

COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA

How conversation and cartography are helping redefine attitudes toward women and LGBTI people



POSTED BY BRIAN BANKS ON AUGUST 20, 2019

Colombia has been wracked by armed conflict between government forces, leftist guerrillas and paramilitary splinter groups for generations. The peace process ratified at the end of 2016, marking an official end to the conflict, was itself decades in the making.

So when a wave of shootings targeting women and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) communities flared up in early 2017 in Tumaco, a municipality bordering Ecuador, it underscored a grim reality — that curtailing gender-based violence would be neither quick nor easy in the post-conflict era.

It's also a reality that Gélica Mazzoldi Díaz, a senior researcher at [Fundación Ideas para la Paz](#), or FIP, a Bogotá-based think tank that works to build a stable and lasting peace in Colombia, was by then working to address. In February 2017, she and her team began a two-year [IDRC project](#) in Tumaco and two other border regions, Apartadó in the north and Putumayo in the south. Their goals were threefold: to evaluate the prob-

A perception map of Tumaco, Colombia. The map uses wildlife symbols to show points where women can be attacked (wasps) or face danger from criminal gangs that control or fight over particular territory (snakes). (Infographic and Illustration: Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP)/Christian Benito Rebollo)

lem of gender-based violence through the eyes of its victims; assess the effectiveness and limitations of existing security policies; and work with key local stakeholders to present and apply their results to improve the situation.

“Historically, there has been a high level of impunity and limited access to justice in the territories, especially for women and LGBTI populations,” says Mazzoldi Díaz. “In addition, Colombian public policy does not have a comprehensive understanding of security and gender-based violence.”

A single program in three small areas won't change Colombian society overnight. But now that the project is complete, Mazzoldi Díaz says their findings are having a positive effect, generating significant interest and uptake from local officials,

COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA

How conversation and cartography are helping redefine attitudes toward women and LGBTI people

community leaders and the private sector. “We have been able to deepen the understanding of the relationship between the types of violence and the security perception of women and LGBTI populations,” she says.

From the outset, researchers recognized that the subject matter and vulnerability of the people they wanted to reach dictated a safe, interactive approach. Teams conducted 10-day survey visits to local communities in the three territories, reaching about 1,000 people.

“We developed two key exercises in this stage. The first was a survey regarding gender-based violence and security perceptions,” Mazzoldi Díaz says. “The second was a mapping process. It allowed us to identify different types of violence and to determine safe zones and unsafe zones according to the perception of women and LGBTI communities.”

The work revealed complicated landscapes where sources of violence include armed groups, domestic abuse, local institutions and the workplace. For women, gender stereotyping that gives men licence to act violently is a major problem at home and where criminal groups use it to assert control over territory. In local economies that depend on drug trafficking,

women feel more secure when they can find other, legitimate work. The research also showed that state security measures aren’t effectively addressing women’s risks.

For LGBTI populations, stereotyping and prejudice are major threats. Adding to the problem is a lack of any official recognition or data collection on violence against LGBTI individuals, which limits institutional response.

After their surveys, the FIP team took the unusual step of returning to the regions to share and refine the results. This fortified both their data and the local buy-in. “They’re not used to having this type of information shared with them and validated,” says Mazzoldi Díaz.

The messaging has proved effective. In Apartadó, a banana-producing region, Mazzoldi Díaz says one company requested FIP’s help in conducting a workshop to sensitize men to women’s concerns and discuss ways to make a male-dominated workspace more women-friendly.

With her team’s work complete, Mazzoldi Díaz hopes to take their insights to a wider audience. “A main goal of our organization is to be able to position these kinds of topics in the national agenda and also in the public policy that’s being elaborated.”

COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA

How conversation and cartography are helping redefine attitudes toward women and LGBTI people

READING AS THINKING

1. Look at the map of the city of Tumaco included in the article. Based on the explanation you read in the article, what does this map show? Do you notice any patterns?

2. Why do you think victims chose symbols such as snakes and wasps to show where violent events occurred?

3. This article discusses many issues threatening the health and safety of women and the LGBTI community in Tumaco. Briefly summarize two of these issues:

a. _____

b. _____

4. Describe the solutions to these issues that Díaz and her team are working toward.

5. Why do you think the research team chose to return to the site where they conducted their surveys to share the results of their study with the victims they interviewed?

COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA

How conversation and cartography are helping redefine attitudes toward women and LGBTI people

6. The article suggests three key players must be involved if a solution to gender-based violence is to be adopted: victims, policy-makers and local stakeholders. What role do you think each of these players could play in working toward a solution?

a. Victims: _____

b. Policy-makers: _____

c. Stakeholders (e.g., community leaders, business owners): _____

7. Women and LGBTI communities outside of Colombia, for example in Canada, the United States and Europe, also face gender-based violence in their everyday lives. Can you think of a small but effective way to help prevent this type of violence in your community, your region, or your country?

COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA

How conversation and cartography are helping redefine attitudes toward women and LGBTI people

Think-Pair-Share

Think

Read through the article once more, taking note of 5-10 words you had difficulty understanding or that you think others might have difficulty understanding. Write these down on a piece of paper.

Pair

In groups of two, compare your list of words. Next, use a dictionary to find the definitions of these words and discuss the definitions until you have a solid understanding of their meaning. Write a couple of sentences using these words to gain a deeper understanding of their meaning and usage.

Share

Using the word web diagram on the following page, choose one word from your list with your partner and write it in the centre of the diagram. Next, fill in the remaining information based on the following:

- Who: What demographic is normally associated with the use of this word? Which individuals in the article are described using this word?
- What: What is the context in which this word is used? What is happening in the article when this word is used?
- Where: Is this word associated with a space, place, region or country? Is there a location in the article associated with this word?
- When: Can this word be misinterpreted if used at the wrong time? When is this word used in the article?
- Why: Why do writers, politicians, scientists or the general public use this word? Why is it used in the article?
- How: How would you define this word?

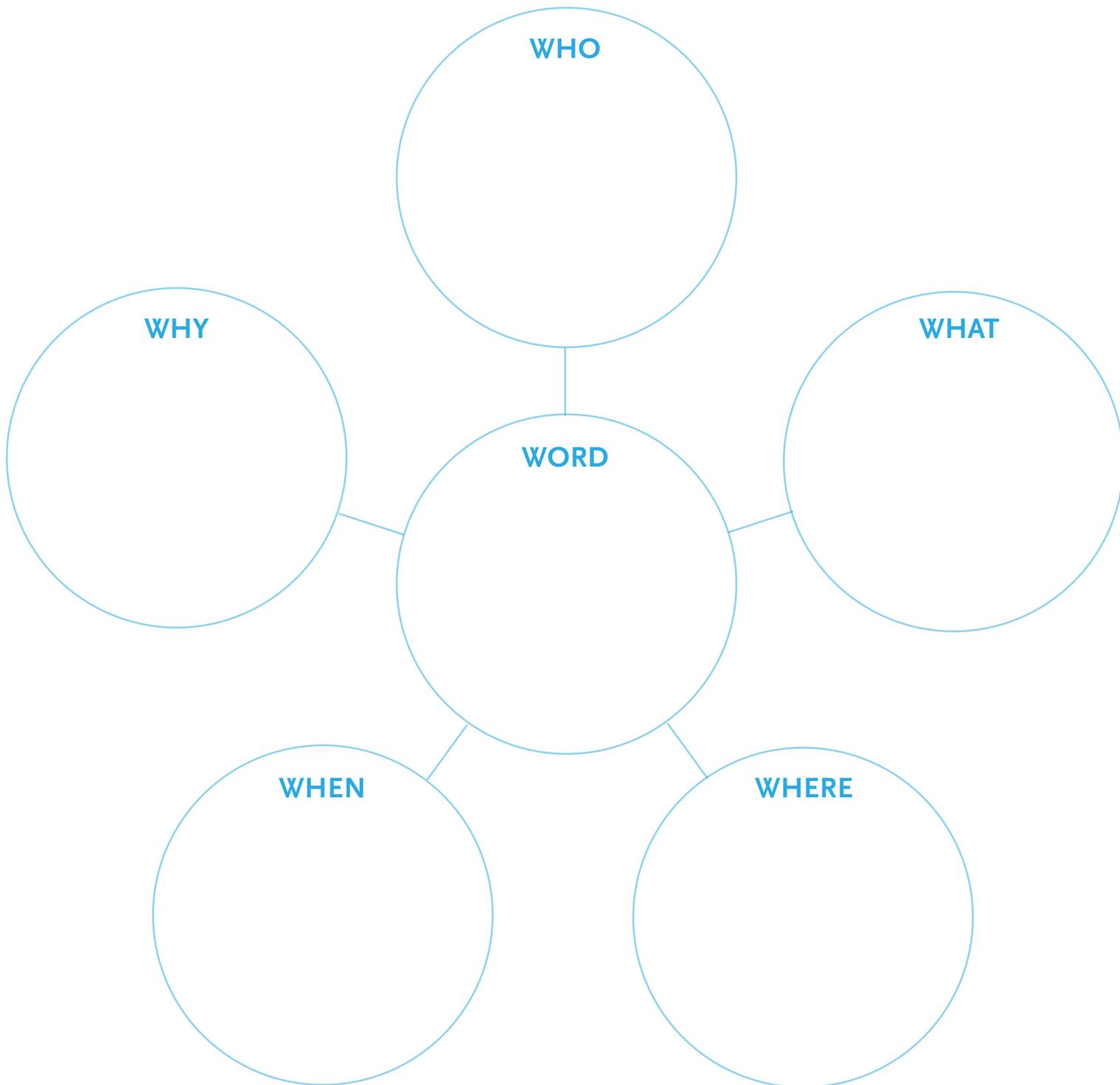
To conclude, present your word webs to the class or hang them up on display in the classroom or the hall.

