



UNIDAD DE BÚSQUEDA
DE PERSONAS DADAS POR DESAPARECIDAS

Participation and Differential Approach Guidelines For The Search Search Unit for Missing Persons

Guidelines on the gender perspective for women and girls in the search process for missing persons

What do we mean by Gender Perspective for Women and Girls?

The gender perspective is an analysis tool that makes it possible to recognize, understand, act, and transform hierarchical power relations that lead to discrimination and violence based on gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity, which, at a certain time in a particular context, prevent women, girls, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals from having their access to equal rights ensured.

Ensuring the implementation of the Gender Perspective in the search for missing women and girls allows to understand the role that the gender dimension played in their disappearance. It also allows to generate hypotheses on possible facts that consider Gender-Based Violence and Violence Based on Prejudice as elements that could have caused, rendered invisible or been used to justify this violation of human rights. To this end, it is necessary to adopt methodologies, methods of analysis and tools that allow us to identify the particular characteristics of victimization for each population and territory.

What does this Guideline aim to achieve?

To provide guidance to the employees of the Search Unit for Missing Persons (UBPD by its Spanish acronym) so as to implement the principles and guarantee the rights to equality and non-discrimination of missing women and girls, and of those who participate in the search process, by recognizing and transforming the gender-based power relations that limit the exercise of their citizenship, impose gender gaps and have a disproportionate impact on them in the context of the armed conflict.

Core aspects to be considered

Core definitions. For orientation and common understanding, the guidelines define the core categories related to the gender perspective, which are necessary for humanitarian and extrajudicial searches. These definitions are taken from international instruments for the protection and guarantee of women's human rights. Among these definitions are: sex, sex assigned at birth, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, violence based on prejudice, gender-based violence, systemic discrimination, discrimination against women, intersectionality, among others.

The Gender Perspective for Women and Girls in the Humanitarian Search Process

The inclusion of the gender perspective for women and girls in all humanitarian search actions is a way of vindicating the rights of hundreds of women who were disappeared -as it is still happening today, they are faced with the indifference of the state and society in general. It also aims to highlight the different forms of violence against women,

which the disappeared women were victims of during their possible imprisonment or captivity (for being women), and to point out the real reasons why they were disappeared.

This differential approach also seeks to ensure non-discrimination and avoid gender biases or negative judgments about the behavior of missing women when receiving and orienting search requests, which may hinder the actual search for girls and women itself. To this end, the specific guidelines for including a gender perspective for women and girls during each phase of the search process are outlined below.

- To include gender-related indicators and parameters in the results management of the “Sistema de Información para la Búsqueda”, as well as in the identification of the universe of missing persons, the universes of missing persons, persons who are searching as a part of the Regional Search Plans and in any instrument used to record information regarding the search.
- To implement suitable mechanisms to facilitate and encourage the total collaboration and participation of women in each of the phases of the search process, including measures that guarantee the protection of their identity and the possibility for them to choose the gender of the persons who will interview them or collect the information.
- To take into account the household chores and unpaid care activities carried out by these women in order to take measures on a case-by-case basis that will ensure the participation of women in each phase and procedure of the search process and in the Regional Search Plans.
- To recognize the search as a highly gendered unpaid care activity, mostly carried out by women.
- To recognize that the search for missing persons conducted by women has a political dimension that must be valued as such in order to establish appropriate mechanisms to guarantee their participation. In this regard, it is essential to consider that gender stereotypes related to care work traditionally assigned to women may render this political role invisible.
- To design counseling, orientation and strengthening actions for women leaders and human rights defenders, thus recognizing not only their political role, but also the role they play in their communities, and accompanying other persons who are searching for their missing relatives.
- To promote the recognition of resources, experiences, practices and opinions of women regarding the process of searching for their relatives and loved ones.
- The actions carried out by the UBPD must consider the gender roles and stereotypes faced by women and which may limit their participation in the search process. The UBPD must adopt measures to render these constraints visible and overcome them by implementing the principle of equality and non-discrimination. These gender roles and stereotypes should be characterized considering the particularities of each population and territory.
- Educational and communication strategies must take into account the characteristics of women and girls in each territory, so that they are relevant and use clear and simple language.
- To include variables and questions related to violence against women and girls perpetrated by armed actors in the process of humanitarian and extrajudicial search, in the analysis of context and patterns, as well as in the generation of hypotheses, lines and sublines of investigation of the Regional Search Plans.
- To identify and recognize the particularities and specificities regarding risks, barriers and experiences in rural and urban contexts for women and girls.

