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REVIEW PAPER

Gender-based violence as a barrier to women rights towards socio- environmental sustainability

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ABSTRACT

This study provides an exhaustive analysis of the intersection between gender-based violence and environmental sustainability, focusing on the Colombian experience, particularly within the context of armed conflict and migration. This analysis investigates the emerging area of research in Colombia that focuses on preventing gender-based violence from ecological and environmental viewpoints. Adopting a socio-ecological lens, this study highlights the ways in which women are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence and environmental challenges, particularly in contexts defined by conflict, displacement, poverty, and inadequate access to resources. Women in these contexts face direct violence and the compounded hardships associated with losing essential natural resources that sustain their families and communities. The review highlights addressing these intertwined challenges by empowering women as agents of socio-environmental transformation. It emphasizes the need for holistic interventions linking gender-based violence prevention with strategies for environmental protection, including initiatives tailored to local contexts. These interventions involve environmental education programs, the promotion of female leadership in conservation efforts, and the implementation of community-based projects driven by women, fostering their role as key drivers of sustainable change. Moreover, the research emphasizes the multifaceted consequences of armed conflict on Colombia's social and environmental systems, which further amplify the vulnerabilities of women and contribute to increased ecological decline. Addressing these issues jointly, it calls for public policies and programs adopting integrated socio-ecological perspectives to tackle gender-based violence and promote environmental sustainability. The proposed approach equips women with tools to combat violence and strengthens their capacity to contribute to environmental conservation and the establishment of resilient communities. This study advocates for a framework bridging gender-based violence prevention and environmental protection as a pathway to achieving inclusive, participatory, and sustainable peace. This strategy presents a viable structure for fostering enduring social and environmental improvements. Such an approach is particularly relevant for Colombia, where the legacy of conflict and displacement continues to pose significant challenges to both gender equality and ecological integrity.

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INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) and the degradation of natural common goods are issues that profoundly affect communities in various regions of the world (Okpara and Anugwa, 2022; O'Mullan *et al*., 2024). These circumstances have a significant effect on vulnerable populations, particularly girls, adolescents, women, and women living in rural regions, who experience numerous instances of social exclusion and infringements on their human rights (Stark *et al*., 2021; Echeverry-López *et al*., 2024). This amplifies their risk of encountering perilous situations, which include territorial conflicts, harassment in public spaces, obstacles to educational access, unplanned pregnancies, femicides, and cases of forced disappearances (Wirtz *et al*., 2014). GBV is considered a global public health issue and, according to the United Nations (UN), is defined as "any violent act committed based on socially attributed gender differences," encompassing violence within intimate partnerships as well as sexual assault outside of them. This term refers to multiple types of violence, such as physical, psychological, economic, and sexual violence, as well as acts of exploitation, coercion, and harmful traditional practices (Wirtz *et al*., 2014; Hourani *et al*., 2021). GBV is a phenomenon that prevails, though not exclusively, among populations affected by armed conflict in Colombia and is linked to various levels of vulnerability to conflict and displacement (García, 2024). For the past sixty years, Colombia has experienced significant violence, resulting in approximately 5.2 million internally displaced individuals. This persistent violence is further intensified by an internal armed conflict that began in the mid-20th century, with over 9,395,274 registered victims, predominantly civilians (Wirtz *et al*., 2014; Registro Único de Victimas, 2022; Echeverry-López *et al*., 2024). In the past two decades, the experiences of conflict, displacement, and GBV have been documented (Shultz *et al*., 2014; Vos-Obeso and Gutierrez-Gonzalez, 2018; Mootz *et al*., 2019; Zamora *et al*., 2021; Few *et al*., 2021), with some instances illegally and immorally employed by armed actors to terrorize the population or as forms of torture targeting the most vulnerable groups (Maier, 2020; Martínez-Torres *et al*., 2024). Beginning in the 1940s, Colombia has experienced political conflict and violence that has evolved into a sustained confrontation between the government and various armed groups since the 1960s (Meger and Sachseder, 2020). This situation has disproportionately affected women, girls, and individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, or questioning (LGBTIQ+) (Loken and Hagen, 2022). Throughout the decades, armed groups have employed sexual violence as a tactic of warfare and domination, exhibiting various manifestations of this abuse (Kreft, 2020; Stallone, 2022). The main patterns of GBV include rape as a tool to intimidate, punish, and humiliate both women and men, as well as to establish control over territories and communities (Thulin *et al*., 2022). Reports of exploitation and sexual slavery have emerged from rural areas, highlighting how armed groups have compelled women to participate in networks of sexual exploitation and prostitution (Hurtado *et al*., 2018; Villacampa and Flórez, 2018). Furthermore, numerous femicides have been perpetrated within the context of the conflict, with women killed due to gender-related motives (Pröl and Magin, 2022; Brunke, 2024). Another rise in GBV in Colombia is associated with migration, whether forced or voluntary, which creates situations of extreme vulnerability (Morales-Muñoz *et al*., 2020). During this process, individuals are exposed to various forms of violence and abuse, both in transit locations and at their final destinations (Cubides *et al*., 2022; Obinna, 2024). During instances of displacement or forced migration, children, adolescents, and women are considered among the most susceptible demographics, experiencing heightened risks to their physical, social, and mental health (Luttenberger *et al*., 2024). For this reason, migration has become a key focus within the sustainable development goals (SDG) (UN, 2020) and is considered a social determinant of sexual and reproductive health, especially for migrant and refugee women and girls (Zimmerman *et al*., 2011; Calderón *et al*., 2020; Obinna, 2024). At their destinations, migrant girls and women face a heightened risk of violence, as they may become victims of trafficking for commercial purposes, forced sex work, labor exploitation, and abuse of power, manifesting in sexual assaults, among other forms of violence (Correa-Salazar *et al*., 2023a). Correa-Salazar had largest concentrations of Venezuelan refugees can be found in Colombia and Peru, where the numbers reach about 2.5 and 1.5 million, respectively (Obinna, 2024). Consequently, Venezuelan refugees,

