

VOICES FROM THE COCA FIELDS:

Women Building Rural Communities

Ana Jimena Bautista - Revelo

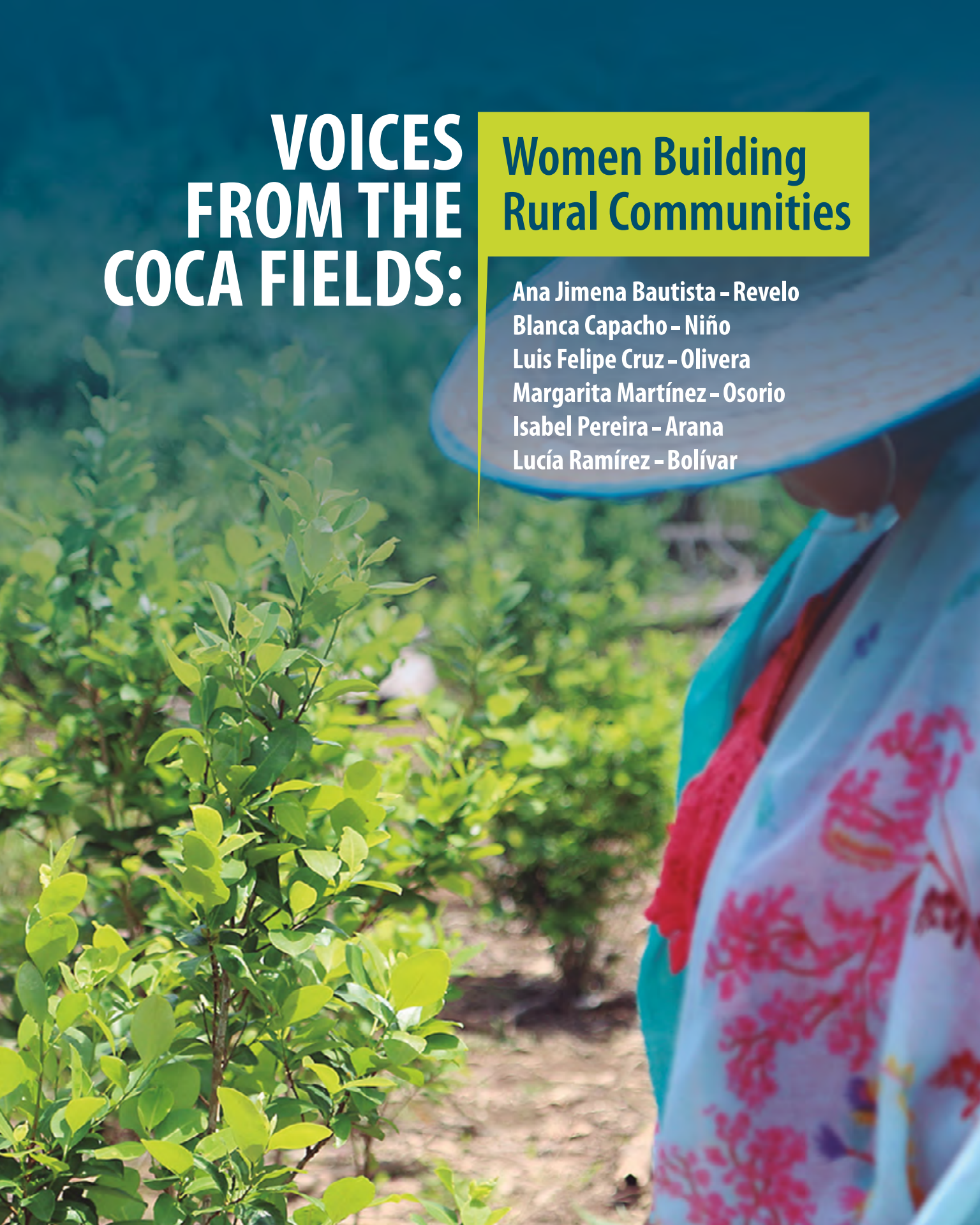
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Dejusticia



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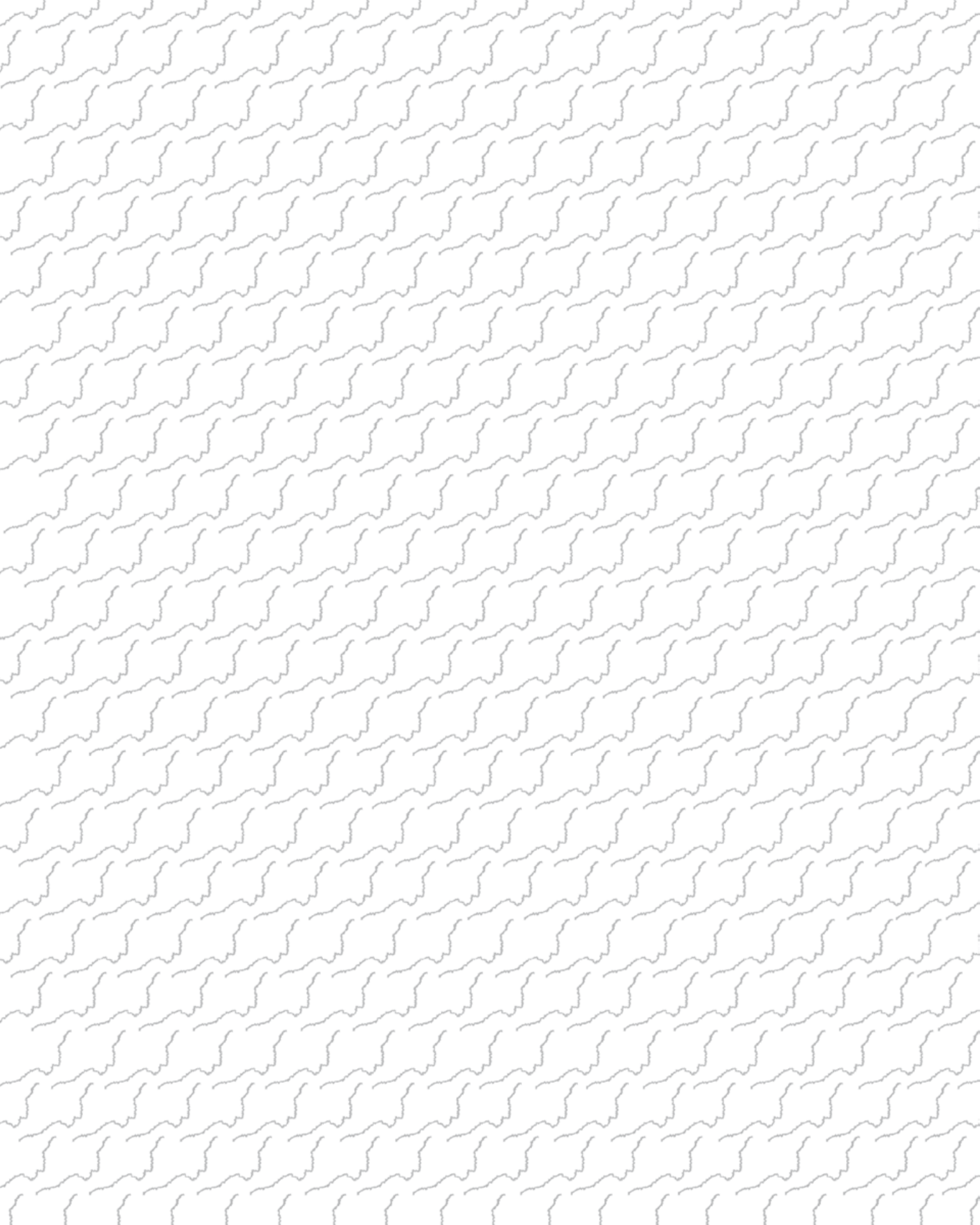
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One of the aims of this book is to ensure that the realities of women coca growers are made visible in settings where they are usually invisible. To this end, we created audiovisual pieces that draw on testimonies from the National Conference of Women from Fensuagro, held in Viotá, Cundinamarca. This effort was carried out by Dejusticia's communications team. We are thus grateful to Carolina Mila, Carolina Gutiérrez, and César Andrés Rodríguez for helping us tell the stories of women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region. Among these women, we are particularly grateful to Nidia Quintero; Luz Dary Molina, from Fensuagro; Gloria Oliva, community leader and coca grower; and two women from Putumayo who shared their experiences as coca growers and women's rights activists but who preferred to remain anonymous.

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GLOSSARY

<i>derecho de petición</i>	petition sent within the framework of Colombia's right to access public information
<i>cocalero / cocalera</i>	coca grower
ENUT	National Survey on Time Use (Encuesta Nacional de Uso del Tiempo)
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia)
PDET	territorially focused development plan (Programa de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial)
PISDA	comprehensive plan for crop substitution and alternative development (Plan Integral Municipal y Comunitario de Sustitución y Desarrollo Alternativo)
SIMCI	Integrated Illicit Crops Monitoring System (Sistema Integrado de Monitoreo de Cultivos Ilícitos)
UNGASS 2016	United Nations General Assembly on the World Drug Problem
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



INTRODUCTION*

In Colombia, the prohibition on drugs—better known as the “war on drugs”—has been a breeding ground for armed conflict, poverty, marginalization, and stigmatization. Coca, a sacred plant for some people and a loathsome one for others, a source of life or of death, is at the center of the debate over state building and peacebuilding in the country. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Colombia currently has 146,000 hectares of coca;¹ following the peace accord signed in 2016 between the national government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the country is facing enormous pressure to reduce this number to secure peace in rural areas and to increase the state’s presence in historically neglected regions. But behind every number—behind each hectare of coca cultivation and every conflict—there are people trying to survive in the face of hostile conditions and a weak state presence; what the numbers of hectares of coca crops do not show us is the extent of poverty, exclusion, and resistance experienced by those who are involved in various aspects of the coca economy in order to scrape by and overcome everyday conditions of violence and oppression.

* The present document is a translation from the Spanish version of this document, published in 2019 by Dejusticia and Fensuagro.

1 This book relies on data from SIMCI, the official monitoring system for illicit crops that is administered by the government of Colombia and the United Nations. We do not consider data from the US government’s Office of National Drug Control Policy to be “official” data.

This book explores the experience of the human faces behind these numbers—the lives of the people from a specific region in Colombia who grow coca as a means of survival within the context of precarious living conditions and constant disputes between armed actors. We selected the Andes-Amazon region of Colombia—particularly the department of Putumayo—as the focus of our study, for it is a region where violence, colonization, poverty, and state building converge around coca cultivation and pose particular challenges to the implementation of crop substitution programs as proposed in point four of the final peace accord signed between the Colombian government and the FARC.

In addition to this particular region of study, we focus specifically on the experience of women coca growers. Those who grow coca in the southern part of the country share experiences of poverty, stigmatization, criminalization, and a historical state focus on militarization and resource extraction as opposed to human rights and well-being. And within this fragile panorama, the lives and bodies of women coca growers are marked by unique experiences of violence, oppression, and resistance, stemming from their being rural women in a stigmatized, militarized, and profoundly patriarchal region.

The war on drugs has shaped particular life experiences and has resulted in specific gender-based impacts.

The perspective of women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region thus allows us to understand how the war on drugs has shaped particular life experiences and has resulted in specific gender-based impacts. Identifying these differentiated impacts not only helps fill existing gaps in the literature but also sheds light on the challenges facing the implementation of a gender approach as outlined in point four of the peace accord and, on this basis, propose concrete recommendations for ensuring the application of such an approach in crop substitution efforts.

With this in mind, this book's focus on the socioeconomic situation of women coca growers in the Andes-Amazon region rests on the idea that the country's drug policy should replace its almost exclusive emphasis on the elimination of illicit crops with one that considers the differentiated impacts of the drug economy and the ways in which these impacts deepen inequality in different settings. Indeed, within the framework of the global prohibition on drugs, which stems from United Nations conventions, Colombia's strategies to reduce the size of the drug trade have focused almost entirely on repressing coca cultivation—that is, reducing the amount of coca leaf that is harvested. Nonetheless, no solutions have been offered to address the per-

sistent conditions of poverty in rural Colombia that have a differentiated impact on rural women.² The policies of the war on drugs have placed an excessive emphasis on the plant's elimination, which has meant that campesinos who derive their livelihood from coca cultivation have had to deal with a military state focused on eradicating, fumigating, and criminalizing, as opposed to a state based on the social rule of law that offers alternatives for overcoming the high rates of rural poverty.

Voices from the Coca Fields sheds light on the living conditions of women coca growers with the aim of providing recommendations, mainly in the context of the implementation of the peace accord, that offer ways to effectively incorporate a rights-based perspective into the crop substitution programs and alternative development plans that are currently being carried out throughout the country. In particular, we believe that such a perspective should incorporate a gender focus as one of its key pillars, for the construction of stable and lasting peace is achieved only by addressing the state's historical debt with women. Peace requires women—it requires their voices and experiences—and thus it is critical to listen to and take seriously their claims and demands.

WHY ANALYZE THE WAR ON DRUGS FROM A WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE?

The words “war” and “drugs” are usually associated with masculinity. Moreover, statistics show that the effects of drug policies are concentrated more among men than women; the vast literature on the topic confirms that those who consume, traffic, and sell drugs worldwide tend to be men (Malinowska-Sempruch and Rychkova 2015, 2). However, this emphasis on the masculine experience has concealed the range of ways in which women are linked to the drug trade and the inequalities and gender-based violations that are reproduced there. For example, Kasia Malinowska-Sempruch and Olga Rychkova maintain that compared to men, women are more vilified for using drugs, have a lesser chance of seeking treatment for drug dependence, and face more severe punishments for drug-related crimes.

2 According to the National Planning Department, during the fifteen years of Plan Colombia, “9.6 billion dollars [were invested] by the US government and 131 billion dollars by the government of Colombia” (2016, 1), of which 72% was destined for military and police support. The National Planning Department also reported that Colombia's antidrug strategy dedicated 64% of its resources to reducing the drug supply and a mere 5.5% to alternative development (DNP and Ministerio de Justicia y del Derecho 2012, 12). Lastly, in the 2015 SIMCI report, UNODC notes that just 32% of regions with illicit crops have received alternative development interventions (UNODC and Government of Colombia 2016, 14).

The drug literature’s concealment of women’s experiences tends to be even more pronounced with regard to those who cultivate “prohibited plants.” The research that explores the differentiated impact of drug policy on women usually ignores women farmers; additionally, the international drug conventions of 1961, 1971, and 1988 overlook the conditions faced by women farmers (*ibid.*, 3). In Colombia, part of the problem stems from the way that information is collected on illicit crops: for this research project, we undertook an exhaustive analysis of all official data on coca production in the country. In its eighteen years of existence, the Integrated Illicit Crops Monitoring System (SIMCI by its Spanish initials)³ has not included gender-based information in its annual reports. Despite the important data that are gathered and analyzed via this tool—especially through visits to the field—there are no sex-disaggregated data that permit an analysis of women’s involvement in coca cultivation, harvesting, and production.

Some of the few official data that exist in this regard are from 2009, including a report on coca-growing families, the average number of people per household, and the number of hectares of coca crops; and in 2017, SIMCI recorded data disaggregated by educational attainment and sex. Meanwhile, even though socioeconomic research studies on coca-producing families claim to have collected sex-disaggregated data, they do not report this data, which means that we do not know how many women have been involved in agricultural activities related to coca leaf (UNODC and Ministerio de Justicia 2010, 30). In light of this, we can conclude that the existing data do not allow us to fully grasp the complex panorama in which women coca growers in Colombia find themselves.

Recently, numerous entities and organizations have called attention to the importance of studying the war on drugs from a perspective that highlights women’s involvement in the various facets of the illicit drug trade. Since 2005, the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs⁴ has acknowledged the differentiated impact of

3 SIMCI uses a systematic and uniform methodology for collecting data on the presence and evolution of illicit crops in the country. Operated by UNODC since 1999, it publishes an annual report, usually around mid-year, which includes data for the prior year. The data collection methodology is based on satellite monitoring and field visits. Over the years, SIMCI reports have transformed, incorporating various facets of the illicit drug problem and embracing a vision that goes beyond the mere measurement of hectares. Today, the reports include detailed data on the density of coca crops, presence at the municipal level, coca leaf yields, historical and geographical evolution, eradication efforts, and the number of families who rely on coca cultivation, among other indices.

4 The Commission on Narcotic Drugs, based in Vienna, is a policymaking body of the United Nations that monitors states’ compliance with the three international drug control treaties.

drug policy and has even requested that UNODC record sex-disaggregated information in its reports on drugs. Similarly, in the preparatory process for the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS) in 2016,⁵ UN Women prepared a policy brief on the impact of drug policy on women. Moreover, the drug policy reform movement, at both the activist and academic level, has recently begun to take note of the gender-based impacts of prohibition as a policy for controlling drugs. Finally, scholars have increasingly begun to pay attention to the situation of women who are incarcerated for drug-related crimes and related policy reforms in Latin America (Pérez Correa 2015; Uprimny et al. 2016; WOLA 2017).

Nonetheless, the emphasis of these studies on women's involvement in the drug trade is on incarceration and micro-trafficking. Aspects concerning cultivation and production remain absent from research studies. And even though UN Women has called attention to the need for deeper study of women's participation in the coca economy and the violence-related impacts of this involvement, this gap in the literature has yet to be filled (UN Women 2014, 2).

This dearth of information is a serious problem in the case of Colombia, for the peace accord includes commitments by both parties (the government and the FARC) to incorporate a gender perspective in all processes aimed at tackling the illicit drug problem, particularly crop substitution programs. Similarly, the UNGASS 2016 outcome document reflects transformations in language and actions that open the door for drug policy based on human rights (Pereira and Cruz 2017).⁶ A gender perspective can be seen in the document's operational recommendations on cross-cutting issues, which call on governments to "mainstream a gender perspective into and ensure the involvement of women in all stages of the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of drug policies and programmes, develop and disseminate gender-sensitive and age-appropriate measures that take into account the

5 Held in April 2016 in New York, UNGASS 2016 was the culmination of a multilateral political process, begun in 2012, that sought to engage governments in frank debate on strategies to address the world's drug problem; the idea was that strategies should be based on evidence instead of moral prejudices and that governments should acknowledge the failure of prohibition as a strategy for drug control. The outcome document is titled *Our Joint Commitment to Effectively Addressing and Countering the World Drug Problem*. UNGASS 2016 was the result of a joint call by the governments of Colombia, Guatemala, and Mexico.

6 It is worth highlighting that UNGASS 2016 departed from the traditional three-pillar structure of international drug policy—demand reduction, supply reduction, and international cooperation—by embracing seven key thematic areas that address cross-cutting human rights concerns for certain populations (children, youth, and women), as well as questions related to socioeconomic development for campesinos who eradicate their illicit crops.

specific needs and circumstances faced by women and girls with regard to the world drug problem” (UNODC 2016, 15).

Both the peace accord and the UNGASS outcome document require that crop substitution processes incorporate a gender perspective that addresses the claims and interests of women involved in the cultivation and production of coca. But how can this be achieved without understanding or listening firsthand to women? This book documents the experiences of women coca growers—for hearing their voices is the first step in grasping their complex realities and beginning the process of constructing a drug and crop substitution policy committed to the elimination of gender-based violence and inequality.

PUTUMAYO AND THE ANDES-AMAZON REGION

According to the 2035 Andes-Amazon Comprehensive Development Plan, geographically speaking, the Andes-Amazon region comprises several municipalities from the departments of Putumayo and Nariño and is divided into six subregions: Valle de Sibundoy, Centro, Río Caquetá, Leguízamo, Río Putumayo, and Valle del Guamuez. The composition of this region—unlike the traditional political-administrative and departmental divisions—is due to specific environmental, agricultural, sociocultural, and political traits of these municipalities, as well as the riverways that facilitate communication and exchanges among the communities who inhabit them (Mesa Regional 2017).

Although the Andes-Amazon region includes municipalities that belong to a number of departments—Cauca, Caquetá, Nariño, and Putumayo—this book is focused on the department of Putumayo. Most of the municipalities of the Andes-Amazon region are located in this department and share similar social, demographic, and economic traits. In general, the information we have gathered for Putumayo also reflects the situation of neighboring municipalities and villages that, because of their location, are economically and socially closer to Putumayo than to Cauca, Nariño, or Caquetá.⁷

7 Our fieldwork with women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region also includes testimonies from women from the municipality of Piamonte (Cauca) and the town of Jardines de Sucumbíos (Nariño). Although these two areas are not part of the Andes-Amazon region, we decided to include these women’s stories in our research because they share commonalities with those from the Andes-Amazon region; in addition, the fact that these towns are located on the border with Putumayo means that residents have frequent economic, cultural, and social interactions with communities from Putumayo.

While we are aware that the municipalities and departments of the Andes-Amazon region possess unique features that belie generalizations, in this book we focus on the shared experiences and the crosscutting regional dynamics in the Andes-Amazon region, particularly Putumayo. As suggested by María Clara Torres, Putumayo's history is marked by, on the one hand, a national government that has made its presence in the area known through the promotion of extractive activities and the deployment of military force aimed at bringing down armed actors and other threats and, on the other, the efforts of local communities to build a state “from the ground up”—that is, to provide themselves with the well-being and basic services needed to live with dignity (Torres Bustamante 2011).

Cutting across both of these processes are the dynamics of the coca trade. First, this economy attracted various illegal armed actors to the region, which triggered an increase in the state's military presence, in turn affecting the civilian population and campesino coca growers in many ways. Second, as a response to the state's militarized presence, the civilian population—particularly those inhabitants involved in the coca trade—began to take part in social movements aimed at supplying the basic goods and services that the state was failing to provide.

This context of state building, social mobilization, and cultural dynamics spurred by the coca economy in Putumayo has been widely documented. Nevertheless, the experience of women coca growers in these processes has not. This book seeks to fill that gap. Moreover, ignoring women's perspectives in these processes means overlooking key experiences that help us understand how social inequality and poverty operate and are exacerbated through policies such as the “war on drugs” and the militarization of regions stigmatized as coca havens. In this regard, this book constitutes a first step in analyzing these complex processes from a gender perspective, with an eye toward highlighting the barriers to designing a rights-based drug policy that takes women's experiences into account and making recommendations for overcoming them.

Comal



Mi Familia



Fundacion-inspeccion



Cabildo



RIO RUMAYACO

Aparte de dedicarle tiempo a mi familia asisto a reunion con mi comunidad que se realiza cada mes.

pertenezco al comite de directivos de mi comunidad por lo tanto asisto a reuniones a la inspeccion cuando me sitan. y a la Fundacion,

METHODOLOGY

Voices from the Coca Fields is the result of a collaborative effort between two research areas of Dejusticia—its nondiscrimination area and its drug policy area—that were convinced of the need for gender equality in peacebuilding. As part of this effort, we partnered with the agricultural trade union Fensuagro; in order to work with regional organizations in Putumayo, Fensuagro collaborated with the Andes-Amazon chapter of the National Coca, Poppy, and Marijuana Growers Co-op. Within the framework of this alliance, we organized the Regional Conference of Women Coca Growers in Puerto Asís, Putumayo, on April 28–29, 2017, which brought together forty-three women coca growers from the departments of Putumayo, Nariño, Cauca, and Caquetá. The aim of this conference was to foster a setting for women coca growers to share their experiences and perspectives regarding the peace accord and programs on crop substitution and alternative development.

This conference used participatory mapping techniques in which women, working in small groups, drew on top of maps of the region to indicate their daily routines, community meeting points, relationships with the coca plant, family experiences, definitions of the state, and relationships with armed actors. These maps, together with the group discussions that followed their creation, brought to light the repertoires of violence, poverty, state neglect, and inequality that the women and their families have experienced, as well as the opportunities for social mobility and economic well-being spurred by the coca trade in their region. This methodology en-

abled the coexistence of different discourses describing women's experiences with coca: reflecting on a concrete space marked on the map, the women spoke from their emotions, from their territory, from their collective life, from their family, from their "womanness."

In addition, we conducted seven in-depth semi-structured interviews with women from different parts of the Andes-Amazon region (the names of some of these women have been changed to protect their privacy). These interviews sought to trace the women's life trajectories. The stories of Martha, Gloria Oliva, María Fernanda, Violeta, Sandra, Viviana, and Rosaura reveal the complexities involved in being a woman coca grower in the Andes-Amazon region. Living in areas of "late colonization," growing coca, confronting restrictive gender roles on a daily basis, sometimes questioning these roles, suffering violence at the hands of armed actors, having to figure out how to make ends meet on a daily basis, participating in patriarchal and unequal families, and becoming involved in the *cocalero* (coca grower) social movement in southern Colombia are just some of the experiences that permeate the lives and bodies of these women coca growers.

Both our participatory mapping exercise and our semi-structured interviews allowed us to uncover women's experiences, told in their own words. This then permitted us to track the subjective dimensions of drug policy in the sense that exploring women's concrete experiences opened the way for understanding how certain national and international policies of the war on drugs shaped, restricted, or enabled these life experiences. Furthermore, the women's voices revealed the various ways in which gender and poverty intersect in the rural Andes-Amazon world, as well as the effects of drug policy on their family, community, and personal lives.

In order to help us draw connections between the macro and micro levels of drug policy, the women invited to the conference also helped create a timeline identifying milestones in Putumayo's history, particularly with regard to measures taken within the framework of the various attempts of the state to address the country's illicit crop problem. After identifying these milestones, the women discussed their arrival to the area, their involvement in coca, their first encounters with the state, social marches and mobilizations, disputes between armed actors, and the consequences of illicit crop reduction strategies. This exercise shed light on the subjective dimensions of drug policy and gave voice to those individuals whose life trajectories embody the impacts of the war on drugs.

In addition, we analyzed secondary sources and official information requested via *derechos de petición* (petitions sent within the framework of Colombia's

right to access public information) to sketch a general picture of the Andes-Amazon region's context and history. We focused in particular on statistics for programs on rural development (housing, education, access to land, and so forth), crop substitution, and alternative development in Putumayo. The *derechos de petición* that we sent to public entities requested sex-disaggregated information; however, in their responses to our requests, the entities rarely included such data, which means that there are not enough data to provide a clear quantitative picture in terms of gender.

We shared the final draft of our research report on April 6, 2018, with participants from our Regional Conference of Women Coca Growers with the aim of discussing the results of our research and our proposed recommendations, as well as working together to design territorial action plans (*planes de acción territorial*). At this meeting, participants provided feedback on how to strengthen the book and its accompanying audiovisual tools. In addition, we mailed copies of the manuscript to each of the women we interviewed so that they could have the final say over the testimonies that are quoted in this book.

The information gathered from our participatory mapping tools, interviews, and timeline exercise—together with the lack of quantitative data—led us to adopt three angles aimed at analyzing drug policy based on the voices of those who are most affected and trying to fill the gaps left by the absence of sex-disaggregated data. The three theoretical-methodological perspectives adopted in this book are (i) an intersectional gender approach; (ii) a subjective approach to the state; and (iii) an approach based on women's voices and life stories as opposed to quantitative figures and data.

AN INTERSECTIONAL GENDER APPROACH

Using gender as an analytical tool for studying social phenomena is a key tenet of Western feminism, as it highlights the ways that gender-based experiences affect the distribution of power in society and shape patterns of inequality and violence. For example, gender analysis allowed us to identify the ways in which the sexual division of labor in the public and private spheres relegated women to the private-domestic sphere of society and men to the public sphere, where community and political issues were handled. This social organization scheme translated into inequality and oppression, for the domestic activities carried out by women tend to be undervalued and overlooked, while the distribution of power between the public and private spheres grants men the ability to control various aspects of women's lives. Thus, in this case as

in many others, a gender analysis helped reveal the way in which the political system was based on unequal and oppressive gender-based experiences that could not be overlooked in an analysis of power, politics, and equality; the various meanings associated with femininity and masculinity needed to be at the center of policy analysis given that they were intricately intertwined with its structure and modes of operation.

However, despite the analytical and critical potential of gender analysis, some problematic biases came to light toward the end of the twentieth century. As explained by Mara Viveros, a number of critiques formulated within the framework of black feminist theory revealed the naivety of examining power relations in terms of gender alone. For black feminist theorists, multiple forms of oppression can affect an individual at the same time; for example, oppression or inequality based on gender can occur alongside oppression based on class, race, ethnicity, and other factors. This led to the development of the intersectional approach, which allows for “an overlapping or interlocking perspective of power relations” (Viveros Vigoya 2016, 2).

Oppression or inequality based on gender can occur alongside oppression based on class, race, ethnicity, and other factors. This led to the development of the intersectional approach.

The adoption of this approach helped shed light on the fact that some types of oppression that had historically been denounced by Western feminism were, in reality, unique to white feminists and were not shared by black or indigenous women. Such is the case with white feminists’ historical claim for women’s inclusion in the labor market; even though this setting had been traditionally closed off to white women, black women were involved in the working world from a young age. In this regard, the relationships between women and labor varied and acquired different meanings depending on race and class, not just gender.

The intersectional approach—as its name suggests—conceives of power relations as necessarily intersectional, meaning that its starting point is a recognition of “the impossibility of separating oppressions that are not solely racial, sexual, or classist” (ibid., 5). For intersectional theorists, it is impossible to treat various forms of oppression in silos; if an individual experiences different types of power relations that limit or restrict their life choices, then their experience should be analyzed as part of a whole, for it is on the basis of this complexity that social inequality and its modes of operation can be examined.

In the case of women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region, their experience requires such an intersectional approach, for their lives involve multiple

forms of social inequality. To begin with, women coca growers from this region are campesina (i.e., rural) women, which in Colombia implies four types of oppression on account of (i) being women, (ii) being campesinas, (iii) being poor, and (iv) being victims of the armed conflict (UNDP 2011a). Second, women coca growers are involved in an illicit and stigmatized economy, which adds another layer of oppression. Throughout this book, we embrace this approach in our exploration of the experiences of women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region; we show that in their everyday lives and trajectories, they have suffered inequalities stemming from having been born in an exceedingly patriarchal rural world that is also marked by the presence of armed actors and profound shortcomings in terms of rights and basic resources needed to live with dignity.

In addition, this social position has given these women coca growers a unique worldview that has spurred them to embrace various forms of resistance, both at the personal and collective level, as well as different languages for telling and giving meaning to their experiences. The language of the community, of the family, of the collective is key in their narratives about their lives, and their notion of emancipation is based on the fulfillment of a collective effort; thus, serving as spokespeople for their communities is an experience that they describe with hope, expectation, and empowerment. This book closely follows these aspirations and this language and formulates recommendations accordingly. It also pays special attention to the multiple and complex strategies developed by these women to confront a patriarchal rural world that is sometimes extremely rigid in its gender roles.

The women coca growers with whom we spoke are involved in a variety of organizations and initiatives that have allowed them to obtain critical political knowledge; for example, they participate in their region's civic and social life, they belong to formal organizations, and they are acutely aware of gender inequalities in general. In this regard, their experiences come from a place of privilege within the countryside, for they are rural women who have questioned machista barriers and stereotypes and who have acquired a voice in the public sphere. We are aware that other coca-growing regions might not have such an organized civic structure or active political life. The particular experience of women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region reveals the features of cocalero mobilization in Putumayo and the ways in which women who belong to mixed-sex organizations have struggled to be included in these spaces and to defy traditional gender roles.

A SUBJECTIVE APPROACH TO THE STATE

Since neither public institutions nor academia have paid much attention to women coca growers, it is ethically and politically imperative that this gap be filled from a subjective perspective that—despite not being representative, generalizable, or all encompassing—at least allows for a more micro-level picture that helps us understand the specific havoc being wreaked on women and their life plans. Furthermore, embracing a subjective approach allows us to put a name to particular experiences and lessons on politics, war, and the state. The lives and bodies of these women have been deeply marked by the armed conflict and the war on drugs. Their political stances and expectations for peace are intricately connected to their sorrows caused by the war and their dreams of peace. By adopting a subjective point of view, we can thus identify what they have seen and what they yearn for.

We adhere to Norbert Lechner's idea that political subjectivity offers an important exercise in remembrance:

Oftentimes, institutional dynamics, the strategies of actors, and economic conditions are analyzed without duly considering the daily experiences of people, their fears and their wishes. The backstreets of everyday life are often dead-ends, but sometimes they allow us to glimpse the hidden side of major avenues. Even democracy, in need of the public spotlight in order to develop, hides backyards, some of them sordid, and others simply forgotten. (Lechner 1990, 15)

Using women's life stories as its foundation, this book seeks to shed light on these "backyards"—this hidden side of drug policy and of state-building processes in the Andes-Amazon region. These women's daily routines, their sorrows, their hopes and dreams, and the violent experiences that they carry deep within themselves are all experiences that embody the impacts and costs of policies that are constructed "from above" and that affect real people's lives. The conflicts that these women have endured—the internal armed conflict, the war on drugs, and displacement due to extractive activities on their land—are not unfortunate or isolated events but rather a reflection of the way that politics has affected their lives, transforming them, truncating them, expanding them.

But we also wish to highlight the paths of resistance, resilience, and creativity unveiled by these testimonies in order to do justice to the women's commitment to building a territory where they can live well and to their commitment to channeling the pain from their losses through the empowerment gained from social and political mobilization.

Through their words, expressions, and discourses, the women coca growers observe the state with great emotionality: they await the state, feel cheated by the state, fear the state. The women experience the state through commonplace and routine practices in everyday life, and they reproduce it through certain “languages of stateness” (Blom Hansen and Steputtat 2001, 8) that talk about what the state means (with pain and frustration) and about what they wish it would be (provider and protector). The women’s relationship with the state, then, is symbolically represented through the “languages of stateness,” understood as languages that invoke the government, public institutions, and authorities (ibid., 5). This language traverses our analysis and serves as the starting point for our recommendations, for it is the “longed-for state” that offers the most solid basis for adequate policies on crop substitution that take into account the needs and claims of populations affected by the war on drugs.

Our reconstruction of the subjective experiences of women coca growers in southern Colombia is unavoidably fragmented. It is based on short conversations, fleeting encounters, and limited exchanges. Nonetheless, it is what we have for now to help fill the enormous gap in official data and the country’s memory concerning women’s role in the coca trade. If bureaucracy has placed a shadow over these women, their roles, and the ways in which coca transformed their lives, we will make their stories known in order to reconstruct what has not been told.

TALKING ABOUT LIFE STORIES AND STORIES OF PAIN

The participatory mapping exercise and women’s testimonies from our interviews shed light on their experiences of violence and pain at the hands of armed actors, their families, and poverty. When we met with the women, we quickly realized their need to talk, to explain what they had lived through; for many of them, talking was not just an opportunity to vent and to share their stories with other women who had lived through similar events but also a way to enlighten the public about experiences that had remained invisible and that they had tried to process privately. Alongside this process of telling, sharing, and making their stories public was a call for justice, for amidst the harsh reality of impunity in which these women find themselves, talking is their way of ensuring that these things do not happen again and do not remain forever shrouded in silence.

For example, Martha—one of the women we interviewed, who, together with her daughters, was the victim of sexual violence by paramilitaries—explicitly asked that we tell her story and that we do so exactly as she had, with all of the details

and expressions. Martha wants everyone in Colombia to know what happened to her and her daughters, and she saw our research project as a way to channel this claim. For these reasons, in addition to serving as a research document and a set of policy recommendations, this book is also a bridge that allows women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region to communicate their calls for justice and to break the silence of what they have lived through—and, in doing so, to dismantle the many barriers to finding a public voice and being heard.

During our work with the women and the subsequent writing process, we grappled with the question of how to narrate stories of pain—how to build a text based on the voices and experiences of those who, in addition to seeking justice, are speaking as victims of various forms of violence and cruelty. Juan Pablo Aranguren (2016), drawing on victims' testimonies of torture perpetrated by members of the armed forces at the end of the twentieth century in Colombia, offers thought-provoking reflections about how to address and narrate the pain of others based on their subjective and human dimension. Although numbers and systematized data on torture and victimization are important components of demonstrating the magnitude of the problem, if we focus exclusively on this type of information, we run the risk of erasing the human being and the story behind each number. As Aranguren writes:

[T]here is no doubt that efforts to systematically document acts of detention and torture ... are fundamental to filing complaints; in addition, we cannot forget that they responded to the need to shed light on practices that government narratives sought to deny. But such systematization presents the subjects as mere objects of such suffering ... Systematization shows qualities, quantities, and classifications within the spectrum of horror, but little or nothing about the subjects [themselves], and much less about their suffering. (2016, 188–9)

Following this line of thinking, our book unearths stories of pain. More than figures or numbers, the stories of women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region are perforated by violence and resistance that have shaped their particular subjectivities and positions toward coca, their families, the state, and armed actors. For Aranguren, the methodological choice to privilege subjects and their pain in the construction of stories on torture and violence implies, from the outset, a decision on how to build the text's narrative: the text should let people speak and should tell their story using their own words, emphases, pauses, and claims.

For this reason, *Voices from the Coca Fields* privileges women's voices and testimonies. Long quotations from our interviews, together with photographs of the

pictures drawn by the women during our participatory mapping exercise, form the main content on which our account of coca in the Andes-Amazon region is based. This effort seeks to listen to women coca growers' claims and to take them seriously. The history of coca in Colombia should put the human and gender dimensions of the illicit drug economy at the center, with the aim of ensuring that public policies contribute effectively to combating the historic inequality and poverty that have pushed rural families to pursue coca as a means to get by. It is our hope that this book helps place the voices of women coca growers at the center of public policy and peacebuilding in Colombia.

The history of coca in Colombia should put the human and gender dimensions of the illicit drug economy at the center.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

Voices from the Coca Fields is divided into five chapters. In the first, we explore the relationship between the state and women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region. The chapter contains three sections related to state building in Putumayo: (i) colonization and extractivism; (ii) the state's presence as it relates to the guarantee and enjoyment of women coca growers' economic, social, and cultural rights; and (iii) community-led rural development in the state's absence, as well as women's role in this effort.

In the second chapter, we analyze the impacts of coca on the lives of women coca growers. We begin by looking at the positive impacts of coca in terms of socio-economic well-being; access to certain rights, such as health and education; increased autonomy in the private sphere; and greater educational attainment. We then examine coca's negative impacts as they concern the presence of armed actors in the region (guerrillas and paramilitaries) and the response of the Colombian state through forced eradication, particularly aerial spraying. We also explore women's concerns about the culture of extravagance and waste that emerged in their communities as a result of the coca boom. Lastly, we look at crop substitution initiatives that have been rolled out in the region and women's perspectives on these efforts.

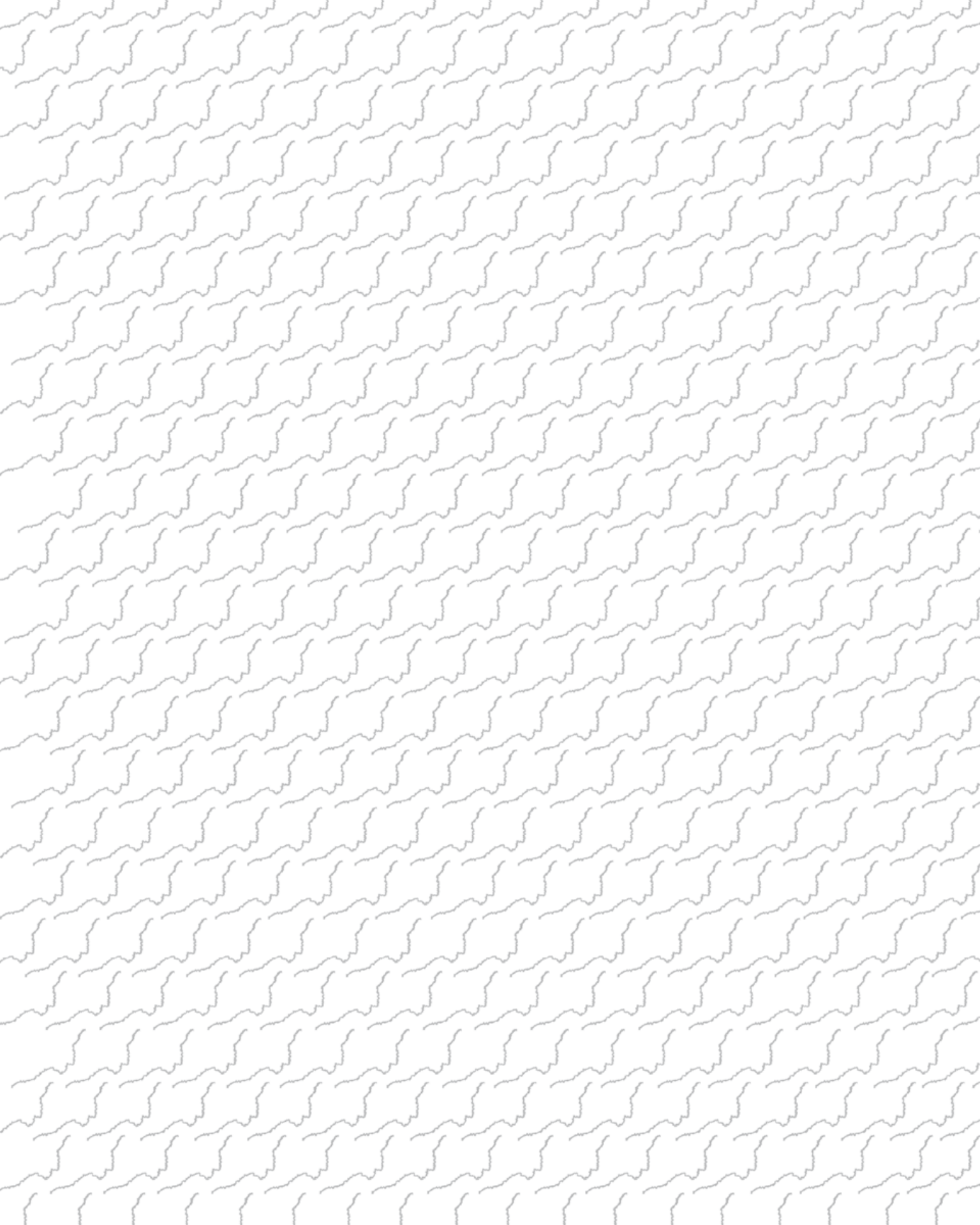
In chapter three, we focus on (i) the way that rural gender structures, particularly the sexual division of labor utilized by campesino families, affect women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region and (ii) the impacts of the gender roles imposed on communities by armed actors. We argue that the household, on the one

hand, and armed actors, on the other, have in large part been sources of oppression and violence for women coca growers, who have had to endure double and even triple work burdens, as well as physical violence. In this context, coca has offered them a chance to acquire greater autonomy and liberty in largely patriarchal and restrictive settings.

