

HER WAR, HER JUSTICE: LEARNING FROM THE PAST
TO REPAIR THE LIVES OF FORMER GIRL SOLDIERS
*LAURA C. GAMARRA AMAYA**



SU GUERRA, SU JUSTICIA: APRENDER DEL PASADO
PARA REPARAR LAS VIDAS DE EX NIÑAS SOLDADOS

ABSTRACT

Former girl soldiers stand in society as anonymous women with a particular set of challenges in their reintegration to society. This article studies these specific challenges in post-conflict nations and assesses how reparations programs have addressed –or failed to address– their unique needs. Drawing on case studies from transitional justice initiatives in Africa, Latin America and Asia, the article highlights the scope of armed conflicts and the forms of harm suffered by girl soldiers, including sexual violence, forced marriages and social stigmatization. It takes a qualitative approach in analyzing existing international and domestic reparations frameworks, emphasizing inclusivity, recognition of victimhood and the importance of tailored, transformative reparations. The article argues for reimagining reparations beyond financial compensation to include access to education, psychosocial support and community reintegration efforts. It concludes that transformative reparations are essential to repair the deep and multilayered harm suffered by former girl soldiers, particularly in supporting them to rebuild their lives and identities on their own terms. Finally, it offers concrete recommendations for designing future reparations programs that genuinely respond to the lived experiences of former girl soldiers and contribute to their long-term empowerment and healing.

Keywords: Girl soldiers; Sexual violence; Forced marriages; Social stigmatization; Reparations frameworks; Inclusivity; Recognition of victimhood.

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RESUMEN

Las ex niñas soldado se presentan en la sociedad como mujeres anónimas con desafíos particulares para su reintegración. Este artículo estudia estos desafíos específicos en países en posconflicto y evalúa cómo los programas de reparación han abordado –o no– sus necesidades específicas. Basándose en estudios de caso de iniciativas de justicia transicional en África, América Latina y Asia, el artículo destaca el alcance de los conflictos armados y los daños que sufren las niñas soldado, que incluyen la violencia sexual, los matrimonios forzados y la estigmatización social. Adopta un enfoque cualitativo para analizar los marcos de reparación internacionales y nacionales existentes, hace hincapié en la inclusión, el reconocimiento de la victimización y la importancia de reparaciones personalizadas y transformadoras. El artículo aboga por re-imaginar las reparaciones más allá de la compensación económica para incluir el acceso a la educación, el apoyo psicosocial y los esfuerzos de reintegración comunitaria. Concluye que las reparaciones transformadoras son esenciales para reparar el daño profundo y multidimensional que sufren las ex niñas soldado, en particular, para ayudarlas a reconstruir sus vidas e identidades según sus propios términos. Por último, ofrece recomendaciones concretas para diseñar futuros programas de reparaciones que respondan de manera genuina a las experiencias vividas de las ex niñas soldados y contribuyan a su empoderamiento y sanación a largo plazo.

Palabras clave: Niñas soldado; Violencia sexual; Matrimonios forzados; Estigmatización social; Marcos de reparación; Inclusión; Reconocimiento de las víctimas.

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I. INTRODUCTION

All over the world, armed conflicts have challenged global stability. Historically, developing nations are more susceptible to the instability that gives rise to such armed conflicts¹. After reconciliation efforts and peace processes, nation building efforts focus on justice for all the victims, including those members of rebel or national liberation movements that were recruited during childhood².

1 On the dynamics of political violence and social instability and the role of intellectual elites shaping narratives that escalate or deescalate violence in this type of contexts, see. BERNARDO PÉREZ SALAZAR. "Violencia y política: La pobreza de las ideas en Colombia", *Revista de Economía Institucional*, vol. 18, n.º 35, 2016, pp. 359 to 366, available in [<https://revistas.uexternado.edu.co/index.php/ecoins/article/view/4734/5493>].

2 OLEH SURKOV. "Elaboration of a Method for Strategic Analysis of the Development of the Armed Forces", *Novum Jus*, vol. 16, n.º 3, October-December 2022, pp. 75 to 105, available in [<https://novumjus.ucatolica.edu.co/article/view/4707/4425>]. Similar peace

The phenomenon of child soldiering has caught significant attention within the international legal and humanitarian community; however, the distinct experiences of girl soldiers have often been marginalized within both academic scholarship and the design of reparations programs³. Former girl soldiers endure multifaceted forms of victimization, including, but not limited to, sexual violence, forced marriage, exploitation and profound social stigmatization⁴. However, these harms are frequently rendered invisible within general frameworks addressing the reintegration of child soldiers⁵. Despite inter-

processes have been carried out in Colombia, which have involved adopting positions on political crimes and the treatment of victims, see GERMÁN SILVA GARCÍA. “Delito político y narcotráfico”, in RICHARD TOVAR CÁRDENAS (comp.). *La problemática de las drogas. Mitos y realidades*, Bogotá, Externado y Proyecto Enlace del Ministerio de Comunicaciones, 1998, pp. 65 a 90; ID. *El proceso de paz. Un paso adelante... dos pasos atrás*, Bogotá, Fundación de Estudios Sociales e Investigaciones Políticas –FESIP– and Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos –CSPP–, 1985, pp. 7 y ss. For a discussion about the scope of armed conflict in other scenarios such as cities: JAIME CUBIDES CÁRDENAS, JUAN DAVID GONZÁLEZ AGUDELO and FERNANDA NAVAS CAMARGO. “Principios clave para el uso de la fuerza en escenarios urbanos en Colombia”, *Revista Científica General José María Córdova*, vol. 20, n.º 37, January-March 2022, pp. 89 to 107, available in [<https://revistacientificaesmic.com/index.php/esmic/article/view/808/821>].