especially women, are likely to experience GBV at every stage of their migration journey, with their vulnerability further compounded by limited access to sexual, reproductive, and mental health care and justice services (Borges, 2024; Obinna, 2024). Being a migrant amplifies the risks women and girls face regarding GBV in every country (Tan and Kuschminder, 2022). One situation that influenced the increase of this phenomenon was the pandemic (Zambrano *et al*., 2021), which led to border closures and travel restrictions, forcing many women and girls to take dangerous routes or unofficial border crossings (known as trochas) and exposing them to GBV by a range of actors, including smugglers, traffickers, police, border guards, and other migrants (Correa-Salazar *et al*., 2023a; Palma-Gutiérrez, 2024). Within this framework, another area of vulnerability is evident among rural, Indigenous, and Afro-descendant women, who have endured land dispossession and forced displacement, resulting in significant detrimental effects on their economic and social positions (Velez-Torres and Agergaard, 2014; Sachseder, 2020). GBV has been used as a strategy to undermine their cultural and territorial autonomy, destroying social fabrics and dismantling entire communities, subjected to psychological and physical violence by their husbands during their struggle to obtain justice and respect for women victims of sexual violence, their opposition to female genital mutilation, and other cultural concepts such as forced marriages (Santamaria, 2024). This is also linked to other forms of violence, such as colonial, missionary, traditional, sexual, spiritual, political, and armed violence (FIMI, 2019). In the context of Colombia's internal armed conflict, GBV among different groups showcases specific characteristics that differentiate it from other forms of violence. This dynamic has created an environment in which gender inequalities are deepened, affecting women not only because of their gender but also due to the very nature of the conflict or cultural beliefs. The exclusion of women from decision-making processes, along with their assignment to traditional caregiving roles, illustrates the impact of armed patriarchy and militarization. The aggression against indigenous women represents a system of control that simultaneously builds, strengthens, and perpetuates the dominant structures imposed upon them (Lokot *et al*., 2024; Santamaria, 2024). Similarly, GBV in Colombia, particularly in the context of the internal conflict, is deeply interconnected with dynamics of natural resource exploitation and environmental degradation (Yoshida and Céspedes-Báez, 2021). Women and youth, especially in rural areas, have suffered a triple oppression: violence stemming from the armed conflict, GBV, and ecological and/or environmental violence that destroys the ecosystems relied upon for survival. This holds particular importance in Colombia, where environmental challenges are recognized as integral to the underlying causes of the armed conflict (Urzola and González, 2022). The relationship between rural women and the land, along with the management of natural resources, is significant. As a result, environmental harm directly influences their existence, resulting in the loss of their territories and the degradation of their surroundings, including the contamination of water, land, and air due to extractive practices (Oswald-Spring, 2022). This triple oppression perpetuates poverty, exclusion, and violence in the lives of rural women, who are not only direct victims but also suffer the consequences of natural resource exploitation systems (Urzola and González, 2022). The concept of environmental violence, particularly climate-related violence, leverages existing disparities linked to gender, ethnicity, and low income, along with their intersections. This leads to a disproportionate impact on marginalized groups, notably Indigenous peoples and local communities (O'Sullivan *et al*., 2023). This type of violence includes the threat arising from the intersection of extreme weather conditions and acute social realities. Socioeconomic inequality plays a central role in the relationship between climate and security, where gender constitutes a crucial but underexplored dimension (Sultana, 2018; Betts-Davies *et al*., 2024). Across the globe, women and girls experience heightened risks of various forms of GBV, which includes violence linked to climate issues (Desai and Mandal, 2021; Rezwana and Pain, 2021; Urzola and González, 2022). Despite the adversities endured, extraordinary resilience is demonstrated by differential actors in Colombia, with rights actively defended and remarkable perseverance shown. Protagonists in the struggle against inequality have been recognized, and networks of support and resistance against the structural violence faced daily have been increasingly established (Santamaria, 2024). Regardless of the multiple forms of oppression,

great organizational capacity and resilience have been demonstrated by women; their participation has been considered key for a sustainable peace to be built, integrating gender justice and environmental justice. Nevertheless, this struggle has also led to a pattern of systematic violence, with women frequently facing persecution and criminalization. In Colombia, violence against environmental leaders is a serious issue, and many women have been killed or displaced for defending the environment (Tran *et al*., 2020; Tran and Hanacek, 2023). Empowering differential actors is a key factor in reducing economic dependency and improving living conditions, breaking the cycles of violence that perpetuate structural inequalities, and strengthening their capacities to transform their communities, promoting a more sustainable future for all at the national level. The significance of exploring the link between GBV and environmental sustainability is evident in its capacity to uncover the intricate relationship between these challenges, illustrating how a unified approach can foster transformative solutions. The aim of the current study is to analyze the relationship between GBV and environmental sustainability within the Colombian context, with an emphasis on the disproportionate impacts faced by women and vulnerable communities. Additionally, the study explored the structural and sociocultural factors that contributed to both issues, underscoring the significant involvement of Colombian women in the protection of their lands and resources. This study has been carried out in Colombia in the year 2024, reflecting contemporary challenges and emphasizing the urgent need for integrated solutions.

METHODOLOGY

This study is framed within the systematic review methodology, which is characterized by conducting a structured and exhaustive search of literature in academic databases based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The process starts with the development of a research question and the establishment of the study's goals. Next, a detailed search strategy is created, utilizing keywords and Boolean operators to guarantee the acquisition of relevant data. The selection of studies is carried out in two stages: an initial screening of titles and abstracts, followed by a full-text review of the selected articles. Key data from the studies presented is collected, assessed, and combined. This approach is vital for recognizing distinct shortcomings in the existing body of literature, which in turn lays a strong groundwork for future investigations. For the development of this study and information search, the following research question was formulated: What information does the scientific literature provide on GBV and environmental sustainability in Colombia, and how can an integrated approach contribute to the prevention of this GBV? Secondly, the study focused exclusively on Colombia, and the keywords used were "Gender Violence + Colombia + Conflicts," "Environmental Sustainability," "Socio-environmental Effects," "Women + Gender Violence," "Armed Conflicts," "Types of Violence," and "Sustainable Development Goals." The sources of the database were ScienceDirect, Web of Science, and Scopus®. Only studies related to the topic of GBV in Colombia, based on the described keywords, published between 2018 and 2024, were included. The selection process was limited to articles published in English. Studies concerning GBV that took place outside of Colombia, as well as those not published within the designated timeframe, were omitted. Furthermore, articles lacking clear methodologies, duplicate research, or those that did not directly respond to the research question were also excluded. To assess the quality of the studies, a checklist was used, considering aspects such as methodological design, title, abstract, references, rigor in data collection, and the relevance of the findings. This strategy confirms that the articles chosen are comprehensive and applicable, thereby supporting their selection. Priority was given to particular data to address the identified deficiencies in the literature and to meet the study's goals, ensuring that the analyses are both in-depth and relevant. This was done following the modified Fink (2014) method, as presented in Fig. 1. An independent review process was carried out by the authorship and co-authorship team to analyze and refine the search results retrieved from the databases. Disagreements among the reviewers were resolved through workshops, discussions, knowledge exchange, brainstorming based on prior readings, and consensus. Data were included and extracted from all relevant documents, regardless of their quality score (Kebede *et al*., 2024).