In chapter four, we direct our attention to women's participation in social mobilization efforts in the Andes-Amazon region, the barriers they face, and the resistance that they must overcome or negotiate in order to be a part of community life. We include a brief reflection on campesino subjectivity and patriarchy in the countryside as a setting in which women's participation is disputed. Finally, we maintain that women's inclusion is a task that should also be carried out within mixed-sex organizations in light of the fact that many such organization have patriarchal dynamics in their delegation of responsibilities and leadership; to this end, we include a brief reference to women's participation in the cocalero movement in Bolivia.

In chapter five, we argue that the commitments outlined in points one (comprehensive rural reform) and four (solution to the illicit drug problem) of the peace accord between the Colombian government and the FARC, in addition to being key components of lasting peace, represent an important opportunity to address drug policy reform and the issue of illicit crops from a perspective that is based on human rights, public health, gender, and rural development.

Finally, based on the diagnoses contained in the preceding chapters, we offer a series of recommendations in chapter six that are focused on designing a crop substitution process that acknowledges and takes seriously the life experiences, needs, and claims of women coca growers as it coordinates with the territorially focused development plans (*planes de desarrollo con enfoque territorial - PDET*) that are called for in point one of the peace accord.



CHAPTER 1

“EVERYTHING HAS BEEN ACHIEVED USING THE COMMUNITY’S RESOURCES”: WOMEN COCA GROWERS IN PUTUMAYO AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STATE

This chapter aims to explore citizens’ relationship with the state as experienced by women coca growers in the Andes-Amazon region. To that end, our analysis is divided into two parts: in the first, we provide an overview of Putumayo’s historical context, with a particular emphasis on the colonization process, extractive industries, and the weak presence of state institutions in the region. In the second, we examine the state’s capacity in Putumayo as measured by women coca growers’ enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights.

PUTUMAYO: COLONIZATION, EXTRACTIVISM, AND THE STATE

The department of Putumayo belongs to Colombia’s Andes-Amazon region, a region historically characterized by high poverty rates, unbridled natural resource extraction, the struggles of private interests, the presence of armed actors vying for territorial control, systematic human rights violations, and a high prevalence of illicit crops. The roots of these problems can be traced to a long process of state abandonment, described by Margarita Serje in the following terms:

[T]he colonial state was never able to impose its control over the entire territory that is now Colombia. During the three centuries of colonial occupation, [the state] cemented a series of spaces connected to urbanization efforts, production, and urban commerce that occupied, roughly speaking, the north-south axis of the three *cordilleras* [mountain ranges of the Andes] and the Caribbean coast between the Sinú and Magdalena Rivers. (Serje 2005)

This meant that some departments of the country developed more rapidly and cohesively, while others, such as Amazonas, were excluded from and neglected by state-building processes. Extractive industries, the war with Peru, Capuchin missions, and, in particular, colonization processes would seal the fate of Putumayo's economic, social, and territorial structure (Melo Rodríguez 2014). This area of the country, which made up Colombia's agricultural frontier, was forged through different waves of colonization consisting of people who migrated in search of new horizons, reflecting a society in constant motion (Torres 2011, 38).

At the end of the nineteenth century and during the first half of the twentieth century, the extraction of quinine, rubber, precious woods, and furs transformed the composition of Putumayo's population, which had originally consisted of indigenous peoples. Unlike those involved in rubber extraction (indigenous slaves), those who were dedicated to hunting and fishing were low-income residents from the interior of the country, as well as indigenous people from the lower Putumayo basin, who had been lured by traders under debt-peonage systems similar to the Casa Arana model.⁸ Given that the population was transient and hunting was prohibited in 1974, many inhabitants returned to their places of origin, while others transitioned to the harvesting of precious woods. This new economy attracted, once again, people from the interior and thus established a new wave of colonization (CNMH 2015, 60–64).

Meanwhile, the arrival of Capuchin missions (toward the end of the nineteenth century) and Colombia's war with Peru (1932–1934) unleashed additional settlement patterns in Putumayo, for they involved investments in transportation infrastructure, namely the highway connecting Pasto with Puerto Asís. These two developments were part of the government's strategy for monitoring and exercising sovereignty over the department. As part of this effort, in 1904 the Colombian state signed a concordat with the Vatican creating the Apostolic Prefecture of Caquetá and Putumayo, which aimed to evangelize the largely indigenous local population

8 La Casa Arana, a commercial empire engaged in rubber exploitation in the Colombian Amazon, was involved in the extermination of indigenous communities, among other atrocities.

and keep an eye on those areas; the construction of the road linking Pasto to Mocoa would be coordinated by the Capuchin missions, which began works in 1911. The highway's completion in 1931 was spurred by the Colombian-Peruvian conflict in light of the road's importance for transporting military equipment (Torres 2011, 39).

The Capuchin missions and the border conflict with Peru were colonization processes in and of themselves. Indeed, people from the interior of the country arrived to Putumayo to work on the infrastructure projects, some of them with the intention of settling there; those who were successful acquired lands near the highway and the river and its tributaries. Similarly, nearly 1,000 soldiers were sent to fight in the war with Peru. Lastly, those who came with the Capuchin missions to sell products to the military were also an important source of population growth in the department in the twentieth century (CNMH 2015, 53–54).

Nonetheless, according to María Clara Torres, it was not until the second half of the twentieth century that true settlement and colonization processes in Putumayo took place, for “[t]he waves of colonization paint the picture of a society in motion, whose end could be achieved only through the depletion of territorial borders.” Torres thus classifies Putumayo's colonization according to three phases: (i) early colonization from 1950 to 1960; (ii) oil exploration from 1963 to 1978; and (iii) the coca boom from 1980 to 2000. As Torres explains, early colonization consisted of campesinos who migrated from Nariño, Cauca, and Huila in search of alternatives to their unproductive lands and the smallholding crisis in their regions (Torres 2011, 38–40). During this period, many campesinos fled the political violence sparked by La Violencia (UNODC and Agencia Presidencial para la Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional 2007, 229).

The following wave of colonization involved the migration of people from Nariño, Cauca, Huila, Valle, and Antioquia who were lured by the salaries of oil companies (which were up to three times higher than the national average), by other activities related to oil exploration, and by the chance to colonize new lands. These new residents settled in Orito and Puerto Asís. During this economic boom, Puerto Asís's population reached 3,000, allowing it to be elevated to the status of municipality in 1967 (Torres 2011, 40–41). This wave of colonization would transform “the spheres of work stimulated by Texaco (wells, pipeline, roads, and highways) into waves of colonization,” for due to the infrastructure required by oil exploration and exploitation activities, new residents enjoyed greater possibilities of forming settlements around these [construction] works, even when the conditions were not appropriate for this end (CNMH 2015, 17).

During this wave of colonization, and up until today, extractive activities damaged the natural environment, failed to create strong supply chain linkages with the local economy, and led some members of the community to openly reject these activities, including through social protests against the diversion of water resources (Roca, Bonilla, and Sánchez 2013).

As these two waves of colonization took place, in the 1960s the Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform promoted what is today considered the only government attempt at colonization in Putumayo, which sought to expand the country's agricultural frontier. However, this effort was unsuccessful because the state did not consider the region's circumstances and needs in terms of infrastructure, basic services for inhabitants, development of the agricultural market, and soil improvement (Acción Social and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2007). Moreover, the population that migrated to the area as part of this colonization effort was greater than expected, consisting largely of campesinos, merchants, and service providers (*ibid.*, 231–2).

This effort's failure deepened the poverty already being experienced by those who had migrated to Putumayo in search of a better life. UNODC summarizes the population's situation thus: "Most campesinos settled in the region were in an extremely precarious situation. Money was scarce, and therefore their purchasing power was very low, making community work an important strategy for survival" (*ibid.*). In addition, in areas where oil exploration and exploitation was taking place, communities lacked access to public utilities, lived in perilous conditions, and depended directly or indirectly on extractive activities.

After the state's failed colonization effort, and against the backdrop of declining oil activities, the coca economy emerged in the late 1970s, a period that Torres (2011) describes as the third wave of colonization, which led to a demographic explosion in the region. This phenomenon led to the massive migration of people from all over the country who, as in the case of oil exploration, arrived to Putumayo not only in search of possibilities concerning the cultivation, production, and processing of coca but also other activities sparked either directly or indirectly by this new economy. For many campesinos in Putumayo, coca and its accompanying activities represented a way out of poverty, for "unlike other agricultural products, coca has a reliable market, coca paste was easy to transport, and [buyers] even went directly to farms to purchase the harvest; in addition, it sold for a very high price" compared to other agricultural products (*ibid.*, 232).

As Torres points out, "the coca economy triggered an expansion of the agri-

cultural frontier, increased the pace of settlement, reactivated human settlements arising from the oil boom, and led to the formation of nascent urban centers” (2011, 43). The population explosion from this period can be clearly seen in the figures provided by Maria Clemencia Ramírez et al. (2010), which indicate that Putumayo’s population density (inhabitants per square kilometer) increased from 2.8 in 1973 to 12.1 in 2005; in other words, in about twenty years, it grew 145%, much higher than the national average of 31% (table 2). As these authors note:

Putumayo ceased to be an “empty space” in the western Amazon—as had been the traditional thinking in the center of the country since colonial times—and became a receiving territory. So much so that in 1993, the department ranked among the top five receiving regions in the country, after Bogotá, Valle, Atlántico, and Meta.

Their research also shows that the greatest population burst occurred in lower Putumayo, where coca crops were concentrated. There, the population growth rate reached 725% between 1973 and 2005 (ibid., 11, table 4).

In addition to being extractive activities, coca production and oil drilling are both enclave economies, whereby the majority of the benefits are enjoyed by those located outside the area, with no integration into the local market. Some studies on the dynamics of settlement in Putumayo suggest that, accordingly, there is a strong relationship between oil drilling and the coca trade in Putumayo. For example, Andreína Guerrero, Sandra Londoño, and Maria Fernanda Jaramillo (2015) note that the swaths of people who arrived to the department during the oil boom quickly became involved in the coca trade after the oil reserves were depleted in the 1970s. This group found itself “waiting to be integrated into a productive system that would guarantee its existence. Henceforth, this amalgam of different inhabitants would be linked to the cultivation of marijuana and, subsequently, to the cultivation of coca” (Duarte 2015, 191). A similar conclusion is drawn by the National Center for Historical Memory, which notes that settlers and campesinos involved with Texaco’s operations in one way or another would later participate in the coca trade (2015, 141).

For example, toward the end of the nineteenth century, Putumayo was seen as a “vacant, depraved, and barbaric” area, neglected by national policies.

These waves of colonization in Putumayo occurred amidst persistent stereotypes and prejudices that considered the department *terra nullius*, or land belonging to nobody. For example, toward the end of the nineteenth century, Putumayo

was seen as a “vacant, depraved, and barbaric” area, neglected by national policies (UNODC and Agencia Presidencial para la Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional 2007, 229). Today, this perception and state of neglect remain alive and well due to the persistence of various factors that have negatively affected the region, such as legal and illegal economies linked to extractive industries, the presence of armed actors, the lack of social and economic development among the rural population, and territorial disputes related to oil exploration and exploitation (CNMH 2015, 96).

Added to this is the department’s historical connection with the oil boom and coca cultivation, activities that have linked a population—consisting largely of people migrating from other parts of the country—to a set of vulnerabilities and unsatisfied basic needs. As indicated in a report on Putumayo published by Fundación Paz y Reconciliación and Red Prodepaz (2014, 4), the department’s demographic structure has been characterized “by a great demographic momentum and mobility linked to extractivist economic models that have emerged one after the other for centuries,” which has inhibited the region’s development.

ENJOYMENT OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL RIGHTS: BARRIERS FACED BY WOMEN COCA GROWERS IN ACCESSING HOUSING, EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND LAND

This section explores the impacts of the aforementioned context on women coca growers in the Andes-Amazon region. We place particular emphasis on the restrictions faced by these women when trying to access their economic, social, and cultural rights, as well as their relationship with the state based on these limitations.

A recent book by Mauricio García Villegas et al. (2016) examines the extent to which effective and legitimate institutions exist in Colombian municipalities in light of the challenges posed by Colombia’s post-conflict era. The authors designed three indicators to measure the capacity of local governments: (i) the administration of justice, (ii) taxation capacity, and (iii) administrative capacity. In this regard, their research calls attention to those municipalities with “critical” local capacity (municipalities that rank low or very low in all three indicators) or “low” local capacity (municipalities that rank low or very low in two indicators).

The authors found that nationwide, 137 municipalities have “critical” local capacity and 272 have “low” local capacity. Of those with critical capacity, eight are located in Putumayo, meaning that 61% of the department’s municipalities have critically low levels of institutional capacity. Meanwhile, the remaining municipalities in the

department, with the exception of Mocoa, have “low” local capacity. In other words, except for Mocoa, the state’s capacity throughout Putumayo is either low or critical. Added to this is the fact that the department is among those most affected by the armed conflict.⁹ For these reasons, García Villegas et al. conclude that the local government in this region lacks the ability to guarantee the rights of its inhabitants, to ensure the state’s monopoly on force, and to collect taxes; it also lacks the capacity to deliver justice and the administrative muscle to apply effective decisions (2016, 67–78).

According to the National Planning Department (DNP 2015a), Putumayo’s score on the multidimensional poverty index is 76.3%, compared to the national score of 49%. Villagarzón (94.48%), Puerto Leguízamo (93.70%), and Puerto Guzmán (93.88%) are the municipalities with the highest poverty levels in the department. Meanwhile, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) notes that 26.54% of the department’s urban population and 46.22% of its rural population have unsatisfied basic needs (UNDP, Embassy of Sweden, and Alianzas Territoriales para la Paz 2016, 26–27). Putumayo’s population has not only endured this institutional abandonment but also had to coexist on a daily basis with all of the actors involved in the country’s conflict and with the violence stemming from that conflict. Forced displacement, sexual violence, assassinations, and forced disappearances are among the various forms of victimization that were part of the daily lives of communities in Putumayo.

This context of vulnerability has affected rural women in particular. As argued by UNDP (2011b), these women suffer discrimination three times over: (i) on account of being women; (ii) on account of living in the countryside; and (iii) because “the conflict rages fiercely among them due to their status as mothers [and] heads of household.” This has placed them in a context of exclusion and marginality that has inhibited their enjoyment of rights in multiple ways. Women coca growers—on account of being rural women who live in areas marked by deep poverty, low and critical local government capacity, and the presence of armed actors—have

These women suffer discrimination three times over: on account of being women; on account of living in the countryside; and because the conflict rages fiercely among them due to their status as mothers and heads of household.

9 According to the Victims’ Unit, of the 9,116,716 victimizing acts that took place throughout Colombia, 284,417 occurred in Putumayo (UARIV 2016, 24). In terms of displacement, 174,172 people were forcibly displaced from the department, and 98,477 victims of displacement from other regions settled in Putumayo.

suffered concrete violations of their economic, social, and cultural rights. In the following sections, we analyze their enjoyment of the rights to education, work, health, housing, and access to land.

Education

According to Colombia's *National Human Development Report*, the gross secondary school enrollment ratio is 2.7 times lower in rural areas than urban ones (UNDP 2011a, 32). Reducing the rural-urban gap thus continues to be one of the great challenges facing the Colombian state in guaranteeing the rural population's right to education.¹⁰

In rural areas throughout Colombia, the right to education is extremely restricted. According to the 2014 agricultural census conducted by the National Administrative Department of Statistics, 12.6% of the rural population above the age of fifteen is illiterate; in addition, 20.3% of the population aged five to sixteen and 73.7% of the population aged seventeen to twenty-four are not enrolled in or lack access to schooling (DANE 2015c, 23–26). Similarly, the Victims' Unit estimates that 4.5% of Putumayo's population have only a preschool education, 50.8% only a primary school education, 25.8% only a secondary school education, 2.0% technical degrees, 0.1% primary teacher certificates, 5.4% post-secondary education, and 11.4% no formal education whatsoever (UARIV 2016, 10).

According to the testimonies of women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region, there are two main factors behind Putumayans' lack of educational attainment: (i) the lack of adequate conditions and safeguards for accessing and remaining in the educational system and (ii) the impacts of the armed conflict. First, as demonstrated in a report by the National Planning Department's Mission for the Transformation of the Countryside, 28.6% of children and adolescents in secondary school in rural areas reported lacking interest in attending school. The authors write that "this apathy is associated with irrelevant and low-quality education and with inadequate information and expectations about the benefits that education can provide in terms of improving their living conditions or their income-generation potential" (DNP 2015b, 43–44, figure 9).

10 As indicated by the Constitutional Court, education as a right and a public service is directly connected to the enjoyment of various freedoms and the right to equality; it is also an urgent requirement for ensuring that a population can enjoy basic conditions of subsistence. In this regard, the court has highlighted the need to provide the physical conditions necessary to prevent a rural-urban gap in education (Sentencias T-02 de 1992, T-429 de 1992, and T-467 de 1994).

Along these same lines, the National Planning Department indicates that 22.5% of the country's rural population cannot access schooling due to a lack of financial means, 11.1% cannot access such opportunities because they must attend to household chores, and 8.8% cannot access schooling because they need to work (ibid.). As reflected by these figures, there are numerous obstacles to accessing and remaining in the educational system: geographical distance, lack of educational coverage, economic factors, poor-quality education, and familial obligations.¹¹ Meanwhile, UNDP notes that the school dropout rate in rural Putumayo is 13.64%, compared to 8.14% in the department's urban areas (UNDP, Embassy of Sweden, and Alianzas Territoriales para la Paz 2016, 28–30).

UNDP also notes that Putumayo had just 154 officially registered schools in 2012, which were tasked with meeting the needs of a student population of 87,259, including 36,733 in rural areas (ibid.). In this highly rural department,¹² students must spend hours walking to school or move in with relatives who live closer to their school; sometimes, their parents end up moving to another area to facilitate their access to education. María Fernanda, for example, told us about the many times she moved as a child in order to be able to finish her primary and secondary education;¹³ as she explained, this implied not only economic costs but also emotional ones on account of being separated from her family and home life:

I was able to go to school, but I had to leave the village and move into town to be able to complete ninth grade. It was expensive for my parents. My mom had to pay someone in town to provide me with meals while I was enrolled. During vacation, I would go back to the farm to be with my parents—that's how it was up until ninth grade.¹⁴

María Fernanda's daily routine during primary school reflects some of the obstacles to schools' physical accessibility¹⁵:

11 The issue of child labor will be discussed further below.

12 According to the National Planning Department, eight of Putumayo's thirteen municipalities are rural, and two are considered "scattered rural."

13 According to the Victims' Unit, 11.5% of residential moves in Putumayo are due to the need to access schools, as villages do not tend to be near schools or universities.

14 Due to space constraints, we do not discuss the School Feeding Program in this book. However, many of our interviewees noted the importance of broadening this program's coverage and quality throughout the region, especially in the most remote areas.

15 According to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, physical accessibility refers to schools' distance from communities. Colombia's Constitutional Court has recognized that the absence of such accessibility violates the rights to education, health, and physical integrity, as well as the principle of human dignity (Sentencias T-1259 de 2008 and T-008 de 2016).

When I was a girl, my siblings and I would walk for an hour, and they didn't give us lunch at school—my mom would pack it up for us in a little pot and we had to take it with us. And when the creek's water level rose? We would have to get to the other side of the creek with just our knapsack; often, we'd have to take our clothes off, using one hand to swim and the other to pass. So we wouldn't have any lunch. By the time I was twelve, I had an ulcer because of that.

With regard to the availability¹⁶ of infrastructure and personnel at schools, as recounted to us by interviewees, women and their families often had to provide what the state didn't—not only by using their own resources and efforts to build physical structures for their children's education but also by having some of the educated community members teach classes. These educational settings constructed by communities themselves have allowed knowledge to be passed down to new generations through practice. As María Fernanda recounted, “Back then, the desks were made of wood; our own parents built those desks for us to sit on. The school was made of *chonta* wood, everything was so beautiful, made with our own means—I mean, by the community.” Rosaura added, “There were a ton of children but no teacher. The state didn't give us anything, so we would collect money from the community and build a little house, and whoever had the most education would teach those children. My mom, for example, was a teacher for those children.”

Access to education in Putumayo's rural areas faces a number of impediments that encourage dropout. Poverty is one of the most common factors, with many families taking their children out of school due to the high costs of education, especially when the children must attend school in an area other than their place of residence. Another contributing factor is aerial fumigation with glyphosate, as many families dedicated to coca cultivation suffered serious economic crises and decided to move, together with their cultivations, to other regions. For example, Violeta, who was a school teacher and headmaster prior to becoming a coca grower, told us that “the school suffered a setback due to the disappearance of coca. People moved out. The school grew empty.” Fumigations led the population to move elsewhere¹⁷ in

16 According to General Comment 13 issued by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, availability refers not only to the quantity of schools but also to the infrastructure and staff needed for their adequate functioning.

17 As recorded in *Boletín 44* published by the nongovernmental organization CODHES, in 2002, aerial spraying caused the displacement of 10,813 people in Putumayo, a department with a population of 350,705 inhabitants according to the 2005 census (Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento 2003).

search of alternative livelihoods, which also had an impact on the enjoyment of the right to education.

One final aspect that affects student retention is the practicality and relevance of the education that students receive in the classroom. Many families end up removing their children from school due to the belief that “they aren’t learning anything useful there” and that there is much work to be done at home by family members. With regard to teaching students skills that are useful for their contexts, Violeta noted that education should focus on teaching students values and ethics, in addition to strengthening basic skills such as spelling and mathematics. Such skills, she argued, help people perform well in life.

Similarly, young people in Putumayo face profound difficulties in completing higher education. Although the department has a public technological institute, and a few higher education institutions offer certain programs in Putumayo, there are no public universities in the department. As noted by the women we interviewed, the closest university is in Florencia, Caquetá (a city located five and a half hours from Mocoa). But in addition to their geographical distance, institutions of higher education require financial resources that many rural families simply lack (UNDP, Embassy of Sweden, and Alianzas Territoriales para la Paz 2016, 28–30). María Fernanda recounted, “My sister, who is seventeen, is in Cali. Because of the same situation—the fact that there are no universities here—my mom was forced to send her to Cali so she could go to college.” Cases such as these, in which a family has the resources and the willingness to send a child to college in another city, are the exception in Putumayo.

The armed conflict has also had an impact on people’s ability to access education: between 2010 and 2015, 4.3% of teachers in Putumayo received threats; of them, 69.7% were located in lower Putumayo (*ibid.*, 28, table 8). Threats and other forms of victimization not only cause teachers to move out of the area and encourage students to drop out but also lead to the closure of some educational facilities. As reported by UNDP in 2016, in addition to threats, there were murders of school teachers and administrators, the rationing of food for schools, and forced recruitment of students into armed groups. María Fernanda noted that in her community, young women teachers were raped and murdered by armed actors and common criminals.

According to UNDP’s report, many families in the region preferred not to send their children to school in order to keep them away from the armed conflict; some even chose to send them to Ecuador, where they believed there to be “better guarantees for young people’s educational process, labor continuity among teachers, and various forms of assistance offered to students” (*ibid.*, 31). Sandra told us that her

children had to move to Puerto Asís to go to school because the family was unable to find a place that was closer to their village; however, more than the distance, “my eldest son also had to go to [Puerto Asís] for fear that the conflict might lead him to one day end up in an armed group.”

Armed groups also exercised control over educational activities, which significantly impeded residents’ enjoyment of the right to education. Violeta told us that the guerrillas monitored her work as school principal; she was constantly required to report to the commander in the area, who made decisions regarding her work. Meanwhile, schools were used as operational hubs by armed groups and the Colombian armed forces. In this context, many schools were the site of attacks and violent confrontations. The presence of armed actors also meant that schools were located near minefields and military facilities, thus constituting a violation of international humanitarian law (*ibid.*, 31). María Fernanda described how “there were also confrontations at school, and that’s tough—for a kid it’s hard, seeing soldiers coming up against the FARC.”

Lastly, sexual violence—largely against women and girls—committed by armed actors within the struggle for territorial control also posed a severe obstacle to communities’ access to education.¹⁸ Martha and her children were the victims of sexual violence at the hands of paramilitaries. This led to concrete impacts that, among other things, resulted in a lack of access to education. As Martha noted, “My daughter didn’t go back to school. None of my daughters went to school,” since the fear of suffering the same sexual violence prevented them from leaving their house. Moreover, paramilitaries often kidnapped girls and adolescents who dared to leave their households: “Once, they took four girls between the ages of fourteen and sixteen and two young girls who were students; they were very pretty and they took them to use them for all of their [sexual] needs, and then kill them.”

Work

According to labor market indicators in Colombia, rural unemployment decreased by nearly four percentage points between 2010 (8.3%) and 2017 (4.4%); but meanwhile, unpaid work has increased by 20.7% over the past seven years, and work as hired laborers or day laborers has increased by 10% (DANE 2017b, 7–15, figures 5, 13). Although, as noted by a report by the Mission for the Transformation

18

Sexual violence against women coca growers is studied in greater depth in chapter three.

of the Countryside (Misión para la Transformación del Campo 2015a), there is no document that systematically analyzes rural employment and earnings in recent years in Colombia, these figures demonstrate that the employment situation in Colombia's countryside is far from meeting national¹⁹ and international²⁰ standards.

In terms of the right to work, studies reveal two trends in rural areas that impede the fulfillment of this right: the first is the persistence of informal labor, low wages, and the absence of employment opportunities; the second, which has to do especially with rural women, is the sexual division of labor that places a larger burden of unpaid care work on women. To analyze the first trend, we must keep in mind that the agricultural sector continues to be the main source of employment in rural areas (51.1%), followed by commerce (17.4%), social work (10.6%), and industry (6.1%), according to a report on the labor market in rural areas (Misión para la Transformación del Campo 2015a, 9–10).

For the Mission for the Transformation of the Countryside (Misión para la Transformación del Campo 2015b), informality in the agricultural sector is due to seasonal work, workers' high mobility, and the long distances between work and home. In terms of low wages, the mission's report notes that pay is dependent on the market, external demand, and the international prices of agricultural products. Further, it emphasizes that the agricultural sector has the largest number of people with low educational attainment, as 14% of farm workers lack any type of education and 98% lack higher education; in addition, it is the sector with the greatest presence of minors under the age of fifteen and with low educational attainment (*ibid.*, 15).

Moreover, the mission's report on social protection points out that 53.8% of rural residents are self-employed, with 48.3% of this group dedicated to agricultural activities. In light of this lower participation in formal labor and greater involvement in independent work, the mission notes, "[t]his rural labor market structure affects the quality of employment, leads to insufficient earnings, and impedes access to welfare services." In this context, self-employed agricultural workers have the highest levels of poverty (48.5% are income poor) (*ibid.*, 15–16).

19 The right to work, along with the right to a minimum existence (*mínimo vital*) and the right to food, is related to the subsistence of campesino communities and, consequently, is a critical component of improving the quality of life of campesinos and rural workers, who are subjects of special constitutional protection in Colombia.

20 General Comment 18 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights outlines the following essential elements of the right to work: (i) availability; (ii) accessibility; and (iii) acceptability and quality.

With respect to hourly wages, the Mission for the Transformation of the Countryside, in its report on the labor market, presents data based on its calculations of wages according to economic sector, sex, educational attainment, and job position. According to these calculations, the average hourly wage in the rural sector in 2013 was COP2,985 (about US\$0.80), higher than the legal minimum wage (COP2,682, or US\$0.72), but lower than the average urban wage (COP5,457, or US\$1.49). The figures cited in this report also demonstrate that earnings in the agricultural sector are much lower than those in other activities in rural areas (Misión para la Transformación del Campo 2015a, 11–13).

Another facet of the rural labor market is the wide participation of minors under the age of fifteen and with low educational levels. As explained in the previous section, rural children and adolescents encounter a range of obstacles to accessing educational opportunities, among them the fact that they often enter the labor market at a young age. The women we interviewed, for example, explained that they had to begin working when they were just girls. This situation appears to be a common one in rural Colombia and rural Latin America. According to Marcela Ballara and Soledad Parada (2009), rural girls under the age of fifteen dedicate the majority of their time to tasks related to family agriculture and even begin working in informal paid jobs at an early age.

In Colombia, between October and December 2016, the labor rate among children and adolescents (aged five to seventeen) in rural areas was 13.6%, compared to 5.7% in urban areas; 72.1% of rural children participated in activities related to agriculture, cattle raising, hunting, and others; and 60.7% worked without pay (DANE 2017c, 4–18). The Office of the Inspector General notes that “the higher rates of child labor ... can be explained by the trap of poverty in which these [rural] households find themselves, which drives them to rely on their sons and daughters as sources of income” (Procuraduría General de la Nación 2013, 61–62). Rosaura, for example, began to work as a girl in various activities on the farm and performed poorly paid informal work to help her family stay afloat: “[My mom] put me to work; I was eleven years old at the time. She sent me to work at a hotel, where I worked as a maid, and she worked at a restaurant to support those kids, to help us. I had to work and work to help her.”

“The higher rates of child labor... can be explained by the trap of poverty in which these [rural] households find themselves, which drives them to rely on their sons and daughters as sources of income.”

According to UNDP, children and adolescents make up 41% of the department's population, and 60% of them are devoted to working, "regardless of the type of work, the physical demands, the risks, and the abuses that violate the rights of children and adolescents" (2016, 62–63). Citing research by the Colombian Ombudsman's Office, UNDP notes that most worrying of all is the fact that nearly 11,000 children and adolescents in Putumayo—who account for 22.6% of the population aged five to eighteen—are involved in harvesting coca leaf; these children begin by harvesting coca in their free time and then eventually devote themselves full time to the activity, which leads to school dropout. In many cases, they do this to help support their families; in other cases, they do it as a result of the influence of classmates or friends who are already involved in these activities (*ibid.*). As mentioned in the previous section, one of the reasons for school dropout is the migration of families in search of work opportunities; during this transition, children become involved in various ways in these new work activities.

With regard to rural women's labor force participation, the Mission for the Transformation of the Countryside (*Misión para la Transformación del Campo 2015a*) found that in 2013, nearly 6.2 million people were involved in Colombia's rural labor market, which represented 29.3% of all employment in the country; in terms of sex, 67.3% of these workers were men, while 32.7% were women. However, this figure on sex has been criticized for its failure to include unpaid care work performed by women. This oversight obscures their work and helps foster the informality and instability that affects women in particular. As described in the mission's report, there remains a significant gap between men and women with regard to their participation rates in the rural labor market (*ibid.*, 9–10, box 2).

This phenomenon can be explained in part by the persistence of an economic and social system that assigns productive work responsibilities to men and reproductive and care work to women. While productive labor tends to be paid, care work does not, and as explained by Ballara and Parada, the latter is usually considered secondary work (2009, 9). This gender-based division of labor in rural families was clearly identified by Rosaura, who told us, "I remember that my mom was a very meek woman, very subservient to the household, where whatever my dad ordered was how things would be. And there she was, with her head down, like she didn't care whether he went out to work or not. She was the one who took care of the kids. He worked back then."

As Rosaura explained, while her father worked on the farm, her mother was

in charge of raising the children.²¹ This sexual division of labor means that care work, which is carried out largely by women, is perceived as a secondary activity or overlooked altogether. In the first case, women, by virtue of the caregiving role that they usually assume, tend to enter the labor market by reproducing this role under informal and unstable conditions; for example, many have jobs related to domestic work and food preparation, as was the case of Rosaura.

In the second case—in which unpaid care work is overlooked—it is difficult for such work to be captured by statistics. According to UNDP (2011b, 42), despite women’s increasing participation in agricultural work (from 11.55% in 2006 to 13.8% in 2009), “31.3% ... are considered family helpers who are not paid, and the land-related activities that they perform are often not reported as work. In addition to these activities, rural women also perform tasks in the household, productive, and community spheres.” The figures reveal that while rural unemployment among men is 5%, it is 15.3% among women; and 93% of rural women of working age spend an average of eight hours each day on unpaid care work. This results in less availability and opportunity for accessing formal employment and thus fewer chances of remaining in the social security system (Misión para la Transformación del Campo 2015b, 16).²²

Lastly, as mentioned earlier, low educational attainment and informal unpaid work reduce women’s chances of accessing the labor market under fair and dignified conditions and with the corresponding employee protections. For women coca growers, this has meant being exposed to sexual abuse and labor exploitation both inside and outside their communities. As Rosaura recounted:

The figures reveal that while rural unemployment among men is 5%, it is 15.3% among women.

When my mom was about to have the baby [my little brother], she couldn’t handle standing on her feet with that huge belly and couldn’t work as much. So I had to stay up and work until one or two in the morning. There were clubs, bars in the area, so I sold food until one or two a.m., and my mom would go home. I was thirteen, selling fried food by myself.

In insecure settings such as these, on two occasions, Rosaura was nearly the

21 The sexual division of labor in rural families is addressed in greater detail in chapter three.

22 In addition being an informal and unstable type of work, coca cultivation—which is an illegal activity—increases women’s chances of being criminalized. This issue is discussed in the following chapter.

victim of sexual violence. Meanwhile, Martha, who began working at a very young age, suffered exploitation more than once:

I got a job, and after the first month was up, I asked [my employer] to pay me. Well, the woman said that she didn't have any money. So I waited another two weeks. After a month and a half of working, she told me again that she didn't have any money. So I said to myself, "Everyone is going to try to make me work without pay." I got out of there.

Health

Although the National Quality of Life Survey estimates that 95.3% of the rural population is enrolled in the health care system—of whom 81.8% are in the subsidized regime (DANE 2017a, 11, 13)—a number of structural barriers in the health system prevent rural residents from effectively accessing their right to health. Among these obstacles are a lack of available health programs and services, insufficient facilities, geographical barriers, costs (copayments, medicines, and transportation costs), poor coordination between health centers and hospitals, and a lack of information. Additionally, in general, health services tend to fail to respond appropriately to the cultural identities of a given population. All of these factors are exacerbated in the context of armed conflict (MSF Colombia 2011).

UNDP's *National Human Development Report* for Colombia notes that health centers are often located far away from communities, which not only implies a greater financial and logistical burden for patients but can also lead to serious health consequences for patients, including death (2011a, 32). Moreover, the presence of armed actors makes it even more difficult to ensure access to services, as fear among residents and health personnel impedes access to services under good conditions; this was confirmed by a study conducted by the nongovernmental organization MSF in June 2010 on access to health in rural areas in which 18.6% of respondents claimed that the presence of armed groups caused them fear and prevented them from seeking health services (*El País* 2010). For example, Martha's daughter, who acquired a sexually transmitted infection as a result of sexual violence, was unable to visit the health center due to her fear of the armed actors in the region who closely monitored the community's daily activities.

Another example of the difficulties faced by women coca growers in accessing health services is the case of Sandra's mother, who died as a result of inaccessible and unavailable health services. Sandra's mother had suffered a stroke and required

emergency hospital care in the department's capital; however, she was able to make this trip only four days later, as the distance between Sandra's house and the hospital, coupled with the family's lack of financial means, made it impossible to access these services more quickly. In this regard, the 2015 National Demographic and Health Survey has identified the high cost of such services as one of the main barriers to receiving medical care; 15.9% of rural residents cited having missed out on medical care as a result of financial difficulties (Ministerio de Salud y Protección Social 2016, 132).

The testimonies of women coca growers reveal that even obstetric care—which should be provided at first-level health facilities²³—is limited. Viviana told us that during a high-risk pregnancy, she had to go to another city for her prenatal check-ups, which she paid for out of pocket. Further, despite being enrolled in the health care system, after she started labor and while she was 4–6 cm dilated, she was forced to travel to two nearby cities in search of a facility that would receive her, due to the lack of doctors and coverage.

Barriers to accessing health care also stem from communities' wide lack of awareness of their rights. Many women, for example, are unfamiliar with their sexual and reproductive rights and do not receive primary care that includes access to contraceptives and information on sexually transmitted infections. María Fernanda noted how the first time she got her period, she thought that she had done something bad and would be punished by her family:

[My period] came when it was time. I was twelve or thirteen. I remember that they had me carrying water, I was carrying water back and forth. I went to pee and I freaked out, I was scared to tell my mom, I had been carrying water ... and so what I did was I would go to the water, to the river, and would get in and get wet, I would keep on carrying water, and that's what I did. I didn't want to stop carrying water because I was scared, and my period was flowing and I was scared.

Many of the women we interviewed told us how they had become pregnant as a result of contraceptive failure. Diseases of the reproductive system and pregnancy-related problems are also common. As revealed by programs conducted by MSF

23 According to Resolution 5261 of 1994 issued by the Ministry of Health, first-level facilities have general practitioners and other health staff who offer nonspecialized care. These facilities include outpatient care (general consultations, initial care, stabilization services, referrals to urgent care, dental care, laboratory tests, radiology, essential medicines, pap smears, health promotion and disease prevention activities, and surgical care) and hospitalization services (obstetric care, non-surgical care, laboratory tests, radiology, essential medicines, diagnosis and treatment, and surgical care).

in rural areas of Caquetá, Nariño, and Cauca, 51% of pregnant women who attended prenatal check-ups had pathologies such as “ectopic pregnancies, postterm pregnancies (prolonged pregnancy), twin pregnancies, grand multiparity ... malnutrition, obesity, isoimmunization, malaria, obstetric fistulas, lacerations, short pregnancy intervals, or intrauterine growth retardation” (2014, 25). Although MSF’s report covers only three departments of Colombia, it is suggestive of a general panorama in terms of health in conflict-affected regions and those most neglected by the state.

With regard to services and treatments, despite the fact that Putumayo has second- and third-level health facilities,²⁴ they are neither accredited nor specialized, and the department lacks a consolidated health network (Departamento de Putumayo 2011). Thus, many women prefer to travel to other departments such as Nariño, or even to hospitals in Ecuador, to receive medical care. Martha, for example, told us that she went to Quito for a surgery.

With regard to the quality of services, facilities, equipment, medicines, and medical personnel, in Putumayo health care is largely public, with poorly maintained facilities and a lack of qualified personnel. As indicated in a report by the government of Putumayo, “none of the health care providers ... complies with the requirements of the Mandatory Quality Control System” (Departamento de Putumayo 2011). In many cases, as confirmed by women’s testimonies, the few medications that are available in rural areas are expired or defective, sometimes even leading to patient death. Rosaura lived through such a situation: “My daughter became ill, and my husband, not wanting me to stay in town with her, had her receive an injection, and the medicine had expired, and she died.”

According to the 2015 National Mental Health Survey, although mental illnesses are twice as common in urban areas compared to rural ones, poverty and vio-

24 According to Resolution 5261 of 1994 issued by the Ministry of Health, second-level facilities offer specialized outpatient services (provided by a specialist and involving consultation with or referral by a general practitioner), laboratory tests, radiology, diagnostic tests such as electroencephalograms and anatomic pathology tests, and other diagnostic and therapeutic procedures such as those offered in the fields of urology, pneumology, cardiology and hemodynamics, neurology, ophthalmology, physical therapy and rehabilitation, psychiatry and psychology, gynecology and obstetrics, orthopedics and traumatology, hand surgery, reconstructive surgery, general surgery, dietetics, social work, and pediatric dentistry. Meanwhile, third-level facilities provide specialized consultations, laboratory tests, radiology, special exams (abdomen, joints, neuroradiology, cardiovascular), as well as other diagnostic and therapeutic procedures such as those related to nephrology and urology, pneumology, hemodynamics and cardiology, neurology, otorhinolaryngology, ophthalmology, physical therapy and rehabilitation, noninvasive vascular procedures, magnetic resonance imaging, and oncology.

lence suffered as a result of the armed conflict are frequently linked to mental illnesses affecting the adult rural population. Indeed, Colombia's armed conflict is a leading cause of trauma among the population: between four and five out of every ten adults who have suffered a traumatic experience within the framework of the conflict have psychological trauma (Pontificia Universidad Javeriana 2015). MSF Colombia observes:

Colombia's armed conflict is a leading cause of trauma among the population: between four and five out of every ten adults who have suffered a traumatic experience within the framework of the conflict have psychological trauma.