- 3 For more information: PAOLA ALEXANDRA SIERRA ZAMORA, LINA VANESSA JIMÉNEZ BARRERA, NORMAN MANUEL REY TORRES and MANUEL BERMÚDEZ TAPIA. “Análisis de las acciones de atención y tuición a ‘niños soldados’ en el posacuerdo colombiano”, in PAOLA ALEXANDRA SIERRA ZAMORA, MANUEL ALEXIS BERMÚDEZ TAPIA and César Alberto KARÁN BENÍTEZ (eds.). *Las consecuencias del conflicto armado interno en el posacuerdo colombiano*, Bogotá, Escuela Militar de Cadetes José María Córdova, 2020, pp. 21 a 46, available in [<https://librosesmic.com/index.php/editorial/catalog/view/19/40/1241-1>]. “1. Las consecuencias del conflicto armado interno en el posacuerdo colombiano”, results of the research project “Desafíos contemporáneos para la protección de derechos humanos en escenarios de posconflicto desde enfoques interdisciplinarios – Fase II”, by Grupo de Investigación Persona, Instituciones y Exigencias de Justicia, del Centro de Investigaciones Sociojurídicas, Facultad de Derecho, Universidad Católica de Colombia.
- 4 This partly as a result of patriarchal relations of domination. In this regard, GERMÁN SILVA GARCÍA and VANNIA ÁVILA CANO. “Control penal y género ¡Baracunátana! Una elegía al poder sobre la rebeldía”, *Revista Criminalidad*, vol. 64, n.º 2, mayo-agosto de 2022, pp. 23 a 34, available in [<https://revistacriminalidad.policia.gov.co:8000/index.php/revcriminalidad/article/view/352/597>]; GERMÁN SILVA GARCÍA. “El control penal sobre la sexualidad –Fundamentos, extralimitaciones y limitaciones–”, in AA. VV. *Memorias xx Jornadas Internacionales de Derecho Penal*, Bogotá, Externado, 1998, pp. 231 a 271; GERMÁN SILVA GARCÍA and PAMELA TINOCO ORDÓÑEZ. “Delitos sexuales”, in PABLO ELÍAS GONZÁLEZ MONGUÍ (coord.). *Derecho penal especial*, t. II, Bogotá, Ibáñez, 2023.
- 5 JORGE FERNANDO PERDOMO TORRES. “Criterios de imputación contra los agentes del Estado. Una referencia especial al caso colombiano”, *Novum Jus*, vol. 18, n.º 1, January-April, 2024, pp. 403 to 429, available in [<https://novumjus.ucatolica.edu.co/article/view/5531/5034>].

national normative developments recognizing gender-specific harms in conflict settings, reparative efforts have largely failed to adequately respond to the complex realities faced by female former combatants.

This article critically examines existing reparations initiatives through a gender-sensitive approach, focusing on how past experiences can aid the development of more inclusive and transformative reparations⁶. Through comparative analysis of case studies from post-conflict societies⁷, it interrogates the extent to which former girl soldiers' needs have been addressed and identifies persistent shortcomings within prevailing reparations frameworks. Ultimately, the article argues that meaningful reparations for former girl soldiers must transcend monetary compensation to encompass educational opportunities, psychosocial support and measures aimed at social reintegration and empowerment. By centering the lived experiences of girl soldiers, the article contributes to the broader project of rendering transitional justice mechanisms more responsive to the realities of all victims⁸.

This is a work of legal sociology that deals with a social problem in a legal context⁹.

6 NICOLE COFFEY KELLETT. "Truth and Reparations: A Perpetual Challenge for the Marginalized in Peru", *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*, vol. 27, n.º 4, December 2022, pp. 540 to 549.

7 JAIME CUBIDES CÁRDENAS, DAIANA REYES GARCÍA and PAOLA ALEXANDRA SIERRA ZAMORA (eds.). "Desenlace a los conflictos desde la justicia tradicional: Experiencias comparadas, aportes para el caso colombiano", Bogotá, Editorial Fundación Universitaria San Mateo, 2021, available in [<https://books.scielo.org/id/wz6qg/pdf/cubides-9786289558227.pdf>].

8 For more information: JAIME CUBIDES CÁRDENAS, PAOLA ALEXANDRA SIERRA ZAMORA and JEAN CARLO MEJÍA AZUERO. "Reflexiones en torno a la Justicia Transicional en Colombia: Fuerzas Armadas, víctimas y posacuerdo", *Utopía y Praxis Latinoamericana*, vol. 23, n.º 2, 2018, pp. 11 to 24, available in [<https://www.redalyc.org/journal/279/27957770001/html/>]; PABLO ELÍAS GONZÁLEZ MONGUÍ. *Procesos de selección penal negativa. Investigación criminológica*, Bogotá, Universidad Libre, 2013.

9 GERMÁN SILVA GARCÍA. "Aspectos fundamentales", in ID. (ed.). *Tratado latinoamericano de sociología jurídica*, Bogotá, Instituto Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios -ILAE-, 2023, pp. 15 a 58, available in [<https://libroselectronicos.ilae.edu.co/index.php/ilae/catalog/view/392/878/1817>].

II. REPARATIONS

One of the fundamental principles of tort liability holds that “all damage must be repaired”¹⁰. This idea continues to be a key feature in countries belonging to the Civil Law tradition. However, despite this foundation, recent legislation –influenced by the Anglo-Saxon common law tradition– has expanded the content and scope of liability to include measures aimed at sanctioning and deterring harmful conduct. Across Europe, North America and South America, legal systems have been established to compensate victims for harm to their personal integrity or property when such harm is attributable to another party. In the United States and other common law countries, tort law developed from the English common law. In contrast, the framework for reparations in Colombia and much of South America is rooted in the Civil Law tradition, where legal rules are systematically codified¹¹.

In traditional tort law, the purpose of awarding damages is to compensate a person who has suffered harm or loss by restoring them, as much as possible, to the position they would have been in, had the harm not occurred¹². In other words, it is meant to make the injured party whole.

Depending on the legal system and the type of case, these damages can serve slightly different functions, such as, to cover actual losses like medical expenses, lost income, emotional suffering, to restore to the injured party something that was taken from them, to punish particularly harmful behavior and deter similar future conduct, or to recognize that a legal wrong occurred even if no significant loss is proven¹³. The idea across all types of monetary damages is that

10 Further review on Tort Liability in other areas of law is found in LAURA CECILIA GAMARRA AMAYA, FERNANDA NAVAS CAMARGO, PAULA ANDREA BARRETO CIFUENTES and JOHANNA NAVAS CAMARGO. “Tort liability for unsafe sidewalk conditions: A comparative study between Colombia and New York city”, *Opción: Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales*, vol. 35, n.º 25, 2019, pp. 605 to 639, available in [<https://produccioncientificaluz.org/index.php/opcion/article/view/32321/33735>].

11 LAURA CECILIA GAMARRA AMAYA. “Damages and Awards: A Comparative Study between Colombia and the United States”, *Revista Jurídicas*, vol. 16, n.º 1, pp. 139 to 152, available in [<https://revistasoj.s.ucaldas.edu.co/index.php/juridicas/article/view/3137/2997>].

12 E. GARRETT WEST. “Refining Constitutional Torts”, *Yale Law Journal*, 134, n.º 3, January 2025, pp. 858 to 944, available in [https://yalelawjournal.org/pdf/134.3.West_pvhid8o8.pdf].