History and evolution of GBV in Colombia

The origins of GBV in Colombia are closely linked

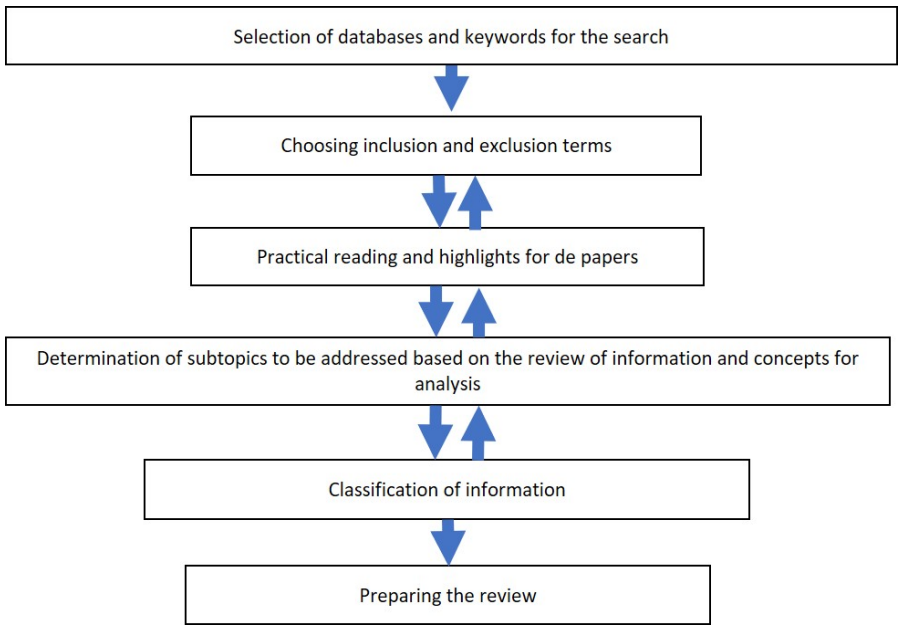

Fig. 1: The Literature review process (Fink, 2014)

to the country's historical context, characterized by prolonged armed conflicts, significant social inequalities, and a deeply ingrained patriarchal culture. Since colonization, women have been subjected to both physical and symbolic violence, contributing to the construction of an environment where GBV is tolerated and normalized (Restrepo *et al*., 2024). In the period leading up to the armed conflict, Colombia faced numerous types of violence that exposed profound social and structural issues. Among these were land disputes, a common issue in rural areas due to the stark inequality in agrarian distribution. The disagreements arose between landowners and peasants, centered on the competition for arable land. In addition, the rivalry for political and territorial authority in these regions exacerbated confrontations between local groups linked to political parties, which in turn led to increased partisan violence (Cartagena, 2016). Forms of violence linked to broader social conflicts also emerged. In cities, tensions between working-class sectors and economic elites led to protests, met with state repression, highlighting the impact of industrialization and urbanization. Concurrently, the tensions between traditional and progressive communities regarding cultural and religious beliefs exacerbated social rifts, particularly in rural locales where conservatives staunchly defended religious values against the secular ideologies championed by liberals (Plata-Quezada and Vega-Rincón, 2015). These dynamics fueled systemic violence which, although distinct from the armed conflict, reflected the country's deep social and political fractures. During the internal armed conflict, women suffered not only from widespread violence but also from gender-specific attacks, such as sexual violence used as a weapon of war (Stojetz and Brück, 2023). he prevailing circumstances have enabled GBV to continue as a means of exerting power and control over women. The prolonged armed conflict in Colombia, spanning over fifty years, has intensified this issue of GBV (Hacıaliefendioğlu *et al*., 2021). Armed groups, both guerrillas and paramilitaries, have used GBV as a strategy for territorial control and to destabilize communities. Systematic sexual violence and other forms of aggression targeted women, inflicting significant physical and psychological damage. This violence not only affected their health but also weakened their status in the community and compromised their independence (Hacıaliefendioğlu *et al*., 2021; Bates, 2022). In this context, GBV is not only an individual phenomenon but a structural problem reflecting gender inequalities, and this situation is even more critical in the context of war

(Restrepo *et al*., 2024). The term GBV is also primarily used to highlight structural gender-based differences that place women, girls, and LGBTQ+ individuals in situations of risk against various forms of violence, seen as an extreme manifestation of discrimination in patriarchal societies where women and individuals with "non-normative" gender identities tend to hold positions of lesser power. From the perspective of International Human Rights Law (IHRL), the concept of violence against women is built on the prohibition of discrimination. This viewpoint offers numerous avenues to advocate for the enforcement and safeguarding of women's rights, acknowledging that gender-based violence represents a severe form of discrimination and constitutes a breach of human rights (Calderon-Jaramillo *et al*., 2020). The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is recognized as the foremost international treaty advocating for women's rights. Known as the "women's bill of rights," it was adopted in December 1979 after an extensive development process led by the UN and driven by international social movements focused on gender equality and the protection of women (Tickner and True, 2018). As the country advanced toward a peace process, GBV remained a marginal issue in negotiations. Although the 2016 peace agreement marked a milestone in Colombia's peace process by incorporating protections for women's rights and gender equality, its implementation has been uneven and often inadequate (Inguanzo and Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2024). Women, especially in rural communities, continue to face high levels of GBV, and promises of justice and reparations are frequently unfulfilled (Calderon-Jaramillo *et al*., 2020; Inguanzo and Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2024). The lack of a comprehensive approach to address GBV in the peace context reflects a resistance to transforming the patriarchal structures that perpetuate this violence. The ongoing issue of GBV in Colombia cannot be fully comprehended without considering its relationship with other social factors. Economic hardships, restricted educational opportunities, and insufficient healthcare access have all contributed to the continuation of GBV. Recent studies reveal that women in economically vulnerable circumstances are more prone to violence and are less likely to report these occurrences, largely because they lack the necessary resources and support (Correa-Salazar *et al*., 2023b). This cycle of violence and economic dependence reinforces the barriers that prevent women from seeking help and achieving empowerment. Currently, the fight against GBV in Colombia has solidified into a highly relevant social movement. Feminist collectives and women's organizations have taken on significant roles in raising awareness about GBV and in advancing public policies that support gender equality. However, these movements constantly face challenges, including threats and acts of violence from groups opposed to their efforts (Correa-Salazar *et al*., 2023b). Despite these adversities, activism against GBV continues to grow, shifting the narrative and raising the visibility of this issue within Colombian society. Various manifestations of GBV exist, each with the common goal of eroding women's self-esteem, which facilitates greater dominance and control by the aggressor. The essence of GBV is rooted in the dynamics of control and submission, which can be observed across a range of behaviors, including emotional abuse, physical violence, and sexual exploitation. Additionally, GBV is classified into different types of violence, detailed in Fig. 2.

Context and main regulations on the issue in Colombia

GBV is a global problem of pandemic proportions, particularly in Colombia, encompassing a range of behaviors and assaults against women and girls based on their sex, from marital abuse and sexual violence to femicide and forced sexual exploitation (Svallfors, 2023). These forms of violence seek to strengthen the power and control of the aggressors through intimidation and denial, profoundly influencing the lives of those affected and diminishing their self-determination (Heise *et al*., 2002). GBV reflects not only the patriarchal structure that predominates in the country but also unequal social, cultural, and economic dynamics that perpetuate the use of violence as a control mechanism against behaviors perceived as a challenge to traditional gender roles (Calderon-Jaramillo *et al*., 2020). The violence is influenced by several structural factors, such as gender inequality, a prevailing machismo culture, and a lack of sufficient support services for those affected. According to the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences (INMLCF), thousands of women in Colombia are victims of violence each year, with alarming figures of femicides and sexual

