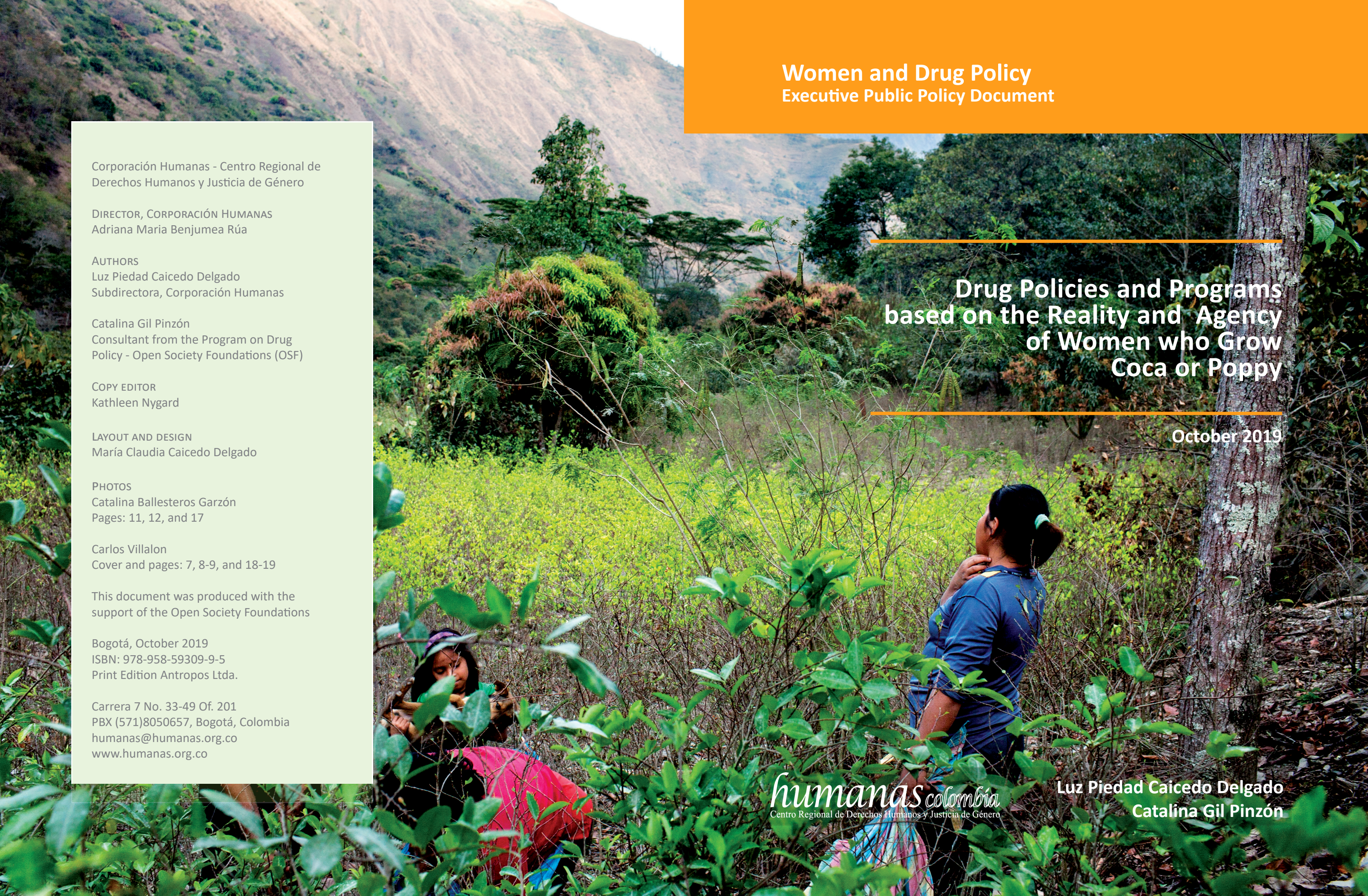




Women and Drug Policy

Executive Public Policy Document

Corporación Humanas - Centro Regional de
Derechos Humanos y Justicia de Género

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Drug Policies and Programs based on the Reality and Agency of Women who Grow Coca or Poppy

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humanas colombia
Centro Regional de Derechos Humanos y Justicia de Género

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Introduction

Women who live in rural communities face serious social and economic challenges due to gender stereotypes and discrimination, which prevent them from having equitable access to opportunities, resources, and services. Like women in urban areas, there is a generalized lack of recognition of rural women's work to raise and care for children or manage a home. In addition, their crucial role to guarantee food security –through peasant agriculture and animal husbandry– is not always recognized or seen as an essential contribution to the family economy or the country's GDP.