- If the entry of the UBPD into a territory requires assessing the security conditions for both the team and other people involved in the search process, such an assessment should also include the specific security conditions and risks for women and girls.
- To consider the socio-economic impact that the disappearance and the search have on the lives of women and girls, so that, if relevant, the measures taken by the UBPD to ensure participation will take them into account.
- To promote collective strengthening actions among women that allow them to exchange knowledge, identify new resources and build collective empowerment processes around the search and defense of women's human rights. In this regard, it is important that these settings include training and educational processes for women on the Gender Perspective in the search for missing persons.
- In the context of rural communities or ethnic peoples, it is recommended to set up particular and specific settings for women to communicate their needs and expectations in terms of participation, in addition to the ones that are settled and defined by the ethnic-territorial authorities or leaders of these communities.
- To understand the disappearance of women and girls as a form of gender-based violence that is part of the continuum of violence perpetrated in the context of the armed conflict. Therefore, in the humanitarian and extrajudicial search it should be considered and asked whether the disappearance is related to other forms of gender-based violence such as sexual violence.
- To recognize that searching is an activity prone to many forms of violence, including Gender-Based Violence. Moreover, that women and girls are exposed to them in such a way that narratives of these forms of victimization may arise during participatory actions.
- To determine whether missing girls and women or those who are searching are affected by structural relations of discrimination that work against them and are particularly vulnerable due to the intersectionality of oppressions. For example: girls and women who are racialized, indigenous, impoverished, sex workers, domestic slaves, sexually diverse, and/or have dissident gender identities.
- To coordinate arrangements with women for their referral to entities and programs for specialized physical and psychosocial care and rehabilitation, such as the Psychosocial and Comprehensive Health Care Program for Victims of the Armed Conflict of the Ministry of Health, or specialized programs and procedures for the care of victims of gender-based violence and sexual violence.
- To recognize the rights of women who are searching for missing persons along with their own experiences in the search for missing persons that they have carried out.
- To consider the impact by gender that the disappearance and the search process has had on the aging of women.
- To map organizations that defend women's rights in the territories so to establish a first contact and create a cooperative connection for search purposes.

Guidelines of the Gender Perspective for LGBTI Persons in the process of searching for Missing Persons – LGBTI Perspective – "Recovering and Dignifying Identities"

The Gender Perspective for LGBTI Persons –henceforth referred to as the LGBTI Perspective– is a conceptual and methodological proposal for addressing the ***inequalities and factors that have historically been discriminatory*** towards Persons with Diverse Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities (LGBTI Persons) and which are exacerbated by the armed conflict. **In the process of searching for LGBTI missing persons, this perspective allows us to understand how this discrimination permeates the different patterns of disappearance and limits their participation in the search.**

The first chapter: Guidelines from the Gender Perspective –LGBTI Persons ***for their participation*** provides orientations for the creation of spaces in which the search experiences of LGBTI persons can be recognized, but also where actions with social families, blood relatives or LGBTI social collectives can also take place. The second chapter: Guidelines for the ***search*** for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex missing persons in the context and due to the armed conflict, ***establishes a series of guidelines and methodologies that can help and strengthen the search for LGBTI missing persons***, the population with the highest rate of underreporting. As shown in figures such as those by the National Center for Historical Memory, out of 83,036 people subjected to forced disappearance, only 22 people are known to have a diverging sexual orientation or gender identity¹ .

Objective

To provide guidelines for the implementation of the LGBTI Perspective in the search process; to implement the principles and guarantee the rights to equality and non-discrimination² of LGBTI missing persons, those who participate in the search process and those who are searching for them, through the recognition and transformation of gender-based power relations that limit the exercise of their citizenship, impose gender gaps and have a disproportionate impact on them in the context of the armed conflict.

Regulatory framework

The following are the regulatory standards of the LGBTI Perspective based on the Yogyakarta Principles: THE RIGHT TO THE UNIVERSAL ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS; THE RIGHTS TO EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION; THE RIGHT TO RECOGNITION BEFORE THE LAW; THE RIGHT TO SECURITY OF THE PERSON; THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY; THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM FROM TORTURE AND CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT; THE RIGHT TO FOUND A FAMILY; THE RIGHT TO THE TRUTH.

¹ National Center for Historical Memory. UBPD internal databases (Accessed on June 21, 2019).

² See Article 13 of the Colombian Constitution.

Key concepts

Violence-based on prejudice: “It is a social phenomenon addressed toward specific social groups, such as LGBT persons, and it has a symbolic impact. Even when this type of violence is directed against one person or a group of persons, a strong social message is addressed to the whole LGBT community ³”.

Concepts on Diverging Resistances: Those particular ways of being, living and going through the world that are established as protection mechanisms that in some way have allowed the LGTBI community to counteract the effects of systematic violence. Self-recognition, social families and blood families, corporeality, aesthetics and diverse_territoriality.

Actions within the UBPD

- To recognize and reflect on the attitudes, imaginaries and ideas that each UBPD employee has about LGBTI people and understand that they are specially protected by the Colombian constitution.
- To refer to the political and constitutional commitment of the UBPD to implement the LGBTI perspective in the search process for missing persons.
- To ask about how the person wants to be called –chosen name– and about their gender identity.
- To ask about the sexual orientation or gender identity of persons participating in the search process. This should never be assumed.

