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An Exploratory Study on Social Entrepreneurship, Empowerment and Peace Process. The Case of Colombian Women Victims of the Armed Conflict

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Abstract: The Colombian armed conflict is the oldest internal confrontation in the entire American continent and has placed Colombia as one of the countries in the world with the highest volume of internally displaced persons. There are many factors that influence the possibility of suffering violence in this situation, but one of the main factors is undoubtedly gender. In addition, the destruction of the productive fabric and the impoverishment of conflict zones are a difficult reality when it comes to undertaking initiatives. Women not resigning themselves to this state of affairs, by their own initiative, work to go from passive victims to survivors and agents of change. To achieve this, they hold on to social entrepreneurship as a possible vehicle and alternative for empowerment and personal development, the union with other women and the support of their families' being crucial factors to reach this purpose. In this context, two research questions have been raised, related to the role of social entrepreneurship in women's development and in building peace. These questions are answered by obtaining empirical data from key informants (seven personal interviews with Colombian women victims of the conflict from different departments who have promoted social entrepreneurship projects). The interviews were conducted from September to November 2019. Thus, one of the main conclusions is that entrepreneurship alone is not enough; State involvement is also necessary if the effects of the work carried out by these women are to reach a greater number of people and be more durable, contributing to economic and social progress and, therefore, to peace processes.

Keywords: Colombian armed conflict; Women Social Entrepreneurship; empowerment; peace construction

1. Introduction

The United Nations agency for gender equality and empowerment [1] points out that in certain territories women are far behind in access to land, credit and decent employment, and they continue to suffer in a way disproportionate poverty, discrimination and exploitation. To this, the fact that they are also victims of different forms of violence such as sexual, psychological and physical has been added [2–4], being the main surviving victims of violence derived from armed conflicts [5].

The empowerment of women refers to the transformation of women's lives, from a position of limited power to one of better position [6]. This transformation can occur on a personal and relational level. In the first case, they refer to the way in which women see themselves and how they consider their role in society. On the other hand, changes at the relational level are related to relationships within the home and the community [7,8].

Promoting women's economic empowerment can directly contribute to gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth. This female economic empowerment is the right of women

to control and benefit in an effective and real way, both from assets and income and from resources, as well as to have the capacity to manage risks and improve their economic situation [9]. It must be borne in mind that the empowerment of women is intersectoral, and that the different types of empowerment are interconnected, therefore, the positive changes that are generated in one dimension are not sustainable or lasting if they do not occur in the same way in the others [10]. Consequently, for economic empowerment to be effective and have an effective impact on the reality of women, it is necessary that it also take place in the social, political and personal sphere [11].

There are various tools that can be used to economically empower women and one of them is entrepreneurship [12], even more so in settings where there are factors that inhibit women's development alternatives [13–16]. Additionally, it is that entrepreneurship that plays a crucial role in the transformation of low-income societies singled out by reduced productivity, and on many occasions, by subsistence self-employment [17]. However, this importance is even greater in the case of social entrepreneurship, understood as the process in which an entrepreneur or an entrepreneurial team identifies and exploits social opportunities using management methods in order to create social wealth for societies [18,19]. The benefit for society as a whole makes it especially recommendable in developing countries in which collective social construction is proposed as a complement to state action to face the problems of society [20]. Social entrepreneurship has the capacity not only to empower the entrepreneur but also the society that is directly or indirectly related to this project [21].

Entrepreneurship in general is related to economic and social development [22] and in contexts of war or violence it is positively related to peace building [23] despite the enormous difficulties involved in undertaking in these situations [22]. Consequently, social entrepreneurship can contribute to consolidating peace insofar as it contributes to the social and economic development of the population of a territory and implies ramifications and dependency relationships, providing an alternative means of life thanks, as Jha [24] suggested, to the presence of a non-violent means of redistributive transfers of trade surplus.

An analysis of the existing literature reviews on social entrepreneurship reveals a dearth of studies classifying the existing social entrepreneurship literature into multiple research themes and further presenting popular and less popular research themes [25]. To this is added the fact that research on entrepreneurship in adverse conditions or in territories that have gone through hostile conditions is relatively scarce [22,26].

On the other hand, without entering into the condition of violence, several theoretical approaches have been proposed to study the processes of business creation by women and social entrepreneurship [27,28]. Among them, a body of literature suggests the suitability of empowerment for the analysis of factors that influence business creation by women and the development of social entrepreneurial activities [29–31].

Social entrepreneurship is especially relevant in those regions where different social problems persist and the State is not able to solve them [32]. Therefore, the visibility and promotion of this type of undertaking is relevant, but it requires a great commitment from different agents, public and private, as well as civil society [20,21].

Based on all of the above, an investigation has been carried out on women victims of the war in six Colombian departments where there are large percentages of displaced persons (Cauca, Bogotá D.C., Caldas, Cauca Valley, Quindío, and Putumayo). An inductive and qualitative methodology has been used in order to describe the circumstances related to the activities of these women and the benefits this brings to themselves and to society. More specifically, the paper analyzes, among other aspects, whether the social entrepreneurship of women victims of the Colombian armed conflict has an influence on the empowerment of these women and could be considered as a tool to promote socioeconomic development, participation and peacebuilding and how it all happens. To this end, two research questions, related to the role of social entrepreneurship in the economic development of women and in the construction of peace, have been posed, to which an attempt is made to answer by obtaining empirical information from a set of seven interviews with women victims of the armed conflict who have promoted social entrepreneurship projects. These are the research questions mentioned above:

- How does social entrepreneurship contribute to the empowerment of women victims of the Colombian armed conflict?
- How does the empowerment of women victims of the conflict contribute to the peace process?

The paper is divided into several parts. First, a theoretical introduction to Social Entrepreneurship as an alternative for female empowerment is made, highlighting the relationship between both concepts. Next, the research questions are constructed and the aspects to be analyzed are established. Later, already in the Colombian context, those questions are answered through an exploratory empirical study, describing the behavior and general circumstances of these women in their endeavor to contribute to the progress and development of their peers, their communities and their country.

2. Social Entrepreneurship as an Alternative to Female Empowerment

2.1. Female Economic Empowerment and Entrepreneurship

The nexus between entrepreneurship and the empowerment of women has been previously studied by different authors and in various settings. In general, Haugh and Talwar [30] developed the idea that entrepreneurship has a direct effect on economic empowerment since having a source of income confers greater participation in decision-making related to the expenditure of income, greater confidence and physical well-being as a result of being able to spend the money obtained on themselves and on their children [11]. Entrepreneurship not only generates empowerment in economic terms but also improves the confidence and life aspirations of women, allowing them to challenge gender inequalities [33]. In this sense, Salas et al. [34] revealed that empowerment increases in terms of building confidence, self-esteem, decision-making pattern, and psychological empowerment. In addition, this empowerment can occur within small businesses, and even in informal companies [33], having not only a positive impact on the women themselves but also on their family environment [35].