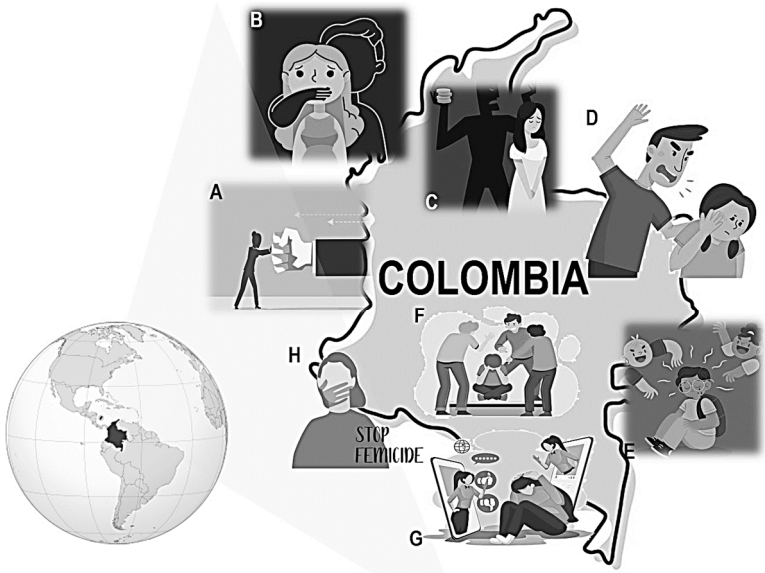

Fig. 2: Types of violence in Colombia. A. Gender-based workplace; B. Sexual harassment; C. Economic violence; D. Physical violence; E. Psychological violence; F. Emotional violence; G. Online or digital violence; H. Femicide

violence (INMLCF, 2023), not only in the domestic sphere but also in public and workplace settings, significantly limiting their opportunities for personal and professional development. Law 1257 of 2008 represents a crucial legislative advancement, as it establishes measures to prevent, punish, and eradicate gender-based violence (Parra-Barrera et al., 2021). This legislation further introduces definitive measures aimed at addressing incidents of violence, thereby supporting the initiatives established by the protection system and the relevant administrative and judicial bodies. It includes educational, social, family, and policy initiatives aimed at transforming the mental frameworks associated with patriarchal thinking (Torregrosa-Jiménez *et al*., 2018). This legislation's implementation is hindered by major challenges, notably the scarcity of necessary resources and the enduring nature of discriminatory beliefs. Law 1719 of 2014, aimed at guaranteeing the rights of victims of sexual violence within the context of armed conflict. Law 1761 of 2015, known as the Rosa Elvira Cely Law, classifies femicide as an autonomous crime and imposes harsher penalties to reflect the severity of the crime (Padilla, 2022). Moreover, this law advocates for the implementation of prevention and awareness initiatives concerning femicide, facilitating cultural shifts and a thorough approach to victim assistance that provides access to health services, psychological support, and legal protection. Following the 2016 Peace Agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), specific commitments were made to address GBV and promote women's participation in peacebuilding. As part of the territorial focused development plans (TFDP), more than 65000 women actively participated, highlighting the importance of a gender perspective in stability and sustainable development programs (Mitra, 2022). Among the various policies enacted, Colombia's public policy focused on the prevention and management of violence is particularly significant due to its all-encompassing approach to addressing, preventing, and penalizing GBV. This policy, launched as part of the "Colombia: World Power of Life" program, aims to eradicate all forms of violence and discrimination against women, promoting collaboration between the public and private sectors to achieve a structural change in the culture that sustains these violences (Howland *et al*., 2023). In 2023, 8719 cases of GBV and prejudice-based violence were addressed, and reports increased by 92.4 percent (%) compared to the previous year, highlighting greater visibility of the issue and access to reporting channels (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2024).

Impact of the armed conflict on GBV

In Latin America, the effort to achieve peace has been deeply tied to the history of internal armed conflicts in the region. The continuous pursuit of a negotiated settlement to the conflict in Colombia has led women to mobilize and, in recent years, to effectively leverage transitional justice mechanisms, which has facilitated their participation in peace negotiations. These dialogues aim not only for a negotiated end to the conflict but also for the transformation of the political, economic, cultural, and social structures that have historically marginalized and discriminated against them (Velásquez-Ocampo, 2024). The armed conflict in Colombia has had a significant impact on GBV, becoming a systematic tool of control and domination in a context of widespread violence. The armed conflict in Colombia during the 20th century primarily stemmed from the escalating tensions between the two dominant political factions, the liberals and the conservatives. Political violence was exacerbated during the period known as "La Violencia" and intensified due to the activities of guerrilla groups, the rise of the drug economy, and the emergence of paramilitary forces in the country (Velásquez-Ocampo, 2024). For more than fifty years, women have been subjected to victimization stemming from factors associated with this armed conflict, facing a range of violence and other abuses within the framework of the conflict. It is estimated that between 25% and 50% of women who have been victims of the armed conflict and its consequence, forced displacement, have experienced sexual violence at some point, reflecting the magnitude of this issue in a war context (Meernik *et al*., 2021). Consequently, GBV acts as a mechanism for punishment and societl control, sustaining structural disparities (Velásquez-Ocampo, 2024). This country has experienced the deepest, most intense, and prolonged armed conflict in the Western Hemisphere, involving different terrorist groups such as guerrillas and paramilitary forces, which has brought suffering to more than nine million Colombians (Restrepo *et al*., 2024). It is reported in the Registro Único de Víctimas of the unit for victims that 49.73% of the 8347566 victims are women, amounting to 4151416. It is also estimated that 3780677 have been displaced; 458781 have been classified as victims of femicide; 191784 as victims of threats; 77100 as victims of forced disappearance; 47627 as victims of the loss of movable or immovable property; 40231 as victims of terrorist acts, attacks, combat, and harassment; and 17350 as victims of sexual violence. These figures shed light on the multiple harms women suffer during the conflict (Velásquez-Ocampo, 2024). One of the most critical repercussions of armed conflict is forced displacement, which affects millions of Colombians and intensifies the vulnerability of women, placing them in unstable situations that increase their likelihood of experiencing GBV (Obinna, 2024). 60% of these women experience some form of violence within the first six months after their displacement. This context illustrates the relationship between conflict and displacement, which is closely associated with a surge in violence directed at women, ultimately hindering their ability to access resources and safety (Kelly *et al*., 2024). Additionally, the militarization of certain regions of Colombia has contributed to the normalization of violence. Communities living under the control of armed groups experience a high incidence of GBV, where fear and repression limit women's ability to report abuse and mistreatment (Kelly *et al*., 2024). Alarmingly, the level of impunity in gender-based violence cases remains exceedingly high, with convictions occurring in less than 10% of reported incidents, which contributes to an ongoing cycle of violence and a culture of impunity. The impact of the armed conflict on GBV also has long-term repercussions on the physical, mental, and emotional health of women. It has been concluded in the literature review by Gómez-Figueroa and Camino Proaño (2022) that experiences of GBV are closely associated with mental health disorders, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. The findings of this study reveal that gender-based violence (GBV) influences not only the individuals directly affected but also their families and communities, creating transgenerational consequences. This dynamic poses significant challenges to social reconstruction and reconciliation efforts in a country endeavoring to recover from the aftermath of conflict. Currently, the search for a negotiated solution to the conflict has driven Colombian women to mobilize, empower themselves, and take ownership of the issues. The use of transitional justice mechanisms has been strategically employed in recent years (Velásquez-Ocampo, 2024). This development has facilitated their engagement in peace discussions, which strive for both a negotiated conclusion to the conflict and