Supporting organizations

- The UBPD must rely on national and territorial organizations to build confidence among LGBTI persons searching for missing persons.
- To call for and propose a collective dialogue with LGBTI persons and organizations to promote the development of a social agenda for the search of missing persons.
- To establish and open spaces for meetings and exchanges between social organizations of relatives and LGBTI social organizations.

Guidelines from the LGBTI Gender Perspective for their participation in the search process

- To implement participation mechanisms in which same–sex couples, social peers, social families and organizations can participate and contribute during the whole process of searching for LGBTI missing persons.
- To adopt a Collective–Community Approach in the search through the establishment of community networks and alliances with LGBTI organizations in order to disseminate the Perspective.
- To design participation schemes for blood families of LGBTI people.
- To reach out to the social families who shared spaces and experiences with the LGBTI missing person.

³ Inter–American Commission on Human Rights. Violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex persons in the Americas. OAS/Ser.L/V/II.rev.1 Doc. 36 12 November 2015 Original: English. quoted in Search Unit for Missing Persons (2019) Preliminary document defining concepts, principles of participation and assistance with differential, gender and psychosocial approaches. Internal working document. Developments: Lilibeth Cortés Mora & Ludivia Serrato. Office of Participation, Contact with Victims and Differential Perspectives.

- To work with the communities in the Regional Search Plans to organize specific meetings on the LGBTI Perspective.
- To create different spaces and actions of dignified return, in case the person who cannot participate in the scenarios agreed upon by the relatives of the missing persons belongs to the LGBTI community –if their parents, siblings, grandparents, among others, are the ones who disappeared due to the armed conflict.
- To establish, jointly with the LGBTI Person found alive or with any LGBTI relatives of the missing person, the guarantees of confidentiality and security of information related to their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- To establish a referral, care and orientation route with an LGBTI Perspective that defines the needs and recommendations for the care and assistance of the person found alive and their relatives.

Guidelines for the search for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex missing persons

- To broaden the categories of data collection and analysis. This implies asking questions about: hegemonic gender culture, gender roles, conceptions of sexuality, territoriality, corporeality, human mobility, the participation of communities in the conflict, the normalization of violence, social collectives and organizations, among other categories of analysis.
- To establish as one of the main hypotheses in the process of gathering, organizing and analyzing the information that the **violence committed by the different armed groups against the LGBTI population in Colombia may be based on the existence of prejudices towards sexual orientation or diverse gender identity –that is to say violence based on prejudice.**
- To generate hypotheses on the location of LGBTI people found alive based on searches in places where LGBTI people socialize.
- To generate processes of articulation with the National Registry for the location of trans persons found alive as they may have benefited from the Decree 1227 of 2015.
- To create maps and social mapping processes in the Regional Search Plans, locating the places where LGBTI people socialize, forbidden places, places of horror and the territory as a whole.
- In the recovery procedures of the bodies of dead people, especially those of trans persons, the recovery of elements associated with the body, such as nails, false nails, prosthetics, wigs or clothing, can be a reflection of the physical changes made to reaffirm their identity.
- Part of the objects to be recovered in these procedures are elements associated with different forms of sexual violence.
- To include their gender identities and sexual orientations in the identification procedures and in the reconstruction and remembrance of their life stories.
- In the case of the bodies of trans persons found dead, it is necessary to reconstruct their history of surgical procedures undergone for identity reaffirmation, hormone treatments and body adjustments performed through specialized medical institutions or handmade procedures.
- To set up internal technical roundtables to define actions for the identification of deceased LGBTI persons for whom the UBPD does not have enough information for their identification in accordance with technical–scientific standards and identification thresholds.

Guidelines of the differential approach to children, adolescents and youth for the process of searching for missing persons in the context of and due to the armed conflict

This differential approach is an analytical tool that allows the UBPD to recognize, understand, act and transform situations in which, due to age, this population faces discrimination, vulnerability, exclusion, invisibilization and inequality. It must be implemented to overcome barriers and obstacles to participation, recognize the differential damages and impacts of disappearance, in addition to involving the differential understanding of the risks and facts of the disappearance of children, adolescents and young people in the context of the armed conflict.

According to figures from the National Center of Historical Memory (NCHM), there are records of data for 59,203 victims of enforced disappearance, of which it is estimated that 3,217 are children and adolescents aged between 0 and 17 (NCHM, 2016, p. 84). In addition to this, it is important to note that the humanitarian understanding of missing persons broadens the framework of action of the Search Unit for Missing Persons –hereinafter UBPD–, to the recognition of different situations associated with disappearance, which leads to consider facts such as the unlawful recruitment of children and adolescents –even today the whereabouts of most of them are unknown–, among other facts and circumstances of the conflict, which differentially affected children and adolescents in our country.