13 GERMÁN SILVA GARCÍA and PAMELA TINOCO ORDÓÑEZ. “La justicia restaurativa. Un pa-

money acts as a stand-in for the harm suffered, since the law cannot usually undo the harm itself.

For victims of armed conflicts, however, monetary damages aim to provide reparation for violations of internationally recognized rights¹⁴. The International Court of Justice –ICJ– and human rights bodies like the Inter-American Court of Human Rights have stressed that the goal is to “wipe out” the consequences of the wrongful act as far as possible¹⁵. Compensation is given when restitution –that is, restoring the original situation– is impossible; for example, when a child has been recruited to join the ranks of an organization and has suffered the effects of the war without having a choice in his or her future¹⁶.

In transitional justice, which deals with societies emerging from conflict or authoritarianism¹⁷, monetary awards are one –but not the only– form of reparation among others like truth commissions, apolo-

rangón entre la justicia penal y la transicional”, *Araucaria. Revista Iberoamericana de Filosofía, Política, Humanidades y Relaciones Internacionales*, año 26, n.º 57, 2024, pp. 483 a 504, available in [<https://revistascientificas.us.es/index.php/araucaria/article/view/26801/23317>].

- 14 ROBERT G. VOLTERRA and FLORENTINE VOS. “How (Not) to Compensate for State Responsibility in Armed Conflict: The *DRC v. Uganda* Reparations Judgment and the International Law of Reparations”, in GIULIANA ZICCARDI CAPALDO (ed.), *The Global Community. Yearbook of International Law and Jurisprudence 2023*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2024, pp. 269 to 296. For a case of demands not compensable with monetary reparations, see BERNARDO PÉREZ SALAZAR. “¿Qué hay de la responsabilidad del Estado colombiano después de una condena internacional? El caso de las comunidades afrodescendientes del río Caicara”, in JAIME ALFONSO CUBIDES CÁRDENAS and TANIA GIOVANNA VIVAS BARRERA (eds.). *Responsabilidad internacional y protección ambiental: En tiempos de paz, en medio del conflicto armado y en etapas de posconflicto*, Bogotá, Universidad Católica de Colombia, 2018, pp. 161 to 196, available in [<https://repository.ucatolica.edu.co/entities/publication/2ddc2e51-8fa3-475b-8967-ab16edf98b64>].
- 15 INTER AMERICAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS. “Cuadernillos de Jurisprudencia de la Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos”, Bogotá, CIDH, 2021, available in [https://www.corteidh.or.cr/sitios/libros/todos/docs/cuadernillo5_2021.pdf].
- 16 UNITED NATIONS. “Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict”, New York, 25 May 2000, available in [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11-b&chapter=4&clang=_en&_gl=1*1jkh5wh*_ga*MjEyOTcwODQzMy4xNzA5NjcwNzI2*_ga_TK9BQL5X7Z*MTcxNDQwMjcyOS41LjEuMTcxNDQwMjc0MC4wLjAuMA.#EndDec.].
- 17 WALTER ARÉVALO RAMÍREZ and PAULINE MARTINI. “When International Legal Standards Meet Transitional Justice Processes: Balancing Nationals Interests with International Criminal Law at the Colombian Special Jurisdiction for Peace”, *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, vol. 20, n.º 4, September 2022, pp. 1.001 to 1.026.

gies, memorials or rehabilitation programs¹⁸. Their purpose varies, but generally it serves to acknowledge that a wrong occurred and that the state (or another actor) accepts responsibility. It also helps victims rebuild their lives materially through education, housing, healthcare, etc. In addition, monetary reparations can help rebuild trust between citizens and institutions by demonstrating a commitment to justice. However, monetary damages alone are usually seen as insufficient in transitional justice. Experts emphasize that reparations must be *comprehensive*, meaning they must combine financial compensation with symbolic measures and services to truly repair harm and transform victims' lives¹⁹.

In Colombia, the National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation –CNRR– considers as

victims all those individuals or groups of individuals who, due to or in connection with the internal armed conflict that the country has been experiencing since 1964, have suffered individual or collective harm caused by acts or omissions that violate the rights enshrined in the Colombian Constitution, International Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law and International Criminal Law, and that constitute a violation of national criminal law²⁰.

These harms can include material and moral damage, damage to life plans and social damage. Material damages include consequential damages and lost profits, whereas non-material damages involve the interruption of life plans and moral damage. Consequential damage, or *daño emergente*, is the harm or loss²¹ arising from the breach of an obligation, its imperfect fulfillment, or its delayed fulfillment; lost

18 MÓNICA ALEXANDRA MENDOZA MOLINA. "Inclusión de la niñez en las comisiones de la verdad: Casos Guatemala y Argentina", *Novum Jus*, vol. 15, n.º especial, 2021, pp. 127 to 153, available in [<https://novumjus.ucatolica.edu.co/article/view/4089/3970>].

19 VOLTERRA and VOS. How (Not) to Compensate for State Responsibility in Armed Conflict: The *DRC v. Uganda* Reparations Judgment and the International Law of Reparations", cit.

20 CORTE INTERAMERICANA DE DERECHOS HUMANOS –CIDH–. "Definiciones Estratégicas de la Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación", 2008, available in [<https://www.cortheidh.or.cr/tablas/CD0373-4.pdf>], p. 2.

21 To deepen the review of conceptual use in transitional justice cases, review DANIEL RICARDO VARGAS DÍAZ and FERNANDA NAVAS CAMARGO. "Colombia's Special Jurisdiction for Peace, use of Case concept within their decisions and harm to procedural guarantees", *Opción: Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales*, n.º 93, 2020, pp. 48 to 62, available in [<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/7621421.pdf>].

profits are the profit that is no longer obtained as a result of the obligation not being fulfilled or imperfectly fulfilled, or its delayed fulfillment²².

Regarding non-pecuniary damages, the IACHR in its reparations ruling in the “Cantoral Benavides” case, notes that they are characterized “by not having an economic or patrimonial nature; therefore, they cannot be assessed in monetary terms”²³. As to damage to the “life plan”, the ruling in the “Loayza Tamayo” case explains that this damage “compromises the external freedom of the person, delays, undermines or frustrates their personal destiny and their reason for being”²⁴.

ANA LUCÍA AGUIRRE GARABITO and IRINA SIBAJA LÓPEZ argue that social harm refers to the damage, negative impact or reduction in collective well-being resulting from human actions that go against legal norms, whether lawful or unlawful. It is a type of harm that affects a community as a whole –an indiscriminate injury suffered by society– creating an obligation to make amends for the consequences caused²⁵. This kind of harm cannot be fully addressed through financial compensation alone. It requires deeper forms of reparation that restore victims’ humanity and dignity, acknowledging that the damage includes emotional, physical and moral suffering –such as pain, fear, and trauma–. As a result, conventional approaches to assessing damages are insufficient when it comes to human rights violations committed during the conflict, which often involve not just material losses but also disruptions to victims’ life plans and the emotional and symbolic bonds they had developed over time²⁶.