Cultural practices and barriers make it difficult for women to even recognize their own interests, make these visible, and ensure that they are taken into account in decision-making. In spite of women's essential contributions to care work, poverty reduction, and food security, their rights to land or remuneration for their work often go unrecognized, due to the existence of predominantly patriarchal structures.

Furthermore, women who live in rural areas where coca or poppy crops are present face stigmatization for receiving their income from a criminalized activity. In some of these areas, women are even more vulnerable to violence generated by armed groups.

Even though there have been local efforts¹ to listen to women's realities as inhabitants of coca or poppy production areas, there is still an important gap in the understanding of their roles and tasks in relation to the following issues: What risks and vulnerabilities do women face due to their participation in the agricultural production of coca or poppy? What is their role and contribution to the family and regional economy? What knowledge and skills do they have? How can alternative development programs contribute to creating and strengthening legal and sustainable sources of income? In which organizational initiatives have women participated? How can national and local governments promote women growers' potential in participation and decision-making spaces?

The International Gathering of Women Peasants was held in order to identify both unique and shared characteristics of women who live in coca- or poppy-growing regions. 16 women peasants from Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru, and three experts on development-oriented drug policies from Afghanistan and Thailand participated in the event. Over four days, the women shared and exchanged their knowledge and experiences

¹. Some examples of local gatherings with women who live in regions with coca or poppy cultivation are: the National Gathering of Women Coca Growers in Puerto Asís (Putumayo), held on April 28th and 29th, 2017 and the Gathering of Women Coca Growers of Southern Colombia, held on March 17th and 18th, 2017. See: <https://www.humanas.org.co/alfa/pg.php?pa=136>.

about working in regions with coca or poppy crops, their participation in community decision-making and alternative development programs, and their security challenges.

This document looks to make the voices of women who live in areas with coca or poppy cultivation heard, and it is an initial step to ensure the inclusion of appropriate evidence in decision-making on drug policies. This document was written to collect the experiences, voices, and recommendations of the women who participated in the gathering.

The first section presents the characteristics, roles, difficulties, and capacities of women peasants who live in areas with coca or poppy cultivation. These elements were identified by the women themselves. The second section reflects general and specific recommendations offered by the women on each of the issues addressed.

Women peasants as workers in areas with coca or poppy cultivation

Women who live in areas with coca or poppy crops identify themselves as women peasant farmers who carry out a variety of tasks. One of these is agricultural work, which includes growing food crops for their own consumption and their family's, in addition to growing coca or poppy. These women, like other women peasant farmers, also dedicate a significant amount of their time to the work of managing their homes, which includes taking care of their children, attending to the needs of their partner and others who live with them, preparing food for their family and farm workers, taking food to the worksites, cleaning, washing clothes, and taking care of smaller animals and the garden, among other tasks.

“After breakfast, we go take care of our animals, after our partner leaves; we have to get to work. But first we have to take care of our children and animals, and clean: the things we do at home. We leave after the men because we have to get our children off to school and take care of the animals. Then, we go out to the crops.”

Woman participant from Bolivia

In spite of the long work hours, many women also participate in their communities' social and political organizations. That is why it is often said that women peasant farmers have a triple workday: agricultural work, household care work, and participation in social and political organizations. It is important to highlight that care work and domestic tasks, which are carried out mainly by women, as well as community participation, are usually unpaid.

This has implications for relationships and power inequalities between men and women, and for women's possibilities to enjoy rights such as access to education, free time, or paid work.