Female economic empowerment is the right of women to control and benefit in an effective and real way, both income and resources, as well as to have the capacity to manage risks and improve their economic situation [9]. For this empowerment to be a reality, it is essential that they have the autonomy and freedom necessary to be able to make decisions for themselves.

It must be borne in mind that the empowerment of women is intersectoral, and that the different types of empowerment, personal and relational [8], are interconnected, therefore, the positive changes that are generated in one dimension are not sustainable or lasting if they do not occur in the same way in the others. As Kabeer [36] pointed out, access to resources does not always mean that you have the ability to make vital decisions. Culture, power dynamics or gender inequalities can restrict this ability [37]. Consequently, for economic empowerment to be effective and have an effective impact on the reality of women, it is necessary that it also take place in the social, political and personal sphere [11].

There are various tools that can be used to economically empower women and one of them is entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs play a crucial role in the transformation of low-income societies characterized by reduced productivity, and in many cases, by subsistence self-employment, and in dynamic economies characterized by innovation and the increase in well-paid workers [17].

Indeed, the discrimination suffered by women makes it difficult for them to access work for others, therefore, the possibility of independent work is presented as an opportunity to combat the obstacles they face [38]. Entrepreneurship becomes a source of income, which increases their economic independence. Furthermore, the fact that women manage the project itself has several positive effects: first, they can adapt it to their personal needs, making it easier to reconcile the family; second, women own businesses that favor inclusiveness [38,39]; and, finally, women become dynamizers of the economy and their environment [40].

2.2. Social Entrepreneurship

An integrative and transversal vision of entrepreneurship that goes beyond its purely economic and business meaning is currently necessary since the facts show us nuances and adaptations of entrepreneurial

projects in very different areas [41–43]. Emphasis is placed on creating value for entrepreneurship from a personal, business, economic and social point of view [44]. In this sense, in the context of traditional entrepreneurship framed in the world of business and the economy, but with the push of the situation of inequality and vulnerability in which many people are, social entrepreneurship is born. This implies the possibility of facing unresolved social and environmental problems [45] through a business model that seeks to satisfy the needs of society by involving the community as an active actor [21]. In this sense, Agarwal, et al. [46], in the context of India, encouraged social entrepreneurs to work in rural markets and seek wider resource pools within these markets by building social embeddedness in rural communities.

Dees and Anderson [47] specified that social entrepreneurship is not equivalent to that of a non-profit organization, and that what differentiates it is the concept of using business mechanisms and combining them in order to create social value and achieve collective goals beyond individual ones. In relation to this, taking into account the concept of social entrepreneurship [48], entrepreneurs, independently or through alliances with government organizations and civil society, can contribute to accelerating the process of the improvement of humanity. They thus act as transforming forces [49] that in a situation of need provide an innovative vision and question status [50].

That is, it is an alternative action mechanism inspired by business logic and formulated for social purposes, which aims to channel coordinated contributions towards specific goals of opportunity and well-being [51]. It is an undertaking that encompasses the activities and processes carried out to discover, define and exploit opportunities in order to improve social well-being by creating new companies or managing existing organizations in an innovative way [52].

Therefore, social entrepreneurship can be understood as the creation of social value through innovative techniques, with elements typical of the business world but taking into account the needs and qualities of the society they intend to benefit, that is, transforming and improving the quality of life of the less favored [52]. However, it is important to highlight that they must also bear in mind the creation of economic value since sufficient income must be generated to guarantee financial independence and sustainability over time [53], which does not eliminate the responsibility of the government to support them [54–56].

In short, the benefit for society as a whole pursued by social entrepreneurship makes it advisable in any field but is especially relevant in developing countries where the union of efforts and cooperation among equals is proposed as a complement to the action of the State to deal with problems of society [20].

3. Social Entrepreneurship as a Promoter of the Economic Empowerment of Women Victims of the Colombian Armed Conflict and the Construction of Peace

3.1. Social Entrepreneurship and Empowerment of Female Victims

There are different investigations on the relationship between social entrepreneurship and female empowerment in rural areas, especially peasant women and artisans [57]. The works of Cáceres and Ramos [58] or García, Spíndola and Tapia [59], show that entrepreneurial activity is presented as a way to overcome the asymmetries suffered by women in their jobs. Throughout the entrepreneurship, women acquire different skills and gain independence and authority, thus expanding their negotiating capacity both in the professional and personal fields.

Legis [60] in the context of Kenya established that to achieve the empowerment of women through social entrepreneurship there must be regular training initiatives, instilling a culture of continuous improvement and innovation and joining professional associations that provide them with the opportunity to work with other entrepreneurs and share resources and information.

Datta and Gailey [29] in the framework of India established that self-employment provides women with a greater sense of security and empowerment. Women gain confidence by earning a regular income with which they can support their family.

Castiblanco [61] studied the empowerment of women subsistence entrepreneurs in the city of Bogotá and concluded that there is a significant difference in the level of women's empowerment before and after the start of productive activity, emphasizing that empowerment has an individual

emergence, even though it can be exercised in the political, social and cultural spheres. More specifically, women's entrepreneurship diversifies and enriches the business sector and leads to better and higher economic performance [62,63]. Simultaneously, female entrepreneurship favors endogenous and more participatory development models [64]. Entrepreneurial communities represent a conceptual link between the macro-perspective on economic development and the micro-perspective on entrepreneurial initiatives as a tipping point for economic development [65].

With regard to social and human development, the empowerment of women can be presented as an effective mechanism to combat poverty, hunger, and disease and promote sustainable development, very common problems of great relevance in most countries in development, which includes Latin America [66].

The improvement in the position of women, as a consequence of their empowerment, has direct positive effects on the well-being of the children, and consequently on the improvement of the conditions of the next generation. Furthermore, obtaining equal conditions, in the long term, may generate more representative and inclusive societies [65]. Greater labor participation allows women to improve their quality of life, broadens their spectrum of alternatives and facilitates their access to resources such as health or education [67]. It can be stated that entrepreneurship is a generator of development in a society [68]. In this sense, in order to enhance societal development, female entrepreneurs focus on creating a local ecosystem based on the creation as a core value of the collaboration network, which is important to achieve effective outcomes at the organizational, industry and societal level [69].

According to the report of the Ideas for Peace Foundation (FIP), the UN Women Colombia and the Colombia Global Pact [70], female enterprises are especially relevant in contexts of the reconstruction of territory where there has been an armed conflict. Supporting and promoting businesses undertaken by women becomes not only a catalyst for local markets and a driver of competitiveness in areas traditionally excluded from the national market, but also contributes to the reduction in illicit economic activities that promote conflict, and it promotes the socio-economic development required for a stable and lasting peace.

Finally, empowered and entrepreneurial women tend to have a greater participation, as well as a greater awareness of power, both individually and collectively [71]. Ultimately, empowerment strengthens their determination to take advantage of the spaces available to them and claim their participation and inclusion in decision-making.