The incorporation of the approach in the entity's actions and procedures is based on the recognition of children, adolescents and youths –henceforth CAY– as subjects of rights, as a response to the transformation of a traditionally adult–centric social order, in which it has been understood that the capacity to make decisions autonomously and independently is directly related to their age.

Guiding understandings

Mutual recognition: Mutual recognition between adults and CAY who have experienced the disappearance of a loved one will be an opportunity to dialogue and allow them to exchange different experiences and understandings about what this event has meant and the experience of the search in their lives. Thus, "the act of recognition can fulfill a relevant psychological function, helping the persons come apart their traumatic past, to which one has been tied from the moment of the violation, and as a possibility of integration into the present" (Beristain, 2009, p. 201, cited by Gutierrez, 2010) where, assumptions and imaginaries about the other are overcome, to make room for listening and understanding of the meanings that have accompanied the decisions and actions during the search process.

Transgenerational harm: The accompaniment of relatives of missing persons in the Latin American context, highlights the importance of understanding harm as "... something that continues to happen, substantially as an effect of impunity and non–reparation and the consequent frustration in relation to the ideals of justice, with the repercussions this has on subjective expressions". The category of transgenerationality should also be extended to the understanding of the search experience and its transformation over time, the intergenerational transmission of the search process and the

emergence and meanings constructed by the young men and women who encounter this legacy and responsibility, from different circumstances.

General guidelines

- To guarantee the participation of CAY in the entire search process based on the guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular, the best interest of the child, the developmental faculties, the right of children, adolescents and young people to freely express their opinion, and from their consideration as subjects of rights.
- The different stages of development must be considered for the adjustment of educational and communicative tools.
- To build a sense of participation, guiding people close to them (parents, teachers, tutors, guardians and other adults) to help them process and understand the experiences go through during the search process.
- To render visible the differential impact of the crime of disappearance on CAY, facilitating spaces for the elaboration of their experience. To render visible the impact of disappearance at the intergenerational and transgenerational level, as well as the coping capacity and the struggles of family members in the search for and preservation of the memory of their loved ones.
- To involve child protection agencies and local leaders to identify and support participating CAY while recognizing potential risks, as long as their autonomy is respected.
- To ensure that girls' voices are encouraged and heard through differential consultations, if necessary, from an intersectional approach.
- The search for missing CAY should incorporate reflections, perspectives and research methodologies that identify situations of vulnerability and discrimination, based on age, that may have led to the disappearance, as well as hinder search actions. To expand and recognize the different circumstances of disappearance; according to the particularities of the territories (border), ethnicity, condition of disability, dynamics of urban and rural conflict and other associated victimizing events, among others.
- The entity shall include indicators and parameters related to the differential approach to children and youth in the results management framework.
- Differential risks of participation of CAY must be considered, including measures that guarantee the protection of their identity, analysis of specific contexts for the differential assessment of risks when entering territories to carry out humanitarian actions and the possibility for them to choose the gender of the people with whom they will interact during their participation and search, if specified.
- In coordination with the Code of Childhood and Adolescence (Law 1098 of 2006), the concept of **Progressive Autonomy** is accepted, which implies that "... children and adolescents are recognized as full subjects of rights and that the interpretation of the level of maturity of their decisions must be evaluated in each specific case, since the purely biological age is not a definitive factor to form a criterion about it, since this corresponds not only to physical factors, but also social, cultural and personal factors according to the own life experiences of each child." (ICBF, 2017).
- To recognize and to reflect on the attitudes, stereotypes and imaginaries of the entity's employees in relation to CAY, which may become obstacles to the incorporation of the approach.

- The comprehensive search strategy for newborn or very young children must take into account that their identity documents may have been altered and that they may have been taken from their families and handed over with a false identity to childcare institutions or put up for adoption. These children, adolescents or adults should be sought, identified and their identity restored".
- The search for information on missing CAY should include the possibility of inspecting the records and files of orphanages, children's homes, hospitals, medical institutions, military facilities, records of adoptions at the time, data on children, adolescents and young people who left the airport at the relevant time, demobilized and disengaged population from armed groups, as well as unidentified deceased persons within the age range, among other things.
- Certain legal or factual situations may be an obstacle to reunification when the person found alive is still a minor, for which the UBPD may make arrangements with the competent institutions to provide the required guidance and support to the families.

Technical guidelines for the participation of the elderly in the search process for their missing loved ones

The effective participation of the elderly in the search process, from the UBPD, is oriented to contribute to ease the suffering generated by the disappearance of their loved one, to the extent that they have the possibility to receive information about the process, express their concerns, needs and expectations, so that these are taken into account during the search actions. It also seeks to generate specific strategies that respond to their differential characteristics and yield concrete results regarding the whereabouts of the missing loved one and the truth about what happened to them.