Systematic exposure to violent events and difficulties escaping from the circle of violence in urban environments has a direct and significant effect on population health. Constant fear and distrust not only undermine community coping strategies but also lead to physical and mental health ailments, generating chronic conditions among people. (MSF Colombia 2017, 15)

This is compounded by the stigmatization and rehabilitation difficulties experienced by victims of violence, which further increase their vulnerability. MSF points out that despite the population's needs, there is a dearth of mental health services within primary care settings. Rosaura, whose mother suffered from a mental illness, shed light on the dimensions of this problem: "When my mom would go crazy, she would say 'Get these ants off me,' and she would take off her clothes, running naked toward the bushes, and I would have to run after her and restrain her. If she were to fall down a hill or something—I'd have to grab her and tie her down so she wouldn't run off and get lost in the woods."

In this case, Rosaura had to assume her mother's care; taking her to a hospital was not an option, perhaps due to a lack of knowledge or being too expensive. Whichever the reason, her case speaks to the difficulties faced by rural residents in fulfilling their right to mental health.

In addition, health services in rural areas are neither designed nor implemented with a differentiated approach to the diversity present among different regions and communities. According to MSF Colombia (2014), discrimination in health care settings is experienced by women, indigenous people, Afro-Colombians, displaced people, people who have returned to their lands, and people branded as supporters of illegal armed groups. Similarly, the Mission for the Transformation of the Countryside (Misión para la Transformación del Campo 2015b) notes that the

health system's existing structure fails to take into account the needs of rural populations, as well as the unique risks they face. For example, within the context of Colombia's armed conflict, not only do armed actors impede rural communities' access to health services by placing travel restrictions on communities and health workers, but they also destroy and seize health facilities. Moreover, in some cases, armed actors impede residents' access to psychological care, as they consider it to be a method by which the community passes information to the state (MSF Colombia 2014).

In the case of the Andes-Amazon region, one of the most common negative health impacts was the harm wreaked by the use of glyphosate, a chemical that not only damaged subsistence crops but also animals and people. María Fernanda explained:

I was seventeen when they began fumigating ... When they sprayed, they didn't spray [only] what they were supposed to ... because the poison was very strong and damaged our subsistence crops, like plantain, corn, our animals, our pastures where we had cows, right? And that was just the tip of the iceberg, everything dying ... The poison also infiltrated our water, even us as human beings, because we were often in those areas, I mean in the crops when they were fumigating, you know? Some people from our village got skin infections because of the spraying, and there was also a case where a baby was born deformed because of the chemicals.

Lastly, all of these conditions have especially negative impacts on victims of sexual violence, who are supposed to have access to urgent medical care, including timely treatments for sexually transmitted infections and abortion when appropriate and requested by the woman (MSF Colombia 2014, 2017). As we mentioned at the beginning of this section, Martha's daughter acquired a sexually transmitted infection after being raped, but neither she nor Martha—who was also a victim of rape—had access to any type of physical or psychological care or treatment. The presence of armed actors also limited their access to necessary care.

Housing

The National Planning Department (DNP 2015b) has called attention to the lack of sufficient rural housing in Colombia. Inadequate public policies are partly to blame for the fact that the urban-rural housing gap has not improved very much. In 1997, 79% of rural households and 42% of urban ones in Colombia suffered from a housing deficit, defined as housing-related shortages and needs experienced by a

given population;²⁵ in 2013, these percentages were 61.4% and 23.7%, respectively (DNP 2015c, 9).

In rural Putumayo, 72.6% of households suffer from a housing deficit, compared to the national average of 68% (DNP 2015a). Additionally, there is a significant degree of noncompliance with the housing-related standards set by Colombia's Constitutional Court²⁶ and the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,²⁷ for people lack security of tenure and adequate infrastructure, among other things. In terms of qualitative deficiencies—which refer to dwellings that are deficient in one way or another but do not need to be rebuilt²⁸—according to Colombia's 2005 census, 80.77% of Putumayo's rural areas are affected; of these, the municipalities of San Miguel, Valle del Guamuez, and Puerto Asís have the highest rates as of 2015, at 91.7%, 78.4%, and 76.7%, respectively, compared to the national average of 34% (DANE 2005; DNP 2015a).

Rosaura's story is telling in this regard: she recalled that from the time she was a little girl, her family would constantly be on the move in search of opportunities for a life in dignity and free of poverty. Every time they arrived to a new place, Rosaura, her siblings, and her parents would build their house with their own hands. She explained that coca crops were what made it possible for her family to build a house with improved living conditions:

My mom was the one who began to work [with coca], to improve the house, and we had a house that was made from a material called *cartulina* or *súper*,

25 A housing deficit includes both qualitative elements (dwellings with inadequate conditions) and quantitative ones (insufficient dwellings for the number of families in a given area).

26 As established by Sentence T-088 of 2011 of the Constitutional Court, adequate housing means not only the right to a roof but also the right to be protected from adverse weather conditions, to be able to rest, and to be able to enjoy one's rights and freedoms.

27 The Constitutional Court has established that adequate housing should incorporate the conditions and elements laid out by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its General Comment 4: (i) legal security of tenure; (ii) availability of services, materials, facilities, and infrastructure; (iii) affordability; (iv) habitability; (v) accessibility; (vi) location; and (vii) cultural adequacy.

28 Qualitative deficiencies are calculated according to the following characteristics: "Structure-floors: number of households living in dwellings that are built with sturdy and durable materials but that have earth or sand floors. Mitigable overcrowding: in urban areas, households with more than three but fewer than five people sleeping in each room; in rural areas, households with more than three people sleeping in each room. Kitchen: households that lack an adequate space for food preparation. Public utilities: households that lack one utility, up to households that lack all public utilities. In rural areas, waste collection is not taken into account" (Misión para la Transformación del Campo 2015c).

instead of sheet metal. We had a better house because she had the means! Because all the other homes were made of palm leaf. But [my mom] was able to build a house with wood and *cartulina*.

She added:

We've always been like this—broke. Just enough to survive. We used to cut bamboo out in the fields, which we would sell for construction, to make these roofs, these *planchas*. And if not, we would harvest plantain on the farm and sell it. We've always had to struggle. I haven't been able to build my own house here—just pay rent.

Adequate housing in rural areas should include access to public utilities (such as drinking water, sanitation facilities, water supply, street lighting, and so forth), quality floors and walls, sufficient space for food preparation, and adequate conditions for cohabitation. In terms of public utilities, however, in 2005, rural Putumayo presented the following scenario: 20% of rural residents had access to a water supply, 25% had access to sewage systems (with or without wastewater treatment), 16% had access to telephone services, and an unknown percentage had access to the electrical network given that diesel generators were still being used at the time (UNDP 2016, 27).

Every time they arrived to a new place, they would build their house with their own hands. She explained that coca crops were what made it possible for her family to build a house with improved living conditions.

In terms of dwellings' physical structure, the agricultural census shows that in rural dwellings nationwide, rammed earth, adobe, and bahareque are used in 25.6% of dwellings; rough wood and timber are used in 18.9%; and bamboo, sugarcane, and other materials are used in 3.4% (DANE 2015a, figure 14). The prevalence of such rustic materials for building rural dwellings can be seen in Rosaura's testimony confirming that some families in Putumayo live in makeshift unstable houses. Not only do families generally use these less sturdy materials to build their homes, but they also rely on their own resources and means to build them.

With regard to habitability, dwellings should provide inhabitants with adequate space and protection against weather conditions, other threats to health, and structural hazards. The women we interviewed detailed how many of the houses where they and their families have lived fail to meet these minimum standards, as numerous people are crammed into a small space. Rosaura, for example, described the house that her family moved into after her father left them: "We left without knowing

anyone, without anything. Just a little suitcase and that's it. My mom found a place with two little rooms—we used one for cooking and the other for sleeping.” In this case, Rosaura's family had four members, who, relying on their meager resources, found a place to live. This is representative of Putumayo's overall panorama: 19.5% of Putumayan households consist of three people who share a bedroom, 18.7% consist of four people, 13.9% consist of five people, and 2.7% consist of more than eight people (UARIV 2016, 8).

In terms of rural housing subsidies,²⁹ between 2010 and 2013, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development awarded 413 such subsidies in Putumayo, of which it delivered only 129. According to the 2005 census, Putumayo's rural areas have a quantitative housing deficit of 2%, which is calculated by comparing the number of households with the number of available dwellings. In other words, according to the census,³⁰ 3,533 people are deprived of housing (Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural 2015).³¹ Moreover, as demonstrated by Rosaura's testimony and that of other women who participated in our social mapping activity, these subsidy programs are catered neither to the particular needs of rural populations³² nor to those of rural women.

In other words, poverty and precariousness prevail, and the means to purchase a parcel of land and build a home are scarce. This situation is exacerbated for women, who face barriers to accessing credit as a result of their low participation rate in paid employment, their lack of secure land tenure, and their greater dedication to

29 The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has two housing subsidy programs for rural communities: the first supports improvements to existing dwellings, and the second facilitates the acquisition of new housing. These dwellings are financed via general spending, sectoral expenditures, and budgets for displaced populations.

30 According to the 2005 census, Putumayo has a rural population of 176,669.

31 According to the Mission for the Transformation of the Countryside, quantitative housing deficits are calculated on the basis of the “structure: number of households that inhabit inadequate dwellings (tents, wagons, boats, caves, natural refuges, bridge, etc.) and those that inhabit dwellings made of unstable materials (sugarcane, other plant material, sheet metal, canvas, cardboard and cans, refuse, plastic) or without walls. Cohabitation: number of households that share a dwelling with another household. Overcrowding: number of households with five or more people sleeping in each room, applying only to urban areas.”

32 In this regard, in Sentence T-942 of 2014, the Constitutional Court stresses the importance of the right to equality in public announcements for housing subsidies. The court notes that the state must craft public policies based on a differentiated approach that benefits the subjects of special constitutional protection, such as victims of forced displacement. Women coca growers should thus enjoy the privileges emanating from this special constitutional protection, for many of them are victims of the armed conflict, particularly forced displacement.

household and domestic work. This limits their available time for paid employment. Added to these factors is a general lack of financial education.

Coca-growing families face an additional obstacle related to insecure land tenure, which among rural women is intimately connected to the fulfillment of the right to housing.³³ During the past twenty-five years, rural Colombia has undergone a decline in the number of landowners, from 61.6% in 1973 to 52.8% in 2012. This has been accompanied by an increase in the number of renters, from 11.1% to 12.2% over the same period. Squatters and usufructuaries have also increased, from 23.5% to 35% (Centro de Estudios de la Construcción y el Desarrollo Urbano y Regional 2013, annex 1).

According to the women coca growers we interviewed, renting, usufructs, and squatting have been the most common ways to acquire housing. María Fernanda told us about how violence perpetrated by the FARC forced her and her husband to abandon the farm they had been living on; when they finally decided that they wanted to return, they felt that they couldn't do it due to their lack of legal land ownership. Even though they had purchased the land, they had never obtained a formal property title, which impeded their ability to recover the land: "So we didn't go back, because we had purchased the land, but they never gave us the deed, and anyway we didn't know about those things. It was our way of surviving, we were property owners, but we didn't have—what do you call it—the title, the piece of paper."

As demonstrated by María Fernanda's testimony, even though her family yearns for the stability provided by a purchased piece of land, the purchasing process can be confusing and is not a guarantee of secure tenure, since without a registered property title it is impossible to prove one's ownership of the land. This situation was mentioned time and again by women who participated in our social mapping activity and interviews, and it is aggravated in their cases in particular because, as shown in numerous studies, women tend to have weak property rights,³⁴ which increases their vulnerability in the context of displacement.

33 As noted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, "Notwithstanding the type of tenure, all persons should possess a degree of security of tenure which guarantees legal protection against forced eviction, harassment and other threats" (1991, para. 8(a)).

34 The Constitutional Court's Order 092 of 2008 notes that "it is clear that women in this country have historically accessed land and property through their male partners. As a consequence of this structural feature, women face a variety of obstacles to proving land ownership, to discovering their rights in rem or the scope of their patrimony, to acquiring the necessary titles or the required proof of possession, even to certifying their partner status with their provider, etc."

Land

A 2017 research study by the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History lays out several dimensions and premises necessary for understanding campesino communities and “campesino life.”³⁵ Among these facets is the socio-territorial dimension, which concerns the intrinsic link between campesino communities and land. The study notes:

Campesino communities have an interlocking relationship with land and with the territorialities that are, in turn, linked to land possession of a neighborly or associative nature and to forms of social organization anchored in community and family nuclei. Such characteristics embody differentiable forms of inhabiting and transforming the natural environment on the basis of the labor and other activities that they carry out as campesinos. (2017, 2)

In this regard, campesino communities have a unique way of inhabiting the world, which, according to the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History, leads “campesino” to be defined in part on the basis of one’s relationship with land: “Campesinos point to specific attributes of their rural life that are closely linked with land and the territory of the region in which they live” (ibid., 3). Thus, given that land is a fundamental aspect of the full enjoyment of rural Colombians’ self-identity and territoriality, it is critical to explore the fulfillment of the right to land, which is, in turn, essential for the fulfillment of other rights, such as the rights to housing, work, and food.

In our interviews and social mapping exercise with women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region, it became clear that those women who have access to land see it as the source of their daily sustenance. They use part of their land to plant subsistence crops for their families. The women are the ones who lead these activities, while the men focus their efforts on commercial crops, such as coca. This is important for rural women, as it helps ensure their families’ food security. As Violeta explained:

Here, next to this barbed-wire fence, I planted an orchard. It has beans, onions, corn, plantain, two beechwood trees. The beech tree produces a fruit that is very nutritious for cattle. I brought it from Caquetá, when I took a trip there once. They are so beautiful. Also, there’s another tree called *cachimbo*, but that one doesn’t have thorns. There are some in our region, but they have thorns. But the one from there doesn’t have thorns, and it also is good for

35 According to the institute’s conception, “campesino” possesses four distinct dimensions: socio-territorial, sociocultural, economic-productive, and political-organizational.

cattle. I brought some flemingia seeds, which is another type of grass, I still have them out there. So that's what I have in my orchard. And over here, I planted another orchard with plantains. The plants are about sprout.

In addition, and particularly with regard to rural women, there are at least three ways in which access to land serves to advance gender justice: it improves overall well-being, increases women's negotiating power, and lessens their chances of being displaced. With regard to the first aspect, Magdalena León writes:

In Latin America, as in other regions, there is increasing evidence that women are more likely to share their individual earnings for the benefit of the family. By contrast, men are more likely to spend their income on individual consumption (mostly on alcohol and tobacco), contributing just a portion of their earnings to the family economy. The allocation of men's earnings between discretionary spending and household expenses is almost never a decision made in collaboration with the family, and is instead almost always made by the men themselves. (2008, 297)

Owning their own property reduces women's economic vulnerability and risk of falling into poverty, as it allows them to increase their ability to generate income and build equity. For example, access to land allows women to sell or mortgage their property in emergency situations, and it also serves as collateral for loans. Meanwhile, from a productive standpoint, women's access to land offers the potential to increase production and productivity, as it increases access to other essential elements, such as loans, technical assistance, marketing, and information.

Furthermore, drawing on feminist economic studies, León connects access to property—and, in this case, access to land—with economic autonomy, which increases women's bargaining power within the household, community, and society. These changes also entail less exposure to domestic violence, as having financial means makes it easier for women to leave abusive relationships (Deere and León 2000). This increased autonomy and bargaining power can be seen in the results of the 2014 agricultural census, which show that when women share land ownership with their partners, they are more likely to be involved in decisions regarding the use of that land (DANE 2014).

Moreover, access to land for rural women, whether individually or in conjunction with their partners, helps prevent dispossession, both as a result of armed conflict and at the hands of their partners. Rosaura's father, for example, stripped her mother multiple times of land that the couple had settled on together. One time, with regard to a 300-hectare parcel that the couple had settled on, Rosaura's father disin-

generously cited the presence of armed actors in the region to convince her mother to leave the area, allowing him to sell the land and keep the money. As Rosaura recounted:

When the violence [by armed actors] began, [my father] took advantage, telling her, “Honey, it’s better if you go and stay with your family, with your mother, since things are really messy here. I don’t want anything to happen to you, take the children so nothing happens to them.” [My mom] was anxious to see her family, whom she hadn’t seen in ten years. She said, “Okay, I’ll go,” but she never imagined that it was a trick, since he already had a mistress who he was planning to live with ... He sold the farm, he spent everything.

As this example shows, insecure tenure increases women’s risk of being dispossessed of their land.

Many of the women coca growers we spoke with told us how they had settled on land jointly with their fathers or partners and have always sought ways to gain access to land, which has become increasingly scarce, even in regions of “late” colonization. Even though land is critical for sustaining campesino life, particularly among women, Colombia has extremely unequal land distribution. According to a recent Oxfam report, which draws on data from the agricultural census and on an analysis of 1960–2002 data collected by the Agustín Codazzi Geographic Institute, there is an accelerated trend toward the concentration of land in large holdings at the expense of small and medium-sized landholdings.

UPAs [Units of Agricultural Production] of less than 10 hectares represent 81 percent of total landholdings (1,658,450 units) and on average are barely 2 hectares in size. The area controlled by all of them together is less than 5 percent of the total area included in the census ... At the other extreme, UPAs larger than 2,000 hectares represent 0.1 percent of the total (2,362 holdings); on average, they are 17,195 hectares in size and occupy almost 60 percent of the total area included in the census. (Oxfam 2017, 15)

These figures substantiate, in the words of Absalón Machado (2002, 38), the existence of a dualistic “minifundio-latifundio” tenure system: at one extreme are numerous individuals who own or occupy small properties (minifundios), and at the other extreme are a handful of people who monopolize the vast majority of land in the form of large commercial estates (latifundios). Although this model recognizes medium landholders, it also recognizes that such landholders carry little weight within the overall structure, as the latifundios become a form of social control with political, economic, and cultural impacts stemming from the monopoly of land.

In Putumayo, according to cadastral data from 2009, private property accounts for just 17% of the cadastral area; of these private properties, 68% are medium holdings and 12% are small holdings. What accounts for Putumayo's deviation from the national trend in land grabbing? While a comprehensive answer to this question is beyond the scope of this book, we would like to explore a few of the factors linked to the coca economy in Putumayo that help shed light on the situation.

First, it is worth noting that after Caquetá, Putumayo is the department with the greatest proportion of land informality in its territory, which stands at 33% (IGAC, Universidad del Rosario, and Universidad de los Andes 2012, 437, 443). In order for an individual to be allocated a piece of this land by the state, they had to show—prior to the issuing of Decree 902 of 2017—that they were carrying out an agricultural activity on at least 70% of the land in question. And given that such activity had to be legal, land formalization faced significant barriers within a setting where many crops were illicit. Second, coca-growing families who live on *baldíos* (public lands subject to agrarian reform) explained that they are not interested in obtaining a property title, since, as property owners, they could have these assets seized as a result of their coca cultivation.

This assessment seems to be in line with the spatial econometrics study carried out by Carlos Suescún for 2000–2010. According to his study, the use of such crops is not an economic determinant of land concentration in Colombia, as the increase in illicit crops has taken place largely on lands that are part of family agricultural units or collectively owned parcels, or that are scattered throughout a particular geographic area, without producing property transfers (Suescún 2013).

Even though Putumayo is an outlier compared to the national trend of land concentration, increased land-based conflicts—particularly those stemming from land grabbing by mining and oil companies—have meant less land for agrarian reform beneficiaries. This panorama is confirmed by the considerations outlined in Sentence T-445 issued by the Constitutional Court in 2016. In its ruling, the court noted that the emergence of mining and oil drilling activities have caused 6,893,348 hectares of *baldíos* to become ineligible for distribution to land-poor campesinos, since current regulations prohibit the awarding of land within a 2,500-meter radius of mining or oil drilling sites.³⁶

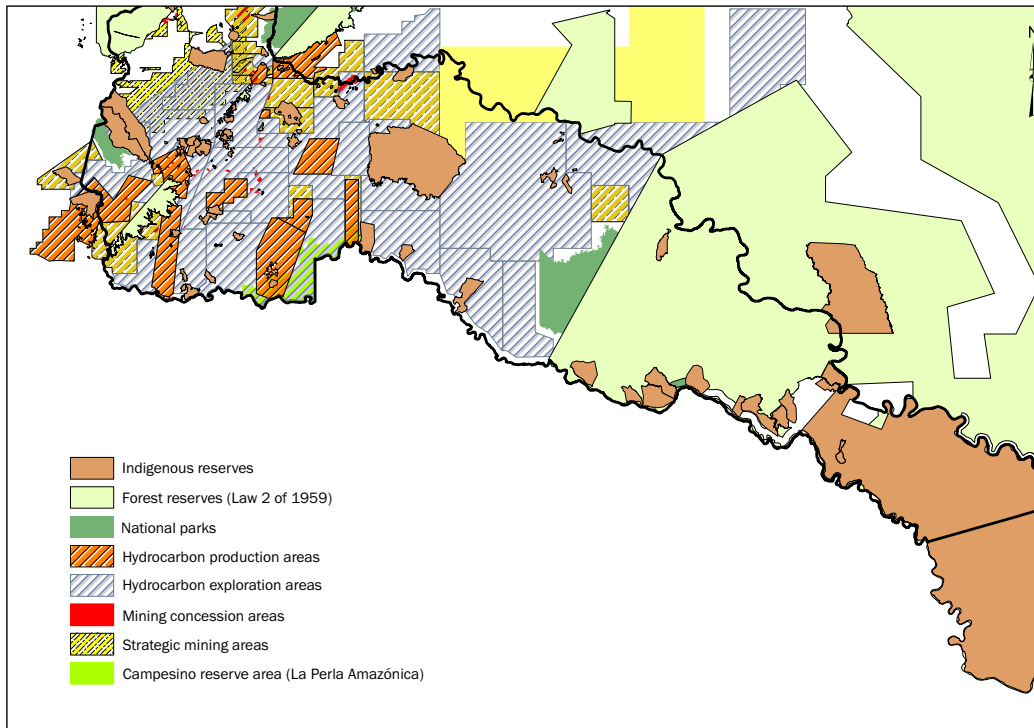
In Putumayo, during the 1970s, the oil boom unleashed a wave of private

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Ley 160 de 1995, art. 67(1), as modified by Ley 1728 of 2014, art. 1.

Map 1

Mining and oil drilling in Putumayo



SOURCES: National Hydrocarbons Agency; National Mining Agency; Agustín Codazzi Geographic Institute

colonization, which spurred the department's insertion into the international market and its promotion as a source of raw materials for the national economy (Guerrero, Londoño, and Jaramillo 2015, 189). This had concrete impacts on campesinos' access to land. According to the National Center for Historical Memory, the presence of oil companies caused land prices to rise, which further impeded access to land by campesinos, indigenous peoples, and Afro-descendant communities (CNMH 2015, 279).

As shown in map 1, projected and ongoing mining and oil extraction extends throughout middle and lower Putumayo. The map also shows how these activities overlap and connect with environmentally protected areas, such as forest reserves and national parks, where the allocation of land to campesinos is restricted. All of this produces deep tensions due to the dearth of land eligible for allocation to low-income families, especially within campesino communities (in addition to other types of conflicts stemming from environmental aspects and the lack of prior consultation with

ethnic minorities). One example is that of the Perla Amazónica campesino reserve area, whose entire territory is now dedicated to oil exploration and drilling. María Fernanda told us about the unease generated by these activities in her area:

You settle down in a really charming place, where you can hear the birds singing, where you see the best fish in the world, you can see all the little animals... Then another person comes along from some other country and takes everything away. I'll give you an example: your house, you have all the things you value there, all the things you really adore, maybe it's a little flower pot that you really love and take care of. That's like how we are—we love our land, our territory, our water that is so essential. So then let's say a neighbor comes along and takes what you most adore. Wouldn't this hurt you? Wouldn't it make you feel helpless, wouldn't it make you angry? I mean, it's hard, that's what you go through.

This picture is made even more bleak by the way that drug trafficking and the armed conflict have led to forced abandonment and land dispossession in Putumayo (CNMH 2015, 281).

In this context of campesinos' reduced access to land, it is worth pointing out that rural women have even less access. This is due to four main reasons: (i) families usually leave land-related inheritances to men, who are expected to form families and to need land to support their families, while women tend to migrate to wherever their spouses are domiciled; (ii) cultural and matrimonial customs tend to mean that the best pieces of land are given to men; (iii) gender biases in the use of communally owned land; and (iv) gender biases in land distribution and titling programs (León 2000).³⁷

An example of this last factor can be seen in data provided by the Colombian Institute for Rural Development and the National Center for Historical Memory regarding men's and women's access to land through the allocation of *baldíos*—the state's primary mechanism for ensuring that landless and land-poor people have access to land—between 1988 and 2012. These figures demonstrate that rural women in Colombia have historically enjoyed less access to land. As we can see in table 1, women's share of land allocations and their share of hectares has increased over time; nonetheless, during this twenty-four-year period, men were allocated 2,777,986 more hectares than women.

37 The Constitutional Court has also called attention to historical structural barriers that have placed the majority of women in Colombia, particularly those in rural and marginal areas, in a disadvantaged and asymmetric position with regard to property, especially land ownership.

Table 1
Allocations of state land to campesinos, 1988–2012

Years	Land allocations (%)		Land allocations		Land extension (%)		Land extension (hectares)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
1988–1994	69.8	30.2	53,941	23,295	71.5	28.5	2,244,094	895,599
1995–2012	58.7	41.2	73,971	51,837	64.2	35.8	3,229,859	1,800,368
Total	62.9	37	127,912	75,132	67	32.9	5,473,953	2,695,967

SOURCE: CNMH (2016)

Although there are no sex-disaggregated data for Putumayo, it is reasonable to conclude that this unequal distribution of land at the national level is also present in the region.

As a conclusion to this chapter, we wish to emphasize that the state’s absence as a guarantor of rights in Putumayo has meant that the population has had to face persistent and profound deficiencies concerning the enjoyment of human rights and access to basic goods. Further, in light of the traditional dynamics of rural Colombia—where women are relegated to specific roles in the household, family, and work—women have experienced particularly severe limitations to their access to housing, health, paid work, and land on account of being women in a rural context shaped by an absent state and omnipresent armed actors.

Within this scenario of vulnerability, the dynamics of community building in Putumayo have taken place on the margins of, or parallel to, the state. Indeed, given the state’s failure to guarantee the population’s economic, social, and cultural rights, communities themselves have assumed the task of securing the basic goods and conditions needed to ensure their well-being and security. In Putumayo, it is through their own means and resources that communities have been able to access the goods and rights that the state should provide.

Thanks to community organizing, and particularly to women’s leadership, the inhabitants of Putumayo have been able to access certain rights. Rosaura’s testimony on the construction of tertiary roads offers one example:

My colleague Violeta and I are on the road committee. The road out there was very bad, full of muddy holes and all of that. So, at that time, I was the committee treasurer, she was the secretary; but we got really involved, we pleaded with the mayor, with the council members. We do fundraising, so we can apply materials to the road surface, voluntary contributions. We don’t

have a tollgate or anything, because the people already know, we pay someone to spend the day there collecting money. Then I'm in charge, I'm the treasurer, among all of us we're going to fill a pothole, do some other task. So I give them the money, they sign a receipt, and we have everything in order. And now people say that our road is better than the one in Miraflores, that after being so ugly, the road is looking good again. So now we're focusing on trying to get a bridge.

It is important to highlight women coca growers' significant mobilization capacity; some of those who participated in the Puerto Asís conference belong to multiple community organizations. In addition to participating in community action boards, they sit on committees aimed at infrastructure improvements, such as the aqueduct and roads. Without women's contributions and leadership, their communities would undoubtedly be worse off than they are today, for women have assumed important mobilizing and organizing roles that have helped ensure access to basic goods that the state has failed to provide. Their work expands beyond the family and touches their entire communities, for roads, health, and education are all goods that improve the well-being of those who inhabit the same region.

Cosas Buenas planta
de coca



Salud
Educacion
Alimentacion
Vivienda
Vestuario
Turismo

Malas

Desplazamientos
Perdidas de seres queridos
Carcel
Estigmatizacion
Fumigacion

CHAPTER 2

THE WAR ON DRUGS IN THE ANDES-AMAZON REGION: “THEY CAME TO ERADICATE DRUGS BUT INSTEAD DESTROYED OUR LAND.”

“We Colombians who live in the countryside, who get up at 5 a.m. each day to work, for us it has been [simply] a war—not a war on drugs, as they claim.”

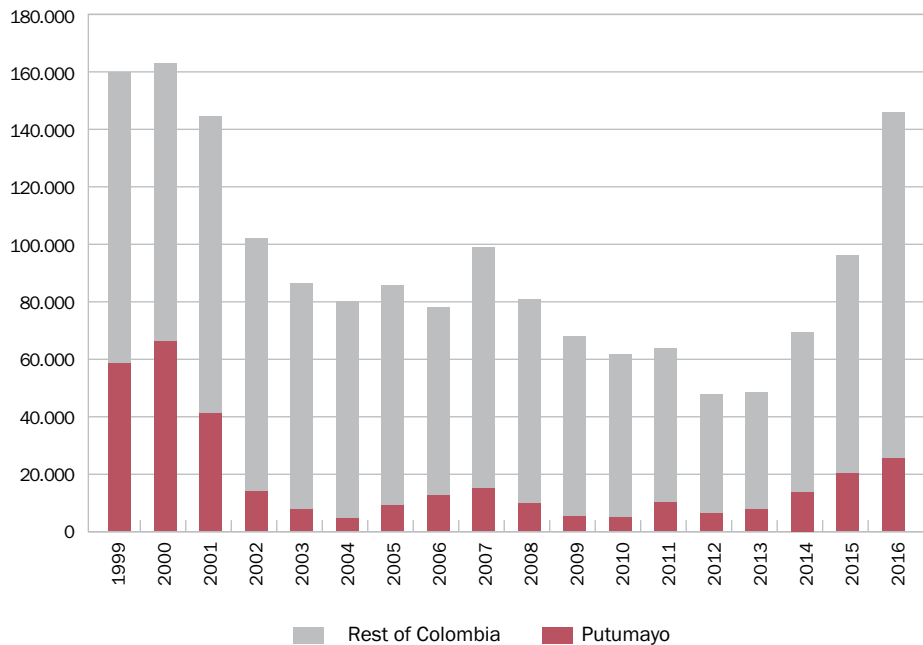
María Fernanda

This chapter explores women coca growers’ relationship with coca, focusing on women from Colombia’s Andes-Amazon region. Historically, the department of Putumayo has been a key player in Colombia’s collective memory on illicit crops and the war on drugs. During the coca boom of 1999–2000, the department was home to 36–40% of the country’s coca crops. As demonstrated in figure 1, Putumayo adheres to national trends in terms of the numbers of coca crops.

Just as the coca economy has allowed women to overcome shortcomings in the fulfillment of their rights and access to basic goods, it has also placed them at the center of violence and vulnerability as a result of the militarization of their lands, the stigmatization of their work, and the presence of armed actors linked to the drug trade.

This chapter is divided into three sections: in the first, we explore the impacts that coca has had on women’s enjoyment of their rights, economic independence, and access to basic goods; in the second, we discuss the negative impacts stemming from repressive policies against coca (namely, forced eradication and militarization) and the cultural impact of extractivist booms such as coca; finally, in the third, we explore the state’s efforts to work with communities to transform illicit economies into licit ones.

Figure 1
Coca cultivation area in Colombia and Putumayo (1999–2016)



SOURCE: Drug Observatory of Colombia, www.odc.gov.co

REASONS FOR CULTIVATING COCA: “WE GREW COCA WITH THE BEST OF INTENTIONS—TO BE ABLE TO GIVE OUR CHILDREN AN EDUCATION.”

In 2016, Putumayo had 25,162 hectares of coca crops, representing 17% of all such crops in the country. This number is relatively low considering that in 2000, the department had 66,022 hectares (40% of the country’s total). After years of repression and war, coca crops persist in the Andes-Amazon region, where fumigation efforts were most intense between 2000 and 2004, reaching a peak in 2002, when 81,891 hectares were sprayed. Coca, which has existed in this department for approx-

imately forty years, radically changed the lives of those living in the foothills of the Amazon, as it offered many campesinos “a solution to their economic problems ... For many, it was an answer to their prayers” (Ojeda 2007, 232).

Although coca provided a way out of poverty for many campesino families, the women we interviewed expressed an ambivalent view toward their relationship with the plant: one that oscillates between opportunities and deceptions. The same plant that has allowed them to survive and achieve economic solvency has also brought threats, risk, and pain to their lives. Despite these women’s different experiences, all of them agreed that coca offered a viable economic alternative in contexts of extreme economic and social hardship. As María Fernanda noted:

Today, [the crop] has become a problem, but it was a solution that allowed us to survive and meet our basic needs ... If we grow plantain, which is the most common crop in our region, or corn or rice, ... it’s not the same as coca. With coca, you take it and put it in a little bag and sell it ... Plantain doesn’t sell.

Campesina women participate in the coca economy in a variety of ways, including by caring for and feeding workers, harvesting, applying pesticides, processing, and selling the plant and its derivatives. Over the course of their lives, women move among these different roles in accordance with their circumstances, economic needs, and possibilities. Coca has a longstanding presence in their memories. Their earliest memories are nostalgic ones, for back then they did not fully grasp the negative consequences linked to coca cultivation; back then, they saw only the chance to overcome poverty. Sandra recalled it thus:

My first memory of coca is when my dad, seeing our desperate economic situation, decided to sell a cow and buy coca seeds to plant. After he sold his first harvest and came home [Sandra smiles] ... he left home with a little bag and came home with a huge sack—he brought us all kinds of things! And the next week, he said, “Okay, two of you are coming with me again to Puerto Asís to help with the shopping.” He bought us shoes, boots, clothes, and he kept on doing it [over time]. So my first memory of coca is one of happiness. It filled a big need, and that was my first memory of coca.

So my first memory of coca is one of happiness. It filled a big need, and that was my first memory of coca.

In this context, for some women, growing coca was a conscious decision in the midst of limited job opportunities, while for others it was a practice handed down

from their parents and sometimes their grandparents. Still other women noted that they became involved in coca due to the influence of their husbands or close relatives. As Viviana described:

My husband told me, “Honey, the mine here has closed, let’s buy this little farm and we’ll plant coca there.” Well, I was clueless. The truth is that I was venturing into the unknown. So I said, “Fine, let’s do it!” And I went with him to the lot he told me about and said, “Let’s go for it, you’re the one who knows what you’re doing.” And so we bought the farm. It was a *baldío* [parcel of state-owned land].

As revealed by Viviana’s story—as well as those of many other women coca growers—the fact that coca was cultivated primarily by campesinos who arrived to areas of “late colonization” (regions that were colonized relatively late in Colombian history) in search of opportunities meant that the entire process of settling the land began from scratch, which generated instability in terms of access to basic goods and rights. Viviana recounted her arrival to the department of Nariño and how they built their home on their own:

When I looked around, it was all mountains, mountains everywhere. We set up a makeshift tent [Viviana laughs] since we were the first to arrive—there were no houses, nothing. So we set up a little hut with a plastic tarp, put up some stakes, and started to organize things. The following week, we got ahold of a saw, and by the end of the month we had a little wooden house right next to a pretty stream called La Hoja. It was a beautiful experience. We built our house, hired a few workers, and my husband began to grow *tingo*³⁸ seedlings.

As demonstrated by the women we interviewed, their involvement in coca was a response to poverty. Nonetheless, they noted that many observers fail to grasp this and call them “stubborn” for continuing this activity; these critics do not understand that despite having other crops on their farms, these secondary crops do not allow women and their families to make a living. In the words of María Fernanda, “We’re not growing coca because we like it, but simply because it has allowed us to survive in the countryside.” There is a market for coca, and unlike other agricultural products—which enjoy neither the conditions nor a stable market to ensure regular earnings—coca’s transport and sale does not require much infrastructure.

According to data from the Office of Economic Studies of the Ministry of

38 *Tingo* is a coca variety that is commonly found in Putumayo, as explained to us by the women we interviewed.

Commerce, Industry and Tourism, the most common crops in Putumayo are plantain (38.86%) and cassava (22.51%) (Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo 2017). As of December 2016, farmers sold plantain at an average price of COP1,082 (US\$0.31) per kilo and cassava at COP945 (US\$0.30) per kilo (DANE 2016b). By contrast, according to the 2016 SIMCI report, the average price of a kilo of coca leaves at the site of production was COP2,900 (US\$0.85) (UNODC and Government of Colombia 2017)—in other words, nearly 44% more than a kilo of plantain and 33% more than a kilo of cassava. Despite the considerable difference in price between the most commonly grown licit crops in Putumayo and coca leaf, it is important to point out, as confirmed by the Ministry of Justice, that most farming families in the region do not earn more than the minimum wage (Ministerio de Justicia 2017). In other words, while coca has allowed women to help their families overcome the poverty that often afflicts rural communities in Putumayo, it has not made them rich.

With regard to social and economic vulnerability—on account of being women living in low-income rural areas—involvement in coca cultivation brought unexpected benefits for women, such as greater economic independence and the ability to access fundamental rights such as housing, education, and health. Coca also allowed some women

to earn enough to purchase land, improve their farms, and make investments in their properties. In this regard, as Gloria Oliva recounted, “We began to plant coca, and our first harvest yielded about 70 arrobas [793 kilos], and that is how we got started. We bought a little piece of land with the money we made, because the land where we had been planting wasn’t ours, it was rented.”

However, even though coca gave women the chance to earn money, it was not enough to live on by itself, so they would take on other projects in order to earn enough to meet their basic needs. As Rosaura explained:

We began working with my brother and built a nice house with wood and sheet metal that we had gathered. On Saturdays, I washed other people’s clothes [to earn money]. I would get up before dawn—all those coca pickers who would bring all their laundry—I would get up at 4:30 a.m. and head to the river. By 10 a.m., I was home again, and I would iron from 3 to 6 p.m.

With regard to health care, the coca economy has allowed women to pay out of pocket for private doctors, given the difficulties and shortcomings in access-

Coca also allowed some women to earn enough to purchase land, improve their farms, and make investments in their properties.

ing care via the public health system. Viviana explained, for example, how she was able to pay for check-ups during her third pregnancy thanks to the money she earned through coca:

My health coverage is with Emsanar [a health care provider] from Nariño, which is the subsidized health care. But since I needed certain exams due to my high-risk pregnancy, which my insurance didn't cover, I had to pay out of pocket for appointments. And because we had gone through a [difficult] experience with our second child, we didn't want anything to happen to our third baby. So we had to pay ourselves since we were going to a private doctor.

In addition, the women we interviewed noted that the economy in their region was driven largely by coca, which meant that even those who were not directly involved in the trade benefited from it, since resources flowed through the region on account of coca. As Viviana noted, "If it weren't for coca, there would be no money. Who would provide resources? Not the banks or anybody. Some people say, 'I don't grow coca,' but they are indirectly benefiting from it, we need to be clear about that. Even if they're not planting it, they're benefiting and there's better market opportunities—but without coca, there isn't money for anybody."

NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF THE WAR ON DRUGS: "THE FUMIGATIONS WERE VERY CRUEL, VERY SAD."

Over the past four decades, the state has rolled out an intensive military strategy in Putumayo aimed at, on the one hand, dismantling and driving out leftist guerrillas and, on the other, eradicating illicit crops to reduce the coca cultivation area, as required by national and international drug control policies. Within this context, the state has embraced an excessive focus on militarizing the region, neglecting, in the words of Mauricio García and Javier Revelo, the construction of an efficient public administration that functions within a free and participatory political system (2010, 17) and that responds to the need to foster the necessary conditions for structural equality within the population.

This militarization had severe negative impacts on the lives of coca-growing families in Putumayo, as seen in various ways: (i) it involved the armed forces' interference in the daily lives of communities, especially during the implementation of Plan Colombia; (ii) it was carried out in coordination with paramilitary groups, who used the threat of weapons to impose restrictive gender roles and who fought with guerrilla groups over territorial control in certain areas of the department; (iii) it pro-

moted indiscriminate aerial spraying that damaged licit crops along with illicit ones, causing negative repercussions for communities' livelihoods; and (iv) it was based on a military strategy that, today, is linked to large-scale resource extraction, which women coca growers perceive as an attack on local populations and civil society. In addition to the above, the proliferation of illicit crops in the region led to other, less visible impacts that have affected the social and family fabric; examples include the criminal prosecution of those who grow coca and an upswing in the flaunting of wealth.

In particular, lethal violence as a result of the war on drugs is a story that has yet to be told. The illegality of coca, together with the tools used to fight the war in this region, arguably left deaths that are omitted from official figures, as many witnesses likely did not report such violence for fear of being prosecuted for coca cultivation. It is also worth noting that such violence is not a thing of the past, for as of February 2018, reports on the implementation of the country's peace accord noted an increase in threats to social activists, as well as the established presence of illegal armed groups, namely La Constru and Los Comuneros (Fundación Ideas para la Paz 2018, 16–17). At the national level, municipalities without a coca presence saw an 8% decrease in homicides during January–August 2017 compared to January–August 2016, while the opposite occurred in municipalities where coca is grown: there, the homicide rate increased by 12% during the same period (*ibid.*). Meanwhile, the National Coca, Poppy, and Marijuana Growers Co-op, at a March 2018 press conference, decried the murder of twenty-seven activists between 2017 and 2018 who had been defending crop substitution efforts in coca-growing regions. This panorama highlights the need to acknowledge the dynamics of both past and current violence in order to be able to develop effective security measures on behalf of these populations.