a reformation of the political, economic, cultural, and social frameworks that have perpetuated their marginalization and discrimination. The transitional justice framework of Colombia, established in the Final Peace Agreement, integrates environmental and gender-based violence dimensions as essential components for reparation and the pursuit of truth. In environmental terms, it acknowledges the significant damages caused during the conflict, such as deforestation, contamination of water sources, and soil degradation, resulting from activities like illegal mining and armed clashes (Morales, 2017). To counteract these impacts, strategies for ecological restoration are being proposed, emphasizing the participation of local communities, particularly those of indigenous and Afro-descendant heritage, in the environmental reparation efforts. Additionally, the Truth Commission and the Unit for the Search of Disappeared Persons include the recognition of these damages in their mandates. Regarding GBV, the agreement adopts a differential approach that recognizes the disproportionate impacts suffered by women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ individuals during the conflict. This method focuses on specific manifestations of violence, such as sexual violence and forced displacement, through a holistic approach to reparations that encompasses symbolic justice, psychosocial support, and economic restitution (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2018). The active participation of women in all stages of the Agreement's implementation is also promoted, from the construction of truth to the guarantee of non-repetition, highlighting their central role in historical memory and social transformation processes (García, 2024).

Most common types of GBV in Colombia and their incidence

Globally, GBV represents a widespread crisis, interconnected with issues such as unplanned pregnancies, abortion, insufficient contraceptive practices, poor self-assessed health, thoughts and attempts of suicide, and the broader context of gender equality in society (Svallfors, 2023). The term "GBV" illustrates violence related to hierarchies between sociobiological categories such as gender. In Colombia, GBV manifests in various forms (Fig. 1), each with specific characteristics and a significant impact on women's lives. The most common typologies in recent years are described in Table 1.

The rate of GBV in Colombia is troubling, indicating a deep-rooted issue that necessitates prompt intervention. Effective institutional and community responses are vital to decrease these occurrences and foster gender equity. Factors such as deeply rooted patriarchal culture, lack of education on women's rights, and impunity in the judicial system perpetuate these forms of violence (Svallfors, 2023). The consequences of GBV are devastating, not only for victims but also for society as a whole. Women who experience violence face serious mental health issues, decreased quality of life, and barriers to personal and professional development. Additionally, the children of these women might face detrimental consequences for their emotional and social development, which can lead to a continuing cycle of violence through generations (Mootz *et al*., 2019). The current context in Colombia remains critical, with GBV rates remaining high, particularly during and after the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, when many women were trapped in violent situations without access to support resources. Despite efforts by governmental and non-governmental organizations, the effective implementation of policies still faces significant challenges (Czepiel *et al*., 2024). Combating GBV in Colombia calls for a diverse approach that integrates educational initiatives, the strengthening of women's rights, and necessary changes to the judicial framework. Collaboration between the government, civil society, and the community is essential to eradicate these forms of violence and move toward a gender-equitable society. A crucial aspect to keep in mind is that one of the primary aims of SDG 5 is to formulate strategies and avenues that provide women with equal rights and economic resources. Meanwhile, SDG 16 is dedicated to the significant decrease of all forms of violence, including the associated mortality rates. Thus, for the 2030 agenda, Colombia must ensure compliance with these objectives and implement appropriate policies and regulations to successfully address these SDG (López *et al*., 2024).

Social, cultural, environmental, and economic factors associated with GBV

The damage to ecosystems caused by human activity is increasingly reflected in the environment, accelerating climate change and increasing its

Table 1: Most common GBV typologies in Colombia in recent years

GBV typology	Physical violence	Psychological violence	Sexual violence	Economic violence	Patrimonial violence	Environmental and/or climate violence	Intimate partner violence
Incidences	Any action that causes physical harm to a woman. In Colombia, during 2022, 66624 cases of physical violence were reported, 83% of which involved women, adolescents, and girls as victims (Ministry of Health and Social Protection-MHSP, 2023).	It manifests through threats, harassment, and emotional control (Krook and Restrepo-Sanín, 2016). During the first semester of 2024, 5594 cases of women victims of psychological violence were reported in Colombia (National Institute of Health, 2024). This type of violence can have devastating effects on the mental health and well-being of the victims	Involves actions that violate human dignity, including abuse, harassment, rape, exploitation, human trafficking, and non-consensual sexual acts (Keyser *et al*., 2022). In 2022, Colombia recorded 21128 forensic medical examinations on women, highlighting the concerning scale of suspected	It involves restricting a woman's ability to access, manage, and retain economic resources, jeopardizing her financial stability and autonomy (Alkan *et al*., 2021).	This type of violence involves the control or destruction of material assets. Although less visible, it severely affects women's autonomy, limiting their ability to escape abusive situations (López *et al*., 2024).	It takes advantage of preexisting conditions of inequality that range from gender, ethnicity, and low income to combinations of these, and is especially experienced by marginalized groups, including Indigenous peoples and local communities (Urzola and González, 2022).	It encompasses any behavior by current or former intimate partners that uses coercive control, intimidation, humiliation, and physical or sexual aggression within the context of marriage, cohabitation, or any other informal relationship (Restrepo *et al*., 2024).

associated risks (Urzola and González, 2022). The economic activities that sustain modern societies have altered the climate to such an extent that this era is known as the Anthropocene, as described by Nobel laureate in Chemistry Paul Crutzen. Within this updated framework, the most disadvantaged populations in the global south, especially women and girls, endure the harmful consequences more severely. It has been reported that natural disasters can exacerbate the discrimination experienced by women, making them more susceptible in situations of risk (Carrillo and Izulain, 2023). Studies focusing on female leadership and environmental stewardship reveal that the link between GBV and environmental concerns is primarily associated with the conventional role of women in defending their families, communities, and communal assets (Goméz and Durán, 2024). This role exposes them more to the effects of climate change and natural disasters, as many are forced to flee and ensure the safety of their loved ones during times of crisis, increasing their vulnerability. This situation provides women with a distinct viewpoint on environmental issues, enabling them to suggest sustainable and impactful solutions (Urzola and González, 2022). The reduction of gender inequality for climate-resilient development has been highlighted as a key factor, with research indicating that the effects of climate change are more likely to affect countries with high levels of gender inequality. In societies with reduced inequality, there is a tendency to implement more decisive actions related to environmental protection and resilience, underscoring the recognized relationship between female leadership, political engagement, and these advancements (Andrijevic *et al*. 2020). It is evident that greater female representation in national parliaments is associated with more proactive public policies on environmental issues, and women in leadership positions drive initiatives to reduce emissions, promote equity, and improve