These considerations have led the UBPD to design strategies to prioritize older persons in the search process, recognizing that they are the bearers of the historical memory of the armed conflict and their voices are essential to understand the dynamics of disappearance in the country. Additionally, there is a historical debt of Colombian society and the State to people who today are older, since many of them in their youth and adulthood led various social organizations and worked on important aspects such as the recognition of enforced disappearance as a crime and its criminalization. Many of the older leaders deserve credit for the progress that has been made around the peace process with the FARC–EP, making possible the existence of an entity that is dedicated exclusively to the search for missing persons in the context of the armed conflict.

General Objective: To provide guidelines for the incorporation of the approach of older persons in the process of searching for their missing loved ones in the context of and due to the Colombian armed conflict, in order to promote their rights to equality, non–discrimination and free participation.

Core concepts

- **Older persons:** All persons aged 60 years or older and those aged 50 years or older with any disabilities or belong to any indigenous people.
- **Aging:** Process of change linked to genetic, environmental, economic, etc. conditions, which occurs throughout life, therefore, it starts from the moment of birth and ends with death.
- **Old age:** It is the last stage of the life cycle where the result of all the experiences, transformations and learning lived in the previous stages can be appreciated.
- **Intersectional view:** It is important to consider that older persons not only assume the roles inherent to old age, but also have other characteristics and therefore assume other roles in their families and communities, as they are men, women, LGBTI persons, who may have disabilities, belong to different ethnic groups, with diverse economic and educational conditions, and whose living conditions, customs and culture may vary depending on the place in the national territory where they have grown up and aged.

General guidelines

- To take into account the medical condition of the elderly and the exhaustion inherent to old age.
- To embrace their emotions and provide the necessary support using the psychosocial approach and action without harm.
- When the elderly person presents some difficulty to attend: agree with them the possibility of going to their place of residence, carrying out the necessary actions to facilitate their transfer, searching for strategies that allow them to participate remotely.
- If it is the wish of the elderly, they should be fully informed of all the actions of the search process, its progress and its limitations, even if their relatives do not agree.
- The voice of the elderly should always have a place.
- To generate educational strategies in order to strengthen their knowledge about the search process and ensure that they can participate in an informed and autonomous manner.
- To recognize the support network of older people, in order to enable them to help when necessary.
- To generate meeting spaces among the elderly and strengthen their organizational initiatives, in order to propitiate the strengthening of their social support networks.
- On some occasions, older people will be overwhelmed by the process and will prefer not to continue: find out the origin of their discomfort and propose strategies to overcome it. Respect their decision, generate spaces for dialogue to make sure the intergenerational transmission of the search has been taking place.

Methodological Recommendations

- Taking into account that some elderly people show signs of cognitive impairment, such as memory loss and lack of attention, it is necessary to work with pedagogical methodologies to help them understand the search process and remember the corresponding information.
- Whenever there are activities, conversations or spaces that trigger emotions, it is necessary to contain them and, at the end, carry out a closure exercise, for this it is possible to resort to artistic methodologies, since art allows expressing emotions, understanding the emotions of others and generating empathy towards them.
- It is important to be careful with performative methodologies or those that require body mobility. It is always recommended to inquire about people's physical condition (their ailments and care habits) and ask beforehand if they agree to perform certain movements or exercises.
- If long working hours are performed with the elderly, it is necessary to involve active breaks every two hours, where they are allowed to walk, move and relax the body, as some of them may suffer from cramps and tensions.
- To recognize the support network of the elderly, so that they can help when necessary.
- To generate meeting spaces among the elderly and strengthen their organizational initiatives, in order to propitiate the strengthening of their social support networks.
- Whenever the elderly person requires it, the company of their relatives or people they trust should be allowed.
- The places where the elderly are invited should be easily accessible and appropriate for the elderly (avoid places where they have to climb stairs, taking long walks, using chairs that are not ergonomic for long periods of time, rooms with little light, spaces where the air conditioning generates too much cold, etc.).

- For events or activities where it is necessary to offer food such as lunches, snacks, dinners, etc., it is important to emphasize that these should follow a diet low in salt, sugar, sauces and fats, prioritizing vegetables, fruits and proteins.
- For events where lodging is required, it is necessary to ensure that the hotel has permanent medical assistance or to coordinate with local entities, so that they can attend to any emergency during their stay.
- For those occasions when the elderly must travel to other territories in the company of the UBPD team, it is important to have an interdisciplinary group that can provide first aid if necessary.
- In long journeys, it is recommended to make announcements every so often where the elderly are reminded to take their medications.
- In cases where people need to move from one place to another in order to participate, economic and mobility limitations should be taken into account in order to solve any obstacles that may arise.