Based on all the above, the first of the research questions is established. In these terms:

1. How does social entrepreneurship contribute to the empowerment of women victims of the Colombian armed conflict?

3.2. *Social Entrepreneurship and the Peace Processes*

Drucker [72] pointed out that there can be no successful companies when society is in decline, therefore, the company not only has the opportunity but the obligation to seek mechanisms that help in the consolidation of peace and in the search for a reliable, competitive, and safe market [73]. In situations of armed conflict, women, on many occasions, have a greater role in spaces and processes of citizen participation as a consequence of the absence of men as a result of their involvement in the conflict. International statistics indicate that a greater participation of women in public positions with decisive power positively affects decision-making that favors the construction of peace in their countries [70].

Wood [74] uncovered how civil war can transform the accepted roles that women can fill. During war, women are often needed as security producers. If women can be accepted as, or even valued for, being security producers, then it becomes more accepted and indeed normal for women to have authority in society [75].

On the other hand, the processes of reconciliation and peace building seek to facilitate the victims themselves to be actively linked to civil and political life, which implies dignified conditions in work,

housing, health, education, and other socio-economic rights [73]. In this framework, enterprises play an essential role [76,77], since through their economic activity they generate jobs and redistribute wealth.

Indeed, the organization International Alert [78] maintains that social enterprises with a focus on peace have direct effects on the economy, security, reconciliation, and politics. They affect security to the extent that they create reintegration processes, agree on early warnings and participate in dialogues for the cessation of hostilities. Its effect on reconciliation is based on the positive impact that is created in the workplace, the participation of dialogue initiatives and the joint involvement in projects of members of opposing groups. Lastly, in politics, undertakings contribute to raising awareness and lobbying for peace, as well as facilitating and supporting peace processes.

For Lederach [79], peace building is a concept that generates and sustains the set of processes, approaches and states necessary to modify conflicts and transform them into sustainable and peaceful relationships. Scholars have argued that in contrast to men, women are better suited to employ inclusive strategies and lead social enterprises due to their feminine competencies of being more compassionate, empathetic and emotional [80]. The promotion of entrepreneurship activities is positive for peacebuilding [81]. In addition, the role of social and local enterprises acts as actors with the possibility of rebuilding social capital through participation in economic activities [82].

These arguments lead to the second of the research questions. In the following terms:

2. How does the empowerment of women victims of the conflict contribute to the peace process?

4. Female Social Entrepreneurship in Colombia

4.1. The General Context of Colombia

Colombia is a country in South America that borders Panama, Venezuela, Brazil, Peru and Ecuador and has direct access to both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. It has a population of 48,258,494 inhabitants [83] that inhabit the 32 departments into which the country is administratively divided, in addition to Bogotá as the capital district.

In relation to the economy, it has a GDP at current prices of 323,616,000 million dollars and 6427 dollars per capita [84]. The weight of the productive sectors with respect to the GDP is as follows: primary (13.6%), secondary (19.1%) and services (67.3%), the main economic activities being financial intermediation (21.7% GDP), trade (14.1% GDP), manufacturing industry (12.1% GDP), transportation (8.5% GDP) and the agricultural sector (7.1% GDP) [84].

Unemployment stood at 10.4% in 2019, being 13.6% for women and 8% for men, with an underemployment rate of 27.6% and an informal work rate of around 47% [70]. Furthermore, in Colombia child labor is still a palpable and accepted reality today, showing an increased rate of child labor of 9.5%, with a higher impact on girls (10.2% compared to 8.9% for boys). This reality is more dramatic in rural settings where the rate stands at 15.5% [85].

Colombia's Human Development Index (HDI) was 0.761 in 2018, slightly higher than the average for Latin America and the Caribbean (0.759), and ranking 79th worldwide [86]. It is also interesting due to the very nature of this work to point out the gender inequality index that considers three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity. This index is interpreted as the loss of human development due to the inequality between the achievements of women and men, which in the case of Colombia is 0.411, ranking 94th out of 162 countries [87].

This reality, similar to that of other developing countries, is compounded by the consequences of a war that has been going on since 1958 and that, despite the 2016 peace treaty, continues today, especially with problems of gender, race and violation of rights [5,86].

Given this situation, part of the Colombian civil society works and struggles to achieve a lasting peace, the enterprise becoming something more than a livelihood, even more so female entrepreneurship, since gender is a determining factor when it comes to suffering violence, but at the same time, women must be a protagonist in the reconstruction processes as stated by Human Rights Watch [5] or previously Martinez et al. [88] or Gallego [89].

4.2. *The Conflict and Colombian Women Today*

This conflict has impacted on women, placing them as direct victims from three points of view. On the one hand, they are a mortal victim, but to a lesser extent than men. However, precisely because of this, she becomes a living victim who has seen how in many cases her husband, father, or siblings have been murdered and she is left in charge of a completely destroyed home. In addition, more than 15,738 acts of sexual violence between 1958 and 2018 have been demonstrated that have women as the main victim [90]. As Gallego [89] explained, patriarchal culture deepens control and domination over the lives and bodies of women, restricting their freedom and autonomy, and it does so not only in the scenarios of the armed conflict, but in all spaces where women live, interact and mobilize.

The Colombian conflict is, to a large extent, a gender issue, while women are its main survivors and victims [88,89]; consequently, peace is a collective issue in which they are the first complainants and those who make proposals in response to political change. Reparation aimed at repairing the damage to the victims is necessary to redefine the contents and malicious effects of the war, creating possibilities for integration between resources, media, institutions, social actors and all those who may intervene in overcoming the damage [91].

The struggle of women in a country like Colombia is daily, constant and surprising, with associations, collectives and initiatives that from different spheres have become actors of resistance and peace building in different territories [92].

The first step in the struggle of women for the construction of peace and the achievement of a more egalitarian society is to stop being passive victims to become active agents of changes in social, political and family spheres, with the objectives, for one hand, to create spaces for their participation and position their proposals for truth, justice, reparation and peace; and on the other, to improve their quality of life, previously deteriorated by violence [93]. Through different scenarios women have been empowered; however, both for the aforementioned transformation and for empowerment, association and organization are necessary, so progress, in some way, depends on them [94]. In this regard, women have established themselves in grassroots social organizations, that is, they develop a set of collective actions that are undertaken by groups of individuals who have common interests in order to satisfy them [95]. Work or collective action is in the essence of the social, to the extent that its result comes from the joint action of an individual with others to achieve more immediate vital objectives [93].

Indeed, the social entrepreneur identifies opportunities that are shown as problems that need to be solved and strives to create enterprises to solve them [96]. In Colombia there are numerous problems of a social nature: high level of poverty and marginalization, difficulties in accessing basic services, labor informality, systematic violence, absence of the State, etc. Therefore, the areas where social entrepreneurship can have a positive impact, and where it is proposed as a necessary action, are abundant.

4.3. *The Woman Victim of the Conflict and the Possibility of Entrepreneurship in Colombia*

In Colombia women have not been present in different fields and they have faced numerous obstacles in order to develop their professional skills and interests. In addition, this situation of invisibility varies according to socioeconomic level, ethnic group, place of origin and the violence suffered [97]. Gender discrimination and limitations impede the development of female business and entrepreneurial activity and, therefore, the solutions that are proposed have to consider not only economic factors, but also personal and social factors that are directly related to gender status [98].