22 GAMARRA AMAYA. “Damages and Awards: A Comparative Study between Colombia and the United States”, cit.

23 CORTE INTERAMERICANA DE DERECHOS HUMANOS –CIDH–. *Caso Cantoral Benavides v. Perú*, Sentencia de 18 de agosto de 2000 (fondo), available in [https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_69_esp.pdf].

24 INTER AMERICAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS. *Caso Loayza-Tamayo v. Perú*, Sentencia de 17 de septiembre de 1997 (Fondo), available in [https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_33_esp.pdf].

25 ANA LUCÍA AGUIRRE GARABITO and IRINA SIBAJA LÓPEZ. “El daño social: Su conceptualización y posibles aplicaciones”, *Revista Judicial, Costa Rica*, n.º 101, September 2011, pp. 129 to 160, available in [https://escuelajudicialpj.poder-judicial.go.cr/Archivos/documentos/revs_juds/revista%20101/pdf/010_dañosocial.pdf].

26 VIZNEY LEONARDO BUSTAMANTE. “De víctimas a sobrevivientes: Implicaciones para la construcción de paces en Colombia”, *Revista de Antropología y Sociología: Virajes*, vol. 19, n.º

Based on this understanding of damage, the meaning of “survivor” in the context of the armed conflict acquires meaning; this concept relates to a person capable of dynamically reconstructing their life plan and contributing to the reparation of subjective damage. The victim, on the other hand, acts as a passive subject, awaiting financial reparation for objective damage as a responsibility of the State²⁷.

III. REPARATIONS FOR WAR CRIMES

In a broad sense, reparations are institutional measures aimed at addressing the structural deficiencies that lead to repeated violations of international humanitarian law –IHL– within a State. Their direct objective is to correct these shortcomings, create general conditions that comply with international standards on the matter, and consequently, prevent further revictimization by bringing victims closer. In Colombia, reparations for war crimes are typically anchored by the guarantee of non-repetition, reflecting the broader transitional justice framework aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict and preventing future violations. This guarantee serves not only as a symbolic acknowledgment of victims’ suffering, but also as a practical commitment to institutional reform, truth-seeking and the dismantling of structures that enabled the violence. By prioritizing non-repetition, Colombia underscores its obligation to create conditions that ensure lasting peace and justice for affected communities²⁸.

International law has made it paramount to provide reparations, so that citizens that have been victimized and ravaged by war can get the tools to move forward and advance society. These reparations, ranging from financial compensation and psychological support to truth-telling mechanisms and guarantees of non-repetition, are not merely symbolic; they aid in restoring dignity, acknowledging suffer-

1, January-June 2017, pp. 147 to 163, available in [<https://revistasoj.s.ucaldas.edu.co/index.php/virajes/article/view/3289/3055>].

27 NICOLAS QUELOZ. “Représentations et Place des Personnes Victimes dans la Justice Pénale”, *Revue Pénale Suisse*, t. 131, n.º 4, 2013, pp. 430 to 444, available in [https://fredi.hepvs.ch/documents/303594/files/6-RPS-NQueloz-Texte_VICTIMES.pdf].

28 MARÍA CARMELINA LONDOÑO LÁZARO and ANA MARÍA IDÁRRAGA MARTÍNEZ. “La justicia transicional como garantía de no repetición: El modelo colombiano puesto a prueba”, *Novum Jus*, vol. 18, n.º 3, September-December 2024, pp. 307 to 342, available in [<https://novumjus.ucatolica.edu.co/article/view/5738/5619>].

ing and rebuilding trust in state institutions²⁹. By equipping victims with the resources and recognition necessary to heal, reparations play a transformative role in enabling affected populations to reclaim agency and contribute to the reconstruction and development of their societies. This legal and moral imperative reflects a broader commitment to peacebuilding and long-term stability in post-conflict settings.

The United Nations General Assembly's Resolution 60/147³⁰, adopted in 2005, outlines the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for victims of gross violations of international human rights law and serious breaches of international humanitarian law. This non-binding instrument affirms that victims have the right to equal and effective access to justice, adequate, effective and prompt reparation for harm suffered, and access to relevant information concerning violations and reparation mechanisms. Reparations may take various forms, including restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition³¹. The principles serve as a guide for states in developing domestic policies to address the needs of victims and to fulfill their obligations under international law³².

These community level initiatives to repair victims of war crimes are not only employed all over the world. In Kosovo, for example, a randomized controlled trial conducted by the Danish Institute Against Torture –DIGNITY– showed that combining treatments such as cognitive behavioral therapy, biofeedback and physiotherapy can ef-

29 Idem.

30 UNITED NATIONS, OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS –OHCHR–. “Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law”, General Assembly Resolution 60/147, 16 December 2005, available in [<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-and-guidelines-right-remedy-and-reparation>].

31 However, the effectiveness and legitimacy of traditional resocialization has been widely questioned, which forces us to consider alternative forms of rehabilitation, more in terms of social utility, GERMÁN SILVA GARCÍA. “La resocialización y la retribución. El debate contemporáneo sobre los fines y las funciones de la pena”, en JAIME BERNAL CUÉLLAR (coord.). *xxv Jornadas Internacionales de Derecho Penal*, Bogotá, Externado, 2003, pp. 307 a 341.

32 OHCHR. “Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law”, cit.

fectively enhance mental health, social integration, and employment prospects for victims of armed conflict³³.

In the case of The Democratic Republic of Congo, The Trust Fund for Victims –TFV– has been addressing the needs of individuals affected by severe crimes, including mass killings, sexual violence and the use of child soldiers, particularly in the Ituri, North and South Kivu regions. In its initial phase, the TFV supported over 58,000 direct beneficiaries through initiatives such as physical and psychological rehabilitation, educational assistance, income-generating activities and community reconciliation efforts. In 2020, the TFV commenced a second phase with ten new projects aiming to assist more than 20,000 victims. These projects, implemented in collaboration with both international and national partners, focus on providing medical and psychological support, promoting economic self-sufficiency and fostering peacebuilding within communities. Despite these efforts, ongoing conflicts in regions like Ituri and North Kivu highlight the continued need for support to help survivors rebuild their lives³⁴. Some authors have argued that a one-size-fits-all approach is inadequate, advocating instead for reparative strategies that consider the diverse experiences and needs of victims, including gender-based violence and child soldiering. After all, the system to address reparations for victims of the DRC armed conflict is imperfect and needs more nuanced and context-sensitive reparations that promote justice and healing³⁵.