social welfare (Carrillo and Izulain, 2023). An analysis of 91 countries supports this trend, revealing that female representation in parliaments is linked to stricter climate policies and significant reductions in emissions. This political representation offers benefits that surpass mere climate action, facilitating the development of policies in areas such as health, education, and social welfare, while also contributing to the improvement of institutional quality. An example of this is the international association of Women Economic-Independence and Growth Opportunity (WEGO), mostly led by women and focused on promoting public policies for social and environmental welfare, prioritizing these goals over traditional economic growth (Carrillo and Izulain, 2023). The perpetuation of GBV is influenced by social factors, as a patriarchal culture, promoted by deeply rooted gender norms and expectations in many societies, leads to the devaluation of women and the normalization of violence as a form of control. Evidence suggests that in communities where gender inequality is normalized and family violence is prevalent, attitudes that condone GBV are more commonly found (Guerrero-Molina *et al*., 2023). This socialization from childhood, which reinforces traditional gender roles, contributes to the acceptance of violence as a means to resolve conflicts. From a cultural perspective, the beliefs and values prevailing in a society can significantly influence the incidence of GBV. In some communities, cultural practices and traditions, such as child marriage and violence as a form of discipline, perpetuate inequality and justify abuse. Research has found that women living in contexts where patriarchal practices are valued are more likely to experience GBV (UN Women, 2020). A deficiency in education and restricted access to information about women's rights often strengthens resistance to altering these cultural beliefs, which in turn perpetuating the cycle of violence. Finally, economic and environmental factors are also key determinants of GBV. Poverty and economic dependence increase women's vulnerability, limiting their ability to escape abusive situations. The reliance on economic support greatly restricts women's involvement in environmental protection activities and their capacity to oppose gender-based violence, limiting their access to vital resources, rights, and opportunities. In the environmental field, women with economic dependency often face a lack of access to funding, technology, and training, which reduces their involvement in sustainable projects. Furthermore, the absence of land rights and unpaid domestic burdens further hinder their active engagement in conservation initiatives, relegating them to secondary roles in environmental decision-making. WHO, (2018) reveals that women in poverty are more likely to experience GBV due to a lack of resources and opportunities. Additionally, factors related to the environment, including insecurity and inadequate access to fundamental services exacerbate the situation. In contexts of conflict or economic crisis, social tensions rise, potentially leading to an increase in GBV as an expression of frustration and social discontent (Kelly *et al*., 2024). It is vital to consider these factors in an integrated manner to create effective strategies for the preventing and responding to GBV in Colombia. The impact of armed conflict and violence in Colombia has caused considerable environmental and cultural destruction, intensifying social disparities and heightening the vulnerability of communities, with women being particularly affected (Table 2). Rural populations have experienced direct consequences on their livelihoods due to extensive deforestation, pollution of water sources, and soil degradation, which are driven by illegal activities like mining and the production of illicit crops, often connected to armed factions (Palacios-Torres *et al*., 2020; Sinclair *et al*., 2022). These environmental damages not only affect ecosystems but also dispossess communities of their territories, disrupting their cultural identity and connection to the land. Simultaneously, the challenges of forced displacement and the decline of traditional practices have disrupted the social cohesion, escalating tensions and continuing cycles of violence (Loperena *et al*., 2023). These dynamics, exacerbated by the conflict, underscore the need for policies that address not only GBV but also safeguard the environmental and cultural rights of affected communities.

Relationship between armed conflict and environmental degradation in Colombia

In Colombia, the connection between armed conflict and environmental degradation is both complex and diverse, as hostilities typically lead to significant harm to ecosystems and the depletion of natural resources. The prolonged armed conflict

Table 2: Environmental and cultural damages resulting from armed conflict and violence in Colombia

Matrices	Description	Source	References
Water	Water contamination (for consumption, irrigation, tourism, and ecotourism) from various sources.	Oil spills. Waste/Emerging contaminants. Illegal mining. Lack of environmental education. Drainage of flooded agricultural areas. Poorly managed solid waste. Discharge of wastewater. Deforestation.	Palacios-Torres *et al*., 2018; Palacios-Torres *et al*., 2020; De la Parra-Guerra and Acevedo-Barrios, 2023
Soil, crops, agricultural biodiversity	Territorial dispossession by settlers, illicit crops, crop and livestock bombings, insecurity, zero hunger	Use of agrochemicals. Invisible borders. Intensive agricultural practices. Oil exploitation and spills. Territorial conflict. Emerging contaminants.	Food and Agriculture Organization-FAO, 2009; Sinclair *et al*., 2022; De la Parra-Guerra and Acevedo-Barrios, 2023
Food	Food security, land dispossession, habitat loss, hunger, migration	Intensive use of agrochemicals. Land dispossession. Use of agrochemicals. Food insecurity. Endocrine disruptors (contaminants). Fishing in contaminated waters.	Alcalá-Orozco *et al*., 2017; Alcalá-Orozco *et al*., 2020; Sinclair *et al*., 2022; Parra-Guerra and Acevedo-Barrios, 2023
Traditional clothing (ethnicity)	Loss of traditional clothing, poporo and insecurity.	Forced displacement. Victimization. Migration.	Sinclair *et al*., 2022; Loperena *et al*., 2023
System of occult science	Effects of confessions and traditional works. Cultural losses (language, rituals, and beliefs).	Forced displacement. Victimization. Marginalization. Gender gap. Migration.	Sinclair *et al*., 2022; Loperena *et al*., 2023
Sacred places and spiritual systems	Flooding of collective sacred places and family sacred places. Destruction of sacred places. Spiritual debts expressed in illnesses.	Climate change. Forced displacement. Illegal groups. Gender gap. Territorial conflict. Heritage violence.	Urzola and González, 2022
Human health	Psychological damage, depression and anxiety, suicidal thoughts.	GBV. Reproductive violence. Sexual violence. War. Migration. Pollution.	Molina and Matud, 2024; Echeverry-López *et al*., 2024

in the country has led to the intensive exploitation of resources, such as mining (particularly illegal mining) and deforestation, significantly contributing to environmental degradation and the contamination of various environmental matrices (Gallego *et al*., 2024; Caballero-Gallardo *et al*., 2022; Palacios-Torres *et al*., 2020). Both legitimate and illegitimate armed groups have turned to resource extraction for financial support, resulting in the destruction of habitats and the pollution of soil and water. Findings from a study reveal that illegal mining in regions experiencing conflict has resulted in irreversible harm to local ecosystems, significantly affecting both biodiversity and the livelihoods of those living in rural communities (Palacios-Torres *et al*., 2018). Beyond resource exploitation, the violence dynamics within the conflict context have led to the implementation of unsustainable agricultural practices. Due to territorial control pressures and the involuntary relocation of communities, there has been an expansion of agricultural frontiers that favors illicit crop cultivation over the preservation of the environment. It is also reported that the agricultural expansion has increased deforestation and fragmented ecosystems,