Despite the different advances at a social, political and economic level, there are still certain dynamics in the domestic sphere that slow down these initiatives and that represent the maximum expressions of inequality within the family; marriage and adolescent pregnancy, domestic violence, etc., to which must be added the unequal distribution of household tasks; on average, women spend more than twice as much time as men on domestic work and unpaid care [99].

The Colombian government tries to implement gender policies that reduce discrimination and promote business development. Attention is paid to women in all areas of the country, as they can

cause growth in the economy and supply the need for jobs, and are a potentially generating group of entrepreneurs [100]. However, for social entrepreneurship in Colombia to have more weight and more notable and lasting effects, an active and equitable participation of all the parties involved is required [101,102]

5. Exploratory Empirical Study

5.1. Research Methodology

Qualitative techniques have been used to get closer to the reality under study. These techniques have been endorsed by other authors such as Eisenhardt [103], Alvesson and Sköldbberg [104] or Yin [105] and serve to better understand change processes, allowing in-depth analysis and access to first-hand information. In the field of Social Sciences, qualitative methodology has provided significant opportunities to increase the available knowledge about organizations and their environment [106–108]. The methods used will be described in these phases: design of the empirical study, interview protocol, data selection, data collection, face-to-face interviews, and data analysis.

First, the objective of designing the exploratory empirical study was to obtain quality information in accordance with reality related to the positive and negative circumstances surrounding the Colombian woman who was the victim of the conflict and, more specifically, her entrepreneurial activities in different areas of Colombia.

Second, an interview protocol was defined for the women, which included a semi-structured questionnaire based on the theoretical framework set out in previous sections. The questionnaire began with personal information about the interviewees and a description of the social facet of the business, then the questions covered aspects such as the factors that influence business creation by women [29], the possibility of empowerment caused by entrepreneurship in these women [30] or their contribution to peace [82].

Third, in terms of data selection, similar to previous studies [109,110], interviews were carried out in six Colombian departments, which were chosen based on the number of internally displaced persons. Additionally, one of the consequences of the conflict is the fact that Colombia is the country in the world with the highest number of forcibly displaced persons, with about 8 million people [86]. In this way, the following departments were chosen with the percentage of displaced persons indicated according to DANE [85]: in Cauca, where 48.76% of the population was born in another region of Colombia, in Bogotá D.C. 35.02%, in Caldas 40.18%, in Cauca Valley 42.13%, in Quindío 51.15% and in Putumayo 48.76%.

From these departments, women who were victims of the conflict were contacted who, in addition to being displaced, had suffered some other type of violence, found themselves in a vulnerable situation and who, in addition and more importantly, had started a social entrepreneurship activity to get out of that situation. In order to access them and gain their trust, local institutions and NGOs in each area were previously contacted, to which the objectives of the investigation were explained and thus they facilitated contact with women, always with absolute anonymity. A total of twelve interviews were carried out but only seven were selected (see Table 1) for the analysis because during the development of these interviews the orientation towards the social aspect of their activities and behaviors was not clearly perceived. Thus, the number of participants is relatively low, but taking into account that a specific profile of social entrepreneur was sought and that it is an initial exploratory study, it is considered as sufficient, according to other authors [111–115], in order to achieve the objectives of the exploratory study. The seven women interviewed in this work have suffered violence, they have witnessed how their families have suffered it, they know what racism is and what it is to be forced into forced displacement in a country.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the women interviewed.

Interviewed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Age	49	59	47	43	65	49	57
Department	Quindío	Cauca	Cauca Valley	Caldas	Bogotá D.C.	Bogotá D.C.	Putumayo
Civil Status	Single	Single	Married	Single	Widow	Widow	Married
Ethnicity	Mixed race	Afro-Colombian	Afro-Colombian	Mixed race	Afro-Colombian	Pijao indigenous	Mixed race
Kind of Violence	Forced displacement and threats	Victim and victim's family	Stigmatization by ethnicity and place of origin	Forced displacement	Persecution and violation	Forced displacement	Forced displacement
Children and Dependents	Both	Both	Both	Both	Children	Both	Both
Studies	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary	Higher	Basic	Basic	Higher
Main Activity	Food products	Textile products and accessories	Hair products	Food products	Food products	Food products	Gastronomy

Source: own work.

Fourth, to collect the empirical data, personal interviews were carried out from September to November 2019. This data collection was part of an international cooperation project entitled “Narratives for the construction of memory and peace in Colombia”, which had the objective of exploring the role of the social entrepreneurship initiatives of the victims of the armed conflict through their narratives.

It is important to clarify that, although the semi-structured questionnaires were used initially to homogenize the information obtained, during the development of the interviews, new ideas appeared, which were deepened without the previous script, similar to open-ended questions [116]. This allowed the exploration of aspirations surrounding the creation of the venture, perceptions of growth, desired levels, opportunities, social objectives, and experiences of these women. This means that the interviewees were also allowed to talk freely about their experiences, thoughts and ideas, which facilitated the understanding of their reality and circumstances [117]. The average interview lasted 90 min and was conducted at the entrepreneur’s place of business. Similar to Galindo et al. [11], interaction with the subjects, witnessing their response and verbal, physical, and emotional reactions to the questions, were very helpful to interpret the results.

Fifth, a five-phase cycle was followed for data analysis [105]: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. Previous research has been used to describe the context. In addition, during the process various sources of primary information (NGOs, city councils and universities) helped to corroborate the data [118]. They have also discussed all interpretations through a war room exercise and applied the common recommendations for qualitative analysis [119–122].

The method used for the study of cases was inductive, based on observation and the experience provided by particular facts, and that after being analyzed helps us to answer the research questions posed, as well as describe the conditions around this troublesome issue.

The interviews were recorded and the NVivo v12 software was used to identify behaviors and common points in the interviewees. Following Gioia et al. [123], an inductive analysis of the transcribed interviews was applied. A total of 511 lines in Spanish were obtained from the transcribed interviews. As in previous studies [124], themes and exemplary quotes were used to help develop findings and conclusions from the data.

5.2. Findings

Despite having used a previously validated qualitative methodology [105,116,117,119–122], in order to expose more clearly the process followed from obtaining the information from the interviewees to the realization of the findings, Table 2 shows some of the questions raised, the general idea of the main answer obtained and the percentage of interviewees who agree with that answer.

As can be seen, for this sample, most of the women interviewed say that they have started their business activity because they are victims of the conflict and it was the only option they had. They consider that they have had greater difficulties in starting their activities than men and, furthermore, they do not feel that the government has helped them to start their businesses. They state that Entrepreneurship has had positive consequences for them both on a personal and professional level, highlighting the large number of people they have met and the establishment of associations to help each other. On the other hand, they are clear that, with the greater social and economic participation that entrepreneurship allows them, they are contributing to the economic progress of their country and are being protagonists in the search for the necessary peace.