Involvement of the Armed Forces and the Stigmatization of Communities

For women coca growers in Putumayo, the state's presence in the region is embodied almost entirely by the armed forces. Living in an area dominated by illicit crops has led to a state-community relationship marked by an imbalance of power, which has meant the excessive use of force and the stigmatization of local populations on account of their supposed links with armed actors via the coca trade. In this light, the recollections of the women we interviewed are shaped in large part by the state's military intervention within the framework of Plan Colombia, which began in 2000.

Under Plan Colombia, the Colombian and US governments promised to invest US\$1.3 billion and US\$9.6 billion, respectively, over a fifteen-year period to

finance the war on drugs and initiatives to eliminate guerrilla violence in the country. Of the plan's total budget, 72% of resources were destined for military and police support. Colombia's military capacity grew from 23,000 soldiers in 1998 to 88,000 soldiers in 2014; from 35 helicopters in 1999 to more than 200 in 2014; and from three to thirty-six mobile brigades between 1999 and 2014. In addition, the government created eight high-mountain battalions and fifty-two mobile squadrons (DNP 2016).

Plan Colombia's significance for Putumayo can be seen in the statements of Simón Gaviria, the director of Colombia's National Planning Department between 2014 and 2017, describing the centrality of military action in the department during the first six years of the plan's implementation: "The fight against illicit crops in Putumayo—the main coca producer in 2000, with some 120,000 hectares of crops—as well as greater territorial control in Cundinamarca and Meta, and the protection of strategic infrastructure in Arauca, were the main focus of Plan [Colombia] during those first six years" (ibid.). In Putumayo, the military's presence grew from eighteen to thirty-one brigades. Counterinsurgency efforts, aerial spraying with glyphosate, and the criminal prosecution of the department's inhabitants became key tools of the war on drugs in the region.

Militarization and the war on drugs pushed the campesinos of Putumayo from their status as citizens to a new status as enemies of the state —enemies that the state was obligated to ensure, instead becoming targets of retaliation and criminal prosecution.

According to the women we interviewed, alongside this militarization came the stigmatization of women and their families, who were accused by the armed forces of being guerrillas and drug traffickers. Militarization and the war on drugs pushed the campesinos of Putumayo from their status as citizens to a new status as enemies of the state—enemies who, accordingly, lost access to the rights and well-being that the state was obligated to ensure, instead becoming targets of retaliation and criminal prosecution. María Fernanda described this stigmatization:

When the soldiers would come to people's homes, they weren't respectful. They claim to be defenders of the community, of all of us, but it wasn't like that. In our village, there were violations, I was personally mistreated. Once, my parents went to pick leaves and the soldiers came [to our house] ... They told me that they were going to take me away in the helicopter because I was growing coca, that I had to show them my ID, and that they were the ones who set the rules around here ... A million things. I felt so insignificant, they

were the law and that was that. They came to tell us that we were terrorists because we grew coca, we were guerrillas, we had a permanent target on our back. All I did was cry because I was a little girl, and I hoped that my parents would come home soon. My dad arrived with his hat on, and the soldier who was giving orders told him, “Take off your hat because we need to take your picture with the coca, and you have to sign here and give us your IDs.” And my dad refused. “Come with us, you old man, we’re going to take you because you’re a stubborn old man, because you keep growing coca.” Do you see what I’m saying? We were always made out to be the guilty ones. They never tried to understand why we grew coca, that we did it out of necessity. And they told him, “Take off your hat because we’re going to video-tape you and take pictures,” and my dad didn’t want to and that’s how they talked to him, they abused him verbally. So my dad began to cry because they violated his rights, because he had to do what they ordered, and at that point my mom also started to cry, we were all crying, my little brothers scared by the sight of the soldiers who were all armed. Finally, even the farmworker who was with us said to my dad, “Take off your hat and let them take our pictures.” And that’s how it was, they took our photos, recorded us, took our fingerprints, supposedly to take us to jail because the helicopter was on its way. We were totally intimidated, and we don’t know anything about those things or the law, so my dad gave in, he took off his hat and posed for the picture ... Do you think that’s a way to treat people?

María Fernanda also explained how the armed forces, abiding by the logic of stigmatizing campesino coca growers, began to identify coca farmers by their crooked and calloused hands: “When people [from the government] arrive, they start looking at your hands, because when you grow coca you have fingers like me ... crooked from scraping coca leaves, and calloused. So when they tell you to show them your hands, they know.” This practice generated fear and anxiety within the community, while also stigmatizing coca growers on account of their physical traits.

The impacts of this strategy of militarization and of communities’ daily co-existence with the armed forces ranged from an increased risk of sexual violence (as noted by the women we interviewed) to difficulties in making a living after having their crops forcibly eradicated. With regard to the latter, Sandra told us how the fumigation and eradication activities of Plan Colombia caused her to lose her primary source of income, which in turn contributed to her mother’s death, for her mother was unable to access timely medical care. In the municipality where they had been living, there was no hospital equipped to treat her emergency, and she was not provided with an ambulance ride to Pasto, the nearest city with appropriate facilities:

My mom died because of medical negligence. It has been very hard. I think that if I had still been growing coca, maybe my mom wouldn't have died that way, because when you have money, or you have coca, you have a way to pay—anyone will lend you money, any neighbor or friend [her voice falters]. But when you don't have that, no one lends you a dime. I needed four million pesos [US\$1,176] to get my mom out. My mom had a stroke and needed emergency care, and they didn't let me take her out, they didn't release her!... If I had been growing coca like before, anyone would have lent me the money [crying], but no, I didn't have [coca]! If I had, I would have continued expanding on the crops that I had before ... My son would've been able to go to college.

Thus, the strategies of militarization and crop eradication meant significant losses for the families that had been relying on coca as a way out of poverty. Plan Colombia, hailed a great success by some, was a tragedy for these women and their families that deepened their marginalization within the Andes-Amazon countryside.

Armed Actors in the Region and Community Perceptions

The military strategy also branded Putumayo residents—especially those involved in the coca economy—as guerrillas, meaning that the counterinsurgency efforts of paramilitary groups were focused on this sector. The presence of illegal armed groups in Putumayo dates back to the 1980s, first through the M-19 (1980–1982), then the Popular Liberation Army (1983–1990), and then the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC by its Spanish initials) beginning in 1984 until the group's demobilization in 2017.³⁹ In parallel to these guerrilla groups, right-wing paramilitary groups appeared beginning in late 1987 until mid-1991 and then between 1997 and 2006, when they demobilized (CNMH 2012a, 30–37).

According to the National Center for Historical Memory, the first paramilitary groups to arrive to Putumayo were the Masetos and Combos, who originated from the Middle Magdalena Valley and settled in the department at the instruction of Gonzalo Rodríguez and the Medellín Cartel. The second paramilitary wave consisted of the formation of the Southern Bloc of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, led by the Castaño family (*ibid.*, 30–37). During the paramilitary reign, the Combos and the Masetos consolidated their power by serving as private security forces for cocaine processing labs run by the region's drug traffickers. But their pres-

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For a detailed timeline of the armed conflict in Putumayo, see CNMH (2012a, 30–55).

ence and power also grew as a result of the harsh repression of civic movements and community organizing, particularly those movements that identified as the unarmed communist left (CNMH 2015, 191).

This attack on social movements had negative repercussions for the community organizing in which women coca growers were taking part. Sandra recounted, for example, how the movement supporting the creation of the campesino reserve area (*zona de reserva campesina*) known as La Perla Amazónica was affected by the stigmatizing counterinsurgent discourse promoted by the Colombian state:

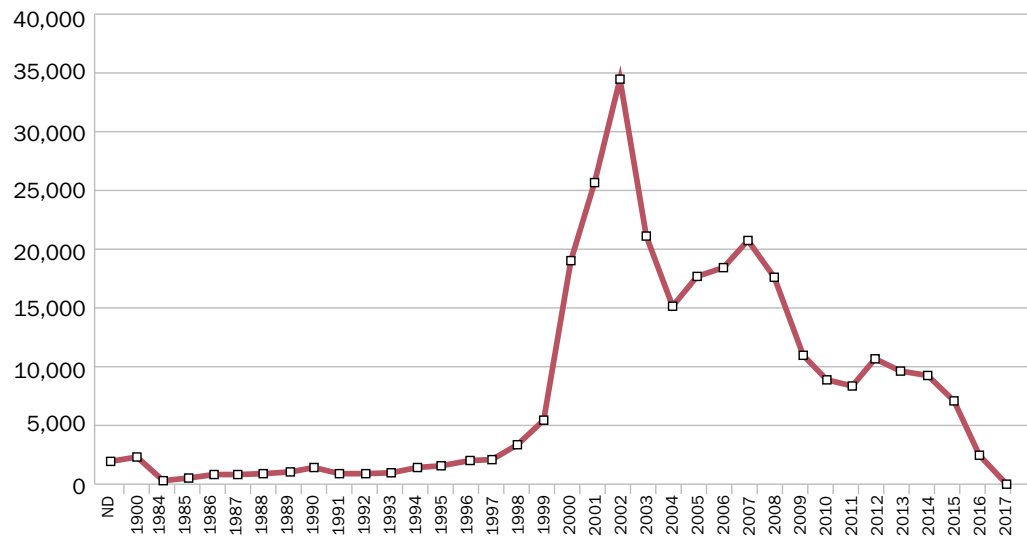
We supported the creation of the [campesino reserve area, or ZRC]. The communities had great expectations, beautiful ones, that, sadly, the Uribe administration wanted to quash. Because the ZRCs are stigmatized, the government said that ZRCs were FARC hideouts and that anyone who supported them was a guerrilla fighter. Unfortunately, this was hurtful to us because that's not how it was; and the ZRCs are actually created by the community, they're an attempt to turn coca crops into [other] productive crops. It's a [peaceful] initiative, and so it hurt us that this was happening.

In some cases, the fact that the state and paramilitary groups shared the same discourse translated into complicity between the two actors. According to the National Center for Historical Memory, collaboration between the armed forces and paramilitary groups “was prompted both by drug trafficking interests and by the counterinsurgent struggle” (CNMH 2012a, 35). In this regard, Sandra told us emphatically, “For us, paramilitarism never came to an end—it has always remained alive, because paramilitaries are members of the [government] military. I mean, there's a difference in their names, but they're the same. So we always say that as long as there are armed forces [here], there are paramilitaries.”

This complicity continued during the second paramilitary wave, which began in 1997 under the objective of stifling the FARC's control of the drug trafficking business, including its monopoly on the “tax” on coca paste. The paramilitaries' platform for driving guerrillas out of the area was also informed by the counterinsurgent discourse, which aligned with the objective of the Colombian armed forces within the framework of the war on drugs. For example, oftentimes, paramilitary groups set up checkpoints near army bases, army checkpoints were set up to protect certain areas at the same time that paramilitary-led massacres took place, and the army and paramilitaries carried out joint actions against guerrillas. According to Rafa Putumayo, one of the department's paramilitary leaders, the paramilitaries indeed coordinated their actions with the armed forces (*ibid.*, 46).

All of these observations lead to the conclusion that the militarization espoused by the state and by illegal armed groups in Putumayo has meant, for civilians, the militarization of their daily life (Nash 2003, 329). As a result, the department's inhabitants—among them women coca growers—have suffered multiple forms of victimization. According to figures compiled by the Victims' Registry, as of July 1, 2017, a total of 269,137 people had been victimized in Putumayo. Of these, 50% were women, 49% were men, and 1% were members of the LGBTI community or individuals who did not report their sex. The municipalities most affected by such violence are Valle del Guamuez, San Miguel, and Puerto Asís. Many women coca growers in the Andes-Amazon region are victims of the armed conflict; however, the state—with the war on drugs as its main focus—seems to place more emphasis on their status as coca growers and not as victims.

Figure 2
Victims in Putumayo, by year



SOURCE: Victims' Unit

With regard to the FARC, relations between this guerrilla group and residents varied according to the social dynamics that had been formed in the area as a result of colonization patterns, political history, landholding structures, community organizing, and other factors. To explain this type of dynamic, historian Mario Aguilar proposes three analytical categories for studying regions with a guerrilla presence. The first category centers on “recently colonized areas in which the FARC emerged as the sole regulating force for the social order.” The second refers to “areas inhabited by small

and medium landholders influenced by the Communist Party,” and the third refers to “areas inhabited by large-scale landowners ... where the FARC provided security to the landowners” (CNMH 2012a, 94). According to this analytical approach, Putumayo falls into the first category, for, as explained in chapter one, it is a region that was among the last to be colonized in Colombia, with little to no state presence and where armed actors such as the FARC were the only ones providing law and order.

Relationships between the FARC and these communities are also shaped by the evolving dynamics of the armed conflict, especially when other armed actors—including the armed forces—enter areas where the guerrillas managed to cement their control. The FARC’s territorial control over Putumayo took place in solitude during the first few years, when the guerrilla group managed to regulate a preexisting business over which no one else was alleging ownership; later, when the FARC began clashing with paramilitary groups and other armed actors, these other forces demonstrated such a high degree of violence and arbitrariness that inhabitants preferred the FARC, whose members at least demonstrated fairness when enforcing the group’s rules.

To a certain degree, this acceptance of the FARC’s style of justice was due to the fact that the guerrilla group applied rules that were in line with the same notions of justice supported by the civilian population. Additionally, communities’ differing perceptions of the various armed actors in the region were related to the type of state that was present in the area. As described by García Villegas et al. (2016, 98), the Andes-Amazon region, particularly Putumayo, is an example of a “contested state,” in which various political forces compete for territorial control at the institutional, social, and economic level. In areas affected by the armed conflict, this type of state exists alongside volatile and illegal markets, and the dispute over territorial control exacerbates violence. As Violeta recounted:

As a teacher, I never had a problem with [the FARC], because I didn’t mess with them at all, not with them or the Colombian army either, because the army also came in. And it was there that the conflicts came about. Wherever the army entered, that’s where they tried to stay. And there were definitely deaths in all of that. Being in the crossfire is very dangerous—if you stick your head out, you get hit.

In this context, during the years of the FARC’s reign in Putumayo, an ambivalent relationship emerged between guerrillas and inhabitants. On the one hand, the guerrilla group exercised an iron grip that violated the lives and physical integrity of the population in multiple ways; but on the other, inhabitants tended to view the

FARC as a source of security and defense, especially in the face of attacks by paramilitary groups. Indeed, in some contexts, communities even saw the FARC as a defender of rights and “development.”

María Fernanda recalled how the FARC entered her town after paramilitaries perpetrated a massacre in lower Putumayo:

We stayed there. Where were we going to go? That's where all of our things were, our animals, our farm. A lot of people left with their little suitcases in hand, you could see them the next day running out of there like crazy ... Then the FARC came in to restore order, and, well, they clashed with the paramilitaries because there were already so many abuses, I mean they were up there hiding in the bush, but they came out and then there were confrontations. The FARC came and began telling us, “Look, you people as campesinos, you have rights, you have to organize, you need to study laws and the Constitution.” We had no idea about any of that.

Her testimony highlights that even though the FARC's overall political objective was to seize the Colombian state, in terms of its relationship with communities, it used the very tools, laws, and narratives offered by the state to empower communities on their rights. Hence communities' ambivalent relationship with the FARC: at the same time that the guerrilla group imposed an armed and coercive social order, it fostered settings that allowed communities to lead initiatives aimed at satisfying their basic needs and improving their living conditions. Gloria Oliva explained that during the meetings that the FARC held with presidents of community action boards, the FARC encouraged communities to establish funds that would allow residents to make up for the lack of state-led guarantees in the realm of education:

The aim was for us to organize, because [the FARC] said that the state wasn't going to give us anything, that these municipalities were red zones where the government never pays any attention. So they told us, “Your communities have coca, and with that coca you can create a fund, a budget for the community.” For example, we used that fund to pay for a teacher, because there was no government presence.

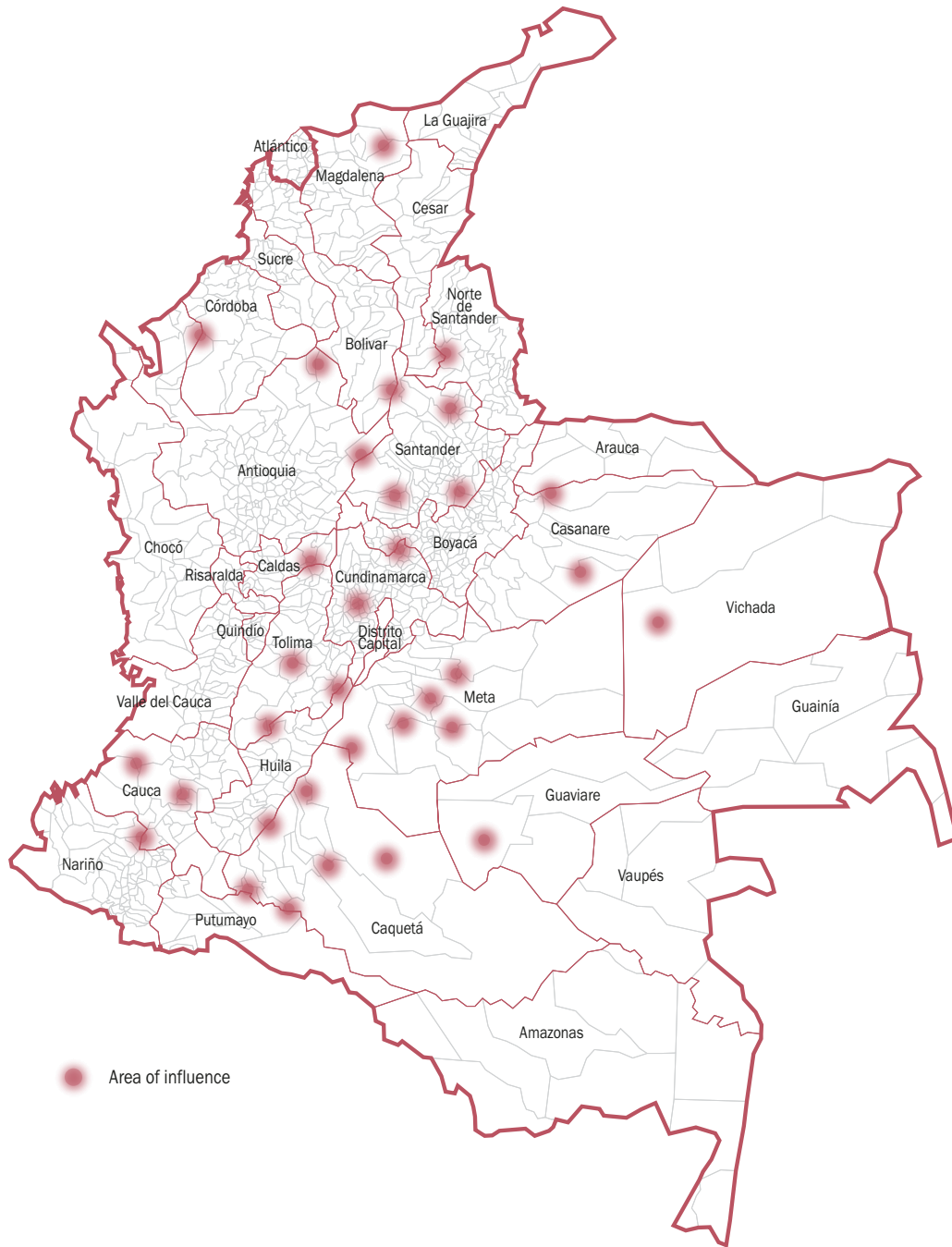
At the same time, our interviews with women coca growers revealed the fact that women sometimes had to confront armed actors and make specific demands of them at critical moments. For example, Gloria Oliva, as president of her village's community action board, had to approach a FARC commander to demand that he release a young community member whom the guerrilla group had detained and planned to assassinate:

The FARC took a teenager because he was supposedly involved with the paramilitaries. I met with the community; when the guerrillas summoned me, I went with the community and introduced myself as president. I said, "Come what may," and I went with the community to where the guerrillas were staying. We were there for about three days and I told them, "The boy that you brought here belongs to the community." There were about fifteen of us. As we left, they told us, "Listen, right now he's not here, but come back [to get him] tomorrow. But it's your responsibility as president, in case we hear any complaints about him, you're the one who's responsible. You're the one who has to come here [and account for the situation]." And I said, "Well, in any case, you have time to investigate. The truth is that I'm not going to be responsible because I'm neither his mom nor his sister. We're responsible for our children when they're at home, but once they step out of the door it's hard. If you summon our community and tell us, 'We discovered this boy doing such and such thing,' well then, yes, painful as it may be, you can leave his body here and we will bury him." But the truth is that the boy liked to help out, he was very active. Whenever we organized our local festivals, he would help. So you look at a situation like this, someone who is so involved [in the community], and you say to yourself, how can you let him be killed? The FARC released the boy. After that, he never left the area, not even to go to the road that passes by the village. He would say, "No way. What if I go over there and they grab me and kill me?" That's what he would say.

This testimony reveals two types of experiences concerning communities' relationship with armed actors in the region. In the first, the law and order imposed by the FARC was incorporated into community dynamics in such a way that residents themselves ended up legitimizing the social order promoted by the guerrilla group. In the example above, Gloria Oliva noted how if the boy had not been an honest person, she would not have intervened on his behalf, suggesting that the community used the same moral framework as the guerrillas to judge the actions of others. The second experience that comes to light in her testimony relates to women's position vis-à-vis armed actors: Gloria Oliva's story, as well as those of others, paints a picture of women who negotiate with and question the decisions of guerrillas and who have the capacity to mobilize the community to confront them.

The above examples speak to the FARC's continued presence in the region and the guerrilla group's ability to impose strict rules regulating inhabitants' everyday lives. This phenomenon was the result of the FARC's general expansion throughout the country during the 1980s: while the guerrilla group had just eight fronts in 1978 (none of which were in Putumayo), by 1987 it had thirty-three fronts, and by 1991

Map 2
Distribution of FARC fronts in 1987



SOURCE: CNMH (2013, 144)

it had forty-eight (CNMH 2013). This desire to expand its theater of operations in the 1980s and 1990s was outlined in the group's strategic plan laid out at its Seventh Conference in 1982.

In 1987, of the FARC's thirty-three active fronts, fifteen were located in areas with the presence of illicit crops, many in the Andes-Amazon region: seven bases in Caquetá, with military operations in Putumayo, Meta, and Cauca, as demonstrated in map 2 (CNMH 2013, 142–4). By 1991, the 13th Front and the 32nd Front, both of the Southern Bloc, were present in Putumayo (*ibid.*, 191–2). During the first decade of the 2000s, in response to the state's military offensive, the FARC intensified its actions in outlying areas, such as Nariño, Cauca, and Putumayo, which were also areas of coca production and transport (*ibid.*, 218).

Beginning in the 1970s, in an effort to convert grassroots communities into allies, the FARC embarked on a strategy of supporting campesinos in their demands before the state (CNMH 2013, 97). This strategy persisted in Putumayo until very recently; as recounted by María Fernanda, the FARC provided political education for local communities, using the 1991 Constitution and invoking a rights-based discourse that supported campesinos' claims. María Fernanda explained how this political education at the hands of guerrillas helped the community learn to fight against the state's failure to comply with its obligations and to draw on arguments that campesinos were previously unaware of:

The FARC came and began telling us, “Look, you people as campesinos, you have rights, you have to organize, you need to study laws and the Constitution.” We had no idea about any of that. But when the FARC came and told us that—that we need to demand our rights and look at which rights in the Constitution relate to us as citizens and campesinos, as people—that is where certain people caught on ... They decided to go to their mayors' offices and look for that book ... to look for the Constitution.

With regard to areas with illicit crops, the FARC's presence was also a response to the need to regulate and resolve conflicts stemming from the coca trade in those regions. In the 1980s, the guerrilla group decided to centralize its tax-collection processes. Its taxation scheme consisted of taxing 10–15% of all transactions involving coca leaf or coca paste. As author Mario Aguilera explains, “The order established by the guerrilla group was characterized, among other things, by its provision of citizen security through support for coca leaf transactions and price regulation” (CNMH 2013, 154). In particular, the FARC's price regulation efforts were viewed as beneficial to communities. As Viviana told us, “The FARC has always been more mindful; they always paid us a better price and, well, it was different with them.”

Communities tolerated these actions by the guerrillas because they fulfilled an essential social function. As demonstrated by Gloria Oliva's testimony, women did not tend to see such actions as arbitrary:

When I arrived in '96, that was the first time I went to a meeting. In Cauca, there had been guerrillas—the FARC, ELN, M-19—but I never lived alongside them. At the meetings [organized by the FARC], they instilled in us the idea that we as a community needed a fund and that it had to be created within the community, but giving that same knowledge to the community about what the money was invested in. What they taught us was how to be legal. If I am buying something with community money, I need a receipt. That is what they taught us, to be honest, not to be corrupt.

In the same vein, María Fernanda recounted:

Whenever a campesino decided to grow coca, that's where [the FARC] would come in and get involved ... First, to provide order in the zone, where thieves could be anywhere, people who don't have good thoughts. In that respect, they appeared to provide that order to communities, to show the communities that they had to be united.

Against this backdrop, both the armed forces and paramilitary groups fought for control of various regions, which, as highlighted by the women we interviewed, left civilians squarely within military operations and in the crossfire of various armed actors (CNMH 2013, 156). The arbitrariness demonstrated by the other armed actors—paramilitaries and the armed forces—did not go over smoothly with communities, for it contrasted sharply with the relationship that they had established with the FARC. As explained by María Fernanda:

[The armed forces] would fumigate, and soldiers would come in and do all sorts of things—they would take our chickens, whatever we had, they would take it for them to eat, they would grab those chickens and what could we do? They were armed and we didn't have any kind of protection ... The paramilitaries [came] and would no longer allow [the FARC] to enter. So the day the FARC left, that night they took some of us out and killed us, they killed eleven people and took another four, and we found them on a road hacked to pieces, we had to pick them up finger by finger ... Others were tossed in the river, others we don't know where they were—and who's going to go after them to see where they left the bodies? Nobody, not with those psychos.

Meanwhile, Viviana recounted:

There was crossfire, residents of our area were killed, injured, even police of-

ficers, guerrillas—it was very upsetting for us. One of the biggest confrontations I remember, that I experienced, began at midnight and ended at 6 a.m. Homes were destroyed. No! It's something you remember and you wish to never have to live through again.

In the face of such violence, especially by paramilitary groups, communities downplayed the misdeeds of the FARC, which, from their perspective, were much less severe than those committed by paramilitaries. As María Fernanda told us, “I'm not going to lie that the FARC also made some mistakes in certain areas, like any human being.” Meanwhile, she referred to the paramilitaries as non-humans who lacked any sense of compassion toward others:

It was how [the paramilitaries] felt happy—seeing our suffering. And sometimes we saw them drugging themselves up, they would stick a needle in their veins. What were they injecting? We don't know. The only thing we know is that they became, I mean, they weren't really themselves, to be able to do all that to women, to take a chainsaw and cut them up in living flesh, or to take a machete and slice off finger by finger. Do you think that a human being, a normal person, does those things?

Even though the relationship between communities and the FARC was characterized by a certain level of tolerance—related to the political education that inhabitants received from the FARC and a set of rules that were deemed to be fair—the order imposed by the guerrilla group was based on the use of force, which is inherently violent. In this context of violence, the FARC also carried out forcible, arbitrary, and disproportionate acts against civilians, as recounted to us by interviewees. Violeta, for example, noted that the guerrillas burned the mayor's office: “At that time, the violence was—hmm!—it was intense and it really scared us.” She also explained that when she was working as a teacher, she was summoned by the FARC to defend herself against claims of mismanaging school money, an accusation that worried her greatly and generated a sensation of helplessness:

They came to notify me: “The guerrillas need you to come with all your papers.” I had to go there. I've always been organized, so I just got my stuff ready. I had always kept a proper file in case I needed it one day, so all I had to do was pick up the file and go. I was notified of this at 7 a.m. and was told that I had to be there, where those men were, at 5 p.m. *Jesús Credo, Ave María!* That's where we had to go. *Virgen Santica!* God will watch over me because I didn't do anything corrupt. Anyway, we will see. So we arrive there ... They look through my papers and ask questions. I respond to the questions, and they finally say, “Listen, teacher, we're not going to get involved anymore, be-

cause we can see that your papers are organized. Keep on being a responsible worker, and you won't have any more trouble with us, and you won't have to come back here." So I picked up my file. We left, had lunch. "Well, *mijita*, see you later. Go and leave her where you picked her up." Not a yes or a no, or a scolding of any kind. "Keep working as you've been doing," they told me.

Although Violeta's encounter with the FARC did not involve direct physical violence, it reflects the general context of coercion and lack of freedom experienced by the inhabitants of Putumayo. The struggles waged in this region—in the name of the war on drugs—meant that women were perpetually in the crossfire of armed actors.

The Impact of Forced Eradication

In many cases, militarization was what allowed the state to intervene in Putumayo and to carry out its illicit crop eradication policies within the framework of the war on drugs. Under Plan Colombia, between 2002 and 2015, the state forcibly eradicated 2.2 million hectares of coca crops, a geographical area about the size of the department of Cundinamarca (DNP 2016). Eradication consisted mainly of aerial fumigation and, to a lesser extent, manual uprooting, as demonstrated in table 2.

Table 2
Forced eradication of coca crops in the department of Putumayo and in Colombia (2000–2015)

Putumayo		Colombia	
Aerial fumigation	Manual eradication	Aerial fumigation	Manual eradication
279,828 hectares	85,347 hectares	1,699,029 hectares	477,050 hectares

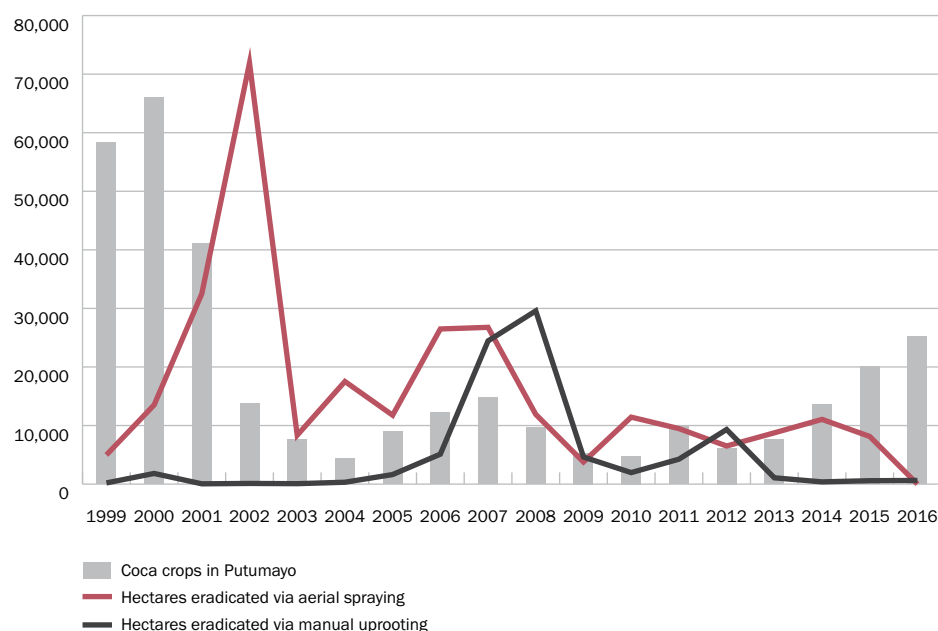
SOURCE: Integrated Illicit Crops Monitoring System

A uniform trend can be seen at both the departmental and national levels: the prioritization of aerial fumigation over manual eradication. According to the Drug Observatory of Colombia, manual eradication increased by 28% between 2016 and 2017. But even with this increase, manual eradication represents a mere 5% of all eradication efforts (UNODC and Government of Colombia 2017, 145).⁴⁰ Mean-

⁴⁰ That said, a report by the Colombian government and UNODC acknowledges that forced manual eradication efforts are not systematically recorded, for "the data being reported in this area do not

while, aerial fumigation reached a peak in 2006, when nearly 170,000 hectares were fumigated throughout the country, 26,492 of which were in Putumayo, in accordance with the national trend of an intensified fight against drugs in the mid-2000s. According to data from the Territorial Renewal Agency, which we obtained via *derecho de petición* (petitions sent within the framework of Colombia’s right to access public information), mobile eradication groups had a budget of COP462 billion (US\$133 million) between 2004 and 2011 for operations throughout the country.

Figure 3
Coca crops, aerial fumigation, and manual eradication in Putumayo (1999–2016)



SOURCE: Integrated Illicit Crops Monitoring System

The women we interviewed vividly recalled the commencement of fumigations in 2000, given the economic crisis and food insecurity that it sparked for them and their families. Between 2000 and 2002—years that the women remember as the height of fumigation—117,906 hectares of coca were sprayed in Putumayo. If we consider the fact that nearly 280,000 hectares were fumigated in the department be-

meet the parameters for traceability, objectivity, and reliability in order to be verified and included in the UNODC’s monitoring system” (UNODC and Government of Colombia 2017, 145). This suggests that the forced manual eradication of coca crops is underreported.

tween 2000 and 2015, this amount in just three years (2000–2002) represents almost half of the historical fumigation effort in Putumayo territory.

In terms of the impacts of aerial spraying, the women were emphatic in noting that such activities ruined not only their coca crops but also their subsistence crops and other productive projects that had been supporting their families. As Gloria Oliva noted:

[In 2000], they sprayed our crops. It was awful. They sprayed the pasture, our cassava, plantain, corn, rice. It was something you don't expect—to be left with bunches of plantains that are damaged ... We were left without food and had to go out with our neighbor to look for food. That was where Plan Colombia came in ... So, we had nothing to eat. My husband had to go find work somewhere else in order to buy us food.

Martha recounted:

We [had] organized a group of women [farmers] ... By 2000, we were already growing plantain, cassava, corn, peach-palm. Not a ton, but we had some plants around. So then the fumigations came. In some parts, they sprayed and the breeze—maybe it wasn't the spray itself, but the breeze that damaged them. It reached our *chiro* plantains, and that's what brought an end to our crops.

Finally, Violeta told us:

The spraying began around 2002. We were growing coca, but just when things are getting off the ground, the downpour [of herbicides] comes and kills it all, then the army comes and rips it out. The fumigators come and destroy it all. And for the community, the last straw was when they sprayed plantain fields, pastures, everything. When they wiped out our subsistence crops, that's where everything died. Everything died, and people had to leave since there was nothing left to harvest.

To make matters worse, the negative health impacts of aerial spraying had to be resolved by communities themselves, for the lack of nearby health services meant that residents could not easily access care.

While the airplanes fumigated, and while the police and army uprooted inhabitants' coca plants, solutions for rural poverty were nowhere to be found in Putumayo. Once again, this shows how anti-drug strategies deepened poverty and the frailty of campesinos' livelihoods in Putumayo.

Extractivism and the War on Drugs

The fourth feature of the state's militarization strategy is its linkage to resource extraction, which has the effect of destabilizing community organizations in the region. In this regard, Sandra explained:

My strongest memories are from when they started indiscriminate bombings of communities, because of the advances of the oil companies. It was the army that pulled the trigger. It's not fair that the army, under the pretext of the FARC's presence—yes there was [such a presence], you can't deny that—but it wasn't the FARC that was pointing [a gun] at the community, it was the army. We as civilians aren't the ones to blame for the FARC passing through our communities, or the fact that they camp out in our communities. But the army immediately came and stigmatized us: we were all guerrillas, but they didn't bother looking at who had weapons and who was the civilian population. So, that's sad, because in addition to pointing their guns at us, they also wanted to uproot us from the area to hand it over to multinational companies. It's been a difficult discussion, in various settings, with the oil company, the army, the government. That happened, for example, when some communities that are part of the [community] organization were displaced from the village of La Piña, on the border. In the future, they plan to put a military base there—it's part of the campesino reserve area—but we know that there's a lot of oil there, so the big multinationals and the government already know what they're going to do there. But, because of our organization, they haven't been able to. But we were able to figure it out, due to some maps where you can see what they plan to do. So the communities would say back then, "But why are they doing this to us?" And we would tell them, "Do you know what's there? Oil! They're going to put up a military base, that's why." So, the pretext is the guerrillas and, right now, the pretext is coca. But they're really just covers—what they are really interested in is drilling our land, and they want to push the people out, whatever it takes.

My strongest memories are from when they started indiscriminate bombings of communities, because of the advances of the oil companies. It was the army that pulled the trigger.

According to the National Center for Historical Memory, the reforms to the armed forces and police that took place under Plan Colombia facilitated the oil industry's resurgence in Putumayo: "The increased manpower and the modernization of armaments and military doctrine on which [Plan Colombia] was based allowed

the Colombian state to ‘secure’ certain zones in Putumayo that had oil reserves and that had a historically weak or nonexistent military presence” (CNMH 2015, 278).

This observation is supported by an analysis of the linkages between the oil industry and Colombia’s armed forces. One of the mechanisms for such cooperation is the signing of agreements between oil companies and the Ministry of Defense aimed at protecting companies’ investments throughout the country. Indeed, between 2004 and 2014, the government signed forty agreements totaling more than COP73 billion (US\$21.5 million) with Ecopetrol, Vetra, Emerald Energy, Gran Tierra, Amerisur, Consorcio Colombia Energy, and Pacific. The agreements directly involved the army’s 27th Brigade, which has jurisdiction over the campesino reserve area and indigenous Nasa territories in the Andes-Amazon region. Local communities have denounced this situation as a human rights violation (Cepeda Castro 2015).

By way of example, it is noteworthy that during the same period in which forced displacement intensified in the Perla Amazónica campesino reserve area, in part due to the actions of the armed forces, there was an increase in activity by Amerisur, the oil company that holds land titles in the area. According to information from Colombia’s Congress, Amerisur reported an output of 151,878 barrels in 2010; 144,190 barrels in 2011; 432,970 barrels in 2012; and 1,726,600 barrels in 2013 (Cepeda Castro 2015). Furthermore, according to data from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, oil has been Putumayo’s main export in recent years (Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo 2017). Ultimately, all of these examples demonstrate that the state’s priority has been to militarize the region to protect the interests of private companies, which, instead of increasing the government’s legitimacy, has led women coca growers to view the state as a biased actor and as an enemy of the interests of women and their communities.

Fear of Prosecution: Disproportionate Punishment for Drug-Related Crimes

During our social mapping exercise, women repeatedly referred to Law 30 of 1986⁴¹ as a punishment that the state was applying to them on account of being

41 Law 30 of 1986, or the National Narcotics Statute, is the legal framework that incorporates international drug control policies, as based on international conventions ratified by Colombia, into domestic law. The law classifies the criminal conduct related to drugs and their respective sanctions. Although these provisions were subsequently replaced by the Penal Code, citizens continue to associate drug-related crimes with Law 30.

coca growers. They also spoke of the ways that Law 30 has affected their lives and those of their families, demonstrating a deep awareness of the criminal sanctions to which they are exposed as a result of growing coca. Despite the fact that, according to data from the National Penitentiary and Prison Institute, few people are actually incarcerated for the crime of cultivating coca plants (as outlined in article 375 of the Penal Code), it is important to point out that the available data do not allow us to quantify the small farmers who have been prosecuted for their involvement in coca, given that a variety of articles in the Penal Code are used to prosecute small farmers, raising the issue of potential double counting. According to the data provided by the National Penitentiary and Prison Institute—which we obtained via *derecho de petición*—between 2010 and 2014, 882 people were sent to prison for the crime of the cultivation of illicit plants in conjunction with other crimes, while 459 people were sentenced for article 375 alone.

As noted by Rodrigo Uprimny, Diana Guzmán, and Jorge Parra (2013), the sanctions for these crimes are not proportionate to the harm caused by the prohibited conduct. An examination of the penal, utilitarian, and constitutional proportionality of the punishments reveals that prohibitionist drug policies have used irrational punishments for crimes that lack a significant social impact. Table 3 compares the possible punishments for the crime of cultivating illicit crops with the punishments that are usually applied to high-impact crimes against life, security, integrity, and sexual freedom, such as larceny, rape, conspiracy to commit a crime, and torture.

Table 3
Punishment for drug-related crimes compared to other crimes

Crime (Colombian Penal Code)	Punishment		
	Minimum penalty	Average penalty	Maximum penalty
Cultivation of illicit plants (art. 375)	5 years 4 months	11 years 8 months	18 years
Larceny (art. 239 et seq.)	2 years 8 months	9 years 4 months	16 years
Torture (art. 178)	10 years 8 months	16 years 8 months	22 years 6 months
Rape (art. 205)	12 years	16 years	20 years
Conspiracy to commit a crime (art. 340)	4 years	11 years	18 years

SOURCE: Colombian Penal Code

As demonstrated in the table, sanctions for the crime of cultivating illicit crops are harsh in comparison to the punishments for other offenses, such as conspiracy to commit a crime, which would apply to someone who is involved in an illegal armed group. In addition, the average punishment for rape—a crime that infringes on personal integrity and sexual freedom—is slightly greater compared to the average punishment for the crime of illicit crop cultivation.

Such disproportionality has direct and indirect impacts on women coca growers. Their testimonies reveal how incarceration for this crime has affected their and their families' lives. As Gloria Oliva explained:

For us, coca leaf has provided a way to get by; it has allowed me to support my family. But for many families, it has been a failure ... Some people are in jail, others have been buried because they were killed by someone trying to rob them. In this [crop], there's a lot of conflict.

Sandra added:

I now have a hit on my record because they caught me with 700 grams, which I had been carrying to pay for my son's graduation fees and all of his school stuff—you know how those expenses add up. It was going to give me about 400,000 pesos [US\$117]. That's why I was carrying 700 grams of merchandise. But it wasn't possible.