“When a woman works in the fields, it is the man who gets paid. Men charge for both people's work, and then women ask their husbands for money.”

Woman participant from Colombia

Unlike other women peasant farmers, who usually go unpaid for the work they do on their plots, women who work in coca or poppy cultivation do get paid for their work. However, some participants stated that men are often paid more because their work requires more strength. This pay gap is validated by women, demonstrating that they undervalue their own work.

“The hardest part is weeding because it hurts our hands; there are weeds that have thorns, and since we spend a long time sitting or bent over, our backs hurt and we get tired because these are steep hills; it is exhausting.”

Woman participant from Mexico

Like other women peasants, few women who live in regions with coca or poppy crops have access to property. When women do have property, it is due to an inheritance. For women who are unmarried or separated, it is even more difficult.

It is interesting to see that these experiences hardly vary between countries. For example, in Colombia, land titles and assets are held by men, even though the law recognizes the possibility of granting titles to women. In Bolivia, land tenure is shared by men and women, but sometimes sexism makes it impossible for women to be landowners; besides, not all land has been titled.

“Those who have ownership are men: not only ownership of land, but all assets.”

Woman participant from Colombia

The main reasons that coca or poppy are grown by these women's communities are: first, it is an ancestral practice, as is the case in Bolivia and Peru, where

the coca leaf has been grown since pre-Hispanic times for medicinal uses.

“In Peru, our ancestors, the Incas, were the first to produce the coca leaf, and each leaf was sacred; it was used to pay for land, for consumption, to feed the children and the people themselves. The communities that still work in coca leaf production do so in accordance with this ancestral logic.”

Woman participant from Peru

The second reason is mainly economic, as is the case in Colombia and Mexico. In these countries, coca leaf or poppy cultivation has made it possible for peasants to participate in the market economy from areas where it would be virtually impossible with other agricultural products. In this context, coca or poppy cultivation provides work opportunities for rural women, which are difficult to find in other areas.

In Latin America's coca fields, women carry out all of the crop-related activities: cooking, planting and harvesting, fertilizing, weeding, and spraying. The same occurs in poppy production: women carry out activities to thin (“deshijar”),² spray and score, collect the gum, and take care of the plantation. The prices for opium gum and

2. “Deshijar” (thinning) refers to pulling up seedlings as they are born because, if they are not removed, they compete with the other plants, and none of them grow well.



coca leaf are usually established beforehand, which is why the sale price is paid equally to men and women.

“Women grow coca because it is the easiest way to make money: they plant the bush and in five months it is ready for harvest, and that helps them to have money and remittances for their children. It is also easy to transport. With just a pound, we make money, whereas a sack of corn is hard to transport, and we don't make money.”

Woman participant from Colombia

“Women have a role in everything: at home, in the fields, making crafts. They have a very important role in everything, in everything that happens in Guerrero; the children, we go with our husbands to the fields to fertilize, plant, and thin the poppy. As women, there are many things that we can do, and also together with the men.”

Woman participant from Mexico

The frequency of coca leaf harvests, the constant demand, and the fact that the middlemen go directly to the farm where coca is grown allow women to have an income throughout the year³. Profits obtained through this work are generally allocated to purchasing basic goods and food for the family, for healthcare and educational services –including higher education for their children– and, if there is some money left over, to even satisfy the women's own needs.

“Coca is a source of cash for everyone since we know that the coca leaf is harvested three times a year.”

Woman participant from Peru

“Likewise, as mothers, we have to take care of our homes and different needs, then our desires and whims.”

Woman participant from Bolivia

3. There isn't total price stability. There are periods when the price falls due to an excess supply or the introduction of synthetic substitutes. This has happened to the price of opium gum produced in Mexico, which fell at the end of 2017 because fentanyl, a synthetic opioid, began to be introduced in the United States.

On some occasions, working in coca or poppy cultivation becomes the only possibility for women to access paid work. It makes it possible for them to access economic resources and credit, which they had not been able to access previously as rural workers because they often do not receive payment for their other tasks, nor do they receive land titles. In addition, land ownership is not formalized in these areas, and there is not sufficient land for a project to be truly productive.