The concept of self-repair has gained traction in the last few years. Acknowledging that state efforts to compensate victims, proponents of this modality of reparations affirm that the vast majority of transitional societies fall short of delivering effective reparations to victims, meaning that they have to rely on the support of civil so-

33 SHR-JIE WANG *et al.* "A novel bio-psycho-social approach for rehabilitation of traumatized victims of torture and war in the post-conflict context: A pilot randomized controlled trial in Kosovo", *Conflict and Health*, vol. 10, n.º 1, 2017, pp. 1 to 17, available in [<https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1186/s13031-016-0100-y.pdf>].

34 THE TRUST FUND FOR VICTIMS. Democratic Republic of Congo, available in [<https://www.trustfundforvictims.org/en/locations/democratic-republic-congo>].

35 AMISSI M. MANIRABONA and JO-ANNE WEMMERS. "Specific Reparation for Specific Victimization: A Case for Suitable Reparation Strategies for War Crimes Victims in the DRC", in *International Criminal Law Review*, vol. 13, n.º 5, 2013, pp. 977 to 1012.

ciety or themselves through “self-repair” or “informal repair”³⁶. It has been argued that transitional justice scholarship increasingly challenges traditional assumptions about victims’ roles, advocating for more participatory, grassroots approaches to justice and reparations. Despite this shift, critics argue that victims’ voices are often selectively used, appropriated and reshaped to align with the agendas of other transitional justice actors. Scholars like SARA KENDALL and SARAH NOUWEN point out that portrayals of victims frequently serve to justify justice initiatives, while their actual voices are abstracted and depoliticized³⁷. This critique draws on Christie’s notion of the “ideal victim”, which prioritizes justice for those seen as passive and vulnerable, thereby ignoring the complex identities and self-determination of many individuals who do not conform to this narrow image. CHRISTINE SCHWÖBEL-PATEL highlights how depicting victims as powerless reinforces their dependence on legal and humanitarian professionals, who assume authority to speak on their behalf³⁸. This dynamic not only strips victims of their agency but also perpetuates structural inequalities by reinforcing the dominance of institutional actors over those most affected. The concept of self-repair engages directly with these critiques, questioning the idea that recovery and reintegration can only come through formal justice mechanisms and emphasizing the need to recognize and respect victims’ autonomy in their own healing processes³⁹.

Drawing from the Colombian experience, the PAPSIVI, or The Psychosocial Care and Comprehensive Health Program for Victims was launched in 2013, within the framework of Act 1448 of 2011 which aims to improve the quality of life and repair the damage suf-

36 SUNEVA GILMORE and LUKE MOFFETT. “Finding a Way to Live with the Past: ‘Self-Repair’, ‘Informal Repair’, and Reparations in Transitional Justice”, *Journal of Law and Society*, vol. 48, n.º 3, 2021, pp. 455 to 480, available in [<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jols.12311>].

37 SARA KENDALL and SARAH NOUWEN. “Representational Practices at the International Criminal Court: The Gap between Juridified and Abstract Victimhood”, *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2013, available in [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2313094].

38 CHRISTINE SCHWÖBEL-PATEL. “The ‘Ideal’ Victim of International Criminal Law”, *European Journal of International Law*, vol. 29, n.º 3, August 2018, pp. 703 724, available in [<https://academic.oup.com/ejil/article/29/3/703/5165646>].

39 GILMORE and MOFFETT. “Finding a Way to Live with the Past: ‘Self-Repair’, ‘Informal Repair’, and Reparations in Transitional Justice”, cit.

ferred by victims of war⁴⁰. Since 1985, the Single Registry of Victims –RUV– has registered 9,943,287 victims nationwide. All of these victims registered in the RUV are a result of the armed conflict. The total number of people receiving care is 7,752,091 which corresponds to the PAPSIVI target population⁴¹.

The PAPSIVI adopts a comprehensive and restorative approach that views victims as protagonists in their own process of empowerment and positive change. One of the program's characteristics is its multilevel intervention, focusing on the individual, family and community levels. The program is implemented in the municipalities by interprofessional care teams composed of psychologists, social workers and community facilitators⁴². The size and composition of the teams depend on the number of victims registered in the municipalities, the prevalence of victimizing events in the communities and the predominant level of intervention in the municipalities. The multilevel and systemic nature of the intervention is evident, on the one hand, in the fact that psychologists provide psychological care at the individual level and, to a lesser extent, family therapy is also offered with sessions that seek to repair the psychosocial damage experienced through direct or indirect exposure to situations of violence. On the other hand, social workers carry out community-level interventions focused on promoting the associative fabric and social capital present in each intervention context. Community promoters, without carrying out interventions in the strict sense, act as facilitators and as a link between the professionals implementing the program and the potential beneficiaries of the intervention. The importance of promoters is crucial given that, as victims themselves, they increase the ecological validity of the intervention. Given the characteristics of

40 CONGRESO DE LA REPÚBLICA DE COLOMBIA. Ley 1448 from June 10, 2011, "por la cual se dictan medidas de atención, asistencia y reparación integral a las víctimas del conflicto armado interno", *Diario Oficial*, n.º 48.096, June 10, 2011, available in [<https://www.suin-juriscol.gov.co/viewDocument.asp?ruta=Leyes/1680697>].

41 UNIDAD PARA LAS VÍCTIMAS. "Registro Único de Víctimas (RUV)", available in [<https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/registro-unico-de-victimas-ruv/>].

42 IGNACIO RAMOS VIDAL, JORGE ENRIQUE PALACIO SAÑUDO, ALICIA URIBE ORZOLA and ILSE VILLAMIL BENÍTEZ. "Análisis dinámico de un equipo interprofesional que implementa un programa de atención psicosocial a víctimas de la guerra", *Interdisciplinaria. Revista de Psicología y Ciencias Afines*, vol. 40, n.º 2, 2023, pp. 517, available in [<https://www.scielo.org.ar/pdf/interd/v40n2/1668-7027-Interd-40-02-00541.pdf>].

the implementation of this initiative, it is valid to ask in this research what structural changes the teams of professionals implementing PAPSIVI experience⁴³.

Additionally, Colombia implemented the pilot program *Transformando mi futuro* (Changing my future) which applied the “graduation” approach to promote the economic inclusion of victims of the armed conflict. This approach combines cash transfers, training, support and access to financial services to facilitate beneficiaries’ transition to sustainable livelihoods⁴⁴. Results indicated significant improvements in income, assets and food security, although challenges are identified regarding long-term sustainability and the need to adapt the program to local contexts. The study concludes that, with appropriate adjustments, this model can be an effective tool for economic inclusion policies in post-conflict contexts⁴⁵.