exacerbating biodiversity loss (Murad and Pearse, 2018; Clerici *et al*., 2020). Displaced communities, often without access to resources or suitable lands, are forced to adopt practices that further degrade the natural environment (McClanahan *et al*., 2019). GBV rates are generally elevated in regions suffering from severe environmental degradation, as opposed to those that are less affected, owing to structural and contextual elements that worsen existing disparities. In contrast, less affected areas tend to have greater socioeconomic stability and lower pressure on resources, which can reduce these risks. The distinctions may also be clarified by the communities' collective strength in opposing these dynamics, along with the accessibility of resources and prevention programs designed to meet women's needs. The armed conflict also impacts water resource management. Violence and the militarization of certain areas hinder both the implementation of conservation policies and equitable access to water. Contamination of water sources due to mining activities, along with the destruction of aquatic ecosystems and the displacement of communities that rely on water for their survival, significantly intensifies the environmental crisis in the country (Palacios-Torres *et al*., 2020). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the relationship between conflict and environmental degradation represents a critical challenge for building sustainable peace, where ecosystem restoration and the rights of affected communities are essential for harmonious coexistence between society and the environment (de Siqueira *et al*., 2022). It is crucial to emphasize that public policies have the potential to enhance the participation of all parties in conflicts, especially women, in environmental conservation and conflict resolution efforts. This can be accomplished through the development of gender-sensitive regulatory frameworks that ensure equitable representation in decision-making. This includes establishing quotas in environmental committees and boards, as well as designing specific training programs to strengthen their leadership and technical skills. It is also essential to ensure access to financial and technological resources, encouraging their active participation in sustainable initiatives and climate change mitigation projects. Moreover, it is essential for these policies to create inclusive participatory spaces that honor the perspectives of women, particularly those from indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, by weaving in their traditional knowledge. It is crucial to develop multisector partnerships with organizations and the private sector to support female leadership and raise societal awareness of their role in environmental management. In addition, implementing dedicated protection strategies for environmental defenders is crucial to ensure their safety in territorial defense and to effectively address gender-based violence within peace-building efforts.

Impacts of the environmental crisis on vulnerable communities, with a focus on women

The intersection of GBV and the environmental crisis is a complex issue that uniquely affects women, shaped by their individual circumstances and social environments. When it intersects with the environment, social inequalities intensify, which is why addressing one without considering the other limits the effectiveness of solutions. Several studies have pointed out that GBV can be effectively addressed through the integration of environmental and social approaches (Yoshida and Céspedes-Báez, 2021). Efforts to combat GBV through ecological and environmental initiatives understand that the connections between individuals and their natural surroundings are deeply linked. Therefore, the interaction of individual, community, social, and structural factors influences the occurrence of violence and increases the vulnerability of women. Socio-ecological approaches to studying violence have adopted a holistic perspective that allows for identifying the levels of influence that environmental degradation has on the perpetuation of violence. By structuring the issues of violence into four interconnected levels, the WHO effectively popularized this model and proposed intervention strategies for each level, as depicted in Fig. 3.

The implementation of socio-ecological frameworks provides insight into the ways environmental exploitation influences not only ecosystems but also the social dynamics and structures within communities, particularly concerning gender relations. Such exploitation tends to sustain the subordination of women and increases their risk of experiencing violence, especially in scenarios where resources and communal goods are contested. The reviewed literature highlights that women and the LGBTQ+ population have experienced violence due to

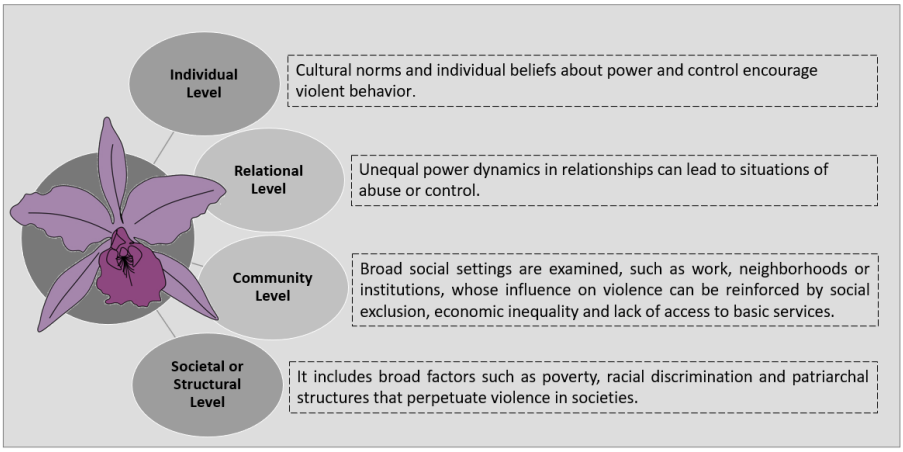

Fig. 3: Interconnected levels of violence

the subordination and patriarchal machismo present in symbolic gender relations and power systems. This violence manifests in multiple forms and requires comprehensive intervention actions that encompass both the social and environmental spheres for prevention, care, and guidance, as stipulated in the Belén do Para and other national conventions and policies. Consequently, these methods suggest the development of safe and inclusive spaces for women and young individuals, as well as the imaginative engagement of leisure time and the restoration of natural and urban environments. By integrating gender equity with environmental sustainability, the goal is to bolster women's safety and protect the environment. This approach not only addresses risk aspects related to violence but also promotes community integration and territorial appropriation (Feeney, 2024). The socio-ecological and environmental approach is based on understanding the causes and consequences of violence, as well as the interaction of risk factors present in individuals, their relationships, the community, and the socio-ecological, cultural, and historical contexts (WHO-World Bank Group, 2018). Additionally, it helps identify the roots of the phenomena that foster violence and the factors that can help eradicate it, addressing the prevention and mitigation strategies proposed in international and national frameworks, which focus on training and educating communities on gender issues, violence, and human rights, aimed at changing attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate violence. This framework encourages the cultivation of positive relationships, the formation of support systems, and the creation of safe spaces that act as zones of tranquility, free from any form of violence. Promoting environmental justice from a gender perspective also involves recognizing and empowering women as key agents in sustainability and the protection of their natural resources, while combating the structures that perpetuate GBV.

Proposals for interdisciplinary approaches to address GBV in contexts of environmental degradation and female leadership

Female leadership has traditionally been oriented toward family and community care, reflecting social norms and structures that have assigned women roles of responsibility in the home, child-rearing, and caregiving for the elderly. This viewpoint has influenced women to handle resources in a way that differs from men, focusing on preventive risk assessment and always prioritizing community interests. Historically, women have spearheaded movements for social and environmental change, championing rights, equity, and well-being through a holistic and interdisciplinary lens. From their local communities to global spaces, female leadership has been crucial in struggles for social justice and environmental protection, driving reforms that have improved labor rights, health, education, and the protection of ecosystems. In the 1970s, the convergence between feminism and ecology emerged, giving rise to ecofeminism, inspired