“... employment options for women are terrible [...]. Coca can help economically; in the countryside, coca is the only option that has helped. Only with this plant have they been able to take care of their homes, their children, and have money.”

Woman participant from Colombia

“If you are a woman, it is difficult to get a loan; if you have a husband, you can. If you have a husband, you are granted the loan. That’s the way it is, but now we can get a loan. What makes it possible for us? Our accreditation as coca growers is the assurance.”

Woman participant from Bolivia

Confidence in poppy and coca plantations’ profitability makes local credit systems possible. The most common system is credit granted by store owners who sell merchandise based on the promise of payment when the next harvest is sold. These businesses, unlike traditional banks, are the only ones that grant credit to women.

Access to these resources has also made it possible for many women to gain economic independence and, with that, freedom to make decisions. For example, they have been able to break the cycle of domestic violence by no longer depending on resources that a man contributes to the household. Similarly, women heads of household have guarantees that they will be able

to respond to their children’s needs, in addition to independently managing their income.

It is important to remember that, even though these resources have made it possible for them to access certain services, it does not mean that they are wealthy. Regions with a presence of coca or poppy crops are usually remote and marginalized areas with low levels of investment, high levels of poverty and exclusion, and a weak state presence.

The women’s description of the areas where they live includes a lack of well-maintained roads, abandoned health centers, a lack of equipment at the schools, an absence of sewage systems and potable water, and wooden houses, among other situations.



“The saddest part is that there aren’t doctors in Guerrero, there are no medical services, no schools... Well, there are schools, but no teachers, as they fear the violence [that] we face due to [the presence of] two groups. That causes people to emigrate to other places.”

Woman participant from Mexico

The advantages that poppy and coca crops represent for women are also offset by the violence generated by these crops because they are illegal, the interests of organized criminal structures involved in this activity, and the fact that the fields are mainly in areas where land ownership is not formalized.

In addition, participating in activities related to these crops makes them victims of triple discrimination: as women, as peasant farmers, and because they work in activities that are punishable by law.

Women's participation in community or political decision-making in their regions

Women's political participation varies by individual, depending on age, life history, and the regions women come from. Some participants at the Gathering mentioned that sexism, violence against women, and corruption are obstacles to their participation.

“Other challenges in the region are corruption, sexism, violence against women; women's empowerment is lacking: fear impedes women's empowerment.”
Woman participant from Colombia

Regardless, many of the women coca and poppy growers who were at the event have actively participated in their communities since they were young, and some are even influential in community decision-making. This participation includes being part of social and peasant organizations, agricultural unions, and protests specifically related to illicit use crops, mainly in Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru.

For example, women have participated in community action councils (JAC, in Spanish) in Colombia; in student movements, community restaurants, the Glass of Milk (Vaso de Leche) Program, and the National Confederation of

Agricultural Producers in Peru's Coca-Growing Valleys (CONPACCP - Confederación Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios de las Cuencas Cocaleras del Perú) in Peru; and in the Yungas-Chapare Federation of Intercultural Communities (Federación de Comunidades Interculturales Yungas-Chapare) in Bolivia. In some cases, women have held local political positions, such as deputy mayor or peace judge, or have been candidates for the municipal council.

“We act as leaders and occupying those spaces. The challenge is the minimal recognition [we receive] because we are women, both from men and women. In my sector, I am the first woman to be a peace judge and men do not want me to try them, and they ask me to have a man try them; the same thing happens with women: they feel more confidence if it is a man who responds.”

Woman participant from Peru

In these participation processes, women have faced difficulties or obstacles related to their age, limited recognition of their leadership and participation –both from men and women–, and a lack of their own resources to travel to meetings. Sometimes, their participation and leadership have affected their safety. For example, in countries with high levels of violence, some women have been threatened and have been victims of kidnapping and forced displacement.