IV. REPARATIONS FOR FORMER CHILD SOLDIERS AND THE NEED FOR A GENDERED APPROACH WHEN ADDRESSING REPARATIONS FOR GIRL SOLDIERS

Girls have been traditionally absent when assessing the need for reparations in a post armed conflict scenario⁴⁶. However, seeing as girls and boys experience conflict differently, there is a need to address reparations with a gendered perspective. One obvious situation that girls face is the disproportionate number of times they are

43 MINISTERIO DE SALUD. “Programa de Atención Psicosocial y Salud Integral a Víctimas del Conflicto Armado and de Atención Psicosocial y Salud Integral”, documento macro PAPSIVI, 2017, available in [<https://www.minsalud.gov.co/sites/rid/Lists/BibliotecaDigital/RIDE/DE/PS/Documento-Marco-papsivi-2017.pdf>].

44 FUNDACIÓN CAPITAL. “Construyendo el mañana: ‘Transformando Mi Futuro’ arranca Su segundo año en Colombia”, *Medium*, June 6, 2019, available in [<https://fundacapital.medium.com/construyendo-el-mañana-transformando-mi-futuro-arranca-su-segundo-año-en-colombia-870c7e454e1e>].

45 VIVIANA LEÓN JURADO and JORGE H. MALDONADO. “A Graduation Approach-Based Program for Victims of Colombia’s Armed Conflict: Lessons for Economic Inclusion”, *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy*, vol. 28, n.º 2, 2022, pp. 129 to 154.

46 PAOLA ALEXANDRA SIERRA ZAMORA y ANDRÉS EDUARDO FERNANDEZ OSORIO. “Perspectivas del delito de violencia sexual y el posacuerdo colombiano: Un enfoque desde la victimología y la teoría de la reacción social”, in VÍCTOR RODRÍGUEZ GONZÁLEZ (dir.). *Vulnerabilidad de las víctimas desde la perspectiva de género: Una visión criminológica*, Madrid, Dykinson, 2021, pp. 161 a 176.

subject to sexual violence and exploitation compared to their male peers⁴⁷, not to mention the stigma they face when going back to their communities⁴⁸. In addition, many girls experience long-term reproductive and psychological health consequences from abuse, including untreated trauma and complications from childbirth. Girls also miss out on school or training at a higher rate than boy soldiers due to pregnancy, childcare or trauma, creating barriers to independence and livelihood⁴⁹.

Some states have acknowledged the importance of a gendered approach to reparations and have therefore included the specific needs of girl soldiers in their Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration –DDR– processes. In Sierra Leone, for example, many girls were abducted and forced into sexual slavery by the Revolutionary United Front –RUF–⁵⁰. As a result of their DDR, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recognized sexual violence as a major harm and included counseling and skills training amongst their reparation efforts⁵¹. However, the programs often required girls to turn in a weapon to qualify, and many didn't have one because they were sex slaves or support workers. As a result, thousands of girls were excluded from benefits⁵².

In Uganda, an estimated 75,000 children were abducted and forced to serve as combatants, porters and sexual slaves from 1979

47 PAOLA ALEXANDRASIERRA ZAMORA. "Mecanismos y límites de la justicia transicional colombiana: Especial referencia a las amnistías e indultos", doctoral thesis, Valencia, Universidad de Valencia, 2021, available in [<https://roderic.uv.es/bitstreams/ed280776-ef0f-48c0-8bce-03b05290365c/download>].

48 SARAH WILLIAMS and EMMA PALMER. "Transformative Reparations for Women and Girls at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia", in *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, vol. 10, n.º 2, July 2016, pp. 311 to 331.

49 STACEY HYND. "In/Visible Girls: 'Girl Soldiers', Gender and Humanitarianism in African Conflicts, c. 1955-2005", in ESTHER MÖLLER, JOHANNES PAULMANN and KATHARINA STORNIG (eds.). *Gendering Global Humanitarianism in the Twentieth Century*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, pp. 255 to 279.

50 MIRIAM S. CHAIKEN. "Women Warriors and Kidnapped Kids: Girl Soldier/Brides in Sierra Leone", in CHRIS COULTER. *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers: Women's Lives through War and Peace in Sierra Leone*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2009, pp. 566 to 568.

51 SIERRA LEONE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION. "Witness to Truth", Volume Two (Chapter 4: Reparations)", available in [https://www.sierraleonetr.org/index.php/view-the-final-report/download-table-of-contents/volume-two/item/witness?category_id=12].

52 SIERRA LEONE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION. "Witness to Truth", available in [<https://www.sierraleonetr.org>].

to 2005. Girls were forcibly recruited into the Lord's Resistance Army –LRA–, where many experienced forced motherhood and sexual slavery⁵³. Uganda's transitional justice policy acknowledges gender-specific harms and calls for psychosocial support, health care and education for survivors of sexual violence. It includes community-based reconciliation approaches to help with reintegration. Its implementation is still ongoing and there is a need for victim-centered reparations that prioritize girls' voices⁵⁴.

In Liberia, girl soldiers were involved in various factions during Liberia's civil wars. From 1989 to 2003, Liberia endured two phases of a brutal civil war that began with CHARLES TAYLOR's National Patriotic Front rebelling against President SAMUEL DOE. The first phase ended in 1997 with TAYLOR's election as president, but conflict resumed in 1999 as opposition groups rose against him. Amid peace negotiations in Ghana in 2003, TAYLOR was indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, prompting his resignation and exile to Nigeria. A ceasefire and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement –CPA– followed, leading to a two-year transitional government. With international backing, democratic elections were held in 2005, resulting in the historic election of ELLEN JOHNSON-SIRLEAF. In 2006, TAYLOR was arrested and later tried in The Hague for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the use of child soldiers⁵⁵. In this case, the DDR program largely ignored girls, especially those who didn't carry weapons, although many had been excluded from education and reintegration services, and little was done to address sexual violence trauma⁵⁶.

53 ANNE-MARIE DE BROUWER. "Reparation to Victims of Sexual Violence: Possibilities at the International Criminal Court and at the Trust Fund for Victims and Their Families", *Leiden Journal of International Law*, vol. 20, n.º 1, March 2007, pp. 207 a 237, available in [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/231860379_Reparation_to_Victims_of_Sexual_Violence_Possibilities_at_the_International_Criminal_Court_and_at_the_Trust_Fund_for_Victims_and_Their_Families].