And Rosaura noted:

They arrested [my husband] under Law 30. He went to prison for coca trafficking because he was carrying it to sell it. So I began to get moving. His sentence was for thirty years, and the entire process was thanks to my efforts, to the fact that I wasn't behind bars, that I was a leader, that I was the treasurer for the community action board in Huila. I have never had problems with the community or anything. I collected about 5,000 signatures, and all of these actions I took helped reduce his sentence to twenty-five months.

Thus, the criminalization of coca-related activities, together with the disproportionate punishment related to these activities, exacerbated the already difficult situation in the countryside, with consequences that remain alive today, given that many women coca growers and their relatives now have criminal records.

A Culture of Extravagance and Waste

In addition to the aforementioned impacts, the coca boom in the region transformed the cultural dynamics within communities, who often made the abrupt transition from poverty to wealth as a result of their coca cultivation. This led to a culture of extravagance and waste in certain sectors that ended up damaging the social fabric and instigating violence against the most vulnerable. Violeta described the situation as follows:

In 1994, I began working again as a substitute teacher, and I worked in a nearby village. It was the height of coca cultivation. In the village, they were just throwing money around. People were harvesting coca left and right. For example, by the time the weekend came, they would drink like you wouldn't believe. Or throw coins so the children [could pick them up], and they would take 100-peso bills and use them to roll cigarettes and then smoke them. People were crazy with money. And that put people's lives [at risk] because of the issue of the mafia. It was awful.

Viviana recounted:

[Coca cultivation] has also had negative consequences for us. The work is an environment surrounded by what have you—money, women, drinking. It's hard to keep your family together, for your husband to be faithful to you and your children, because when [the men] sell coca, they get together. And [we women] see what's happening, but we now have a different mentality. So you go there [to where the men are gathered], and your husband says, "Buy yourself a car, buy yourself a truck, we're going to travel to such-and-such place," this and that ... I mean, there is so much vanity. Right? I don't know, so much ego, so much arrogance. And that he's a commission agent and how much is he earning, and this leads to so much disintegration.

Sometimes, the culture of opulence that resulted from the extreme cash flow in the region also affected power relations, whereby whoever had the most money was the one who imposed law and order. Violeta told us about a neighbor of hers who was involved in the mafia:

He wasn't from our village, he came from another one farther away. But our village was his playground. There, he would go to the bars. Things were horrible back then. So he would be happy going out with three or four bodyguards, and he was happy, *bang, bang, bang*, to the ground, it didn't matter who he killed. One day he killed two brothers because one of them asked him something or other, and he got up and *bang*. Then the other brother

came and asked him, “Why did you kill my brother?” And he took his pistol and shot him in the head. Two brothers dead, just like that. Horrible! That was brutal ... That kind of fanaticism with money is the worst. It was terrible.

On top of this lifestyle of extravagance and waste, the illegality of coca cultivation and the presence of armed actors led to the near disappearance of community organizing in the region, given that “in situations such as these, building roots in the region became nonsense; all of the money from coca either went elsewhere or was spent on drinking, women, and bars” (Ojeda 2007, 234). Likewise, as demonstrated in a report by the National Center for Historical Memory, armed actors in the area inflamed the culture of opulence; this was particularly so among paramilitary groups, who, for example, would set up brothels in the areas where they were based and would organize large-scale events to flaunt their wealth (CNMH 2012a).

ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS: “MY FATHER BELIEVED IN THE IDEA OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, AND IT TURNED OUT TO BE A TOTAL SHAM.”

Thanks to the agreements reached between the Colombian government and local communities—which were the result of coca growers’ marches in 1996 and the strengthening of social movements based on these mobilizations⁴²—the past twenty years have seen the emergence of various initiatives focused on the substitution of illicit crops and on alternative development, some of which have been promoted by communities themselves and others by state institutions operating within the framework of the war on drugs. Thus far, this chapter has analyzed the militarization and repression of coca-growing communities; in this section, we explore the state’s efforts to work with communities to transform illicit economies into licit ones. Below, we offer a brief analysis of these efforts, focusing in particular on gender-based measures.

Initiatives Promoted by the International Development Community and the Colombian State

Even though alternative development in Colombia dates back to the 1980s (in Cauca and Nariño), it became official national strategy in 1994 through a policy document known as CONPES 2734. This document created the Alternative Del-

42 The topic of marches and mobilizations led by coca growers in the Andes-Amazon region is explored in greater detail in chapter four.

opment Program, and in 1995 another document, CONPES 2799, announced the National Alternative Development Plan. Later, in 2003, CONPES 3218 laid out guidelines for alternative development interventions, focusing on three components: (i) productive projects and income generation; (ii) a post-eradication and containment model embodied by the Forest Warden Families Program; and (iii) institutional strengthening, social development, and monitoring (Ministerio de Justicia 2017).

The Forest Warden Families Program is representative of the Colombian government's alternative development interventions to curb the growth of coca crops, particularly in the southern part of the country. According to the Territorial Renewal Agency, this program sought to "generate the conditions for sustainable, licit rural economies and contribute to the strengthening of the countryside, connecting and engaging families in the development of good agricultural, environmental, and socio-organizational practices." To meet this goal, the program had the following components:

- *Economic, agricultural, environmental, and social assistance* that sought to provide training and technical support for families undertaking productive projects.
- *Conditional financial assistance* that allowed families to meet their basic needs once the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime certified the absence of illicit crops on their land.
- *Temporary food assistance* that provided basic food supplies for families, ensuring food security for those participating in the program while they got their productive projects off the ground.
- *Productive projects* to be implemented by local community organizations with experience and technical capacity, supported by the program's technical team. Each project had to include an investment plan for the relevant farm.
- *Monitoring mechanisms* consisting of periodic verification by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime that the areas were free of illicit crops.

In theory, after performing a participatory diagnosis to identify the agricultural profile of a given area, the program would allocate financial resources to support relevant value chains. The main value chains supported were cacao, coffee, silvopasture, rubber, palm, fish farming, and small farm animals. In addition to providing financial resources, the program supported beneficiaries with a team of professionals in agriculture, forestry, and community development. Based on the information provided by the Territorial Renewal Agency, each productive project lasted for one year and

was not continued the following year in the same village or even within the same municipality, suggesting that the projects had a limited medium- and long-term impact.

Between 2003 and 2013, the Forest Warden Families Program spent approximately COP781 billion (US\$224 million) in support of 370,000 families. In Putumayo, it spent nearly COP75 billion (US\$22 million), representing 9.6% of its total spending throughout the country, and supported 29,227 families, representing 7.8% of all families supported by the program. Putumayo was the first department in the country to roll out the program and was the only department with a consistent program presence between 2003 and 2013 (Observatorio de Drogas de Colombia 2016). According to the Territorial Renewal Agency, the program's 2014 budget for Putumayo was nearly COP11,000 million (US\$3.2 million), almost five times more than the prior year. Nonetheless, the program was not continued in the department in 2015.

The Presidential Agency for International Cooperation provided information in response to our *derecho de petición* concerning the alternative development projects that were officially implemented in the departments of Cauca, Caquetá, Nariño, and Putumayo between 2010 and 2017. According to the information we received, the donors for these projects were wide and varied and included bilateral donors (e.g., Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States), as well as United Nations agencies, multilateral organizations (e.g., the Inter-American Development Bank), and national-level agencies (e.g., the Rural Development Agency, the Colombian Institute for Rural Development, and the Ministry of Justice). Additionally, in these four departments, a total of 3,226 projects were implemented at a value of US\$257.28 million. In Putumayo, 286 projects were implemented between 2010 and 2016 with a total budget of US\$29.34 million. In other words, approximately 11% of all resources were invested in productive projects in Putumayo.

Our analysis of the information gathered through *derechos de petición* reveals that for alternative development projects financed both with resources from the Colombian government and with funds from international agencies, there is no official data on the impact and sustainability of productive projects, nor on the number of beneficiaries disaggregated by sex. It is thus impossible to determine whether the projects had a positive impact in the region or whether women were active participants in these activities. When we asked the Territorial Renewal Agency about the strategies used to promote community participation, particularly among women, the entity indicated that the projects incorporated meetings with beneficiaries at the municipal and village levels; however, there were no specific measures targeted at en-

asuring women's participation in these settings. Furthermore, this intervention model lacked policies with a gender focus. According to the agency, “[the projects] promoted actions aimed at highlighting the role of rural women and their importance within the object of intervention, which was the family.” However, this approach reproduced a familist focus and did not translate into concrete actions that responded to the specific needs of women. Lastly, in terms of monitoring, there is no record of the number of hectares affected by the Forest Warden Families Program's productive projects, nor of the areas where illicit crops were substituted.

According to the Regional Roundtable of Social Organizations from Putumayo, Baja Bota Caucana, and Cofanía Jardines de Sucumbíos (hereafter Regional Roundtable), alternative development projects in the region have suffered from a number of shortcomings that—despite the significant resources invested—have caused them to have a limited impact and to fail to definitively substitute illicit crops with other productive activities that allow families to make a living (Mesa Regional 2015). In general, these failings stem from the limited participation of communities, lack of adequate technical assistance, and absence of accountability mechanisms.

With regard to participation, organizations from the Regional Roundtable note that they have not been included in the project design phase, particularly as it relates to the definition of the type of projects, type of financing, cultivation techniques, and sales strategies. Moreover, technical teams' lack of awareness of the organizational processes within communities have accentuated communities' fragmentation and restricted the participation of certain sectors.

In terms of technical support, the organizations note that many trainings are carried out online, limiting the possibilities for learning. In addition, technical teams' lack of region-specific knowledge has led to the “application of planting and cultivation models that are not suited to the Amazonian ecosystem” (Mesa Regional 2015). In addition, the projects often lack a market analysis to ensure the successful sale of the products being used to substitute coca.

Finally, the women we interviewed explained that despite their willingness to participate in substitution programs such as the Forest Warden Families Program, the shortcomings of such initiatives ultimately affect their sustainability. As Rosaura recounted:

The Forest Warden program came, and residents of our village joined in, because if you didn't, you were going to have your [coca] crops ripped out, because they go there with those devices that can detect coca. I didn't get any

in-kind assistance. I was the one who got the seedlings, I planted 150 plantain seedlings. Since there was a little piece of uncultivated land there, I fertilized it with cow manure, and I put together a nice little crop, a planting pasture, I was the one who put up the fences and everything. We did that for a year and a half, almost two years, and we planted so much because we wanted to move forward, and the little airplanes came and destroyed all our work.

Moreover, as noted by the women, eradication efforts and alternative development programs were carried out in parallel, which led them to lose confidence in the state. In light of eradication efforts and the violence that they brought with them, some people signed up for government programs, such as the Forest Warden Families Program, but ended up frustrated and without the earnings needed to make ends meet. Sandra, for example, told us the story of her father, a native of Nariño who moved to Putumayo, where he signed up for the government's substitution programs; however, after these programs failed, he returned to Nariño to work once again as an informal day laborer:

During the whole time of Plan Colombia, my father—being a [community] leader—believed in the idea of development in the countryside, and it turned out to be a total sham. He was part of the forest wardens, he believed in it—I mean, he uprooted coca, which was what had kept his family afloat! He ripped out the coca plants and planted palm, peach-palm. After harvest, nobody wanted to buy from him. And even the cooperative that had been formed [around the new value chains], my dad even saved a piece of paper saying that they owed him some hearts-of-palm. So instead of improving his quality of life, it made it worse. That was very hard, and he decided to sell the farm. That was the problem—having assistance from the government, and having to stop cultivating coca when that was what helped us get by ... Obviously, [the new crops] didn't do that ... What's worse, not everyone even got assistance, since it wasn't that much to begin with, so only the most savvy people got it. It didn't last at all, and they brought seeds that never took root, I don't know where they brought them from, but those seeds never sprouted.

These short-term programs ended up being a type of hand-out that failed to address the structural causes that were driving people to grow coca—and, on some occasions, they even exacerbated those very causes of poverty and inequality in the countryside.

Finally, according to the communities, these programs lacked accountability mechanisms to ensure the appropriate and transparent use of resources. Ultimately, these short-term programs ended up being a type of hand-out that failed to address the structural causes that were driving people to grow coca—and, on some occasions, they even exacerbated those very causes of poverty and inequality in the countryside.

Community-Led Initiatives

Due to the repeated failings of the development programs promoted by the state and their lack of sustainability, between 2003 and 2006 community organizations throughout the region began to mobilize around the hazardous impacts of aerial spraying. This process, which gathered proposals from the municipal and regional levels, gave rise to what was later named the Regional Roundtable of Social Organizations from Putumayo, Baja Bota Caucana, and Cofanía Jardines de Sucumbíos, which would serve as the mechanism to foster “agreement between the national government, the international community, and the department of Putumayo” (Mesa Regional 2015, 80).

One of the first aims of the Regional Roundtable was to ensure the construction of the Integrated Plan for Alternative Rural Development. To this end, between 2007 and 2008, the group conducted a variety of advocacy and awareness-raising efforts aimed at “1) achieving the voluntary, gradual, and comprehensive substitution of coca crops, 2) attaining a state of well-being for campesino communities in political, economic, social, environmental, and cultural terms, 3) preventing the aerial spraying and displacement of communities, and 4) [securing] an equitable distribution of economic resources for investing in the rural sector” (ibid., 81).

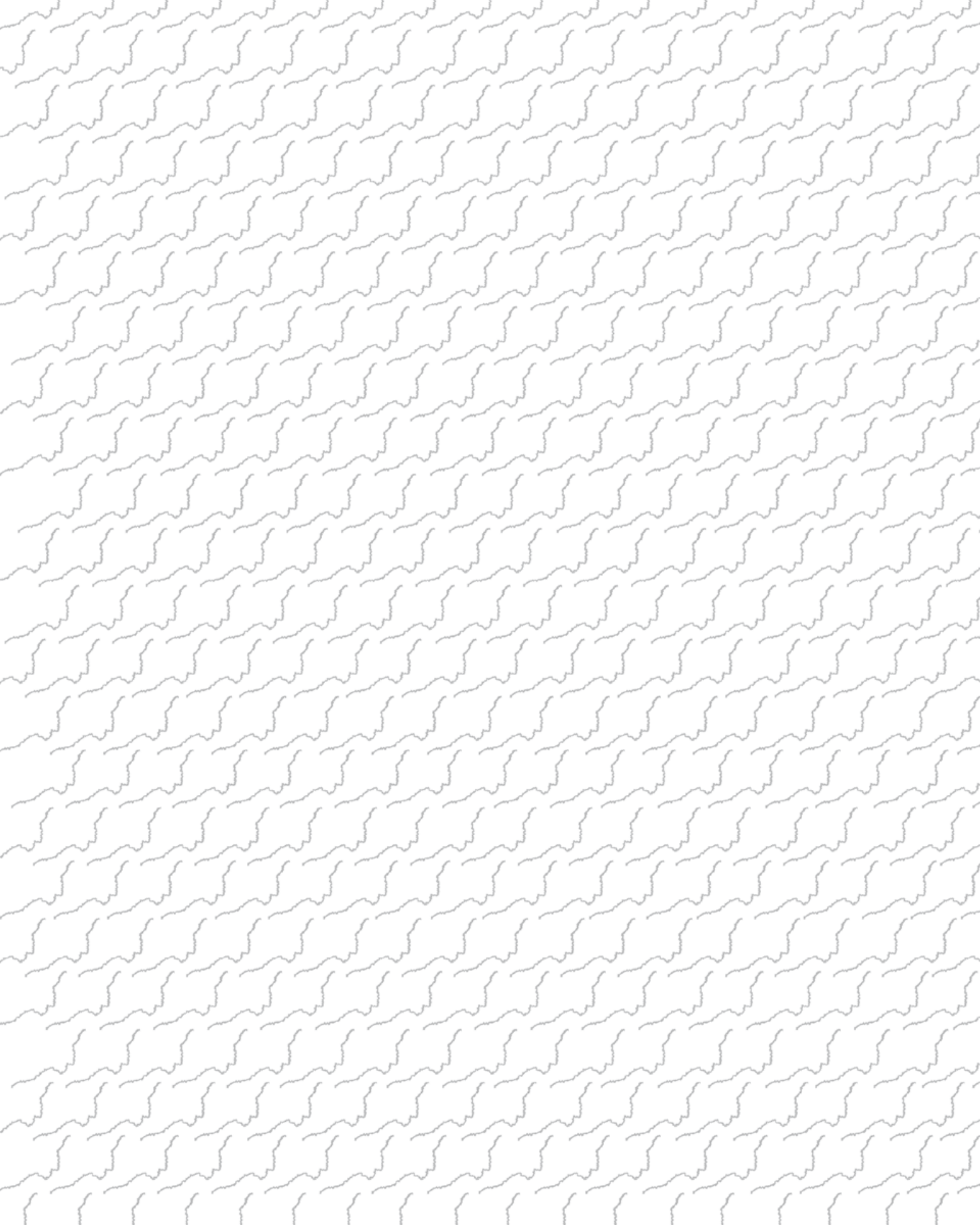
The idea of a community-led alternative development plan was replicated at the municipal level through comprehensive campesino development plans that were designed with the support of the Regional Roundtable in the municipalities of Orito and Puerto Asís, among others. Nonetheless, the lack of an adequate response from municipal and departmental authorities, together with the lack of sufficient resources, prevented these initiatives from being implemented. These planning processes culminated in the development of the 2035 Andes-Amazon Comprehensive Development Plan, led by the Regional Roundtable.

This plan, which was developed with the participation of organizations and communities from the fourteen municipalities of Putumayo, Nariño, and Cauca that make up the Andes-Amazon region, was based on a participatory diagnosis that iden-

tified the impacts of the war on drugs in the region and proposed alternative methods for promoting a comprehensive development model based on social justice, quality of life, and peace (Mesa Regional 2017). Today, the expectation of these communities is that this plan will serve as a reference point for the implementation of the country's peace agreement in the Andes-Amazon region.

In conclusion, women's relationship with coca tells us about their struggle with poverty, their attempt to secure better living conditions for themselves and their families, and their search for economic alternatives in the countryside. But it also shows us how coca put them in contact with a historically absent state through the militarization of their lands. This relationship with the state thanks to coca was shaped by the convergence of anti-drug and counterinsurgent efforts, as the war on drugs and the state's efforts to rid the region of guerrillas placed women in the cross-fire. Coca cultivation—which emerged as an option for these women to overcome poverty—was attacked by the state and the international community through a variety of strategies that exacerbated this precariousness even more, leaving profound pain and suffering in their wake. It was not coca itself, but rather the war against it, that wreaked the most havoc on these communities.

The lessons that these women learned from the difficult years of crop eradication efforts are pushing them today to seek alternatives to coca, but with a deep distrust of the state's resolve to comply with the promises of the peace accord, including its guarantees of security. Thus, coca remains present in their lives, and these women observe cautiously as new efforts aimed at eradicating and substituting illicit crops come to the fore. In the words of a participant from the regional conference, it is critical that “this not become another Plan Colombia.”





Sale el Sol

de la mañana



Bus



Iglesia
Puerto
Colón



2



Desayuno

Servida desayuno

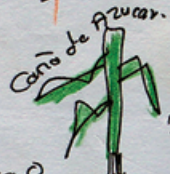


Tejiendo el
Tiempo Libre

Televisión



Caca



3



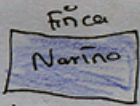
Cultivo



Carro



moto



Finca



Casa

Aseguro el futuro de mis niñas
el estudio, comida, la ropa,

5



ejercito



glifosato



Paramilitares



Carnet.

Ensanar

Martha

Familias en acción



Caprecom.
Mami

adulto mayor

CHAPTER 3

ARMED ACTORS AND THE HOUSEHOLD: SETTINGS OF VIOLENCE, OPPRESSION, AND RESISTANCE FOR WOMEN COCA GROWERS

“That’s why we call ourselves women coqueras [coca growers], we are the ones who have to get up at 3 a.m. and work all day, and not go to bed until 10 p.m. And it’s always been that way: women, mothers heads of household, women with their husbands, women with a bunch of kids, obligations, and all of that.”

Martha

This chapter explores how gender structures in the rural Andes-Amazon world affect the lives and bodies of women coca growers—impacts that materialize in the form of oppression and violence. In particular, we examine two settings that are embedded in the daily routines of women coca growers in Putumayo: first, the household, and second, the omnipresence of armed actors. The first section of this chapter looks at the sexual division of labor in coca-growing families and documents the existence of an unjust triple-shift workday in which women are responsible for caring for the household and children, performing productive work on the farm, and participating in social and community organizations. The second section focuses on the ways that the gender norms laid down by armed actors in Putumayo affect these women. In this regard, we demonstrate how such norms promoted specific forms of

violence in the region that affected women on account of their being women in a rural society based on patriarchal structures.

“WHILE I COOK AND CLEAN, MY HUSBAND LAYS IN THE HAMMOCK ... AND THAT HAMMOCK SWINGS BACK AND FORTH, BACK AND FORTH”: THE TRIPLE-SHIFT WORKDAY OF WOMEN COCA GROWERS IN THE ANDES-AMAZON REGION

“My mother shaped us through cooking and work”: The Sexual Division of Labor in Cocalero Families

“When I was six, I was already doing chores. And my father was very strict. He would make us [girls] do the work of adults from the time we were little, he would take down all the dirty dishes for me since I couldn’t reach the countertop, and I had to wash it all really good because my mom had recently given birth. And he would send me to the creek to wash all my baby brother’s clothes and to get the mud out of his pants.” These are Rosaura’s recollections of her childhood; as a rural woman, she was put to work at a young age, not only to perform household chores but also, alongside her older brothers, to work in the field:

My dad would take all of us with him, like little worker ants, and we had to help him work and do things. Sometimes he would leave for a while and would leave my brother and me to do a certain task: “You have to plant all this yuca or corn for me,” and we had to go and plant it. We were just little kids. I was seven or eight years old, and that was my job.

María Fernanda’s childhood memories are quite similar:

I had to get up with my mom at 5 a.m. to make breakfast ... I was enrolled in school, but I would leave school to help with household chores. On weekends, I helped my parents work in the field, in the coca crops, planting coca as well as other food like plantains and corn. And we would work during school vacations as well; during vacation, we worked on our crops, helping spray pesticides or harvest.

The testimonies of Rosaura and María Fernanda reveal a shared trait among women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region: they are rural women whose life trajectory is shaped by family units in which the majority of household tasks fall on them, and who also actively participate in productive work in the fields. These rural women, raised to be caregivers, also quickly become breadwinners together with

the men, who are raised to perform productive work but who are not usually expected to do household chores.

This section looks at how the sexual division of labor plays out among calero families in the Andes-Amazon region, as well as how it deepens gender inequality in the countryside. In doing so, it draws on feminist perspectives of the care economy, which provide theoretical and methodological tools for better understanding the problem's many nuances and complexities. As explained by Corina Rodríguez, the care economy is a school of thought “concerned with shedding light on the gender dimensions of economic dynamics ... and describing the economic roots of gender inequality” (2015, 30–31).

Accordingly, this school of thought seeks to highlight how prevailing gender norms in certain social sectors place men and women in specific areas of the market and the economy.

In this context, feminist economics frames its thinking around the distinction between reproductive (or care) work and productive work:

[Reproductive work] refers to all activities and tasks necessary for people's daily survival ... including self-care, the direct care of others, the provision of the preconditions for care (cleaning the house, purchasing and preparing food) and the management of care (schedule coordination, transportation to school and other facilities, supervision of paid caregivers, among others). (ibid., 36)

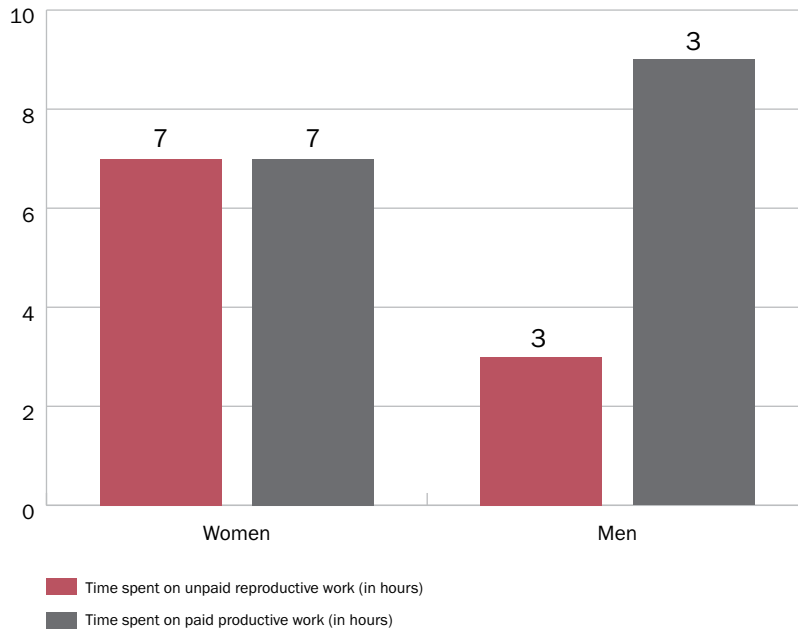
Meanwhile, productive labor refers to those “activities that result in the production of goods and services for the market” (DANE 2012). According to Rodríguez, reproductive work is linked to the sustainability and care of life and is what enables productive labor to have workers who are able to face the demands of the economy: without food, maintenance, or the daily care that all human beings need to live, the workforce could not be sustained.

This two-pronged structure consisting of reproductive and productive work has persisted in Western patriarchal societies on the basis of three basic trends: First is the sexual division of labor, in which women are responsible for reproductive work and men for productive work. Second, as described by Rodríguez, despite the fact that reproductive work is what makes productive work possible, it has tended to remain invisible in the eyes of the market, for it is not recognized as “work” per se and thus tends to be unpaid. Third, these two characteristics have served to “naturalize” care work to the extent that women are seen as caregivers *by nature*, which, as noted

by Martha Nussbaum (2000), perpetuates conditions of oppression and inequality by placing the entire burden of sustaining life within the family on women and by denigrating care work and failing to recognize it as actual work. In Colombia, the sexual division of productive and reproductive labor has functioned in distinct ways and, particularly in the rural Andes-Amazon world inhabited by women coca growers, has acquired facets that have often translated into increased inequality between men and women in the home.

One of the tools for measuring the distribution of care work and productive work in Colombia is the National Survey on Time Use (ENUT by its Spanish initials), conducted by the National Administrative Department of Statistics. Survey data from 2012 indicate that despite the existence of a sexual division of labor in which women take on the role of caregivers while men assume the role of breadwinners, women have a complex relationship with the economic productive cycle.

Figure 4
Time spent on reproductive and productive work, by sex



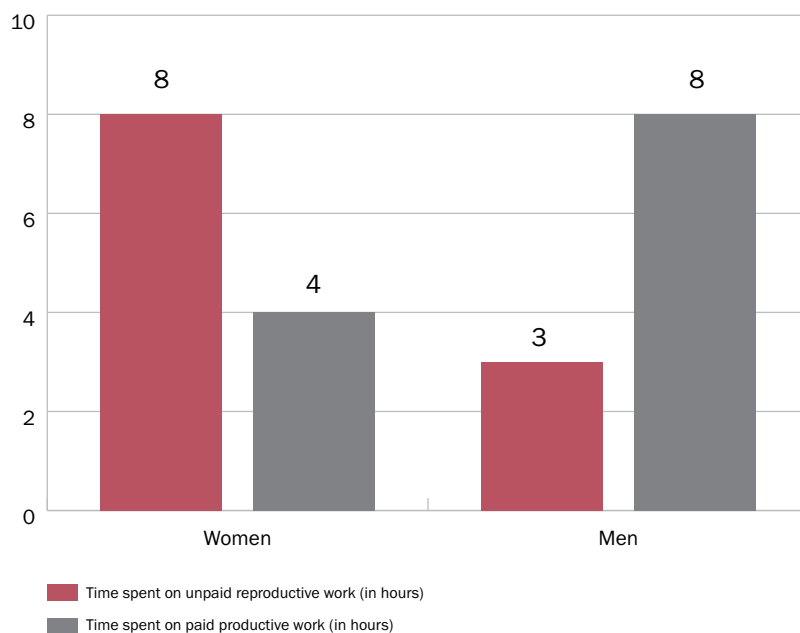
SOURCE: DANE (2016a)

According to the survey, women in Colombia spend a daily average of seven hours and twenty-three minutes on unpaid care work, while men spend three hours and ten minutes on such work, with 89.4% of women participating in unpaid repro-

ductive work and 63.1% of men doing so. In this regard, the first conclusion stemming from the survey is that the burden of unpaid care work falls largely on women. But what the survey data reveal in terms of productive work is that, in terms of the use of their time, Colombian women also actively participate in this work. According to the ENUT, women spend an average of seven hours and seventeen minutes each day on paid work, and men spend an average of nine hours and five minutes, with 34.6% of women performing paid productive work and 57% of men doing so. If we compare the time spent by men and women on productive and reproductive work in Colombia, we can see that women are investing seven hours each day on tasks associated with the productive cycle and seven hours with those connected to the reproductive cycle of the economy. In other words, they are performing a double-shift workday—one paid and the other unpaid.

Figure 5

Time spent by rural women and men on reproductive and productive work

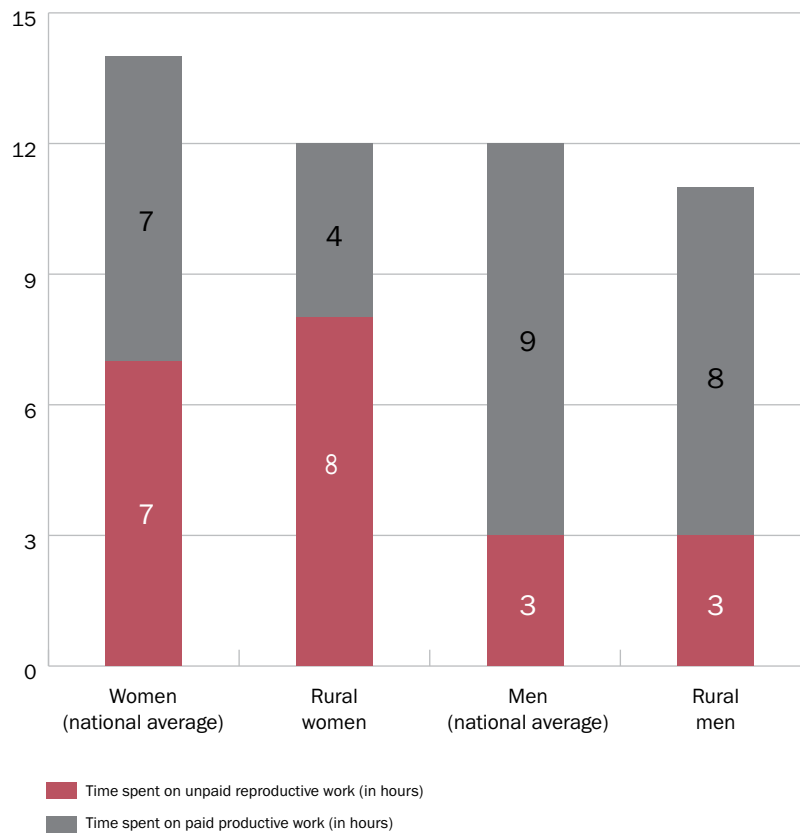


SOURCE: DANE (2016a)

This panorama is more nuanced when it comes to rural women: according to the ENUT, rural women over the age of ten participate in 93% of daily reproductive or care tasks, while rural men participate in 60.6% of these tasks. In terms of time use, in the countryside, women spend an average of eight hours and twelve minutes

on care work, while men spend three hours and six minutes. The burden of reproductive work falls mainly on women, with rural women spending more hours than the national average on unpaid reproductive work. With regard to productive work, rural women are below the national average: they spend a daily average of four hours on this kind of work, while men spend eight hours and eleven minutes on such work, with 38.4% of women and 68% of men performing such work.

Figure 6
Time spent by rural women and men on reproductive and productive work compared to the national average



SOURCE: DANE (2016a)

While the national average shows that women in Colombia participate in two daily work shifts—one doing unpaid reproductive work and the other doing productive work—in the countryside, the sexual division of labor is even stronger: women spend eight hours on care work and men spend eight hours on productive work,

with women's involvement in productive work and men's involvement in care work tending to be very little. The survey data thus confirm María Fernanda's observation: rural women are usually assigned the role of caregivers and men that of providers.

Nonetheless, the life trajectories of the women we interviewed demonstrate the complexities of this sexual division of labor in rural communities, where, often-times, the household is the site of both productive and reproductive work and where, because of this stark sexual division of labor, the household burden tends to fall almost exclusively on women, who end up playing an active role in productive tasks as well, with the aim of sustaining the life of the home.

The daily routines of women coca growers in southern Colombia reveal this daily overlap between productive and reproductive tasks, and they show that the burden of caring for the home and those who inhabit it falls largely on women, especially mothers and older daughters. María Fernanda explained:

My mother molded us through cooking and work—women and men both doing work [on the farm], but men never in the kitchen ... So imagine that we women were already doing the kitchen work and [farm] work, cooking and getting lunch ready, and then helping work two or three hours, and then on weekends all day long.

She added that her position as the older sister meant having more work than her siblings: "I'm the eldest, and, well, it's the eldest who—how do I put it ... who carries the biggest load, because you have to go and teach the younger ones, right? And take care of them."

With María Fernanda's mother absent—given that she went to work in the coca fields together with their father—the older sisters were entrusted with the task of cooking lunch for all of the field workers. María Fernanda told us:

For as long as I can remember, I had to set up a little wooden bench, my mom had me cooking for twelve workers, ten workers, and I had to climb on that bench and add the plantain, potato, all the ingredients for the stew into the pot. And when the stew was ready, I had to stick a big spoon in the pot and check that everything was soft, and then put out the fire. I was little, and my mom would leave to work. When she got home at noon, I would have the stew ready, and that's how she would teach me.

Through our participatory mapping exercise, women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region reconstructed their daily routines step by step and realized how, despite coming from different municipalities and even departments, they shared

a very similar daily reality: they get up at three or four in the morning, make breakfast for everyone in the family, get the children ready for school, leave the ingredients ready for making lunch for the field workers, go to work in the crops alongside their partners, and then at night clean, cook, wash clothes, iron, help the children with their homework, and go to bed at ten o'clock. During the week, after delegating work to their eldest daughters, these women play an active role in civil society organizations, whether as leaders or as grassroots activists; many women belong to three or four organizations at the same time.⁴³

The above panorama allows us to see the way in which women assume simultaneous roles in production and reproduction: daughters—especially the older ones—and mothers divide their time between working in the coca fields and performing domestic chores, which are not limited to caring for family members but also include caring for field workers. In this way, the campesino home where women coca growers live is simultaneously a source of production and reproduction, thereby blurring the borders between productive work and reproductive work: care tasks extend beyond the family to field workers, and women, relegated to caregiver roles since childhood, also assume production-related tasks that support the household economy, learning from and participating in the transmission of knowledge from their parents and grandparents with regard to caring for land and crops.

As argued by Patricia Jaramillo, rural women's productive and reproductive role begins at an early age and can last through old age—consequently, groups that are not part of the so-called economically active population,⁴⁴ such as girls and elderly women, contribute to the rural economy across all its stages. From childhood onward, rural women contribute to the economy in a variety of ways, including in “family gardens that provide food for the household, participation in certain stages of the agricultural productive cycle, the preparation of food for field workers, the breeding and raising of small animals, and the sale of products from their homes, among other activities” (Jaramillo 2006, 56). Jaramillo notes that this arduous routine is not usually recognized as work, which leads to exploitative and unequal relationships within the home.

43 A deeper analysis of women coca growers' participation in civil society organizations is provided in the next chapter.

44 According to the National Administrative Department of Statistics, the economically active participation is “made up of people of working age who are employed or seeking employment” (https://www.dane.gov.co/files/faqs/faq_ech.pdf).

It's a Woman's Home, but the Men Call the Shots: Oppression and Caregiving in Cocalero Families

According to Iris Marion Young, various circumstances can lead to an oppressive relationship. The type of oppression linked to the functioning of the economic system is that of exploitation, which is defined as those circumstances in which “some people exercise their capacities under the control, according to the purposes, and for the benefit of other people” (1990, 49). Thus, a social relationship is exploitative when one social group benefits from the labor of another, and when the latter does not enjoy the direct benefits of their work or make decisions concerning the conditions in which it is performed. Furthermore, exploitation involves an unequal distribution of the results of labor, for it entails “a transfer of energies from one group to another” that allows one group to accumulate benefits to the detriment of the other (ibid., 53).

In the case of the Andes-Amazon region, the tasks related to caring for the family and the community, together with productive work, tend to fall on women, to the benefit of their families and the community. The sexual division of labor underlying the distribution of tasks within families poses a double- or triple-shift workday on women, which is justified, in part, by the naturalization of care work: it is assumed that women should be responsible for care work because they are *naturally* predisposed to caring for the home and for the children; the fact that they do this work is not questioned, and therefore domestic chores are not seen as work nor is the possibility of redistributing household chores among men and women considered. As explained by Nussbaum, “The family, and women’s place in it, have often been thought to exist ‘by nature’” (2000, 253). As a result, in the words of Young, women have little negotiating power over the distribution of labor between men and women, and men, in turn, benefit from the “transfer of the fruits of material labor to men and transfer of nurturing and sexual energies to men” (1990, 50).

This situation came to light in our social mapping exercise: as women reconstructed their daily routines, we asked them if their partners worked alongside them in household chores. Many of them laughed upon hearing this question, with one woman answering, “While I cook and clean, my husband lays in the hammock ... and that hammock swings back and forth, back and forth.” Their laughter is telling in terms of the naturalization of care work: the fact that this question was silly to them and it was impossible to imagine a man doing domestic chores after finishing his productive work shows that the women-care relationship is taken for granted and never questioned, which restricts women’s possibilities of reducing their daily work hours by redistributing tasks among family members.

Meanwhile, the image of the husband resting in the hammock not only reveals the tendency for household chores to fall on women but also demonstrates the subordinate role that women generally occupy within their families, for their time, energy, and bodies are expected to be at the service of others throughout the day. They care for their children, spouses, field workers, and communities, while their personal care is often seen as irrelevant.

One approach that has solidified this idea of women as natural carers of the household is the “familist” perspective, which perceives the rural family as a harmonious and homogenous unit and, as a result, does not question the relationships that are forged among family members or the hierarchies that can develop within the household. This has had a negative impact on the design and implementation of public policies to the extent that rural programs benefit the family as a harmonious whole without taking into account the power relationships and inequalities therein (Ministerio de Salud y Protección Social 2015, 11). The principal failing of this perspective, as warned by Nussbaum, is that it sees the family as an organic whole and does not contemplate the extent to which each member of this unit is able to exercise their capacities and carry out their life plan. Indeed, “for all too often, women have been denied the basic goods of life because they have been seen as parts of an organic entity, such as the family is supposed to be, rather than as political subjects in their own right” (Nussbaum 2000, 247).

This familist perspective is reinforced by families themselves when they naturalize the roles performed by men and women: for example, in our interviews, some women referred to their families as a space characterized by love and unity, without ruptures of any kind. This was the case for Viviana, who stated, “In our culture, the mother is always at home taking care of the children, but the family is very loving, I mean, as a family, [we are] always very united, that family love, that unity.” As argued by Nussbaum, even though love and care do exist within the family—which makes it a place of vital importance for life in society and personal development—it is “difficult to deny that the family has been a, if not the, major site of the oppression of women” (Nussbaum 2000, 243), where acts of discrimination and violence take place. Thus, even though their love for their family and community might be what motivates women coca growers to work, this does not negate the fact that, on many occasions, they are immersed in oppressive relationships and subsequently denied access to their social, economic, and cultural rights, as well as the ability to accomplish their life plans.

Rosaura’s story embodies the many costs of this naturalization of care and

the violence that it can unleash: from the time she was a little girl, her father would disappear from the home for long periods, as he had another family with another woman. This meant that Rosaura's mother had to double her workload, since even though she had always been a caregiver and provider, now she had to perform the work of her absent husband. Further, before leaving to be with his other family, Rosaura's father "sold the farm and spent it all, he didn't give any of the money to my mom because he used it all up." Each time he returned to Rosaura's mother after having spent time with his other family, he would sell the farm and use the money. This repeated behavior shows that even though Rosaura's mother performed productive and reproductive work to the benefit of the family, decisions about how to spend resources were made entirely by her husband. The home was hers, but he called the shots: she was in charge of caring for and supporting the children, and he was in charge of spending and distributing the family's resources.

The first time Rosaura's father left home, after selling the farm, he sent his wife and her children to live with one of his sisters in Neiva. Rosaura recounted, "My aunt lived in a house that had been part of a rural squatter settlement, and she still hadn't built a proper house, and her doors were just sheet metal. She was alone because she didn't have a husband." In total, the house had "eight children and the two women [the aunt and Rosaura's mother], without steady income and together without husbands." To make money, Rosaura's aunt "washed clothes, cleaned houses; she would clean houses and they would pay her to iron, but, well, it wasn't like a salary that lets you live well, and she lived in a squatter settlement and there was no running water." In this setting, Rosaura and her siblings had to get up at 2 a.m. to fetch water from a nearby river, and Rosaura—at the same time that she had to care for her newborn sister—"had to sell salted potatoes with fried beef lungs on the streets, [and] popcorn, or pork chops that my mom would cook."