These and other aspects obtained are analyzed in more detail below. The main findings obtained from the interviews are presented, as well as the fragment of the transcripts that support these ideas, which have been grouped into the fundamental factors found to facilitate their understanding and that provide answers to the two questions of research raised, as shown in the discussion section.

Table 2. Percentages of agreement on the ideas discussed.

Question Idea	Thought of the Most Frequent Answer	Percentage of Women Who Share This Thought
Reason why you decided to start a business	I am a victim of the conflict and it was my only possible option.	100% (7/7)
Greater difficulties to undertake for women than for men	It is more difficult to get the initial financing and it is also more difficult to maintain and grow	100% (7/7)
Support from the Colombian government or other institutions	We have obtained financing and help from relatives or our own savings and from some friends and acquaintances, but the government does not help and it is very difficult to get bank loans	71% (5/7)
Meaning for you of entrepreneurship on a personal level	I have grown as a person and it has helped me face difficult situations in a better way.	100% (7/7)
Meaning for you of entrepreneurship at a professional level	It has allowed me to have economic independence and meet other entrepreneurs who have helped each other	86% (6/7)
The work of women (social entrepreneurship) benefits the development of their community and country	Female entrepreneurship contributes economically and with jobs but, in addition, it serves as an example to other women and satisfies some of their needs	100% (7/7)
The work of women contributes to the achievement of peace	With our contribution and participation, we go from victims to protagonists of change. We have to participate to achieve a society with less discrimination.	100%
Associations necessary for the future of the activities of women entrepreneurs	It is very important, because that way we grow faster and, in addition, there is mutual help and more solidarity between us.	71% (5/7)
Socio-political participation of women	Entrepreneurship makes us more visible, and this presence increases more and more, but there is still a long way to go	86% (6/7)

Source: own work.

5.2.1. Entrepreneurship Out of Necessity

In the first place, the interviews show us that women who decide to undertake an economic activity do so for reasons of necessity and have previously suffered violence, discrimination and, in some cases, forced displacement. Of the seven women interviewed, more than half said they had to forcibly move to another place, two being relatives of victims or having seen their family circle violated and one of them racism. Some of the testimonies on this subject are the following:

I1: “I decided to undertake because I am a victim of the conflict, in various ways, I have suffered forced displacement, they killed a nephew and my brother, they threatened me, I even had to send my son abroad . . . In addition, I have suffered and suffer re-victimization. Entrepreneurship was almost like an obligation; you know? The only alternative left to many of us is to undertake and innovate”.

For I4, “We have to defend what is ours. Although sometimes it is dangerous because they want to silence us, I have already seen how many of my colleagues were killed, how we had to move, but we must continue participating, we cannot let them win us. We must fight and defend our community, our country . . . ” And I5 explains: “I have suffered several abuses as a result of the conflict. The first one that I suffered was the recruitment of my children by a paramilitary group. But that was the beginning: first I had to move within my own apartment due to the construction of a dam; later, I had to come here, to Bogotá; and since I have been here I have suffered threats, persecution”.

5.2.2. Insufficient Presence of the State. The Problems of Financing and Training

This decision encounters an early obstacle, which is the insufficient presence and management on the part of the State administrations, which materializes in a lack of information, training and financial aid to promote such activities and which leads these women to start completely from the beginning. In the words of I4:

“But I stopped and started from zero, from zero is from zero, I left the village where I was with three little changes of clothes, no more. And I started with nothing, I arrived, and I had to find a life, because I had to live, and I decided to do something that I liked and was good at. And little by little, with a lot of work, fighting a lot, I made my venture work. I would like to have a large company and give a lot of employment”.

The fact is that, despite being victims of the conflict, the majority of women (either due to lack of opportunities or by their own decision) have not obtained funding from public entities (there are programs, but funding does not seem to flow properly), financing their activities through their own savings, loans from banks or foundations and with contributions from family members and acquaintances, which sometimes poses serious problems when, due to market fluctuations, they are not able to repay the loans. Among the reasons for this situation, the women interviewed consider that one of the main reasons why entrepreneurship is not promoted effectively is the corruption existing in the State and other government agents, which hinders these aspects. This is reflected in the following testimonies:

For I1, “They don’t give aid, support or training, or anything at all. We have to look for things ourselves. There are certain aids, but they are minimal and with the corruption that exists in this country it does not reach who it should. Everything would be better if they supported us, but in Colombia, but it seems impossible that it will be done, as it is. The situation continues to get worse; we live in a country of parasites that is not interested in its leaders, its entrepreneurs”

For her part, I6 affirms that: “Unfortunately no. Neither to the entrepreneurs, nor to the victims, nor to women in general . . . Yes, there are funds and programs, but the reality is that aid does not really arrive. They are other entrepreneurs, other people interested in supporting us who help us. The government that exists right now is not very involved, and hopefully it will change, because we Colombians need a government that is committed to peace, to survivors, to end violence, inequality”.

5.2.3. Female Persistence

Faced with the lack of support from the State or financial institutions, these women show great persistence that allows them not to give up, finding the necessary support in family, friends and, especially, in associations of women who have the same needs. I4 expresses it in the following way:

“The funding for my project has come from me, from my family, who have worked very hard. Later, Women Foundation gave me several credits that helped me a lot, especially to enter markets that I thought I would not be able to enter, such as supermarkets. For me the foundation has also been a strategic ally. You feel welcomed, you feel supported, and for me it has been spectacular”.

In this line I3 pronounces: “At the bank I could not but one fine day, we were able to have access to SENA through which I accessed a semester-long training and through that training I was able to access a resource for seed capital. Thanks to that we were able to access and formalize what was being done, and I can have sanitary certifications and records to be able to freely commercialize my products”.

As for I6: “Help for my business no. I am getting it out with my work and that of my family, as well as the support of family and friends. Right now, I receive help from an association that has helped me a lot to publicize my tamales and has made it reach more people here in Bogotá. I received money from the bank, but not from the government as such, not for my business. It should because the victims have to support us so that we have a project, an undertaking that helps us move forward”.

5.2.4. By and for the Social Field. Family Support

The lack of external support and the search for such support in family and social networks impregnate these entrepreneurial projects with social values. Activities have important benefits for own personal development but also for the families and community in which they are integrated. It is very common that women who use the formula of social entrepreneurship to get ahead have the intention or manage to involve other women who are also victims or with other problems in their initiatives, that is, they are solidarity initiatives based on their own and mutual help. In other words, female entrepreneurs would tend to have greater social participation since the entrepreneurship of one victim, for example, can inspire another to take up one or another activity and thus create a chain of help. In addition, this is very important for incorporation into the labor market, since gender roles are very marked and these women present significant obstacles to getting a job outside the domestic sphere and care. In short, entrepreneurship for these women would become, in addition to personal and family sustenance, a movement in their environment. This is reflected in the following testimonies:

I1: “Entrepreneurship has helped me a lot on a personal level. I am a believer and very spiritual and entrepreneurship has helped me to believe in myself, to grow personally and to give me the strength to get out of many emotional situations. Professionally, it is my way of helping, of contributing to improve the situation, with my work, my tools and the desire to help and serve”.

