombia in a number of ways, for example by ensuring that the visits to Washington and tours organized with the Colombia Human Rights Network and Coordinación Colombia-Europa-Estados Unidos prioritize victims; by supporting the work of Peace Brigades International in Colombia; and by members providing logistical support for advocates who come to Washington to present matters to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

We have placed **special emphasis on activities to support peace**. These have included extensive cooperation with the Truth Commission, particularly facilitating its use of the CHRC's archives from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s; organizing activities from time to time with the United States Institute of Peace. In addition, members of the CHRC participated as volunteers for the Truth Commission, collecting testimony from victims living in the Washington, D.C. area.

The CHRC has provided **support to many persons who have had to leave Colombia** and have arrived in the United States seeking political asylum, as well as persons who are threatened and need to leave Colombia temporarily.

We participate in **urgent action campaigns** to call on the Colombian authorities to protect the lives of persons threatened by the different armed groups.

For more information about our activities please visit our website:
<https://www.colombiahrc.org>

Flor María Barreiro from the organization Grupo de Apoyo a Mujeres Víctimas del Conflicto Armado (Support Group for Women Victims of the Armed Conflict), located in Tumaco, Department of Nariño

At the time of the closure [of USAID], we were working on a partnership focused on teaching women about saving, in collaboration with the Local Credit Group, which was made up of 10 organizations, including ASOPORCA and Mujer Rural Exitosa. We were training women on how to start saving, offering them loans with very low interest rates, and the dividends were shared among them to help grow their businesses. In total, we were working with 150 women.

On January 24, 2025, the news of USAID's shutdown hit us like a bucket of cold water. We had workshops scheduled for the next day, and it was very hard to tell the women that we wouldn't be doing them anymore. This caused tension with some organizations, because some believed we didn't want to hold the workshops, or that we had stolen the money—comments that are really upsetting. The biggest issue is that news doesn't reach everywhere, especially rural areas like the municipality of Ricaurte, which is quite remote, so people make assumptions without all the facts. Even though I explained the situation, there are still people who are upset with me.

It wasn't just the 150 women we were training who were harmed—those who were leading the workshops were also affected because there was no money to pay them. This hurt us a lot, because the workshops benefited the community.

Our organization was also harmed because some people no longer trust us. We used to hire people to produce the workshop materials.

Right now, we're submitting project proposals to government institutions, but we haven't gotten anything approved because competition is so high.

Personally, I don't have a job right now—I'm surviving off a small business I have selling perfumes and crafts that I make to get by.

For me, USAID was a very good program that created a lot of jobs in Colombia. For example, in Tumaco there were 13 programs, and all those people lost their jobs. We had 6 programs that lasted one or two years. And we didn't just work in Tumaco—we also worked in other municipalities like Barbacoas, Roberto Payán, Ricaurte, and Francisco Pizarro.

Fabio Romero - Corporación Hombres en Movimiento (Men on the Move)

Fabio Romero is the director of Men on the Move, a non-profit based in the department of Nariño in the Southwest of Colombia that works in areas of peace, security, justice, and coexistence. Each area of focus is addressed through a gendered lens, with a masculinity perspective and the dual goals of eradicating violence against women and children as well as the active involvement of men in the upbringing of their children. The approach is transversal in all exercises and has been applied to former guerilla combatants who have demobilized through the peace accords with the FARC-EP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army), working to dismantle warmongering masculinities.

We had an alliance with HIAS Colombia to assist Venezuelan migrants in reducing violence against women and girls through the involvement of men, as well as children and teenagers, as allies in preventing violence.

We also focused on working with rural men and men from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities in collaboration with different systems of urban integration, through institutions, education, and support networks to address gender equality. To prevent violence, we must work with women, but it is imperative to integrate the men. We have also utilized sport to mobilize men to participate in these spaces.

The resources provided by HIAS Colombia were supported by the United States' Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. With this support, we worked with women and men, provided dignity kits for women, and facilitated community support groups for women.

Additionally, we anticipated support from TETRA TECH, a USAID grantee for a program called Generating Equity. The main objective of the program was to strengthen civil society organizations in strategic planning and communications. Unfortunately, with the departure of USAID, these plans have been greatly impacted.