As the eldest daughter, Rosaura was only ten years old when she had to begin watching after her little sister. While her mother worked at a restaurant to support her children,

I had to take my sister to where my mom was so she could give her dinner, because [my mom] got off work at 10 p.m. and started around 4 a.m. It took an hour to get from our neighborhood to my mom's work, and I passed through all of that on foot with that little girl on my back so my mom could give her food. I would go back home and take her with me, because she couldn't stay [with my mom] since she was a little girl. And my mom, working, would ask her boss to give her the *pegas de arroz* [the crust at the bottom of the rice pot], and those big pieces of meat that customers would leave on their plates, and

sometimes she would pack them up in bags and I had to take it back to my cousins, that leftover food.

Both Rosaura's mom and her siblings had to take on a range of informal jobs to support the family. One especially difficult period was when her mother became ill; this forced Rosaura's brothers to assume the role of providers while Rosaura, as the eldest sister and the head of household in her mother's absence, continued working and caring for her sister. Coca crops were what kept them afloat: "My brother went to scrape leaves, you could see the coca coming up, so he went to scrape, to earn money for the week. He would go every so often and they would pay him, and that's how he was able to buy groceries, as if he were our father—bringing money home while we cared for my mom." Meanwhile, Rosaura's work on the coca crops oscillated between productive and reproductive tasks:

I would get up at 4:30 a.m. and head to the river, and all those coca pickers would bring all their laundry for me to wash. By 10 a.m., I was home again, and I would iron from 3 to 6 p.m. Then I would start making tamales, helping my mom until 11. On Sundays, I would get up early to help the butchers wash the tripe, and they would pay me with some meat when I did that. And then after that, I would help the butchers with the restaurant.

Carmen Diana Deere is among the scholars who have studied rural Latin America from a gender perspective. For her, there is a key difference between patriarchal and egalitarian family farming systems. The former "involve women's participation in agricultural and livestock tasks, but with male control over decision making and the provision of products or income resulting from this family labor" (2002, 167). By contrast, egalitarian agricultural systems are those in which the distribution of labor, decision making, and the distribution of products are carried out in a balanced way with the participation of both men and women. The family structures in which women coca growers tend to be involved are largely patriarchal ones, for even though women participate in all cycles of the family economy, they are not usually involved in decision-making processes.

Rosaura's story is a crude portrayal of the damage caused by patriarchal agricultural systems and the way in which they promote exploitative and violent relationships: each time her father would go to be with his other family, he would sell the farm and use the earnings as he wished and without consulting with other members of the household; in the face of this, Rosaura's mother bore the entire burden of caring for and supporting the family, a task that was impossible for one person, which meant that she had to delegate some of these responsibilities to her children, particularly

her daughters. Situations such as these require women to work extremely long shifts and limit their chances of exploring life plans other than caregiving and daily survival. Rosaura, for example, wanted to go to school, but her heavy daily routine made that impossible.

According to Young, exploitation enacts “social rules about what work is, who does what for whom, how work is compensated, and the social process by which the results of work are appropriated” (1990, 50). Here, social rules about who performs the work and how such work is compensated are based on socialization processes that teach women to be caregivers and to accept this role as their destiny, without much room for questioning; along these same lines, since the household responsibility falls almost entirely on women, men are more likely to disassociate themselves from their family responsibilities. As Young rightly notes, “The freedom, power, status and self-realization of men is possible precisely because women work for them” (ibid.).

What this means, in the words of Nussbaum, is that families based on a patriarchal division of labor can cause specific harm to women’s lives: “In many instances, the damage women suffer in the family takes a particular form: the woman is treated not as an end in herself, but as an adjunct or instrument of the needs of others, as a mere reproducer, cook, cleaner, sexual outlet, caretaker, rather than as a source of agency and worth in her own right” (2000, 243). Women coca growers, from an early age, engage in reproductive and productive work, and they place their energies and bodies at the service of their husbands, children, and community. In addition to placing them under economic exploitation on a daily basis, this can force them to endure—as substantiated by the women we interviewed—sexual violence at the hands of other family members, as their bodies are seen more as a service than a site of autonomy and liberty.

“In many instances, the damage women suffer in the family takes a particular form: the woman is treated not as an end in herself, but as an adjunct or instrument of the needs of others.”

Within this oppressive context experienced by women coca growers in the Andes-Amazon region, women have found ways to enjoy greater autonomy, sometimes even breaking with the family unit in order to increase their personal and economic independence and to exercise decision-making power over their own resources. Many of the women we interviewed were abandoned by their husbands or decided to separate from them. Violeta’s story is an example: “He helped very little in the household, but at least I had his company, and he helped watch the kids, at least

when they were little he helped me a lot. But as they grew up, I don't know what happened but he gradually got lazier. And when I least expected it, he left me." Faced with this, Violeta noted, "I didn't do anything to find him. I never looked for him, but I do know what my obligation is," which is to take care of and support the children.

Like the case of Rosaura's mother, Violeta's story also shows how the household is perceived as the almost exclusive responsibility of women, while men make the decisions and fail to meet their family responsibilities: "He wasn't a fan of me working. He wanted me to stay home and take care of the children, and to go out and work with him, yes. But I didn't control one penny." This situation changed when he abandoned them, as Violeta was forced to serve as the family's sole breadwinner—and coca provided her the opportunity to support her family and manage her own money for her and her family's benefit. As demonstrated by the cases of Rosaura and Violeta, coca has offered an alternative for sustaining the production and reproduction of families that are left in the hands of single mothers.

With respect to women who decide to leave their husbands, the women's testimonies reveal a desire to make decisions concerning family resources and to escape from abusive or unhappy relationships. This was the case of María Fernanda, who had decided to move in with her partner and who became pregnant and had a child. Little by little, her partner began to neglect his family responsibilities: he would spend all of his income on alcohol, buying none of the things his little daughter needed. María Fernanda thus decided to leave him and work as a coca scraper. A while later, she tried to get in touch with him so her daughter could speak to him and learn about who her father was: "Look, here's a little girl who wants to see you. I'm not going to be selfish about it. If you want to send money for your daughter, go ahead—if you don't want to help her, then don't." María Fernanda's attitude toward her ex demonstrates how she bore the entire burden of supporting her child, and even though she recognized the possibility of him providing child support, she did not demand that he do so.

Similarly, after her ex told her that he was still single and had not found another girlfriend, she responded, "Well, you aren't going to find another woman like me, who puts up with all of your crap, another die-hard woman who gets up at 4 a.m. to make you breakfast and lunch and to go work. Not all us women think the same." María Fernanda's position is ultimately based on her idea of a "good wife" as someone who places value on caregiving. Upon realizing the costs that this "good wife" model was having for her own life, María Fernanda decided to abandon her husband, and she found that coca offered a source of independence and sustenance for supporting herself and her daughter, as well as for accessing better educational opportunities.

After leaving her husband, she earned several technical certificates and is now hoping to start university studies; she has been able to save money and is ready to pay for her daughter's college when the time comes.

Regardless of whether a woman's husband leaves her or vice versa, the woman is left in a situation that forces her to seek independence and to secure the means to support her family. As argued by Deere, rural Latin America is increasingly coming across "domestic units with women heads of household, without either a permanent or a temporary adult male" (2002, 167). In Colombia's Andes-Amazon region, coca has provided a source of livelihood that has allowed women heads of household to attain economic independence, to exercise decision-making power over earnings, and to support and care for their families. Nonetheless, such independence has also brought costs, harm, and violence, underscoring the barriers encountered by rural women who transgress patriarchal family models and the commonly held notion of what makes a "good woman."

Tired of the dire economic situation faced by her family each time their father went to be with his other family, Rosaura decided to leave home at the age of fourteen. Her first job was working as a coca scraper. "There was another worker known as Pibe and he would always harass me. I didn't know back then what a man was or any of that, I didn't know about those things. One night, he entered my room and I ran out of there shouting, and I said, 'I'm leaving this place.' At any moment, one of those workers would grab you by force, and that's why I left." After that, Rosaura found a job working as a maid at a house in Florencia, where her employers were two doctors:

She was a doctor and he was a doctor, and they had a little girl. They would take their daughter to the nanny, and I would stay home alone, cleaning and cooking. The wife had lots of [work] trips, where she would be sent to a lot of different towns, and it would be just the husband and me there, him in his room and me in mine. So the husband also tried to sexually abuse me, and I said, "Let go of me, leave me alone in my room," and I shut my door and locked it. The next day, I told him to pay me so I could quit, and I said, "You either pay me, or I'll tell your wife what you did, and if not, I'm going to get a friend to help me file a police report." I was a minor.

The risk of sexual violence is permanent for those women—and oftentimes girls—who leave their families in search of independence, better life opportunities, or freedom from oppressive situations. Women without partners or family close by are seen as transgressing the values of a patriarchal social system and are thus more

vulnerable to suffering violence by those who see a woman's body as a mere item at their disposal. Moreover, independence for women coca growers often means leaving behind their children, as they must delegate someone else with their care in order to earn enough money to support the family. After leaving her husband, María Fernanda had to ask her mother to look after her daughter while she went to work as a scraper in the coca fields; she had to stay at the work site for long periods of time to be able to earn enough income to support her family and save a bit as well.

In Rosaura's case, two difficult circumstances were added to her separation from her children: her husband was incarcerated under Law 30 for his involvement in the narcotics trade, and this meant more daily work for Rosaura, who had to work two different jobs to support her family. Her children stayed at home alone, and one of them began using drugs at an early age, which led her to place him in a rehabilitation center in Bogotá. With this situation, Rosaura had to work even harder to support her son's rehabilitation costs and to save enough money to be able to visit him: "It was as if everything was being snatched away from me ... my son tried to escape; so he couldn't be left alone anymore, they had to assign him a substitute mother so I, in the meantime, could work to buy food for my other children." The emotional costs of this kind of situation are very high for women who, since childhood, have cared and provided for others; shame, sadness, and criticism from family members—especially husbands—for not having adequately fulfilled their "jobs as mothers" are some of the burdens that they must carry due to their separation from their children.

GENDER NORMS AND VIOLENCE AT THE HANDS OF ARMED ACTORS

In addition to experiencing inequality and violence in their own homes, women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region must also live alongside armed actors who have settled in the region on account of the coca trade and have imposed social and gender norms that have victimized these women in multiple ways. In Putumayo, women account for 49.85% of victims of the armed conflict. The crimes that most affect Putumayan women are forced abandonment and dispossession of land, threats, displacement, and crimes against freedom and sexual integrity. With regard to the latter, 90.95% of victims of sexual violence are women, which exceeds the national average (where 89.66% of victims of sexual crimes are women) (UARIV 2017).

The women we interviewed recalled the second paramilitary wave with great detail. This is probably because it was a particularly violent time for women living in cocalero areas branded as FARC territory. According to the National Center

for Historical Memory, the main feature of this second wave was the fact that paramilitaries settled in the area and utilized war strategies to control local communities, with the aim of monopolizing all stages of the coca trade (CNMH 2012, 104–105). As a result, Putumayans, especially those living in coca-growing areas, were subject to paramilitary-imposed law and order between 1997 and 2006, the year that paramilitaries throughout the country demobilized.

This second wave unleashed a reign of terror in which paramilitaries sought to intimidate and display their power over the population and, in turn, facilitate the process of everyday subjugation. This effort began with what the National Center for Historical Memory calls the “massacres of lower Putumayo,” which commenced with the massacre of El Tigre in 1999 and followed with raids in El Placer and La Dorada (CNMH 2012a, 49). At the time, María Fernanda was living in a village in San Miguel, La Dorada; she recalled how the paramilitaries came to the area in 2002, at 11 p.m., just prior to the community’s Mother’s Day celebration:

That night we had gotten everything in the community ready for the Mother’s Day party. And that night, the paramilitaries came and called us out of our houses. Everyone had to stand there in the middle ... I mean, here is my village and in the middle is the sports field, and all around it are the houses ... and they put us in the middle of the field, entire families. That night they took us out and killed eleven people and took another four, and we found them on a road hacked to pieces, we had to pick them up finger by finger ... Others, we don’t know where they were ... Being forced to watch, for example, your spouse be summoned, your wife being raped in front of you ... And what can the husband do? Nothing, he had to stay quiet, anyone who barely even moved would be killed, tortured, chopped up ... I was young then, and having to see that, having your family brought out so they can do that, what could we do? Hold on and cry, pray to God to protect us ... With our own eyes, we saw children three or four years old being left without their mom or dad.

As she told her story, María Fernanda stressed the impacts that the paramilitary’s arrival and its reign of terror had on the community and on people’s sense of solidarity and empathy. For one, the violent and oppressive atmosphere brought on by the paramilitaries during the massacre meant that any attempt to help another person was impossible:

Several mothers fainted, and you wanted to lend them a hand, but they wouldn’t allow it. I felt the urge to help another woman because she was elderly, I felt that need to go and help her, I don’t know what I was thinking at that moment and I went to help her. And the *paraco* [paramilitary soldier]

puts his weapon here and says, “Lift a finger and you die, bitch,” and I could just feel a knot here [in my throat], seeing that woman there. The only thing I did was get up slowly and crawl to where my mom and dad were. Seeing all of that makes you feel brave and you want to help people, but in those circumstances, you just can’t. And the woman [died] there, she had suffered shock ... It was awful, they didn’t even give her water, and how do you think that stays in your conscience? Seeing that you could have saved that woman’s life and you couldn’t do anything.

Moreover, in addition to the feelings of guilt and helplessness that women and their communities felt, the paramilitary presence forcibly displaced many families, which led to the splintering of people who had lived alongside one another for at least two generations and who had shared the experience of settling and building a community in lower Putumayo (CNMH 2012a).

The paramilitaries justified their presence by arguing that the area was overrun with FARC guerrillas and cocaleros who supported them, thus making it necessary to “cleanse” the area. As María Fernanda explained:

Just because we lived in the area didn’t mean that we were part of [the FARC]. We were just like any other people. Our way of surviving was the countryside, that’s all ... So the *paracos* said that we were FARC because we lived there, and they marked us as guerrillas. That’s why they kicked us out and did all those things to us—because we were growing coca, because we were living there, and that we were snitches, accomplices, and that’s how it was.

According to the National Center for Historical Memory, this stigmatization of lower Putumayo as a guerrilla zone emerged during the aerial spraying efforts prompted by Plan Colombia: “It is important to highlight that this fumigation was carried out essentially in two municipalities, San Miguel and Valle del Guamuez, which led to these municipalities’ representation as predominantly cocalero and therefore violent” (CNMH 2012a, 59). The FARC’s ubiquitous presence in these areas not only reinforced this violent and problematic image of lower Putumayo but also tagged local communities as “guerrilla collaborators, which served to legitimize the arrival of the paramilitaries” (ibid., 60). Indeed, one of the war tactics most utilized by the paramilitaries, once they settled in the region, was the identification, torture, and public assassination of FARC militants as an exemplary punishment that warned residents against forming alliances or collaborating with the guerrillas (ibid., 98). In this way, the stigmatization suffered by campesino communities living in FARC areas was intertwined with stigmatization on account of growing coca.

After so many years of a strong guerrilla presence in the Andes-Amazon region, paramilitary groups employed an antisubversive discourse that relied on massacres and daily subjugation as part of an “anything goes” mentality against guerrilla enemies. The aim was to wipe out the FARC’s influence in the region and take control of illicit economies; to this end, they used torture and public punishments not only to instill fear but, above all, to demonstrate their power and denigrate the enemy. In addition, paramilitaries systematically used strategies that controlled the population’s everyday life and cultivated an environment of unease. Viviana described this panorama to us when she talked about her life in Nariño:

The paramilitaries implemented a stoppage where nothing could enter—no food, nothing. Merchandise couldn’t be bought, food couldn’t arrive, I mean, nothing. They blocked everything ... and lots of people died because of it. The truth is that I was so scared, I didn’t leave the property. I didn’t step one foot out—my husband was the one who would sometimes leave to scrounge up something or other, and he would take our son with him, to maybe prevent them from hurting him. For me, every time they would leave, that was also, uff! Dear God, protect them! Because they were my little baby and my husband. It was very hard. For a short time [when the stoppage halted] and they opened the road, my husband said, “Viviana, get ready because they’re going to open the road in Paso Real,” that’s what it was called, “so we can get out of here. We need to take advantage of this chance.” And that’s what we did.

In this context, armed groups’ battles for territorial control extended to women, who were seen as the personal property of one armed group or another, and who were publicly punished for that reason. Martha’s story speaks to this:

The big mobsters started buying more weapons to fight with each other. The guerrillas began, the FARC, the ones who controlled that area. They were the ones who looked out for the big mobsters. You hear about a persecution, that the guerrillas were crushed. What do you mean crushed? What happened? Well, it turns out that the drug traffickers brought in another group to look out for them and all that. And that group was the Masetos. The Masetos were the ones who walked around dressed like soldiers; like that, in uniform. Other times, in black shirts—in a nutshell, camouflaged. They began to recruit people from Ecuador because they promised them good money, they were sponsored by the mafias. There was money like you wouldn’t believe. You lived afraid, because you knew they were armed up to their ears. They tied people up, killed them. Then, in that crazy fight, the guerrillas killed all the Masetos. They killed Seis, the boss. And I’m going to tell you the story of the first coca growers who planted *la caucana* [a variety of coca]. That man

had a daughter, her name was Ariela. She was very pretty. First, she had a guerrilla boss as her husband. And when the Masetos came and killed all the guerrillas, then she hooked up with the thug from the Masetos. And they hadn't killed her ex-husband, the man from the guerrillas. So, [the ex] decided to seek revenge. He came to kill the Masetos, he killed Seis, who was her husband, and he found her. Do you know what this guerrilla—this girl's ex-husband—did? He took each piece of jewelry off her, one by one, and he said to her, "Remember that you used to be my wife?" And he did a bunch more things to her and said, "And now you're going to go away in that boat." And he threw her in there with five women, in the river, inside a canoe without any oars, nothing—just letting the current take it away. The women were shouting and shouting, and gunfire going off everywhere. So the bystanders, on the other side in Ecuador, seeing the women screaming, got the courage to quietly [rescue them from the boat]. That's the story of the Masetos, who came and caused so much damage.

As demonstrated by Martha's story, women's bodies become disputed territory and a place of punishment by armed actors; women are in the crosshairs of the conflict. Along these lines, María Fernanda's testimony shows how sexual violence was used as a strategy to terrorize, subdue, and humiliate women, stigmatized as criminals, coca growers, and guerrillas. Nonetheless, there is very little information on sexual violence against women in lower Putumayo, particularly women coca growers; as María Fernanda's account shows, this practice was indeed used as a tool during massacres, but there are no research studies providing information on the aims of this strategy or the rationales or criteria behind the selection of victims.

Women's bodies become disputed territory and a place of punishment by armed actors; women are in the crosshairs of the conflict.

Despite this lack of information on sexual violence as a weapon of war in the region, the National Center for Historical Memory's report on the town of El Placer and the report published by the Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (2009) on sexual violence during the El Tigre massacre are valuable documents that facilitate an understanding of certain dynamics and contexts in which sexual violence was perpetrated against women in lower Putumayo. Both studies show that in addition to being prevalent during massacres, sexual violence was an inherent risk in women's daily coexistence with paramilitary actors. Although the women we interviewed repeatedly emphasized the risks posed to men in their interactions with paramilitaries (such as assassination, torture, and forced disappearance), sexual vio-

lence was a threat for women in particular and with specific effects on their lives and those of their families.

Such was the case of Martha, who, together with her daughters, was raped on September 15, 2002, when she was living in San Marcelino, a village about an hour by car from San Miguel, La Dorada. That day, Martha and her daughters left the house to buy some school supplies. They were afraid to leave, but they did so anyway because “the men were more scared to go and buy things, and so the women went with the children. Or if some of us women were afraid to go, then the children would go. You think that if you send your children, there’s no risk.” She described what happened on their way back home, on the highway to La Dorada:

There was a big checkpoint, the paramilitaries, I don’t know, when they felt the presence of guerrillas or something, they would go overboard. So, we got there, and everyone had to go inside to these rooms in these old dump and abandoned houses. So when it was my turn, I went with some other women, but not my daughters, because they were just girls ... I went inside and a man interviewed me and looked at my ID and said, “Your birthday was on August 2, we’re from the same place, you’re from Caquetá, me too. Why don’t we have a birthday party?” And I said, “No, because my birthday has passed, maybe next year,” and like that, so as not to show fear; I never let them see my fear, only courage ... When I left and went to get into the car, they had my girls there and were taking them into the rooms; so I jumped and said, “No! What’s happening here? Those are my daughters!” So one of them said, “Ma’am, it’s alright, don’t worry,” and I said, “It’s just that I need my girls, why did they take them?” “No, it’s just that the girls also have to go inside and show their IDs.” And they began. Some of them looked at one another with these sadistic smiles, murderously, and others, you could see this pain on their faces, like shame. I still can’t wipe those looks from my memory, because they knew what was going to happen with my girls. So when the others came from another one of the houses, they said, “But we can bring their mother too.” And they took my hand, and two of them took me to one of the rooms. There was another man in there, and two of them grabbed my legs while the other began to rape me. It’s tremendously painful. I lost my head, because I couldn’t even remember the names of my granddaughters, or how many girls my daughter had. I could only remember one of them—how awful that is, losing your head, losing your mind. And all three of the men began [raping me]. I remember one part—another part I remember that they hit me, they pulled my hair because I was biting them, I didn’t stop jumping or moving, and I was biting them. You have to defend yourself, that’s something

I learned as a girl, because I have always been a woman with responsibilities, as a girl my parents would leave me alone with the workers. So, that was part of coming loose, biting, kicking, sometimes you even get violent. When I got out of there, I remember that I just got dressed, I picked myself up ... but my head felt huge because they had been grabbing my hair to keep my head down against the floor. It reeked in there, reeked. There were combs, underwear, ponchos, it was a room, a pigsty there, and that awful rape, so shameless, sadistic, those people are truly terrible. I thank God because they could've killed me. And well, my girls, they spent a total of four hours in there—I don't know how long I was there, but I entered last and got out first. When my daughters came out, I had recently come out of there too. I don't know what time it was when we left, but it was late and when my daughters got out, their blouses were ripped, I also had a ripped blouse, they didn't have socks on, they were stained with blood, and bruised. They raped my three daughters, who were between twelve and fifteen years old, more or less. It's so sad, they were hurting, I was hurting, we were distraught. Such sadness, the pain stays with you. We walked about 200 meters and came across a water channel called El Zancudo, and we began to wash ourselves, to fix our hair. I fixed up the girls, all wet and they wouldn't stop bleeding. We were out of there, but embarrassed because you could see our chests, I tried to fix their torn blouses. Then a car drove by and gave us a lift.

Martha's story portrays the multiple forms of violence that are present in the lives of women coca growers. First is the fact that, as Martha noted, she had to learn to defend herself since the time she was a girl; this indicates that the risk of sexual violence is due not only to the presence armed actors but also to dangers within women's very homes and communities. As we saw in the previous section with Rosaura's story, women who are alone and who participate in certain types of work run the risk of sexual abuse, for they are perceived as "unprotected" and defenseless. Second, these risks are exacerbated by the presence of armed actors, with women identifying paramilitary groups and the Colombian army as particular threats against their bodily integrity. As María Fernanda noted, "[The risk of sexual violence] was an impact that I suffered from a young age, both from seeing the *paracos* and the soldiers... In my community, a lot of girls were raped by soldiers. They would find them alone and would rape them." This led to an environment in which, as explained by the National Center for Historical Memory, "women felt that they could be sexually attacked when they moved through spaces such as trails and roads" (CNMH 2012a, 210).

Martha's story also reveals that in the midst of largely patriarchal gender norms that persist in cocalero families, sexual violence against women is seen as a

cause of shame for women but not for the aggressors; furthermore, in addition to victimizing women, such violence humiliates male members of the family. Martha told us that one of her daughters saw marriage as a chance to overcome the rape she had suffered. However, “when her husband learned that she had been raped, he began to treat her very badly, very badly, he turned mean ... He took their daughter, kicked her out of the house, hit her. My daughter was going to escape and wanted to take her girl, but then he grabbed her and hit her and took her back to the house. After that, he made life very hard for her. That’s why she escaped again.” The second time that Martha’s daughter escaped, she didn’t take her daughter with her out of fear that her husband would track her down; today, he has custody of the child and does not allow her mother to see her.

The National Center for Historical Memory notes that in lower Putumayo, “the paramilitaries enacted repertoires of terror against local women and placed them on the blurry line between *decent* and *indecent* women, to be judged by their very communities and families” (CNMH 2012a, 215). Indeed, as we saw in the case of Martha’s daughter, being a victim of sexual violence also led her to suffer abuse at the hands of her own family; her husband branded her an “indecent” woman incapable of being a mother. This kind of attitude fosters a culture of silence in which it is best not to speak of acts of sexual violence in order to avoid family and community reproach—which means that women lack settings for communicating their pain and that a backdrop of impunity is upheld by the very community. These settings also promote the idea that the blame for sexual violence lies with the victims, not the perpetrators, insofar as social sanctions and value judgments fall on women, as demonstrated by the case of Martha’s daughter.

“The paramilitaries enacted repertoires of terror against local women and placed them on the blurry line between *decent* and *indecent* women, to be judged by their very communities and families.”

Moreover, given the patriarchal nature of most cocalero families, sexual violence against women tends to be perceived as an affront to the men in the family. This idea was expressed by María Fernanda when she described the rapes perpetrated by paramilitaries when they came to San Miguel:

And looking at the husbands, I mean, what made me feel most helpless was that [the paramilitaries] stood there and raped wives in front of their husbands—and the husbands, what could they do? Cry, bite their fingernails and clench their teeth because they couldn’t shout. If they uttered a word—

bam! Because that's what they did, everyone there and crying through their teeth and suffering it all in silence.

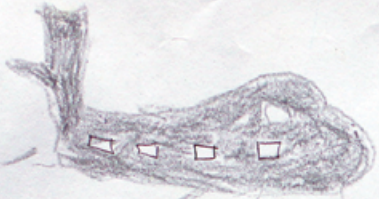
In this narrative, we can see that María Fernanda laments not only the harm being inflicted on the women victims but also the fact that their husbands had to watch helplessly. The National Center for Historical Memory describes this type of reaction thus: "The ramifications and impacts of sexual violence against women were also experienced among men, for they were humiliated. Such humiliation is the result of the inability to fulfill one of the duties that society imparts on men: to be the gatekeeper of the sexual lives of their wives and daughters" (CNMH 2012a, 216). Men, raised to be protectors and providers, are humiliated by paramilitaries through women's bodies: by committing sexual violence against their wives, the paramilitaries disgrace the husbands who can do nothing to protect their partners.⁴⁵

All of this demonstrates that the experience of women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region is defined, in part, by the fact that they are often direct victims of the armed conflict, and of sexual violence in particular. This situation is further aggravated by the deeply patriarchal structures that persist within families and communities and that place burdens, shame, and sanctions on women, which hampers their healing process. This exacerbates an environment of impunity and silence that is concerning in and of itself and that becomes even more grim when the families themselves are the ones that end up legitimizing violence against women perpetrated by armed actors.

The experiences portrayed in this chapter allow us to identify two main sources of oppression of women in the Andes-Amazon region. The first is the home, where the unequal distribution of labor (namely productive and reproductive work) means that women must perform caregiving tasks for their children and family while also doing productive work to keep the agricultural activities afloat. This gender-based distribution of tasks frees men from the responsibility of caring for the home and family, causing women to bear a double or triple work burden and to be forced to continually place their bodies and lives at the service of the family, farm workers, and the community. The second source of violence against women coca growers

45 In addition, the National Center for Historical Memory (CNMH 2011) has noted that in Colombia, in light of the traditional assigning of "soldier" roles to men, many women have been left in charge of their households because their spouses have been killed or disappeared or have joined armed groups. Although this experience was not specifically discussed during our interviews or social mapping activity, it is a key example of the way in which gender-based social orders intersect with one another during times of conflict.

is armed actors, whose presence has imposed extremely violent social structures in which sexual violence is a frequent form of repression, especially for women. In the next chapter, we explore the ways that women coca growers have participated in civil society organizations in Putumayo and how this involvement has offered them tools for circumventing and resisting the overall context of violence described here.



avioneta
Fungicida



Platano



Lugar de reunion.
asambleas, talleres
Eventos
mingas.

Organizar la comunidad
para la resistencia
gestion interinstitucional.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL MOBILIZATION BY WOMEN COCA GROWERS **IN THE ANDES-AMAZON REGION**

“The organization, or our leadership effort, has always been co-ed. We haven’t focused on women! For a year, we’ve been working on organizing women’s committees—we’re moving forward and I think it’s very important.”

Sandra

“We have come a long way in getting here; we have suffered as much as we have benefitted; we have experienced grief because of absences as well as presences; we have dreamed about peaceful and productive times for ourselves and our families; we have raised our voices when necessary to make demands and proposals; we have chosen to stay in the Andes-Amazon region, to live in harmony with the forest and the mountains, with our neighbors, with all of our rural customs.”

Mesa Regional (2015)

This chapter explores women’s participation in civic and social movements in the Andes-Amazon region. In particular, we focus on two issues related to an intersectional gender approach and the building of institutions and citizenship in coca-growing regions. First, we analyze why many women have placed the needs of their families, communities, and organizations above their own. As revealed by our

analysis, “campesino subjectivity” privileges a deeply patriarchal collective in which the need to pool individual efforts to defend communities’ existence in a region neglected by the state means that women must commit their lives, energies, and bodies to family and community goals at the expense of their own well-being. Second, we explore what it means for women to participate in civil society movements that resist, in various ways and contexts, policies of the state and actions by armed groups that are based on stigmatizing discourses. We analyze the way in which women’s participation in civil society organizations draws on their own conceptions of intersectionality as they claim rural citizenship and their right to participation.

To achieve these aims, the chapter is divided into three sections. The first section offers an overview of the key milestones in Putumayo’s cocalero movement, including the marches of 1996 and the 2013 national farmers’ strike; these events were highlighted by the women who participated in our social mapping exercise, timeline construction, and interviews. In the second section, we synthesize the women’s movement in the region, bringing attention to the key demands of the movement and its connection to various regional and national efforts. In the third section, we discuss the tension that women coca growers face when trying to balance their own needs with those of their communities. We discuss certain features of women’s participation in civil society organizations and in the cocalero movement. Finally, in the last section, we analyze the difficulties that those who lead mixed-sex organizations have in recognizing women’s leadership and contributions, as well as the reproduction of rural patriarchal structures within these organizations and political platforms; as part of this analysis, we offer some reflections on the Bolivian women’s cocalero movement.

RIGHTS AND CITIZENSHIP IN THE REGION: “EVERYONE AGREED ON THE NEED TO ORGANIZE”

In Colombia, especially the Andes-Amazon region, state institutions have been developed within the context of a segregated society, in which certain areas of the country have lived according to their own local systems (González, Bolívar, and Vásquez 2002). This has caused the state to experience difficulties in imposing its authority in these areas, since community and social rules have been established by the local population and illegal armed actors. The orders created by communities or imposed by armed actors end up becoming the nuclei for political and state institutions (ibid., 260). The state’s absence in the Andes-Amazon region allowed for the construction of a social order marked by, among other things, community organiz-

ing.⁴⁶ In other words, the creation of civil society organizations helped build a social order that not only allowed for the region's resistance and institutional management but also created new subjectivities that shaped the rural citizenship being claimed in social mobilization.

The paradoxical relationship between the state, citizenship, and recognition of campesino identity is reflected in women's sketches from the social mapping exercise. On the one hand, as can be seen in the image at the beginning of this chapter, subsistence crops, farms, land, and the home make up the most basic daily elements for women in the region. On the other hand, when asked to draw the state, the women drew institutions based on the use of force, such as the army, the police, and the planes that spray glyphosate. Their sketches also included health posts, schools, and other public services, but these were not characterized as being related to the state. All of this is a reflection of the state's debt to these communities and the impacts of the conflicts that have affected local populations. As explained by María Fernanda:

We experienced violence with our own flesh and blood. We only chose to grow coca in order to survive and support our families, but the government, blinded by its desire to wipe out coca, let itself be manipulated by many countries that sponsored fumigation and eradication. The government alone wasn't capable of doing all of that—paying all those people to go to every little area and do what was done badly.

The need to defend human rights in the context of the armed conflict and the state's counterinsurgency efforts had the effect of stigmatizing coca-growing populations as being connected to the FARC and to drug traffickers (Torres 2011, 156). While poverty and exclusion became the daily bread for civil society organizing in the region, strikes, marches, blockades, the creation of committees, and participation in elections were the tools of a resistance movement that had been going on for five decades in search of protection for the region, recognition of rural citizenship, and the rights of settlers, campesinos, and indigenous and Afro-descendant populations; all of these actions also directly and openly butted heads with the state's vision of the region and led to acts of physical and symbolic violence against coca-growing communities.

46 "Organizing" can be seen as the most concrete expression of civic activity in motion. The creation of committees, community action boards, human rights collectives, and associations weaves a wide and complex web of relations that are managed from the ground up within the framework of social movements. The role played by civil society organizations in the countryside is not a small one, for these organizations promote joint work, build solidarity, make the voices of residents heard, educate residents on various issues, and build the foundation for social movements.

This section offers a brief description of the various faces of Putumayo's social movement, such as the civic movement and the cocalero movement. As defined by Mauricio Archila, we understand social movement to be the organized expression of civil society that promotes ongoing and proactive collective efforts aimed at correcting exclusion, inequality, and injustice (2003, 74). Social, or civil society, movements fight problematic discourses, conduct advocacy, and propose alternative and utopic ideals. Put another way, these movements are an active exercise of citizenship. The growing claim for democratization from the ground up marks the dawning of today's crisis of representative democracy—that is, the precise moment in which democracy “from above” is being questioned from below by local communities (Archila 2006, 12). Hence, we can affirm that neither the state nor development programs can achieve legitimacy without the participation and strengthening of organized civil society.

Civil society strikes have taken place in the Andes-Amazon region since 1974,⁴⁷ when citizens called for “public infrastructure and social services and demanded respect for the human rights” of those involved in protests (CNMH 2015, 207). During the 1980s, Putumayo's Regional Civic Movement emerged, which, together with other movements, such as that of Catholic priest Alcides Jiménez⁴⁸ in

47 One aspect that we do not explore in depth due to space constraints, but which is critical for understanding the state's response to civil society mobilizations during the 1970s and 1980s, is the antidemocratic and repressive nature of the 1886 Constitution. The main objective of this now-defunct constitution was to preserve public order throughout the country, focusing on “the radical centralization of public power, the strengthening of the executive branch, support from the Catholic Church and using religion as a tool for education and social control” (Melo 1989, 4). In this regard, article 28 allowed—even during “times of peace”—the arrest and detention of anyone “against whom [there are] serious suspicions that they have attempted to commit a crime against the public peace,” while article 46 allowed for the suspension of any meeting that obstructed public roads. This legal framework not only authorized the arbitrary use of legal powers toward protests but also gave wide leeway to the application of the counterinsurgent doctrine, which classified social protest “from a national security and public order perspective as opposed to seeing it as a right worthy of protection” (E. C. Rodríguez 2015, 56). Under the framework of these contentious provisions and the state of emergency, in September 1978, the Turbay administration issued Decree 1923 (known as the Security Statute), which led to increased human rights violations, from harassment and threats to torture and forced disappearances, committed directly by members of the armed forces (Majbub Avendaño 2016, 70). Following Colombia's 1991 constitutional reform, which ushered in a more democratic and rights-based constitution, protests took on a different legal character, as article 37 establishes the right of assembly and the right to demonstrate, while also noting that only a law (of special legal force and via a special majority) may set limits to the exercise of these rights. Nonetheless, the stigmatizing rhetoric of security and counterinsurgent policies, shaped in recent years by Colombia's “democratic security policy,” continues to be a threat to the exercise of the right to protest, as demonstrated by the state's response to the cocalero marches held in 2017 in various parts of the country.

48 Father Alcides Jiménez, from the lower Bota Caucana, was a parish priest in the municipality of Puerto Caicedo from 1982 to September 11, 1998, when he was assassinated by the FARC (CNMH

Puerto Caicedo (Mesa Regional 2015, 22), offered a voice for civic and community organizations from the region (Ramírez 2001, 93, 98). In 1994, in the face of increasing coca crops, the government included the region in its glyphosate fumigation efforts, which it had been carrying out since 1991. This decision led to a strike in Puerto Asís in November 1994, which then expanded to Orito, San Miguel, and Valle del Guamuez, mobilizing more than 5,000 campesinos (Peñaranda 1996, 27). Protestors' main demands were the adoption of the Alternative National Development Plan and the implementation of the Social Solidarity Network, a government program that promised electricity for underserved municipalities, improvements to health and education, and a repositioning of resources obtained from oil revenues to projects prioritized by communities (Ramírez 2001, 107).

The strike lasted until January 11, 1995, when the national government and the Regional Civic Movement signed an agreement. The agreement included actions aimed at participatory coca substitution and investments in productive, commercial, and transportation infrastructure, as well as loans and other financial incentives for agricultural projects—in other words, they agreed on the implementation of the Alternative National Development Plan in the region. However, in December of that year, the Regional Civic Movement was already preparing a second strike to protest against the state's failure to comply with the agreement reached in January and to denounce the murder of several movement leaders and the commencement of aerial spraying with glyphosate in Guaviare and Caquetá (CNMH 2015, 209). The setting was ripe for protest. During meetings held in mid-1995, men and women leaders from the cocalero movement in Guaviare, Caquetá, and the Andes-Amazon region had agreed to hold joint protests as soon as aerial fumigations began in any of the departments (Ramírez 2001, 137).

On July 22, 1996, the anti-narcotics police began fumigating in Remolinos del Caguán (Caquetá), which sparked marches in the Andes-Amazon region toward the cities of Orito, San Miguel, Valle del Guamuez, and Puerto Asís. Similarly, in Guaviare and Caquetá, campesinos marched toward their respective department capitals.

2012b, 344). He was a religious civic leader who drew on issues of agricultural production, food security, and intelligent financial management to motivate families to offset the influence that drug trafficking and coca monoculture had brought to the region. His initiative, entitled “Nuevo Milenio” (“New Millennium”), sought to achieve a better quality of life for people on the basis of personal and community development stemming from the campesino value system (Mesa Regional 2015, 22). This effort, which organized communities in several parts of lower Putumayo, promoted the construction of self-sufficient ecological farms that allowed families to grow their own food, add value to their agricultural products, preserve native seeds, and care for the natural environment (*ibid.*, 24).

During the negotiations,⁴⁹ which lasted twenty-five days, it became clear that protestors from the Andes-Amazon region had undertaken prior planning efforts, for the Regional Civic Movement had come prepared with a list of demands. An example of this is that during negotiations, protestors were able to conceive of an emergency plan for comprehensive development as a vehicle for breaking the deadlock between the two extremes of complete eradication and inclusion in programs that lacked any real commitments to uprooting coca plants. It was hoped that this plan would allow for gradual crop substitution and the establishment of an alternative economy.

Finally, on August 19, 1996, parties signed the Pact of Orito, which put an end to the cocalero marches in the Andes-Amazon region. In this agreement, the government agreed to invest in infrastructure related to education, health, recreation, and transportation; to support local industry; and to protect human rights in the region (CNMH 2015, 209). However, after the negotiating table was closed and the agreement signed, the Regional Civic Movement began denouncing the government's failure to comply with its promises, for several of its leaders continued to suffer persecution by paramilitaries, who saw the cocalero marches as an excuse to justify their violent entry into the area.

Thus, as the severity of the armed conflict between guerrillas and paramilitaries grew (CNMH 2012a), so did the negative consequences for civil society movements. In 2000, "violence worsened, the fumigations commenced, there were deaths, and control over communities, especially women, increased" (Mesa Regional 2015, 63). After the state's failure to comply with the Pact of Orito, which is considered a victory of the 1996 cocalero marches, civil society organizations from the Andes-Amazon region were cornered. For six years, fear, persecution, and anxiety brought on by armed actors in the area brought social organizing to a standstill. Sandra recounted:

We were basically suspended because our colleagues who led [La Perla Amazónica campesino reserve area] were threatened, and not only by paramilitaries but by the FARC as well. Because in creating the development plan, there was a mistake in wording—it was misunderstood, misinterpreted—and that brought problems for the leaders. It was "to legitimate the state," and so that created a conflict with the FARC. We [also] had problems with the

49 During the negotiations, seven committees were established to address the following themes: (i) strengthening of the department's alternative, agricultural, and agroindustrial programs and rural development policy; (ii) electrification and roads; (iii) health, basic sanitation, and social welfare; (iv) education, sports, recreation, and culture; (v) housing; (vi) land-use management; and (vii) human rights (Ramírez 2001, 218–23).

paramilitaries because they said [our area was] a FARC hideout. That was hard, because we were ordered to stay quiet. For a long time, our colleagues didn't go to Puerto Asís, they stayed at home. I'll say it again—we did our work, but within the community. We would have events and things like that in the same community. But going to another village, to Puerto Asís, to another area—no, we couldn't do that.

According to the Regional Roundtable, between 2000 and 2005, “we couldn't claim our rights, or create organizations because we were declared to be a military objective; we couldn't even get elected to the community action boards because no one dared run for fear of being killed” (Mesa Regional 2015, 63). But not everything was stalled; although community efforts were affected by the escalating conflict, many developments occurred on the organizational front as paramilitaries and the FARC fought over the territory. For example, school building and strengthening continued to take place. As Violeta told us, she was able to run the school and improve its facilities with the help of parents, without generating opposition from the FARC, “because if they are not suspicious of you, they didn't see it as bad. Because what they need, and needed at that time, was that you weren't connecting dots where you didn't need to.”