by works such as Silent Spring by Rachel Carson, which alerted the public about the impact of natural resource abuse. In 1978, French activist Françoise d'Eaubonne coined the term "ecofeminism," highlighting the transformative power of women in the ecological struggle and the restructuring of gender relations and interactions with the natural environment (Brighenti, 2023). In the United States, this movement received robust support, highlighting the essential role of women in promoting sustainable development. This is particularly relevant when considering the socioeconomic effects of industrialization, which have caused ecological crises that have a greater impact on women. Female empowerment in social and environmental spheres has promoted justice and gender equality, fostering the protection of natural resources and social well-being. Women have led inclusive changes in contexts of economic, social, and environmental vulnerability, with feminist collectives in Latin America forming coalitions to defend territorial rights and fight against gender-based violence. By focusing on education and awareness regarding sustainability, they illustrate the link between these critical issues and their capacity to effect change in communities through responsible resource management and the reduction of GBV. Figures such as Berta Cáceres, the Honduran indigenous activist, led the defense of natural resources and the fight against violence in their communities until facing fatal reprisals (Stevenson, 2023). Through their advocacy, women have underscored the connection between environmental degradation and land dispossession, illustrating how these issues worsen gender disparities and heighten violence, especially in marginalized communities. However, these female leaders continue to face significant barriers in terms of opportunities, wages, and access to positions of power, prompting them to challenge patriarchal structures and transform into agents of change, inspiring and strengthening their communities in the face of global crises. To empower women in Colombia's conflict-impacted areas, it is essential to adopt a multifaceted approach that includes educational initiatives, active community involvement, and economic support. Providing leadership training, resource management, and conflict resolution, adapted to the cultural context, strengthens their confidence and capacity to actively participate in community rebuilding. Additionally, establishing support networks among women leaders facilitates the exchange of experiences, access to resources, and visibility in decision-making spaces. It is crucial to promote sustainable economic projects led by women, such as agroforestry or ecotourism, linked to fair markets that promote their economic independence and environmental conservation. Ensuring their active participation in environmental governance requires the establishment of gender quotas and their integration into post-conflict policy frameworks. In parallel, providing psychosocial support helps overcome conflict-related trauma and strengthens their role as agents of change and social cohesion. There are financing mechanisms to support socio-ecological approaches that prevent gender-based violence in Colombia, including government resources, multilateral organizations, international entities, and public-private partnerships. Agencies such as the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and the Department of Social Prosperity allocate funding for projects that integrate gender equality with environmental management. At the international level, entities such as the Global Environment Facility, the World Bank, and the UNDP finance initiatives that integrate environmental sustainability and gender. In addition, non-governmental entities like UN Women and Conservation International back initiatives spearheaded by women, whereas private investments foster community development through holistic methods. International organizations can contribute more effectively by strengthening local capacities through leadership training and technical assistance, promoting multi-actor partnerships that connect global resources and knowledge with local actors, and ensuring flexible and sustained funding for transformative projects. It is crucial to establish monitoring systems that utilize inclusive indicators and to advocate for evidence-based policies that consider the relationship between environmental sustainability and gender equity. This will help create a lasting effect on the prevention of GBV.

RECOMMENDATION

This work has the potential to drive profound change by addressing GBV from an ecological perspective, acknowledging the interconnectedness of women's rights and environmental protection. Empowering women to take on roles in

environmental management not only advances gender equity but also bolsters community resilience and encourages sustainable development. Additionally, by incorporating local knowledge and the experiences of affected women, can offer more tailored and effective strategies to prevent GBV and foster sustainable environmental practices within the Colombian context. This could entail collaborative workshops that engage both men and women in investigating the relationship between gender-based violence and environmental decline, encouraging a mutual comprehension of how these challenges influence their environments and social connections. The implementation of integrated approaches linking GBV and environmental degradation faces several key challenges. One of the main obstacles is the lack of knowledge and awareness about the connection between both issues, which limits the understanding of their interrelation, especially in vulnerable communities. Additionally, public policies often address these problems in isolation, reducing the effectiveness of interventions. There is also a shortage of resources, both financial and human, to carry out integrated programs, and sociocultural resistance due to traditional gender roles and deeply rooted cultural practices that hinder the acceptance of new strategies. To address these obstacles, the introduction of awareness campaigns and educational programs is recommended, focusing on the link between GBV and environmental degradation. It is also advocated to create public policies that integrate multisector approaches, establishing strategic alliances with international organizations and the private sector to mobilize resources. It is essential to involve community leaders in the design of programs and consider cultural sensitivities to ensure their success. Investing in interdisciplinary research and encouraging collaboration among institutions is vital for overcoming fragmentation and advancing the implementation of effective solutions.

CONCLUSION

Understanding the need to explore the various aspects of GBV and its socio-environmental dimensions in Colombia, this study offers a comprehensive response to these challenges. It encourages the empowerment of women as vital contributors to socio-environmental change in their communities, signifying an important move towards establishing more just and sustainable societies where women are central to efforts in violence prevention and environmental protection. By highlighting the interconnection between women's rights and environmental conservation, it fosters resilience practices that benefit both people and ecosystems. This method aids in alleviating gender imbalances and fortifies a development model that is specifically designed to meet local demands, leading to favorable outcomes for women and the health of their environments. When women take on leadership roles in defending their rights and protecting the environment, their initiatives generate both local and global impacts. The empowerment of women is essential not only for addressing worldwide challenges but also for fundamentally altering the social and political systems that maintain gender inequality. Recognizing their transformative capacity is crucial to building a more inclusive society. The future of sustainability and equity largely depends on women's ability to lead and actively participate in decision-making processes. The convergence of gender justice and environmental justice demonstrates how women can be essential agents in fostering a more resilient and equitable world. Studies demonstrate that access to resources, education, and support systems empowers women to effect meaningful change in their communities, leading to the establishment of more peaceful and equitable societies. Acknowledging and respecting their rights are essential for social cohesion and lasting peace. This study reaffirms that gender equality and environmental justice are not separate objectives but complementary pillars of a just and sustainable society. Integrating these approaches into public policies and community actions is essential to addressing global challenges such as climate change and social inequality. Women are pivotal in mending the social fabric and developing sustainable solutions in contexts affected by conflict. It is crucial that public policies enhance their leadership, not only to mitigate the effects of conflict but also to strengthen community ties and promote social cohesion. Investing in inclusive policies that integrate gender equity, post-conflict recovery, and environmental conservation is vital to overcoming the structural causes of violence. These policies should guarantee access to resources, training, and support networks, allowing women to take the lead in initiatives that not only mend material damage but also heal social

rifts. Additionally, fostering partnerships between governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations, and local communities can amplify the impact of women's initiatives, ensuring long-term sustainability and greater inclusion in decision-making processes Recognizing their transformative role is key to building a future where justice, sustainability, and peace are shared realities.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

A.C. De la Parra-Guerra, the corresponding author, contributed to the design and conceptualization of the research and was also responsible for the revision of the manuscript. J. Truyol-Padilla, participated in the conceptualization and the writing of original draft. C.A. García-Alzate designed the tables and figures included in the manuscript and assisted with its revision. F. Fuentes-Gandara was responsible for analyzing the results and contributing to the manuscript's writing.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest regarding the publication of this work. In addition, the ethical issues including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and, or falsification, double publication and, or submission, and redundancy have been completely witnessed by the authors.

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ABBREVIATIONS

%	Percent
CEDAW	Discrimination against women
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease-2019
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FIMI	Foro Internacional de mujeres indigenas
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GBV	Gender-based violence
IHRL	International Human Rights Law
INMLCF	National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, or questioning
MHSP	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
SDG	Sustainable development goals
TFDP	Territorial Focused development plans
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WEGO	Women economic-independence and growth opportunity
WHO	World Health Organization

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