54 INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE –ICTJ–. Uganda, available in [<https://www.ictj.org/where-we-work/uganda>].

55 THOMAS JAYE. "Transitional Justice and DDR: The Case of Liberia", New York, International Center for Transitional Justice, June 2009, available in [https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-DDR-Liberia-ResearchBrief-2009-English_0.pdf].

56 STEPHANIE HANSON. "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) in Africa", *Council on Foreign Relations*, February 15, 2007, available in [<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-ddr-africa>].

In Colombia, addressing reparations for former girl soldiers has encompassed legal, social and political factors. While the 2016 peace agreement and related legal measures have established a foundation for responding to their needs, considerable obstacles still persist.

Act 1448 of 2011 previously mentioned, also called the “Victims and Land Restitution Law”, seeks to provide reparation to victims of the country’s internal armed conflict by providing comprehensive care, assistance and reparation to those affected⁵⁷. The law defines who is considered a victim and establishes mechanisms for care and reparation. It also acknowledges that due to age, gender, sexual orientation and disability status, some people are more vulnerable than others and it calls for a differential approach. Despite this, the actual implementation of reparations has faced numerous obstacles such as the lack of coordination among the various government entities that comprise the National System for Victim Assistance and Reparation, which hampers the effective implementation of the law, especially between the national and territorial entities, creating delays and obstacles to the care and reparation of victims⁵⁸.

Another negative aspect is the difficulty in implementing the law, due to factors such as bureaucracy and lack of resources. Furthermore, the law has been criticized for not being effective enough to reach all victims and for not comprehensively addressing their needs⁵⁹.

Another negative aspect is the difficulty in implementing the law, due to factors such as bureaucracy and lack of resources. Furthermore, the law has been criticized for not being effective enough to reach all victims and for not comprehensively addressing their needs⁶⁰.

In addition, many scholars view non-custodial sanctions or alternative sanctions as incompatible with the prevailing standards in international criminal law, international human rights law and inter-

57 Act 1448 de 2011, cit.

58 ANGIE MAYORGA COY. “La reparación y la participación de las víctimas en la Ley 1448 de 2011 y el Acuerdo de Paz de la Habana”, *Trabajo Social*, vol. 23, n.º 2, July-December 2021, pp. 219 to 235, available in [<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/8277870.pdf>].

59 ALRLE YIMI DIAZ GAVIRIA. “Ley 1448 de 2011. Análisis Crítico a la Restitución de Tierras como Mecanismo de Reparación Integral”, degree work, Bogotá, Universidad Católica de Colombia, 2016, available in [<https://repository.ucatolica.edu.co/server/api/core/bitstreams/cd512c30-c610-4a46-980f-ffda68e6cf83/content>].

60 Idem.

national humanitarian law, which generally call for prison sentences that reflect the seriousness of the crime and the offender's degree of culpability⁶¹.

V. THE CONCEPT OF "TRANSFORMATIVE REPARATIONS"

The concept of "Transformative reparations" for victims of armed conflict –specifically former girl soldiers– is a recent one that has gained traction in transitional justice settings across the globe⁶². Transformative reparations go beyond traditional forms of compensation by seeking not only to pay for harm suffered but also to address the structural inequalities and social conditions that allowed the violations to occur in the first place. While the principle of restitution aims to restore victims to the situation they were in before the conflict, transformative reparations recognize that many of these girls were marked by exclusion, poverty or discrimination, even before the conflict started⁶³. Thus, reparations must be forward-looking, aiming to create more equitable and resilient communities where the root causes of violence and victimization are meaningfully addressed.

A similar concern has been raised in other areas of transitional and penal policy in Colombia. BELTRÁN CÁRDENAS has argued that when state responses remain anchored in punitive or symbolic measures, such as expanding incarceration without addressing structural inequalities, the result is the reproduction of exclusion and the weakening of reintegration processes⁶⁴. This parallel illustrates the broader risk that reparations limited to financial or symbolic dimensions

61 BEATRIZ E. MAYANS HERMIDA and BARBORA HOLÁ. "Punishing Atrocity Crimes in Transitional Contexts: Advancing Discussions on Adequacy of Alternative Criminal Sanctions Using the Case of Colombia", *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, vol. 43, n.º 1, 2023, pp. 1 to 31, available in [<https://academic.oup.com/ojls/article/43/1/1/6755567>].

62 WILLIAMS and PALMER. "Transformative Reparations for Women and Girls at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia", cit.

63 BRIANNE MCGONIGLE LEYH and JULIE FRASER. "Transformative Reparations: Changing the Game or More of the Same?", *Cambridge International Law Journal*, vol. 8, n.º 1, 2019, pp. 39 to 59, available in [<https://www.elgaronline.com/downloadpdf/view/journals/cilj/8/1/article-p39.pdf>].

64 LADY ANDREA BELTRÁN CÁRDENAS. "El fin de la pena privativa de la libertad: Entre la utopía y el confinamiento", master's thesis, Bogotá, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2019, available in [<https://bffrepositorio.unal.edu.co/server/api/core/bitstreams/98614214-78bd-4403-993f-1a893423aea3/content>].

may fall short of transforming the conditions that originally made girls vulnerable to recruitment and violence.

These reparations may include a combination of material and symbolic measures: access to education, land restitution, guarantees of non-repetition, public acknowledgment of wrongdoing and the reform of institutions⁶⁵. For example, in post-conflict settings where women were disproportionately affected by violence, reparations should not only provide economic support but also challenge patriarchal structures that enabled gender-based violence. Similarly, for displaced indigenous communities, returning to their ancestral territories may require legal reforms and environmental protections to ensure that their rights are respected moving forward⁶⁶.

Colombia's transitional justice system is based on the idea that a less retributive approach to punishment is viable when supported by a robust conditionality framework⁶⁷. Under this model, perpetrators can receive reduced sanctions in exchange for meaningful contributions to victims' rights to truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-repetition. If the system succeeds in upholding these rights, it could represent a significant advance in transitional justice and potentially shift the focus from punitive sanctions toward more restorative forms of accountability. Such success might pave the way for broader acceptance of alternatives to imprisonment within transitional justice frameworks. However, if it doesn't meet its objectives, it could instead strengthen demands for retributive justice⁶⁸.

65 SANNE WEBER. *Gender and Citizenship in Transitional Justice. Everyday Experiences of Reparation and Reintegration in Colombia*, Bristol, Bristol University Press, 2023.