I3: “Well, for me it is an achievement and it is a way to break schemes in my family, schemes..., break the idea of scarcity, that” I can’t “, break having unemployed daughters, having to fight for the minimum, is that. And then also showing the little ones in the house that it is possible, for me it is more ... [...]. When you have lived with scarcity, where the family has not had trained professionals, or if there have been, they have been distant relatives, and to arrive and be able to break with that, because for me it has been a very great achievement. And I am not filled with vanity, but with great humility. I want to set an example, say “look at me, you can”, with fewer possibilities, with fewer resources you can. For me, everything, everything has been a challenge”.

In other words, the choice to undertake a social enterprise would be mainly due to three reasons: first, it is intended to help those who go through a situation similar to yours—that is why practically all the cases studied include other victims of the conflict or women at risk of exclusion—second, because they want to make their community and/or its traditions visible; and last, because it wants to resignify the territories through sustainable and environmentally friendly processes. This would show that these women tend to create more inclusive and participatory processes. Take the following testimony as an example:

I4: “For me, work with the community and social work are essential. I employ women from the community, I give them the opportunity to work, because that is what we need, opportunity. People don’t want to be given things, no, people want to be given the opportunity to grow, the opportunity to be able to serve other people. I do that too, so of course it favors, we work together, generating employment, wealth, links... In addition, we work respecting the environment, respecting Pachamama, not like many companies do here in Colombia. Working for the community is also working to preserve where we are. I live in the field; I need the field to be good. It has to be a sustainable development”.

5.2.5. Union as a Tool

These ventures also would originate, as previously indicated, a promotion of social participation and, consequently, of associations around women victims of the conflict, which would give them the opportunity to join forces and seek synergies to help themselves and others, as well as a space for learning, training and the exchange of ideas. The union of these women makes them stop being passive victims and become agents of change, with more confidence in themselves, and fight and claim their own rights and those of their peers. This is evidenced by the following words:

I3: “Most of the time they are women who approach, and are interested and want to join. For example, some women also came with the desire to undertake, so this encourages other women to do it as well, at first I did not believe it, but people I did not know began to call me and they told me their ideas, they asked me how they could do it, and well then we create a strategy, and an alliance [...]. It begins as a chain of support, for me it has been very favorable”.

I6: “It’s very cool, you are in contact with other women, with other victims. With people who have been through the same thing as you. A network is created, a support among all, it is very nice. Because we are not used to receiving support, and knowing that there are people like you, people willing to help, is very nice”.

I5: “I am also the founder and director of an association in which we work with victims of forced displacement, with women forced into prostitution and with relatives of disappeared persons in the context of the conflict. We influence the training and education of people, we support them so that they can claim their rights and demand the guarantees promised and the recognition they deserve. [...] I focus on making my community, the Afro-Colombian, visible and working against the uprooting suffered by the displaced people”.

5.2.6. Supporting Culture

On the other hand, the social enterprises of these women would not only suppose a greater implication in the production processes, but also an important impulse to keep alive their traditions and culture, which would be necessary elements to achieve a peace that encompasses the entire community population. This is how I6 expresses it:

“We have to empower ourselves, tell our stories ... most of the time we are the ones who keep traditions and our culture alive. We are necessary”.

And I7: “Women work very hard, at home, as mothers, wives, daughters, and also outside. We are sustenance for ourselves and for our families. We provide employment, we have traditional projects... we represent a great benefit”.

5.2.7. Development, Independence and Social Self-Realization

These women consider that the act of entrepreneurship is an effective mechanism to achieve or advance, depending on the case, economic independence and be more active, which, later, entails other benefits such as helping to respect yourself, to value yourself and not to let yourself be revictimized. In relation to this, I4 explains what they face in many areas of Colombia:

“In areas like this, in the countryside, not many people worry about women working, because it is said that women have to be at home, cleaning, taking care of... I give women the opportunity to work, so they know that it can, and that we can also undertake”.

And, for her part, I2, talks about the importance of achieving that independence:

“My entrepreneurship has helped me a lot, to be able to have a job after everything I went through, and a job like this that gives employment, that inspires... I work mainly with women because for us jobs are very limited, and working we empower ourselves, we become more independent and stronger. When you know what you are worth, you do not allow yourself to be manipulated, we have already suffered too much, and we must leave behind regrets and be strong. And entrepreneurship helps, the entrepreneur, like me, and those who work, like all the women who help me. That is the example that I give my daughter, you have to fight, and work, but you cannot depend on anyone”.

This economic independence and the emotional benefits that come with feeling self-actualized and the feeling that one contributes not only to the search for personal or familial well-being, but that of the entire community, would bring these women closer to a real empowerment that arises from their projects of social entrepreneurship. Thus, the fact of sharing experiences and identifying with other women would be essential to gain autonomy, as reflected by I5:

“We give space and support to women to share their experiences, so that they feel supported, so that they generate training and education. Furthermore, entrepreneurship usually comes accompanied by greater autonomy and better control of time and family needs. When a woman knows, when she recognizes her value, when she recognizes herself as a full-fledged person, that is, when she empowers herself, she can lead and fight”.

In addition, participation itself would originate a feedback movement that would activate these women and help them achieve their goals and fight for those around them, as evidenced by the following testimonies:

I4: “If you feel empowered you have more desire to fight for the social.”

I6: “You become more active, and of course you participate more, you feel more capable and with more resources. With these processes we are empowering ourselves because spaces for dialogue are being created”.

5.2.8. Fight against Gender Violence and Racism

Another aspect in which entrepreneurship would help these women is in relation to gender violence. The empowerment of these women would be a crucial element in the prevention of violence in the family environment, since many women tolerate mistreatment by men because he is the provider of income in the family, a situation that could change when women undertake and achieve their financial independence, as reflected in the following testimonies:

I2: “Wherever we find more support in women entrepreneurs or who are going to undertake, we avoid domestic violence, we avoid male violence, we promote independence. Many women are enduring physical, verbal, economic, psychological abuse ... because they don't produce, because they are women The man is the provider and because he is, he believes that he has the right to mistreat her, but when he also contributes, it is a way that he will not allow himself to be mistreated”.

I6: “Having money empowers one, for her, to be able to support the family. When you have one, you have more independence, and you can say, listen that I put money and you can avoid many situations of violence, mainly with the husband. You need to have money and be able to use it as you see fit. We know very well how to spend money”.

In addition to the problems derived from the conflict, there are others, also linked to women, such as racism, and that must also be fought as a prior or alternative step to peacebuilding. The following statements are an example:

I3: “Yes, in fact, being Afro-Colombian in Colombia is like that ... well, she also has her things, there is no lack of someone who tells you something. For example, here in a market in Cali, there is a business circle where there are several cosmetic stores, and there was that racism, that discrimination, while a person with worse products, but who has a different skin color from mine, has more possibilities than an Afro-Colombian person”.