“One challenge that I have faced is a lack of safety due to the risks that arise from being a community leader; we are accused of stirring things up. This happens more with women because men are generally more respected.”
Woman participant from Colombia

“We cannot join projects. In my town, there are assemblies where only the male heads of household participate. We can go to the assemblies, but we cannot share our opinions; we can only listen and share information with our husbands, but they decide. We cannot vote. In other words, we cannot choose a committee, and if we speak, they tell us “you are not the head of household so you cannot share your opinion.”
Woman participant from Mexico

In some regions of Mexico, where women have little or no influence in decision-making processes and spaces, even if they are present, they do not have a voice or a vote. Unlike men, an increase in women's participation in certain spaces and a strengthening of their leadership has costs on a social and family level, and with their partners. Several women stated that their partners or communities do not always support their leadership, as they believe that women should only focus on their families and homes, and they do not accept women having a voice and making decisions.

Participation in community decisions and becoming leaders has contributed to these women's personal growth, helping them to recognize abilities that they had not identified and to strengthen others. This participation has provided new tools and

knowledge for their interactions with governmental entities. Several women have increased their knowledge of issues like human rights, women's rights, reparation for victims, and crop substitution, among others. In some cases, belonging to these spaces has allowed them to make visible topics related to women's rights.

Regarding initiatives that benefit their communities, women's participation in certain organizations has been key to obtain resources and build schools, or improve aqueducts in their communities, carry out literacy programs, achieve respect for cultivation, and increase the coca leaf price in countries like Bolivia and Peru, where purchasing the plants is legal, and obtain land titles for women (mainly in Bolivia).



Alternative and rural development in the regions

Even though the rural development project financed by the Mae Fah Luang Foundation in Thailand is a successful experience in alternative development, it is not necessarily replicable in other countries. Nevertheless, there are aspects worth mentioning that have contributed to its sustainability and community participation, in addition to taking into account the need for gradual substitution.

This project was recognized and welcomed by communities because it began by acknowledging their needs, placing people at the center, and addressing their problems regarding health, poverty, and a lack of education, which were the reasons why these communities began growing poppy. The initial goal was not eradicating poppy crops; it was satisfying the communities' basic needs.

“The problem we detected in Daitung was the presence of illegal drug crops, but after a more detailed analysis, we realized that the cause was poverty and a lack of opportunities.”

Woman participant from Thailand

The following were other elements that ensured the project's success:

implementation was carried out in accordance with each region's needs; alliances were established with different stakeholders (local government, civil society organizations, and the private sector); and, perhaps most importantly, the project included peasant farmers' knowledge in order to define the products that could be grown. It is the men and women peasants who know their land best, and their active involvement is the only way to generate a sustainable project in the community.

“In 1990, the project introduced long-term crops (coffee and macadamia nuts), increasing revenue for the community. Coffee takes three years and macadamia seven years to be grown. While we awaited the result from these harvests, other parallel activities focused on women's skills.”

Woman participant from Thailand

The experience of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation was replicated in northern Afghanistan with families who grew poppy. Men received support in small animal breeding and women were trained as artisans. The equal inclusion of men and women was essential as people seriously questioned projects that only support women, believing that they will change the Afghan culture and that this could put them at risk. For that reason, it was important to include the entire family and religious

groups, who are well-respected by the communities.

This experience contrasts with other projects implemented in regions of Afghanistan and with alternative development practices in Latin American countries where these programs have been executed for over thirty years. They are generally sponsored by national governments, with support from international cooperation, and do not have a rural or territorial development approach; instead, they have the very concrete objective of replacing coca crops with non-criminalized crops. In Mexico, women have yet to see alternative development programs.

Even though the communities have been willing to listen to the options offered by different alternative development initiatives and commit to them, frustration and distrust often persist regarding these programs. In part, this has to do with a lack of knowledge of each region's social, political, and economic reality. This includes recognizing the value that communities place on coca leaf or poppy crops and having a suitable assessment of soil characteristics, crops that can adapt to that soil, and the current infrastructure and institutional structures that can support the projects.

“Coca is the crop that compels us most because it is an easy product to manage. We don't have to negotiate its sale. It is harvested and laid out to dry, and then it is sold quickly to a company called Enaco.”

Woman participant from Peru

“This is an area without road infrastructure or overland access routes. You must travel by river, and it's difficult to transport crops.”