66 WILLIAMS and PALMER. "Transformative Reparations for Women and Girls at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia", cit. For a discussion about the scope of transformative reparation that the IAHRIC ordered after recognizing the right to collective landownership to Indigenous and tribal peoples, see TANIA GIOVANNA VIVAS BARRERA, GABRIEL ALEJANDRO QUINTERO SÁNCHEZ and BERNARDO PÉREZ SALAZAR. "From *terra nullius* to Indigenous collective land rights: Cases before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights", *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, vol. 19, n.º 1, March 2023, pp. 101 to 112.

67 LONDOÑO LÁZARO and IDÁRRAGA MARTÍNEZ. "La justicia transicional como garantía de no repetición: El modelo colombiano puesto a prueba", cit.

68 CLARA SANDOVAL, HOBETH MARTÍNEZ CARRILLO and MICHAEL CRUZ RODRÍGUEZ. "The Challenges of Implementing Special Sanctions (Sanciones Propias) in Colombia and Providing Retribution, Reparation, Participation and Reincorporation", *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, vol. 14, n.º 2, 2022, pp. 478 a 501, available in [<https://academic.oup.com/jhrp/article/14/2/478/6659909>]. As for an analysis of public perception in

CONCLUSIONS

Reparations alone cannot fully heal the wounds of victims. Although they are a central component of transitional justice, offering a means for those responsible to acknowledge and address the harm inflicted, such measures often fall short of recognizing the active role victims play in coping with their pain and finding their own paths toward recovery. In the aftermath of widespread atrocities, reparations are typically framed as tools for redress, rebuilding social trust or symbolically mending broken relationships. However, this framing can sometimes seem overly optimistic, failing to account for the profound and often irreparable nature of the harm endured.

Future reparations programs aimed at former girl soldiers must begin with their direct participation in every stage of the process, from design to implementation and evaluation. These girls, often doubly marginalized because of their age and gender, possess crucial insight into the harm they endured and the support they need. Creating safe and confidential environments where they can share their experiences and preferences is essential to ensure their input is meaningful and free from coercion or fear of stigmatization. Their inclusion should not be tokenistic but rather embedded in the core decision-making structures of reparations programs.

Programs must also acknowledge and respond to the deeply gendered nature of the violence girl soldiers experience. This includes addressing sexual slavery, forced pregnancies, coerced marriages and the burden of motherhood during and after conflict. Reparations must offer trauma-informed psychological support specifically designed to address gender-based violence and its long-term effects. Mental health services should be coupled with peer support networks and safe spaces that allow survivors to rebuild their identities outside of their victimization.

Bogotá of the results of the Transitional Justice System (known as JEP) and its impact on public safety, see, GERMÁN SILVA GARCÍA, BERNARDO PÉREZ SALAZAR and PABLO ELÍAS GONZÁLEZ MONGUÍ. "La Paz Total. ¿El crimen si paga? Percepciones del conflicto y la negociación en Colombia", *Revista Chilena de Derecho y Ciencia Política*, vol. 16, n.º 1, 2025, pp. 1 a 24, available in [<https://derechocienciapolitica.uct.cl/index.php/RDCP/article/view/467/422>].

Reparations should be conceived not merely as financial compensation but as long-term, holistic support systems that promote real transformation. This includes access to education, vocational training and sustainable livelihood opportunities that are flexible enough to accommodate young mothers. Healthcare, including reproductive and maternal services, must be part of the package, recognizing the intergenerational impact of wartime abuse. Without such structural support, reparations risk being short-term gestures rather than meaningful steps toward recovery.

Thus, transformative reparations are essential for addressing the unique harms suffered by former girl soldiers, whose experiences of conflict often include forced recruitment, sexual violence and the denial of childhood⁶⁹. Traditional reparations, such as financial compensation or symbolic recognition, fall short in responding to the deep psychological, social and physical wounds these girls carry. Transformative measures must acknowledge their dual identities as both victims and survivors, offering pathways to reclaim their agency, rebuild their lives and overcome the compounded stigma they often face within their communities. These reparations must be tailored to restore not only what was lost but also to support the creation of a life they choose for themselves, free from coercion and shame.

A crucial component of this process is enabling former girl soldiers to become mothers on their own terms. Many were forced into motherhood under violent and exploitative conditions, and they now need support systems that allow them to redefine what it means to parent in a safe and dignified way. This may include access to healthcare, psychosocial services, education and housing –not just for themselves, but also for their children–. Transformative reparations, in this sense, do more than address past harm; they build futures grounded in autonomy, healing and justice. Supporting girl soldiers in reclaiming motherhood is not only a form of redress but a powerful act of restoring their full humanity.

69 Then, "... the material [experiences] really connected to those cognitive structures is that girl soldiers' specificities, such contexts and social role related experiences, are not adequately addressed by DDR measures. Girl soldiers are silenced before, during and after the army conflict". PATRICIA NABUCO MARTUSCELLI and LEONARDO BANDARRA. "Triply silenced agents: Cognitive structures and girl soldiers in Colombia", *Critical Studies on Security*, vol. 8, n.º 3, 2020, available in [<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/21624887.2020.1846277?needAccess=true>], p. 235.

Another vital component is social reintegration, which remains one of the most difficult challenges for former girl soldiers. Reparations programs must include community-based reconciliation strategies to reduce stigma and enable acceptance. Working with traditional authorities, women's organizations and former combatant groups can help shift societal narratives about girl soldiers from shame to solidarity. Public education campaigns that humanize their experiences and acknowledge their resilience can play a powerful role in this process.

Legal identity is another crucial but often overlooked area. Many former girl soldiers return home without official documentation due to displacement, abduction or exploitation. Reparations should include assistance in securing legal identity documents, such as birth certificates and national ID cards, which are essential for accessing education, healthcare and employment. This step not only facilitates reintegration but also affirms their status as full citizens with rights.

Symbolic and collective measures should complement material forms of redress. Truth-telling initiatives can offer girl soldiers a platform to share their stories, if they choose, helping to restore their dignity and validate their suffering. National memorials, public commemorations, or days of recognition that specifically acknowledge the experiences of girl soldiers can also contribute to healing and collective remembrance. These symbolic acts reinforce a broader cultural acknowledgment of their place in history and their right to justice.

Ultimately, transformative reparations are needed to rebuild the social fabric torn by armed conflict and to empower victims as rights-holders, not merely as recipients of aid. By incorporating a participatory and intersectional approach, such reparations recognize the diverse experiences and needs of victims while laying the foundation for lasting peace and justice. While restoring victims to their original position remains a fundamental goal, it must be understood in the broader context of achieving substantive equality and social transformation. Reparations should be a process that empowers former girl soldiers, not one that forces them to relive their trauma in order to be heard.

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