I6: “Colombia is a very diverse country, with many indigenous communities and instead of helping us to keep our traditions, our culture, our language alive, they are eliminating us. Being indigenous here is one more risk, we are more likely to suffer violence and we are very marginalized. They do not recognize the value we bring to society. The Constitution highlights the diversity of ethnic groups, but the reality is quite different. They are destroying the indigenous populations, there are fewer and fewer of us left in the territory. Take a walk around Bogotá and see how many indigenous people are on the streets, it makes me very sad and angry, but it seems as if many Colombians and the government do not like us”.

5.2.9. Building Peace

Lastly, the undertakings could have an important impact on peacebuilding, since women are the main survivors of the conflict and their processes are more inclusive. Women promote more inclusive participatory processes since women tend to think more about others and the environment, through sustainable projects. This is how some of the interviewees express it directly:

I1: “Women are the majority of survivors. We are mothers; heads of families, many of us are alone with our children. Peace cannot be built if we are not taken into account, if we do not empower ourselves. With our projects, in our communities we are building peace throughout the country”.

I4: “You cannot achieve peace if women do not participate. We have suffered the conflict, we have suffered a lot of violence, and we cannot be excluded. They have to give us the opportunity to speak, to participate. Women tend to think more of everyone, in the community, in the environment. All of my fellow leaders and entrepreneurs are doing a fantastic job. And there we have to continue, the government has to listen to us, to the victims, to the women, to the workers”.

Ultimately, these women consider that the way forward to achieve peace and progress is to speak from experience, and educate and support victims, women and minority groups, so that the process is inclusive, and this could be achieved through social entrepreneurship. However, throughout this process, the State would have a fundamental role, having to focus on the victims, in supporting them and in redefining the territories.

Figure 1 shows a synthesis of the main aspects discussed in this section, as well as the relationship of some of these variables to each other, which converges, among others, on the benefits raised in the research questions (empowerment and peacebuilding).

Figure 1. Relationship between obtained variables.

For this sample, women victims of the conflict initially present a complicated situation and have previously suffered violence, discrimination and, in some cases, forced displacement. Entrepreneurship seems to be one of the few alternatives they have to try to make progress but, in many cases, they do not have sufficient training or the financial resources to do so, and state support is very limited. In these circumstances, it is precisely their commitment and resilience that seems to allow them to continue with their objectives, seeking and finding help from family members and other women in similar situations.

The violence they have previously suffered, the initial problems in their businesses and the help received by their peers seems to imbue these women's activity with values oriented towards the common good, beyond purely economic profit.

It is precisely this social vision of their business that seems to allow them, according to their opinions, to obtain certain benefits at a personal level, but also at a community and country level (empowerment, reduction in gender violence, family development, etc.).

Finally, in relation to the social function of these women's entrepreneurship (Social entrepreneurship), it may be necessary to clarify with a concrete example obtained from this exploratory study the meaning of this social vision of entrepreneurship, which implies shared values, a more supportive vision of business activity and the search for common welfare. The following example from interviewee 3 shows these aspects:

"My company has been a window for the world, so that they realize our culture, get to know it and open spaces for us. I would be happy if my products were in a chain store, in a large one, but I am even happier if other Afro women can use it. I develop my activity from the Afro, for people like me who recognize ourselves as Afro and have our identity. I look for clothes with which I identify myself, but there are none in department stores, so my intention is that, to promote our culture and our identity. I also do it with cosmetics, sometimes it is difficult to find products for our skin or hair, all the offer that there is, all the propaganda that is offered, is for white or mixed-race women, but not for us. I want to make my community visible, give them the opportunity to progress, and that the rest of the people also take us into account to solve the problems of our society. Things like this help them feel more integrated and less discriminated against and they begin to think that a united and peaceful society is possible. My company is just an example, a small contribution, but if many more social enterprises are created, more needs will be satisfied and our society will be more united and the values of solidarity and mutual aid will be more present."

6. Discussion

As mentioned in the previous section, the results obtained provide answers to the established research questions and, since a qualitative analysis has been developed, many nuances and complementary contributions are obtained. Thus, before addressing these issues, it seems necessary to highlight the reality in which the answers have been given and which has become evident in the interviews. It seems clear that the commitment and sacrifice of the women interviewed to get ahead contribute to the economic and social development of their environment. It starts from a complex context of poverty and violence where the role of the State to reverse this situation is clearly insufficient and where, to survive, women are driven to undertake work out of necessity. In the entrepreneurship process, they usually find support from their families and from associations that work in the area, giving rise to social entrepreneurship projects that bring personal benefits for the entrepreneurs and that contribute extraordinarily to their empowerment, but also for the community and for the country as a tool to achieve peace.

Although the ideal for economic empowerment to be effective is that there is an inclusive economic system that guarantees the equality of women [1] and that this empowerment occurs in the social, political and personal sphere [11], in the present case, reality shows that it could be also possible in environments that a priori do not seem conducive to this. As previously mentioned, in Colombia, violence against the civilian population continues [5] and this violence is translated countless times into gender violence [86], turning women into multiple victims of the conflict: as a civilian population, as a woman, as an indigenous or Afro-descendant, as a community activist, etc.

Thus, the woman becomes the main survivor and victim of the war [88,89]. The seven women interviewed in this work have suffered violence, they have witnessed how their families have suffered it, they know what racism is and what it is to be forced into forced displacement in a country that leads the world ranking in terms of the number of displaced people inmates with almost eight million [125]. All this in a society that, apart from the war, continues to appear as eminently sexist and where gender violence in the family is a constant that finds sustenance when women depend economically on men as the main providers of income in the family, that is, as a consequence of a patriarchal culture [126] that finds its maximum expression in militarism and war as tools of control and domination [89].

This situation is further aggravated when the woman belongs to an ethnic group or minority different from that of the group that carries out the violence, episodes of racism being common, who on many occasions are silenced precisely because they belong to said ethnic group [97].

However, an important halo of optimism emerges from the interviews carried out because despite the violence suffered and the deterioration and uncertainty of the environment, these women present a great resilience that allows them not to give up and that corroborates what Parrando [92] expressed when they cataloged the struggle of Colombian women as constant and surprising as well as essential for the construction of peace.

The result of this struggle is the desire to overcome the situation of deterioration and violence [93] which, in addition, tends to make it difficult to access a job for others [38] and that drives them to undertake work. Therefore, an enterprise is produced out of necessity that seeks, in the first place, to improve its economic situation but which, as Gobbi, Dhakal and Hijazi [9] or Haugh and Talwar [30] point out, will result in economic empowerment.

For entrepreneurship, which in the case of the women interviewed is social, has more weight and its effects are more palpable and sustainable over time, the active and equitable participation of all parties involved in the economic board is essential [24,101,102]. However, it has been found that the presence of the State could be insufficient and materializes in a lack of information, training and financial aid to promote such activities. The fact of the existence of the war and that these women are direct victims of it does not make them an object of help from public entities, but rather the viability of their businesses itself must guarantee their financial independence in the terms stated by Emerson and Twersky [53]. Now, that an entrepreneurial project must be viable does not mean that it is not positive to have public support [56], especially when it comes to social entrepreneurship projects that can play an important structuring role in achieving peace.