Woman participant from Colombia

“About 80% don't have access to well-maintained roads. Products can't be taken to market because they are very far away; you can't get a good price for them. If you can get them to market, they aren't purchased at a good price because they are already damaged.”

Woman participant from Colombia

“In some rural communities, the markets are twelve hours away on horseback; for other communities, it is eight or nine hours...”

Woman participant from Colombia

“To get to market, well, it is a 40-minute walk. We leave from town, 45 minutes to get there, from there we bring it in and then return. To sell rice, plantain,

yuca...they don't pay a fair price. They get damaged during travel.”
Woman participant from Bolivia

For some women, alternative development projects have not been truly participatory. The communities have not been consulted or considered to be a part of the solution. The women stated that usually the projects are shared with them, without considering their opinions, needs, or knowledge.

Regarding women's participation in these projects, the experience has varied, depending on the existing organizational level. In countries where women are less organized, their involvement and participation have been limited. For some women, it has been difficult to get involved due to a lack of information or fear of being excluded since, in some communities, they are not welcome in participation or decision-making spaces. Additionally, some programs are focused on landowners –men in most cases–, automatically excluding women. On other occasions, women's involvement in programs is connected to their spouse's participation, so they are automatically included, or there is a family-based approach.

“Women's participation is mainly through the family group, where their husbands are the bridge to inclusion... Hence, not all women can sign on.”
Woman participant from Peru

In countries where women are more organized and where they have held important positions in political and community bodies, these associations have been recognized and involved in alternative development projects. In fact, it has been women who have promoted important programs for their communities –for example, the Glass of Milk (Vaso de Leche) program in Peru. In Colombia, the Comprehensive Program for the Substitution of Illicit Use Crops (PNIS - Programa Nacional Integral de Sustitución de Cultivos de Uso Ilícito) exists, which came out of the agreements signed between the Colombian government and FARC guerrilla group; there was an effort to create a process that was participatory and included women. For some women who live in areas with coca crops, this became an opportunity for participation. However, in this case, women have not evaluated the program positively because they feel that the government has not fulfilled all of the commitments included in the agreements.

“What did work was the peasants and communities' fulfillment of their part of the agreement.”
Woman participant from Colombia

In general, and in spite of some efforts to include women and their organizations, there are few alternative development and rural development programs that incorporated (or incorporate) a gender perspective.

Lastly, it is important to return to some of the reflections shared by the women on the potential use of coca leaf and poppy. Alternative development proposals have not contemplated projects that transform coca leaf into food or non-psychoactive derivatives or that use opium gum for pharmaceutical and medical purposes. Taking these options into account makes it possible to address some of the challenges related to products that are not adapted to the geography or are derived from illegal businesses.

“With coca, we aren’t only selling the leaf; we also make cakes, liquors, flour, and other products in order to increase our profits a bit more.”

Woman participant from Peru

“Once the eradication is done, the markets are horrible. When a farmer goes to sell their plantains, nobody is going to buy them because there is no money. Then people are going to go hungry; there is no money to buy salt... This is the conflict. Kids end up dropping out of school because some parents have to go to other cities, to other municipalities.”

Woman participant from Colombia

“I continue participating because I like the idea of legalization: because it will begin to reduce the violence in our lives; that is why I continue to defend this initiative.”

Woman participant from Mexico

Women’s security in areas with coca or poppy cultivation

Women peasant farmers who live in areas with a presence of coca or poppy crops have been victims of different types of violence. The presence of armed groups in these areas has caused, at times, forced land dispossession, personal threats, internal displacements, the recruitment of minors, deaths or the enforced disappearance of loved ones, threats, and sexual violence.

“Ok, so even though the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has provided some numbers, I can say that is not the reality; I know of several cases in my region, friends, children, [...] and they aren’t in the statistics. The Army came through, they shot up everything, the native population was treated like animals, and who has counted all of that? Then, the Commission carried out an evaluation in my region, and they said that there were only thirty dead during the conflict in our region; in my district, no more, in each populated area, there are at least thirty dead... In one night, there were a hundred and some killed.”