General recommendations for the search of missing elderly people missing

- The search for missing elderly persons should contemplate the review of census lists, where there is information on persons who are in Centros de protección Social para el Adulto Mayor, Centros Vida, Centros de Bienestar del Anciano, Centros de Día para el Adulto Mayor, etc.
- If at the time of the disappearance the elderly person showed signs of cognitive impairment (memory, attention, spatial orientation, etc.), belonged to some political movement or religious group, in order to recreate the context of the disappearance, its motives and possible sources of information; take into account the real or approximate age, since sometimes relatives are not clear about the date of birth of the elderly person or their exact age. Additionally, previously in many rural settings the date of birth was not significant, therefore, people grew up and aged without being certain of their exact age.
- Regarding the identification process, it is important to use traditional methods, that is to say, to look for meeting points, similarities or congruencies between the antemortem data provided by the family and the postmortem information found in the anthropological-forensic analysis, since in many occasions the families remember aspects such as, bone fractures, state of their denture, bone diseases, etc., which can later help to identify and accept that it is the missing elderly person.
- In cases where the elderly person suffered from a disease that caused the deterioration of their bone system, it is important to be especially careful with the methodologies of prospecting and recovery, so as not to alter the possibility of finding traces of the missing person.
- It is necessary to take into account that in some indigenous cultures the burial of the elderly is carried out in different ways than that of people of any other age, since the elderly usually have privileged or respected positions within the communities. For this reason, it is important to inquire about the customs and beliefs, when dealing with a case related to ethnic peoples.

Participation Guidelines For The Search

Objective

To provide technical and conceptual orientation on the participation process involving individuals, relatives, rural population, indigenous peoples, black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal, and Palenquero communities, Roma peoples, collectives and organizations that search for missing persons and other social actors involved that accompany or support such actions in a way that they facilitate the synchronization and recognition of their practices in the search. The above can be achieved through advisory dialogues, orientation and strengthening actions that guarantee their participation in the technical and scientific actions of the search process carried out by the UBPD, from its humanitarian and extrajudicial nature, in order to ease the suffering of the persons who are searching for their loved ones.

For the UBPD, a key element in making progress in the search for missing persons is the real and effective participation of the persons who are searching. This necessarily requires a level of information, as comprehensive as possible, on the status of the search and its implications as long as it does not derail the search process, so that those who participate can have a say in future decisions based on their thorough knowledge of the different stages of the search.

In this sense, participation is not restricted to the information that is delivered and goes beyond its dissemination. It is to be considered as the ideal input that allows the establishment of a real setting for conscious participation in decision making and in the recognition of the search actions that have been carried out by the people who participate in the process. Participation is a two-way street in which unilateral relationships make it impossible to ensure this right.

Principles

Dignifying: Both missing persons and persons who are searching dignified human beings, that is, with a complete human and ethical condition, which identifies, recognizes, and values such condition without any distinction whatsoever.

Recognition of impacts and resilience: The UBPD recognizes the search experience of the persons who are searching, granting importance to the pain, the impact, and the psychosocial and physical damage that the disappearance may have caused. At the same time, it recognizes their resilience and struggles to recover the missing and the memories of the missing.

Recognition of the search experience: Persons who are searching have priceless experience in the search for their loved ones. This experience should be recognized and used for the benefit of humanitarian searches, that is, in the joint construction of search plans and in the actions around it. It should also be used as a learning experience for society to recognize the suffering and the human and political capacities of the people involved.

Granting value to biographies: While the experience of the search undertaken by the persons who are searching is an important aspect of the participation that guides the process and the documentation for the search itself, it is only

one of many ways that they can choose to play an active role in the process. In this sense, it is also necessary to create spaces for dialogue to talk about who the person is, who the family and the community that are searching or waiting for their loved one are, and what this search has implied for them from different points of view. Who the missing person is and who is searching are linked in the search process and enhance the participation of relatives and close friends.

Interaction and ongoing dialogue from an educational approach: It allows persons who are searching to be updated on developments in the process from an educational and creative approach that combines their knowledge in order to contribute to and participate in the design and implementation of search plans, and in the development of actions to strengthen participation.

Core concepts

Needs and expectations: Demands, requests, questions, concerns and goals that persons who are searching submit to the UBPD, which are related to their cultural and spiritual belief systems, search experience, family history and interests regarding their participation in the search process and in the search itself.

Who are the ones searching?: Relatives, communities or ethnic groups searching for missing persons, as well as civil society organizations and individuals that accompany them. A family is understood as systems of meaning and social systems with their own narratives and roles that provide support and shelter during difficult situations; bonds that are established within this system are not necessarily and/or solely determined by legal or biological situations, but rather, in a very significant way, they are bonds of affection and solidarity. Especially in the case of ethnic communities, a family has a broad perspective that can be understood as both a part of and as the whole community around a culture, harmony and a shared natural environment.

Advisory, orientation and strengthening actions: Activities that develop methodologies applied throughout the participation process for the search. Here we find both the different dialogues –as a link between the needs and expectations of those who are searching and the different technical and scientific procedures during the search phases–, as well as other strengthening actions –which are developed in a complementary way to these dialogues, and which also seek to guarantee the right conditions for participating in the search.