ONLINE

1. [United Nations: Colombian News](#)
2. [World Health Organization: Colombia](#)
3. [British Columbia Teachers' Federation gender-based violence lesson plans](#)
4. [How teachers can help end gender-based violence in schools](#)

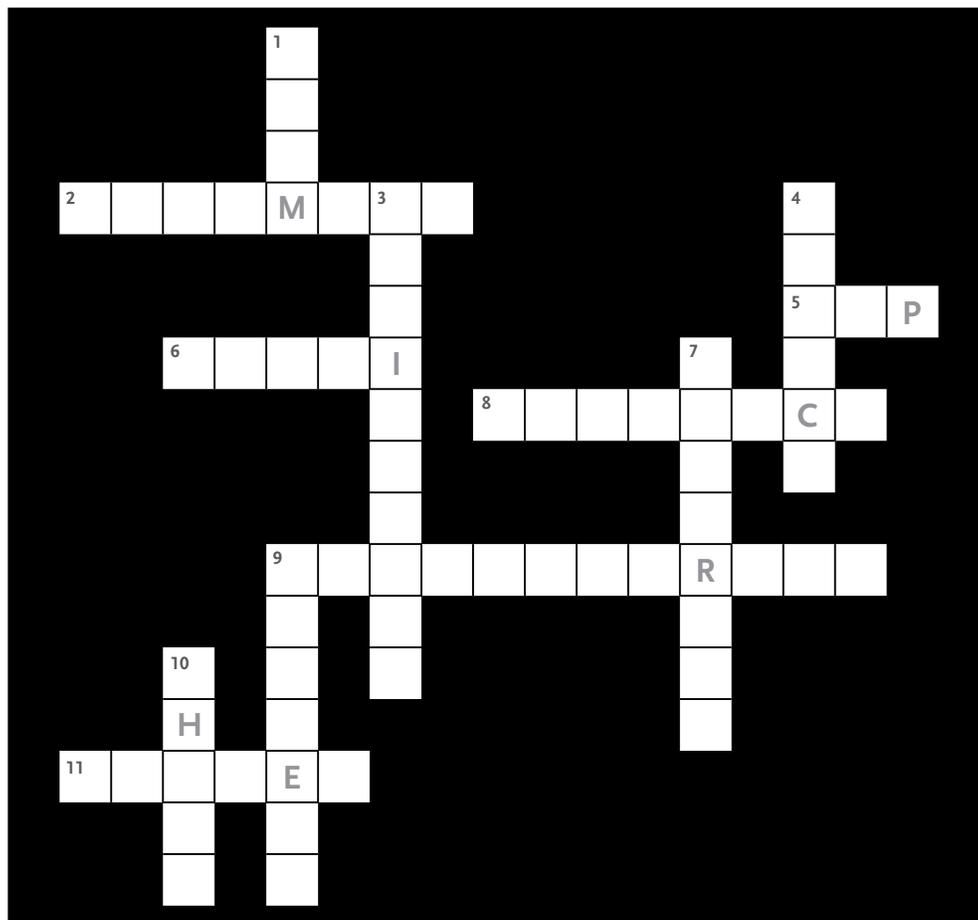
COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA

How conversation and cartography are helping redefine attitudes toward women and LGBTI people



COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA

How conversation and cartography are helping redefine attitudes toward women and LGBTI people



CROSSWORD:

Across

2. a country historically wracked by armed conflict between governments and radicals
5. the type of visual representation the researchers used to display their results
6. the acronym used for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities
8. behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill
9. the continent where Tumaco is located (two words)
11. a general view, examination, or description of someone, something or a particular phenomenon

Down

1. the term for a group of people that work together to achieve a common goal
3. the term for a single human being that is distinct from a group
4. the city where Díaz and her colleagues conducted their research
7. the state of being free from danger or threat
9. the term for a group of people living together in a community
10. the number of goals Díaz and her team set out to achieve during their study