Woman participant from Peru

Women have seen confrontations between the different armed groups who are fighting over the territory, as well as murders and disappearances. The majority of the victims are men (who could be their fathers, spouses, or sons). On another note, women tend to have increased exposure to domestic violence, given that the use of weapons is more common in these environments and that many men spend their earnings from the crops on sex and alcohol.



Some policies, such as forced eradication or aerial fumigation, have generated women’s distrust in the government, due to the impacts of

government actions on their personal, family, and community economy, and on their food security. As coca or poppy crops are the only work opportunity for many women, forced eradication policies mean losing their and their families' main source of livelihood, which sometimes translates into a loss of independence. For that reason, the women generally do not perceive the State as an entity that provides development and well-being in their territories.

“ Forced eradication generates debt as people borrow money, and if the government comes in to eradicate, people have more debts and are in greater poverty. There is environmental contamination as the fumigation is aerial, using a helicopter, and for that reason, it affects other crops. There are health problems because there are crops near the stream, and the drinking water affects people's respiratory and digestive systems, even more so for children.”

Woman participant from Mexico

“ As women, we have not only been in resistance regarding illicit crops, but we have also defended our rights as women, mothers, spouses. But it has not been easy to resist. In the community where we live, there were very few of us women who organized to demand that the Army not act this way



with the women, men, children, and our belongings.”

Woman participant from Colombia

Sometimes these situations of insecurity and violence also impact the communities' social fabric, the family unit, women's organizational capacity, and their role as leaders.

“ ... but that fear is present. So, those of us who are leaders no longer want to speak up or defend our rights, due to the fear; there is total insecurity. Also, we aren't backed by the government.”

Woman participant from Colombia

Nevertheless, regarding different situations of insecurity, women recognize and value their resistance

and resilience, not only as coca or poppy growers, but also as women, mothers, and spouses. Some communities have created self-protection systems; in others, women have become human shields to protect the men.

“ Using cell phones, WhatsApp, we created groups for leaders from all of the municipality's rural communities, and another group just for the community. If I see a stranger in my community, I immediately write the group and ask if anyone knows who it is; if nobody knows the person, we report them to the Army [unit] that is in the area.”

Woman participant from Colombia

“ We protect the men; we are shields because we go out first and they are behind us, and we are also crucial when we block a road or confront the government. We are very courageous.”

Woman participant from Mexico

Lastly, the fact that the women work in coca or poppy production also affects their security. They are generally stigmatized since their work is a criminalized activity and controlled by one illegal armed group or another. This places them in a position of increased vulnerability in comparison with other rural women.

“ Other problems are the risks of imprisonment, kidnapping, economic insecurity, confrontations between armed groups, extortion, landmines in the territories, forced eradication, criminal prosecution and seizing of assets, and health and environmental problems. This is due to the illicit crops, but it all arises from a territorial dispute.”

Woman participant from Colombia

Recommendations

Public policy design and implementation must take into account the reality of those for whom the policy is designed.

This common-sense starting point is often ignored in drug policies, as the focus is placed on avoiding the consumption of psychoactive substances, and not on the social and community dynamics that in one way or another revolve around that consumption. This reality is even more significant when addressing those who grow plants that are used to extract the necessary materials for producing prohibited psychoactive substances.

The previous sections have revealed some of the realities faced by women coca leaf and poppy growers, realities that must be the foundation to design public policies on drugs.

In designing drug policies, a lack of knowledge on women's experiences has made their incorporation as active and productive stakeholders impossible. In fact, it has favored a reproduction of gender stereotypes, as well as continuing the double discrimination faced by women, as women and as peasants.

Generally, when talking about women, emphasis is placed on their

vulnerabilities. Women peasant farmers who live in areas with coca or poppy crops are citizens who, with their experiences and knowledge of the context and of their communities, can actively contribute to the design and implementation of drug policies in general.

The following recommendations are based on the previous considerations:

1. Generate more spaces –such as the Gathering held in Mexico– to learn from women peasants who live in regions with coca or poppy crops. These kinds of spaces will also make it possible for women to recognize their potential and capacities as economic agents and as guarantors of food security and well-being for their families and communities. Women are the individuals who know the rural world best and are experts who should be invited to learn about their realities.