Psychosocial approach: A reference framework that allows people who wish to narrate and express, beyond words, their multiple explanations, and understandings of those elements that cannot be explained regarding disappearance and the armed conflict, in order to develop insights that would allow them to give relevance to the search experience and the history itself of those who are looking for their loved ones. In this way, the process of participation from a psychosocial approach contributes to strengthen people and collectives insofar as it recognizes the social and political subject from their human and emotional dimension, raising the issue about the meaning of the search action in people's lives and in relation to the different social spaces where others are.

Participatory actions

The link between these two processes in the context of the humanitarian and extrajudicial search is articulated through: Initial Dialogue, Dialogues to expand information, Dialogues following humanitarian actions; and Dialogues of advice, orientation and strengthening according to the implementation of humanitarian actions (prospecting, recovery, identification, contact and verification of identity with living persons, dignified return or reunion). At the same time, actions to strengthen participation are carried out to address aspects of an emotional or interpersonal nature that arise during the search process. These actions may be individual, in groups or collective.

Mechanisms to ensure participation in Regional Search Plans

- **Design and implementation of the RSP:** the Regional Search Plan is a participatory planning instrument aimed at designing strategies that facilitate and speed up the development of humanitarian and extrajudicial search actions (information gathering, location, prospecting, recovery, dignified return, location and reunion of persons found alive) in a delimited and differentiated geographic region. It is also a public instrument that will allow the interaction and participation of the different relevant actors (relatives and close friends, civil society organizations, collectives, platforms, movements, ethnic groups and institutions) that are part of the regional plan, both for its construction and for its development and implementation, from the differential, gender (women and LGBTI) and territorial perspectives.
- **Participatory research:** It is a methodological approach that seeks to strengthen the humanitarian and extrajudicial search for missing persons –which is developed through a process of dialogue, inquiry, discussion and analysis of information, integrating differential, ethnic, territorial and gender perspectives. Its starting point is the knowledge and experiences of the persons who are searching and other relevant social actors for the search process. Its humanitarian purpose is to contribute to finding or establishing the fate and whereabouts of missing persons (dead or alive), to ease suffering, and to guarantee participation and the right to the truth, as core elements for the search process to have a restorative meaning.
- **Regional search pacts:** They promote a regional convergence in which institutions, organizations, the international community, academia and citizens can contribute to the humanitarian and extrajudicial search process and help ease the suffering of the persons who are searching. It is a strategy to increase the visibility of the work carried out by the UBPD, as well as to strengthen the articulation at territorial level, and a mechanism for public participation aimed at creating strategic and joint actions.
- **Technical roundtables⁴:** They are regular spaces opened for dialogue, work and joint efforts between the organizations, collectives, movements, platforms, and communities (OCMPC) and the UBPD, which are defined

⁴ For instance, the UBPD leads the technical advisory roundtables for the gender and children and adolescents approaches, along with social organizations, entities and international entities to strengthen these perspectives in the search actions.

collectively according to the interests and needs of the parties, made up of leaders of the OCMPC. These roundtables are set for: designing work plans, gathering information, analyzing information, formulating, implementing and monitoring regional search plans, designing and implementing humanitarian and extrajudicial search actions, developing educational tools and search methodologies according to the context, analyzing the patterns and dynamics of disappearance, articulating and coordinating the participation of those searching, incorporating differential perspectives (ethnic and gender – women and LGBTI), worldview, ancestral, cultural and spiritual knowledge, among others. Technical roundtables and working spaces have had a territorial or national scope, as needed.

- **Support network:** It is a strategy of joint work with Organizations, Collectives, Movements and Platforms in the search for missing persons that is developed through partnership agreements to strengthen the participation of victims. Its presence has been consolidated since 2019. Thanks to this strategy, organizations, collectives, movements and platforms promote safe and trusting environments that favor the participation of those who are searching, integrating differential perspectives. They contribute to the gathering and analysis of information, context analysis, design and implementation of the Regional Search Plans through the strengthening of the participation of those persons who are searching, recognizing their experiences and methodologies, in order to contribute to the search processes carried out by the Search Unit. The OCMPC that participate in the support network strategy meet the criteria of the processes carried out with the UBPD, through consolidated technical roundtables, results in joint work or strategic choices due to the specificities of the organizations involved.
- **Body established to strengthen the communication with indigenous peoples and mechanism for monitoring and monitor the impact among the Black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal, and Palenquero Communities:** These spaces include the ones included in the tools for interacting with the ethnic peoples and communities and which were set through prior consultation processes. These spaces are intended for dialogue, coordination and monitoring of the agreements that were reached in the prior consultation processes. They have an impact on the design and implementation of the Regional Search Plans. They also promote dialogue with regional and territorial organizations of ethnic communities that are interested in the search for missing persons and provide political orientation to the UBPD for a relation based on the recognition of their identity, culture and worldview.
- **Advisory Council:** Participatory mechanism that aims to engage civil society organizations that represent the different voices of the territory. As an advisory and consultative body, it allows such organizations to share their experience and proposals directly with the Directorate General. This participation enables organizations to have a say in decisions that affect them, such as: participation protocols, public policy guidelines for the search, location, identification and dignified return of skeletonized bodies of missing persons in the context and as a result of the armed conflict, the National Search Plan, Regional Plans and participation protocols. Likewise, this entity has a political control function as it monitors and checks that the functions of the UBPD are being fulfilled.
- **Círculo de saberes creativos:** It is the educational strategy that involves victims in a collective, participatory and collaborative way, to make room for the knowledge and skills acquired by the persons who are searching and have been searching for their loved ones. Círculo de Saberes promotes working in the territories with the goal of