We wanted to implement a development project in Tumaco with men who were already participating in the project in several municipalities along the Pacific coast, where there is pervasive violence. The project's aim was to generate a network of positive masculinities to eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls.

We have achieved progress in making men visible as allies of equality and in the prevention of violence against women and girls. Notably, men are interested in being heard and in taking active roles in transforming traditional notions of masculinity. This has resulted in an increased participation of men in childrearing and active paternity.

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Unfortunately, due to the closure of USAID, our projects with HIAS Colombia and TETRA TECH were canceled. As a result of the January 24, 2025, directive to suspend all activities, we were sent into a state of uncertainty. The communities were greatly affected because it was such an abrupt stoppage in our work, bringing about deleterious social, economic, and political effects that caused setbacks to the humanitarian issue to eradicate violence. The community has begun suffering the consequences of our absence and the disappearance of development funding. Finally, the organization has suffered immensely, seeing a reduction in our staff from twelve to four over the course of the year.

1. How many people have participated in the organization's programs?

Approximately 5000 people have participated in the various programs implemented by Men on the Move (La Corporación Hombres en Marcha).

2. How many years has Men on the Move worked with the communities?

Men on the Move has been working with communities for approximately 10 years, promoting and strengthening non-violent and co-responsible masculinities, peace building, environmental awareness, and in the economic, social, political technological and cultural development of society.

The following correspond with the organization's theory of change:

- The promotion of non-violent and co-responsible masculinities for constructing the social fabric
- Women's empowerment and leadership
- Project management to reduce gender gaps
- A life free of violence

3. Has the work of the organization been recognized by the government or international entities?

Yes, Men on the Move's work in reducing gender-based violence and building and constructing non-violent and co-responsible masculinities within Nariño has been recognized by both the Departmental Assembly of Nariño (Proposition 087 of 2020 – December 9, 2020) as well as the by the Municipal Council of Pasto (Proposition 015 – March 10, 2021). Additionally, entities of the United Nations system along with international non-governmental organizations have recognized Men on the Move as a strategic ally in Nariño.

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4. Does the organization have data about reductions in violence that can be attributed to its programming?

Men on the Move has implemented various strategies focused on the prevention of violence against women, among which, the following stand out:

- Reeducation program with men responsible for violence against women. Since its inception in 2024, 125 men, who have either been indicted or incarcerated for domestic or intimate partner violence have participated in the program.

Through this process, positive results have been observed which contribute to the reduction of violence against women through affirmative actions of transformation. Notably, to encourage abstaining from violence, men who participate in the program are taught to identify their violent tendencies, to recognize the dynamics in cycles of violence, and to understand the lack of emotional control as determining factors in violence against women.

This process has resulted in a significant increase in the level of learning of participants, where 84% managed to clearly identify the forms, expressions, thoughts, and behaviors that lead to violence against women as well as the possible physical and mental health consequences for the victims. Furthermore, to date, the program has a 100% effectiveness in preventing recidivism on the part of the participants.

- Involving young men and adults in the prevention of violence against women and girls. 200 men from migrant and host communities participated in the training curriculum to reduce gender-based violence between 2021 and January 2025. During this period, 240 psychosocial cases were handled for women either at risk of or victims of gender-based violence.

To identify gender-based violence, training processes were developed for 320 women, while group discussions were held on the impact of gender-based violence with children and adolescents aged 10-17 years through the masculinity's curriculum.

- Narratives for life, reconciliation, and gender equality. With the support of the United Nations Multi-Donor Fund for Peace in Colombia, 80 leaders, human rights defenders, and signatories of the peace accords from the municipalities of Tumaco and La Variante worked to strengthen plans and protocols for the prevention of violence in the spheres of self-protection, de-stigmatization, and strategic and community communication.

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- National Network of Local Development Agencies of Colombia (Adelco Network).

Thanks to the support of PDT Nariño, strategic actions were developed for the process of updating the public policy for the equity of women in the department of Nariño.

Service delivery pathways for gender-based violence were developed for the department of Nariño as well as the structuring of the communication strategies on the prevention and protection of gender-based violence based on Pasto's Safe Cities model.