2. Acknowledge and take into account that women living in areas with coca or poppy crops generally acquire their income from these crops. This income is usually invested in activities, goods, or services that generate well-being for their families and communities. Women peasant farmers have a very important role in agricultural production and their families'

and communities' food security⁴. Therefore, those who design programs or policies must promote more equitable access to project resources.

“Programs should be directed towards women, since the majority have been signed with men. Cash is given to the men, and it shouldn't be this way.”
Woman participant from Colombia

3. Identify and strengthen women's leadership in regions with coca or poppy crops and actively involve them in the design and implementation of alternative or rural development programs and policies. It is important to recognize women's skills, knowledge, and expertise. It is recommended that they are offered workshops or training on issues such as leadership, human rights, women's rights, and rural development, among others. Nevertheless, it is also important to involve men and their children.

“From day one, the community must be involved in activities and discussions. The project staff is not in charge of carrying out any activity: they are simply facilitators and guides, and they

4. Muhammad Yunus, Nobel Peace Prize Winner in 2006, is the author of *Banker to the Poor* and proposed that women “are better at fighting poverty than men.” See El País, “Por qué es mejor dar el dinero a las mujeres,” 10 June 2008, https://elpais.com/diario/2008/06/10/sociedad/1213048801_850215.html.

must listen closely to the community.”
Woman participant from Thailand

“These women have great abilities but need support. It is important that women continue increasing their capacities so that they have access to more markets. The project is very open; it allows them to participate when they are pregnant, they can bring their young children, there is a day-care center at the factory, and they are given time to breastfeed.”
Woman participant from Thailand

“In Colombia, every department and municipality has a Women's Secretariat, but the government doesn't publicize their work and they often don't know what to do. We, the women's organizations, have had to teach them what to do.”
Woman participant from Colombia

4. Those in charge of program and policy design and implementation must have gender training and experience in order to identify how unequal power relationships between men and women influence decision-making and different individuals' participation in the community, as well as the execution of alternative development projects. It can also be useful to involve bodies that already exist on a local level and that are focused on guaranteeing

and promoting women's rights (for example, the Women's Secretariat or Women's House) in the design and implementation processes.

“In Colombia, every department and municipality has a Women's Secretariat, but the government doesn't publicize their work and they often don't know what to do. We, the women's organizations, have had to teach them what to do.”
Woman participant from Colombia

5. When designing and promoting productive projects, women must be involved as individuals and not as members of a family. Direct meetings or dialogues with women and their organizations are recommended, in order to understand their role in the community and in coca or poppy cultivation, and so that they can express themselves freely. For example, thematic working groups can be created to learn about the relationship between security, access to land, participation, and women, thus obtaining an assessment that makes it possible to identify the differential needs of women, men, and communities. As was previously mentioned, women have vast knowledge about the countryside, crops, land characteristics, and the products that grow best, according to the region, and also about community needs related to infrastructure, education, and technical, economic, and security issues.

“Improve the roads to get products to market, because the roads are in poor condition. More technical support on how to harvest. We know about poppy; they should teach us about other things.”
Woman participant from Mexico

6. Implement a census to understand the composition of peasant families who live in areas with coca or poppy crops in order to obtain sex-disaggregated data (for example, the percentage of family members that are women).

7. Strengthen women's access to land titles and ensure that they can obtain credit because without titles and credit, agricultural productivity becomes difficult.

8. Plan short-, medium-, and long-term alternative development programs/projects with active community participation. This makes it possible to address immediate needs –those that affect women most since they involve ensuring food for the family and other basic needs– and wait for long-cycle projects to produce results.

9. Identify, design, and implement innovative protection networks among women to report and share information on risks in the regions. This should include the use of new technologies, taking into account the

communities' abilities to access cell phones and the internet.

10. Document and share different incidents of violence registered in coca or poppy cultivation areas with the relevant organisms in order to guarantee that these do not reoccur, are not forgotten, and so that local and national governments can carry out actions to improve the situation in these areas. Based on the prior, it is important to promote local, participatory, and creative initiatives, and to include women's organizations in these initiatives.