After the conflict began to ease up and the peace talks between the government and the FARC were made public, campesinos throughout the country found themselves in a dire situation due not only to the signing of free trade agreements but also to the difficulties faced by the agricultural sector during the early twenty-first century. On top this panorama emerged another key development: the national farmers' strike that was held in August and September 2013. After the cocalero marches of 1996, this farmers' strike was the second round of protests that managed to bring together the various subregions of the Andes-Amazon (Fundación Paz y Reconciliación 2014, 42). In this region, the protest involved roadblocks, the halting of work activities, and calls for compliance with a document signed between the government and communities on March 8, 2013, which required the state to implement the Campesino Development Plan of Putumayo (*ibid.*, 40).

The 2013 farmers' strike is framed within a national context exhibiting three traits: (i) the signing of free trade agreements, which put Colombian farmers at a competitive disadvantage in the face of foreign imports; (ii) the absence of an agricultural policy that included campesinos and provided them with political and economic guarantees that would allow them to overcome their extreme poverty; and (iii) campesinos' demands for recognition as political subjects and as rights holders

(Salcedo et al. 2013, 3). The Andes-Amazon region was among the regions that most mobilized in this regard (ibid., 14). As María Fernanda explained:

How far would the injustice with us go? If they found a lab with, say, two cans like this of [coca] leaves, they would say there were four, six, ten, they would double it. In our case, we were just getting started, and they claimed that we had twenty arrobas when it was really just two. So we began to see for ourselves how things needed to change, to struggle on our own behalf, and it was an awakening. The result was three months of strike.

María Fernanda noted that the decision to organize emerged from a specific source: once the community in her village began to explore the 1991 Constitution and discuss it publicly, they implemented strategies for ensuring that their rights were fulfilled. She noted:

We learned that the army can't enter [your house or property], because that's what the [Constitution] states. So everyone saw the need to organize, to read about our rights, about what we should do, where we should turn.

Also, marches, strikes, they're in [the Constitution] and aren't illegal, they are a way of taking action—if they don't pay attention to us, then we can resort to that. After that, things grew, more communities started uniting. Okay, let's hold a march so they stop eradicating, stop spraying. Our first strike lasted three months.

Civil society organizational processes, both in the Andes-Amazon region and in general, are a blending of wills that leads to linkages and support in various spheres of collective life.

Mobilization strategies were varied, from fundraising to sponsoring individuals so they could participate in the effort—these were the ways that campesino coca growers prepared themselves to face the nationwide farmers' strike. María Fernanda explained:

How were we campesinos going to get by during the strike? By rotating, by saying that such-and-such group would go for eight days, five days, then return and another group would go, but the campesinos provided the food ... And that's how we've been fighting. Then, more organizations were created. All of the municipalities started organizing, and that's why today we participate in marches to Mocoa, to Neiva, to Bogotá. But everything starts somewhere, and we had to suffer things that nobody would have ever imagined.

Civil society organizational processes, both in the Andes-Amazon region

and in general, are a blending of wills that leads to linkages and support in various spheres of collective life. Some of the women we interviewed told us about their active participation in marches, which offers interesting insight into these processes of solidarity building. For example, collaboration between people who participated in the march and those who supported the cause but who were unable to attend was fundamental for being able to survive during the strikes. María Fernanda explained:

Four years ago [in 2013], our colleagues from Puerto Vega Teteyé decided [to hold protests and blockades] for almost ninety days. I was there ... but I went because I had heard about all of it already, I had already observed the mobilization, the strikes and all that, and it was interesting to me because I felt good about the rights outlined in [the 1991 Constitution]. And when they said, “Look, we’re going to do this and that, we’re going to fight for our land,” I said, “Great.” Other people are more fearful, but I don’t know—I don’t know what it is about me [laughs]. One of my colleagues said, “I’m not going, but I’ll pay for someone else to go.” So I said, “Okay, I’ll go.” I was in Teteyé for ninety days. Of course, I was earning 200—I was harvesting, working, in whatever I could get my hands on, and they said, “Listen, if you go, I’ll pay you 200 a week to go to the strike.” But I went there because I was born to be there.

In the Andes-Amazon region, the national farmers’ strike led civil society to agree on a methodology for addressing the issue of illicit crops (Mesa Regional 2015, 153). The proposal submitted by civil society organizations to the government consisted of three phases. In the first phase, the government would deliver mitigation packages that would allow farming families to grow other crops; in the second, coca crops would be substituted gradually, according to the progress made by the government in allocating resources to the region; and lastly, the third phase consisted of a “no replanting commitment” by farming communities after two years of the methodology’s implementation that would contribute to crop reduction. Although this proposal went unanswered by the government, the results of the strike could be seen in the creation of many proposals for the negotiations (ibid., 154).

Looking back on this state of affairs, we can see that civil society mobilization efforts have proposed visions of territory and its habitation, as occurred from 1984 onward with the formation of campesino reserve areas, understood as vehicles for organizing a given territory with the aim of facing the various crises being experienced by the coca economy, strengthening the economic opportunities for campesino settlers, and preventing the concentration of land (CNMH 2015, 213).

This conflict with the state allowed civil society organizations to pave different pathways for securing access to basic services, such as education, recreation, and

the building of bridges, roads, community centers, churches, meeting centers, and so forth. The first public goods successfully attained by the population in this region speak to individuals' capacity to join forces to inhabit areas far removed from the national eye, which means planting the seed for public institutions, the state, and citizenry.

The stigmatization and persecution experienced by cocalero populations in the Andes-Amazon region rekindled social mobilization in 2013 to call for the government's compliance with the Constitution. This is the paradox described by Ramírez (2001, 20): despite the fact that campesino communities have been branded as drug traffickers and guerrillas who act outside the law, in reality they are the same communities who demand political recognition, engagement as citizens, and compliance with the provisions of the Constitution through their proposals for alternative crop substitution plans that have yet to be taken into account by the state. In other words, instead of questioning the state's legitimacy, the cocalero movement is calling for this legitimacy to show its face in the region (ibid.).

As we can see based on the aforementioned scenario, organizations in the Andes-Amazon region have historically called on the state to come into being in the region. That said, they are not asking that the state exercise a monopoly of force or that it forcibly eradicate crops—rather, they are requesting that the state make good on its promise to fulfill people's social rights. Given that the state called into question the civil society status of cocalero communities through its war on drugs and its counterinsurgent efforts, the claim for communities' well-being and the institutional capacity needed to achieve it is not over the top; to the contrary, it is a call for public policy in this region to fulfill its constitutional mandate.

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN THE ANDES-AMAZON REGION⁵⁰

Similar to the mobilization efforts around human rights and citizenship in the Andes-Amazon region, the organizational processes of the women's movement emerged as a result of two factors: barriers to achieving well-being and accessing public

50 This section seeks to gather and synthesize available research on the organizational processes of rural women in the Andes-Amazon region. It does not attempt to provide a systematic analysis of the range of initiatives that exist; rather, it seeks to draw the attention of academia, civil society, and social movements and encourage them to broaden their approaches to the intersectional problems faced by rural women so that these women's efforts in their communities can be appreciated and drawn on to assist other women experiencing similar contexts. Finally, we wish to state that never before has there been such a critical need to understand how rural women have connected to social movements.

services, and the negative impacts of the war on drugs and the armed conflict (CNMH 2012b, 342). During this process, local women's initiatives connected to other feminist movements in the country, whose agenda during 1998–2005 included “a series of processes that [sought] to achieve the fulfillment of various human rights of women within a context of intensifying armed conflict” (Wills and Gómez 2006, 304).

The feminist approach to gender has begun to embrace a differentiated approach and intersectionality by expanding its vision on collective action to include the mothers of disappeared individuals, “urban popular” women, women guerrillas, women trade unionists, indigenous women, lesbians, and Afro-descendant women (Ibarra 2011, 1923). Indeed, the national women's movement has evolved in its principal aims—previously focused on domestic violence, reproductive rights, equitable development, and public participation (*ibid.*, 1921)—and now addresses the demands of rural women affected by the armed conflict, the cessation of violence against them, and recognition of their rights as victims caught in the crossfire of armed actors. Today, feminist organizations are also addressing drug policy and its gender-related impacts.

The emergence of the women's movement in the Andes-Amazon region can be traced back to the initiative led by Catholic priest Alcides Jiménez, who, in addition to defending the livelihoods of campesino communities, promoted women's participation in lower Putumayo via the “Women, Paths, and Future” program, which began in the 1980s (CNMH 2012b, 344). In 1985, after the formation of a group of parishes that traveled among the municipalities of Puerto Caicedo, Puerto Asís, Orito, Valle del Guamuez, and San Miguel, the project centered on helping women learn how to make their own money, as well as to “convince” their spouses to invest in work tools and farm improvements to protect farming families against the economic threats posed by the appearance of the coca trade in the Andes-Amazon region. One of the project's concerns was the absence of women's decision-making power in household matters, as rural women tended to be relegated to “performing household chores” and were subject to the decisions of their husbands and the lack of family planning options (*ibid.*, 349).

The “Women, Paths, and Future” project inspired broader organizational efforts throughout the region: for example, 1987 saw the creation of the Puerto Caicedo Women's Association, which is now one of Putumayo's longest-standing rural women's organizations. Little by little, civil society organizations began to create women's committees, and local public institutions began to establish women's offices and consultative councils. This sparked greater women's participation in political and

organizational settings. For example, according to the National Center for Historical Memory, at the end of the 1990s the need for women leaders in municipal and departmental councils had become evident; and in 1998, a woman who had worked within the group of parishes formed by Father Jiménez was elected to the Puerto Caicedo Municipal Council (CNMH 2012b, 353).

The Puerto Caicedo Women's Association played a leading role in the 1996 creation of the national movement known as the Women's Pacific Route and has been actively involved in national and international events, including the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 and the recent National Summit of Women for Peace held in Bogotá in October 2013 (UNDP, Embassy of Sweden, and Alianzas Territoriales para la Paz 2016, 72). Together with the Women's Pacific Route—which brings together women from more than 350 organizations from departments such as Antioquia, Bolívar, Cauca, Chocó, Cundinamarca, Valle del Cauca, Putumayo, Risaralda, and Santander (Bautista 2010, 3)—the Puerto Caicedo Women's Association was involved in peaceful efforts aimed at denouncing violence against women committed by armed actors. One example of such an effort was the 2003 pilgrimage toward Puerto Caicedo by more than 3,500 women who sought to condemn the arbitrary violence that occurred during confrontations between FARC guerrillas and the Southern Bloc of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (Osorio 2016).

Another one of women's organizational experiences in Putumayo was the Departmental Alliance of Women Weavers of Life, created in 2005 by a team of women leaders who decided to unite forces to support humanitarian aid efforts for Putumayan communities during a thirty-day armed stoppage imposed by the FARC⁵¹ (Alianza de Mujeres Tejedoras de Vida Putumayo 2015). One of the actions aimed at responding to the emergency was the coordination of women from forty organizations and sixty-five development initiatives in thirteen municipalities around three themes: (i) human rights and peacebuilding; (ii) women's history and political participation; and (iii) women's social and economic development (*ibid.*).

51 During the armed stoppage, confrontations between the FARC and paramilitary groups affected more than ten municipalities in the department. For more than six days, electricity was cut off; land communication was interrupted due to the bombing of a bridge linking to Pitalito, Huila; and more than 150 people were displaced and 450 families harassed in thirteen villages (Caracol Radio 2005). "The stoppage paralyzed all economic activities, especially informal ones (sales of empanadas and arepas, laundry services, etc.) and left children, women heads of household, and the displaced in a state of complete vulnerability" (Alianza de Mujeres Tejedoras de Vida Putumayo 2015).

The achievements of the women's movement in the Andes-Amazon region—related to their claim for rights and an end to gender-based violence within the context of the armed conflict and the war on drugs—offer important lessons that deserve deeper study. In one way or another, civil society organizations became a bullhorn for women's concerns and a source of support for their daily struggles, thus opening the way for women's broadened participation in politics. Several women who expressed their views during the social mapping exercise said that their involvement in these organizations allowed them to grow, “to learn to speak” in public, and to provide support actively and creatively in cases of domestic violence suffered by other women.

Nonetheless—and despite the strength of women's peace initiatives—barriers continue to impede the ability of women's organizations to position their agendas and to link to other civil society organizations and to the political-electoral sphere. Further, within their own families and communities, and in light of longstanding gender norms, women encounter various difficulties when trying to participate in public life; but through negotiating and through strategies of everyday resistance, women coca growers have been able to make space for themselves in civil society organizations and have strengthened their role as leaders within their families and communities. In the next section, we explore the general features of this increased participation, as well as some of the main obstacles to women's involvement in political and collective life in the region and at the national level.

They learned to “put themselves last” and to place the needs of their children, husbands, communities, and organizations above their own.

“THAT’S NOT GOOD FOR A WOMAN WHO HAS A HUSBAND”: WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND THE COCALERO MOVEMENT

The stories of women coca growers who took part in our Puerto Asís convening share a common feature: they learned to “put themselves last” and to place the needs of their children, husbands, communities, and organizations above their own. Their concerns range from the family to the community, and seldom do they center on the women themselves. Women's daily routines include caring for family members, preparing meals, and addressing the everyday needs of their villages, such as the lack of foot paths, the maintenance of meeting spaces, and fundraising through bake sales, bazaars, or collections. They also direct their attention to the needs of civil society organizations, and only at the end, in the midst of the hustle and bustle, when

they remember that they too exist, do they think of themselves. This is the story of women coca growers who participate in civil society organizations in Putumayo; this is the busy life of women who are leaders, mothers, presidents of community committees, friends, and neighbors concerned about the common good.

This neglect of personal plans and goals poses an enormous difficulty when it comes to talking about the measures and needs that a gender focus in Andes-Amazon coca-growing areas should address and set in motion; to the extent that women place collective and family needs above their own, it is difficult to uncover their personal experiences, frustrations, needs, and life plans linked specifically to their expectations as women coca growers. This, in turn, has an impact on the way in which women participate in public settings, movements, and civil society organizations. Against this backdrop, it is important to examine two elements of rural society that are interlaced with the everyday lives of women coca growers in the Andes-Amazon region. The first of these is “campesino subjectivity,” which has a collective, community, and family emphasis; the second is the patriarchal system that places women in underappreciated roles compared to men.

Campesino subjectivity is understood as that identity which is forged on economic, social, and cultural processes in which family and community—in other words, collective—self-identification is linked to working the land and harvesting or transforming its products (ICANH 2017, 3). Campesinos are a population group characterized by their connection between work, land, and territory; in the words of Fals Borda (1982, 65), they are a social class whose labor power is used directly to make land productive. In this way, the difficulties inherent in farm labor, geographical distance from city centers (in the case of the Andes-Amazon region), and the precarious living situation of rural populations contributed to shaping a form of solidarity linked to community support and the neighborhood, which allowed campesinos to face the vagaries of “clearing bush” and of the occupation of land as a key pillar of Colombian rurality.

Based on an analysis of the literature on rural populations, Teodor Shanin (1979) defines peasantry (i.e., campesinos) in relation to their reliance on the family farm, land husbandry as the main means of livelihood, a traditional culture connected with the way of life of small communities, and economic and political subjection to powerful outsiders. As he points out, the family farm serves as campesinos’ main unit of social organization and well-being, and, for this reason, individuals tend to follow the rules and behavior assigned by their families and communities (ibid., 11–13).

Today, however, rural Colombia seems to be turning toward a model based

on extreme individuality, the exploitation of raw materials through industry, the “de-territorialization” of decisions, and disputes among private interests (Ortiz 2003, 146). One could say that much of the poverty experienced by campesinos participating in the coca economy is related to the disintegration of “rural” and “campesino” life and its community-based patterns due to the old discourses of urbanizing and industrial modernity (Fals Borda 1982, 111). Modernity placed—often through violence—reason over superstition, branded religion as irrational, and defined development as synonymous with urbanization and highways (Martín-Barbero 2008, 141). Thus, the narrative of “progress” began to dissolve the elements that encourage community, collectivity, and the bonds of campesino subjectivity (*ibid.*, 40).

Women coca growers—embedded in a rural world with these dynamics of disintegration, where collective relationships not only subjugate them but also help maintain their existence—have a distinct perception of their individuality compared to women who live in urban areas. For these rural women, the support offered by the collective and the family is based on an unequal system in which women must assume a greater share of work and caregiving. As described in the previous chapter, the division of labor within the family is based on sex and age, whereby women and older daughters exercise little control over household resources while also being responsible for a larger share of everyday responsibilities (Chonchol 1990, 32). Under this unequal pattern of solidarity, women must assume other people’s needs as their own, relegate themselves to private spaces of caregiving, and, as a result, forego opportunities for public life. This is where we encounter the second element we wish to highlight: the profoundly patriarchal nature of rural Colombia. Several traits of rural families and civil society organizations impose disadvantages and obstacles with regard to women’s participation in public spaces.

According to the rural studies literature, traditional Colombian peasant families of the mid-twentieth century were patriarchal, large, prolific, deeply conservative, and Catholic, with family members’ roles assigned according to sex and socialization processes based on violence and deference to the father (Castañeda Ramírez 2012, 47). But the writings of Donny Meertens (2000, 301) show the changes that took place among rural families during the second half of that century; she highlights how rural women participated actively in agricultural activities, assuming their own—if largely invisible—responsibilities in the value chain that focused on raising animals, subsistence farming, and processing agricultural products.

Similarly, Deere (2002, 172) notes that rural gender studies have focused in recent years on studying the family unit based on an analysis of the “different negoti-

ating capacities between women and men.” In this regard, the family is no longer seen as a harmonious whole devoid of power relations and is understood as “a continuous process of negotiation, contracts, renegotiation and exchanges.” Power relations and hierarchies among family members can thus be measured based on the power that each individual possesses to negotiate and come to agreement with others concerning decisions that affect the family unit and that concern each member of the family. As we saw in chapter three, on the one hand, women from cocalero families tend to lack bargaining power over family resources and the distribution of work within the household, and, on the other, their method of acquiring power within the family unit is often by separating from their husbands. But women coca growers have also found another source of autonomy that has given them negotiating power at home: participation in civil society organizations.

Nevertheless, Sandra’s story shows a unique situation, as her father was the one who roped her into civil society activities at a young age:

When I was a little girl, from eight years onward, because I was the eldest daughter, my dad would take me to the places where he liked to be leader. He was president of the community action board; as I got older, I was the one who kept his accounting books because my dad ... well, he was smart, but keeping a book, writing, was hard for him. So I was in about third grade and I already knew how. So I would always accompany my dad to whatever place or meeting he had. But when they had meetings with politicians, they would leave us children outside. My dad didn’t like to leave me outside, but he had to on account of the other communities. Anyway, that’s how I began developing my leadership skills and later, around 1991–1992, I became a leader.

One clear feature of rural education is the fact that people learn by seeing or doing, which facilitates the passing down of practices within the family. In Sandra’s case, this allowed her to learn not only about work on the farm but also about how to become a leader.

Meanwhile, Gloria Oliva’s trajectory in civil society organizations began when her husband moved to Ecuador in search of construction work, for aerial fumigations had recently begun and the family had no income. Gloria Oliva explained, “He had to leave, and so I began to learn. I only knew how to cook, to work and have children and raise them. When he left, I became more independent.” That was when she began to become involved in the community and take on leadership roles:

When I moved in with my husband, he would buy groceries by himself, he would bring food home by himself, and that’s how things were—he would

go, while I would stay at home with my firstborn. So he ruled in that house, and I had to go with it. But thanks to my nomination as president of the community action board, I gradually became liberated. I mean, thanks to that, we could say that today I am a woman who has been freed from the home.

She quickly became president of her village's community action board and today participates in a range of community settings aimed at securing better roads and negotiating the arrival of basic services to the region. But this process of "freeing herself" from the home, as Gloria Oliva described it, involves negotiations and conflicts within the family, which either requires a redistribution of tasks among members of the household or places an extra work shift on women that must be handled in addition to their daily productive and reproductive tasks.

Gloria Oliva explained, "At first, I would get up at dawn. I have always gotten up early to do my household chores, my kids were smaller then. Then they would go to school and I would run to the meetings." Even though she tried to balance her daily caregiving responsibilities with organization meetings, as she grew more involved in the community, it became harder to do both jobs thoroughly; the organizations were requesting her presence in other regions, and these trips made it impossible for her to do her household work. As a result, she began delegating her care work:

My eldest daughter is in charge of the household, and I used to pay a woman to watch the kids, to cook, to take them to school. But back then, it was a little easier to find the money to pay—now it's not so easy. So, since I couldn't pay for that anymore, I taught my daughter to do it.

In principle, Gloria Oliva tried to align her work schedule with her civil society schedule, but when doing so became impossible, she delegated her care work to other women, namely her eldest daughter.

In general, this redistribution of care work due to women's participation in civil society organizations does not involve men; usually, women coca growers delegate these responsibilities to other women, without considering the possibility of men taking them on. Perhaps this is because women must go through at least two conflict-ridden negotiating processes with their partners to get the men to agree to do care work: the first process concerns women's ability to leave the house to participate in civil society, and the second concerns the redistribution of care work.

With regard to the first negotiating process, Gloria Oliva, for example, noted that her spouse didn't like her leaving the house: "He didn't like it because he thought I would leave him, or out of jealousy, saying that some women find another partner

and abandon their home, they run away with someone else, they have an affair, all of that.” Every time she would leave to attend a meeting, “he would call me all the time, asking ‘Where are you, what are you doing?’, and if I didn’t answer the phone quickly, he would turn his phone off. He was crazy with jealousy.” Rosaura described a similar situation for women who participate in organizations alongside their spouses: “There are men who say, ‘Oh no, you going way out there, that’s not good for a woman who has a husband, you going out there to stay in other parts.” In our social mapping exercise, many women stated that their spouses do not support their participation in civil society organizations; many of their spouses criticize them for spending time on community work when they have responsibilities at home and on the farm, while others depoliticize women’s work by asking why women waste their time in those meetings with “gossipy ladies.”

Richard Sennett, in his analysis of the construction of the public and private realms in modern times, notes that “together, public and private created what would today be called a ‘universe’ of social relations” (1974, 19). Indeed, the distinction between the two spheres involves the shaping of social interactions and roles that determine which actors may participate in each realm and under what conditions or circumstances they may do so. Although there are multiple barriers in rural Colombia that prevent campesino men and women from taking part in the country’s public life, the gender structures that prevail in rural families in the Andes-Amazon region impose further obstacles to women’s involvement in the public-political sphere.

As revealed by women’s testimonies, one barrier for women wishing to participate in civil society organizations is that the negotiating process with their spouses is based on the assumption that women should not leave the home because doing so runs the risk of them losing their “morality” and ceasing to be “good” women and wives. In this context, women in the Andes-Amazon region have even less power to express their ideas and concerns over their daily lives, for the gender structures that deny them access to the public sphere also decrease their possibilities of fully and fairly accessing the services and goods offered by the state to improve the living conditions of rural populations (Villarreal Méndez and Vargas 2014, 4).

In general, women’s negotiations with their spouses are couched in these terms, meaning that the women must prove that they are “good women” and that participating in public life will not change that. Rosaura described the situation thus:

My question is whether the men, when they go out, are going to look for other women, or what is it that they are doing? Because I think that we women, we are going to a working session, a work trip, we’re not going thinking about

who I'm going to hook up with or if I'm going to go out dancing. Myself, at least, when I go out, I go straight from work to the room where I sleep, and to eat. Similarly, if he's going out there, he knows what he needs to look at, he isn't going to look for prettier girls around there.

Ultimately, negotiations within the family require women to demonstrate to their husbands that the family unit and the roles assigned therein will not be altered or subverted by women's participation in civil society organizations; they must show their spouses that they are not going out to look for other men or to abandon their family. This leads women themselves to require that they be "good" women, wives, and mothers, and it means that the role of the "good" woman becomes a defining element of women's notions of social leadership. As Gloria Oliva told us:

Me—as a woman, as a mother or leader—my dream is to get ahead in life and teach women in the municipality that we are going to become independent, that freeing themselves from their spouse doesn't mean that they are going to abandon him but rather teach him that he will also contribute to the household work. So it's really just being able to do more to get some help at home.

But what Gloria Oliva's testimony shows is that despite the fact that the language of the home and its roles is upheld, women's appropriation of social leadership functions has impacts on the home and on the distribution of care work.

This relates to the second negotiating process that women must undergo within their families when they decide to participate in civil society organizations: although many women try to balance their productive and reproductive responsibilities with their social leadership ones, this balancing act becomes impossible as they take on more community work, for they must travel and spend long periods away from home. In such cases, many women decide to delegate work to other women in the family or to pay a woman to take care of those tasks, while others begin to negotiate with their husbands to convince them to take on more care responsibilities. This second negotiating process is rife with conflict, for they tend to be infused with the fear that traditional gender roles will be subverted.

To take an example, Gloria Oliva's husband says that he doesn't want her to be president of the community action board because other people will make em-

Ultimately, negotiations within the family require women to demonstrate to their husbands that the family unit and the roles assigned therein will not be altered or subverted by women's participation in civil society organizations.

barrassing comments about him. For him, Gloria Oliva's attainment of a position of power within the community means an upheaval of traditional family hierarchies—he will no longer be seen as the head of household and will be seen as “weak” for being unable to keep his wife at home.

Women coca growers are immersed in family dynamics that confine them to the home, meaning that when they decide to contravene these dynamics, they are the object of accusations and complaints. This was Violeta's problem with her husband: he never liked that she worked at a school, teaching children who were not theirs; he wanted her to “stay at home, taking care of the kids and doing everything,” although he was fine with her going out to work with him, but without being able to control “one cent.” After several years, he left her and never answered her calls; in her case, his abandonment was the price of her “daring” to work outside the home. Such recriminations demonstrate the inequalities of patriarchal families and seek to give women only one possibility for their lives: “existing for others,” or, as described by the women who participated in our social mapping activity, “serve what others eat, clean what others get dirty, and enjoy what others do.”

Despite these deeply rooted features of rural societies, certain experiences highlighted by the women we interviewed reveal reconsiderations of and fissures in this state of affairs. The women pointed to two rationales that have given them the tools to negotiate within their families and civil society organizations. First, some women noted that their organizations conduct workshops with men aimed at dismantling gender stereotypes and involving men in childrearing and household chores. These workshops are accompanied by sessions that address violence against women and the right of rural women to participate in the public sphere.

Second, some of the women who decided to leave their husbands and take care of the children by themselves have found new partners who encourage their civil society work and who assume their own share of household work; this allows the women to attend organization meetings and to take work trips without worrying about the children or the household. This can be seen in the case of Rosaura, who told us how she was able to build a relationship with her new partner based on responsible parenting and the alignment of her household and farm work with her participation in civil society organizations:

So, he would stay with our little boy and would give him a bottle at night. If he [seemed reluctant], I would say, “Come on, honey, it's so the baby doesn't go hungry. Why don't we go together, and you can stay in another area, in the park or something, or in the room, so the baby won't be thirsty and won't get

sick. And you can stay outside [with the baby] during the meeting.” So he would say yes and we would go together to Florencia and would take our son with us to the meetings.

Such dynamics have allowed many women to build new types of family units in which the chores are shared. But they have also shaped women’s meaning of social leadership: for many, participating in civil society organizations has empowered them within their families and communities. They feel valued and important, and they enjoy the work they do; for some, participating in the public sphere has even strengthened their sense of belonging within the community and has led them to reflect on their role as women in caring for their region.

In our social mapping exercise, several women noted that their role as women has allowed them to be in participatory settings and conflictive social uprisings where men cannot be. As María Fernanda stated:

What the men have to do is go to the protests and all of that, and we women go too—I say this because I’ve already experienced it. When we came up against the [Mobile Anti-Disturbance Squadron], we women put ourselves on the frontlines because we thought the [squadron] wouldn’t touch us on account of being women, but even so, they didn’t respect us. They were also aggressive toward us, and they prosecuted and jailed the women they caught. We coped with all of this because we know our rights and we thought that they would have to step away from us, but that’s not how it was. At these protests, we thought that they would respect us more for being women. But it didn’t happen like that.

In this case, the women play the role that has traditionally been assigned to them in order to care for their organizations. By placing themselves on the frontlines of the protests, they try to protect the men in their community from assault by the Mobile Anti-Disturbance Squadron—which is deemed less likely to hurt women protestors—and, as a result, not only improve the protest conditions but also collectively forge their role in the strengthening of the movement.

In light of the above, the question remains as to how to improve the well-being and participation of women coca growers while simultaneously recognizing the collective campesino claims of which they are part—including the need to ensure the cultural survival of rural communities—but without invalidating women’s own individuality. The answer to this apparent paradox is to embrace an intersectional gender approach, which not only supports the aim of balancing the burden of care work between men and women in rural society but also helps ensure that critiques

of gender structures in rural communities do not promote discursive attacks of these disintegrating dynamics brought on by modernity and which affect the construction of campesino identity.

This discussion has emerged in Bolivia with regard to coca growers, miners, and campesinos. Amidst the tensions between the feminist movement, on the one hand, and campesino, cocalero, and miners' movements, on the other, rural women in Bolivia have pointed to the "association between the politics of women's rights and the neoliberal colonial matrix" (Cabezas 2013, 55). This colonial framework was incorporated into the "governmentality" of the regions where these women live, with a logic centered more on the market than on the recognition of identity. What is clear for many women coca growers from Colombia's Andes-Amazon region is that in the struggle against machismo, their rights will prevail: "It's going to cost us a lot, including by gaining enemies, but with great difficulty we will eventually prevail." Rural women deserve these settings to discuss gender—and not from an urban, modern, or hegemonic perspective within the feminist movement, but on their own terms and according to their own expectations and beliefs.

"THE DAY WILL COME WHEN WE ARE AT THE BRINK OF EQUALITY": CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN MIXED-SEX ORGANIZATIONS

Women's varied participation in community life, social protest, civic activities, and even armed groups shows that their involvement in collective action brings with it a redefinition of political power that can help transform certain aspects of patriarchal society (Ibarra 2011, 1920). Nonetheless, this does not necessarily mean that their rights within these groups are guaranteed, for even the activities of civil society organizations are often distributed in accordance with gender-based structures that assign tasks to women on the basis of their "natural abilities." For example, if a task requires logistical or mediation abilities, teamwork, or manual dexterity, women are seen as the "right people" to take it on; meanwhile, if a task requires oral and written abilities, leadership, or communication skills, men are usually thought of as better equipped.

In an analysis on the sexual division of organizational work within the Platform for the Defense of the Ebro Delta, a Spanish social movement, Eva Alfama i Guillén (2009, 122) classifies the movement's various forms of action according to type and visibility. The first category identifies tasks as related to either directives

or implementation, while the second category determines whether tasks are visible or invisible with regard to mass media, the political sphere, or the streets. Based on this classification, the author concludes that the Platform for the Defense of the Ebro Delta appears to involve little women's participation due to the fact that women's roles are usually invisible and related to implementation, which ends up obscuring the majority of their contributions to collective action (ibid., 127). This situation can also be seen in the case of women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region: often, women are the ones in charge of organizing food and other logistics for people who attend organizational meetings or protests. These tasks, although invisible to the public, are crucial for the maintenance of civil society organizations in the region.

It is not uncommon for community and advocacy organizations to underestimate women's capacity to act as spokespeople and to exercise leadership. Male colleagues often underestimate women's ability to serve as leaders and representatives of community associations in tasks that require managing money and human resources. These stereotypes and practices are reinforced even within social organizations in which women participate: during our social mapping exercise, many women noted that during meetings of mixed-sex organizations, it is difficult for a woman to request the floor, be heard, and be taken seriously by her male colleagues. Nidia,⁵² for example, told us about an experience in which a man from the community action board asked the women why they were there, saying that they should be at home in the kitchen. When the women criticized him for making this comment, he apologized and said that he had been trying to make a joke. Regardless, his comment made many women uncomfortable because, for some, securing a participatory role in these organizations entails continual negotiations and conflicts with their colleagues, families, and communities.

In Bolivia, large organizations such as the National Federation of Campesina Women and the Tropics of Cochabamba Women's Federation have lobbied mixed-sex campesino organizations to include women and their claims in their man-

52 Nidia Quintero is the secretary-general of Fensuagro. She was born in Río Blanco, Tolima, and attended primary school in Orito. After finishing high school, she earned a technical degree in cooperativism and worked in rural areas while studying at the National Training Service, with a focus on medicinal plants. She has served as a leader of community action boards since 1990, a leader of campesino organizations since 1997, and member of Fensuagro's National Board of Directors since 2004. She also helped found the Regional Roundtable in May 2006. At Fensuagro, she has held positions such as secretary for rural women and children, member of the Executive Committee, and secretary-general, a position she currently holds. Furthermore, she has been a member of the Junta Patriótica Nacional, as well as a spokesperson for the Mesa de Interlocución y Acuerdos and the Cumbre Agraria, Étnica, Popular y Campesina.

agement and decision-making arenas. In this way, indigenous women have had to participate in the politics of conflict⁵³ with their male colleagues in order to gain a seat at the table (Cabezas 2013, 36). The history of women's involvement in the Bolivian cocalero movement⁵⁴ shows that women have been the architects of everyday resistance against the war on drugs while also being responsible for agricultural activities, childrearing, and advocacy efforts during blockades and marches (De Souza Santos 2010, 97). Their actions have sought not to fracture this movement but rather ensure women's participation within it.

In December 1995, women coca growers in Bolivia organized a historic march for peace and human rights that called for an end to forced eradication efforts and for respect for the lives, human rights, and liberty of colleagues who had been detained by the government due to their involvement in blockades in Cochabamba (Pinto Ocampo 2004, 181). The women walked more than 390 kilometers from Cochabamba to La Paz to speak with the wives of the country's president and vice president, whom they hoped they could speak with "woman to woman" and urge them to convince their husbands to put an end to forced eradication and violence in the tropics region. In this regard, claiming their collective rights—and despite their differences with the feminist movement—women who belong to cocalero organizations throughout Bolivia have used their position to reclaim the spotlight and leadership in various actions of the cocalero movement.

To summarize, women's participation in collective actions by cocalero communities in the Andes-Amazon region are immersed in dynamics marked by intersectionality. While civil society organizations and movements struggle for the recognition of campesino identity, access to citizenship, rights protection, and the ability to inhabit the region with dignity, their frameworks for action reflect the unequal and patriarchal nature of rural society. This means that being a woman is often disad-

Women from the Andes-Amazon region—and across the Colombian countryside in general—have a long road ahead of them before reaching full equality.

53 According to Marta Cabezas (2013, 36), the politics of conflict in the case of Bolivia meant encouraging trade unions to take up a battle "against patriarchal hegemony" so that housewives' committees and other women's groups could have both a voice and a choice in decisions of the movement.

54 For a detailed description of Bolivia's anti-coca policy and the cocalero movement, see Pinto Ocampo (2004), which explores the movement's history, achievements, and errors. It also compares Bolivia's movement with that of Putumayo.

vantageous in terms of making decisions, participating, taking the floor, and leading the activities of the cocalero movement. The civil society organizations that fight against the structural inequality of rural areas do not necessarily include unfair gender structures in their agendas for action. This battle must instead be waged by women themselves in all of the collective settings (family, community, organization, and movement) to which they belong, and where their rights to participate and to help make decisions must be recognized. Women from the Andes-Amazon region—and across the Colombian countryside in general—have a long road ahead of them before reaching full equality.



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CHAPTER 5

THE FINAL PEACE ACCORD AND DRUG POLICY REFORM: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PEACE

The stories and experiences of women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region reveal the harmful impacts of the war on drugs, not only on account of the crops that these women cultivate but also due to the structural discrimination that they face as women and as rural citizens. Their perspectives and expectations for the future underscore the importance of reforming Colombia's drug policy and adopting more intelligent methods for controlling psychoactive substances.

This chapter argues that the programs and measures outlined in point one (“Comprehensive Rural Reform”) and point four (“Solution to the Illicit Drug Problem”) of the peace accord signed between the Colombian government and the FARC, in addition to being key components of stable and lasting peace, offer an important opportunity to reform the country's drug policy and address the problem of illicit crops from a perspective centered on human rights, public health, gender, and rural development. To this end, the chapter provides an overview of these two points of the peace accord as they relate to communities in areas with illicit crop cultivation, followed by a discussion of the progress that has been made in the year following the signing of the peace accord.

THE PEACE ACCORD AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE EVOLVING DRUG POLICY DISCOURSE

Discussions on the failure of the war on drugs have prompted an unraveling of the national and international consensus on prohibition. Unlike in the 1980s, there is no longer widespread agreement that the prohibition of drugs has achieved its objectives of reducing the size of the illegal drug market and protecting humanity from these psychoactive substances. On the contrary, the world has seen an increase in drug-associated violence while also failing to significantly decrease the production and consumption of these substances.

Within the framework of this change in discourse, the movement for drug policy reform has grown stronger and Colombia has assumed a leading role at the multilateral level. Indeed, during UNGASS 2016, the government of Colombia called on the international community to engage in a frank debate to revisit strategies to combat the world's drug problem, focusing on evidence-based approaches instead of ones founded on moral prejudices.

Similarly, during the peace negotiations that took place in Havana, Cuba, between the Colombian government and the FARC, drug policy was a central theme—so much so that an entire chapter of the peace accord focuses on establishing measures to find “a solution to the illicit drug problem.” Point four of the agreement recognizes that illicit crops have persisted on account of poverty and a weak state presence in certain areas of the country and notes that the roots of inequality in the Colombian countryside stem in large part from “a deepening of [these regions’] marginalization, inequality, gender-based violence, and lack of development” (Government of Colombia and FARC-EP 2016). This situation, as we have noted throughout this book, has had a negative impact on the enjoyment of the human rights of rural populations, particularly women coca growers from the Andes-Amazon region.

Illicit crops have persisted on account of poverty and a weak state presence in certain areas of the country.

Based on these premises, the peace accord establishes that the causes and consequences of the illicit drug problem must be addressed through public policies that are based on human rights, public health, gender, and “territorial” (i.e., rural) development. In order to lay the foundation for a structural transformation of the countryside and create the conditions needed to ensure rural communities’ well-being,

the two parties agreed on the need to guarantee access to land and to enhance income opportunities for rural families, as well as to ensure access to public goods and services, including health, education, housing, and dignified employment. To this end, the peace accord includes a commitment to implementing “comprehensive rural reform” and the National Comprehensive Program for Illicit Crop Substitution, whose main features and to-date achievements are described below.

Voluntary Substitution: The First Step to Overcoming the Illicit Crop Problem

The National Comprehensive Program for Illicit Crop Substitution, established in point four of the peace accord, seeks to improve the well-being of campesino communities who depend on coca cultivation for a living and to help them overcome poverty by offering other rural productive opportunities (Government of Colombia and FARC-EP 2016). In this way, the program is aimed at the structural transformation of regions with illicit crops through the implementation of participatory substitution activities created in conjunction with communities.

Two key principles of this program are community participation and a differentiated approach. The peace accord states that substitution initiatives should be designed jointly by communities and government authorities, which requires “strengthening the participation and capabilities of campesino organizations, including rural women’s organizations, to provide support (technical, financial, human, and other) for their projects,” as well as “involving women as active subjects in consultation processes on voluntary substitution, recognizing their active role in rural development efforts” (ibid.).

In terms of a differentiated approach, the peace accord states that the national substitution program “must recognize and take into account the economic, cultural, and social needs, characteristics, and particularities of Colombia’s rural areas and communities, particularly indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, and of the women in these communities and territories.” To achieve this, it proposes, among other measures, undertaking research studies that include a gender-based approach (ibid.).

The National Comprehensive Program for Illicit Crop Substitution is being implemented through “territorially focused development plans” (known as PDETs in Spanish) and, in municipalities that lack PDETs, through comprehensive plans for crop substitution and alternative development (known as PISDAs). In both of these cases, substitution programs at the local level must include the following com-

ponents: (i) “immediate assistance plans” and the development of productive projects; (ii) fast-track social infrastructure works, such as rural roads, health centers, and community centers; (iii) environmental sustainability and restoration efforts aimed at closing the agricultural frontier; and (iv) land titling programs (ibid.).

To roll out the National Comprehensive Program for Illicit Crop Substitution, in 2017 the government issued Decree 896 formally creating the ten-year program. Among other things, the decree’s provisions outline the various components of the program, the national and local entities responsible for its execution, and its beneficiaries.⁵⁵ In addition, in 2018, the government issued Decree 362 outlining the national, departmental, and municipal entities responsible for implementing the substitution program. However, neither of these decrees include a gender-based approach, for they fail to outline concrete measures for ensuring women’s effective participation and for including their specific needs in the implementation of substitution initiatives.

The national substitution program’s implementation at the local level requires that collective and individual substitution agreements be signed among communities, families, and the Directorate for Illicit Crop Substitution at the Office of the Presidential Advisor for Postconflict. According to the most recent monitoring report on the substitution program, published by Fundación Ideas para la Paz (2018), collective substitution agreements that include 127,405 families have been signed to date. These agreements cover approximately 95,481 hectares of illicit crops. This figure represents about 60% of all coca crops, according to a 2017 UNODC report (UNODC and Government of Colombia 2017).