- Protective environments and communities for women from the municipalities of Ipiales and Cumbal of the department of Nariño. This project was developed with rural and indigenous men and women from the municipalities of Ipiales and Cumbal in Nariño to promote protective environments for women and girls in the border region between Colombia and Ecuador. Through training, the promotion of political advocacy and the creation of community routes to prevent violence, the project strengthened the capacities of more than 130 women to prevent and protect against recruitment, gender-based violence, and sexual exploitation. Parallely, more than 70 men from arts and cultural groups promoted cultural initiatives to promote non-violent and co-responsible masculinities to contribute to the prevention of gender-based violence.

Interview with Luz Marina Becerra, legal representative of the Coordinación de Mujeres Afrocolombianas Desplazadas (La Comadre), May 2025

In May 2025 the Colombia Human Rights Committee asked Luz Marina Becerra to describe the impact of the sudden cutoff of assistance from USAID on her organization, La Comadre. Following is her response:

“We had projects through IOM [International Organization for Migration] as an operator of USAID. In 2013 they supported us to design a strategy for psychosocial healing, recognizing the gaps in Colombia when it comes to addressing the mental health problems, since the vast majority of those problems have been brought about by the armed conflict, especially in the territories.

“Working with the Ministry of Health and the Victims Unit’s Program of Psychosocial Care and Comprehensive Health for Victims of the Armed Conflict [PAPSIVI in Spanish], we succeeded in including not only a gender perspective but also an ethnic perspective. We embraced this program, first, recognizing the disproportionate impacts of the armed conflict on Black women. Second, recognizing the gaps we have when it comes to designing and implementing public policies to address all the traumas and sequelae of the armed conflict. And third, because the PAPSIVI strategy designed by the state lacked a differential approach tailored to the particular characteristics of our communities.

“Comadre played a particularly key role before the Integrated System of Truth, Justice, and Reparation and Non-Repetition [the transitional justice institutions created in the 2016 Peace Agreement]. We provided four reports to the Truth Commission, two to the Special Peace Courts (JEP), and two to the Unit to Search for Persons Considered Disappeared. These reports were supported by the IOM, which enabled us to play a role in the transitional justice system....

“This year we had signed an agreement for collective reparation, one of the initiatives we have been leading. We have engaged in this process for the last 10 years; with this new project we were working to promote various inter-institutional roundtables in several local communities around collective reparation, holding cultural festivals engaging the receiving or host communities, where the displaced persons arrive; in those communities people often think [the displaced persons] are coming to take away opportunities from them, invading their territory. Our initiative is an attempt to achieve lasting solutions, which the United Nations has been proposing around the world – the obligation of states to provide lasting solutions for displaced persons. And we were continuing to promote the strategy of psycho-spiritual healing. But unfortunately with the new policy of the U.S. government and the cuts of USAID resources, we lost support for that project.

**Interview with Luz Marina Becerra, legal representative of the
Coordinación de Mujeres Afrocolombianas Desplazadas (La Comadre), May
2025**

“This has had a significant negative impact on the organization: we had been making gains, yet today, this geopolitical crisis has led us to review our own situation, internally, to look at our strengths, so as to reconfigure our work and continue going forward with our struggles.

“Another significant impact is the reduction in personnel. With the support of IOM we were able to have technical staff to support the various thematic and strategic lines of work of La Comadre, yet with the cutbacks we had to suspend staff, and today just a few of us who are continuing to wage the struggle are bearing all the work....

“We had a national level team with seven persons, and we had to let go of three, all professionals. Today four remain, not with the same level of education needed for these processes, nor with the same political clarity and level of knowledge as is needed for raising the profile of these struggles. We had 10 projects in different communities, and one coordinator for each one, but this staff we had to suspend due to lack of resources. This affects our operations both nationally and in the regions where we work.

“There are also emotional impacts, due to the expectations and hopes we had of continuing to go forward with our work. We had decided that this year would be the year of La Comadre because we planned to set in motion a three-year plan. Yet implementing it is difficult since we don't have the personnel or the money for publicizing or implementing it. This also interrupts life projects, both individual and collective.

“Today, seeking funding is more complex and competitive. We intended to seek resources from the European Union, but we found that they are also rethinking their presence [in Colombia] and weighing who they are going to continue funding.”