On the other hand, the GEM 2020 [127] report for Colombia highlights the poor position in terms of the financing possibilities that entrepreneurial projects have. This leads, as we have corroborated in the interviews, to the activity being financed, mainly, through own savings, foundations and with contributions from relatives and acquaintances.

But not everything is negative, these projects have a series of social values that are not altered or conditioned as a counterpart of external support. In many cases it can be stated that these are businesses that favor inclusion [38,39] as we have seen through the interviews and where we are shown how social entrepreneurship manages to involve other women as well victims or other problems. In the same vein, Montgomery et al. [128] proposed as a social impact strategy the establishment of an ecosystem of mutual support among the different social entrepreneurs which is important to achieve effective outcomes at the organizational, industry and societal level [69]. This leads to greater social participation that in many cases translates into the creation of associations, as indicated by Legis [60], helping to increase a grassroots social fabric [95]. This is of great importance if we also take into consideration that social networks prior to violence have frequently been annihilated as a consequence of the massive displacement of people [26]. This participation originates a feedback movement that activates these women, ceasing to be passive victims of violence, and urging them to fight towards the achievement of certain personal and community objectives, corroborating what was pointed out by Bravo [45] or Ospina [21].

All of the interviewees in this work are convinced that their projects have a social and economic impact that translates into the socioeconomic development of their community, providing employment

and income to other families and enhancing the territories in which they live. They thus act as transforming forces [49] capable of promoting more participatory development models [64].

The activation of these women has been reflected in an increase in their level of economic independence and consequent empowerment as directly manifested by all the women interviewed in this work, corroborating what Castiblanco [61] pointed out. For them, entrepreneurial activity has not only helped them to overcome the labor gap [58,59], but the economic empowerment generated has led to a broader empowerment in others scopes; as pointed out by Cruz [71] when she pointed to greater participation and awareness of power. In addition, their entrepreneurial activity could bring them a series of emotional benefits such as self-realization and the feeling of contribution to their community that represent a transcendental cure to overcome their role as victim.

With its projects, it is not only pursued to obtain an economic income but it is also intended to make the community visible and keep traditions and culture alive as necessary elements to achieve peace without excluding anyone. Having their own means to earn a living helps victims to lead a lifestyle through legal, dignified and peaceful means, regardless of the logic that the guerrillas or paramilitaries impose too many times [89]. The entrepreneurial projects of these women are clearly inclusive and not exclusive. In this regard, the Ideas for Peace Foundation (FIP), the UN Women Colombia and the Colombia Global Compact [70] affirm that female entrepreneurship is especially important in contexts of reconstruction after an armed conflict, although it is nonetheless admirable that for the majority of women victims of violence in Colombia the most important thing is not punishable justice against their aggressors but reparation as a way of gaining autonomy through the undertaking of productive processes and personal growth [87]. In short, and corroborating what has been pointed out by International Alert [78], and Crocker, Hampson and Aaall [81], social enterprises could contribute to the construction of peace, enabling the reconstruction of social capital through participation in economic activities [82]. In this sense, Wood [74] uncovered how during war, women can be accepted as, or even valued for, being security producers, then it becomes more accepted and indeed normal for women to have authority in society [75]. As previously commented, Entrepreneurship would allow this necessary security [29] that favors the transformation of reality, endows non-violent power and encourages processes of social and political participation that would help to design and build a more peaceful and democratic future.

7. Conclusions

This exploratory work provides empirical data on the contribution of entrepreneurship to achieving peace in environments hit by the violence of war. Through the interviews carried out and the subsequent discussion generated, a first step has been taken towards the idea that women who have suffered violence as a consequence of the war in Colombia find in social entrepreneurship the tool to empower themselves, building an economic and social development of their territory that acts as an integrating agent of society and contributing to the construction of peace in their territories.

Entrepreneurship seems to be a mechanism that helps women to get out of the category of victims and become survivors and, in addition, thanks to their income they could build memory, make citizens aware that they exist, that they could be forgotten and that at present there are too many regions that still continue to suffer violence, therefore a fabric and social network should be created.

On the other hand, entrepreneurship could favor the empowerment of women, since entrepreneurship would provide greater autonomy and help women recognize their value. It would be also confirmed that entrepreneurship increases participation and this provides a greater degree of empowerment. Participation in associations could create a social network of mutual support that is linked to the participation of the family and, subsequently, the rest of the citizenry, creating a connection between the victims and the population, a connection that does not often occur in other areas. In addition, women could contribute to the construction of peace in the country, since the company would ensure that the victims have a sustainable and productive life project, while creating a social connection.

However, it may also have been found that insufficient government presence would have prevented these women from contributing even more effectively. Victims' businesses directly promote

the recognition, resignification, and empowerment of victims and the socio-economic development of communities, but it is essential that public agencies and state entities be involved in the same way. Social entrepreneurship could be an alternative to promote the inclusive development of the country, solving various social problems and giving the population an opportunity for improvement, but support and coordination between the Government and citizen initiatives would be necessary.

Finally, it should be noted that this work has several implications. For women victims of the conflict, it is a way of visualizing and disseminating their situation; and, above all, for Colombian institutions, it is a way of knowing the vision that women victims of the conflict have about the activities of these institutions and about the need to become more involved in their development and protection, since the contribution they make to the country is remarkable.

The work of the victims and the participating associations, as well as that of all those who strive to defend their right to justice, truth and reparation, as well as the guarantee of non-repetition is presented as insufficient and scarce if there is no institutional support behind it. The involvement of the State is necessary if the benefits obtained by social entrepreneurship and the economic empowerment of the victims are to be maintained, and if it is intended that these reach a greater number of people and their effects are more effective, extensive and lasting.

This study could contribute to the theory by providing indications about the relationship between women's empowerment, social entrepreneurship and the construction of peace processes in environments plagued by war or violence. Furthermore, this exploratory study opens up the possibility of quantitatively corroborating the positive relationship between the aforementioned aspects in future studies (in other words, how social entrepreneurship becomes a source of empowerment for women victims of violence and a tool for building peace). On the other hand, we believe that this study contributes to the construction of an incipient field of study that addresses the struggle of women against gender inequalities in different contexts.

In addition, this work could contribute to the social visualization of the active role of women in society in general and in the economy in particular. It is about making visible a role that is often silenced as a consequence of existing gender inequalities that prevent women from being seen as an active agent of change and progress.

In terms of limitations, the difficulty in locating eligible women who would like to be interviewed has meant that the sample is not too large, although it is sufficient for an initial qualitative exploratory study that may represent a first step on this path. Anyway, with a larger sample, it would be possible to carry out, as future actions, quantitative studies that include more women and from more territories. It could be interesting to address, for example, the role that the resilience of these women plays in the success of their businesses and, therefore, in the economic and social development of the different areas.

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