In an analysis prepared by Dejusticia and other organizations for the monitoring report on Resolution 1325, very few collective agreements include a gender-based approach. For example, none of the agreements establish a mechanism to ensure women’s access to the resources provided by “immediate assistance plans,” and only one of the agreements includes a reference to single-person, blended, and non-traditional families. With regard to participation in the local entities tasked with coordinating and overseeing the program, only 17% of the agreements analyzed in this report expressly provide for women’s participation. Additionally, although 67% of the agreements identify the need to ensure communities’ safety, they do not include gender-based protection measures (Coalición 1325 – Colombia 2017).

55 The Constitutional Court upheld the constitutionality of Decree 896 of 2017 through Sentence C-493, issued in 2017.

The implementation of the peace accord in coca-growing regions has not promoted women's participation, nor has it taken their concerns or needs into account. As of 2017, a mere 26% of the signatories to collective substitution agreements were women. Because of political pressure at the national and international levels stemming from the surge in coca cultivation, the national substitution program has been implemented without much attention to the comprehensive rural reform measures outlined in point one of the peace accord. As a result, the harmful and distressing experiences suffered by women coca growers on account of the drug policy are being perpetuated. Today, women coca growers face a situation in which their source of livelihood risks being eradicated at the same time that the government has offered neither immediate solutions to help them survive the transition nor the structural changes required to overcome the poverty and vulnerability of rural communities.

As of 2017, a mere 26% of the signatories to collective substitution agreements were women.

The women we interviewed—who at the time were unaware of the contents of the collective agreements—expressed concern that the substitution program established in the peace accord would be insufficient and that the government would ultimately fail to comply with the accord. For example, Gloria Oliva noted that the monthly subsidy promised to cocalero families over the course of one year as part of the immediate assistance plans, in exchange for their commitment to eradicating their coca crops, would fall short: “A million pesos [about US\$268] a month is not enough to pay for my daughter’s studies. She’s even telling me, ‘Mom, you say that I’m going to go to college, but now that the coca is going to come to an end, how are you going to pay for my tuition?’”

The inadequate implementation of the peace accord could thus have very negative consequences for women coca growers, for the state’s failure to provide economic alternatives that allow women to achieve the same level of independence, education, and social mobility that coca has given them poses an imminent risk of exacerbating rural poverty in these regions.

Comprehensive Rural Reform as a Structural Response to the Needs of Women Coca Growers

Point one of the peace accord calls for the implementation of comprehensive rural reform that fosters a structural transformation of the countryside, ultimately

“integrating regions, eradicating poverty, promoting equality, ensuring the full enjoyment of citizens’ rights, and, as a result, guaranteeing the nonrepetition of the armed conflict and the eradication of violence” (Government of Colombia and FARC-EP 2016). Point one recognizes the fundamental role that women play in rural development and the rural economy and thus includes equality and a gender-based approach as key principles for comprehensive rural reform.

The peace accord interprets these principles thus:

Acknowledgment of women as independent citizens with rights who, irrespective of their marital status or relationship to their family or community, have access, on an equal footing with men, to land ownership and productive projects, financial opportunities, infrastructure, technical services, and training. (ibid.)

Structurally transforming the countryside thus requires the adoption of “specific measures in terms of planning, execution, and monitoring of the plans and programs covered in this accord so that they can be implemented while taking into account the specific needs and distinct conditions of women” (ibid.).

The accord proposes three overall strategies for implementing comprehensive rural reform: (i) the promotion of access to land and security of tenure; (ii) the implementation of territorially focused development plans, or PDETs; and (iii) the implementation of national plans for comprehensive rural reform.

First, to promote access to land, the agreement calls for the creation of a land fund, accompanied by the design of a special purchase credit. Both of these mechanisms place particular emphasis on assisting landless and land-poor rural women. In addition, with regard to land titling, the peace accord prioritizes regions with PDETs and campesino reserve areas. The titling process must “include specific measures for overcoming the obstacles faced by rural women.” Moreover, it should provide legal advice and special training for women to help them overcome barriers to accessing land and must guarantee the inclusion of information “on the size and characteristics of land parcels held by women, their relationship with the land, and the type of titling” in the Comprehensive and Multipurpose General Cadastral Information System (ibid.).

Second, the PDETs—which will take shape in rural areas through “action plans for regional transformation”—include the objective of promoting the well-being and quality of life of rural communities and the development of campesino and family economies. The criteria for prioritizing which regions will be home to PDETs

are (i) poverty levels; (ii) the degree to which an area has been affected by the armed conflict; (iii) the degree of weakness of public institutions; and (iv) the presence of illicit crops. The peace accord states that PDETs will be constructed on the basis of a participatory process that includes women's effective involvement.

Lastly, the national plans for comprehensive rural reform include the implementation of programs in the following areas: infrastructure and land improvement; social development, understood as access to health, education, housing, and poverty eradication; stimuli for agricultural production and the solidarity economy; and the progressive realization of the right to food. With regard to access to health, the peace accord calls for

an equity- and gender-based approach that takes account of women's health requirements, in accordance with their life cycle, including measures aimed at sexual and reproductive health, psychological care, and special measures for pregnant women and children in the areas of prevention, health promotion, and treatment. (ibid.)

With regard to education, the peace accord promotes women's professional training in areas that are typically uncommon for them. In terms of housing, the agreement prioritizes mothers who are heads of household for construction and home improvement subsidies. In addition, to stimulate the solidarity and cooperative economy, it promises technical and financial support for women's organizations (ibid.).

To advance in the implementation of comprehensive rural reform, the government issued Decrees 893 and 902 in 2017. The first of these, Decree 893, provides for the creation of PDETs, which have a ten-year duration. In total, the decree provides for sixteen PDETs covering 170 municipalities and establishes that they must be constructed with communities' active participation. Putumayo has one PDET encompassing all of the department's municipalities.

This decree also establishes certain gender-based measures, such as the recognition and promotion of rural women's organizations (art. 2); women's mandatory inclusion in action plans for regional transformation (art. 4); women's inclusion in measures seeking to strengthen governance, management, planning, oversight, and social control capacities (art. 11); and the requirement that guidelines for participatory planning with ethnic communities take into account "women, family, and youth" (art. 14) (Coalición 1325 – Colombia 2017).

The second decree, Decree 902, contains four measures that are key to

comprehensive rural reform: land titling plans for rural property, the Land Fund, the Registry of Zoning Subjects (which classifies and prioritizes beneficiaries of the Land Fund and land titling), and the simplification of administrative and judicial procedures for the legal security of tenure. According to this decree, initiatives seeking to promote access to and the titling of land shall prioritize women through, for example, the provision of a higher ranking to rural women in the Registry of Zoning Subjects. In addition, the decree notes that women's role in the care economy will be recognized as evidence of their relationship with land and thus as a basis for land ownership (ibid.).

Currently, the PDETs' design is being worked on; the Territorial Renewal Agency, which is responsible for this effort, has developed guidelines for ensuring women's inclusion in the PDETs' design and implementation. In addition, the Coalition for Action on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in Colombia has included recommendations in its annual report aimed at ensuring a focus on women in comprehensive rural reform efforts, as well as promoting women's active participation. Among these recommendations are that at least 50% of available state lands be allocated to rural women, that property titles be issued in the name of both members of a couple, and that gender-specific security measures be designed with women's participation (ibid.).

An Opportunity for Peace

Women coca growers in the Andes-Amazon region are aware of the importance of this historical moment in Colombia and are committed to helping shape collective agreements on illicit crop substitution as a way to support peacebuilding. These women and their organizations are actively mobilizing to enunciate their needs and expectations in terms of the new direction that drug policy in Colombia appears to be taking.

During this research project, we were fortunate to witness these women's determination and commitment. Many of those who participated in our regional conference in Puerto Asís traveled long distances to get there. They spent days riding on mules, buses, and canoes from faraway corners of Putumayo, Cauca, Caquetá, and Nariño in

Women coca growers in the Andes-Amazon region are aware of the importance of this historical moment in Colombia and are committed to helping shape collective agreements on illicit crop substitution.

order to be able to share their concerns and ideas. Viviana, for example, traveled for three days to get to the event. She spent nine hours riding a mule and walking to reach the nearest city center, where she then took a *chiva* (rustic bus common in rural areas) and three other buses through three different departments before finally arriving to Puerto Asís.

When we asked Viviana to explain what motivated her to travel so far, she responded with a gigantic smile:

I've had many experiences that have shaped my life, so hopefully we are now facing a time for change, for transformation, for renewal, especially for women, who are always the ones affected the most by the situations we live through. And to continue [being] a leader for women so that we can move forward, so we can express our views as women, and so hopefully our beloved Colombia [can be] an example for other countries in this process that we are undergoing.

The measures outlined in points one and four of the peace accord—particularly those centered on supporting communities near illicit crops—offer a unique opportunity to strengthen the state's presence in rural regions through its public institutions. In doing so, the Colombian government will be able to make amends to the coca growers that it had abandoned and repressed for so many decades, to protect their fundamental rights, and to promote their well-being.



Micro Empresa
(Artes y bordados)

CHAPTER 6

“HOPEFULLY WE ARE NOW FACING A TIME FOR CHANGE, FOR TRANSFORMATION, FOR RENEWAL, ESPECIALLY FOR WOMEN”: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

“Today, my dream is to build a complete farm, have a little bit of everything on my land, and hopefully this war will come to an end. And there will be no more conflict. And I can grow old and look at my children with happiness, without worry. And my children will never ... have to hold a weapon.”

Sandra

CONCLUSION

The experience of being a woman coca grower as the peace accord is being implemented leads us to reflect on issues of equality and justice, two concepts that are addressed by feminist philosopher Nancy Fraser (2008), who has explored inequality on the basis of material resources, cultural differences, and diversity in political representation. Her approach is centered on a redistributive paradigm that is intertwined with social justice and addresses class differentials—recognition linked to cultural diversity, by which she means those communities or populations that fall

outside the dominant norm, particularly in terms of sexual, ethnic, and gender diversity. Additionally, Fraser sees nation-states as incapable of acting autonomously in today's transnational environment, meaning that women's poverty cannot be addressed within a state-based framework, for it is a globalized injustice—hence the concept of representation.

If we analyze the situation of women coca growers in the Andes-Amazon region, we can argue, like Fraser, that these women face a framework of reinforced injustice and discrimination that stems from a lack of redistribution in the rural world in general (among men and women alike), as we described in chapter one, which highlights the difficulties faced by women coca growers in accessing their economic, social, and cultural rights.

In addition to this lack of redistribution, women coca growers have had to endure a lack of recognition as rural citizens and as women due to a patriarchal society that reinforces gender-based stereotypes and violence, as described throughout this book but especially in chapter three. This problem of recognition is not unique to women coca growers, for it affects other rural women as well; nonetheless, in the case of women coca growers in Colombia, based on our analysis performed in conjunction with that of women from the Andes-Amazon region, we can conclude that an additional element serves to further reinforce each one of the aforementioned deficits: their stigmatization as guerrilla supporters and drug traffickers as a result of their involvement in coca cultivation. This stigmatization, although shared by men in their communities as well, places Andes-Amazon women in an even more precarious situation compared to others in the rural world.

Furthermore, these women are affected by a lack of representation stemming from the war on drugs, as explored in chapter two. In this way, decisions concerning drug policy fall increasingly outside the hands of the national government and instead depend on transnational-level decision making, where the voices of the weakest links in the drug chain—such as women coca growers—are invisible and where these actors are rarely able to conduct advocacy.

Moreover, these situations occur within a disadvantageous context in and of itself. Southern Colombia, a region that underwent “late colonization” linked to

The Andes-Amazon region has suffered from a weak state that has been unable to effectively fulfill its functions and that, instead of eliminating discriminatory structures, has strengthened them.

the armed conflict and extractive industries, has received scant attention from the Colombian government. The Andes-Amazon region has suffered from a weak state that has been unable to effectively fulfill its functions and that, instead of eliminating discriminatory structures, has strengthened them. Today, as the peace accord is being implemented, the state has a rare opportunity to correct this historical neglect and to adopt participatory-based measures aimed at transforming the region.

As it implements the peace accord, the Colombian state should embrace the following key premises with regard to women coca growers:

1. Sustainably achieving rural development in regions with coca crops means addressing the historical lack of redistribution and recognition of women coca growers.
2. The peace accord presents a momentous opportunity for the state to establish a presence in coca-growing regions that is based on public institutions, and doing so requires that state institutions adopt a gender-based, campesino, and redistributive perspective.
3. In the transnational sphere, Colombia's drug policy should prioritize the state's duties toward its citizens from a rights-based perspective and should seek to directly involve cocalero communities, as they are one of the primary victims of the war on drugs.

This book has sought to achieve two aims: on the one hand, shed light on the situation of women coca growers and the tools that they have used to fight for the protection of their rights, and on the other, contribute to the peace accord's implementation. In this regard, we wish to present the recommendations proposed by the women who took part in our Puerto Asís conference, as well as other recommendations based on our analysis of the data gathered for this book and from advocacy activities carried out by Dejusticia as part of the Working Group on Gender in Peace and the Coalition for Action on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. It is our hope that the recommendations outlined below will facilitate the implementation of the peace accord's gender-based measures and, ultimately, contribute to improved livelihoods among rural women in Colombia.

The recommendations are organized into four overarching categories: (i) general recommendations on a gender-based approach to peacebuilding and on the restoration of rural communities' trust in the state, particularly in areas with the presence of illicit crops; (ii) recommendations on a gender-based approach to the implementation of point one of the peace accord (comprehensive rural reform); (iii)

recommendations on a gender-based approach to the implementation of point four (solution to the illicit drug problem) of the accord, particularly the Comprehensive Program for Illicit Crop Substitution; and (iv) recommendations on security measures for women and the prevention of gender-based violence.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON A GENDER-BASED APPROACH TO PEACEBUILDING AND ON BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN COCALERO COMMUNITIES AND THE STATE

- Undertake actions aimed at rebuilding cocalero communities' trust in the state. This process should begin by reframing the notion of the Andes-Amazon region as a wasteland available for resource extraction and whose inhabitants are largely linked to criminal and guerrilla activities. Historically, women and communities in the region have called for a greater state presence, which is why state institutions should begin by acknowledging their role and value in forging rural territory, and with whom the state has a great debt, including with regard to respecting and fulfilling their rights. To build communities' trust in the state, we propose the creation of an impartial verification mechanism for monitoring compliance with the commitments signed between the national government and cocalero communities. In addition, state institutions should assume a greater presence in marginalized regions of the country, such as through institutions related to justice, agriculture and rural development, social security, housing, health, and education, starting with those regions that are home to PISDAs and PDETs.
- Ensure the participation of rural women in the various settings related to the implementation of the peace accord. To this end, the state should:
 1. Democratize the time spent on care work by men and women (see next set of recommendations).
 2. Guarantee a security strategy that is designed and implemented using a gender-based approach.
 3. Incorporate gender parity as a key pillar of participatory settings related to the implementation of the peace accord.
 4. Strengthen organizational settings that involve rural women, regardless of whether such settings are mixed-sex, with the aim of empowering women to participate without fear and in an active, informed manner. In this regard, it is critical to foster women-only spaces for discussion prior to these other public settings.

4. Reinforce a gender perspective in the design of activities aimed at raising local communities' awareness of the peace accord.

5. Seek transportation solutions that allow women to travel to discussion and decision-making settings.

- Take actions to democratize reproductive work within the household and community, paying special attention to the greater share of unpaid work that is usually borne by rural women, particularly those involved in the illicit drug trade on account of their dire economic situation. To achieve this, the state should strengthen the National System on the Care Economy so that its strategic objectives include a focus on rural areas; this will help lessen the disproportionate burden of care work that falls on women and redistribute those tasks to men so that women may play an active role in the design and implementation of crop substitution plans, PDETs, and other political and community initiatives. These measures should include the following:
 1. Awareness-raising efforts aimed at the renegotiation and redistribution of care-related workloads among members of the family, the community, and the public sector, with the goal of promoting women's participation in various community, organizational, and political forums.
 2. Inclusion of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection as members of the National System on the Care Economy.
 3. Implementation of care-related services, such as daycares and community cafeterias, provided by the state in participatory settings and aimed at offering services to children, the elderly, and differently abled people.
- For the implementation of points one and four of the peace accord, the state should acknowledge that family relations are often enmeshed in unequal power dynamics that can lead to gender subordination. In this sense, the state should refrain from implementing policies that embrace a familist approach but without denying the importance placed on the community by rural women, including women coca growers.
- Implement points one and four of the peace accord with the full coordination of relevant state entities. The state should make public its work methodologies, available budgets and their allocation, monitoring indicators, timelines, and protocols for interinstitutional coordination. All of these instruments should be designed with a gender-based approach, as called for in the peace accord.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON A GENDER-BASED APPROACH TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POINT ONE OF THE PEACE ACCORD (COMPREHENSIVE RURAL REFORM)

As a general principle behind the effective implementation of comprehensive rural reform, the PDETs and land titling plans for rural property should consider rural women's special relationship with land and the region.

The peace accord should secure the effective transformation of the countryside through the implementation of eleven national plans for comprehensive rural reform, connected to the improvement of living conditions and the effective implementation of the PDETs and PISDAs; moreover, comprehensive rural reform should ensure that the current substitution plans outlined in point four do not fail on account of focusing on short-term measures alone, without considering the long term, which is essential for helping communities overcome the poverty and inequality linked to the drug trade. Nonetheless, general measures are not enough; the state should undertake affirmative and differentiated measures aimed at dismantling the reinforced discrimination faced by women coca growers, particularly with regard to the following:

Health

- Strengthen existing health care institutions in the country's most remote rural areas by increasing the number of facilities and types of services offered so that all levels of care and universal coverage are available to campesinos and respond to the particular health needs of women.
- Provide medical brigades that offer basic and specialized health care throughout the country, and then present reports to community assemblies on the brigades' activities. These brigades should include sexual and reproductive health care and rights promotion, as well as mechanisms for ensuring access; they should also offer prenatal care and information on contraception, among other things.

Housing

- Should the need arise to prioritize certain individuals' access to housing, give preference to women heads of household, women with two or more people under their care, and women who have a disability or a serious or terminal illness.

- In the housing plan, include access to safe fuels or a plan for replacing wood-burning stoves with cleaner burning options.
- When designing rural houses, pay special attention to the area required by rural families, as well as family customs.

Access to Land

- Ensure that land titling plans include measures to identify common barriers faced by women in accessing land; with regard to land-related conflicts, the plans should be able to determine whether gender is an important factor in these conflicts.
- The national agrarian authority should ensure that land distributed to women is in optimal conditions, thereby avoiding the common historical practice of giving lower-quality land to women.
- Within the framework of Decree 902 of 2017 on measures for implementing comprehensive rural reform, in order to ensure equal access to land, the state should make land available to persons subject to payment or partial payment only after fully satisfying the right to land for persons who qualify for free distribution.

Education

- Ensure shorter geographical distances between schools and homes. In addition, create mechanisms together with local communities that seek to increase safety along transit routes. The government should also encourage schools to implement daycare facilities, as well as flexible schedules that take into account children's ages.
- To facilitate women's access to higher education, stimulate the construction of universities and technical institutes that offer a wide range of good-quality studies in rural areas of the country. Concretely speaking, women from the Andes-Amazon region requested the rollout of a good-quality public university in the department of Putumayo.
- Through the Ministry of Education, encourage schools to offer an equivalency course that strengthens women's reading, writing, analytical, computer, and mathematic skills. In addition, promote training for women and youth in new agricultural technologies.

- Improve access to scholarships and loans for women aged thirty to fifty who wish to certify their work experience.

Product Marketing and Technical and Business Assistance

- The promotion of local, regional, national, and international markets should include an emphasis on women's economic autonomy and empowerment, recognizing both their care work and productive work, financial self-management, the promotion of rural women's associations, participation in strategies for product sales, and minimization of arbitration.

Access to Credit

- Create a line of forgivable loans through the Microfinance Fund for Rural Women for women involved in tasks related to coca, marijuana, and poppy cultivation, with the aim of boosting agricultural projects that strengthen their economy autonomy.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON A GENDER-BASED APPROACH TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POINT FOUR (SOLUTION TO THE ILLICIT DRUG PROBLEM) OF THE ACCORD, PARTICULARLY THE COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM FOR ILLICIT CROP SUBSTITUTION

Over the next few years, the Colombian government's drug policy should embrace point four of the peace accord—which notes that forced eradication (including fumigation) of illicit crops should be used as a last resort only—as a guiding principle. Rural citizens' historical lack of trust in the state should serve as a voice of warning to avoid repeating costly and ineffective tactics, such as the aerial and land spraying of illicit crops. The government should uphold Resolution 0006 of the National Narcotics Council, issued in May 2015, which suspends the aerial spraying of glyphosate, and should refrain from performing aerial or land fumigations with other herbicides.

Within the framework of this guiding principle, crop substitution programs should embrace the rural transformation efforts mentioned above. This will ensure that the needs and circumstances of affected communities will be taken into account

and also builds on the fact that civil society efforts already exist in these regions. Recommendations in this regard include the following:

- Although Decree 896 of 2017 and its subsequent upholding by the Constitutional Court constitute progress in regulating the Comprehensive Program for Illicit Crop Substitution, it is important that the Directorate for Illicit Crop Substitution issue a decree regulating the following aspects:
 1. The legal scope of collective and individual crop substitution agreements in order to ensure legal security for both the government and the communities and individuals who are participating in them. In this regard, it is important to treat the agreements as administrative acts.
 2. Guidelines for crop substitution in specially protected areas, such as national parks and the collective territories of indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups, in order to ensure these populations' fundamental right to prior consultation.
 3. The inclusion of gender-based measures in the design and implementation of collective and individual substitution agreements.
- The Colombian government should stipulate, as soon as possible, the legal provisions necessary for providing differentiated penal treatment for small coca farmers, as established in the peace accord. These legal provisions should (i) comply with the conditions outlined in the peace accord; (ii) incorporate measures to safeguard the personal information of those who benefit from this treatment, to prevent future criminal prosecution; and (iii) incorporate measures of due process for those individuals who return to coca, marijuana, or poppy cultivation.
- Crop substitution and alternative development programs should consider the diagnoses, principles, plans, and strategies generated by the community planning processes carried out in regions with illicit crops, paying special attention to community proposals that incorporate a gender-based approach. This is the case for the 2035 Andes-Amazon Comprehensive Development Plan, which includes a diagnosis on the situation of coca crops in the region and proposes gender-based substitution alternatives.
- Keeping in mind that point 4.1.2 of the peace accord establishes the need to encourage and strengthen research, reflection, and analysis concerning the reality experienced by women involved in illicit crops, the government should establish a rural women's observatory that focuses on women's relationship with illicit crops and has the following key objectives:

1. Establish a baseline that facilitates the future monitoring of the results of the Comprehensive Program for Illicit Crop Substitution and its joint work with the PDETs, as demonstrated by the situation of rural women, particularly those involved in coca. This baseline should document, among other things:

- Women's enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights.
- Women's relationship with land, recognizing their participation in productive and reproductive work as part of the right to land.
- The relationship between poverty, drugs, and gender-based violence.
- The legal situation of women coca growers.

2. Create gender-sensitive monitoring indicators that allow the state to monitor the results of the Comprehensive Program for Illicit Crop Substitution and its joint work with the PDETs.

3. Monitor the application of gender-responsive budgets for the purposes of implementing the Comprehensive Program for Illicit Crop Substitution.

- In light of the lack of official data on women involved in coca cultivation and processing, the entities tasked with monitoring illicit crops should include questions in their annual census that are disaggregated by sex and type of work in order to produce reports that reveal the number of women involved in the trade, as well as their type of involvement.
- Similarly, to correct the lack of sex-disaggregated data concerning crop substitution and alternative development programs, both by the Colombian government and international agencies, gender-sensitive variables should be systematically incorporated into such programs.
- Information-collection efforts for coca growers who sign up for crop substitution programs should abide by the following practices:
 1. Lists and descriptions of families should embrace a broad notion of "family" that includes single-person, blended, same-sex, and, in general, non-traditional families. They should also account for the different ways that families are involved in the coca trade (coca scraping, cultivation, food preparation for fieldworkers, etc.).
 2. The information gathered should be kept confidential and used only for the purposes of implementation the programs laid out in the peace accord.
- Along the same lines, throughout the country, municipal monitoring and

evaluation councils should be responsible for developing monitoring indicators that permit an objective assessment of compliance with crop substitution agreements. Some of these indicators should seek to assess compliance with the gender-based aspects of collective agreements.

- The Board for Strategic Direction, the Permanent Governing Board (as groups under the national substitution program), and entities at the regional level (for example, community assemblies, municipal participatory planning commissions, and municipal monitoring and evaluation councils) should promote the equal participation of men and women in decision-making spaces, including management settings. This principle of gender parity should also guide community representation efforts and the formation of working teams within the state entities that intervene in rural areas.
- Agricultural projects should embrace a crop diversification strategy. Such a strategy is desirable because it fosters income sustainability and food security among campesino communities, particularly in times of drought, crop damage, or other agricultural adversities. In addition, this strategy increases farming communities' portfolio of products and activities, which reduces their dependence on product marketers (Ellis 1999, 10).
- With the aim of ensuring the sustainability of crops and soil quality, women who participated in our conference recommended the exclusive use of native seeds. Rural development programs should refrain from implementing projects that require the use of other seeds and from creating barriers that impede the use of native seeds.
- A certain percentage of resources for community-level immediate assistance plans should be destined for strategies and activities identified by the women who are present in participatory assemblies. An all-women setting should be set aside for this purpose. Such a setting should not mean that women are excluded from other settings.
- Conditions should be created to guarantee the economic autonomy achieved by some women on account of their involvement in coca. In addition to providing other agricultural alternatives, it is important to undertake actions aimed at recognizing women's economic autonomy, such as through the design of mechanisms that ensure the direct delivery—that is, to women and not to their spouses—of economic resources stipulated in collective and individual crop substitution agreements.
- Community action boards in each village should ensure that food assistance resources are distributed equitably among family members and alert national

authorities of any noncompliance with this standard. This will help in the design of measures to address the risk of domestic violence as a result of the delivery of resources from immediate assistance plans.

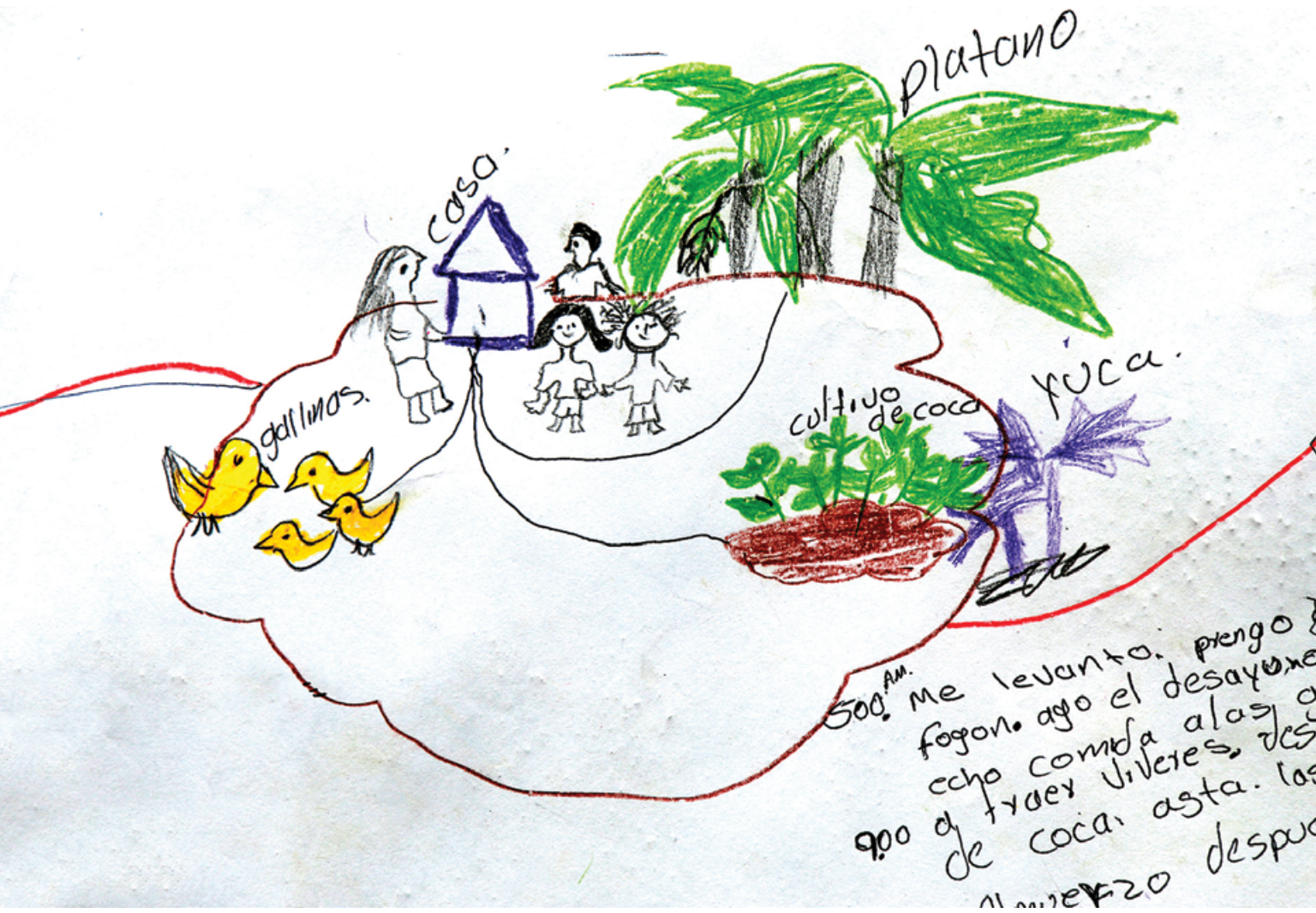
- With respect to the disbursement of resources, women who participated in our regional conference recommended the following:
 1. If the resources are deposited into the recipient's bank account, the bank should not be able to automatically debit these resources to pay other outstanding debts of the client, nor should these resources be subject to bank fees or taxes, such as Colombia's *cuatro por mil* tax.
 2. If the resources are provided in person, the subsidy should include the recipient's transportation costs to reach the nearest city center.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON SECURITY MEASURES FOR WOMEN AND THE PREVENTION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The implementation of the peace accord should draw on security strategies that allow campesinos to remain within their regions of residence, that allow civil society movements to continue their advocacy efforts, and, above all, that allow coca growers to access crop substitution programs without placing their lives at risk. For women in particular, the construction of sustainable and lasting peace requires certain measures to highlight and put an end to the violence that they have experienced in their everyday lives at the hands of people inside and outside their community. To this end, we recommend the following measures:

- Given the security risks faced by communities that will be affected by crop substitution programs, especially due to land-related disputes, it is critical to undertake a security strategy based on a differentiated approach that takes into account the specific risks faced by women and members of the LGTBI community. To this end, it is essential to guarantee the effective participation of at-risk communities during the strategy's design and execution. The national government should thus allow neutral third parties—such as the Ombudsperson's Office, the United Nations Verification Mission, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights—to accompany substitution processes in areas with volatile security conditions.
- To formulate this security strategy, the government should create a space for independent reflection by women involved in coca cultivation, with the objective of identifying the risks they face and the specific measures that should be taken to guarantee their safety.

- When designing crop substitution plans, municipal participatory planning commissions should promote activities and measures aimed at preventing violence against women and decreasing the amount of time that rural women typically spend on unpaid care work.
- With regard to women coca growers who experienced violence during the armed conflict, it is critical to raise awareness of their dual status as women coca growers and as victims and to promote actions aimed at erasing their stigmatization as criminals and guerrillas.
- As part of its peacebuilding efforts, the government should promote historical memory activities that allow women to reconstruct and transform their histories of pain and violence, taking special care with regard to the sexual violence that many of them have suffered.
- The government should undertake steps to ensure that communities in general, and women in particular, have access to truth, justice, and reparation measures concerning acts of violence that took place within the context of the war on drugs in the Andes-Amazon region.
- Finally, the government should promote awareness-raising activities within communities affected by the armed conflict that seek to educate men on violence against women and to see it as a violation of women's rights and dignity as opposed to an affront to their manhood.



5:00 AM. Me levanto. prendo el
fogón. ago el desayuno.
echo comida a las
9:00 y traer viveres, ves
de coca. asta. las
11:00 y 20 despues

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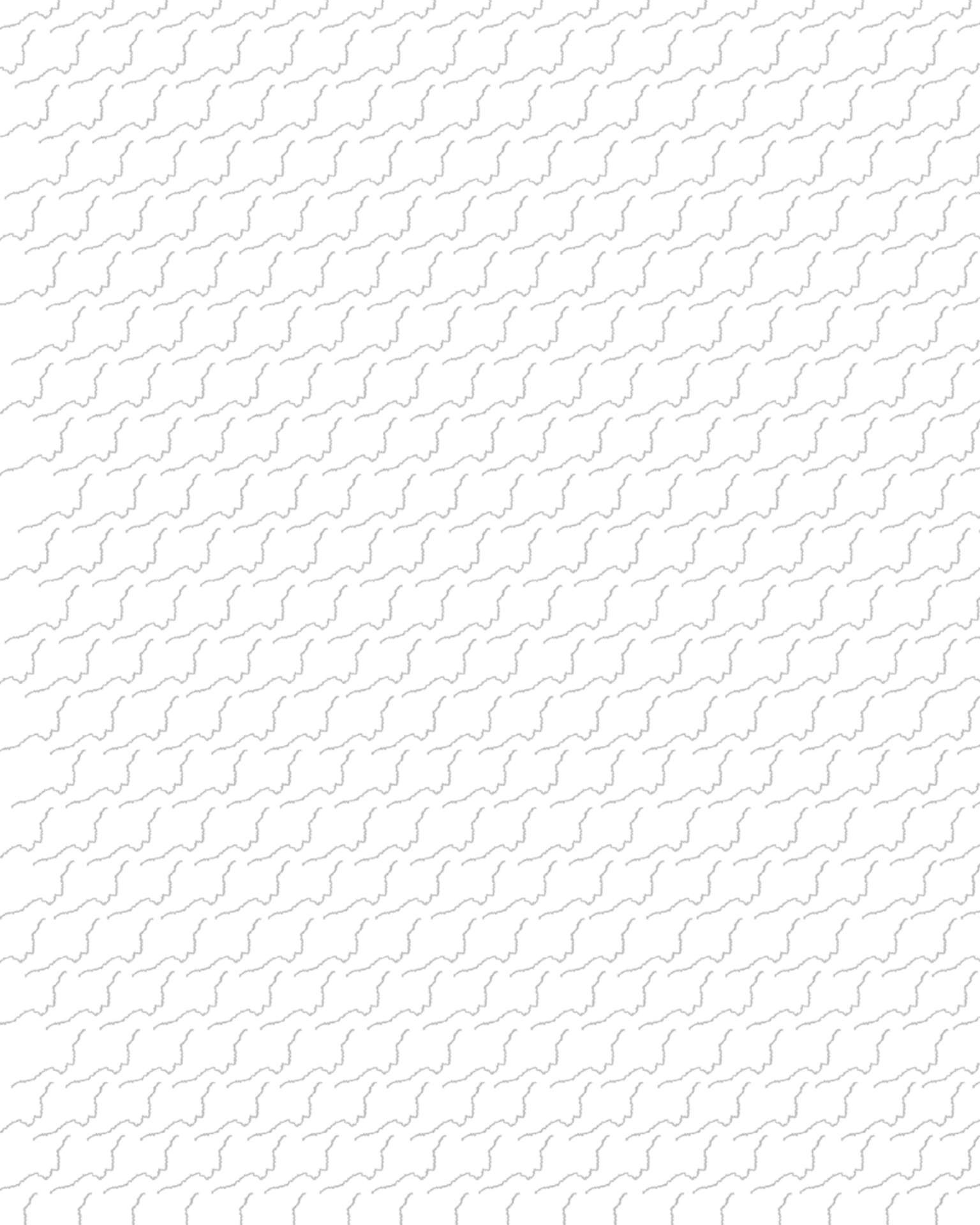
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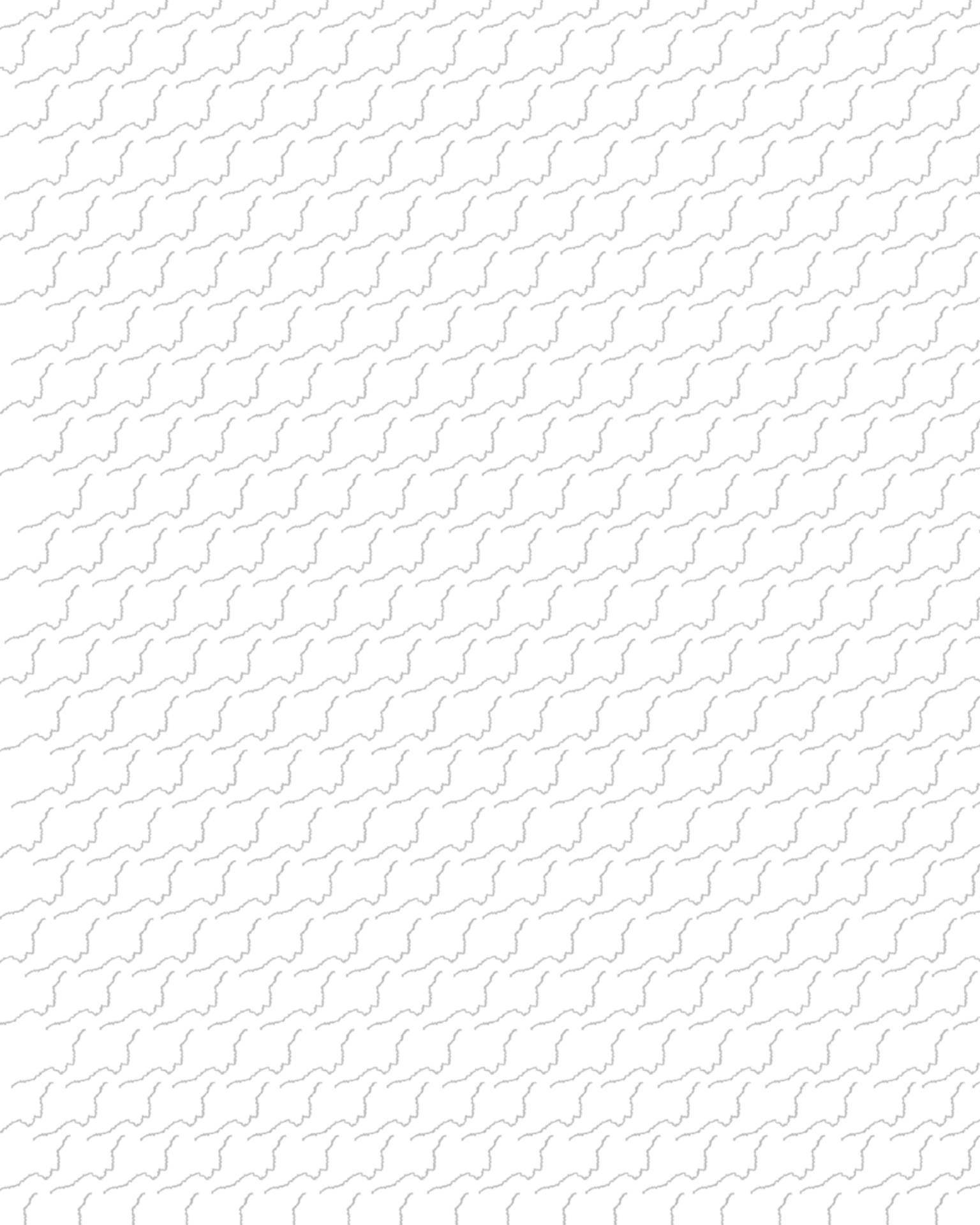
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Colombia's response to the country's drug problem has been based on the repression of the weakest links in the drug chain—namely consumers and small farmers—which has led to disproportionate rates of imprisonment and has involved a heavy focus on forced crop eradication. Not only has such an approach failed to effectively control the cocaine market, but it has also unleashed harmful side effects in terms of security, social development, and human rights as they concern communities in coca-growing areas. Moreover, although scholars and practitioners have analyzed Colombia's drug problem from a variety of perspectives, these efforts have tended to overlook women's experiences.

This report explores the ways that rural norms, gender structures, the armed conflict, and illegal markets have played out in the lives of women coca growers in Colombia's Andes-Amazon region, an area distinguished by the presence of illegal armed groups, violence, poverty, and weak state institutions. In this region of Colombia, coca cultivation has offered an important source of income for rural families, which in turn has affected women's roles in society and has placed them in a vulnerable position vis- à-vis armed actors.

The Andes-Amazon region is an area where the country's war on drugs and its armed conflict converged and unmasked the gender structures dominating the countryside. These structures affected rural women in various ways: through everyday violence, the fumigation of illicit and licit crops alike, and women's stigmatization due to their involvement in an illegal trade. But coca was also a source of livelihood that helped them attain economic independence and gave them the ability to improve their well-being and that of their families.

The recent peace accord signed between the Colombian government and the country's main guerrilla group represents a historic opportunity to learn from past mistakes in terms of the illicit crop problem and the social and political demands of coca-growing communities. Against this backdrop, it is time to recognize the contributions that women coca growers have made in both the public and the private spheres toward the construction of a peaceful countryside in the most remote and forgotten regions of the country.