developing educational, artistic, cultural and communication products close to the communities, embracing the feelings of the victims in order to generate awareness and solidarity around the search.

To keep in mind

Organizations, collectives, movements, platforms and Communities:

- Accompany or submit individual and collective requests to search for missing persons on their own initiative or on the initiative of relatives and friends.
- Help build trust between families and communities with the UBPD.
- Have experience in accompanying victims, search methodologies, working on territory with specific populations, and addressing psychosocial, differential perspectives, gender (women and LGTBI), ethnic and territorial.
- Provide psychosocial, spiritual, technical, and legal support to relatives and close friends.
- Share their knowledge on territorial contexts, disappearances, and the armed conflict, which is useful and necessary for the design, implementation and monitoring of regional search plans.
- Provide key information for the humanitarian and extrajudicial investigation that speeds up the search: universe, sites of forensic interest, hypotheses about what could have happened, and enrich the lines of research identified in the regional search plans.
- Facilitate or accompany the institutional work of the UBPD at the territorial, national and international levels.
- Act as political subjects and agents of social transformation who have an impact on, confront, guide, and contribute to the research processes led by the UBPD.
- They provide orientation and support to the search processes, offering their own protection mechanisms to victims, leaders and technical teams that develop humanitarian and extrajudicial search actions.
- Follow up on the search processes carried out by the UBPD.
- Exert a political impact and promote the development of public policies for the search.
- Share, directly or indirectly, their strategic and political perspective on peacebuilding and the search for missing persons.
- Render visible at the local, national and international level, the historical and current problem of the disappearance of persons in the context of the armed conflict, through political, educational, artistic and cultural activities and actions in favor of historical memory and the active search for the missing persons.

In accordance with the above, guaranteeing the right to participation of organizations, collectives, movements and platforms, –understood as a right whose guarantee aims at the realization of the rights to truth, reparation and non–repetition– requires UBPD employees to reflect on their preconceptions regarding the role played by organizations so as to see them as equal actors in the search. They are actors that contribute not only providing information, but also in the analysis and understanding of it, through political proposals for peacebuilding and transformation of the historical conditions that have led to disappearances in the context of the armed conflict and their perpetuation over time. UBPD employees must be creative and innovative in the design of spaces to encourage the participation of the OCMP and their communication with the UBPD, as well as in the different stages of the search: information, location of persons found alive, prospecting and recovery, identification, reunion or dignified and culturally relevant return.

Persons who are searching can:

- Inform the UBPD about their search requests and provide information that may help to establish the whereabouts of missing persons, with the assistance of organizations, collectives, movements and platforms they trust or on their own initiative.
- Share their knowledge on the territorial contexts where disappearances and the armed conflict have occurred, the differential and territorial impacts of disappearances, search strategies, hypotheses about what could have happened and the whereabouts of missing persons. Their knowledge is necessary for the design, implementation and monitoring of regional search plans.
- Share their experience and knowledge in the development of regional search plans and operational plans with a territorial and ethnic approach and gender perspective.
- Provide key information for the humanitarian and extrajudicial investigation that speeds up the search: universe of missing persons, national register of graves, illegal cemeteries and burials, and enrich the lines of investigation identified in the regional search plans.
- Design a joint plan and participate directly or indirectly in the planning and implementation of humanitarian search actions such as locating, prospecting, recovering, promoting identification, dignified returns and reunions.
- Leave a legacy for the search for missing persons by providing their DNA samples for the database of genetic profiles.
- Share experiences with persons searching for their missing loved ones and their relatives, which contributes to strengthening their support network in the search process.

Participation comprises:

- Regular communication and dialogue
- Facilitating decision making for persons who are searching throughout the entire search process
- Reporting on the progress, challenges and difficulties of the search
- Recognizing the experiences and learnings of those searching and the Civil Society Organizations involved in the search
- Answering all concerns and questions from persons who are searching in a timely manner.
- Facilitating the means for the participation of persons who are searching in all humanitarian search actions.